UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY
OU_214165
UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

214165

A FIRST SERIES

OF REPRESENTATIVE

RUSSIAN STORIES

PUSHKIN TO GORKY

SELECTED AND EDITED

AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

JANKO LAVRIN

WESTHOUSE

LONDON 1946

First published in March 1946 by
JOHN WESTHOUSE (PUBLISHERS) LIMITED
49 Chancery Lane
London

All rights reserved

Printed by
KELIHER HUDSON & KEARNS LTD
London

CONTENTS

7 **INTRODUCTION AND NOTES: Fan*ko Lavrin***

23 THE POSTMASTER *Alexander Pushkin*

36 TAMAN: *Michael Lermontov*

49 THE CARRIAGE • *Nikolai Gogol*

62 THE SINGERS *Ivan Turgenev*

80 A STRANGE STORY. *Ivan Turgenev*

102 AN HONEST THIEF *Feodor Dostoevsky*

120 BUB-BOO *Feodor Dostoevsky*

I38 THREE DEATHS: *Leo Tolstoy*

153 DIARY OF A MADMAN. *Leo Tolstoy*

I66 THE ARTISTS- *Vsevolod Garshin*

I86 HEARTACHE *Anton Chekov*

I92 THE BLACK MONK *Anton Chekov*

225 TWENTY-SIX MEN AND A GIRL: *Maxim Gorky*

THE THANKS *and acknowledgments of the publishers are due to Messrs Chatto and Windus for permission to use Constance Garnet's translations of " The Carriage" and " The Black Monk " ; and to Oxford University Press, and the personal representatives of the late Aylmer Maude for permission to use the translation of " Three Deaths" by Louise and Aylmer Maude*

INTRODUCTION

JANKO LAVRIN

I

RUSSIAN LITERATURE has earned a world reputation primarily owing to its novels. For this reason one is often inclined to forget its achievements in another sphere of which it can be equally proud - that of the short story Apart from France, Russia seems, in fact, to be the only European country where the cult of the short story as a high literatary genre (not to be confused with the ordinary magazine-story) can already point to a strong and definite tradition, the foundations for which were laid mainly by Pushkin and Gogol. With the exception of Sergey Aksakov and Ivan Goncharov, there has not been a single notable prose writer in Russia during the last hundred years or so who did not also contribute at least something remarkable in the realm of the short story-from Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky to Maxim Gorky, and from Pisemsky and Leskov to the Soviet authors of the present day. The fame of several Russian authors rests above all on their short stories. Garshin, for example, owes his reputation solely to them. So does Chekhov, to a large extent. Among the more recent names one could mention I. Kuprin, Ivan Bunin, Leonid Andreyev, E Zamyatin, and the Soviet writer, Michael Zoshchenko.

The task of dealing with the general characteristics of the Russian story as a whole is fascinating owing to its very wealth and variety on the one hand, and originality on the other. One cannot but admire its wonderful grasp of human character, with the peculiar Russian flair not only for the fundamentals of man and life but also for the most elusive psychological imponderables; and finally that courage with regard to truth which refuses to put up with mere appearances and takes

a delight in debunking even our most cherished fakes and illusions. This does not mean that the narrative element as such is neglected or else sacrificed to non-literary considerations On the contrary, it is precisely in the Russian story that this element has received the fullest scope in all its aspects - from the anecdotic sketch and descriptive 'slice of life' to the wonderfully articulated tales from Gogol onwards. Conspicuous in both quantity and quality, it cannot be neglected by anyone interested in Russian literature or, for that matter, in the development of the modern short story in general.

II

The first important landmark in the evolution of the Russian short story is to be found in the work of Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837). Although primarily a poet-one of the greatest in Europe - he was also active as a dramatist and prose-writer. It was he who introduced into the literature of his country that straightforward simplicity which became so notable a feature of the subsequent Russian realism. Pushkin moreover sanctioned the non-heroic hero or the 'little man' in Russian prose. This aspect was worthily continued by the more exuberant Gogol, while Lermontov combined Pushkin's directness with a profound psychological insight which was certainly not lost on the next generation.

Michael Lermontov (1814-41) is still regarded as a poet second only to Pushkin. And like Pushkin, he too was responsible for the further development of Russian prose. His prose, clear and incisive, is marked by a crisp flexibility of its own, which differs from the lyrical flexibility of, say, Turgenev. In contrast with Pushkin, who describes and suggests, Lermontov analyses. His *Hero of our Time* is the first analytical novel of merit in Russian literature, although in structure it is not so much a novel as a collection of five narratives (three of them in the form of a diary) which are connected by the same principal character and can be read independently.

As for Nikolai Gogol (1809-52), his prose can best be described as that of a romantic who, in spite of his ornate language (or rather because of it), gradually worked out a peculiar realistic

method of his own. Yet his realism, such as comes out in his *Greatcoat* and in his novel *Dead Souls,* was primarily one of indictment on the part of a frustrated idealist, that is, of a romantic who either refused or else was unable to come to terms with life. So he considered it his duty to expose life in all its grotesque vulgarity and tedium, and to ridicule it by means of his proverbial 'laughter through tears.' Such a negative attitude towards actual life found an echo in a number of subsequent writers. Gogol's inner quest, on the other hand, with his vexation of spirit, anticipated, as it were, both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy Even Gogol's rich and agitated prose, so different from the ' naked beauty' of Pushkin, was transmitted to Dostoevsky and through him to Andrey Bely, who was one of the leaders of Russian symbolism. The elements bequeathed by Pushkin, Lermontov and Gogol can thus be found - in varying proportions - in the whole of Russian prose: the novel, the story, and the tale corresponding to the Western *nouvelle.*

III

The thirteen narratives printed in this volume are, each in its own way, typical of the Russian story and also of the authors who wrote them. *The Postmaster,* for example, is taken from the five stories which Pushkin finished in the autumn of 1830 and gave out as the products of the 'late Ivan Petrovich Belkin' -supposedly a naive and pathetically comic half-intellectual (from the gentry), anxious to gratify his literary ambitions in his own modest way. This deliberate camouflage gave Pushkin an opportunity to tell the stories with artless simplicity, but not so artless perhaps as would appear on the surface. *The Postmaster* is even meant to contain under its naive garb a subtle parody on the Prodigal Son (the prints of which were hanging in the guest-room of the posting-station). In Pushkin's story, the 'prodigal daughter' who runs away with her lover, far from coming to grief, lives happily ever after The one who comes to grief is her old-fashioned father - the prototype of the 'little man,' subsequently taken up by Gogol and scores of other Russian authors.

Lermontovs *Taman* (1840) is a part of *A Hero of our Time.*

Nevertheless it is also a perfectly written independent story which was much admired by Chekhov. Told in the first person by the chief character Pechorin himself, it brings out certain features of that vigorous but cold and frustrated individual. As a descendant of Pushkin's quasi-Byronic Onegin *(Evgeny Onegin)* he leads to a progeny of the less vigorous but equally 'superfluous' individuals so conspicuous in Turgenev's novels and stories, in Goncharov's *Oblomov,* and especially in Chekhov's writings. As Pechorin undoubtedly reflects the character of Lermontov himself, *Taman,* like the whole novel in question, is tinged with hidden subjectivism.

In contrast to Lermontov's incisive matter-of-factness, Gogol is inclined to be carried away by the temperamental rhythmic flow of his own descriptions and to indulge in over-statement. This does not apply in the same degree to *The Carriage,* the substance of which, anyway, is hardly more than an amusing anecdote. On the other hand, we find in it quite a number of features characteristic of Gogol's art as a whole. Gogol himself once remarked that, of all people, Pushkin alone was quick enough to see his capacity for expressing the meanness and the vulgarity of life through ridiculous everyday trifles. In *Dead Souls,* for instance, Gogol stressed those trifles (especially in his portraits) by means of exaggerations which border on parody and are charged with the author's own rancour against life. *The Carriage,* finished a few years earlier (1835), is full of equally grotesque portraits and details; but there is more humour than rancour in the general mood pervading this superbly told story. Here Gogol laughs without tears, and makes the reader laugh together with him. In addition, *The Carriage* deserves to be known also as a link between Gogol and the early work of Chekhov - before Chekhov's laughter turned into his own peculiar 'smile through tears.'

IV

From Pushkin, Gogol and Lermontov onwards, Russian prose developed rapidly in all directions. After the 'natural school' in particular, which in the 'forties was championed by the critic Belinsky as a combination of truth to life and of service

to life, Russian realism began to grow to such an extent as to assume, less than thirty years later, in the works of Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, truly monumental proportions.

The oldest of them was Ivan Turgenev (1818-83). The compass of his genius may have been smaller than that of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, but on the other hand he was a consummate artist and his aesthetic sense was well-nigh uncanny. Known above all by his novels *(A Nest of Gentlefolk, Fathers and Children, Smoke, Virgin Soil,* etc.), he excelled also in numerous stories and sketches, most of which are among the finest in European literature. Having adopted Pushkin's naturalness and simplicity, he evolved a mellow prose of his own, full of half-shades, of lyrical 'autumnal' moods, and of that nostalgic atmosphere of doom which seemed to hover over the educated gentry class from the 'forties onwards. Turgenev's stories are *told* (most of them in the first person) rather than 'written' - told with that art which is strong enough to brave both time and changing literary fashions.

One of his merits was that, simultaneously with D. V. Grigorovich, he introduced into Russian literature the serf and the moujik. He did this in his *A Sportsman's Sketches* (published in book form in 1849). But far from sentimentalising them like Grigorovich, he treated his peasants as individuals with a mentality of their own - inscrutable at times, yet original, independent and entitled to respect. By confronting the peasant with the exploiting landowner, he was, moreover, able to show the injustice of serfdom all the more convincingly because he did it only as an artist and with the detachment of an artist. No wonder that *A Sportsman's Sketches* played a considerable role in the liberation of the serfs and is supposed to have influenced Alexander II himself in that direction. Another outstanding feature is Turgenev's treatment of nature. An impressionist by God's grace, he made use of natural scenery not as a mere conventional background, but as something so intimately intertwined with the theme and the characters as to form an inalienable organic part of the narrative itself.

Of his two stories included in this volume, *The Singers* is taken from *A Sportsman's Sketches.* It is a genre picture, and shows Turgenev the portrait painter at his best. In his ap-

proach to the peasants described one does not even distantly feel any condescension on the part of a humanitarian nobleman. He treats them on an equal footing with himself, and his attitude is one of sympathetic understanding, which does not prevent him, however, from seeing also their foibles: the marvellous singing-competition of the three peasants ends, peasant-fashion, in rowdy drunken revelry.

A Strange Story, as the title suggests, is primarily a story, and a very Russian one into the bargain. The two principal characters - the strangely meditative heroine and the religious crank of the *yurodivy** type - exemplify certain features of that old-world Russia which are likely to strike a European or American reader as something exotic and hardly fathomable when scrutinised by our Western mentality. The intense and as though helplessly groping vexation of spirit, which comes out even in the aberrations of the characters concerned, is one of them Equally striking is their love of suffering So is the ecstasy with which the heroine crushes the very possibility of what we understand by personal pride. All this is akin to the religious East rather than to the coldly calculating Europe or America. It is all the more surprising that Turgenev - himself an admirer of the Western pattern of life and therefore hardly in sympathy with the characters - should have treated the theme not only with his usual skill, but also with his usual artistic detachment.

V

After Turgenev's healthy and balanced aesthetic temperament, one is likely to be shocked at first by the fascinatingly morbid and in some respects apocalyptic genius of Feodor Dostoevsky (1821-81). Yet Dostoevsky never indulged in morbid orabnormal aspects for their own sake. They attracted him chiefly as psychological short cuts to the riddle of 'normality' itself. Hence his attempts to penetrate to those workings of the human mind and spiritwhich actually are beyond mere psychology in the ordinary

*** A *yarddivy* was usually a mentally deranged simpleton suffering from religious mania. It was customary for him to wear heavy chains next to his skin.**

sense. Nor is it surprising that, long before psycho-analysis appeared, he annexed to modern literature the entire realm of the Unconscious. But he did this largely because he was driven by his split personality to cope with his own inner conflicts, which he was anxious to sublimate in his novels and stories.

Following in the footsteps of Gogol, Dostoevsky continued the tradition of the 'little man' in literature; from *Poor Folk* (1846) to his motley gallery of the 'offended and the injured/ including the grim portraits of his Siberian fellow-convicts in *The House of the Dead.* What concerned him was not the social but the psychological aspects of the characters, especially those aspects in which all sorts of frustrations and inner contradictions were simultaneously at work. The story *An Honest Thief* (1848), although one of his early works of this kind, is quite typical. Its literary pedigree goes back to Pushkin's *Postmaster* and Gogol's *Greatcoat,* but at the same time its chief character anticipates the will-less drunkard Marmeladov in *Crime and Punishment.* And the background is that of Petersburg - the most 'abstract' city on earth, as Dostoevsky once called it. His genius certainly bears the imprint of Petersburg, with its 'nerves,' its extremes, and its hectic fermentation, both the outward and especially the inner one. Interested in the latter, he gave in his *Notes from the Underworld* (1863) a thorough self-analysis of that rebellious, theoretically rebellious, 'little man' whose frustrations had resulted in spiritual and social rancour of the most virulent kind. It was through the eyes of such a rancorous 'underworld' individual that Dostoevsky now began a critical examination of all our values - a process which brought him to the verge of utter nihilism. He went so far in this process that in the end his literary work became a necessary defence of his own spirit against the threatening inner void and devastation.

As a child of his age, Dostoevsky was infected with modern doubt and unbelief, while still preserving his strong religious temperament and his craving for that higher affirmation of man and life which can perhaps take place only on a religious plane In order to make such an affirmation reliable he needed the sanction of his reason, which however was much too modern, much too sceptical to provide it. His rational and his irrational

truths were thus in a continuous conflict, which he eventually tried to resolve by siding with the irrational religious truth as against mere 'science and reason.' But the path on which he arrived at such a solution first led him through the mazes of Satanic negation, wherein he learned many a disturbing secret about man. Nor was he ignorant of those tense states of mind, often accompanied by the extremes of misery, pain and degradation, where all masks are taken off and where camouflage of any sort is impossible. His sharpened psychological sense reached the verge of clairvoyance, but the knowledge it brought to him was itself a heavy burden. For what he learned through it was pity - that cruel pity which, in his case, grew at the expense of respect for empirical man and mankind. One of the most powerful expressions of pity which cannot respect is his *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* in *The Brothers Karamazov.* But a few years earlier he wrote his sketch *Bub-boo* (in Russian *Bobok),* in which his spitefully pessimistic view of man, and particularly of the species belonging to the 'smart set,' was not tempered even by pity.

Bub-boo appeared originally in 1873 in Dostoevsky's *Diary of an Author,* which at the time was a regular feature of the periodical *The Citizen (Grazhdanin).* Brief though it is, it yet provides certain clues to Dostoevsky's ruthless genius. To begin with, the story is a phantasy or delusion of a diseased mind verging on madness, and therefore susceptible to things and ideas which are inaccessible to a normal human being. Secondly, it is full of what might be called metaphysical disgust with the shallowness, meanness and vulgarity of man. And thirdly, it abounds in that spiritual *horror vacui,* the fear of which drove Dostoevsky to a religious view of life, no matter whether 'science and reason' approved of it or not. The fact that he presents it in the form of a grotesque joke (deliberately flavoured with the mannerisms of a second-rate reporter) makes this story about human baseness, persisting even through death and in the face of eternity, all the more cruel. On perusing it, one is reminded of the terrible verdict passed by the Grand Inquisitor on the humans: 'If there were anything in the other world, it certainly would not be for such as they.' *Bub-boo* can serve as an additional proof of the inner turmoil Dostoevsky

had to pass through before he finally arrived at the Christian 'Hosannah.'

VI

Inner struggle, but of a different kind, is recorded also in the work of Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). Whereas in Dostoevsky the spirit itself was divided in its irreconcilable antitheses, Tolstoy's dilemma consisted in an amplified antagonism between the physical and the moral man. On the physical plane, Tolstoy was one of the most full-blooded and passionate of mortals, capable of enjoying life spontaneously, that is, apart from and prior to any meaning of life. But the very excess of his vitality made him turn, step by step, against life-in his quest for a meaning of life. What undermined his joy in existence was above all his unusually acute awareness of the fact of death as the inevitable end of everything. How indeed could one abandon oneself to a happy existence with death waiting round the corner as a negation of it, and what a negation! Joy and happiness under such conditions would resemble the revel of a condemned man who at any moment is likely to be snatched up and led away to a senseless execution. Tolstoy's excessive fear of death thus became only an expression of his excessive love of life, which he was now anxious to justify in the very teeth of annihilation

It was at this point that he began to look round for a 'meaning' strong enough to stave off the bogy of death. As is known, he found it through a peculiar kind of reasoning which may briefly be summed up as follows: one suffers from the fear of death principally because death threatens to destroy the individual self together with everything which the self enjoys and stands for; but if so, why should one not brave death by giving up one's own self while still alive? In short, one ought to become selfless to the extent of forgetting all about one's personal separateness, and then death itself will lose its sting. One ought to merge lovingly with the pre-individual collective group-soul and go back to the primitives, 'back to Nature,' as to a kind of Nirvana in which, together with the suppression of one's personality, the disappearance of one's fears and torments is guaranteed.. This modified Rousseauism - Rousseau filtered through Buddha-was further complicated by Tolstoy's own

brand of Christianity, which reduced the whole of Christ's teaching to a few suitably corrected moral precepts only, taken from the Sermon on the Mount.

Unfortunately, this new 'meaning of life,' preached by Tolstoy with such vehemence, turned against everything which is understood as life in civilised conditions. We may or may not agree with it; but whatever the attitude, there is no denying that the inner struggle which eventually led to Tolstoy's open 'conversion' was a matter of sincere quest and distress. Besides, the whole of it is poignantly recorded in Tolstoy's *Confession* (1879), which marks his final breach with the 'old Adam/ with civilisation, and to some extent even with his own art. What the early stage of this long struggle was like can be gauged from his story *Three Deaths* (1858), included in the present volume. But let us listen to what he himself has to say about the subject tackled in the story. This is what he wrote in a letter to his friend and relative, Countess Alexandra Tolstoy, on May 1st, 1858:

'My idea was this: three beings die-a lady, a peasant, a tree. The worldly lady is pitiable and wretched, since she has lived surrounded by lies and dies while still surrounded by them. Christianity as she understands it does not solve the problem of life and death for her. Why should she die at all, since she wants to live? Her mind and her imagination make her believe in the promised life beyond, yet her entire being protests, because she knows no solace (except that offered by her false Christianity) Hence she is wretched and pitiable. The peasant dies in peace, and he does so precisely because he is not a Christian. He keeps by habit to Christian observances, yet his religion is a different one; it is the religion of Nature amidst which he lives. With his own hands he fells the trees, mows, slaughters and breeds sheep as naturally as children are born and old men die; he knows this law of nature and has not turned away from it as the lady has done; he sees nature face to face. "An animal," you will say, and why not? Is there anything wrong with it? An animal represents beauty, and happiness, and harmony with the whole universe, and not discord with it like the lady. The tree dies calmly in freedom and beauty, because it knows no falsity, no distortions, no fears and regrets. Such is my idea, of

which, I am sure, you will not approve. But it would be futile to argue: it is in your soul and also in mine.'

This litter explains Tolstoy's basic attitude-his hostility to personally or even personal consciousness - so well that nothing need be added. But *Three Deaths* can shed some light even upon the technique of his writings: his frequent use of juxtaposition or parallelism of contrasts, illustrating as it were the 'idea' of the story and leaving the conclusion (of a didactic or moral kind) to the reader himself. We find it in *The Two Hussars, Family Happiness, Anna Karenina,* etc. After his conversion, Tolstoy became a direct, that is, a militant moralist and puritan. But how the conversion came about can be learned from his *Diary of a Madman* (Tolstoy borrowed the title from a well-known story by Gogol), written in 1884 and forming a valuable literary counterpart to his *Confession.* It also makes it clear why, after conversion, Tolstoy looked upon the whole of life only in terms of his 'new truth,' so conspicuous in *The Death of Ivan llyich, Master and Man, The Power of Darkness,* and above all in his last novel, *Resurrection*

VII

Another truly Russian phenomenon in literature was Vsevolod Garshin (1855-88). His vivid and nervously agitated story, *The Artists* (1879), is somewhat reminiscent of Tolstoy's own dilemma with regard to art and life, although in Garshin there was no split between the moral and the artistic conscience. Profound and very acute moral sensitiveness (which eventually drove him to suicide) seems to have been the chief inspiration of Garshin's talent, which found in the *nouvelle* its literary medium. As a past master in this particular medium, he became a link between Turgenev and Chekhov - with this difference, that all his writings are invariably filled with his own moral pathos distilled into art. His very first story, *Four Days,* written under the personal impressions of the Russo-Turkish war in 1876, was the work of a man morally much too sensitive to endure the horrors described. So the art itself with which he described them became a weapon of anti-militarist propaganda. But there were plenty of other evils Garshin fought against,

using as **his** favourite form that of diaries, letters, or confessions, in which the tension of thought went hand-in-hand with his own emotional glow. How the two worked together can be seen in *The Artists,* which, apart from being a poignant story, is also a ruthless condemnation of modern capitalism.

If Garshin was typical of the intelligentsia of the 'seventies, with their 'sickly conscience' and their 'going to the people,' Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) was equally representative of the 'eighties which in Russia at any rate was a decade of the blind-alley. Hence the atmosphere of nostalgia and despondence permeating most of his work. In Chekhov the old monumental realism began to disintegrate, but (as has often been pointed out) it did so in a manner which itself constituted a strangely original art of its own. Both in his impressionism and his preference for the minor key, Chekhov is an heir of Turgenev On the other hand, the flair for petty everyday trifles was as strong in him as it had been in Gogol; only he used it in such a way as to build up his peculiar 'Chekhovian' atmosphere - with the suggestion of a muffled tragedy in the background. A remarkable feature of Chekhov's stories is that they are based not on plots in the old sense, but on an accumulation of trifles, on small incidents taken straight from life and developed according to the logic of life (if there is any logic in life at all). Cemented as it were by Chekhov's 'atmosphere' as well as his elusive undertone, they often reach a pathos and a kind of symbolic significance which are all the more overwhelming because of the author's deliberate reserve and understatement In *Heartache* (1886), for example, which is one of his finest works, we have instead of a plot only an incident and a mood, a state of mind. Having lost his son, an old cabby longs to relieve his grief by trying to recount it to each of his fares in turn, but in vain. As his customers have neither time nor inclination to listen, the cabby at last tells the whole story to his patient old horse. This is all. But think of the suffering and the human isolation masked by such an apparently comic finale!

His longer story, *The Black Monk* (1894), is in spite of Chekhov's usual method, more complex and somewhat provocative in its theme. Here, too, as in Maupassant's *Le Horla,* an irrational other-world agent seems to interfere with human fate.

But whereas in *Le Horla* we witness the **unmitigated horror of** a man who knows that he is at the mercy of some mysterious sub-human force, the apparition in *The Black Monk* causes in the slightly 'abnormal' savant Kovrin an exalted inner state which is responsible for an expansion of all his creative forces. Ironically enough, as soon as he has been doctored, cured and brought back to normal, those states of mental exaltation vanish and he becomes a commonplace mediocrity - a change which he bitterly resents and avenges on those who have, with such loving care, nursed him back to health. With the disappearance of the Black Monk (the projection of his own higher self) the whole of his life goes to pieces. When, after a couple of futile and empty years, he is dying, a broken man, in the Crimea, he has a last glimpse of the Monk, this time reproaching him for his failure. It is another tale of frustration rather than of pessimism. For underneath it one can still feel Chekhov's hesitant faith in life at a time when Russia offered very few opportunities for any faith at all.

VIII

There could hardly be a greater contrast than that between Chekhov and Maxim Gorky (1868-1936). Born into a poor artisan's family, Gorky, whose real name was Alexey Peshkov, had save for the hard school of life no education. In search of work, he roamed as an ordinary tramp all over Russia, saw all sorts of people and conditions, and tried his luck at one job after another until, at the beginning of the 'nineties, he discovered that literature was his true calling. But the literature he set out to serve was of a new type. So were his readers.

The 'nineties in Russia were in many respects a period of awakening from the torpor of the previous decade. While on the top there was a modernist orientation in literature (with sonorous highbrow slogans), at the bottom of the social ladder the working masses, exploited by a rapidly growing Russian industry, were becoming class-conscious and began to organise themselves for the struggles that lay ahead. It was during this process that Gorky's voice suddenly resounded like a clarion, calling to a new courage and faith in life. His favourite heroes

were the outcasts whose freedom from social or any other ties gave them a pride and self-assertiveness of their own Some of his early characters sound like Nietscheans from the gutter. These he may have over-idealised, or used as mouthpieces for his own philosophy of life, yet his very rhetoric served as a stimulus and a tonic. Having embraced the cause of the working class, Gorky soon became its literary spokesman. In his novels he depicted the struggle of the workers *(The Mother)* as well as the disintegrating bourgeois Russia, especially in the provinces, which he knew so well The artistic side of his work often suffered from too much pamphleteering and propaganda, but this applies less to his autobiographic books, *My Childhood, In the World, My Universities,* which are among his lasting achievements. The same can be said of a number of his stories, among which *Twenty Six Men and a Girl* ranks very high.

Written in 1899, this story shows what Gorky is like at his best. Here, too, he deals with outcasts and their appropriate background. Yet the twenty-six wage-slavers of the lowest category have preserved, amidst all the gloom and squalor of their existence, a smouldering desire for decency and the beauty of life - a desire which is only too ready to be kindled at the first opportunity. This is actually provided by a pretty, innocent girl who calls each morning at their 'bakery' for a gift of pretzels. The pretzels gradually become a token of their love and devotion, since for all the twenty-six men she represents perhaps the only ideal of purity and beauty that has come into their lives. Hence their silent and disinterested worship. Hence also their brutal resentment, once they have found out that she had failed to pass the test and to live up to their high opinion of her virtue. The pathos of this tragedy of the 'nether depths' is increased by the bluntly rugged manner in -which the story is told.

While from the 'nineties onwards all sorts of Russian aesthetes, 'decadents' and symbolists kept indulging in art for art's sake, Gorky and the group of writers around him insisted that art should be socially significant and integrated with life. In this tendency Gorky persevered to the end. So much so that after the revolution of 1917 he formed as it were a bridge between the old and the new, that is, the post-revolutionary

literature, and successfully resisted the fanatics of a mere proletarian culture. Subsequently he inaugurated the present-day socialist realism, without destroying or even impairing the cultural continuity of Russia. It was he above all who showed a right understanding for such continuity, the fruits of which are now being gathered by the rapidly developing literature of the Soviet Union

THE POSTMASTER

ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

Translated by Walter Morison

Official on the lowest grade of pay,
And yet a very tyrant in his way.

Derzhavin

WHO IS THERE has never cursed the station-masters on our post-roads, never exchanged angry words with them? Who in a moment of anger has not demanded the ill-omened book, to inscribe in it his fruitless complaints of unfair treatment, rudeness and negligence? Who does not account them outcasts of the human race, as debased as the now defunct Government scribes, or at least the bandits of the Murom forests? But let us be just; let us endeavour to put ourselves in their place; then, perhaps, we shall begin to judge them more indulgently. What is a postmaster? A very martyr of the fourteenth grade of

officials, only just protected by his rank from blows, and then not always: I put it to the conscience of my readers. What are the duties of this 'dictator,' as Prince Vyazemsky facetiously calls him? Are they not equivalent to a term in a convict-prison? Rest neither by day nor by night. All the vexation accumulated during a tedious journey is worked off by the traveller on the postmaster. Is the weather unbearable, the road appalling, the driver a stubborn ass; are the horses broken-down wrecks? -for everything the postmaster is to blame. The moment he enters the postmaster's wretched dwelling, the passing traveller looks upon him as an enemy; the postmaster is lucky if he can soon succeed in banishing his uninvited guest; but if there should happen to be no horses? . . . Heavens! what oaths, what threats are showered upon his head! In rain and slush he is forced to run about the yard; in howling storm and biting frost he goes out into the entrance-passage to rest for a moment from the shouts and shoves of his irate caller. Up drives a general; the trembling postmaster hands over to him the last two teams of horses, including those reserved for the Government courier. The general drives off without a word of thanks. Five minutes later the tinkle of little bells is heard, and the courier throws on the table his order for fresh horses! ... If we look carefully into all this, our hearts will fill not with indignation, but with genuine sympathy. A few words more. Over a period of twenty years I travelled Russia from one end to the other; I am acquainted with nearly all the post-roads; several generations of drivers are familiar to me; there are few postmasters I do not know by sight, with few of them have I had no dealings; I hope shortly to publish my curious collection of travel-notes; for the moment I will merely say that postmasters as a body have been presented to the public view in the falsest of lights. These so bitterly calumniated officials are as a rule peaceable folk, obliging by nature, sociable, modest in their demands for recognition and not too avid of gain. From their conversation, which the gentlemen passing through are wrong to disregard, much that is interesting and edifying may be gathered. As for myself, I mu'st admit that I prefer what they say to the prating of some official of the sixth class travelling on Government business.

It may easily be guessed that I number acquaintances among

the honourable body of postmasters. Indeed, the memory of one of them is very dear to me. Circumstances once brought us together, and it is his story I should now like to tell my amiable readers.

In the month of May of the year 1816 I chanced to be passing through the Government of——, along a post-road that has now fallen into disuse. My rank was very low; I was travelling by post-chaise and paying for two horses. In consequence the postmasters did not stand on ceremony with me, and not infrequently I had to obtain with a struggle what I considered my due. Being young and hot-headed, I felt indignant at the baseness and pusillanimity of the postmaster when the latter harnessed my horses to the carriage of a gentleman of higher rank. It took me equally long to grow accustomed to have the discerning menial pass me over at the Governor's table. Now the one and the other seem to me in the nature of things. And indeed, what would become of us if, instead of the universally satisfying rule 'Let rank be respected,' another rule were to be introduced: 'Let intelligence be respected,' for instance? What disputes would arise! and how would the servants know whom to serve first? But I must turn to my story.

The day was hot. At three versts from the station of——spots of rain began to fall, and a minute later the shower had drernched me to the skin. When I reached the station my first care was to change my clothes as quickly as possible, my second to order some tea. 'Hey, Dunya!l' cried the postmaster. Tut on the samovar, and fetch some cream.' At these words a girl of about fourteen emerged from behind the partition and ran out into the entrance-passage. I was struck by her beauty. 'Was that your daughter?' I asked the postmaster. 'My daughter, sir,' he answered, with a look of pride; 'and such a clever girl, such a sharp little thing: every inch her poor mother.' He now set about copying out my pass, and I embarked on an examination of the pictures adorning the walls of his humble but spotless dwelling. They told the story of the Prodigal Son: in the first, a worthy old man in a nightcap and dressing-gown is bidding farewell to his restless offspring, who is only too anxious to receive his father's blessing and a bag of money. The second depicted in vivid hues the young man's dissolute life: he is sitting

at a table surrounded by false friends and shameless women. The next picture showed the young man, now ruined, wearing sackcloth and with a three-cornered hat on his head, feeding the swine and sharing their dinner; his face expresses profound sorrow and repentance. The last picture represented his home-coming: the worthy old man, wearing the same dressing-gown and nightcap as before, is running out to meet him; the Prodigal Son is on his knees; in the background the cook is killing the fatted calf, while the elder brother is asking the servants the reason for all the rejoicing. Beneath each picture I read verses in German well suited to the subject. All this remains in my memory to this day, like the pots of balsam and the bed with its variegated hangings and the other objects that then surrounded me. In my mind's eye I can still see the postmaster, a man of about fifty, fresh-complexioned and vigorous, in his long green coat with three medals on faded ribbons.

I had scarcely settled with my old driver when Dunya returned bearing the samovar. The little coquette observed with her second glance the impression she had made on me; she dropped her big blue eyes; I began to talk to the girl; her answers, totally free from shyness, revealed a young person who had seen a thing or two. I offered her father a glass of punch; to Dunya I gave a cup of tea, and the three of us were soon chatting away as though we had known one another for years.

The horses had long been harnessed, and still I felt disinclined to part with the postmaster and his daughter. Finally I said good-bye; the man wished me a pleasant journey, and his daughter saw me to my carriage. In the entrance-passage I halted and asked permission to kiss her; Dunya consented. . . . I can count many a kiss

Since the day when first the trick I mastered,

but not one of them left in me so lasting and pleasant a memory.

Several years passed, and circumstances once more took me along the same post-road, to the same places. I remembered the postmaster's daughter, and felt glad at the prospect of seeing her again. 'But,' I thought, 'the postmaster may have been replaced, and Dunya is probably a married woman by now.' The idea that one or the other might have died also entered my mind, and I drew near to the station of—filled with a gloomy

presentiment. The horses drew up at the post-house. On entering the room I at once recognised the pictures portraying the story of the Prodigal Son; the table and the bed stood in their former places, but there were no longer flowers in the windows, and everything around spoke of decay and neglect. The postmaster was asleep under a sheepskin coat; he woke at my entrance, and rose from his bench.... It was indeed Simeon Vyrin; but how old he had grown! While he was preparing to copy out my pass I gazed at his grey hairs, the deep wrinkles in his long-unshaven face, his bowed back - and could not but feel amazed that three or four years should have sufficed to turn a vigorous man into this aged wreck. 'Do your recognise me?' I asked. 'We are old acquaintances.' - 'No doubt,' replied the man morosely; 'this is a busy road; many travellers pass through.'-'Is your daughter well?' I went on. The old man frowned. 'God knows,' he answered. - 'Married, I suppose?' The old man pretended he had not heard my question, and went on mumbling my pass to himself. I cut short my queries, and ordered some tea. Curiosity was beginning to prick me, and I hoped that a drop of punch would loosen my old friend's tongue.

I was not mistaken. The old man did not decline the glass I offered him, and I observed that the rum dispersed his moroseness. At the second glass he grew loquacious; he remembered me, or said he did, and I heard from him a story that interested and moved me deeply.

'So you knew my Dunya?' he began. 'And who did not? Ah, Dunya, Dunya! What a girl she was! Whoever happened to pass through could not but praise her, and no one had a hard word for her. The ladies used to give her presents, this one a handkerchief, that one some ear-rings. The gentlemen passing through stopped on purpose, pretending they wanted a bit of dinner or supper, but really just so as to look at her the longer. However angry a traveller might be, he would calm down at the sight of her and speak kindly to me. Just think, sir: the very couriers and dispatch-riders would talk to her for half-an-hour on end! The whole house rested on her shoulders; what was to be tidied up, what was to be prepared, she saw to it all. And I, old fool that I was, couldn't admire her enough, couldn't rejoice in her enough! Didn't I love her, my Dunya? didn't I cherish

my child? wasn't she happy with me? Well, you can't escape your fate; what is destined will come to pass.'

Here he began to tell me the details of his -misfortune. One winter evening three years before, when the postmaster was ruling lines in a new day-book and his daughter was sewing herself a frock behind the partition, a carriage drew up and a traveller in a Circassian cap, wearing a military greatcoat and with a muffler round his neck, came into the room and demanded horses. All the horses were out on the road. On hearing this, the traveller was about to raise his voice and his riding-crop; but Dunya, accustomed to such scenes, ran out from behind the partition and amiably inquired whether the traveller wouldn't like something to eat. Dunya's appearance had its usual effect. The traveller's anger subsided; he consented to wait for horses, and ordered some supper. When he had taken off his wet, shaggy cap, unwound his muffler and tugged off his greatcoat, he proved to be a young hussar with a neat figure and a little black moustache. He settled down in a chair and began to talk cheerfully to the postmaster and his daughter. Supper was served. Meanwhile horses had come in, and the postmaster ordered them, without being fed, to be harnessed at once to the traveller's carriage; but on his return from the yard he found the young man lying almost senseless on a bench: he had been taken ill, his head was splitting, he couldn't possibly continue his journey. . . . What was to be done? The postmaster gave up his bed to him, and it was settled that if the sick man were not better by the morning they would send to S. for a doctor.

Next day the hussar was worse. His servant rode into town on horseback to fetch the doctor. Dunya bound his head in a kerchief steeped in vinegar, and sat by his bed with her sewing. While the postmaster was there the sick man groaned and uttered hardly a word; however, he drank two cups of coffee and, groaning, ordered some lunch. Dunya did not leave his side. He was constantly asking for a drink, and Dunya would take him a jug of lemonade she had herself prepared. The sick man would moisten his lips, and each time he gave back the jug he would press Dunya's hand with his feeble fingers to show his gratitude. At lunch-time the doctor arrived. He took the

patient's pulse, spoke to him in German, and declared in Russian that all the sick man needed was peace and quiet, and that in a couple of days he would be fit enough to continue his journey. The hussar handed him the generous sum of twenty-five roubles for his pains, and asked him to lunch; the doctor accepted the invitation; the two of them ate with a good appetite, split a bottle of wine, and parted very pleased with one another.

Another day passed, and the hussar quite recovered. He was extraordinarily cheerful, constantly joked with the postmaster and his daughter, whistled tunes, chatted with the travellers, copied out their passes; the worthy postmaster grew so fond of him that on the third morning he felt quite sorry to part with his charming guest. It was Sunday, and Dunya was getting ready to go to church. The hussar's carriage was brought round. He said good-bye to the postmaster, rewarding him generously for his stay; bade adieu to Dunya, and offered to drive her as far as the church, which was situated at the end of the village. Dunya hesitated. . . . 'What are you afraid of?' asked her father. 'The gentleman is not a wolf; he won't eat you up. Have a ride to the church.' Dunya sat in the carriage next to the hussar, the servant jumped up on the box, the driver whistled, and the horses galloped off.

The poor postmaster could simply not understand how he had allowed his Dunya to drive off with the hussar; how he could have been so blind, where his wits had been wandering. Ere half-an-hour had passed he was beginning to grow anxious, and uneasiness at length overcame him to such a degree that he could not refrain from making his way to the church. As he drew near he saw that the congregation was already dispersing; but Dunya was neither outside the church nor in the porch. He hastened inside: the priest was leaving the altar; the sacristan was putting out the candles; two old women were still praying in a corner; but of Dunya not a sign. Mastering his reluctance, the postmaster asked the sacristan whether his daughter had been at the service. The sacristan replied that she hadn't. The postmaster returned home quite beside himself. One hope remained: that Dunya, with the thoughtlessness characteristic of her years, had perhaps decided to drive on to the next station,

where her godmother lived. Racked by anxiety, he awaited the return of the carriage in which he had let her go. It seemed the driver would never come back. At last, towards evening, he appeared, alone and drunk, with the fatal news that Dunya had driven on from the next station with the hussar.

The old man was unable to bear his misfortune: straightway he took to the bed that the day before had held the young deceiver. Reviewing all the circumstances, he divined that the hussar's illness had been simulated. The poor fellow fell sick of a high fever; he was conveyed to S., and his place was temporarily taken by another. The same doctor as had attended the hussar was called to his bedside. He assured the postmaster that the young man had been perfectly well and that he had suspected his evil intention at the time, but had kept silent in fear of the hussar's riding-crop. Whether the German was telling the truth or whether he merely wished to show off his perspicacity, what he said in no way comforted the poor man. Scarcely recovered from his illness, he obtained from the postmaster at S. two months' leave of absence, and without telling anyone of his intention set off on foot in search of his daughter. From his record of the hussar's pass he knew that Captain Minsky had been travelling from Smolensk to St. Petersburg. The fellow who had driven him reported that the whole of the way Dunya had been weeping, although, as it appeared, she had gone of her own free will. 'Maybe,' thought the postmaster, 'I shall be able to bring my lost lamb home.' With this thought he arrived in St. Petersburg, put up at the Izmaylovsky barracks, in the house of a retired non-commissioned officer with whom he had served in the army, and began his search. Soon he learnt that Captain Minsky was in St. Petersburg and was staying at the Demuth Hotel. The postmaster resolved to appear there before him.

Early in the morning he stepped into the Captain's antichamber, and asked that His Honour should be informed that an old soldier wished to see him. The batman, who was polishing a boot on a tree, declared that his master was sleeping and never saw anyone before eleven o'clock. The postmaster went away and returned at the designated hour. Minsky himself came out to meet him, in a dressing-gown and with a red smoking-

cap on his head. 'What do you want, fellow?' he asked. The old man's heart seethed, the tears sprang to his eyes, and all he could say in a trembling voice was: 'Your Honour! ... in God's name have the kindness to . . .' Minsky cast a rapid glance at him, flushed, took him by the hand, led him into his study and closed the door behind him. Tour HonourI' went on the old man. 'What has fallen from the waggon is lost and gone; at least give me back my poor Dunya. You have had your pleasure of the girl; do not wantonly destroy her!' - 'It's no good crying over spilt milk,' said the young man, greatly embarrassed. 'I have wronged you and I must ask your pardon; but do not think for a minute that I could give Dunya up: she shall be happy, I give you my word. Why should she return to you? She loves me; she has lost touch with her former circumstances. Neither she nor you would ever forget what has happened.' Then, slipping something into the old man's sleeve, he opened the door, and the postmaster found himself, he didn't know how, once more in the street.

For a long time he stood motionless; then he caught sight in his cuff of a roll of paper: he pulled it out, unfolded a few crumpled fifty-rouble bills. The tears again sprang to his eyes - tears of indignation! He crushed the notes into a ball, hurled them to the ground, trampled on them and went his way. . . . A little further along he stopped, thought for a while . . . and retraced his steps . . . but the money was no longer there. A well-dressed young man, seeing him approach, hurried over to a cab, jumped in and cried: 'Drive off!' The postmaster did not try to catch him up. He resolved to return home and resume his post, but before doing so he felt he must see his poor Dunya for the last time. With this hope in his heart he returned two days later to Minsky's dwelling, but the batman told him crossly that his master would receive no one. bundled him out of the hall and slammed the door in his face. The postmaster stood there for a while and then went his way.

On the evening of the same day he was walking along Liteynaya Street after attending service at the Church of All the Afflicted. Suddenly a smart carriage dashed past him, and in it he recognised Minsky. The carriage drew up at the entrance to a three-storied house and the hussar ran up the steps. A happy

thought flashed through the postmaster's mind. He turned back, and drawing level with the driver: 'Whose horse is this, brother?' he asked; 'doesn't it belong to Captain Minsky?' - 'That's right,' replied the driver; 'but what's it to do with you?' -'It's like this: your master ordered me to take a note to his Dunya, and I've gone and forgotten where she lives.' - 'Why, right here, on the second floor. But you're late with your note, brother; he's up there with her himself.' - 'No matter,' replied the postmaster; 'thanks for mentioning it, but I must do what I was told.' And with these words he entered the house and mounted the stairs.

The door was closed; he rang. A few seconds passed in painful expectancy. A key grated in the lock, and the door opened. 'Does Avdotya Simeonovna live here?' he asked. - 'She does,' replied the young servant-maid; 'what do you want of her?' Without replying, the postmaster walked in. 'Stop, stop!' the girl cried after him; 'Avdotya Someonovna has visitors!'

But paying no attention the postmaster walked on. The first two rooms were in darkness, but there was a light in the third. He approached the open doorway, and halted. In the beautifully appointed room Minsky sat lost in thought. Dunya, dressed in the height of fashion, was perched on the arm of his chair, like a lady in a side-saddle. She was looking tenderly at Minsky as she wound his black curls on her gleaming fingers. Poor postmaster! Never had his daughter seemed to him so beautiful; he could not but admire her. 'Who is it?' she asked, not raising her head. He said nothing. Receiving no reply, Dunya looked up . . . and with a cry collapsed on the carpet. The startled Minsky rushed to pick her up; then, seeing the old man in the doorway, he left Dunya and approached him, trembling with rage.

'What do you want?' he said, grinding his teeth. 'Why do you keep creeping around behind me like a bandit? D'you want to cut my throat? Get out!' And seizing the old man's coat-collar in his powerful fist he pushed him out on to the staircase.

The old man returned to his lodgings. His friend advised him to lay a complaint; but the postmaster thought for a while, waved his hand in despair, and resolved to abandon the struggle. Two days later he left St. Petersburg and returned to his

station, where he resumed his duties.

'This is the third year,' he concluded, 'that I've been living without Dunya, and never a word from her or about her Whether she's alive or dead, God only knows. All kinds of things happen. She's not the first and she won't be the last to be seduced by a passing scoundrel, kept for a while, and then cast aside. There are lots of the sort in St. Petersburg, the young fools; to-day in satin and velvet, and to-morrow you'll see them sweeping the streets with the tavern-scum. If you stop to think that perhaps Dunya too may end up that way, you can't help sinning, and wish she were dead . . .'

This was the tale I heard from my friend the old postmaster, a tale more than once interrupted by tears which he picturesquely dried with the tail of his coat, like the faithful Terentyich in Dmitnev's charming ballad. These tears were provoked in part by the punch, of which he swallowed five glasses during the course of his narrative, but however that might be, they touched me deeply. Long after I had left him I could not forget the old postmaster, for a long time I thought about poor Dunya. . . .

When I was passing through the town of———not long ago, I remembered my friend; I learnt that the station which had been in his charge was now abolished, but to my question whether the old postmaster was still alive no one could give a satisfactory reply I resolved to \isit the familiar scene, hired some horses, anid set out for the village of N

It was autumn. Little gray clouds covered the sky; a cold wind blew from the stubble-fields, snatching red and yellow leaves from the trees it encountered. I reached the village as the sun was setting, and stopped at the post-house. Out into the entrance-passage where once Dunya had kissed me came a fat peasant-woman, who replied to my questions by saving that the old postmaster had died about a year before, that a brewer had moved into his house, and that she was the brewer's wife. I began to regret my pointless journey and the seven roubles I had spent in vain.

'What did he die of?' I asked the brewer's wife.

'Of drink, sir,' she replied.

'And where is he buried?'

'Beyond the village bounds, next to his wife.'

'Could someone take me to his grave?'

'Why, of course. Hey, Vanka! that's enough teasing the cat! Take the gentleman to the cemetery and point him out the postmaster's grave.'

At these words a ragged boy, red-haired and blind in one eye, ran from the house and conducted me out of the village.

"Did you know the postmaster?' I asked him as we walked.

'Of course I did! He taught me to cut reed-pipes, God rest his soul! He'd be coming from the inn and we would call after him: "Grandad, grandad, give us some nuts!" and he would give us nuts too. He used to play around with us all the time.'

'And do travellers still speak of him?'

'Why, there aren't many travellers these days; the assessor passes through sometimes, but he has no time for dead 'uns. This summer, though, a lady did come this way; and she certainly asked about the old postmaster, and even went to visit his grave.'

'What sort of a lady was she?' I asked, curious.

'She was a beautiful lady,' replied the lad; 'she drove in a carriage and six, with three little boys and a nanny, and a black pug-dog, and when she was told that the old postmaster was dead she burst out crying and said to the children: "Sit quietly while I go to the cemetery." I was going to offer to take her there, but the lady said: "I know the way myself." And she gave me five copecks in silver . . . such a kind lady she was!'

We reached the cemetery, a bare plot of ground, unfenced and dotted with wooden crosses, and shaded by not a single tree. Never in my life had I seen so desolate a graveyard.

'Here is the old postmaster's grave,' said the boy, jumping on to a heap of sand from which a black cross with a brass image protruded.

'This is where the lady came?' I asked.

'Here, sir,' replied Vanka; 'I was watching her from a distance. She lay down here, and lay for a long time. Then she went back to the village, called for the priest and gave him some money, and drove off; but to me she gave five copecks in silver. . . . She was a lovely lady!'

I too gave the lad five copecks, and I no longer regretted my

journey or the seven roubles I had spent.

Sept. 14, 1830.

TAMAN

MICHAEL LERMONTOV

Translated by E. M. Walton

OF ALL THE wretched little coastal towns in Russia none is quite as bad as Taman. I was nearly starved to death there, to say nothing of narrowly escaping being drowned M) post-chaise, drawn by three tired horses, brought me there late one night. The coachman pulled up at the gates of one of the first houses we came to-the one and only stone building in the place. The sentry, a Black Sea Cossack, apparently roused from his slumbers by the sound of horse-bells, shouted wildly: 'Who goes there?' A policeman and a police sergeant appeared on the scene. I explained that I was an army officer travelling to rejoin my unit on active service in the Caucasus, and that I was entitled to a free billet. We then drove on again, the policeman acting as guide, and visited house after house, only to find that

there was no spare room anywhere. It was cold. I had not slept for three nights and felt worn out. My annoyance grew.

'Come on, you rascal,' I cried. 'Take me somewhere, to the devil if need be, but at least somewhere where I can settle down.'

'There is a place of sorts,' said the policeman, scratching his head, 'but Your Honour won't like it; it's kind of dirty.'

The true meaning of his last word escaped me at the time. I told him to go ahead. After meandering through muddy side streets, where all I saw to right and left of me was ramshackle walls and fences, we at last reached a small hut right by the sea.

A full moon shone upon the thatched roof and white walls of my new abode. It stood in a yard surrounded by a cobble-stone wall, and in the same yard was another hovel, smaller and more dilapidated. The hut was perched right on the edge of a cliff. Beyond was a steep drop to the sea. From below rose the never-ceasing roar of the waves The moon looked down on the dark expanse of turbulent waters, over which she alone holds sway, and by her light I could see two ships at sea, their dark rigging like cobwebs drawn across the pale horizon. 'There are ships in the harbour,' I thought to myself. 'To-morrow I shall sail for Gelendjik.'

