

Collected Works of

Nikolai Gogol

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The Complete Works of

NIKOLAI GOGOL

(1809-1852)



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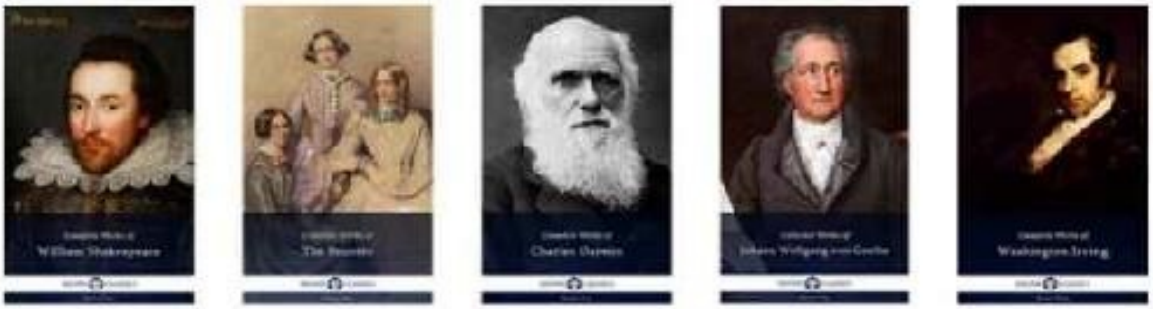
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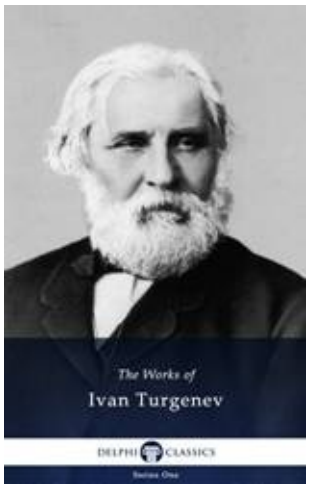


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The Novels



Velyki Sorochyntsi, modern day Ukraine — Gogol's birthplace

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One of the many statues commemorating Gogol in his hometown

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The Transfiguration Church in Velyki Sorochyntsi, where Gogol was baptised

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TARAS BULBA



Translated by C.J. Hogarth

This historical novella tells the story of the old Cossack Taras Bulba, and his two sons, Andriy and Ostap, who after their studies at Kiev Academy return home. The father and his sons decide to set out on an epic journey to Zaporizhian Sich located in Southern Ukraine, where they join other Cossacks and go to war against Poland. The main character Taras Vs based on several historical personalities, but was principally inspired by the legend of the Cossack Sava Chaly, whose execution was ordered by his own father for the betrayal of an Ukrainian cause.

The novella was first published in 1835 as part of a story collection. However, due to the strong Ukrainian contexts of the story, critics in the Russian government considered *Taras Bulba* to be too Ukrainian and so Gogol had to revise the work. The 1842 edition was edited to include Russian nationalist themes, which were popular with the tsarist ideology of the time. The changes included three new chapters and a new ending, all included in this edition.

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Vasyl Panasovych Gogol-Yanovsky (1777-1825) – Gogol's father was the landlord of the Ukrainian village of Vasylivka

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Maria Ivanovna Gogol-Yanovsky, the author's mother, whose correspondence with literary figures makes her letters of much importance in the history of Russian literature

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A 1952 Russian postage stamp depicting Nikolai Gogol and his famous character Taras Bulba

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The 2008 television adaptation, produced by the Russian state TV and paid for by the Russian Ministry of Culture

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CHAPTER I

“Turn round, my boy! How ridiculous you look! What sort of a priest’s cassock have you got on? Does everybody at the academy dress like that?”

With such words did old Bulba greet his two sons, who had been absent for their education at the Royal Seminary of Kief, and had now returned home to their father.

His sons had but just dismounted from their horses. They were a couple of stout lads who still looked bashful, as became youths recently released from the seminary. Their firm healthy faces were covered with the first down of manhood, down which had, as yet, never known a razor. They were greatly discomfited by such a reception from their father, and stood motionless with eyes fixed upon the ground.

“Stand still, stand still! let me have a good look at you,” he continued, turning them around. “How long your gaberdines are! What gaberdines! There never were such gaberdines in the world before. Just run, one of you! I want to see whether you will not get entangled in the skirts, and fall down.”

“Don’t laugh, don’t laugh, father!” said the eldest lad at length.

“How touchy we are! Why shouldn’t I laugh?”

“Because, although you are my father, if you laugh, by heavens, I will strike you!”

“What kind of son are you? what, strike your father!” exclaimed Taras Bulba, retreating several paces in amazement.

“Yes, even my father. I don’t stop to consider persons when an insult is in question.”

“So you want to fight me? with your fist, eh?”

“Any way.”

“Well, let it be fisticuffs,” said Taras Bulba, turning up his sleeves. “I’ll see what sort of a man you are with your fists.”

And father and son, in lieu of a pleasant greeting after long separation, began to deal each other heavy blows on ribs, back, and chest, now retreating and looking at each other, now attacking afresh.

“Look, good people! the old man has gone man! he has lost his senses completely!” screamed their pale, ugly, kindly mother, who was standing on the threshold, and had not yet succeeded in embracing her darling children. “The children have come home, we have not seen them for over a year; and now he has taken some strange freak — he’s pommelling them.”

“Yes, he fights well,” said Bulba, pausing; “well, by heavens!” he continued, rather as if excusing himself, “although he has never tried his hand at it before, he will make a good Cossack! Now, welcome, son! embrace me,” and father and son began to kiss each other. “Good lad! see that you hit every one as you pommelled me; don’t let any one escape. Nevertheless your clothes are ridiculous all the same. What rope is this hanging there? — And you, you lout, why are you standing there with your hands hanging beside you?” he added, turning to the youngest. “Why don’t you fight me? you son of a dog!”

“What an idea!” said the mother, who had managed in the meantime to embrace her youngest. “Who ever heard of children fighting their own father? That’s enough for the present; the child is young, he has had a long journey, he is tired.” The child was over twenty, and about six feet high. “He ought to rest, and eat something; and you set him to fighting!”

“You are a gabbler!” said Bulba. “Don’t listen to your mother, my lad; she is a woman, and knows nothing. What sort of petting do you need? A clear field and a good horse, that’s the kind of petting for you! And do you see this sword? that’s your mother! All the rest people stuff your heads with is rubbish; the academy, books, primers, philosophy, and all that, I spit upon it all!” Here Bulba added a word which is not used in print. “But I’ll tell you what is best: I’ll take you to Zaporozhe (1) this very week. That’s where there’s science for you! There’s your school; there alone will you gain sense.”

(1) The Cossack country beyond (za) the falls (porozhe) of the Dnieper.

“And are they only to remain home a week?” said the worn old mother sadly and with tears in her eyes. “The poor boys will have no chance of looking around, no chance of getting acquainted with the home where they were born; there will be no chance for me to get a look at them.”

“Enough, you’ve howled quite enough, old woman! A Cossack is not born to run around after women. You would like to hide them both under your petticoat, and sit upon them as a hen sits on eggs. Go, go, and let us have everything there is on the table in a trice. We don’t want any dumplings, honey-cakes, poppy-cakes, or any other such messes: give us a whole sheep, a goat, mead forty years old, and as much corn-brandy as possible, not with raisins and all sorts of stuff, but plain scorching corn-brandy, which foams and hisses like mad.”

Bulba led his sons into the principal room of the hut; and two pretty servant girls wearing coin necklaces, who were arranging the apartment, ran out quickly. They were either frightened at the arrival of the young men, who did not care to be familiar with anyone; or else they merely wanted to keep up their feminine custom of screaming and rushing away headlong at the sight of a man, and then

screening their blushes for some time with their sleeves. The hut was furnished according to the fashion of that period — a fashion concerning which hints linger only in the songs and lyrics, no longer sung, alas! in the Ukraine as of yore by blind old men, to the soft tinkling of the native guitar, to the people thronging round them — according to the taste of that warlike and troublous time, of leagues and battles prevailing in the Ukraine after the union. Everything was cleanly smeared with coloured clay. On the walls hung sabres, hunting-whips, nets for birds, fishing-nets, guns, elaborately carved powder-horns, gilded bits for horses, and tether-ropes with silver plates. The small window had round dull panes, through which it was impossible to see except by opening the one moveable one. Around the windows and doors red bands were painted. On shelves in one corner stood jugs, bottles, and flasks of green and blue glass, carved silver cups, and gilded drinking vessels of various makes — Venetian, Turkish, Tscherkessian, which had reached Bulba's cabin by various roads, at third and fourth hand, a thing common enough in those bold days. There were birch-wood benches all around the room, a huge table under the holy pictures in one corner, and a huge stove covered with particoloured patterns in relief, with spaces between it and the wall. All this was quite familiar to the two young men, who were wont to come home every year during the dog-days, since they had no horses, and it was not customary to allow students to ride afield on horseback. The only distinctive things permitted them were long locks of hair on the temples, which every Cossack who bore weapons was entitled to pull. It was only at the end of their course of study that Bulba had sent them a couple of young stallions from his stud.

Bulba, on the occasion of his sons' arrival, ordered all the sotniks or captains of hundreds, and all the officers of the band who were of any consequence, to be summoned; and when two of them arrived with his old comrade, the Osaul or sub-chief, Dmitro Tovkatch, he immediately presented the lads, saying, "See what fine young fellows they are! I shall send them to the Setch (2) shortly." The guests congratulated Bulba and the young men, telling them they would do well and that there was no better knowledge for a young man than a knowledge of that same Zaporozhian Setch.

(2) The village or, rather, permanent camp of the Zaporozhian Cossacks.

"Come, brothers, seat yourselves, each where he likes best, at the table; come, my sons. First of all, let's take some corn-brandy," said Bulba. "God bless you! Welcome, lads; you, Ostap, and you, Andrii. God grant that you may always be successful in war, that you may beat the Musselmans and the Turks and the Tatars; and that when the Poles undertake any expedition against our faith, you

may beat the Poles. Come, clink your glasses. How now? Is the brandy good? What's corn-brandy in Latin? The Latins were stupid: they did not know there was such a thing in the world as corn-brandy. What was the name of the man who wrote Latin verses? I don't know much about reading and writing, so I don't quite know. Wasn't it Horace?"

"What a dad!" thought the elder son Ostap. "The old dog knows everything, but he always pretends the contrary."

"I don't believe the archimandrite allowed you so much as a smell of corn-brandy," continued Taras. "Confess, my boys, they thrashed you well with fresh birch-twigs on your backs and all over your Cossack bodies; and perhaps, when you grew too sharp, they beat you with whips. And not on Saturday only, I fancy, but on Wednesday and Thursday."

"What is past, father, need not be recalled; it is done with."

"Let them try it know," said Andrii. "Let anybody just touch me, let any Tatar risk it now, and he'll soon learn what a Cossack's sword is like!"

"Good, my son, by heavens, good! And when it comes to that, I'll go with you; by heavens, I'll go too! What should I wait here for? To become a buckwheat-reaper and housekeeper, to look after the sheep and swine, and loaf around with my wife? Away with such nonsense! I am a Cossack; I'll have none of it! What's left but war? I'll go with you to Zaporozhe to carouse; I'll go, by heavens!" And old Bulba, growing warm by degrees and finally quite angry, rose from the table, and, assuming a dignified attitude, stamped his foot. "We will go to-morrow! Wherefore delay? What enemy can we besiege here? What is this hut to us? What do we want with all these things? What are pots and pans to us?" So saying, he began to knock over the pots and flasks, and to throw them about.

The poor old woman, well used to such freaks on the part of her husband, looked sadly on from her seat on the wall-bench. She did not dare say a word; but when she heard the decision which was so terrible for her, she could not refrain from tears. As she looked at her children, from whom so speedy a separation was threatened, it is impossible to describe the full force of her speechless grief, which seemed to quiver in her eyes and on her lips convulsively pressed together.

Bulba was terribly headstrong. He was one of those characters which could only exist in that fierce fifteenth century, and in that half-nomadic corner of Europe, when the whole of Southern Russia, deserted by its princes, was laid waste and burned to the quick by pitiless troops of Mongolian robbers; when men deprived of house and home grew brave there; when, amid conflagrations, threatening neighbours, and eternal terrors, they settled down, and growing

accustomed to looking these things straight in the face, trained themselves not to know that there was such a thing as fear in the world; when the old, peacable Slav spirit was fired with warlike flame, and the Cossack state was instituted — a free, wild outbreak of Russian nature — and when all the river-banks, fords, and like suitable places were peopled by Cossacks, whose number no man knew. Their bold comrades had a right to reply to the Sultan when he asked how many they were, “Who knows? We are scattered all over the steppes; wherever there is a hillock, there is a Cossack.”

It was, in fact, a most remarkable exhibition of Russian strength, forced by dire necessity from the bosom of the people. In place of the original provinces with their petty towns, in place of the warring and bartering petty princes ruling in their cities, there arose great colonies, kurens (3), and districts, bound together by one common danger and hatred against the heathen robbers. The story is well known how their incessant warfare and restless existence saved Europe from the merciless hordes which threatened to overwhelm her. The Polish kings, who now found themselves sovereigns, in place of the provincial princes, over these extensive tracts of territory, fully understood, despite the weakness and remoteness of their own rule, the value of the Cossacks, and the advantages of the warlike, untrammelled life led by them. They encouraged them and flattered this disposition of mind. Under their distant rule, the hetmans or chiefs, chosen from among the Cossacks themselves, redistributed the territory into military districts. It was not a standing army, no one saw it; but in case of war and general uprising, it required a week, and no more, for every man to appear on horseback, fully armed, receiving only one ducat from the king; and in two weeks such a force had assembled as no recruiting officers would ever have been able to collect. When the expedition was ended, the army dispersed among the fields and meadows and the fords of the Dnieper; each man fished, wrought at his trade, brewed his beer, and was once more a free Cossack. Their foreign contemporaries rightly marvelled at their wonderful qualities. There was no handicraft which the Cossack was not expert at: he could distil brandy, build a waggon, make powder, and do blacksmith’s and gunsmith’s work, in addition to committing wild excesses, drinking and carousing as only a Russian can — all this he was equal to. Besides the registered Cossacks, who considered themselves bound to appear in arms in time of war, it was possible to collect at any time, in case of dire need, a whole army of volunteers. All that was required was for the Osaul or sub-chief to traverse the market-places and squares of the villages and hamlets, and shout at the top of his voice, as he stood in his waggon, “Hey, you distillers and beer-brewers! you have brewed enough beer, and lolled on your stoves, and stuffed your fat carcasses with flour, long enough! Rise, win

glory and warlike honours! You ploughmen, you reapers of buckwheat, you tenders of sheep, you danglers after women, enough of following the plough, and soiling your yellow shoes in the earth, and courting women, and wasting your warlike strength! The hour has come to win glory for the Cossacks!" These words were like sparks falling on dry wood. The husbandman broke his plough; the brewers and distillers threw away their casks and destroyed their barrels; the mechanics and merchants sent their trade and their shop to the devil, broke pots and everything else in their homes, and mounted their horses. In short, the Russian character here received a profound development, and manifested a powerful outwards expression.

(3) Cossack villages. In the Setch, a large wooden barrack.

Taras was one of the band of old-fashioned leaders; he was born for warlike emotions, and was distinguished for his uprightness of character. At that epoch the influence of Poland had already begun to make itself felt upon the Russian nobility. Many had adopted Polish customs, and began to display luxury in splendid staffs of servants, hawks, huntsmen, dinners, and palaces. This was not to Taras's taste. He liked the simple life of the Cossacks, and quarrelled with those of his comrades who were inclined to the Warsaw party, calling them serfs of the Polish nobles. Ever on the alert, he regarded himself as the legal protector of the orthodox faith. He entered despotically into any village where there was a general complaint of oppression by the revenue farmers and of the addition of fresh taxes on necessaries. He and his Cossacks executed justice, and made it a rule that in three cases it was absolutely necessary to resort to the sword. Namely, when the commissioners did not respect the superior officers and stood before them covered; when any one made light of the faith and did not observe the customs of his ancestors; and, finally, when the enemy were Mussulmans or Turks, against whom he considered it permissible, in every case, to draw the sword for the glory of Christianity.

Now he rejoiced beforehand at the thought of how he would present himself with his two sons at the Setch, and say, "See what fine young fellows I have brought you!" how he would introduce them to all his old comrades, steeled in warfare; how he would observe their first exploits in the sciences of war and of drinking, which was also regarded as one of the principal warlike qualities. At first he had intended to send them forth alone; but at the sight of their freshness, stature, and manly personal beauty his martial spirit flamed up and he resolved to go with them himself the very next day, although there was no necessity for this except his obstinate self-will. He began at once to hurry about and give orders; selected horses and trappings for his sons, looked through the stables and storehouses, and chose servants to accompany them on the morrow. He

delegated his power to Osaul Tovkatch, and gave with it a strict command to appear with his whole force at the Setch the very instant he should receive a message from him. Although he was jolly, and the effects of his drinking bout still lingered in his brain, he forgot nothing. He even gave orders that the horses should be watered, their cribs filled, and that they should be fed with the finest corn; and then he retired, fatigued with all his labours.

“Now, children, we must sleep, but to-morrow we shall do what God wills. Don’t prepare us a bed: we need no bed; we will sleep in the courtyard.”

Night had but just stole over the heavens, but Bulba always went to bed early. He lay down on a rug and covered himself with a sheepskin pelisse, for the night air was quite sharp and he liked to lie warm when he was at home. He was soon snoring, and the whole household speedily followed his example. All snored and groaned as they lay in different corners. The watchman went to sleep the first of all, he had drunk so much in honour of the young masters’ home-coming.

The mother alone did not sleep. She bent over the pillow of her beloved sons, as they lay side by side; she smoothed with a comb their carelessly tangled locks, and moistened them with her tears. She gazed at them with her whole soul, with every sense; she was wholly merged in the gaze, and yet she could not gaze enough. She had fed them at her own breast, she had tended them and brought them up; and now to see them only for an instant! “My sons, my darling sons! what will become of you! what fate awaits you?” she said, and tears stood in the wrinkles which disfigured her once beautiful face. In truth, she was to be pitied, as was every woman of that period. She had lived only for a moment of love, only during the first ardour of passion, only during the first flush of youth; and then her grim betrayer had deserted her for the sword, for his comrades and his carouses. She saw her husband two or three days in a year, and then, for several years, heard nothing of him. And when she did see him, when they did live together, what a life was hers! She endured insult, even blows; she felt caresses bestowed only in pity; she was a misplaced object in that community of unmarried warriors, upon which wandering Zaporozhe cast a colouring of its own. Her pleasureless youth flitted by; her ripe cheeks and bosom withered away unkissed and became covered with premature wrinkles. Love, feeling, everything that is tender and passionate in a woman, was converted in her into maternal love. She hovered around her children with anxiety, passion, tears, like the gull of the steppes. They were taking her sons, her darling sons, from her — taking them from her, so that she should never see them again! Who knew? Perhaps a Tatar would cut off their heads in the very first skirmish, and she would never know where their deserted bodies might lie, torn by birds of prey; and yet for each single drop of their blood she would have given all hers.

Sobbing, she gazed into their eyes, and thought, “Perhaps Bulba, when he wakes, will put off their departure for a day or two; perhaps it occurred to him to go so soon because he had been drinking.”

The moon from the summit of the heavens had long since lit up the whole courtyard filled with sleepers, the thick clump of willows, and the tall steppe-grass, which hid the palisade surrounding the court. She still sat at her sons’ pillow, never removing her eyes from them for a moment, nor thinking of sleep. Already the horses, divining the approach of dawn, had ceased eating and lain down upon the grass; the topmost leaves of the willows began to rustle softly, and little by little the rippling rustle descended to their bases. She sat there until daylight, unwearied, and wishing in her heart that the night might prolong itself indefinitely. From the steppes came the ringing neigh of the horses, and red streaks shone brightly in the sky. Bulba suddenly awoke, and sprang to his feet. He remembered quite well what he had ordered the night before. “Now, my men, you’ve slept enough! ‘tis time, ‘tis time! Water the horses! And where is the old woman?” He generally called his wife so. “Be quick, old woman, get us something to eat; the way is long.”

The poor old woman, deprived of her last hope, slipped sadly into the hut.

Whilst she, with tears, prepared what was needed for breakfast, Bulba gave his orders, went to the stable, and selected his best trappings for his children with his own hand.

The scholars were suddenly transformed. Red morocco boots with silver heels took the place of their dirty old ones; trousers wide as the Black Sea, with countless folds and plaits, were kept up by golden girdles from which hung long slender thongs, with tassles and other tinkling things, for pipes. Their jackets of scarlet cloth were girt by flowered sashes into which were thrust engraved Turkish pistols; their swords clanked at their heels. Their faces, already a little sunburnt, seemed to have grown handsomer and whiter; their slight black moustaches now cast a more distinct shadow on this pallor and set off their healthy youthful complexions. They looked very handsome in their black sheepskin caps, with cloth-of-gold crowns.

When their poor mother saw them, she could not utter a word, and tears stood in her eyes.

“Now, my lads, all is ready; no delay!” said Bulba at last. “But we must first all sit down together, in accordance with Christian custom before a journey.”

All sat down, not excepting the servants, who had been standing respectfully at the door.

“Now, mother, bless your children,” said Bulba. “Pray God that they may fight bravely, always defend their warlike honour, always defend the faith of Christ;

and, if not, that they may die, so that their breath may not be longer in the world.”

“Come to your mother, children; a mother’s prayer protects on land and sea.”

The mother, weak as mothers are, embraced them, drew out two small holy pictures, and hung them, sobbing, around their necks. “May God’s mother — keep you! Children, do not forget your mother — send some little word of yourselves — ” She could say no more.

“Now, children, let us go,” said Bulba.

At the door stood the horses, ready saddled. Bulba sprang upon his “Devil,” which bounded wildly, on feeling on his back a load of over thirty stone, for Taras was extremely stout and heavy.

When the mother saw that her sons were also mounted, she rushed towards the younger, whose features expressed somewhat more gentleness than those of his brother. She grasped his stirrup, clung to his saddle, and with despair in her eyes, refused to loose her hold. Two stout Cossacks seized her carefully, and bore her back into the hut. But before the cavalcade had passed out of the courtyard, she rushed with the speed of a wild goat, disproportionate to her years, to the gate, stopped a horse with irresistible strength, and embraced one of her sons with mad, unconscious violence. Then they led her away again.

The young Cossacks rode on sadly, repressing their tears out of fear of their father, who, on his side, was somewhat moved, although he strove not to show it. The morning was grey, the green sward bright, the birds twittered rather discordantly. They glanced back as they rode. Their paternal farm seemed to have sunk into the earth. All that was visible above the surface were the two chimneys of their modest hut and the tops of the trees up whose trunks they had been used to climb like squirrels. Before them still stretched the field by which they could recall the whole story of their lives, from the years when they rolled in its dewy grass down to the years when they awaited in it the dark-browed Cossack maiden, running timidly across it on quick young feet. There is the pole above the well, with the waggon wheel fastened to its top, rising solitary against the sky; already the level which they have traversed appears a hill in the distance, and now all has disappeared. Farewell, childhood, games, all, all, farewell!

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CHAPTER II

All three horsemen rode in silence. Old Taras's thoughts were far away: before him passed his youth, his years — the swift-flying years, over which the Cossack always weeps, wishing that his life might be all youth. He wondered whom of his former comrades he should meet at the Setch. He reckoned up how many had already died, how many were still alive. Tears formed slowly in his eyes, and his grey head bent sadly.

His sons were occupied with other thoughts. But we must speak further of his sons. They had been sent, when twelve years old, to the academy at Kief, because all leaders of that day considered it indispensable to give their children an education, although it was afterwards utterly forgotten. Like all who entered the academy, they were wild, having been brought up in unrestrained freedom; and whilst there they had acquired some polish, and pursued some common branches of knowledge which gave them a certain resemblance to each other.

The elder, Ostap, began his scholastic career by running away in the course of the first year. They brought him back, whipped him well, and set him down to his books. Four times did he bury his primer in the earth; and four times, after giving him a sound thrashing, did they buy him a new one. But he would no doubt have repeated this feat for the fifth time, had not his father given him a solemn assurance that he would keep him at monastic work for twenty years, and sworn in advance that he should never behold Zaporozhe all his life long, unless he learned all the sciences taught in the academy. It was odd that the man who said this was that very Taras Bulba who condemned all learning, and counselled his children, as we have seen, not to trouble themselves at all about it. From that moment, Ostap began to pore over his tiresome books with exemplary diligence, and quickly stood on a level with the best. The style of education in that age differed widely from the manner of life. The scholastic, grammatical, rhetorical, and logical subtle ties in vogue were decidedly out of consonance with the times, never having any connection with, and never being encountered in, actual life. Those who studied them, even the least scholastic, could not apply their knowledge to anything whatever. The learned men of those days were even more incapable than the rest, because farther removed from all experience. Moreover, the republican constitution of the academy, the fearful multitude of young, healthy, strong fellows, inspired the students with an activity quite outside the limits of their learning. Poor fare, or frequent punishments of fasting, with the

numerous requirements arising in fresh, strong, healthy youth, combined to arouse in them that spirit of enterprise which was afterwards further developed among the Zaporozhians. The hungry student running about the streets of Kief forced every one to be on his guard. Dealers sitting in the bazaar covered their pies, their cakes, and their pumpkin-rolls with their hands, like eagles protecting their young, if they but caught sight of a passing student. The consul or monitor, who was bound by his duty to look after the comrades entrusted to his care, had such frightfully wide pockets to his trousers that he could stow away the whole contents of the gaping dealer's stall in them. These students constituted an entirely separate world, for they were not admitted to the higher circles, composed of Polish and Russian nobles. Even the Waiwode, Adam Kisel, in spite of the patronage he bestowed upon the academy, did not seek to introduce them into society, and ordered them to be kept more strictly in supervision. This command was quite superfluous, for neither the rector nor the monkish professors spared rod or whip; and the lictors sometimes, by their orders, lashed their consuls so severely that the latter rubbed their trousers for weeks afterwards. This was to many of them a trifle, only a little more stinging than good vodka with pepper: others at length grew tired of such constant blisters, and ran away to Zaporozhe if they could find the road and were not caught on the way. Ostap Bulba, although he began to study logic, and even theology, with much zeal, did not escape the merciless rod. Naturally, all this tended to harden his character, and give him that firmness which distinguishes the Cossacks. He always held himself aloof from his comrades.

He rarely led others into such hazardous enterprises as robbing a strange garden or orchard; but, on the other hand, he was always among the first to join the standard of an adventurous student. And never, under any circumstances, did he betray his comrades; neither imprisonment nor beatings could make him do so. He was unassailable by any temptations save those of war and revelry; at least, he scarcely ever dreamt of others. He was upright with his equals. He was kind-hearted, after the only fashion that kind-heartedness could exist in such a character and at such a time. He was touched to his very heart by his poor mother's tears; but this only vexed him, and caused him to hang his head in thought.

His younger brother, Andrii, had livelier and more fully developed feelings. He learned more willingly and without the effort with which strong and weighty characters generally have to make in order to apply themselves to study. He was more inventive-minded than his brother, and frequently appeared as the leader of dangerous expeditions; sometimes, thanks to the quickness of his mind, contriving to escape punishment when his brother Ostap, abandoning all efforts,

stripped off his gaberdine and lay down upon the floor without a thought of begging for mercy. He too thirsted for action; but, at the same time, his soul was accessible to other sentiments. The need of love burned ardently within him. When he had passed his eighteenth year, woman began to present herself more frequently in his dreams; listening to philosophical discussions, he still beheld her, fresh, black-eyed, tender; before him constantly flitted her elastic bosom, her soft, bare arms; the very gown which clung about her youthful yet well-rounded limbs breathed into his visions a certain inexpressible sensuousness. He carefully concealed this impulse of his passionate young soul from his comrades, because in that age it was held shameful and dishonourable for a Cossack to think of love and a wife before he had tasted battle. On the whole, during the last year, he had acted more rarely as leader to the bands of students, but had roamed more frequently alone, in remote corners of Kief, among low-roofed houses, buried in cherry orchards, peeping alluringly at the street. Sometimes he betook himself to the more aristocratic streets, in the old Kief of to-day, where dwelt Little Russian and Polish nobles, and where houses were built in more fanciful style. Once, as he was gaping along, an old-fashioned carriage belonging to some Polish noble almost drove over him; and the heavily moustached coachman, who sat on the box, gave him a smart cut with his whip. The young student fired up; with thoughtless daring he seized the hind-wheel with his powerful hands and stopped the carriage. But the coachman, fearing a drubbing, lashed his horses; they sprang forward, and Andrii, succeeding happily in freeing his hands, was flung full length on the ground with his face flat in the mud. The most ringing and harmonious of laughs resounded above him. He raised his eyes and saw, standing at a window, a beauty such as he had never beheld in all his life, black-eyed, and with skin white as snow illumined by the dawning flush of the sun. She was laughing heartily, and her laugh enhanced her dazzling loveliness. Taken aback he gazed at her in confusion, abstractedly wiping the mud from his face, by which means it became still further smeared. Who could this beauty be? He sought to find out from the servants, who, in rich liveries, stood at the gate in a crowd surrounding a young guitar-player; but they only laughed when they saw his besmeared face and deigned him no reply. At length he learned that she was the daughter of the Waiwode of Koven, who had come thither for a time. The following night, with the daring characteristic of the student, he crept through the palings into the garden and climbed a tree which spread its branches upon the very roof of the house. From the tree he gained the roof, and made his way down the chimney straight into the bedroom of the beauty, who at that moment was seated before a lamp, engaged in removing the costly earrings from her ears. The beautiful Pole was so alarmed on suddenly

beholding an unknown man that she could not utter a single word; but when she perceived that the student stood before her with downcast eyes, not daring to move a hand through timidity, when she recognised in him the one who had fallen in the street, laughter again overpowered her.

Moreover, there was nothing terrible about Andrii's features; he was very handsome. She laughed heartily, and amused herself over him for a long time. The lady was giddy, like all Poles; but her eyes — her wondrous clear, piercing eyes — shot one glance, a long glance. The student could not move hand or foot, but stood bound as in a sack, when the Waiwode's daughter approached him boldly, placed upon his head her glittering diadem, hung her earrings on his lips, and flung over him a transparent muslin chemisette with gold-embroidered garlands. She adorned him, and played a thousand foolish pranks, with the childish carelessness which distinguishes the giddy Poles, and which threw the poor student into still greater confusion.

He cut a ridiculous feature, gazing immovably, and with open mouth, into her dazzling eyes. A knock at the door startled her. She ordered him to hide himself under the bed, and, as soon as the disturber was gone, called her maid, a Tatar prisoner, and gave her orders to conduct him to the garden with caution, and thence show him through the fence. But our student this time did not pass the fence so successfully. The watchman awoke, and caught him firmly by the foot; and the servants, assembling, beat him in the street, until his swift legs rescued him. After that it became very dangerous to pass the house, for the Waiwode's domestics were numerous. He met her once again at church. She saw him, and smiled pleasantly, as at an old acquaintance. He saw her once more, by chance; but shortly afterwards the Waiwode departed, and, instead of the beautiful black-eyed Pole, some fat face or other gazed from the window. This was what Andrii was thinking about, as he hung his head and kept his eyes on his horse's mane.

In the meantime the steppe had long since received them all into its green embrace; and the high grass, closing round, concealed them, till only their black Cossack caps appeared above it.

"Eh, eh, why are you so quiet, lads?" said Bulba at length, waking from his own reverie. "You're like monks. Now, all thinking to the Evil One, once for all! Take your pipes in your teeth, and let us smoke, and spur on our horses so swiftly that no bird can overtake us."

And the Cossacks, bending low on their horses' necks, disappeared in the grass. Their black caps were no longer to be seen; a streak of trodden grass alone showed the trace of their swift flight.

The sun had long since looked forth from the clear heavens and inundated the steppe with his quickening, warming light. All that was dim and drowsy in the

Cossacks' minds flew away in a twinkling: their hearts fluttered like birds.

The farther they penetrated the steppe, the more beautiful it became. Then all the South, all that region which now constitutes New Russia, even as far as the Black Sea, was a green, virgin wilderness. No plough had ever passed over the immeasurable waves of wild growth; horses alone, hidden in it as in a forest, trod it down. Nothing in nature could be finer. The whole surface resembled a golden-green ocean, upon which were sprinkled millions of different flowers. Through the tall, slender stems of the grass peeped light-blue, dark-blue, and lilac star-thistles; the yellow broom thrust up its pyramidal head; the parasol-shaped white flower of the false flax shimmered on high. A wheat-ear, brought God knows whence, was filling out to ripening. Amongst the roots of this luxuriant vegetation ran partridges with outstretched necks. The air was filled with the notes of a thousand different birds. On high hovered the hawks, their wings outspread, and their eyes fixed intently on the grass. The cries of a flock of wild ducks, ascending from one side, were echoed from God knows what distant lake. From the grass arose, with measured sweep, a gull, and skimmed wantonly through blue waves of air. And now she has vanished on high, and appears only as a black dot: now she has turned her wings, and shines in the sunlight. Oh, steppes, how beautiful you are!

Our travellers halted only a few minutes for dinner. Their escort of ten Cossacks sprang from their horses and undid the wooden casks of brandy, and the gourds which were used instead of drinking vessels. They ate only cakes of bread and dripping; they drank but one cup apiece to strengthen them, for Taras Bulba never permitted intoxication upon the road, and then continued their journey until evening.

In the evening the whole steppe changed its aspect. All its varied expanse was bathed in the last bright glow of the sun; and as it grew dark gradually, it could be seen how the shadow flitted across it and it became dark green. The mist rose more densely; each flower, each blade of grass, emitted a fragrance as of ambergris, and the whole steppe distilled perfume. Broad bands of rosy gold were streaked across the dark blue heaven, as with a gigantic brush; here and there gleamed, in white tufts, light and transparent clouds: and the freshest, most enchanting of gentle breezes barely stirred the tops of the grass-blades, like sea-waves, and caressed the cheek. The music which had resounded through the day had died away, and given place to another. The striped marmots crept out of their holes, stood erect on their hind legs, and filled the steppe with their whistle. The whirr of the grasshoppers had become more distinctly audible. Sometimes the cry of the swan was heard from some distant lake, ringing through the air like a silver trumpet. The travellers, halting in the midst of the plain, selected a spot for

their night encampment, made a fire, and hung over it the kettle in which they cooked their oatmeal; the steam rising and floating aslant in the air. Having supped, the Cossacks lay down to sleep, after hobbling their horses and turning them out to graze. They lay down in their gaberdines. The stars of night gazed directly down upon them. They could hear the countless myriads of insects which filled the grass; their rasping, whistling, and chirping, softened by the fresh air, resounded clearly through the night, and lulled the drowsy ear. If one of them rose and stood for a time, the steppe presented itself to him strewn with the sparks of glow-worms. At times the night sky was illumined in spots by the glare of burning reeds along pools or river-bank; and dark flights of swans flying to the north were suddenly lit up by the silvery, rose-coloured gleam, till it seemed as though red kerchiefs were floating in the dark heavens.

The travellers proceeded onward without any adventure. They came across no villages. It was ever the same boundless, waving, beautiful steppe. Only at intervals the summits of distant forests shone blue, on one hand, stretching along the banks of the Dnieper. Once only did Taras point out to his sons a small black speck far away amongst the grass, saying, “Look, children! yonder gallops a Tatar.” The little head with its long moustaches fixed its narrow eyes upon them from afar, its nostrils snuffing the air like a greyhound’s, and then disappeared like an antelope on its owner perceiving that the Cossacks were thirteen strong. “And now, children, don’t try to overtake the Tatar! You would never catch him to all eternity; he has a horse swifter than my Devil.” But Bulba took precautions, fearing hidden ambushes. They galloped along the course of a small stream, called the Tatarka, which falls into the Dnieper; rode into the water and swam with their horses some distance in order to conceal their trail. Then, scrambling out on the bank, they continued their road.

Three days later they were not far from the goal of their journey. The air suddenly grew colder: they could feel the vicinity of the Dnieper. And there it gleamed afar, distinguishable on the horizon as a dark band. It sent forth cold waves, spreading nearer, nearer, and finally seeming to embrace half the entire surface of the earth. This was that section of its course where the river, hitherto confined by the rapids, finally makes its own away and, roaring like the sea, rushes on at will; where the islands, flung into its midst, have pressed it farther from their shores, and its waves have spread widely over the earth, encountering neither cliffs nor hills. The Cossacks, alighting from their horses, entered the ferry-boat, and after a three hours’ sail reached the shores of the island of Khortitz, where at that time stood the Setch, which so often changed its situation.

A throng of people hastened to the shore with boats. The Cossacks arranged the horses’ trappings. Taras assumed a stately air, pulled his belt tighter, and

proudly stroked his moustache. His sons also inspected themselves from head to foot, with some apprehension and an undefined feeling of satisfaction; and all set out together for the suburb, which was half a verst from the Setch. On their arrival, they were deafened by the clang of fifty blacksmiths' hammers beating upon twenty-five anvils sunk in the earth. Stout tanners seated beneath awnings were scraping ox-hides with their strong hands; shop-keepers sat in their booths, with piles of flints, steels, and powder before them; Armenians spread out their rich handkerchiefs; Tatars turned their kabobs upon spits; a Jew, with his head thrust forward, was filtering some corn-brandy from a cask. But the first man they encountered was a Zaporozhetz (1) who was sleeping in the very middle of the road with legs and arms outstretched. Taras Bulba could not refrain from halting to admire him. "How splendidly developed he is; phew, what a magnificent figure!" he said, stopping his horse. It was, in fact, a striking picture. This Zaporozhetz had stretched himself out in the road like a lion; his scalp-lock, thrown proudly behind him, extended over upwards of a foot of ground; his trousers of rich red cloth were spotted with tar, to show his utter disdain for them. Having admired to his heart's content, Bulba passed on through the narrow street, crowded with mechanics exercising their trades, and with people of all nationalities who thronged this suburb of the Setch, resembling a fair, and fed and clothed the Setch itself, which knew only how to revel and burn powder.

(1) Sometimes written Zaporovian.

At length they left the suburb behind them, and perceived some scattered kurens (2), covered with turf, or in Tatar fashion with felt. Some were furnished with cannon. Nowhere were any fences visible, or any of those low-roofed houses with verandahs supported upon low wooden pillars, such as were seen in the suburb. A low wall and a ditch, totally unguarded, betokened a terrible degree of recklessness. Some sturdy Zaporozhtzi lying, pipe in mouth, in the very road, glanced indifferently at them, but never moved from their places. Taras threaded his way carefully among them, with his sons, saying, "Good-day, gentles." — "Good-day to you," answered the Zaporozhtzi. Scattered over the plain were picturesque groups. From their weatherbeaten faces, it was plain that all were steeled in battle, and had faced every sort of bad weather. And there it was, the Setch! There was the lair from whence all those men, proud and strong as lions, issued forth! There was the spot whence poured forth liberty and Cossacks all over the Ukraine.

(2) Enormous wooden sheds, each inhabited by a troop or kuren.

The travellers entered the great square where the council generally met. On a huge overturned cask sat a Zaporozhetz without his shirt; he was holding it in his hands, and slowly sewing up the holes in it. Again their way was stopped by a

whole crowd of musicians, in the midst of whom a young Zaporozhetz was dancing, with head thrown back and arms outstretched. He kept shouting, “Play faster, musicians! Begrudge not, Thoma, brandy to these orthodox Christians!” And Thoma, with his blackened eye, went on measuring out without stint, to every one who presented himself, a huge jugful.

About the youthful Zaporozhetz four old men, moving their feet quite briskly, leaped like a whirlwind to one side, almost upon the musicians’ heads, and, suddenly, retreating, squatted down and drummed the hard earth vigorously with their silver heels. The earth hummed dully all about, and afar the air resounded with national dance tunes beaten by the clanging heels of their boots.

But one shouted more loudly than all the rest, and flew after the others in the dance. His scalp-lock streamed in the wind, his muscular chest was bare, his warm, winter fur jacket was hanging by the sleeves, and the perspiration poured from him as from a pig. “Take off your jacket!” said Taras at length: “see how he steams!” — ”I can’t,” shouted the Cossack. “Why?” — ”I can’t: I have such a disposition that whatever I take off, I drink up.” And indeed, the young fellow had not had a cap for a long time, nor a belt to his caftan, nor an embroidered neckerchief: all had gone the proper road. The throng increased; more folk joined the dancer: and it was impossible to observe without emotion how all yielded to the impulse of the dance, the freest, the wildest, the world has ever seen, still called from its mighty originators, the Kosachka.

“Oh, if I had no horse to hold,” exclaimed Taras, “I would join the dance myself.”

Meanwhile there began to appear among the throng men who were respected for their prowess throughout all the Setch — old greyheads who had been leaders more than once. Taras soon found a number of familiar faces. Ostap and Andrii heard nothing but greetings. “Ah, it is you, Petcheritza! Good day, Kozolup!” — ”Whence has God brought you, Taras?” — ”How did you come here, Doloto? Health to you, Kirdyaga! Hail to you, Gustui! Did I ever think of seeing you, Remen?” And these heroes, gathered from all the roving population of Eastern Russia, kissed each other and began to ask questions. “But what has become of Kasyan? Where is Borodavka? and Koloper? and Pidsuitok?” And in reply, Taras Bulba learned that Borodavka had been hung at Tolopan, that Koloper had been flayed alive at Kizikirmen, that Pidsuitok’s head had been salted and sent in a cask to Constantinople. Old Bulba hung his head and said thoughtfully, “They were good Cossacks.”

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CHAPTER III

Taras Bulba and his sons had been in the Setch about a week. Ostap and Andrii occupied themselves but little with the science of war. The Setch was not fond of wasting time in warlike exercises. The young generation learned these by experience alone, in the very heat of battles, which were therefore incessant. The Cossacks thought it a nuisance to fill up the intervals of this instruction with any kind of drill, except perhaps shooting at a mark, and on rare occasions with horse-racing and wild-beast hunts on the steppes and in the forests. All the rest of the time was devoted to revelry — a sign of the wide diffusion of moral liberty. The whole of the Setch presented an unusual scene: it was one unbroken revel; a ball noisily begun, which had no end. Some busied themselves with handicrafts; others kept little shops and traded; but the majority caroused from morning till night, if the wherewithal jingled in their pockets, and if the booty they had captured had not already passed into the hands of the shopkeepers and spirit-sellers. This universal revelry had something fascinating about it. It was not an assemblage of topers, who drank to drown sorrow, but simply a wild revelry of joy. Every one who came thither forgot everything, abandoned everything which had hitherto interested him. He, so to speak, spat upon his past and gave himself recklessly up to freedom and the good-fellowship of men of the same stamp as himself — idlers having neither relatives nor home nor family, nothing, in short, save the free sky and the eternal revel of their souls. This gave rise to that wild gaiety which could not have sprung from any other source. The tales and talk current among the assembled crowd, reposing lazily on the ground, were often so droll, and breathed such power of vivid narration, that it required all the nonchalance of a Zaporozhetz to retain his immovable expression, without even a twitch of the moustache — a feature which to this day distinguishes the Southern Russian from his northern brethren. It was drunken, noisy mirth; but there was no dark ale-house where a man drowns thought in stupefying intoxication: it was a dense throng of schoolboys.

The only difference as regarded the students was that, instead of sitting under the pointer and listening to the worn-out doctrines of a teacher, they practised racing with five thousand horses; instead of the field where they had played ball, they had the boundless borderlands, where at the sight of them the Tatar showed his keen face and the Turk frowned grimly from under his green turban. The difference was that, instead of being forced to the companionship of school, they

themselves had deserted their fathers and mothers and fled from their homes; that here were those about whose neck a rope had already been wound, and who, instead of pale death, had seen life, and life in all its intensity; those who, from generous habits, could never keep a coin in their pockets; those who had thitherto regarded a ducat as wealth, and whose pockets, thanks to the Jew revenue-farmers, could have been turned wrong side out without any danger of anything falling from them. Here were students who could not endure the academic rod, and had not carried away a single letter from the schools; but with them were also some who knew about Horace, Cicero, and the Roman Republic. There were many leaders who afterwards distinguished themselves in the king's armies; and there were numerous clever partisans who cherished a magnanimous conviction that it was of no consequence where they fought, so long as they did fight, since it was a disgrace to an honourable man to live without fighting. There were many who had come to the Setch for the sake of being able to say afterwards that they had been there and were therefore hardened warriors. But who was not there? This strange republic was a necessary outgrowth of the epoch. Lovers of a warlike life, of golden beakers and rich brocades, of ducats and gold pieces, could always find employment there. The lovers of women alone could find naught, for no woman dared show herself even in the suburbs of the Setch.

It seemed exceedingly strange to Ostap and Andrii that, although a crowd of people had come to the Setch with them, not a soul inquired, "Whence come these men? who are they? and what are their names?" They had come thither as though returning to a home whence they had departed only an hour before. The new-comer merely presented himself to the Koschevoi, or head chief of the Setch, who generally said, "Welcome! Do you believe in Christ?" — "I do," replied the new-comer. "And do you believe in the Holy Trinity?" — "I do." — "And do you go to church?" — "I do." "Now cross yourself." The new-comer crossed himself. "Very good," replied the Koschevoi; "enter the kuren where you have most acquaintances." This concluded the ceremony. And all the Setch prayed in one church, and were willing to defend it to their last drop of blood, although they would not hearken to aught about fasting or abstinence. Jews, Armenians, and Tatars, inspired by strong avarice, took the liberty of living and trading in the suburbs; for the Zaporozhtzi never cared for bargaining, and paid whatever money their hand chanced to grasp in their pocket. Moreover, the lot of these gain-loving traders was pitiable in the extreme. They resembled people settled at the foot of Vesuvius; for when the Zaporozhtzi lacked money, these bold adventurers broke down their booths and took everything gratis. The Setch consisted of over sixty kurens, each of which greatly resembled a separate

independent republic, but still more a school or seminary of children, always ready for anything. No one had any occupation; no one retained anything for himself; everything was in the hands of the hetman of the kuren, who, on that account, generally bore the title of “father.” In his hands were deposited the money, clothes, all the provisions, oatmeal, grain, even the firewood. They gave him money to take care of. Quarrels amongst the inhabitants of the kuren were not unfrequent; and in such cases they proceeded at once to blows. The inhabitants of the kuren swarmed into the square, and smote each other with their fists, until one side had finally gained the upper hand, when the revelry began. Such was the Setch, which had such an attraction for young men.

Ostap and Andrii flung themselves into this sea of dissipation with all the ardour of youth, forgot in a trice their father’s house, the seminary, and all which had hitherto exercised their minds, and gave themselves wholly up to their new life. Everything interested them — the jovial habits of the Setch, and its chaotic morals and laws, which even seemed to them too strict for such a free republic. If a Cossack stole the smallest trifle, it was considered a disgrace to the whole Cossack community. He was bound to the pillar of shame, and a club was laid beside him, with which each passer-by was bound to deal him a blow until in this manner he was beaten to death. He who did not pay his debts was chained to a cannon, until some one of his comrades should decide to ransom him by paying his debts for him. But what made the deepest impression on Andrii was the terrible punishment decreed for murder. A hole was dug in his presence, the murderer was lowered alive into it, and over him was placed a coffin containing the body of the man he had killed, after which the earth was thrown upon both. Long afterwards the fearful ceremony of this horrible execution haunted his mind, and the man who had been buried alive appeared to him with his terrible coffin.

Both the young Cossacks soon took a good standing among their fellows. They often sallied out upon the steppe with comrades from their kuren, and sometimes too with the whole kuren or with neighbouring kurens, to shoot the innumerable steppe-birds of every sort, deer, and goats. Or they went out upon the lakes, the river, and its tributaries allotted to each kuren, to throw their nets and draw out rich prey for the enjoyment of the whole kuren. Although unversed in any trade exercised by a Cossack, they were soon remarked among the other youths for their obstinate bravery and daring in everything. Skilfully and accurately they fired at the mark, and swam the Dnieper against the current — a deed for which the novice was triumphantly received into the circle of Cossacks.

But old Taras was planning a different sphere of activity for them. Such an idle life was not to his mind; he wanted active employment. He reflected

incessantly how to stir up the Setch to some bold enterprise, wherein a man could revel as became a warrior. At length he went one day to the Koschevoi, and said plainly: —

"Well, Koschevoi, it is time for the Zaporozhtzi to set out."

"There is nowhere for them to go," replied the Koschevoi, removing his short pipe from his mouth and spitting to one side.

"What do you mean by nowhere? We can go to Turkey or Tatary."

"Impossible to go either to Turkey or Tatary," replied the Koschevoi, putting his pipe coolly into his mouth again.

"Why impossible?"

"It is so; we have promised the Sultan peace."

"But he is a Mussulman; and God and the Holy Scriptures command us to slay Mussulmans."

"We have no right. If we had not sworn by our faith, it might be done; but now it is impossible."

"How is it impossible? How can you say that we have no right? Here are my two sons, both young men. Neither has been to war; and you say that we have no right, and that there is no need for the Zaporozhtzi to set out on an expedition."

"Well, it is not fitting."

"Then it must be fitting that Cossack strength should be wasted in vain, that a man should disappear like a dog without having done a single good deed, that he should be of no use to his country or to Christianity! Why, then, do we live? What the deuce do we live for? just tell me that. You are a sensible man, you were not chosen as Koschevoi without reason: so just tell me what we live for?"

The Koschevoi made no reply to this question. He was an obstinate Cossack. He was silent for a while, and then said, "Anyway, there will not be war."

"There will not be war?" Taras asked again.

"No."

"Then it is no use thinking about it?"

"It is not to be thought of."

"Wait, you devil's limb!" said Taras to himself; "you shall learn to know me!" and he at once resolved to have his revenge on the Koschevoi.

Having made an agreement with several others, he gave them liquor; and the drunken Cossacks staggered into the square, where on a post hung the kettledrums which were generally beaten to assemble the people. Not finding the sticks, which were kept by the drummer, they seized a piece of wood and began to beat. The first to respond to the drum-beat was the drummer, a tall man with but one eye, but a frightfully sleepy one for all that.

