



political significance. What is rare in Chekhov—in both these stories there is an earnestness, a keenness of moral judgment that raises them above the average of his work. All Chekhov's work is symbolical, but in most of his stories the symbolism is less concrete and more vaguely suggestive. It is akin to Maeterlinck's, in some of the vast difference of style between the Russian realist and the Belgian mystic. *Ward No. 6*, the darkest and most terrible of all Chekhov's stories, is an especially notable example of this suggestive symbolism. It is all the more suggestive for being strikingly realistic. (The only time Chekhov attempted to step out of the limits of strict realism was when he wrote the only story that is quite certainly a failure—*The Black Monk*.) But this symbolism reached its full development in his plays, beginning with *The Seagull*.

* * *

Chekhov's English admirers think that everything is perfect in Chekhov. To find weak spots in him will seem blasphemy to them. Still it is only fair to point out these spots. I have already referred to the complete lack of individuality in his characters and in their way of speaking. This is not in itself a fault, for it belongs to his fundamental intuition of life, which recognizes no personality. But it is not a virtue. It is especially noticeable when he makes his characters speak at length on abstract subjects. How different from Dostoyevsky, who "felt ideas" and who made them so splendidly individual! Chekhov did not "feel ideas," and when his characters give expression to theirs, they speak a colorless and monotonous jargon. *The Duel* is especially disfigured by such harangues. This is perhaps Chekhov's tribute to the deep-rooted tradition of Russian intelligentsia literature. Their speeches may have had some emotional significance in their time but certainly have none today. Another serious shortcoming is Chekhov's Russian. It is colorful and lacks individuality. He had no feeling for words. No Russian writer of anything like his significance lacked a language so devoid of a richness, technical terms, and occasional catch-words) so easy to translate. Of all Russian writers, he was the least to fear from the treachery of translators.

Chekhov's direct influence on Russian literature was not important. The success of his short stories contributed to the great popularity of that form, which became the predominant form in Russian fiction. But Gorky, Kuprin, and Bunin, to name but the foremost of those who regarded him as their master, can hardly be recognized as his pupils. Certainly no one learned from him the art of constructing his stories. His dramas, which looked so easy to imitate, were imitated, but the style proved a pitfall. Today's Russian fiction is

1. Minsky's essay was first published in Chekhov's stories retain their popularity in 1926. Even then his comments must in Russia as elsewhere. [Editor's have seemed outrageously opinionated.]

quite free from any trace of Chekhov's influence. Some of the younger writers began, before the Revolution, as his imitators or less intelligent imitators, but none of them remained true to him. In Russia, Chekhov has become a thing of the past. In the past remoter than even Gogol, not to speak of Gogol, Leskov. Abroad, things stand differently. If Chekhov has had a genuine heir to the secrets of his art, it is in England, where Katherine Mansfield did what no Russian has done—learned from Chekhov without imitating him. In England, and to a lesser degree in France, the cult of Chekhov has become the mark of the highbrow intellectual. Curiously enough, in Russia, Chekhov was always regarded as a distinctly "lowbrow" writer; the self-conscious intellectual elite was always conspicuous and cool to him. The highbrows of the beginning of the century were affected to (or sincerely) despise him. His real stronghold was in the heart of the honest middle class in the street. Nowadays Chekhov has of course become the common property of the nation. His place as a classic—a major classic, one of the "ten best"—is not challenged. But he is a classic who has been tentatively shelved.

A. B. DERMAN

Compositional Elements in Chekhov's Poetics†

1

Chekhov stands at the very forefront of those artists of the word who repeatedly proclaimed the principle of creative collaboration between the artist and the scientist, rather than merely using the resources made available by science in his work, resources used by everyone, including those who claim to shun them and to depend entirely on their intuition. As we have seen, in his autobiographical remarks as well, he sharply emphasized the role of science in his work.

There is something scientific in his very approach to the composition of a work. He carefully dissected composition into stages and worked out a methodology for the artistic execution of his conception in each part.

If Chekhov's poetics as a whole is polemical, that is, urges new methods against the old, it is most so particularly in regard to the first stages of composition, "exposition," "opening," the so-called "introduction," "prologue," etc., and its emphasis there is even paradoxical.

†From A. B. Derman, *O Maestrovye* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 74-88. Translated by Ralph E. Matlaw.

His poetics of "exposition" consists essentially in his insistence that there be no "exposition" at all or that it consists at most of two or three lines. That was, of course, a totally revolutionary approach considering the reigning poetics of the time, Turgenev's—to name it after its strongest representative—who in his main and largest works, that is, in his novels, devoted dozens of pages to a retrospective description of his characters' lives before their appearance on the scene. Perhaps, too, since Chekhov wrote no novels, since the short story and the tale are the main forms of his work, the very character of his formal demands was adapted to the story or the short tale.

Yet unquestionably the main reason for Chekhov's sharp hostility to more or less extended "expositions" was different: they seemed superfluous and unnecessary to Chekhov, and contradicted his conception of the active reader. He supposed that such a reader would reconstruct the main features of the characters' past without the aid of a specific introduction, through the skillful depiction of the present; and even if one thing or another from the past remained unknown to him, another more real danger would be avoided, namely, the diffused impression created by the excessive profusion of details. We shall speak of Chekhov's laconic mode later, in dealing with his style. Here, analyzing the writer's compositional principles, we will limit ourselves to the indication that the "God of brevity's" most ruthless demands were made on the brevity of the "exposition," "introduction," "opening," etc.

This is reported very expressively in the valuable memoirs of the priest S. Shchukin, who had come to Chekhov with the manuscript of his work. Picking up the notebook, Chekhov said:

"Fledgling authors frequently should do the following: bend the notebook in half and tear off the first half."

"I looked at him in amazement" [Shchukin writes].

"I am speaking seriously," Chekhov said. "Normally beginners try to lead into the story, as they say, and half of what they write is unnecessary. One ought to write so that reader understands what is going on without the author's explanations, from the progress of the story, from the characters' conversations, from their actions. Try to rip out the first half of your story; you'll only have to change the beginning of the second half a little bit and the story will be totally comprehensible. And in general there out to be nothing unnecessary. Everything that has no direct relation to the story must be ruthlessly thrown out. If you write in the first chapter that a rifle hangs on the wall it must without fail fire in the second or third chapter. And if it isn't going to fire, it mustn't hang, either."

Comparable instructions rarely fail to appear in his letters to authors who sent him their works. In his own creative practice he

was no less merciless in that respect, and, moreover, his strictness constantly increased with the passage of time. If in his more or less early works one could still find a beginning in the traditional poetic spirit, with some specific flavor of an "introduction," later they disappear without a trace. Chekhov either begins his stories with some single sentence (literally!) which leads into the very essence of the narrative, or manages without even that. The beginning of *Ariadne* is an illustration of the first type: "On the deck of the ship from Odessa to Sevastopol a certain gentleman, quite handsome, with a full beard, came up to me for a match, and said . . ."

That is not only the *entire* introduction to *Ariadne*, but is even more than a mere introduction: the remark on the man's appearance, strictly speaking, belongs to the narrative, since the man who turns out to be the narrator is also an important character in the story. Everything that follows is the body of the work, the narrative itself. Nevertheless, one further point must be noted. Apparently recognizing something unnatural in that sort of beginning, in which a man comes up to a stranger for a match and for no reason tells him a long, complicated, and intimate story, Chekhov was careful later to render this device harmless. Having let the narrator talk first not on the main theme but on something close to it, the author notes in his own person: "It was noticeable that he was disturbed and really wanted to talk about himself rather than about women, and that I could not avoid hearing some long story resembling a confession."

Such a story of course does follow, but as a second "amortizer" of artificiality, the narrator, that is, the gentleman with the full beard, having started the story soon turns again to the auditor-author: "Excuse me, I will ask you again: you don't mind listening?" I answered that I did not and he continued," we may add, without further interruption from the author until the end of the story.

As indicated earlier, Chekhov did not stop at that stage of his battle with "introductions" and started to do without them altogether. Here, for example, is the beginning of his long tale *My Life*: "The manager said to me: 'I'm keeping you only out of respect for your honored father, otherwise you'd have been fired long ago.'"

Here we have absolutely nothing of the traditional "opening," "introduction," etc. This is a characteristic piece of the man per sonage's life, the first of many similar situations of which the life as a whole is made up, and the description of which is therefore even called *My Life*.

In all probability, the primary form of his early work—the obligatory short story—brought about the writer's persistent and long-continued struggle to perfect techniques directed toward the greatest possible curtailing of the "exposition," for there was simply no

room for it at his disposal in the newspapers and humorous magazines for which he worked. Having brilliantly mastered the art of the brief opening, Chekhov valued its results, became its champion on principle, and remained true to it even after all sorts of conditions limiting his work disappeared completely.

* * *

3

Of the three classical compositional elements—exposition, development, and conclusion—Chekhov seems to have concerned himself most with the conclusion. Apparently the popular adage "All's well that ends well" was a real principle in the process of his creative work. Considerations of the conclusion occupy the primary place in his remarks on questions of composition. The sharp changes which occurred in Chekhov's poetics over the years may also be observed most clearly in his conclusions: his theory and practice in his early years not only differ from those of the late years but frequently are directly opposed to it.

Chekhov's remarks about his work on conclusions are distinguished by their absolute precision. One of them has become quite popular thanks to its peculiar aphoristic expressiveness, and it is particularly valuable since it applies to the composition of stories as well as plays. Having finished *Ivanoy*,¹ he wrote in a letter to his brother Alexander: "It's my first attempt at a play, therefore there will necessarily be mistakes. The subject is complicated and significant. I end each act like a story: I conduct the entire action peacefully and quietly, but at the end I bash the viewer in the snout."

Chekhov doesn't even try to explain to his brother what he means by such an energetic formula, so he must be sure that the addressee won't mistake his meaning. And in actuality, when Chekhov wrote that letter in 1887, the characteristic special quality of the conclusion of his stories was palpably clear: *an effect of the unexpected*.

There is something very noteworthy here, though it is not immediately apparent. First we must note that the effective unexpected ending is firmly associated in our consciousness with the humorous stories of Chekhov's early period, for example *The Orator*, who in his funeral oration commemorates a participant in the service rather than the defunct; *A Horse Name*, only incidentally concerned with horses; *A Mishap*, where a trapped prospective husband escapes because he is blessed with a portrait of the writer Lazhechnikov rather than with the icon; *Drama*, where a writer kills, with his heavy paperweight, a lady who drives him to fury with the reading of her drama, and so on.

1. Chekhov's first successful full-length play (performed 1887).

And yet it is clear from Chekhov's letter that he intentionally applies the same sort of ending to a drama without hope! Moreover, in the letter he gives his brother only the most schematic notion of his new literary genre and tries to emphasize that situation: it turns out that he uses the same device for a dramatic work as for a humorous one.

However, the impression of the unexpected is unquestionably misleading here. It is explainable by the unquestioned predominance of humorous works in Chekhov's early period, and, moreover, it is emphasized by the fact that we remember those stories best. Yet among the non-humorous stories of Chekhov's early period unexpected endings play a great role as in the humorous, and are not immediately taken by the reader to be unexpected only because the unexpected is habitually associated with the amusing, the funny, the humorous, and where there is no laughter the unexpected does not seem to be present either. Yet isn't the ending of *Vanka*, the naïve address on the letter to the grandfather, a typical unexpected conclusion? Or the ending of *Sleepy*? Do we not feel something like a sudden tragic illumination when the coachman Iona in *Misery* turns with his tale of great sorrow to his horse, the only listener he can find? Isn't that the same "bashing the reader in the snout"? In his stories and tales Chekhov successfully creates and develops, and generally canonizes in literature, the ending without resolution. Was it conceivable before Chekhov that a story whose "heroine" has several love affairs could end as his *Darling* does: "She lies down and thinks of Sasha, who is sleeping soundly in the next room and from time to time cries out in his dream: 'I'll show you! Get away! Don't fight!'"?

The very essence of a conclusion contains a hidden danger for the writer. Despite the relative variety possible in an ending, the heightened and rhetorical, a certain saccharine quality, effectiveness, etc., all lead in the end to the same thing: the danger of a specific and commonplace "rounding out." Chekhov had very characteristic devices for combating this danger.

* * *

4

The classic example of a Chekhov ending, when he was at the height of his career, exists in *The Lady with the Dog*. It deserves careful attention. Here we have in distinct, clear, and exact words, "audibly" pronounced, the essential, basic components of the endings of almost all Chekhov's works in his mature period, though they appear less openly there, and are at times only hinted at: "And it seemed to them that they were within an inch of arriving at a decision, and that then a new, beautiful life would begin. And they

both realized that the end was still far, far away, and that the hardest, the most complicated part was only just beginning."

Even if the words "was beginning" that conclude *The Lady with the Dog* were set down without the author's purposeful intention, it does not prevent us from noting that the same words might have concluded the ending of *The Duel*, *The House with the Mansard*, *The Betrothed*, *My Life*, and a series of other works still read with deep emotion although the concrete details on which they are based have almost entirely disappeared with time. The endings of these stories proclaim that a certain stage has ended in the life he has described—and that is all. The process of life as such continues; a new phase, even more important than the one described, is beginning.

* * *

Chekhov parts from his hero at the moment his hero begins to reflect, or sink into reflection, about what he has experienced in the events that have been described. That, of course, is not merely an accident. The hero's thoughts and reflections are a projection of the reader's most intensive thinking, which occurs at the culmination of the structure, toward the end of the work, when all the figures and events comprising the part of existence that has been described have passed before his eyes. Hence the special attention Chekhov paid to the ending. If in his earlier years he concentrated all his resources in order to create an effect at the end, that is, primarily for the emotional gorging of the reader's reaction, later, without ignoring that aspect of the ending, Chekhov nevertheless moved the center of gravity in order to arouse in the reader the deepest possible thought.