I had a Cossack travelling with me as batman. Telling him to bring in my luggage and to dismiss the coachman, I called for the landlord. There was no reply. I banged on the door. No one answered What could it mean? Suddenly a bo\ of fourteen or thereabouts appeared on the doorstep.

'Where is the landlord?'

'There is no landlord here,' he replied in Ukrainian.

'Do you mean there is no landlord here at all?'

'None at all.'

'And what about the landlady?'

'She's gone to town.'

'Who is going to unlock this place for me?' I exclaimed, but when I kicked the door it flew open and I was met by a whiff of damp air from inside. I struck a match and brought it close to the boy's face. I saw two blank, discoloured eyes. The boy was completely blind, and had obviously been so from birth. He stood stock still, while I studied his features.

I must confess I have a great prejudice against people who are blind, deformed, deaf, dumb, legless, armless, hunch-backed and so forth. I have noticed that there is some strange connection between a man's outward appearance and his soul: as if the loss of some limb or faculty implied the loss of some inner quality.

So there I stood gazing at the blind boy; but what is there to read in a face that has no eyes? I looked at him for quite a long time, genuine pity welling up in me against my will, till all of a sudden the ghost of a smile rippled across his thin lips. I don't know why, it gave me the most unpleasant feeling. A suspicion flashed through my mind that the boy was not as blind as he looked. I tried to persuade myself that wall eyes could not be feigned and that there could be no object in trying to do so anyhow, but my unpleasant impression persisted. What can one do about such things? I often find, myself swayed by preconceived notions and prejudices.

'Are you the landlady's son?' I asked him at last.

'No.'

'Who are you, then?'

'Just a poor orphan.'

'Has the landlady any children?'

'No; she had a daughter, but she's gone off across the sea with a Tartar.'

'Who is this Tartar?'

'How the devil should I know? Some Crimean-a boatman from Kertch.'

I went into the hut. Its only furniture was a table, two benches and a huge chest standing by the stove. There were no ikons on the wall - a bad sign. Gusts of cold sea air blew in through a broken window pane.

I took a wax candle from my portmanteau and, lighting it, began to settle in for the night. I stood my sword and rifle in a corner, laid my pistols on the table and spread my thick, warm cloak on one of the benches. My batman lay down on the other bench and ten minutes later was snoring loudly, but I could not sleep: the image of the boy with the blank eyes still haunted me in the darkness.

An hour or so went by. The moon shone through the window,

a beam playing on the bare, earthern floor of the hut. Suddenly a dark shadow flitted across the bright patch of light stretching obliquely across the room. I raised myself on my elbow and looked out of the window. Again a figure flitted past and vanished. It did not seem possible that this person, whoever it might be, could disappear down the steep slope behind the hut, but on the other hand there was nowhere else for it *to* go. I got up, put on my tunic, strapped on my dagger, and moving as quietly as I could crept out of the hut. Suddenly I saw the blind boy coming towards me. Holding my breath, I pressed close to the cobblestone wall as he passed by me with a sure and cautious tread. He carried a bundle under his arm. Turning towards the harbour, he began to descend a steep and narrow footpath. 'And in that day shall the deaf hear and the eyes of the blind shall see,' flashed through my mind, as I followed him at some distance, but keeping him well in sight.

Meanwhile the moon had draped itself in dark clouds and a thick mist rose from the sea. A lantern on the nearest ship was now barely visible through the haze. The white foam of the waves gleamed threateningly amidst the boulders on the beach. Scrambling down the steep slope with great difficulty, I could see the blind boy below pause for a moment and then turn to the right. He skirted the water's edge at such close quarters that it seemed to me that at any moment the waves would sweep him off his feet and carry him out to sea. It was quite obvious from the assurance with which he picked his way, stepping from stone to stone and avoiding gullies, that he was not making this journey for the first time. At last he halted and seemed to be listening for something. Then he sat down, laying his bundle on the ground. Under cover of a protruding rock I continued to observe his movements. A few moments passed. Then a white figure appeared from the opposite direction; she came towards the blind boy and sat down beside him. From time to time snatches of their conversation were carried to me by the wind.

'Well, blind boy/ said a woman's voice, 'there's a strong gale blowing. Yanko won't come.'

'Yanko isn't afraid of storms,' said the boy.

'But the fog is getting thicker,' continued the woman's voice sadly.

'It's easier to get past patrol-boats in the fog.'

'What if he's drowned I'

'And what if he is? When you go to church next Sunday you won't have a new ribbon to wear.'

Then there was silence. What surprised me greatly was that while the boy had spoken to me in the Ukrainian dialect he was now talking perfect Russian.

'There, you see I am right,' cried the boy, clapping his hands. 'Yanko is not afraid of the sea, or of gales, or fog, or coast-guards. Listen! That's not just the sound of water. I know I am right I That's the sound of Yanko's long oars.'

The woman sprang to her feet and peered into the distance anxiously.

'You are crazy, blind boy! I can't see anything '

I must confess that though I was straining my eyes to the utmost in the hopes of distinguishing something that might be a boat, I, too, saw nothing. Ten minutes or so went by. Then suddenly a black spot, now growing bigger, now smaller, appeared amidst the high waves Rising slowly to the crest of the waves, then plunging down rapidly, a boat was making for the shore. 'It must be a daring boatman who sets out on a twenty verst trip across the straits on a night like this, and there must be a very good reason to make such a risk worth while.' Such were my thoughts as with beating heart I watched the lonely little boat. But she dived like a duck, her oars flapped like wings and up she would bob from a watery chasm amidst the splash and spray of foam. At one time I felt sure that the boat would be dashed against the shore and smashed to bits, but she was skilfully headed off, and presently landed safe and sound in a small cove. A man of medium height, wearing a Tartar sheepskin cap, jumped out of the boat. He waved his arm and all three began to unload the boat. The cargo was so large that to this day I do not know how it failed to sink the boat. Slinging bundles across their backs, they then set off along the beach and were soon out of sight. I set off homewards, but I confess that I was upset by all the strange things I had seen and could hardly wait for the morning.

My batman was much surprised to find me fully dressed when he awoke. However, I told him nothing. For a little while I

gazed out of the window at the deep blue sky, covered here and there with feathery clouds, and admired the distant shore of the Crimea, a long purple strip culminating in a tall cliff with a white lighthouse at the top. Then I went to the Fanagoria Fortress to find out from the Commandant when I could sail for Gelendjik

But, alas, the Commandant could tell me nothing definite. All the ships in the harbour were either patrol-boats or private cargo-boats, which had not yet begun to load

'In three or four days,' said the commandant, 'the mail-boat may turn up, and then we shall see '

I returned home angry and depressed. My batman met me in the doorway, looking scared.

'It's a bad business, Your Honour,' he said.

'Yes, my good fellow, I replied 'God knows when we shall be able to leave this place/ My Cossack looked more frightened than ever and. leaning towards me, whispered: 'This is a bad place I met a sergeant, a Black Sea Cossack, to-day, who was in my detachment last year. When I told him where we were staying, he said there was some dirty business going on here, and that the people were a bad lot. And really, just look at that blind boy, he goes about everywhere alone: off to market, to buy bread, to fetch water . . . and everyone seems to think this is as it should be. . . '

' Well, what of it? What about our landlady? Has she turned up?'

'Yes, Your Honour, the old woman came back here with her daughter while you were out'

'With her daughter? But she hasn't got a daughter.'

'Well, goodness knows who she is if she isn't her daughter. But look, there is the old woman sitting in her hut now.'

I went into the hovel The stove had been well stoked, and dinner-quite a lavish meal for a poor household - was being cooked. To all my questions the old woman replied that she was deaf and could not hear. What was I to do with her? I turned to the blind boy who was crouching in front of the stove, putting dry twigs on the fire.

'Well, you blind little devil/ said I, tweaking his ear, 'tell me what you were up to last night with that bundle, and where you

went?'

The boy suddenly burst into tears, and sobbed lustily: 'Where did I go? I didn't go anywhere. A bundle? What kind of bundle?' He was again talking in Ukrainian. This time the old woman heard what was being said, and she began to mutter: 'Fancy imputing such things, and to a blind boy at that! Why treat him like that? What's he done to you?' I soon tired of this, and went out firmly resolved to get to the bottom of the mystery.

I drew my cloak closely around me and sat down on a large boulder near the wall, gazing into the distance. In front of me lay the sea, still rough from last night's gale. Its monotonous murmur, not unlike the murmur of a large city before it settles down to sleep, reminded me of days which can never return. My thoughts sped northward to bleak St. Petersburg. Disturbed by my memories, I lost all count of time. So an hour went by, or possibly more. . . Suddenly I thought I heard a song. Yes, it was a song: a woman with a youthful though not very powerful voice was singing. But where? I strained my ears. A melody reached me, true and clear, now slow and plaintive, now lively and gay. I looked around me. There was no one about. I listened intently. The sound came from somewhere above. I looked up. A girl wearing a striped frock, with long hair hanging loose down her back, was standing on the roof of my hut. She looked like a real mermaid. Shading her eyes from the sun with her hand, she was peering into the distance, now laughing merrily and talking to herself, now breaking into song. I still remember the words by heart:

Over the green waves,
Free as the air,
Their white sails gleaming.
The little boats fare

Amid all those barks
My little craft floats,
Tackleless, gearless,
My two-oared boat.

If the storm winds shall rage
All the boats there be

Will spread their white wings,
Speed over the sea.

I shall bow to the billows.
Whispering soft:
' Touch not, thou evil sea,
My little craft!

' Costly the merchandise
My little boat bears,
Into the dark of night
An outlaw steers *

Suddenly I realised that this was the same voice I had heard the night before. For a moment I was lost in thought. When I looked up again at the roof the girl was gone. Suddenly, singing something different and snapping her fingers, she sped past me into the hovel to the old woman. They began to argue. The old woman scolded, but the girl laughed without restraint. Then I saw my Undine skipping towards me again. When she drew abreast, she stood still and looked fixedly into my eyes, as if surprised to see me there. Then she turned away unconcernedly and walked quietly away towards the harbour. But the matter did not end there. All day long she was somewhere about near my hut, skipping about and singing. What a strange creature she was. But her face bore no signs of madness. On the contrary, the eyes that rested on me were alert and astute. What is more, they seemed to possess magnetic power, and every time our eyes met I saw in hers some air of expectancy. But, as soon as I tried to talk to her, away she would run, smiling craftily.

Decidedly I had never met a woman like her before. She was far from beautiful. What she did possess was breed. How important breed is for women and horses is a discovery we owe to the French. Breed shows in a woman's whole bearing, in her hands, in her feet. But particularly in the shape of her nose. A well-proportioned nose is much rarer in Russia than a dainty foot. My little singer did not look more than eighteen years old I was fascinated by the extraordinary suppleness of her body, by the indefinable way in which she, and she alone, held her head,

* Translated by Walter Morison.

by her long, fair hair, by the golden glow of her slightly sun burnt neck and shoulders, but particularly by her beautiful nose. It is true that I discerned something wild and suspicious in her sidelong glances and something uncertain in her smile, but so strong are my preconceived ideas that her well-proportioned nose made me lose my head. I felt that I had redis covered Goethe's Mignon, that whimsical creation of the German mind, and really there *was* some resemblance between them: the quick transition from great restlessness to perfect immobility, the enigmatic words, the tripping gait, the strange songs. . .

Late in the afternoon I stopped the girl in the doorway.

'Tell me, my beauty,' I said to her, 'what were you doing on the roof to-day?'

'I was looking to see where the wind came from.'

'Whatever for?'

'Happiness and wind conic from the same place/

'Were you hoping to invoke happiness by your singing?'

'Happiness and singing go well together.'

'But what if your song should bring you sorrow?'

'Well, what of it? When things do not change for the better, they change for the worse, and from the worse they can easily change again for the better.'

'Who taught you that song?'

'No one taught it me. I just sing when I feel like it. He who is intended to hear my song will hear it; and he for whom my song isn't meant will not understand it.'

'What is your name, mv little singer?'

'You should ask those who christened me '

'And who christened)ou?'

'How should I know! '

'What a secretive person you are! And yet I have found%ut something about you.' (I watched the expression on her face, but could not detect the slightest tremor, as though my words in no wise concerned her.) 'I know that you went to the beach last night.' Here I described to her, somewhat pompously, all that I had seen. If I had hoped to startle her, I was disappointed. She laughed heartily.

'You may have seen a great deal, but you don't know much,

and what you do know you must keep to yourself.'

'All that is very well, but suppose I decided to report everything to the Commandant?' said I, looking not only grave, but stern. She suddenly burst out singing and, jumping to her feet, sped away like a bird frightened out of a thicket. My last words had been a mistake; at the time I did not realise how very ill-advised they were, but later I had ample opportunity to regret them.

It was growing dark. I ordered my batman to put on the kettle and brew camp tea; lit a candle and sat at the table, puffing at my pipe. Just as I was finishing my second glass of tea the door creaked and I heard the faint rustle of a dress and light footsteps behind me. I started and looked round. It was she - my Undine. She sat down opposite me quietly, without saying a word, and raised her eyes to mine I don't know why, but her gaze seemed most wonderfully tender. It reminded me of glances that had dominated my life in the past. . . She seemed to be expecting some question, but I felt inexplicably ill at ease and remained silent. Her face was pale with suppressed emotion, her hand strayed aimlessly along the table and I noticed that it trembled slightly. Now her breast rose, now she seemed to be holding her breath. This comedy was beginning to pall, and I was just about to cut it short in the most prosaic way, that is by offering my visitor some tea, when suddenly she sprang towards me, threw her arms round my neck, and a moist, alluring kiss met my lips. I was dazed, my head swam With all the vigour of youthful passion I clasped her in my arms, but she slipped from my grasp like a snake, murmuring close to my ear: 'This evening, when everyone is asleep, come out on the beach,' and darted out of the room. In the porch she overturned the candle and the kettle which were standing on the floor. 'What a she-devil!' cried my batman, who had settled down on the straw and who had been looking forward to warming himself with the remains of the tea. Only then did I come to my senses.

Two hours later, when everything in the harbour was quiet, I woke my batman. 'If I should fire a pistol,' I said to him, 'run out on to the beach.' He opened his eyes wide with surprise, but replied mechanically: 'Yes, Your Honour!' I stuck my

pistol in my belt and went out. The girl was waiting for me at the edge of the cliff, very scantily clothed, a shawl wrapped round her lissome body.

'Follow me,' she said, taking my hand. We began the descent. It is a wonder I did not break my neck. When we reached the beach we turned to the right and took the same path along which I had followed the blind boy the night before. The moon had not yet risen. Two stars, like beacon lights, twinkled in the dark blue sky. The slow measured waves scarcely rocked a solitary boat that was lying by the shore. 'Let's get into the boat,' said my companion. I hesitated, for I am no lover of sentimental sea trips, but this was no time to retreat. She sprang into the boat and I followed. I had hardly time to realise what was happening before I noticed that the boat was drifting out to sea.

'What is the meaning of this?' I cried angrily.

'It means/ she said, drawing me down to the seat and winding her arms about me, 'it means that I love you.' Her cheek touched mine. I felt her hot breath on my face. Suddenly something fell into the water with a loud splash. My hand flew to my belt My pistol had gone. A terrible suspicion shot through me, the blood rushed to my head. I looked back. We were now well over a hundred yards from the shore, and I cannot swim. I wanted to push the girl away, but she clung to my clothes like a cat. and an unexpected jolt nearly sent me headlong into the water. The boat rocked, but I managed to regain my balance and we engaged in a fierce struggle. My fury lent me strength, but I soon learnt that when it came to agility I was no match for my opponent. 'What do you want?' I shouted, and crushed her small hands in mine till her joints cracked, but she did not cry out. The little snake knew how to bear pain.

'You have seen too much, and you will betray us/ she cried, as with a superhuman effort she brought me down on to the gunwale. We both hung out of the boat to our waists, her hair trailing in the water. It was a decisive moment. I pressed my knee against the bottom of the boat, seized her by the hair with one hand and by the throat with the other, and the next moment I had thrown her into the water.

By now it was quite dark; her head bobbed up once or twice amidst the foam, and then I saw her no more. . .

I found part of a broken oar in the boat and somehow, after prolonged and persistent effort, succeeded in bringing the boat into harbour. As I wended my way home, my eyes travelled involuntarily to the spot where the blind boy had waited for the boatman the previous night. The moon was now up, and it seemed to me that someone in white was sitting on the beach. Impelled by curiosity I crept nearer and crouched down in the grass at the top of the cliff. Craning my neck I was able to see clearly everything that was happening below. Without any surprise, I might even say with a certain amount of pleasure, I recognised my mermaid. She was wringing sea water out of her long hair; her wet chemise outlined her supple body and high breasts. Very soon a boat appeared in the distance. As on the previous night, a man jumped ashore, wearing a Tartar cap, but his hair was cut like a Cossack's and a large knife was stuck in his leather belt. 'Yanko,' said the girl, 'the game is up/ After that they spoke too softly for me to hear. 'Where's the blind boy?' said Yanko at last, raising his voice. 'I told him where to go/ she replied. A few minutes later the blind boy arrived with a heavy sack on his back. The sack was put into the boat.

'Listen, blind boy, said Yanko. 'You must guard that place. . . You know where I mean? There are valuable goods there.

Tell (I' could not catch the name) 'I am no longer working for him. Things have turned out badly, and he won't see me any more. It is dangerous now. I'll go to look for work in some other place, but he won't find another dare-devil like me. Oh yes, you can also tell him that if he had paid those who work for him better, Yanko would not have left him. But there are plenty of places where I can go, wherever the wind blows and the sea calls.' After a short silence, Yanko continued: 'I am taking her with me. She can't renlain here, but you can tell the old woman that it's high time she was dead. she has been living too long and all things must have an end. She won't see us again/

'But what about me?' said the blind boy plaintively

'What good are you to me?' was the reply

In the meantime my Undine had jumped into the boat and beckoned to her comrade. He put something into the boy's hand: 'There you are; buy yourself some ginger-bread ' 'Is that

all?' asked the blind boy. 'Well, here is some more.' and a falling coin rang as it hit a pebble. The boy did not pick it up. Yanko stepped into the boat. The wind was blowing from the •shore. They hoisted a small sail and the boat sped out to sea For a long time the white sail glimmered in the moonlight amidst the dark waves. The blind boy continued to sit on the beach and I heard a sound as of sobbing. The blind boy was •crying, and he wept for a long time ... I felt sad. Why had the Fates chosen to cast me amongst honest smugglers? Like a stone thrown into an untroubled pool I had disturbed their calm and, like a stone, I myself had nearly gone to the bottom!

I returned home. The remnants of a candle were spluttering in a wooden platter in the porch, and my Cossack, contrary to my orders, was fast asleep, clutching his rifle.with both hands. I did not disturb him, but took the candle and went into the hut. Alas, my casket, mv sword with the silver hilt and the Caucasian dagger that had been given me by a friend had all disappeared. I realised then what it was that damned blind bov had been carrying. I woke my Cossack with a brusque prod and cursed him roundly, but save for losing m\ temper there was nothing more I could do. It would have been somewhat ludicrous to report to my superior officer that I had been robbed by a blind child and nearly-drowned by an eighteen-vear-old 'girl. Thank God, I was able to leave Taman the next day. I don't know what became of the old woman or the poor blind boy. After all, I am a roaming officer, entitled to free travel on a voucher marked 'on official business,' so what concern of mine are human joys and sorrows?

THE CARRIAGE'

NIKOLAI GOGOL
Translated by Constance Garnett

THE LITTLETOWN of B. has grown much more lively since a cavalry regiment began to be stationed in it. Till then it was fearfully dull. When one drove through it and glanced at the low-pitched, painted houses which looked into the street with an incredibly sour expression . . . well, it is impossible to put into words what things were like there: it is as dejecting as though one had lost money at cards, or just said something stupid and inappropriate - in short, it is depressing. The plaster on the houses has peeled off with the rain, and the walls instead of being white are piebald; the roofs are for the most part thatched with reeds, as is usual in our Southern towns. The gardens have long ago, by order of the police-master, been cut down to improve the look of the place. There is never a soul to

be met in the streets; at most a cock crosses the road, soft as a pillow from the dust that lies on it eight inches thick and at the slightest drop of rain is transformed into mud, and then the streets of the town of B. are filled with those corpulent animals which the local police-master calls Frenchmen; thrusting out their solemn snouts from their baths, they set up such a grunting that the traveller can do nothing but urge on his horses. It is not easy, however, to meet a traveller in the town of B. On rare, very rare occasions, some country gentleman, owning eleven souls of serfs and dressed in a full nankeen coat, jolts over the road in something between a chaise and a cart, and peeps out from behind piled-up sacks of flour, as he lashes his solemn mare behind whom runs a colt. Even the market-place has rather a melancholy air: the tailor's shop stands out very foolishly with one corner to the street instead of the whole shop-front; facing it, a brick building with two windows has been in the course of construction for fifteen years: a little further, standing all by itself, there is one of those paling fences so fashionable, painted grey to match the mud, and erected as a model for other buildings by the police-master in the days of his youth, before he had formed the habit of sleeping immediately after-dinner and drinking at night a beverage flavoured with dry gooseberries. In other parts the fences are all of hurdle. in the middle of the square, there are very tiny shops; in them one may always see a bunch of bread rings, a peasant woman in a red kerchief, a hundredweight of soap, a few pounds of bitter almonds, small shot for sportsmen, some cotton-shoddy material, and two shopmen who spend all their time playing a sort of quoits near the door.

But as soon as the cavalry regiment was stationed at the little town of B. everything was changed: the streets were full of life and colour, in fact, they assumed quite a different aspect; the low-pitched little houses often saw a graceful, well-built officer with a plume on his head passing by on his way to discuss promotion or the best kind of tobacco with a comrade, or sometimes to play cards for the stake of a chaise, which might have been described as the regimental chaise, for, without *ever* leaving the regiment, it had already'gone the round of the officers: one day the major rolled up in it, the next day it was to be seen

in the lieutenant's stable, and a week later, lo and behold, the major's orderly was greasing its wheels again. The wooden fence between the houses was always studded with soldiers' caps hanging in the sun; a grey military overcoat was always conspicuous on some gate; in the side streets soldiers were to be seen with moustaches as stiff as boot-brushes. These moustaches were on view everywhere; if workwomen gathered in the market with their tin mugs, one could always get a glimpse of a moustache behind their shoulders. The officers brought life into a local society which had until then consisted of a judge, who lived in the same house with a deacon's wife, and a police-Tnaster, who was a very sagacious person, but slept absolutely the whole day from dinner-time until evening and from evening until dinner-time. Society gained even more in numbers and interest when the headquarters of the general of the brigade were transferred to the town. Neighbouring landowners, whose existence no one would previously have suspected, began visiting the district town more frequently to see the officers and sometimes to play a game of 'bank,' of which there was an extremely hazy notion in their brains, busy with thoughts of crops and hares and their wives' commissions.

I am very sorry that I cannot recall what circumstance it was that led the general of the brigade to give a big dinner; preparations for it were made on a vast scale; the clatter of the cooks' knives in the general's kitchen could be heard almost as far as the town gate. The whole market was completely cleared for the dinner, so that the judge and his deaconess had nothing to eat but buckwheat cakes and cornflour-shape. The little courtyard of the general's quarters was packed with chaises and carriages. The company consisted of gentlemen - officers and a few neighbouring landowners. Of the latter, the most noteworthy was Pifagor Pifagorovitch Tchertokutsky, one of the leading aristocrats of the district of B., who made more noise than anyone at the elections and drove to them in a very smart carriage. He had once served in a cavalry regiment and had been one of its most important and conspicuous officers, anyway he had been seen at numerous balls and assemblies, wherever his regiment had been stationed; the young ladies of the Tambov and Simbirsk provinces, however, could tell us most about that. It

is very possible that he would have gained a desirable reputation in other provinces, too, if he had not resigned his commission owing to one of those incidents which are usually described as 'an unpleasantness'; either he had given someone a box on the ear in old days, or was given it, which I don't remember for certain; anyway, the point is that he was asking to resign his commission. He lost nothing of his importance through this, however. He wore a high-waisted dress-coat of military cut, spurs on his boots, and a moustache under his nose, since, but for that, the nobility of his province might have supposed that he had served in the infantry, which he always spoke of contemptuously. He visited all the much-frequented fairs, to which those who make up the heart of Russia, that is, the nurses and children, stout landowners and their daughters, flock to enjoy themselves, driving in chaises with hoods, gigs, waggonettes, and carriages such as have never been seen in the wildest dreams. He had a special scent for where a cavalry regiment was stationed, and always went to interview the officers, very nimbly leaping out of his light carriage in view of them and very quickly making their acquaintance. At the last election he had given the nobility of the provinces an excellent dinner, at which he had declared that, if only he were elected Marshal, he 'would put the gentry on the best possible footing/ Altogether he lived like a gentleman, as the expression goes in the provinces; he married a rather pretty wife, getting with her a dowry of two hundred souls and some thousands in cash. This last was at once spent on a team of six really first-rate horses, gilt locks on the doors, a tame monkey, and a French butler for the household. The two hundred souls, together with two hundred of his own, were mortgaged to the bank for the sake of some commercial operations.

In short, he was a proper sort of landowner, a very decent sort of landowner. .. .

Apart from this gentleman, there were a few other landowners at the general's dinner, but there is no need to describe them. The other guests were the officers of the same regiment, besides two staff-officers, a colonel, and a rather stout major. The general himself was a thick-set, corpulent person, though an excellent commanding officer, so the others said of him. He

spoke in a rather thick, consequential bass. The dinner was remarkable: sturgeon of various sorts, as well as sterlet, bustards, asparagus, quails, partridges, and mushrooms, testified to the fact that the cook had not had a drop of anything strong between his lips since the previous day, and that four soldiers had been at work with knives in their hands all night, helping him with the fricassee and the jelly. A multitude of bottles, tall ones with Lafite and the short ones with Madeira: a lovely summer day, windows wide open, plates of ice on the table, the crumpled shirt-fronts of the owners of extremely roomy dress coats, a cross-fire of conversation drowned by the general's voice and washed down by champagne - all was in keeping. After dinner they all got up from the table with an agreeable heaviness in their stomachs, and, after lighting pipes, some with long and some with short mouthpieces, went out on to the steps with cups of coffee in their hands.

'You can look at her now/ said the general; 'if you please, m\ dear boy,' he went on, addressing his adjutant, a rather sprightly young man of agreeable appearance, 'tell them to bring the bay mare round! here you shall see for yourself.' At this point the general took a pull at his pipe and blew out the smoke, 'she is not quite well-groomed: this wretched accursed little town! She is a very-puff-puff-decent mare!'

'And have you - puff-puff - had her long, your Excellency?' said Tchertokutsky.

'Well . . puff-puff-puff . . . 'not so long; it's only two years since I had her from the stud-stables.'

'And did you get her broken in, or have you been breaking her in here, your Excellency?'

Puff-puff-pu-ff pu-ff, 'Here,' saying this the general completely disappeared in smoke.

Meanwhile a soldier skipped out of the stables, the thud of hoofs was audible, and at last another soldier with huge black moustaches, wearing a white smock, appeared, leading by the bridle a trembling and frightened mare, who, suddenly flinging up her head, almost lifted the soldier together with his moustaches into the air.

'There, there, Agrafena Ivanovna!' he said, leading her up to the steps.

The mare's name was Agrafena Ivanovna. Strong and wild as a beauty of the south, she stamped her hoof upon the wooden steps, then suddenly stopped.

The general, laying down his pipe, began with a satisfied air looking at Agrafena Ivanovna. The colonel himself went down the steps and took Agrafena Ivanovna by the nose, the major patted Agrafena Ivanovna on the leg, the others made a clicking sound with their tongues.

Tchertokutsky went down and approached her from behind; the soldier, drawn up to attention and holding the bridle, looked straight into the visitor's eyes as though he wanted to jump into them.

'Very, very fine,' said Tchertokutsky, 'a horse with excellent points I And allow me to ask your Excellency, how does she go?'

'Her action is very good, only . . . that fool of a doctor's assistant, the devil take the man, gave her pills of some sort and for the last two days she has done nothing but sneeze.'

'Very fine horse, very; and have you a suitable carriage, your Excellency?' *

'A carriage? . . . But she is a saddle-horse, you know/

'I know that, but I asked your Excellency to find out whether you have a suitable carriage for your other horses.'

'Well, I am not very well off for carriages I must own; I have long been wanting to get an up-to-date one. I have written to my brother who is in Petersburg just now, but I don't know whether he'll send me one or not.'

'1 think, your Excellency, there are no better carriages than the Viennese '

'You are quite right there,' puff-puff-puff——

'I have an excellent carriage, your Excellency, of real Vienna make.'

'What is it like? Is it the one you came here in?'

'Oh no, that's just for rough work, for my excursions, but the other. ... It is a wonder! light as a feather, and when you are in it, it is simply, saving your Excellency's presence, as though your nurse were rocking you in the cradle!'

'So it is comfortable?

'Very comfortable indeed: cushions, springs and all looking like a picture.'

'That's nice.

'And so roomy! As a matter of fact, your Excellency, I have never seen one like it. When I was in the service I used to put a dozen bottles of rum and twenty pounds of tobacco in the boxes, and besides that I used to have about six uniforms and underlinen and two pipes, the very long ones, your Excellency, v/hile you could put a whole ox in the pockets/

'That's nice.'

'It cost four thousand, your Excellency.'

'At that price it ought to be good; and did you buy it yourself?'

'No, your Excellency, it came to me by chance; it was bought by my friend, the companion of my childhood, a rare man with whom you would have got on perfectly, your Excellency; we were on such terms that what was his was mine, it was all the same. I won it from,him at cards. Would you care, your Excellency, to do me the honour to dine with me to-morrow, and you could have a look at the carriage at the same time?'

'I really don't know what to say ... for me to come alone like that . . . would you allow me to bring my fellow-officers?'

'I beg the other officers to come too. Gentlemen I I shall think it a great pleasure to see you in my house.'

The colonel, the major, and the other officers thanked him with a polite bow.

'What I think, your Excellency, is that if one buys a thing it must be good, if it is not good there is no use having it. When you do me the honour to visit me to-morrow, I will show you a few other things I have bought in the useful line/

The general looked at him and blew smoke out of his mouth. Tchertokutsky was highly delighted at having invited the officers: he was inwardly ordering pastries and sauces while he looked very good-humouredly at the gentlemen in question, who for their part, too, seemed to feel twice as amiably disposed to him, as could be discerned from their eyes and the small movements they made in the way of half-bows. Tchertokutsky put himself forward with a more free-and-easy air, and there was a melting tone in his voice as though it were weighed down with please.

'There, your Excellency, you will ma' ' intanrp of

my wife.'

'I shall be delighted,' said the general, stroking his moustache.

After that Tchertokutsky wanted to set off home at once that he might be beforehand in preparing everything for the reception of his guests and the dinner to be offered them; he took up his hat, but, strangely enough, it happened that he stayed on for some time. Meanwhile card-tables were set in the room. Soon the whole company was divided into parties of four for whist and sat down in the different corners of the general's rooms. Candles were brought; for a long time Tchertokutsky was uncertain whether to sit down to whist or not, but as the officers began to press him to do so, he felt that it would be a breach of the rules of civility to refuse and he sat down for a little while. By his side there appeared from somewhere a glass of punch which, without noticing it, he drank off instantly. After winning two rubbers Tchertokutsky again found a glass of punch at hand and again without observing it emptied the glass, though he did say first: 'It's time for me to be getting home, gentlemen, it really is time,' but again he sat down to the second game.

Meanwhile conversation assumed an entirely personal character in the different corners of the room. The whist players were lather silent, but those who were not playing sat on sofas at one side and kept up a conversation of their own. In one corner the staff-captain, with a cushion thrust under his back and a pipe between his teeth, was recounting in a free and flowing style his amatory adventures, which completely absorbed the attention of a circle gathered round him. One extremely fat landowner with short hands rather like over-grown potatoes was listening with an extraordinarily mawkish air, and only from time to time exerted himself to get his short arm behind his broad back and pull out his snuff-box. In another corner a rather heated discussion sprang up concerning squadron drill, and Tchertokutsky, who about that time twice threw down a knave instead of a queen, suddenly intervened in this conversation, which was not addressed to him, and shouted from his corner: In what year?' or 'Which regiment?' without observing that the question had nothing to do with the matter under discussion. At last, a few minutes before supper, they left off

playing, though the games went on verbally and it seemed as though the heads of all were full of whist. Tchertokutsky remembered perfectly that he had won a great deal, but he picked up nothing, and getting up from the tables stood for a long time in the attitude of a man who has found he has no pocket-handkerchief. Meanwhile supper was served. It need hardly be said that there was no lack of wines and that Tchertokutsky was almost obliged to fill up his glass at times, since there were bottles standing on the right and on the left of him.

A very long conversation dragged on at table, but it was rather oddly conducted. One colonel who had served in the campaign of 1812 described a battle such as had certainly never taken place, and then, I am quite unable to say for what reason, tock the stopper out of the decanter and stuck it in the pudding. In short, by the time the party began to break up it was three o'clock, and the coachmen were obliged to carry some of the gentlemen in their arms as though they had been parcels of purchases, and in spite of all his aristocratic breeding Tchertokutsky bowed so low and with such a violent lurch of his head, as he got into his carriage, that he brought two burrs home with him on his moustache.

At home everyone was sound asleep. The coachman had some difficulty in finding a footman, who conducted his master across the drawing-room and handed him over to a maid-servant, in whose charge Tchertokutsky made his way to his bedroom and got into bed beside his young and pretty wife, who was lying in the most enchanting way in snow-white sleeping-attire. The jolt made by her husband falling upon the bed awakened her. Stretching, lifting her eyelashes and three times rapidly blinking her eyes, she opened them with a half-angry smile, but seeing that he absolutely declined on this occasion to show any interest in her, she turned over on the other side in vexation, and laying her fresh little cheek on her arm soon afterwards fell asleep:

It was at an hour which would not in the country be described as early that the young mistress of the house woke up beside her snoring spouse. Remembering that it had been nearly four o'clock in the morning when he came home, she did not like to

wake him, and so, putting on her bedroom slippers which her husband had ordered for her from Petersburg, with **a** white dressing-gown draped about her like a flowing stream, she washed in water as fresh as herself and proceeded to attire herself for the day. Glancing at herself a couple of times in the mirror, she saw that she was looking very nice that morning This apparently insignificant circumstance led her to spend two hours extra before the looking-glass. At last she was very charmingly dressed and went out to take an airing in the garden. As luck would have it, the weather was as lovely as it can only be on a summer day in the South. The sun, which was approaching the zenith, was blazing hot; but it was cool walking in the thick, dark avenue, and the flowers were three times as fragrant in the warmth of the sun. The pretty young wife quite forgot that it was now twelve o'clock and her husband was still asleep. Already she could hear the after-dinner snores of two coachmen and one postilion sleeping in the stable beyond the garden, but she still sat on in a shady avenue from which there was an open view of the high-road, and was absent-mindedly watching it, stretching empty and deserted into the distance, when all at once a cloud of dust appearing in the distance attracted her attention. Gazing intently, she soon discerned several carriages. The foremost was a light open carriage with two seats. In it was sitting a general with thick epaulettes that gleamed in the sun, and beside him a colonel. It was followed by another carriage with seats for four in which were the major, the general's adjutant, and two officers sitting opposite. Then came the regimental chaise, familiar to everyone, at the moment in the possession of the fat major. The chaise was followed by a *bon-voyage,* in which there were four officers seated and a fifth on their knees, then came three officers on excellent, dark bay dappled horses.

'Then they may be coming to us,' thought the lady. 'Oh, my goodness, they really are! They have turned at the bridge!' She uttered a shriek, clasped her hands and ran right over the flower-beds straight to her husband's bedroom; he was sleeping like the dead.

'Get up! Get up! Make haste **and get** up!' she **shouted,** tugging at his arm.

'What?' murmured Tchertokutsky, not opening his eyes.

'Get up, poppet 1 Do you hear, visitors !'

'Visitors! What visitors?' . . . Saying this he uttered a slight grunt such as a calf gives when it is looking for its mother's udder, 'Mm . . .' he muttered: 'stoop your neck, precious! I'll give you a kiss.'

'Darling, get up, for goodness' sake, make haste! The general and the officers! Oh dear, you've got a burr on your moustache!'

'The general! So he is coming already, then? But why the devil did nobody wake me? And the dinner, what about the dinner? Is everything ready that's wanted?'

'What dinner?'

'Why, didn't I order it?'

'You came back at four o'clock in the morning and you did not say one word to me, however much I questioned you. I didn't wake you, poppet, because I felt sorry for you, you had had no sleep.

The last words she uttered in an extremely supplicating and languishing voice.

Tchertokutsky lay for a minute in bed with his eyes starting out of his head, as though struck by a thunderbolt. At last he jumped out of bed with nothing but his shirt on, forgetting that this was quite unseemly.

'Oh, I am an ass!' he said, slapping himself on the forehead; 'I invited them to dinner! What's to be done? Are they far off?'

' I don't know. ... I expect they will be here every minute/

'My love . . . hide yourself. . . . Hey, who's there? You wretched girl, come in; what are you afraid of, silly? The officers will be here in a minute: you say that your master is not at home, say that he won't be home at all, that he went out early in the morning. . . . Do you hear? and tell all the servants the same; make haste!' Saying this, he hurriedly snatched up his dressing-gown and ran to hide in the carriage-house, supposing that there he would be in a position of complete security, but, standing in the corner of the carriage-house, he saw that even there he might be seen. 'Ah, this will be better,' flashed through his mind, and in one minute he flung down the steps of the carriage standing near, leapt in, closed the door after him, for

greater security covering himself with the apron and the leather, and lay perfectly still, curled up in his dressing-gown.

Meanwhile the carriages drove up to the front steps. The general stepped out and shook himself; after him the colonel, smoothing the plume of his hat with his hands, then the fat major, holding his sabre under his arm, jumped out of the chaise, the slim sub-lieutenants skipped down from the *bon-voyage* with the lieutenant who had been sitting on the others' knees, and, last of all, the officers who had been elegantly riding on horseback alighted from their saddles.

The master is not at home/ said a footman, coming out on to the steps.

'Not at home? He'll be back to dinner, I suppose?'

'No. His Honour had gone out for the whole day. He won't be back until to-morrow about this time perhaps/

'Well, upon my soul,' said the general. 'What is the meaning of this?'

'I must own it is queer,' said the colonel, laughing.

'No, really . . . how can he behave like this?' the general went on with displeasure. 'Whew! . . . the devil . . . whv, if he can't receive people, what does he ask them for?'

'I can't understand how anyone could do it, your Excellency,' a young officer observed.

'What, what?' said the general, who had the habit of always uttering this interrogative monosyllable when he was talking to an officer.

'I said, your Excellency, that it is not the way to behave!'

'Naturally . . . why, if anything has happened, he might let us know at any rate, or else not have asked us/

'Well, your Excellency, there is no help for it, we shall have to go back/ said the colonel.

'Of course, there is nothing else for it. We can look at the carriage though without him; it is not likely he has taken it with him. Hey, you there! Come here, my man!

'What is your pleasure?'

'Are you the stable-boy?'

'Yes, your Excellency.'

'Show us the new carriage your master got lately.'

'This way, sir; come to the carriage-house/

The general went to the carriage-house together with the officers.

'Shall I push it out a little? it is rather dark in here.'

'That's enough, that's enough, that's right!'

The general and the officers stood round the carriage and carefully examined the wheels and the springs.

'Well, there is nothing special about it,' said the general. 'It is a most ordinary carriage,'

'A very ugly one,' said the colonel; 'there is nothing good about it at all.'

'I fancy, your Excellency, it is not worth four thousand,' said the young officer.

'What?'

'I say, your Excellency, that I fancy it is not worth four thousand'

Tour thousand, indeed ! why, it is not worth two, there is nothing in it at all. Perhaps there is something special about the inside. . . . Unbutton the leather, my dear fellow, please/

And what met the officers' eyes was Tchertokutsky sitting in his dressing-gown curled up in an extraordinary way. 'Ah, you are here!' . . . said the astonished general.

Saying this he slammed the carriage door at once, covered Tchertokutsky with the apron again, and drove away with the officers

THE SINGERS

IVAN TURGENEV

Translated by Walter Morison

THE LITTLE VILLAGE of Kolotovka, once owned by a lady known in the neighbourhood, on account of her bold and boisterous nature, as the Bouncer (her real name is not recorded), and now the property of some sort of Petersburg German, lies on the slope of a bare hill gashed from top to bottom by an enormous ravine which, gaping like an abyss, twists torn and rain-scarred right down the middle of the village street, separating more decisively than a river-which could at any rate be bridged - one side of the wretched settlement from the other. A few emaciated willows cling timidly to its sandy flanks; right at the bottom of the ravine, dry and yellow as brass, lie great slabs of argillaceous stone. A depressing prospect, one must admit - and yet all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood

are familiar with the road to Kolotovka: they go there frequently, and are glad to.

At the very head of the ravine, a few steps from the point where it begins as a narrow crack, a small rectangular hut stands alone, at some distance from the rest. It has a thatched roof and a chimney-stack; one window, like a watchful eye, is turned towards the ravine, and lit from inside is visible from afar through the frosty mist of winter evenings, shining forth to many a passing peasant like a sort of guiding star. Above the door of the hut is nailed a little board painted blue, for the hut i> a pot-house, and is known as the 'Hearty Welcome.' At this pot-house vodka is probably not sold below the regulation price, and yet it is frequented much more assiduously than all establishments of a like nature in the neighbourhood. The reason for this is the host, Nikolay Ivanych.

Nikolay Ivanych - once a well-built, curly-headed, rosy-cheeked lad and now an unusually obese man with prematurely grey hair, a bloated face, cunningly good-natured little eyes and a shiny forehead netted with wrinkles like tiny threads-has lived in Kolotovka for more than twenty years. Like most innkeepers, Nikolay Ivanych is a man of shrewdness and resource. Distinguished by no special affability or talkativeness, he possesses the gift of attracting and keeping customers, who find a peculiar chaim in sitting at his counter under the calm and welcoming albeit watchful gaze of their phlegmatic host. He has much common sense; he knows the way landowners live, and peasants, and townsfolk; in awkward cases he would be quite capable of giving sensible advice, but being a cautious and selfish individual he prefers to remain apart, and with roundabout hints, uttered as it were without intention, to guide his guests-the ones he likes-on to the right path. He knows much about everything that is of importance or interest to the Russian: horses and cattle, timber, bricks, crockery, textiles and leather, songs and dances. When he has no customers he usually sits slumped like a sack on the ground outside the door of his hut, his thin legs tucked beneath him, exchanging friendly words with all who pass that way. He has seen plenty in his day, outlived more than a dozen petty landowners who used to call at his place for 'rectified' spirits, knows every-

THE SINGERS

I V AN TU R G K N E V

translated by Walter Monson

T H i L I I II L v I L LA G Ii of K o l o t o v i once owned by a ladv known m the neighbourhood, on account of her bold and boisteious nature as the Bouncer (her real name is not re eorded), and now the propertv of SOUK sort of Peteasbuig Gei man, lies on the slope of a bate hill gashed from top to bottom by an enormous ravine which, gaping like an abyss, twists torn and lain-scarrcd tight down the middle of *the village* street, separating more dessivels than a river - w h i c h could at any late be budged - one side o! the wretched settlement from the other \ few emaciated willows cling timidly to its sandy flanks; right at the bottom of die name dry *.and yellow* as brass, lie great slabs of argillaceous stone A depressing prospect, one must admit -and vet all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood

are familiar with the road to Kolotovka: they go there frequently, and are glad to

At the very head of the ravine, a few steps from the point where it begins as a nanow crack, a small rectangular hut stands alone, at some distance from the rest It has a thatched roof and a chimney-stack, one window, like a watchful eye, is mined towards the ravine, and lit from inside is visible horn afar through the fiosty mist o! winter evenings, shining forth to many a passing peasant like a sor t of guiding star Above the door of the hut is nailed a little board painted blue, for the hut a pot house, and is known as the 'Hearty Welcome' At this pot-house vodka is probably not sold below the regulation price, and yet it is frequented much more assiduously than all establishments of a like nature *m* the neighbourhood I he reason for this is the host, Nikolay Ivanych

Nikolay Ivanych-once a well-built, curl)-headed, rosy-cheeked lad and now an unusually obese man with prematurelv grey hair, a bloated face, cunninglv good-natured little e\es and a shinv forehead netted with wrinkles like tinv tin cads- has lied in Kolotovka for more than twentv years Like most innkeepers, Nikola) Ivanch is a man of shrewdness and n source Distinguished by no special aifabihts or talkativness, he possesses the gift of attracting and keeping customers who find a peculiar chaim in sitting at his counter under the calm and welcoming albeit watchful ga/e of then phlegmatic host He has much common sense, he knows the wav landowners live, and peasants, and townsfolk, in awkward cases he would be mute capable of giving sensible advice but being a cautious and selfish individual he prefers to remain apart, and with roundabout hints, uttered as it were without intention, to guide his guests -- the ones he likes- on to the right path He knows much about everythmg that is of importance or interest to the Russian horses and cattle, timber, bucks, criockery, tc vilies and leather, songs and dances When he has no customers he usually sits slumped like a sack on the ground outside the door of his hut, his thin legs tucked beneath him, exchang nig friendly words with all who pass that way He has seen plenty in his day, outlived more than a dozen petty landowners who used to call at his place for 'rectified' spirits, knows even-

thing that is going on for a hundred versts around, and never gossips, never even lets it appear that he knows what the most perspicacious of district police-officers is far from suspecting. He just says nothing and smiles faintly to himself, and moves glasses about on the counter. His neighbours respect him; the highest dignitary in the district always bows graciously to him when he drives past the hut Nikolay Ivanych is a man of influence: he forced a certain horse-thief to restore a horse stolen from someone he knew, talked sense into the peasants of a neighbouring village who were jibbing at accepting a new steward, and so on. One must not of course suppose that he does such things from any love of justice, out of love for his neighbour-far from it! He simply attempts to forestall anything that might in any way disturb his own tranquillity. Nikolay Ivanych is married, and has children. His wife is a lively, sharp nosed, keen-eyed woman horn the town, who has of late grown rather fat, like her husband He relies on her in everything, and she keeps the key to the money-box. Noisy drunkards are afraid of her; she doesn't like them: they don't bring in much money and they kick up a din, she much prefers customers who are silent and morose. Nikolay Ivanych's children are still small; the first children all died, but the remainder have taken after their parents: it warms your heart to see the clever little faces of those health) urchins

It was an unbearably hot day m July when I, sluggishly putting one foot before the other, moved slowly with my dog up the Kolotovka ravine in the direction of the 'Hearty Welcome.' The sun blazed as though in a frenzy, scorching and parching; the air was filled with a stifling dust. Rooks and crows covered with a sort of gloss, their beaks agape, gazed mournfully at those passing as though begging lor sympathy, the sparrows alone were in good spirits, and fluttering their wings chirruped more frantically than ever, squabbled on the fences, flew up in swarms from the dusty road, swept in grey clouds over the green hemp-patches. I was parched with thirst. There was no water at hand: in Kolotovka, as in many other villages on the steppe, the peasants, having no springs or wells, drink a sort of thin mud from the ponds . . . but who could call that nauseating beverage water? I wanted to ask Nikolay Ivanych for a glass of

beer or kvass

It must be confessed that at no season of the year does Kolotovka present a cheering sight; but it arouses a particularly mournful feeling when the blazing July sun floods with its merciless rays the brown, half-decayed thatch of the cottages, the deep ravine, the scorched, dusty common, on which thin, long-legged hens wander hopelessly, the grey shanty of aspen-logs with holes instead of windows, remains of a former manor-house, overgrown with nettles, weeds and wormwood, the pond covered with goose-down, black, as though incandescent, with a fringe of half-dried mud and a dam that has heeled over, by which, on the ground trampled fine and ash-like, sheep, scarcely breathing, sneezing from the heat, press sadly against one another and with mournful patience bow their heads as low as possible, as though waiting for the moment when this unbearable heat will pass As with weary footsteps I drew near to Nikolay Ivanych's abode, arousing in the children, as is always the case, astonishment that grew into a tense, moon-struck contemplation, in the dogs indignation expressed by barks so hoarse and angry that one might imagine they were barking their very insides out, so that afterwards they themselves coughed breathlessly, there suddenly appeared on the threshold of the inn a tall man, bare-headed, in a frieze greatcoat belted low down with a blue sash. He looked like a servant horn an estate; his thick grey hair rose in disorder over his dry and wrinkled face He was calling to someone, moving his hands about quickly, hands which were clearly executing much wider gestures than he himself intended. You could see that he had already had a drop

'Come on, come on,' he stammered, raising his thick brows with an effort; 'come on, Winker, can't you? You simply crawl, that's the only word for it. Not the thing, brother! People are waiting for you here, and you just crawl . . Come along, now!'