"Who dares to beat the drum?" he shouted.

“Hold your tongue! take your sticks, and beat when you are ordered!” replied the drunken men.

The drummer at once took from his pocket the sticks which he had brought with him, well knowing the result of such proceedings. The drum rattled, and soon black swarms of Cossacks began to collect like bees in the square. All formed in a ring; and at length, after the third summons, the chiefs began to arrive — the Koschevoi with staff in hand, the symbol of his office; the judge with the army-seal; the secretary with his ink-bottle; and the osaul with his staff. The Koschevoi and the chiefs took off their caps and bowed on all sides to the Cossacks, who stood proudly with their arms akimbo.

“What means this assemblage? what do you wish, gentles?” said the Koschevoi. Shouts and exclamations interrupted his speech.

“Resign your staff! resign your staff this moment, you son of Satan! we will have you no longer!” shouted some of the Cossacks in the crowd. Some of the sober ones appeared to wish to oppose this, but both sober and drunken fell to blows. The shouting and uproar became universal.

The Koschevoi attempted to speak; but knowing that the self-willed multitude, if enraged, might beat him to death, as almost always happened in such cases, he bowed very low, laid down his staff, and hid himself in the crowd.

“Do you command us, gentles, to resign our insignia of office?” said the judge, the secretary, and the osaul, as they prepared to give up the ink-horn, army-seal, and staff, upon the spot.

“No, you are to remain!” was shouted from the crowd. “We only wanted to drive out the Koschevoi because he is a woman, and we want a man for Koschevoi.”

“Whom do you now elect as Koschevoi?” asked the chiefs.

“We choose Kukubenko,” shouted some.

“We won’t have Kukubenko!” screamed another party: “he is too young; the milk has not dried off his lips yet.”

“Let Schilo be hetman!” shouted some: “make Schilo our Koschevoi!”

“Away with your Schilo!” yelled the crowd; “what kind of a Cossack is he who is as thievish as a Tatar? To the devil in a sack with your drunken Schilo!”

“Borodaty! let us make Borodaty our Koschevoi!”

“We won’t have Borodaty! To the evil one’s mother with Borodaty!”

“Shout Kirdyanga!” whispered Taras Bulba to several.

“Kirdyanga, Kirdyanga!” shouted the crowd. “Borodaty, Borodaty! Kirdyanga, Kirdyanga! Schilo! Away with Schilo! Kirdyanga!”

All the candidates, on hearing their names mentioned, quitted the crowd, in order not to give any one a chance of supposing that they were personally

assisting in their election.

“Kirdyanga, Kirdyanga!” echoed more strongly than the rest.

“Borodaty!”

They proceeded to decide the matter by a show of hands, and Kirdyanga won.

“Fetch Kirdyanga!” they shouted. Half a score of Cossacks immediately left the crowd — some of them hardly able to keep their feet, to such an extent had they drunk — and went directly to Kirdyanga to inform him of his election.

Kirdyanga, a very old but wise Cossack, had been sitting for some time in his kuren, as if he knew nothing of what was going on.

“What is it, gentles? What do you wish?” he inquired.

“Come, they have chosen you for Koschevoi.”

“Have mercy, gentles!” said Kirdyanga. “How can I be worthy of such honour? Why should I be made Koschevoi? I have not sufficient capacity to fill such a post. Could no better person be found in all the army?”

“Come, I say!” shouted the Zaporozhtzi. Two of them seized him by the arms; and in spite of his planting his feet firmly they finally dragged him to the square, accompanying his progress with shouts, blows from behind with their fists, kicks, and exhortations. “Don’t hold back, you son of Satan! Accept the honour, you dog, when it is given!” In this manner Kirdyanga was conducted into the ring of Cossacks.

“How now, gentles?” announced those who had brought him, “are you agreed that this Cossack shall be your Koschevoi?”

“We are all agreed!” shouted the throng, and the whole plain trembled for a long time afterwards from the shout.

One of the chiefs took the staff and brought it to the newly elected Koschevoi. Kirdyanga, in accordance with custom, immediately refused it. The chief offered it a second time; Kirdyanga again refused it, and then, at the third offer, accepted the staff. A cry of approbation rang out from the crowd, and again the whole plain resounded afar with the Cossacks’ shout. Then there stepped out from among the people the four oldest of them all, white-bearded, white-haired Cossacks; though there were no very old men in the Setch, for none of the Zaporozhtzi ever died in their beds. Taking each a handful of earth, which recent rain had converted into mud, they laid it on Kirdyanga’s head. The wet earth trickled down from his head on to his moustache and cheeks and smeared his whole face. But Kirdyanga stood immovable in his place, and thanked the Cossacks for the honour shown him.

Thus ended the noisy election, concerning which we cannot say whether it was as pleasing to the others as it was to Bulba; by means of it he had revenged himself on the former Koschevoi. Moreover, Kirdyanga was an old comrade, and

had been with him on the same expeditions by sea and land, sharing the toils and hardships of war. The crowd immediately dispersed to celebrate the election, and such revelry ensued as Ostap and Andrii had not yet beheld. The taverns were attacked and mead, corn-brandy, and beer seized without payment, the owners being only too glad to escape with whole skins themselves. The whole night passed amid shouts, songs, and rejoicings; and the rising moon gazed long at troops of musicians traversing the streets with guitars, flutes, tambourines, and the church choir, who were kept in the Setch to sing in church and glorify the deeds of the Zaporozhtzi. At length drunkenness and fatigue began to overpower even these strong heads, and here and there a Cossack could be seen to fall to the ground, embracing a comrade in fraternal fashion; whilst maudlin, and even weeping, the latter rolled upon the earth with him. Here a whole group would lie down in a heap; there a man would choose the most comfortable position and stretch himself out on a log of wood. The last, and strongest, still uttered some incoherent speeches; finally even they, yielding to the power of intoxication, flung themselves down and all the Setch slept.

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CHAPTER IV

But next day Taras Bulba had a conference with the new Koschevoi as to the method of exciting the Cossacks to some enterprise. The Koschevoi, a shrewd and sensible Cossack, who knew the Zaporozhtzi thoroughly, said at first, “Oaths cannot be violated by any means”; but after a pause added, “No matter, it can be done. We will not violate them, but let us devise something. Let the people assemble, not at my summons, but of their own accord. You know how to manage that; and I will hasten to the square with the chiefs, as though we know nothing about it.”

Not an hour had elapsed after their conversation, when the drums again thundered. The drunken and senseless Cossacks assembled. A myriad Cossack caps were sprinkled over the square. A murmur arose, “Why? What? Why was the assembly beaten?” No one answered. At length, in one quarter and another, it began to be rumoured about, “Behold, the Cossack strength is being vainly wasted: there is no war! Behold, our leaders have become as marmots, every one; their eyes swim in fat! Plainly, there is no justice in the world!” The other Cossacks listened at first, and then began themselves to say, “In truth, there is no justice in the world!” Their leaders seemed surprised at these utterances. Finally the Koschevoi stepped forward: “Permit me, Cossacks, to address you.”

“Do so!”

“Touching the matter in question, gentles, none know better than yourselves that many Zaporozhtzi have run in debt to the Jew ale-house keepers and to their brethren, so that now they have not an atom of credit. Again, touching the matter in question, there are many young fellows who have no idea of what war is like, although you know, gentles, that without war a young man cannot exist. How make a Zaporozhetz out of him if he has never killed a Mussulman?”

“He speaks well,” thought Bulba.

“Think not, however, gentles, that I speak thus in order to break the truce; God forbid! I merely mention it. Besides, it is a shame to see what sort of church we have for our God. Not only has the church remained without exterior decoration during all the years which by God’s mercy the Setch has stood, but up to this day even the holy pictures have no adornments. No one has even thought of making them a silver frame; they have only received what some Cossacks have left them in their wills; and these gifts were poor, since they had drunk up nearly all they had during their lifetime. I am making you this speech, therefore, not in order to

stir up a war against the Mussulmans; we have promised the Sultan peace, and it would be a great sin in us to break this promise, for we swore it on our law."

"What is he mixing things up like that for?" said Bulba to himself.

"So you see, gentles, that war cannot be begun; honour does not permit it. But according to my poor opinion, we might, I think, send out a few young men in boats and let them plunder the coasts of Anatolia a little. What do you think, gentles?"

"Lead us, lead us all!" shouted the crowd on all sides. "We are ready to lay down our lives for our faith."

The Koschevoi was alarmed. He by no means wished to stir up all Zaporozhe; a breach of the truce appeared to him on this occasion unsuitable. "Permit me, gentles, to address you further."

"Enough!" yelled the Cossacks; "you can say nothing better."

"If it must be so, then let it be so. I am the slave of your will. We know, and from Scripture too, that the voice of the people is the voice of God. It is impossible to devise anything better than the whole nation has devised. But here lies the difficulty; you know, gentles, that the Sultan will not permit that which delights our young men to go unpunished. We should be prepared at such a time, and our forces should be fresh, and then we should fear no one. But during their absence the Tatars may assemble fresh forces; the dogs do not show themselves in sight and dare not come while the master is at home, but they can bite his heels from behind, and bite painfully too. And if I must tell you the truth, we have not boats enough, nor powder ready in sufficient quantity, for all to go. But I am ready, if you please; I am the slave of your will."

The cunning hetman was silent. The various groups began to discuss the matter, and the hetmans of the kurens to take counsel together; few were drunk fortunately, so they decided to listen to reason.

A number of men set out at once for the opposite shore of the Dnieper, to the treasury of the army, where in strictest secrecy, under water and among the reeds, lay concealed the army chest and a portion of the arms captured from the enemy. Others hastened to inspect the boats and prepare them for service. In a twinkling the whole shore was thronged with men. Carpenters appeared with axes in their hands. Old, weatherbeaten, broad-shouldered, strong-legged Zaporozhtzi, with black or silvered moustaches, rolled up their trousers, waded up to their knees in water, and dragged the boats on to the shore with stout ropes; others brought seasoned timber and all sorts of wood. The boats were freshly planked, turned bottom upwards, caulked and tarred, and then bound together side by side after Cossack fashion, with long strands of reeds, so that the swell of the waves might not sink them. Far along the shore they built fires and heated tar

in copper cauldrons to smear the boats. The old and the experienced instructed the young. The blows and shouts of the workers rose all over the neighbourhood; the bank shook and moved about.

About this time a large ferry-boat began to near the shore. The mass of people standing in it began to wave their hands from a distance. They were Cossacks in torn, ragged gaberdines. Their disordered garments, for many had on nothing but their shirts, with a short pipe in their mouths, showed that they had either escaped from some disaster or had caroused to such an extent that they had drunk up all they had on their bodies. A short, broad-shouldered Cossack of about fifty stepped out from the midst of them and stood in front. He shouted and waved his hand more vigorously than any of the others; but his words could not be heard for the cries and hammering of the workmen.

“Whence come you!” asked the Koschevoi, as the boat touched the shore. All the workers paused in their labours, and, raising their axes and chisels, looked on expectantly.

“From a misfortune!” shouted the short Cossack.

“From what?”

“Permit me, noble Zaporozhtzi, to address you.”

“Speak!”

“Or would you prefer to assemble a council?”

“Speak, we are all here.”

The people all pressed together in one mass.

“Have you then heard nothing of what has been going on in the hetman’s dominions?”

“What is it?” inquired one of the kuren hetmans.

“Eh! what! Evidently the Tatars have plastered up your ears so that you might hear nothing.”

“Tell us then; what has been going on there?”

“That is going on the like of which no man born or christened ever yet has seen.”

“Tell us what it is, you son of a dog!” shouted one of the crowd, apparently losing patience.

“Things have come to such a pass that our holy churches are no longer ours.”

“How not ours?”

“They are pledged to the Jews. If the Jew is not first paid, there can be no mass.”

“What are you saying?”

“And if the dog of a Jew does not make a sign with his unclean hand over the holy Easter-bread, it cannot be consecrated.”

“He lies, brother gentles. It cannot be that an unclean Jew puts his mark upon the holy Easter-bread.”

“Listen! I have not yet told all. Catholic priests are going about all over the Ukraine in carts. The harm lies not in the carts, but in the fact that not horses, but orthodox Christians (1), are harnessed to them. Listen! I have not yet told all. They say that the Jewesses are making themselves petticoats out of our popes’ vestments. Such are the deeds that are taking place in the Ukraine, gentles! And you sit here revelling in Zaporozhe; and evidently the Tatars have so scared you that you have no eyes, no ears, no anything, and know nothing that is going on in the world.”

(1) That is of the Greek Church. The Poles were Catholics.

“Stop, stop!” broke in the Koschevoi, who up to that moment had stood with his eyes fixed upon the earth like all Zaporozhtzi, who, on important occasions, never yielded to their first impulse, but kept silence, and meanwhile concentrated inwardly all the power of their indignation. “Stop! I also have a word to say. But what were you about? When your father the devil was raging thus, what were you doing yourselves? Had you no swords? How came you to permit such lawlessness?”

“Eh! how did we come to permit such lawlessness? You would have tried when there were fifty thousand of the Lyakhs (2) alone; yes, and it is a shame not to be concealed, when there are also dogs among us who have already accepted their faith.”

(2) Lyakhs, an opprobrious name for the Poles.

“But your hetman and your leaders, what have they done?”

“God preserve any one from such deeds as our leaders performed!”

“How so?”

“Our hetman, roasted in a brazen ox, now lies in Warsaw; and the heads and hands of our leaders are being carried to all the fairs as a spectacle for the people. That is what our leaders did.”

The whole throng became wildly excited. At first silence reigned all along the shore, like that which precedes a tempest; and then suddenly voices were raised and all the shore spoke: —

“What! The Jews hold the Christian churches in pledge! Roman Catholic priests have harnessed and beaten orthodox Christians! What! such torture has been permitted on Russian soil by the cursed unbelievers! And they have done such things to the leaders and the hetman? Nay, this shall not be, it shall not be.” Such words came from all quarters. The Zaporozhtzi were moved, and knew their power. It was not the excitement of a giddy-minded folk. All who were thus agitated were strong, firm characters, not easily aroused, but, once aroused,

preserving their inward heat long and obstinately. “Hang all the Jews!” rang through the crowd. “They shall not make petticoats for their Jewesses out of popes’ vestments! They shall not place their signs upon the holy wafers! Drown all the heathens in the Dnieper!” These words uttered by some one in the throng flashed like lightning through all minds, and the crowd flung themselves upon the suburb with the intention of cutting the throats of all the Jews.

The poor sons of Israel, losing all presence of mind, and not being in any case courageous, hid themselves in empty brandy-casks, in ovens, and even crawled under the skirts of their Jewesses; but the Cossacks found them wherever they were.

“Gracious nobles!” shrieked one Jew, tall and thin as a stick, thrusting his sorry visage, distorted with terror, from among a group of his comrades, “gracious nobles! suffer us to say a word, only one word. We will reveal to you what you never yet have heard, a thing more important than I can say — very important!”

“Well, say it,” said Bulba, who always liked to hear what an accused man had to say.

“Gracious nobles,” exclaimed the Jew, “such nobles were never seen, by heavens, never! Such good, kind, and brave men there never were in the world before!” His voice died away and quivered with fear. “How was it possible that we should think any evil of the Zaporozhtzi? Those men are not of us at all, those who have taken pledges in the Ukraine. By heavens, they are not of us! They are not Jews at all. The evil one alone knows what they are; they are only fit to be spit upon and cast aside. Behold, my brethren, say the same! Is it not true, Schloma? is it not true, Schmul?”

“By heavens, it is true!” replied Schloma and Schmul, from among the crowd, both pale as clay, in their ragged caps.

“We never yet,” continued the tall Jew, “have had any secret intercourse with your enemies, and we will have nothing to do with Catholics; may the evil one fly away with them! We are like own brothers to the Zaporozhtzi.”

“What! the Zaporozhtzi are brothers to you!” exclaimed some one in the crowd. “Don’t wait! the cursed Jews! Into the Dnieper with them, gentles! Drown all the unbelievers!”

These words were the signal. They seized the Jews by the arms and began to hurl them into the waves. Pitiful cries resounded on all sides; but the stern Zaporozhtzi only laughed when they saw the Jewish legs, cased in shoes and stockings, struggling in the air. The poor orator who had called down destruction upon himself jumped out of the caftan, by which they had seized him, and in his scant parti-coloured under waistcoat clasped Bulba’s legs, and cried, in piteous

tones, “Great lord! gracious noble! I knew your brother, the late Doroscha. He was a warrior who was an ornament to all knighthood. I gave him eight hundred sequins when he was obliged to ransom himself from the Turks.”

“You knew my brother?” asked Taras.

“By heavens, I knew him. He was a magnificent nobleman.”

“And what is your name?”

“Yankel.”

“Good,” said Taras; and after reflecting, he turned to the Cossacks and spoke as follows: “There will always be plenty of time to hang the Jew, if it proves necessary; but for to-day give him to me.”

So saying, Taras led him to his waggon, beside which stood his Cossacks. “Crawl under the waggon; lie down, and do not move. And you, brothers, do not surrender this Jew.”

So saying, he returned to the square, for the whole crowd had long since collected there. All had at once abandoned the shore and the preparation of the boats; for a land-journey now awaited them, and not a sea-voyage, and they needed horses and waggons, not ships. All, both young and old, wanted to go on the expedition; and it was decided, on the advice of the chiefs, the hetmans of the kurens, and the Koschevoi, and with the approbation of the whole Zaporozhtzian army, to march straight to Poland, to avenge the injury and disgrace to their faith and to Cossack renown, to seize booty from the cities, to burn villages and grain, and spread their glory far over the steppe. All at once girded and armed themselves. The Koschevoi grew a whole foot taller. He was no longer the timid executor of the restless wishes of a free people, but their untrammelled master. He was a despot, who know only to command. All the independent and pleasure-loving warriors stood in an orderly line, with respectfully bowed heads, not venturing to raise their eyes, when the Koschevoi gave his orders. He gave these quietly, without shouting and without haste, but with pauses between, like an experienced man deeply learned in Cossack affairs, and carrying into execution, not for the first time, a wisely matured enterprise.

“Examine yourselves, look well to yourselves; examine all your equipments thoroughly,” he said; “put your teams and your tar-boxes (3) in order; test your weapons. Take not many clothes with you: a shirt and a couple of pairs of trousers to each Cossack, and a pot of oatmeal and millet apiece — let no one take any more. There will be plenty of provisions, all that is needed, in the waggons. Let every Cossack have two horses. And two hundred yoke of oxen must be taken, for we shall require them at the fords and marshy places. Keep order, gentles, above all things. I know that there are some among you whom God has made so greedy that they would like to tear up silk and velvet for foot-

cloths. Leave off such devilish habits; reject all garments as plunder, and take only weapons: though if valuables offer themselves, ducats or silver, they are useful in any case. I tell you this beforehand, gentles, if any one gets drunk on the expedition, he will have a short shrift: I will have him dragged by the neck like a dog behind the baggage waggons, no matter who he may be, even were he the most heroic Cossack in the whole army; he shall be shot on the spot like a dog, and flung out, without sepulture, to be torn by the birds of prey, for a drunkard on the march deserves no Christian burial. Young men, obey the old men in all things! If a ball grazes you, or a sword cuts your head or any other part, attach no importance to such trifles. Mix a charge of powder in a cup of brandy, quaff it heartily, and all will pass off — you will not even have any fever; and if the wound is large, put simple earth upon it, mixing it first with spittle in your palm, and that will dry it up. And now to work, to work, lads, and look well to all, and without haste."

(3) The Cossack waggons have their axles smeared with tar instead of grease.

So spoke the Koschevoi; and no sooner had he finished his speech than all the Cossacks at once set to work. All the Setch grew sober. Nowhere was a single drunken man to be found, it was as though there never had been such a thing among the Cossacks. Some attended to the tyres of the wheels, others changed the axles of the waggons; some carried sacks of provisions to them or leaded them with arms; others again drove up the horses and oxen. On all sides resounded the tramp of horses' hoofs, test-shots from the guns, the clank of swords, the lowing of oxen, the screech of rolling waggons, talking, sharp cries and urging-on of cattle. Soon the Cossack force spread far over all the plain; and he who might have undertaken to run from its van to its rear would have had a long course. In the little wooden church the priest was offering up prayers and sprinkling all worshippers with holy water. All kissed the cross. When the camp broke up and the army moved out of the Setch, all the Zaporozhtzi turned their heads back. "Farewell, our mother!" they said almost in one breath. "May God preserve thee from all misfortune!"

As he passed through the suburb, Taras Bulba saw that his Jew, Yankel, had already erected a sort of booth with an awning, and was selling flint, screwdrivers, powder, and all sorts of military stores needed on the road, even to rolls and bread. "What devils these Jews are!" thought Taras; and riding up to him, he said, "Fool, why are you sitting here? do you want to be shot like a crow?"

Yankel in reply approached nearer, and making a sign with both hands, as though wishing to impart some secret, said, "Let the noble lord but keep silence

and say nothing to any one. Among the Cossack waggons is a waggon of mine. I am carrying all sorts of needful stores for the Cossacks, and on the journey I will furnish every sort of provisions at a lower price than any Jew ever sold at before. ‘Tis so, by heavens! by heavens, ‘tis so!”

Taras Bulba shrugged his shoulders in amazement at the Jewish nature, and went on to the camp.

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CHAPTER V

All South-west Poland speedily became a prey to fear. Everywhere the rumour flew, “The Zaporozhtzi! The Zaporozhtzi have appeared!” All who could flee did so. All rose and scattered after the manner of that lawless, reckless age, when they built neither fortresses nor castles, but each man erected a temporary dwelling of straw wherever he happened to find himself. He thought, “It is useless to waste money and labour on an izba, when the roving Tatars will carry it off in any case.” All was in an uproar: one exchanged his plough and oxen for a horse and gun, and joined an armed band; another, seeking concealment, drove off his cattle and carried off all the household stuff he could. Occasionally, on the road, some were encountered who met their visitors with arms in their hands; but the majority fled before their arrival. All knew that it was hard to deal with the raging and warlike throng known by the name of the Zaporozhian army; a body which, under its independent and disorderly exterior, concealed an organisation well calculated for times of battle. The horsemen rode steadily on without overburdening or heating their horses; the foot-soldiers marched only by night, resting during the day, and selecting for this purpose desert tracts, uninhabited spots, and forests, of which there were then plenty. Spies and scouts were sent ahead to study the time, place, and method of attack. And lo! the Zaporozhtzi suddenly appeared in those places where they were least expected: then all were put to the sword; the villages were burned; and the horses and cattle which were not driven off behind the army killed upon the spot. They seemed to be fiercely revelling, rather than carrying out a military expedition. Our hair would stand on end nowadays at the horrible traits of that fierce, half-civilised age, which the Zaporozhtzi everywhere exhibited: children killed, women’s breasts cut open, the skin flayed from the legs up to the knees, and the victim then set at liberty. In short, the Cossacks paid their former debts in coin of full weight. The abbot of one monastery, on hearing of their approach, sent two monks to say that they were not behaving as they should; that there was an agreement between the Zaporozhtzi and the government; that they were breaking faith with the king, and violating all international rights. “Tell your bishop from me and from all the Zaporozhtzi,” said the Koschevoi, “that he has nothing to fear: the Cossacks, so far, have only lighted and smoked their pipes.” And the magnificent abbey was soon wrapped in the devouring flames, its tall Gothic windows showing grimly through the waves of fire as they parted. The fleeing

mass of monks, women, and Jews thronged into those towns where any hope lay in the garrison and the civic forces. The aid sent in season by the government, but delayed on the way, consisted of a few troops which either were unable to enter the towns or, seized with fright, turned their backs at the very first encounter and fled on their swift horses. However, several of the royal commanders, who had conquered in former battles, resolved to unite their forces and confront the Zaporozhtzi.

And here, above all, did our young Cossacks, disgusted with pillage, greed, and a feeble foe, and burning with the desire to distinguish themselves in presence of their chiefs, seek to measure themselves in single combat with the warlike and boastful Lyakhs, prancing on their spirited horses, with the sleeves of their jackets thrown back and streaming in the wind. This game was inspiriting; they won at it many costly sets of horse-trappings and valuable weapons. In a month the scarcely fledged birds attained their full growth, were completely transformed, and became men; their features, in which hitherto a trace of youthful softness had been visible, grew strong and grim. But it was pleasant to old Taras to see his sons among the foremost. It seemed as though Ostap were designed by nature for the game of war and the difficult science of command. Never once losing his head or becoming confused under any circumstances, he could, with a cool audacity almost supernatural in a youth of two-and-twenty, in an instant gauge the danger and the whole scope of the matter, could at once devise a means of escaping, but of escaping only that he might the more surely conquer. His movements now began to be marked by the assurance which comes from experience, and in them could be detected the germ of the future leader. His person strengthened, and his bearing grew majestically leonine. “What a fine leader he will make one of these days!” said old Taras. “He will make a splendid leader, far surpassing even his father!”

Andrii gave himself up wholly to the enchanting music of blades and bullets. He knew not what it was to consider, or calculate, or to measure his own as against the enemy’s strength. He gazed on battle with mad delight and intoxication: he found something festal in the moments when a man’s brain burns, when all things wave and flutter before his eyes, when heads are stricken off, horses fall to the earth with a sound of thunder, and he rides on like a drunken man, amid the whistling of bullets and the flashing of swords, dealing blows to all, and heeding not those aimed at himself. More than once their father marvelled too at Andrii, seeing him, stirred only by a flash of impulse, dash at something which a sensible man in cold blood never would have attempted, and, by the sheer force of his mad attack, accomplish such wonders as could not but amaze even men grown old in battle. Old Taras admired and said, “And he too

will make a good warrior if the enemy does not capture him meanwhile. He is not Ostap, but he is a dashing warrior, nevertheless."

The army decided to march straight on the city of Dubno, which, rumour said, contained much wealth and many rich inhabitants. The journey was accomplished in a day and a half, and the Zaporozhtzi appeared before the city. The inhabitants resolved to defend themselves to the utmost extent of their power, and to fight to the last extremity, preferring to die in their squares and streets, and on their thresholds, rather than admit the enemy to their houses. A high rampart of earth surrounded the city; and in places where it was low or weak, it was strengthened by a wall of stone, or a house which served as a redoubt, or even an oaken stockade. The garrison was strong and aware of the importance of their position. The Zaporozhtzi attacked the wall fiercely, but were met with a shower of grapeshot. The citizens and residents of the town evidently did not wish to remain idle, but gathered on the ramparts; in their eyes could be read desperate resistance. The women too were determined to take part in the fray, and upon the heads of the Zaporozhians rained down stones, casks of boiling water, and sacks of lime which blinded them. The Zaporozhtzi were not fond of having anything to do with fortified places: sieges were not in their line. The Koschevoi ordered them to retreat, saying, "It is useless, brother gentles; we will retire: but may I be a heathen Tatar, and not a Christian, if we do not clear them out of that town! may they all perish of hunger, the dogs!" The army retreated, surrounded the town, and, for lack of something to do, busied themselves with devastating the surrounding country, burning the neighbouring villages and the ricks of unthreshed grain, and turning their droves of horses loose in the cornfields, as yet untouched by the reaping-hook, where the plump ears waved, fruit, as luck would have it, of an unusually good harvest which should have liberally rewarded all tillers of the soil that season.

With horror those in the city beheld their means of subsistence destroyed. Meanwhile the Zaporozhtzi, having formed a double ring of their waggons around the city, disposed themselves as in the Setch in kurens, smoked their pipes, bartered their booty for weapons, played at leapfrog and odd-and-even, and gazed at the city with deadly cold-bloodedness. At night they lighted their camp fires, and the cooks boiled the porridge for each kuren in huge copper cauldrons; whilst an alert sentinel watched all night beside the blazing fire. But the Zaporozhtzi soon began to tire of inactivity and prolonged sobriety, unaccompanied by any fighting. The Koschevoi even ordered the allowance of wine to be doubled, which was sometimes done in the army when no difficult enterprises or movements were on hand. The young men, and Taras Bulba's sons in particular, did not like this life. Andrii was visibly bored. "You silly fellow!"

said Taras to him, “be patient, you will be hetman one day. He is not a good warrior who loses heart in an important enterprise; but he who is not tired even of inactivity, who endures all, and who even if he likes a thing can give it up.” But hot youth cannot agree with age; the two have different natures, and look at the same thing with different eyes.

But in the meantime Taras’s band, led by Tovkatch, arrived; with him were also two osauls, the secretary, and other regimental officers: the Cossacks numbered over four thousand in all. There were among them many volunteers, who had risen of their own free will, without any summons, as soon as they had heard what the matter was. The osauls brought to Taras’s sons the blessing of their aged mother, and to each a picture in a cypress-wood frame from the Mezhigorski monastery at Kief. The two brothers hung the pictures round their necks, and involuntarily grew pensive as they remembered their old mother. What did this blessing prophecy? Was it a blessing for their victory over the enemy, and then a joyous return to their home with booty and glory, to be everlastingly commemorated in the songs of guitar-players? or was it...? But the future is unknown, and stands before a man like autumnal fogs rising from the swamps; birds fly foolishly up and down in it with flapping wings, never recognising each other, the dove seeing not the vulture, nor the vulture the dove, and no one knowing how far he may be flying from destruction.

Ostap had long since attended to his duties and gone to the kuren. Andrii, without knowing why, felt a kind of oppression at his heart. The Cossacks had finished their evening meal; the wonderful July night had completely fallen; still he did not go to the kuren, nor lie down to sleep, but gazed unconsciously at the whole scene before him. In the sky innumerable stars twinkled brightly. The plain was covered far and wide with scattered waggons with swinging tar-buckets, smeared with tar, and loaded with every description of goods and provisions captured from the foe. Beside the waggons, under the waggons, and far beyond the waggons, Zaporozhtzi were everywhere visible, stretched upon the grass. They all slumbered in picturesque attitudes; one had thrust a sack under his head, another his cap, and another simply made use of his comrade’s side. Swords, guns, matchlocks, short pipe-stems with copper mountings, iron awls, and a flint and steel were inseparable from every Cossack. The heavy oxen lay with their feet doubled under them like huge whitish masses, and at a distance looked like gray stones scattered on the slopes of the plain. On all sides the heavy snores of sleeping warriors began to arise from the grass, and were answered from the plain by the ringing neighs of their steeds, chafing at their hobbled feet. Meanwhile a certain threatening magnificence had mingled with the beauty of the July night. It was the distant glare of the burning district afar. In

one place the flames spread quietly and grandly over the sky; in another, suddenly bursting into a whirlwind, they hissed and flew upwards to the very stars, and floating fragments died away in the most distant quarter of the heavens. Here the black, burned monastery like a grim Carthusian monk stood threatening, and displaying its dark magnificence at every flash; there blazed the monastery garden. It seemed as though the trees could be heard hissing as they stood wrapped in smoke; and when the fire burst forth, it suddenly lighted up the ripe plums with a phosphoric lilac-coloured gleam, or turned the yellowing pears here and there to pure gold. In the midst of them hung black against the wall of the building, or the trunk of a tree, the body of some poor Jew or monk who had perished in the flames with the structure. Above the distant fires hovered a flock of birds, like a cluster of tiny black crosses upon a fiery field. The town thus laid bare seemed to sleep; the spires and roofs, and its palisade and walls, gleamed quietly in the glare of the distant conflagrations. Andrii went the rounds of the Cossack ranks. The camp-fires, beside which the sentinels sat, were ready to go out at any moment; and even the sentinels slept, having devoured oatmeal and dumplings with true Cossack appetites. He was astonished at such carelessness, thinking, “It is well that there is no strong enemy at hand and nothing to fear.” Finally he went to one of the waggons, climbed into it, and lay down upon his back, putting his clasped hands under his head; but he could not sleep, and gazed long at the sky. It was all open before him; the air was pure and transparent; the dense clusters of stars in the Milky Way, crossing the sky like a belt, were flooded with light. From time to time Andrii in some degree lost consciousness, and a light mist of dream veiled the heavens from him for a moment; but then he awoke, and they became visible again.

During one of these intervals it seemed to him that some strange human figure flitted before him. Thinking it to be merely a vision which would vanish at once, he opened his eyes, and beheld a withered, emaciated face bending over him, and gazing straight into his own. Long coal-black hair, unkempt, dishevelled, fell from beneath a dark veil which had been thrown over the head; whilst the strange gleam of the eyes, and the death-like tone of the sharp-cut features, inclined him to think that it was an apparition. His hand involuntarily grasped his gun; and he exclaimed almost convulsively: “Who are you? If you are an evil spirit, avaunt! If you are a living being, you have chosen an ill time for your jest. I will kill you with one shot.”

In answer to this, the apparition laid its finger upon its lips and seemed to entreat silence. He dropped his hands and began to look more attentively. He recognised it to be a woman from the long hair, the brown neck, and the half-concealed bosom. But she was not a native of those regions: her wide cheek-

bones stood out prominently over her hollow cheeks; her small eyes were obliquely set. The more he gazed at her features, the more he found them familiar. Finally he could restrain himself no longer, and said, “Tell me, who are you? It seems to me that I know you, or have seen you somewhere.”

“Two years ago in Kief.”

“Two years ago in Kief!” repeated Andrii, endeavouring to collect in his mind all that lingered in his memory of his former student life. He looked intently at her once more, and suddenly exclaimed at the top of his voice, “You are the Tatar! the servant of the lady, the Waiwode’s daughter!”

“Sh!” cried the Tatar, clasping her hands with a supplicating glance, trembling all over, and turning her head round in order to see whether any one had been awakened by Andrii’s loud exclamation.

“Tell me, tell me, why are you here?” said Andrii almost breathlessly, in a whisper, interrupted every moment by inward emotion. “Where is the lady? is she alive?”

“She is now in the city.”

“In the city!” he exclaimed, again almost in a shriek, and feeling all the blood suddenly rush to his heart. “Why is she in the city?”

“Because the old lord himself is in the city: he has been Waiwode of Dubno for the last year and a half.”

“Is she married? How strange you are! Tell me about her.”

“She has eaten nothing for two days.”

“What!”

“And not one of the inhabitants has had a morsel of bread for a long while; all have long been eating earth.”

Andrii was astounded.

“The lady saw you from the city wall, among the Zaporozhtzi. She said to me, ‘Go tell the warrior: if he remembers me, let him come to me; and do not forget to make him give you a bit of bread for my aged mother, for I do not wish to see my mother die before my very eyes. Better that I should die first, and she afterwards! Beseech him; clasp his knees, his feet: he also has an aged mother, let him give you the bread for her sake!’“

Many feelings awoke in the young Cossack’s breast.

“But how came you here? how did you get here?”

“By an underground passage.”

“Is there an underground passage?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

“You will not betray it, warrior?”

“I swear it by the holy cross!”

“You descend into a hole, and cross the brook, yonder among the reeds.”

“And it leads into the city?”

“Straight into the monastery.”

“Let us go, let us go at once.”

“A bit of bread, in the name of Christ and of His holy mother!”

“Good, so be it. Stand here beside the waggon, or, better still, lie down in it: no one will see you, all are asleep. I will return at once.”

And he set off for the baggage waggons, which contained the provisions belonging to their kuren. His heart beat. All the past, all that had been extinguished by the Cossack bivouacks, and by the stern battle of life, flamed out at once on the surface and drowned the present in its turn. Again, as from the dark depths of the sea, the noble lady rose before him: again there gleamed in his memory her beautiful arms, her eyes, her laughing mouth, her thick dark-chestnut hair, falling in curls upon her shoulders, and the firm, well-rounded limbs of her maiden form. No, they had not been extinguished in his breast, they had not vanished, they had simply been laid aside, in order, for a time, to make way for other strong emotions; but often, very often, the young Cossack’s deep slumber had been troubled by them, and often he had lain sleepless on his couch, without being able to explain the cause.

His heart beat more violently at the thought of seeing her again, and his young knees shook. On reaching the baggage waggons, he had quite forgotten what he had come for; he raised his hand to his brow and rubbed it long, trying to recollect what he was to do. At length he shuddered, and was filled with terror as the thought suddenly occurred to him that she was dying of hunger. He jumped upon the waggon and seized several large loaves of black bread; but then he thought, “Is this not food, suited to a robust and easily satisfied Zaporozhetz, too coarse and unfit for her delicate frame?” Then he recollected that the Koschevoi, on the previous evening, had reproved the cooks for having cooked up all the oatmeal into porridge at once, when there was plenty for three times. Sure that he would find plenty of porridge in the kettles, he drew out his father’s travelling kettle and went with it to the cook of their kuren, who was sleeping beside two big cauldrons, holding about ten pailfuls, under which the ashes still glowed. Glancing into them, he was amazed to find them empty. It must have required supernatural powers to eat it all; the more so, as their kuren numbered fewer than the others. He looked into the cauldron of the other kurens — nothing anywhere. Involuntarily the saying recurred to his mind, “The Zaporozhtzi are like children: if there is little they eat it, if there is much they leave nothing.” What was to be done? There was, somewhere in the waggon belonging to his father’s band, a

sack of white bread, which they had found when they pillaged the bakery of the monastery. He went straight to his father's waggon, but it was not there. Ostap had taken it and put it under his head; and there he lay, stretched out on the ground, snoring so that the whole plain rang again. Andrii seized the sack abruptly with one hand and gave it a jerk, so that Ostap's head fell to the ground. The elder brother sprang up in his sleep, and, sitting there with closed eyes, shouted at the top of his lungs, "Stop them! Stop the cursed Lyakhs! Catch the horses! catch the horses!" — "Silence! I'll kill you," shouted Andrii in terror, flourishing the sack over him. But Ostap did not continue his speech, sank down again, and gave such a snore that the grass on which he lay waved with his breath.

Andrii glanced timidly on all sides to see if Ostap's talking in his sleep had waked any of the Cossacks. Only one long-locked head was raised in the adjoining kuren, and after glancing about, was dropped back on the ground. After waiting a couple of minutes he set out with his load. The Tatar woman was lying where he had left her, scarcely breathing. "Come, rise up. Fear not, all are sleeping. Can you take one of these loaves if I cannot carry all?" So saying, he swung the sack on to his back, pulled out another sack of millet as he passed the waggon, took in his hands the loaves he had wanted to give the Tatar woman to carry, and, bending somewhat under the load, went boldly through the ranks of sleeping Zaporozhtzi.

"Andrii," said old Bulba, as he passed. His heart died within him. He halted, trembling, and said softly, "What is it?"

"There's a woman with you. When I get up I'll give you a sound thrashing. Women will lead you to no good." So saying, he leaned his hand upon his hand and gazed intently at the muffled form of the Tatar.

Andrii stood there, more dead than alive, not daring to look in his father's face. When he did raise his eyes and glance at him, old Bulba was asleep, with his head still resting in the palm of his hand.

Andrii crossed himself. Fear fled from his heart even more rapidly than it had assailed it. When he turned to look at the Tatar woman, she stood before him, muffled in her mantle, like a dark granite statue, and the gleam of the distant dawn lighted up only her eyes, dull as those of a corpse. He plucked her by the sleeve, and both went on together, glancing back continually. At length they descended the slope of a small ravine, almost a hole, along the bottom of which a brook flowed lazily, overgrown with sedge, and strewed with mossy boulders. Descending into this ravine, they were completely concealed from the view of all the plain occupied by the Zaporovian camp. At least Andrii, glancing back, saw that the steep slope rose behind him higher than a man. On its summit

appeared a few blades of steppe-grass; and behind them, in the sky, hung the moon, like a golden sickle. The breeze rising on the steppe warned them that the dawn was not far off. But nowhere was the crow of the cock heard. Neither in the city nor in the devastated neighbourhood had there been a cock for a long time past. They crossed the brook on a small plank, beyond which rose the opposite bank, which appeared higher than the one behind them and rose steeply. It seemed as though this were the strong point of the citadel upon which the besieged could rely; at all events, the earthen wall was lower there, and no garrison appeared behind it. But farther on rose the thick monastery walls. The steep bank was overgrown with steppe-grass, and in the narrow ravine between it and the brook grew tall reeds almost as high as a man. At the summit of the bank were the remains of a wattled fence, which had formerly surrounded some garden, and in front of it were visible the wide leaves of the burdock, from among which rose blackthorn, and sunflowers lifting their heads high above all the rest. Here the Tatar flung off her slippers and went barefoot, gathering her clothes up carefully, for the spot was marshy and full of water. Forcing their way among the reeds, they stopped before a ruined outwork. Skirting this outwork, they found a sort of earthen arch — an opening not much larger than the opening of an oven. The Tatar woman bent her head and went first. Andrii followed, bending low as he could, in order to pass with his sacks; and both soon found themselves in total darkness.

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CHAPTER VI

Andrii could hardly move in the dark and narrow earthen burrow, as he followed the Tatar, dragging after him his sacks of bread. “It will soon be light,” said his guide: “we are approaching the spot where I placed a light.” And in fact the dark earthen walls began to be gradually lit up. They reached a widening in the passage where, it seemed, there had once been a chapel; at least, there was a small table against the wall, like an altar, and above, the faded, almost entirely obliterated picture of a Catholic Madonna. A small silver lamp hanging before it barely illumined it. The Tatar stooped and picked up from the ground a copper candlestick which she had left there, a candlestick with a tall, slender stem, and snuffers, pin, and extinguisher hanging about it on chains. She lighted it at the silver lamp. The light grew stronger; and as they went on, now illumined by it, and again enveloped in pitchy shadow, they suggested a picture by Gerard Dow.

The warrior’s fresh, handsome countenance, overflowing with health and youth, presented a strong contrast to the pale, emaciated face of his companion. The passage grew a little higher, so that Andrii could hold himself erect. He gazed with curiosity at the earthen walls. Here and there, as in the catacombs at Kief, were niches in the walls; and in some places coffins were standing. Sometimes they came across human bones which had become softened with the dampness and were crumbling into dust. It was evident that pious folk had taken refuge here from the storms, sorrows, and seductions of the world. It was extremely damp in some places; indeed there was water under their feet at intervals. Andrii was forced to halt frequently to allow his companion to rest, for her fatigue kept increasing. The small piece of bread she had swallowed only caused a pain in her stomach, of late unused to food; and she often stood motionless for minutes together in one spot.

At length a small iron door appeared before them. “Glory be to God, we have arrived!” said the Tatar in a faint voice, and tried to lift her hand to knock, but had no strength to do so. Andrii knocked hard at the door in her stead. There was an echo as though a large space lay beyond the door; then the echo changed as if resounding through lofty arches. In a couple of minutes, keys rattled, and steps were heard descending some stairs. At length the door opened, and a monk, standing on the narrow stairs with the key and a light in his hands, admitted them. Andrii involuntarily halted at the sight of a Catholic monk — one of those who had aroused such hate and disdain among the Cossacks that they treated

them even more inhumanly than they treated the Jews.

The monk, on his part, started back on perceiving a Zaporovian Cossack, but a whisper from the Tatar reassured him. He lighted them in, fastened the door behind them, and led them up the stairs. They found themselves beneath the dark and lofty arches of the monastery church. Before one of the altars, adorned with tall candlesticks and candles, knelt a priest praying quietly. Near him on each side knelt two young choristers in lilac cassocks and white lace stoles, with censers in their hands. He prayed for the performance of a miracle, that the city might be saved; that their souls might be strengthened; that patience might be given them; that doubt and timid, weak-spirited mourning over earthly misfortunes might be banished. A few women, resembling shadows, knelt supporting themselves against the backs of the chairs and dark wooden benches before them, and laying their exhausted heads upon them. A few men stood sadly, leaning against the columns upon which the wide arches rested. The stained-glass window above the altar suddenly glowed with the rosy light of dawn; and from it, on the floor, fell circles of blue, yellow, and other colours, illuminating the dim church. The whole altar was lighted up; the smoke from the censers hung a cloudy rainbow in the air. Andrii gazed from his dark corner, not without surprise, at the wonders worked by the light. At that moment the magnificent swell of the organ filled the whole church. It grew deeper and deeper, expanded, swelled into heavy bursts of thunder; and then all at once, turning into heavenly music, its ringing tones floated high among the arches, like clear maiden voices, and again descended into a deep roar and thunder, and then ceased. The thunderous pulsations echoed long and tremulously among the arches; and Andrii, with half-open mouth, admired the wondrous music.

Then he felt some one plucking the shirt of his caftan. “It is time,” said the Tatar. They traversed the church unperceived, and emerged upon the square in front. Dawn had long flushed the heavens; all announced sunrise. The square was empty: in the middle of it still stood wooden pillars, showing that, perhaps only a week before, there had been a market here stocked with provisions. The streets, which were unpaved, were simply a mass of dried mud. The square was surrounded by small, one-storied stone or mud houses, in the walls of which were visible wooden stakes and posts obliquely crossed by carved wooden beams, as was the manner of building in those days. Specimens of it can still be seen in some parts of Lithuania and Poland. They were all covered with enormously high roofs, with a multitude of windows and air-holes. On one side, close to the church, rose a building quite detached from and taller than the rest, probably the town-hall or some official structure. It was two stories high, and above it, on two arches, rose a belvedere where a watchman stood; a huge clock-

face was let into the roof.

The square seemed deserted, but Andrii thought he heard a feeble groan. Looking about him, he perceived, on the farther side, a group of two or three men lying motionless upon the ground. He fixed his eyes more intently on them, to see whether they were asleep or dead; and, at the same moment, stumbled over something lying at his feet. It was the dead body of a woman, a Jewess apparently. She appeared to be young, though it was scarcely discernible in her distorted and emaciated features. Upon her head was a red silk kerchief; two rows of pearls or pearl beads adorned the beads of her head-dress, from beneath which two long curls hung down upon her shrivelled neck, with its tightly drawn veins. Beside her lay a child, grasping convulsively at her shrunken breast, and squeezing it with involuntary ferocity at finding no milk there. He neither wept nor screamed, and only his gently rising and falling body would have led one to guess that he was not dead, or at least on the point of breathing his last. They turned into a street, and were suddenly stopped by a madman, who, catching sight of Andrii's precious burden, sprang upon him like a tiger, and clutched him, yelling, "Bread!" But his strength was not equal to his madness. Andrii repulsed him and he fell to the ground. Moved with pity, the young Cossack flung him a loaf, which he seized like a mad dog, gnawing and biting it; but nevertheless he shortly expired in horrible suffering, there in the street, from the effect of long abstinence. The ghastly victims of hunger startled them at every step. Many, apparently unable to endure their torments in their houses, seemed to run into the streets to see whether some nourishing power might not possibly descend from the air. At the gate of one house sat an old woman, and it was impossible to say whether she was asleep or dead, or only unconscious; at all events, she no longer saw or heard anything, and sat immovable in one spot, her head drooping on her breast. From the roof of another house hung a worn and wasted body in a rope noose. The poor fellow could not endure the tortures of hunger to the last, and had preferred to hasten his end by a voluntary death.

At the sight of such terrible proofs of famine, Andrii could not refrain from saying to the Tatar, "Is there really nothing with which they can prolong life? If a man is driven to extremities, he must feed on what he has hitherto despised; he can sustain himself with creatures which are forbidden by the law. Anything can be eaten under such circumstances."

"They have eaten everything," said the Tatar, "all the animals. Not a horse, nor a dog, nor even a mouse is to be found in the whole city. We never had any store of provisions in the town: they were all brought from the villages."

"But how can you, while dying such a fearful death, still dream of defending the city?"

“Possibly the Waiwode might have surrendered; but yesterday morning the commander of the troops at Buzhana sent a hawk into the city with a note saying that it was not to be given up; that he was coming to its rescue with his forces, and was only waiting for another leader, that they might march together. And now they are expected every moment. But we have reached the house.”

Andrii had already noticed from a distance this house, unlike the others, and built apparently by some Italian architect. It was constructed of thin red bricks, and had two stories. The windows of the lower story were sheltered under lofty, projecting granite cornices. The upper story consisted entirely of small arches, forming a gallery; between the arches were iron gratings enriched with escutcheons; whilst upon the gables of the house more coats-of-arms were displayed. The broad external staircase, of tinted bricks, abutted on the square. At the foot of it sat guards, who with one hand held their halberds upright, and with the other supported their drooping heads, and in this attitude more resembled apparitions than living beings. They neither slept nor dreamed, but seemed quite insensible to everything; they even paid no attention to who went up the stairs. At the head of the stairs, they found a richly-dressed warrior, armed cap-a-pie, and holding a breviary in his hand. He turned his dim eyes upon them; but the Tatar spoke a word to him, and he dropped them again upon the open pages of his breviary. They entered the first chamber, a large one, serving either as a reception-room, or simply as an ante-room; it was filled with soldiers, servants, secretaries, huntsmen, cup-bearers, and the other servitors indispensable to the support of a Polish magnate’s estate, all seated along the walls. The reek of extinguished candles was perceptible; and two were still burning in two huge candlesticks, nearly as tall as a man, standing in the middle of the room, although morning had long since peeped through the wide grated window. Andrii wanted to go straight on to the large oaken door adorned with a coat-of-arms and a profusion of carved ornaments, but the Tatar pulled his sleeve and pointed to a small door in the side wall. Through this they gained a corridor, and then a room, which he began to examine attentively. The light which filtered through a crack in the shutter fell upon several objects — a crimson curtain, a gilded cornice, and a painting on the wall. Here the Tatar motioned to Andrii to wait, and opened the door into another room from which flashed the light of a fire. He heard a whispering, and a soft voice which made him quiver all over. Through the open door he saw flit rapidly past a tall female figure, with a long thick braid of hair falling over her uplifted hands. The Tatar returned and told him to go in.