Thus, turning to Chekhov's prose beginning with 1894, that is, for the last decade of his life, we have the following endings:

A Woman's Kingdom: "Now she *thought* that if it were only possible to depict the long day she had passed in a picture, everything bad and vulgar would be the truth, and her dreams would stand out from the whole as false and affected."

In *Rothschild's Fiddle*, Bronze reflects bitterly "Why should the world be so strangely arranged that a man's life, which was given to him only once, must pass without profit?"

The student in the story by the same name "*thought* that beauty and truth . . . evidently were always the main thing in human existence."

In *A Doctor's Visit*, Dr. Korolev, returning early in the morning from his trip to the patient in the country, "*thought* of the time, perhaps already near, when life would be as bright and gay as that peaceful Sunday morning."

In *A New Villa* the peasants *think* about their stupid relations with the villa's owners: "What was the fog that made it impossible to see the main thing?"

The list of Chekhov's works at whose conclusion the hero falls into thought, trying to comprehend everything he has experienced, can be continued to the end of Chekhov's creative career, including his swan song, *Betrothed*, where we read at the end: "She went into Sasha's room and stood there. 'Farewell, dear Sasha!'—she *thought*, and a new, broad, full life appeared to her, and that life, still vague, full of mystery, beckoned and attracted her."

* * * These are the words ["began," "think," "reflected," "thought"] that contain the key to Chekhov's endings as the most important compositional element! Chekhov does not try to strike the reader in any way or to disclose exotic realms of life to him but, on the contrary, merely to lead a "traditional" but "concealed" idea out of darkness into light, to turn it to something ordinary which is constantly before the reader's eyes, to make him open his eyes wider, make him look more deeply into the depths of life, to help him interpret that tedious life "broadly and clearly," to *think*.

RENATO POGGIOLI

Storytelling in a Double Key[†]

I. A Critique of Six Chekhov Tales

Chekhov's early stories are of some interest to the critic only inasmuch as they anticipate the accomplished master, destined to mature a few years later. Otherwise, their importance is slight, although it would be wrong to despise pieces that are still able to amuse and intrigue the reader. They were written in the early eighties, or about seventy years ago; and it is rare for any kind of writing, especially at the popular level, to survive with any effectiveness for such a long interval. This is even truer when one considers that the writing in question was never taken too seriously by the author himself. Both the critic and the reader should never forget that the young Chekhov wrote to entertain, and to add a little to his own income in the bargain.

The periodicals for which Chekhov wrote his early tales wanted to give their public cheap and easy laughter, rather than rare and thoughtful humor, and Chekhov the budding writer readily complied with his editors' demands. He did so without indulging in vulgarity or coarseness; yet at that stage of his career he dealt only with stock situations, to which he gave, half spontaneously and half mechanically, stock responses. In brief, what distinguishes Che-

[†]From *The Phoenix and the Spider* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 109-30.

Then he would go down the street to school, a little figure, wearing a big cap and carrying a satchel on his shoulder. Olenka would follow him noiselessly.

"Sashenka!" she would call after him, and she would pop into his hand a date or a caramel. When he reached the street where the school was, he would feel ashamed of being followed by a tall, stout woman; he would turn round and say:

"You'd better go home, Auntie. I can go the rest of the way alone."

She would stand still and look after him fixedly till he had disappeared at the school gate.

Ah, how she loved him! Of her former attachments not one had been so deep: never had her soul surrendered to any feeling so spontaneously, so disinterestedly, and so joyously as now that her maternal instincts were aroused. For this little boy with the dimple in his cheek and the big school cap, she would have given her whole life, she would have given it with joy and tears of tenderness. Why? Who can tell why?

When she had seen the last of Sasha, she returned home, contented and serene, blushing over with love; her face, which had grown younger during the last six months, smiled and beamed; people meeting her looked at her with pleasure.

"Good-morning, Olga Semyonovna, darling. How are you, darling?"

"The lessons at the high school are very difficult now," she would relate at the market. "It's too much; in the first class yesterday they gave him a fable to learn by heart, and a Latin translation and a problem. You know it's too much for a little chap."

And she would begin talking about the teachers, the lessons, and the schoolbooks, saying just what Sasha said.

At three o'clock they had dinner together: in the evening they learned their lessons together and cried. When she put him to bed, she would stay a long time making the Cross over him and murmuring a prayer; then she would go to bed and dream of that faraway misty future when Sasha would finish his studies and become a doctor or an engineer, would have a big house of his own with horses and a carriage, would get married and have children. . . . She would fall asleep still thinking of the same thing, and tears would run down her cheeks from her closed eyes, while the black cat lay purring beside her: "Mr, mrr, mrr."

Suddenly there would come a loud knock at the gate.

Olenka would wake up breathless with alarm, her heart throbbing. Half a minute later would come another knock.

"It must be a telegram from Kharkov," she would think, beginning to tremble from head to foot. "Sasha's mother is sending for him from Kharkov. . . . Oh, mercy on us!"

She was in despair. Her head, her hands, and her feet would turn chill, and she would feel that she was the most unhappy woman in the world. But another minute would pass, voices would be heard: it would turn out to be the veterinary surgeon coming home from the club.

"Well, thank God!" she would think.

And gradually the load in her heart would pass off, and she would feel at ease. She would go back to bed thinking of Sasha, who lay sound asleep in the next room, sometimes crying out in his sleep:

"I'll give it to you! Get away! Shut up!"

1899

The Lady with the Dog

I

People were telling one another that a newcomer had been seen on the promenade—a lady with a dog. Dmitri Dmitrich Gurov had been a fortnight in Yalta,¹ and was accustomed to its ways, and he, too, had begun to take an interest in fresh arrivals. From his seat in Vernet's outdoor café, he caught sight of a young woman in a toque, passing along the promenade; she was fair and not very tall, after her trotted a white Pomeranian.

Later he encountered her in the municipal park and in the square several times a day. She was always alone, wearing the same toque, and the Pomeranian always trotted at her side. Nobody knew who she was, and people referred to her simply as "the lady with the dog."

"If she's here without her husband, and without any friends," thought Gurov, "it wouldn't be a bad idea to make her acquaintance."

He was not yet forty but had a twelve-year-old daughter and two sons in high school. He had been talked into marrying in his third year at college, and his wife now looked nearly twice as old as he did. She was a tall woman with dark eyebrows, erect, dignified, imposing, and, as she said of herself, a "thinker." She was a great reader, omitted the "hard sign"² at the end of words in her letters, and called her husband "Dimitry" instead of Dmitry; and though he secretly considered her shallow, narrow-minded, and dowdy, he

1. A fashionable seaside resort in the Crimea.

2. Certain progressive intellectuals omitted the hard sign after consonants in

writing. They anticipated the reform in the Russian alphabet introduced later. Here used rather as emancipated affection.

stood in awe of her, and disliked being at home. He had first begun deceiving her long ago and he was now constantly unfaithful to her, and this was no doubt why he spoke slightly of women, to whom he referred as *the lower race*.

He considered that the ample lessons he had received from bitter experience entitled him to call them whatever he liked, but without this "lower race" he could not have existed a single day. He was bored and ill-at-ease in the company of men, with whom he was always cold and reserved, but felt quite at home among women, and knew exactly what to say to them, and how to behave; he could even be silent in their company without feeling the slightest awkwardness. There was an elusive charm in his appearance and disposition which attracted women and caught their sympathies. He knew this and was himself attracted to them by some invisible force.

Repeated and bitter experience had taught him that every fresh intimacy, while at first introducing such pleasant variety into everyday life, and offering itself as a charming, light adventure, inevitably developed, among decent people (especially in Moscow, where they are so irresolute and slow to move), into a problem of excessive complication leading to an intolerably irksome situation. But every time he encountered an attractive woman he forgot all about this experience, the desire for life surged up in him, and everything suddenly seemed simple and amusing.

One evening, then, while he was dining at the restaurant in the park, the lady in the toque came strolling up and took a seat at a neighboring table. Her expression, gait, dress, coiffure, all told him that she was from the upper classes, that she was married, that she was in Yalta for the first time, alone and bored. . . . The accounts of the laxity of morals among visitors to Yalta are greatly exaggerated, and he paid no heed to them, knowing that for the most part they were invented by people who would gladly have transgressed themselves, had they known how to set about it. But when the lady sat down at a neighboring table a few yards away from him, these stories of easy conquests, of excursions to the mountains, came back to him, and the seductive idea of a brisk transitory liaison, an affair with a woman whose very name he did not know, suddenly took possession of his mind.

He snapped his fingers at the Pomermanian and, when it trotted up to him, shook his forefinger at it. The Pomermanian growled. Gurov shook his finger again.

The lady glanced at him and instantly lowered her eyes.

"He doesn't bite," she said, and blushed.

"May I give him a bone?" he asked, and on her nod of consent added in friendly tones: "Have you been long in Yalta?"

"About five days."

"And I am dragging out my second week here."

Neither spoke for a few minutes.

"The days pass quickly, and yet one is so bored here," she said, not looking at him.

"It's the thing to say it's boring here. People never complain of boredom in godforsaken holes like Belyev or Zhizdra, but when they get here it's: 'Oh, the dullness! Oh, the dust! You'd think they'd come from Granada to say the least.'"

She laughed. Then they both went on eating in silence, like complete strangers. But after dinner they left the restaurant together, and embarked upon the light, jesting talk of people free and contented, for whom it is all the same where they go, or what they talk about. They strolled along, remarking on the strange light over the sea. The water was a warm, tender purple, the moonlight lay on its surface in a golden strip. They said how close it was, after the hot day. Gurov told her he was from Moscow, had a degree in literature but worked in a bank; that he had at one time trained himself to sing in a private opera company, but had given up the idea; that he owned two houses in Moscow. . . . And from her he learned that she had grown up in Petersburg, but had gotten married in the town of S, where she had been living two years, that she would stay another month in Yalta, and that perhaps her husband, who also needed a rest, would join her. She was quite unable to explain whether her husband was a member of the province council, or on the board of the *zemstvo*,¹ and was greatly amused at herself for this. Further, Gurov learned that her name was Anna Sergeyevna.

Back in his own room he thought about her, and felt sure he would meet her the next day. It was inevitable. As he went to bed he reminded himself that only a very short time ago she had been a schoolgirl, like his own daughter, learning her lessons, he remembered how much there was of shyness and constraint in her laughter, in her way of conversing with a stranger—it was probably the first time in her life that she found herself alone, and in a situation in which men could follow her and watch her, and speak to her, all the time with a secret aim she could not fail to divine. He recalled her slender, delicate neck, her fine gray eyes.

"And yet there's something pathetic about her," he thought to himself as he fell asleep.

II

A week had passed since the beginning of their acquaintance. It was a holiday. Indoors it was stuffy, but the dust rose in clouds out of doors, and people's hats blew off. It was a parching day and Gurov

1. District administration.

kept going to the outdoor café for fruit drinks and ices to offer Anna Sergeevna. The heat was overpowering.

In the evening, when the wind had dropped, they walked to the pier to see the steamer come in. There were a great many people strolling about the landing-place; some, bunches of flowers in their hands, were meeting friends. Two peculiarities of the smart Yalta crowd stood out distinctly—the elderly ladies all tried to dress very youthfully, and there seemed to be an inordinate number of generals about.

Owing to the roughness of the sea the steamer arrived late, after the sun had gone down, and it had to maneuver for some time before it could get alongside the pier. Anna Sergeevna scanned the steamer and passengers through her lorgnette, as if looking for someone she knew, and when she turned to Gurov her eyes were glistening. She talked a great deal, firing off abrupt questions and forgetting immediately what it was she had wanted to know. Then she lost her lorgnette in the crush.

The smart crowd began dispersing, features could no longer be made out, the wind had quite dropped, and Gurov and Anna Sergeevna stood there as if waiting for someone else to come off the steamer. Anna Sergeevna had fallen silent, every now and then smelling her flowers, but not looking at Gurov.

"It's turned out a fine evening," he said. "What shall we do? We might go for a drive."

She made no reply.

He looked steadily at her and suddenly took her in his arms and kissed her lips, and the fragrance and dampness of the flowers closed round him, but the next moment he looked behind him in alarm—had anyone seen them?

"Let's go to your room," he murmured.

And they walked off together, very quickly.

Her room was stuffy and smelt of some scent she had bought in the Japanese shop. Gurov looked at her, thinking to himself: "How full of strange encounters life is!" He could remember carefree, good-natured women who were exhilarated by love-making and grateful to him for the happiness he gave them, however short-lived, and there had been others—his wife among them—whose caresses were insincere, affected, hysterical, mixed up with a great deal of quite unnecessary talk, and whose expression seemed to say that all this was not just lovemaking or passion, but something much more significant; then there had been two or three beautiful, cold women, over whose features flitted a predatory expression, betraying a determination to wring from life more than it could give, women no longer in their first youth, capricious, irrational, despotic, brainless, and when Gurov had cooled to these, their beauty aroused in him

nothing but repulsion, and the lace trimming on their underclothes reminded him of fish-scales.

But here the timidity and awkwardness of youth and inexperience were still apparent; and there was a feeling of embarrassment in the atmosphere, as if someone had just knocked at the door. Anna Sergeevna, "the lady with the dog," seemed to regard the affair as something very special, very serious, as if she had become a fallen woman, an attitude he found odd and disconcerting. Her features lengthened and drooped, and her long hair hung mournfully on either side of her face. She assumed a pose of dismal meditation, like a repentant sinner in some classical painting.

"It isn't right," she said. "You will never respect me anymore."