'Coming, coming,' sounded a harsh voice, and to the right from behind the hut emerged a short fellow, fat and lame. He was wearing a fairly clean linen jacket, one sleeve flapping loose; the tall sharp-pointed cap pulled down over his eyes, gave his round puffy face a cunning and insolent expression. His little yellow eyes kept flitting this way and that, his lips never

lost their reserved, forced smile, and his nose, long and sharp, projected jeeringly, like a rudder. 'I'm coming, my dear,' he continued, as he hobbled towards the inn; 'what are you calling me for? . . . Who's waiting for me?'

'Why am I calling you?' repeated the man in the frieze great-coat reproachfully. 'You are a one, Winker! They're calling you inside, and you keep asking why. All the good folk are waiting for you: Jacob the Turk, and the Wild Squire, and the trader from Zhizdra. Jake has made a bet with the trader: they've laid a keg of beer on who beats who; singing, that is. . . . Now d'you understand?'

'Jake's going to sing?' said the man addressed as Winker. 'You're not lying, Addlepate?'

'I don't lie,' replied Addlepate with dignity; 'you're the liar if anyone is! He'll sing, I tell you; they've laid a bet on it, ain't they, you ladybird you, you rascally Winker?'

'Come on then, dim-wit!' retorted Winker.

'Well, kiss me at least, light of my soul!' cried Addlepate, spreading his arms wide.

'Chuck it, you mother's darling!' said Winker scornfully, pushing him away with his elbow, and the two of them bent down and went through the low doorway.

The conversation I had heard had greatly roused my curiosity. More than once I had heard of Jacob the Turk as the best singer in the neighbourhood, and suddenly I was presented with the opportunity of hearing him compete with another expert. I quickened my pace and stepped into the pot-house

It is probable that few of my readers have had the occasion to examine the interior of a Russian inn; but there are few places that hunters like myself do not enter. The arrangement o! these establishments is very simple. They usually consist of a dark entrance-passage and a room divided in two by a partition behind which no customer has the right to penetrate. In this partition, above a wide oak table, there is pierced a large longitudinal opening. On this table or counter the spirits are sold. The sealed bottles of various sizes stand in rows on shelves behind the partition facing the opening. In the outer part of the room, the one reserved for customers, there are benches, two or three empty barrels, and a table in the corner. Village inns are

for the most part rather dark, and you will hardly ever see on their log walls the gaudily coloured prints rarely missing from the ordinary peasant hut.

When I entered the 'Hearty Welcome' quite a number of people had already gathered there.

Behind the counter, as usual, and filling nearly the whole of the aperture, stood Nikolay Ivanych in a cotton shirt of many colours, a lazy smile on his puffy cheeks, pouring out with his plump white hand a glass of vodka each for his visitors Winker and Addlepate; behind him, in the corner, could be seen his sharp-eyed spouse. In the middle of the room stood Jacob the Turk, a thin, shapely man of about twenty-three dressed in a long-skirted nankeen kaftan of light blue. He looked like a tough lad from a factory, and did not appear to be in the best of health. His sunken cheeks, his large, restless grey eyes, his straight nose with its slender, mobile nostrils, his white, sloping forehead from which the fair curls were thrown back, his large but shapely and expressive lips - the whole of his face revealed a sensitive and passionate nature He was very excited: he kept blinking his eyes, breathed unevenly, his hands trembled as though he had a fever - and in fact he had a fever, that agitating, sudden fever so familar to all who are to sing or speak in public. By him stood a man of about forty, broad-shouldered, with wide cheek-bones, a low forehead, narrow Tartar eyes, a short flat nose, a rectangular chin and gleaming black hair as harsh as bristles. The expression of his sallow face with its leaden tinge, and particularly that of his pale lips, might have been described as savage had it not been so tranquilly pensive. He hardly stirred, looking slowly round like a yoked ox. He was dressed in a sort of worn tail-coat with flat brass buttons; an old black silk kerchief enveloped his massive neck. He was known as the Wild Squire. Facing him, on a bench beneath the ikons, sat Jacob's rival, the trader from Zhizdra; this was a short corpulent man of about thirty, pock-marked and curly-haired, with a snub nose, lively brown eyes and a sparse beard. He kept looking merrily round, his hands tucked beneath him, swinging his legs and tapping his heels in a carefree way; he was wearing smart boots with coloured trimmings. He had on a new overcoat of thin grey cloth with a plush

collar; against it the edge of a crimson Russian shirt, the collar of which was fastened tightly round his neck, stood out in vivid relief. In the opposite corner, to the right of the door, a little peasant in a tight-fitting, threadbare smock with a great hole on the shoulder sat at the table. The sunlight penetrated in a thin yellowish stream through the dusty panes of the two small windows and appeared unable to defeat the accustomed darkness of the room: every object was illuminated in a niggardly way, as it were in spots. The room was on the other hand almost cool, and the feeling of heat and oppression fell like a burden from my shoulders the moment I crossed the threshold.

My arrival, I observed, at first rather embarrassed Nikolay Ivanych's guests; but on seeing him bow to me as to an acquaintance they calmed down and paid me no further attention. I ordered a glass of beer and sat down in the corner next to the peasant in the torn smock.

'Well, what about it?' cried Addlepate suddenly, first gulping down a glass of vodka, and accompanying his exclamation with the strange wavings of the arms without which he seemed incapable of uttering a word. 'What are we waiting for? If we're going to begin we might as well begin. Eh? Jake?'

'Yes, let's get started,' said Nikolay Ivanych approvingly.

'Right-ho!' said the trader coolly, and smiled a self-confident smile. Im ready.'

'So am I,' said Jacob, agitated.

'Begin, then, lads, begin!' squeaked Winker

But despite the unanimously expressed wish no one began; the trader did not even rise from his bench - all seemed to be waiting for something.

'Begin,' said the Wild Squire, in a sharp and sullen tone

Jacob gave a start. The trader stood up, pushed his belt lower down and cleared his throat.

'Who is to begin?' he asked the Wild Squire, in a voice that had changed somewhat. The Wild Squire continued to stand motionless in the middle of the room, his great legs straddled, his powerful arms thrust almost up to the elbows into the pockets of his wide Turkish trousers.

'You, trader,' stuttered Addlepate; 'you, brother!'

The Wild Squire peered at him from beneath lowered brows

Addlepate gave a faint squeak, forgot what he was going to say, lcoked up at the ceiling and was silent.

'We must cast lots,' said the Wild Squire in measured tones; 'and the keg of beer must be set on the counter.'

Nikolay Ivanych bent down, lifted, grunting, the keg from the floor and placed it on the table

The Wild Squire looked at Jacob and said: 'Well?'

Jacob hunted in his pockets, found a half-copeck and made a mark on it with his teeth. The trader produced from beneath the skirt of his kaftan a little new purse of leather, without hurrying loosened its neck, and pouring a pile of small change into his palm chose a new half-copeck piece. Addlepate held out his tattered cap with its broken and half-detached peak; Jacob threw in his coin, the trader his.

It's for you to pick,' said the Wild Squire, turning to Winker

Winker gave a self-satisfied smile, took the cap in his two hands and began to shake it.

Absolute silence reigned save tor the faint tinkle of the coins as they struck one another. I looked cautiously round. every face expressed tense expectancy; even the Wild Squire had half-closed his eyes; my neighbour, the little peasant in the torn smock, had even thrust out his neck in curiosity Winker put his hand into the cap and drew out the trader's coin: everyone gave a sigh Jacob turned red, and the trader passed his hand over his hair

'I told you \ou must start,' cried Addlepate, 'didn't I, now?'

'Come, don't squawk!' observed the Wild Squire scornfully. 'Begin!' he went on, nodding towards the trader.

'What shall I sing?' asked the trader, now growing agitated.

'Whatever you like,' replied Winker. 'Whatever \ou think of, sing.'

'Of course, whatever you like,' added Nikolay Ivanych, slowly folding his arms on his chest. 'No one's going to tell you what. Sing whatever you like; but sing well; then we'll decide as our consciences bid '

'Naturally, as our consciences bid,' echoed Addlepate, and licked the rim of an empty glass.

'Let me, brothers, just clear my throat a little,' said the trader, fiddling with the collar of his shirt.

'Come, come, no fussing-get started!' said the Wild Squire firmly, and looked down at the floor.

The trader thought for a moment, gave his head a shake and stepped forward. Jacob fixed his gaze upon him. . . .

But before I begin to describe the contest I think it not out of place to say a few words about each of the characters in my tale. The story of some of them was already familiar to me when I encountered them at the 'Hearty Welcome'; information about the rest I acquired subsequently.

Let us begin with Addlepate. His real name was Yevgrat Ivanov; but no one in the neighbourhood called him anything but Addlepate, and he himself used this nickname: so well did it suit him. And in fact it would have been impossible to select a more fitting epithet for his insignificant and eternally agitated features. He was an unmarried manor-servant who had gone on the loose, whom his masters had long since cast off and who, having no occupation, receiving not a copeck in wages, nevertheless managed every day to carouse - at someone else's expense. He had scores of acquaintances who treated him to vodka and tea, without knowing why; for not only was he not amusing company but on the contrary even bored everyone with his senseless chatter, his unbearable importunity, his feverish gesticulations and his incessant and artificial guffaws. He could neither sing nor dance; since the day he was born he had not uttered a sensible word, much less a clever one: prattled and babbled all day long, talked the most arrant nonsense-in fact, a regular addlepate I And yet not a drinking-bout for forty versts around took place without his gangling figure appearing amid the guests - so used had they become to him, suffering his presence as an unavoidable evil. It is true that he was treated with disdain, but no one was able to tame his extravagant outbursts save the Wild Squire.

Winker in no way resembled Addlepate. The name also fitted him, though he did not blink his eyes more than other people; but it is well known that Russians are masters at hitting on suitable nicknames. Despite my endeavours to ascertain further details about this fellow's past, there remained in his life for me-and no doubt for many other people-dark patches, episodes (as literary men would put it) veiled in the gloom of

uncertainty. All I could learn was that he had once been coachman to an old lady without any children, had run away with some horses entrusted to him, had disappeared for a whole year and, one must suppose, having convinced himself by experience of the disadvantages and miseries of a vagrant existence, had returned of his own accord, thrown himself at his mistress's feet and in the course of a few years atoned by his exemplary behaviour for his misdeed, gradually won the lady's affection, at length gained her complete confidence, became her steward, and after the lady's death, in what way is not known, found himself released from serfdom, become registered at a town-dweller, begun to rent melon-gardens from his neighbours, grown rich, and was now leading a most enjoyable existence. He is a man of experience, with his head screwed on the right way, neither bad nor good, calculating rather; he is a sly dog who knows people and how to make use of them. He is cautious and at the same time enterprising, like a fox; as talkative as an old woman, yet never lets anything slip out against his will, but makes all the rest blurt out their secrets; it should be added that he does not play the simpleton as do certain sly knaves of his sort, nor would it be easy for him to do so: I have never seen shrewder or more penetrating eyes than his tiny, cunning 'peepers.' They never look straight at you, but sideways or from underneath. Winker sometimes for weeks on end thinks over some undertaking that would appear to be quite simple, at other times suddenly decides on a desperately bold course of action; you feel certain that he is going to come a cropper, and lo and behold! he's brought it off, as easily as falling off a log. He is lucky, and believes in his luck. He also believes in signs and omens; he is very superstitious generally. People don't like him, because he is really fond of no one; but they respect him. His whole family consists of one small son who is the apple of his father's eye and who, brought up by such a parent, will probably make his way in the world. 'Little Winker's every inch his father,' the old men already say of him in low voices as they sit gossiping outside their huts on summer evenings: and all understand what is meant, and add not another word.

About Jacob the Turk and the trader there is not much to be said. Jake, nicknamed the Turk because he was in fact the son

of a captive Turkish woman, was by nature an artist and by trade labourer at a paper-factory; as for the trader, whose story, I must confess, remained unknown to me, he appeared a quick-witted and lively townsman. But the Wild Squire is worth describing in rather more detail.

The first impression one had of this fellow was that of a sort of coarse, heavy but irresistible power. He was clumsily built, thrown together as it were, but he breathed invincible health, and-strange to say-his bearlike figure was not devoid of a certain peculiar grace that proceeded perhaps from a calm assurance of his own strength. It was difficult to decide at the first glance to what social stratum this Hercules belonged; he resembled neither a servant from an estate, nor a townsman, nor an impoverished law-copier in retirement, nor a petty landowner on the rocks, lover of hounds and fisticuffs: he was as it were simply of his own type. No one knew whence he had drifted into our district; it was rumoured that he was of a family of freeholders and had once been in Government service, but nothing definite was known in this direction; and from whom could the truth be discovered? - not from him, for never was a man more taciturn and morose. Similarly, no one could say with any certainty what he subsisted on; he had no occupation, paid no visits, was indeed familiar with hardly anyone, and yet he had money; not much, it is true, but money. One couldn't say that he behaved modestly - there was nothing at all modest about him: he behaved quietly; he lived as though he did not notice anyone around him and most certainly did not need anyone. The Wild Squire (so he was nicknamed; his real name was Pervolesov) was a man of enormous influence throughout the district; he was obeyed at once and with alacrity, although he not only had no right to order people about but did not himself manifest the slightest claim to the obedience of the people with whom he chanced to come in contact. He spoke -and was obeyed; power always makes itself felt. He hardly ever drank, avoided women and was passionately fond of singing. There was a lot of mystery about this man; it seemed as though certain tremendous forces lay at rest in him, knowing as it were that once they arose, once they broke loose they could not help destroying both themselves and everything they

touched; and I am cruelly mistaken if in his life there had not already occurred an outburst of the sort, and he, having escaped destruction by a hair's breadth and taught by experience, was not ruthlessly holding himself in check. What particularly struck me about him was the mingling of a sort of innate, constitutional ferocity and a similarly innate nobility-a mixture I had met in no one before.

The trader, then, stepped forward, half-closed his eyes, and began singing in an extremely high falsetto. His voice was quite pleasant and melodious, though a trifle hoarse, he played tricks with it, made it twist and turn like a humming-top: he swept right down the scale and up again to the top notes, which he made a special effort to maintain and prolong; he would be silent for a moment, then suddenly catch up the melody he had dropped, with a sort of devil-may-care and ostentatious daring His transitions were sometimes rather bold, sometimes quite amusing: they would have given a connoisseu a great deal of pleasure; a German would have been infuriated by them. He was a Russian *tenore di grazia, tenor leger.* He sang a rollicking dance-tune, the words of which, so far as I could make them out through the endless flourishes, the supernumerary conson ants and the exclamations, ran as follows:

' I will plough with my fair hands
The earth an hour,
I will sow with my fair hands
A crimson flower.'

He sang; and all listened to him with great attention He obviously felt that he had to do with people who knew what was what, and therefore, as they say, laid himself out to please them. It is a fact that in our part of the country they know something about singing; and not for nothing is the village of Sergievka, on the Orel highway, famed throughout the whole of Russia for its particularly agreeable and harmonious part-songs. For a long time the trader sang, without appearing to awaken any overwhelming sympathy in his audience; but at length, at a particularly successful transition which made even the Wild Squire smile, Addlepate could not contain himself, and gave a cry of delight. Everyone started. Addlepate and Winker began below their breaths to catch up the melody, to

harmonize, to utter exclamations: 'Marvellous! Higher, you rascal! . . . Higher still, and draw it out some more! . . . Let's have it, you dog! . . . May Herod destroy your soul!' and so on. Nikolay Ivanych behind his counter swayed his head in approval. Finally Addlepate stamped on the ground and started to shuffle his feet and jerk his shoulder to the rhythm; while Jacob's eyes began to blaze like coals, he trembled all over like j leaf and smiled a dazed, stupid smile. The Wild Squire alone did not change his expression, remaining motionless as before; but his gaze, fixed on the trader, grew a shade softer, though the curve of his lips remained disdainful. Encouraged by these signs of general pleasure the trader went all out, and now began to perform such flourishes, snapped and drummed so with his tongue, carolled in so frenzied a way that when at length, exhausted, pale and bathed in sweat, he emitted, leaning back with the whole of his body, the last dying exclamation, vociferous applause shook the roof. Addlepate threw himself on the singer's neck and began to strangle him with his long bony fingers; the colour burst out on Nikolay Ivanych's fat face, and he really seemed to have grown younger; Jacob, as though beside himself, yelled 'Bravo, bravo!'; even my neighbour the peasant in the torn smock could not resist, pounded the table with his fist, crying: 'Very good, dammit, very good!' and spat resolutely to one side.

'Well, brother, you certainly gave us pleasure!' cried Addlepate, not releasing the exhausted trader from his embrace; 'gave us pleasure and that's the truth! You've won, brother, you've won! Congratulations - the keg is yours! Jake don't compare with you . . . not a patch on you, I say. . . . lake my word for it!' And once more he crushed the trader to his bosom.

'Let him go, let him go, you bothersome——!' said Winker, vexed; 'let him sit down on the bench; can't you see he's tired? . . What a loony you are; a regular loony! Sticking to him like a burr!'

'Right-ho, let him sit himself down, and I'll have one to his health,' said Addlepate, and went over to the counter. 'You'll pay, brother,' he added, turning to the trader.

The latter nodded, sat on the bench, produced a towel from inside his cap and began to mop his face; while Addlepate with

eager haste drank a glassful and then, as drunkards are wont to do, grunted and assumed an expression of mournful concern.

'You sing well, brother, very well indeed,' observed Nikolay Ivanych amiably. 'And now it's your turn, Jake; watch out, and don't lose your nerve. We'll see who beats who; we'll wait and we'll see. . . . But the trader sings well too, hang me if he don't !'

'Indeed he does,' observed Nikolay Ivanych's wife, and looked at Jacob with a smile.

'True enough,' said my neighbour in a low voice.

'Ha, you Polessian clodhopper!' cried Addlepate, who had recognised by his accent that the ragged peasant was from that part of the country; and going up to him he pointed his finger, started skipping about and burst into a cackling laugh. 'You Polessian, you! What are you doing here, you clod?' he cried through his laughter.

The wretched peasant was sorely embarrassed, and was about to get up and make off when the Wild Squire's brazen voice boomed out:

'What an insufferable animal you are!' he said, grinding his teeth.

'I didn't do nothing,' mumbled Addlepate. 'Not me, I didn't. ... I was just

'Right, then shut up I' the Wild Squire shot back at him. 'Jacob, get started!'

Jacob put his hand to his throat.

'Ye see, brother, um . . . er . . . ahem . . I really don't know, I . . . er . . . '

That'll do; don't funk! Ought to be ashamed!. . Why all the play-acting? . . . Sing as God commands you.'

And the Wild Squire looked down at the floor, expectant.

Jacob was silent for a while, looked round, and put his hand to his face. All looked fixedly at him, especially the trader, in whose face, through its accustomed self-confidence and the triumph of his success, one could read a slight but uncontrollable uneasiness. He leant back against the wall and once more thrust his hands beneath him, but he no longer swung his legs. When at length Jacob took his hand away from his face it was as pale as a dead man's; the gleam of the eyes was hardly visible through the lowered lids. He gave a deep sigh and began to

sing——

The first note he uttered was weak and uneven, and did not appear to proceed from his chest but from somewhere far away, as though it had come flying into the room by chance. This quivering, soaring note had a strange effect on us all; we looked at one another, and Nikolay Ivanych's wife straightened herself up. After the first note came another, firmer now and more sustained, but still perceptibly quivering, as when a string that has suddenly spoken beneath a plucking finger utters its last, rapidly fading vibration; after the second note came a third, and gradually bursting into flame a mournful song welled forth. *'More than one road lay through the fields,'* he sang, and we all felt a sweet and at the same time creepy sensation I must confess I had rarely heard a voice like it: it was slightly broken and had a cracked resonance; at first there was even something sickly about it; but in it there was also profound and unaffected passion, and youth, and power, and sweetness, and a sort of captivatingly careless yearning. A Russian soul, truthful and ardent, rang and breathed in the voice, and it took hold of your heart, seizing on to its Russian heart-strings. The song grew, spread out in a flood. Jacob was visibly possessed by the intoxication of his song: he was no longer nervous, he was abandoning himself to his happiness; his voice no longer trembled - it shuddered, but with that scarcely perceptible inner shudder of passion that pierces the heart of a listener like an arrow; and it constantly grew in volume and firmness, spread out wider and wider. I remember seeing, one evening when the tide was ebbing, on the flat sandy shore of a sea that murmured with sullen menace in the distance, a great white seagull: it sat motionless, presenting its silken breast to the crimson glow of the sunset, and only now and then spread its long wings towards the familiar sea, towards the low blood-red sun: I thought of this gull as I listened to Jacob. He sang, completely oblivious of his rival and of us, but obviously buoyed up, like a stout swimmer by the waves, by our silent but impassioned sympathy. He sang, and from each note there wafted something close to the heart yet immeasurably spacious, just as though the familiar steppe lay spread before us, stretching awav to an infinitely distant horizon. I felt the tears welling from my heart

and springing to my eyes; dull, restrained sobs suddenly struck my ear. . . . I looked round: the innkeeper's wife, slumped against the window, was weeping. Jacob looked at her quickly and sang still more sonorously, more sweetly than before; Nikolay Ivanych's eyes were fixed on the floor, Winker had turned away, Addlepate, faint with emotion, stood gaping stupidly; the little grey peasant was quietly sobbing in his corner, whispering bitterly to himself as he swayed his head from side to side; and down the iron face of the Wild Squire, from beneath the furiously contracted brows, a heavy teardrop ciept slowly; the trader had raised his clenched fist to his forehead and was completely still. . . . 1 do not know how our pent-up emotion would have been released had Jacob not suddenly ended on a high, unusually thin note -just as though his voice had snapped. No one cried out, no one even stirred; all seemed to be waiting to sec whether he would sing on; but he opened his eyes as though surprised by our silence, looked round at everyone with a questioning gaze-and saw that the v ictory was his . . .

'Jake,' said the Wild Squire, put his hand on Jacob's shoulder, and - was silent.

We all stood as though dazed. The trader quietly got up and went over to Jacob. 'You have you . . you have won !' he brought out at length, and rushed from the room.

His rapid and decisive movement seemed to break the spell: all suddenly began to talk noisily, joyfully Addlepate skipped up in the air, started babbling, waving his arms like mill-sails; Winker limped over to Jacob and began to kiss him; Nikolay Ivanych stood up and declared solemnly that he would add another keg to the prize; the Wild Squire was smiling a sort of good-natured smile that I by no means expected to encounter on his face; the little grey peasant kept murmuring in his corner, as he wiped his eyes, his nose, his beard with his two fists: 'Damn good, damme-I'm a son of a bitch if it weren't damn good!' and Nikolay Ivanych's wife, her face flushed, quickly got up and went out. Jacob enjoyed his triumph like a child; his whole face was transfigured; especially his eyes, which simply blazed with happiness. He was dragged to the counter; he called over the tear-stained little peasant, sent the inn-

keepers son to fetch the trader, who could however **not** be discovered, and a carousal began. 'You'll sing some more for us; you'll sing to us till evening,' Addlepate kept repeating, raising his arms high in the air.

I looked at Jacob once more and went out. I had no wish to remain; I was afraid my impression might be ruined. But the heat was as unbearable as before. It appeared to hang low over the earth in a thick, heavy layer; in the dark-blue sky little points of light seemed to quiver through an extremely fine, almost black film of dust. All was still; there was something crushed and hopeless in this profound stillness of an exhausted Nature. I found my way to the hay-loft and lay down on the fresh-mown grass that was already nearly dry. For a long time I was unable to sleep; for a long time Jacob's magic voice sounded in my ears . . . finally the heat and my fatigue overcame me, and I fell into a heavy sleep. When I woke it had grown dark; the tumbled hay about me smelt strongly and was touched with moisture; through the thin poles supporting the incomplete roofing pale little stars blinked faintly. I went out. The afterglow of the sunset had long since faded, its last trace touching the horizon with a faint white gleam; but in the air, till recently red-hot, warmth was still perceptible through the cool of the night, and the breast yearned for a soothing breeze. There was no wind, there were no clouds; the sky rose all around pure and transparently blue, twinkling quietly with its numberless but hardly distinguishable stars. Lights gleamed down in the village; from the brightly-lit inn not far away came an irregular, confused uproar, in which I seemed to recognise Jacob's voice. Now and then there was a burst of fierce laughter. I went up to the window and put my face against the pane. I beheld a cheerless though colourful and animated scene: they were all drunk, Jacob included. He was sitting with bared breast on a bench, singing in a hoarse voice some sort of vulgar dance-song as he lazily strummed and plucked the strings of a guitar. His damp, matted hair hung over his deathly-pale face. In the middle of the room Addlepate, quite gone to pieces, his kaftan off, was dancing a gopak before the peasant in the grey smock; the peasant in his turn was ponderously stamping and scraping his enfeebled legs and

smiling senselessly through his tousled beard; now and then he would wave one hand, as though to say: 'Don't care what happens! ' Nothing could be funnier than his face: however much he jerked up his eyebrows, his lids, heavy as lead, would not rise, but just lay on the scarcely visible, bleared, oily little eyes. He was in the charming condition of the dead-drunk man to whom every passer, looking in his face, will say without fail: 'You've certainly had a few I' Winker, red as a beetroot, blowing out his nostrils, was chuckling venomously in the corner; Nikolay Ivanych alone, as becomes an innkeeper, preserved his equanimity. A lot of new faces had appeared in the room; but the Wild Squire I could not see.

I turned away and began to walk quickly down the hill on which Kolotovka lay. At the foot of the hill stretched a wide plain; flooded by waves of evening must it seemed even more expansive, and as it were merged with the darkened sky. I was stepping briskly down the road by the side of the ravine when from far away on the plain came the sonorous voice of a boy. 'Antropka! Antropka-a-a!' it cried, with a stubborn and tearful desperation, drawing out the last syllable endlessly.

The boy would be silent for a few minutes and then start shouting again. His voice soared musically through the motionless, lightly-slumbering air. Thirty times at least he must have cried Antropka's name when suddenly from the other side of the plain, as it were from another world, came the scarcely audible response:

'Wha-a-a-t?'

The lad's face at once cried out in joyful wrath:

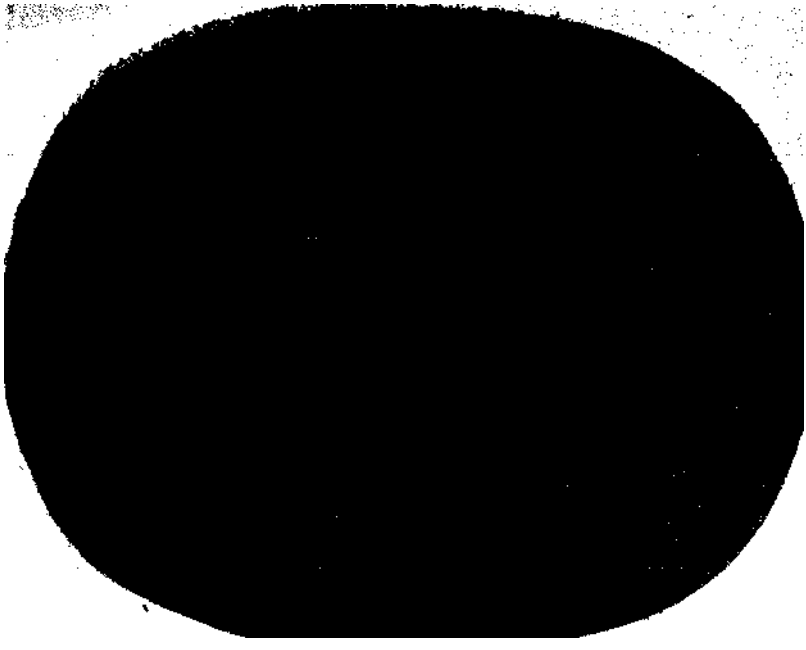
'Come here, you fie-e-e-nd!'

'Why-y-y?' came the other voice, after a long silence.

'Because father wants to tan your hi-i-i-de!' shouted the first voice.

There was no response from the other voice, and the boy again began calling on the name of Antropka. His cries, growing ever rarer, ever weaker, were stilling reaching my ears when it had already become pitch-dark and I was skirting the edge of the wood surrounding my village, four versts from Kolotovka.

'Antropka-a-a I' The cry still seemed to quiver in the shadow-filled air of night.



A STRANGE STORY

IVAN TURGENEV

Translated by Walter Morison

ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS ago (began Mr. X.) my official duties took me for a few days to the town of T. I put up at quite a decent hotel opened about six months before my arrival by a tailor of Jewish extraction who had made his pile. I don't think the place flourished for long; this is not unusual in our country, but when I put up there it was at the height of its glory: at night the new furniture cracked with a noise like pistol-shots, the bed-linen, tablecloths and napkins smelt of soap, and the recently-painted floors gave off a reek of drying oil, which, incidentally - according to the waiter, a most exquisite individual of not impeccable cleanliness - prevented the spread of vermin. This waiter, formerly Prince G.'s valet, was distinguished by his free-and-easy behaviour and his self-con-

fidence; he always wore a second-hand tail-coat and patched shoes, had a napkin on his arm and a multitude of pimples on his face, and waving his perspiring hands in wide gestures pronounced brief but edifying allocutions. Towards me, as a man capable of appreciating his education and knowledge of the world, he adopted a certain protective attitude; but he held a rather jaundiced view of his own fate. 'You know, sir," he once remarked, 'how people like myself are situated. Here to-day and gone to-morrow.' His name was Ardalion.

I had to pay a number of visits to officials in the town. This fellow Ardalion procured me a carriage and a lackey equally broken-down and threadbare; but the lackey wore livery, and the carriage had a coat-of-arms. Having made my official calls, I paid a visit to a landowner, a resident in T. for many years, who was an old friend of my father's. I hadn't seen him for twenty years or so, in the meantime he had married, raised a fairly numerous family, lost his wife and grown rich. His business was the leasing of distilleries; that is to say, he lent the lessees, at a high rate of interest, the down-payments they had to make to the Government. 'A risk is a noble thing!' - though for that matter there wasn't much risk involved. Into the room as we talked there came, with light but hesitant steps, so to speak on tiptoe, a girl of about seventeen, thin and delicate. 'This,' said my friend, 'is my eldest daughter Sophie; she has taken the place of her dear mother, runs the house, looks after the children.' I bowed for a second time to the girl, who had now silently seated herself, and it occurred to me that she little resembled a housewife or a governess. Her face was quite childish, round, with small and agreeable but immobile features, her blue eyes, beneath upraised and uneven brows that were equally motionless, held a look of keen attention, almost of surprise, as though they had begun to take note of something they had not expected to see; her puffed little mouth with its raised upper lip not only did not smile but, it appeared, was by no means in the habit of smiling; on her cheeks, in two soft and elongated patches, neither increasing nor diminishing in size, the pink blood stood out beneath the delicate skin. Her fluffy fair hair hung in light ringlets on either side of her small head

Her breast rose and fell gently, and she held her hands pressed against her narrow bodice in a way at once awkward and austere. Her blue dress fell without folds, just like a child's, on to her little feet. The general impression the girl gave was not exactly sickly, rather was it enigmatic. I saw before me not just a shy provincial young lady but a creature of a special stamp, a stamp I had not met before. She neither attracted nor repelled me; I couldn't quite make her out; what I felt was that never in my life had I encountered such absolute sincerity. Compassion . . . yes, it was compassion - God knows why! - that she aroused, this young, serious creature seemingly always on her guard. 'Not of this world,' the thought occurred to me, though strictly speaking there was nothing 'other-worldly' in her expression and Mademoiselle Sophie had clearly appeared in the drawing-room to play the part of lady of the house to which her father had alluded.

My friend began talking about life in T., the social pleasures and amenities it provided. peace and quiet,' he observed, 'the Governor is a melancholic, the Marshal of the Nobility is a bachelor. By the way, the day after to-morrow there is to be a big ball at the Assembly Rooms. I advise you to look in; this part of the world is not lacking in handsome women. And you'll see our local *intelligentsia.'*

My friend, as a university man, was fond of using learned expressions. He pronounced them ironically, but with respect Apart from which it is well known that the business of distillery-leases develops in people, besides respectability, a certain profundity of thought.

'Are *you* going to the ball?' 1 asked, addressing my friend's daughter. I wanted to hear her speak.

Tapa means to go,' she replied, 'and I shall go with him.'

She spoke in a low voice, slowly, enunciating every word as though surprised at something.

'In that case, may I have the pleasure of the first quadrille?' She bowed her head in assent, but even now she did not smile.

Soon afterwards I took my leave, and I remember that the look in her eyes, fixed watchfully upon me, struck me as so peculiar that I involuntarily glanced over my shoulder to see whether

she was looking at someone, or something, behind my back.

Having returned to my hotel and dined off the invariable *'soupe Julienne,'* cutlets with peas and a hazel-grouse so dried up as to be perfectly black, I sat down on a sofa and abandoned myself to my thoughts. It was about Sophie, my friend's rather puzzling daughter, that I was thinking; but Ardalion, who was clearing the table, interpreted my pensiveness after his own fashion: he attributed it to boredom.

'Very little in the way of amusement for gentlemen passing through the town,' he began, with his customary nonchalant condescension, at the same time continuing to flick the backs of the chairs with a dirty napkin; this napkin-flicking, it is well known, is peculiar to educated servants. 'Very little.' He was silent, and the big clock on the wall, with a lilac rose on its white dial, seemed as it were to corroborate his words with its monotonous and wheezy ticking. 'Very litt-le,' it ticked. 'No concerts, no *thee-atres,'* continued Ardalion (he had been abroad with his master, had practically been in Paris; he knew very well that only peasants say *'the-aytre'),* 'no dances, let us say, or evening receptions organised by the nobility - things of that nature are completely non-existent.' (He paused for a moment, no doubt in order to permit me to savour the choiceness of his style.) 'People meet one another at most infrequent intervals. Each sits on his pole like a Simon Stylites. And the nett result is that visitors to this locality have positively nowhere to go.'

Ardalion looked sideways at me.

'Unless, of course,' he went on, slowly, 'you happened to feel disposed to . . '

He looked at me a second time, and even smiled, but presumably failed to observe in me the necessary disposition.

The exquisite fellow withdrew to the doorway, thought for a while, returned, hesitated, bent down to my ear, and said with a playful smile:

'I suppose you wouldn't care to see a ghost?'

I looked at him in amazement.

'Yes,' he went on, now in a whisper, 'there's a fellow here

who. . . . Just a lower-class townsman, can't even read or write, and yet he does the most remarkable things. If, for instance, you pay him a visit and ask to see the ghost of anybody you ever knew, he'll make it appear before you without fail.'And how does he do t

'That's something only he knows. But although he's an unlettered man, an absolute ignoramus as you might say, he's extraordinarily gifted in anything smacking of the supernatural! The local merchants hold him in the very highest esteem.'

'And everybody in town knows about this?'

'Those who need to, know; of course, one has to be careful about the police. Because, sir, however you may look at it, it's unquestionably dabbling in forbidden things, and for simple folks it might be too much of a temptation; the common herd, as you are well aware, rolls up its sleeves at the slightest provocation."

'Has he shown *you* any ghosts?' I asked.

Ardalion nodded. 'He has indeed; he showed me my deceased father, absolutely to the life.'

I looked at him keenly. The fellow kept smiling and twiddling his napkin, all the time looking at me condescendingly but firmly.

'This is very interesting!' I cried at last 'Would it be possible for me to meet this person?'

'It can't be done directly; one has to approach him through his mother. A worthy old soul; sells steeped apples on the bridge. If you wished, I could have a word with her.'

'Please do.'

Ardalion coughed into his palm. 'It is customary, sir, to give her - this old woman, that is - a little present; just whatever you think fit, not a large sum. I for my part will explain to her that she has nothing to fear from you, as you're simply passing through the town-and of course you'll understand, sir, that this is all very private, and won't under any circumstances get her into difficulties.'

Ardalion took a tray in one hand, and gracefully wiggling the tray and his own waist headed for the door.

'So I can rely upon you?' I called after him.

'Absolutely,' came the self-confident reply. 'I'll have **a word** with the good soul and let you know exactly what she says/

I will not enlarge on the thoughts aroused in me by the strange things I had heard from Ardalion; but I must confess that I waited impatiently for the answer I had been promised Late that evening Ardalion came to see me and expressed his annoyance; he had not been able to get in touch with the old woman. By way of encouragement I gave him a three-rouble note. Next morning he appeared once more, beaming this time; the **old** woman had agreed to see me.

'Hey, boy!' cried Ardalion into the corridor. 'Hey, you, artisan! Come here!' In came a boy of about six, smeared with soot to a feline blackness, with a head so closely cropped as to be quite bald in places; he was dressed in a torn striped dressing-gown and wore huge galoshes on his bare feet. 'Take this gentleman you know where,' said Ardalion, addressing the 'artisan' and pointing to me. 'And you, sir, when you get there, ask for Matridia Karpovna.'

The lad emitted a hoarse sound, and we set out.

We walked for quite a way through the unpaved streets of T.; finally in one street, probably the most deserted and melancholy of them all, my guide stopped outside an old wooden house of two stories, wiped his nose with the whole length of his dressing-gown sleeve, and said: 'Here you are; to the right.'

I passed through the porch into the entrance-passage and gtoped my way to the right: a low door squeaked on its rusty hinges, and I saw before me a fat old woman in a brown jacket lined with rabbit fur with a coloured kerchief on her head.

'Matridia Karpovna?' I inquired.

'None other,' replied the old woman m a shrill voice. 'Please come in. Won't you take a chair?'

The room into which the old woman led me was so cluttered up with all sorts of lumber - rags, pillows, feather-beds, sacks - that it was almost impossible to turn. The sunlight had difficulty in penetrating the two dusty windows; in one corner, on a pile of boxes placed one on top of the other, there feebly whined and complained . . . goodness knows what: perhaps a

sick child, perhaps a puppy. I sat down on a chair, and the old woman stood before me. Her face was yellow, of a waxlike semi-transparency; her lips were so sunken that they simply formed one horizontal wrinkle among the countless other wrinkles; a wisp of white hair protruded from beneath her kerchief, but a pair of inflamed grey eyes peered intelligently and full of life from beneath the overhanging forehead, and her pointed little nose projected just like an awl, sniffing at the air as though to say: 'You'll not find it easy to take *me* in!'

'This woman has all her wits about her,' I thought to myself, at the same time I was conscious of the odour of vodka emanating from her.

1 explained the reason for my visit, though I could see that she knew why I had come. She listened to what I had to say, blinking her eyes rapidly, and her nose stuck out even more sharply, as though she were preparing to give a peck with it.

'I know, I know,' she said at length, 'Ardalion Matveyich was telling me; quite so; you need the help of my son Vasmka. . The only thing is that I'm wondering, good sir . . .'

'Wondering what?' I broke in. 'As far as I am concerned you may feel quite safe . . I'm not a spy '

'Goodness, my dear sir!' the old woman hurriedly replied 'How can you say such a thing? How could I dare think such things about a fine gentleman like you? And in any case, what would be the use of spying on us? Are we doing anything sinful? My son, good sir, is not such as to consent to anything impure . . . dabble in any sort of black art. . . . God forbid, and the Blessed Virgin!' (The old woman crossed herself three times.) 'He's the first keeper of fasts and sayer of prayers in the whole region; the first, worthy sir! But it's a fact that a great grace has descended upon him Well, it's the work of other hands than his. This, my dear, comes from above, indeed it does'

'You agree, then?' I asked. 'When can I see your son?'

The old woman began blinking again, and two or three times passed her rolled-up handkerchief from one sleeve to the other

'Oh dear, sir, good sir, we very much doubt . . '

'Allow me, Matridia Karpovna, to hand you this,' I interrupted, and gave her a ten-rouble note.

The old woman grasped it at once with her swollen, crooked fingers - fingers that reminded me of the fleshy claws of a screech-owl; tucked it nimbly into her sleeve, thought for a while, then, as though suddenly making up her mind, clapped her thighs with her palms.

'Come here this evening, between seven and eight/ she said, not in her usual tone but in a different voice, more serious and quieter; 'not to this room, though, but have the goodness to go straight up to the top floor; you'll see a door on the left: open ir, and you'll find yourself, good sir, in an empty room, and in this room you'll see a chair. Sit down on this chair and wait; and whatever you see don't utter a word, don't do a thing; and, above all, don't try to get into conversation with my son, for he's still very young, and he suffers from the falling sickness. It's very easy to frighten him: he starts trembling, goes on trembling like a scared hen . . . it's awful!'

1 looked at Matridia. 'You say he's young? But if he's your son . . '

'In the spirit, good sir. in the spirit! -I have many orphans about me!' she added, and nodded towards the corner whence came the squeaky lament. 'Ah, Lord God and the Holy Virgin! But you, sir, before you make your way here, have the goodness to think hard and decide which one of your deceased relatives or friends-God rest their souls! -you wish to see. Go through them all, and the one you select, keep him firmly in your mind, keep thinking about him till my son comes.'

'But mustn't I tell your son whom I . . .?'

'No, no, sir; not a word! He will discover in your thoughts everything he needs Just you keep your friend or relative firmly in your mind; and drink a drop of wine with your dinner: two or three glasses; a little wine never hurts.' The old woman laughed, licked her lips, passed her hand over her mouth and sighed.

'At half past seven, then?' I said, rising from my seat.

'Half past seven it is, good sir; half past seven,' replied Matridia Karpovna reassuringly.

I said good-bye to the old woman and returned to my hotel. I had no doubt at all that I was going to be hoodwinked, but I

was curious to know just how. With Ardalion I barely exchanged a couple of words. 'She's willing?' he asked, frowning; and when I replied in the affirmative, 'The woman's a genius!' he exclaimed. Taking the advice of the 'genius' I began to pass my dead over in my mind. After some hesitation I at last picked on an old Frenchman who had died years before, my former tutor. I chose him not because I had ever felt any great affection for him, but because he was so unusual in appearance, so unlike the men of to-day, that to simulate him would have been quite out of the question. He had a huge head, fluffy white hair brushed back, bushy black eyebrows, a hooked nose and two large lilac-coloured warts in the middle of his forehead; he wore a green tail-coat with flat brass buttons, a striped waistcoat with a stiff collar, a stock and cuffs. 'If he can show me my old Dessere,' I thought, 'it will have to be admitted that he's a wizard!'

At dinner, as the old woman had advised, I drank a bottle of Lafite, best quality according to Ardalion, though it tasted strongly of burnt cork and left a thick sediment at the bottom of each glass.

At exactly half past seven I was before the house in which I had conversed with the worthy Matridia Karpovna. All the shutters were drawn, but the door was ajar. I went into the house, climbed the rickety staircase to the upper floor, and opening a door on the left found myself, as the old woman had said, in a completely empty and fairly large room. A tallow candle on the window-sill shed a faint illumination; by the wall facing the door stood a cane-bottomed chair. I snuffed the candle, which badly needed it, sat down on the chair and began to wait.

The first ten minutes passed fairly quickly; in the room there was absolutely nothing to attract my attention; but I listened carefully to every rustle, looked fixedly at the closed door. After the first ten minutes another ten passed; then half an hour; three quarters - not a sign of anything! I coughed several times to make my presence known; I was beginning to feel bored, angry: to be hoodwinked *like this* was not at all what I had bargained on. I was already preparing to rise from my seat, take

the candle from the window-sill and make my way downstairs. . . . I looked at the candle; the wick had again sooted over in the shape of a mushroom; but when I shifted my gaze from the window to the door I could not repress a start of surprise: leaning against the door stood a man. He had entered so lightly and noiselessly that I hadn't heard a sound.

He wore a plain blue jacket; he was of medium height and fairly full in the body. His hands behind his back, his head bent forward, he stood there looking at me. In the dim light of the candle I could not distinguish his features; all I could see was a shock of tangled hair falling over his forehead, thick, slightly twisted lips and eyes with practically colourless irises. I was about to address him when I remembered Matridia Karpovna's injunction, and bit my lip. The man who had entered continued to look at me; I looked back at him, and - strange to tell ~ at one and the same time I began to feel afraid and slowly, as though obeying a command, to think about my old tutor. *He* continued to stand by the door, breathing heavily, just as though he were climbing a hill or raising a heavy burden, and his eyes seemed to widen, seemed to draw nearer to me - and I felt uncomfortable under this fixed, heavy and menacing gaze; at times the eyes blazed with an evil inner fire; I have seen a similar light in the eyes of a borzoi when it 'fixes' a hare, and like a borzoi *he* constantly followed my eyes with *his* whenever I tried to look away.

How long passed like this I do not know: perhaps a minute, perhaps a quarter of an hour. He continued to look at me; I continued to feel a certain embarrassment and fear, and kept thinking about my Frenchman. Two or three times I tried to say to myself: 'What nonsense! What a farce!'; I tried to smile, to shrug my shoulders. . . . In vain! Every resolve I made at once 'froze' -I cannot find a better word to describe it. A sort of numbness overcame me. Suddenly I noticed that *he* had moved away from the door and now stood a step or two nearer to me; then he gave a little hop, both legs together, and was nearer still. . . . Then another hop nearer . . . then another; and his dreadful eyes were fastened upon my face, his hands re-

mained behind his back, his broad chest breathed stertorously. These little hops struck me as funny, but I also felt creepy, and - this I am quite unable to understand - I also began to be overcome by drowsiness. My eyelids began to stick together. . . . I seemed to see it double, the figure with its blue jacket and its shock of hair and its pallid eyes - and suddenly it completely disappeared! . . . I gave a start: *he* was once more standing between me and the door, but now much closer to me than before. . . . Then he disappeared again, as though enveloped in mist; appeared once more . . . vanished again . . . reappeared . . . and ever nearer and nearer. . . . His heavy, almost panting breath nearly reached me. , . . Again the mist descended, and suddenly from this mist, beginning with the white hair *en brosse,* there clearly began to appear before me the head of old Dessere! Yes: there were his warts, his black eyebrows, his hooked nose! There was his green tail-coat with the brass buttons, and his striped waistcoat, and his stock. . . . I gave a cry, started from my chair. . . . The old man vanished, and in his place I once more saw the man in the blue jacket. He staggered to the wall, leant his head and his two hands against it, and panting like a broken-winded horse gasped: 'Some tea!' Appearing from nowhere, Matridia Karpovna rushed over to him, and muttering 'Vasmka! Vasinka!' began carefully to wipe away the sweat that was streaming from his hair and face. 1 was going to approach her, but she cried out, in so convincing, so heart-rending a voice: 'Sir, dear dear sir, do not destroy him; go away for Christ's sake!' that I obeyed; and she turned once more to her son. 'There, there, ducky!' she soothed him; 'you shall have some tea straight away! - And you, sir, have some tea too when you get home!' she cried after me.

Returning home I did as Matridia Karpovna had said and ordered some tea: I felt tired - exhausted even. 'Well, how about it?' asked Ardalion. 'Did you go? Did you see anything?'

'He certainly made me see something . . . something I must confess I hadn't expected,' I replied.

'A man of great powers!' observed Ardalion as he bore away the samovar. 'Our merchants hold him in the very hi-i-ighest esteem!'

Undressing, I thought about what had happened, and finally imagined that I had arrived at an explanation. This man unquestionably possessed considerable hypnotic powers; acting on my nerves in a way I could of course not fathom, he had awoken in me so clear, so definite an image of the old man I was thinking about that it had finally seemed to me that I saw him before me. . . . Such 'metastases ' - transferences of sensations - are known to science. Very well; but the power capable of- producing such effects nevertheless remained something amazing and mysterious. 'Whatever one may say, with my own eyes I saw my deceased tutor!'

Next day the ball at the Assembly Rooms took place. Sophie's father looked in and reminded me of the promise I had made his daughter. Before ten o'clock I was already standing at her side in the middle of a hall illuminated by a quantity of brass lamps, ready to perform the simple steps of a French quadrille to the stormy wailings of a military band Crowds of people had come; ladies were particularly numerous, and some of them extremely good-looking: but the palm would undoubtedly have been carried off by my partner had it not been for the rather strange, even rather wild look in her eyes. I observed that she very rarely blinked; the unquestionable expression of sincerity in her eyes did not redeem what was unusual in them. But she was beautifully formed, and moved gracefully though shyly. When she was waltzing, leaning her body back slightly and bending her slender neck towards her right shoulder as though wishing to get as far as possible from her partner, it was impossible to imagine anything more touchingly youthful and pure. She was dressed all in white, with a little turquoise cross on a black ribbon.

1 invited her to a mazurka and tried to make her talk. But she replied briefly and reluctantly, though she listened attentively, with the same expression of pensive wonder that had struck me the first time I saw her. Not a trace of coquetry, at her age and with her looks; and the unsmiling lips, and those eyes, fixed constantly and penetratingly on her interlocutor- eyes which at the same time seemed to see something else, to be preoccupied with something else. . . What a strange creature!

At length, finding no other way to arouse her, I thought of telling her my adventure of the day before.

She heard me to the end with obvious interest, but-what I had not at all expected - was not surprised by my narrative, and merely asked me whether *he* was called Vasily. I remembered hearing the old woman address him as 'Vasinka.'

'Yes, his name is Vasily.' I replied; 'you don't know him, do you?'

'There lives here a God-fearing man named Vasily,' she said;. 'I wondered whether it might be he.'