He could never understand how he entered and how the door was shut behind him. Two candles burned in the room and a lamp glowed before the images:

beneath the lamp stood a tall table with steps to kneel upon during prayer, after the Catholic fashion. But his eye did not seek this. He turned to the other side and perceived a woman, who appeared to have been frozen or turned to stone in the midst of some quick movement. It seemed as though her whole body had sought to spring towards him, and had suddenly paused. And he stood in like manner amazed before her. Not thus had he pictured to himself that he should find her. This was not the same being he had formerly known; nothing about her resembled her former self; but she was twice as beautiful, twice as enchanting, now than she had been then. Then there had been something unfinished, incomplete, about her; now here was a production to which the artist had given the finishing stroke of his brush. That was a charming, giddy girl; this was a woman in the full development of her charms. As she raised her eyes, they were full of feeling, not of mere hints of feeling. The tears were not yet dry in them, and framed them in a shining dew which penetrated the very soul. Her bosom, neck, and arms were moulded in the proportions which mark fully developed loveliness. Her hair, which had in former days waved in light ringlets about her face, had become a heavy, luxuriant mass, a part of which was caught up, while part fell in long, slender curls upon her arms and breast. It seemed as though her every feature had changed. In vain did he seek to discover in them a single one of those which were engraved in his memory — a single one. Even her great pallor did not lessen her wonderful beauty; on the contrary, it conferred upon it an irresistible, inexpressible charm. Andrii felt in his heart a noble timidity, and stood motionless before her. She, too, seemed surprised at the appearance of the Cossack, as he stood before her in all the beauty and might of his young manhood, and in the very immovability of his limbs personified the utmost freedom of movement. His eyes beamed with clear decision; his velvet brows curved in a bold arch; his sunburnt cheeks glowed with all the ardour of youthful fire; and his downy black moustache shone like silk.

“No, I have no power to thank you, noble sir,” she said, her silvery voice all in a tremble. “God alone can reward you, not I, a weak woman.” She dropped her eyes, her lids fell over them in beautiful, snowy semicircles, guarded by lashes long as arrows; her wondrous face bowed forward, and a delicate flush overspread it from within. Andrii knew not what to say; he wanted to say everything. He had in his mind to say it all ardently as it glowed in his heart — and could not. He felt something confining his mouth; voice and words were lacking; he felt that it was not for him, bred in the seminary and in the tumult of a roaming life, to reply fitly to such language, and was angry with his Cossack nature.

At that moment the Tatar entered the room. She had cut up the bread which

the warrior had brought into small pieces on a golden plate, which she placed before her mistress. The lady glanced at her, at the bread, at her again, and then turned her eyes towards Andrii. There was a great deal in those eyes. That gentle glance, expressive of her weakness and her inability to give words to the feeling which overpowered her, was far more comprehensible to Andrii than any words. His heart suddenly grew light within him, all seemed made smooth. The mental emotions and the feelings which up to that moment he had restrained with a heavy curb, as it were, now felt themselves released, at liberty, and anxious to pour themselves out in a resistless torrent of words. Suddenly the lady turned to the Tatar, and said anxiously, “But my mother? you took her some?”

“She is asleep.”

“And my father?”

“I carried him some; he said that he would come to thank the young lord in person.”

She took the bread and raised it to her mouth. With inexpressible delight Andrii watched her break it with her shining fingers and eat it; but all at once he recalled the man mad with hunger, who had expired before his eyes on swallowing a morsel of bread. He turned pale and, seizing her hand, cried, “Enough! eat no more! you have not eaten for so long that too much bread will be poison to you now.” And she at once dropped her hand, laid her bread upon the plate, and gazed into his eyes like a submissive child. And if any words could express — But neither chisel, nor brush, nor mighty speech is capable of expressing what is sometimes seen in glances of maidens, nor the tender feeling which takes possession of him who receives such maiden glances.

“My queen!” exclaimed Andrii, his heart and soul filled with emotion, “what do you need? what do you wish? command me! Impose on me the most impossible task in all the world: I fly to fulfil it! Tell me to do that which it is beyond the power of man to do: I will fulfil it if I destroy myself. I will ruin myself. And I swear by the holy cross that ruin for your sake is as sweet — but no, it is impossible to say how sweet! I have three farms; half my father’s droves of horses are mine; all that my mother brought my father, and which she still conceals from him — all this is mine! Not one of the Cossacks owns such weapons as I; for the pommel of my sword alone they would give their best drove of horses and three thousand sheep. And I renounce all this, I discard it, I throw it aside, I will burn and drown it, if you will but say the word, or even move your delicate black brows! But I know that I am talking madly and wide of the mark; that all this is not fitting here; that it is not for me, who have passed my life in the seminary and among the Zaporozhtzi, to speak as they speak where kings, princes, and all the best of noble knighthood have been. I can see

that you are a different being from the rest of us, and far above all other boyars' wives and maiden daughters."

With growing amazement the maiden listened, losing no single word, to the frank, sincere language in which, as in a mirror, the young, strong spirit reflected itself. Each simple word of this speech, uttered in a voice which penetrated straight to the depths of her heart, was clothed in power. She advanced her beautiful face, pushed back her troublesome hair, opened her mouth, and gazed long, with parted lips. Then she tried to say something and suddenly stopped, remembering that the warrior was known by a different name; that his father, brothers, country, lay beyond, grim avengers; that the Zaporozhtzi besieging the city were terrible, and that the cruel death awaited all who were within its walls, and her eyes suddenly filled with tears. She seized a silk embroidered handkerchief and threw it over her face. In a moment it was all wet; and she sat for some time with her beautiful head thrown back, and her snowy teeth set on her lovely under-lip, as though she suddenly felt the sting of a poisonous serpent, without removing the handkerchief from her face, lest he should see her shaken with grief.

"Speak but one word to me," said Andrii, and he took her satin-skinned hand. A sparkling fire coursed through his veins at the touch, and he pressed the hand lying motionless in his.

But she still kept silence, never taking the kerchief from her face, and remaining motionless.

"Why are you so sad? Tell me, why are you so sad?"

She cast away the handkerchief, pushed aside the long hair which fell over her eyes, and poured out her heart in sad speech, in a quiet voice, like the breeze which, rising on a beautiful evening, blows through the thick growth of reeds beside the stream. They rustle, murmur, and give forth delicately mournful sounds, and the traveller, pausing in inexplicable sadness, hears them, and heeds not the fading light, nor the gay songs of the peasants which float in the air as they return from their labours in meadow and stubble-field, nor the distant rumble of the passing waggon.

"Am not I worthy of eternal pity? Is not the mother that bore me unhappy? Is it not a bitter lot which has befallen me? Art not thou a cruel executioner, fate? Thou has brought all to my feet — the highest nobles in the land, the richest gentlemen, counts, foreign barons, all the flower of our knighthood. All loved me, and any one of them would have counted my love the greatest boon. I had but to beckon, and the best of them, the handsomest, the first in beauty and birth would have become my husband. And to none of them didst thou incline my heart, O bitter fate; but thou didst turn it against the noblest heroes of our land,

and towards a stranger, towards our enemy. O most holy mother of God! for what sin dost thou so pitilessly, mercilessly, persecute me? In abundance and superfluity of luxury my days were passed, the richest dishes and the sweetest wine were my food. And to what end was it all? What was it all for? In order that I might at last die a death more cruel than that of the meanest beggar in the kingdom? And it was not enough that I should be condemned to so horrible a fate; not enough that before my own end I should behold my father and mother perish in intolerable torment, when I would have willingly given my own life twenty times over to save them; all this was not enough, but before my own death I must hear words of love such as I had never before dreamed of. It was necessary that he should break my heart with his words; that my bitter lot should be rendered still more bitter; that my young life should be made yet more sad; that my death should seem even more terrible; and that, dying, I should reproach thee still more, O cruel fate! and thee — forgive my sin — O holy mother of God!"

As she ceased in despair, her feelings were plainly expressed in her face. Every feature spoke of gnawing sorrow and, from the sadly bowed brow and downcast eyes to the tears trickling down and drying on her softly burning cheeks, seemed to say, "There is no happiness in this face."

"Such a thing was never heard of since the world began. It cannot be," said Andrii, "that the best and most beautiful of women should suffer so bitter a fate, when she was born that all the best there is in the world should bow before her as before a saint. No, you will not die, you shall not die! I swear by my birth and by all there is dear to me in the world that you shall not die. But if it must be so; if nothing, neither strength, nor prayer, nor heroism, will avail to avert this cruel fate — then we will die together, and I will die first. I will die before you, at your beauteous knees, and even in death they shall not divide us."

"Deceive not yourself and me, noble sir," she said, gently shaking her beautiful head; "I know, and to my great sorrow I know but too well, that it is impossible for you to love me. I know what your duty is, and your faith. Your father calls you, your comrades, your country, and we are your enemies."

"And what are my father, my comrades, my country to me?" said Andrii, with a quick movement of his head, and straightening up his figure like a poplar beside the river. "Be that as it may, I have no one, no one!" he repeated, with that movement of the hand with which the Cossack expresses his determination to do some unheard-of deed, impossible to any other man. "Who says that the Ukraine is my country? Who gave it to me for my country? Our country is the one our soul longs for, the one which is dearest of all to us. My country is — you! That is my native land, and I bear that country in my heart. I will bear it there all my

life, and I will see whether any of the Cossacks can tear it thence. And I will give everything, barter everything, I will destroy myself, for that country!”

Astounded, she gazed in his eyes for a space, like a beautiful statue, and then suddenly burst out sobbing; and with the wonderful feminine impetuosity which only grand-souled, uncalculating women, created for fine impulses of the heart, are capable of, threw herself upon his neck, encircling it with her wondrous snowy arms, and wept. At that moment indistinct shouts rang through the street, accompanied by the sound of trumpets and kettledrums; but he heard them not. He was only conscious of the beauteous mouth bathing him with its warm, sweet breath, of the tears streaming down his face, and of her long, unbound perfumed hair, veiling him completely in its dark and shining silk.

At that moment the Tatar ran in with a cry of joy. “Saved, saved!” she cried, beside herself. “Our troops have entered the city. They have brought corn, millet, flour, and Zaporozhtzi in chains!” But no one heard that “our troops” had arrived in the city, or what they had brought with them, or how they had bound the Zaporozhtzi. Filled with feelings untasted as yet upon earth, Andrii kissed the sweet mouth which pressed his cheek, and the sweet mouth did not remain unresponsive. In this union of kisses they experienced that which it is given to a man to feel but once on earth.

And the Cossack was ruined. He was lost to Cossack chivalry. Never again will Zaporozhe, nor his father’s house, nor the Church of God, behold him. The Ukraine will never more see the bravest of the children who have undertaken to defend her. Old Taras may tear the grey hair from his scalp-lock, and curse the day and hour in which such a son was born to dishonour him.

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CHAPTER VII

Noise and movement were rife in the Zaporozhian camp. At first, no one could account for the relieving army having made its way into the city; but it afterwards appeared that the Pereyaslavsky kuren, encamped before the wide gate of the town, had been dead drunk. It was no wonder that half had been killed, and the other half bound, before they knew what it was all about. Meantime the neighbouring kurens, aroused by the tumult, succeeded in grasping their weapons; but the relieving force had already passed through the gate, and its rear ranks fired upon the sleepy and only half-sober Zaporozhtzi who were pressing in disorder upon them, and kept them back.

The Koschevoi ordered a general assembly; and when all stood in a ring and had removed their caps and became quiet, he said: “See what happened last night, brother gentles! See what drunkenness has led to! See what shame the enemy has put upon us! It is evident that, if your allowances are kindly doubled, then you are ready to stretch out at full length, and the enemies of Christ can not only take your very trousers off you, but sneeze in your faces without your hearing them!”

The Cossacks all stood with drooping heads, knowing that they were guilty; only Kukubenko, the hetman of the Nezamisky kuren, answered back. “Stop, father!” said he; “although it is not lawful to make a retort when the Koschevoi speaks before the whole army, yet it is necessary to say that that was not the state of the case. You have not been quite just in your reprimand. The Cossacks would have been guilty, and deserving of death, had they got drunk on the march, or when engaged on heavy toilsome labour during war; but we have been sitting here unoccupied, loitering in vain before the city. There was no fast or other Christian restraint; how then could it be otherwise than that a man should get drunk in idleness? There is no sin in that. But we had better show them what it is to attack innocent people. They first beat us well, and now we will beat them so that not half a dozen of them will ever see home again.”

The speech of the hetman of the kuren pleased the Cossacks. They raised their drooping heads upright and many nodded approvingly, muttering, “Kukubenko has spoken well!” And Taras Bulba, who stood not far from the Koschevoi, said: “How now, Koschevoi? Kukubenko has spoken truth. What have you to say to this?”

“What have I to say? I say, Blessed be the father of such a son! It does not

need much wisdom to utter words of reproof; but much wisdom is needed to find such words as do not embitter a man's misfortune, but encourage him, restore to him his spirit, put spurs to the horse of his soul, refreshed by water. I meant myself to speak words of comfort to you, but Kukubenko has forestalled me."

"The Koschevoi has also spoken well!" rang through the ranks of the Zaporozhtzi. "His words are good," repeated others. And even the greyheads, who stood there like dark blue doves, nodded their heads and, twitching their grey moustaches, muttered softly, "That was well said."

"Listen now, gentles," continued the Koschevoi. "To take the city, by scaling its walls, or undermining them as the foreign engineers do, is not proper, not Cossack fashion. But, judging from appearances, the enemy entered the city without many provisions; they had not many waggons with them. The people in the city are hungry; they will all eat heartily, and the horses will soon devour the hay. I don't know whether their saints will fling them down anything from heaven with hayforks; God only knows that though there are a great many Catholic priests among them. By one means or another the people will seek to leave the city. Divide yourselves, therefore, into three divisions, and take up your posts before the three gates; five kurens before the principal gate, and three kurens before each of the others. Let the Dadikivsky and Korsunsky kurens go into ambush and Taras and his men into ambush too. The Titarevsky and Timoschevsky kurens are to guard the baggage train on the right flank, the Scherbinovsky and Steblikivsky on the left, and to select from their ranks the most daring young men to face the foe. The Lyakhs are of a restless nature and cannot endure a siege, and perhaps this very day they will sally forth from the gates. Let each hetman inspect his kuren; those whose ranks are not full are to be recruited from the remains of the Pereyaslavsky kuren. Inspect them all anew. Give a loaf and a beaker to each Cossack to strengthen him. But surely every one must be satiated from last night; for all stuffed themselves so that, to tell the truth, I am only surprised that no one burst in the night. And here is one further command: if any Jew spirit-seller sells a Cossack so much as a single jug of brandy, I will nail pig's ears to his very forehead, the dog, and hang him up by his feet. To work, brothers, to work!"

Thus did the Koschevoi give his orders. All bowed to their girdles, and without putting on their caps set out for their waggons and camps. It was only when they had gone some distance that they covered themselves. All began to equip themselves: they tested their swords, poured powder from the sacks into their powder-flasks, drew up and arranged the waggons, and looked to their horses.

On his way to his band, Taras wondered what had become of Andrii; could he

have been captured and found while asleep with the others? But no, Andrii was not the man to go alive into captivity. Yet he was not to be seen among the slaughtered Cossacks. Taras pondered deeply and went past his men without hearing that some one had for some time been calling him by name. “Who wants me?” he said, finally arousing himself from his reflections. Before him stood the Jew, Yankel. “Lord colonel! lord colonel!” said the Jew in a hasty and broken voice, as though desirous of revealing something not utterly useless, “I have been in the city, lord colonel!”

Taras looked at the Jew, and wondered how he had succeeded in getting into the city. “What enemy took you there?”

“I will tell you at once,” said Yankel. “As soon as I heard the uproar this morning, when the Cossacks began to fire, I seized my caftan and, without stopping to put it on, ran at the top of my speed, thrusting my arms in on the way, because I wanted to know as soon as possible the cause of the noise and why the Cossacks were firing at dawn. I ran to the very gate of the city, at the moment when the last of the army was passing through. I looked, and in command of the rearguard was Cornet Galyandovitch. He is a man well known to me; he has owed me a hundred ducats these three years past. I ran after him, as though to claim the debt of him, and so entered the city with them.”

“You entered the city, and wanted him to settle the debt!” said Bulba; “and he did not order you to be hung like a dog on the spot?”

“By heavens, he did want to hang me,” replied the Jew; “his servants had already seized me and thrown a rope about my neck. But I besought the noble lord, and said that I would wait for the money as long as his lordship liked, and promised to lend him more if he would only help me to collect my debts from the other nobles; for I can tell my lord that the noble cornet had not a ducat in his pocket, although he has farms and estates and four castles and steppe-land that extends clear to Schklof; but he has not a penny, any more than a Cossack. If the Breslau Jews had not equipped him, he would never have gone on this campaign. That was the reason he did not go to the Diet.”

“What did you do in the city? Did you see any of our people?”

“Certainly, there are many of them there: Itzok, Rachum, Samuel, Khaivalkh, Evrei the pawnbroker — ”

“May they die, the dogs!” shouted Taras in a rage. “Why do you name your Jewish tribe to me? I ask you about our Zaporozhtzi.”

“I saw none of our Zaporozhtzi; I saw only Lord Andrii.”

“You saw Andrii!” shouted Bulba. “What is he doing? Where did you see him? In a dungeon? in a pit? dishonoured? bound?”

“Who would dare to bind Lord Andrii? now he is so grand a knight. I hardly

recognised him. Gold on his shoulders and his belt, gold everywhere about him; as the sun shines in spring, when every bird twitters and sings in the orchard, so he shines, all gold. And his horse, which the Waiwode himself gave him, is the very best; that horse alone is worth two hundred ducats."

Bulba was petrified. "Why has he put on foreign garments?"

"He put them on because they were finer. And he rides about, and the others ride about, and he teaches them, and they teach him; like the very grandest Polish noble."

"Who forced him to do this?"

"I should not say that he had been forced. Does not my lord know that he went over to them of his own free will?"

"Who went over?"

"Lord Andrii."

"Went where?"

"Went over to their side; he is now a thorough foreigner."

"You lie, you hog's ear!"

"How is it possible that I should lie? Am I a fool, that I should lie? Would I lie at the risk of my head? Do not I know that Jews are hung like dogs if they lie to nobles?"

"Then it means, according to you, he has betrayed his native land and his faith?"

"I do not say that he has betrayed anything; I merely said that he had gone over to the other side."

"You lie, you imp of a Jew! Such a deed was never known in a Christian land. You are making a mistake, dog!"

"May the grass grow upon the threshold of my house if I am mistaken! May every one spit upon the grave of my father, my mother, my father's father, and my mother's father, if I am mistaken! If my lord wished I can even tell him why he went over to them."

"Why?"

"The Waiwode has a beautiful daughter. Holy Father! what a beauty!" Here the Jew tried his utmost to express beauty by extending his hands, screwing up his eyes, and twisting his mouth to one side as though tasting something on trial.

"Well, what of that?"

"He did it all for her, he went there for her sake. When a man is in love, then all things are the same to him; like the sole of a shoe which you can bend in any direction if you soak it in water."

Bulba reflected deeply. He remembered the power of weak woman — how she had ruined many a strong man, and that this was the weak point in Andrii's

nature — and stood for some time in one spot, as though rooted there. “Listen, my lord, I will tell my lord all,” said the Jew. “As soon as I heard the uproar, and saw them going through the city gate, I seized a string of pearls, in case of any emergency. For there are beauties and noble-women there; ‘and if there are beauties and noble-women,’ I said to myself, ‘they will buy pearls, even if they have nothing to eat.’ And, as soon as ever the cornet’s servants had set me at liberty, I hastened to the Waiwode’s residence to sell my pearls. I asked all manner of questions of the lady’s Tatar maid; the wedding is to take place immediately, as soon as they have driven off the Zaporozhtzi. Lord Andrii has promised to drive off the Zaporovians.”

“And you did not kill him on the spot, you devil’s brat?” shouted Bulba.

“Why should I kill him? He went over of his own free will. What is his crime? He liked it better there, so he went there.”

“And you saw him face to face?”

“Face to face, by heavens! such a magnificent warrior! more splendid than all the rest. God bless him, he knew me, and when I approached him he said at once — ”

“What did he say?”

“He said — First he beckoned me with his finger, and then he said, ‘Yankel!’ Lord Andrii said, ‘Yankel, tell my father, tell my brother, tell all the Cossacks, all the Zaporozhtzi, everybody, that my father is no longer my father, nor my brother my brother, nor my comrades my comrades; and that I will fight them all, all.’“

“You lie, imp of a Jew!” shouted Taras, beside himself. “You lie, dog! I will kill you, Satan! Get away from here! if not, death awaits you!” So saying, Taras drew his sword.

The terrified Jew set off instantly, at the full speed of his thin, shrunken legs. He ran for a long time, without looking back, through the Cossack camp, and then far out on the deserted plain, although Taras did not chase him at all, reasoning that it was foolish to thus vent his rage on the first person who presented himself.

Then he recollected that he had seen Andrii on the previous night traversing the camp with some woman, and he bowed his grey head. Still he would not believe that so disgraceful a thing could have happened, and that his own son had betrayed his faith and soul.

Finally he placed his men in ambush in a wood — the only one which had not been burned by the Cossacks — whilst the Zaporozhians, foot and horse, set out for the three gates by three different roads. One after another the kurens turned out: Oumansky, Popovichesky, Kanevsky, Steblikovsky, Nezamaikovsky,

Gurgazif, Titarevsky, Tomischevsky. The Pereyaslavsky kuren alone was wanting. Its Cossacks had smoked and drank to their destruction. Some awoke to find themselves bound in the enemy's hands; others never woke at all but passed in their sleep into the damp earth; and the hetman Khlib himself, minus his trousers and accoutrements, found himself in the camp of the Lyakhs.

The uproar among the Zaporozhtzi was heard in the city. All the besieged hastened to the ramparts, and a lively scene was presented to the Cossacks. The handsome Polish heroes thronged on the wall. The brazen helmets of some shone like the sun, and were adorned with feathers white as swans. Others wore pink and blue caps, drooping over one ear, and caftans with the sleeves thrown back, embroidered with gold. Their weapons were richly mounted and very costly, as were their equipments. In the front rank the Budzhakovsky colonel stood proudly in his red cap ornamented with gold. He was a tall, stout man, and his rich and ample caftan hardly covered him. Near the side gate stood another colonel. He was a dried-up little man, but his small, piercing eyes gleamed sharply from under his thick and shaggy brows, and as he turned quickly on all sides, motioning boldly with his thin, withered hand, and giving out his orders, it was evident that, in spite of his little body, he understood military science thoroughly. Not far from him stood a very tall cornet, with thick moustaches and a highly-coloured complexion — a noble fond of strong mead and hearty revelry. Behind them were many nobles who had equipped themselves, some with their own ducats, some from the royal treasury, some with money obtained from the Jews, by pawning everything they found in their ancestral castles. Many too were parasites, whom the senators took with them to dinners for show, and who stole silver cups from the table and the sideboard, and when the day's display was over mounted some noble's coach-box and drove his horses. There were folk of all kinds there. Sometimes they had not enough to drink, but all were equipped for war.

The Cossack ranks stood quietly before the walls. There was no gold about them, save where it shone on the hilt of a sword or the mountings of a gun. The Zaporozhtzi were not given to decking themselves out gaily for battle: their coats-of-mail and garments were plain, and their black-bordered red-crowned caps showed darkly in the distance.

Two men — Okhrim Nasch and Mikiga Golokopuitenko — advanced from the Zaporozhian ranks. One was quite young, the other older; both fierce in words, and not bad specimens of Cossacks in action. They were followed by Demid Popovitch, a strongly built Cossack who had been hanging about the Setch for a long time, after having been in Adrianople and undergoing a great deal in the course of his life. He had been burned, and had escaped to the Setch

with blackened head and singed moustaches. But Popovitch recovered, let his hair grow, raised moustaches thick and black as pitch, and was a stout fellow, according to his own biting speech.

“Red jackets on all the army, but I should like to know what sort of men are under them,” he cried.

“I will show you,” shouted the stout colonel from above. “I will capture the whole of you. Surrender your guns and horses, slaves. Did you see how I caught your men? — Bring out a Zaporozhetz on the wall for them to see.”

And they let out a Zaporozhetz bound with stout cords.

Before them stood Khlib, the hetman of the Pereyaslavsky kuren, without his trousers or accoutrements, just as they had captured him in his drunken sleep. He bowed his head in shame before the Cossacks at his nakedness, and at having been thus taken like a dog, while asleep. His hair had turned grey in one night.

“Grieve not, Khlib: we will rescue you,” shouted the Cossacks from below.

“Grieve not, friend,” cried the hetman Borodaty. “It is not your fault that they caught you naked: that misfortune might happen to any man. But it is a disgrace to them that they should have exposed you to dishonour, and not covered your nakedness decently.”

“You seem to be a brave army when you have people who are asleep to fight,” remarked Golokopuitenko, glancing at the ramparts.

“Wait a bit, we’ll singe your top-knots for you!” was the reply.

“I should like to see them singe our scalp locks!” said Popovitch, prancing about before them on his horse; and then, glancing at his comrades, he added, “Well, perhaps the Lyakhs speak the truth: if that fat-bellied fellow leads them, they will all find a good shelter.”

“Why do you think they will find a good shelter?” asked the Cossacks, knowing that Popovitch was probably preparing some repartee.

“Because the whole army will hide behind him; and the devil himself couldn’t help you to reach any one with your spear through that belly of his!”

The Cossacks laughed, some of them shaking their heads and saying, “What a fellow Popovitch is for a joke! but now — ” But the Cossacks had not time to explain what they meant by that “now.”

“Fall back, fall back quickly from the wall!” shouted the Koschevoi, seeing that the Lyakhs could not endure these biting words, and that the colonel was waving his hand.

The Cossacks had hardly retreated from the wall before the grape-shot rained down. On the ramparts all was excitement, and the grey-haired Waiwode himself appeared on horseback. The gates opened and the garrison sallied forth. In the van came hussars in orderly ranks, behind them the horsemen in armour, and

then the heroes in brazen helmets; after whom rode singly the highest nobility, each man accoutred as he pleased. These haughty nobles would not mingle in the ranks with others, and such of them as had no commands rode apart with their own immediate following. Next came some more companies, and after these the cornet, then more files of men, and the stout colonel; and in the rear of the whole force the little colonel.

“Keep them from forming in line!” shouted the Koschevoi; “let all the kurens attack them at once! Block the other gate! Titarevsky kuren, fall on one flank! Dyadovsky kuren, charge on the other! Attack them in the rear, Kukubenko and Palivod! Check them, break them!” The Cossacks attacked on all sides, throwing the Lyakhs into confusion and getting confused themselves. They did not even give the foe time to fire, it came to swords and spears at once. All fought hand to hand, and each man had an opportunity to distinguish himself.

Demid Popovitch speared three soldiers, and struck two of the highest nobles from their saddles, saying, “Good horses! I have long wanted just such horses.” And he drove the horses far afield, shouting to the Cossacks standing about to catch them. Then he rushed again into the fray, fell upon the dismounted nobles, slew one, and throwing his lasso round the neck of the other, tied him to his saddle and dragged him over the plain, after having taken from him his sword from its rich hilt and removed from his girdle a whole bag of ducats.

Kobita, a good Cossack, though still very young, attacked one of the bravest men in the Polish army, and they fought long together. They grappled, and the Cossack mastering his foe, and throwing him down, stabbed him in the breast with his sharp Turkish knife. But he did not look out for himself, and a bullet struck him on the temple. The man who struck him down was the most distinguished of the nobles, the handsomest scion of an ancient and princely race. Like a stately poplar, he bestrode his dun-coloured steed, and many heroic deeds did he perform. He cut two Cossacks in twain. Fedor Korzh, the brave Cossack, he overthrew together with his horse, shooting the steed and picking off the rider with his spear. Many heads and hands did he hew off; and slew Kobita by sending a bullet through his temple.

“There’s a man I should like to measure strength with!” shouted Kukubenko, the hetman of the Nezamaikovsky kuren. Spurring his horse, he dashed straight at the Pole’s back, shouting loudly, so that all who stood near shuddered at the unearthly yell. The boyard tried to wheel his horse suddenly and face him, but his horse would not obey him; scared by the terrible cry, it bounded aside, and the Lyakh received Kukubenko’s fire. The ball struck him in the shoulder-blade, and he rolled from his saddle. Even then he did not surrender and strove to deal his enemy a blow, but his hand was weak. Kukubenko, taking his heavy sword in

both hands, thrust it through his mouth. The sword, breaking out two teeth, cut the tongue in twain, pierced the windpipe, and penetrated deep into the earth, nailing him to the ground. His noble blood, red as viburnum berries beside the river, welled forth in a stream staining his yellow, gold-embroidered caftan. But Kukubenko had already left him, and was forcing his way, with his Nezamaikovsky kuren, towards another group.

"He has left untouched rich plunder," said Borodaty, hetman of the Oumansky kuren, leaving his men and going to the place where the nobleman killed by Kukubenko lay. "I have killed seven nobles with my own hand, but such spoil I never beheld on any one." Prompted by greed, Borodaty bent down to strip off the rich armour, and had already secured the Turkish knife set with precious stones, and taken from the foe's belt a purse of ducats, and from his breast a silver case containing a maiden's curl, cherished tenderly as a love-token. But he heeded not how the red-faced cornet, whom he had already once hurled from the saddle and given a good blow as a remembrance, flew upon him from behind. The cornet swung his arm with all his might, and brought his sword down upon Borodaty's bent neck. Greed led to no good: the head rolled off, and the body fell headless, sprinkling the earth with blood far and wide; whilst the Cossack soul ascended, indignant and surprised at having so soon quitted so stout a frame. The cornet had not succeeded in seizing the hetman's head by its scalp-lock, and fastening it to his saddle, before an avenger had arrived.

As a hawk floating in the sky, sweeping in great circles with his mighty wings, suddenly remains poised in air, in one spot, and thence darts down like an arrow upon the shrieking quail, so Taras's son Ostap darted suddenly upon the cornet and flung a rope about his neck with one cast. The cornet's red face became a still deeper purple as the cruel noose compressed his throat, and he tried to use his pistol; but his convulsively quivering hand could not aim straight, and the bullet flew wild across the plain. Ostap immediately unfastened a silken cord which the cornet carried at his saddle bow to bind prisoners, and having with it bound him hand and foot, attached the cord to his saddle and dragged him across the field, calling on all the Cossacks of the Oumansky kuren to come and render the last honours to their hetman.

When the Oumantzi heard that the hetman of their kuren, Borodaty, was no longer among the living, they deserted the field of battle, rushed to secure his body, and consulted at once as to whom they should select as their leader. At length they said, "But why consult? It is impossible to find a better leader than Bulba's son, Ostap; he is younger than all the rest of us, it is true; but his judgment is equal to that of the eldest."

Ostap, taking off his cap, thanked his comrades for the honour, and did not

decline it on the ground of youth or inexperience, knowing that war time is no fitting season for that; but instantly ordered them straight to the fray, and soon showed them that not in vain had they chosen him as hetman. The Lyakhs felt that the matter was growing too hot for them, and retreated across the plain in order to form again at its other end. But the little colonel signalled to the reserve of four hundred, stationed at the gate, and these rained shot upon the Cossacks. To little purpose, however, their shot only taking effect on the Cossack oxen, which were gazing wildly upon the battle. The frightened oxen, bellowing with fear, dashed into the camp, breaking the line of waggons and trampling on many. But Taras, emerging from ambush at the moment with his troops, headed off the infuriated cattle, which, startled by his yell, swooped down upon the Polish troops, overthrew the cavalry, and crushed and dispersed them all.

“Thank you, oxen!” cried the Zaporozhtzi; “you served us on the march, and now you serve us in war.” And they attacked the foe with fresh vigour killing many of the enemy. Several distinguished themselves — Metelitza and Schilo, both of the Pisarenki, Vovtuzenko, and many others. The Lyakhs seeing that matters were going badly for them flung away their banners and shouted for the city gates to be opened. With a screeching sound the iron-bound gates swung open and received the weary and dust-covered riders, flocking like sheep into a fold. Many of the Zaporozhtzi would have pursued them, but Ostap stopped his Oumantzi, saying, “Farther, farther from the walls, brother gentles! it is not well to approach them too closely.” He spoke truly; for from the ramparts the foe rained and poured down everything which came to hand, and many were struck. At that moment the Koschevoi came up and congratulated him, saying, “Here is the new hetman leading the army like an old one!” Old Bulba glanced round to see the new hetman, and beheld Ostap sitting on his horse at the head of the Oumantzi, his cap on one side and the hetman’s staff in his hand. “Who ever saw the like!” he exclaimed; and the old man rejoiced, and began to thank all the Oumantzi for the honour they had conferred upon his son.

The Cossacks retired, preparing to go into camp; but the Lyakhs showed themselves again on the city ramparts with tattered mantles. Many rich caftans were spotted with blood, and dust covered the brazen helmets.

“Have you bound us?” cried the Zaporozhtzi to them from below.

“We will do so!” shouted the big colonel from above, showing them a rope. The weary, dust-covered warriors ceased not to threaten, nor the most zealous on both sides to exchange fierce remarks.

At length all dispersed. Some, weary with battle, stretched themselves out to rest; others sprinkled their wounds with earth, and bound them with kerchiefs and rich stuffs captured from the enemy. Others, who were fresher, began to

inspect the corpses and to pay them the last honours. They dug graves with swords and spears, brought earth in their caps and the skirts of their garments, laid the Cossacks' bodies out decently, and covered them up in order that the ravens and eagles might not claw out their eyes. But binding the bodies of the Lyakhs, as they came to hand, to the tails of horses, they let these loose on the plain, pursuing them and beating them for some time. The infuriated horses flew over hill and hollow, through ditch and brook, dragging the bodies of the Poles, all covered with blood and dust, along the ground.

All the kurens sat down in circles in the evening, and talked for a long time of their deeds, and of the achievements which had fallen to the share of each, for repetition by strangers and posterity. It was long before they lay down to sleep; and longer still before old Taras, meditating what it might signify that Andrii was not among the foe, lay down. Had the Judas been ashamed to come forth against his own countrymen? or had the Jew been deceiving him, and had he simply gone into the city against his will? But then he recollected that there were no bounds to a woman's influence upon Andrii's heart; he felt ashamed, and swore a mighty oath to himself against the fair Pole who had bewitched his son. And he would have kept his oath. He would not have looked at her beauty; he would have dragged her forth by her thick and splendid hair; he would have trailed her after him over all the plain, among all the Cossacks. Her beautiful shoulders and bosom, white as fresh-fallen snow upon the mountain-tops, would have been crushed to earth and covered with blood and dust. Her lovely body would have been torn to pieces. But Taras, who did not foresee what God prepares for man on the morrow, began to grow drowsy, and finally fell asleep. The Cossacks still talked among themselves; and the sober sentinel stood all night long beside the fire without blinking and keeping a good look out on all sides.

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CHAPTER VIII

The sun had not ascended midway in the heavens when all the army assembled in a group. News had come from the Setch that during the Cossacks' absence the Tatars had plundered it completely, unearthed the treasures which were kept concealed in the ground, killed or carried into captivity all who had remained behind, and straightway set out, with all the flocks and droves of horses they had collected, for Perekop. One Cossack only, Maksin Galodukha, had broken loose from the Tatars' hands, stabbed the Mirza, seized his bag of sequins, and on a Tatar horse, in Tatar garments, had fled from his pursuers for two nights and a day and a half, ridden his horse to death, obtained another, killed that one too, and arrived at the Zaporozhian camp upon a third, having learned upon the road that the Zaporozhtzi were before Dubno. He could only manage to tell them that this misfortune had taken place; but as to how it happened — whether the remaining Zaporozhtzi had been carousing after Cossack fashion, and had been carried drunk into captivity, and how the Tatars were aware of the spot where the treasures of the army were concealed — he was too exhausted to say. Extremely fatigued, his body swollen, and his face scorched and weatherbeaten, he had fallen down, and a deep sleep had overpowered him.

In such cases it was customary for the Cossacks to pursue the robbers at once, endeavouring to overtake them on the road; for, let the prisoners once be got to the bazaars of Asia Minor, Smyrna, or the island of Crete, and God knows in what places the tufted heads of Zaporozhtzi might not be seen. This was the occasion of the Cossacks' assembling. They all stood to a man with their caps on; for they had not met to listen to the commands of their hetman, but to take counsel together as equals among equals. "Let the old men first advise," was shouted to the crowd. "Let the Koschevoi give his opinion," cried others.

The Koschevoi, taking off his cap and speaking not as commander, but as a comrade among comrades, thanked all the Cossacks for the honour, and said, "There are among us many experienced men and much wisdom; but since you have thought me worthy, my counsel is not to lose time in pursuing the Tatars, for you know yourselves what the Tatar is. He will not pause with his stolen booty to await our coming, but will vanish in a twinkling, so that you can find no trace of him. Therefore my advice is to go. We have had good sport here. The Lyakhs now know what Cossacks are. We have avenged our faith to the extent of our ability; there is not much to satisfy greed in the famished city, and so my

advice is to go."

"To go," rang heavily through the Zaporozhian kurens. But such words did not suit Taras Bulba at all; and he brought his frowning, iron-grey brows still lower down over his eyes, brows like bushes growing on dark mountain heights, whose crowns are suddenly covered with sharp northern frost.

"No, Koschevoi, your counsel is not good," said he. "You cannot say that. You have evidently forgotten that those of our men captured by the Lyakhs will remain prisoners. You evidently wish that we should not heed the first holy law of comradeship; that we should leave our brethren to be flayed alive, or carried about through the towns and villages after their Cossack bodies have been quartered, as was done with the hetman and the bravest Russian warriors in the Ukraine. Have the enemy not desecrated the holy things sufficiently without that? What are we? I ask you all what sort of a Cossack is he who would desert his comrade in misfortune, and let him perish like a dog in a foreign land? If it has come to such a pass that no one has any confidence in Cossack honour, permitting men to spit upon his grey moustache, and upbraid him with offensive words, then let no one blame me; I will remain here alone."

All the Zaporozhtzi who were there wavered.

"And have you forgotten, brave comrades," said the Koschevoi, "that the Tatars also have comrades of ours in their hands; that if we do not rescue them now their lives will be sacrificed in eternal imprisonment among the infidels, which is worse than the most cruel death? Have you forgotten that they now hold all our treasure, won by Christian blood?"

The Cossacks reflected, not knowing what to say. None of them wished to deserve ill repute. Then there stepped out in front of them the oldest in years of all the Zaporozhian army, Kasyan Bovdug. He was respected by all the Cossacks. Twice had he been chosen Koschevoi, and had also been a stout warrior; but he had long been old, and had ceased to go upon raids. Neither did the old man like to give advice to any one; but loved to lie upon his side in the circle of Cossacks, listening to tales of every occurrence on the Cossack marches. He never joined in the conversation, but only listened, and pressed the ashes with his finger in his short pipe, which never left his mouth; and would sit so long with his eyes half open, that the Cossacks never knew whether he were asleep or still listening. He always stayed at home during their raids, but this time the old man had joined the army. He had waved his hand in Cossack fashion, and said, "Wherever you go, I am going too; perhaps I may be of some service to the Cossack nation." All the Cossacks became silent when he now stepped forward before the assembly, for it was long since any speech from him had been heard. Every one wanted to know what Bovdug had to say.

“It is my turn to speak a word, brother gentles,” he began: “listen, my children, to an old man. The Koschevoi spoke well as the head of the Cossack army; being bound to protect it, and in respect to the treasures of the army he could say nothing wiser. That is so! Let that be my first remark; but now listen to my second. And this is my second remark: Taras spoke even more truly. God grant him many years, and that such leaders may be plentiful in the Ukraine! A Cossack’s first duty and honour is to guard comradeship. Never in all my life, brother gentles, have I heard of any Cossack deserting or betraying any of his comrades. Both those made captive at the Setch and these taken here are our comrades. Whether they be few or many, it makes no difference; all are our comrades, and all are dear to us. So this is my speech: Let those to whom the prisoners captured by the Tatars are dear set out after the Tatars; and let those to whom the captives of the Poles are dear, and who do not care to desert a righteous cause, stay behind. The Koschevoi, in accordance with his duty, will accompany one half in pursuit of the Tatars, and the other half can choose a hetman to lead them. But if you will heed the words of an old man, there is no man fitter to be the commanding hetman than Taras Bulba. Not one of us is his equal in heroism.”

Thus spoke Bovdug, and paused; and all the Cossacks rejoiced that the old man had in this manner brought them to an agreement. All flung up their caps and shouted, “Thanks, father! He kept silence for a long, long time, but he has spoken at last. Not in vain did he say, when we prepared for this expedition, that he might be useful to the Cossack nation: even so it has come to pass!”

“Well, are you agreed upon anything?” asked the Koschevoi.

“We are all agreed!” cried the Cossacks.

“Then the council is at an end?”

“At an end!” cried the Cossacks.

“Then listen to the military command, children,” said the Koschevoi, stepping forward, and putting on his cap; whilst all the Cossacks took off theirs, and stood with uncovered heads, and with eyes fixed upon the earth, as was always the custom among them when the leader prepared to speak. “Now divide yourselves, brother gentles! Let those who wish to go stand on the right, and those who wish to stay, on the left. Where the majority of a kuren goes there its officers are to go: if the minority of a kuren goes over, it must be added to another kuren.”

Then they began to take up their positions, some to the right and some to the left. Whither the majority of a kuren went thither the hetman went also; and the minority attached itself to another kuren. It came out pretty even on both sides. Those who wished to remain were nearly the whole of the Nezamaikovsky kuren, the entire Oumansky kuren, the entire Kanevsky kuren, and the larger half

of the Popovitchsky, the Timoschevsky and the Steblikivsky kurens. All the rest preferred to go in pursuit of the Tatars. On both sides there were many stout and brave Cossacks. Among those who decided to follow the Tatars were Tcherevaty, and those good old Cossacks Pokotipole, Lemisch, and Prokopovitch Koma. Demid Popovitch also went with that party, because he could not sit long in one place: he had tried his hand on the Lyakhs and wanted to try it on the Tatars also. The hetmans of kurens were Nostiugan, Pokruischka, Nevnimsky, and numerous brave and renowned Cossacks who wished to test their swords and muscles in an encounter with the Tatars. There were likewise many brave Cossacks among those who preferred to remain, including the kuren hetmans, Demitrovitch, Kukubenko, Vertikhvist, Balan, and Ostap Bulba. Besides these there were plenty of stout and distinguished warriors: Vovtuzenko, Tcherevitchenko, Stepan Guska, Okhrim Guska, Vikola Gonstiy, Zadorozhniy, Metelitza, Ivan Zakrutiguba, Mosiy Pisarenko, and still another Pisarenko, and many others. They were all great travellers; they had visited the shores of Anatolia, the salt marshes and steppes of the Crimea, all the rivers great and small which empty into the Dnieper, and all the fords and islands of the Dnieper; they had been in Moldavia, Wallachia, and Turkey; they had sailed all over the Black Sea, in their double-ruddered Cossack boats; they had attacked with fifty skiffs in line the tallest and richest ships; they had sunk many a Turkish galley, and had burnt much, very much powder in their day; more than once they had made foot-bandages from velvets and rich stuffs; more than once they had beaten buckles for their girdles out of sequins. Every one of them had drunk and revelled away what would have sufficed any other for a whole lifetime, and had nothing to show for it. They spent it all, like Cossacks, in treating all the world, and in hiring music that every one might be merry. Even now few of them had amassed any property: some caskets, cups, and bracelets were hidden beneath the reeds on the islands of the Dnieper in order that the Tatars might not find them if by mishap they should succeed in falling suddenly on the Setch; but it would have been difficult for the Tatars to find them, for the owners themselves had forgotten where they had buried them. Such were the Cossacks who wished to remain and take vengeance on the Lyakhs for their trusty comrades and the faith of Christ. The old Cossack Bovdug wished also to remain with them, saying, “I am not of an age to pursue the Tatars, but this is a place to meet a good Cossack death. I have long prayed God that when my life was to end I might end it in battle for a holy and Christian cause. And so it has come to pass. There can be no more glorious end in any other place for the aged Cossack.”

When they had all separated, and were ranged in two lines on opposite sides, the Koschevoi passed through the ranks, and said, “Well, brother gentles, are the

two parties satisfied with each other?”

“All satisfied, father!” replied the Cossacks.

“Then kiss each other, and bid each other farewell; for God knows whether you will ever see each other alive again. Obey your hetman, but you know yourselves what you have to do: you know yourselves what Cossack honour requires.”

And all the Cossacks kissed each other. The hetmans first began it. Stroking down their grey moustaches, they kissed each other, making the sign of the cross, and then, grasping hands firmly, wanted to ask of each other, “Well, brother, shall we see one another again or not?” But they did not ask the question: they kept silence, and both grey-heads were lost in thought. Then the Cossacks took leave of each other to the last man, knowing that there was a great deal of work before them all. Yet they were not obliged to part at once: they would have to wait until night in order not to let the Lyakhs perceive the diminution in the Cossack army. Then all went off, by kurens, to dine.

After dinner, all who had the prospect of the journey before them lay down to rest, and fell into a deep and long sleep, as though foreseeing that it was the last sleep they should enjoy in such security. They slept even until sunset; and when the sun had gone down and it had grown somewhat dusky, began to tar the waggons. All being in readiness, they sent the waggons ahead, and having pulled off their caps once more to their comrades, quietly followed the baggage train. The cavalry, without shouts or whistles to the horses, tramped lightly after the foot-soldiers, and all soon vanished in the darkness. The only sound was the dull thud of horses’ hoofs, or the squeak of some wheel which had not got into working order, or had not been properly tarred amid the darkness.

Their comrades stood for some time waving their hands, though nothing was visible. But when they returned to their camping places and saw by the light of the gleaming stars that half the waggons were gone, and many of their comrades, each man’s heart grew sad; all became involuntarily pensive, and drooped their heads towards the earth.

Taras saw how troubled were the Cossack ranks, and that sadness, unsuited to brave men, had begun to quietly master the Cossack hearts; but he remained silent. He wished to give them time to become accustomed to the melancholy caused by their parting from their comrades; but, meanwhile, he was preparing to rouse them at one blow, by a loud battle-cry in Cossack fashion, in order that good cheer might return to the soul of each with greater strength than before. Of this only the Slav nature, a broad, powerful nature, which is to others what the sea is to small rivulets, is capable. In stormy times it roars and thunders, raging, and raising such waves as weak rivers cannot throw up; but when it is windless

and quiet, it spreads its boundless glassy surface, clearer than any river, a constant delight to the eye.

Taras ordered his servants to unload one of the waggons which stood apart. It was larger and stronger than any other in the Cossack camp; two stout tires encircled its mighty wheels. It was heavily laden, covered with horsecloths and strong wolf-skins, and firmly bound with tightly drawn tarred ropes. In the waggon were flasks and casks of good old wine, which had long lain in Taras's cellar. He had brought it along, in case a moment should arrive when some deed awaited them worthy of being handed down to posterity, so that each Cossack, to the very last man, might quaff it, and be inspired with sentiments fitting to the occasion. On receiving his command, the servants hastened to the waggon, hewed asunder the stout ropes with their swords, removed the thick wolf-skins and horsecloths, and drew forth the flasks and casks.

"Take them all," said Bulba, "all there are; take them, that every one may be supplied. Take jugs, or the pails for watering the horses; take sleeve or cap; but if you have nothing else, then hold your two hands under."

All the Cossacks seized something: one took a jug, another a pail, another a sleeve, another a cap, and another held both hands. Taras's servants, making their way among the ranks, poured out for all from the casks and flasks. But Taras ordered them not to drink until he should give the signal for all to drink together. It was evident that he wished to say something. He knew that however good in itself the wine might be and however fitted to strengthen the spirit of man, yet, if a suitable speech were linked with it, then the strength of the wine and of the spirit would be doubled.

"I treat you, brother gentles," thus spoke Bulba, "not in honour of your having made me hetman, however great such an honour may be, nor in honour of our parting from our comrades. To do both would be fitting at a fitting time; but the moment before us is not such a time. The work before us is great both in labour and in glory for the Cossacks. Therefore let us drink all together, let us drink before all else to the holy orthodox faith, that the day may finally come when it may be spread over all the world, and that everywhere there may be but one faith, and that all Mussulmans may become Christians. And let us also drink together to the Setch, that it may stand long for the ruin of the Mussulmans, and that every year there may issue forth from it young men, each better, each handsomer than the other. And let us drink to our own glory, that our grandsons and their sons may say that there were once men who were not ashamed of comradeship, and who never betrayed each other. Now to the faith, brother gentles, to the faith!"

"To the faith!" cried those standing in the ranks hard by, with thick voices. "To

the faith!” those more distant took up the cry; and all, both young and old, drank to the faith.

“To the Setch!” said Taras, raising his hand high above his head.

“To the Setch!” echoed the foremost ranks. “To the Setch!” said the old men, softly, twitching their grey moustaches; and eagerly as young hawks, the youths repeated, “To the Setch!” And the distant plain heard how the Cossacks mentioned their Setch.

“Now a last draught, comrades, to the glory of all Christians now living in the world!”

And every Cossack drank a last draught to the glory of all Christians in the world. And among all the ranks in the kurens they long repeated, “To all the Christians in the world!”

The pails were empty, but the Cossacks still stood with their hands uplifted. Although the eyes of all gleamed brightly with the wine, they were thinking deeply. Not of greed or the spoils of war were they thinking now, nor of who would be lucky enough to get ducats, fine weapons, embroidered caftans, and Tcherkessian horses; but they meditated like eagles perched upon the rocky crests of mountains, from which the distant sea is visible, dotted, as with tiny birds, with galleys, ships, and every sort of vessel, bounded only by the scarcely visible lines of shore, with their ports like gnats and their forests like fine grass. Like eagles they gazed out on all the plain, with their fate darkling in the distance. All the plain, with its slopes and roads, will be covered with their white projecting bones, lavishly washed with their Cossack blood, and strewn with shattered waggons and with broken swords and spears; the eagles will swoop down and tear out their Cossack eyes. But there is one grand advantage: not a single noble deed will be lost, and the Cossack glory will not vanish like the tiniest grain of powder from a gun-barrel. The guitar-player with grey beard falling upon his breast, and perhaps a white-headed old man still full of ripe, manly strength will come, and will speak his low, strong words of them. And their glory will resound through all the world, and all who are born thereafter will speak of them; for the word of power is carried afar, ringing like a booming brazen bell, in which the maker has mingled much rich, pure silver, that is beautiful sound may be borne far and wide through the cities, villages, huts, and palaces, summoning all betimes to holy prayer.