On the table was a watermelon. Gurov cut himself a slice from it and began slowly eating it. At least half an hour passed in silence.

Anna Sergeevna was very touching, revealing the purity of a decent, naive woman who had seen very little of life. The solitary candle burning on the table scarcely lit up her face, but it was obvious that her heart was heavy.

"Why should I stop respecting you?" asked Gurov. "You don't know what you're saying."

"May God forgive me!" she exclaimed, and her eyes filled with tears. "It's terrible."

"No need to seek to justify yourself."

"How can I justify myself? I'm a wicked, fallen woman, I despise myself and have not the least thought of self-justification. It isn't my husband I have deceived, it's myself. And not only now, I have been deceiving myself for ever so long. My husband is no doubt an honest, worthy man, but he's a flunky. I don't know what it is he does at his office, but I know he's a flunky. I was only twenty when I married him, and I was devoured by curiosity, I wanted something higher. I told myself that there must be a different kind of life I wanted to live, to live. . . . I was burning with curiosity. . . . you'll never understand that, but I swear to God I could no longer control myself, nothing could hold me back, I told my husband I was ill, and I came here. . . . And I started going about like one possessed, like a madwoman. . . . and now I have become an ordinary, worthless woman, and everyone has the right to despise me."

Gurov listened to her, bored to death. The naive accents, the remorse, all was so unexpected, so out of place. But for the tears in her eyes, she might have been jesting or play-acting.

"I don't understand," he said gently. "What is it you want?"

She hid her face against his breast and pressed closer to him.

"Do believe me, I implore you to believe me," she said. "I love all that is honest and pure in life, vice is revolting to me, I don't know what I'm doing. The common people say they are snared by the

Devil. And now I can say that I have been snared by the Devil, too."

"Come, come," he murmured.

He gazed into her fixed, terrified eyes, kissed her, and soothed her with gentle affectionate words, and gradually she calmed down and regained her cheerfulness. Soon they were laughing together again.

When, a little later, they went out, there was not a soul on the promenade, the town and its cypresses looked dead, but the sea was still roaring as it dashed against the beach. A solitary fishing-boat tossed on the waves, its lamp blinking sleepily.

They found a carriage and drove to Oreanda.

"I discovered your name in the hall, just now," said Gurov, "written up on the board. Von Diederitz. Is your husband a German?"

"No. His grandfather was, I think, but he belongs to the Orthodox Church himself."

When they got out of the carriage at Oreanda they sat down on a bench not far from the church, and looked down at the sea, without talking. Yalta could be dimly discerned through the morning mist, and white clouds rested motionless on the summits of the mountains. Not a leaf stirred, the grasshoppers chirruped, and the monotonous hollow roar of the sea came up to them, speaking of peace, of the eternal sleep lying in wait for us all. "The sea had roared like this long before there was any Yalta or Oreanda, it was hollowly, when we had passed away. And it may be that in this continuity, this utter indifference to the life and death of each of us lies hidden the pledge of our eternal salvation, of the continuous movement of life on earth, of the continuous movement toward perfection.

Side by side with a young woman, who looked so exquisite in the early light, soothed and enchanted by the sight of all this magical beauty—sea, mountains, clouds and the vast expanse of the sky—Gurov told himself that, when you came to think of it, everything in the world is beautiful really, everything but our own thoughts and actions, when we lose sight of the higher aims of life, and of our dignity as human beings.

Someone approached them—a watchman, probably—looked at them and went away. And there was something mysterious and beautiful even in this. The steamer from Feodosia could be seen coming towards the pier, lit up by the dawn, its lamps out.

"There's dew on the grass," said Anna Sergeyevna, breaking the silence.

"Yes. Time to go home."

They went back to the town.

After this they met every day at noon on the promenade, lunching and dining together, going for walks, and admiring the sea. She

complained of sleeplessness, of palpitations, asked the same questions over and over again, alternately surrendering to jealousy and the fear that he did not really respect her. And often, when there was nobody in sight in the square or the park, he would draw her to him and kiss her passionately. The utter idleness, these kisses in broad daylight, accompanied by furtive glances and the fear of discovery, the heat, the smell of the sea, and the idle, smart, well-fed people continually crossing their field of vision, seemed to have given him a new lease of life. He told Anna Sergeyevna she was beautiful and seductive, made love to her with impetuous passion, and never left her side, while she was always pensive, always trying to force from him the admission that he did not respect her, that he did not love her a bit, and considered her just an ordinary woman. Almost every night they drove out of town, to Oreanda, the waterfall, or some other beauty-spot. And these excursions were invariably a success, each contributing fresh impressions of majestic beauty.

All this time they kept expecting her husband to arrive. But a letter came in which he told his wife that he was having trouble with his eyes, and implored her to come home as soon as possible. Anna Sergeyevna made hasty preparations for leaving.

"It's a good thing I'm going," she said to Gurov. "It's the intervention of fate."

She left Yalta in a carriage, and he went with her as far as the railway station. The drive took nearly a whole day. When she got into the express train, after the second bell had been rung, she said:

"Let me have one more look at you. . . . One last look. That's right."

She did not weep, but was mournful, and seemed ill, the muscles of her cheeks twitching.

"I shall think of you. . . . I shall think of you all the time," she said. "God bless you! Think kindly of me. We are parting forever, it must be so, because we ought never to have met. Good-bye—God bless you."

The train steamed rapidly out of the station, its lights soon disappearing, and a minute later even the sound it made was silenced, as if everything were conspiring to bring this sweet oblivion, this madness, to an end as quickly as possible. And Gurov, standing alone on the platform and gazing into the dark distance, listened to the shrilling of the grasshoppers and the humming of the telegraph wires, with a feeling that he had only just awakened. And he told himself that this had been just one more of the many adventures in his life, and that it, too, was over, leaving nothing but a memory. . . . He was moved and sad, and felt a slight remorse. After all, this young woman whom he would never again see had not been really

happy with him. He had been friendly and affectionate with her, but in his whole behaviour, in the tones of his voice, in his very caresses, there had been a shade of irony, the insulting indulgence of the fortunate male, who was, moreover, almost twice her age. She had insisted in calling him good, remarkable, high-minded. Evidently he had appeared to her different from his real self, in a word he had involuntarily deceived her....

There was an autumnal feeling in the air, and the evening was chilly.

"It's time for me to be going north, too," thought Gurov, as he walked away from the platform. "High time!"

III

When he got back to Moscow it was beginning to look like winter; the stoves were heated every day, and it was still dark when the children got up to go to school and drank their tea, so that the nurse had to light the lamp for a short time. Frost had set in. When the first snow falls, and one goes for one's first sleigh-ride, it is pleasant to see the white ground, the white roofs; one breathes freely and lightly, and remembers the days of one's youth. The ancient lime-trees and birches, white with hoarfrost, have a good-natured look, they are closer to the heart than cypresses and palms, and beneath their branches one is no longer haunted by the memory of mountains and the sea.

Gurov had always lived in Moscow, and he returned to Moscow on a fine frosty day, and when he put on his fur-lined overcoat and thick gloves, and sauntered down Petrovka Street, and when, on Saturday evening, he heard the church bells ringing, his recent journey and the places he had visited lost their charm for him. He became gradually immersed in Moscow life, reading with avidity three newspapers a day, while declaring he never read Moscow newspapers on principle. Once more he was caught up in a whirl of restaurants, clubs, banquets, and celebrations, once more glowed with the flattering consciousness that well-known lawyers and actors came to his house, that he played cards in the Medical Club opposite a professor. He could once again eat a whole serving of Moscow Fish Stew served in a pan.

He had believed that in a month's time Anna Sergeyevna would be nothing but a vague memory, and that hereafter, with her wistful smile, she would only occasionally appear to him in dreams, like others before her. But the month was now well over and winter was in full swing, and all was as clear in his memory as if he had parted with Anna Sergeyevna only the day before. And his recollections grew ever more insistent. When the voices of his children at their lessons reached him in his study through the evening stillness, when he heard a song, or the sounds of a music-box in a restaurant, when

the wind howled in the chimney, it all came back to him: early morning on the pier, the misty mountains, the steamer from Feodosia, the kisses. He would pace up and down his room for a long time, smiling at his memories, and then memory turned into dreaming, and what had happened mingled in his imagination with what was going to happen. Anna Sergeyevna did not come to him in his dreams, she accompanied him everywhere, like his shadow, following him everywhere he went. When he closed his eyes, she seemed to stand before him in the flesh, still lovelier, younger, tenderer than she had really been, and looking back, he saw himself, too, as better than he had been in Yalta. In the evenings she looked out at him from the bookshelves, the fireplace, the corner, he could hear her breathing, the sweet rustle of her skirts. In the streets he followed women with his eyes, to see if there were any like her....

He began to feel an overwhelming desire to share his memories with someone. But he could not speak of his love at home, and outside his home who was there for him to confide in? Not the tenants living in his house, and certainly not his colleagues at the bank. And what was there to tell? Was it love that he had felt? Had there been anything exquisite, poetic, anything instructive or even amusing about his relations with Anna Sergeyevna? He had to content himself with uttering vague generalizations about love and women, and nobody guessed what he meant, though his wife's dark eyebrows twitched as she said:

"The role of a coxcomb doesn't suit you a bit, Dinitiy."

One evening, leaving the Medical Club with one of his card-partners, a government official, he could not refrain from remarking:

"If you only knew what a charming woman I met in Yalta!"

The official got into his sleigh, and just before driving off, turned and called out:

"Dmitry Dmitrich!"

"Yes?"

"You were quite right, you know—the sturgeon was just a little off."

These words, in themselves so commonplace, for some reason infuriated Gurov, seemed to him humiliating, gross. What savage manners, what people! What wasted evenings, what tedious, empty days! Frantic card-playing, gluttony, drunkenness, perpetual talk always about the same thing. The greater part of one's time and energy went on business that was no use to anyone, and on discussing the same thing over and over again, and there was nothing to show for it all but a stunted wingless existence and a round of trivalities, and there was nowhere to escape to, you might as well be in a madhouse or a convict settlement.

Gurov lay awake all night, raging, and went about the whole of

the next day with a headache. He slept badly on the succeeding nights, too, sitting up in bed, thinking, or pacing the floor of his room. He was sick of his children, sick of the bank, felt not the slightest desire to go anywhere or talk about anything.

When the Christmas holidays came, he packed his things, telling his wife he had to go to Petersburg in the interests of a certain young man, and set off for the town of S. To what end? He hardly knew himself. He only knew that he must see Anna Sergeyevna, must speak to her, arrange a meeting, if possible.

He arrived at S. in the morning and engaged the best suite in the hotel, which had a carpet of gray military frieze, and a dusty ink-pot on the table, surmounted by a headless rider, holding his hat in his raised hand. The hall porter told him what he wanted to know: von Diederitz had a house of his own in Staro-Conchamaya Street. It wasn't far from the hotel, he lived on a grand scale, luxuriously, kept carriage-horses, the whole town knew him. The hall porter pronounced the name "Diederitz."

Gurov strolled over to Staro-Conchamaya Street and discovered the house. In front of it was a long gray fence with inverted nails hammered into the tops of the palings.

"A fence like that is enough to make anyone want to run away," thought Gurov, looking at the windows of the house and the fence. He reasoned that since it was a holiday, Anna's husband would probably be at home. In any case it would be tactless to embarrass her by calling at the house. And a note might fall into the hands of the husband, and bring about catastrophe. The best thing would be to wait about on the chance of seeing her. And he walked up and down the street, hovering in the vicinity of the fence, watching for his chance. A beggar entered the gate, only to be attacked by dogs, then, an hour later, the faint, vague sounds of a piano reached his ears. That would be Anna Sergeyevna playing. Suddenly the front door opened and an old woman came out, followed by a familiar white Pomenanian. Gurov tried to call to it, but his heart beat violently, and in his agitation he could not remember its name.

He walked on, hating the gray fence more and more, and now ready to tell himself irately that Anna Sergeyevna had forgotten him, had already, perhaps, found distraction in another—what could be more natural in a young woman who had to look at this accursed fence from morning to night? He went back to his hotel and sat on the sofa in his suite for some time, not knowing what to do, then he ordered dinner, and after dinner, had a long sleep.

"What a foolish, restless business," he thought, waking up and looking towards the dark windowpanes. It was evening by now. "Well, I've had my sleep out. And what am I to do in the night?"

He sat up in bed, covered by the cheap gray quilt, which re-

minded him of a hospital blanket, and in his vexation he fell to taunting himself.

"You and your lady with a dog . . . there's adventure for you! See what you get for your pains!"

On his arrival at the station that morning he had noticed a poster announcing in enormous letters the first performance at the local theatre of *The Geisha*.⁴ Remembering this, he got up and made for the theatre.

"It's highly probable that she goes to first nights," he told himself. The theatre was full. It was a typical provincial theatre, with a mist collecting over the chandeliers, and the crowd in the gallery fidgeting noisily. In the first row of the stalls the local dandies stood waiting for the curtain to go up, their hands clasped behind them. There, in the front seat of the governor's box, sat the governor's daughter, wearing a boa, the governor himself hiding modestly behind the drapes, so that only his hands were visible. The curtain stirred, the orchestra took a long time tuning up their instruments. Gurov's eyes roamed eagerly over the audience as they filed in and occupied their seats.

Anna Sergeyevna came in, too. She seated herself in the third row of the stalls, and when Gurov's glance fell on her, his heart seemed to stop, and he knew in a flash that the whole world contained no one nearer or dearer to him, no one more important to his happiness. This little woman, lost in the provincial crowd, in no way remarkable, holding a silly lorgnette in her hand, now filled his whole life, was his grief, his joy, all that he desired. Lulled by the sounds coming from the wretched orchestra, with its feeble, amateurish violinists, he thought how beautiful she was . . . thought and dreamed . . .