'Fear of God has nothing to do with it,' I observed; 'it's simply a question of hypnotism - a phenomenon of interest to medical men and students of nature.'

I began to expound my views on the special force known as hypnotism, on the possibility of subjecting the will of one person to that of another, and so on; but my admittedly rather rambling explanations did not appear to make any impression on the girl. She listened, her hands clasped in her lap with a motionless fan between them; she did not play with the fan, did not move her fingers, and I felt that all my words were rebounding from her as from a stone statue. She understood them, but she obviously had her own unshakable and ineradicable convictions.

'You surely don't allow of miracles?' I exclaimed.

'Certainly I do,' she said calmly. 'How is it possible not to? Doesn't it say in the Gospel that whoever has a mustard-seed of faith can move mountains? All one needs *is* faith - and miracles will occur,'

'There obviously isn't much faith about, these days,' I retorted: 'somehow one doesn't seem to hear of miracles!'

'And yet they occur; you yourself witnessed one. No; there is no lack of faith in our days, and the beginning of faith is . . .'

'The beginning of wisdom is fear of God,' I interrupted.

'The beginning of faith,' continued Sophie, not at all put out, 'is self-sacrifice . . . the annihilation of self !'

'Even that?' I asked.

'Yes. Human pride, arrogance, haughtiness - that's what must be rooted out. You just mentioned the will. . . . That, too, must

be broken.'

I cast my eyes over the figure of the young girl who was uttering these words. . . . 'And she's not joking!' I thought to myself. I glanced at our neighbours in the mazurka: they also looked at me, and it seemed that my surprise caused them some amusement; one of them even smiled sympathetically at me, as though to say: 'Well, what do you think of our cranky young lady? Everybody here knows she's like that.'

'Have you tried to break your own will?' I asked Sophie.

'Each must do what seems right to him,' she replied, in a sort of dogmatic tone.

'Permit me to ask you,' I began after a slight pause, 'whether you believe in the possibility of evoking the dead.'

She quietly shook her head.

'There *are* no dead.'

'How do you mean?'

'The soul never dies; it is immortal, and can appear whenever it desires. . . . We are constantly surrounded by souls.'

'What? You suppose that, for instance, an immortal soul may at this moment be hovering over that major with the red nose?'

'Why not? The sunlight shines on him and his nose; and is not sunlight, every light, from God? For the pure nothing is impure! All one must do is find a teacher I Find a guide!'

'Come, come!' I interrupted, not, I admit, without a certain malice. 'You want a guide . . . but what about your priest?'

Sophie looked at me coldly.

'I think you're laughing at me. The priest tells me what I must do; but I need a guide who will show me by his own acts how to sacrifice myself!'

She raised her eyes to the ceiling. With her childish face and her expression of immobile pensiveness, of a constant, secret surprise, she reminded me of a Madonna by one of Raphael's predecessors.

'I read somewhere,' she went on, not turning to me and barely moving her lips, 'that a certain great man gave instructions that he was to be buried beneath the church porch so that everyone entering the church should trample on him . . . spurn him. . . . One ought to do something like that while still alive. . . .'

Boom! boom! tra-ra-ra! thundered the kettledrums from the gallery. ... I must confess that a conversation like this at a ball struck me as being extremely eccentric; it involuntarily roused in me thoughts of a nature . . . anything but religious. I profited by my partner's invitation to one of the figures of the mazurka not to renew our quasi-religious arguments.

A quarter of an hour later I took Sophie back to her father, and a couple of days later I left the town of T. The image of the girl with the childish face and the impenetrable, as it were stony soul soon faded from my memory.

Two years elapsed, and this image was destined once again to rise before me. What happened was that I was talking to a colleague who had just returned from a trip through the South of Russia. He had spent some time in the town of T., and he told me a few things about the local inhabitants. 'By the way,' he exclaimed, 'I believe you know V.G.B. quite well?'

'I do/

'And you know his daughter Sophie?

'I met her twice.'

'Fancy: she's run away!'

'What do you mean?'

'Just what I say. Been missing for three months. And the strange thing is that no one knows who she ran away with. Just think: no one can guess, no one has the faintest suspicion! She had turned down all her suitors. And her behaviour was most reserved. It's always the way with those quiet ones, those religious cranks! A terrible scandal; B.'s in despair. . . . And what need had she to run away? Her father indulged her every wish. What's most amazing is that all the local Lovelaces have been accounted for.'

'And she hasn't been traced yet?'

'Absolutely disappeared into thin air! One marriageable heiress less-that's the worst thing about it!'

This news greatly surprised me. It did not at all fit the memory I had preserved of Sophie B. But the queerest things happen

In the autumn of the same year fate took me, once more on

business, to the Government of S., which, as" everyone knows, adjoins the Government of T. The weather was cold and rainy; the exhausted post-horses could scarcely drag my light carriage through the churned-up mud of the highroad. I remember that one day was particularly depressing: three times we sank up to the axletrees; my driver kept abandoning one rut and, encouraging the horses with shouts and wails, slithering over into another; but there too the going was no easier. In short, I was so exhausted when evening came that when we reached the post-house I determined to stay the night at the inn. I was given a room with a broken-down wooden divan, a slanting floor and torn wallpaper; it smelt of kvass, bast matting, onions and even turpentine, and there were swarms of flies; but at least it provided shelter from the weather, and the rain had obviously set in for days. I ordered a samovar, and sitting down on the divan abandoned myself to the cheerless wayside thoughts so familiar to the traveller in Russia

They were interrupted by a dull knocking-noise that proceeded from the general room separated from mine by a wooden partition. This knocking was accompanied by an irregular, sonorous clanging like the clanking of chains, and suddenly a coarse male voice yelled out. 'God bless all those dwelling in this place! God bless them I God bless them! Amen, amen-shoo!' repeated the voice, strangely and wildly drawing out the last syllable of each word. . . . There was a noisy sigh, and with the same clanking a heavy body slumped on to a bench.

'Akulina! Servant of God, come here!' the voice began again; 'behold me, blessed in my nakedness. . . . Ha-ha-ha!' - The noise of a spit. -'Lord God, Lord God, Lord God!' bellowed the voice, like somebody singing in a choir; 'Lord God, Master of my life, behold my misery! . . . O-ho-ho! Ha-ha!' -A spit. - 'Blessings on this house in the seventh hour! '

'Who is that' I asked my full-bosomed hostess, who had come in with the samovar.

'That, my dear sir,' she replied in a hurried whisper, 'is a blessed man, a man of God. He appeared in our parts not long since; deigned to visit us too-fancyI And with the weather like this! The rain's simply pouring from the sweet man!

And you ought to see his chains - enormous!'

'God bless us! God bless us!' came the voice again. 'Akulina! Hey, Akulina, Akulinushka my dear! Tell me, where is our paradise? Our beautiful paradise? In the wilderness is our paradise . . . our paradise. . . . And on this dwelling, at the beginning of this age, a great gladness shall ... oh ... oh .. . oh . . .'The voice mumbled something unintelligible, and suddenly, after a protracted yawn, there came a hoarse bellow of laughter. This laughter burst forth each time as it were involuntarily, and each time it was followed by an indignant expectoration.

'Oh dear, oh dear! And Stepanych not here! What a misfortune!' the landlady said more or less to herself, standing by the door and giving every sign of profound attention. 'The blessed man will utter a word of salvation, and I poor woman won't understand.' Quickly she went out

There was a chink in the partition; I put my eye to it. The half-witted pilgrim sat on a bench with his back to me: all I could see was a hairy head, huge as a beer-cauldron, and a broad bowed back under a patched and sodden gown. Behind him on the earthen floor knelt a frail-looking woman in an old jacket equally drenched, on her head a dark kerchief pulled down almost over her eyes. She was trying to pull the boot from the half-wit's foot; her fingers kept slipping on the slimy, filth-smeared leather. The landlady stood by her, her hands folded on her breast, gazing in awe at the 'man of God.' The latter continued to mumble unintelligible words.

Finally the kneeling woman managed to tug off the boot. She nearly fell over backwards, but pulled herself up and began unwinding the cloth wrappings from the half-wit's foot. On the instep there was a sore. ... I turned away.

'Won't you let me get you a nice cup of tea, you dear man?' came the landlady's fawning voice.

'What an idea!' retorted the half-wit. 'Indulging the sinful body . . . O-ho-ho! All its bones should be crushed . . . and she offers tea! Oh, oh, worthy old woman, powerful is the Satan in us! He suffers cold and hunger, the windows of the heavens are opened on him, the pouring rain wets him to the marrow, and

he don't mind-just goes on livingl Remember the Feast of the Intercession! Much shall be granted thee-much I'

The landlady gave a slight gasp of amazement.

"But do what I tell thee! Give everything away-give thy head away, give thy shirt away! Even though they beg not, give! For God sees all. . . . Does it take long to sweep away the roof? The Lord God has given thee bread; well, place it in the oven! And God sees all! A-a-all! Whose eye is it in the triangle, eh? Tell me whose eye it is!'

Beneath the kerchief on her bosom the landlady surreptitiously crossed herself.

'The devil of olden times, Adamantus! A-da-man-tus!' the half-wit kept repeating, grinding his teeth. 'The ancient serpent! Well, may God be resurrected! May He be resurrected, and His enemies scattered! I will call up all the dead, I will raise an host against His enemy . . . Ha-ha-ha!' -A spit.

'You haven't a little drop of oil,' said another voice, almost inaudibly, 'that I could put on his wound? I have a piece of clean rag/

I looked through the chink again: the woman in the jacket was still busying herself with the half-wit's foot. . . . 'Magdalene! ' I thought.

'At once, my dear, at once!' said the landlady; and coming into my room she took a spoonful of oil from the lamp hanging before the ikon.

'Who is the woman serving him?' I asked.

'We don't know, good sir, who she is; seeking salvation too, no doubt; atoning for her sins. But what a holy man he is!'

'Akulinushka, my sweetest child, dearest daughter of mine,' the half-wit meanwhile kept repeating, and suddenly he burst into tears.

The kneeling woman raised her eyes to him. . . . Heavens, where had I seen those eyes?

The landlady went up to her with the spoonful of oil. The woman completed her operation, and rising from the floor asked whether there wasn't a clean storeroom somewhere, a little hay. . . . 'Vasily Nikitich likes sleeping on hay,' she added.

'Of course there is,' said the landlady. 'Come with me, my dear/ she went on, addressing the half-wit; 'dry yourself and

have a good rest.' The man grunted, rose slowly from the bench, his chains clanking; and turning his face in my direction, seeking the ikon with his eyes, he began to cross himself with a wide gesture.

I recognised him at once; it was the townsman Vasily who had conjured up my deceased tutor.

His features had changed very little, but his expression had become even more unusual, more terrible. . . . The lower part of his swollen face was covered by a tousled beard. Ragged, dirty, neglected, he inspired in me disgust rather than horror. He ceased crossing himself, but continued to let his eyes wander stupidly about the corners of the room, over the floor, just as though he were waiting for something. . . .

'Vasily Nikitich, please come along,' said the woman in the jacket, bowing low before him. The man suddenly gave his head a violent shake, and turning tripped and staggered. . . . His companion leapt up to him and put her hand under his arm. Judging by her voice and her figure she was still a young woman; her face was almost invisible.

'Akulinushka, my dear!' said the half-wit in a sort of heart-rending voice, and opening his mouth wide and beating his breast he gave a dull groan that seemed to proceed from the bottom of his soul. Then the two followed the landlady out of the room.

I lay down on my hard divan and thought for a long time about what I had seen. My hypnotist had become a half-witted vagrant. To this he had been led by a force it was impossible to deny he possessed.

Next day I prepared to leave. It was still pouring with rain, but I could delay no longer. Over the face of my servant as he handed me a towel there flickered a peculiar smile of repressed irony. I well understood this smile: it signified that my servant had learnt something to the detriment of the master-class, even something indecent about them. He was obviously burning with impatience to tell me what it was.

'Well, what is it?' I asked at length.

'Did you see the half-wit yesterday?' my servant replied at once.

'I did; what about him?'

'And did you also see his companion?'

'Yes/

'Well, she's a lady; of noble birth.'

'What!'

'It's the truth I'm telling you; some merchants from T. passed through to-day, and they recognised her. Even gave her name, but I've forgotten it

Like a lightning-flash a thought struck me. 'Is the half-wit still here or has he left?' I asked.

'Still here, I fancy. Just now he was sitting at the gate occupied in some mysterious business I couldn't make head or tail of. Getting as fat as a pig, he is; this sort of existence suits him down to the ground.'

My man belonged to the same class of educated servant as Ardalion.

'And is the young lady with him?'

'Indeed she is; keeping watch over him.'

I went out to the porch and saw the half-wit. He was sitting on a bench at the gate, and pressing both his hands on it was swinging his head from side to side, just like a caged beast. His thick curly hair hung over his eyes and swayed this way and that like his pendulous lips, from which there issued a strange, almost inhuman murmur. His companion had just washed her face from a pitcher hanging on a pole, and her head still uncovered was making her way back to the gate along a narrow plank laid across the dark pools of the muck-yard. I looked at the bared head, and clasped my hands in amazement. ... It was Sophie!

She turned quickly and fixed on me a pair of blue eyes as motionless as ever. She had grown very thin, her skin had coarsened and taken on the yellowish-red tinge of sunburn, her nose had sharpened and her lips were more clearly cut. She hadn't grown ugly, though; but to the former, pensively-wondering expression there had been added another, a determined, almost bold expression of concentrated ecstasy. Of anything childish in these features there was not a trace.

I approached her. 'Sophia Vladimirovna,' I cried; 'is it really

you? In these garments ... in this company.

She started, looked at me yet more attentively, as if wishing to identify the person who had addressed her, and without a word rushed to her companion.

'Akulinushka,' the man stammered, sighing heavily; 'our sins, our heavy sins! . . .'

'Vasily Nikitich, let us go at once! Do you hear, at once!' she said, with one hand pulling the kerchief over her forehead and with the other taking the half-wit by the elbow. 'Let us go, Vasily Nikitich! It's dangerous here!'

'I'll come, my dear, I'll come,' the half-wit replied submissively, and bending his whole body forward he rose from the bench. 'I must just tie up my chains. . . .'

I approached Sophie once more and told her my name, and I begged her to listen, to say but one word to me; I pointed out the pouring rain, besought her to think of her own health and that of her companion, spoke of her father. . . . But she was possessed by a sort of evil, merciless exaltation. Paying me no attention, clenching her teeth and breathing irregularly, with commanding words uttered in a low voice she kept urging the confused half-wit; she fastened his belt, tied up his chains, pulled on his head a child's hat of cloth with a broken peak, thrust his stick into his hand, threw a bag over her shoulder and went with him through the gate and out into the street. . . . I had no right to stop her, nor would it have served any purpose; and at my last despairing cry she did not even turn her head. Holding the 'man of God' under the arm she stepped quickly through the black mud of the street, and a few moments later, through the dull mist of morning, the fine mesh of the falling rain, for the last time I glimpsed the two figures, the half-wit and Sophie. . . . Then they turned the corner of a hut, and vanished from sight.

I returned to my room. Heavy thoughts pressed upon me. I just couldn't understand. I couldn't understand how a well-educated, wealthy young girl could throw up everything and everybody, her home, her family, abandon all her habits, renounce the conveniences of her life-for what? To trail round after a half-witted vagrant, act as his slave. Not for a moment

was it possible to believe that her decision had been prompted by any sort of affection, by a perhaps perverse attraction, love, passion. . . . One look at the repulsive figure of the 'man of God' sufficed to banish the notion! No, Sophie had remained pure; and, as she had once told me, for her there was nothing impure. I could not understand her behaviour; but neither did I condemn it, just as later on I did not condemn other girls who sacrificed everything to what *they* considered right, in which *they* saw their vocation. I could not but regret that Sophie had chosen *this* path; but to refuse her admiration, respect even, was beyond my powers. Not in vain had she spoken to me of self-sacrifice, the annihilation of self . . . in *her* case words and deeds had been identical. She sought a guide, a leader, and she had found one . . . my God, in whom!

Yes, she had let herself be trampled underfoot. . . . Later on I heard that the family had at length succeeded in tracing the lost sheep and bringing her home. But there she lived only a short time, and died without uttering a word.

Peace to thy heart, thou wretched and mysterious creature! - Vasily Nikitich is probably continuing his crazy wanderings; the iron health of such people is indeed amazing. Unless perhaps epilepsy has done for him . . .

AN HONEST THIEF

FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF AN UNKNOWN

FEODOR DOSTOEVSKY

Translated by Walter Morison

ONE MORNING when I was just going to work, my cook, washerwoman and housekeeper Agrafena came into my room and to my great surprise began talking to me.

Hitherto she had been so taciturn and simple-minded a woman that apart from the couple of words a day about what she should get for dinner she had hardly said a thing to me for six years or more. At least, I hadn't heard.

'I'd like a word with you, sir,' she burst out. 'You ought to let a room.'

'What room?'

'Why, the one next to the kitchen. You know the one!'

'And why should I let it?'

'Why? Well, people do. You know very well why!'

'And who would take it?'

'Who would take it? A lodger, of course! Who d'you think?'

'But my dear woman, there's not even room for a bed; far too pokey. Who could think of living there?'

'Why should he live there? All he'd need would be somewhere to sleep; he can live in the window.'

'In the window? Which window?'

'You know very well which window! The one in the hall. He'll sit there, do his tailoring or what not. Or he can sit on a chair. He's got a chair, and a table, too; he's got everything.'

'And what sort of a person is he?'

'A very decent sort of person; knocked about a bit. I'll cook his dinners. And for his room and board I'll only charge three roubles a month.'

By means of a prolonged interrogation I learnt that a certain elderly man had persuaded or otherwise induced Agrafena to admit him to her kitchen as boarder and lodger. What Agrafena had got into her head simply had to be done; otherwise, as I knew, she would give me no peace. Whenever anything was not to her liking she would at once become very pensive, fall into a profound melancholy, and continue in this condition for two or three weeks. At such times the cooking was bad, the washing went astray, the floors remained unscoured; in a word, things were very unpleasant generally. I had long ago observed that this wordless woman was quite incapable of making her mind up about anything, fastening upon a thought of her own. But if in her feeble brain there formed in some fortuitous way something in the nature of an idea, an undertaking, then to refuse her its putting into operation was equivalent to killing her morally for a time. And so, loving nothing more than my peace and comfort, I agreed.

'Has he at least some sort of papers, a passport or anything like that?'

'Naturally he has! He's a decent fellow, been about a bit; he's promised to pay three roubles.'

Next day the new lodger appeared in my modest bachelor-quarters; and I wasn't annoyed, even felt glad. Generally speaking, I lead a solitary existence, am in fact quite a recluse. I have hardly any acquaintances; I rarely go out. After ten years

of this sort of existence I had become used to solitude. But another ten or fifteen years or perhaps even longer of this solitude, with the same Agrafena, in the same flat, was certainly a cheerless prospect! To be joined by someone who wouldn't cause me any trouble was in the circumstances something to be thankful for.

Agrafena had not lied; my lodger had certainly knocked about a bit. It appeared from his passport that he had once been a soldier, and this could be recognised, even without looking at his passport, from the first glance at his face. An old soldier is easily spotted. Astafy Ivanovich, my lodger, was a nice chap when you got to know him. We got on well together. The best thing of all was that Astafy Ivanovich would sometimes tell stories, occurrences from his own life. In view of the normal dullness of my existence a story-teller of the sort was an absolute godsend. A story he once told me made a certain impression on me. This is how he came to tell it:

One day I was alone in the flat, both Astafy and Agrafena having gone out about their business. Suddenly I heard from the other room that someone had come in, a stranger as it seemed to me; I went out: in the hall there stood a strange man, a short fellow, wearing a thin overcoat despite the cold autumn weather.

'What do you want?'

'Does Mr. Alexander the official live here?'

'No. Good morning!'

'But the porter told me he did,' said my visitor, cautiously withdrawing towards the door.

'Come, fellow, be off with you!'

Next day after lunch, when Astafy Ivanovich was trying on me a coat of mine he was altering, someone again entered the hall. I half-opened the door.

As I watched, the visitor of the day before in the calmest way imaginable took my winter overcoat from its peg, tucked it under his arm and made his way out of the flat. Agrafena had been looking at him all the time, her mouth agape with amazement, and doing nothing at all to save the coat. Astafy Ivanovich dashed after the rascal and returned ten minutes later out of breath and empty-handed. The fellow had simply disappeared!

'Bad luck, Astafy Ivanovich. It's a good job *your* overcoats safe. Otherwise he'd have left us in a pretty pickle, the rogue I'

But Astafy Ivanovich was so overcome by what had happened that, looking at him, I quite forgot about the theft. He simply couldn't get over it. He would keep throwing down the work he was busy on, starting to tell the story all over again, how it had all happened, how he had stood there and beneath his very eyes, at two paces from him, the overcoat had been taken, and how it had come about that the fellow could not be caught. Then he again sat down to his work, only to cast it aside a moment later; and finally I saw him go down to the porter to tell him about it and to reproach him for allowing such goings-on in a house under his care. Then he came back and began to scold Agrafena. After that he started work again, but for a long time he went on muttering to himself about how it had all happened, how he had been standing here and I there, and how under his very eyes, two paces away, the coat had been taken, and so on. In a word, Astafy Ivanovich, though he knew how to do a job of work, was a most fiddlesome fuss-pot.

'We've been done, Astafy Ivanovich!' I said to him that evening as I handed him a glass of tea, wishing in my boredom to elicit once more the story of the purloined overcoat, which from its frequent repetition and the profound sincerity of the narrator was beginning to become quite comical.

'We have indeed, sir! I can't help feeling annoyed, though it was your coat and not mine; makes me absolutely furious. In my opinion there's no worse reptile in the world than a thief. Others may take things from you and not pay much, but a thief steals your very labour, the sweat of your brow shed on his behalf, your time. . . . Sickening! Can't bear to talk about it; it makes me wild. A man can't help regretting his own property.'

'Quite true, Astafy Ivanovich; it's better that a thing should be burnt than that one should have to give it up to a thief - goes quite against the grain.'

'Indeed it does! Of course, sir, there are thieves and thieves. It once happened to me, sir, to run into an honest thief.''How d'you mean, hon Ivanovich?'

'Very true, sir. There's no such thing as an honest thief. What

I meant was that the fellow seemed to be an honest man; and yet he stole. You really felt sorry for him.'

'What happened, then, Astafy Ivanovich?'

'It was about two years ago, sir. I was out of a job for nearly a year, but while I was still in my old job I got to know a fellow who had quite gone to the dogs. We happened to get into talk at a pub. He was a regular drunkard, a down-and-out, a sponger; he had once had a Government job somewhere, but had long ago been sacked for drunkenness. Such a worthless fellow! And the clothes he went about in! Sometimes you'd wonder whether he had a shirt on underneath his greatcoat; every stitch he possessed went in drink. Yet he wasn't a tough character; he was a quiet little chap, good-natured and affectionate, and he was simply incapable of begging-felt ashamed to; but you'd see that the poor fellow was dying for a drink, and so you'd stand him one. Well, as I say, I got friendly with him, or rather he attached himself to me . . . I didn't mind. And what an extraordinary fellow he was! He'd get as attached to you as a dog; wherever you went he'd be following you, and this happened to me after we'd only met once. First he asked to be allowed to spend the night; well, I let him; I saw that his passport was in order, and he seemed all right. Then, next day, he asked to stay the night again, and the third day he came and sat in the window all day, and stayed that night too. Well, I thought to myself, this is really getting a bit. . . . Feed him, and pay for his drinks, and let him stay the night - I'm a poor man, and now I've got another mouth to feed! Before this, he had been hanging about a chap in a Government job in just the same way; attached himself to the fellow, and they were always drinking together; but the chap became a regular drunkard and died of some sort of secret sorrow. Well, this fellow of mine was called Emelyan Ilyich - Emelya for short. I kept thinking and thinking: What am I going to do with him? At the idea of driving him away I felt ashamed; I was sorry for the fellow: he was such a wretched, down-and-out cove that you felt quite ill to look at him. And such a silent customer: he'd never think of asking for anything but just sit there, looking at you with eyes like a dog. You see what drink can bring you to! I thought to myself: How can I possibly say to him, Clear off, Emelya;

there's nothing doing up this street; you've knocked at the wrong door; I shan't have a bite to eat myself soon, so how can I afford to support you? I'd think to myself as I sat there, What on earth would he do if I said something of the sort? And I could picture to myself how he would look at me lor a long time when he heard my words, how he would sit there not understanding a thing, and how when at last it sank in he would get up from the window, take his little bundle -I can still see it: checked it was, red, with holes in it, heaven knows what he used to wrap up in it, but he always carried it about with him - how he would straighten out his old overcoat so as to look respectable and keep warm and not have the holes showing; such a fastidious fellow he was! How he would then open the door and step out on to the staircase, with a tear trickling down his cheek. Well, you couldn't let a fellow go utterly to the dogs . . . you felt sorry for him. And what about me? I thought. Just wait, Emelya! I said to myself; you won't be able to feast at my expense much longer; I shall soon be moving, and then you will have to shift for yourself. Well, sir, I *did* move; Alexander Filipovich, my master (he's dead now, God rest his soul!), says to me: "I'm very pleased with you, Astafy; when we all come back from the country we shan't forget about you; we'll employ you again." You see, I was a steward of theirs; he was a good master, but he died that same year. Well, when we had seen them off to the country I took my goods and chattels, and a little bit of money I had put by, and I thought to myself, I'll have a bit of a rest, and I went to see an old woman I knew and rented a corner from her. The only corner she had free. She had been a nurse somewhere, and now was living by herself on a pension. Well, I say to myself, good-bye now, Emelya my dear, you've seen the last of me! And what do you think, sir? I came home one evening- I had been visiting friends-and the first thing I saw was Emelya sitting as large as life on my trunk, his little bundle at his side, wearing his old overcoat, waiting for me . . . and while he waited he had even borrowed a prayer-book from the old woman, and was holding it upside down. So he'd found me after all! My arms sank in dismay. Well, I thought, there's nothing to be done; why didn't I get rid of him right at the start? And the first thing I said was: "Have you brought your

passpoit, Emelya?"

'And now I sat down and began thinking: Is this poor vagabond really going to be such a nuisance to me? And when I thought it over, it seemed to me that he wouldn't. He'd have to have a bite to eat. Well, a crust of bread in the morning, and to make it tastier I must get some onions. And a little more bread for him at midday, and some onions; and for supper he can have onions and kvass, and a crust of bread if he wants it. And if there happens to be a little cabbage-soup left over, there will be more than enough for the two of us. I'm not a great eater; and a drunkard, as you know, eats nothing: all he wants is his drink. He'll ruin me with his drinking, I thought; and then something else came into my head and simply shattered me. If Emelya were to go away, I realised, life would lose all its colour. ... I then and there resolved to be a father and benefactor to him. I'll hold him back from ruin, I thought to myself; I'll teach him to scorn the cup! Wait a minute, I thought, Emelya; stay, but mind that you stick to me from now on, and do as I tell you!

'And so I thought to myself that I'd teach him some sort of job; but not all of a sudden - I'd let him relax first, and meanwhile I would keep my eyes skinned and see if I couldn't find something to suit him. Because, sir, to do anything, you first of all need the human capacity. And so I started studying him on the sly. And I saw: You're a desperate character, Emelya! I began by saying a kind word to him: "So-and-so," I said to him, "Emelyan Ilyich, you ought to keep an eye on yourself and see if you can't pull yourself together.

' "It's time to give up the booze. Just look, you're walking about in rags; your overcoat, if you'll excuse the expression, is good for nothing but a sieve. It won't do! It's really time to draw the line." He sits there listening to me, his head bowed, does my Emelya. Fancy, sir! things had gone so far that he'd drunk away the capacity to speak, couldn't have said a sensible thing to save his life. You'd start talking to him about cucumbers, and he'd come back with a reference to beans. He listens to me, listens for a long time, and then he sighs. "Why are you sighing, Emelyan Ilyich?" I ask.

' "It's nothing, Astafy Ivanovich; don't worry. But to-day two

peasant-women had a fight in the street; one of them had accidentally upset the other's basket of cranberries."

' "And what happened?"

' "Well, the other one upset the *other* one's basket, on purpose, and started stamping on it."

' "And then, Emelyan Ilyich?"

' "Why, nothing, Astafy Ivanovich. I just mentioned it."

'You just mentioned it! I say to myself. Goodness, poor old Emelya, what a state drink has brought you to I

' "Another time a gentleman dropped some money on the pavement in Gorokhovaya Street-I mean Sadovaya Street. A peasant saw it and said, Bags I! and another peasant saw it and said, No, bags I! I saw it before you did."

' "Well, Emelyan Ilyich?"

' "Well, the peasants started fighting, Astafy Ivanovich. And a policeman came up, picked up the money and gave it to the gentleman who had dropped it, and threatened to take both the peasants to the lock-up."

' "Well, and what about it? What is there so very edifying in that, Emelya?"

' "Why, nothing. People were laughing; that's all, Astafy Ivanovich."

' "Oh dear, Emelya I Supposing they were? How can you get so worked up over trifles? D'you know what I'm going to say to you, Emelyan Ilyich?"

' "What, Astafy Ivanovich?"

' "You ought to take up some sort of work, really you ought! I've told you a hundred times; you shouldn't let yourself go so!"

' "What sort of work could I take up, Astafy Ivanovich? I simply don't know what I could do, and nobody would employ me, Astafy Ivanovich."

' "For the same reason as you lost your other job, Emelyan Ilyich: too fond of the drink! "

' "And d'you know, to-day they called Vlas the barman into the office."

' "And why," say I, "did they do that?"

' "I don't really know why, Astafy Ivanovich; I suppose they needed him, and so they asked him to come."

'Oh dear! I think to myself; we're finished, Emelya, the two of us! The Lord is punishing us for our sins! What can I do with such a fellow, I ask you?

'Only he was a cunning fellow-no end! He'd keep listening to me, and then I suppose he'd get bored, and the moment he saw I was getting cross he'd take his old overcoat and slip away and not show up all day. He'd come back tipsy as it was getting on towards evening. Who had been treating him, or where he had got the money, the Lord only knows - in any case I wasn't responsible! . . .

' "No," I say, "Emelyan Ilyich, you'll come to a bad end! Give up drinking, d'you hear? give it up! The next time you come back drunk you shall spend the night on the stairs! I won't let you in!"

'After hearing my threat Emelya sat there that day, and the next, and on the third day he slipped away again. I waited and waited, but he didn't come back. I must confess that I got quite frightened, and felt ever so sorry for him. What have I done? I thought. I've put the wind up him, and heaven knows where he's got to now, the poor wretch. Goodness, I shouldn't be surprised if he comes to grief! Night fell-he didn't come. Next morning I went out into the entrance-passage, and there he was! He was lying with his head on a step, absolutely blue with cold.

' "What on earth are you doing, Emelya? Good heavens! What does this mean?"

' "Why, Astafy Ivanovich, you . . . um . . . got cross with me the other day, got quite wrought up and promised me I should sleep outside, and so I . . . I . . . was afraid to come in, Astafy Ivanovich, and lay down here. . . ."

'I was overcome by anger and pity.

' "Really, Emelyan Ilyich," I said to him, "you ought to take up some other sort of work You're not the right type for a staircase watchman! . . ."

' "What other work, Astafy Ivanovich?"

' "Why, you lost soul you! " I said (I was feeling so furious), "you might learn tailoring, now! Look at the state your overcoat's in! Not enough that it should be nothing but holes - you have to go sweeping the stairs with it! You might at least take

a needle and thread and patch up the holes and make yourself look respectable! Was there ever such a drunkard?"

'Well, sir, he went and got hold of a needle; I had only said it to him for fun, but he got the wind up and went and found one. He took off his overcoat and started trying to thread the needle. I watched him; well, as you can imagine, his eyes were red and bleary, and his hands were shaking like anything. He kept poking and poking, but just couldn't get it into the eye; he'd screw up his eyes, and wet the thread, and twist it-just couldn't manage the job. At last he gave up, and sat there looking at me. . . .

' "Well, Emelya, I must say! If there had been any witnesses of this exhibition I'd have knocked your head off! Why, I just said it for fun, to make you feel small. . . . Put down the silly needle, for goodness' sake! Sit there, and don't make a disgrace of yourself, and don't shame me by spending the night on the stairs! . . ."

* "But what can I do, Astafy Ivanovich? I know myself that I'm a drunken beast, and not a bit of good to anyone. Only you, my bene . . . benefactor, I treasure in my heart in vain! "

'And now his blue lips suddenly started quivering, and a tear rolled down his cheek and trembled on his unshaven chin, and then he burst out into an absolute torrent of tears. . . . Heavens! It was as though he had slashed my heart with a knife.

' "Oh, you soft-hearted creature, I wasn't thinking you were anything of the sort! Who'd said a word about such a thing?" No, Emelya, I thought to myself, I can't do a thing for you; you must make your bed and lie on it.

'Well, sir, what's the good of talking about it? The whole business is so futile, so wretched, not worth wasting words on; that's to say, sir, you wouldn't give a brass farthing for it; but I - 1 , sir, would give a lot, if I had a lot, if only all this hadn't happened! I had, you must know, a pair of riding-breeches, devil take them! - as fine a pair as ever you saw, blue check, and they had been ordered by a gentleman I used to work for, but he wouldn't take them after all, said they were too tight, and so they were left on my hands. A valuable piece of work, I thought to myself; I dare say I could sell them for five roubles, or else I could make a couple of pairs of trousers out of them, and there

would still be a scrap left over to make a waistcoat of. Poor fellows like us, you know, can't afford to waste a thing. Now about this time Emelya happened to be going through a gloomy spell. I watched him: a whole day he didn't drink, nor the next; on the third day never a drop; looked quite dazed, sat there a picture of misery-made your heart ache! Well, 1 thought, either the lad's run out of cash or else he's turned over a new leaf, come to his senses and given up the stuff. Well, it happened to be a feast-day, so I went to evening service. When I came home Emelya was sitting in the window, swaying, drunk as a lord. Aha! I thought; that's how it is, eh? and I went to fetch something or other from my trunk. What's this? No riding-breeches! I looked everywhere: not a trace of them! When I had turned everything inside out and made sure that they weren't there, something seemed to nip at my heart. I rushed to the old woman and accused her of it; never thought it might have been Emelya, though the fact that he was drunk was suspicious enough! "No," said the old woman; "Lord preserve you, sir; what should I want with a pair of riding-breeches? To wear them? The other day I lost my very skirt through one of your sex. . . . Sorry, sir, I don't know a thing about them." -"What callers have there been?" - "Why, none, sir; nobody's called, and I've been here all the time; Emelyan Ilyich went out and then came back, and he's sitting there now: ask him! " I suppose he hadn't, I said to him, taken my new riding-breeches for any purpose; he remembered, the ones I had made for a gentleman? "What, me?" he says. "No, Astafy Ivanovich, it wasn't . . . um . . . me that took them."

'What a business! I started hunting for them again, looked everywhere - simply couldn't find them! And Emelya sat there, swaying. I was crouching down over the trunk, and suddenly I squinted at him . . . God bless me! I thought, and my breast seemed to catch on fire, and I even went red. And then Emelya looked at me.

' "No," he says, "I didn't . . . um . . . take those riding-breeches of yours. . . . You perhaps are thinking . . . um . . . that I did, but I . . . um . . . didn't! "

' "But where on earth can they have got to, Emelyan Ilyich?"

' "Goodness knows! I haven't set eyes on them."

' "I suppose, Emelyan Ilyich, they must have taken and walked off by themselves?"

' "Perhaps they did, now, Astafy Ivanovich; perhaps they did."

"When he had said this I got up, went over to him, lit the light and sat down to my work. I was altering a waistcoat for a gentleman in a Government office who lived downstairs. And my heart was burning and my breast was aching. I should have felt better if I'd shoved every stitch I possessed into the stove. And Emelya must have guessed that I was feeling terrible. The thing is, sir, that if you've had a hand in any sort of dirty business you scent danger a mile away, just as a bird knows there's going to be a storm.

' "Did you hear, Astafy Ivanovich," began Emelya (and his voice was trembling), "that to-day Antip Prokhorych, who works at the hospital, married the widow of the coachman who died last week?"

'Well, when I looked at him there must have been an angry look in my eye. . . . And Emelya understood. He got up, went over to the bed and began rummaging about. I waited-he fumbled for a long time, all the while mumbling to himself: "Where on earth can they have got to, the wretched things?" I waited to see what would happen; and all of a sudden Emelya got down on his hands and knees and crawled under the bed. This was more than I could bear.

' "What on earth are you crawling about on all fours for, Emelyan Ilyich?" I asked.

' "Just to see if I can find the breeches, Astafy Ivanovich. Thought perhaps they might have got stuffed under there somehow."

' "And why on earth should you, my good sir" (that's how I addressed him, in my anger) "worry about a poor simple fellow like me and go crawling about on the floor?"

' "Why, Astafy Ivanovich, I just. . I thought they might turn up if one only looked properly."

' "H'm!" 1 said. "I say, Emelyan Ilyich!"

' "What is it, Astafy Ivanovich?"

' "Wasn't it you," I say, "that stole them, like a thief and a rascal, to reward me for my hospitality?" You see, sir, I was so overcome at seeing him crawling about on the floor.

' "No, sir, Astafy Ivanovich. .. ."

'And he just stayed there, face down, under the bed. He lay there for a long time; then he crawled out. He was as pale as death. He got up, sat by me in the window, sat there for ten minutes or so.

' "No, Astafy Ivanovich," he says, and suddenly he stands up and comes nearer to me; I can see him now, looking as awful as sin. "No," he says; "I didn't . . . um . . . take those breeches of yours, Astafy Ivanovich."

'And he was shivering all over, poking his chest with his trembling finger, and his voice was quivering so that I felt quite frightened and flattened myself against the wall.

' "Well, Emelyan Ilyich," I say, "it's as you wish; forgive me if I stupidly rebuked you when you didn't deserve it. And as for the breeches, I'm not worrying about them; we can get along all right without riding-breeches. We have hands, thank God! -we don't need to go thieving . . . begging things from poor people; we can earn our daily bread. ..."

'Emelya listened to me, stood there for a while before me, and then he sat down. So he sat all the evening; when I was getting into bed he was still sitting in the same place. In the morning I found him lying on the bare floor, huddled up in his overcoat; he hadn't dared get on to the bed. Well, sir, from that time on I began to dislike him; in fact, for the first few days I simply couldn't bear him.. It was as though my own son had robbed me; it cut me to the heart. Emelya, I thought, Emelya! But Emelya, sir, drank without stopping for about two weeks. Absolutely lapped the stuff up. He'd go away in the morning and come back late at night, and all that fortnight I couldn't get a word out of him. I suppose his feelings had got him down, and he had to do something to take his mind off things. Well, at last he'd had enough, chucked it - he'd spent all his money. Sat in the window again. I remember that he sat there, saying nothing, for three weeks; then all of a sudden he was weeping. He sat there weeping, and what tears! Torrents, and just as though he wasn't aware how they were pouring down. And it's an awful thing when a grown man, elderly even, like Emelya, starts weeping.

' "What's the matter, Emelya?" I asked.

'And he shook all over. Gave a great start. You see, this was the first time I'd spoken to him since *then,*

' "Nothing, Astafy Ivanovich."

' "My goodness, Emelya, what are you so upset about? Sitting there snivelling! " I can't tell you how sorry I felt for him!

' "Astafy Ivanovich, it's just. . . it's nothing. I'd like to take up some sort of work, Astafy Ivanovich."

' "What sort of work, Emelyan Ilyich?"

' "Why, any sort. Perhaps I could get a place like the one I was in before; I've already been to see Fedosey Ivanych. . . I shouldn't put upon you like this, Astafy Ivanovich. If I can get hold of some sort of job, Astafy Ivanovich, I'll pay you back for ever)-thing, make up for all I've cost you."

' "Come, come, Emelya; even if I have been a bit out of pocket, who's worrying about that now? Forget it! Let's live as we used to! "

' "No, Astafy Ivanovich, you're still perhaps . . . urn . . . but 1 tell you I didn't take those breeches!"

' "Have it your own way, Emelyan Ilyich! "

' "No, Astafy Ivanovich. I shan't be bothering you any longer You must excuse me, Astafy Ivanovich."

' "But good heavens, Emelyan Ilyich, is anyone ill-treating you, driving you away? Am I?"

* "No, it's not decent of me to live like this with you, Astafy Ivanovich. . . It will be better if I go. . . ."

'You see, he felt hurt, kept harping on the same thing. *As* I looked at him he got up and pulled on his overcoat.

' "Wherever are you off to, Emelya Ilyich? Do be sensible! Where d'you think you're going?"

' "Good-bye, Astafy Ivanovich. Don't try to keep me" (and he started snivelling again); "the best thing will be if I go right away. You're different from what you used to be."

' "How d'you mean, different? I'm just the same as I always was. But you're just like a helpless child, Emelyan Ilyich; you'll get into trouble if you go off by yourself "

' No, Astafy Ivanovich; nowadays when you go out you lock your trunk, and when I see you do that it cuts me to the heart. . . . No, you must let me go, Astafy Ivanovich, and forgive me for all the ill I have done you while I've been living here."

'Well, sir, he up and went. I waited a day, thinking to myself that he'd be sure to come back in the evening, but no. Nor the next day, nor the third. I felt quite worried, had a sort of ache in my heart; couldn't drink, couldn't eat, couldn't sleep. On the fourth day I went and looked in at all the pubs, asked after him-but he was nowhere to be foundI He's finished, I said to myself. Perhaps he's died in his drink, and now he's lying under a fence somewhere like a rotten plank. I came home quite beside myself. The next day I intended to go on looking for him. And I cursed myself for letting the silly man go off on his own. And what do you think? At dawn on the fifth day (it was a holiday) the door creaked, and who should come in but Emelya, quite blue, and his hair plastered with mud, just as though he'd been sleeping in the gutter; and he had got as thin as a post. He took off his overcoat, sat down by me on the trunk, looked at me. I felt glad, and at the same time my heart ached worse than before. The point is this, sir: had I done anything wrong I'd have preferred to die like a dog rather than come back. But Emelya had come back. Well, of course it hurts to see a fellow in such a condition. I started to soothe him, to pacify him. "Well, Emelya," I said, "I'm certainly pleased to see you again ! If you'd been much longer I should have been hunting through all the pubs for you. Have you had something to eat?"

' "Yes thank you, Astafy Ivanovich."

' "You really have? See, here's a little of yesterday's cabbage-soup; there's beef in it, not just cabbage; and here's some onions and bread. Have some," I say, "it'll do you good."

I gave him the food, and I could see that he probably hadn't eaten for three days, such an appetite he had. So it was hunger that had brought him back. I felt quite touched. When we've eaten, 1 thought, I'll pop down to the off-licence and bring back a drop of something that will take his mind off things, help him to get over it. I'm not cross with you any longer, Emelya! I went and fetched a drop of something. "Here you are, Emelyan Ilyich," I said; "it's a holiday, so let's celebrate. Drink up!"

'He started to put his hand out, thirsty like; he had almost picked up the glass, and then he stopped. He waited a while,

then he took the glass and raised it to his lips, spilling the stuff on his sleeve. He just raised it to his lips and immediately put it back on the table.

' "What's up, Emelya?"

' "Why, nothing ... I just. . . ."

' "Aren't you going to drink it?"

' "I don't think so, Astafy Ivanovich. I don't think I shall drink any more."

' "How d'you mean, Emelya; not ever any more, or just to-day?"

'He was silent. Then he rested his head on his hand.

' "Not feeling ill, I hope, Emelya?"

' "To tell you the truth, Astafy Ivanovich, I don't feel too good."

' I took him and put him on the bed. He was certainly unwell: his forehead was burning and he was shaking with fever. I sat with him that day, and towards night he got worse. I mixed him some kvass with butter and onion and crumbled some bread in it. "Come on, have some of this," I said; "perhaps it'll do you good." - "No," he says, "I won't have any to-day, Astafy Ivanovich." I made him some tea, ran the old woman off her feet; there's nothing better than a nice cup of tea. I was worried about him, I can tell you! On the third day I fetched the doctor. A Doctor Kostopravov I knew; lived in the neighbourhood. Before, when I was in service with the Bosomyagins, I had got to know him; he had treated me. The doctor came, looked at him: "Certainly in a bad way," he said; "really no point in calling me in. One might perhaps give him a powder." Well, I didn't give him a powder; I knew the doctor was just saying that. And then the fifth day came.

'He lay there before me, sir, passing away. I sat in the window with some work in my hands. The old woman Was lighting the stove. No one said anything. My heart was bleeding for the poor wretch; it was as though I was losing my own son. I knew he was looking at me; from the morning I'd seen that he was trying to make himself say something, but didn't dare. At last I looked at him; the poor fellow's eyes were filled with sadness, he didn't take them off me, but as soon as he saw me looking at him he dropped his gaze.

' "Astafy Ivanovich!"

' "What is it, Emelya?"

' "I was wondering, if you were to take my overcoat to the market, how much they'd give for it."

' "I really don't know/' I said. "Three paper roubles, perhaps."

'Though if you'd really taken it to the market they wouldn't have given you a thing, but just laughed at you for trying to sell such trash. I said what I did to cheer him up, knowing what a simple fellow he was.

' "And I was thinking, Astafy Ivanovich, that they might offer three roubles in silver; it's good material. Only three paper roubles when it's such good cloth?"

' "I don't know, Emelyan Ilyich; if you were to take it to the market, three roubles would be the least you could ask."

'Emelya was silent for a while, and then he spoke again:

' "Astafy Ivanovich! "

' "What is it, Emelya?"

' "Sell my coat when I die; don't bury me in it. I can he as I am; but the coat's a valuable thing, you may find it useful."

'I can't tell you, sir, how this wrung my heart. I saw that the poor chap was filled with the sorrow of the dying. We were silent again. An hour passed. I looked at him: his eyes were turned to me, but they dropped when he met my gaze.

' "Can I get you a drink of water, Emelyan Ilyich?"

' "Please do, Astafy Ivanovich."

'I gave him a drink. "Thank you, Astafy Ivanovich."

' "Anything more I can get you, Emelya?"

' "No thank you, Astafy Ivanovich; I don't need anything, but I ... I____"

' "Yes?"

' " I . . ."

' "What is it, Emelya?"

" Those riding-breeches . um ... it was me that took them, Astafy Ivanovich. . . ."

' "Well, the Lord will forgive you, Emelya, you poor old thing! Don't you worry about *them!* . . ." And I could hardly breathe, and the tears sprang to my eyes, and I felt I must turn away for a minute.

' "Astafy Ivanovichl "

'I looked round: Emelya wanted to say something to me, was raising himself on the bed, striving hard, stirring his lips. . . . Suddenly he turned red, looked at me. . . . Then I saw that he was growing paler and paler. In a moment he seemed to cave in; his head fell back, he gave a sigh, and it was all over. . .'

BUB-BOO

FEODOR DOSTOEVSKY

Translated by Walter Morison

This time I am printing 'The Notes of a Certain Person.' This person is not myself; he is somebody quite different. I don't think any further introduction is necessary.

THE NOTES OF A CERTAIN PERSON

SEMYON ARDALYONOVICH BLURTED OUt at me the day before yesterday: 'I say, Ivan Ivanovich, are you *ever* going to be sober?'

A strange demand. I don't take offence, I'm a timid sort of individual; but still, they did go and make a madman out of me. An artist painted my portrait-had nothing better to do at the time-'After all, you *are* a literary man.' I let him do it, and the painting was exhibited. What do I read? 'Approach and

gaze upon this sickly countenance, on which weak-mindedness is writ large.'

Maybe; but really, I mean to say-in print? Everything in print ought to be noble; ideals are needed, instead of which . .

Say it, at any rate, indirectly; that's what style is for. But no, he just won't put it indirectly. These days humour and good style are disappearing, and abuse is accepted in place of wit. 1 don't take offence: I'm not so great a literary man as to go off my head. I wrote a story - they didn't publish it. I wrote an article - they rejected it. I have carted lots of these articles to all sorts of editorial offices - turned down everywhere; no salt in 'em, they say.

'What salt do you mean?' I ask with a sneer. 'Attic?'

He doesn't even understand. Mostly I translate from the French, for booksellers. I also write advertisements: 'A bargain! Red' (let us say) 'tea from our own plantations . . .' For a panegyric on His late lamented Excellency Peter Matveyich I pocketed quite a tidy sum. Compiled for a bookseller 'The Art of Pleasing Ladies.' I've perpetrated six or so little booklets of the sort in my time. Shouldn't mind making a collection of Voltaire's witticisms, but I'm afraid our people might find them rather flat. Voltaire indeed! It's oak cudgels these days, not Voltaire! They've knocked one another's back teeth out! Well, that's all there is to my literary activity. Apart from sending letters to publishing houses all over the place, free of charge, signed in full. I give them advice and tell them off, criticise, point out the way. To one firm I last week sent my fortieth letter in two years, four roubles in stamps alone. I'm a bad character, and that's a fact.

I fancy the artist painted me not for the sake of literature but because of the two symmetrical warts on my forehead; quite a phenomenon, I gather. No ideas, so they make do with phenomena. And the way he brought them out, those warts of mine - just like life! They call that realism.