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CHAPTER IX

In the city, no one knew that one-half of the Cossacks had gone in pursuit of the Tatars. From the tower of the town hall the sentinel only perceived that a part of the waggons had been dragged into the forest; but it was thought that the Cossacks were preparing an ambush — a view taken by the French engineer also. Meanwhile, the Koschevoi's words proved not unfounded, for a scarcity of provisions arose in the city. According to a custom of past centuries, the army did not separate as much as was necessary. They tried to make a sortie; but half of those who did so were instantly killed by the Cossacks, and the other half driven back into the city with no results. But the Jews availed themselves of the opportunity to find out everything; whither and why the Zaporozhtzi had departed, and with what leaders, and which particular kurens, and their number, and how many had remained on the spot, and what they intended to do; in short, within a few minutes all was known in the city.

The besieged took courage, and prepared to offer battle. Taras had already divined it from the noise and movement in the city, and hastened about, making his arrangements, forming his men, and giving orders and instructions. He ranged the kurens in three camps, surrounding them with the waggons as bulwarks — a formation in which the Zaporozhtzi were invincible — ordered two kurens into ambush, and drove sharp stakes, broken guns, and fragments of spears into a part of the plain, with a view to forcing the enemy's cavalry upon it if an opportunity should present itself. When all was done which was necessary, he made a speech to the Cossacks, not for the purpose of encouraging and freshening up their spirits — he knew their souls were strong without that — but simply because he wished to tell them all he had upon his heart.

"I want to tell you, brother gentles, what our brotherhood is. You have heard from your fathers and grandfathers in what honour our land has always been held by all. We made ourselves known to the Greeks, and we took gold from Constantinople, and our cities were luxurious, and we had, too, our temples, and our princes — the princes of the Russian people, our own princes, not Catholic unbelievers. But the Mussulmans took all; all vanished, and we remained defenceless; yea, like a widow after the death of a powerful husband: defenceless was our land as well as ourselves! Such was the time, comrades, when we joined hands in a brotherhood: that is what our fellowship consists in. There is no more sacred brotherhood. The father loves his children, the mother

loves her children, the children love their father and mother; but this is not like that, brothers. The wild beast also loves its young. But a man can be related only by similarity of mind and not of blood. There have been brotherhoods in other lands, but never any such brotherhoods as on our Russian soil. It has happened to many of you to be in foreign lands. You look: there are people there also, God's creatures, too; and you talk with them as with the men of your own country. But when it comes to saying a hearty word — you will see. No! they are sensible people, but not the same; the same kind of people, and yet not the same! No, brothers, to love as the Russian soul loves, is to love not with the mind or anything else, but with all that God has given, all that is within you. Ah!" said Taras, and waved his hand, and wiped his grey head, and twitched his moustache, and then went on: "No, no one else can love in that way! I know that baseness has now made its way into our land. Men care only to have their ricks of grain and hay, and their droves of horses, and that their mead may be safe in their cellars; they adopt, the devil only knows what Mussulman customs. They speak scornfully with their tongues. They care not to speak their real thoughts with their own countrymen. They sell their own things to their own comrades, like soulless creatures in the market-place. The favour of a foreign king, and not even a king, but the poor favour of a Polish magnate, who beats them on the mouth with his yellow shoe, is dearer to them than all brotherhood. But the very meanest of these vile men, whoever he may be, given over though he be to vileness and slavishness, even he, brothers, has some grains of Russian feeling; and they will assert themselves some day. And then the wretched man will beat his breast with his hands; and will tear his hair, cursing his vile life loudly, and ready to expiate his disgraceful deeds with torture. Let them know what brotherhood means on Russian soil! And if it has come to the point that a man must die for his brotherhood, it is not fit that any of them should die so. No! none of them. It is not a fit thing for their mouse-like natures."

Thus spoke the hetman; and after he had finished his speech he still continued to shake his head, which had grown grey in Cossack service. All who stood there were deeply affected by his speech, which went to their very hearts. The oldest in the ranks stood motionless, their grey heads drooping. Tears trickled quietly from their aged eyes; they wiped them slowly away with their sleeves, and then all, as if with one consent, waved their hands in the air at the same moment, and shook their experienced heads. For it was evident that old Taras recalled to them many of the best-known and finest traits of the heart in a man who has become wise through suffering, toil, daring, and every earthly misfortune, or, though unknown to them, of many things felt by young, pure spirits, to the eternal joy of the parents who bore them.

But the army of the enemy was already marching out of the city, sounding drums and trumpets; and the nobles, with their arms akimbo, were riding forth too, surrounded by innumerable servants. The stout colonel gave his orders, and they began to advance briskly on the Cossack camps, pointing their matchlocks threateningly. Their eyes flashed, and they were brilliant with brass armour. As soon as the Cossacks saw that they had come within gunshot, their matchlocks thundered all together, and they continued to fire without cessation.

The detonations resounded through the distant fields and meadows, merging into one continuous roar. The whole plain was shrouded in smoke, but the Zaporozhtzi continued to fire without drawing breath — the rear ranks doing nothing but loading the guns and handing them to those in front, thus creating amazement among the enemy, who could not understand how the Cossacks fired without reloading. Amid the dense smoke which enveloped both armies, it could not be seen how first one and then another dropped: but the Lyakhs felt that the balls flew thickly, and that the affair was growing hot; and when they retreated to escape from the smoke and see how matters stood, many were missing from their ranks, but only two or three out of a hundred were killed on the Cossack side. Still the Cossacks went on firing off their matchlocks without a moment's intermission. Even the foreign engineers were amazed at tactics heretofore unknown to them, and said then and there, in the presence of all, "These Zaporozhtzi are brave fellows. That is the way men in other lands ought to fight." And they advised that the cannons should at once be turned on the camps. Heavily roared the iron cannons with their wide throats; the earth hummed and trembled far and wide, and the smoke lay twice as heavy over the plain. They smelt the reek of the powder among the squares and streets in the most distant as well as the nearest quarters of the city. But those who laid the cannons pointed them too high, and the shot describing too wide a curve flew over the heads of the camps, and buried themselves deep in the earth at a distance, tearing the ground, and throwing the black soil high in the air. At the sight of such lack of skill the French engineer tore his hair, and undertook to lay the cannons himself, heeding not the Cossack bullets which showered round him.

Taras saw from afar that destruction menaced the whole Nezamaikovsky and Steblikivsky kurens, and gave a ringing shout, "Get away from the waggons instantly, and mount your horses!" But the Cossacks would not have succeeded in effecting both these movements if Ostap had not dashed into the middle of the foe and wrenched the linstocks from six cannoneers. But he could not wrench them from the other four, for the Lyakhs drove him back. Meanwhile the foreign captain had taken the lunt in his own hand to fire the largest cannon, such a cannon as none of the Cossacks had ever beheld before. It looked horrible with

its wide mouth, and a thousand deaths poured forth from it. And as it thundered, the three others followed, shaking in fourfold earthquake the dully responsive earth. Much woe did they cause. For more than one Cossack wailed the aged mother, beating with bony hands her feeble breast; more than one widow was left in Glukhof, Nemirof, Chernigof, and other cities. The loving woman will hasten forth every day to the bazaar, grasping at all passers-by, scanning the face of each to see if there be not among them one dearer than all; but though many an army will pass through the city, never among them will a single one of all their dearest be.

Half the Nezamaikovsky kuren was as if it had never been. As the hail suddenly beats down a field where every ear of grain shines like purest gold, so were they beaten down.

How the Cossacks hastened thither! How they all started up! How raged Kukubenko, the hetman, when he saw that the best half of his kuren was no more! He fought his way with his remaining Nezamaikovtzi to the very midst of the fray, cut down in his wrath, like a cabbage, the first man he met, hurled many a rider from his steed, piercing both horse and man with his lance; and making his way to the gunners, captured some of the cannons. Here he found the hetman of the Oumansky kuren, and Stepan Guska, hard at work, having already seized the largest cannon. He left those Cossacks there, and plunged with his own into another mass of the foe, making a lane through it. Where the Nezamaikovtzi passed there was a street; where they turned about there was a square as where streets meet. The foemen's ranks were visibly thinning, and the Lyakhs falling in sheaves. Beside the waggons stood Vovtuzenko, and in front Tcherevitchenko, and by the more distant ones Degtyarenko; and behind them the kuren hetman, Vertikhvist. Degtyarenko had pierced two Lyakhs with his spear, and now attacked a third, a stout antagonist. Agile and strong was the Lyakh, with glittering arms, and accompanied by fifty followers. He fell fiercely upon Degtyarenko, struck him to the earth, and, flourishing his sword above him, cried, "There is not one of you Cossack dogs who has dared to oppose me."

"Here is one," said Mosiy Schilo, and stepped forward. He was a muscular Cossack, who had often commanded at sea, and undergone many vicissitudes. The Turks had once seized him and his men at Trebizond, and borne them captives to the galleys, where they bound them hand and foot with iron chains, gave them no food for a week at a time, and made them drink sea-water. The poor prisoners endured and suffered all, but would not renounce their orthodox faith. Their hetman, Mosiy Schilo, could not bear it: he trampled the Holy Scriptures under foot, wound the vile turban about his sinful head, and became the favourite of a pasha, steward of a ship, and ruler over all the galley slaves.

The poor slaves sorrowed greatly thereat, for they knew that if he had renounced his faith he would be a tyrant, and his hand would be the more heavy and severe upon them. So it turned out. Mosiy Schilo had them put in new chains, three to an oar. The cruel fetters cut to the very bone; and he beat them upon the back. But when the Turks, rejoicing at having obtained such a servant, began to carouse, and, forgetful of their law, got all drunk, he distributed all the sixty-four keys among the prisoners, in order that they might free themselves, fling their chains and manacles into the sea, and, seizing their swords, in turn kill the Turks. Then the Cossacks collected great booty, and returned with glory to their country; and the guitar-players celebrated Mosiy Schilo's exploits for a long time. They would have elected him Koschevoi, but he was a very eccentric Cossack. At one time he would perform some feat which the most sagacious would never have dreamed of. At another, folly simply took possession of him, and he drank and squandered everything away, was in debt to every one in the Setch, and, in addition to that, stole like a street thief. He carried off a whole Cossack equipment from a strange kuren by night and pawned it to the tavern-keeper. For this dishonourable act they bound him to a post in the bazaar, and laid a club beside him, in order that every one who passed should, according to the measure of his strength, deal him a blow. But there was not one Zaporozhetz out of them all to be found who would raise the club against him, remembering his former services. Such was the Cossack, Mosiy Schilo.

"Here is one who will kill you, dog!" he said, springing upon the Lyakh. How they hacked away! their shoulder-plates and breast-plates bent under their blows. The hostile Lyakh cut through Schilo's shirt of mail, reaching the body itself with his blade. The Cossack's shirt was dyed purple: but Schilo heeded it not. He brandished his brawny hand, heavy indeed was that mighty fist, and brought the pommel of his sword down unexpectedly upon his foeman's head. The brazen helmet flew into pieces and the Lyakh staggered and fell; but Schilo went on hacking and cutting gashes in the body of the stunned man. Kill not utterly thine enemy, Cossack: look back rather! The Cossack did not turn, and one of the dead man's servants plunged a knife into his neck. Schilo turned and tried to seize him, but he disappeared amid the smoke of the powder. On all sides rose the roar of matchlocks. Schilo knew that his wound was mortal. He fell with his hand upon his wound, and said, turning to his comrades, "Farewell, brother gentles, my comrades! may the holy Russian land stand forever, and may it be eternally honoured!" And as he closed his failing eyes, the Cossack soul fled from his grim body. Then Zadorozhniy came forward with his men, Vertikhvist issued from the ranks, and Balaban stepped forth.

"What now, gentles?" said Taras, calling to the hetmans by name: "there is yet

powder in the power-flasks? The Cossack force is not weakened? the Cossacks do not yield?”

“There is yet powder in the flasks, father; the Cossack force is not weakened yet: the Cossacks yield not!”

And the Cossacks pressed vigorously on: the foemen’s ranks were disordered. The short colonel beat the assembly, and ordered eight painted standards to be displayed to collect his men, who were scattered over all the plain. All the Lyakhs hastened to the standards. But they had not yet succeeded in ranging themselves in order, when the hetman Kukubenko attacked their centre again with his Nezamaikovtzi and fell straight upon the stout colonel. The colonel could not resist the attack, and, wheeling his horse about, set out at a gallop; but Kukubenko pursued him for a considerable distance cross the plain and prevented him from joining his regiment.

Perceiving this from the kuren on the flank, Stepan Guska set out after him, lasso in hand, bending his head to his horse’s neck. Taking advantage of an opportunity, he cast his lasso about his neck at the first attempt. The colonel turned purple in the face, grasped the cord with both hands, and tried to break it; but with a powerful thrust Stepan drove his lance through his body, and there he remained pinned to the earth. But Guska did not escape his fate. The Cossacks had but time to look round when they beheld Stepan Guska elevated on four spears. All the poor fellow succeeded in saying was, “May all our enemies perish, and may the Russian land rejoice forever!” and then he yielded up his soul.

The Cossacks glanced around, and there was Metelitza on one side, entertaining the Lyakhs by dealing blows on the head to one and another; on the other side, the hetman Nevelitchkiy was attacking with his men; and Zakrutibuga was repulsing and slaying the enemy by the waggons. The third Pisarenko had repulsed a whole squadron from the more distant waggons; and they were still fighting and killing amongst the other waggons, and even upon them.

“How now, gentles?” cried Taras, stepping forward before them all: “is there still powder in your flasks? Is the Cossack force still strong? do the Cossacks yield?”

“There is still powder in the flasks, father; the Cossack force is still strong: the Cossacks yield not!”

But Bovdug had already fallen from the waggons; a bullet had struck him just below the heart. The old man collected all his strength, and said, “I sorrow not to part from the world. God grant every man such an end! May the Russian land be forever glorious!” And Bovdug’s spirit flew above, to tell the old men who had gone on long before that men still knew how to fight on Russian soil, and better

still, that they knew how to die for it and the holy faith.

Balaban, hetman of a kuren, soon after fell to the ground also from a waggon. Three mortal wounds had he received from a lance, a bullet, and a sword. He had been one of the very best of Cossacks, and had accomplished a great deal as a commander on naval expeditions; but more glorious than all the rest was his raid on the shores of Anatolia. They collected many sequins, much valuable Turkish plunder, caftans, and adornments of every description. But misfortune awaited them on their way back. They came across the Turkish fleet, and were fired on by the ships. Half the boats were crushed and overturned, drowning more than one; but the bundles of reeds bound to the sides, Cossack fashion, saved the boats from completely sinking. Balaban rowed off at full speed, and steered straight in the face of the sun, thus rendering himself invisible to the Turkish ships. All the following night they spent in baling out the water with pails and their caps, and in repairing the damaged places. They made sails out of their Cossack trousers, and, sailing off, escaped from the fastest Turkish vessels. And not only did they arrive unharmed at the Setch, but they brought a gold-embroidered vesture for the archimandrite at the Mezhigorsky Monastery in Kief, and an ikon frame of pure silver for the church in honour of the Intercession of the Virgin Mary, which is in Zaporozhe. The guitar-players celebrated the daring of Balaban and his Cossacks for a long time afterwards. Now he bowed his head, feeling the pains which precede death, and said quietly, “I am permitted, brother gentles, to die a fine death. Seven have I hewn in pieces, nine have I pierced with my lance, many have I trampled upon with my horse’s hoofs; and I no longer remember how many my bullets have slain. May our Russian land flourish forever!” and his spirit fled.

Cossacks, Cossacks! abandon not the flower of your army. Already was Kukubenko surrounded, and seven men only remained of all the Nezamaikovsky kuren, exhausted and with garments already stained with their blood. Taras himself, perceiving their straits, hastened to their rescue; but the Cossacks arrived too late. Before the enemies who surrounded him could be driven off, a spear was buried just below Kukubenko’s heart. He sank into the arms of the Cossacks who caught him, and his young blood flowed in a stream, like precious wine brought from the cellar in a glass vessel by careless servants, who, stumbling at the entrance, break the rich flask. The wine streams over the ground, and the master, hastening up, tears his hair, having reserved it, in order that if God should grant him, in his old age, to meet again the comrade of his youth, they might over it recall together former days, when a man enjoyed himself otherwise and better than now. Kukubenko cast his eyes around, and said, “I thank God that it has been my lot to die before your eyes, comrades.

May they live better who come after us than we have lived; and may our Russian land, beloved by Christ, flourish forever!" and his young spirit fled. The angels took it in their arms and bore it to heaven: it will be well with him there. "Sit down at my right hand, Kukubenko," Christ will say to him: "you never betrayed your comrades, you never committed a dishonourable act, you never sold a man into misery, you preserved and defended my church." The death of Kukubenko saddened them all. The Cossack ranks were terribly thinned. Many brave men were missing, but the Cossacks still stood their ground.

"How now, gentles," cried Taras to the remaining kurens: "is there still powder in your flasks? Are your swords blunted? Are the Cossack forces wearied? Have the Cossacks given way?"

"There is still an abundance of powder; our swords are still sharp; the Cossack forces are not wearied, and the Cossacks have not yet yielded."

And the Cossacks again strained every nerve, as though they had suffered no loss. Only three kuren hetmans still remained alive. Red blood flowed in streams everywhere; heaps of their bodies and of those of the enemy were piled high. Taras looked up to heaven, and there already hovered a flock of vultures. Well, there would be prey for some one. And there the foe were raising Metelitza on their lances, and the head of the second Pisarenko was dizzily opening and shutting its eyes; and the mangled body of Okhrim Guska fell upon the ground. "Now," said Taras, and waved a cloth on high. Ostap understood this signal and springing quickly from his ambush attacked sharply. The Lyakhs could not withstand this onslaught; and he drove them back, and chased them straight to the spot where the stakes and fragments of spears were driven into the earth. The horses began to stumble and fall and the Lyakhs to fly over their heads. At that moment the Korsuntzi, who had stood till the last by the baggage waggons, perceived that they still had some bullets left, and suddenly fired a volley from their matchlocks. The Lyakhs became confused, and lost their presence of mind; and the Cossacks took courage. "The victory is ours!" rang Cossack voices on all sides; the trumpets sounded and the banner of victory was unfurled. The beaten Lyakhs ran in all directions and hid themselves. "No, the victory is not yet complete," said Taras, glancing at the city gate; and he was right.

The gates opened, and out dashed a hussar band, the flower of all the cavalry. Every rider was mounted on a matched brown horse from the Kabardei; and in front rode the handsomest, the most heroic of them all. His black hair streamed from beneath his brazen helmet; and from his arm floated a rich scarf, embroidered by the hands of a peerless beauty. Taras sprang back in horror when he saw that it was Andrii. And the latter meanwhile, enveloped in the dust and heat of battle, eager to deserve the scarf which had been bound as a gift upon his

arm, flew on like a greyhound; the handsomest, most agile, and youngest of all the band. The experienced huntsman urges on the greyhound, and he springs forward, tossing up the snow, and a score of times outrunning the hare, in the ardour of his course. And so it was with Andrii. Old Taras paused and observed how he cleared a path before him, hewing away and dealing blows to the right and the left. Taras could not restrain himself, but shouted: “Your comrades! your comrades! you devil’s brat, would you kill your own comrades?” But Andrii distinguished not who stood before him, comrades or strangers; he saw nothing. Curls, long curls, were what he saw; and a bosom like that of a river swan, and a snowy neck and shoulders, and all that is created for rapturous kisses.

“Hey there, lads! only draw him to the forest, entice him to the forest for me!” shouted Taras. Instantly thirty of the smartest Cossacks volunteered to entice him thither; and setting their tall caps firmly spurred their horses straight at a gap in the hussars. They attacked the front ranks in flank, beat them down, cut them off from the rear ranks, and slew many of them. Golopuitenko struck Andrii on the back with his sword, and immediately set out to ride away at the top of his speed. How Andrii flew after him! How his young blood coursed through all his veins! Driving his sharp spurs into his horse’s flanks, he tore along after the Cossacks, never glancing back, and not perceiving that only twenty men at the most were following him. The Cossacks fled at full gallop, and directed their course straight for the forest. Andrii overtook them, and was on the point of catching Golopuitenko, when a powerful hand seized his horse’s bridle. Andrii looked; before him stood Taras! He trembled all over, and turned suddenly pale, like a student who, receiving a blow on the forehead with a ruler, flushes up like fire, springs in wrath from his seat to chase his comrade, and suddenly encounters his teacher entering the classroom; in the instant his wrathful impulse calms down and his futile anger vanishes. In this wise, in an instant, Andrii’s wrath was as if it had never existed. And he beheld before him only his terrible father.

“Well, what are we going to do now?” said Taras, looking him straight in the eyes. But Andrii could make no reply to this, and stood with his eyes fixed on the ground.

“Well, son; did your Lyakhs help you?”

Andrii made no answer.

“To think that you should be such a traitor! that you should betray your faith! betray your comrades! Dismount from your horse!”

Obedient as a child, he dismounted, and stood before Taras more dead than alive.

“Stand still, do not move! I gave you life, I will also kill you!” said Taras, and,

retreating a step backwards, he brought his gun up to his shoulder. Andrii was white as a sheet; his lips moved gently, and he uttered a name; but it was not the name of his native land, nor of his mother, nor his brother; it was the name of the beautiful Pole. Taras fired.

Like the ear of corn cut down by the reaping-hook, like the young lamb when it feels the deadly steel in its heart, he hung his head and rolled upon the grass without uttering a word.

The murderer of his son stood still, and gazed long upon the lifeless body. Even in death he was very handsome; his manly face, so short a time ago filled with power, and with an irresistible charm for every woman, still had a marvellous beauty; his black brows, like sombre velvet, set off his pale features.

“Is he not a true Cossack?” said Taras; “he is tall of stature, and black-browed, his face is that of a noble, and his hand was strong in battle! He is fallen! fallen without glory, like a vile dog!”

“Father, what have you done? Was it you who killed him?” said Ostap, coming up at this moment.

Taras nodded.

Ostap gazed intently at the dead man. He was sorry for his brother, and said at once: “Let us give him honourable burial, father, that the foe may not dishonour his body, nor the birds of prey rend it.”

“They will bury him without our help,” said Taras; “there will be plenty of mourners and rejoicers for him.”

And he reflected for a couple of minutes, whether he should fling him to the wolves for prey, or respect in him the bravery which every brave man is bound to honour in another, no matter whom? Then he saw Golopuitenko galloping towards them and crying: “Woe, hetman, the Lyakhs have been reinforced, a fresh force has come to their rescue!” Golopuitenko had not finished speaking when Vovtuzenko galloped up: “Woe, hetman! a fresh force is bearing down upon us.”

Vovtuzenko had not finished speaking when Pisarenko rushed up without his horse: “Where are you, father? The Cossacks are seeking for you. Hetman Nevelitchkiy is killed, Zadorozhniy is killed, and Tcherevitchenko: but the Cossacks stand their ground; they will not die without looking in your eyes; they want you to gaze upon them once more before the hour of death arrives.”

“To horse, Ostap!” said Taras, and hastened to find his Cossacks, to look once more upon them, and let them behold their hetman once more before the hour of death. But before they could emerge from the wood, the enemy’s force had already surrounded it on all sides, and horsemen armed with swords and spears appeared everywhere between the trees. “Ostap, Ostap! don’t yield!” shouted

Taras, and grasping his sword he began to cut down all he encountered on every side. But six suddenly sprang upon Ostap. They did it in an unpropitious hour: the head of one flew off, another turned to flee, a spear pierced the ribs of a third; a fourth, more bold, bent his head to escape the bullet, and the bullet striking his horse's breast, the maddened animal reared, fell back upon the earth, and crushed his rider under him. "Well done, son! Well done, Ostap!" cried Taras: "I am following you." And he drove off those who attacked him. Taras hewed and fought, dealing blows at one after another, but still keeping his eye upon Ostap ahead. He saw that eight more were falling upon his son. "Ostap, Ostap! don't yield!" But they had already overpowered Ostap; one had flung his lasso about his neck, and they had bound him, and were carrying him away. "Hey, Ostap, Ostap!" shouted Taras, forcing his way towards him, and cutting men down like cabbages to right and left. "Hey, Ostap, Ostap!" But something at that moment struck him like a heavy stone. All grew dim and confused before his eyes. In one moment there flashed confusedly before him heads, spears, smoke, the gleam of fire, tree-trunks, and leaves; and then he sank heavily to the earth like a felled oak, and darkness covered his eyes.

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CHAPTER X

“I have slept a long while!” said Taras, coming to his senses, as if after a heavy drunken sleep, and trying to distinguish the objects about him. A terrible weakness overpowered his limbs. The walls and corners of a strange room were dimly visible before him. At length he perceived that Tovkatch was seated beside him, apparently listening to his every breath.

“Yes,” thought Tovkatch, “you might have slept forever.” But he said nothing, only shook his finger, and motioned him to be silent.

“But tell me where I am now?” asked Taras, straining his mind, and trying to recollect what had taken place.

“Be silent!” cried his companion sternly. “Why should you want to know? Don’t you see that you are all hacked to pieces? Here I have been galloping with you for two weeks without taking a breath; and you have been burnt up with fever and talking nonsense. This is the first time you have slept quietly. Be silent if you don’t wish to do yourself an injury.”

But Taras still tried to collect his thoughts and to recall what had passed. “Well, the Lyakhs must have surrounded and captured me. I had no chance of fighting my way clear from the throng.”

“Be silent, I tell you, you devil’s brat!” cried Tovkatch angrily, as a nurse, driven beyond her patience, cries out at her unruly charge. “What good will it do you to know how you got away? It is enough that you did get away. Some people were found who would not abandon you; let that be enough for you. It is something for me to have ridden all night with you. You think that you passed for a common Cossack? No, they have offered a reward of two thousand ducats for your head.”

“And Ostap!” cried Taras suddenly, and tried to rise; for all at once he recollected that Ostap had been seized and bound before his very eyes, and that he was now in the hands of the Lyakhs. Grief overpowered him. He pulled off and tore in pieces the bandages from his wounds, and threw them far from him; he tried to say something, but only articulated some incoherent words. Fever and delirium seized upon him afresh, and he uttered wild and incoherent speeches. Meanwhile his faithful comrade stood beside him, scolding and showering harsh, reproachful words upon him without stint. Finally, he seized him by the arms and legs, wrapped him up like a child, arranged all his bandages, rolled him in an ox-hide, bound him with bast, and, fastening him with ropes to his saddle, rode

with him again at full speed along the road.

“I’ll get you there, even if it be not alive! I will not abandon your body for the Lyakhs to make merry over you, and cut your body in twain and fling it into the water. Let the eagle tear out your eyes if it must be so; but let it be our eagle of the steppe and not a Polish eagle, not one which has flown hither from Polish soil. I will bring you, though it be a corpse, to the Ukraine!”

Thus spoke his faithful companion. He rode without drawing rein, day and night, and brought Taras still insensible into the Zaporozhian Setch itself. There he undertook to cure him, with unswerving care, by the aid of herbs and liniments. He sought out a skilled Jewess, who made Taras drink various potions for a whole month, and at length he improved. Whether it was owing to the medicine or to his iron constitution gaining the upper hand, at all events, in six weeks he was on his feet. His wounds had closed, and only the scars of the sabre-cuts showed how deeply injured the old Cossack had been. But he was markedly sad and morose. Three deep wrinkles engraved themselves upon his brow and never more departed thence. Then he looked around him. All was new in the Setch; all his old companions were dead. Not one was left of those who had stood up for the right, for faith and brotherhood. And those who had gone forth with the Koschevoi in pursuit of the Tatars, they also had long since disappeared. All had perished. One had lost his head in battle; another had died for lack of food, amid the salt marshes of the Crimea; another had fallen in captivity and been unable to survive the disgrace. Their former Koschevoi was no longer living, nor any of his old companions, and the grass was growing over those once alert with power. He felt as one who had given a feast, a great noisy feast. All the dishes had been smashed in pieces; not a drop of wine was left anywhere; the guests and servants had all stolen valuable cups and platters; and he, like the master of the house, stood sadly thinking that it would have been no feast. In vain did they try to cheer Taras and to divert his mind; in vain did the long-bearded, grey-haired guitar-players come by twos and threes to glorify his Cossack deeds. He gazed grimly and indifferently at everything, with inappeasable grief printed on his stolid face; and said softly, as he drooped his head, “My son, my Ostap!”

The Zaporozhtzi assembled for a raid by sea. Two hundred boats were launched on the Dnieper, and Asia Minor saw those who manned them, with their shaven heads and long scalp-locks, devote her thriving shores to fire and sword; she saw the turbans of her Mahometan inhabitants strewn, like her innumerable flowers, over the blood-sprinkled fields, and floating along her river banks; she saw many tarry Zaporozhian trousers, and strong hands with black hunting-whips. The Zaporozhtzi ate up and laid waste all the vineyards. In the

mosques they left heaps of dung. They used rich Persian shawls for sashes, and girded their dirty gaberdines with them. Long afterwards, short Zaporozhian pipes were found in those regions. They sailed merrily back. A ten-gun Turkish ship pursued them and scattered their skiffs, like birds, with a volley from its guns. A third part of them sank in the depths of the sea; but the rest again assembled, and gained the mouth of the Dnieper with twelve kegs full of sequins. But all this did not interest Taras. He went off upon the steppe as though to hunt; but the charge remained in his gun, and, laying down the weapon, he would seat himself sadly on the shores of the sea. He sat there long with drooping head, repeating continually, “My Ostap, my Ostap!” Before him spread the gleaming Black Sea; in the distant reeds the sea-gull screamed. His grey moustache turned to silver, and the tears fell one by one upon it.

At last Taras could endure it no longer. “Whatever happens, I must go and find out what he is doing. Is he alive, or in the grave? I will know, cost what it may!” Within a week he found himself in the city of Ouman, fully armed, and mounted, with lance, sword, canteen, pot of oatmeal, powder horn, cord to hobble his horse, and other equipments. He went straight to a dirty, ill-kept little house, the small windows of which were almost invisible, blackened as they were with some unknown dirt. The chimney was wrapped in rags; and the roof, which was full of holes, was covered with sparrows. A heap of all sorts of refuse lay before the very door. From the window peered the head of a Jewess, in a head-dress with discoloured pearls.

“Is your husband at home?” said Bulba, dismounting, and fastening his horse’s bridle to an iron hook beside the door.

“He is at home,” said the Jewess, and hastened out at once with a measure of corn for the horse, and a stoup of beer for the rider.

“Where is your Jew?”

“He is in the other room at prayer,” replied the Jewess, bowing and wishing Bulba good health as he raised the cup to his lips.

“Remain here, feed and water my horse, whilst I go speak with him alone. I have business with him.”

This Jew was the well-known Yankel. He was there as revenue-farmer and tavern-keeper. He had gradually got nearly all the neighbouring noblemen and gentlemen into his hands, had slowly sucked away most of their money, and had strongly impressed his presence on that locality. For a distance of three miles in all directions, not a single farm remained in a proper state. All were falling in ruins; all had been drunk away, and poverty and rags alone remained. The whole neighbourhood was depopulated, as if after a fire or an epidemic; and if Yankel had lived there ten years, he would probably have depopulated the Waiwode’s

whole domains.

Taras entered the room. The Jew was praying, enveloped in his dirty shroud, and was turning to spit for the last time, according to the forms of his creed, when his eye suddenly lighted on Taras standing behind him. The first thing that crossed Yankel's mind was the two thousand ducats offered for his visitor's head; but he was ashamed of his avarice, and tried to stifle within him the eternal thought of gold, which twines, like a snake, about the soul of a Jew.

"Listen, Yankel," said Taras to the Jew, who began to bow low before him, and as he spoke he shut the door so that they might not be seen, "I saved your life: the Zaporozhtzi would have torn you to pieces like a dog. Now it is your turn to do me a service."

The Jew's face clouded over a little.

"What service? If it is a service I can render, why should I not render it?"

"Ask no questions. Take me to Warsaw."

"To Warsaw? Why to Warsaw?" said the Jew, and his brows and shoulders rose in amazement.

"Ask me nothing. Take me to Warsaw. I must see him once more at any cost, and say one word to him."

"Say a word to whom?"

"To him — to Ostap — to my son."

"Has not my lord heard that already — "

"I know, I know all. They offer two thousand ducats for my head. They know its value, fools! I will give you five thousand. Here are two thousand on the spot," and Bulba poured out two thousand ducats from a leather purse, "and the rest when I return."

The Jew instantly seized a towel and concealed the ducats under it. "Ai, glorious money! ai, good money!" he said, twirling one gold piece in his hand and testing it with his teeth. "I don't believe the man from whom my lord took these fine gold pieces remained in the world an hour longer; he went straight to the river and drowned himself, after the loss of such magnificent gold pieces."

"I should not have asked you, I might possibly have found my own way to Warsaw; but some one might recognise me, and then the cursed Lyakhs would capture me, for I am not clever at inventions; whilst that is just what you Jews are created for. You would deceive the very devil. You know every trick: that is why I have come to you; and, besides, I could do nothing of myself in Warsaw. Harness the horse to your waggon at once and take me."

"And my lord thinks that I can take the nag at once, and harness him, and say 'Get up, Dapple!' My lord thinks that I can take him just as he is, without concealing him?"

“Well, hide me, hide me as you like: in an empty cask?”

“Ai, ai! and my lord thinks he can be concealed in an empty cask? Does not my lord know that every man thinks that every cast he sees contains brandy?”

“Well, let them think it is brandy.”

“Let them think it is brandy?” said the Jew, and grasped his ear-locks with both hands, and then raised them both on high.

“Well, why are you so frightened?”

“And does not my lord know that God has made brandy expressly for every one to sip? They are all gluttons and fond of dainties there: a nobleman will run five versts after a cask; he will make a hole in it, and as soon as he sees that nothing runs out, he will say, ‘A Jew does not carry empty casks; there is certainly something wrong. Seize the Jew, bind the Jew, take away all the Jew’s money, put the Jew in prison!’ Then all the vile people will fall upon the Jew, for every one takes a Jew for a dog; and they think he is not a man, but only a Jew.”

“Then put me in the waggon with some fish over me.”

“I cannot, my lord, by heaven, I cannot: all over Poland the people are as hungry as dogs now. They will steal the fish, and feel my lord.”

“Then take me in the fiend’s way, only take me.”

“Listen, listen, my lord!” said the Jew, turning up the ends of his sleeves, and approaching him with extended arms. “This is what we will do. They are building fortresses and castles everywhere: French engineers have come from Germany, and so a great deal of brick and stone is being carried over the roads. Let my lord lie down in the bottom of the waggon, and over him I will pile bricks. My lord is strong and well, apparently, so he will not mind if it is a little heavy; and I will make a hole in the bottom of the waggon in order to feed my lord.”

“Do what you will, only take me!”

In an hour, a waggon-load of bricks left Ouman, drawn by two sorry nags. On one of them sat tall Yankel, his long, curling ear-locks flowing from beneath his Jewish cap, as he bounced about on the horse, like a verst-mark planted by the roadside.

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CHAPTER XI

At the time when these things took place, there were as yet on the frontiers neither custom-house officials nor guards — those bugbears of enterprising people — so that any one could bring across anything he fancied. If any one made a search or inspection, he did it chiefly for his own pleasure, especially if there happened to be in the waggon objects attractive to his eye, and if his own hand possessed a certain weight and power. But the bricks found no admirers, and they entered the principal gate unmolested. Bulba, in his narrow cage, could only hear the noise, the shouts of the driver, and nothing more. Yankel, bouncing up and down on his dust-covered nag, turned, after making several detours, into a dark, narrow street bearing the names of the Muddy and also of the Jews' street, because Jews from nearly every part of Warsaw were to be found here. This street greatly resembled a back-yard turned wrong side out. The sun never seemed to shine into it. The black wooden houses, with numerous poles projecting from the windows, still further increased the darkness. Rarely did a brick wall gleam red among them; for these too, in many places, had turned quite black. Here and there, high up, a bit of stuccoed wall illumined by the sun glistened with intolerable whiteness. Pipes, rags, shells, broken and discarded tubs: every one flung whatever was useless to him into the street, thus affording the passer-by an opportunity of exercising all his five senses with the rubbish. A man on horseback could almost touch with his hand the poles thrown across the street from one house to another, upon which hung Jewish stockings, short trousers, and smoked geese. Sometimes a pretty little Hebrew face, adorned with discoloured pearls, peeped out of an old window. A group of little Jews, with torn and dirty garments and curly hair, screamed and rolled about in the dirt. A red-haired Jew, with freckles all over his face which made him look like a sparrow's egg, gazed from a window. He addressed Yankel at once in his gibberish, and Yankel at once drove into a court-yard. Another Jew came along, halted, and entered into conversation. When Bulba finally emerged from beneath the bricks, he beheld three Jews talking with great warmth.

Yankel turned to him and said that everything possible would be done; that his Ostap was in the city jail, and that although it would be difficult to persuade the jailer, yet he hoped to arrange a meeting.

Bulba entered the room with the three Jews.

The Jews again began to talk among themselves in their incomprehensible

tongue. Taras looked hard at each of them. Something seemed to have moved him deeply; over his rough and stolid countenance a flame of hope spread, of hope such as sometimes visits a man in the last depths of his despair; his aged heart began to beat violently as though he had been a youth.

“Listen, Jews!” said he, and there was a triumphant ring in his words. “You can do anything in the world, even extract things from the bottom of the sea; and it has long been a proverb, that a Jew will steal from himself if he takes a fancy to steal. Set my Ostap at liberty! give him a chance to escape from their diabolical hands. I promised this man five thousand ducats; I will add another five thousand: all that I have, rich cups, buried gold, houses, all, even to my last garment, I will part with; and I will enter into a contract with you for my whole life, to give you half of all the booty I may gain in war.”

“Oh, impossible, dear lord, it is impossible!” said Yankel with a sigh.

“Impossible,” said another Jew.

All three Jews looked at each other.

“We might try,” said the third, glancing timidly at the other two. “God may favour us.”

All three Jews discussed the matter in German. Bulba, in spite of his straining ears, could make nothing of it; he only caught the word “Mardokhai” often repeated.

“Listen, my lord!” said Yankel. “We must consult with a man such as there never was before in the world... ugh, ugh! as wise as Solomon; and if he will do nothing, then no one in the world can. Sit here: this is the key; admit no one.” The Jews went out into the street.

Taras locked the door, and looked out from the little window upon the dirty Jewish street. The three Jews halted in the middle of the street and began to talk with a good deal of warmth: a fourth soon joined them, and finally a fifth. Again he heard repeated, “Mardokhai, Mardokhai!” The Jews glanced incessantly towards one side of the street; at length from a dirty house near the end of it emerged a foot in a Jewish shoe and the skirts of a caftan. “Ah! Mardokhai, Mardokhai!” shouted the Jews in one voice. A thin Jew somewhat shorter than Yankel, but even more wrinkled, and with a huge upper lip, approached the impatient group; and all the Jews made haste to talk to him, interrupting each other. During the recital, Mardokhai glanced several times towards the little window, and Taras divined that the conversation concerned him.

Mardokhai waved his hands, listened, interrupted, spat frequently to one side, and, pulling up the skirts of his caftan, thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out some jingling thing, showing very dirty trousers in the operation. Finally all the Jews set up such a shouting that the Jew who was standing guard was forced

to make a signal for silence, and Taras began to fear for his safety; but when he remembered that Jews can only consult in the street, and that the demon himself cannot understand their language, he regained his composure.

Two minutes later the Jews all entered the room together. Mardokhai approached Taras, tapped him on the shoulder, and said, “When we set to work it will be all right.” Taras looked at this Solomon whom the world had never known and conceived some hope: indeed, his face might well inspire confidence. His upper lip was simply an object of horror; its thickness being doubtless increased by adventitious circumstances. This Solomon’s beard consisted only of about fifteen hairs, and they were on the left side. Solomon’s face bore so many scars of battle, received for his daring, that he had doubtless lost count of them long before, and had grown accustomed to consider them as birthmarks.

Mardokhai departed, accompanied by his comrades, who were filled with admiration at his wisdom. Bulba remained alone. He was in a strange, unaccustomed situation for the first time in his life; he felt uneasy. His mind was in a state of fever. He was no longer unbending, immovable, strong as an oak, as he had formerly been: but felt timid and weak. He trembled at every sound, at every fresh Jewish face which showed itself at the end of the street. In this condition he passed the whole day. He neither ate nor drank, and his eye never for a moment left the small window looking on the street. Finally, late at night, Mardokhai and Yankel made their appearance. Taras’s heart died within him.

“What news? have you been successful?” he asked with the impatience of a wild horse.

But before the Jews had recovered breath to answer, Taras perceived that Mardokhai no longer had the locks, which had formerly fallen in greasy curls from under his felt cap. It was evident that he wished to say something, but he uttered only nonsense which Taras could make nothing of. Yankel himself put his hand very often to his mouth as though suffering from a cold.

“Oh, dearest lord!” said Yankel: “it is quite impossible now! by heaven, impossible! Such vile people that they deserve to be spit upon! Mardokhai here says the same. Mardokhai has done what no man in the world ever did, but God did not will that it should be so. Three thousand soldiers are in garrison here, and to-morrow the prisoners are all to be executed.”

Taras looked the Jew straight in the face, but no longer with impatience or anger.

“But if my lord wishes to see his son, then it must be early to-morrow morning, before the sun has risen. The sentinels have consented, and one gaoler has promised. But may he have no happiness in the world, woe is me! What greedy people! There are none such among us: I gave fifty ducats to each

sentinel and to the gaoler."

"Good. Take me to him!" exclaimed Taras, with decision, and with all his firmness of mind restored. He agreed to Yankel's proposition that he should disguise himself as a foreign count, just arrived from Germany, for which purpose the prudent Jew had already provided a costume. It was already night. The master of the house, the red-haired Jew with freckles, pulled out a mattress covered with some kind of rug, and spread it on a bench for Bulba. Yankel lay upon the floor on a similar mattress. The red-haired Jew drank a small cup of brandy, took off his caftan, and betook himself — looking, in his shoes and stockings, very like a lean chicken — with his wife, to something resembling a cupboard. Two little Jews lay down on the floor beside the cupboard, like a couple of dogs. But Taras did not sleep; he sat motionless, drumming on the table with his fingers. He kept his pipe in his mouth, and puffed out smoke, which made the Jew sneeze in his sleep and pull his coverlet over his nose. Scarcely was the sky touched with the first faint gleams of dawn than he pushed Yankel with his foot, saying: "Rise, Jew, and give me your count's dress!"

In a moment he was dressed. He blackened his moustache and eyebrows, put on his head a small dark cap; even the Cossacks who knew him best would not have recognised him. Apparently he was not more than thirty-five. A healthy colour glowed on his cheeks, and his scars lent him an air of command. The gold-embroidered dress became him extremely well.

The streets were still asleep. Not a single one of the market folk as yet showed himself in the city, with his basket on his arm. Yankel and Bulba made their way to a building which presented the appearance of a crouching stork. It was large, low, wide, and black; and on one side a long slender tower like a stork's neck projected above the roof. This building served for a variety of purposes; it was a barrack, a jail, and the criminal court. The visitors entered the gate and found themselves in a vast room, or covered courtyard. About a thousand men were sleeping here. Straight before them was a small door, in front of which sat two sentries playing at some game which consisted in one striking the palm of the other's hand with two fingers. They paid little heed to the new arrivals, and only turned their heads when Yankel said, "It is we, sirs; do you hear? it is we."

"Go in!" said one of them, opening the door with one hand, and holding out the other to his comrade to receive his blows.

They entered a low and dark corridor, which led them to a similar room with small windows overhead. "Who goes there?" shouted several voices, and Taras beheld a number of warriors in full armour. "We have been ordered to admit no one."

"It is we!" cried Yankel; "we, by heavens, noble sirs!" But no one would listen

to him. Fortunately, at that moment a fat man came up, who appeared to be a commanding officer, for he swore louder than all the others.

“My lord, it is we! you know us, and the lord count will thank you.”

“Admit them, a hundred fiends, and mother of fiends! Admit no one else. And no one is to draw his sword, nor quarrel.”

The conclusion of this order the visitors did not hear. “It is we, it is I, it is your friends!” Yankel said to every one they met.

“Well, can it be managed now?” he inquired of one of the guards, when they at length reached the end of the corridor.

“It is possible, but I don’t know whether you will be able to gain admission to the prison itself. Yana is not here now; another man is keeping watch in his place,” replied the guard.

“Ai, ai!” cried the Jew softly: “this is bad, my dear lord!”

“Go on!” said Taras, firmly, and the Jew obeyed.

At the arched entrance of the vaults stood a heyduke, with a moustache trimmed in three layers: the upper layer was trained backwards, the second straight forward, and the third downwards, which made him greatly resemble a cat.

The Jew shrank into nothing and approached him almost sideways: “Your high excellency! High and illustrious lord!”

“Are you speaking to me, Jew?”

“To you, illustrious lord.”

“Hm, but I am merely a heyduke,” said the merry-eyed man with the triple-tiered moustache.

“And I thought it was the Waiwode himself, by heavens! Ai, ai, ai!” Thereupon the Jew twisted his head about and spread out his fingers. “Ai, what a fine figure! Another finger’s-breadth and he would be a colonel. The lord no doubt rides a horse as fleet as the wind and commands the troops!”

The heyduke twirled the lower tier of his moustache, and his eyes beamed.

“What a warlike people!” continued the Jew. “Ah, woe is me, what a fine race! Golden cords and trappings that shine like the sun; and the maidens, wherever they see warriors — Ai, ai!” Again the Jew wagged his head.

The heyduke twirled his upper moustache and uttered a sound somewhat resembling the neighing of a horse.

“I pray my lord to do us a service!” exclaimed the Jew: “this prince has come hither from a foreign land, and wants to get a look at the Cossacks. He never, in all his life, has seen what sort of people the Cossacks are.”

The advent of foreign counts and barons was common enough in Poland: they were often drawn thither by curiosity to view this half-Asiatic corner of Europe.

They regarded Moscow and the Ukraine as situated in Asia. So the heyduke bowed low, and thought fit to add a few words of his own.

"I do not know, your excellency," said he, "why you should desire to see them. They are dogs, not men; and their faith is such as no one respects."

"You lie, you son of Satan!" exclaimed Bulba. "You are a dog yourself! How dare you say that our faith is not respected? It is your heretical faith which is not respected."

"Oho!" said the heyduke. "I can guess who you are, my friend; you are one of the breed of those under my charge. So just wait while I summon our men."

Taras realised his indiscretion, but vexation and obstinacy hindered him from devising a means of remedying it. Fortunately Yankel managed to interpose at this moment: —

"Most noble lord, how is it possible that the count can be a Cossack? If he were a Cossack, where could have he obtained such a dress, and such a count-like mien?"

"Explain that yourself." And the heyduke opened his wide mouth to shout.

"Your royal highness, silence, silence, for heaven's sake!" cried Yankel. "Silence! we will pay you for it in a way you never dreamed of: we will give you two golden ducats."

"Oho! two ducats! I can't do anything with two ducats. I give my barber two ducats for only shaving the half of my beard. Give me a hundred ducats, Jew." Here the heyduke twirled his upper moustache. "If you don't, I will shout at once."

"Why so much?" said the Jew, sadly, turning pale, and undoing his leather purse; but it was lucky that he had no more in it, and that the heyduke could not count over a hundred.

"My lord, my lord, let us depart quickly! Look at the evil-minded fellow!" said Yankel to Taras, perceiving that the heyduke was turning the money over in his hand as though regretting that he had not demanded more.

"What do you mean, you devil of a heyduke?" said Bulba. "What do you mean by taking our money and not letting us see the Cossacks? No, you must let us see them. Since you have taken the money, you have no right to refuse."

"Go, go to the devil! If you won't, I'll give the alarm this moment. Take yourselves off quickly, I say!"

"My lord, my lord, let us go! in God's name let us go! Curse him! May he dream such things that he will have to spit," cried poor Yankel.

Bulba turned slowly, with drooping head, and retraced his steps, followed by the complaints of Yankel who was sorrowing at the thought of the wasted ducats.

"Why be angry? Let the dog curse. That race cannot help cursing. Oh, woe is

me, what luck God sends to some people! A hundred ducats merely for driving us off! And our brother: they have torn off his ear-locks, and they made wounds on his face that you cannot bear to look at, and yet no one will give him a hundred gold pieces. O heavens! Merciful God!”

But this failure made a much deeper impression on Bulba, expressed by a devouring flame in his eyes.

“Let us go,” he said, suddenly, as if arousing himself; “let us go to the square. I want to see how they will torture him.”

“Oh, my lord! why go? That will do us no good now.”

“Let us go,” said Bulba, obstinately; and the Jew followed him, sighing like a nurse.

The square on which the execution was to take place was not hard to find: for the people were thronging thither from all quarters. In that savage age such a thing constituted one of the most noteworthy spectacles, not only for the common people, but among the higher classes. A number of the most pious old men, a throng of young girls, and the most cowardly women, who dreamed the whole night afterwards of their bloody corpses, and shrieked as loudly in their sleep as a drunken hussar, missed, nevertheless, no opportunity of gratifying their curiosity. “Ah, what tortures!” many of them would cry, hysterically, covering their eyes and turning away; but they stood their ground for a good while, all the same. Many a one, with gaping mouth and outstretched hands, would have liked to jump upon other folk’s heads, to get a better view. Above the crowd towered a bulky butcher, admiring the whole process with the air of a connoisseur, and exchanging brief remarks with a gunsmith, whom he addressed as “Gossip,” because he got drunk in the same alehouse with him on holidays. Some entered into warm discussions, others even laid wagers. But the majority were of the species who, all the world over, look on at the world and at everything that goes on in it and merely scratch their noses. In the front ranks, close to the bearded civic-guards, stood a young noble, in warlike array, who had certainly put his whole wardrobe on his back, leaving only his torn shirt and old shoes at his quarters. Two chains, one above the other, hung around his neck. He stood beside his mistress, Usisya, and glanced about incessantly to see that no one soiled her silk gown. He explained everything to her so perfectly that no one could have added a word. “All these people whom you see, my dear Usisya,” he said, “have come to see the criminals executed; and that man, my love, yonder, holding the axe and other instruments in his hands, is the executioner, who will despatch them. When he begins to break them on the wheel, and torture them in other ways, the criminals will still be alive; but when he cuts off their heads, then, my love, they will die at once. Before that, they will cry and move; but as

soon as their heads are cut off, it will be impossible for them to cry, or to eat or drink, because, my dear, they will no longer have any head.” Usisya listened to all this with terror and curiosity.