Anna Sergeyevna was accompanied by a tall, round-shouldered young man with small whiskers, who nodded at every step before taking the seat beside her and seemed to be continually bowing to someone. This must be her husband, whom, in a fit of bitterness, at Yalta, she had called a "funky." And there really was something of a lackey's servility in his lanky figure, his side-whiskers, and the little bald spot on the top of his head. And he smiled sweetly, and the badge of some scientific society gleaming in his buttonhole was like the number on a footman's livery.

The husband went out to smoke in the first interval, and she was left alone in her seat. Gurov, who had taken a seat in the stalls, went up to her and said in a trembling voice, with a forced smile: "How do you do?"

She glanced up at him and turned pale, then looked at him again in alarm, unable to believe her eyes, squeezing her fan and lorgnette

4. An operetta by the English composer Sidney Jones (1897).

in one hand, evidently struggling to overcome a feeling of faintness. Neither of them said a word. She sat there, and he stood beside her, disconcerted by her embarrassment, and not daring to sit down. The violins and flutes sang out as they were tuned, and there was a tense sensation in the atmosphere, as if they were being watched from all the boxes. At last she got up and moved rapidly towards one of the exits. He followed her and they wandered aimlessly along corridors, up and down stairs; figures flashed by in the uniforms of legal officials, high-school teachers and civil servants, all wearing badges; ladies, coats hanging from pegs flashed by; there was a sharp draft, bringing with it an odor of cigarette butts. And Gurov, whose heart was beating violently, thought:

"What on earth are all these people, this orchestra for? . . ."

The next minute he suddenly remembered how, after seeing Anna Sergeyevna off that evening at the station, he had told himself that all was over, and they would never meet again. And how far away the end seemed to be now!

She stopped on a dark narrow staircase over which was a notice bearing the inscription "To the upper circle."

"How you frightened me!" she said, breathing heavily, still pale and half-stunned. "Oh, how you frightened me! I'm almost dead! Why did you come? Oh, why?"

"But, Anna," he said, in low, hasty tones. "But, Anna. . . . Try to understand. . . . do try. . . ."

She cast him a glance of fear, entreaty, love, and then gazed at him steadily, as if to fix his features firmly in her memory.

"I've been so unhappy," she continued, taking no notice of his words. "I could think of nothing but you the whole time, I lived on the thoughts of you. I tried to forget—why, oh, why did you come?"

On the landing above them were two schoolboys, smoking and looking down, but Gurov did not care, and, drawing Anna Sergeyevna towards him, began kissing her face, her lips, her hands.

"What are you doing, oh, what are you doing?" she said in horror, drawing back. "We have both gone mad. Go away this very night, this moment. . . . By all that is sacred, I implore you. . . . Somebody is coming."

Someone was ascending the stairs.

"You must go away," went on Anna Sergeyevna in a whisper. "Do you hear me, Dmitry Dmitrich? I'll come to you in Moscow. I have never been happy, I am unhappy now, and I shall never be happy—never! Do not make me suffer still more! I will come to you in Moscow, I swear it! And now we must part! My dear one, my kind one, my darling, we must part."

She pressed his hand and hurried down the stairs, looking back at him continually, and her eyes showed that she was in truth un-

happy. Gurov stood where he was for a short time, listening, and when all was quiet, went to look for his coat, and left the theatre.

IV

And Anna Sergeyevna began going to Moscow to see him. Every two or three months she left the town of S., telling her husband that she was going to consult a specialist on female diseases, and her husband believed her and did not believe her. In Moscow she always stayed at the Slavianski Bazaar, sending a man in a red cap to Gurov the moment she arrived. Gurov went to her, and no one in Moscow knew anything about it.

One winter morning he went to see her as usual (the messenger had been to him the evening before, but had not found him at home). His daughter was with him, for her school was on the way and he thought he might as well see her to it.

"It is forty degrees," said Gurov to his daughter, "and yet it is snowing. You see it is only above freezing close to the ground, the temperature in the upper layers of the atmosphere is quite different."

"Why doesn't it ever thunder in winter, Papa?"

He explained this, too. As he was speaking, he kept reminding himself that he was going to a rendezvous and that not a living soul knew about it, or, probably, ever would. He led a double life—one in public, in the sight of all whom it concerned, full of conventional truth and conventional deception, exactly like the lives of his friends and acquaintances, and another which flowed in secret. And, owing to some strange, possibly quite accidental chain of circumstances, everything that was important, interesting, essential, everything about which he was sincere and never deceived himself, everything that composed the kernel of his life, went on in secret, while everything that was false in him, everything that composed the husk in which he hid himself and the truth which was in him—his work at the bank, discussions at the club, his "lower race," his attendance at anniversary celebrations with his wife—was on the surface. He began to judge others by himself, no longer believing what he saw, and always assuming that the real, the only interesting life of every individual goes on as under cover of night, secretly. Every individual existence revolves around mystery, and perhaps that is the chief reason that all cultivated individuals insisted so strongly on the respect due to personal secrets.

After leaving his daughter at the door of her school Gurov set off for the Slavianski Bazaar. Taking off his overcoat in the lobby, he went upstairs and knocked softly on the door. Anna Sergeyevna, wearing the gray dress he liked most, exhausted by her journey and by suspense, had been expecting him since the evening before. She

was pale and looked at him without smiling, but was in his arms almost before he was fairly in the room. Their kiss was lingering, prolonged, as if they had not met for years.

"Well, how are you?" he asked. "Anything new?"

"Wait, I'll tell you in a minute. . . . I can't. . . ."

She could not speak, because she was crying. Turning away, she held her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I'll wait till she's had her cry out," he thought, and sank into a chair.

He rang for tea, and a little later, while he was drinking it, she was still standing there, her face to the window. She wept from emotion, from her bitter consciousness of the sadness of their life; they could only see one another in secret, hiding from people, as if they were thieves. Was not their life a broken one?

"Don't cry," he said.

It was quite obvious to him that this love of theirs would not soon come to an end, and that no one could say when this end would be. Anna Sergeevna loved him ever more fondly, worshipped him, and there would have been no point in telling her that one day it must end. Indeed, she would not have believed him.

He moved over and took her by the shoulders, intending to caress her, to make a joke, but suddenly he caught sight of himself in the looking-glass.

His hair was already beginning to turn gray. It struck him as strange that he should have aged so much in the last few years, have lost so much of his looks. The shoulders on which his hands lay were warm and quivering. He felt a pity for his life, still so warm and exquisite, but probably soon to fade and droop like his own. Why did she love him so? Women had always believed him different from what he really was, had loved in him not himself but the man their imagination pictured him, a man they had sought for eagerly all their lives. And afterwards when they discovered their mistake, they went on loving him just the same. And not one of them had ever been happy with him. Time had passed, he had met one woman after another, become intimate with each, parted with each, but had never loved. There had been all sorts of things between them, but never love.

And only now, when he was gray-haired, had he fallen in love properly, thoroughly, for the first time in his life.

He and Anna Sergeevna loved one another as people who are very close and intimate, as husband and wife, as dear friends love one another. It seemed to them that fate had intended them for one another, and they could not understand why she should have a husband, and he a wife. They were like two migrating birds, the male and the female, who had been caught and put into separate cages. They forgave one another all that they were ashamed of in

the past and in the present, and felt that this love of theirs had changed them both.

Formerly, in moments of melancholy, he had consoled himself by the first argument that came into his head, but now arguments were nothing to him, he felt profound pity, desired to be sincere, tender.

"Stop crying, my dearest," he said. "You've had your cry, now stop. . . . Now let us have a talk, let us try and think what we are to do."

Then they discussed their situation for a long time, trying to think how they could get rid of the necessity for hiding, deception, living in different towns, being so long without meeting. How were they to shake off these intolerable fetters?

"How? How?" he repeated, clutching his head. "How?"

And it seemed to them that they were within an inch of arriving at a decision, and that then a new, beautiful life would begin. And they both realized that the end was still far, far away, and that the hardest, the most complicated part was only just beginning.

1899

The Bishop

It was on the eve of Palm Sunday; vespers were being sung in the Staro-Petrovski Convent. The hour was nearly ten when the palm leaves were distributed, and the little icon-lamps were growing dim; their wicks had burnt low, and a soft haze hung in the chapel. As the worshippers surged forward in the twilight like the waves of the sea, it seemed to His Reverence Pyotr, who had been feeling ill for three days, that the people who came to him for palm leaves all looked alike, and, men or women, old or young, all had the same expression in their eyes. He could not see the doors through the haze; the endless procession rolled toward him, and seemed as if it must go on rolling for ever. A choir of women's voices was singing and a nun was reading the canon.

How hot and close the air was, and how long the prayers! His Reverence was tired. His dry, parching breath was coming quickly and painfully, his shoulders were aching, and his legs were trembling. The occasional cries of an idiot in the gallery annoyed him. And now, as a climax, His Reverence saw, as in a delirium, his own mother whom he had not seen for nine years coming toward him in the crowd. She, or an old woman exactly like her, took a palm leaf from his hands, and moved away looking at him all the while with a glad, sweet smile, until she was lost in the crowd. And for some reason the tears began to course down his cheeks. His heart was

happy and peaceful, but his eyes were fixed on a distant part of the chapel where the prayers were being read, and where no human being could be distinguished among the shadows. The tears glistened on his cheeks and beard. Then someone who was standing near him began to weep, too, and then another, and then another, until little by little the chapel was filled with a low sound of weeping. Then the convent choir began to sing, the weeping stopped, and everything went on as before.

Soon afterward the service ended. The fine, jubilant notes of the heavy chapel-bells were throbbing through the moonlit garden as the bishop stepped into his coach and drove away. The white walls, the crosses on the graves, the silvery birches, and the faraway moon hanging directly over the monastery, all seemed to be living a life of their own, incomprehensible, but very near to mankind. It was early in April, and a chilly night had succeeded a warm spring day. A light frost was falling, but the breath of spring could be felt in the soft, cool air. The road from the monastery was sandy, the horses were obliged to proceed at a walk, and, bathed in the bright, tranquil moonlight, a stream of pilgrims was crawling along on either side of the coach. All were thoughtful, no one spoke. Everything around them, the trees, the sky, and even the moon, looked so young and intimate and friendly that they were reluctant to break the spell which they hoped might last forever.

Finally the coach entered the city, and rolled down the main street. All the stores were closed but that of Erakn, the millionaire merchant. He was trying his electric lights for the first time, and they were flashing so violently that a crowd had collected in front of the store. Then came wide, dark streets in endless succession, and then the highway, and fields, and the smell of pines. Suddenly a white crenelated wall loomed before him, and beyond it rose a tall belfry flanked by five flashing golden cupolas, all bathed in moonlight. This was the Pankratievski Monastery, where His Reverence Pyotr lived. Here, too, the calm, brooding moon was floating directly above the monastery. The coach drove through the gate, its wheels crunching on the sand. Here and there the dark forms of monks started out into the moonlight and footsteps rang along the flagstone paths.

"Your mother has been here while you were away, Your Reverence," a lay brother told the bishop as he entered his room.

"My mother? When did she come?"

"Before vespers. She first found out where you were, and then drove to the convent."

"Then it was she whom I saw just now in the chapel! Oh, Father in heaven!"

And His Reverence laughed for joy.

"She told me to tell you, Your Reverence," the lay brother continued, "that she would come back tomorrow. She had a little girl with her, a grandchild, I think. She is stopping at Ovsianikov's inn."

"What time is it now?"

"It is after eleven."

"What a nuisance!"

His Reverence sat down irresolutely in his sitting-room, unwilling to believe that it was already so late. His arms and legs were racked with pain, the back of his neck was aching, and he felt uncomfortable and hot. When he had rested a few moments he went into his bedroom and there, too, he sat down, and dreamed of his mother. He heard the lay brother walking away and Father Sisoï the priest coughing in the next room. The monastery clock struck the quarter.

His Reverence undressed and began his prayers. He spoke the old, familiar words with scrupulous attention, and at the same time he thought of his mother. She had nine children, and about forty grandchildren. She had lived from the age of seventeen to the age of sixty with her husband the deacon in a little village. His Reverence remembered her from the days of his earliest childhood, and, ah, how he had loved her! Oh, that dear, precious, unforgettable childhood of his! Why did those years that had vanished forever seem so much brighter and richer and gayier than they really had been? How tender and kind his mother had been when he was ill in his childhood and youth! His prayers mingled with the memories that burned ever brighter and brighter in his heart like a flame, but they did not hinder his thoughts of his mother.

When he had prayed he lay down, and as soon as he found himself in the dark there rose before his eyes the vision of his dead father, his mother, and Lyesopolye, his native village. The creaking of wagon-wheels, the bleating of sheep, the sound of church-bells on a clear summer morning, ah, how pleasant it was to think of these things! He remembered Father Semyon, the old priest at Lyesopolye, a kind, gentle, good-natured old man. He himself had been small, and the priest's son had been a huge strapping novice with a terrible bass voice. He remembered how this young priest had scolded the cook once, and had shouted: "Ah, you she-ass of Jehovah!" And Father Semyon had said nothing, and had only been mortified because he could not for the life of him remember reading of an ass of that name in the Bible!

Father Semyon had been succeeded by Father Demyan, a hard drinker who sometimes even went so far as to see green snakes. He had actually borne the nickname of "Demian the Snake-See" in the village. Matvey Nikolaitch had been the schoolmaster, a kind, intel-

ligent man, but a hard drinker, too. He never thrashed his scholars, but for some reason he kept a little bundle of birch twigs hanging on his wall, under which was a tablet bearing the absolutely unintelligible inscription: "Betula Kinderbalsamica Secuta."¹ He had had a woolly black dog whom he called "Syntax."