As for madness, a lot were written off as lunatics last year. And with what style! - 'So original a talent. . . and right at the end it proved . . . though one should long ago have foreseen . . .' Rather cunning; from the standpoint of pure art even laudable. As a matter of fact, they're verv good at diiving

people mad; but making them more sensible is quite another matter.

The cleverest of all is as I see it he who at least once a month c:alls himself a fool-a capacity you never hear of these days! Formerly at the very least a fool knew once a year that he was a fool, but now - absolutely unheard of. And they have muddled things so that you can't tell a fool from a wise man. Done it on purpose.

1 am reminded of the Spanish joke about the French who, two hundred and fifty years ago, were the first to build a lunatic-asylum: 'They've locked all their fools up in a special building so as to be quite sure that they themselves are in their right senses.' Very neat: by locking somebody else up in an asylum you can't prove your own good sense. 'K. has gone off his head, *ergo* we are in our right minds.' No *ergo* about it.

Though why on earth am I going on so about madness? Really getting too peevish. Even got on the housemaid's nerves. Yesterday a friend looked in. 'Your style,' says he, 'is changing; nothing but chip-chop. You mince away - a parenthetic statement, then something in it in brackets, next you shove in something in inverted commas, then start chipping and chopping away again . . .'

My friend is right. Something queer is happening to me. My character is changing, and my head aches all the time. I am beginning to see and hear all sorts of strange things. Not exactly voices, and yet there seems to be somebody close beside me- 'Bub-boo,' he goes, 'bub-boo, bub-boo!'

Bub-boo indeed! I must really do something to take my mind off things.

Went out to take my mind off things, and found myself at a funeral. A distant relative. Still, he was a collegiate councillor. A widow, five daughters, all unmarried. Think of the cost in shoe-leather alone! The late lamented was making quite a bit, and now- a measly pension. They'll sing small. They were **never** very nice to me when I called. Shouldn't have dreamt of going to the funeral in the usual run of things. Went to the cemetery with the rest of the crowd; they're stand-offish, look down their noses. It's a fact that my undress uniform has seen

better days. Don't think I've been in a cemetery for twenty-five years: what a place!

First of all there's the smell. Some fifteen corpses had been delivered. Palls of various prices, even two catafalques: a general and a lady of sorts. Lots of lugubrious faces, lots of pretended grief too, and also a lot of unconcealed cheerfulness. The clergy can't complain: plenty of revenue. But the smell, the smell! The odour of sanctity must be unbearable at times . . .

I was very chary about looking at the faces of the dead, remembering how easily I am touched. Some have gentle expressions, others unpleasant ones. Smiles, generally speaking, are not to be recommended, especially in some cases. I don't like them; I dream about them.

After the mass I came out of the church for a breath of fresh air; the day was grayish, but dry. Cold, too; of course it's October. I walked about between the graves for a while. Various classes. Third-class thirty roubles: decent and not too dear. First- and second-class in the church and under the porch, devilish expensive. This time six of them were being buried third-class, among them the general and the lady.

I looked into the graves - horrible: water, and what water! Absolutely green, and . . . but what's the good of talking about it? The grave-digger kept ladling it out with a scoop. While the service was going on I took a stroll outside the gates. A poor-house just opposite, and a little further along a restaurant. Not a bad little restaurant either: snacks and everything. A lot of mourners were in there. I observed much cheerfulness and genuine enthusiasm. Had a bite and a drink.

Then I took part *manu propria* in bearing the coffin from the church to. the grave. Why do people .grow so heavy in coffins? Through a sort of inertia, they say; the body is somehow no longer in control of itself ... or some balderdash or the sort, at variance with common sense and the law of gravity. I hate it when people who've only had a general education start laying down the law on special subjects; and that's what we never stop doing. Civilians love rushing into discussions of military matters where a field-marshal even would fear to tread, and people who've been trained as engineers spend most of their spare time discussing philosophy and economics.

I didn't go back to the house. I am proud, and if they accept me only because it can't be avoided I'm damned if I'm going to go and partake of their baked meats, albeit funeral! What I don't understand is why I stayed in the cemetery; I sat down on a stone with R.I.P. on it and began to think accordingly.

I began with the Moscow Exhibition and ended up thinking about surprise, surprise in general. This is what I thought about surprise:

Of course it's silly to be surprised at everything; it looks much better if you're surprised at nothing, and this is even regarded as rather distinguished. But that's hardly the truth, really. As I see it, it's much sillier not to be surprised at anything than to be sur prised at everything Apart from which, not being surprised at anything is more or less equivalent to not respecting anything. A stupid person is simply incapable of feeling respect.

'More than anything,' said somebody I know the other day, '1 wish to feel respect. I *thirst* to feel respect.'

He thirsts to feel respect! My goodness, I thought, what would happen to you if you dared to print such a thing these days?

Here my thoughts began to wander. I don't like reading the inscriptions on tombs: always the same. On a near-by gravestone lay a half-eaten sandwich: stupid and out of place. I poked it on to the ground, for it wasn't bread but only a sandwich. For that matter I have an idea it's not sinful to let bread fall on the ground; it's on the floor you musn't drop it. Must look it up in Suvorin's almanack.

I can only suppose that I had been sitting there for a long time, too long in fact; that is to say I had even stretched out on a long marble slab covering a grave. How was it that I suddenly began to hear things? At first I didn't pay any attention, adopted a scornful attitude. But the conversation went on. I could hear dull sounds as though issuing from mouths stuffed up with pillows, but for all that intelligible and very close at hand. I woke up, sat up and started listening attentively.

'My dear General, you simply can't do things like that! You went spades, I passed, and now you suddenly turn out to have had seven hearts. You must stick to the rules, really you must!'

'What d'you mean, play according to the book? How uninteresting!'

'But General, it simply isn't done! Just look at the dummy!'

Im not interested in dummies!'

What an arrogant way to talk! Strange too, and unexpected. One voice solid and ponderous, the other as it were of a sickly sugariness; I just wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't heard it with my own ears. It wasn't as though I'd been knocking them back at the funeral party. Yet cards, and a general? That the voices came from underneath the ground was beyond question. I bent down and read the inscription:

'Sacred to the memory of Major-Geneial Pervoyedov . . . such and such distinctions.' Hm. 'Departed this life . . . August . . . fifty-seven. . . . Rest, dear dust, until the joyful morrow!'

Dammit, so he *is* a general! On the other grave, the one from which the ingratiating voice came, there was as yet no inscription; just a plain slab. Clearly a newcomer. Judging by the voice, an aulic councillor.

'Oh dear oh dear oh dear!' groaned quite a new voice from beneath a freshly-dug grave ten yards or so from where the general lay; a male voice, rather common, but muted to a note of awe-filled emotion.

'Oh dear oh dear oh dear!'

'Good heavens, he's started hiccoughing again!' rapped out the haughty and disdainful voice of an irritated lady, as it were of the highest circles. 'To have to be in the neighbourhood of that vulgar shopkeeper!'

'I wasn't hiccoughing at all, had no victuals to hiccough on; it's just the way I am. Really, ma'am, you don't seem able to settle down nice and comfortable.'

'Why did you have to lie there?'

'I didn't lay, I was laid here by my better half and my little ones; none of my doing. The hand of fate. . . . And I wouldn't have laid down by you for all the money in the world; I'm laying here on my own bank-balance, judging by the price. We folks can always run to a slap-up third-class funeral.'

'Made your pile swindling your customers, I'll be bound!'

'How could I swindle you if you haven't paid a penny on account come January? The bills you've run up at our place!'

'Really too stupid! This is hardly the time or place to worry people about bills! Kindly step upstairs. See my niece about

the matter; she's come into all my money.'

'Step upstairs? See somebody about it? We have both reached our end, ma'm, and in the sight of the Lord God we are equal in our misdoings.'

'In our misdoings!' mocked the late lady. 'Don't you dare say another word to mel'

'Oh dear oh dear oh dear!'

'You'll observe, General, that the shopkeepei is obeying the lady.'

'I should like to know the reason why if he didn't!'

'I fancy you're forgetting there's a new order of things here.'

'New order, indeed?'

'You see, General, we, so to speak, are dead.'

'So we are! But that doesn't mean, I trust, the end of law and order.'

Well, I must say I'm grateful to them; amused me no end! The idea of going upstairs to ask! What a business! But I went on listening, though boiling with indignation.

'How I should love to see a bit of life' Really, you know, 1 should love to see a bit of life!' said a new voice, from somewhere between the general and the irascible lady.

'D'you hear, General? He's started again. Never a word for three days, and then suddenl) "How I should love to see a bit of life! " And with such, you know, appetite!'

'Frivolity, nothing less!'

'He's decomposing, you know, General; dozing off, nearly fast asleep-been here since April, you see: and all of a sudden: "I *should* like to see a bit of life!

'Rather tedious, really,' observed the General

'If you're feeling dull, General, how about teasing Avdotya Ignatyevna some more?'

'You'll oblige me by doing nothing of the sort I cannot *stand* that hysterical female.'

'And I can't stand the pair of you,' the female called back scornfully. 'You both bore me to tears; never say a thing a little out of the ordinary. As for you, General - stop preening yourself! -I once heard a little story about how one morning a servant swept you out from beneath somebody else's bed.'

You're a wicked woman,' wheezed the General.

'Avdotya Ignatyevna, my dear,' the shopkeeper began lamenting; 'tell me, my dear, casting all anger out of your heart, why is it I must go through this purgatory?'

'Lord, he's started again,' cried Avdotya Ignatyevna; 'I knew he would; I can smell him again, and that mean's he's turning over.'

'I'm not budging, my dear, and there's no special smell from me, because I'm still perfectly composed, whereas you, my dear, are getting a little bit high: the smell you give off is really unbearable, even for this place. If I've said nothing it's out of politeness.'

'You beast I Stink enough to knock a donkey down, and try to make out that I . . .'

'Oh dear oh dear oh dearl If only they'd hold the memorial service: I'd hear tearful voices above me, the lamentations of my spouse and the quiet weeping of my children . . .'

'A fine thing to get excited about; all they'll do will be stuff themselves with boiled rice and raisins in the customary fashion and clear off as quickly as possible. How I wish somebody else would wake up!'

'Avdotya Ignatyevna,' said the ingratiating voice, 'have a little patience; new ones will soon be speaking up.'

'Are there any young people among them?'

'Young people too, Avdotya Ignatyevna. Youths even.'

'How divine!'

'Haven't they started stirring?' inquired the General.

'Even those who were delivered two days ago haven't woken up yet, General; as you are aware, sometimes they don't say anything for a whole week. It's a good thing there was such a big delivery to-day, yesterday and the day before; apart from them, nearly everything for twenty yards around is last year's stuff.'

'Interesting.'

'Now to-day, General, Privy Councillor Tarasevich was buried I could tell by the voices. I know his nephew; he was by the grave just now.'

'Where exactly is His Excellency lying?'

'Why, five paces from you, General, to the left. Almost, you

might say, at your feet . . . Would you care for me to introduce you?'

'Hm, why no, really - why should I take the first step?"

'But *he* will, General. Even feel flattered. Just leave it to me, General.'

'Oh, oh! What's happened to me?' suddenly groaned a frightened new voice.

'A new arrival, General; how quickly he's come to! They often say nothing for a week.'

'I do believe it's a young man!' squeaked Avdotya Ignatyevna.

'I . . I . . . I . . . Complications, and so suddenly!' stammered the youth. 'Only the day before, Schulz was talking about complications, and the very next morning I went and died. Oh my!'

'Well, it can't be helped, young man,' graciously observed the General, obviously pleased by the new arrival; 'you must make the oest you can of things. Welcome to our, so to speak, Vale of Jchoshaphat. We're quite nice people; you'll get to know us and recognise our qualities. Major-General Vasily Vasilyevich Pervoyedov, at your service.'

'No, no! I won't believe it. I'm at Schulz's place, you know; complications set in, first it settled on my chest, coughing and all that, then I got a chill; my chest worrying me, influenza on top of everything . . . and then suddenly, quite unexpectedly . . so unexpectedly: that's the whole point really. . . '

'You were saying, first of all your chest?' interrupted the aulic councillor gently, as though wishing to encourage the newcomer.

'Yes, my chest, phlegm, then suddenly no phlegm, and my chest . . . and I simply can't breathe . . . you know how it is. . . /

'I know, I know. But if it was your chest you should have gone to see Eck rather than Schulz.'

'As a matter of fact I kept meaning to go and see Botkin . . . and all of a sudden . . '

'Botkin?' repeated the General. 'A bit stiff, I believe.'

'No, no, he's not stiff at all. I've heard he's extremely kind and attentive, and tells you everything in advance.'

'The General meant that Botkin's fees are rather stiff,' explained the aulic councillor.

Nonsense; only charges three roubles, and gives you a proper overhauling, and a prescription. . . . 1 was absolutely determined to go and see him, for I'd been told . . . What do you say, gentlemen; should I see Eck or Botkin?'

'What's that you say?' the General chuckled, his corpse quivering. The aulic councillor's falsetto chimed in.

'My dear boy, my dear sweet boy, how I love you I ' squeaked Avdotya Ignatyevna, rapturously. 'If only they'd put someone like you next to me!'

This is really going too far I Not as though they weren't quite dead! Still, I'll listen a little longer and not rush to conclusions. This milksop of a newcomer - I remember seeing him in his coffin just now: the expression of a startled chicken; simply unbearable! However, what will happen next?

What happened next was so extraordinarily confusing that I can't remember all the details, for a whole lot of them all woke up together. A councillor of State woke up and immediately starting discussing with the General a projected subcommission in the Ministry of———Affairs and the probable transfer of officials involved, which interested the General very much indeed. I must confess that I too learnt quite a lot, so that I couldn't help wondering at the ways in which one may sometimes hear the latest administrative news in this capital of ours. Then an engineer half-woke and for a long time kept mumbling absolute nonsense, so that our people didn't bother him but let him lie there and recover. Finally a lady from the highest circles who had been buried that morning in a catafalque began to reveal signs of funereal exaltation. Lebezyatnikov (for the ingratiating aulic councillor who lay next to General Pervoyedov, and for whom I had come to feel the deepest loathing, turned out to be called Lebezyatnikov; he would!) was very surprised and excited at the speed with which they were all waking up. I must admit that I too was surprised; thought as a matter of fact some of the wakers had been buried for two days, a very young girl of sixteen or thereabouts for instance, who kept tittering . . . a loathsome and blood-thirsty titter.

'General, Privy Councillor Tarasevich is waking up!' an-

nounced Lebezyatnikov, almost beside himself.

'What's this?' the privy councillor mumbled in a disdainful lisp. In his voice there was something capriciously commanding. 1 listened curiously, for in the last few days I had heard something about Tarasevich; something to the highest degree intriguing and disturbing.

'It's me, Your Excellency, just me '

'Well? What can I do for you?'

'I simply wished to ask how Your Excellency was feeling; through lack of practice everyone here at first feels somewhat, how shall I say, constricted. . . . General Pervoyedov would like the honour of making Your Excellency's acquaintance, and hopes

'Can't hear a word you say!'

Tardon me, Your Excellency; General Pervoyedov, Vasily Vasilyevich

'Are you General Pervoyedov?'

'No, no, Your Excellency, I am merely Aulic Councillor Lebezyatnikov, at your service; and General Pervoyedov—'

'Stuff and nonsense! I must beg you to leave me in peace.'

'Let him be,' said the General with dignity, checking the odious alacrity of his funereal client

'His Excellency hasn't properly woken up yet, General, you must remember that. Not quite himself. He'll wake up presently, and then his attitude will be quite different'

'Let him be,' repeated the General

'Vasily Vasilyevich! Hey you, General!' suddenly cried, loudly and recklessly, quite a new voice from next to Avdotya Ignatyevna - an insolent upper-class voice, with a fashionably fatigued enunciation and an arrogant drawl. 'I've been watching the lot of you for two hours; been here three days, you see. D'you remember me, Vasily Vasilyevich? I'm Klmevich; we used to meet at the Volokonskys'; they also used to invite you, I can't think why.'

'What? Count Peter Petrovich? Is it really you? So young! How pained I am!'

'I'm pained, too, but I don't care a damn really, and I'm determined to make the best of things. And I'm not a count

but a baron, just a baron. We're some sort of scurvy little barons, risen from below stairs; simply can't think why, and don't care a damn. I'm just a pseudo-high-society scoundrel, and am reckoned a "charming rogue". My father is some sort of third-rate general, my mother was once received *en haut lieu.* Last year I passed fifty thou' in forged bills for Siffel the Jew, then blew the gaff on him, and Julie Charpentier de Lusignan took all the cash with her to Bordeaux. And, just fancy, I was practically engaged - the Shchevalevsky gal, fifteen and three-quarters, still at boarding-school, dowry of ninety thou' or so. Avdotya Ignatyevna, d'you remember how fifteen years ago, when I was fourteen, you debauched me?'

'Oh, you rascal I To talk so, and here of all places!'

'You were wrong to suspect your neighbour, the gentleman in trade, of smelling bad. I just kept silent, laughing to myself It's me, you see, they shouldn't have buried me in such a cheap coffin.'

'Oh, how beastly you are! And yet I'm glad you're here all the same, Klinevich; you *can't* imagine what a lack of liveliness and wit there is.'

'I can indeed, and I'm resolved to get up something original. You, sir - I don't mean you, Peryoyedov, I mean you, Tarasevich, the Privy Councillor; speak up, can't you? This is Klinevich, who used to take you along to Mile Furie's during Lent.'

'I hear you, Klinevich, and I'm very glad, and believe me . . '

1 don't believe a word and I don't care a damn. I just want to give you a good kiss, you dear old man, but thank God I can't! D'you know, gentlemen, what this *grand-pere* did? Died two or three days ago and, just imagine, left a deficit of four hundred thousand roubles in his official accounts. A fund for widows and orphans, and he for some reason used to handle it all by himself; hadn't had an audit for eight years. I can just imagine the long faces they're pulling now, and how they are referring to the late lamented. A voluptuous idea, really! The whole of his last year I kept wondering how an old man of seventy suffering from gout and rheumatism could have conserved so much vigour for debauchery - and then it became clear. Those widows and orphans; the very thought of them must have stimulated him no end! I'd known about this for

some time, nobody else did, Julie Char pent ier had told me, and as soon as I learnt the secret I went to see him - in Holy Week it was-and began a little friendly pressure: "Hand over twenty-five thou' or to-morrow you'll have the auditors in"; just fancy, by that time the old man only had thirty thousand left, so it looks as though he kicked the bucket very opportunely. *Grand-pere, grand-pere,* can you hear me?'

"Cher Klinevich, I absolutely agree with you, and you have no need to . . . enter into such detail. In life there is so much suffering and torment, and the rewards are so few. ... At length 1 craved peace, and as far as I can see I have hopes of deriving great benefit from my present . . .'

'I'm willing to bet he's already scented Kaly Berestova's presence!'

'Who? Katy what?' the old man's voice quivered carnivorously.

'You see? Katy what, indeed! Here she is, just here to the left, five yards from me and ten from you. This is her fifth day here, and if you only knew, *grand-pere,* what a tramp she is! ... Good family, first-class education, and yet-a monster, an absolute monster! I didn't let anybody know about her, kept her all for myself . . . Katy! I say, Katy!'

'He-he-he!' came the cracked titter of the young girl's voice, in which you could feel a sort of pin-prick 'He-he-he!'

'And is she a b-b-blonde?' stuttered *grand-pere.*

'He-he-he!'

'For years,' lisped the old man breathlessly, 'I've been dreaming of a blonde ... of about fifteen . . . and to find her in precisely these surroundings . . .'

'Oh, you old horror!' cried Avdotya Ignatyevna.

'That'll do!' said Klinevich firmly. 'I see we have excellent material here. We must set about making our arrangements. The chief thing is to spend the rest of our time amusingly; but how much time have we? Hey you, Lebezyatnikov or whatever your name is!'

'Lebezyatnikov is certainly the name, Aulic Councillor Semyon Yevseyich Lebezyatnikov, at your service, and very very pleased to —'

'I don't care a damn whether you're pleased or not, but you're the only one here who seems to know things Tell me first of

all-1 still cant get over it-how is it that we are still able to talk? We are dead, after all, and yet we're talking; we seem to be stirring, and yet we're neither stirring nor speaking. What sort of trickery is this?'

'This, Baron, if you cared, Platon Nikolayevich could explain better than I'

platon who? Don't mumble; get to the point/

platon Nikolayevich, our home-baked local philosopher and natural historian. He's published a number of philosophical works, but in the last three months he's gone quite off to sleep, so that there's no hope of shaking him awake. Once a week he mutters a few words not at all to the point.'

'To the point, to the point!'

'He explains all this by the very simple fact that up above, while we were still alive, we were mistaken as to the nature of death. Down here the body as it were once more comes to life, the remnants of life become concentrated, but only in the form of consciousness. This is -I really don't know how to put it properly-a sort of continuation of life as it were by inertia. Everything is concentrated, in his opinion, somewhere in the consciousness, and continues for two or three months longer, sometimes even half a year. . . . For instance there's an individual here who has almost completely decomposed, but about once every six weeks he still manages to mumble something quite unintelligible about some sort of bub-boo: "Bub-boo., bub-boo," he goes; this means that an almost invisible spark of life is still burning in him. . . .'

'Rather stupid, I think. Another thing: how is it that I have no sense of smell and yet can smell things?'

'This-ahem -well, on this point our philosopher became extremely foggy. Precisely on the subject of smell he observed that the smell you can smell here is a sort of moral smell-he-he! The odour as it were of the soul, reminding us to use these two cr three months to square our accounts, and that this is so to speak the last token of mercy. . . But it seems to me, Baron, that this is nothing but mystical raving, pardonable no doubt in view of his condition. . . /

'That'll do; all the rest is equally nonsensical, I'll be bound. The chief thing is two or three months more of life, and at

the end - bub-boo. 1 propose that we spend these two months as agreeably as possible, and that we all therefore reorganise our existences. Gentlemen' I suggest that we should not be ashamed of anything!'

'Yes, let's not be ashamed of anything !' cried many voices; and strange to relate quite new voices joined in the chorus: the voices of those who had woken up in the meantime With especial alacrity the bass of the engineer, who had now quite woken up, rumbled assent The girl Katy tittered joyfully.

'How I should love not to be ashamed of anything!' cried Avdotya Ignatyevna

'You hear? If Avdotya Ignatyevna is prepared not to be ashamed of anything . .'

'No, no, Klinevich, there were lots of things I was ashamed of, up there, and down here I do so terribly want not to be ashamed of anything!'

'As I understand it, Klinevich,' said the engineer in his deep voice, you are proposing that we should arrange our existence here on new and rational principles.'

'I don't care a damn for rational principles. As regards that, let's wait for Kudeyarov; he was dumped here yesterday. He'll wake up and explain everything. To-morrow, I believe, we shall be joined by another natural historian; an officer is coming for sure, and, if I'm not mistaken, in three or four days a journalist will be arriving, accompanied, I fancy, by his editor. Not that I care a damn about them, but there'll be a nice little crowd of us, and we'll fix things splendidly. But for the time being all I want is not to tell lies. That's all I want, because it's the main thing. It's impossible to live on earth and not tell lies, for living and lying are synonyms; but down here, just for fun, we'll cut out the lies. Damn it, being in one's grave means something after all! We'll all tell our life-stories and not be ashamed of anything. First of all I'll tell my story. I, you must know, am of the carnivorous variety. Everything up there is tied together with rotten ropes: away with the ropes, and let us live these two months in an atmosphere of shameless truth! Let's lay ourselves bare, be quite naked!'

'Let's be naked, let's be naked!' cried all the voices.

I should simply love to be naked!' thrilled Avdotva

Ignatyevna.

'Oh dear! I see its going to be jolly here; I won't go and see Eck.'

I *should* like to see a bit of life, really I should!'

'He-he-he!' tittered Katy.

'The chief thing is that no one can forbid us to do what we like, and though Pervoyedov, as I see, is getting cross, he can't reach to where I am. *Grand-pere,* are you agreed?'

'I am completely, absolutely in agreement, and shall be delighted; but on condition that Katy is first with her biography.'

'I protest, I most vigorously protest!' pronounced General Pervoyedov firmly.

'General,' the rascally Lebezyatnikov babbled persuasively, in agitated haste and lowering his voice, 'General, it will even be to our advantage if we agree. She's quite a young girl, remember, and we may expect all sorts of .

'Admittedly she's a girl, but . . .'

'To our advantage, General; I swear it will bel Come, just as a little example, let's just try . . .'

'Even in the grave they give you no peace!'

'In the fiist place, General, in the -grave you aren't averse to a hand at cards, and secondly, we don't care a damn what you think,' drawled Klinevich.

'Sir, please don't forget yourself!'

'What's that? You see, you can't get at me, and I can tease you from here as I used to tease Julie's pug. In the first place, gentlemen, what sort of a general is he? Up there he may have been a general, but down here he's nothing but a spy!'

'I'm not a spy. . . Even here I'm . . .'

'Here you will rot in your grave, and all that will be left of you will be six brass buttons.'

'Bravo, Klinevich! Ha-ha-ha!' roared the voices

'I served my Emperor ... I carried a sword

'Your sword would only have served to squash bugs, and in any case you never took it out of its scabbard '

'No matter; I was part of a whole.'

'The hole ought to have been stopped up long ago!'

'Bravo, Klinevich, bravo! Ha-ha-ha!'

'What is a sword after all?' boomed the engineer.

'The Prussians will make us run like mice, they'll knock us to smithereens!' cried an unknown voice from the distance, literally breathless with delight.

'The sword, sir, is an honour,' the general wanted to cry, but 1 alone heard him. A long and frantic outcry arose, tumult and uproar, and all that could be distinguished was Avdotya Ignatyevna's hysterically impatient screech: 'Hurry up, hurry up! When are we going to start not being ashamed of anything?'

'Oh dear oh dear oh dear! In very truth the soul passes through purgatory,' I thought I heard the shopkeeper complain, but. . .

But here, all of a sudden, I sneezed. The occurrence was unexpected and unintended, but the effect was stupendous: all was still, everything vanished like a dream. The silence was truly that of the tomb. I don't think it was that they were ashamed at having been overheard; after all, they had resolved not to be ashamed of anything! I waited for about five minutes, but not a word, not a sound. Neithei is it to be supposed that they were afraid I might report them to the police, for what after all could the police do in a case like this? I am forced to the conclusion that they had some sort of secret unknown to mortals, a secret they carefully concealed from mortal ears.

'Well,' I thought, 'my dears, I'll visit you again.' And with these words I left the graveyard.

No, I really can't permit this; I swear I can't. Bub-boo shall not intimidate me. (So there was a bub-boo after all!)

Debauchery in such a place, the debauchery of the last hopes of salvation, the debauchery of decrepit and decomposing corpses, not even respecting the last few gleams of consciousness' These last moments are given them, granted them, and . . . And there, of all places! No, I really can't permit it. . . .

I'll visit the first- and second-class graves too; listen every where. That's the point: you must listen everywhere, not just at one end, if you want to form a conception. Perhaps I'll also hear something edifying.

But I'll certainly pay another visit to the third-class graves

They promised their biographies and all sorts of anecdotes Heavens! But I'll go there, go without fail. It's a matter of conscience!

THREE DEATHS

LEO TOLSTOY

Translated by Louise *and* Aylmer Maude

IT WAS AUTUMN. Two vehicles were going along the highway at a quick trot. In the first sat two women: a lady thin and pale, and a maidservant, plump and rosy and shining. The maid's short dry hair escaped from under her faded bonnet and her red hand in its torn glove kept pushing it back by fits and starts; her full bosom, covered by a woollen shawl, breathed health, her quick black eyes now watched the fields as they glided past the window, now glanced timidly at her mistress, and now restlessly scanned the corners of the carriage. In front of her nose dangled her mistress's bonnet, pinned to the luggage carrier, on her lap lay a puppy, her feet were raised on the boxes standing on the floor and just audibly tapped against them to the creaking of the coach-springs and the clatter of the window panes.

Having folded her hands on her knees and closed her eyes, the lady swayed feebly against the pillows placed at her back, and, frowning slightly, coughed inwardly. On her head she had a white nightcap, and a blue kerchief was tied round her delicate white throat. A straight line receding under the cap parted her light brown, extremely flat, pomaded hair, and there was something dry and deathly about the whiteness of the skin of that wide parting. Her features were delicate and handsome, but her skin was flabby and rather sallow, though there was a hectic flush on her cheeks. Her lips were dry and restless, her scanty eyelashes had no curl in them, and her cloth travelling coat fell in straight folds over a sunken breast. Though her eyes were closed her face bore an expression of weariness, irritation, and habitual suffering.

A footman, leaning on the arms of his seat, was dozing on the box. The mail-coach driver, shouting lustily, urged on his four big sweating horses, occasionally turning to the other driver who called to him from the caleche behind. The broad parallel tracks of the tyres spread themselves evenly and fast on the muddy, chalky surface of the road. The sky was grey and cold and a damp mist was settling on the fields and road. It was stuffy in the coach and there was a smell of Eau-de-Cologne and dust. The invalid drew back her head and slowly opened her beautiful dark eyes, which were large and brilliant.

'Again,' she said, nervously pushing away with her beautiful thin hand an end of her maid's cloak which had lightly touched her foot, and her mouth twitched painfully. Matresha gathered up her cloak with both hands, rose on her strong legs, and seated herself farther away, while her fresh face grew scarlet The lady, leaning with both hands on the seat, also tried to raise herself so as to sit up higher, but her strength failed her. Her mouth twisted, and her whole face became distorted by a look of impotent malevolence and irony. 'You might at least help me! . . . No, don't bother! I can do it myself, only don't put your bags or anything behind me, for goodness' sake! . . No, better not touch me since you don't know how to!' The lady closed her eyes and then, again quickly raising her eyelids, glared at the maid. Matresha, looking at her, bit her red nether lip. A deep sigh rose from the invalid's chest and turned into a

cough before it was completed. She turned away, puckered her face, and clutched her chest with both hands. When the coughing fit was over she once more closed her eyes and continued to sit motionless. The carriage and caliche entered a village. Matresha stretched out her thick hand from under her shawl and crossed herself.

'What is it?' asked her mistress.

'A post-station, madam.'

'I am asking why you crossed yourself,'

'There's a church, madam,'

The invalid turned to the window and began slowly to cross herself, looking with large wide-open eyes at the big village church her carriage was passing.

The carriage and caleche both stopped at the post-station and the invalid's husband and doctor stepped out of the caliche and went up to the coach.

'How are you feeling?' asked the doctor, taking her pulse.

'Well, my dear, how are you - not tired?' asked the husband in French. 'Wouldn't you like to get out?'

Matresha, gathering up the bundles, squeezed herself into a corner so as not to interfere with their conversation.

'Nothing much, just the same,' replied the invalid. 'I won't get out.'

Her husband after standing there a while went into the station-house, and Matresha, too, jumped out of the carriage and ran on tiptoe across the mud and in at the gate.

'If I feel ill, it's no reason for you not to have lunch,' said the sick woman with a slight smile to the doctor, who was standing at her window.

'None of them has any thought for me,' she added to herself as soon as the doctor, having slowly walked away from her, ran quickly up the steps to the station-house. 'They are well, so they don't care. Oh, my God!'

'Well, Edward Ivanovich?' said the husband, rubbing his hands as he met the doctor with a merry smile. 'I have ordered the lunch-basket to be brought in. What do you think about it?'

'A capital idea,' replied the doctor.

'Well, how is she?' asked the husband with a sigh, lowering his voice and lifting his eyebrows.

'As I told you: it is impossible for her to reach Italy - God grant that she gets even as far as Moscow, especially in this weather,'

'But what are we to do? Oh, my God, my God!' and the husband hid his eyes with his hand. 'Bring it here I' he said to the man who had brought in the lunch-basket.

'She ought to have stayed at home,' said the doctor, shrugging his shoulders.

'But what could I do?' rejoined the husband. 'You know I used every possible means to get her to stay. I spoke of the expense, of our children whom we had to leave behind, and of my business affairs, but she would not listen to anything. She is making plans for life abroad as if she were in good health. To tell her of her condition would be to kill her,'

'But she is killed already-you must know that, Vasili Dmitrich. A person can't live without lungs, and new lungs won't grow. It is sad and hard, but what is to be done? My business and yours is to see that her end is made as peaceful as possible. It's a priest who is needed for that,'

'Oh, my God! Think of my condition, having to remind her about her will. Come what may I can't tell her that, you know how good she is . . ,'

'Still, try to persuade her to wait till the roads are fit for sledging,' said the doctor, shaking his head significantly, 'or something bad may happen on the journey,'

'Aksyiisha, hello Aksyiisha!' yelled the station-master's daughter, throwing her jacket over her head and stamping her feet on the muddy back porch. 'Come and let's have a look at the Shirkin lady: they say she is being taken abroad for a chest trouble, and I've never seen what consumptive people look like!'

She jumped onto the threshold, and seizing one another by the hand the two girls ran out of the gate. Checking their pace, they passed by the coach and looked in at the open window. The invalid turned her head towards them but, noticing their curiosity, frowned and turned away.

'De-arie me!' said the station-master's daughter, quickly turning her head away. 'What a wonderful beauty she must have been, and see what she's like now! It's dreadful. Did you see,

did you, Aksyiisha?'

'Yes, how thin! * Aksyiisha agreed. 'Let's go and look again, as if we were going to the well. See, she has turned away, and I hadn't seen her yet. What a pity, Masha!'

'Yes, and what mud!' said Masha, and they both ran through the gate

'Evidently I look frightful,' thought the invalid. 'If only I could get abroad quicker, quicker. I should soon recover there '

'Well, my dear, how are you?' said her husband, approaching her and still chewing.

'Always the same question,' thought the invalid, 'and he himself is eating.'

'So-so,' she murmured through her closed teeth.

'You know, my dear, I'm afraid you'll get worse travelling in this weather, and Edward Ivanovich says so too Don't you think we'd better turn back?'

She remained angrily silent

'The weather will perhaps improve and the roads be fit for sledging; you will get better meanwhile, and we will all go together.'

'Excuse me. If I had not listened to you for so long, I should now at least have reached Berlin, and have been quite well.'

'What could be done, my angel? You know it was impossible But now if you stayed another month you would get nicely better, I should have finished my business, and we could take the children with us.'

'The children are well, but I am not.'

'But do understand, my dear, that if in this weather you should get worse on the road. ... At least you would be at home.'

'What of being at home? . . . To die at home?' answered the invalid, flaring up. But the word 'die' evidently frightened her, and she looked imploringly and questioningly at her husband He hung his head and was silent. The invalid's mouth suddenly widened like a child's, and tears rolled down her cheeks. Her husband hid his face in his handkerchief and stepped silently away from the carriage.

'No, I will go on,' said the invalid, and lifting her eyes to the sky she folded her hands and began whispering incoherent words: 'Oh, my God, what is it for?' she said, and her tears

flowed faster. She prayed long and fervently, but her chest ached and felt as tight as before; the sky, the fields, and the road were just as grey and gloomy, and the autumnal mist fell, neither thickening nor lifting, and settled on the muddy road, the roofs, the carriage, and the sheepskin coats of the drivers, who talking in their strong merry voices were greasing the wheels and harnessing the horses

II

The carriage was ready but the driver still loitered. He had gone into the drivers' room at the station. It was hot, stuffy, and dark there, with an oppressive smell of baking bread, cabbage, sheepskin garments, and humanity. Several drivers were sitting in the room, and a cook was busy at the oven, on the top of which lay a sick man wrapped in sheepskins.

'Uncle Theodore! I say, Uncle Theodore!' said the young driver, entering the room in his sheepskin coat with a whip stuck in his belt, and addressing the sick man

'What do you want Theodore for, lazvbones?' asked one of the drivers. 'There's your carriage waiting for you '

'I want to ask for his boots; mine are quite worn out,' answered the young fellow, tossing back his hair and straightening the mittens tucked in his belt. 'Is he asleep? I say, Uncle Theodore! ' he repeated, walking over to the oven.

'What is it?' answered a weak voice, and a lean face with a red beard looked down from the oven, while a broad, emaciated, pale, and hairy hand pulled up the coat over the dirty shirt covering his angular shoulder.

'Give me a drink, lad. . . . What is it you want?

The lad handed him up a dipper with water.

'Well, you see, Theodore,' he said, stepping from foot to foot, 'I expect you don't need your new boots now; won't you let me have them? I don't suppose you'll go about any more.'

The sick man, lowering his weary head to the shiny dipper and immersing his sparse drooping moustache in the turbid water, drank feebly but eagerly. His matted beard was dirty, and his sunken clouded eyes had difficulty in looking up at the lad's face. Having finished drinking he tried to lift his hand to wipe his wet lips, but he could not do so, and rubbed them on

the sleeve of his coat instead. Silently, and breathing heavily through his nose, he looked straight into the lad's eyes, collecting his strength.

'But perhaps you have promised them to someone else?' asked the lad. 'If so, it's all right. The worst of it is, it's wet outside and I have to go about my work, so I said to myself: "Suppose I ask Theodore for his boots; I expect he doesn't need them." If you need them yourself-just say so.'

Something began to rumble and gurgle in the sick man's chest; he doubled up and began to choke with an abortive cough in his throat.

'Need them indeed!' the cook snapped out unexpectedly so as to be heard by the whole room. 'He hasn't come down from the oven for more than a month! Hear how he's choking-it makes me ache inside just to hear him. What does he want with boots? They won't bury him in new boots. And it was time long ago-God forgive me the sin! See how he chokes. He ought to be taken into the other room or somewhere. They say there are hospitals in the town. Is it right that he should take up the whole corner? - there's no more to be said. I've no room at all, and yet they expect cleanliness!'

'Hello, Sergey! Come along and take your place, the gentlefolk are waiting!' shouted the drivers' overseer, looking in at the door.

Sergey was about to go without waiting for a reply, but the sick man, while coughing, let him understand by a look that he wanted to give him an answer.

'Take my boots, Sergey,' he said when he had mastered the cough and rested a moment. 'But listen. . . . Buy a stone for me when I die,' he added hoarsely.

'Thank you, uncle. Then I'll take them, and I'll buy a stone for sure,'

'There, lads, you heard that?' the sick man managed to utter, and then bent double again and began to choke.

'All right, we heard!' said one of the drivers. 'Go and take your seat, Sergey, there's the overseer running back. The Shirkin lady is ill, you know.'

Sergey quickly pulled off his unduly big, dilapidated boots and threw them under a bench. Uncle Theodore's new boots

just fitted him, and having put them on he went to the carriage with his eyes fixed on his feet.

'What fine boots! Let me grease them,' said a driver, who held some axle-grease in his hand, as Sergey climbed onto the box and gathered up the reins. 'Did he give them to you for nothing?'

'Why, are you envious?' Sergey replied, rising and wrapping the skirts of his coat under his legs. 'Off with you! Gee up, my beauties I' he shouted to the horses, flourishing the whip, and the carriage and caleche with their occupants, portmanteaux, and trunks rolled rapidly along the wet road and disappeared in the grey autumnal mist.

The sick driver was left on the top of the oven in the stuffy room and, unable to relieve himself by coughing, turned with an effort onto his other side and became silent.

Till late in the evening people came in and out of the room and dined there. The sick man made no sound. When night came, the cook climbed up onto the oven and stretched over his legs to get down her sheepskin coat

'Don't be cross with me, Nastasya,' said the sick man. 'I shall soon leave your corner empty '

'All right, all right, never mind,' muttered Nastasya. 'But what is it that hurts you? Tell me, uncle '

'My whole* inside has wasted away. God knows what it is!'

'I suppose your throat hurts when you cough?'

'Everything hurts. My death has come - that's how it is Oh, oh. oh!' moaned the sick man.

'Cover up your feet like this,' said Nastasya, drawing his coat over him as she climbed down from the oven

A night-light burnt dimly in the room. Nastasya and some ten drivers slept on the floor or on the benches, loudly snoring. The sick man groaned feebly, coughed, and turned about on the oven. Towards morning he grew quite quiet.

'I had a queer dream last night,' said Nastasya next morning, stretching herself in the dim light. 'I dreamt that Uncle Theodore got down from the oven and went out to chop wood. "Come, Nastdsya," he says, "I'll help you!" and I say, "How can you chop wood now?", but he just seizes the axe and begins chopping quickly, quickly, so that the chips flv all about.

"Why," I say, "haven't you been ill?" "No," he says, "I am well," and he swings the axe so that I was quite frightened. I gave a cry and woke up. I wonder whether he is dead! Uncle Theodore! I say, Uncle Theodore!'

Theodore did not answer.

'True enough he may have died. I'll go and see,' said one of the drivers, waking up.

The lean hand covered with reddish hair that hung down from the oven was pale and cold.

'I'll go and tell the station-master,' said the driver. 'I think he's dead.'

Theodore had no relatives: he was from some distant place They buried him next day in the new cemetery beyond the wood, and Nastasya went on for days telling everybody of her dream, and of having been the first to discover that Uncle Theodore was dead.

III

Spring had come. Rivulets of water hurried down the wet streets of the city, gurgling between lumps of frozen manure; the colours of the people's clothes as they moved along the streets looked vivid and their voices sounded shrill. Behind the garden-fences the buds on the trees were swelling and their branches were just audibly swaying in the fresh breeze Everywhere transparent drops were forming and falling. . . . The sparrows chirped, and fluttered awkwardly with their little wings. On the sunny side of the street, on the fences, houses, and trees, everything was in motion and sparkling. There was joy and youth everywhere in the sky, on the earth, and in the hearts of men.

In one of the chief streets fresh straw had been strewn on the road before a large, important house, where the invalid who had been in a hurry to go abroad lay dying.

At the closed door of her room stood the invalid's husband and an elderly woman. On the sofa a priest sat with bowed head, holding something wrapped in his stole. In a corner of the room the sick woman's old mother lay on an invalid chair weeping bitterly: beside her stood one maidservant holding a clean handkerchief, waiting for her to ask for it; while another was

rubbing her temples with something and blowing under the old lady's cap onto her grey head.

'Well, may Christ aid you, dear friend,' the husband said to the elderly woman who stood near him at the door. 'She has such confidence in you and you know so well how to talk to her, so persuade her as well as you can, my dear - go to her,' He was about to open the door, but her cousin stopped him, pressing her handkerchief several times to her eyes and giving her head a shake

'Well, I don't think I look as if I had been crying now,' said she and, opening the door herself, went in.

The husband was in great agitation and seemed quite distracted. He walked towards the old woman, but while still several steps from her turned back, walked about the room, and went up to the priest. The priest looked at him, raised his eyebrows to heaven, and sighed: his thick, greyish beard also rose as he sighed and then came down again.

'My God, my God!' said the husband.

'What is to be done?' said the priest with a sigh, and again his eyebrows and beard rose and fell.

'And her mother is here!' said the husband almost in despair. 'She won't be able to bear it. You see, loving her as she does . . . I don't know! If you would only try to comfort her, Father, and persuade her to go away,'

The priest got up and went to the old woman.

'It is true, no one can appreciate a mother's heart,' he said- 'but God is merciful,'

The old woman's face suddenly twitched all over, and she began to hiccup hysterically.

'God is merciful,' the priest continued when she grew a little calmer. 'Let me tell you of a patient in my parish who was much worse than Mary Dmitrievna, and a simple tradesman cured her in a short time with various herbs. That tradesman is even now in Moscow. I told Vasili Dmitrich-we might try him. . . It would at any rate comfort the invalid. To God all is possible,'

'No, she will not live,' said the old woman. 'God is taking her instead of me,' and the hysterical hiccuping grew so violent that she fainted.

The sick woman's husband hid his face in his hands and ran out of the room.

In the passage the first person he met was his six-year-old son, who was running full speed after his younger sister.

'Won't you order the children to be taken to their mamma?' asked the nurse.

'No, she doesn't want to see them- it would upset her.'

The boy stopped a moment, looked intently into his father's face, then gave a kick and ran on, shouting merrily.

'She pretends to be the black horse, Papa!' he shouted, pointing to his sister.

Meanwhile in the other room the cousin sat down beside the invalid, and tried by skilful conversation to prepare her for the thought of death. The doctor was mixing a draught at another window.

The patient, in a white dressing gown, sat up in bed supported all round by pillows, and looked at her cousin m silence.

'Ah, my dear friend,' she said, unexpectedly interrupting her, 'don't prepare me I Don't treat me like a child. I am a Christian. I know it all. I know I have not long to live, and know that if my husband had listened to me sooner I should now have been in Italy and perhaps - no, certainly - should have been well. Everybody told him so. But what is to be done? Evidently this is God's wish. We have all sinned heavily. I know that, but I trust in God's mercy everybody will be forgiven, probably all will be forgiven. I try to understand myself. I have many sins to answer' for, dear friend, but then how much I have had to suffer! I try to bear my sufferings patiently . . .'

'Then shall I call the priest, my dear? You will feel still more comfortable after receiving communion,' said her cousin.

The sick woman bent her head in assent.

'God forgive me, sinner that I am!' she whispered

The cousin went out and signalled with her eyes to the priest.

'She is an angel!' she said to the husband, with tears in her eyes. The husband burst into tears, the priest went into the next room; the invalid's mother was still unconscious, and all was silent there Five minutes later he came out again, and after taking off his stole, straightened out his hair.

'Thank God she is calmer now,' he said, 'and wishes to see

you.

The cousin and the husband went into the sick-room. The invalid was silently weeping, gazing at an icon.

'I congratulate you, my dear,'[1] said her husband.

'Thank you! How well I feel now, what inexpressible sweetness I feel!' said the sick woman, and a soft smile played on her thin lips. 'How merciful God is! Is He not? Merciful and all powerful!' and again she looked at the icon with eager entreaty and her eyes full of tears.

Then suddenly, as if she remembered something, she beckoned to her husband to come closer.

'You never want to do what I ask . . .' she said in a feeble and dissatisfied voice.

The husband, craning his neck, listened to her humbly

'What is it, my dear?'

'How many times have I not said that these doctors don't know anything; there are simple women who can heal, and who do cure. The priest told me . . . there is also a tradesman . . . Send!'

'For whom, my dear?'

'O God, you don't want to understand anything!' . . And the sick woman's face puckered and she closed her eyes.

The doctor came up and took her hand. Her pulse was beating more and more feebly. He glanced at the husband. The invalid noticed that gesture and looked round in affright. The cousin turned away and began to cry.

'Don't cry, don't torture yourself and me,' said the patient 'Don't take from me the last of my tranquillity.'

'You are an angel,' said the cousin, kissing her hand.

'No, kiss me here! Only dead people are kissed on the hand. My God, my God!'

That same evening the patient was a corpse, and the body lay in a coffin in the music room of the large house. A deacon sat alone in that big room reading the psalms of David through bis nose in a monotonous voice. A bright light from the wax candles in their tall silver candlesticks fell on the pale brow of the dead woman, on her heavy wax-like hands, on the stiff folds

[1] It was customary in Russia to congratulate people who had received communion.

of the pall which brought out in awesome relief the knees and the toes. The deacon without understanding the words read on monotonously, and in the quiet room the words sounded strangely and died away. Now and then from a distant room came the sounds of children's voices and the patter of their feet

'Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled,' said the psalter 'Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever.'

The dead woman's face looked stern and majestic. Neither in the clear cold brow nor in the firmly closed lips was there any movement. She seemed all attention. But had she even now understood those solemn words?

IV

A month later a stone chapel was being erected over the grave of the deceased woman. Over the driver's tomb there was still no stone, and only the light green grass sprouted on the mound which served as the only token of the past existence of a man.

'It will be a sin, Sergey,' said the cook at the station-house one day, 'if you don't buy a stone for Theodore. You kept saying "It's winter, it's winter!" but why don't you keep your word now? You know I witnessed it. He has already come back once to ask you to do it; if you don't buy him one, he'll come again and choke you.'

'But why? I'm not backing out of it,' replied Sergey. 'I'll buy a stone as I said I would, and give a ruble and a half for it. I haven't forgotten it, but it has to be fetched When I happen to be in town I'll buy one.'

'You might at least put up a cross - you ought to - else it's really wrong,' interposed an old driver 'You know you are wearing his boots.'

'Where can I get a cross? I can't cut one out of a log.'

'What do you mean, can't cut one out of a log? You take an axe and go into the forest early, and you can cut one there. Cut down a young ash or something like that, and you can make a cross of it . . . you may have to treat the forester to vodka; but one can't afford to treat him for every trifle. There now, I broke

my splinter-bar and went and cut a new one, and **nobody said a word,'**

Early in the morning, as soon as it was daybreak, Sergey took an axe and went into the wood.

A cold white cover of dew, which was still falling untouched by the sun, lay on everything. The east was imperceptibly growing brighter, reflecting its pale light on the vault of heaven still veiled by a covering of clouds. Not a blade of grass below, nor a leaf on the topmost branches of the trees, stirred. Only occasionally a sound of wings amid the brushwood, or a rustling on the ground, broke the silence of the forest. Suddenly a strange sound, foreign to Nature, resounded and died away at the outskirts of the forest. Again the sound was heard and was rhythmically repeated at the foot of the trunk of one of the motionless trees. A tree-top began to tremble in an unwonted manner, its juicy leaves whispered something, and the robin who had been sitting in one of its branches fluttered twice from place to place with a whistle, and jerking its tail sat down on another tree.