The upper stories of the houses were filled with people. From the windows in the roof peered strange faces with beards and something resembling caps. Upon the balconies, beneath shady awnings, sat the aristocracy. The hands of smiling young ladies, brilliant as white sugar, rested on the railings. Portly nobles looked on with dignity. Servants in rich garb, with flowing sleeves, handed round various refreshments. Sometimes a black-eyed young rogue would take her cake or fruit and fling it among the crowd with her own noble little hand. The crowd of hungry gentles held up their caps to receive it; and some tall noble, whose head rose amid the throng, with his faded red jacket and discoloured gold braid, and who was the first to catch it with the aid of his long arms, would kiss his booty, press it to his heart, and finally put it in his mouth. The hawk, suspended beneath the balcony in a golden cage, was also a spectator; with beak inclined to one side, and with one foot raised, he, too, watched the people attentively. But suddenly a murmur ran through the crowd, and a rumour spread, “They are coming! they are coming! the Cossacks!”

They were bare-headed, with their long locks floating in the air. Their beards had grown, and their once handsome garments were worn out, and hung about them in tatters. They walked neither timidly nor surlily, but with a certain pride, neither looking at nor bowing to the people. At the head of all came Ostap.

What were old Taras’s feelings when thus he beheld his Ostap? What filled his heart then? He gazed at him from amid the crowd, and lost not a single movement of his. They reached the place of execution. Ostap stopped. He was to be the first to drink the bitter cup. He glanced at his comrades, raised his hand, and said in a loud voice: “God grant that none of the heretics who stand here may hear, the unclean dogs, how Christians suffer! Let none of us utter a single word.” After this he ascended the scaffold.

“Well done, son! well done!” said Bulba, softly, and bent his grey head.

The executioner tore off his old rags; they fastened his hands and feet in stocks prepared expressly, and — We will not pain the reader with a picture of the hellish tortures which would make his hair rise upright on his head. They were the outcome of that coarse, wild age, when men still led a life of warfare which hardened their souls until no sense of humanity was left in them. In vain did some, not many, in that age make a stand against such terrible measures. In vain did the king and many nobles, enlightened in mind and spirit, demonstrate that such severity of punishment could but fan the flame of vengeance in the Cossack nation. But the power of the king, and the opinion of the wise, was as

nothing before the savage will of the magnates of the kingdom, who, by their thoughtlessness and unconquerable lack of all far-sighted policy, their childish self-love and miserable pride, converted the Diet into the mockery of a government. Ostap endured the torture like a giant. Not a cry, not a groan, was heard. Even when they began to break the bones in his hands and feet, when, amid the death-like stillness of the crowd, the horrible cracking was audible to the most distant spectators; when even his tormentors turned aside their eyes, nothing like a groan escaped his lips, nor did his face quiver. Taras stood in the crowd with bowed head; and, raising his eyes proudly at that moment, he said, approvingly, “Well done, boy! well done!”

But when they took him to the last deadly tortures, it seemed as though his strength were failing. He cast his eyes around.

O God! all strangers, all unknown faces! If only some of his relatives had been present at his death! He would not have cared to hear the sobs and anguish of his poor, weak mother, nor the unreasoning cries of a wife, tearing her hair and beating her white breast; but he would have liked to see a strong man who might refresh him with a word of wisdom, and cheer his end. And his strength failed him, and he cried in the weakness of his soul, “Father! where are you? do you hear?”

“I hear!” rang through the universal silence, and those thousands of people shuddered in concert. A detachment of cavalry hastened to search through the throng of people. Yankel turned pale as death, and when the horsemen had got within a short distance of him, turned round in terror to look for Taras; but Taras was no longer beside him; every trace of him was lost.

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CHAPTER XII

They soon found traces of Taras. An army of a hundred and twenty thousand Cossacks appeared on the frontier of the Ukraine. This was no small detachment sallying forth for plunder or in pursuit of the Tatars. No: the whole nation had risen, for the measure of the people's patience was over-full; they had risen to avenge the disregard of their rights, the dishonourable humiliation of themselves, the insults to the faith of their fathers and their sacred customs, the outrages upon their church, the excesses of the foreign nobles, the disgraceful domination of the Jews on Christian soil, and all that had aroused and deepened the stern hatred of the Cossacks for a long time past. Hetman Ostranitza, young, but firm in mind, led the vast Cossack force. Beside him was seen his old and experienced friend and counsellor, Gunya. Eight leaders led bands of twelve thousand men each. Two osauls and a bunchuzhniy assisted the hetman. A cornet-general carried the chief standard, whilst many other banners and standards floated in the air; and the comrades of the staff bore the golden staff of the hetman, the symbol of his office. There were also many other officials belonging to the different bands, the baggage train and the main force with detachments of infantry and cavalry. There were almost as many free Cossacks and volunteers as there were registered Cossacks. The Cossacks had risen everywhere. They came from Tchigirin, from Pereyaslaf, from Baturin, from Glukhof, from the regions of the lower Dnieper, and from all its upper shores and islands. An uninterrupted stream of horses and herds of cattle stretched across the plain. And among all these Cossacks, among all these bands, one was the choicest; and that was the band led by Taras Bulba. All contributed to give him an influence over the others: his advanced years, his experience and skill in directing an army, and his bitter hatred of the foe. His unsparing fierceness and cruelty seemed exaggerated even to the Cossacks. His grey head dreamed of naught save fire and sword, and his utterances at the councils of war breathed only annihilation.

It is useless to describe all the battles in which the Cossacks distinguished themselves, or the gradual courses of the campaign. All this is set down in the chronicles. It is well known what an army raised on Russian soil, for the orthodox faith, is like. There is no power stronger than faith. It is threatening and invincible like a rock, and rising amidst the stormy, ever-changing sea. From the very bottom of the sea it rears to heaven its jagged sides of firm, impenetrable

stone. It is visible from everywhere, and looks the waves straight in the face as they roll past. And woe to the ship which is dashed against it! Its frame flies into splinters, everything in it is split and crushed, and the startled air re-echoes the piteous cries of the drowning.

In the pages of the chronicles there is a minute description of how the Polish garrisons fled from the freed cities; how the unscrupulous Jewish tavern-keepers were hung; how powerless was the royal hetman, Nikolai Pototzky, with his numerous army, against this invincible force; how, routed and pursued, he lost the best of his troops by drowning in a small stream; how the fierce Cossack regiments besieged him in the little town of Polon; and how, reduced to extremities, he promised, under oath, on the part of the king and the government, its full satisfaction to all, and the restoration of all their rights and privileges. But the Cossacks were not men to give way for this. They already knew well what a Polish oath was worth. And Pototzky would never more have pranced on his six-thousand ducat horse from the Kabardei, attracting the glances of distinguished ladies and the envy of the nobility; he would never more have made a figure in the Diet, by giving costly feasts to the senators — if the Russian priests who were in the little town had not saved him. When all the popes, in their brilliant gold vestments, went out to meet the Cossacks, bearing the holy pictures and the cross, with the bishop himself at their head, crosier in hand and mitre on his head, the Cossacks all bowed their heads and took off their caps. To no one lower than the king himself would they have shown respect at such an hour; but their daring fell before the Church of Christ, and they honoured their priesthood. The hetman and leaders agreed to release Pototzky, after having extracted from him a solemn oath to leave all the Christian churches unmolested, to forswear the ancient enmity, and to do no harm to the Cossack forces. One leader alone would not consent to such a peace. It was Taras. He tore a handful of hair from his head, and cried:

“Hetman and leaders! Commit no such womanish deed. Trust not the Lyakhs; slay the dogs!”

When the secretary presented the agreement, and the hetman put his hand to it, Taras drew a genuine Damascene blade, a costly Turkish sabre of the finest steel, broke it in twain like a reed, and threw the two pieces far away on each side, saying, “Farewell! As the two pieces of this sword will never reunite and form one sword again, so we, comrades, shall nevermore behold each other in this world. Remember my parting words.” As he spoke his voice grew stronger, rose higher, and acquired a hitherto unknown power; and his prophetic utterances troubled them all. “Before the death hour you will remember me! Do you think that you have purchased peace and quiet? do you think that you will make a

great show? You will make a great show, but after another fashion. They will flay the skin from your head, hetman, they will stuff it with bran, and long will it be exhibited at fairs. Neither will you retain your heads, gentles. You will be thrown into damp dungeons, walled about with stone, if they do not boil you alive in cauldrons like sheep. And you, men," he continued, turning to his followers, "which of you wants to die his true death? not through sorrows and the ale-house; but an honourable Cossack death, all in one bed, like bride and groom? But, perhaps, you would like to return home, and turn infidels, and carry Polish priests on your backs?"

"We will follow you, noble leader, we will follow you!" shouted all his band, and many others joined them.

"If it is to be so, then follow me," said Taras, pulling his cap farther over his brows. Looking menacingly at the others, he went to his horse, and cried to his men, "Let no one reproach us with any insulting speeches. Now, hey there, men! we'll call on the Catholics." And then he struck his horse, and there followed him a camp of a hundred waggons, and with them many Cossack cavalry and infantry; and, turning, he threatened with a glance all who remained behind, and wrath was in his eye. The band departed in full view of all the army, and Taras continued long to turn and glower.

The hetman and leaders were uneasy; all became thoughtful, and remained silent, as though oppressed by some heavy foreboding. Not in vain had Taras prophesied: all came to pass as he had foretold. A little later, after the treacherous attack at Kaneva, the hetman's head was mounted on a stake, together with those of many of his officers.

And what of Taras? Taras made raids all over Poland with his band, burned eighteen towns and nearly forty churches, and reached Cracow. He killed many nobles, and plundered some of the richest and finest castles. The Cossacks emptied on the ground the century-old mead and wine, carefully hoarded up in lordly cellars; they cut and burned the rich garments and equipments which they found in the wardrobes. "Spare nothing," was the order of Taras. The Cossacks spared not the black-browed gentlewomen, the brilliant, white-bosomed maidens: these could not save themselves even at the altar, for Taras burned them with the altar itself. Snowy hands were raised to heaven from amid fiery flames, with piteous shrieks which would have moved the damp earth itself to pity and caused the steppe-grass to bend with compassion at their fate. But the cruel Cossacks paid no heed; and, raising the children in the streets upon the points of their lances, they cast them also into the flames.

"This is a mass for the soul of Ostap, you heathen Lyakhs," was all that Taras said. And such masses for Ostap he had sung in every village, until the Polish

Government perceived that Taras's raids were more than ordinary expeditions for plunder; and Pototzky was given five regiments, and ordered to capture him without fail.

Six days did the Cossacks retreat along the by-roads before their pursuers; their horses were almost equal to this unchecked flight, and nearly saved them. But this time Pototzky was also equal to the task intrusted to him; unweariedly he followed them, and overtook them on the bank of the Dniester, where Taras had taken possession of an abandoned and ruined castle for the purpose of resting.

On the very brink of the Dniester it stood, with its shattered ramparts and the ruined remnants of its walls. The summit of the cliff was strewn with ragged stones and broken bricks, ready at any moment to detach themselves. The royal hetman, Pototzky, surrounded it on the two sides which faced the plain. Four days did the Cossacks fight, tearing down bricks and stones for missiles. But their stones and their strength were at length exhausted, and Taras resolved to cut his way through the beleaguering forces. And the Cossacks would have cut their way through, and their swift steeds might again have served them faithfully, had not Taras halted suddenly in the very midst of their flight, and shouted, "Halt! my pipe has dropped with its tobacco: I won't let those heathen Lyakhs have my pipe!" And the old hetman stooped down, and felt in the grass for his pipe full of tobacco, his inseparable companion on all his expeditions by sea and land and at home.

But in the meantime a band of Lyakhs suddenly rushed up, and seized him by the shoulders. He struggled with all might; but he could not scatter on the earth, as he had been wont to do, the heydukes who had seized him. "Oh, old age, old age!" he exclaimed: and the stout old Cossack wept. But his age was not to blame: nearly thirty men were clinging to his arms and legs.

"The raven is caught!" yelled the Lyakhs. "We must think how we can show him the most honour, the dog!" They decided, with the permission of the hetman, to burn him alive in the sight of all. There stood hard by a leafless tree, the summit of which had been struck by lightning. They fastened him with iron chains and nails driven through his hands high up on the trunk of the tree, so that he might be seen from all sides; and began at once to place fagots at its foot. But Taras did not look at the wood, nor did he think of the fire with which they were preparing to roast him: he gazed anxiously in the direction whence his Cossacks were firing. From his high point of observation he could see everything as in the palm of his hand.

"Take possession, men," he shouted, "of the hillock behind the wood: they cannot climb it!" But the wind did not carry his words to them. "They are lost,

lost!” he said in despair, and glanced down to where the water of the Dniester glittered. Joy gleamed in his eyes. He saw the sterns of four boats peeping out from behind some bushes; exerted all the power of his lungs, and shouted in a ringing tone, “To the bank, to the bank, men! descend the path to the left, under the cliff. There are boats on the bank; take all, that they may not catch you.”

This time the breeze blew from the other side, and his words were audible to the Cossacks. But for this counsel he received a blow on the head with the back of an axe, which made everything dance before his eyes.

The Cossacks descended the cliff path at full speed, but their pursuers were at their heels. They looked: the path wound and twisted, and made many detours to one side. “Comrades, we are trapped!” said they. All halted for an instant, raised their whips, whistled, and their Tatar horses rose from the ground, clove the air like serpents, flew over the precipice, and plunged straight into the Dniester. Two only did not alight in the river, but thundered down from the height upon the stones, and perished there with their horses without uttering a cry. But the Cossacks had already swum shoreward from their horses, and unfastened the boats, when the Lyakhs halted on the brink of the precipice, astounded by this wonderful feat, and thinking, “Shall we jump down to them, or not?”

One young colonel, a lively, hot-blooded soldier, own brother to the beautiful Pole who had seduced poor Andrii, did not reflect long, but leaped with his horse after the Cossacks. He made three turns in the air with his steed, and fell heavily on the rocks. The sharp stones tore him in pieces; and his brains, mingled with blood, bespattered the shrubs growing on the uneven walls of the precipice.

When Taras Bulba recovered from the blow, and glanced towards the Dniester, the Cossacks were already in the skiffs and rowing away. Balls were showered upon them from above but did not reach them. And the old hetman’s eyes sparkled with joy.

“Farewell, comrades!” he shouted to them from above; “remember me, and come hither again next spring and make merry in the same fashion! What! cursed Lyakhs, have ye caught me? Think ye there is anything in the world that a Cossack fears? Wait; the time will come when ye shall learn what the orthodox Russian faith is! Already the people scent it far and near. A czar shall arise from Russian soil, and there shall not be a power in the world which shall not submit to him!” But fire had already risen from the fagots; it lapped his feet, and the flame spread to the tree.... But can any fire, flames, or power be found on earth which are capable of overpowering Russian strength?

Broad is the river Dniester, and in it are many deep pools, dense reed-beds, clear shallows and little bays; its watery mirror gleams, filled with the melodious plaint of the swan, the proud wild goose glides swiftly over it; and snipe, red-

throated ruffs, and other birds are to be found among the reeds and along the banks. The Cossacks rowed swiftly on in the narrow double-ruddered boats — rowed stoutly, carefully shunning the sand bars, and cleaving the ranks of the birds, which took wing — rowed, and talked of their hetman.

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DEAD SOULS



Translated by C. J. Hogarth

First published in 1842, this is Gogol's most famous work, widely regarded as a masterpiece of 19th-century Russian literature. Gogol described the novel as "an epic poem in prose", which was originally intended to form three parts. In its current state the novel finishes mid-sentence, apparently partway through the second part

The title refers to the term 'soul' used to mean a serf working in the Russian Empire, before the emancipation of 1861. Serfs were considered the property of the landowner, and could be bought, sold or mortgaged. Therefore the term soul was used as a unit of measurement. The novel concerns the "dead souls" which are still accounted for in property registers. Yet on another level, the title refers to the "dead souls" of the many characters, whose various unfulfilled lives are depicted in the narrative.

The novel's first part allegorically represents the Inferno of a modern-day Divine Comedy, inspired by Dante's great poem. Gogol portrays a detailed image of the ailing social system in Russia after the war of 1812. As in many of the author's short stories, the social criticism of *Dead Souls* is expressed through absurd and hilarious satire. Unlike the short stories, the novel offers solutions rather than criticisms, giving the work more of a didactic stance.

The novel follows the exploits of Chichikov, a gentleman of middling social class and position, who arrives in a small town. Chichikov endeavours to make a good name for himself, impressing the many petty officials of the town. Despite his limited funds, he spends extravagantly, hoping that a great display of wealth and power will gain him the connections he needs to live easily in the future. Meanwhile, he begins to develop a bizarre and mysterious plan to acquire 'dead souls'…

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ПОХОЖДЕНІЯ ЧИЧИКОВА,

ИЛИ

МЕРТВЫЯ ДУШИ.

ПОЭМА

Н. ГОГОЛЯ.

МОСКВА.

1842.

The title page of the first edition

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A contemporary Russian illustration of the characters Chichikov and Nozdryov

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INTRODUCTION

Dead Souls, first published in 1842, is the great prose classic of Russia. That amazing institution, “the Russian novel,” not only began its career with this unfinished masterpiece by Nikolai Vasil’evich Gogol, but practically all the Russian masterpieces that have come since have grown out of it, like the limbs of a single tree. Dostoieffsky goes so far as to bestow this tribute upon an earlier work by the same author, a short story entitled The Cloak; this idea has been wittily expressed by another compatriot, who says: “We have all issued out of Gogol’s Cloak.”

Dead Souls, which bears the word “Poem” upon the title page of the original, has been generally compared to Don Quixote and to the Pickwick Papers, while E. M. Vogue places its author somewhere between Cervantes and Le Sage. However considerable the influences of Cervantes and Dickens may have been — the first in the matter of structure, the other in background, humour, and detail of characterisation — the predominating and distinguishing quality of the work is undeniably something foreign to both and quite peculiar to itself; something which, for want of a better term, might be called the quality of the Russian soul. The English reader familiar with the works of Dostoieffsky, Turgenev, and Tolstoi, need hardly be told what this implies; it might be defined in the words of the French critic just named as “a tendency to pity.” One might indeed go further and say that it implies a certain tolerance of one’s characters even though they be, in the conventional sense, knaves, products, as the case might be, of conditions or circumstance, which after all is the thing to be criticised and not the man. But pity and tolerance are rare in satire, even in clash with it, producing in the result a deep sense of tragic humour. It is this that makes of Dead Souls a unique work, peculiarly Gogolian, peculiarly Russian, and distinct from its author’s Spanish and English masters.

Still more profound are the contradictions to be seen in the author’s personal character; and unfortunately they prevented him from completing his work. The trouble is that he made his art out of life, and when in his final years he carried his struggle, as Tolstoi did later, back into life, he repented of all he had written, and in the frenzy of a wakeful night burned all his manuscripts, including the second part of Dead Souls, only fragments of which were saved. There was yet a third part to be written. Indeed, the second part had been written and burned twice. Accounts differ as to why he had burned it finally. Religious remorse, fury at adverse criticism, and despair at not reaching ideal perfection are among the

reasons given. Again it is said that he had destroyed the manuscript with the others inadvertently.

The poet Pushkin, who said of Gogol that “behind his laughter you feel the unseen tears,” was his chief friend and inspirer. It was he who suggested the plot of Dead Souls as well as the plot of the earlier work The Revisor, which is almost the only comedy in Russian. The importance of both is their introduction of the social element in Russian literature, as Prince Kropotkin points out. Both hold up the mirror to Russian officialdom and the effects it has produced on the national character. The plot of Dead Souls is simple enough, and is said to have been suggested by an actual episode.

It was the day of serfdom in Russia, and a man’s standing was often judged by the numbers of “souls” he possessed. There was a periodical census of serfs, say once every ten or twenty years. This being the case, an owner had to pay a tax on every “soul” registered at the last census, though some of the serfs might have died in the meantime. Nevertheless, the system had its material advantages, inasmuch as an owner might borrow money from a bank on the “dead souls” no less than on the living ones. The plan of Chichikov, Gogol’s hero-villain, was therefore to make a journey through Russia and buy up the “dead souls,” at reduced rates of course, saving their owners the government tax, and acquiring for himself a list of fictitious serfs, which he meant to mortgage to a bank for a considerable sum. With this money he would buy an estate and some real life serfs, and make the beginning of a fortune.

Obviously, this plot, which is really no plot at all but merely a ruse to enable Chichikov to go across Russia in a troika, with Selifan the coachman as a sort of Russian Sancho Panza, gives Gogol a magnificent opportunity to reveal his genius as a painter of Russian panorama, peopled with characteristic native types commonplace enough but drawn in comic relief. “The comic,” explained the author yet at the beginning of his career, “is hidden everywhere, only living in the midst of it we are not conscious of it; but if the artist brings it into his art, on the stage say, we shall roll about with laughter and only wonder we did not notice it before.” But the comic in Dead Souls is merely external. Let us see how Pushkin, who loved to laugh, regarded the work. As Gogol read it aloud to him from the manuscript the poet grew more and more gloomy and at last cried out: “God! What a sad country Russia is!” And later he said of it: “Gogol invents nothing; it is the simple truth, the terrible truth.”

The work on one hand was received as nothing less than an exposure of all Russia — what would foreigners think of it? The liberal elements, however, the critical Belinsky among them, welcomed it as a revelation, as an omen of a freer future. Gogol, who had meant to do a service to Russia and not to heap ridicule

upon her, took the criticisms of the Slavophiles to heart; and he palliated his critics by promising to bring about in the succeeding parts of his novel the redemption of Chichikov and the other “knaves and blockheads.” But the “Westerner” Belinsky and others of the liberal camp were mistrustful. It was about this time (1847) that Gogol published his Correspondence with Friends, and aroused a literary controversy that is alive to this day. Tolstoi is to be found among his apologists.

Opinions as to the actual significance of Gogol’s masterpiece differ. Some consider the author a realist who has drawn with meticulous detail a picture of Russia; others, Merejkovsky among them, see in him a great symbolist; the very title Dead Souls is taken to describe the living of Russia as well as its dead. Chichikov himself is now generally regarded as a universal character. We find an American professor, William Lyon Phelps , of Yale, holding the opinion that “no one can travel far in America without meeting scores of Chichikovs; indeed, he is an accurate portrait of the American promoter, of the successful commercial traveller whose success depends entirely not on the real value and usefulness of his stock-in-trade, but on his knowledge of human nature and of the persuasive power of his tongue.” This is also the opinion held by Prince Kropotkin , who says: “Chichikov may buy dead souls, or railway shares, or he may collect funds for some charitable institution, or look for a position in a bank, but he is an immortal international type; we meet him everywhere; he is of all lands and of all times; he but takes different forms to suit the requirements of nationality and time.”

Again, the work bears an interesting relation to Gogol himself. A romantic, writing of realities, he was appalled at the commonplaces of life, at finding no outlet for his love of colour derived from his Cossack ancestry. He realised that he had drawn a host of “heroes,” “one more commonplace than another, that there was not a single palliating circumstance, that there was not a single place where the reader might find pause to rest and to console himself, and that when he had finished the book it was as though he had walked out of an oppressive cellar into the open air.” He felt perhaps inward need to redeem Chichikov; in Merejkovsky’s opinion he really wanted to save his own soul, but had succeeded only in losing it. His last years were spent morbidly; he suffered torments and ran from place to place like one hunted; but really always running from himself. Rome was his favourite refuge, and he returned to it again and again. In 1848, he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but he could find no peace for his soul. Something of this mood had reflected itself even much earlier in the Memoirs of a Madman: “Oh, little mother, save your poor son! Look how they are tormenting him.... There’s no place for him on earth! He’s being driven!... Oh,

little mother, take pity on thy poor child."

All the contradictions of Gogol's character are not to be disposed of in a brief essay. Such a strange combination of the tragic and the comic was truly seldom seen in one man. He, for one, realised that "it is dangerous to jest with laughter." "Everything that I laughed at became sad." "And terrible," adds Merejkovsky. But earlier his humour was lighter, less tinged with the tragic; in those days Pushkin never failed to be amused by what Gogol had brought to read to him. Even Revizor (1835), with its tragic undercurrent, was a trifle compared to Dead Souls, so that one is not astonished to hear that not only did the Tsar, Nicholas I, give permission to have it acted, in spite of its being a criticism of official rottenness, but laughed uproariously, and led the applause. Moreover, he gave Gogol a grant of money, and asked that its source should not be revealed to the author lest "he might feel obliged to write from the official point of view."

Gogol was born at Sorotchinetz, Little Russia, in March 1809. He left college at nineteen and went to St. Petersburg, where he secured a position as copying clerk in a government department. He did not keep his position long, yet long enough to store away in his mind a number of bureaucratic types which proved useful later. He quite suddenly started for America with money given to him by his mother for another purpose, but when he got as far as Lubeck he turned back. He then wanted to become an actor, but his voice proved not strong enough. Later he wrote a poem which was unkindly received. As the copies remained unsold, he gathered them all up at the various shops and burned them in his room.

His next effort, Evenings at the Farm of Dikanka (1831) was more successful. It was a series of gay and colourful pictures of Ukraine, the land he knew and loved, and if he is occasionally a little over romantic here and there, he also achieves some beautifully lyrical passages. Then came another even finer series called Mirgorod, which won the admiration of Pushkin. Next he planned a "History of Little Russia" and a "History of the Middle Ages," this last work to be in eight or nine volumes. The result of all this study was a beautiful and short Homeric epic in prose, called Taras Bulba. His appointment to a professorship in history was a ridiculous episode in his life. After a brilliant first lecture, in which he had evidently said all he had to say, he settled to a life of boredom for himself and his pupils. When he resigned he said joyously: "I am once more a free Cossack." Between 1834 and 1835 he produced a new series of stories, including his famous Cloak, which may be regarded as the legitimate beginning of the Russian novel.

Gogol knew little about women, who played an equally minor role in his life and in his books. This may be partly because his personal appearance was not

prepossessing. He is described by a contemporary as “a little man with legs too short for his body. He walked crookedly; he was clumsy, ill-dressed, and rather ridiculous-looking, with his long lock of hair flapping on his forehead, and his large prominent nose.”

From 1835 Gogol spent almost his entire time abroad; some strange unrest — possibly his Cossack blood — possessed him like a demon, and he never stopped anywhere very long. After his pilgrimage in 1848 to Jerusalem, he returned to Moscow, his entire possessions in a little bag; these consisted of pamphlets, critiques, and newspaper articles mostly inimical to himself. He wandered about with these from house to house. Everything he had of value he gave away to the poor. He ceased work entirely. According to all accounts he spent his last days in praying and fasting. Visions came to him. His death, which came in 1852, was extremely fantastic. His last words, uttered in a loud frenzy, were: “A ladder! Quick, a ladder!” This call for a ladder — ”a spiritual ladder,” in the words of Merejkovsky — had been made on an earlier occasion by a certain Russian saint, who used almost the same language. “I shall laugh my bitter laugh” 3 was the inscription placed on Gogol’s grave.

JOHN COURNOS

Evenings on the Farm near the Dikanka, 1829-31; Mirgorod, 1831-33; Taras Bulba, 1834; Arabesques (includes tales, The Portrait and A Madman’s Diary), 1831-35; The Cloak, 1835; The Revizor (The Inspector-General), 1836; Dead Souls, 1842; Correspondence with Friends, 1847.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS: Cossack Tales (The Night of Christmas Eve, Tarass Boolba), trans. by G. Tolstoy, 1860; St. John’s Eve and Other Stories, trans. by Isabel F. Hapgood, New York, Crowell, 1886; Taras Bulba: Also St. John’s Eve and Other Stories, London, Vizetelly, 1887; Taras Bulba, trans. by B. C. Baskerville, London, Scott, 1907; The Inspector: a Comedy, Calcutta, 1890; The Inspector-General, trans. by A. A. Sykes, London, Scott, 1892; Revizor, trans. for the Yale Dramatic Association by Max S. Mandell, New Haven, Conn., 1908; Home Life in Russia (adaptation of Dead Souls), London, Hurst, 1854; Tchitchikoff’s Journey’s; or Dead Souls, trans. by Isabel F. Hapgood, New York, Crowell, 1886; Dead Souls, London, Vizetelly, 1887; Dead Souls, London, Maxwell 1887; Meditations on the Divine Liturgy, trans. by L. Alexeieff, London, A. R. Mowbray and Co., 1913.

LIVES, etc.: (Russian) Kotlyarevsky (N. A.), 1903; Shenrok (V. I.), Materials for a Biography, 1892; (French) Leger (L.), Nicholas Gogol, 1914.

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AUTHOR’S PREFACE

Reader, whosoever or wheresoever you be, and whatsoever be your station — whether that of a member of the higher ranks of society or that of a member of the plainer walks of life — I beg of you, if God shall have given you any skill in letters, and my book shall fall into your hands, to extend to me your assistance.
For in the book which lies before you, and which, probably, you have read in its first edition, there is portrayed a man who is a type taken from our Russian Empire. This man travels about the Russian land and meets with folk of every condition — from the nobly-born to the humble toiler. Him I have taken as a type to show forth the vices and the failings, rather than the merits and the virtues, of the commonplace Russian individual; and the characters which revolve around him have also been selected for the purpose of demonstrating our national weaknesses and shortcomings. As for men and women of the better sort, I propose to portray them in subsequent volumes. Probably much of what I have described is improbable and does not happen as things customarily happen in Russia; and the reason for that is that for me to learn all that I have wished to do has been impossible, in that human life is not sufficiently long to become acquainted with even a hundredth part of what takes place within the borders of the Russian Empire. Also, carelessness, inexperience, and lack of time have led to my perpetrating numerous errors and inaccuracies of detail; with the result that in every line of the book there is something which calls for correction. For these reasons I beg of you, my reader, to act also as my corrector. Do not despise the task, for, however superior be your education, and however lofty your station, and however insignificant, in your eyes, my book, and however trifling the apparent labour of correcting and commenting upon that book, I implore you to do as I have said. And you too, O reader of lowly education and simple status, I beseech you not to look upon yourself as too ignorant to be able in some fashion, however small, to help me. Every man who has lived in the world and mixed with his fellow men will have remarked something which has remained hidden from the eyes of others; and therefore I beg of you not to deprive me of your comments, seeing that it cannot be that, should you read my book with attention, you will have NOTHING to say at some point therein.

For example, how excellent it would be if some reader who is sufficiently rich in experience and the knowledge of life to be acquainted with the sort of characters which I have described herein would annotate in detail the book,

without missing a single page, and undertake to read it precisely as though, laying pen and paper before him, he were first to peruse a few pages of the work, and then to recall his own life, and the lives of folk with whom he has come in contact, and everything which he has seen with his own eyes or has heard of from others, and to proceed to annotate, in so far as may tally with his own experience or otherwise, what is set forth in the book, and to jot down the whole exactly as it stands pictured to his memory, and, lastly, to send me the jottings as they may issue from his pen, and to continue doing so until he has covered the entire work! Yes, he would indeed do me a vital service! Of style or beauty of expression he would need to take no account, for the value of a book lies in its truth and its actuality rather than in its wording. Nor would he need to consider my feelings if at any point he should feel minded to blame or to upbraid me, or to demonstrate the harm rather than the good which has been done through any lack of thought or verisimilitude of which I have been guilty. In short, for anything and for everything in the way of criticism I should be thankful.

Also, it would be an excellent thing if some reader in the higher walks of life, some person who stands remote, both by life and by education, from the circle of folk which I have pictured in my book, but who knows the life of the circle in which he himself revolves, would undertake to read my work in similar fashion, and methodically to recall to his mind any members of superior social classes whom he has met, and carefully to observe whether there exists any resemblance between one such class and another, and whether, at times, there may not be repeated in a higher sphere what is done in a lower, and likewise to note any additional fact in the same connection which may occur to him (that is to say, any fact pertaining to the higher ranks of society which would seem to confirm or to disprove his conclusions), and, lastly, to record that fact as it may have occurred within his own experience, while giving full details of persons (of individual manners, tendencies, and customs) and also of inanimate surroundings (of dress, furniture, fittings of houses, and so forth). For I need knowledge of the classes in question, which are the flower of our people. In fact, this very reason — the reason that I do not yet know Russian life in all its aspects, and in the degree to which it is necessary for me to know it in order to become a successful author — is what has, until now, prevented me from publishing any subsequent volumes of this story.

Again, it would be an excellent thing if some one who is endowed with the faculty of imagining and vividly picturing to himself the various situations wherein a character may be placed, and of mentally following up a character’s career in one field and another — by this I mean some one who possesses the power of entering into and developing the ideas of the author whose work he

may be reading — would scan each character herein portrayed, and tell me how each character ought to have acted at a given juncture, and what, to judge from the beginnings of each character, ought to have become of that character later, and what new circumstances might be devised in connection therewith, and what new details might advantageously be added to those already described. Honestly can I say that to consider these points against the time when a new edition of my book may be published in a different and a better form would give me the greatest possible pleasure.

One thing in particular would I ask of any reader who may be willing to give me the benefit of his advice. That is to say, I would beg of him to suppose, while recording his remarks, that it is for the benefit of a man in no way his equal in education, or similar to him in tastes and ideas, or capable of apprehending criticisms without full explanation appended, that he is doing so. Rather would I ask such a reader to suppose that before him there stands a man of incomparably inferior enlightenment and schooling — a rude country bumpkin whose life, throughout, has been passed in retirement — a bumpkin to whom it is necessary to explain each circumstance in detail, while never forgetting to be as simple of speech as though he were a child, and at every step there were a danger of employing terms beyond his understanding. Should these precautions be kept constantly in view by any reader undertaking to annotate my book, that reader's remarks will exceed in weight and interest even his own expectations, and will bring me very real advantage.

Thus, provided that my earnest request be heeded by my readers, and that among them there be found a few kind spirits to do as I desire, the following is the manner in which I would request them to transmit their notes for my consideration. Inscribing the package with my name, let them then enclose that package in a second one addressed either to the Rector of the University of St. Petersburg or to Professor Shevirev of the University of Moscow, according as the one or the other of those two cities may be the nearer to the sender.

Lastly, while thanking all journalists and litterateurs for their previously published criticisms of my book — criticisms which, in spite of a spice of that intemperance and prejudice which is common to all humanity, have proved of the greatest use both to my head and to my heart — I beg of such writers again to favour me with their reviews. For in all sincerity I can assure them that whatsoever they may be pleased to say for my improvement and my instruction will be received by me with naught but gratitude.

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PART I

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CHAPTER I

To the door of an inn in the provincial town of N. there drew up a smart britchka — a light spring-carriage of the sort affected by bachelors, retired lieutenant-colonels, staff-captains, land-owners possessed of about a hundred souls, and, in short, all persons who rank as gentlemen of the intermediate category. In the britchka was seated such a gentleman — a man who, though not handsome, was not ill-favoured, not over-fat, and not over-thin. Also, though not over-elderly, he was not over-young. His arrival produced no stir in the town, and was accompanied by no particular incident, beyond that a couple of peasants who happened to be standing at the door of a dramshop exchanged a few comments with reference to the equipage rather than to the individual who was seated in it. "Look at that carriage," one of them said to the other. "Think you it will be going as far as Moscow?" "I think it will," replied his companion. "But not as far as Kazan, eh?" "No, not as far as Kazan." With that the conversation ended. Presently, as the britchka was approaching the inn, it was met by a young man in a pair of very short, very tight breeches of white dimity, a quasi-fashionable frockcoat, and a dickey fastened with a pistol-shaped bronze tie-pin. The young man turned his head as he passed the britchka and eyed it attentively; after which he clapped his hand to his cap (which was in danger of being removed by the wind) and resumed his way. On the vehicle reaching the inn door, its occupant found standing there to welcome him the polevoi, or waiter, of the establishment — an individual of such nimble and brisk movement that even to distinguish the character of his face was impossible. Running out with a napkin in one hand and his lanky form clad in a tailcoat, reaching almost to the nape of his neck, he tossed back his locks, and escorted the gentleman upstairs, along a wooden gallery, and so to the bedchamber which God had prepared for the gentleman's reception. The said bedchamber was of quite ordinary appearance, since the inn belonged to the species to be found in all provincial towns — the species wherein, for two roubles a day, travellers may obtain a room swarming with black-beetles, and communicating by a doorway with the apartment adjoining. True, the doorway may be blocked up with a wardrobe; yet behind it, in all probability, there will be standing a silent, motionless neighbour whose ears are burning to learn every possible detail concerning the latest arrival. The inn's exterior corresponded with its interior. Long, and consisting only of two storeys, the building had its lower half destitute of stucco; with the result that the dark-

red bricks, originally more or less dingy, had grown yet dingier under the influence of atmospheric changes. As for the upper half of the building, it was, of course, painted the usual tint of unfading yellow. Within, on the ground floor, there stood a number of benches heaped with horse-collars, rope, and sheepskins; while the window-seat accommodated a sbitentshik , cheek by jowl with a samovar — the latter so closely resembling the former in appearance that, but for the fact of the samovar possessing a pitch-black lip, the samovar and the sbitentshik might have been two of a pair.

During the traveller's inspection of his room his luggage was brought into the apartment. First came a portmanteau of white leather whose raggedness indicated that the receptacle had made several previous journeys. The bearers of the same were the gentleman's coachman, Selifan (a little man in a large overcoat), and the gentleman's valet, Petrushka — the latter a fellow of about thirty, clad in a worn, over-ample jacket which formerly had graced his master's shoulders, and possessed of a nose and a pair of lips whose coarseness communicated to his face rather a sullen expression. Behind the portmanteau came a small dispatch-box of redwood, lined with birch bark, a boot-case, and (wrapped in blue paper) a roast fowl; all of which having been deposited, the coachman departed to look after his horses, and the valet to establish himself in the little dark anteroom or kennel where already he had stored a cloak, a bagful of livery, and his own peculiar smell. Pressing the narrow bedstead back against the wall, he covered it with the tiny remnant of mattress — a remnant as thin and flat (perhaps also as greasy) as a pancake — which he had managed to beg of the landlord of the establishment.

While the attendants had been thus setting things straight the gentleman had repaired to the common parlour. The appearance of common parlours of the kind is known to every one who travels. Always they have varnished walls which, grown black in their upper portions with tobacco smoke, are, in their lower, grown shiny with the friction of customers' backs — more especially with that of the backs of such local tradesmen as, on market-days, make it their regular practice to resort to the local hostelry for a glass of tea. Also, parlours of this kind invariably contain smutty ceilings, an equally smutty chandelier, a number of pendent shades which jump and rattle whenever the waiter scurries across the shabby oilcloth with a trayful of glasses (the glasses looking like a flock of birds roosting by the seashore), and a selection of oil paintings. In short, there are certain objects which one sees in every inn. In the present case the only outstanding feature of the room was the fact that in one of the paintings a nymph was portrayed as possessing breasts of a size such as the reader can never in his life have beheld. A similar caricaturing of nature is to be noted in the historical

pictures (of unknown origin, period, and creation) which reach us — sometimes through the instrumentality of Russian magnates who profess to be connoisseurs of art — from Italy; owing to the said magnates having made such purchases solely on the advice of the couriers who have escorted them.

To resume, however — our traveller removed his cap, and divested his neck of a parti-coloured woollen scarf of the kind which a wife makes for her husband with her own hands, while accompanying the gift with interminable injunctions as to how best such a garment ought to be folded. True, bachelors also wear similar gauds, but, in their case, God alone knows who may have manufactured the articles! For my part, I cannot endure them. Having unfolded the scarf, the gentleman ordered dinner, and whilst the various dishes were being got ready — cabbage soup, a pie several weeks old, a dish of marrow and peas, a dish of sausages and cabbage, a roast fowl, some salted cucumber, and the sweet tart which stands perpetually ready for use in such establishments; whilst, I say, these things were either being warmed up or brought in cold, the gentleman induced the waiter to retail certain fragments of tittle-tattle concerning the late landlord of the hostelry, the amount of income which the hostelry produced, and the character of its present proprietor. To the last-mentioned inquiry the waiter returned the answer invariably given in such cases — namely, “My master is a terribly hard man, sir.” Curious that in enlightened Russia so many people cannot even take a meal at an inn without chattering to the attendant and making free with him! Nevertheless not ALL the questions which the gentleman asked were aimless ones, for he inquired who was Governor of the town, who President of the Local Council, and who Public Prosecutor. In short, he omitted no single official of note, while asking also (though with an air of detachment) the most exact particulars concerning the landowners of the neighbourhood. Which of them, he inquired, possessed serfs, and how many of them? How far from the town did those landowners reside? What was the character of each landowner, and was he in the habit of paying frequent visits to the town? The gentleman also made searching inquiries concerning the hygienic condition of the countryside. Was there, he asked, much sickness about — whether sporadic fever, fatal forms of ague, smallpox, or what not? Yet, though his solicitude concerning these matters showed more than ordinary curiosity, his bearing retained its gravity unimpaired, and from time to time he blew his nose with portentous fervour. Indeed, the manner in which he accomplished this latter feat was marvellous in the extreme, for, though that member emitted sounds equal to those of a trumpet in intensity, he could yet, with his accompanying air of guileless dignity, evoke the waiter’s undivided respect — so much so that, whenever the sounds of the nose reached that menial’s ears, he would shake back

his locks, straighten himself into a posture of marked solicitude, and inquire afresh, with head slightly inclined, whether the gentleman happened to require anything further. After dinner the guest consumed a cup of coffee, and then, seating himself upon the sofa, with, behind him, one of those wool-covered cushions which, in Russian taverns, resemble nothing so much as a cobblestone or a brick, fell to snoring; whereafter, returning with a start to consciousness, he ordered himself to be conducted to his room, flung himself at full length upon the bed, and once more slept soundly for a couple of hours. Aroused, eventually, by the waiter, he, at the latter's request, inscribed a fragment of paper with his name, his surname, and his rank (for communication, in accordance with the law, to the police): and on that paper the waiter, leaning forward from the corridor, read, syllable by syllable: "Paul Ivanovitch Chichikov, Collegiate Councillor — Landowner — Travelling on Private Affairs." The waiter had just time to accomplish this feat before Paul Ivanovitch Chichikov set forth to inspect the town. Apparently the place succeeded in satisfying him, and, to tell the truth, it was at least up to the usual standard of our provincial capitals. Where the staring yellow of stone edifices did not greet his eye he found himself confronted with the more modest grey of wooden ones; which, consisting, for the most part, of one or two storeys (added to the range of attics which provincial architects love so well), looked almost lost amid the expanses of street and intervening medleys of broken or half-finished partition-walls. At other points evidence of more life and movement was to be seen, and here the houses stood crowded together and displayed dilapidated, rain-blurred signboards whereon boots of cakes or pairs of blue breeches inscribed "Arshavski, Tailor," and so forth, were depicted. Over a shop containing hats and caps was written "Vassili Thedorov, Foreigner"; while, at another spot, a signboard portrayed a billiard table and two players — the latter clad in frockcoats of the kind usually affected by actors whose part it is to enter the stage during the closing act of a piece, even though, with arms sharply crooked and legs slightly bent, the said billiard players were taking the most careful aim, but succeeding only in making abortive strokes in the air. Each emporium of the sort had written over it: "This is the best establishment of its kind in the town." Also, al fresco in the streets there stood tables heaped with nuts, soap, and gingerbread (the latter but little distinguishable from the soap), and at an eating-house there was displayed the sign of a plump fish transfixed with a gaff. But the sign most frequently to be discerned was the insignia of the State, the double-headed eagle (now replaced, in this connection, with the laconic inscription "Dramshop"). As for the paving of the town, it was uniformly bad.

The gentleman peered also into the municipal gardens, which contained only a

few sorry trees that were poorly selected, requiring to be propped with oil-painted, triangular green supports, and able to boast of a height no greater than that of an ordinary walking-stick. Yet recently the local paper had said (apropos of a gala) that, “Thanks to the efforts of our Civil Governor, the town has become enriched with a pleasaunce full of umbrageous, spaciously-branching trees. Even on the most sultry day they afford agreeable shade, and indeed gratifying was it to see the hearts of our citizens panting with an impulse of gratitude as their eyes shed tears in recognition of all that their Governor has done for them!”

Next, after inquiring of a gendarme as to the best ways and means of finding the local council, the local law-courts, and the local Governor, should he (Chichikov) have need of them, the gentleman went on to inspect the river which ran through the town. En route he tore off a notice affixed to a post, in order that he might the more conveniently read it after his return to the inn. Also, he bestowed upon a lady of pleasant exterior who, escorted by a footman laden with a bundle, happened to be passing along a wooden sidewalk a prolonged stare. Lastly, he threw around him a comprehensive glance (as though to fix in his mind the general topography of the place) and betook himself home. There, gently aided by the waiter, he ascended the stairs to his bedroom, drank a glass of tea, and, seating himself at the table, called for a candle; which having been brought him, he produced from his pocket the notice, held it close to the flame, and conned its tenour — slightly contracting his right eye as he did so. Yet there was little in the notice to call for remark. All that it said was that shortly one of Kotzebue’s plays would be given, and that one of the parts in the play was to be taken by a certain Monsieur Poplevin, and another by a certain Mademoiselle Ziablova, while the remaining parts were to be filled by a number of less important personages. Nevertheless the gentleman perused the notice with careful attention, and even jotted down the prices to be asked for seats for the performance. Also, he remarked that the bill had been printed in the press of the Provincial Government. Next, he turned over the paper, in order to see if anything further was to be read on the reverse side; but, finding nothing there, he refolded the document, placed it in the box which served him as a receptacle for odds and ends, and brought the day to a close with a portion of cold veal, a bottle of pickles, and a sound sleep.

The following day he devoted to paying calls upon the various municipal officials — a first, and a very respectful, visit being paid to the Governor. This personage turned out to resemble Chichikov himself in that he was neither fat nor thin. Also, he wore the riband of the order of Saint Anna about his neck, and was reported to have been recommended also for the star. For the rest, he was

large and good-natured, and had a habit of amusing himself with occasional spells of knitting. Next, Chichikov repaired to the Vice-Governor's, and thence to the house of the Public Prosecutor, to that of the President of the Local Council, to that of the Chief of Police, to that of the Commissioner of Taxes, and to that of the local Director of State Factories. True, the task of remembering every big-wig in this world of ours is not a very easy one; but at least our visitor displayed the greatest activity in his work of paying calls, seeing that he went so far as to pay his respects also to the Inspector of the Municipal Department of Medicine and to the City Architect. Thereafter he sat thoughtfully in his britchka — plunged in meditation on the subject of whom else it might be well to visit. However, not a single magnate had been neglected, and in conversation with his hosts he had contrived to flatter each separate one. For instance to the Governor he had hinted that a stranger, on arriving in his, the Governor's province, would conceive that he had reached Paradise, so velvety were the roads. "Governors who appoint capable subordinates," had said Chichikov, "are deserving of the most ample meed of praise." Again, to the Chief of Police our hero had passed a most gratifying remark on the subject of the local gendarmery; while in his conversation with the Vice-Governor and the President of the Local Council (neither of whom had, as yet, risen above the rank of State Councillor) he had twice been guilty of the gaucherie of addressing his interlocutors with the title of "Your Excellency" — a blunder which had not failed to delight them. In the result the Governor had invited him to a reception the same evening, and certain other officials had followed suit by inviting him, one of them to dinner, a second to a tea-party, and so forth, and so forth.

Of himself, however, the traveller had spoken little; or, if he had spoken at any length, he had done so in a general sort of way and with marked modesty. Indeed, at moments of the kind his discourse had assumed something of a literary vein, in that invariably he had stated that, being a worm of no account in the world, he was deserving of no consideration at the hands of his fellows; that in his time he had undergone many strange experiences; that subsequently he had suffered much in the cause of Truth; that he had many enemies seeking his life; and that, being desirous of rest, he was now engaged in searching for a spot wherein to dwell — wherefore, having stumbled upon the town in which he now found himself, he had considered it his bounden duty to evince his respect for the chief authorities of the place. This, and no more, was all that, for the moment, the town succeeded in learning about the new arrival. Naturally he lost no time in presenting himself at the Governor's evening party. First, however, his preparations for that function occupied a space of over two hours, and necessitated an attention to his toilet of a kind not commonly seen. That is to say,

after a brief post-grandial nap he called for soap and water, and spent a considerable period in the task of scrubbing his cheeks (which, for the purpose, he supported from within with his tongue) and then of drying his full, round face, from the ears downwards, with a towel which he took from the waiter's shoulder. Twice he snorted into the waiter's countenance as he did this, and then he posted himself in front of the mirror, donned a false shirt-front, plucked out a couple of hairs which were protruding from his nose, and appeared vested in a frockcoat of bilberry-coloured check. Thereafter driving through broad streets sparsely lighted with lanterns, he arrived at the Governor's residence to find it illuminated as for a ball. Barouches with gleaming lamps, a couple of gendarmes posted before the doors, a babel of postillions' cries — nothing of a kind likely to be impressive was wanting; and, on reaching the salon, the visitor actually found himself obliged to close his eyes for a moment, so strong was the mingled sheen of lamps, candles, and feminine apparel. Everything seemed suffused with light, and everywhere, flitting and flashing, were to be seen black coats — even as on a hot summer's day flies revolve around a sugar loaf while the old housekeeper is cutting it into cubes before the open window, and the children of the house crowd around her to watch the movements of her rugged hands as those members ply the smoking pestle; and airy squadrons of flies, borne on the breeze, enter boldly, as though free of the house, and, taking advantage of the fact that the glare of the sunshine is troubling the old lady's sight, disperse themselves over broken and unbroken fragments alike, even though the lethargy induced by the opulence of summer and the rich shower of dainties to be encountered at every step has induced them to enter less for the purpose of eating than for that of showing themselves in public, of parading up and down the sugar loaf, of rubbing both their hindquarters and their fore against one another, of cleaning their bodies under the wings, of extending their forelegs over their heads and grooming themselves, and of flying out of the window again to return with other predatory squadrons. Indeed, so dazed was Chichikov that scarcely did he realise that the Governor was taking him by the arm and presenting him to his (the Governor's) lady. Yet the newly-arrived guest kept his head sufficiently to contrive to murmur some such compliment as might fittingly come from a middle-aged individual of a rank neither excessively high nor excessively low. Next, when couples had been formed for dancing and the remainder of the company found itself pressed back against the walls, Chichikov folded his arms, and carefully scrutinised the dancers. Some of the ladies were dressed well and in the fashion, while the remainder were clad in such garments as God usually bestows upon a provincial town. Also here, as elsewhere, the men belonged to two separate and distinct categories; one of which comprised

slender individuals who, flitting around the ladies, were scarcely to be distinguished from denizens of the metropolis, so carefully, so artistically, groomed were their whiskers, so presentable their oval, clean-shaven faces, so easy the manner of their dancing attendance upon their womenfolk, so glib their French conversation as they quizzed their female companions. As for the other category, it comprised individuals who, stout, or of the same build as Chichikov (that is to say, neither very portly nor very lean), backed and sidled away from the ladies, and kept peering hither and thither to see whether the Governor's footmen had set out green tables for whist. Their features were full and plump, some of them had beards, and in no case was their hair curled or waved or arranged in what the French call "the devil-may-care" style. On the contrary, their heads were either close-cropped or brushed very smooth, and their faces were round and firm. This category represented the more respectable officials of the town. In passing, I may say that in business matters fat men always prove superior to their leaner brethren; which is probably the reason why the latter are mostly to be found in the Political Police, or acting as mere ciphers whose existence is a purely hopeless, airy, trivial one. Again, stout individuals never take a back seat, but always a front one, and, wheresoever it be, they sit firmly, and with confidence, and decline to budge even though the seat crack and bend with their weight. For comeliness of exterior they care not a rap, and therefore a dress coat sits less easily on their figures than is the case with figures of leaner individuals. Yet invariably fat men amass the greater wealth. In three years' time a thin man will not have a single serf whom he has left unpledged; whereas — well, pray look at a fat man's fortunes, and what will you see? First of all a suburban villa, and then a larger suburban villa, and then a villa close to a town, and lastly a country estate which comprises every amenity! That is to say, having served both God and the State, the stout individual has won universal respect, and will end by retiring from business, reordering his mode of life, and becoming a Russian landowner — in other words, a fine gentleman who dispenses hospitality, lives in comfort and luxury, and is destined to leave his property to heirs who are purposing to squander the same on foreign travel.