The bishop laughed. Eight miles from Lyesopolye lay the village of Obunio, possessing a miraculous icon. A procession started from Obunio every summer bearing the wonder-working icon and making the round of all the neighboring villages. The church-bells would ring all day long first in one village, then in another, and to little Pavel (His Reverence was called little Pavel then) the air itself seemed tremulous with rapture. Barefoot, hatless, and infinitely happy, he followed the icon with a naive smile on his lips and naive faith in his heart.

Until the age of fifteen little Pavel had been so slow at his lessons that his parents had even thought of taking him out of the ecclesiastical school and putting him to work in the village store.

The bishop turned over so as to break the train of his thoughts, and tried to go to sleep.

"My mother has come!" he remembered, and smiled.

The moon was shining in through the window, and the floor was lit by its rays while he lay in shadow. A cricket was chirping, Father Sisoï was snoring in the next room, and there was a forlorn, friendless, even a vagrant note in the old man's cadences.

Sisoï had once been the steward of a diocesan bishop and was known as "Father Former Steward." He was seventy years old, and lived sometimes in a monastery sixteen miles away, sometimes in the city, sometimes wherever he happened to be. Three days ago he had turned up at the Pankratovski Monastery, and the bishop had kept him here in order to discuss with him at his leisure the affairs of the monastery.

The bell for matins rang at half-past one. Father Sisoï coughed, growled something, and got up.

"Father Sisoï!" called the bishop.

Sisoï came in dressed in a white cassock, carrying a candle in his hand.

"I can't go to sleep," His Reverence said. "I must be ill. I don't know what the matter is; I have fever."

"You have caught cold, your Lordship. I must rub you with tallow."

Father Sisoï stood looking at him for a while and yawned: "Ah—the Lord have mercy on us!"

"Enkin has electricity in his store now—I hate it!" he continued. Father Sisoï was aged, and round-shouldered, and gaunt. He was

1. Fractured Latin and German: "Twigs children-healing flogger."

always displeased with something or other, and his eyes, which protruded like those of a crab, always wore an angry expression.

"I don't like it at all," he repeated—"I hate it."

II

Next day, on Palm Sunday, His Reverence officiated at the cathedral in the city. Then he went to the diocesan bishop's, then to see a general's wife who was very ill, and at last he drove home. At two o'clock two beloved guests were having dinner with him, his aged mother, and his little niece Katya, a child of eight. The spring sun was peeping cheerily in through the windows as they sat at their meal, and was shining merrily on the white tablecloth, and on Katya's red hair. Through the double panes they heard the rooks cawing, and the magpies chattering in the garden.

"It is nine years since I saw you last," said the old mother, "and yet when I caught sight of you in the convent chapel yesterday I thought to myself: God bless me, he has not changed a bit! Only perhaps you are a little thinner than you were, and your beard has grown longer. Oh, holy Mother, Queen of Heaven! Everybody was crying yesterday. As soon as I saw you, I began to cry myself, I don't know why. His holy will be done!"

In spite of the tenderness with which she said this, it was clear that she was not at her ease. It was as if she did not know whether to address the bishop by the familiar "thee" or the formal "you," and whether she ought to laugh or not. She seemed to feel herself more of a poor deacon's wife than a mother in his presence. Meanwhile Katya was sitting with her eyes glued to the face of her uncle the bishop as if she were trying to make out what manner of man this was. Her hair had escaped from her comb and her bow of velvet ribbon, and was standing straight up around her head like a halo. Her eyes were foxy and bright. She had broken a glass before sitting down, and now, as she talked, her grandmother kept moving first a glass, and then a wineglass, out of her reach. As the bishop sat listening to his mother, he remembered how, many years ago, she had sometimes taken him and his brothers and sisters to visit relatives whom they considered rich. She had been busy with her own children in those days, and now she was busy with her grandchildren, and had come to visit him with Katya here.

"Your sister Varenka has four children"—she was telling him—"Katya is the oldest. God knows why, her father fell ill and died three days before Assumption. So my Varenka has been thrown out into the cold world."

"And how is my brother Nikanor?" the bishop asked.

"He is well, thank the Lord. He is pretty well, praise be to God. But his son Nikolasha wouldn't go into the church, and is at college

instead learning to be a doctor. He thinks it is best, but who knows? However, God's will be done!"

"Nikolasha cuts up dead people!" said Katya, spilling some water into her lap.

"Sit still, child!" her grandmother said, quietly taking the glass out of her hands.

"How long it is since we have seen one another!" exclaimed His Reverence, tenderly stroking his mother's shoulder and hand. "I missed you when I was abroad, I missed you dreadfully."

"Thank you very much!"

"I used to sit by my window in the evening listening to the band playing, and feeling lonely and forlorn. Sometimes I would suddenly grow so homesick that I used to think I would gladly give everything I had in the world for a glimpse of you and home."

His mother smiled and beamed, and then immediately drew a long face and said stiffly:

"Thank you very much!"

The bishop's mood changed. He looked at his mother, and could not understand where she had acquired that deferential, humble expression of face and voice, and what the meaning of it might be. He hardly recognized her, and felt sorrowful and vexed. Besides, his head was still aching, and his legs were racked with pain. The fish he was eating tasted insipid and he was very thirsty.

After dinner two wealthy lady handowners visited him, and sat for an hour and a half with faces a mile long, never uttering a word. Then an archmandrite, a gloomy, taciturn man, came on business. Then the bells rang for vespers, the sun set behind the woods, and the day was done. As soon as he got back from church the bishop said his prayers, and went to bed, drawing the covers up closely about his ears. The moonlight troubled him, and soon the sound of voices came to his ears. Father Sisoï was talking politics with his mother in the next room.

"There is a war in Japan now," he was saying. "The Japanese belong to the same race as the Montenegrins. They fell under the Turkish yoke at the same time."

And then the bishop heard his mother's voice say:

"And so, you see, when we had said our prayers, and had our tea, we went to Father Yegor—"

She kept saying over and over again that they "had tea," as if all she knew of life was tea-drinking.

The memory of his seminary and college life slowly and mistily took shape in the bishop's mind. He had been a teacher of Greek for three years, until he could no longer read without glasses, and then he had taken the vows, and had been made an inspector. When he was thirty-two he had been made the rector of a seminary, and then an archmandrite. At that time his life had been so easy, and

pleasant, and had seemed to stretch so far, far into the future that he could see absolutely no end to it. But his health had failed, and he had nearly lost his eyesight. His doctors had advised him to give up his work and go abroad.

"And what did you do next?" asked Father Sisoï in the adjoining room.

"And then we had tea," answered his mother.

"Why, Father, your beard is green!" exclaimed Katya suddenly.

And she burst out laughing.

The bishop remembered that the color of Father Sisoï's beard really did verge on green, and he, too, laughed.

"My goodness! What a plague that child is!" cried Father Sisoï in a loud voice, for he was growing angry. "You're a spoiled baby, you are! Sit still!"

The bishop recalled the new white church in which he had officiated when he was abroad, and the sound of a warm sea. Eight years had slipped by while he was there; then he had been recalled to Russia, and now he was already a bishop, and the past had faded away into mist as if it had been but a dream.

Father Sisoï came into his room with a candle in his hand.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed, surprised. "Asleep already, Your Reverence?"

"Why not?"

"It's early yet, only ten o'clock! I bought a candle this evening and wanted to rub you with tallow."

"I have a fever," the bishop said, sitting up. "I suppose something ought to be done. My head feels so queer."

Sisoï began to rub the bishop's chest and back with tallow.

"There—there—" he said. "Oh, Lord God Almighty! There! I went to town to-day, and saw that—what do you call him?—that archpresbyter Sidonski. I had tea with him. I hate him! Oh, Lord God Almighty! There! I hate him!"

III

The diocesan bishop was very old and very fat, and had been ill in bed with gout for a month. So His Reverence Pyotr had been visiting him almost every day, and had received his supplicants for him. And now that he was ill he was appalled to think of the follies and trifles they asked for and wept over. He felt annoyed at their ignorance and cowardice. The very number of all those useless trivialities oppressed him, and he felt as if he could understand the diocesan bishop who had written "Lessons in Free Will" when he was young, and now seemed so absorbed in details that the memory of everything else, even of God, had forsaken him. Pyotr must have grown out of touch with Russian life while he was

abroad, for it was hard for him to grow used to it now. The people seemed rough, the women stupid and tiresome, the novices and their teachers uneducated and often disorderly. And then the documents that passed through his hands by the hundreds of thousands! The provosts gave all the priests in the diocese, young and old, and their wives and children¹ marks for good behavior, and he was obliged to talk about all this, and read about it, and write serious articles on it. His Reverence never had a moment which he could call his own; all day his nerves were on edge, and he grew calm only when he found himself in church.

He could not grow accustomed to the terror which he involuntarily inspired in every breast in spite of his quiet and modest ways. Everyone in the district seemed to shiver and quake and apologize as soon as he looked at them. Everyone trembled in his presence; even the old archpriests fell down at his feet, and not long ago one suppliant, the old wife of a village priest, had been prevented by terror from uttering a word, and had gone away without asking for anything. And he, who had never been able to say a harsh word in his sermons, and who never blamed people because he pitted them so, would grow exasperated with these suppliants, and hurl their petitions to the ground. Not a soul had spoken sincerely and naturally to him since he had been here; even his old mother had changed, yes, she had changed very much! Why did she talk so freely to Sisoï when all the while she was so serious and ill at ease with him, her own son? It was not like her at all! The only person who behaved naturally in his presence, and who said whatever came into his head, was old man Sisoï, who had lived with bishops all his life, and had outlasted eleven of them. And therefore His Reverence felt at ease with Sisoï, even though he was, without a doubt, a rough and quarrelsome person.

After morning prayers on Tuesday the bishop received his suppliants, and lost his temper with them. He felt ill, as usual, and longed to go to bed, but he had hardly entered his room before he was told that the young merchant Erkin, a benefactor of the monastery, had called on very important business. The bishop was obliged to receive him. Erkin stayed about an hour talking in a very loud voice, and it was hard to understand what he was trying to say.

After he had gone there came an abbess from a distant convent, and by the time she had gone the bells were tolling for vespers; it was time for the bishop to go to church.

The monks sang melodiously and rapturously that evening; a young, black-bearded priest officiated. His Reverence listened as they sang of the Bridegroom and of the chamber sweet and gar-

1. Lower Russian Orthodox clergy are permitted to marry.

nished, and felt neither repentance nor sorrow, but only a deep peace of mind. He sat by the altar where the shadows were deepest, and was swept in imagination back into the days of his childhood and youth, when he had first heard these words sung. The tears trickled down his cheeks, and he meditated on how he had attained everything in life that it was possible for a man in his position to attain; his faith was unshaken, and yet all was not clear to him; something was lacking, and he did not want to die. It still seemed to him that he was leaving unfound the most important thing of all. Something of which he had dimly dreamed in the past, hopes that had thrilled his heart as a child, a schoolboy, and a traveler in foreign lands, troubled him still.

"How beautifully they are singing today!" he thought. "Oh, how beautifully!"

IV

On Thursday he held a service in the cathedral. It was the festival of the Washing of Feet. When the service was over, and the people had gone to their several homes, the sun was shining brightly and cheerily, and the air was warm. The gutters were streaming with bubbling water, and the tender songs of larks came floating in from the fields beyond the city, bringing peace to his heart. The trees were already awake, and over them brooded the blue, unfathomable sky.

His Reverence went to bed as soon as he reached home, and told the lay brother to close his shutters. The room grew dark. Oh, how tired he was!

As on the day before, the sound of voices and the tinkling of glasses came to him from the next room. His mother was gaily recounting some tale to Father Sisoï, with many a quaint word and saying, and the old man was listening gloomily, and answering in a gruff voice:

"Well, I never! Did they, indeed? What do you think of that?"

And once more the bishop felt annoyed, and then hurt that the old lady should be so natural and simple with strangers, and so silent and awkward with her own son. It even seemed to him that she always tried to find some pretext for standing in his presence, as if she felt uneasy sitting down. And his father? If he had been alive, he would probably not have been able to utter a word when the bishop was there.

Something in the next room fell to the floor with a crash. Katya had evidently broken a cup or a saucer, for Father Sisoï suddenly snorted, and cried angrily:

"What a terrible plague this child is! Merciful heavens! No one could keep her supplied with china!"

Then silence fell. When he opened his eyes again, the bishop saw Katya standing by his bedside staring at him, her red hair standing up around her head like a halo, as usual.

"Is that you, Katya?" he asked. "Who is that opening and shutting doors down there?"

"I don't hear anything," Katya answered and tried to listen.

"There, someone just went by."

"That's in your belly, uncle!"

He smiled and stroked her head.

"So your cousin Nikolasha cuts up dead people, does he?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes, he is learning to."

"Is he nice?"

"Yes, very, only he drinks a lot."

"What did your father die of?"

"Papa grew weaker and weaker, and thinner and thinner, and then came his sore throat. And I was ill, too, and so was my brother Fedia. We all had sore throats. Papa died, Uncle, but we got well."

Her chin quivered, her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, Your Reverence!" she cried in a shrill voice, beginning to weep bitterly. "Dear Uncle, Mother and all of us are so unhappy! Do give us a little money! Help us, Uncle darling!"

He also shed tears, and for a moment could not speak for emotion. He stroked her hair, and touched her shoulder, and said:

"All right, all right, little child. Wait until Easter comes, then we will talk about it. I'll help you."

His mother came quietly and timidly into the room, and said a prayer before the icon. When she saw that he was awake, she asked:

"Would you like a little soup?"

"No, thanks," he answered. "I'm not hungry."