The axe at the bottom gave off a more and more muffled sound, sappy white chips were scattered on the dewy grass and a slight creaking was heard above the sound of the blows. The tree, shuddering in its whole body, bent down and quickly rose again, vibrating with fear on its roots. For an instant all was still, but the tree bent again, a crashing sound came from its trunk, and with its branches breaking and its boughs hanging down it fell with its crown on the damp earth.

The sounds of the axe and of the footsteps were silenced. The robin whistled and flitted higher. A twig which it brushed with its wings shook a little and then with all its foliage grew still like the rest. The trees flaunted the beauty of their motionless branches still more joyously in the newly cleared space.

The first sunbeams, piercing the translucent cloud, shone out and spread over earth and sky. The mist began to quiver like waves in the hollows, the dew sparkled and played on the verdure, the transparent cloudlets grew whiter, and hurriedly dispersed over the deepening azure vault of the sky. The birds stirred in the thicket and, as though bewildered, twittered joyfully about something; the sappy leaves whispered gladly and

peacefully on the treetops, and the branches of those that were living began to rustle slowly and majestically over the dead and prostrate tree.

DIARY OF A MADMAN

LEO TOLSTOY

Translated by C. J. Lane

I WAS TAKEN to be examined by a medical board to-day and there was a difference of opinion about me. They argued about it and decided that I was not mad. But this was only because I managed to prevent myself from speaking out during the examination. I did not give myself away, because I am afraid of the mad-house: they would not let me get on with my mad affairs there. . . . They agreed that I was subject to fits and the like, but that my mind was quite sound. That is what they said, but I know that I am mad. The doctor prescribed some medicine for me, assuring me that if I strictly followed his instructions the symptoms would pass off. He said it would all pass off. If only it would! I just cannot stand it. Now I will tell you from the beginning how I went out of my mind, how

I betrayed my madness and came to be examined by the medical board.

Up to the age of thirty-five I lived like everyone else, and there was nothing remarkable about me. However, in early childhood, that is, up to the age of ten, I did experience something like my present complaint, but only spasmodically. It was not a permanent condition as it is now. It came over me rather differently when I was a child. This was the sort of thing that happened:

I remember once at bed-time when I was about five or six years old and my nurse, Yevpraksia, was undressing me and helping me into my cot. She was tall and thin, and was wearing a brown dress and a cap on her head, and I remember she had loose folds of skin under her hairy chin.

'Let me, let me,' I said, and climbed into the cot.

'Now then, lie down, Fedenka. Look at Mitya: he's a good boy, he's already in bed,' she said, looking at my brother I jumped into the cot, holding on to her hand. Then I let go, kicked my legs under the blanket and covered myself up. I felt contented.

I lay quietly and started thinking: 'I love Nanny; Nanny loves me and Mitenka, and I love Mitenka, and Mitenka loves me and Nanny. And Nanny loves Taras, and I love Taras, and Mitenka loves him And Taras loves me and Nanny, and Mama loves me and Nanny, and Nanny loves Mama and me and Papa And they all love one another and it's nice for everyone.'

Then suddenly I heard the housekeeper run in and angrily shout out something about the sugar-basin, and Nanny shouted back heatedly that she hadn't taken it And I felt sick and frightened and bewildered, and a chill of horror came over me, and I hid my head under the blanket. But that did not comfort me I remember how once I saw a boy beaten, how he cried, and how horrible Foka's face was as he beat him. Tou won't do it again, you won't do it again?' he kept on shouting, and went on striking him. The boy said 'No, I won't,' but Foka kept shouting, 'You won't do it again?' and beat him just the same. Then it came over me. I started sobbing and sobbing and for a long time I could not be comforted. That sobbing and that despair were the first signs of my present madness. I remember what happened another time when my aunt told us the story

of Christ. When she had finished she wanted to go away but we said:

'Tell us some more about Jesus Christ.'

'No, I haven't time now.'

'Oh, do tell us some more,' Mitenka also begged her to go on telling us. . . . So our aunt began to tell us the same story over again. She told us how they crucified him and scourged and tormented him and how he prayed all the time and did not judge them.

'Aunt, why did they torment him?'

'They were wicked people '

'But surely he was good?'

'Well, that's enough now. It's past eight, do you hear?'

'Why did they beat him? He forgave them, so why did they beat him? Did it hurt him, Aunt, did it hurt him?'

'There now, that's enough. I'm going to have my tea now.'

'But perhaps it's not true They didn't beat him?'

'Now that's enough.'

'No, no, don't go away.'

And then it came over me again. I sobbed and sobbed and began to beat my head against the wall.

That is what happened when I was a child. But from the age of fourteen, when sex awoke in me and I started indulging in vice, all this passed off and I was like all the other boys. I was pampered, brought up on an excess of rich food, without any physical work to do, with all the allurements for inflaming the senses, and with similarly spoiled children for companions. The beys of my age taught me vice and I gave myself up to it. Later this vice gave place to another. I came to know women. And so, seeking enjoyment and finding it, I lived until I was thirty-five. I was perfectly healthy, and there was no sign of my madness.

I hardly remember anything about these twenty years of my healthy life, and recall them only with difficulty and revulsion. Healthy in mind, like all the other boys of my circle, I went to the grammar school and then to the university, where I graduated in the Faculty of Law. Then, after working for a time, I met the girl who later became my wife. I married her, settled in the country, as they say, and reared my children; attended to

the managing of my property and acted as district magistrate.

1 had been married over nine years when I had my first attack since childhood

We had saved some money from my wife's legacy and from certain bonds which I held, and we decided to buy an estate. I was naturally very anxious to increase our estate and to do so in the most efficient way possible, in fact, better than anyone else would do it. I got to know all the places where estates were for sale, and read all the advertisements in the papers. 1 wanted to buy one where the profit from the estate or the value of the timber would cover the purchase price, so that I should get it for nothing. I was looking for a fool who wouldn't know any better, and I thought that I had found one. An estate with large forests was being sold in the Penza province, and from all that I could find out it appeared that the seller was just such a fool, and the forests would cover the cost of the estate. So I got ready and set off. For the first part of the journey we went by train - I was travelling with a servant - and then by post-chaise. The journey was a very jolly one for me, and my servant, a young and good-hearted fellow, was in high spirits, too. New places, new people; we travelled and enjoyed ourselves. The journev was one of some two hundred versts, and we decided to go on without halting except to change horses. Night came but we travelled on. We began to doze, and I must have fallen asleep but suddenly awoke with a feeling of fright. And as often happens, I felt wide awake, as if I should never get to sleep again 'Why am I travelling and where am I going?' I suddenly began 10 think. It was not because I was not pleased with the idea of buying a cheap estate, but all at once it seemed to me that there was no reason whatever to travel all that distance, that I should die here in a strange place. And I became terrified. Sergei, the servant, had woken, so I took the opportunity to start talking with him. I began talking about the part of the country where we were and he replied, and joked, but I felt miserable. Then I started talking about the family and about the purchase of the estate, and it amazed me how cheerfully he replied. To him everything seemed bright and cheerful, while I felt sick of everything. However, my mind felt easier after talking to him. But besides feeling so terrified and miserable a sense of tired -

ness came over me and I wanted to stop everything. I felt that if I could just go into a house and see people and drink tea, and particularly if I could sleep, then I should feel better. We were approaching the town of Arzamas.

'Couldn't we stop here and rest a little?'

'Why of course.'

'Is it far to the town?'

'About seven versts.'

The coachman was a staid, precise and morose type of man and he drove slowly and wearily.

We travelled on. I stopped talking and became easier in mind because I was looking forward to a rest and hoped that then all would be well. We went on and on in the darkness, and it seemed a terribly long way. We came to the town. Everyone was jsleep. Some small houses appeared through the darkness, and the coach-bell and the clatter of the horses' hooves echoed, as they do, among the houses. Now and then there would loom up larger white houses. It all made me feel very sad and I longed for the station, a samovar and a rest - and to lie down.

Well, we came at last to a small house with a post outside. It was white, but it seemed so terribly sad to me that I felt apprehensive. I quietly climbed down from the coach.

Sergei quickly got out what we needed from the coach and ran clattering up the steps. At the sound of his feet a feeling of sickness came over me. I went in. There was a passage. A sleepy servant with a birth-mark on his cheek showed me to the waiting-room. The mark on his cheek seemed horrible to me. It was a gloomy room and as I entered I felt even more tenified.

'You haven't a room where I could rest?'

'Certainly I have; there is this one '

It was a clean, square, whitewashed room. And I remember what anguish the very squareness of the room caused me. It had one window with a small red curtain. There was a Karelian birch table and a sofa with curved sides. We went in. Sergei set up the samovar and made tea while I lay down on the bed. I did not go to sleep but listened to Sergei drinking his tea. He called me, but I was terrified of getting up lest I should banish sleep altogether, and 1 was afraid to sit awake in that room. I did not get up, and began to doze. I must have dozed off, because

when I came to myself there was no one in the room and it was dark. I had the same wide-awake feeling as when I awoke in the coach. Now I felt it was quite impossible to go to sleep Why did I come here? Where am I going? Why am I running away, and where? I am running away from something terrible from which there is no escape. 1 am always with myself and it is 1 that am a torment to myself. I - that is it - the whole of me is here. Neither the Penza estate nor any other estate could add to or take away from me. And I, I have had enough of myself, my intolerable, tormenting self. I want to go to sleep, to forget, and cannot. I cannot get away from myself.

1 went out into the passage. Sergei was asleep on a narrow bench and his arm had flopped down, but he slept peacefully, and the porter with the mark on his cheek slept too. I had gone out into the passage thinking that I should get away from what tormented me. But it followed me and overshadowed everything. 'What nonsense is this?' I said to myself. 'What am I worrying about? What am I afraid of?'

'Me,' whispered the voice of death. 'I am here.' My flesh began to creep. Yes, death. It will come. Death, there it is, but it should not be. If death had actually appeared before me I could not have felt as I did then. I should have been afraid, but now I was not afraid; I saw and felt that death was approaching but at the same time that it should not be. My whole being felt the need of life, the right to life, and at the same time that death was approaching, and this inner conflict was horrible. I tried to shake off this horror. I found a bronze candlestick with the stump of a candle in it and lit it. The bright flame of the candle and the fact that it was shorter than the candlestick - it all said the same thing. There is nothing in life; death is, and ought not to be.

I tried to think about other things, about buying the estate and about my wife. But not only did these things fail to console me but they all seemed to have become just nothing. Horror that my life should be perishing precluded every other thought. I must sleep. I lay down, but the moment I did so I jumped up again in terror. And I felt an anguish, a spiritual anguish - anguish such as one feels before vomiting, but spiritual anguish. It was terrifying and horrible. I thought it was the horror of

death, **but** remembering and thinking about life it seemed that it was the horror of life, doomed to perish. Somehow life and death had fused into one. Something was trying to tear my soul asunder but could not do so. Once again I went to look at the two men sleeping, and again tried to get to sleep; but always the same terror was there-red, white, square Something is being torn and will not tear There is something horribly dry and evil, not a drop of goodness can I feel in myself, only an even, steady, bitter anger at myself and with what has made me.

What has made me? God, they say. God I must pray, 1 remembered. I had not prayed for a long time, not for twenty years. I did not believe in it all, though for the sake of appearance I went to confession and communion every year in Holy Week. I began to pray: 'Lord have mercy,' 'Our Father,' 'Hail Mary,' and began composing prayers. Then I started crossing myself and bowing down to the ground, and looking around afraid that I should be seen. And it was as if this distracted me - the fear of being seen - and I lay down. But no sooner had I closed my eyes than the feeling of horror came over me again and roused me. I could stand no more. I woke the porter and Sergei, oidered Sergei to pack, and we started off. The air and the movement made things seem better. But I felt that something *new* had settled on mv mind and poisoned all my former life.

•

Towards nightfall we came to our destination All day I had wrestled with my anguish and had mastered it But there was left in my mind a horrible residue as if some misfortune had befallen me which I could only temporarily forget, and which remained there in the back of my mind and took possession of me.

We arrived in the evening. An old man, the steward of the estate, greeted me, but with no enthusiasm - he was not pleased that the estate was being sold. Clean rooms with upholstered furniture, a new shining samovar, a large tea-service, honey for tea; it was all very pleasant. I asked him about the estate, but unwillingly, as if reciting an old forgotten lesson. It was a miserable business That night, however, I slept without worry I ascribed that to the fact that I had prayed again.

1 began to live as before, but the fear of that anguish hung over me from that time onwards. I had to live without a pause and to live in the old familiar conditions. Just as a school-boy recites from habit the lessons he has learnt by heart, so had I to live in order not to fall again into the clutches of that terrible anguish which I first experienced in Ar,'amas.

1 returned home safely. I did not buy the estate -I couldn't afford it-and began to live as before, but with one difference: 1 began to pray and to go to church. To live as before, 1 thought, but it was not as before, as I now see. I lived through what I had already begun, and continued with my former strength to run along a track already laid, but I no longer undertook anything new. I no longer took the same interest in my former way of life and was bored with everything, and I became religious. My wife noticed this and chided and pestered me about it. But there was no reappearance of my complaint while I was at home.

One day I went unexpectedly to Moscow. I packed during the day and set off in the evening. It was about a law-suit. I arrived in Moscow happy enough. On the journey I had struck up a conversation with a landowner from the Kharkov province about agriculture and banking, about where to stay and about theatres. We decided to stay together at a Moscow hostelry in Myasnitsky Street and to go to 'Faust'.

We arrived and I entered my small room at the hotel. I felt the dank smell of the corridor in my nostrils. The porter brought in my luggage and the chambermaid lit a candle. The flame burnt up brightly and then, as it always does, became dim. In the next room someone coughed; it sounded like an old man. The maid went out and the porter waited and asked if he should untie my luggage. The candle flame flared up once more and showed up the blue wallpaper with yellow stripes, a partition, a shabby table and a small sofa, a mirror and the window, and the narrowness of the room. And suddenly the Arzamas horror stirred in me. 'My God! How shall I spend a night here?' I thought.

'Yes, I should be glad if you would, my lad,' I said to the porter, so as to keep him in the room. 'I must change quickly for the theatre.' He untied my luggage. 'Would you just go over

to the gentleman in room eight, the one who came in with me? Tell him that I shall be ready in a minute and will call for him,' The porter went off and I began hastily to change, afraid to look at the walls. 'What nonsense,' I thought. 'What am I afraid of? I'm as bad as a child. I'm not afraid of ghosts. Ghosts? Better to be afraid of ghosts than this. Than what? Nothing. Myself-what nonsense I'm thinking!'

However, I put on a stiff, cold starched shirt, fastened my cuff-links and studs, put on my coat and a new pair of boots and went to call for the Kharkov landowner. He was ready, and we set off for 'Faust'. My companion just called in to have his hair waved while I went to a French hairdresser for a hair-cut and chatted with him. Then I bought a pair of gloves and everything was going well, and I forgot all about the oblong room and the partition.

It was pleasant at the theatre, and afterwards the landowner suggested having supper. I am not at all in the habit of doing this, but when he suggested it, as we were coming out of the theatre, I thought of the partition, and agreed.

We returned home after one o'clock in the morning. I had drunk two glasses of wine, contrary to my usual habit, but was in good spirits. But as soon as we entered the passage of the hotel with its dimmed lamp and I noticed the smell of the hotel, a chill of horror ran down my spine. However, there was nothing to be done about it. I shook hands with my companion and went into my room.

I spent a terrible night, worse than at Arzamas. Only in the mornmg, when the old man in the next room began coughing, did I get to sleep, and then not on my bed, where I had tried to sleep several times, but on the sofa. I suffered unbearably the whole night through. Again my soul was torn from my body. I live, I have lived, I ought to live, and suddenly - death. The annihilation of everything. Why then life? Or death? Why **not** kill myself at once? I am afraid. Shall I wait till death comes? I am even more afraid. One must live. Why? In order to die? I could not break away from this vicious circle. I took a book, read and forgot for the moment; but then again the question and the terror. I lay down on the bed and covered my eyes - it was worse still.

Go,d has done this. Why? They say 'Do not question, but pray,' v ery well. I prayed, just as I did at Arzamas. But then I prayed like a child. Now the prayer had a meaning: 'If You exist, tell me why and what I am,' I bowed down, said all the prayers I knew and composed my own, adding, 'Reveal to me,' And I stopped and waited for an answer. But there was no answer, as if there were no one who could reply. 'In order to live the future life,' I replied to myself. But why this uncertainty and torment? I cannot believe in the future life. I believed when I did not question with my whole soul, but now I cannot, I cannot 'If You had existed You would have told me and humanity. But You do not exist, only despair exists. And I don't want that, 1 don't want it,' I was indignant. I had begged Him to reveal to me the truth, to reveal Himself to me; I had done everything I knew but He had not revealed Himself. Then I remembered: 'Ask and it shall be given you,' and I asked, and in asking I found not consolation but respite. Perhaps I had not asked but denied Him. 'Recede from Him an inch and He will retreat a mile,' I did not believe in Him but had asked, and yet He had revealed to me nothing. I had made a bargain with Him and yet I blamed Him, and I just did not believe.

# # #

Next day I made every effort to do all my business in the one day and thus avoid another night in that room. I did not finish it all but returned home that night, and the feeling of anguish was no longer with me. My life, which had begun to change since the journey to Arzamas, was changed still more by that night in Moscow. Periods of apathy would come over me, and I occupied myself less with my business affairs. My health became weak and my wife insisted that I should get medical advice. She said that all my talk about faith and God was a result of my illness. But I knew that my weakness and illness was the result of the unresolved conflict within me. I tried to keep this conflict in the background by living in the conditions that were familiar to me. I went to church on Sundays and Feast Days and to Confession and Communion. Since my journey to the Penza province I had even taken to fasting, and I prayed more than usual. I expected nothing from all this. It

was as though, knowing that a promissory note would not be met, I had duly protested it instead of tearing it up. I did these things just in case. ... I no longer occupied myself with managing my estate -I hadn't the energy - but I just read magazines, novels and the papers, and played cards for small stakes My only display of energy was to go on my customary hunting expeditions I had always been a keen sportsman. Once a neighbour of mine, also a sportsman, was going out on a wolf-hunt and I accompanied him. When we arrived we changed over to skis and went to the place where the hunt was to begin. It was not a success. The wolves broke through the screen of beaters. I heard this from a distance, and so went on through the forest pursuing a fresh hare-trail. The tracks led me deep into a glade where I came upon the hare. But he leapt away so quickly that I hardly saw him. I retraced my steps through the tall forest. The snow was deep and my skis stuck and the twigs impeded my movements. Deeper and deeper it became and I began to ask: 'Where am I?' The snow had changed everything.

1 suddenly felt that I was lost. Home was far away and so were the hunters - there was not a sound. I felt tired and was in a sweat. If I stopped I should freeze - if I went on I should lose my remaining strength. I began to shout. Not a sound. No one answered. I turned back again, but again I could not find my way. I looked around me: forest. You could not tell east from west. Again I retraced my steps. My legs were getting tired. I was frightened. I stopped, and there came over me all the horror of the Arzamas and Moscow nights, but a hundred times worse. My heart thumped and my arms and legs trembled. Is this death? I don't want it. Why death? What is death? I wanted, as before, to ask and reproach God, but then I suddenly felt that I dare not, and that one must not try to bargain with Him, that He had said what was necessary and that I alone was to blame. I began to pray to Him for forgiveness and to loathe myself.

My terror did not last long. I stood there, and when I came to, after proceeding some distance I found a way out of the forest. I wasn't far from the edge, and came out on to the road. My arms and legs continued to tremble and my heart thumped, but I was joyful. I reached the hunters and we re-

turned home. I was joyful and knew I had some gladness within me which I would sort out when I was alone. And that is what in fact happened. I stayed alone in my study and began to pray, begging for forgiveness and remembering my sins. There did not seem to be many of them. But I remembered them and they seemed repulsive to me.

* * #

From that time onwards I began to read the Scriptures. The Old Testament was incomprehensible to me, but alluring; the Gospels moved me. But most of all I read the lives of the Saints, and these comforted me and set me an example which it seemed more and more possible to follow. Thenceforth I occupied myself less with business, the managing of my estate and my family affairs. These even repelled me. They didn't seem the thing I wanted. What exactly that thing was I did not know, but what had been my life ceased to be so. I again realised this at the sale of an estate.

A very profitable estate was being sold not far from us, and I went over to have a look at it. It certainly was a very good estate and a good bargain. Particularly valuable was the fact that the peasants had only kitchen-garden land, and as I understood it they would have to work in the landowner's fields for nothing in order to obtain pasturage for their cattle. And it appeared that this was so. I reckoned all this out and was pleased about it, just as I had always been about such things. But as I rode home I met an old woman, asked her the way and had a talk with her, and she told me about her poverty. When I arrived home and began telling my wife about how profitable the estate was I grew ashamed. I became disgusted. I said that I could not buy the estate because our profit would be derived from the poverty and misery of others. When I had said this, the truth of what I had said suddenly dawned upon me-and particularly the truth that the peasants want to live, just as we do, and that they are people, brothers, 'sons of the Father' as it says in the Gospel. It was suddenly as if something which had long been aching in me tore itself from me, as if being born. My wife scolded me but I was full of gladness.

That was the beginning of my madness. But complete mad-

ness followed later, about a month after this. It was when I was at church, attending morning service. I prayed and listened and was moved. And suddenly they brought me a holy loaf. We went to kiss the cross and began jostling one another. Then at the doorway of the church there were some beggars. And it suddenly became clear to me that all this ought not to be, and that it was not so; and if it were not so then death and fear did not exist, and there was no longer the conflict within me and I no longer feared anything.

Then a light dawned upon me and I became what I am. If fear and death do not exist, they certainly do not exist in me. There and then in the porchway I gave away all I had, thirty-five roubles, to the poor and walked home talking with the people. . . .

THE ARTISTS

VSEVOLOD GARSHIN

Translated by E. M. Walton

1

DYEDOV

How LIGHT-HEARTEDI feel to-day! Happiness has come to me so suddenly. Away with my engineer's uniform, my slide rule, estimates and specifications!

Ought I to be ashamed of feeling so jubilant at my poor aunt's death, just because the money she left me enables me to throw up my job? On the other hand her dying request to me was that I should give myself up whole-heartedly to the work I love, so in a way I am rejoicing also because I am carrying out her fervent wish. What a day I had yesterday. . . . What a look of astonishment on my chief's face when I told him I wanted to leave! But when I mentioned my plans for the future, he just gaped.

'To devote yourself to Art? . . . Hm. . . . You may send in your resignation,'

With that he turned and went out of the room without another word. But what more do I want? I am free and an artist. Could anything be more wonderful?

I felt I would like to get away from St. Petersburg and from everybody. I hired a boat and was rowed out to sea. The water, the sky, the sunlit town in the distance, the dark forest fringing the Gulf, the tall masts in the Kronstadt roadstead, dozens of ships steaming rapidly past me, sailing vessels and small boats sailing lightly by-all this appeared to me in a new light. It was all mine now and in my power: I could pick out whatever I chose and display it on canvas before the gaze of an admiring, art-loving crowd. However, one shouldn't sell the bear's skin before one has caught the bear: I am by no means a great painter as yet . . .

My boat moved swiftly along the smooth surface. The boatman, a tall, handsome, vigorous fellow in a bright red shirt, applied himself to the oars with a will, leaning forward and throwing himself back so that at every stroke the boat shot far forward. The light of the setting sun fell so effectively on his face and red shirt that I wanted to paint him. As usual I had my small paint-box with me.

'Stop rowing,' I said, 'and sit still for a little while. I want to paint you,'

He put down his oars.

'No,' said I, 'I want you to look as though you were rowing,'

He picked up the oars and swung them back like the wings of a bird poised for flight, and held this wonderful pose. I quickly sketched in the outline in pencil and began to paint. I mixed my paints with a new feeling of joy, for I knew that now nothing on earth would ever tear me away from painting.

The boatman tired very soon. His animated expression gave way to a look of boredom. He yawned occasionally and once even leant his head forward to the oars to wipe his face with his sleeve. The folds of his shirt were completely disarranged:

What a nuisance! I do feel annoyed when a model moves.

'You must sit perfectly still, my good man!'

He grinned.

'**What are** you laughing at?'

He smiled sheepishly.

'Well, it's funny, sir,'

'What is funny?'

'You painting me as if 1 was something extraordinary. As though you were making a picture,'

'But that is just what I *am* doing- painting a picture,'

'What for?'

'To learn how to paint. First I shall draw small pictures, and then large ones,'

'Very big ones?'

'Twenty feet long if I want to,'

He was silent for a moment and then asked quite seriously:

'Does that mean that you could paint an ikon?'

'Yes, if I chose, but I am going to paint pictures,'

'I see,'

He pondered once more:

'What are they for?'

'What? Pictures?'

'Yes, these pictures?'

Needless to say I did not deliver a lecture to him on the aims and significance of Art. I merely stated that pictures brought in good money, a couple of thousand roubles and sometimes more. The boatman was quite satisfied with this explanation and did not talk any more. My study has turned out very well - the warm tones of the red material bathed in sunshine are very effective. I returned home perfectly happy.

2

RYABININ

HERE AM l in the midst of a crowd of fellow students, who like myself are seated at their easels with palettes and paint-brushes. In front of us in a strained, unnatural position stands an old man, Taras, our nude model, holding his hand on his head, because our dear Professor N. (of Teutonic origin) considers this to be 'a very classical pose,' Well to the fore is Dyedov, who though a landscape-painter is painting away at Taras for all he is worth. The class-room reeks of oil, paint and

turps. Silence reigns. Every half-hour Taras is **allowed to rest.** He then sits on the edge, of a wooden case which is also his pedestal and degenerates from a 'nude' into a very ordinary naked old man, who rubs and stretches his stiff limbs, blows his nose without a handkerchief and so forth. The students crowd lound the easels, examining one another's work. There is always a large gathering around my easel. I am a very gifted student of the Academy of Art. I show great promise of 'becoming one of our Coryphaei,' according to the felicitous phrase of the well-known art critic, Mr. V. S., who predicted quite a long time ago that 'Ryabinin is sure to make good.' That is why everyone has a look at my work.

After a five minutes' break we all return to our places. Taras clambers on to his pedestal, puts his hand on his head and we go on with our daubing . . .

And so every day . . .

Sounds deadly dull, doesn't it? I discovered a long time ago how very boring all this was. But just as a railway engine with its steam full on has no choice but to travel along the rails till the steam is exhausted or jump the rails and change from a sturdy iron and copper monster into a heap of scrap metal, so it is with me. . . I am running along rails; they firmly grip my wheels. If I am derailed, what then? Whatever happens I must travel along till I reach my station, even though this destination 13 a blank in my mind, and I cannot make head or tail of anything. Others tell me that my aim is to serve Art. 'Art'-mavbe, but when it comes to 'service'-well . . .

When I visit art exhibitions and look at pictures, what do I really see? The answer is: canvases covered with paint in such a way as to produce an impression similar to those produced by various objects. Then people flock to admire how dexterously the paint has been laid on. And that is all there is to it. Whole books have been written on this subject, stacks of them. Many of these volumes I have read myself. But all these Taines, Carrteres, Kuglers, and others who write on Art, including Prud'hon, can shed no real light.

They all harp on one theme: the significance of Art; but when I read their works I invariably find at the back of my mind the thought: 'providing it has one.' I have never come across an

instance of a good picture having a good influence on a man; why then should I believe it exists.

Why should I believe? Because in my case such a belief is an absolute necessity; but how does one acquire it? How am I to convince myself that my life will not be spent ministering merely to the stupid curiosity of the human herd (and well and good, if it should be curiosity only, and not something else, such as arousing the baser instincts, for instance)? How am I to convince myself that I shall not be pandering to the vanity of some wealthy owner of a well-filled paunch who will saunter up to my picture, so precious to me because of the thoughts, passion and suffering that have gone to its making, and because it is painted not with brush and paint, but with my blood and nerves? Mumbling 'Hm . . . not bad!' he will stick his hand into his bulging pocket and throwing me a few hundred roubles will carry my picture away. With it he will also take my sleepless nights, my doubts and misgivings, my visions and disappointments, my joys and despair. Then again I shall find myself one of a crowd, yet always alone, mechanically drawing some model every evening, mechanically painting it again every morning, impressing my professors and fellow-students with the good progress I am making. Why should I do all this, and where does it all lead?

It is now four months since I sold my last picture, and I am still without an idea for the next. How I wish an idea would come to me! That would mean a brief spell of oblivion: as in a monastery I should find refuge in my picture; it would absorb all my thought. The questions: 'Where one is going?' and 'Why?' are silenced during work. A single thought, a single aim fills one's being. The realisation of this idea is blissfully satisfying. The picture becomes the world in which one lives, and one's responsibility is to it alone. Standards of everyday morality no longer apply; you create a new morality for yourself in this *new* world of your own where you can assess in your own way, quite apart from everyday life, your worth and integrity, or your worthlessness and dishonesty.

But you cannot go on painting for ever. In the evenings the fading light will interrupt your work. Your everyday life claims you once more and again there is no escape from the eternal

question: 'What is it all for?' This question will not let you sleep,' but will keep you tossing feverishly in bed, peering into the darkness, as though the answer could be read there. Just before morning you will drop off into a heavy sleep, to awaken later into another world of dreams, in which nothing is truly alive except the images that emerge from within you and gradually grow distinct on the canvas in front of you.

'Ryabinin, why aren't you working?' asks my neighbour loudly. I am so deep in thought that I start at the sound of his voice. My hand holding the palette is hanging down, my coat is covered with paint and my brushes lie scattered on the floor. I look at my work. It is finished and it is good. A very life-like Taras stands before me on my canvas.

'I have finished,' I reply.

The lesson, too, is over. The model climbs down from his pedestal and begins dressing. We put away our things amidst the usual talk and noise. Students come up to me; some murmur words of praise:

'You'll win the medal . . . the best piece of work,' they say. 'Others are silent: artists do not like to praise one another.

3

DYEDOV

I THINK THAT MY fellow students look up to me; partly, of course, because of my comparatively ripe age. Volsky alone of all the students at the Academy is older than I am. How Art can attract man! This Volsky, for instance, is a retired officer of about forty-five and completely grey-haired. It is quite a feat to start studying and enter an art school at that age. He works very hard: in the summer, from morning till night, and in all weather, he paints studies with a kind of zealous devotion; in the winter he paints whenever the light is good enough, and in the evenings draws. Although he is not really gifted, he has made very good progress in two years.

Now Ryabinin, that is quite another matter: devilishly clever and shockingly lazy. The young students all admire him, but personally I don't think anything will come of him. What I find most disconcerting is his passion for so called realistic

subjects: he paints peasants' birch-bark shoes, the rags they wear instead of socks and their sheepskin jackets, as if we did not see enough of these in real life. The main thing, however, is that he hardly does any work. Sometimes he will get down to it and in a month will produce a picture which is hailed by everyone as if it were something remarkable, though his technique comes in for some criticism. (My own opinion, incidentally, is that his technique is very weak indeed.) After that he does no work at all - not even studies - but wanders about plunged in gloom and won't speak to anyone, not even to me, though I believe he avoids me less than the others. What a peculiar youth he isI I cannot understand people who do not find Art completely satisfying. How is it that they fail to grasp that for man there is nothing so uplifting as Art?

The picture I finished yesterday is on exhibition, and to-day someone asked its price. I shall not let it go under three hundred; so far have been offered two fifty. I feel that once a price has been fixed you must stick to it. This enhances one's standing. In this particular instance 1 shall certainly hold out, because the picture is sure to find a buyer. The subject is pleasing and one that sells well. It is a winter sunset: dark trees in the foreground very strikingly outlined against a vivid red sky. K goes in for this sort of thing and they sell like hot cakes. I have heard that this winter alone he has raked in about twenty thousand. Not bad that! I don't know how it is some artists manage to starve. With K. not a single canvas goes begging: he sells everything he turns out. All you need is the right approach to your work: while you paint your picture you must be a creative artist; once it is finished-you must be a tradesman; the astuter you are in business transactions the better. The general public often tries to do us artists down.

4

RYABININ

As I LIVE IN 15th Street, Middle Prospect, I have to walk four times a day along the quayside where the ships arriving from abroad are moored. I love this part of St. Petersburg for its motley crowd and colour, animation, bustle and noise, and

because it has provided me with so much material. Here, watching the dockers handling sacks and bales, working cranes and pushing heavy wheelbarrows as they load and unload the ships, I have learnt to paint human toil.'

J was walking home with Dyedov, the landscape-painter. He is a very kind man, as ingenuous as his own landscapes and passionately in love with his own art. Here is an artist free from all doubts and misgivings if there ever was one. He paints what he sees. If he sees a river, he paints a river. If he sees sedge growing in a marsh, he paints sedge growing in a marsh. He has never paused to think *why* he should paint rivers or marshes. 1 believe he is quite well-educated; at all events he has taken a university degree in engineering, but as he was left some money - enough to live on - he threw up his job. Now he spends his whole time painting. During the summer months from morning till dusk he is out in the fields and woods sketching, and in the winter he assiduously turns out sunsets, dawns, noons, before the showers, after the showers, winters, springs and so forth. I don't think he ever regrets having given up engineering, but as we walk along the quayside he often tells me the names and uses of the huge iron and steel contraptions that are unloaded from the ships, various machine-parts, boilers and so forth.

'Do look what an enormous boiler has just arrived!' he said to me yesterday, tapping the ringing metal with his cane.

'Surely we are able to manufacture such things in Russia?'

'Oh, we produce them here all right, but not in sufficient quantities. You see what masses of them have arrived. And the workmanship is none too good. Here is one that is in need of repair already. Do you see how this seam has given? And here, too, the rivets are loose. Do you know how they make these things? I can assure you it's the most terrible work imaginable. A workman inside the boiler holds a rivet in position with pincers, pressing his chest against them with all his might, while a skilled workman hammers the rivet from the outside, so as to make a head,'

Here he pointed to a row of round metal protuberances along the seam of the boiler.

'But Dyedov,' I exclaimed, 'this amounts to someone hammer-

ing a man's chest!'

'Yes, exactly. I once got into a boiler and tried it myself. After four rivets I had difficulty in getting out at all. I felt completely shattered. But these men seem to get used to it somehow, though, of course, they die like flies. A year or two is about as long as any of them lasts out, and if they are alive after that it is quite the exception for them to be any good for anything else. How could they be after having their chests hammered at all day, and inside the boiler, too, where there isn't enough air and where they are bent double. In winter the iron freezes and there in the terrible cold they have to sit or lie on metal. In that boiler over there, for instance-can you see that red, narrow one?-there just isn't room to sit; you have to lie on your side as you counteract the blows with your chest. No easy job for those "deaf'uns." '

'Those what?'

' "Deaf'uns" - that's the workmen's nickname for them, because usually the echoing din of the hammering makes them lose their hearing. And what do you think they earn? Why, next to nothing, for their work requires neither experience, nor skill, merely brawn. . . Oh, Ryabinin, if you only knew what terrible things one comes across in works and factories ! I can't tell you how glad I am that I have given up that work once and for all. In the beginning you just feel you don't want to go on living as you watch these sufferings. . . What a change to work with Nature ! She does not make us suffer, and we artists, in our turn, needn't hurt her when we exploit her. . . Oh, do look at that beautiful shade of grey,' he interrupted himself suddenly, pointing to the sky; 'there, can you see? - quite low down, below that cloudlet . . . oh, how beautiful I Just with that touch of green! Why, if one reproduced that faithfully, no one would believe it could be natural. Don't you think it is marvellous?'

I voiced my approval, though to be perfectly honest I could not see any particular beauty in a grey-green patch of our St. Petersburg sky; and I interrupted Dyedov, who was now in raptures about another little bit of sky near another cloudlet.

'Tell me, where could I see a "deaf'un "?'

'If you would like to come to the works with me some day, I

could show you all sorts of interesting things. As a matter of fact, if you like we could go to-morrow. You aren't by any chance contemplating painting a "deaf'un," I trust! Don't, it's not worth it; there are more cheerful subjects in plenty. But if you would really like to see over the works, let's go to-morrow.'

To-day we visited the works and saw everything. We also saw a 'deaf'un.' He was crouching all huddled up at one end of the boiler countering the blows of a heavy hammer with his chest. 1 watched for half-an-hour. The hammer must have crashed down on to the boiler hundreds of times. The 'deaf'un' writhed. 1 must paint him.

5

DYEDOV

RYABININ HAS BEEN struck with such a crazy notion that I don't know what to think of him. A few days ago I took him round a works. We spent the whole day there, went over everything, and I explained various technical processes to him. (Was incidentally surprised to find how little I have forgotten about my former profession.) Eventually we visited the boiler workshop. Work was in progress on an enormous boiler. Ryabinin climbed into the boiler and for over half-an-hour watched the workman holding the rivets in position with pincers. He came out pale and upset, and did not say a word the whole way home. To-day he announced to me that he had begun to paint a 'deaf'un.' What an absurd idea! What is there poetic about dirt? Speaking more frankly than I could before others, I think that all this 'moujik' tendency in Art is just straining after ugliness and nothing else. Who really wants these 'Volga Boatmen' of Ryepin's? No one can deny that the actual painting is masterly, but that is all that can be said about them. Beauty, harmony, aesthetics - where do they come in? Does not Art exist to reproduce those things in Nature which are pleasing to the eye?

That brings me back to my own work. A few days more and my 'Peaceful Morning in May' will be finished. Weeping willows trail their branches over faintly rippling water, the eastern sky is tinged with red, and pink tints are reflected in

the light feathery clouds. In the distance a female figure carrying a pail descends the steep bank scaring a flock of ducks. That is all; it sounds simple enough, but I feel very strongly that there is something wonderfully poetic about my picture. Now this *is* Art. It predisposes a man to quiet, placid musing and brings gentleness into his s,oul. But Ryabinin's 'Deaf'un' won't have any effect on anyone, because, to begin with, everybody will try to get away from it as soon as possible: the hideous lags and grimy face are an eye-sore. Now that I come to think of it, in music we do not tolerate harsh discords which jar on the ear; why then should we be allowed to reproduce definitely ugly and repulsive images in our drawings and paintings? I must discuss this point with L.; he will write an article and incidentally put in a few scathing remarks about Ryabinin's latest picture - he richly deserves it!

6

KVABIN'IM

l H A V E N O T B E E N t o the Academy for a fortnight but have been painting at home. The work has quite exhausted me, although it is going well. I really should not say 'although,' but 'especially because' it is going well. As my work progresses, what I am painting fills me more and more with dismay. It also seems tome that this is go**ing** to *be* my last picture.

Here he is, crouching before me in a dark corner of the boiler, kent dtuble and dressed in rags, this human being on the verg e of collapse from bodily exertion. He would be in complete darkness were it not for the light coming through the round holes which have been drilled in the boiler to take the rivets. Round patches of light fall on his face and on his clothes, like golden flecks; they shine on his tattered garments, on his dirty, tangled beard and hair, on his red congested face, streaming with sweat and grime, on his sinewy, overstrained hands and arms and on his broad but sunken and tortured chest. As blow after blow crashes down on the boiler he musters all his strength to maintain his unnatural position. As far as such a thing is possible I have succeeded in portraying the strain of his effort. At times I lay aside my palette and brushes and look at my

picture **from a** distance. I am satisfied with **it: never have I** done anything that has turned out so **well as this appalling** thing. But unfortunately my satisfaction does not soothe me; on the contrary it torments me. This is not a case of a picture that has been finished, but of a disease that has come to a head. What its outcome will be I don't know, but I feel that having painted this picture there will be nothing more for me to paint. Bird-catchers, fishermen and anglers, huntsmen, etc., with their mobile, expressive faces - the happy hunting-ground of the painters of subject pictures - what have I to do with them now? There is no other way in which I could convey a meaning more powerfully than I have done with my 'Deaf un,' that is, if I do convey it. . .

As an experiment I invited Dyedov and showed him the picture. His only words were: 'My God! and he spread out his arms helplessly. He then sat down, gazed at the picture for about half-an-hour, shook hands in silence and went away. In his case, I believe, it worked, but then, after all, he is an artist.

I, too, sit in front of my picture and it works on me, too. I feel I cannot tear my eyes away from it, that I am at one with that tormented body. At times I seem to hear the echoing crash of the hammer. It will drive me mad. I must cover up the picture.

I have hung a cloth over my easel, but I still sit here thinking about the terrible, undefinable thing that torments me. In a yellow, oblique beam of light cast by the setting sun through my dusty windowpane my cloth-bedecked easel looks like the Spirit of Earth in Taust,' as portrayed by German actors: 'Wer raft mir?' Who has summoned *you}* It is I, I who have created you. Only I have not conjured you up from some other 'sphere,' but out of a dark and airless boiler, so that you should shock this sleek, immaculate and loathsome crowd. By the powers at my command I hold you bound to this canvas; come then, look down from it on these tail-coats and trailing evening dresses; cry out to them: 'I am a growing canker!' Strike at their hearts, deprive them of sleep; let your image haunt them! Destroy their placid calm, as you have for ever destroyed mine. . .

But oh no. This is not the way it will really happen. My picture will be finished and framed in gold; two keepers will carry

it on their heads to the Academy where it will be exhibited. And there it will hang among the 'Sunsets' and the 'Mid-days,' next to the 'Little Girl with a Cat' and not far from an enormous 'Czar Ivan the Terrible Piercing the Foot of Vassih Shibanov.' It would be unfair to say that no one will notice it It will certainly be looked at, and even praised. Artists will discuss my technique. Art critics and reporters will try to overhear their comments as they scribble in their note-books. Mr. V. S. alone, who is above borrowing the opinions of others, will look, approve, extol, and shake me by the hand. Art Critic L. will attack my poor 'Deaf'un' with fury: 'Can anyone tell me what is the aesthetic value of this picture?' After that he will slate me for all he is worth. The general public . . . They will pass by my picture unmoved or with a frown of disgust. The elegant ladies will say: 'What an ugly man!' and will gracefully pass on to the next picture, 'Little Girl with a Cat,' and here they will say: 'Isn't that sweet!' or words to that effect Worthy gentlemen with bovine countenances will look at my picture, then they will cast down their eyes to consult their catalogues and uttering something between a grunt and a sniff will continue on their way, unruffled and serene. Maybe only some youth or girl will pause and ponder, and read in the tormented eyes that look down upon them in anguish from the canvas, the wail of despair which I have portrayed within their depths.

And what after that? The picture has been exhibited. It will be sold and taken away. But what is to happen to me? All that I have lived through these days - will that all vanish into thin air? All these emotions - will they peter out and be followed by a period free from stress when I shall look for innocuous, inoffensive subjects? Innocent subjects! I have suddenly re membered how the custodian of an art gallery, compiling a catalogue, called out to his clerk:

'Martynov, please put down No. 112 — First Love Scene-Girl plucking a Rose.'

'And now, Martynov, put down No. 113-Second Love Scene - Girl smelling a Rose.'

Will I go on as before painting girls smelling roses, or shall 1 jump the rails?

7

DYEDOV

RYABININ HAS NEARLY finished his 'Deafun' and invited me round to see it to-day. I went very much prejudiced against the picture, and must confess that I had to change my mind. It really does produce a very strong impression. The draughtsmanship is excellent, the painting sculptural. The most remarkable thing about the picture is the fantastic lighting which at the same time is so true to life. Undoubtedly this would be a work of merit were it not for its absurd subject. L. agrees with me entirely, and next week his article will be published in the papers. I wonder what Ryabinin will have to say about it. L., of course, won't be able to criticise the picture from the point of view of technique, but he will know how to deal with its significance as a work of Art, which cannot be degraded to serve low and obscure ideas.

L. came to see me to-day. He was most complimentary. Made some minor observations, but in general was most favourably impressed. Would that the professors saw my work with his eyes! Surely, surely, I must win what we students of the Academy all covet: the Gold Medal, which means a scholarship: four years abroad at Government expense and a professorship to look forward to in the future. . . How right I was when I gave up my joyless, monotonous and dirty work, where at every step one was brought up against men like Ryabinin's 'Deaf'un.'

8

RYABININ

THE PICTURE HAS been sold and has gone to Moscow. I have been paid, and at the request of my fellow students gave a party at the 'Vienna.' I don't know when this custom originated, but nearly all such celebrations are held by us young artists in one particular room of this hotel. It is a corner room, large and lofty with an imposing branched chandelier, orna mented with glass pendants, hanging from the ceiling and other chandeliers of bronze, with carpets and furniture blackened with time and tobacco smoke, a piano that has faced many

ordeals in its time at the hands, or should I say fingers, of would-be pianists. Only one thing in that room is new: the enormous looking-glass which has to be replaced two or three times a year, every time, in fact, celebrations are held not by artists but by the scions of our merchant class.

Quite a lot of people came: genre-painters, landscape-painters, sculptors, two art-critics from obscure newspapers, a few casual acquaintances. We talked and drank. In half-an-hour everyone was talking at once: we were all slightly drunk, myself included. I remember being carried shoulder high and making a speech. Later I kissed and was kissed by one of the art-critics, and we drank to our closer friendship. We drank, embraced, kissed and talked quite a lot, and the party went on till four o'clock in the morning. I believe two of my guests remained behind fast asleep when the rest of us left.

I had great difficulty in getting home, and threw myself on my bed fully dressed. I felt as though I were on board ship in a heavy gale; my bedroom seemed to rock and revolve together with my bed and myself. This lasted for a minute or two; then I fell asleep.

I awoke very late. My head ached, my body felt as though filled with lead. It was a great effort to open my eyes; when I did open them I saw my empty easel. The picture had gone. The easel reminded me of all that I had just lived through, and everything began all over again. . . . Oh, God, will there never be an end to this?

My head ached more and more, everything grew blurred. I would doze, then wake up for a time to drop off to sleep again. 1 did not know whether there was dead silence around me or a deafening noise, a chaos of sounds too terrible to be audible to human ears. Perhaps there really was a silence, but with a ringing, crashing, whirring sound hovering somewhere in it. It seemed to me I was listening to an enormous pump of incredible power pumping water from unfathomable depths, working away to the dull rush and rumble of the falling water and the clanking of the piston-shaft. But above all this was one sustained note, oppressive and persistent. I longed to open my eyes, to get up, to open the window, to hear homely sounds: a Human voice, the clatter of a passing carriage, the barking of a

dog, anything to escape from this eternal hubbub. But I hadn't the strength. I was drunk the night before, so now I had to lie there and go on listening for ever and ever.

Again I fell asleep, again I woke. Once more I heard the knocking and the clanking, but now the sounds grew nearer and clearer. The knocks became one with the beat of my pulse. Could they be within me, inside my brain, or were they outside my body? They grew more and more distinct. Here they were ringing, sharp and clear, one . . . two . . . one . . . two. They fell on metal, but on something else besides. I could clearly distinguish the clang of iron as it rang and echoed. At first the hammer fell with a dull thud as if it struck a viscous mass, but gradually the sonorous tones gained in volume and at last the enormous boiler reverberated like a huge bell. Then a pause . . . silence . . . and then again the unbearable, deafening din. Yes, that was as it should be: first the hammer falls on the iron while it is red-hot and pliant and then it hardens. And the boiler rings when the head of the rivet has set. That's quite clear. But those other sounds, what are they? I try to understand, but a mist clouds my brain. I feel it ought to be so easy to remember, it is just there at the back of my mind, so tantalismgly near, but what it is I don't know. No, I just cannot get there. . . There is nothing for it but to let the noise go on. I do know what it is, it's only that I can't remember for the moment. ..

The clamour increased, then faded away, now growing unbearably, monstrously loud, now dying down altogether. And it seemed to me that it was not the noise that disappeared, but that it was I myself who would vanish somewhere, where I could neither hear, nor lift a finger, nor raise my eyelids, nor utter a sound. Benumbed and racked with horror I wake up in a fever, but not completely: I just pass from one kind of dream into another. I am back at the works, but not at the works I visited with Dyedov. This place is vaster and gloomier. On all sides are gigantic furnaces of monstrous, fantastic shape. They belch forth sprays of flame, which blacken the walls and roof of the workshop, already dark as pitch. The machines sway and whine. There is hardly room for me to pass between revolving wheels and vibrating moving belts. Not a soul

anywhere. Thuds and clanging are coming from somewhere. That is where the work is going on. Blood-curdling shrieks and terrific thuds are coming from there. I am afraid to go there, but I am caught up and borne aloft, while the hammering grows louder and the cries more horrible. Then everything is merged in one stupendous roar, and I see ... I see an uncouth, hideous creature writhing on the ground while blows rain upon him from all directions. He is being beaten by a vast crowd with whatever comes handy. All my friends are here, their faces frenzied, armed with hammers, crowbars, cudgels or simply beating with their fists this creature whom I cannot yet name. I know that it is still he ... I lunge forward; I want to shout: 'Stop! What has he done to you?' and I suddenly behold a pale, distorted face, strangely terrifying, terrifying because it is my own. I see how I myself, the other I, lift and swing a hammer to bring it down with a frantic blow.

Then the hammer comes crashing down upon my own skull. Everything vanishes. For a time I am aware of darkness, silence, emptiness and immobility; but soon I too vanish. . . .