That the foregoing represents pretty much the gist of Chichikov's reflections as he stood watching the company I will not attempt to deny. And of those reflections the upshot was that he decided to join himself to the stouter section of the guests, among whom he had already recognised several familiar faces — namely, those of the Public Prosecutor (a man with beetling brows over eyes which seemed to be saying with a wink, "Come into the next room, my friend, for I have something to say to you" — though, in the main, their owner was a man of grave and taciturn habit), of the Postmaster (an insignificant-looking

individual, yet a would-be wit and a philosopher), and of the President of the Local Council (a man of much amiability and good sense). These three personages greeted Chichikov as an old acquaintance, and to their salutations he responded with a sidelong, yet a sufficiently civil, bow. Also, he became acquainted with an extremely unctuous and approachable landowner named Manilov, and with a landowner of more uncouth exterior named Sobakevitch — the latter of whom began the acquaintance by treading heavily upon Chichikov's toes, and then begging his pardon. Next, Chichikov received an offer of a "cut in" at whist, and accepted the same with his usual courteous inclination of the head. Seating themselves at a green table, the party did not rise therefrom till supper time; and during that period all conversation between the players became hushed, as is the custom when men have given themselves up to a really serious pursuit. Even the Postmaster — a talkative man by nature — had no sooner taken the cards into his hands than he assumed an expression of profound thought, pursed his lips, and retained this attitude unchanged throughout the game. Only when playing a court card was it his custom to strike the table with his fist, and to exclaim (if the card happened to be a queen), "Now, old popadia !" and (if the card happened to be a king), "Now, peasant of Tambov!" To which ejaculations invariably the President of the Local Council retorted, "Ah, I have him by the ears, I have him by the ears!" And from the neighbourhood of the table other strong ejaculations relative to the play would arise, interposed with one or another of those nicknames which participants in a game are apt to apply to members of the various suits. I need hardly add that, the game over, the players fell to quarrelling, and that in the dispute our friend joined, though so artfully as to let every one see that, in spite of the fact that he was wrangling, he was doing so only in the most amicable fashion possible. Never did he say outright, "You played the wrong card at such and such a point." No, he always employed some such phrase as, "You permitted yourself to make a slip, and thus afforded me the honour of covering your deuce." Indeed, the better to keep in accord with his antagonists, he kept offering them his silver-enamelled snuff-box (at the bottom of which lay a couple of violets, placed there for the sake of their scent). In particular did the newcomer pay attention to landowners Manilov and Sobakevitch; so much so that his haste to arrive on good terms with them led to his leaving the President and the Postmaster rather in the shade. At the same time, certain questions which he put to those two landowners evinced not only curiosity, but also a certain amount of sound intelligence; for he began by asking how many peasant souls each of them possessed, and how their affairs happened at present to be situated, and then proceeded to enlighten himself also as their standing and their families. Indeed, it was not long before he had succeeded in

fairly enchanting his new friends. In particular did Manilov — a man still in his prime, and possessed of a pair of eyes which, sweet as sugar, blinked whenever he laughed — find himself unable to make enough of his enchanter. Clasping Chichikov long and fervently by the hand, he besought him to do him, Manilov, the honour of visiting his country house (which he declared to lie at a distance of not more than fifteen versts from the boundaries of the town); and in return Chichikov averred (with an exceedingly affable bow and a most sincere handshake) that he was prepared not only to fulfil his friend's behest, but also to look upon the fulfilling of it as a sacred duty. In the same way Sobakevitch said to him laconically: "And do you pay ME a visit," and then proceeded to shuffle a pair of boots of such dimensions that to find a pair to correspond with them would have been indeed difficult — more especially at the present day, when the race of epic heroes is beginning to die out in Russia.

Next day Chichikov dined and spent the evening at the house of the Chief of Police — a residence where, three hours after dinner, every one sat down to whist, and remained so seated until two o'clock in the morning. On this occasion Chichikov made the acquaintance of, among others, a landowner named Nozdrev — a dissipated little fellow of thirty who had no sooner exchanged three or four words with his new acquaintance than he began to address him in the second person singular. Yet although he did the same to the Chief of Police and the Public Prosecutor, the company had no sooner seated themselves at the card-table than both the one and the other of these functionaries started to keep a careful eye upon Nozdrev's tricks, and to watch practically every card which he played. The following evening Chichikov spent with the President of the Local Council, who received his guests — even though the latter included two ladies — in a greasy dressing-gown. Upon that followed an evening at the Vice-Governor's, a large dinner party at the house of the Commissioner of Taxes, a smaller dinner-party at the house of the Public Prosecutor (a very wealthy man), and a subsequent reception given by the Mayor. In short, not an hour of the day did Chichikov find himself forced to spend at home, and his return to the inn became necessary only for the purposes of sleeping. Somehow or other he had landed on his feet, and everywhere he figured as an experienced man of the world. No matter what the conversation chanced to be about, he always contrived to maintain his part in the same. Did the discourse turn upon horse-breeding, upon horse-breeding he happened to be peculiarly well-qualified to speak. Did the company fall to discussing well-bred dogs, at once he had remarks of the most pertinent kind possible to offer. Did the company touch upon a prosecution which had recently been carried out by the Excise Department, instantly he showed that he too was not wholly unacquainted with

legal affairs. Did an opinion chance to be expressed concerning billiards, on that subject too he was at least able to avoid committing a blunder. Did a reference occur to virtue, concerning virtue he hastened to deliver himself in a way which brought tears to every eye. Did the subject in hand happen to be the distilling of brandy — well, that was a matter concerning which he had the soundest of knowledge. Did any one happen to mention Customs officials and inspectors, from that moment he expatiated as though he too had been both a minor functionary and a major. Yet a remarkable fact was the circumstance that he always contrived to temper his omniscience with a certain readiness to give way, a certain ability so to keep a rein upon himself that never did his utterances become too loud or too soft, or transcend what was perfectly befitting. In a word, he was always a gentleman of excellent manners, and every official in the place felt pleased when he saw him enter the door. Thus the Governor gave it as his opinion that Chichikov was a man of excellent intentions; the Public Prosecutor, that he was a good man of business; the Chief of Gendarmery, that he was a man of education; the President of the Local Council, that he was a man of breeding and refinement; and the wife of the Chief of Gendarmery, that his politeness of behaviour was equalled only by his affability of bearing. Nay, even Sobakevitch — who as a rule never spoke well of ANY ONE — said to his lanky wife when, on returning late from the town, he undressed and betook himself to bed by her side: “My dear, this evening, after dining with the Chief of Police, I went on to the Governor’s, and met there, among others, a certain Paul Ivanovitch Chichikov, who is a Collegiate Councillor and a very pleasant fellow.” To this his spouse replied “Hm!” and then dealt him a hearty kick in the ribs.

Such were the flattering opinions earned by the newcomer to the town; and these opinions he retained until the time when a certain speciality of his, a certain scheme of his (the reader will learn presently what it was), plunged the majority of the townsfolk into a sea of perplexity.

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CHAPTER II

For more than two weeks the visitor lived amid a round of evening parties and dinners; wherefore he spent (as the saying goes) a very pleasant time. Finally he decided to extend his visits beyond the urban boundaries by going and calling upon landowners Manilov and Sobakevitch, seeing that he had promised on his honour to do so. Yet what really incited him to this may have been a more essential cause, a matter of greater gravity, a purpose which stood nearer to his heart, than the motive which I have just given; and of that purpose the reader will learn if only he will have the patience to read this prefatory narrative (which, lengthy though it be, may yet develop and expand in proportion as we approach the denouement with which the present work is destined to be crowned).

One evening, therefore, Selifan the coachman received orders to have the horses harnessed in good time next morning; while Petrushka received orders to remain behind, for the purpose of looking after the portmanteau and the room. In passing, the reader may care to become more fully acquainted with the two serving-men of whom I have spoken. Naturally, they were not persons of much note, but merely what folk call characters of secondary, or even of tertiary, importance. Yet, despite the fact that the springs and the thread of this romance will not DEPEND upon them, but only touch upon them, and occasionally include them, the author has a passion for circumstantiality, and, like the average Russian, such a desire for accuracy as even a German could not rival. To what the reader already knows concerning the personages in hand it is therefore necessary to add that Petrushka usually wore a cast-off brown jacket of a size too large for him, as also that he had (according to the custom of individuals of his calling) a pair of thick lips and a very prominent nose. In temperament he was taciturn rather than loquacious, and he cherished a yearning for self-education. That is to say, he loved to read books, even though their contents came alike to him whether they were books of heroic adventure or mere grammars or liturgical compendia. As I say, he perused every book with an equal amount of attention, and, had he been offered a work on chemistry, would have accepted that also. Not the words which he read, but the mere solace derived from the act of reading, was what especially pleased his mind; even though at any moment there might launch itself from the page some devil-sent word whereof he could make neither head nor tail. For the most part, his task of reading was performed in a

recumbent position in the anteroom; which circumstance ended by causing his mattress to become as ragged and as thin as a wafer. In addition to his love of poring over books, he could boast of two habits which constituted two other essential features of his character — namely, a habit of retiring to rest in his clothes (that is to say, in the brown jacket above-mentioned) and a habit of everywhere bearing with him his own peculiar atmosphere, his own peculiar smell — a smell which filled any lodging with such subtlety that he needed but to make up his bed anywhere, even in a room hitherto untenanted, and to drag thither his greatcoat and other impedimenta, for that room at once to assume an air of having been lived in during the past ten years. Nevertheless, though a fastidious, and even an irritable, man, Chichikov would merely frown when his nose caught this smell amid the freshness of the morning, and exclaim with a toss of his head: “The devil only knows what is up with you! Surely you sweat a good deal, do you not? The best thing you can do is to go and take a bath.” To this Petrushka would make no reply, but, approaching, brush in hand, the spot where his master’s coat would be pendent, or starting to arrange one and another article in order, would strive to seem wholly immersed in his work. Yet of what was he thinking as he remained thus silent? Perhaps he was saying to himself: “My master is a good fellow, but for him to keep on saying the same thing forty times over is a little wearisome.” Only God knows and sees all things; wherefore for a mere human being to know what is in the mind of a servant while his master is scolding him is wholly impossible. However, no more need be said about Petrushka. On the other hand, Coachman Selifan —

But here let me remark that I do not like engaging the reader’s attention in connection with persons of a lower class than himself; for experience has taught me that we do not willingly familiarise ourselves with the lower orders — that it is the custom of the average Russian to yearn exclusively for information concerning persons on the higher rungs of the social ladder. In fact, even a bowing acquaintance with a prince or a lord counts, in his eyes, for more than do the most intimate of relations with ordinary folk. For the same reason the author feels apprehensive on his hero’s account, seeing that he has made that hero a mere Collegiate Councillor — a mere person with whom Aulic Councillors might consort, but upon whom persons of the grade of full General would probably bestow one of those glances proper to a man who is cringing at their august feet. Worse still, such persons of the grade of General are likely to treat Chichikov with studied negligence — and to an author studied negligence spells death.

However, in spite of the distressfulness of the foregoing possibilities, it is time that I returned to my hero. After issuing, overnight, the necessary orders, he

awoke early, washed himself, rubbed himself from head to foot with a wet sponge (a performance executed only on Sundays — and the day in question happened to be a Sunday), shaved his face with such care that his cheeks issued of absolutely satin-like smoothness and polish, donned first his bilberry-coloured, spotted frockcoat, and then his bearskin overcoat, descended the staircase (attended, throughout, by the waiter) and entered his britchka. With a loud rattle the vehicle left the inn-yard, and issued into the street. A passing priest doffed his cap, and a few urchins in grimy shirts shouted, "Gentleman, please give a poor orphan a trifle!" Presently the driver noticed that a sturdy young rascal was on the point of climbing onto the splashboard; wherefore he cracked his whip and the britchka leapt forward with increased speed over the cobblestones. At last, with a feeling of relief, the travellers caught sight of macadam ahead, which promised an end both to the cobblestones and to sundry other annoyances. And, sure enough, after his head had been bumped a few more times against the boot of the conveyance, Chichikov found himself bowling over softer ground. On the town receding into the distance, the sides of the road began to be varied with the usual hillocks, fir trees, clumps of young pine, trees with old, scarred trunks, bushes of wild juniper, and so forth, Presently there came into view also strings of country villas which, with their carved supports and grey roofs (the latter looking like pendent, embroidered tablecloths), resembled, rather, bundles of old faggots. Likewise the customary peasants, dressed in sheepskin jackets, could be seen yawning on benches before their huts, while their womenfolk, fat of feature and swathed of bosom, gazed out of upper windows, and the windows below displayed, here a peering calf, and there the unsightly jaws of a pig. In short, the view was one of the familiar type. After passing the fifteenth verst-stone Chichikov suddenly recollected that, according to Manilov, fifteen versts was the exact distance between his country house and the town; but the sixteenth verst stone flew by, and the said country house was still nowhere to be seen. In fact, but for the circumstance that the travellers happened to encounter a couple of peasants, they would have come on their errand in vain. To a query as to whether the country house known as Zamanilovka was anywhere in the neighbourhood the peasants replied by doffing their caps; after which one of them who seemed to boast of a little more intelligence than his companion, and who wore a wedge-shaped beard, made answer:

"Perhaps you mean Manilovka — not ZAmanilovka?"

"Yes, yes — Manilovka."

"Manilovka, eh? Well, you must continue for another verst, and then you will see it straight before you, on the right."

“On the right?” re-echoed the coachman.

“Yes, on the right,” affirmed the peasant. “You are on the proper road for Manilovka, but ZAmanilovka — well, there is no such place. The house you mean is called Manilovka because Manilovka is its name; but no house at all is called ZAmanilovka. The house you mean stands there, on that hill, and is a stone house in which a gentleman lives, and its name is Manilovka; but ZAmanilovka does not stand hereabouts, nor ever has stood.”

So the travellers proceeded in search of Manilovka, and, after driving an additional two versts, arrived at a spot whence there branched off a by-road. Yet two, three, or four versts of the by-road had been covered before they saw the least sign of a two-storied stone mansion. Then it was that Chichikov suddenly recollected that, when a friend has invited one to visit his country house, and has said that the distance thereto is fifteen versts, the distance is sure to turn out to be at least thirty.

Not many people would have admired the situation of Manilov’s abode, for it stood on an isolated rise and was open to every wind that blew. On the slope of the rise lay closely-mown turf, while, disposed here and there, after the English fashion, were flower-beds containing clumps of lilac and yellow acacia. Also, there were a few insignificant groups of slender-leaved, pointed-tipped birch trees, with, under two of the latter, an arbour having a shabby green cupola, some blue-painted wooden supports, and the inscription “This is the Temple of Solitary Thought.” Lower down the slope lay a green-coated pond — green-coated ponds constitute a frequent spectacle in the gardens of Russian landowners; and, lastly, from the foot of the declivity there stretched a line of mouldy, log-built huts which, for some obscure reason or another, our hero set himself to count. Up to two hundred or more did he count, but nowhere could he perceive a single leaf of vegetation or a single stick of timber. The only thing to greet the eye was the logs of which the huts were constructed. Nevertheless the scene was to a certain extent enlivened by the spectacle of two peasant women who, with clothes picturesquely tucked up, were wading knee-deep in the pond and dragging behind them, with wooden handles, a ragged fishing-net, in the meshes of which two crawfish and a roach with glistening scales were entangled. The women appeared to have cause of dispute between themselves — to be rating one another about something. In the background, and to one side of the house, showed a faint, dusky blur of pinewood, and even the weather was in keeping with the surroundings, since the day was neither clear nor dull, but of the grey tint which may be noted in uniforms of garrison soldiers which have seen long service. To complete the picture, a cock, the recognised harbinger of atmospheric mutations, was present; and, in spite of the fact that a certain

connection with affairs of gallantry had led to his having had his head pecked bare by other cocks, he flapped a pair of wings — appendages as bare as two pieces of bast — and crowed loudly.

As Chichikov approached the courtyard of the mansion he caught sight of his host (clad in a green frock coat) standing on the verandah and pressing one hand to his eyes to shield them from the sun and so get a better view of the approaching carriage. In proportion as the britchka drew nearer and nearer to the verandah, the host's eyes assumed a more and more delighted expression, and his smile a broader and broader sweep.

"Paul Ivanovitch!" he exclaimed when at length Chichikov leapt from the vehicle. "Never should I have believed that you would have remembered us!"

The two friends exchanged hearty embraces, and Manilov then conducted his guest to the drawing-room. During the brief time that they are traversing the hall, the anteroom, and the dining-room, let me try to say something concerning the master of the house. But such an undertaking bristles with difficulties — it promises to be a far less easy task than the depicting of some outstanding personality which calls but for a wholesale dashing of colours upon the canvas — the colours of a pair of dark, burning eyes, a pair of dark, beetling brows, a forehead seamed with wrinkles, a black, or a fiery-red, cloak thrown backwards over the shoulder, and so forth, and so forth. Yet, so numerous are Russian serf owners that, though careful scrutiny reveals to one's sight a quantity of outre peculiarities, they are, as a class, exceedingly difficult to portray, and one needs to strain one's faculties to the utmost before it becomes possible to pick out their variously subtle, their almost invisible, features. In short, one needs, before doing this, to carry out a prolonged probing with the aid of an insight sharpened in the acute school of research.

Only God can say what Manilov's real character was. A class of men exists whom the proverb has described as "men unto themselves, neither this nor that — neither Bogdan of the city nor Selifan of the village." And to that class we had better assign also Manilov. Outwardly he was presentable enough, for his features were not wanting in amiability, but that amiability was a quality into which there entered too much of the sugary element, so that his every gesture, his every attitude, seemed to connote an excess of eagerness to curry favour and cultivate a closer acquaintance. On first speaking to the man, his ingratiating smile, his flaxen hair, and his blue eyes would lead one to say, "What a pleasant, good-tempered fellow he seems!" yet during the next moment or two one would feel inclined to say nothing at all, and, during the third moment, only to say, "The devil alone knows what he is!" And should, thereafter, one not hasten to depart, one would inevitably become overpowered with the deadly sense of

ennui which comes of the intuition that nothing in the least interesting is to be looked for, but only a series of wearisome utterances of the kind which are apt to fall from the lips of a man whose hobby has once been touched upon. For every man HAS his hobby. One man's may be sporting dogs; another man's may be that of believing himself to be a lover of music, and able to sound the art to its inmost depths; another's may be that of posing as a connoisseur of recherche cookery; another's may be that of aspiring to play roles of a kind higher than nature has assigned him; another's (though this is a more limited ambition) may be that of getting drunk, and of dreaming that he is edifying both his friends, his acquaintances, and people with whom he has no connection at all by walking arm-in-arm with an Imperial aide-de-camp; another's may be that of possessing a hand able to chip corners off aces and deuces of diamonds; another's may be that of yearning to set things straight — in other words, to approximate his personality to that of a stationmaster or a director of posts. In short, almost every man has his hobby or his leaning; yet Manilov had none such, for at home he spoke little, and spent the greater part of his time in meditation — though God only knows what that meditation comprised! Nor can it be said that he took much interest in the management of his estate, for he never rode into the country, and the estate practically managed itself. Whenever the bailiff said to him, "It might be well to have such-and-such a thing done," he would reply, "Yes, that is not a bad idea," and then go on smoking his pipe — a habit which he had acquired during his service in the army, where he had been looked upon as an officer of modesty, delicacy, and refinement. "Yes, it is NOT a bad idea," he would repeat. Again, whenever a peasant approached him and, rubbing the back of his neck, said "Barin, may I have leave to go and work for myself, in order that I may earn my obrok ?" he would snap out, with pipe in mouth as usual, "Yes, go!" and never trouble his head as to whether the peasant's real object might not be to go and get drunk. True, at intervals he would say, while gazing from the verandah to the courtyard, and from the courtyard to the pond, that it would be indeed splendid if a carriage drive could suddenly materialise, and the pond as suddenly become spanned with a stone bridge, and little shops as suddenly arise whence pedlars could dispense the petty merchandise of the kind which peasantry most need. And at such moments his eyes would grow winning, and his features assume an expression of intense satisfaction. Yet never did these projects pass beyond the stage of debate. Likewise there lay in his study a book with the fourteenth page permanently turned down. It was a book which he had been reading for the past two years! In general, something seemed to be wanting in the establishment. For instance, although the drawing-room was filled with beautiful furniture, and upholstered in some fine silken material which clearly

had cost no inconsiderable sum, two of the chairs lacked any covering but bast, and for some years past the master had been accustomed to warn his guests with the words, “Do not sit upon these chairs; they are not yet ready for use.” Another room contained no furniture at all, although, a few days after the marriage, it had been said: “My dear, to-morrow let us set about procuring at least some TEMPORARY furniture for this room.” Also, every evening would see placed upon the drawing-room table a fine bronze candelabrum, a statuette representative of the Three Graces, a tray inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and a rickety, lop-sided copper invalide. Yet of the fact that all four articles were thickly coated with grease neither the master of the house nor the mistress nor the servants seemed to entertain the least suspicion. At the same time, Manilov and his wife were quite satisfied with each other. More than eight years had elapsed since their marriage, yet one of them was for ever offering his or her partner a piece of apple or a bonbon or a nut, while murmuring some tender something which voiced a whole-hearted affection. “Open your mouth, dearest” — thus ran the formula — ”and let me pop into it this titbit.” You may be sure that on such occasions the “dearest mouth” parted its lips most graciously! For their mutual birthdays the pair always contrived some “surprise present” in the shape of a glass receptacle for tooth-powder, or what not; and as they sat together on the sofa he would suddenly, and for some unknown reason, lay aside his pipe, and she her work (if at the moment she happened to be holding it in her hands) and husband and wife would imprint upon one another’s cheeks such a prolonged and languishing kiss that during its continuance you could have smoked a small cigar. In short, they were what is known as “a very happy couple.” Yet it may be remarked that a household requires other pursuits to be engaged in than lengthy embracings and the preparing of cunning “surprises.” Yes, many a function calls for fulfilment. For instance, why should it be thought foolish or low to superintend the kitchen? Why should care not be taken that the storeroom never lacks supplies? Why should a housekeeper be allowed to thieve? Why should slovenly and drunken servants exist? Why should a domestic staff be suffered in indulge in bouts of unconscionable debauchery during its leisure time? Yet none of these things were thought worthy of consideration by Manilov’s wife, for she had been gently brought up, and gentle nurture, as we all know, is to be acquired only in boarding schools, and boarding schools, as we know, hold the three principal subjects which constitute the basis of human virtue to be the French language (a thing indispensable to the happiness of married life), piano-playing (a thing wherewith to beguile a husband’s leisure moments), and that particular department of housewifery which is comprised in the knitting of purses and other “surprises.” Nevertheless

changes and improvements have begun to take place, since things now are governed more by the personal inclinations and idiosyncracies of the keepers of such establishments. For instance, in some seminaries the regimen places piano-playing first, and the French language second, and then the above department of housewifery; while in other seminaries the knitting of “surprises” heads the list, and then the French language, and then the playing of pianos — so diverse are the systems in force! None the less, I may remark that Madame Manilov —

But let me confess that I always shrink from saying too much about ladies. Moreover, it is time that we returned to our heroes, who, during the past few minutes, have been standing in front of the drawing-room door, and engaged in urging one another to enter first.

“Pray be so good as not to inconvenience yourself on my account,” said Chichikov. “*I* will follow YOU.”

“No, Paul Ivanovitch — no! You are my guest.” And Manilov pointed towards the doorway.

“Make no difficulty about it, I pray,” urged Chichikov. “I beg of you to make no difficulty about it, but to pass into the room.”

“Pardon me, I will not. Never could I allow so distinguished and so welcome a guest as yourself to take second place.”

“Why call me ‘distinguished,’ my dear sir? I beg of you to proceed.”

“Nay; be YOU pleased to do so.”

“And why?”

“For the reason which I have stated.” And Manilov smiled his very pleasantest smile.

Finally the pair entered simultaneously and sideways; with the result that they jostled one another not a little in the process.

“Allow me to present to you my wife,” continued Manilov. “My dear — Paul Ivanovitch.”

Upon that Chichikov caught sight of a lady whom hitherto he had overlooked, but who, with Manilov, was now bowing to him in the doorway. Not wholly of unpleasing exterior, she was dressed in a well-fitting, high-necked morning dress of pale-coloured silk; and as the visitor entered the room her small white hands threw something upon the table and clutched her embroidered skirt before rising from the sofa where she had been seated. Not without a sense of pleasure did Chichikov take her hand as, lisping a little, she declared that she and her husband were equally gratified by his coming, and that, of late, not a day had passed without her husband recalling him to mind.

“Yes,” affirmed Manilov; “and every day SHE has said to ME: ‘Why does not your friend put in an appearance?’ ‘Wait a little dearest,’ I have always replied.

‘‘Twill not be long now before he comes.’ And you HAVE come, you HAVE honoured us with a visit, you HAVE bestowed upon us a treat — a treat destined to convert this day into a gala day, a true birthday of the heart.”

The intimation that matters had reached the point of the occasion being destined to constitute a “true birthday of the heart” caused Chichikov to become a little confused; wherefore he made modest reply that, as a matter of fact, he was neither of distinguished origin nor distinguished rank.

“Ah, you ARE so,” interrupted Manilov with his fixed and engaging smile. “You are all that, and more.”

“How like you our town?” queried Madame. “Have you spent an agreeable time in it?”

“Very,” replied Chichikov. “The town is an exceedingly nice one, and I have greatly enjoyed its hospitable society.”

“And what do you think of our Governor?”

“Yes; IS he not a most engaging and dignified personage?” added Manilov.

“He is all that,” assented Chichikov. “Indeed, he is a man worthy of the greatest respect. And how thoroughly he performs his duty according to his lights! Would that we had more like him!”

“And the tactfulness with which he greets every one!” added Manilov, smiling, and half-closing his eyes, like a cat which is being tickled behind the ears.

“Quite so,” assented Chichikov. “He is a man of the most eminent civility and approachableness. And what an artist! Never should I have thought he could have worked the marvellous household samplers which he has done! Some specimens of his needlework which he showed me could not well have been surpassed by any lady in the land!”

“And the Vice-Governor, too — he is a nice man, is he not?” inquired Manilov with renewed blinkings of the eyes.

“Who? The Vice-Governor? Yes, a most worthy fellow!” replied Chichikov.

“And what of the Chief of Police? Is it not a fact that he too is in the highest degree agreeable?”

“Very agreeable indeed. And what a clever, well-read individual! With him and the Public Prosecutor and the President of the Local Council I played whist until the cocks uttered their last morning crow. He is a most excellent fellow.”

“And what of his wife?” queried Madame Manilov. “Is she not a most gracious personality?”

“One of the best among my limited acquaintance,” agreed Chichikov.

Nor were the President of the Local Council and the Postmaster overlooked; until the company had run through the whole list of urban officials. And in every

case those officials appeared to be persons of the highest possible merit.

“Do you devote your time entirely to your estate?” asked Chichikov, in his turn.

“Well, most of it,” replied Manilov; “though also we pay occasional visits to the town, in order that we may mingle with a little well-bred society. One grows a trifle rusty if one lives for ever in retirement.”

“Quite so,” agreed Chichikov.

“Yes, quite so,” capped Manilov. “At the same time, it would be a different matter if the neighbourhood were a GOOD one — if, for example, one had a friend with whom one could discuss manners and polite deportment, or engage in some branch of science, and so stimulate one’s wits. For that sort of thing gives one’s intellect an airing. It, it — ” At a loss for further words, he ended by remarking that his feelings were apt to carry him away; after which he continued with a gesture: “What I mean is that, were that sort of thing possible, I, for one, could find the country and an isolated life possessed of great attractions. But, as matters stand, such a thing is NOT possible. All that I can manage to do is, occasionally, to read a little of A Son of the Fatherland.”

With these sentiments Chichikov expressed entire agreement: adding that nothing could be more delightful than to lead a solitary life in which there should be comprised only the sweet contemplation of nature and the intermittent perusal of a book.

“Nay, but even THAT were worth nothing had not one a friend with whom to share one’s life,” remarked Manilov.

“True, true,” agreed Chichikov. “Without a friend, what are all the treasures in the world? ‘Possess not money,’ a wise man has said, ‘but rather good friends to whom to turn in case of need.’“

“Yes, Paul Ivanovitch,” said Manilov with a glance not merely sweet, but positively luscious — a glance akin to the mixture which even clever physicians have to render palatable before they can induce a hesitant patient to take it. “Consequently you may imagine what happiness — what PERFECT happiness, so to speak — the present occasion has brought me, seeing that I am permitted to converse with you and to enjoy your conversation.”

“But WHAT of my conversation?” replied Chichikov. “I am an insignificant individual, and, beyond that, nothing.”

“Oh, Paul Ivanovitch!” cried the other. “Permit me to be frank, and to say that I would give half my property to possess even a PORTION of the talents which you possess.”

“On the contrary, I should consider it the highest honour in the world if — ”

The lengths to which this mutual outpouring of soul would have proceeded

had not a servant entered to announce luncheon must remain a mystery.

“I humbly invite you to join us at table,” said Manilov. “Also, you will pardon us for the fact that we cannot provide a banquet such as is to be obtained in our metropolitan cities? We partake of simple fare, according to Russian custom — we confine ourselves to shtchi , but we do so with a single heart. Come, I humbly beg of you.”

After another contest for the honour of yielding precedence, Chichikov succeeded in making his way (in zigzag fashion) to the dining-room, where they found awaiting them a couple of youngsters. These were Manilov’s sons, and boys of the age which admits of their presence at table, but necessitates the continued use of high chairs. Beside them was their tutor, who bowed politely and smiled; after which the hostess took her seat before her soup plate, and the guest of honour found himself esconsed between her and the master of the house, while the servant tied up the boys’ necks in bibs.

“What charming children!” said Chichikov as he gazed at the pair. “And how old are they?”

“The eldest is eight,” replied Manilov, “and the younger one attained the age of six yesterday.”

“Themistocleus,” went on the father, turning to his first-born, who was engaged in striving to free his chin from the bib with which the footman had encircled it. On hearing this distinctly Greek name (to which, for some unknown reason, Manilov always appended the termination “eus”), Chichikov raised his eyebrows a little, but hastened, the next moment, to restore his face to a more befitting expression.

“Themistocleus,” repeated the father, “tell me which is the finest city in France.”

Upon this the tutor concentrated his attention upon Themistocleus, and appeared to be trying hard to catch his eye. Only when Themistocleus had muttered “Paris” did the preceptor grow calmer, and nod his head.

“And which is the finest city in Russia?” continued Manilov.

Again the tutor’s attitude became wholly one of concentration.

“St. Petersburg,” replied Themistocleus.

“And what other city?”

“Moscow,” responded the boy.

“Clever little dear!” burst out Chichikov, turning with an air of surprise to the father. “Indeed, I feel bound to say that the child evinces the greatest possible potentialities.”

“You do not know him fully,” replied the delighted Manilov. “The amount of sharpness which he possesses is extraordinary. Our younger one, Alkid, is not so

quick; whereas his brother — well, no matter what he may happen upon (whether upon a cowbug or upon a water-beetle or upon anything else), his little eyes begin jumping out of his head, and he runs to catch the thing, and to inspect it. For HIM I am reserving a diplomatic post. Themistocleus," added the father, again turning to his son, "do you wish to become an ambassador?"

"Yes, I do," replied Themistocleus, chewing a piece of bread and wagging his head from side to side.

At this moment the lacquey who had been standing behind the future ambassador wiped the latter's nose; and well it was that he did so, since otherwise an inelegant and superfluous drop would have been added to the soup. After that the conversation turned upon the joys of a quiet life — though occasionally it was interrupted by remarks from the hostess on the subject of acting and actors. Meanwhile the tutor kept his eyes fixed upon the speakers' faces; and whenever he noticed that they were on the point of laughing he at once opened his mouth, and laughed with enthusiasm. Probably he was a man of grateful heart who wished to repay his employers for the good treatment which he had received. Once, however, his features assumed a look of grimness as, fixing his eyes upon his vis-a-vis, the boys, he tapped sternly upon the table. This happened at a juncture when Themistocleus had bitten Alkid on the ear, and the said Alkid, with frowning eyes and open mouth, was preparing himself to sob in piteous fashion; until, recognising that for such a proceeding he might possibly be deprived of his plate, he hastened to restore his mouth to its original expression, and fell tearfully to gnawing a mutton bone — the grease from which had soon covered his cheeks.

Every now and again the hostess would turn to Chichikov with the words, "You are eating nothing — you have indeed taken little;" but invariably her guest replied: "Thank you, I have had more than enough. A pleasant conversation is worth all the dishes in the world."

At length the company rose from table. Manilov was in high spirits, and, laying his hand upon his guest's shoulder, was on the point of conducting him to the drawing-room, when suddenly Chichikov intimated to him, with a meaning look, that he wished to speak to him on a very important matter.

"That being so," said Manilov, "allow me to invite you into my study." And he led the way to a small room which faced the blue of the forest. "This is my sanctum," he added.

"What a pleasant apartment!" remarked Chichikov as he eyed it carefully. And, indeed, the room did not lack a certain attractiveness. The walls were painted a sort of blueish-grey colour, and the furniture consisted of four chairs, a settee, and a table — the latter of which bore a few sheets of writing-paper and

the book of which I have before had occasion to speak. But the most prominent feature of the room was tobacco, which appeared in many different guises — in packets, in a tobacco jar, and in a loose heap strewn about the table. Likewise, both window sills were studded with little heaps of ash, arranged, not without artifice, in rows of more or less tidiness. Clearly smoking afforded the master of the house a frequent means of passing the time.

"Permit me to offer you a seat on this settee," said Manilov. "Here you will be quieter than you would be in the drawing-room."

"But I should prefer to sit upon this chair."

"I cannot allow that," objected the smiling Manilov. "The settee is specially reserved for my guests. Whether you choose or no, upon it you MUST sit."

Accordingly Chichikov obeyed.

"And also let me hand you a pipe."

"No, I never smoke," answered Chichikov civilly, and with an assumed air of regret.

"And why?" inquired Manilov — equally civilly, but with a regret that was wholly genuine.

"Because I fear that I have never quite formed the habit, owing to my having heard that a pipe exercises a desiccating effect upon the system."

"Then allow me to tell you that that is mere prejudice. Nay, I would even go so far as to say that to smoke a pipe is a healthier practice than to take snuff. Among its members our regiment numbered a lieutenant — a most excellent, well-educated fellow — who was simply INCAPABLE of removing his pipe from his mouth, whether at table or (pardon me) in other places. He is now forty, yet no man could enjoy better health than he has always done."

Chichikov replied that such cases were common, since nature comprised many things which even the finest intellect could not compass.

"But allow me to put to you a question," he went on in a tone in which there was a strange — or, at all events, RATHER a strange — note. For some unknown reason, also, he glanced over his shoulder. For some equally unknown reason, Manilov glanced over HIS.

"How long is it," inquired the guest, "since you last rendered a census return?"

"Oh, a long, long time. In fact, I cannot remember when it was."

"And since then have many of your serfs died?"

"I do not know. To ascertain that I should need to ask my bailiff. Footman, go and call the bailiff. I think he will be at home to-day."

Before long the bailiff made his appearance. He was a man of under forty, clean-shaven, clad in a smock, and evidently used to a quiet life, seeing that his face was of that puffy fullness, and the skin encircling his slit-like eyes was of

that sallow tint, which shows that the owner of those features is well acquainted with a feather bed. In a trice it could be seen that he had played his part in life as all such bailiffs do — that, originally a young serf of elementary education, he had married some Agashka of a housekeeper or a mistress's favourite, and then himself become housekeeper, and, subsequently, bailiff; after which he had proceeded according to the rules of his tribe — that is to say, he had consorted with and stood in with the more well-to-do serfs on the estate, and added the poorer ones to the list of forced payers of obrok, while himself leaving his bed at nine o'clock in the morning, and, when the samovar had been brought, drinking his tea at leisure.

"Look here, my good man," said Manilov. "How many of our serfs have died since the last census revision?"

"How many of them have died? Why, a great many." The bailiff hiccoughed, and slapped his mouth lightly after doing so.

"Yes, I imagined that to be the case," corroborated Manilov. "In fact, a VERY great many serfs have died." He turned to Chichikov and repeated the words.

"How many, for instance?" asked Chichikov.

"Yes; how many?" re-echoed Manilov.

"HOW many?" re-echoed the bailiff. "Well, no one knows the exact number, for no one has kept any account."

"Quite so," remarked Manilov. "I supposed the death-rate to have been high, but was ignorant of its precise extent."

"Then would you be so good as to have it computed for me?" said Chichikov. "And also to have a detailed list of the deaths made out?"

"Yes, I will — a detailed list," agreed Manilov.

"Very well."

The bailiff departed.

"For what purpose do you want it?" inquired Manilov when the bailiff had gone.

The question seemed to embarrass the guest, for in Chichikov's face there dawned a sort of tense expression, and it reddened as though its owner were striving to express something not easy to put into words. True enough, Manilov was now destined to hear such strange and unexpected things as never before had greeted human ears.

"You ask me," said Chichikov, "for what purpose I want the list. Well, my purpose in wanting it is this — that I desire to purchase a few peasants." And he broke off in a gulp.

"But may I ask HOW you desire to purchase those peasants?" asked Manilov. "With land, or merely as souls for transferment — that is to say, by themselves,

and without any land?”

“I want the peasants themselves only,” replied Chichikov. “And I want dead ones at that.”

“What? — Excuse me, but I am a trifle deaf. Really, your words sound most strange!”

“All that I am proposing to do,” replied Chichikov, “is to purchase the dead peasants who, at the last census, were returned by you as alive.”

Manilov dropped his pipe on the floor, and sat gaping. Yes, the two friends who had just been discussing the joys of camaraderie sat staring at one another like the portraits which, of old, used to hang on opposite sides of a mirror. At length Manilov picked up his pipe, and, while doing so, glanced covertly at Chichikov to see whether there was any trace of a smile to be detected on his lips — whether, in short, he was joking. But nothing of the sort could be discerned. On the contrary, Chichikov’s face looked graver than usual. Next, Manilov wondered whether, for some unknown reason, his guest had lost his wits; wherefore he spent some time in gazing at him with anxious intentness. But the guest’s eyes seemed clear — they contained no spark of the wild, restless fire which is apt to wander in the eyes of madmen. All was as it should be. Consequently, in spite of Manilov’s cogitations, he could think of nothing better to do than to sit letting a stream of tobacco smoke escape from his mouth.

“So,” continued Chichikov, “what I desire to know is whether you are willing to hand over to me — to resign — these actually non-living, but legally living, peasants; or whether you have any better proposal to make?”

Manilov felt too confused and confounded to do aught but continue staring at his interlocutor.

“I think that you are disturbing yourself unnecessarily,” was Chichikov’s next remark.

“I? Oh no! Not at all!” stammered Manilov. “Only — pardon me — I do not quite comprehend you. You see, never has it fallen to my lot to acquire the brilliant polish which is, so to speak, manifest in your every movement. Nor have I ever been able to attain the art of expressing myself well. Consequently, although there is a possibility that in the — er — utterances which have just fallen from your lips there may lie something else concealed, it may equally be that — er — you have been pleased so to express yourself for the sake of the beauty of the terms wherein that expression found shape?”

“Oh, no,” asserted Chichikov. “I mean what I say and no more. My reference to such of your pleasant souls as are dead was intended to be taken literally.”

Manilov still felt at a loss — though he was conscious that he MUST do something, he MUST propound some question. But what question? The devil

alone knew! In the end he merely expelled some more tobacco smoke — this time from his nostrils as well as from his mouth.

"So," went on Chichikov, "if no obstacle stands in the way, we might as well proceed to the completion of the purchase."

"What? Of the purchase of the dead souls?"

"Of the 'dead' souls? Oh dear no! Let us write them down as LIVING ones, seeing that that is how they figure in the census returns. Never do I permit myself to step outside the civil law, great though has been the harm which that rule has wrought me in my career. In my eyes an obligation is a sacred thing. In the presence of the law I am dumb."

These last words reassured Manilov not a little: yet still the meaning of the affair remained to him a mystery. By way of answer, he fell to sucking at his pipe with such vehemence that at length the pipe began to gurgle like a bassoon. It was as though he had been seeking of it inspiration in the present unheard-of juncture. But the pipe only gurgled, et praeterea nihil.

"Perhaps you feel doubtful about the proposal?" said Chichikov.

"Not at all," replied Manilov. "But you will, I know, excuse me if I say (and I say it out of no spirit of prejudice, nor yet as criticising yourself in any way) — you will, I know, excuse me if I say that possibly this — er — this, er, SCHEME of yours, this — er — TRANSACTION of yours, may fail altogether to accord with the Civil Statutes and Provisions of the Realm?"

And Manilov, with a slight gesture of the head, looked meaningly into Chichikov's face, while displaying in his every feature, including his closely-compressed lips, such an expression of profundity as never before was seen on any human countenance — unless on that of some particularly sapient Minister of State who is debating some particularly abstruse problem.

Nevertheless Chichikov rejoined that the kind of scheme or transaction which he had adumbrated in no way clashed with the Civil Statutes and Provisions of Russia; to which he added that the Treasury would even BENEFIT by the enterprise, seeing it would draw therefrom the usual legal percentage.

"What, then, do you propose?" asked Manilov.

"I propose only what is above-board, and nothing else."

"Then, that being so, it is another matter, and I have nothing to urge against it," said Manilov, apparently reassured to the full.

"Very well," remarked Chichikov. "Then we need only to agree as to the price."

"As to the price?" began Manilov, and then stopped. Presently he went on: "Surely you cannot suppose me capable of taking money for souls which, in one sense at least, have completed their existence? Seeing that this fantastic whim of

yours (if I may so call it?) has seized upon you to the extent that it has, I, on my side, shall be ready to surrender to you those souls UNCONDITIONALLY, and to charge myself with the whole expenses of the sale."

I should be greatly to blame if I were to omit that, as soon as Manilov had pronounced these words, the face of his guest became replete with satisfaction. Indeed, grave and prudent a man though Chichikov was, he had much ado to refrain from executing a leap that would have done credit to a goat (an animal which, as we all know, finds itself moved to such exertions only during moments of the most ecstatic joy). Nevertheless the guest did at least execute such a convulsive shuffle that the material with which the cushions of the chair were covered came apart, and Manilov gazed at him with some misgiving. Finally Chichikov's gratitude led him to plunge into a stream of acknowledgement of a vehemence which caused his host to grow confused, to blush, to shake his head in deprecation, and to end by declaring that the concession was nothing, and that, his one desire being to manifest the dictates of his heart and the psychic magnetism which his friend exercised, he, in short, looked upon the dead souls as so much worthless rubbish.

"Not at all," replied Chichikov, pressing his hand; after which he heaved a profound sigh. Indeed, he seemed in the right mood for outpourings of the heart, for he continued — not without a ring of emotion in his tone: "If you but knew the service which you have rendered to an apparently insignificant individual who is devoid both of family and kindred! For what have I not suffered in my time — I, a drifting barque amid the tempestuous billows of life? What harryings, what persecutions, have I not known? Of what grief have I not tasted? And why? Simply because I have ever kept the truth in view, because ever I have preserved inviolate an unsullied conscience, because ever I have stretched out a helping hand to the defenceless widow and the hapless orphan!" After which outpouring Chichikov pulled out his handkerchief, and wiped away a brimming tear.

Manilov's heart was moved to the core. Again and again did the two friends press one another's hands in silence as they gazed into one another's tear-filled eyes. Indeed, Manilov COULD not let go our hero's hand, but clasped it with such warmth that the hero in question began to feel himself at a loss how best to wrench it free: until, quietly withdrawing it, he observed that to have the purchase completed as speedily as possible would not be a bad thing; wherefore he himself would at once return to the town to arrange matters. Taking up his hat, therefore, he rose to make his adieus.

"What? Are you departing already?" said Manilov, suddenly recovering himself, and experiencing a sense of misgiving. At that moment his wife sailed

into the room.

“Is Paul Ivanovitch leaving us so soon, dearest Lizanka?” she said with an air of regret.

“Yes. Surely it must be that we have wearied him?” her spouse replied.

“By no means,” asserted Chichikov, pressing his hand to his heart. “In this breast, madam, will abide for ever the pleasant memory of the time which I have spent with you. Believe me, I could conceive of no greater blessing than to reside, if not under the same roof as yourselves, at all events in your immediate neighbourhood.”

“Indeed?” exclaimed Manilov, greatly pleased with the idea. “How splendid it would be if you DID come to reside under our roof, so that we could recline under an elm tree together, and talk philosophy, and delve to the very root of things!”

“Yes, it WOULD be a paradisaical existence!” agreed Chichikov with a sigh. Nevertheless he shook hands with Madame. “Farewell, sudarina,” he said. “And farewell to YOU, my esteemed host. Do not forget what I have requested you to do.”

“Rest assured that I will not,” responded Manilov. “Only for a couple of days will you and I be parted from one another.”

With that the party moved into the drawing-room.

“Farewell, dearest children,” Chichikov went on as he caught sight of Alkid and Themistocleus, who were playing with a wooden hussar which lacked both a nose and one arm. “Farewell, dearest pets. Pardon me for having brought you no presents, but, to tell you the truth, I was not, until my visit, aware of your existence. However, now that I shall be coming again, I will not fail to bring you gifts. Themistocleus, to you I will bring a sword. You would like that, would you not?”

“I should,” replied Themistocleus.

“And to you, Alkid, I will bring a drum. That would suit you, would it not?” And he bowed in Alkid’s direction.

“Zeth — a drum,” lisped the boy, hanging his head.

“Good! Then a drum it shall be — SUCH a beautiful drum! What a tur-r-r-ru-ing and a tra-ta-ta-ta-ing you will be able to kick up! Farewell, my darling.” And, kissing the boy’s head, he turned to Manilov and Madame with the slight smile which one assumes before assuring parents of the guileless merits of their offspring.

“But you had better stay, Paul Ivanovitch,” said the father as the trio stepped out on to the verandah. “See how the clouds are gathering!”

“They are only small ones,” replied Chichikov.

“And you know your way to Sobakevitch’s?”

“No, I do not, and should be glad if you would direct me.”

“If you like I will tell your coachman.” And in very civil fashion Manilov did so, even going so far as to address the man in the second person plural. On hearing that he was to pass two turnings, and then to take a third, Selifan remarked, “We shall get there all right, sir,” and Chichikov departed amid a profound salvo of salutations and wavings of handkerchiefs on the part of his host and hostess, who raised themselves on tiptoe in their enthusiasm.

For a long while Manilov stood following the departing britchka with his eyes. In fact, he continued to smoke his pipe and gaze after the vehicle even when it had become lost to view. Then he re-entered the drawing-room, seated himself upon a chair, and surrendered his mind to the thought that he had shown his guest most excellent entertainment. Next, his mind passed imperceptibly to other matters, until at last it lost itself God only knows where. He thought of the amenities of a life, of friendship, and of how nice it would be to live with a comrade on, say, the bank of some river, and to span the river with a bridge of his own, and to build an enormous mansion with a facade lofty enough even to afford a view to Moscow. On that facade he and his wife and friend would drink afternoon tea in the open air, and discuss interesting subjects; after which, in a fine carriage, they would drive to some reunion or other, where with their pleasant manners they would so charm the company that the Imperial Government, on learning of their merits, would raise the pair to the grade of General or God knows what — that is to say, to heights whereof even Manilov himself could form no idea. Then suddenly Chichikov’s extraordinary request interrupted the dreamer’s reflections, and he found his brain powerless to digest it, seeing that, turn and turn the matter about as he might, he could not properly explain its bearing. Smoking his pipe, he sat where he was until supper time.