"I don't believe you are well—I can see that you are not well. You really mustn't fall ill! You have to be on your feet all day long. My goodness, it makes one tired to see you! Never mind, Easter is no longer over the hills and far away. When Easter comes you will rest. God will give us time for a little talk then, but now I'm not going to worry you any more with my silly chatter. Come, Katya, let His Lordship have another forty winks——"

And the bishop remembered that, when he was a boy, she had used exactly the same half-playful, half-respectful tone to all high dignitaries of the church. Only by her strangely tender eyes, and by the anxious look which she gave him as she left the room could anyone have guessed that she was his mother. He shut his eyes, and seemed to be asleep, but he heard the clock strike twice, and Father Sisoï coughing next door. His mother came in again, and looked shyly at him. Suddenly there came a bang, and a door slammed; a vehicle of some kind drove up to the front steps. The lay brother

came into the bishop's room, and called:

"Your Reverence!"

"What is it?"

"Here is the coach! It is time to go to our Lord's Passion——"

"What time is it?"

"Quarter to eight."

The bishop dressed, and drove to the cathedral. He had to stand motionless in the center of the church while the twelve Gospels were being read, and the first and longest and most beautiful of them all he read himself. A strong, valiant mood took hold of him. He knew this gospel, beginning "The Son of Man is risen today—", by heart, and as he repeated it, he raised his eyes, and saw a sea of little lights about him. He heard the sputtering of candles, but the people had disappeared. He felt surrounded by those whom he had known in his youth; he felt that they would always be here until—
God knows when!

His father had been a deacon, his grandfather had been a priest, and his great-grandfather a deacon. He sprang from a race that had belonged to the church since Christianity first came to Russia, and his love for the ritual of the church, the clergy, and the sound of church-bells was inborn in him, deeply, intractably implanted in his heart. When he was in church, especially when he was taking part in the service himself, he felt active and valorous and happy. And so it was with him now. Only, after the eighth Gospel had been read, he felt that his voice was becoming so feeble that even his cough was inaudible; his head was aching, and he began to fear that he might collapse. His legs were growing numb; in a little while he ceased to have any sensation in them at all, and could not imagine what he was standing on, and why he did not fall down.

It was quarter to twelve when the service ended. The bishop went to bed as soon as he reached home, without even saying his prayers. As he pulled his blanket up over him, he suddenly wished that he were abroad; he passionately wished it. He would give his life, he thought, to cease from seeing these cheap, wooden walls and that low ceiling, to cease from smelling the stale scent of the monastery.

If there were only someone with whom he could talk, someone to whom he could unburden his heart!

He heard steps in the adjoining room, and tried to recall who it might be. At last the door opened, and Father Sisoï came in with a candle in one hand, and a teacup in the other.

"In bed already, Your Reverence?" he asked. "I have come to rub your chest with vinegar and vodka. It is a fine thing, if rubbed in good and hard. Oh, Lord God Almighty! There—there—I have just come from our monastery. I hate it. I am going away from here tomorrow, my Lord. Oh, Lord, God Almighty—there——"

Sisoï never could stay long in one place, and he now felt as if he had been in this monastery for a year. It was hard to tell from what

he said where his home was, whether there was anyone or anything in the world that he loved, and whether he believed in God or not. He himself never could make out why he had become a monk, but then, he never gave it any thought, and the time when he had taken the vows had long since faded from his memory. He thought he must have been born a monk.

"Yes, I am going away tomorrow. Bother this place!"

"I want to have a talk with you—I never seem to have the time—" whispered the bishop, making a great effort to speak. "You see, I don't know anyone—or anything—here—"

"Very well then, I shall stay until Sunday, but no longer! Bother this place!"

"What sort of a bishop am I?" His Reverence went on, in a faint voice. "I ought to have been a village priest, or a deacon, or a plain monk. All this is choking me—it is choking me—"

"What's that? Oh, Lord God Almighty! There—go to sleep now, Your Reverence. What do you mean? What's all this you are saying? Good-night!"

All night long the bishop lay awake, and in the morning he grew very ill. The lay brother took fright and ran first to the archimandrite, and then for the monastery doctor who lived in the city. The doctor, a stout, elderly man, with a long, gray beard, looked intently at His Reverence, shook his head, knit his brows, and finally said: "I'll tell you what, Your Reverence; you have typhoid."

The bishop grew very thin and pale in the next hour, his eyes grew larger, his face became covered with wrinkles, and he looked quite small and old. He felt as if he were the thinnest, weakest, puniest man in the whole world, and as if everything that had occurred before this had been left far, far behind, and would never happen again.

"How glad I am of that!" he thought. "Oh, how glad!"

His aged mother came into the room. When she saw his win-kled face and his great eyes, she was seized with fear, and, falling down on her knees by his bedside, she began kissing his face, his shoulders, and his hands. He seemed to her to be the thinnest, weakest, puniest man in the world, and she forgot that he was a bishop, and kissed him as if he had been a little child whom she dearly, dearly loved.

"Little Pavel, my dearie!" she cried. "My little son, why do you look like this? Little Pavel, oh, answer me!"

Katya, pale and severe, stood near them, and could not understand what was the matter with her uncle, and why Granny wore such a look of suffering on her face, and spoke such heart-rending words. And he, he was speechless, and knew nothing of what was going on around him. He was dreaming that he was an ordinary man once more, striding swiftly and merrily through the open coun-

try, a staff in his hand, bathed in sunshine, with the wide sky above him, as free as a bird to go wherever his fancy led him.

"My little son! My little Pavel! Answer me!" begged his mother.

"Don't bother His Lordship," said Sisoï angrily, crossing the room. "Let him sleep. Nothing to do there... what for!..."

Three doctors came, consulted together, and drove away. The day seemed long, incredibly long, and then came the long, long night. Just before dawn on Saturday morning the lay brother went to the old mother who was lying on a sofa in the sitting-room, and asked her to come into the bedroom, His Reverence had gone to eternal peace.

Next day was Easter. There were forty-two churches in the city, and two monasteries, and the deep, joyous notes of their bells pealed out over the town from morning until night. The birds were caroling, the bright sun was shining. The big marketplace was full of noise; barrel organs were droning, concertinas were squealing, and drunken voices were ringing through the air. Trotting-races were held in the main street that afternoon; in a word, all was merry and gay, as had been the year before and as, doubtless, it would be the year to come.

A month later a new bishop was appointed, and everyone forgot his Reverence Pyotr. Only the dead man's mother, who is living now in a little country town with her son the deacon, when she goes out at sunset to meet her cow, and joins the other women on the way, tells them about her children and grandchildren, and her boy who became a bishop.

And when she mentions him she looks at them shyly, for she is afraid they will not believe her.

And, as a matter of fact, not all of them do.

1902

The Betrothed

I

It was already nine o'clock in the evening, and the full moon was shining over the garden. In the Shumlin house the evening service ordered by the grandmother, Maria Mikhailovna, was only just over, and Nadya, who had slipped out into the garden for a minute, could see a cold supper being laid in the dining-room; her grandmother in her billowing silk dress hovering about the table; Father Andrey, the cathedral priest, talking to Nadya's mother, Nina Ivanovna, who looked very young seen through the window, by artificial

light. Beside her stood Andrey Andreyich, Father Andrey's son, listening attentively.

It was cool and still in the garden, and dark shadows lay peacefully on the ground. From a long way off, probably outside town, came the distant croaking of frogs. There was a feeling of May, the delightful month of May, in the air. One could draw deep breaths, and imagine that somewhere, far beyond the town, beneath the sky, above the treetops, in the fields and woods, the spring was beginning its own life, that mysterious, exquisite life, rich and sacred, from which sinful mortals are shut out. It almost made one want to cry.

Nadya was now twenty-three; ever since she was sixteen years old she had been dreaming ardently of marriage, and now at last she was betrothed to Andrey Andreyich, the young man standing in the dining-room. She liked him, and the wedding was fixed for the seventh of July, but she felt no joy; she slept badly, her gaiety had deserted her. From the open windows of the basement kitchen came sounds of bustling and the clanging of knives, and the door, which closed by a pulley, banged constantly. There was a smell of roasting turkey and spiced cherries. And it seemed as if things would go on like this, without changing, for ever and ever.

Someone came out of the house and stood in the porch. It was Aleksander Timofeyich, or, as everyone called him, Sasha, who had arrived from Moscow about ten days before, on a visit. Long ago, Maria Petrovna, an impoverished widow gentlewoman, small, slight and delicate, used to visit Nadya's grandmother, to whom she was distantly related, asking for charity. She had a son called Sasha. For some reason or other people said he was a fine artist, and when his mother died, Granny, for her own soul's salvation, sent him to the Komissarov school in Moscow. A year or two later he got himself transferred to an art school, where he remained something like fifteen years, till at last he scrambled through his final examinations in the architectural department; he never worked as an architect, but found occupation in a Moscow lithographical works. He came to stay almost every summer, usually very ill, to rest and recuperate.

He was wearing a long coat buttoned up to his neck and shabby canvas trousers with frayed hems. And his shirt was unironed, and his whole appearance was dingy. He was emaciated, with huge eyes and long, bony fingers, bearded, dark-skinned, and, with it all, handsome. At the Shunin's he felt as if he were among his own people, and was quite at home in their house. And the room he occupied on his visits had long been known as Sasha's room.

He caught sight of Nadya from the porch, and went out to her. "It's nice here," he said.

"It's ever so nice. You ought to stay till the autumn."

"Yes, I know, I shall have to, I suppose. I shall probably stay with you till September."

He laughed for no apparent reason, and sat down beside her.

"I've been standing here watching Mama," said Nadya. "She looks so young from here. Of course I know my Mama has her weaknesses," she continued after a pause, "but just the same she's a marvellous woman."

"Yes, she's very nice," agreed Sasha. "In her way your Mama is of course very good and kind, but . . . how shall I put it? I went into the kitchen this morning early and saw four servants sleeping right on the floor, no beds, only rags to lie on, a stench, bugs, cockroaches. . . . Just the same as it used to be twenty years ago, not the slightest change. Granny's not to be blamed, of course, she's old—but your mother, with her French and her amateur theatricals. . . . You'd think she'd understand."

When Sasha spoke he had a habit of holding up two long, bony fingers in the direction of his hearer.

"Everything here strikes me as so strange," he continued. "I'm not used to it, I suppose. Good heavens, nobody ever does anything! Your mother does nothing but stroll about like a Grand-duchess, Granny does nothing at all, and nor do you. And Andrey Andreyich, your fiancé, he does nothing, either."

Nadya had heard all this last year, and, she seemed to remember, the year before, and she knew it was the only way Sasha's mind could work; there was a time when it had amused her, but now for some reason it irritated her.

"That's old stuff, I'm sick of hearing it," she said, getting up. "Can't you think of anything new?"

He laughed and got up, too, and they both went back to the house. Good-looking, tall and slender, she seemed almost offensively well-dressed and healthy, as she walked by his side. She was conscious of it herself, and felt sorry for him, and almost apologetic.

"And you talk a lot of nonsense," she said. "Look what you just said about my Andrey—you don't know him a bit, really!"

"My Andrey. . . . Never mind your Andrey! It's your youth I begudge."

When they went into the dining-room everyone was just sitting down to supper. Nadya's grandmother, or, as everyone in the house called her, Granny, a corpulent, plain old woman, with heavy eyebrows and a moustache, was talking loudly, and her voice and manner of speaking showed that it was she who was the real head of the house. She owned a row of booths in the marketplace, and the old house with its pillars and garden was hers, but every morning she prayed with tears for the Lord to preserve her from ruin.

Her daughter-in-law and Nadya's mother, Nina Ivanovna, blonde, tightly corseted, who wore pince-nez and had diamond rings on all her fingers; Father Andrey, a lean, toothless old man who always looked as if he were just going to say something very funny; and Andrey Andreyich, his son and Nadya's fiancé, a stout, handsome young man with curly hair, rather like an actor or an artist, were all three talking about hypnotism.

"You'll fatten up in a week here," Granny told Sasha. "But you must eat more. Just look at yourself!" she sighed. "You look awful. A real prodigal son, that's what you are."

"He wasted his substance with riotous living," interpolated Father Andrey, bringing out the words slowly, his eyes twinkling, "and he was sent into the fields to feed swine."

"I love my old Dad," said Andrey Andreyich, patting his father on the shoulder. "Dear old man. Good old man!"

Nobody said anything. Sasha suddenly burst out laughing, and pressed his nappkin to his lips.

"So you believe in hypnotism?" Father Andrey asked Nina Ivanovna.

"I can't exactly say I believe in it," replied Nina Ivanovna, assuming a grave, almost severe expression. "But I have to acknowledge that there is much that is mysterious and incomprehensible in nature."

"I quite agree with you, though I am bound to add that faith narrows the sphere of the mysterious considerably for us."

An enormous, juicy turkey was placed on the table. Father Andrey and Nina Ivanovna continued their conversation. The diamonds on Nina Ivanovna's fingers sparkled, and in her eyes sparkled tears; she was deeply moved.

"Of course I cannot venture to argue with you," she said. "But you will agree that there are many unsolved riddles in life."

"Not one, I assure you."

After supper Andrey Andreyich played the violin, Nina Ivanovna accompanying him on the piano. He had graduated from the philological department of the university ten years before, but had no employment and no fixed occupation, merely playing at occasional charity concerts. In the town he was spoken of as a musician.

Andrey Andreyich played and all listened in silence. The samovar steamed quietly on the table, and Sasha was the only one drinking tea. Just as twelve o'clock struck a fiddle-string snapped. Everyone laughed, and there was a bustle of leavetaking.