* * #

Ryabinin lay unconscious and all alone till the evening. At last his Finnish landlady realised that her lodger had not been out of his room all day, and having the good sense to go and see whether anything was wrong, found the boy prostrate in a raging fever and muttering nonsense. She was frightened, uttered an exclamation in her incomprehensible language, and sent her girl for the doctor. The doctor came, examined Ryabinin, grunted, sat down at the table, wrote out a prescription and went away. But Ryabinin continued to toss about in his delirium.

9

DYEDOV

POOR OLD RYABININ was taken ill after yesterday's 'celebration,' I called on him and found him unconscious. His landlady is looking after him. I had to leave her some money, as there did not seem to be any of Ryabinin's anywhere about the place. I don't know whether the old hag has helped herself, or

whether he really spent all he had at the 'Vienna' **last night.** Yesterday's party must have cost a pretty penny. It was great fun. Ryabinin and I drank to our closer friendship. I also drank with L. who is a very good fellow, and he does understand Art. The deep insight L. shows in his last article when explaining what I wished to express in my last picture is really remarkable, and I feel very grateful to him. I think I ought to paint some trifle-something a la Klever-and give it him as a present. His name is Alexander. It's St. Alexander's day to-morrow. I wonder whether it's his name-day?

However, things may go very badly for poor Ryabinin. His picture for the Competition is still in its early stages, and the closing date is drawing near. If his illness lasts for a month, he stands no chance of winning a Scholarship, and then goodbye to his trip abroad. There is one thing for which I am truly thankful: as a landscape painter I do not have to compete with him; but his colleagues, the genre painters, must be rubbing their hands with glee; with him out of the running they stand a much better chance.

However, Ryabinin cannot be left like this. We shall have to get him into a hospital.

10

RYABININ

TO-DAY I CAME TO after many days of unconsciousness For a long time I could not grasp where I was. At first I did not even realise that the long white bundle before my eyes was my own body covered with blankets. With a great effort I turned my head right, then left; there was a rushing sound in my ears. Then I saw a long, dimly-lit hospital ward, with two rows of beds occupied by the shrouded figures of patients, between two curtained windows a knight in shining armour (who subsequently turned out to be a large copper washstand), an ikon of our Saviour with a flickering nightlight in front of it, and two enormous tiled fireplaces. I heard the shallow, uneven breathing of the man in the next bed, the gurgling sighs of another a little farther away, somebody's regular sniffling, and the mighty snores of an orderly probably supposed to be watching

over a dying patient who might perhaps be still alive or perhaps had died and was lying here just as we, the living, were We the living ... 'I am alive,' I thought, and even murmured the words aloud. And suddenly there burst upon me something sc good, so joyous, and so peaceful, as I have never experienced since childhood. It came to me together with the realisation that Death was now far away and that I had a whole life-time before me and that I could shape this life just in the way 1 wanted (Oh, how sure I was of this!). With great difficulty I managed to turn on my side, tucked up my legs, put my hand under my cheek and went to sleep as I did in childhood when sometimes I would wake up in the middle of the night by the side of my sleeping mother, when the wind beat at the window and howled in the chimney, and the merciless frost made the logs in the wooden walls of the house crack with a sharp sound like the report of a gun. Then I would sob quietly, both fearing and longing to wake my mother. She would hear me in her sleep and half awake kiss me and make the sign of the cross over me, and soothed I would curl up and fall asleep with joy and contentment in my little soul. . . .

* * •

My God! How weak I am. To-day I got out of bed and tried to walk from my bed to the bed opposite, occupied by some-student recovering from a sharp attack of fever. I nearly collapsed half-way. The mind seems to recover more rapidly than the body. When I first came to I hardly remembered anything: it was difficult for me even to recall the names of my closest friends, but now everything has come back to me, though not as something that really happened once, but rather like a dream However, it does not torment me any more: the past is over and done with.

Dyedov brought me a whole pile of newspapers this morning full of praise for my 'Deaf un' and his 'Morning,' L. alone of all the art critics hasn't a kind word to say about me. However, what does all this matter? It all seems very far away from me now. I am very happy about Dyedov: he has won the Gold Medal and will be going abroad shortly. He is in the seventh heaven and his face is shining like a buttered pancake. He

asked me whether, since my illness prevented me from competing this time, I should be trying for a scholarship next year. His face was a study when I said: 'No,'

'You can't mean it!'

'But I do,'

'What on earth are you going to do?'

'I shall see,'

He went away completely bewildered.

11

DYEDOV

I HAVE SPENT THE last fortnight in a turmoil of excitement, suspense and impatience, and have only calmed down now as my train rushes me towards Poland and the frontier. I can hardly believe my good fortune: I have won a scholarship and here I am, an artist going abroad for four years to perfect my Art. *Vivat Academial*

But as to Ryabinin - it hardly bears thinking about. I saw him to-day in the street as I was starting off for the station. 'My heartiest congratulations,' he said; 'but you must congratulate me, too,'

'Why?' I asked.

'I have just passed the entrance exam to a training-college for village teachers,'

An artist, a gifted painter, in a training-school for village teachers! What wasted talent! And how can a man of that kind survive in a village? Isn't he absolutely crazy?

\# * *

In this case Dyedov was right. Ryabinin did not make a success of it. But that is another story.

HEARTACHE

ANTON CHEKHOV

Translated by Walter Morison

To whom shall I tell my *sorrow}* . .

DUSK, GREATWET snowflakes circle lazily round the newly-lit street-lamps and settle delicately on roof-tops, the backs of horses, shoulders, fur caps. The cab-driver Jonah Potapov is as white as a ghost. He sits motionless on his sleigh, huddled up just as far as it is possible for a human body to huddle. If a whole snowdrift were to tumble on him, it seems he wouldn't consider it necessary to shake it off. . . . His little old horse is also white and motionless. In its immobility, the angularity of its contours and the stick-like straightness of its legs, it looks even at close quarters like a penny gingerbread-horse. In all piobability it is plunged in thought. For one who has been torn from the plough, from the familiar greyness of the landscape, and thrust into this whirlpool of monstrous lights, incessan*

tumult and surging humans, it is impossible not to think. . . .

For a long time Jonah and his horse have not stirred. They drove out before lunch, and never a fare to start the day with. But now the mists of evening descend on the town. The pallor of the street-lamps gives way to a vivid glow, the bustle in the streets grows noisier still.

'Cabby, drive me to the Vyborg Side!' Jonah hears. 'Hey, cabby!'

Jonah gives a start, and through snow-caked lashes sees a military man in a hooded greatcoat.

To the Vyborg Sidel' repeats the officer. 'Are you asleep? To the Vyborg Side!'

To indicate his assent Jonah jerks the reins, causing great chunks of snow to slither down from the horse's back and his own shoulders. . . The officer seats himself in the sleigh. The cabby smacks his lips, stretches his neck like a swan, rises slightly in his seat and - more from habit than because he needs to - cracks his whip. The old horse also stretches its neck, curves its pole-like legs, and starts uncertainly off. . . .

'Where are you driving, you fool?' is the first thing Jonah hears from the dark masses pushing to and fro. 'Where d'you think you're going? Keep to the right!'

Don't you know how to drive?' cries the officer angrily. 'Keep to the right!'

A coacnman swears; somebody who was running acioss the street and bumped into the horse's muzzle looks up angrily and shakes the snow from his sleeve. Jonah fidgets in his seat as though on hot coals, pokes out his elbows, stares round like a lunatic; he doesn't seem to know where he is and why he is there.

'What rascals they are!' jokes the officer. 'Simply determined to bump into you or fall under your horse's hoofs. It's a conspiracy! '

Jonah looks round at his fare and moves his lips. . . He obviously wants to say something, but nothing issues from his throat save a hoarse murmur.

'What's that?' asks the officer.

Jonah curves his mouth into a smile, strains his throat and wheezes: 'This week, sir, my son . . . um . . . passed away.'

'Indeed? What did he die of?'

Jonah turns his whole trunk towards his fare and says: 'Lord knows. Of the fever, I reckon . . . Three days he lay in the hospital; then he died. . . . It's God's will,'

'Watch out, you devil!' comes a cry from the darkness. 'Arc you blind, you old fool? Use your eyes!'

'Hurry up, hurry up!' urges the fare. 'This way we shan't be there by to-morrow! Get a move on!'

The cabby again stretches his neck, half rises, and cracks his whip with a cumbrous grace. Then he looks round several times at his fare, but the latter has closed his eyes and is clearly not disposed to listen. . . Depositing him on the Vyborg Side, the cabby draws up outside a public-house, huddles up in his seat and is once more immobile. The wet snow whitewashes him and his horse. An hour passes, two hours. . . .

Along the pavement, making a great slapping noise with their goloshes and swearing at one another, come three young people two of them are tall and thin, the third is short and hump-backed.

'Cabby, drive us to the Police Bridge!' cries the hunchback in a voice like shattering glass. 'All three of us for twenty copecks!'

Jonah jerks the reins and smacks his lips. Twenty copecks isn't the proper fare, but at the moment he's not interested in money. . . A rouble, five copecks - it's all the same to him; what he wants is to drive someone somewhere. . . . The young people, shoving and swearing, step over to the sleigh and all three start crawling on to the seat. They begin discussing the problem which two are to sit and which one is to stand. After much cursing and swearing it is resolved that the hunchback, being the shortest, shall stand.

'Gee-up!' grates the hunchback, settling himself in his up-right position and breathing on the back of Jonah's neck. 'Whip her up! -Christ, what a cap you're wearing! Not a worse one in Petersburg!'

'Goo-goo,' chuckles Jonah. 'Best I can do!'

'Come on, best-you-can-do, get moving! Are you going to drive like that all the way? Eh? If you don't look out I'll give you such a clout . . ,'

My head's simply splitting!' says one of the long fellows

'Yesterday at the Dukmasovs' Tommie and I drank four bottles of cognac,'

* What's he want to tell such whoppers for?' says the other long fellow angrily. 'Lies like a trooper I'

'So help me God, it's true . . .'

'As true as that a louse coughs.'

'Goo-goo,' sniggers Jonah. 'Cheerful, ain't you?'

'Devil take you!' cries the indignant hunchback. 'Will you or won't you get a move on? Is that the way to drive? Give her one with the whip I Go on! Slash her!'

Behind his back Jonah feels the twisting body and jarring voice of the hunchback. He hears the oaths showered on him, he sees people, and in his breast the feeling of solitude gradually eases. The hunchback goes on swearing till he chokes on an incredibly far-fetched oath and bursts out coughing. The lengthy chaps begin talking about a certain Vera Petrovna. Jonah looks round at them. Waiting till there is a brief pause, he looks round again and mumbles: 'This week, you see, my son . . . um . . . died.'

'That's what we shall all do,' sighs the hunchback, wiping his lips after his coughing-bout. 'Whip her up! Gentlemen, I absolutely refuse to ride like this any more! We shall never get there!'

'Give him a bit of encouragement . . . with your fist!'

'D'you hear, you old scoundrel? I'll give you such a crack! Treat cabbies decently, and you might as well go on foot! . . . D'you hear, Methuselah? Or don't you care a damn what we say?'

And Jonah hears rather than feels the blow on the back of his head.

'Goo-goo,' he chortles. 'Cheerful the young gents are . . . God bless 'em!'

'Cabby, are you married?' asks one of the long chaps.

'Me? Goo-goo . . . merry young gents! These days my only wife is the damp earth . . . ho-ho-ho! . . . the grave, that is . . My son's gone and died, and I'm still alive and kicking. . . A queer business: death came in at the wrong door. . . . Instead of calling on me, he called on my son. . . ,'

And Jonah turns round to tell them how his son died, but

now the hunchback gives a sigh of relief and declares that at last, thank God, they have arrived. Pocketing his twenty copecks, Jonah watches the roisterers disappearing in a dark entrance. Once more he is alone, once more silence descends upon him. . . His briefly assuaged sorrow stirs again, constricting his breast with greater power than before. His eyes, anxious and martyred, scan the crowds hurrying along the pavements: surely one of these thousands of people will listen to him? But the crowds speed by, noticing neither him nor his grief. . . An enormous grief, knowing no bounds. Were Jonah's breast to burst and his sorrow come gushing forth, it seems it would flood the whole world; but nevertheless it is unseen. It has managed to conceal itself in so insignificant a shell that you couldn't discover it by broad daylight with a lantern. . . .

Jonah sees a house-porter with a sack on his back and resolves to get into conversation with him.

'What time might it be, chum?' he asks.

Tast nine . . . What have you drawn up there for? Drive on !

Jonah drives a few paces away, huddles up and surrenders himself to his sorrow. . . No longer any point in speaking to people. But before five minutes have passed he straightens up, gives his head a violent shake as though to dispel a stab of pain, and jerks the reins. . . . He just can't stand it.

'Home,' he thinks. 'Home.'

And his horse, as though reading his thoughts, starts off at a jog-trot. An hour and a half later Jonah is sitting by the great dirt-smeared stove. On the stove, on the floor, on benches, people are snoring. The air is close and noisome. ... Jonah look?, at the sleepers, scratches himself and regrets that he came home so early. . . .

'Didn't even earn our oats,' he thinks. 'That's why I feel so down. A fellow who knows his business . . . who's well-filled himself and his horse too, is always at peace.'

In one of the corners a young cab-driver sits up, grunts sleepilv and reaches for the water-pail.

'Want a drink?' asks Jonah.

'Looks like it, don't it?'

'That's right, you have a good drink. You know, lad, my son's died. . . Did you hear about it? This week, at the hospital. . .

What a to-do!'

Jonah peers to see what effect his words have had, and sees they have had none. The young man has covered his head with his blanket and is already asleep. The old man sighs and scratches himself. . . Just as the young man wanted to drink, so too he wants to talk. Nearly a week since his son died, and he still hasn't been able to tell anybody about it, not properly. . . Have a proper talk about it, go into details; that's what he needs. . . Tell how his son fell ill, how he suffered, what he said before he died, how he died. . . . Describe the funeral, the journey to the hospital to collect his son's belongings. He's a daughter Anisya left, in the country . . . talk about her, too. Lots of things to talk ab6ut. The listener should say oh and ah, sigh, share his grief. . . To talk to women would be best of all. They may be fools, but say two words and they're already in tears.

Go and have a look at my horse,' thinks Jonah. 'Plenty of time for sleep ... I can have all the sleep I want.'

He puts on his things and goes to the stable where his horse is. He thinks about oats, about hay, about the weather. . . . About his son, when he is all by himself, he just can't think . . . Talk about him to someone, yes; but think about him, picture him - unbearable.

'Are you chewing?' Jonah asks his horse, seeing its eyes gleam. 'That's right; chew, my dear, chew. . . If we haven't earned our oats we will eat hay. . . Yes. . . I'm getting too old to drive a cab. . . That's what my son ought to be doing, not me. . . Now he was a proper cab-driver, he was. . . If only he hadn't . . .'

Jonah is silent for a while; then he goes on: 'That's how it is, my dear. . . Kuzma my son is no more. . . Passed away. . . Went and died, and for what? . . . Now let's take you; you've got, say, a foal, and you're the foal's mother. . . And all of a sudden, say, this foal goes and dies. . . You'd be sorry, wouldn't you?'

The mare chews, listens, breathes on her master's hands. And Jonah, carried away, tells her the whole story. . . .

THE BLACK MONK

ANTON CHEKHOV

Translated by **Constance Garnett**

I

ANDREY VASSILITCH KOVRIN, who held a master's degree at the University, had exhausted himself, and had upset his nerves. He did not send for a doctor, but casually, over a bottle of wine, he spoke to a friend who was a doctor, and the latter advised him to spend the spring and summer in the country. Very opportunely a long letter came from Tanya Pesotsky, who asked him to come and stay with them at Borissovka. And he made up his mind that he really must go.

To begin with - that was in April - he went to his own home, Kovrinka, and there spent three weeks in solitude; then, as soon as the roads were in good condition, he set off, driving in a carriage, to visit Pesotsky, his former guardian, who had brought him up, and was a horticulturist well known all over

Russia. The distance from Kovrinka to Borissovka was reckoned only a little over fifty miles. To drive along a soft road in May in a comfortable carriage with springs was a real pleasure.

Pesotsky had an immense house with columns and lions, off which the stucco was peeling, and with a footman in swallow-tails at the entrance. The old park, laid out in the English style, gloomy and severe, stretched for almost three-quarters of a mile to the river, and there ended in a steep, precipitous clay bank, where pines grew with bare roots that looked like shaggy paws; the water shone below with an unfriendly gleam, and the peewits flew up with a plaintive cry, and there one always felt that one must sit down and write a ballad. But near the house itself, in the courtyard and orchard, which together with the nurseries covered ninety acres, it was all life and gaiety even in bad weather. Such marvellous roses, lilies, camellias; such tulips of all possible shades, from glistening white to sooty black-such a wealth of flowers, in fact, Kovrin had never seen anywhere as at Pesotsky's. It was only the beginning of spring, and the real glory of the flower-beds was still hidden away in the hot-houses. But even the flowers along the avenues, and here and there in the flower-beds, were enough to make one feel, as one walked about the garden, as though one were in a realm of tender colours, especially in the early morning when the dew was glistening on every petal.

What was the decorative part of the garden, and what Pesotsky contemptuously spoke of as rubbish, had at one time in his childhood given Kovrin an impression of fairyland.

Every sort of caprice, of elaborate monstrosity and mockery at Nature was here. There were espaliers of fruit-trees, a pear-tree in the shape of a pyramidal poplar, spherical oaks and lime-trees, an apple-tree in the shape of an umbrella, plum-trees trained into arches, crests, candelabra, and even into the number 1862-the year when Pesotsky first took up horticulture. One came across, too, lovely, graceful trees with strong, straight stems like palms, and it was only by looking intently that one could recognise these trees as gooseberries or currants. But what made the garden most cheerful and gave it a lively air, was the continual coming and going in it, from early morn-

ing till evening; people with wheelbarrows, shovels, and watering-cans swarmed round the trees and bushes, in the avenues and the flower-beds, like ants. . . .

Kovrin arrived at Pesotsky's at ten o'clock in the evening. He found Tanya and her father, Yegor Semyonitch, in great anxiety. The clear starlight sky and the thermometer foretold a frost towards morning, and meanwhile Ivan Karlitch, the gardener, had gone to the town, and they had no one to rely upon. At supper they talked of nothing but the morning frost, and it was settled that Tanya should not go to bed, and between twelve and one should walk through the garden, and see that everything was done properly, and Yegor Semyonitch should get up at three o'clock or even earlier.

Kovrin sat with Tanya all the evening, and after midnight went out with her into the garden. It was cold. There was a strong smell of burning already in the garden. In the big orchard, which was called the commercial garden, and which brought Yegor Semyonitch several thousand clear profit, a thick, black, acrid smoke was creeping over the ground and, curling round the trees, was saving those thousands from the frost. Here the trees were arranged as on a chessboard, in straight and regular rows like ranks of soldiers, and this severe pedantic regularity, and the fact that all the trees were of the same size, and had tops and trunks all exactly alike, made them look monotonous and even dreary. Kovrin and Tanya walked along the rows where fires of dung, straw, and all sorts* of refuse were smouldering, and from time to time they were met by labourers who wandered in the smoke like shadows. The only trees in flower were the cherries, plums, and certain sorts of apples, but the whole garden was plunged in smoke, and it was only near the nurseries that Kovrin could breathe freely.

'Even as a child I used to sneeze from the smoke here,' he said, shrugging his shoulders, 'but to this day I don't understand how smoke can keep off frost.'

'Smoke takes the place of clouds when there are none . . .' answered Tanya.

'And what do you want clouds for?'

'In overcast and cloudy weather there is no frost,'

'You don't say so,'

He laughed and took her arm. Her broad, very earnest face, chilled with the frost, with her delicate black eyebrows, the turned-up collar of her coat, which prevented her moving her head freely, and the whole of her thin, graceful figure, with her skirts tucked up on account of the dew, touched him.

'Good heavens I she is grown up,' he said. 'When I went away from here last, five years ago, you were still a child. You were such a thin, long-legged creature, with your hair hanging on your shoulders; you used to wear short frocks, and I used to tease you, calling you a heron. . . . What time does!'

'Yes, five years!' sighed Tanya. 'Much water has flowed since then. Tell me, Andryusha, honestly,' she began eagerly, looking him in the face: 'do you feel strange with us now? But why do I ask? You are a man, you live your own interesting life, you are somebody. . . . To grow apart is so natural ! But however that may be, Andryusha, I want you to think of us as your people. We have a right to that,'

'I do, Tanya,'

'On your word of honour?'

'Yes, on my word of honour,'

'You were surprised this evening that we have so many of your photographs. You know my father adores you. Sometimes it seems to me that he loves you more than he does me. He is proud of you. You are a clever, extraordinary man, you have made a brilliant career for yourself, and he is persuaded that you have turned out like this because he brought you up. I don't try to prevent him from thinking so. Let him,'

Dawn was already beginning, and that was especially perceptible from the distinctness with which the coils of smoke and the tops of the trees began to stand out in the air.

'It's time we were asleep, though,' said Tanya, 'and it's cold, too.' She took his arm. 'Thank you for coming, Andryusha. We have only uninteresting acquaintances, and not many of them. We have only the garden, the garden, the garden, and nothing else. Standards, half-standards,' she laughed. 'Aports, Reinettes, Borovinkas, budded stocks, grafted stocks. . . . All, all our life has gone into the garden. I never even dream of anything but apples and pears. Of course, it is very nice and useful, but sometimes one longs for something else for variety. I remember

that when you used to come to us for the summer holidays, or simply a visit, it always seemed to be fresher and brighter in the house, as though the covers had been taken off the lustres and the furniture. I was only a little girl then, but yet I understood it.'

She talked a long while and with great feeling. For some reason the idea came into his head that in the course of the summer he might grow fond of this little, weak, talkative creature, might be carried away and fall in love; in their position it was so possible and natural I This thought touched and amused him; he bent down to her sweet, preoccupied face and hummed softly:

* "Onyegin, I won't conceal it;
I madly love Tatiana. . . ." '

By the time they reached the house, Yegor Semyonitch had got up. Kovrin did not feel sleepy; he talked to the old man and went to the garden with him. Yegor Semyonitch was a tall, broad-shouldered, corpulent man, and he suffered from asthma, yet he walked so fast that it was hard work to hurry after him. He had an extremely preoccupied air; he was always hurrying somewhere, with an expression that suggested that if he were one minute late all would be ruined!

'Here is a business, brother . . ,' he began, standing still to take breath. 'On the surface of the ground, as you see, is frost; but if you raise the thermometer on a stick fourteen feet above the ground, there it is warm. . . . Why is that?'

'I really don't know,' said Kovrin, and he laughed.

'H'm! . . . One can't know everything, of course. . . . However large the intellect may be, you can't find room for everything in it. I suppose you still go in chiefly for philosophy?'

'Yes, I lecture in psychology; I am working at philosophy in general,'

'And it does not bore you?'

'On the contrary, it's all I live for,'

'Well, God bless you! .. ,' said Yegor Semyonitch, meditatively stroking his grey whiskers. 'God bless you! . . . I am delighted about you . . . delighted, my boy. . . ,'

But suddenly he listened, and, with a terrible face, ran off and quickly disappeared behind the trees in a cloud of smoke.

'Who tied this horse to an apple-tree?' Kovrin heard his despairing, heart-rending cry. 'Who is the low scoundrel who has dared to tie this horse to an apple-tree? My God, my God! They have ruined everything; they have spoilt everything; they have done everything filthy, horrible, and abominable. The orchard's done for, the orchard's ruined. My Godl'

When he came back to Kovrin, his face looked exhausted and mortified.

'What is one to do with these accursed people?' he said in a tearful voice, flinging up his hands. 'Styopka was carting dung at night, and tied the horse to an apple-tree! He twisted the reins round it, the rascal, as tightly as he could, so that the bark is rubbed off in three places. What do you think of that! I spoke to him and he stands like a post and only blinks his eyes Hanging is too good for him,'

Growing calmer, he embraced Kovrin and kissed him on the cheek.

'Well, God bless you! . . . God bless you! . . .' he muttered. 'I am very glad you have come. Unutterably glad. . . . Thank you.'

Then, with the same rapid step and preoccupied face, he made the round of the whole garden, and showed his former ward all his greenhouses and hot-houses, his covered-in garden, and two apiaries which he called the marvel of our century.

While they were walking the sun rose, flooding the garden with brilliant light. It grew warm. Foreseeing a long, bright, cheerful day, Kovrin recollected that it was only the beginning of May, and that he had before him a whole summer as bright, cheerful, and long; and suddenly there stirred in his bosom a joyous, youthful feeling, such as he used to experience in his childhood, running about in that garden. And he hugged the old man and kissed him affectionately. Both of them, feeling touched, went indoors and drank tea out of old fashioned china cups, with cream and satisfying krendels made with milk and eggs; and these trifles reminded Kovrin again of his childhood and boyhood. The delightful present was blended with the impressions of the past that stirred within him; there was a tightness at his heart, yet he was happy.

He waited till Tanya was awake and had coffee with her, went for a walk, then went to his room and sat down to work.

He read attentively, making notes, and from time to time raised his eyes to look out at the open windows or at the fresh, still dewy flowers in the vases on the table; and again he dropped his eyes to his book, and it seemed to him as though every vein in his body was quivering and fluttering with pleasure.

II

In the country he led just as nervous and restless a life as in town. He read and wrote a great deal, he studied Italian, and when he was out for a walk, thought with pleasure that he would soon sit down to work again. He slept so little that everyone wondered at him; if he accidentally dozed for half an hour in the daytime, he would lie awake all night, and, after a sleepless night, would feel cheerful and vigorous as though nothing had happened.

He talked a great deal, drank wine, and smoked expensive cigars. Very often, almost every day, young ladies of neighbouring families would come to the Pesotskys', and would sing and play the piano with Tanya; sometimes a young neighbour who was a good violinist would come, too. Kovrin listened with eagerness to the music and singing, and was exhausted by it, and this showed itself by his eyes closing and his head falling to one side.

One day he was sitting on the balcony after evening tea, reading. At the same time, in the drawing-room, Tanya taking soprano, one of the young ladies a contralto, and the young man with his violin, were practising a well-known serenade of Braga's. Kovrin listened to the words-they were Russian-and could not understand their meaning. At last, leaving his book and listening attentively, he understood; a maiden, full of sick fancies, heard one night in her garden mysterious sounds, so strange and lovely that she was obliged to recognise them as a holy harmony which is unintelligible to us mortals, and so flies back to heaven. Kovrin's eyes began to close. He got up, and in exhaustion walked up and down the drawing-room, and then the dining-room. When the singing was over he took Tanya's arm, and with her went out on to the balcony.

'I have been all day thinking of a legend,' he said. 'I don't remember whether 1 have read it somewhere or heard it, but

it is a strange and almost grotesque legend. To begin with, it is somewhat obscure. A thousand years ago a monk, dressed in black, wandered about the desert, somewhere in Syria or Arabia. . . . Some miles from where he was, some fisherman saw another black monk, who was moving slowly over the surface of a lake. This second monk was a mirage. Now forget all the laws of optics, which the legend does not recognise, and listen to the rest. From that mirage there was cast another mirage, then from that other a third, so that the imagine of the black monk began to be repeated endlessly from one layer of the atmosphere to another. So that he was *seen* at one time in Africa, at another in Spain, then in Italy, then in the Far North. . . . Then he passed out of the atmosphere of the earth, and now he is wandering all over the universe, still never coming into conditions in which he might disappear. Possibly he may be seen now in Mars or in some star of the Southern Cross. But, my dear, the real point on which the whole legend hangs lies in the fact that, exactly a thousand years from the day when the monk walked in the desert, the mirage will return to the atmosphere of the earth again and will appear to men. And it seems that the thousand years is almost up. . . . According to the legend, we may look out for the black monk to-day or to-morrow,'

'A queer mirage,' said Tanya, who did not like the legend.

'But the most wonderful part of it all,' laughed Kovrin, 'is that I simply cannot recall where I got this legend from. Have I read it somewhere? Have I heard it? Or perhaps I dreamed of the black monk. I swear I don't remember. But the legend interests me. I have been thinking about it all day,'

Letting Tanya go back to her visitors, he went out of the house, and, lost in meditation, walked by the flower-beds. The sun was already setting. The flowers, having just been watered, gave forth a damp, irritating fragrance. Indoors they began singing again, and in the distance the violin had the effect of a human voice. Kovrin, racking his brains to remember where he had read or heard the legend, turned slowly towards the park, and unconsciously went as far as the river. By a little path that ran along the steep bank, between the bare roots, he went down to the water, disturbed the peewits there and frightened two

ducks. The last rays of the setting sun still threw light here and there on the gloomy pines, but it was quite dark on the surface of the river. Kovrin crossed to the other side by the narrow bridge. Before him lay a wide field covered with young rye not yet in blossom. There was no living habitation, no living soul in the distance, and it seemed as though the little path, if one went along it, would take one to the unknown, mysterious place where the sun had just gone down, and where the evening glow was flaming in immensity and splendour.

'How open, how free, how still it is here!' thought Kovrin, walking along the path. 'And it feels as though all the world were watching me, hiding and waiting for me to understand it____'

But then waves began running across the rye, and a light evening breeze softly touched his uncovered head. A minute later there was another gust of wind, but stronger-the rye began rustling, and he heard behind him the hollow murmur of the pines. Kovrin stood still in amazement. From the horizon there rose up to the sky, like a whirlwind or a waterspout, a tall black column. Its outline was indistinct, but from the first instant it could be seen that it was not standing still, but moving with fearful rapidity, moving straight towards Kovrin, and the nearer it came the smaller and the more distinct it was. Kovrin moved aside into the rye to make way for it, and only just had time to do so.

A monk, dressed in black, with a grey head and black eyebrows, his arms crossed over his breast, floated by him. . . . His bare feet did not touch the earth. After he had floated twenty feet beyond him, he looked round at Kovrin, and nodded to him with a friendly but sly smile. But what a pale, fearfully pale, thin face I Beginning to grow larger again, he flew across the river, collided noiselessly with the clay banks and pines, and passing through them, vanished like smoke.

'Why, you see,' muttered Kovrin, 'there must be truth in the legend,'

Without trying to explain to himself the strange apparition, glad that he had succeeded in seeing so near and so distinctly, not only the monk's black garments, but even his face and eyes, agreeably excited, he went back to the house.

In the park and in the garden people were **moving about** quietly, in the house they were playing-so he alone had seen the monk. He had an intense desire to tell Tanya and Yegor Semyonitch, but he reflected that they would certainly think his words were the ravings of delirium, and that would frighten them; he had better say nothing.

He laughed aloud, sang, and danced the mazurka; he was in high spirits, and all of them, the visitors and Tanya, thought he had a peculiar look, radiant and inspired, and that he was very interesting.

Ill

After supper, when the visitors had gone, he went to his room and lay down on the sofa: he wanted to think about the monk. But a minute later Tanya came in.

'Here, Andryusha; read father's articles,' she said, giving him a bundle of pamphlets and proofs. 'They are splendid articles. He writes capitally,'

'Capitally, indeed !' said Yegor Semyonitch, following her and smiling constrainedly; he was ashamed. 'Don't listen to her, please; don't read them! Though, if you want to go to sleep, read them by all means; they are a fine soporific,'

'I think they are splendid articles,' said Tanya, with deep conviction. 'You read them, Andryusha, and persuade father to write oftener. He could write a complete manual of horticulture,'

Yegor Semyonitch gave a forced laugh, blushed, and began uttering the phrases usually made use of by an embarrassed author. At last he began to give way.

'In that case, begin with Gaucher's article and these Russian articles,' he muttered, turning over the pamphlets with a trembling hand, 'or else you won't understand. Before you read my objections, you must know what I am objecting to. But it's all nonsense . . . tiresome stuff. Besides, I believe it's bedtime,'

Tanya went away. Yegor Semyonitch sat down on the sofa by Kovrin and heaved a deep sigh.

'Yes, my boy . . ,' he began after a pause. 'That's how it is, mv dear lecturer. Here I write articles, and take part in exhibitions, and receive medals. . . . Pesotsky, they say, has apples

the size of a head, and Pesotsky, they say, has made his fortune with his garden. In short, "Kotchubey is rich and glorious." But one asks oneself: what is it all for? The garden is certainly fine, a model. It's not really a garden, but a regular institution, which is of the greatest public importance because it marks, so to say, a new era in Russian agriculture and Russian industry. But, what's it for? What's the object of it?'

'The fact speaks for itself,'

'I do not mean in that sense. I meant to ask: what will happen to the garden when I die? In the condition in which you see it now, it would not be maintained for one month without me. The whole secret of success lies not in its being a big garden or a great number of labourers being employed in it, but in the fact that I love the work. Do you understand? I love it perhaps more than myself. Look at me; I do everything myself. I work from morning till night: I do all the grafting myself, the pruning myself, the planting myself. I do it all myself: when anyone helps me I am jealous and irritable till I am rude. The whole secret lies in loving it-that is, in the sharp eye of the master; yes, and in the master's hands, and in the feeling that make's one, when one goes anywhere for an hour's visit, sit, ill at ease, with one's heart far away, afraid that something may have happened in the garden. But when I die, who will look after it? Who will work? The gardener? The labourers? Yes? But I tell you, my dear fellow, the worst enemy in the garden is not a hare, not a cockchafer, and not the frost, but any outside person.'

'And Tanya?' asked Kovrin, laughing. 'She can't be more harmful than a hare? She loves the work and understands it.'

'Yes, she loves it and understands it. If after my death the garden goes to her and she is the mistress, of course nothing better could be wished. But if, which God forbid, she should marry,' Yegor Semyonitch whispered, and looked with a frightened look at Kovrin, 'that's just it. If she marries and children come, she will have no time to think about the garden. What I fear most is: she will marry some fine gentleman, and he will be greedy, and he will let the garden to people who will run it for profit, and everything will go to the devil the very first year! In our work females are the scourge of God!'

Yegor Semyonitch sighed and paused for a while.

perhaps it is egoism, but I tell you frankly: I don't want Tanya to get married. I am afraid of it! There is one young dandy comes to see us, bringing his violin and scraping on it; I know Tanya will not marry him, I know it quite well; but 1 can't bear to see him I Altogether, my boy, I am very queer. I know that,'

Yegor Semyonitch got up and walked about the room in excitement, and it was evident that he wanted to say something very important, but could not bring himself to it.

'I am very fond of you, and so I am going to speak to you openly,' he decided at last, thrusting his hands into his pockets 'I deal plainly with certain delicate questions, and say exactly what I think, and I cannot endure so-called hidden thoughts. I will speak plainly: you are the only man to whom I should not be afraid to marry my daughter. You are a clever man with a good heart, and would not let my beloved work go to ruin; and the chief reason is that I love you as a son, and I am proud of you. If Tanya and you could get up a romance somehow, then - well! I should be very glad and even happy. I tell you this plainly, without mincing matters, like an honest man,'

Kovrin laughed. Yegor Semyonitch opened the door to go out, and stood in the doorway.

'If Tanya and you had a son, I would make a horticulturist of him,' he said, after a moment's thought. 'However, this is idle dreaming Good-night,'

Left alone, Kovrin settled himself more comfortably on the sofa and took up the articles. The title of one was 'On Intercropping'; of another, 'A Few Words on the Remarks of Monsieur Z. concerning the Trenching of the Soil for a New Garden': a third, 'Additional Matter concerning Grafting with a Dormant Bud'; and they were all of the same sort. But what a restless, jerky tone! What nervous, almost hysterical passion! Here was an article, one would have thought, with most peaceable and impersonal contents: the subject of it was the Russian Antonovsky Apple. But Yegor Semyonitch began it with 'Audiatur altera pars,' and finished it with 'Sapienti sat,'; and between these two quotations a perfect torrent of venomous phrases directed 'at the learned ignorance of our recognised

horticultural authorities, who observe Nature from the height of their university chairs,' or at Monsieur Gaucher, 'whose success has been the work of the vulgar and the dilettanti,' And then followed an inappropriate, affected, and insincere regret that peasants who stole fruit and broke the branches could not nowadays be flogged.

'It is beautiful, charming, healthy work, but even in this there is strife and passion,' thought Kovrin. 'I suppose that everywhere and in all careers men of ideas are nervous, and marked by exaggerated sensitiveness. Most likely it must be so,'

He thought of Tanva, who was so pleased with Yegor Semyonitch's articles. Small, pale, and so thin that her shoulder-blades stuck out, her eyes, wide and open, dark and intelligent, had an intent gaze, as though looking for something. She walked like her father with a little hurried step. She talked a great deal and was fond of arguing, accompanying every phrase, however insignificant, with expressive mimicry and gesticulation. No doubt she was nervous in the extreme.

Kovrin went on reading the articles, but he understood nothing of them, and flung them aside. The same pleasant excitement with which he had earlier in the evening danced the mazurka and listened to the music was now mastering him again and rousing a multitude of thoughts. He got up and began walking about the room, thinking about the black monk It occurred to him that if this strange, supernatural monk had appeared to him only, that meant that he was ill and had reached the point of having hallucinations. This reflection frightened him, but not for long.

'But I am all right, and I am doing no harm to anyone; so there is no harm in my hallucinations,' he thought; and he felt happy again.

He sat down on the sofa and clasped his hands round his head. Restraining the unaccountable joy which filled his whole being, he then paced up and down again, and sat down to his work. But the thought that he read in the book did not satisfy him. He wanted something gigantic, unfathomable, stupendous Towards morning he undressed and reluctantly went to bed: he ought to sleep.

When he heard the footsteps of Yegor Semyonitch going out

into the garden, Kovrin rang the bell and asked the footman to bring him some wine. He drank several glasses of Lafite, then wrapped himself up, head and all; his consciousness grew clouded and he fell asleep.

IV

Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya often quarrelled and said nasty things to each other.

They quarrelled about something that morning. Tanya burst out crying and went to her room. She would not come down to dinner nor to tea. At first Yegor Semyonitch went about looking sulky and dignified, as though to give everyone to understand that for him the claims of justice and good order were more important than anything else in the world; but he could not keep it up for long, and soon sank into depression. He walked about the park dejectedly, continually sighing: 'Oh, my God! My God!' and at dinner did not eat a morsel. At last, guilty and conscience-stricken, he knocked at the locked door and called timidly:

'Tanya! Tanya!'

And from behind the door came a faint voice, weak with crying but still determined:

'Leave me alone, if you please,'

The depression of the master and mistress was reflected in the whole household, even in the labourers working in the garden. Kovrin was absorbed in his interesting work, but at last he, too, felt dreary and uncomfortable. To dissipate the general lll-humour in some way, he made up his mind to intervene, and towards evening he knocked at Tanya's door. He was admitted.

Tie, fie, for shame!' he began playfully, looking with surprise at Tanya's tear-stained, woebegone face, flushed in patches with crying. 'Is it really so serious? Fie, fie!'

'But if you know how he tortures me!' she said, and floods of scalding tears streamed from her big eyes. 'He torments me to death,' she went on, wringing her hands. '1 said nothing to him . . nothing ... I only said that there was no need to keep . . . too many labourers ... if we could hire them by the day when we wanted them. You know . . . you know the labourers have been doing nothing for a whole week. . . . I . . . I . . . only said

that, and he shouted and . . . said ... a lot of horrible insulting things to me. What for?'

'There, there,' said Kovrin, smoothing her hair. 'You've quarrelled with each other, you've cried, and that's enough. You must not be angry for long - that's wrong ... all the more as he loves you beyond everything.'

'He has . . . has spoiled my whole life,' Tanya went on, sobbing. 'I hear nothing but abuse and . . . insults. He thinks I am of no use in the house. Well! He is right. I shall go away to-morrow; I shall become a telegraph clerk. . . . I don't care. . . .'

'Come, come, come. . . . You mustn't cry, Tanya. You musn't dear. . . . You are both hot-tempered and irritable, and you are both to blame. Come along; I will reconcile you.'

Kovrin talked affectionately and persuasively, while she went on crying, twitching her shoulders and wringing her hands, as though some terrible misfortune had really befallen her. He felt all the sorrier for her because her grief was not a serious one, yet she suffered extremely. What trivialities were enough to make this little creature miserable for a whole day, perhaps for her whole life! Comforting Tanya, Kovrin thought that, apart from this girl and her father, he might hunt the world over and would not find people who would love him as one of themselves, as one of their kindred. If it had not been for those two he might very likely, having lost his father and mother in early childhood, never to the day of his death have known what was meant by genuine affection and that naive, uncritical love which is only lavished on very close blood relations; and he felt that the nerves of this weeping, shaking girl responded to his half-sick, overstrained nerves like iron to a magnet. He never could have loved a healthy, strong, rosy-cheeked woman, but pale, weak, unhappy Tanya attracted him.

And he liked stroking her hair and her sh6ulders, pressing her hand and wiping away her tears. ... At last she left off crying. She went on for a long time complaining of her father and her hard, insufferable life in that house, entreating Kovrin to put himself in her place; then she began, little by little, smiling, and sighing that God had given her such a bad temper At last, laughing aloud, she called herself a fool, and ran out fl

the room.

When a little later Kovrin went into the garden, Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya were walking side by side along an avenue as though nothing had happened, and both were eating rye bread with salt on it, as both were hungry.

V

Glad that he had been so successful in the part of peace-maker, Kovrin went into the park. Sitting on a garden seat, thinking, he heard the rattle of a carriage and a feminine laugh -visitors were arriving. When the shades of evening began falling on the garden, the sounds of the violin and singing voices reached him indistinctly, and that reminded him of the black monk. Where, in what land or in what planet, was that optical absurdity moving now?

Hardly had he recalled the legend and pictured in his imagination the dark apparition he had seen in the rye-field, when, from behind a pine-tree exactly opposite, there came out noiselessly, without the slightest rustle, a man of medium height with uncovered grey head, all in black, and barefooted like a beggar, and his black eyebrows stood out conspicuously on his pale, death-like face. Nodding his head graciously, this beggar or pilgrim came noiselessly to the seat and sat down, and Kovrin recognised him as the black monk.

For a minute they looked at one another. Kovrin with amaze-ment, and the monk with friendliness, and, just as before, a little slyness, as though he were thinking something to himself.

'But you are a mirage,' said Kovrin. 'Why are you here and sitting still? That does not fit in with the legend.'

'That does not matter,' the monk answered in a low voice, not immediately turning his face towards him. 'The legend, the mirage, and I are all the products of your excited imagination. I am a phantom,'

'Then you don't exist?' said Kovrin.

'You can think as you like,' said the monk, with a faint smile. 'I exist in your imagination, and your imagination is part of nature, so I exist in nature.'

'You have a very old, wise, and extremely expressive face, as though you really had lived more than a thousand years,' said

Kovrin. 'I did not know that my imagination was capable of creating such phenomena. But why do you look at me with such enthusiasm? Do you like me?'

'Yes, you are one of those few who are justly called the chosen of God. You do the service of eternal truth. Your thoughts, your designs, the marvellous studies you are engaged in, and all your life, bear the Divine, the heavenly stamp, seeing that they are consecrated to the rational and the beautiful - that *is.* to what is eternal,'

'You said "eternal truth," . . . But is eternal truth of use to man and within his reach, if there is no eternal life?'

'There is eternal life,' said the monk.

'Do you believe in the immortality of man?'

'Yes, of course. A grand, brilliant future is in store for you men. And the more there are like you on earth, the sooner will this future be realised. Without you who serve the higher principle and live in full understanding and freedom, mankind would be of little account; developing in a natural way, it would have to wait a long time for the end of its earthly history. You will lead it some thousands of years earlier into the kingdom of eternal truth-and therein lies your supreme service. You are the incarnation of the blessing of God, which rests upon men,'

'And what is the object of eternal life?' asked Kovrin.

'As of all life-enjoyment. True enjoyment lies in knowledge, and eternal life provides innumerable and inexhaustible sources of knowledge, and in that sense it has been said: "In My Father's house there are many mansions,"

'If only you know how pleasant it is to hear you!' said Kovrin, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

'1 am very glad,'

'But I know that when you go away I shall be worried by the question of your reality. You are a phantom, an hallucination. So I am mentally deranged, not normal?'

'What if you are? Why trouble yourself? You are ill because you have overworked and exhausted yourself, and that means that you have sacrificed your health to the idea, and the time is near at hand when you will give up life itself to it. What could be better? That is the goal towards which all divinely

endowed, noble natures strive,'

'If I know I am mentally affected, can I trust myself?'

'And are you sure that the men of genius, whom all men trust, did not see phantoms, too? The learned say now that genius is allied to madness. My friend, healthy and normal people are only the common herd. Reflections upon the neurasthenia of the age, nervous exhaustion and degeneracy, etcetera, can only seriously agitate those who place the object of life in the present - that is, the common herd.'

'The Romans used to say: *Mens sana in corpore sano.'*

'Not everything the Greeks and the Romans said is true. Exaltation, enthusiasm, ecstasy - all that distinguishes prophets, poets, martyrs for the idea, from the common folk - is repellant to the animal side of man - that is, his physical health. I repeat, if you want to be healthy and normal, go to the common herd,'

'Strange that you repeat what often comes into my mind,' said Kovrin. 'It is as though you had seen and overheard my secret thoughts. But don't let us talk about me. What do you mean by "eternal truth" ?'

The monk did not answer. Kovrin looked at him and could not distinguish his face. His features grew blurred and misty Then the monk's head and arms disappeared; his body seemed merged into the seat and the evening twilight, and he vanished altogether.

'The hallucination is over,' said Kovrin, and he laughed. 'It's a pity.'

He went back to the house, light-hearted and happy. The little the monk had said to him had flattered, not his vanity, but his whole soul, his whole being. To be one of the chosen, to serve eternal truth, to stand in the ranks of those who could make mankind worthy of the kingdom of God some thousands of years sooner - that is, to free men from some thousands of years of unnecessary struggle, sin, and suffering; to sacrifice to the idea everything-youth, strength, health; to be ready to die for the common weal-what an exalted, what a happy lot! He recalled his past - pure, chaste, laborious; he remembered what he had learned himself and what he had taught to others, and decided that there was no exaggeration *in* **the** monk's words.

Tanya came to meet him in the park: she was by now wearing a different dress.

'Are you here?' she said. 'And we have been looking and looking for you. . . . But what is the matter with you?' she asked in wonder, glancing at his radiant, ecstatic face and eyes full of tears. 'How strange you are, Andryusha!'

'I am pleased, Tanya,' said Kovrin, laying his hand on her shoulders. 'I am more than pleased: I am happy. Tanya, darling Tanya, you are an extraordinary, nice creature. Dear Tanya, I am so glad, I am so glad!'

She began breathing quickly and walked very quickly, but *not* to the house, but further into the park.

He kissed both her hands ardently, and went on:

'I have just passed through an exalted, wonderful, unearthly moment. But I can't tell you all about it or you would call me mad and not believe me. Let us talk of you. Dear, delightful Tanya! I love you, and am used to loving you. To have you near me, to meet you a dozen times a day, has become a necessity of my existence; I don't know how I shall get on without you when I go back home.'

'Oh,' laughed Tanya, 'you will forget about us in two days We are humble people and you are a great man.'

'No; let us talk in earnest!' he said. 'I shall take you with me, Tanya. Yes? Will you come with me? Will you be mine?'

'Come,' said Tanya, and tried to laugh again, but the laugh would not come, and patches of colour came into her face.

'I was not thinking of it ... I was not thinking of it,' she said, wringing her hands in despair.

And Kovrin followed her and went on talking, with the same radiant, enthusiastic face:

'I want a love that will dominate me altogether; and that love only you, Tanya, can give me. I am happy! I am happy!'

She was overwhelmed, and huddling and shrinking together, seemed ten years older all at once, while he thought her beautiful and expressed his rapture aloud.

'How lovely she is!'

VI

Learning from Kovrin that not only a romance had been got

up, but that there would even be a wedding, Yegor Semyonitch spent a long time in pacing from one corner of the room to the other, trying to conceal his agitation. His hands began trembling, his neck swelled and turned purple, he ordered his racing droshky and drove off somewhere. Tanya, seeing how he lashed the horse, and seeing how he pulled his cap over his ears, understood what he was feeling, shut herself up in her room, and cried the whole day.

In the hot-houses the peaches and plums were already ripe; the packing and sending off of these tender and fragile goods to Moscow took a great deal of care, work, and trouble. Owing to the fact that the summer was very hot and dry, it was necessary to water every tree, and a great deal of time and labour was spent on doing it. Numbers of caterpillars made their appearance, which, to Kovrin's disgust, the labourers and even Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya squashed with their fingers. In spite of all that, they had already to book autumn orders for fruit and trees, and to carry on a great deal of correspondence. And at the very busiest time, when no one seemed to have a free moment, the work of the fields carried off more than half their labourers from the garden. Yegor Semyonitch, sunburnt, exhausted, ill-humoured, galloped from the fields to the garden and back again; cried that he was being torn to pieces, and that he should put a bullet through his brains.