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CHAPTER III

Meanwhile, Chichikov, seated in his britchka and bowling along the turnpike, was feeling greatly pleased with himself. From the preceding chapter the reader will have gathered the principal subject of his bent and inclinations: wherefore it is no matter for wonder that his body and his soul had ended by becoming wholly immersed therein. To all appearances the thoughts, the calculations, and the projects which were now reflected in his face partook of a pleasant nature, since momentarily they kept leaving behind them a satisfied smile. Indeed, so engrossed was he that he never noticed that his coachman, elated with the hospitality of Manilov's domestics, was making remarks of a didactic nature to the off horse of the troika , a skewbald. This skewbald was a knowing animal, and made only a show of pulling; whereas its comrades, the middle horse (a bay, and known as the Assessor, owing to his having been acquired from a gentleman of that rank) and the near horse (a roan), would do their work gallantly, and even evince in their eyes the pleasure which they derived from their exertions.

"Ah, you rascal, you rascal! I'll get the better of you!" ejaculated Selifan as he sat up and gave the lazy one a cut with his whip. "YOU know your business all right, you German pantaloon! The bay is a good fellow, and does his duty, and I will give him a bit over his feed, for he is a horse to be respected; and the Assessor too is a good horse. But what are YOU shaking your ears for? You are a fool, so just mind when you're spoken to. 'Tis good advice I'm giving you, you blockhead. Ah! You CAN travel when you like." And he gave the animal another cut, and then shouted to the trio, "Gee up, my beauties!" and drew his whip gently across the backs of the skewbald's comrades — not as a punishment, but as a sign of his approval. That done, he addressed himself to the skewbald again.

"Do you think," he cried, "that I don't see what you are doing? You can behave quite decently when you like, and make a man respect you."

With that he fell to recalling certain reminiscences.

"They were NICE folk, those folk at the gentleman's yonder," he mused. "I DO love a chat with a man when he is a good sort. With a man of that kind I am always hail-fellow-well-met, and glad to drink a glass of tea with him, or to eat a biscuit. One CAN'T help respecting a decent fellow. For instance, this gentleman of mine — why, every one looks up to him, for he has been in the Government's service, and is a Collegiate Councillor."

Thus soliloquising, he passed to more remote abstractions; until, had Chichikov been listening, he would have learnt a number of interesting details concerning himself. However, his thoughts were wholly occupied with his own subject, so much so that not until a loud clap of thunder awoke him from his reverie did he glance around him. The sky was completely covered with clouds, and the dusty turnpike beginning to be sprinkled with drops of rain. At length a second and a nearer and a louder peal resounded, and the rain descended as from a bucket. Falling slantwise, it beat upon one side of the basketwork of the tilt until the splashings began to spurt into his face, and he found himself forced to draw the curtains (fitted with circular openings through which to obtain a glimpse of the wayside view), and to shout to Selifan to quicken his pace. Upon that the coachman, interrupted in the middle of his harangue, bethought him that no time was to be lost; wherefore, extracting from under the box-seat a piece of old blanket, he covered over his sleeves, resumed the reins, and cheered on his threefold team (which, it may be said, had so completely succumbed to the influence of the pleasant lassitude induced by Selifan's discourse that it had taken to scarcely placing one leg before the other). Unfortunately, Selifan could not clearly remember whether two turnings had been passed or three. Indeed, on collecting his faculties, and dimly recalling the lie of the road, he became filled with a shrewd suspicion that A VERY LARGE NUMBER of turnings had been passed. But since, at moments which call for a hasty decision, a Russian is quick to discover what may conceivably be the best course to take, our coachman put away from him all ulterior reasoning, and, turning to the right at the next cross-road, shouted, "Hi, my beauties!" and set off at a gallop. Never for a moment did he stop to think whither the road might lead him!

It was long before the clouds had discharged their burden, and, meanwhile, the dust on the road became kneaded into mire, and the horses' task of pulling the britchka heavier and heavier. Also, Chichikov had taken alarm at his continued failure to catch sight of Sobakevitch's country house. According to his calculations, it ought to have been reached long ago. He gazed about him on every side, but the darkness was too dense for the eye to pierce.

"Selifan!" he exclaimed, leaning forward in the britchka.

"What is it, barin?" replied the coachman.

"Can you see the country house anywhere?"

"No, barin." After which, with a flourish of the whip, the man broke into a sort of endless, drawling song. In that song everything had a place. By "everything" I mean both the various encouraging and stimulating cries with which Russian folk urge on their horses, and a random, unpremeditated selection of adjectives.

Meanwhile Chichikov began to notice that the britchka was swaying violently, and dealing him occasional bumps. Consequently he suspected that it had left the road and was being dragged over a ploughed field. Upon Selifan's mind there appeared to have dawned a similar inkling, for he had ceased to hold forth.

"You rascal, what road are you following?" inquired Chichikov.

"I don't know," retorted the coachman. "What can a man do at a time of night when the darkness won't let him even see his whip?" And as Selifan spoke the vehicle tilted to an angle which left Chichikov no choice but to hang on with hands and teeth. At length he realised the fact that Selifan was drunk.

"Stop, stop, or you will upset us!" he shouted to the fellow.

"No, no, barin," replied Selifan. "HOW could I upset you? To upset people is wrong. I know that very well, and should never dream of such conduct."

Here he started to turn the vehicle round a little — and kept on doing so until the britchka capsized on to its side, and Chichikov landed in the mud on his hands and knees. Fortunately Selifan succeeded in stopping the horses, although they would have stopped of themselves, seeing that they were utterly worn out. This unforeseen catastrophe evidently astonished their driver. Slipping from the box, he stood resting his hands against the side of the britchka, while Chichikov tumbled and floundered about in the mud, in a vain endeavour to wriggle clear of the stuff.

"Ah, you!" said Selifan meditatively to the britchka. "To think of upsetting us like this!"

"You are as drunk as a lord!" exclaimed Chichikov.

"No, no, barin. Drunk, indeed? Why, I know my manners too well. A word or two with a friend — that is all that I have taken. Any one may talk with a decent man when he meets him. There is nothing wrong in that. Also, we had a snack together. There is nothing wrong in a snack — especially a snack with a decent man."

"What did I say to you when last you got drunk?" asked Chichikov. "Have you forgotten what I said then?"

"No, no, barin. HOW could I forget it? I know what is what, and know that it is not right to get drunk. All that I have been having is a word or two with a decent man, for the reason that — "

"Well, if I lay the whip about you, you'll know then how to talk to a decent fellow, I'll warrant!"

"As you please, barin," replied the complacent Selifan. "Should you whip me, you will whip me, and I shall have nothing to complain of. Why should you not whip me if I deserve it? 'Tis for you to do as you like. Whippings are necessary sometimes, for a peasant often plays the fool, and discipline ought to be

maintained. If I have deserved it, beat me. Why should you not?”

This reasoning seemed, at the moment, irrefutable, and Chichikov said nothing more. Fortunately fate had decided to take pity on the pair, for from afar their ears caught the barking of a dog. Plucking up courage, Chichikov gave orders for the britchka to be righted, and the horses to be urged forward; and since a Russian driver has at least this merit, that, owing to a keen sense of smell being able to take the place of eyesight, he can, if necessary, drive at random and yet reach a destination of some sort, Selifan succeeded, though powerless to discern a single object, in directing his steeds to a country house near by, and that with such a certainty of instinct that it was not until the shafts had collided with a garden wall, and thereby made it clear that to proceed another pace was impossible, that he stopped. All that Chichikov could discern through the thick veil of pouring rain was something which resembled a verandah. So he dispatched Selifan to search for the entrance gates, and that process would have lasted indefinitely had it not been shortened by the circumstance that, in Russia, the place of a Swiss footman is frequently taken by watchdogs; of which animals a number now proclaimed the travellers’ presence so loudly that Chichikov found himself forced to stop his ears. Next, a light gleamed in one of the windows, and filtered in a thin stream to the garden wall — thus revealing the whereabouts of the entrance gates; whereupon Selifan fell to knocking at the gates until the bolts of the house door were withdrawn and there issued therefrom a figure clad in a rough cloak.

“Who is that knocking? What have you come for?” shouted the hoarse voice of an elderly woman.

“We are travellers, good mother,” said Chichikov. “Pray allow us to spend the night here.”

“Out upon you for a pair of gadabouts!” retorted the old woman. “A fine time of night to be arriving! We don’t keep an hotel, mind you. This is a lady’s residence.”

“But what are we to do, mother? We have lost our way, and cannot spend the night out of doors in such weather.”

“No, we cannot. The night is dark and cold,” added Selifan.

“Hold your tongue, you fool!” exclaimed Chichikov.

“Who ARE you, then?” inquired the old woman.

“A dvorianin , good mother.”

Somehow the word dvorianin seemed to give the old woman food for thought.

“Wait a moment,” she said, “and I will tell the mistress.”

Two minutes later she returned with a lantern in her hand, the gates were opened, and a light glimmered in a second window. Entering the courtyard, the

britchka halted before a moderate-sized mansion. The darkness did not permit of very accurate observation being made, but, apparently, the windows only of one-half of the building were illuminated, while a quagmire in front of the door reflected the beams from the same. Meanwhile the rain continued to beat sonorously down upon the wooden roof, and could be heard trickling into a water butt; nor for a single moment did the dogs cease to bark with all the strength of their lungs. One of them, throwing up its head, kept venting a howl of such energy and duration that the animal seemed to be howling for a handsome wager; while another, cutting in between the yelpings of the first animal, kept restlessly reiterating, like a postman's bell, the notes of a very young puppy. Finally, an old hound which appeared to be gifted with a peculiarly robust temperament kept supplying the part of contrabasso, so that his growls resembled the rumbling of a bass singer when a chorus is in full cry, and the tenors are rising on tiptoe in their efforts to compass a particularly high note, and the whole body of choristers are wagging their heads before approaching a climax, and this contrabasso alone is tucking his bearded chin into his collar, and sinking almost to a squatting posture on the floor, in order to produce a note which shall cause the windows to shiver and their panes to crack. Naturally, from a canine chorus of such executants it might reasonably be inferred that the establishment was one of the utmost respectability. To that, however, our damp, cold hero gave not a thought, for all his mind was fixed upon bed. Indeed, the britchka had hardly come to a standstill before he leapt out upon the doorstep, missed his footing, and came within an ace of falling. To meet him there issued a female younger than the first, but very closely resembling her; and on his being conducted to the parlour, a couple of glances showed him that the room was hung with old striped curtains, and ornamented with pictures of birds and small, antique mirrors — the latter set in dark frames which were carved to resemble scrolls of foliage. Behind each mirror was stuck either a letter or an old pack of cards or a stocking, while on the wall hung a clock with a flowered dial. More, however, Chichikov could not discern, for his eyelids were as heavy as though smeared with treacle. Presently the lady of the house herself entered — an elderly woman in a sort of nightcap (hastily put on) and a flannel neck wrap. She belonged to that class of lady landowners who are for ever lamenting failures of the harvest and their losses thereby; to the class who, drooping their heads despondently, are all the while stuffing money into striped purses, which they keep hoarded in the drawers of cupboards. Into one purse they will stuff rouble pieces, into another half roubles, and into a third tchetvertachki , although from their mien you would suppose that the cupboard contained only linen and nightshirts and skeins of wool and the piece of shabby material which is destined

— should the old gown become scorched during the baking of holiday cakes and other dainties, or should it fall into pieces of itself — to become converted into a new dress. But the gown never does get burnt or wear out, for the reason that the lady is too careful; wherefore the piece of shabby material reposes in its unmade-up condition until the priest advises that it be given to the niece of some widowed sister, together with a quantity of other such rubbish.

Chichikov apologised for having disturbed the household with his unexpected arrival.

"Not at all, not at all," replied the lady. "But in what dreadful weather God has brought you hither! What wind and what rain! You could not help losing your way. Pray excuse us for being unable to make better preparations for you at this time of night."

Suddenly there broke in upon the hostess' words the sound of a strange hissing, a sound so loud that the guest started in alarm, and the more so seeing that it increased until the room seemed filled with adders. On glancing upwards, however, he recovered his composure, for he perceived the sound to be emanating from the clock, which appeared to be in a mind to strike. To the hissing sound there succeeded a wheezing one, until, putting forth its best efforts, the thing struck two with as much clatter as though some one had been hitting an iron pot with a cudgel. That done, the pendulum returned to its right-left, right-left oscillation.

Chichikov thanked his hostess kindly, and said that he needed nothing, and she must not put herself about: only for rest was he longing — though also he should like to know whither he had arrived, and whether the distance to the country house of land-owner Sobakevitch was anything very great. To this the lady replied that she had never so much as heard the name, since no gentleman of the name resided in the locality.

"But at least you are acquainted with landowner Manilov?" continued Chichikov.

"No. Who is he?"

"Another landed proprietor, madam."

"Well, neither have I heard of him. No such landowner lives hereabouts."

"Then who ARE your local landowners?"

"Bobrov, Svinin, Kanapatiev, Khapakin, Trepakin, and Plieshakov."

"Are they rich men?"

"No, none of them. One of them may own twenty souls, and another thirty, but of gentry who own a hundred there are none."

Chichikov reflected that he had indeed fallen into an aristocratic wilderness!

"At all events, is the town far away?" he inquired.

“About sixty versts. How sorry I am that I have nothing for you to eat! Should you care to drink some tea?”

“I thank you, good mother, but I require nothing beyond a bed.”

“Well, after such a journey you must indeed be needing rest, so you shall lie upon this sofa. Fetinia, bring a quilt and some pillows and sheets. What weather God has sent us! And what dreadful thunder! Ever since sunset I have had a candle burning before the ikon in my bedroom. My God! Why, your back and sides are as muddy as a boar’s! However have you managed to get into such a state?”

“That I am nothing worse than muddy is indeed fortunate, since, but for the Almighty, I should have had my ribs broken.”

“Dear, dear! To think of all that you must have been through. Had I not better wipe your back?”

“I thank you, I thank you, but you need not trouble. Merely be so good as to tell your maid to dry my clothes.”

“Do you hear that, Fetinia?” said the hostess, turning to a woman who was engaged in dragging in a feather bed and deluging the room with feathers. “Take this coat and this vest, and, after drying them before the fire — just as we used to do for your late master — give them a good rub, and fold them up neatly.”

“Very well, mistress,” said Fetinia, spreading some sheets over the bed, and arranging the pillows.

“Now your bed is ready for you,” said the hostess to Chichikov. “Good-night, dear sir. I wish you good-night. Is there anything else that you require? Perhaps you would like to have your heels tickled before retiring to rest? Never could my late husband get to sleep without that having been done.”

But the guest declined the proffered heel-tickling, and, on his hostess taking her departure, hastened to divest himself of his clothing, both upper and under, and to hand the garments to Fetinia. She wished him good-night, and removed the wet trappings; after which he found himself alone. Not without satisfaction did he eye his bed, which reached almost to the ceiling. Clearly Fetinia was a past mistress in the art of beating up such a couch, and, as the result, he had no sooner mounted it with the aid of a chair than it sank well-nigh to the floor, and the feathers, squeezed out of their proper confines, flew hither and thither into every corner of the apartment. Nevertheless he extinguished the candle, covered himself over with the chintz quilt, snuggled down beneath it, and instantly fell asleep. Next day it was late in the morning before he awoke. Through the window the sun was shining into his eyes, and the flies which, overnight, had been roosting quietly on the walls and ceiling now turned their attention to the visitor. One settled on his lip, another on his ear, a third hovered as though

intending to lodge in his very eye, and a fourth had the temerity to alight just under his nostrils. In his drowsy condition he inhaled the latter insect, sneezed violently, and so returned to consciousness. He glanced around the room, and perceived that not all the pictures were representative of birds, since among them hung also a portrait of Kutuzov and an oil painting of an old man in a uniform with red facings such as were worn in the days of the Emperor Paul . At this moment the clock uttered its usual hissing sound, and struck ten, while a woman's face peered in at the door, but at once withdrew, for the reason that, with the object of sleeping as well as possible, Chichikov had removed every stitch of his clothing. Somehow the face seemed to him familiar, and he set himself to recall whose it could be. At length he recollected that it was the face of his hostess. His clothes he found lying, clean and dry, beside him; so he dressed and approached the mirror, meanwhile sneezing again with such vehemence that a cock which happened at the moment to be near the window (which was situated at no great distance from the ground) chuckled a short, sharp phrase. Probably it meant, in the bird's alien tongue, "Good morning to you!" Chichikov retorted by calling the bird a fool, and then himself approached the window to look at the view. It appeared to comprise a poulterer's premises. At all events, the narrow yard in front of the window was full of poultry and other domestic creatures — of game fowls and barn door fowls, with, among them, a cock which strutted with measured gait, and kept shaking its comb, and tilting its head as though it were trying to listen to something. Also, a sow and her family were helping to grace the scene. First, she rooted among a heap of litter; then, in passing, she ate up a young pullet; lastly, she proceeded carelessly to munch some pieces of melon rind. To this small yard or poultry-run a length of planking served as a fence, while beyond it lay a kitchen garden containing cabbages, onions, potatoes, beetroots, and other household vegetables. Also, the garden contained a few stray fruit trees that were covered with netting to protect them from the magpies and sparrows; flocks of which were even then wheeling and darting from one spot to another. For the same reason a number of scarecrows with outstretched arms stood reared on long poles, with, surmounting one of the figures, a cast-off cap of the hostess's. Beyond the garden again there stood a number of peasants' huts. Though scattered, instead of being arranged in regular rows, these appeared to Chichikov's eye to comprise well-to-do inhabitants, since all rotten planks in their roofing had been replaced with new ones, and none of their doors were askew, and such of their tiltsheds as faced him evinced evidence of a presence of a spare waggon — in some cases almost a new one.

"This lady owns by no means a poor village," said Chichikov to himself; wherefore he decided then and there to have a talk with his hostess, and to

cultivate her closer acquaintance. Accordingly he peeped through the chink of the door whence her head had recently protruded, and, on seeing her seated at a tea table, entered and greeted her with a cheerful, kindly smile.

"Good morning, dear sir," she responded as she rose. "How have you slept?" She was dressed in better style than she had been on the previous evening. That is to say, she was now wearing a gown of some dark colour, and lacked her nightcap, and had swathed her neck in something stiff.

"I have slept exceedingly well," replied Chichikov, seating himself upon a chair. "And how are YOU, good madam?"

"But poorly, my dear sir."

"And why so?"

"Because I cannot sleep. A pain has taken me in my middle, and my legs, from the ankles upwards, are aching as though they were broken."

"That will pass, that will pass, good mother. You must pay no attention to it."

"God grant that it MAY pass. However, I have been rubbing myself with lard and turpentine. What sort of tea will you take? In this jar I have some of the scented kind."

"Excellent, good mother! Then I will take that."

Probably the reader will have noticed that, for all his expressions of solicitude, Chichikov's tone towards his hostess partook of a freer, a more unceremonious, nature than that which he had adopted towards Madam Manilov. And here I should like to assert that, howsoever much, in certain respects, we Russians may be surpassed by foreigners, at least we surpass them in adroitness of manner. In fact the various shades and subtleties of our social intercourse defy enumeration. A Frenchman or a German would be incapable of envisaging and understanding all its peculiarities and differences, for his tone in speaking to a millionaire differs but little from that which he employs towards a small tobacconist — and that in spite of the circumstance that he is accustomed to cringe before the former. With us, however, things are different. In Russian society there exist clever folk who can speak in one manner to a landowner possessed of two hundred peasant souls, and in another to a landowner possessed of three hundred, and in another to a landowner possessed of five hundred. In short, up to the number of a million souls the Russian will have ready for each landowner a suitable mode of address. For example, suppose that somewhere there exists a government office, and that in that office there exists a director. I would beg of you to contemplate him as he sits among his myrmidons. Sheer nervousness will prevent you from uttering a word in his presence, so great are the pride and superiority depicted on his countenance. Also, were you to sketch him, you would be sketching a veritable Prometheus, for his glance is as that of an eagle,

and he walks with measured, stately stride. Yet no sooner will the eagle have left the room to seek the study of his superior officer than he will go scurrying along (papers held close to his nose) like any partridge. But in society, and at the evening party (should the rest of those present be of lesser rank than himself) the Prometheus will once more become Prometheus, and the man who stands a step below him will treat him in a way never dreamt of by Ovid, seeing that each fly is of lesser account than its superior fly, and becomes, in the presence of the latter, even as a grain of sand. “Surely that is not Ivan Petrovitch?” you will say of such and such a man as you regard him. “Ivan Petrovitch is tall, whereas this man is small and spare. Ivan Petrovitch has a loud, deep voice, and never smiles, whereas this man (whoever he may be) is twittering like a sparrow, and smiling all the time.” Yet approach and take a good look at the fellow and you will see that is IS Ivan Petrovitch. “Alack, alack!” will be the only remark you can make.

Let us return to our characters in real life. We have seen that, on this occasion, Chichikov decided to dispense with ceremony; wherefore, taking up the teapot, he went on as follows:

“You have a nice little village here, madam. How many souls does it contain?”

“A little less than eighty, dear sir. But the times are hard, and I have lost a great deal through last year’s harvest having proved a failure.”

“But your peasants look fine, strong fellows. May I enquire your name? Through arriving so late at night I have quite lost my wits.”

“Korobotchka, the widow of a Collegiate Secretary.”

“I humbly thank you. And your Christian name and patronymic?”

“Nastasia Petrovna.”

“Nastasia Petrovna! Those are excellent names. I have a maternal aunt named like yourself.”

“And YOUR name?” queried the lady. “May I take it that you are a Government Assessor?”

“No, madam,” replied Chichikov with a smile. “I am not an Assessor, but a traveller on private business.”

“Then you must be a buyer of produce? How I regret that I have sold my honey so cheaply to other buyers! Otherwise YOU might have bought it, dear sir.”

“I never buy honey.”

“Then WHAT do you buy, pray? Hemp? I have a little of that by me, but not more than half a pood or so.”

“No, madam. It is in other wares that I deal. Tell me, have you, of late years, lost many of your peasants by death?”

“Yes; no fewer than eighteen,” responded the old lady with a sigh. “Such a

fine lot, too — all good workers! True, others have since grown up, but of what use are THEY? Mere striplings. When the Assessor last called upon me I could have wept; for, though those workmen of mine are dead, I have to keep on paying for them as though they were still alive! And only last week my blacksmith got burnt to death! Such a clever hand at his trade he was!"

"What? A fire occurred at your place?"

"No, no, God preserve us all! It was not so bad as that. You must understand that the blacksmith SET HIMSELF on fire — he got set on fire in his bowels through overdrinking. Yes, all of a sudden there burst from him a blue flame, and he smouldered and smouldered until he had turned as black as a piece of charcoal! Yet what a clever blacksmith he was! And now I have no horses to drive out with, for there is no one to shoe them."

"In everything the will of God, madam," said Chichikov with a sigh. "Against the divine wisdom it is not for us to rebel. Pray hand them over to me, Nastasia Petrovna."

"Hand over whom?"

"The dead peasants."

"But how could I do that?"

"Quite simply. Sell them to me, and I will give you some money in exchange."

"But how am I to sell them to you? I scarcely understand what you mean. Am I to dig them up again from the ground?"

Chichikov perceived that the old lady was altogether at sea, and that he must explain the matter; wherefore in a few words he informed her that the transfer or purchase of the souls in question would take place merely on paper — that the said souls would be listed as still alive.

"And what good would they be to you?" asked his hostess, staring at him with her eyes distended.

"That is MY affair."

"But they are DEAD souls."

"Who said they were not? The mere fact of their being dead entails upon you a loss as dead as the souls, for you have to continue paying tax upon them, whereas MY plan is to relieve you both of the tax and of the resultant trouble. NOW do you understand? And I will not only do as I say, but also hand you over fifteen roubles per soul. Is that clear enough?"

"Yes — but I do not know," said his hostess diffidently. "You see, never before have I sold dead souls."

"Quite so. It would be a surprising thing if you had. But surely you do not think that these dead souls are in the least worth keeping?"

"Oh, no, indeed! Why should they be worth keeping? I am sure they are not

so. The only thing which troubles me is the fact that they are DEAD."

"She seems a truly obstinate old woman!" was Chichikov's inward comment. "Look here, madam," he added aloud. "You reason well, but you are simply ruining yourself by continuing to pay the tax upon dead souls as though they were still alive."

"Oh, good sir, do not speak of it!" the lady exclaimed. "Three weeks ago I took a hundred and fifty roubles to that Assessor, and buttered him up, and — "

"Then you see how it is, do you not? Remember that, according to my plan, you will never again have to butter up the Assessor, seeing that it will be I who will be paying for those peasants — *I*, not YOU, for I shall have taken over the dues upon them, and have transferred them to myself as so many bona fide serfs. Do you understand AT LAST?"

However, the old lady still communed with herself. She could see that the transaction would be to her advantage, yet it was one of such a novel and unprecedented nature that she was beginning to fear lest this purchaser of souls intended to cheat her. Certainly he had come from God only knew where, and at the dead of night, too!

"But, sir, I have never in my life sold dead folk — only living ones. Three years ago I transferred two wenches to Protopopov for a hundred roubles apiece, and he thanked me kindly, for they turned out splendid workers — able to make napkins or anything else.

"Yes, but with the living we have nothing to do, damn it! I am asking you only about DEAD folk."

"Yes, yes, of course. But at first sight I felt afraid lest I should be incurring a loss — lest you should be wishing to outwit me, good sir. You see, the dead souls are worth rather more than you have offered for them."

"See here, madam. (What a woman it is!) HOW could they be worth more? Think for yourself. They are so much loss to you — so much loss, do you understand? Take any worthless, rubbishy article you like — a piece of old rag, for example. That rag will yet fetch its price, for it can be bought for paper-making. But these dead souls are good for NOTHING AT ALL. Can you name anything that they ARE good for?"

"True, true — they ARE good for nothing. But what troubles me is the fact that they are dead."

"What a blockhead of a creature!" said Chichikov to himself, for he was beginning to lose patience. "Bless her heart, I may as well be going. She has thrown me into a perfect sweat, the cursed old shrew!"

He took a handkerchief from his pocket, and wiped the perspiration from his brow. Yet he need not have flown into such a passion. More than one respected

statesman reveals himself, when confronted with a business matter, to be just such another as Madam Korobotchka, in that, once he has got an idea into his head, there is no getting it out of him — you may ply him with daylight-clear arguments, yet they will rebound from his brain as an india-rubber ball rebounds from a flagstone. Nevertheless, wiping away the perspiration, Chichikov resolved to try whether he could not bring her back to the road by another path.

"Madam," he said, "either you are declining to understand what I say or you are talking for the mere sake of talking. If I hand you over some money — fifteen roubles for each soul, do you understand? — it is MONEY, not something which can be picked up haphazard on the street. For instance, tell me how much you sold your honey for?"

"For twelve roubles per pood."

"Ah! Then by those words, madam, you have laid a trifling sin upon your soul; for you did NOT sell the honey for twelve roubles."

"By the Lord God I did!"

"Well, well! Never mind. Honey is only honey. Now, you had collected that stuff, it may be, for a year, and with infinite care and labour. You had fussed after it, you had trotted to and fro, you had duly frozen out the bees, and you had fed them in the cellar throughout the winter. But these dead souls of which I speak are quite another matter, for in this case you have put forth no exertions — it was merely God's will that they should leave the world, and thus decrease the personnel of your establishment. In the former case you received (so you allege) twelve roubles per pood for your labour; but in this case you will receive money for having done nothing at all. Nor will you receive twelve roubles per item, but FIFTEEN — and roubles not in silver, but roubles in good paper currency."

That these powerful inducements would certainly cause the old woman to yield Chichikov had not a doubt.

"True," his hostess replied. "But how strangely business comes to me as a widow! Perhaps I had better wait a little longer, seeing that other buyers might come along, and I might be able to compare prices."

"For shame, madam! For shame! Think what you are saying. Who else, I would ask, would care to buy those souls? What use could they be to any one?"

"If that is so, they might come in useful to ME," mused the old woman aloud; after which she sat staring at Chichikov with her mouth open and a face of nervous expectancy as to his possible rejoinder.

"Dead folk useful in a household!" he exclaimed. "Why, what could you do with them? Set them up on poles to frighten away the sparrows from your garden?"

"The Lord save us, but what things you say!" she ejaculated, crossing herself.

“Well, WHAT could you do with them? By this time they are so much bones and earth. That is all there is left of them. Their transfer to myself would be ON PAPER only. Come, come! At least give me an answer.”

Again the old woman communed with herself.

“What are you thinking of, Nastasia Petrovna?” inquired Chichikov.

“I am thinking that I scarcely know what to do. Perhaps I had better sell you some hemp?”

“What do I want with hemp? Pardon me, but just when I have made to you a different proposal altogether you begin fussing about hemp! Hemp is hemp, and though I may want some when I NEXT visit you, I should like to know what you have to say to the suggestion under discussion.”

“Well, I think it a very queer bargain. Never have I heard of such a thing.”

Upon this Chichikov lost all patience, upset his chair, and bid her go to the devil; of which personage even the mere mention terrified her extremely.

“Do not speak of him, I beg of you!” she cried, turning pale. “May God, rather, bless him! Last night was the third night that he has appeared to me in a dream. You see, after saying my prayers, I bethought me of telling my fortune by the cards; and God must have sent him as a punishment. He looked so horrible, and had horns longer than a bull’s!”

“I wonder you don’t see SCORES of devils in your dreams! Merely out of Christian charity he had come to you to say, ‘I perceive a poor widow going to rack and ruin, and likely soon to stand in danger of want.’ Well, go to rack and ruin — yes, you and all your village together!”

“The insults!” exclaimed the old woman, glancing at her visitor in terror.

“I should think so!” continued Chichikov. “Indeed, I cannot find words to describe you. To say no more about it, you are like a dog in a manger. You don’t want to eat the hay yourself, yet you won’t let anyone else touch it. All that I am seeking to do is to purchase certain domestic products of yours, for the reason that I have certain Government contracts to fulfil.” This last he added in passing, and without any ulterior motive, save that it came to him as a happy thought. Nevertheless the mention of Government contracts exercised a powerful influence upon Nastasia Petrovna, and she hastened to say in a tone that was almost supplicatory:

“Why should you be so angry with me? Had I known that you were going to lose your temper in this way, I should never have discussed the matter.”

“No wonder that I lose my temper! An egg too many is no great matter, yet it may prove exceedingly annoying.”

“Well, well, I will let you have the souls for fifteen roubles each. Also, with regard to those contracts, do not forget me if at any time you should find

yourself in need of rye-meal or buckwheat or groats or dead meat."

"No, I shall NEVER forget you, madam!" he said, wiping his forehead, where three separate streams of perspiration were trickling down his face. Then he asked her whether in the town she had any acquaintance or agent whom she could empower to complete the transference of the serfs, and to carry out whatsoever else might be necessary.

"Certainly," replied Madame Korobotchka. "The son of our archpriest, Father Cyril, himself is a lawyer."

Upon that Chichikov begged her to accord the gentleman in question a power of attorney, while, to save extra trouble, he himself would then and there compose the requisite letter.

"It would be a fine thing if he were to buy up all my meal and stock for the Government," thought Madame to herself. "I must encourage him a little. There has been some dough standing ready since last night, so I will go and tell Fetinia to try a few pancakes. Also, it might be well to try him with an egg pie. We make then nicely here, and they do not take long in the making."

So she departed to translate her thoughts into action, as well as to supplement the pie with other products of the domestic cuisine; while, for his part, Chichikov returned to the drawing-room where he had spent the night, in order to procure from his dispatch-box the necessary writing-paper. The room had now been set in order, the sumptuous feather bed removed, and a table set before the sofa. Depositing his dispatch-box upon the table, he heaved a gentle sigh on becoming aware that he was so soaked with perspiration that he might almost have been dipped in a river. Everything, from his shirt to his socks, was dripping. "May she starve to death, the cursed old harridan!" he ejaculated after a moment's rest. Then he opened his dispatch-box. In passing, I may say that I feel certain that at least SOME of my readers will be curious to know the contents and the internal arrangements of that receptacle. Why should I not gratify their curiosity? To begin with, the centre of the box contained a soap-dish, with, disposed around it, six or seven compartments for razors. Next came square partitions for a sand-box and an inkstand, as well as (scooped out in their midst) a hollow of pens, sealing-wax, and anything else that required more room. Lastly there were all sorts of little divisions, both with and without lids, for articles of a smaller nature, such as visiting cards, memorial cards, theatre tickets, and things which Chichikov had laid by as souvenirs. This portion of the box could be taken out, and below it were both a space for manuscripts and a secret money-box — the latter made to draw out from the side of the receptacle.

Chichikov set to work to clean a pen, and then to write. Presently his hostess entered the room.

“What a beautiful box you have got, my dear sir!” she exclaimed as she took a seat beside him. “Probably you bought it in Moscow?”

“Yes — in Moscow,” replied Chichikov without interrupting his writing.

“I thought so. One CAN get good things there. Three years ago my sister brought me a few pairs of warm shoes for my sons, and they were such excellent articles! To this day my boys wear them. And what nice stamped paper you have!” (she had peered into the dispatch-box, where, sure enough, there lay a further store of the paper in question). “Would you mind letting me have a sheet of it? I am without any at all, although I shall soon have to be presenting a plea to the land court, and possess not a morsel of paper to write it on.”

Upon this Chichikov explained that the paper was not the sort proper for the purpose — that it was meant for serf-indenturing, and not for the framing of pleas. Nevertheless, to quiet her, he gave her a sheet stamped to the value of a rouble. Next, he handed her the letter to sign, and requested, in return, a list of her peasants. Unfortunately, such a list had never been compiled, let alone any copies of it, and the only way in which she knew the peasants’ names was by heart. However, he told her to dictate them. Some of the names greatly astonished our hero, so, still more, did the surnames. Indeed, frequently, on hearing the latter, he had to pause before writing them down. Especially did he halt before a certain “Peter Saveliev Neuvazhai Korito.” “What a string of titles!” involuntarily he ejaculated. To the Christian name of another serf was appended “Korovi Kirpitch,” and to that of a third “Koleso Ivan.” However, at length the list was compiled, and he caught a deep breath; which latter proceeding caused him to catch also the attractive odour of something fried in fat.

“I beseech you to have a morsel,” murmured his hostess. Chichikov looked up, and saw that the table was spread with mushrooms, pies, and other viands.

“Try this freshly-made pie and an egg,” continued Madame.

Chichikov did so, and having eaten more than half of what she offered him, praised the pie highly. Indeed, it was a toothsome dish, and, after his difficulties and exertions with his hostess, it tasted even better than it might otherwise have done.

“And also a few pancakes?” suggested Madame.

For answer Chichikov folded three together, and, having dipped them in melted butter, consigned the lot to his mouth, and then wiped his mouth with a napkin. Twice more was the process repeated, and then he requested his hostess to order the britchka to be got ready. In dispatching Fetinia with the necessary instructions, she ordered her to return with a second batch of hot pancakes.

“Your pancakes are indeed splendid,” said Chichikov, applying himself to the

second consignment of fried dainties when they had arrived.

“Yes, we make them well here,” replied Madame. “Yet how unfortunate it is that the harvest should have proved so poor as to have prevented me from earning anything on my — But why should you be in such a hurry to depart, good sir?” She broke off on seeing Chichikov reach for his cap. “The britchka is not yet ready.”

“Then it is being got so, madam, it is being got so, and I shall need a moment or two to pack my things.”

“As you please, dear sir; but do not forget me in connection with those Government contracts.”

“No, I have said that NEVER shall I forget you,” replied Chichikov as he hurried into the hall.

“And would you like to buy some lard?” continued his hostess, pursuing him.

“Lard? Oh certainly. Why not? Only, only — I will do so ANOTHER time.”

“I shall have some ready at about Christmas.”

“Quite so, madam. THEN I will buy anything and everything — the lard included.”

“And perhaps you will be wanting also some feathers? I shall be having some for sale about St. Philip’s Day.”

“Very well, very well, madam.”

“There you see!” she remarked as they stepped out on to the verandah. “The britchka is NOT yet ready.”

“But it soon will be, it soon will be. Only direct me to the main road.”

“How am I to do that?” said Madame. “‘Twould puzzle a wise man to do so, for in these parts there are so many turnings. However, I will send a girl to guide you. You could find room for her on the box-seat, could you not?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Then I will send her. She knows the way thoroughly. Only do not carry her off for good. Already some traders have deprived me of one of my girls.”

Chichikov reassured his hostess on the point, and Madame plucked up courage enough to scan, first of all, the housekeeper, who happened to be issuing from the storehouse with a bowl of honey, and, next, a young peasant who happened to be standing at the gates; and, while thus engaged, she became wholly absorbed in her domestic pursuits. But why pay her so much attention? The Widow Korobotchka, Madame Manilov, domestic life, non-domestic life — away with them all! How strangely are things compounded! In a trice may joy turn to sorrow, should one halt long enough over it: in a trice only God can say what ideas may strike one. You may fall even to thinking: “After all, did Madame Korobotchka stand so very low in the scale of human perfection? Was

there really such a very great gulf between her and Madame Manilov — between her and the Madame Manilov whom we have seen entrenched behind the walls of a genteel mansion in which there were a fine staircase of wrought metal and a number of rich carpets; the Madame Manilov who spent most of her time in yawning behind half-read books, and in hoping for a visit from some socially distinguished person in order that she might display her wit and carefully rehearsed thoughts — thoughts which had been de rigeur in town for a week past, yet which referred, not to what was going on in her household or on her estate — both of which properties were at odds and ends, owing to her ignorance of the art of managing them — but to the coming political revolution in France and the direction in which fashionable Catholicism was supposed to be moving? But away with such things! Why need we speak of them? Yet how comes it that suddenly into the midst of our careless, frivolous, unthinking moments there may enter another, and a very different, tendency? — that the smile may not have left a human face before its owner will have radically changed his or her nature (though not his or her environment) with the result that the face will suddenly become lit with a radiance never before seen there?...

"Here is the britchka, here is the britchka!" exclaimed Chichikov on perceiving that vehicle slowly advancing. "Ah, you blockhead!" he went on to Selifan. "Why have you been loitering about? I suppose last night's fumes have not yet left your brain?"

To this Selifan returned no reply.

"Good-bye, madam," added the speaker. "But where is the girl whom you promised me?"

"Here, Pelagea!" called the hostess to a wench of about eleven who was dressed in home-dyed garments and could boast of a pair of bare feet which, from a distance, might almost have been mistaken for boots, so encrusted were they with fresh mire. "Here, Pelagea! Come and show this gentleman the way."

Selifan helped the girl to ascend to the box-seat. Placing one foot upon the step by which the gentry mounted, she covered the said step with mud, and then, ascending higher, attained the desired position beside the coachman. Chichikov followed in her wake (causing the britchka to heel over with his weight as he did so), and then settled himself back into his place with an "All right! Good-bye, madam!" as the horses moved away at a trot.

Selifan looked gloomy as he drove, but also very attentive to his business. This was invariably his custom when he had committed the fault of getting drunk. Also, the horses looked unusually well-groomed. In particular, the collar on one of them had been neatly mended, although hitherto its state of dilapidation had been such as perennially to allow the stuffing to protrude

through the leather. The silence preserved was well-nigh complete. Merely flourishing his whip, Selifan spoke to the team no word of instruction, although the skewbald was as ready as usual to listen to conversation of a didactic nature, seeing that at such times the reins hung loosely in the hands of the loquacious driver, and the whip wandered merely as a matter of form over the backs of the troika. This time, however, there could be heard issuing from Selifan's sullen lips only the uniformly unpleasant exclamation, "Now then, you brutes! Get on with you, get on with you!" The bay and the Assessor too felt put out at not hearing themselves called "my pets" or "good lads"; while, in addition, the skewbald came in for some nasty cuts across his sleek and ample quarters. "What has put master out like this?" thought the animal as it shook its head. "Heaven knows where he does not keep beating me — across the back, and even where I am tenderer still. Yes, he keeps catching the whip in my ears, and lashing me under the belly."

"To the right, eh?" snapped Selifan to the girl beside him as he pointed to a rain-soaked road which trended away through fresh green fields.

"No, no," she replied. "I will show you the road when the time comes."

"Which way, then?" he asked again when they had proceeded a little further.

"This way." And she pointed to the road just mentioned.

"Get along with you!" retorted the coachman. "That DOES go to the right. You don't know your right hand from your left."

The weather was fine, but the ground so excessively sodden that the wheels of the britchka collected mire until they had become caked as with a layer of felt, a circumstance which greatly increased the weight of the vehicle, and prevented it from clearing the neighbouring parishes before the afternoon was arrived. Also, without the girl's help the finding of the way would have been impossible, since roads wiggled away in every direction, like crabs released from a net, and, but for the assistance mentioned, Selifan would have found himself left to his own devices. Presently she pointed to a building ahead, with the words, "THERE is the main road."

"And what is the building?" asked Selifan.

"A tavern," she said.

"Then we can get along by ourselves," he observed. "Do you get down, and be off home."

With that he stopped, and helped her to alight — muttering as he did so: "Ah, you blackfooted creature!"

Chichikov added a copper groat, and she departed well pleased with her ride in the gentleman's carriage.

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CHAPTER IV

On reaching the tavern, Chichikov called a halt. His reasons for this were twofold — namely, that he wanted to rest the horses, and that he himself desired some refreshment. In this connection the author feels bound to confess that the appetite and the capacity of such men are greatly to be envied. Of those well-to-do folk of St. Petersburg and Moscow who spend their time in considering what they shall eat on the morrow, and in composing a dinner for the day following, and who never sit down to a meal without first of all injecting a pill and then swallowing oysters and crabs and a quantity of other monsters, while eternally departing for Karlsbad or the Caucasus, the author has but a small opinion. Yes, THEY are not the persons to inspire envy. Rather, it is the folk of the middle classes — folk who at one posthouse call for bacon, and at another for a sucking pig, and at a third for a steak of sturgeon or a baked pudding with onions, and who can sit down to table at any hour, as though they had never had a meal in their lives, and can devour fish of all sorts, and guzzle and chew it with a view to provoking further appetite — these, I say, are the folk who enjoy heaven's most favoured gift. To attain such a celestial condition the great folk of whom I have spoken would sacrifice half their serfs and half their mortgaged and non-mortgaged property, with the foreign and domestic improvements thereon, if thereby they could compass such a stomach as is possessed by the folk of the middle class. But, unfortunately, neither money nor real estate, whether improved or non-improved, can purchase such a stomach.

The little wooden tavern, with its narrow, but hospitable, curtain suspended from a pair of rough-hewn doorposts like old church candlesticks, seemed to invite Chichikov to enter. True, the establishment was only a Russian hut of the ordinary type, but it was a hut of larger dimensions than usual, and had around its windows and gables carved and patterned cornices of bright-coloured wood which threw into relief the darker hue of the walls, and consorted well with the flowered pitchers painted on the shutters.

Ascending the narrow wooden staircase to the upper floor, and arriving upon a broad landing, Chichikov found himself confronted with a creaking door and a stout old woman in a striped print gown. "This way, if you please," she said. Within the apartment designated Chichikov encountered the old friends which one invariably finds in such roadside hostelries — to wit, a heavy samovar, four smooth, bescratched walls of white pine, a three-cornered press with cups and

teapots, egg-cups of gilded china standing in front of ikons suspended by blue and red ribands, a cat lately delivered of a family, a mirror which gives one four eyes instead of two and a pancake for a face, and, beside the ikons, some bunches of herbs and carnations of such faded dustiness that, should one attempt to smell them, one is bound to burst out sneezing.

"Have you a sucking-pig?" Chichikov inquired of the landlady as she stood expectantly before him.

"Yes."

"And some horse-radish and sour cream?"

"Yes."

"Then serve them."

The landlady departed for the purpose, and returned with a plate, a napkin (the latter starched to the consistency of dried bark), a knife with a bone handle beginning to turn yellow, a two-pronged fork as thin as a wafer, and a salt-cellar incapable of being made to stand upright.

Following the accepted custom, our hero entered into conversation with the woman, and inquired whether she herself or a landlord kept the tavern; how much income the tavern brought in; whether her sons lived with her; whether the oldest was a bachelor or married; whom the eldest had taken to wife; whether the dowry had been large; whether the father-in-law had been satisfied, and whether the said father-in-law had not complained of receiving too small a present at the wedding. In short, Chichikov touched on every conceivable point. Likewise (of course) he displayed some curiosity as to the landowners of the neighbourhood. Their names, he ascertained, were Blochin, Potchitaev, Minoi, Cheprakov, and Sobakevitch.

"Then you are acquainted with Sobakevitch?" he said; whereupon the old woman informed him that she knew not only Sobakevitch, but also Manilov, and that the latter was the more delicate eater of the two, since, whereas Manilov always ordered a roast fowl and some veal and mutton, and then tasted merely a morsel of each, Sobakevitch would order one dish only, but consume the whole of it, and then demand more at the same price.

Whilst Chichikov was thus conversing and partaking of the sucking pig until only a fragment of it seemed likely to remain, the sound of an approaching vehicle made itself heard. Peering through the window, he saw draw up to the tavern door a light britchka drawn by three fine horses. From it there descended two men — one flaxen-haired and tall, and the other dark-haired and of slighter build. While the flaxen-haired man was clad in a dark-blue coat, the other one was wrapped in a coat of striped pattern. Behind the britchka stood a second, but an empty, turn-out, drawn by four long-coated steeds in ragged collars and rope

harnesses. The flaxen-haired man lost no time in ascending the staircase, while his darker friend remained below to fumble at something in the britchka, talking, as he did so, to the driver of the vehicle which stood hitched behind. Somehow, the dark-haired man's voice struck Chichikov as familiar; and as he was taking another look at him the flaxen-haired gentleman entered the room. The newcomer was a man of lofty stature, with a small red moustache and a lean, hard-bitten face whose redness made it evident that its acquaintance, if not with the smoke of gunpowder, at all events with that of tobacco, was intimate and extensive. Nevertheless he greeted Chichikov civilly, and the latter returned his bow. Indeed, the pair would have entered into conversation, and have made one another's acquaintance (since a beginning was made with their simultaneously expressing satisfaction at the circumstance that the previous night's rain had laid the dust on the roads, and thereby made driving cool and pleasant) when the gentleman's darker-favoured friend also entered the room, and, throwing his cap upon the table, pushed back a mass of dishevelled black locks from his brow. The latest arrival was a man of medium height, but well put together, and possessed of a pair of full red cheeks, a set of teeth as white as snow, and coal-black whiskers. Indeed, so fresh was his complexion that it seemed to have been compounded of blood and milk, while health danced in his every feature.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he cried with a gesture of astonishment at the sight of Chichikov. "What chance brings YOU here?"

Upon that Chichikov recognised Nozdrev — the man whom he had met at dinner at the Public Prosecutor's, and who, within a minute or two of the introduction, had become so intimate with his fellow guest as to address him in the second person singular, in spite of the fact that Chichikov had given him no opportunity for doing so.

"Where have you been to-day?" Nozdrev inquired, and, without waiting for an answer, went on: "For myself, I am just from the fair, and completely cleaned out. Actually, I have had to do the journey back with stage horses! Look out of the window, and see them for yourself." And he turned Chichikov's head so sharply in the desired direction that he came very near to bumping it against the window frame. "Did you ever see such a bag of tricks? The cursed things have only just managed to get here. In fact, on the way I had to transfer myself to this fellow's britchka." He indicated his companion with a finger. "By the way, don't you know one another? He is Mizhuev, my brother-in-law. He and I were talking of you only this morning. 'Just you see,' said I to him, 'if we do not fall in with Chichikov before we have done.' Heavens, how completely cleaned out I am! Not only have I lost four good horses, but also my watch and chain." Chichikov perceived that in very truth his interlocutor was minus the articles named, as well

as that one of Nozdrev's whiskers was less bushy in appearance than the other one. "Had I had another twenty roubles in my pocket," went on Nozdrev, "I should have won back all that I have lost, as well as have pouched a further thirty thousand. Yes, I give you my word of honour on that."

"But you were saying the same thing when last I met you," put in the flaxen-haired man. "Yet, even though I lent you fifty roubles, you lost them all."

"But I should not have lost them THIS time. Don't try to make me out a fool. I should NOT have lost them, I tell you. Had I only played the right card, I should have broken the bank."

"But you did NOT break the bank," remarked the flaxen-haired man.

"No. That was because I did not play my cards right. But what about your precious major's play? Is THAT good?"

"Good or not, at least he beat you."

"Splendid of him! Nevertheless I will get my own back. Let him play me at doubles, and we shall soon see what sort of a player he is! Friend Chichikov, at first we had a glorious time, for the fair was a tremendous success. Indeed, the tradesmen said that never yet had there been such a gathering. I myself managed to sell everything from my estate at a good price. In fact, we had a magnificent time. I can't help thinking of it, devil take me! But what a pity YOU were not there! Three versts from the town there is quartered a regiment of dragoons, and you would scarcely believe what a lot of officers it has. Forty at least there are, and they do a fine lot of knocking about the town and drinking. In particular, Staff-Captain Potsieluev is a SPLENDID fellow! You should just see his moustache! Why, he calls good claret 'trash'! 'Bring me some of the usual trash,' is his way of ordering it. And Lieutenant Kuvshinnikov, too! He is as delightful as the other man. In fact, I may say that every one of the lot is a rake. I spent my whole time with them, and you can imagine that Ponomarev, the wine merchant, did a fine trade indeed! All the same, he is a rascal, you know, and ought not to be dealt with, for he puts all sorts of rubbish into his liquor — Indian wood and burnt cork and elderberry juice, the villain! Nevertheless, get him to produce a bottle from what he calls his 'special cellar,' and you will fancy yourself in the seventh heaven of delight. And what quantities of champagne we drank! Compared with it, provincial stuff is kvass . Try to imagine not merely Clicquot, but a sort of blend of Clicquot and Matradura — Clicquot of double strength. Also Ponomarev produced a bottle of French stuff which he calls 'Bonbon.' Had it a bouquet, ask you? Why, it had the bouquet of a rose garden, of anything else you like. What times we had, to be sure! Just after we had left Pnomarev's place, some prince or another arrived in the town, and sent out for some champagne; but not a bottle was there left, for the officers had drunk every one! Why, I

myself got through seventeen bottles at a sitting."