After saying good-night to her fiancé, Nadya went upstairs to the rooms she shared with her mother (the ground floor was occupied by Granny). The lights were being extinguished downstairs, in the dining-room, but Sasha still sat on, drinking tea. He always sat long over his tea, in the Moscow way, drinking six or seven glasses one

after another. Long after Nadya had undressed and got into bed she could hear the servants clearing the table, and Granny scolding. At last the house was quiet but for an occasional sonorous cough from downstairs, in Sasha's room.

II

It must have been about two o'clock when Nadya awoke, for dawn was beginning to break. The night watchman could be heard striking his board in the distance. Nadya could not sleep; her bed seemed too soft to lie down in comfortably. As she had done on all the previous nights this May Nadya sat up in bed and gave herself up to her thoughts. The thoughts were just the same as those of the night before, monotonous, futile, insistent—thoughts of how Andrey Andreyich had courted her and proposed, how she had accepted him and gradually learned to appreciate this good and clever man. But somehow or other now that there was only a month left till the wedding, she began to experience fear, uneasiness, as if something vaguely sad lay in wait for her.

"Tick-tock, tick-tock," rapped out the night watchman lazily.

"Tick-tock. . . ."

Through the big old-fashioned window could be seen the garden, and beyond it lilac bushes, heavy with bloom, drowsy and languid in the cold air. And a dense white mist encroached silently upon the lilacs, as if intent on enveloping them. Sleepy rooks cawed from distant trees.

"Oh, God, what makes me so sad?"

Do all girls feel like this before their weddings? Who knows? Or could it be the influence of Sasha? But Sasha had been saying the same things over and over again, as if by rote, year after year, and what he said always sounded so naive and quaint. And why couldn't she get the thought of Sasha out of her head? Why?

The watchman had long stopped going his rounds. Birds began twittering beneath the window and in the tree tops, the mist in the garden cleared away, and now everything was gilded by the spring sunlight, everything seemed to be smiling. In a short time the whole garden, warmed by the caresses of the sun, had sprung to life, and drops of dew gleamed like diamonds on the leaves of the trees. And the old, neglected garden was young and gay for that one morning.

Granny was already awake. Sasha gave his harsh, deep cough. Downstairs the servants could be heard bringing in the samovar, moving chairs about.

The hours passed slowly. Nadya had been up and walking in the garden for a long time and the morning still dragged on.

And here came Nina Ivanovna, tearful, a glass of mineral water

in her hand. She went in for spiritualism and homeopathy, read a great deal, and was fond of talking about her religious doubts, and Nadya supposed there must be some profound, mysterious significance in all this. She kissed her mother, and walked on at her side.

"What have you been crying about, Mama?" she asked.

"I read a book last night about an old man and his daughter. The old man worked at some office, and what d'you think, his chief fell in love with the old man's daughter! I haven't finished it, but I came to a place in it where I couldn't help crying," said Nina Ivanovna, and took a sip from her glass. "I remembered it this morning, and cried again."

"And I've been so depressed all these days," said Nadya after a pause. "Why can't I sleep?"

"I don't know, dearie. When I can't sleep I shut my eyes tight—like this—and imagine how Anna Karenina looked and spoke, or I try to imagine something historical, something from olden times...."

Nadya felt that her mother did not understand her, that she was incapable of understanding her. She had never had this feeling before, it frightened her; she wanted to hide, and went back to her room.

At two o'clock everyone sat down to dinner. It was Wednesday, a fast-day, and Granny was served meatless *borscht*¹ and bream with buckwheat porridge.

To tease Granny, Sasha ate *borscht* as well as meat soup. He joked all through the meal, but his jokes were too elaborate and always intended to point a moral, and it was not funny at all when, before coming out with a witticism, he lifted his long, bony, dead-looking fingers; and when the thought that he was very ill and probably had not long to live crossed your mind, you felt so sorry for him you could have cried.

After dinner Granny went to her room to rest. Nina Ivanovna played the piano for a short time, and then she went out of the room, too.

"Oh, Nadya dear," Sasha said, returning to his usual after-dinner topic, "if only you would listen to me! If only you would!"

She sat curled up in an old-fashioned armchair, closing her eyes, while he paced quietly up and down the room.

"If only you would go away and study," he said. "Enlightened, saintly people are the only interesting ones, the only ones who are needed. And the more such people there are, the sooner the kingdom of heaven will be on earth. Then not one stone will be left on another, in this town of yours everything will be turned topsy-turvy,

1. See p. 62, above.

everything will change, as if by magic. And there will be huge splendid buildings, beautiful parks, marvellous fountains, fine people.... But that's not the chief thing. The chief thing is that then there will be no crowd anymore, as we now understand the word, that evil in its present aspect will disappear, for each individual will have faith, and know what he lives for, and nobody will seek support from the crowd. Darling, little pet, go away! Show them all that you have had enough of this stagnant, dull, corrupt life! At least show yourself that you have."

"I can't, Sasha, I'm going to get married!"

"Never mind that! What does it matter?"

They went out into the garden and strolled about.

"Anyhow, my dear, you've simply got to think, you've got to understand, how abhorrent, how immoral your idle life is," continued Sasha. "Can't you see that to enable you and your Mama and your Granny to live in idleness, others have to work for you, you are devouring the life of others, is that pure, now, isn't it filthy?" Nadya wanted to say: "Yes, you are right," wanted to tell him she understood, but tears came into her eyes and she fell silent and seemed to shrink into herself; she went to her room.

In the evening Andrey Andreyich came and played the violin a long time, as usual. He was taciturn by nature, and perhaps he loved his violin because while playing he did not have to speak. Soon after ten, when he had his coat on to go home, he took Nadya in his arms and showered passionate kisses on her face, shoulders, and hands.

"My dearest, my darling, my beautiful," he murmured. "Oh, how happy I am! I think I shall go mad with joy!"

And this, too, she seemed to have heard long, long ago, to have read it in some novel, some old, tattered volume which no one ever read anymore.

In the dining-room was Sasha, sitting at the table, drinking tea from a saucer balanced on the tips of his five long fingers. Granny was playing patience. Nina Ivanovna was reading. The flame sputtered in the icon-lamp, and everything seemed still and secure. Nadya said good-night and went up to her room, falling asleep the moment she got into bed. But, just as the night before, she waked up at the first streak of dawn. She could not sleep, something heavy and restless lay on her heart. She sat up and put her head on her knees, thinking about her fiancé, her wedding.... For some reason she remembered that her mother had not loved her husband, and now had nothing of her own, and was completely dependent on Granny, her mother-in-law. And try as she would, Nadya could not understand how it was that she had regarded her mother as something special, remarkable, had not seen that she was just an ordinary, unhappy woman.

Downstairs, Sasha, too, was awake—she could hear him coughing. A strange, naive creature, thought Nadya, and there is something absurd in his dreams, in all those splendid parks, and marvelous fountains. But there was so much that was beautiful in his naivety, in his very absurdity, that the moment she began to wonder if she ought to go away and study, her whole heart, her very being, was bathed in refreshing coolness, and she was plunged in ecstasy. "Better not think . . ." she whispered. "Better not think about it."

"Tick-tock," the distant night-watchman rapped out on the board. "Tick-tock . . . tick-tock . . ."

III

Towards the middle of June Sasha was suddenly overcome by boredom and began to talk about going back to Moscow.

"I can't live in this town," he said morosely. "No running water, no drainage! I can hardly bear to eat my dinner—the kitchen is indescribably filthy. . . ."

"Wait a little longer, Prodigal Son," Granny whispered. "The wedding will be on the seventh."

"I simply can't!"

"You said you would stay with us till September."

"And now I don't want to. I've got to work."

The summer had turned out cold and rainy, the trees were always dripping, the garden looked somber and unfriendly, and the desire to get away and work was quite natural. Unfamiliar feminine voices could be heard in all the rooms, upstairs and downstairs, a sewing-machine whirred in Granny's room. It was all part of the bustle over the trousseau. Of winter-coats alone Nadya was to have six, and the cheapest of them, boasted Granny, had cost three hundred rubles. All this fuss irritated Sasha. He sat and sulked in his room. But they managed to persuade him to stay, and he promised not to leave before the first of July.

The time passed quickly. On St. Peter's day Andrey Andreyich took Nadya after dinner to Moscow Street to have yet another look at the house which had long been rented and furnished for the young couple. It was a two-story house, but so far only the upper floor had been furnished. In the ballroom, with its gleaming floor, painted to look like parquet, were bent-wood chairs, a grand piano, a music-stand for the violin. There was a smell of paint. On the wall was a large oil-painting in a gilt frame—a picture of a naked lady beside a purple vase with a broken handle.

"Beautiful picture," said Andrey Andreyich with an awed sigh. "It's by Shishmachevsky."¹

Next came the drawing-room, in which were a round table, a sofa, and some armchairs upholstered in bright blue material. Over the sofa hung an enlarged photograph of Father Andrey with all his medals on, wearing a tall ceremonial hat. They passed into the dining-room with its sideboard, and from there into the bedroom. Here, in the half-light, stood two beds side by side, and it looked as if those who had furnished the bedroom had taken it for granted that life would always be happy here, that it could not be otherwise. Andrey Andreyich conducted Nadya through the rooms, never removing his arm from her waist. And she felt weak, guilty, hating all these rooms and beds and chairs, while the naked lady made her sick. She now saw quite clearly that she no longer loved Andrey Andreyich, perhaps never had loved him. But she did not know how to say this, whom to say it to, and why to say it at all, and though she thought about it day and night she came no nearer to knowing. . . . He had his arm round her waist, spoke to her so kindly, so humbly, was so happy, walking about his home. And all she saw was vulgarly, stupid, naive, intolerable vulgarity, and his arm round her waist seemed to her cold and rigid, like an iron hoop. At any moment she was ready to run away, to burst into sobs, to jump out of the window. Andrey Andreyich led her to the bathroom, touched a tap screwed into the wall, and the water gushed out.

"What do you think of that?" he said, and laughed. "I had them put up a cistern holding three hundred gallons of water, so we shall have running water in our bathroom."

They walked about the yard for a while and then went out into the street, where they got into a carriage. The dust rose in thick clouds, and it looked as if it were just going to rain.

"Are you cold?" asked Andrey Andreyich, narrowing his eyes against the dust.

She did not answer.

"Remember Sasha reproaching me for not doing anything, yesterday?" he said, after a short pause. "Well, he was right. Infinitely right. I do nothing, and there is nothing I know how to do. Why is it, my dear one? How is it that the very thought of one day wearing a cockade in my cap and going to an office makes me feel sick? How is it that I can't stand the sight of a lawyer, or a Latin teacher, or a town councillor? Oh, Mother Russia, Mother Russia! How many idlers and useless beings you still bear on your bosom! How many beings like myself, oh, long-suffering one!"

1. No such painter is known. Chekhov a further indication of speciousness and probably uses the sound of the name as vulgarity in Andrey.

And he theorized about his own idleness, seeing it as a sign of the times.

"When we are married," he continued, "we'll go to live in the country, my dear one, we'll work. We'll buy a little plot of land with a garden and a stream, and we'll toil, observe life. . . . Oh, how lovely it will be!"

He took his hat off and his hair waved in the breeze, and she listened to him, thinking all the time: "Oh, God, I want to go home! Oh, God!" They overlooked Father Andrey just before they got back to Nadya's home.

"Look, there's my father!" said Andrey Andreyich joyfully, and he waved his hat. "I love my old Dad, really I do," he said, paying off the caddy. "Dear old man! Good old man!"

Nadya went into the house feeling out-of-humor and unwell, unable to forget that all the evening there would be visitors, that she would have to entertain them, to smile, to listen to the violin, to hear all sorts of nonsense and talk about nothing but the wedding. Granny, stiff and pompous in her silk dress, was sitting beside the samovar, looking very haughty, as she always did when there were visitors. Father Andrey came into the room with his subtle smile.

"I have the pleasure and virtuous consolation of seeing you in good health," he said to Granny, and it was hard to say whether he was in earnest or joking.

IV

The wind knocked on the window-panes and on the roof. Whistling sounds could be heard, and the chimney goblin moaned his morose, plaintive song. It was one o'clock in the morning. Everyone in the house was in bed, but no one was asleep, and Nadya kept thinking she could hear the violin being played downstairs. There was a sharp report from outside; a shutter must have torn loose from its hinges. A minute later Nina Ivanovna came into the room in her chemise, holding a candle.

"What was that noise, Nadya?" she asked.

Nadya's mother, her hair in a single plait, smiling timidly, seemed on this stormy night older, plainer, and shorter than usual. Nadya remembered how, so very recently, she had considered her mother a remarkable woman and had felt pride in listening to the words she used. And now she could not for the life of her remember what those words had been—the only ones that came back to her were feeble and affected.

Bass voices seemed to be singing in the chimney, even the words "Oh, my God!" could be made out. Nadya sat up in bed, and tugged violently at her hair, sobbing.

"Mama, Mama!" she cried. "Oh, darling, if you only knew what I was going through! I beg you, I implore you—let me go away!"

"Where to?" asked Nina Ivanovna, in bewilderment, and she sat down on the side of the bed. "Where'd you want to go?"

Nadya cried and cried, unable to bring out another word.

"Let me go away from this town," she said at last. "The wedding must not, will not be, believe me. I don't love that man. . . . I can't bear to speak about him."

"No, my darling, no," said Nina Ivanovna quickly, frightened out of her wits. "Calm yourself. You're out of sorts. It'll pass. It often happens. You've probably had a quarrel with Andrey, but lovers' tiffs end in kisses."

"Go, Mama, go!" sobbed Nadya.

"Yes," said Nina Ivanovna, after a pause. "Only the other day you were a little girl, and now you're almost a bride. Nature is in a constant state of metabolism. Before you know where you are you'll be a mother yourself, and then an old woman, with a troublesome daughter like mine."