Then came the fuss and worry of the trousseau, to which the Pesotskys attached a great deal of importance. Everyone's head was in a whirl from the snipping of the scissors, the rattle of the sewing-machine, the smell of hot irons, and the caprices of the dressmaker, a huffy and nervous lady. And, as ill-luck would have it, visitors came every day, who had to be entertained, fed, and even put up for the night. But all this hard labour passed unnoticed as though in a fog. Tanya felt that love and happiness had taken her unawares, though she had, since she was fourteen, for some reason been convinced that Kovrin would marry her and no one else. She was bewildered, could not grasp it, could not believe herself. ... At one minute such joy would swoop down upon her that she longed to fly away to the clouds and there pray to God, at another moment she would remember that in August she would have to part

rrom her home and leave her father; or, goodness knows why, the idea would occur to her that she was worthless - insignificant and unworthy of a great man like Kovrin - and she would go to her room, lock herself in, and cry bitterly for several hours. When there were visitors, she would suddenly fancy that Kovrin looked extraordinarily handsome, and that all the women were in love with him and envying her, and her soul was filled with pride and rapture, as though she had vanquished the whole world; but he had only to smile politely at any young lady for her to be trembling with jealousy, to retreat to her room - and tears again. These new sensations mastered her completely; she helped her father mechanically, without noticing peaches, caterpillars or labourers, or how rapidly the time was passing.

It was almost the same with Yegor Semyonitch. He worked from morning till night, was always in a hurry, was irritable, and flew into rages, but all of this was in a sort of spellbound dream. It seemed as though there were two men in him: one was the real Yegor Semyonitch, who was moved to indignation, and clutched his head in despair when he heard of some irregularity from Ivan Karlovitch the gardener, and another - not the real one-who seemed as though he were half drunk, would interrupt a business conversation at half a word, touch the gardener on the shoulder, and begin muttering:

'Say what you like, there is a great deal in blood. His mother was a wonderful woman, most high-minded and intelligent. It was a pleasure to look at her good, candid, pure face; it was like the face of an angel. She drew splendidly, wrote verses, spoke five foreign languages, sang. . . . Poor thing! she died of consumption. The Kingdom of Heaven be hers.'

The unreal Yegor Semyonitch sighed, and after a pause went on:

'When he was a boy and growing up in my house, he had the same angelic face, good and candid. The way he looks and talks and moves is as soft and elegant as his mother's. And his intellect! We were always struck with his intelligence. To be sure, it's not for nothing he's a Master of Arts! It's not for nothing! And wait a bit, Ivan Karlovitch, what will he be in ten years' time? He will be far above us!'

But at this point the real Yegor Semyonitch, suddenly coming

to himself, would make a terrible face, would clutch his head and cry:

'The devils! They have spoilt everything! They have ruined everything! They have spoilt everything! The garden's done for, the garden's ruined!'

Kovrin, meanwhile, worked with the same ardour as before, and did not notice the general commotion. Love only added fuel to the flames. After every talk with Tanya he went to his room, happy and triumphant, took up his book or his manuscript with the same passion with which he had just kissed Tanya and told her of his love. What the black monk had told him of the chosen of God, of eternal truth, of the brilliant future of mankind and so on, gave peculiar and extraordinary significance to his work, and filled his soul with pride and the consciousness of his own exalted consequence. Once or twice a week, in the park or in the house, he met the black monk and had long conversations with him, but this did not alarm him, but, on the contrary, delighted him, as he was now firmly persuaded that such apparitions only visited the elect few who rise up above their fellows and devote themselves to the service of the idea.

One day the monk appeared at dinner-time and sat in the dining-room window. Kovrin was delighted, and very adroitly began a conversation with Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya of what might be of interest to the monk; the black-robed visitor listened and nodded his head graciously, and Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya listened, too, and smiled gaily without suspecting that Kovrin was not talking to them but to his hallucination.

Imperceptibly the fast of the Assumption was approaching, and soon after came the wedding, which, at Yegor Semyonitch's urgent desire, was celebrated with 'a flourish' - that is, with senseless festivities that lasted for two whole days and nights. Three thousand roubles' worth of food and drink was consumed, but the music of the wretched hired band, the noisy toasts, the scurrying to and fro of the footmen, the uproar and crowding, prevented them from appreciating the taste of the expensive wines and wonderful delicacies ordered from Moscow.

VII

One long winter night Kovrin was lying in bed, reading a French novel. Poor Tanya, who had headaches in the evenings from living in town, to which she was not accustomed, had been asleep a long while, and, from time to time, articulated some incoherent phrase in her restless dreams.

It struck three o'clock. Kovrin put out the light and lay down to sleep, lay for a long time with his eyes closed, but could not get to sleep because, as he fancied, the room was very hot and Tanya talked in her sleep. At half-past four he lighted the candle again, and this time he saw the black monk sitting in an arm-chair near the bed.

'Good-morning,' said the monk, and after a brief pause he asked: 'What are you thinking of now?'

'Of fame,' answered Kovrin. 'In the French novel I have just been reading, there is a description of a young *savant,* who does silly things and pines away through worrying about fame. I can't understand such anxiety.'

'Because you are wise. Your attitude towards fame is one of indifference, as towards a toy which no longer interests you.'

'Yes, that is true.'

'Renown does not allure you now. What is there flattering, amusing, or edifying in their carving your name on a tomb-stone, then time rubbing off the inscription together with the gilding? Moreover, happily there are too many of you for the weak memory of mankind to be able to retain your names,'

'Of course,' assented Kovrin. 'Besides, why should they be remembered? But let us talk of something else. Of happiness, for instance. What is happiness?'

When the clock struck five, he was sitting on the bed, dangling his feet to the carpet, talking to the monk:

'In ancient times a happy man grew at last frightened of his happiness-it was so great-and to propitiate the gods he brought as a sacrifice his favourite ring. Do you know, I too, like Polykrates, begin to be uneasy of my happiness. It seems strange to me that from morning to night I feel nothing but joy; it fills my whole being and smothers all other feelings. I don't know what sadness, grief, or boredom is. Here I am not asleep; I suffer from sleeplessness, but I am not dull. I say it

in earnest; I begin to feel perplexed,'

'But why?' the monk asked in wonder. 'Is joy a supernatural feeling? Ought it not to be the normal state of man? The more highly a man is developed on the intellectual and moral side, the more independent he is, the more pleasure life gives him. Socrates, Diogenes, and Marcus Aurelius, were joyful, not sorrowful. And the Apostle tells us: "Rejoice continually"; "Rejoice and be glad." '

'But will the gods be suddenly wrathful?' Kovrin jested; and he laughed. 'If they take from me comfort and make me go cold and hungry, it won't be very much to my taste,'

Meanwhile Tanya woke up, and looked with amazement and horror at her husband. He was talking, addressing the arm-chair, laughing and gesticulating; his eyes were gleaming, and there was something strange in his laugh.

'Andryusha, whom are you talking to?' she asked, clutching the hand he stretched out to the monk. 'Andryusha! Whom?'

'Oh! Whom?' said Kovrin in confusion. 'Why, to him. . He is sitting here,' he said, pointing to the black monk.

'There is no one here ... no one! Andryusha, you are ill!'

Tanya put her arm round her husband and held him tight, as though protecting him from the apparition, and put her hand over his eyes.

'You are ill!' she sobbed, trembling all over. 'Forgive me, my precious, my dear one, but I have noticed for a long time that your mind is clouded in some way. . . . You are mentally ill, Andryusha.

Her trembling infected him, too. He glanced once more at the arm-chair, which was now empty, felt a sudden weakness in his arms and legs, was frightened, and began dressing.

'It's nothing, Tanya; it's nothing,' he muttered, shivering. 'I really am not quite well . . . it's time to admit that,'

'I have noticed it for a long time . . . and father has noticed it,' she said, trying to suppress her sobs. 'You talk to yourself, smile somehow strangely . . . and can't sleep. Oh, my God, my God, save us! she said in terror. 'But don't be frightened, Andryusha; for God's sake don't be frightened.

She began dressing, too. Only now, looking at her, Kovrin realised the danger of his position - realised the meaning of the

black monk and his conversations with him. It was clear to him now that he was mad.

Neither of them knew why they dressed and went into the dining-room: she in front and he following her. There they found Yegor Semyonitch standing in his dressing-gown and with a candle in his hand. He was staying with them, and had been awakened by Tanya's sobs.

'Don't be frightened, Andryusha,' Tanya was saying, shivering as though in a fever; 'don't be frightened. . . . Father, it will all pass over ... it will all pass over.

Kovrin was too much agitated to speak. He wanted to say to his father-in-law in a playful tone: 'Congratulate me; it appears I have gone out of my mind;' but he could only move his lips and smile bitterly.

At nine o'clock in the morning they put on his jacket and fur coat, wrapped him up in a shawl, and took him in a carriage to a doctor.

VIII

Summer had come again, and the doctor advised their going into the country. Kovrin had recovered; he had left off seeing the black monk, and he had only to get up his strength. Staying at his father-in-law's, he drank a great deal of milk, worked for only two hours out of the twenty-four, and neither smoked nor drank wine.

On the evening before Elijah's Day they had an evening service in the house. When the deacon was handing the priest the censer the immense old room smelt like a graveyard, and Kovrin felt bored. He went out into the garden. Without noticing the gorgeous flowers, he walked about the garden, sat down on a seat, then strolled about the park; reaching the river, he went down and then stood lost in thought, looking at the water. The sullen pines with their shaggy roots, which had seen him a year before so young, so joyful and confident, were not whispering now, but standing mute and motionless, as though they did not recognise him. And, indeed, his head was closely cropped, his beautiful long hair was gone, his step was lagging, his face was fuller and paler than last summer.

He crossed by the footbridge to the other side. Where the year

before there had been rye the oats stood, reaped, **and lay** in **rows.** The sun had set and there was a broad stretch of glowing red on the horizon, a sign of windy weather next day. It was still. Looking in the direction from which the year before the black monk had first appeared, Kovrin stood for twenty minutes, till the evening glow had begun to fade. . . .

When, listless and dissatisfied, he returned home the service was over. Yegor Semyonitch and Tanya were sitting on the steps of the verandah, drinking tea. They were talking of something, but, seeing Kovrin, ceased at once, and he concluded from their faces that their talk had been about him.

'I believe it is time for you to have your milk,' Tanya said to her husband.

'No, it is not time yet . . .' he said, sitting down on the bottom step. 'Drink it yourself; I don't want it.'

Tanya exchanged a troubled glance with her father, and said in a guilty voice:

'You notice yourself that milk does you good,'

'Yes, a great deal of good!' Kovrin laughed. 'I congratulate you: I have gained a pound in weight since Friday.' He pressed his head tightly in his hands and said miserably: 'Why, why have you cured me? Preparations of bromide, idleness, hot baths, supervision, cowardly consternation at every mouthful, at every step - all this will reduce me at last to idiocy. I went out of my mind, I had megalomania; but then I was cheerful, confident, and even happy; I was interesting and original. Now I have become more sensible and stolid, but I am just like everyone else: I am-mediocrity! I am weary of life. . . . Oh, how cruelly you have treated me! . . . I saw hallucinations, but what harm did that do to anyone? I ask, what harm did that do anyone?'

'Goodness knows what you are saying!' sighed Yegor Semyonitch. 'It's positively wearisome to listen to it.'

'Then don't listen.'

The presence of other people, especially Yegor Semyonitch, irritated Kovrin now; he answered him drily, coldly, and even rudely, never looked at him but with irony and hatred, while Yegor Semyonitch was overcome with confusion and cleared his throat guiltily, though he was not conscious of any fault in him-

self. At a loss to understand why their charming and affectionate relations had changed so abruptly, Tanya huddled up to her father and looked anxiously in his face; she wanted to understand and could not understand, and all that was clear to her was that their relations were growing worse and worse every day, that of late her father had begun to look much older, and her husband had grown irritable, capricious, quarrelsome and uninteresting. She could not laugh or sing; at dinner she ate nothing; did not sleep for nights together, expecting something awful, and was so worn out that on one occasion she lay in a dead faint from dinner-time till evening. During the service she thought her father was crying, and now while the three of them were sitting together on the terrace she made an effort not to think of it.

'How fortunate Buddha, Mahomed, and Shakespeare were that their kind relations and doctors did not cure them of their ecstasy and their inspiration,' said Kovrin. 'If Mohamed had taken bromide for his nerves, had worked only two hours out of the twenty-four, and had drunk milk, that remarkable man would have left no more trace after him than his dog. Doctors and kind relations will succeed in stupefying mankind, in making mediocrity pass for genius and in bringing civilisation to ruin. If only you knew,' Kovrin said with annoyance, 'how grateful I am to you,'

He felt intense irritation, and to avoid saying too much, he got up quickly and went into the house. It was still, and the fragrance of the tobacco plant and the marvel of Peru floated in at the open window. The moonlight lay in green patches on the floor and on the piano in the big dark dining-room. Kovrin remembered the raptures of the previous summer when there had been the same scent of the marvel of Peru and the moon had shone in at the window. To bring back the mood of last year he went quickly to his study, lighted a strong cigar, and told the footman to bring him some wine. But the cigar left a bitter and disgusting taste in his mouth, and the wine had not the same flavour as it had the year before. And so great is the effect of giving up a habit, the cigar and the two gulps of wine made him giddy, and brought on palpitations of the heart, so that he was obliged to take bromide.

Before going to bed, Tanya said to him:

'Father adores you. You are cross with him about something, and it is killing him. Look at him; he is ageing, not from day to day, but from hour to hour. I entreat you, Andryusha, for God's sake, for the sake of your dead father, for the sake of my peace of mind, be affectionate to him.'

'I can't, I don't want to.'

'But why?' asked Tanya, beginning to tremble all over. 'Explain why.'

'Because he is antipathetic to me, that's all,' said Kovrin carelessly; and he shrugged his shoulders. 'But we won't talk about him: he is your father.'

'I can't understand, I can't,' said Tanya, pressing her hands to her temples and staring at a fixed point. 'Something incomprehensible, awful, is going on in the house. You have changed, grown unlike yourself. . . . You, clever, extraordinary man as you are, are irritated over trifles, meddle in paltry nonsense. . . . Such trivial things excite you, that sometimes one is simply amazed and can't believe that it is you. Come, come, don't be angry, don't be angry,' she went on, kissing his hands, frightened of her own words. 'You are clever, kind, noble. You will be just to father. He is so good.'

'He is not good; he is just good-natured. Burlesque old uncles like your father, with well-fed, good-natured faces, extraordinarily hospitable and queer, at one time used to touch me and amuse me in novels and in farces and in life; now I dislike them. They are egoists to the marrow of their bones. What disgusts me most of all is their being so well-fed, and that purely bovine, purely hoggish optimism of a full stomach.'

Tanya sat down on the bed and laid her head on the pillow.

'This is torture,' she said, and from her voice it was evident that she was utterly exhausted, and that it was hard for her to speak. 'Not one moment of peace since the winter. . . . Why, it's awful I My God I I am wretched.'

'Oh, of course, I am Herod, and you and your father are the innocents. Of course,'

His face seemed to Tanya ugly and unpleasant. Hatred and an ironical expression did not suit him. And, indeed, she had noticed before that there was something lacking in his face, as

though ever since his hair had been cut his face had changed, too. She wanted to say something wounding to him, but immediately she caught herself in this antagonistic feeling, she was frightened and went out of the bedroom.

IX

Kovrin received a professorship at the University. The inaugural address was fixed for the second of December, and a notice to that effect was hung up in the corridor at the University. But on the day appointed he informed the students' inspector, by telegram, that he was prevented by illness from giving the lecture.

He had haemorrhage from the throat. He was often spitting blood, but it happened two or three times a month that there was a considerable loss of blood, and then he grew extremely weak and sank into a drowsy condition. This illness did not particularly frighten him, as he knew that his mother had lived for ten years or longer suffering from the same disease, and the doctors assured him that there was no danger, and had only advised him to avoid excitement, to lead a regular life, and to speak as little as possible.

In January again his lecture did not take place owing to the same reason, and in February it was too late to begin the course. It had to be postponed to the following year.

By now he was living not with Tanya, but with another woman, who was two years older than he was, and who looked after him as though he were a baby. He was in a calm and tranquil state of mind; he really gave in, to her, and when Varvara Nikolaevna - that was the name of his friend - decided to take him to the Crimea, he agreed, though he had a presentiment that no good would come of the trip.

They reached Sevastopol in the evening and stopped at an hotel to rest and go on the next day to Yalta. They were both exhausted by the journey. Varvara Nikolaevna had some tea, went to bed and was soon asleep. But Kovrin did not go to bed. An hour before starting for the station, he had received a letter from Tanya, and had not brought himself to open it, and now it was lying in his coat pocket, and the thought of it excited him disagreeably. At the bottom of his heart he genuinely considered

now that his marriage to Tanya had been a mistake. He was glad that their separation was final, and the thought of that woman who in the end had turned into a living relic, still walking about though everything seemed dead in her except her big, staring, intelligent eyes - the thought of her roused in him nothing but pity and disgust with himself. The handwriting on the envelope reminded him how cruel and unjust he had been two years before, how he had worked off his anger at his spiritual emptiness, his boredom, his loneliness, and his dissatisfaction with life by revenging himself on people in no way to blame. He remembered, also, how he had torn up his dissertation and all the articles he had written during his illness, and how he had thrown them out of the window, and the bits of paper had fluttered in the wind and caught on the trees and flowers. In every line of them he saw strange, utterly groundless pretension, shallow defiance, arrogance, megalomania; and they made him feel as though he were reading a description of his vices. But when the last manuscript had been torn up and sent flying out of window, he felt, for some reason, suddenly bitter and angry; he went to his wife and said a great many unpleasant things to her. My God, how he had tormented her! One day, wanting to cause her pain, he told her that her father had played a very unattractive part in their romance, that he had asked him to marry her. Yegor Semyonitch accidentally overheard this, ran into the room, and, in his despair, could not utter a word, could only stamp and make a strange, bellowing sound as though he had lost the power of speech, and Tanya, looking at her father, had uttered a heart-rending shriek and had fallen into a swoon. It was hideous

All this came back into his memory as he looked at the familiar writing. Kovrin went out on to the balcony; it was still warm weather and there was a smell of the sea. The wonderful bay reflected the moonshine and the lights, and was of a colour for which it was difficult to find a name. It was a soft and tender blending of dark blue and green; in places the water was like blue vitriol, and in places it seemed as though the moonlight were liquefied and filling the bay instead of water. And what harmony of colours, what an atmosphere of peace, calm, and sublimity!

In the lower storey under the balcony the windows were probably open, for women's voices and laughter could be heard distinctly. Apparently there was an evening party.

Kovrin made an effort, tore open the envelope, and, going back into his room, read:

'My father is just dead. I owe that to you, for you have killed him. Our garden is being ruined; strangers are managing it already - that is, the very thing is happening that poor father dreaded. That, too, I owe to you. I hate you with my whole soul, and I hope you may soon perish. Oh, how wretched I am! Insufferable anguish is burning my soul. . . . My curses on you. I took you for an extraordinary man, a genius; I loved you, and you have turned out a madman. . . .'

Kovrin could read no more, he tore up the letter and threw it away. He was overcome by an uneasiness that was akin to terror. Varvara Nikolaevna was asleep behind the screen, and he could hear her breathing. From the lower storey came the sounds of laughter and women's voices, but he felt as though in the whole hotel there were no living soul but him. Because Tanya, unhappy, broken by sorrow, had cursed him in her letter and hoped for his perdition, he felt eerie and kept glancing hurriedly at the door, as though he were afraid that the uncomprehended force which two years before had wrought such havoc in his life and in the life of those near him might come into the room and master him once more.

He knew by experience that when his nerves were out of hand the best thing for him to do was to work. He must sit down to the table and force himself, at all costs, to concentrate his mind on some one thought. He took from his red portfolio a manuscript containing a sketch of a small work of the nature of a compilation, which he had planned in case he should find it dull in the Crimea without work. He sat down to the table and began working at this plan, and it seemed to him that his calm, peaceful, indifferent mood was coming back. The manuscript with the sketch even led him to meditation on the vanity of the world. He thought how much life exacts for the worthless or very commonplace blessings it can give a man. For instance, to gain, before forty, a university chair, to be an ordinary professor, to expound ordinary and second-hand thoughts in dull,

heavy, insipid language-in fact, to gain the position of a mediocre learned man, he, Kovrin, had had to study for fifteen years, to work day and night, to endure a terrible mental illness, to experience an unhappy marriage, and to do a great number of stupid and unjust things which it would have been pleasant not to remember. Kovrin recognised clearly, now, that he was a mediocrity, and readily resigned himself to it, as he considered that every man ought to be satisfied with what he is.

The plan of the volume would have soothed him completely, but the torn letter showed white on the floor and prevented him from concentrating his attention. He got up from the table, picked up the pieces of the letter and threw them out of window, but there was a light wind blowing from the sea, and the bits of paper were scattered on the window-sill. Again he was overcome by uneasiness akin to terror, and he felt as though in the whole hotel there were no living soul but himself. . . . He went out on the balcony. The bay, like a living thing, looked at him with its multitude of light blue, dark blue, turquoise and fiery eyes, and seemed beckoning to him. And it really was hot and oppressive, and it would not have been amiss to have a bathe.

Suddenly in the lower storey under the balcony a violin began playing, and two soft feminine voices began singing. It was something familiar. The song was about a maiden, full of sick fancies, who heard one night in her garden mysterious sounds, so strange and lovely that she was obliged to recognise them as a holy harmony which is unintelligible to us mortals, and so flies back to heaven. . . . Kovrin caught his breath and there was a pang of sadness at his heart, and a thrill of the sweet, exquisite delight he had so long forgotten began to stir in his breast.

A tall black column, like a whirlwind or a water-spout, appeared on the further side of the bay. It moved with fearful rapidity across the bay, towards the hotel, growing smaller and darker as it came, and Kovrin only just had time to get out of the way to let it pass. . . . The monk with bare grey head, black eyebrows, barefoot, his arms crossed over his breast, floated by him, and stood still in the middle of the room.

'Why did you not believe me?' he asked reproachfully, looking affectionately at Kovrin. 'If you had believed me then, that you

were a' genius, you would not have spent these two years so gloomily and so wretchedly,'

Kovrin already believed that he was one of God's chosen and a genius; he vividly recalled his conversations with the monk in the past and tried to speak, but the blood flowed from his throat on to His breast, and not knowing what he was doing, he passed his hands over his bteast, and his cuffs were soaked with blood. He tried to call Varvara Nikolaevna, who was asleep behind the screen, he made an effort and said:

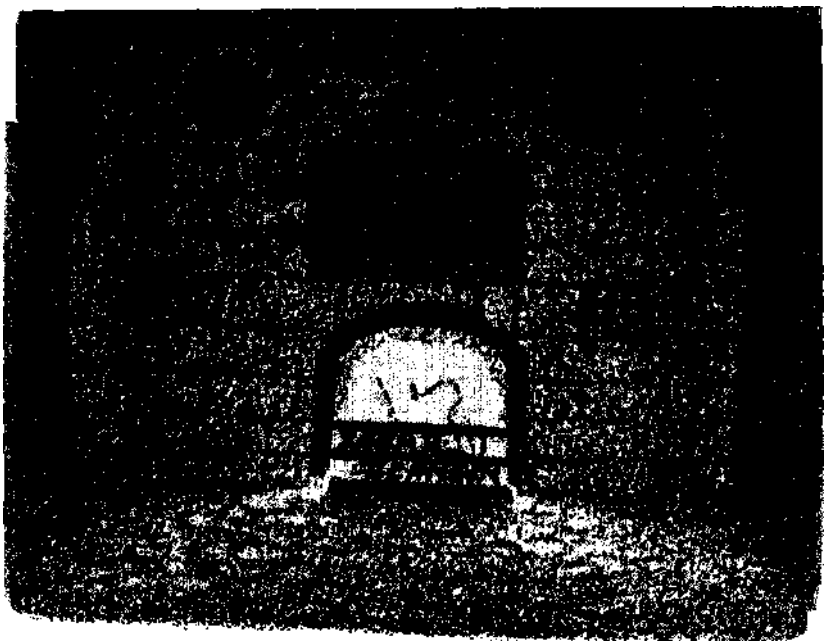
Tanya!'

He fell on to the floor, and propping himself on his arms, called again:

'Tanya !'

He called Tanya, called to'the great garden with the gorgeous flowers sprinkled with dew, called to the park, the pines with their shaggy roots, the rye-field, his marvellous learning, his youth, courage, joy-called to life, which was so lovely. He saw on the floor near his face a great pool of blood, and was too weak to utter a word, but an unspeakable, infinite happiness flooded his whole being. Below, under the balcony, they were playing the serenade, and the black monk whispered to him that he was a genius, and that he was dying only because his frail human body had lost its balance and could no longer serve as the mortal garb of genius.

When Varvara Nikolaevna woke up and came out from behind the screen, Kovrin was dead, and a blissful smile was set upon his face.



TWENTY-SIX MEN AND A GIRL

MAXIM GORKY

Translated by Monica Partridge

THERE WERE TWENTY-SIX of us-twenty-six human machines shut up in a damp cellar where we kneaded dough from morning till night, making pretzel biscuits and cracknels. The windows of our cellar looked into a hole dug out in front of them and then walled up with bricks green with damp; the window frames were barred on the outside with a thick iron grating and no sun could reach us through the panes that were thick with flour dust. Our boss had closed up the windows with the iron bars so that we could not give his bread to beggars and to those of our comrades who went hungry because they were out of work - the boss used to call us scoundrels and instead of meat would give us bad tripe to eat.

It was stuffy and crowded for us living in that stone cell under the low, heavy ceiling covered with soot and cobwebs. Between

the thick walls daubed with patches of dirt and mildew, life was **a** burden and loathsome to us. We used to get up at five o'clock in the morning before we had had enough sleep, and at six, dull and apathetic, we sat down at the table to make pretzels out of the dough which our comrades had prepared while we were still asleep. And for the whole of the day, from morning until ten o'clock at night some of us would sit at the table twisting in our hands the spongy dough and swaying a little so as not to get cramp, while the others worked up the flour and water. And the whole of the day the boiling water where the pretzels were cooking bubbled sullenly in the pot, and the baker's shovel scraped harshly and malevolently on the oven hearth, throwing off the slippery pieces of boiled dough on to the hot brick. From morning till night logs were burning at one side of the stove, and the red reflection of their flames flickered on the workroom wall as if it were constantly mocking us. The enormous oven was like the misshapen head of some fabulous monster - it seemed to poke itself out from under the floor, open its wide mouth filled with vivid fire and breathe out on us its scorching heat, watching our endless toil out of the two black hollows above its forehead where the ventilators were. Those two deep hollows were like eyes, watching with the pitiless, impassive gaze of a monster. They always looked at us with the same dull stare, as if they were tired of watching us slaves and, no longer expecting anything human from us, despised us with the cold contempt of wisdom.

Day after day in the flour dust, in the dirt brought in from the yard by our feet, in the oppressive, smelly heat, we twisted the dough to make pretzels, moistening them with our sweat, and we loathed our work with bitter loathing. We never ate what came from our own hands. We preferred black bread to pretzels. Sitting at the long table opposite each other - nine opposite nine -we moved our arms and fingers mechanically through the long hours and became so accustomed to the work that we did not even watch our own movements any more. And we had looked at each other so much that each one of us knew every wrinkle on the face of his companions. We had nothing to talk about, but we were used to that and kept silent the whole time, except for swearing - for there is always an excuse for swearing

at someone or other, and especially a comrade. **But** we **did not** even swear very often - how can a man even be guilty of anything if he is half-dead, if he is only a statue, if all his feelings are stifled under the burden of his work? Yet silence is frightening and intolerable only to people who have said everything and have nothing left to talk about. For people who have not even begun to speak it is quite easy to be silent. . . . But sometimes we used to sing. Our singing would begin in this way: while he was working someone would suddenly give a deep sigh like a tired horse, and would start very quietly to sing one of those never-ending songs whose plaintively caressing melody always eases the burden on the singer's heart. One of us sang, and at first we listened in silence to his lonely song, which died away and was swallowed up by the great ceiling of-our cellar, just as the little glow of a camp fire in the steppe is swallowed up by the damp autumn night when the grey sky hangs over the earth like a leaden roof. Someone else would join the singer, and then there would be two soft, yearning voices floating in the stuffy heat of our crowded hole. And then suddenly several voices would take up the song together-it surged like a wave *o*[f] the sea, grew stronger and louder, and seemed to burst open the solid grey walls of our stone prison. . . .

. . All the twenty-six are singing. The work-room is filled by the loud voices that have all taken up the song long ago. The singing pushes its way into every corner, it beats on the stone oi the wall, it moans, it weeps, it breathes a gentle, aching life into our hearts, it re-opens the old wounds and stirs up yearning within us. The singers breathe deeply and hard. One of them stops unexpectedly, listens for a long time to the song of his comrades and then adds his voice again to the full chorus. Another utters a sad-oh ! and sings with his eyes closed; perhaps he imagines the deep, broad wave of sound as a road leading somewhere into the distance, a wide road lighted by bright sunshine - and he sees himself travelling along it. . . .

The flames in the stove are still flickering, the baker's shovel still scrapes on the brick, the water is bubbling in the pot and the reflection from the fire still flickers on the wall just the same, eternally mocking. But in the words of other people we are singing away our own burden of sorrow, the dull yearning

of living people deprived of the sun, the yearning of slaves.

In such a way did we live, the twenty-six of us, in the cellar of a great stone house, and life weighed so heavily upon us that it seemed as if all the three storeys of that house had been built solidly upon our shoulders.

• # •

But apart from songs we had something else, something which we loved and which, perhaps, took the place of the sun for us. In the second storey of our house there was a gold-embroidery workshop where a sixteen-year-old housemaid, Tanya, lived with many of the young embroideresses. Every morning a little pink face with merry blue eyes appeared out of the darkness and glued itself to the window cut in the door of our workroom, and a sweet, clear voice cried out to us:

'Prisoners! Give me some pretzels!'

At that bright, familiar sound we all used to turn joyfully round and look good-naturedly at the pure young face with its charming smile. It was quite the usual procedure, and we looked forward to seeing that nose flattened against the glass, and the little white teeth sparkling from behind the rosy lips stretched into a smile. We always rushed to open the door for her, jostling each other, and - there she was, so gay and charming! She would come in, smoothing out her apron, and stand before us, her small head held a little on one side, and smiling all the time. The long, thick plaits of her auburn hair hung down over her shoulders on to her breasts. And we dirty, stupid, uncouth creatures looked up at her from below - the door was four steps above the level of the floor - we looked at her, raising our heads and wishing her good-morning with words such as wc only found when talking with her. When we spoke to her our voices were gentler and our jokes less coarse. Everything to do with her received our especial care. The baker would take out of the oven a shovelful of the tastiest and best-looking pretzels and throw them expertly into Tanya's apron.

'Mind the boss doesn't catch you!' we always warned her. She would laugh impishly, shout gaily to us, 'Good-bye, prisoners!' and then disappear as quick as lightning.

Long after she had gone we used to talk to each other about

her. We said just the same things we had said **yesterday and** the days before, because she and we ourselves **and** everything around us were precisely as they had been yesterday and all the days before. . . . Life is torture and **a** burden for a man when nothing around him ever changes, and if such a life does not utterly destroy his soul, then the longer he lives, the more terrible becomes the unvaried monotony of his surroundings. We always spoke about women in such a way that at times we were even revolted ourselves by the coarse bawdiness of our speech - and it was understandable, since the women we knew probably deserved no better kind of talk. But we never spoke ill of Tanya. Not one of us even allowed himself so much as to touch her with his hand, and we never forgot ourselves so far as to banter with her. That may have been because she did not stay with us very long; she would flash past our eyes like a shooting star in the sky, and then she disappeared. Or it may have been because she was young and very beautiful, and beauty always commands respect, even from louts. And in addition to that, although our drudgery had made stupid oxen of us, we yet remained human beings all the same, and like all human beings we could not live without worshipping something. We had no one better than her, and nobody except her paid any attention to us who lived in the cellar - nobody, although there were dozens of people living in the house. In the end - and this is certainly the most important thing - we all regarded her as belonging especially to us, as if she existed only by virtue of our pretzels. We came to consider it a duty of ours to provide her with hot pretzels, and that obligation became our daily offering to our idol; it became almost a holy rite which bound us to her the more strongly as each day passed. Besides pretzels we gave Tanya a great deal of advice - to dress warmly, not to run too quickly up the stairs, not to carry heavy bundles of wood. She listened to our advice with a smile, answered with a joke, and never paid any attention to us. But we were not offended by that, we only wanted to show that we cared about her.

She would often come to us with various requests. She asked us, for instance, to open the heavy door into the wine-cellar for her and to split logs. We did it for her gladly, even proudly,

and anything else she wanted as well.

But when one of us asked her to wash his only shirt for him, she said with a scornful laugh:

'What next, indeed! Why ever should I do that!'

We roared with laughter at his presumption, and never again asked her for anything. We loved her - that will explain everything. A man always wants to unburden his love on to somebody else. Sometimes he is oppressed and sullied by his love and sometimes perhaps poisons the life of someone near him with it because, loving, he does not also respect the person he loves. We had to love Tanya, for there was no one else for us to love.

Occasionally one of us would for some reason or other suddenly start wondering:

'Why ever do we spoil the girl? What is there so special in her, eh? Why do we make such a fuss over her?'

We very soon rudely put a stop to whoever started saying such things. There had to be something for us to love. We had found it for ourselves and loved it, and whatever we twenty-six loved must be left untouched and sacred for each one of us, and anyone who went against us in this was an enemy. Perhaps we loved something which was not really worthy of our love; but then there were twenty-six of us, and we always wanted the others to hold sacred what we held sacred ourselves.

Our love was no less of a burden than our hate, and perhaps for that very reason some superior mortals declared that our hatred was more flattering than our love. But why did they not leave us, if that were so?

\# * #

Besides ours, the boss had another bakery, for bread. It was in the same house, divided from our hole only by a wall, but the men in that bakery-there were four of them-kept apart from us, considering their work cleaner than ours and therefore considering themselves better than us. They did not enter our shop, and laughed scornfully when they met us outside. We did not go in to them either. We were forbidden to do that by the boss who was afraid we should steal his fancy bread. We disliked those other bakers because we envied them. Their work

was easier than ours, they earned **more than we did, they were** better fed, had a spacious light room to work **in** ar\d **were** so clean and healthy-very different from us. We **all had a** sort of yellow-grey look, three of us were syphilitic, some had the scab, and one was completely crippled by rheumatism. On holidays and in their free time they dressed themselves up in pea-jackets and squeaky boots. Two of them had accordions, and they all went off to saunter in the town park But we wore filthy rags and had dilapidated boots or bast-shoes on our feet. The police did not allow us in the town park. How could we be expected to like the men from the other bakery?

And then, one day we got to know that their chief baker had got drunk, that the boss had fired him and had already taken on another. We heard that the new one was a soldier, wore a satin waistcoat and a watch with a gold chain. We were curious to look at such a dandy, and started to make excuses one after the other to go outside in the hope of seeing him. But he **put** in an appearance in our room of his own accord. He kicked open the door, did not bother to shut it behind him, and standing laughing in the doorway said to us:

'Heavens above! Good day, friends I'

The frosty air, surging through the doorway in a thick, dense cloud, wreathed itself around his feet. He stood on the doorstep looking down at us, his big yellow teeth gleaming from under his fair moustache with its fashionably curled-up ends. His waistcoat certainly, was smart. It was dark blue satin embroidered with flowers'; it-seemed all aglow and its buttons were of some sort of red stone. And the watch-chain was . . .

He was handsome, that soldier - so tall and healthy, with rosy cheeks and big, bright eyes that had a pleasant expression-they were kind and sincere. On his head he wore a white, stiffly-starched cap, and the pointed toes of his highly-polished shoes poked out from under his clean, spotless apron.

Our chief baker asked him politely to shut the door. He did so without hurrying himself and then began to ask us questions about the boss. We all rushed to be the first to inform him that the boss was an old skinflint, a scoundrel, a rascal and a curse-everything that could and should have been said about the boss, but which cannot be written here. The soldier listened,

chewed his moustache **and** contemplated us with his bright, **kind look.**

'You've got plenty of girls here,' he said suddenly.

Several of us smiled politely, others pulled a face and someone offered him the information that there were nine of them.

'You make the most of your opportunities, I hope?' the soldier asked, giving a wink.

Again we laughed, not very loudly, and somewhat sheepishly. . . . Many of us would have liked to show the soldier that we could cut just as dashing a figure as he did, but nobody knew how, not one of us could do it. Someone, confessing that, said quietly:

'How can we . . ?'

'Hra . . . Yes . . . For you it's difficult,' the soldier agreed, staring at us. . . . 'You're . . . not quite . . . You're not sure enough of yourselves . . . you don't look . . . presentable. . . . You haven't got the right air, you know. And a woman . . . she likes a man to have an air about him. . . . She looks for a good physique . . . wants everything just right. . . . And then she admires strength ... an arm - like this!'

The soldier took his right hand out of his pocket. His sleeve was rolled up and the arm he displayed was bare to the elbow. It was clean and strong, covered with shining glossy hairs.

'The legs and chest . . . they must all be strong. . . . And with all that a man must be well-dressed . . . as his good looks demand. . . . Take me, for instance. Women fall for me. I don't ask them to -I don't run after them. But they hang round my neck five at a time of their own accord.'

He squatted on a flour sack and recounted to us at length how the women all fell in love with him and what a lion he was.Then he took his leave, and when the door, squeaking, closed behind him we kept quiet for a long time, thinking about him and his stories. And then somehow we all began talking together, and unanimously agreed that we liked him. He was so simple and unaffected, and had come to sit and have a talk with us. Nobody else had come and talked with us like that, in a friendly way. . . . And we all discussed him and his future successes with the embroideresses who, when they met us outside, either carefully avoided us, insultingly screwing up their lips, or else

walked straight past us as if we did **not exist. And we never** did more than look at them enviously, **both when we were outside** and when they passed our windows dressed in winter in fashionable little caps and coats and in summer in flower-decked hats with gaily-coloured parasols on their arms. On the other hand, among ourselves we talked about the girls in such a way that if they had only heard us they would have gone mad **with** shame and vexation.

' . . Still, I hope he doesn't touch our little Tanya!' the chief baker suddenly said anxiously.

We all stopped talking, thunder-struck by his words. Somehow or other we had forgotten about Tanya. The soldier with his big, handsome figure seemed to have driven her completely out of our heads. A noisy argument ensued; some said that Tanya would not lower herself to that, others asserted that she would not hold out against the soldier, and a third group finally proposed that if the soldier began to run after Tanya we should smash his ribs in for him. And in the end everyone decided to keep an eye on the soldier and Tanya, and to warn the girl to be careful of him. . . . That settled the argument.

# # #

About a month passed. The soldier baked his loaves and went out walking with the embroideresses. He often dropped in on us, but did not speak of his conquests with the girls; he just twirled his moustache and smacked his lips appreciatively.

Every morning Tanya came to us for pretzels and was just as gay, sweet and charming as ever. We tried to get her talking about the soldier. She called him a 'moon-eyed calf' and other funny names, and that reassured us. We were proud of our Tanya, seeing how the embroideresses hung around him. Somehow her attitude to him flattered us, and adopting her attitude we began ourselves to treat the soldier with scorn. Tanya we came to love still more, and each morning we greeted her even more gladly and solicitously.

Once the soldier came in to us half drunk. He sat down and burst out laughing, but when we asked him what he was laughing at he explained:

'Two of them have come to blows over me . . . Lidya and

Grushka. . . . **How do** you think they'll have marred each **other's beauty, eh?** . . . **Ha!** Hal One of them **went** for the **other, got her** on **the** floor in the passage and jumped right on **top** of **her,** . . . **Ha,** ha, ha! . . . They've been scratching each other's eyes out . . . they're tearing themselves to pieces . . . it's enough to make you die with laughing! Why can't women fight fair? What makes them scratch at each other, eh?'

Roaring with laughter, he sat there on the bench bursting with health and so immaculate and gay. We did not speak. For some reason or other we took a dislike to him on this particular occasion.

'No, really, what luck I have with women, eh? How killingly funny. One wink, and there you are! It's the very devil!"

He raised his arms covered with glossy hairs, and gave his thighs a resounding slap. And he looked at us with such an air of frank astonishment as though he were genuinely surprised at his own success with women. His fat, rosy face beamed happily with self-satisfaction and all the time he licked his lips with pleasure.

Our baker scraped his shovel on the oven hearth noisily and angrily, then suddenly jeered:

'A fir sapling doesn't take much felling. Why don't you try a pine-tree?'

'Is it me you're talking to?' the soldier asked.

'Yes, you. . . .'

'What do you mean, then?'

'Oh, nothing . . . it doesn't matter.'

'Oh no! Wait a bit! What are you driving at? Which pine-tree?'

The baker made no reply, busying himself with the oven. He shovelled in the half-cooked pretzels and drew out the ones that were ready, flinging them noisily on the floor for the boys who were stringing them on bast. He appeared to have forgotten about the soldier and their conversation. But the soldier suddenly grew excited. He jumped to his feet, went over to the oven at the risk of receiving a violent dig in the ribs from the shovel-handle which was flashing jerkily in the air.

'Come on, tell me. . . . Who is she? You've insulted me . . . I? Not a single one can resist me, not one! But you've been so

insulting.

He did indeed seem genuinely insulted. **It must have been** that he prided himself exclusively on his ability to entice women. Perhaps, apart from this one talent, there was nothing alive in him and so it was the only spark able to kindle within him an awareness of life. „

There are people for whom the best and most precious thing in life is some malady of the soul or body. They are constantly aware of it, cannot exist without it, suffer from it and build their whole lives around it. They complain of it to others and in such a way attract attention to themselves. It provides them with a means of arousing sympathy, and yet, apart from it, they have absolutely nothing at all. If you cure them, removing their malady, they will be unhappy because you have deprived them of their very means of existence - and then they become utterly empty. Sometimes a man's life is so unutterably worthless that he finds himself obliged to prize his own vice and live by that. To be frank, one may say that men often turn to vice out of sheer boredom.

The soldier was offended, strode up to our baker, and roared:

'Now then, let's have an answer. Who is it?'

'Shall I tell you?' the baker asked, suddenly turning round to him.

'Well?'

'Do you know Tanya?'

'Well?'

'Well, that's all. Have a go . .

'Me?'

'Yes, you,'

'Why, she's nothing for a man like me.'

'Prove it!'

'All right. You'll see ... Ha, ha!'

'She . . .'

'Give me a month!'

'What a braggart you are, soldier!'

'In two weeks! **I'll** show you! Who did you sav? Tanya? . . . Pooh!'

'Now then, clear off. . . . You're in the way!'

'A fortnight and it'll be done. Oh, you . . .'

Clear off, I tell you !

Our baker suddenly **got** angry and brandished his shovel. The soldier, alarmed, drew back, looked at us and was silent for a few moments. Then he said in a quiet, ominous voice, 'Very well,' And he went away.

During the quarrel we had all been silent, engrossed in it all. But when the soldier left, a loud, excited conversation flared up. Somebody shouted out to the baker:

'You've started a bad job, Paul!'

'Get on with your work,' the baker replied aggressively.

We felt that the soldier's pride had been deeply wounded, and that Tanya was in danger. But feeling as we did, we were all nevertheless consumed by a burning curiosity which was pleasant to us. What would happen? Would Tanya withstand the soldier? And almost everyone shouted with conviction:

'Tanya? She'll be safe enough. You won't catch her napping!'

We wanted desperately to prove the strength of our little goddess. We excitedly pointed out to each other that our divinity was strong and would emerge victorious from the contest. In the end it seemed to us that we had not provoked the soldier enough, that he would forget about the quarrel, and that we ought thoroughly to wound his pride. From that day we began to live an unusual, tensely-nervous life, such as we had never lived before. For whole days we argued with each other, all grew somehow wiser, began to talk better and more easily. It seemed to us that we were playing some game with the devil and that the odds were on our side, Tanya. When we got to know from the other bakers that the soldier had begun to set his cap at our Tanya, our curiosity became so engrossing we even failed to notice that the boss, taking advantage of our excitement, had increased our work by twelve pounds of dough a day. Work did not even seem to tire us. Tanya's name was on our lips the whole day. Every morning we waited for her with increasing impatience. At times we even imagined that she was coming in to us and that it was not the Tanya we knew, but someone quite different.

However, we said nothing to her about the quarrel. We did not ask questions, but maintained an affectionate and kindly attitude to her, just as before. Yet already there had crept into

the relationship something new **and different; there was** a new teeling of keen curiosity, keen and **cold, like** a **steel knife.**

'Time's up to-day, chaps!' exclaimed the baker **one morning** as he set to work.

We knew that quite well, without being reminded by him, but all the same it gave us an unpleasant start.

'Watch her . . . she's just coming!' suggested the baker. Someone remarked with regret:

'As if there'll be anything to seel'

And again an excited, noisy argument sprang up among us. To-day at last we should know how pure and undefiled was that vessel into which we had poured of our best. On that morning we all felt for the first time that we were indeed playing for high stakes and that by putting the purity of our goddess to the test we might thereby destroy it irrevocably. Recently we had been hearing that the soldier was running after Tanya obstinately and persistently, but for some reason or other none of us asked her how she got on with him. She continued to come regularly every morning for pretzels and was just the same as ever.

That day we soon heard her voice:

'Prisoners! Give me . . ,'

We rushed to let her in and when she entered we greeted her with an unusual silence. Looking at her wide-eyed we did not know what to say to her or what to ask. And we stood before her in a stupid silent crowd. She was evidently surprised at this unusual greeting. And suddenly we noticed that she had grown pale, was uneasy and stood as if rooted to the spot. And then in a stifled voice she asked us:

'What's the matter with you?'

'And you?' the baker flung at her, straight in the face.

'What have I done?'

'N-nothing . . .'

'Come on with my pretzels then.'

She had never hurried us before.

'You're in a great hurry,' said the baker, not moving and not taking his eyes from her face.

Then she suddenly turned and disappeared through the door. The baker took up his shovel, and as he opened the door said

calmly: so he's done it. . . . But a soldier . . a rascal . . such a rotter!'

Like a flock of sheep, jostling one another, we returned to the table, sat down in silence and set to work half-heartedly Before long somebody remarked:

'But still . . . perhaps . . ,'

'Now then, shut up,' shouted the baker.

We all knew that he was a wise fellow, wiser than us. And by his rebuke we knew he was convinced of the soldier's success We were miserable and uneasy.

At twelve o'clock - dinner-time - the soldier arrived. He was, as usual, clean and spruce and, as usual, looked us squarely in the face. We returned his look awkwardly.

'Well, fine sirs, would you like me to show you what a soldier can do?' he said, laughing defiantly. 'Come into the passage then and take a look through the cracks ... do you understand >'

We went out, and leaning over one another, squeezed up to see through the wall of the passage leading into the yard. We did not have long to wait. Soon, with a hurried step and anxious face, across the yard came Tanya, stepping carefully to avoid the puddles of thawed snow and mud. She disappeared behind the door of the wine-cellar. Then the soldier walked slowly past, whistling. His hands were thrust into his pockets, his moustache was quivering.

It was raining, and we could see the pools of water shivering under the blows of the falling rain-drops. It was a damp, grey dav, and very dismal. Snow still lay on the roof-tops, and on the ground dark stains of mud were appearing And the snow on the roofs also showed dirty brown patches. The rain fell slowly it splashed cheerlessly. It was cold and unpleasant, waiting.

The soldier came out of the cellar first. He walked across the yard slowly, chewing his moustache, with hands dug into his pockets - exactly the same as usual.

And then-Tanya came out. Her eyes shone, beamed with happiness, and her lips smiled. She walked as in a dream, stumbling, with unsure steps. . . .

We could not endure that calmly. We threw ourselves at the door together: we burst into the yard, whistling and shouting after her viciously, madly and loud.

Seeing us, she shuddered and stood rooted to **the spot in the** mud. We surrounded her, and with malicious **delight swore at** her unrestrainedly, using foul language.

We did it quietly and deliberately, since she could not escape. She was completely encircled by us and we could deal with her just as we pleased. I do not know why, but we did not strike her. She stood among us and turned her head in all directions, hearing our insults, while we continued to hurl at her the filth and poison of our words.

The colour left her face. Her blue eyes, happy a moment before, opened wide. Her breast hea\ed convulsively, her lips trembled.

And we, encircling her, took our revenge because she had robbed us. She had belonged to us; we had given her what was best in us, and although our best was only such crumbs as beggars can offer, yet - there were twenty-six of us, and only one of her, and therefore we could inflict no punishment great enough for her crime. How we insulted her! She kept silent, looked at us with wild eyes, and trembled from head to foot

We laughed, roared, snarled. Other people ran up from somewhere to join us. One of us tugged at her coat sleeve.

Suddenly her eyes flashed; she slowly raised her hands to her head, set her hair to rights, and loudly but calmly said straight into our faces:

'Ah, you wretched prisoners!'

And she walked straight through us She went as easily as if we were not standing there, as if we did not bar her way. And nobody made any attempt to stop her.

Walking out of our circle, without turning round towards us, just as loudly and with indescribable scorn she added

'Oh, you swine . . . beasts.

And she went away.

We stayed there in the middle of the yard, in the mud and rain under the grey, sunless sky.

And then we returned silently to our damp, stone dungeon As before, the sun never looked in at us through the windows, and Tanya never came to see us again.