"My darling, you're kind and clever, and you're unhappy," said Nadya. "You're ever so unhappy—why do you say such commonplace things? Why, for God's sake?"

Nina Ivanovna tried to speak, but could not utter a word, only sobbed, and went back to her room. Once more the bass voices moaned in the chimney, and Nadya was suddenly terrified. She jumped out of bed and ran into her mother's room. Nina Ivanovna, her eyelids swollen from crying, was lying in bed covered by a blue blanket, a book in her hands.

"Mama, listen to me," said Nadya. "Think, try to understand me, I implore you! Only think how shallow and humiliating our life is! My eyes have been opened, I see it all now. And what is your Andrey Andreyich? Why, he's not a bit clever, Mama. Oh, God, oh, God! Only think, Mama, why, he's stupid!"

Nina Ivanovna sat up with a jerk.

"You and your grandmother keep torturing me," she said, with a gasping sob. "I want to live! To live!" she repeated, smiting her chest again and again. "Can't you let me have my freedom? I'm still young, I want to live, you've made an old woman of me!"

She cried bitterly and lay down, rolling herself up in the blanket, and looking just a silly, pathetic little thing. Nadya went back to her room and dressed, then she sat at the window to wait for morning to come. All night she sat there thinking, and someone seemed to be knocking at the shutter outside and whistling.

The next morning Granny complained that the wind had beaten down all the apples and split the trunk of an old plum-tree. It was a grey, dim, joyless morning, one of those days when you feel inclined to light the lamp from the very morning. Everyone complained of the cold, and the raindrops tapped on the window-panes. After breakfast Nadya went to Sasha's room and, without a word, fell on

her knees before a chair in the corner, covering her face with her hands.

"What's the matter?" asked Sasha.

"I can't go on like this, I can't!" she exclaimed. "I don't know how I could live here before, I simply can't understand it! I despise my fiancé, I despise myself, I despise this whole idle, empty life...."

"Come, come...." Sasha interrupted her, not yet realizing what she was talking about. "Never mind.... it's all right...."

"This life is hateful to me," continued Nadya. "I won't be able to bear another day here! I shall go away tomorrow. Take me with you, for God's sake!"

Sasha gazed at her for a moment in amazement. At last the truth dawned upon him, and he rejoiced like a child, waving his arms and shuffling in his loose slippers, as if he were dancing with joy.

"Splendid!" he said, rubbing his hands. "God, how fine that is!" She gazed at him unblinkingly, from wide-open eyes, full of love, as if fascinated, waiting for him to come out immediately with something significant, something of infinite importance. He had not told her anything yet, but she felt that something new and vast, something she had never known before, was already opening before her, and she looked at him full of expectation, ready for anything, for death itself.

"I'm leaving tomorrow," he said after a pause. "You can come to the station to see me off. I'll take your things in my trunk and buy a ticket for you. And when the third bell rings, you can get into the train, and off we go. Go with me as far as Moscow, and go to Petersburg by yourself. Have you a passport?"

"Yes."

"You will never regret it—never repent it, I'm sure!" said Sasha enthusiastically. "You will go away and study, and afterwards things will take their own course. As soon as you turn your life upside down, everything will change. The great thing is to turn your life upside down, nothing else matters. So we're off tomorrow?"

"Oh, yes! For God's sake!"

Nadya, who imagined that she was profoundly stirred and that her heart had never before been so heavy, was quite sure that now, on the eve of departure, she would suffer, be racked with anguished thoughts. But she had hardly gone upstairs to her room and lain down on the bed when she fell fast asleep, and slept soundly, with a tear-stained face and a smile on her lips, till the very evening.

V

The carriage had been sent for. Nadya, in her hat and coat, went upstairs to have one last look at her mother, at all that had been hers so long. She stood in her room beside the bed, which was still

warm, and then went softly into her mother's room. Nina Ivanovna was asleep, and it was very quiet in her room. After kissing her mother and smoothing her hair, Nadya stood for a minute or two.... Then she went downstairs with unhurried steps.

The rain was coming down in torrents. A carriage, dripping wet, stood in front of the porch, its hood raised.

"There's no room for you, Nadya," said Granny, when the servant began putting the luggage into the carriage. "I wonder you want to see him off in such weather! You'd better stay at home. Just look at the rain!"

Nadya tried to say something, but could not. Sasha helped her into the carriage, covering her knees with the rug. And now he was seated beside her.

"Good-bye! God bless you!" shouted Granny from the porch.

"Mind you write when you get to Moscow, Sasha!"

"All right. Good-bye, Granny!"

"May the Queen of Heaven protect you!"

"What weather!" said Sasha.

It was only now that Nadya began to cry. It was only now that she realized she was really going away, a thing she had not quite believed, even when saying good-bye to Granny, or standing beside her mother. Good-bye, town! Everything came over her with a rush—Andrey, his father, the new house, the naked lady with the vase. But all this no longer frightened her or weighed upon her, it had become naive and trivial, it was retreating farther into the past. And when they got into the railway carriage and the train started, the whole of this past, so big and important, shrank to a little lump, and a vast future, scarcely perceptible till now, opened before her. The raindrops tapped on the windows, there was nothing to be seen but the green fields, the telegraph-poles flashing by, the birds on the wires, and joy suddenly almost choked her. She remembered that she was going to be at liberty, to study, doing what used to be called in the old days "running away to the Cossacks." She laughed and cried and prayed.

"Come, come," said Sasha, smiling broadly. "Come, come!"

VI

Autumn passed, and after it winter. Nadya was now very homesick, and thought every day of her mother and Granny; she thought of Sasha, too. Letters from home were resigned and kindly, everything seemed to have been forgiven and forgotten. After passing her May examinations, she set off, well and happy, for home, breaking her journey at Moscow to see Sasha. He was just the same as he had been the year before—bearded, shaggy, still wearing the same long old-fashioned coat and canvas trousers, his eyes as large and

beautiful as ever. But he looked ill and worried, he had got older and thinner, and coughed incessantly. And to Nadya he seemed dingy and provincial.

"Why, it's Nadya!" he cried, laughing joyfully. "My darling, my pet!"

They sat together in the lithographic workshop, amidst the fumes of tobacco smoke and a stifling smell of ink and paint; then they went to his room, which reeked of smoke, too, and was littered and filthy. On the table, beside the cold samovar, was a broken plate with a bit of dark paper on it, and both floor and table were strewn with dead flies. Everything here showed that Sasha took no thought for his private life, lived in a continual mess, with utter contempt for comfort. If anyone had spoken to him about his personal happiness and private life, had asked him if there was anyone who loved him, he would have been at a loss to know what was meant, and would only have laughed.

"Everything passed off all right," said Nadya hurriedly. "Mama came to Petersburg in the autumn, to see me, she says Granny isn't angry, but keeps going into my room and making the sign of the cross on the walls."

Sasha looked cheerful, but coughed and spoke in a cracked voice, and Nadya kept looking at him, wondering if he was really seriously ill, or if it was her imagination.

"Sasha, dear Sasha," she said, "but you're ill!"

"I'm all right. A bit unwell—nothing serious. . . ."

"For goodness' sake," said Nadya, in agitated tones, "why don't you go to a doctor? Why don't you take care of your health? My dear one, Sasha, dear," she murmured, and tears sprang into her eyes, and for some reason Andrey Andreyich, and the naked lady with the vase, and the whole of her past, which now seemed as far off as her childhood, rose before her mind. And she cried because Sasha no longer seemed to her so original, clever and interesting as he had last year. "Sasha dear, you are very, very ill. I don't know what I wouldn't give for you not to be so pale and thin! I owe you so much. You can have no idea what a lot you have done for me, Sasha darling! You are now the closest, the dearest person in my life, you know."

They sat on, talking and talking. And now, after a winter in Petersburg, it seemed to her that something outmoded, old-fashioned, finished, something, perhaps, already half in the grave, could be felt in everything he said, in his smile, in the whole of him.

"I'm going for a trip down the Volga the day after tomorrow," said Sasha, "and then I'll go somewhere and take *kurniss*.² I want to

2. Fermented mare's milk, taken, like mineral water, as a cure for various ailments.

try *kurniss*. A friend of mine, and his wife, are going with me. The wife is a marvelous person. I keep trying to persuade her to go and study. I want her to turn her life topsy-turvy."

When they had talked themselves out, they went to the station. Sasha treated her to tea and bought her some apples, and when the train started, and he stood smiling and waving his handkerchief, she could see by just looking at his legs how ill he was, and that he was not likely to live long.

Nadya arrived at her native town at noon. As she drove home from the station the streets seemed to her disproportionately wide, the houses very small and squat. There was hardly anyone about, and the only person she met was the German piano-tuner in his rusty overcoat. And the houses seemed to be covered with a film of dust. Granny, now really old, and as stout and plain as ever, put her arms round Nadya and cried for a long time, with her face pressed against Nadya's shoulder, as if she could not tear herself away. Nina Ivanovna, who had aged greatly, too, had become quite plain and seemed to have shrunk, but she was as tightly laced as ever and the diamonds still shone from her fingers.

"My darling," she said, shaking all over. "My own darling!"

Then they sat down and wept silently. It was easy to see that both Granny and Mama realized that the past was irrevocably lost. Gone were their social position, their former distinction, their right to invite guests to their house. They felt as people feel when, in the midst of an easy, carefree life, the police break in one night and search the house, and it is discovered that the master of the house has committed an embezzlement or a forgery—and then farewell forever to the easy, carefree life!

Nadya went upstairs and saw the same bed, the same window with its demure white curtains, the same view of the garden from her table, sat down, fell into a reverie. She had a good dinner, drinking tea after it, with delicious thick cream, but something was missing, there was an emptiness in the rooms, and the ceiling struck her as very low. When she went to bed in the evening, covering herself with the bed-clothes, there was something ridiculous in lying in this warm, too soft bed.

Nina Ivanovna came in for a moment, and seated herself as the guilty do, timidly, with furtive glances.

"Well, Nadya, how is everything?" she asked. "Are you happy? Really happy?"

"Yes, Mama."

Nina Ivanovna got up and made the sign of the cross over Nadya and the window.

"As you see, I have turned religious," she said. "I'm studying

philosophy, you know, and I keep thinking, thinking. . . . And many things are as clear as daylight to me now. It seems to me that the most important thing is to see life through a prism."

"Mama, how is Granny really?"

"She seems all right. When you went away with Sasha and Granny read your telegram, she fell down on the spot. After that she lay three days in bed without stirring. And then she began praying and crying. But she's all right now."

She got up and began pacing up and down the room.

"Tick-tock," rapped the watchman, "tick-tock."

"The great thing is for life to be seen through a prism," she said. "In other words, life must be divided up in our consciousness into its simplest elements, as if into the seven primary colors, and each element must be studied separately."

What more Nina Ivanovna said, and when she went away, Nadya did not know, for she soon fell asleep.

May passed, and June came. Nadya had got used to being at home again. Granny sat beside the samovar, pouring out tea and giving deep sighs. Nina Ivanovna talked about her philosophy in the evenings. She still lived like a dependent, and had to turn to Granny whenever she wanted a few kopeks. The house was full of flies and the ceilings seemed to be getting lower and lower. Granny and Nina Ivanovna never went out, for fear of meeting Father Andrey and Andrey Andreyich. Nadya walked about the garden and the streets, looking at the houses and the drab fences, and it seemed to her that the town had been getting old for a long time, that it had outlived its day and was now waiting, either for its end, or for the beginning of something fresh and youthful. Oh, for this new, pure life to begin, when one could go straight forward, looking one's fate boldly in the eyes, confident that one was in the right, could be gay and free! This life was bound to come sooner or later. The time would come when there would be nothing left of Granny's house, in which the only way for four servants to live was in one room, in the basement, surrounded by filth—yes, the time would come when there would not be a trace left of such a house, when everyone would have forgotten it, when there would be no one left to remember it. Nadya's only distraction was the little boys in the next house who banged on the fence when she strolled about the garden and laughed at her, shouting, "There goes the bride!"

A letter came from Saratov, from Sasha. He wrote in his reckless, staggering handwriting that the trip down the Volga had been a complete success, but that he had been taken rather ill at Saratov, and had lost his voice, and been in hospital for the last fortnight. She understood what this meant, and a foreboding amounting almost to a conviction came over her. It vexed her that this foreboding and the thought of Sasha himself no longer moved her as

formerly. She felt a longing to live, to be in Petersburg, and her friendship with Sasha seemed to belong to a past, which, while dear, was now very distant. She could not sleep all night, and in the morning sat at the window, as if listening for something. And there really did come the sound of voices from below—Granny was saying something in rapid, querulous tones. Then someone cried. . . . When Nadya went downstairs Granny was standing in the corner of the room praying, and her face was tear-stained. On the table lay a telegram.

Nadya paced up and down the room for a long time, listening to Granny's crying, before picking up the telegram and reading it. It said that yesterday morning, in Saratov, Aleksander Timofeyich, Sasha for short, had died of consumption.

Granny and Nina Ivanovna went to the church to order a service for the dead, and Nadya walked about the rooms for a long time, thinking. She realized clearly that her life had been turned topsyturvy, as Sasha had wanted it to be, that she was lonely, alien, unwanted here, and that there was nothing she wanted here, the past had been torn away and vanished, as if burned by fire, and the ashes scattered to the winds. She went into Sasha's room and stood there.

"Good-bye, dear Sasha," she thought. Life stretched before her, new, vast, spacious, and this life, though still vague and mysterious, beckoned to her, drawing her onward.

She went upstairs to pack, and the next morning said good-bye to her family, and left the town, gay and full of spirits—as she supposed, forever.