"Come, come! You CAN'T have got through seventeen," remarked the flaxen-haired man.

"But I did, I give my word of honour," retorted Nozdrev.

"Imagine what you like, but you didn't drink even TEN bottles at a sitting."

"Will you bet that I did not?"

"No; for what would be the use of betting about it?"

"Then at least wager the gun which you have bought."

"No, I am not going to do anything of the kind."

"Just as an experiment?"

"No."

"It is as well for you that you don't, since, otherwise, you would have found yourself minus both gun and cap. However, friend Chichikov, it is a pity you were not there. Had you been there, I feel sure you would have found yourself unable to part with Lieutenant Kuvshinnikov. You and he would have hit it off splendidly. You know, he is quite a different sort from the Public Prosecutor and our other provincial skinflints — fellows who shiver in their shoes before they will spend a single kopeck. HE will play faro, or anything else, and at any time. Why did you not come with us, instead of wasting your time on cattle breeding or something of the sort? But never mind. Embrace me. I like you immensely. Mizhuev, see how curiously things have turned out. Chichikov has nothing to do with me, or I with him, yet here is he come from God knows where, and landed in the very spot where I happen to be living! I may tell you that, no matter how many carriages I possessed, I should gamble the lot away. Recently I went in for a turn at billiards, and lost two jars of pomade, a china teapot, and a guitar. Then I staked some more things, and, like a fool, lost them all, and six roubles in addition. What a dog is that Kuvshinnikov! He and I attended nearly every ball in the place. In particular, there was a woman — decolletee, and such a swell! I merely thought to myself, 'The devil take her!' but Kuvshinnikov is such a wag that he sat down beside her, and began paying her strings of compliments in French. However, I did not neglect the damsels altogether — although HE calls that sort of thing 'going in for strawberries.' By the way, I have a splendid piece of fish and some caviare with me. 'Tis all I HAVE brought back! In fact it is a lucky chance that I happened to buy the stuff before my money was gone. Where are you for?"

"I am about to call on a friend."

"On what friend? Let him go to the devil, and come to my place instead."

"I cannot, I cannot. I have business to do."

"Oh, business again! I thought so!"

“But I HAVE business to do — and pressing business at that.”

“I wager that you’re lying. If not, tell me whom you’re going to call upon.”

“Upon Sobakevitch.”

Instantly Nozdrev burst into a laugh compassable only by a healthy man in whose head every tooth still remains as white as sugar. By this I mean the laugh of quivering cheeks, the laugh which causes a neighbour who is sleeping behind double doors three rooms away to leap from his bed and exclaim with distended eyes, “Hullo! Something HAS upset him!”

“What is there to laugh at?” asked Chichikov, a trifle nettled; but Nozdrev laughed more unrestrainedly than ever, ejaculating: “Oh, spare us all! The thing is so amusing that I shall die of it!”

“I say that there is nothing to laugh at,” repeated Chichikov. “It is in fulfilment of a promise that I am on my way to Sobakevitch’s.”

“Then you will scarcely be glad to be alive when you’ve got there, for he is the veriest miser in the countryside. Oh, *I* know you. However, if you think to find there either faro or a bottle of ‘Bonbon’ you are mistaken. Look here, my good friend. Let Sobakevitch go to the devil, and come to MY place, where at least I shall have a piece of sturgeon to offer you for dinner. Ponomarev said to me on parting: ‘This piece is just the thing for you. Even if you were to search the whole market, you would never find a better one.’ But of course he is a terrible rogue. I said to him outright: ‘You and the Collector of Taxes are the two greatest skinflints in the town.’ But he only stroked his beard and smiled. Every day I used to breakfast with Kuvshinnikov in his restaurant. Well, what I was nearly forgetting is this: that, though I am aware that you can’t forgo your engagement, I am not going to give you up — no, not for ten thousand roubles of money. I tell you that in advance.”

Here he broke off to run to the window and shout to his servant (who was holding a knife in one hand and a crust of bread and a piece of sturgeon in the other — he had contrived to filch the latter while fumbling in the britchka for something else):

“Hi, Porphyri! Bring here that puppy, you rascal! What a puppy it is! Unfortunately that thief of a landlord has given it nothing to eat, even though I have promised him the roan filly which, as you may remember, I swopped from Khvostirev.” As a matter of act, Chichikov had never in his life seen either Khvostirev or the roan filly.

“Barin, do you wish for anything to eat?” inquired the landlady as she entered.

“No, nothing at all. Ah, friend Chichikov, what times we had! Yes, give me a glass of vodka, old woman. What sort to you keep?”

“Aniseed.”

“Then bring me a glass of it,” repeated Nozdrev.

“And one for me as well,” added the flaxen-haired man.

“At the theatre,” went on Nozdrev, “there was an actress who sang like a canary. Kuvshinnikov, who happened to be sitting with me, said: ‘My boy, you had better go and gather that strawberry.’ As for the booths at the fair, they numbered, I should say, fifty.” At this point he broke off to take the glass of vodka from the landlady, who bowed low in acknowledgement of his doing so. At the same moment Porphyri — a fellow dressed like his master (that is to say, in a greasy, wadded overcoat) — entered with the puppy.

“Put the brute down here,” commanded Nozdrev, “and then fasten it up.”

Porphyri deposited the animal upon the floor; whereupon it proceeded to act after the manner of dogs.

“THERE’S a puppy for you!” cried Nozdrev, catching hold of it by the back, and lifting it up. The puppy uttered a piteous yelp.

“I can see that you haven’t done what I told you to do,” he continued to Porphyri after an inspection of the animal’s belly. “You have quite forgotten to brush him.”

“I DID brush him,” protested Porphyri.

“Then where did these fleas come from?”

“I cannot think. Perhaps they have leapt into his coat out of the britchka.”

“You liar! As a matter of fact, you have forgotten to brush him. Nevertheless, look at these ears, Chichikov. Just feel them.”

“Why should I? Without doing that, I can see that he is well-bred.”

“Nevertheless, catch hold of his ears and feel them.”

To humour the fellow Chichikov did as he had requested, remarking: “Yes, he seems likely to turn out well.”

“And feel the coldness of his nose! Just take it in your hand.”

Not wishing to offend his interlocutor, Chichikov felt the puppy’s nose, saying: “Some day he will have an excellent scent.”

“Yes, will he not? ‘Tis the right sort of muzzle for that. I must say that I have long been wanting such a puppy. Porphyri, take him away again.”

Porphyri lifted up the puppy, and bore it downstairs.

“Look here, Chichikov,” resumed Nozdrev. “You MUST come to my place. It lies only five versts away, and we can go there like the wind, and you can visit Sobakevitch afterwards.”

“Shall I, or shall I not, go to Nozdrev’s?” reflected Chichikov. “Is he likely to prove any more useful than the rest? Well, at least he is as promising, even though he has lost so much at play. But he has a head on his shoulders, and therefore I must go carefully if I am to tackle him concerning my scheme.”

With that he added aloud: “Very well, I WILL come with you, but do not let us be long, for my time is very precious.”

“That’s right, that’s right!” cried Nozdrev. “Splendid, splendid! Let me embrace you!” And he fell upon Chichikov’s neck. “All three of us will go.”

“No, no,” put in the flaxen-haired man. “You must excuse me, for I must be off home.”

“Rubbish, rubbish! I am NOT going to excuse you.”

“But my wife will be furious with me. You and Monsieur Chichikov must change into the other britchka.”

“Come, come! The thing is not to be thought of.”

The flaxen-haired man was one of those people in whose character, at first sight, there seems to lurk a certain grain of stubbornness — so much so that, almost before one has begun to speak, they are ready to dispute one’s words, and to disagree with anything that may be opposed to their peculiar form of opinion. For instance, they will decline to have folly called wisdom, or any tune danced to but their own. Always, however, will there become manifest in their character a soft spot, and in the end they will accept what hitherto they have denied, and call what is foolish sensible, and even dance — yes, better than any one else will do — to a tune set by some one else. In short, they generally begin well, but always end badly.

“Rubbish!” said Nozdrev in answer to a further objection on his brother-in-law’s part. And, sure enough, no sooner had Nozdrev clapped his cap upon his head than the flaxen-haired man started to follow him and his companion.

“But the gentleman has not paid for the vodka?” put in the old woman.

“All right, all right, good mother. Look here, brother-in-law. Pay her, will you, for I have not a kopeck left.”

“How much?” inquired the brother-in-law.

“What, sir? Eighty kopecks, if you please,” replied the old woman.

“A lie! Give her half a rouble. That will be quite enough.”

“No, it will NOT, barin,” protested the old woman. However, she took the money gratefully, and even ran to the door to open it for the gentlemen. As a matter of fact, she had lost nothing by the transaction, since she had demanded fully a quarter more than the vodka was worth.

The travellers then took their seats, and since Chichikov’s britchka kept alongside the britchka wherein Nozdrev and his brother-in-law were seated, it was possible for all three men to converse together as they proceeded. Behind them came Nozdrev’s smaller buggy, with its team of lean stage horses and Porphyri and the puppy. But inasmuch as the conversation which the travellers maintained was not of a kind likely to interest the reader, I might do worse than

say something concerning Nozdrev himself, seeing that he is destined to play no small role in our story.

Nozdrev's face will be familiar to the reader, seeing that every one must have encountered many such. Fellows of the kind are known as "gay young sparks," and, even in their boyhood and school days, earn a reputation for being bons camarades (though with it all they come in for some hard knocks) for the reason that their faces evince an element of frankness, directness, and enterprise which enables them soon to make friends, and, almost before you have had time to look around, to start addressing you in the second person singular. Yet, while cementing such friendships for all eternity, almost always they begin quarrelling the same evening, since, throughout, they are a loquacious, dissipated, high-spirited, over-showy tribe. Indeed, at thirty-five Nozdrev was just what he had been an eighteen and twenty — he was just such a lover of fast living. Nor had his marriage in any way changed him, and the less so since his wife had soon departed to another world, and left behind her two children, whom he did not want, and who were therefore placed in the charge of a good-looking nursemaid. Never at any time could he remain at home for more than a single day, for his keen scent could range over scores and scores of versts, and detect any fair which promised balls and crowds. Consequently in a trice he would be there — quarrelling, and creating disturbances over the gaming-table (like all men of his type, he had a perfect passion for cards) yet playing neither a faultless nor an over-clean game, since he was both a blunderer and able to indulge in a large number of illicit cuts and other devices. The result was that the game often ended in another kind of sport altogether. That is to say, either he received a good kicking, or he had his thick and very handsome whiskers pulled; with the result that on certain occasions he returned home with one of those appendages looking decidedly ragged. Yet his plump, healthy-looking cheeks were so robustly constituted, and contained such an abundance of recreative vigour, that a new whisker soon sprouted in place of the old one, and even surpassed its predecessor. Again (and the following is a phenomenon peculiar to Russia) a very short time would have elapsed before once more he would be consorting with the very cronies who had recently cuffed him — and consorting with them as though nothing whatsoever had happened — no reference to the subject being made by him, and they too holding their tongues.

In short, Nozdrev was, as it were, a man of incident. Never was he present at any gathering without some sort of a fracas occurring thereat. Either he would require to be expelled from the room by gendarmes, or his friends would have to kick him out into the street. At all events, should neither of those occurrences take place, at least he did something of a nature which would not otherwise have

been witnessed. That is to say, should he not play the fool in a buffet to such an extent as to make very one smile, you may be sure that he was engaged in lying to a degree which at times abashed even himself. Moreover, the man lied without reason. For instance, he would begin telling a story to the effect that he possessed a blue-coated or a red-coated horse; until, in the end, his listeners would be forced to leave him with the remark, “You are giving us some fine stuff, old fellow!” Also, men like Nozdrev have a passion for insulting their neighbours without the least excuse afforded. (For that matter, even a man of good standing and of respectable exterior — a man with a star on his breast — may unexpectedly press your hand one day, and begin talking to you on subjects of a nature to give food for serious thought. Yet just as unexpectedly may that man start abusing you to your face — and do so in a manner worthy of a collegiate registrar rather than of a man who wears a star on his breast and aspires to converse on subjects which merit reflection. All that one can do in such a case is to stand shrugging one’s shoulders in amazement.) Well, Nozdrev had just such a weakness. The more he became friendly with a man, the sooner would he insult him, and be ready to spread calumnies as to his reputation. Yet all the while he would consider himself the insulted one’s friend, and, should he meet him again, would greet him in the most amicable style possible, and say, “You rascal, why have you given up coming to see me.” Thus, taken all round, Nozdrev was a person of many aspects and numerous potentialities. In one and the same breath would he propose to go with you whithersoever you might choose (even to the very ends of the world should you so require) or to enter upon any sort of an enterprise with you, or to exchange any commodity for any other commodity which you might care to name. Guns, horses, dogs, all were subjects for barter — though not for profit so far as YOU were concerned. Such traits are mostly the outcome of a boisterous temperament, as is additionally exemplified by the fact that if at a fair he chanced to fall in with a simpleton and to fleece him, he would then proceed to buy a quantity of the very first articles which came to hand — horse-collars, cigar-lighters, dresses for his nursemaid, foals, raisins, silver ewers, lengths of holland, wheatmeal, tobacco, revolvers, dried herrings, pictures, whetstones, crockery, boots, and so forth, until every atom of his money was exhausted. Yet seldom were these articles conveyed home, since, as a rule, the same day saw them lost to some more skilful gambler, in addition to his pipe, his tobacco-pouch, his mouthpiece, his four-horsed turn-out, and his coachman: with the result that, stripped to his very shirt, he would be forced to beg the loan of a vehicle from a friend.

Such was Nozdrev. Some may say that characters of his type have become extinct, that Nozdrevs no longer exist. Alas! such as say this will be wrong; for

many a day must pass before the Nozdrevs will have disappeared from our ken. Everywhere they are to be seen in our midst — the only difference between the new and the old being a difference of garments. Persons of superficial observation are apt to consider that a man clad in a different coat is quite a different person from what he used to be.

To continue. The three vehicles bowled up to the steps of Nozdrev's house, and their occupants alighted. But no preparations whatsoever had been made for the guest's reception, for on some wooden trestles in the centre of the dining-room a couple of peasants were engaged in whitewashing the ceiling and drawling out an endless song as they splashed their stuff about the floor. Hastily bidding peasants and trestles to be gone, Nozdrev departed to another room with further instructions. Indeed, so audible was the sound of his voice as he ordered dinner that Chichikov — who was beginning to feel hungry once more — was enabled to gather that it would be at least five o'clock before a meal of any kind would be available. On his return, Nozdrev invited his companions to inspect his establishment — even though as early as two o'clock he had to announce that nothing more was to be seen.

The tour began with a view of the stables, where the party saw two mares (the one a grey, and the other a roan) and a colt; which latter animal, though far from showy, Nozdrev declared to have cost him ten thousand roubles.

"You NEVER paid ten thousand roubles for the brute!" exclaimed the brother-in-law. "He isn't worth even a thousand."

"By God, I DID pay ten thousand!" asserted Nozdrev.

"You can swear that as much as you like," retorted the other.

"Will you bet that I did not?" asked Nozdrev, but the brother-in-law declined the offer.

Next, Nozdrev showed his guests some empty stalls where a number of equally fine animals (so he alleged) had lately stood. Also there was on view the goat which an old belief still considers to be an indispensable adjunct to such places, even though its apparent use is to pace up and down beneath the noses of the horses as though the place belonged to it. Thereafter the host took his guests to look at a young wolf which he had got tied to a chain. "He is fed on nothing but raw meat," he explained, "for I want him to grow up as fierce as possible." Then the party inspected a pond in which there were "fish of such a size that it would take two men all their time to lift one of them out."

This piece of information was received with renewed incredulity on the part of the brother-in-law.

"Now, Chichikov," went on Nozdrev, "let me show you a truly magnificent brace of dogs. The hardness of their muscles will surprise you, and they have

jowls as sharp as needles."

So saying, he led the way to a small, but neatly-built, shed surrounded on every side with a fenced-in run. Entering this run, the visitors beheld a number of dogs of all sorts and sizes and colours. In their midst Nozdrev looked like a father lording it over his family circle. Erecting their tails — their "stems," as dog fanciers call those members — the animals came bounding to greet the party, and fully a score of them laid their paws upon Chichikov's shoulders. Indeed, one dog was moved with such friendliness that, standing on its hind legs, it licked him on the lips, and so forced him to spit. That done, the visitors duly inspected the couple already mentioned, and expressed astonishment at their muscles. True enough, they were fine animals. Next, the party looked at a Crimean bitch which, though blind and fast nearing her end, had, two years ago, been a truly magnificent dog. At all events, so said Nozdrev. Next came another bitch — also blind; then an inspection of the water-mill, which lacked the spindle-socket wherein the upper stone ought to have been revolving — "fluttering," to use the Russian peasant's quaint expression. "But never mind," said Nozdrev. "Let us proceed to the blacksmith's shop." So to the blacksmith's shop the party proceeded, and when the said shop had been viewed, Nozdrev said as he pointed to a field:

"In this field I have seen such numbers of hares as to render the ground quite invisible. Indeed, on one occasion I, with my own hands, caught a hare by the hind legs."

"You never caught a hare by the hind legs with your hands!" remarked the brother-in-law.

"But I DID" reiterated Nozdrev. "However, let me show you the boundary where my lands come to an end."

So saying, he started to conduct his guests across a field which consisted mostly of moleheaps, and in which the party had to pick their way between strips of ploughed land and of harrowed. Soon Chichikov began to feel weary, for the terrain was so low-lying that in many spots water could be heard squelching underfoot, and though for a while the visitors watched their feet, and stepped carefully, they soon perceived that such a course availed them nothing, and took to following their noses, without either selecting or avoiding the spots where the mire happened to be deeper or the reverse. At length, when a considerable distance had been covered, they caught sight of a boundary-post and a narrow ditch.

"That is the boundary," said Nozdrev. "Everything that you see on this side of the post is mine, as well as the forest on the other side of it, and what lies beyond the forest."

“WHEN did that forest become yours?” asked the brother-in-law. “It cannot be long since you purchased it, for it never USED to be yours.”

“Yes, it isn’t long since I purchased it,” said Nozdrev.

“How long?”

“How long? Why, I purchased it three days ago, and gave a pretty sum for it, as the devil knows!”

“Indeed? Why, three days ago you were at the fair?”

“Wiseacre! Cannot one be at a fair and buy land at the same time? Yes, I WAS at the fair, and my steward bought the land in my absence.”

“Oh, your STEWARD bought it.” The brother-in-law seemed doubtful, and shook his head.

The guests returned by the same route as that by which they had come; whereafter, on reaching the house, Nozdrev conducted them to his study, which contained not a trace of the things usually to be found in such apartments — such things as books and papers. On the contrary, the only articles to be seen were a sword and a brace of guns — the one “of them worth three hundred roubles,” and the other “about eight hundred.” The brother-in-law inspected the articles in question, and then shook his head as before. Next, the visitors were shown some “real Turkish” daggers, of which one bore the inadvertent inscription, “Saveli Sibiriakov , Master Cutler.” Then came a barrel-organ, on which Nozdrev started to play some tune or another. For a while the sounds were not wholly unpleasing, but suddenly something seemed to go wrong, for a mazurka started, to be followed by “Marlborough has gone to the war,” and to this, again, there succeeded an antiquated waltz. Also, long after Nozdrev had ceased to turn the handle, one particularly shrill-pitched pipe which had, throughout, refused to harmonise with the rest kept up a protracted whistling on its own account. Then followed an exhibition of tobacco pipes — pipes of clay, of wood, of meerschaum, pipes smoked and non-smoked; pipes wrapped in chamois leather and not so wrapped; an amber-mounted hookah (a stake won at cards) and a tobacco pouch (worked, it was alleged, by some countess who had fallen in love with Nozdrev at a posthouse, and whose handiwork Nozdrev averred to constitute the “sublimity of superfluity” — a term which, in the Nozdrevian vocabulary, purported to signify the acme of perfection).

Finally, after some hors-d’oeuvres of sturgeon’s back, they sat down to table — the time being then nearly five o’clock. But the meal did not constitute by any means the best of which Chichikov had ever partaken, seeing that some of the dishes were overcooked, and others were scarcely cooked at all. Evidently their compounder had trusted chiefly to inspiration — she had laid hold of the first thing which had happened to come to hand. For instance, had pepper represented

the nearest article within reach, she had added pepper wholesale. Had a cabbage chanced to be so encountered, she had pressed it also into the service. And the same with milk, bacon, and peas. In short, her rule seemed to have been “Make a hot dish of some sort, and some sort of taste will result.” For the rest, Nozdrev drew heavily upon the wine. Even before the soup had been served, he had poured out for each guest a bumper of port and another of “haut” sauterne. (Never in provincial towns is ordinary, vulgar sauterne even procurable.) Next, he called for a bottle of madeira — ”as fine a tipple as ever a field-marshall drank”; but the madeira only burnt the mouth, since the dealers, familiar with the taste of our landed gentry (who love “good” madeira) invariably doctor the stuff with copious dashes of rum and Imperial vodka, in the hope that Russian stomachs will thus be enabled to carry off the lot. After this bottle Nozdrev called for another and “a very special” brand — a brand which he declared to consist of a blend of burgundy and champagne, and of which he poured generous measures into the glasses of Chichikov and the brother-in-law as they sat to right and left of him. But since Chichikov noticed that, after doing so, he added only a scanty modicum of the mixture to his own tumbler, our hero determined to be cautious, and therefore took advantage of a moment when Nozdrev had again plunged into conversation and was yet a third time engaged in refilling his brother-in-law’s glass, to contrive to upset his (Chichikov’s) glass over his plate. In time there came also to table a tart of mountain-ashberries — berries which the host declared to equal, in taste, ripe plums, but which, curiously enough, smacked more of corn brandy. Next, the company consumed a sort of pasty of which the precise name has escaped me, but which the host rendered differently even on the second occasion of its being mentioned. The meal over, and the whole tale of wines tried, the guests still retained their seats — a circumstance which embarrassed Chichikov, seeing that he had no mind to propound his pet scheme in the presence of Nozdrev’s brother-in-law, who was a complete stranger to him. No, that subject called for amicable and PRIVATE conversation. Nevertheless, the brother-in-law appeared to bode little danger, seeing that he had taken on board a full cargo, and was now engaged in doing nothing of a more menacing nature than picking his nose. At length he himself noticed that he was not altogether in a responsible condition; wherefore he rose and began to make excuses for departing homewards, though in a tone so drowsy and lethargic that, to quote the Russian proverb, he might almost have been “pulling a collar on to a horse by the clasps.”

“No, no!” cried Nozdrev. “I am NOT going to let you go.”

“But I MUST go,” replied the brother-in-law. “Don’t dry to hinder me. You are annoying me greatly.”

“Rubbish! We are going to play a game of banker.”

“No, no. You must play it without me, my friend. My wife is expecting me at home, and I must go and tell her all about the fair. Yes, I MUST go if I am to please her. Do not try to detain me.”

“Your wife be — ! But have you REALLY an important piece of business with her?”

“No, no, my friend. The real reason is that she is a good and trustful woman, and that she does a great deal for me. The tears spring to my eyes as I think of it. Do not detain me. As an honourable man I say that I must go. Of that I do assure you in all sincerity.”

“Oh, let him go,” put in Chichikov under his breath. “What use will he be here?”

“Very well,” said Nozdrev, “though, damn it, I do not like fellows who lose their heads.” Then he added to his brother-in-law: “All right, Thetuk . Off you go to your wife and your woman’s talk and may the devil go with you!”

“Do not insult me with the term Thetuk,” retorted the brother-in-law. “To her I owe my life, and she is a dear, good woman, and has shown me much affection. At the very thought of it I could weep. You see, she will be asking me what I have seen at the fair, and tell her about it I must, for she is such a dear, good woman.”

“Then off you go to her with your pack of lies. Here is your cap.”

“No, good friend, you are not to speak of her like that. By so doing you offend me greatly — I say that she is a dear, good woman.”

“Then run along home to her.”

“Yes, I am just going. Excuse me for having been unable to stay. Gladly would I have stayed, but really I cannot.”

The brother-in-law repeated his excuses again and again without noticing that he had entered the britchka, that it had passed through the gates, and that he was now in the open country. Permissibly we may suppose that his wife succeeded in gleaning from him few details of the fair.

“What a fool!” said Nozdrev as, standing by the window, he watched the departing vehicle. “Yet his off-horse is not such a bad one. For a long time past I have been wanting to get hold of it. A man like that is simply impossible. Yes, he is a Thetuk, a regular Thetuk.”

With that they repaired to the parlour, where, on Porphyri bringing candles, Chichikov perceived that his host had produced a pack of cards.

“I tell you what,” said Nozdrev, pressing the sides of the pack together, and then slightly bending them, so that the pack cracked and a card flew out. “How would it be if, to pass the time, I were to make a bank of three hundred?”

Chichikov pretended not to have heard him, but remarked with an air of having just recollected a forgotten point:

“By the way, I had omitted to say that I have a request to make of you.”

“What request?”

“First give me your word that you will grant it.”

“What is the request, I say?”

“Then you give me your word, do you?”

“Certainly.”

“Your word of honour?”

“My word of honour.”

“This, then, is my request. I presume that you have a large number of dead serfs whose names have not yet been removed from the revision list?”

“I have. But why do you ask?”

“Because I want you to make them over to me.”

“Of what use would they be to you?”

“Never mind. I have a purpose in wanting them.”

“What purpose?”

“A purpose which is strictly my own affair. In short, I need them.”

“You seem to have hatched a very fine scheme. Out with it, now! What is in the wind?”

“How could I have hatched such a scheme as you say? One could not very well hatch a scheme out of such a trifle as this.”

“Then for what purpose do you want the serfs?”

“Oh, the curiosity of the man! He wants to poke his fingers into and smell over every detail!”

“Why do you decline to say what is in your mind? At all events, until you DO say I shall not move in the matter.”

“But how would it benefit you to know what my plans are? A whim has seized me. That is all. Nor are you playing fair. You have given me your word of honour, yet now you are trying to back out of it.”

“No matter what you desire me to do, I decline to do it until you have told me your purpose.”

“What am I to say to the fellow?” thought Chichikov. He reflected for a moment, and then explained that he wanted the dead souls in order to acquire a better standing in society, since at present he possessed little landed property, and only a handful of serfs.

“You are lying,” said Nozdrev without even letting him finish. “Yes, you are lying my good friend.”

Chichikov himself perceived that his device had been a clumsy one, and his

pretext weak. “I must tell him straight out,” he said to himself as he pulled his wits together.

“Should I tell you the truth,” he added aloud, “I must beg of you not to repeat it. The truth is that I am thinking of getting married. But, unfortunately, my betrothed’s father and mother are very ambitious people, and do not want me to marry her, since they desire the bridegroom to own not less than three hundred souls, whereas I own but a hundred and fifty, and that number is not sufficient.”

“Again you are lying,” said Nozdrev.

“Then look here; I have been lying only to this extent.” And Chichikov marked off upon his little finger a minute portion.

“Nevertheless I will bet my head that you have been lying throughout.”

“Come, come! That is not very civil of you. Why should I have been lying?”

“Because I know you, and know that you are a regular skinflint. I say that in all friendship. If I possessed any power over you I should hang you to the nearest tree.”

This remark hurt Chichikov, for at any time he disliked expressions gross or offensive to decency, and never allowed any one — no, not even persons of the highest rank — to behave towards him with an undue measure of familiarity. Consequently his sense of umbrage on the present occasion was unbounded.

“By God, I WOULD hang you!” repeated Nozdrev. “I say this frankly, and not for the purpose of offending you, but simply to communicate to you my friendly opinion.”

“To everything there are limits,” retorted Chichikov stiffly. “If you want to indulge in speeches of that sort you had better return to the barracks.”

However, after a pause he added:

“If you do not care to give me the serfs, why not SELL them?”

“SELL them? *I* know you, you rascal! You wouldn’t give me very much for them, WOULD you?”

“A nice fellow! Look here. What are they to you? So many diamonds, eh?”

“I thought so! *I* know you!”

“Pardon me, but I could wish that you were a member of the Jewish persuasion. You would give them to me fast enough then.”

“On the contrary, to show you that I am not a usurer, I will decline to ask of you a single kopeck for the serfs. All that you need do is to buy that colt of mine, and then I will throw in the serfs in addition.”

“But what should *I* want with your colt?” said Chichikov, genuinely astonished at the proposal.

“What should YOU want with him? Why, I have bought him for ten thousand roubles, and am ready to let you have him for four.”

“I ask you again: of what use could the colt possibly be to me? I am not the keeper of a breeding establishment.”

“Ah! I see that you fail to understand me. Let me suggest that you pay down at once three thousand roubles of the purchase money, and leave the other thousand until later.”

“But I do not mean to buy the colt, damn him!”

“Then buy the roan mare.”

“No, nor the roan mare.”

“Then you shall have both the mare and the grey horse which you have seen in my stables for two thousand roubles.”

“I require no horses at all.”

“But you would be able to sell them again. You would be able to get thrice their purchase price at the very first fair that was held.”

“Then sell them at that fair yourself, seeing that you are so certain of making a triple profit.”

“Oh, I should make it fast enough, only I want YOU to benefit by the transaction.”

Chichikov duly thanked his interlocutor, but continued to decline either the grey horse or the roan mare.

“Then buy a few dogs,” said Nozdrev. “I can sell you a couple of hides a-quiver, ears well pricked, coats like quills, ribs barrel-shaped, and paws so tucked up as scarcely to graze the ground when they run.”

“Of what use would those dogs be to me? I am not a sportsman.”

“But I WANT you to have the dogs. Listen. If you won’t have the dogs, then buy my barrel-organ. ‘Tis a splendid instrument. As a man of honour I can tell you that, when new, it cost me fifteen hundred roubles. Well, you shall have it for nine hundred.”

“Come, come! What should I want with a barrel-organ? I am not a German, to go hauling it about the roads and begging for coppers.”

“But this is quite a different kind of organ from the one which Germans take about with them. You see, it is a REAL organ. Look at it for yourself. It is made of the best wood. I will take you to have another view of it.”

And seizing Chichikov by the hand, Nozdrev drew him towards the other room, where, in spite of the fact that Chichikov, with his feet planted firmly on the floor, assured his host, again and again, that he knew exactly what the organ was like, he was forced once more to hear how Marlborough went to the war.

“Then, since you don’t care to give me any money for it,” persisted Nozdrev, “listen to the following proposal. I will give you the barrel-organ and all the dead souls which I possess, and in return you shall give me your britchka, and another

three hundred roubles into the bargain."

"Listen to the man! In that case, what should I have left to drive in?"

"Oh, I would stand you another britchka. Come to the coach-house, and I will show you the one I mean. It only needs repainting to look a perfectly splendid britchka."

"The ramping, incorrigible devil!" thought Chichikov to himself as at all hazards he resolved to escape from britchkas, organs, and every species of dog, however marvellously barrel-ribbed and tucked up of paw.

"And in exchange, you shall have the britchka, the barrel-organ, and the dead souls," repeated Nozdrev.

"I must decline the offer," said Chichikov.

"And why?"

"Because I don't WANT the things — I am full up already."

"I can see that you don't know how things should be done between good friends and comrades. Plainly you are a man of two faces."

"What do you mean, you fool? Think for yourself. Why should I acquire articles which I don't want?"

"Say no more about it, if you please. I have quite taken your measure. But see here. Should you care to play a game of banker? I am ready to stake both the dead souls and the barrel-organ at cards."

"No; to leave an issue to cards means to submit oneself to the unknown," said Chichikov, covertly glancing at the pack which Nozdrev had got in his hands. Somehow the way in which his companion had cut that pack seemed to him suspicious.

"Why 'to the unknown'?" asked Nozdrev. "There is no such thing as 'the unknown.' Should luck be on your side, you may win the devil knows what a haul. Oh, luck, luck!" he went on, beginning to deal, in the hope of raising a quarrel. "Here is the cursed nine upon which, the other night, I lost everything. All along I knew that I should lose my money. Said I to myself: 'The devil take you, you false, accursed card!'"

Just as Nozdrev uttered the words Porphyri entered with a fresh bottle of liquor; but Chichikov declined either to play or to drink.

"Why do you refuse to play?" asked Nozdrev.

"Because I feel indisposed to do so. Moreover, I must confess that I am no great hand at cards."

"WHY are you no great hand at them?"

Chichikov shrugged his shoulders. "Because I am not," he replied.

"You are no great hand at ANYTHING, I think."

"What does that matter? God has made me so."

“The truth is that you are a Thetuk, and nothing else. Once upon a time I believed you to be a good fellow, but now I see that you don’t understand civility. One cannot speak to you as one would to an intimate, for there is no frankness or sincerity about you. You are a regular Sobakevitch — just such another as he.”

“For what reason are you abusing me? Am I in any way at fault for declining to play cards? Sell me those souls if you are the man to hesitate over such rubbish.”

“The foul fiend take you! I was about to have given them to you for nothing, but now you shan’t have them at all — not if you offer me three kingdoms in exchange. Henceforth I will have nothing to do with you, you cobbler, you dirty blacksmith! Porphyri, go and tell the ostler to give the gentleman’s horses no oats, but only hay.”

This development Chichikov had hardly expected.

“And do you,” added Nozdrev to his guest, “get out of my sight.”

Yet in spite of this, host and guest took supper together — even though on this occasion the table was adorned with no wines of fictitious nomenclature, but only with a bottle which reared its solitary head beside a jug of what is usually known as vin ordinaire. When supper was over Nozdrev said to Chichikov as he conducted him to a side room where a bed had been made up:

“This is where you are to sleep. I cannot very well wish you good-night.”

Left to himself on Nozdrev’s departure, Chichikov felt in a most unenviable frame of mind. Full of inward vexation, he blamed himself bitterly for having come to see this man and so wasted valuable time; but even more did he blame himself for having told him of his scheme — for having acted as carelessly as a child or a madman. Of a surety the scheme was not one which ought to have been confided to a man like Nozdrev, for he was a worthless fellow who might lie about it, and append additions to it, and spread such stories as would give rise to God knows what scandals. “This is indeed bad!” Chichikov said to himself. “I have been an absolute fool.” Consequently he spent an uneasy night — this uneasiness being increased by the fact that a number of small, but vigorous, insects so feasted upon him that he could do nothing but scratch the spots and exclaim, “The devil take you and Nozdrev alike!” Only when morning was approaching did he fall asleep. On rising, he made it his first business (after donning dressing-gown and slippers) to cross the courtyard to the stable, for the purpose of ordering Selifan to harness the britchka. Just as he was returning from his errand he encountered Nozdrev, clad in a dressing-gown, and holding a pipe between his teeth.

Host and guest greeted one another in friendly fashion, and Nozdrev inquired

how Chichikov had slept.

"Fairly well," replied Chichikov, but with a touch of dryness in his tone.

"The same with myself," said Nozdrev. "The truth is that such a lot of nasty brutes kept crawling over me that even to speak of it gives me the shudders. Likewise, as the effect of last night's doings, a whole squadron of soldiers seemed to be camping on my chest, and giving me a flogging. Ugh! And whom also do you think I saw in a dream? You would never guess. Why, it was Staff-Captain Potsieluev and Lieutenant Kuvshinnikov!"

"Yes," though Chichikov to himself, "and I wish that they too would give you a public thrashing!"

"I felt so ill!" went on Nozdrev. "And just after I had fallen asleep something DID come and sting me. Probably it was a party of hag fleas. Now, dress yourself, and I will be with you presently. First of all I must give that scoundrel of a bailiff a wigging."

Chichikov departed to his own room to wash and dress; which process completed, he entered the dining-room to find the table laid with tea-things and a bottle of rum. Clearly no broom had yet touched the place, for there remained traces of the previous night's dinner and supper in the shape of crumbs thrown over the floor and tobacco ash on the tablecloth. The host himself, when he entered, was still clad in a dressing-gown exposing a hairy chest; and as he sat holding his pipe in his hand, and drinking tea from a cup, he would have made a model for the sort of painter who prefers to portray gentlemen of the less curled and scented order.

"What think you?" he asked of Chichikov after a short silence. "Are you willing NOW to play me for those souls?"

"I have told you that I never play cards. If the souls are for sale, I will buy them."

"I decline to sell them. Such would not be the course proper between friends. But a game of banker would be quite another matter. Let us deal the cards."

"I have told you that I decline to play."

"And you will not agree to an exchange?"

"No."

"Then look here. Suppose we play a game of chess. If you win, the souls shall be yours. There are lot which I should like to see crossed off the revision list. Hi, Porphyri! Bring me the chessboard."

"You are wasting your time. I will play neither chess nor cards."

"But chess is different from playing with a bank. In chess there can be neither luck nor cheating, for everything depends upon skill. In fact, I warn you that I cannot possibly play with you unless you allow me a move or two in advance."

“The same with me,” thought Chichikov. “Shall I, or shall I not, play this fellow? I used not to be a bad chess-player, and it is a sport in which he would find it more difficult to be up to his tricks.”

“Very well,” he added aloud. “I WILL play you at chess.”

“And stake the souls for a hundred roubles?” asked Nozdrev.

“No. Why for a hundred? Would it not be sufficient to stake them for fifty?”

“No. What would be the use of fifty? Nevertheless, for the hundred roubles I will throw in a moderately old puppy, or else a gold seal and watch-chain.”

“Very well,” assented Chichikov.

“Then how many moves are you going to allow me?”

“Is THAT to be part of the bargain? Why, none, of course.”

“At least allow me two.”

“No, none. I myself am only a poor player.”

“*I* know you and your poor play,” said Nozdrev, moving a chessman.

“In fact, it is a long time since last I had a chessman in my hand,” replied Chichikov, also moving a piece.

“Ah! *I* know you and your poor play,” repeated Nozdrev, moving a second chessman.

“I say again that it is a long time since last I had a chessman in my hand.” And Chichikov, in his turn, moved.

“Ah! *I* know you and your poor play,” repeated Nozdrev, for the third time as he made a third move. At the same moment the cuff of one of his sleeves happened to dislodge another chessman from its position.

“Again, I say,” said Chichikov, “that ‘tis a long time since last — But hi! look here! Put that piece back in its place!”

“What piece?”

“This one.” And almost as Chichikov spoke he saw a third chessman coming into view between the queens. God only knows whence that chessman had materialised.

“No, no!” shouted Chichikov as he rose from the table. “It is impossible to play with a man like you. People don’t move three pieces at once.”

“How ‘three pieces’? All that I have done is to make a mistake — to move one of my pieces by accident. If you like, I will forfeit it to you.”

“And whence has the third piece come?”

“What third piece?”

“The one now standing between the queens?”

“‘Tis one of your own pieces. Surely you are forgetting?”

“No, no, my friend. I have counted every move, and can remember each one. That piece has only just become added to the board. Put it back in its place, I

say.”

“Its place? Which IS its place?” But Nozdrev had reddened a good deal. “I perceive you to be a strategist at the game.”

“No, no, good friend. YOU are the strategist — though an unsuccessful one, as it happens.”

“Then of what are you supposing me capable? Of cheating you?”

“I am not supposing you capable of anything. All that I say is that I will not play with you any more.”

“But you can’t refuse to,” said Nozdrev, growing heated. “You see, the game has begun.”

“Nevertheless, I have a right not to continue it, seeing that you are not playing as an honest man should do.”

“You are lying — you cannot truthfully say that.”

“‘Tis you who are lying.”

“But I have NOT cheated. Consequently you cannot refuse to play, but must continue the game to a finish.”

“You cannot force me to play,” retorted Chichikov coldly as, turning to the chessboard, he swept the pieces into confusion.

Nozdrev approached Chichikov with a manner so threatening that the other fell back a couple of paces.

“I WILL force you to play,” said Nozdrev. “It is no use you making a mess of the chessboard, for I can remember every move. We will replace the chessmen exactly as they were.”

“No, no, my friend. The game is over, and I play you no more.”

“You say that you will not?”

“Yes. Surely you can see for yourself that such a thing is impossible?”

“That cock won’t fight. Say at once that you refuse to play with me.” And Nozdrev approached a step nearer.

“Very well; I DO say that,” replied Chichikov, and at the same moment raised his hands towards his face, for the dispute was growing heated. Nor was the act of caution altogether unwarranted, for Nozdrev also raised his fist, and it may be that one of her hero’s plump, pleasant-looking cheeks would have sustained an indelible insult had not he (Chichikov) parried the blow and, seizing Nozdrev by his whirling arms, held them fast.

“Porphyri! Pavlushka!” shouted Nozdrev as madly he strove to free himself.

On hearing the words, Chichikov, both because he wished to avoid rendering the servants witnesses of the unedifying scene and because he felt that it would be of no avail to hold Nozdrev any longer, let go of the latter’s arms; but at the same moment Porphyri and Pavlushka entered the room — a pair of stout rascals

with whom it would be unwise to meddle.

“Do you, or do you not, intend to finish the game?” said Nozdrev. “Give me a direct answer.”

“No; it will not be possible to finish the game,” replied Chichikov, glancing out of the window. He could see his britchka standing ready for him, and Selifan evidently awaiting orders to draw up to the entrance steps. But from the room there was no escape, since in the doorway was posted the couple of well-built serving-men.

“Then it is as I say? You refuse to finish the game?” repeated Nozdrev, his face as red as fire.

“I would have finished it had you played like a man of honour. But, as it is, I cannot.”

“You cannot, eh, you villain? You find that you cannot as soon as you find that you are not winning? Thrash him, you fellows!” And as he spoke Nozdrev grasped the cherrywood shank of his pipe. Chichikov turned as white as a sheet. He tried to say something, but his quivering lips emitted no sound. “Thrash him!” again shouted Nozdrev as he rushed forward in a state of heat and perspiration more proper to a warrior who is attacking an impregnable fortress. “Thrash him!” again he shouted in a voice like that of some half-demented lieutenant whose desperate bravery has acquired such a reputation that orders have had to be issued that his hands shall be held lest he attempt deeds of over-presumptuous daring. Seized with the military spirit, however, the lieutenant’s head begins to whirl, and before his eye there flits the image of Suvorov . He advances to the great encounter, and impulsively cries, “Forward, my sons!” — cries it without reflecting that he may be spoiling the plan of the general attack, that millions of rifles may be protruding their muzzles through the embrasures of the impregnable, towering walls of the fortress, that his own impotent assault may be destined to be dissipated like dust before the wind, and that already there may have been launched on its whistling career the bullet which is to close for ever his vociferous throat. However, if Nozdrev resembled the headstrong, desperate lieutenant whom we have just pictured as advancing upon a fortress, at least the fortress itself in no way resembled the impregnable stronghold which I have described. As a matter of fact, the fortress became seized with a panic which drove its spirit into its boots. First of all, the chair with which Chichikov (the fortress in question) sought to defend himself was wrested from his grasp by the serfs, and then — blinking and neither alive nor dead — he turned to parry the Circassian pipe-stem of his host. In fact, God only knows what would have happened had not the fates been pleased by a miracle to deliver Chichikov’s elegant back and shoulders from the onslaught. Suddenly, and as unexpectedly

as though the sound had come from the clouds, there made itself heard the tinkling notes of a collar-bell, and then the rumble of wheels approaching the entrance steps, and, lastly, the snorting and hard breathing of a team of horses as a vehicle came to a standstill. Involuntarily all present glanced through the window, and saw a man clad in a semi-military greatcoat leap from a buggy. After making an inquiry or two in the hall, he entered the dining-room just at the juncture when Chichikov, almost swooning with terror, had found himself placed in about as awkward a situation as could well befall a mortal man.

"Kindly tell me which of you is Monsieur Nozdrev?" said the unknown with a glance of perplexity both at the person named (who was still standing with pipe-shank upraised) and at Chichikov (who was just beginning to recover from his unpleasant predicament).

"Kindly tell ME whom I have the honour of addressing?" retorted Nozdrev as he approached the official.

"I am the Superintendent of Rural Police."

"And what do you want?"

"I have come to fulfil a commission imposed upon me. That is to say, I have come to place you under arrest until your case shall have been decided."

"Rubbish! What case, pray?"

"The case in which you involved yourself when, in a drunken condition, and through the instrumentality of a walking-stick, you offered grave offence to the person of Landowner Maksimov."

"You lie! To your face I tell you that never in my life have I set eyes upon Landowner Maksimov."

"Good sir, allow me to represent to you that I am a Government officer. Speeches like that you may address to your servants, but not to me."

At this point Chichikov, without waiting for Nozdrev's reply, seized his cap, slipped behind the Superintendent's back, rushed out on to the verandah, sprang into his britchka, and ordered Selifan to drive like the wind.

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CHAPTER V

Certainly Chichikov was a thorough coward, for, although the britchka pursued its headlong course until Nozdrev's establishment had disappeared behind hillocks and hedgerows, our hero continued to glance nervously behind him, as though every moment expecting to see a stern chase begin. His breath came with difficulty, and when he tried his heart with his hands he could feel it fluttering like a quail caught in a net.

"What a sweat the fellow has thrown me into!" he thought to himself, while many a dire and forceful aspiration passed through his mind. Indeed, the expressions to which he gave vent were most inelegant in their nature. But what was to be done next? He was a Russian and thoroughly aroused. The affair had been no joke. "But for the Superintendent," he reflected, "I might never again have looked upon God's daylight — I might have vanished like a bubble on a pool, and left neither trace nor posterity nor property nor an honourable name for my future offspring to inherit!" (it seemed that our hero was particularly anxious with regard to his possible issue).

"What a scurvy barin!" mused Selifan as he drove along. "Never have I seen such a barin. I should like to spit in his face. 'Tis better to allow a man nothing to eat than to refuse to feed a horse properly. A horse needs his oats — they are his proper fare. Even if you make a man procure a meal at his own expense, don't deny a horse his oats, for he ought always to have them."

An equally poor opinion of Nozdrev seemed to be cherished also by the steeds, for not only were the bay and the Assessor clearly out of spirits, but even the skewbald was wearing a dejected air. True, at home the skewbald got none but the poorer sorts of oats to eat, and Selifan never filled his trough without having first called him a villain; but at least they WERE oats, and not hay — they were stuff which could be chewed with a certain amount of relish. Also, there was the fact that at intervals he could intrude his long nose into his companions' troughs (especially when Selifan happened to be absent from the stable) and ascertain what THEIR provender was like. But at Nozdrev's there had been nothing but hay! That was not right. All three horses felt greatly discontented.

But presently the malcontents had their reflections cut short in a very rude and unexpected manner. That is to say, they were brought back to practicalities by coming into violent collision with a six-horsed vehicle, while upon their heads

descended both a babel of cries from the ladies inside and a storm of curses and abuse from the coachman. “Ah, you damned fool!” he vociferated. “I shouted to you loud enough! Draw out, you old raven, and keep to the right! Are you drunk?” Selifan himself felt conscious that he had been careless, but since a Russian does not care to admit a fault in the presence of strangers, he retorted with dignity: “Why have you run into US? Did you leave your eyes behind you at the last tavern that you stopped at?” With that he started to back the britchka, in the hope that it might get clear of the other’s harness; but this would not do, for the pair were too hopelessly intertwined. Meanwhile the skewbald snuffed curiously at his new acquaintances as they stood planted on either side of him; while the ladies in the vehicle regarded the scene with an expression of terror. One of them was an old woman, and the other a damsel of about sixteen. A mass of golden hair fell daintily from a small head, and the oval of her comely face was as shapely as an egg, and white with the transparent whiteness seen when the hands of a housewife hold a new-laid egg to the light to let the sun’s rays filter through its shell. The same tint marked the maiden’s ears where they glowed in the sunshine, and, in short, what with the tears in her wide-open, arresting eyes, she presented so attractive a picture that our hero bestowed upon it more than a passing glance before he turned his attention to the hubbub which was being raised among the horses and the coachmen.

“Back out, you rook of Nizhni Novgorod!” the strangers’ coachman shouted. Selifan tightened his reins, and the other driver did the same. The horses stepped back a little, and then came together again — this time getting a leg or two over the traces. In fact, so pleased did the skewbald seem with his new friends that he refused to stir from the melee into which an unforeseen chance had plunged him. Laying his muzzle lovingly upon the neck of one of his recently-acquired acquaintances, he seemed to be whispering something in that acquaintance’s ear — and whispering pretty nonsense, too, to judge from the way in which that confidant kept shaking his ears.

At length peasants from a village which happened to be near the scene of the accident tackled the mess; and since a spectacle of that kind is to the Russian muzhik what a newspaper or a club-meeting is to the German, the vehicles soon became the centre of a crowd, and the village denuded even of its old women and children. The traces were disentangled, and a few slaps on the nose forced the skewbald to draw back a little; after which the teams were straightened out and separated. Nevertheless, either sheer obstinacy or vexation at being parted from their new friends caused the strange team absolutely to refuse to move a leg. Their driver laid the whip about them, but still they stood as though rooted to the spot. At length the participatory efforts of the peasants rose to an

unprecedented degree of enthusiasm, and they shouted in an intermittent chorus the advice, “Do you, Andrusha, take the head of the trace horse on the right, while Uncle Mitai mounts the shaft horse. Get up, Uncle Mitai.” Upon that the lean, long, and red-bearded Uncle Mitai mounted the shaft horse; in which position he looked like a village steeple or the winder which is used to raise water from wells. The coachman whipped up his steeds afresh, but nothing came of it, and Uncle Mitai had proved useless. “Hold on, hold on!” shouted the peasants again. “Do you, Uncle Mitai, mount the trace horse, while Uncle Minai mounts the shaft horse.” Whereupon Uncle Minai — a peasant with a pair of broad shoulders, a beard as black as charcoal, and a belly like the huge samovar in which sbiten is brewed for all attending a local market — hastened to seat himself upon the shaft horse, which almost sank to the ground beneath his weight. “NOW they will go all right!” the muzhiks exclaimed. “Lay it on hot, lay it on hot! Give that sorrel horse the whip, and make him squirm like a koramora .” Nevertheless, the affair in no way progressed; wherefore, seeing that flogging was of no use, Uncles Mitai and Minai BOTH mounted the sorrel, while Andrusha seated himself upon the trace horse. Then the coachman himself lost patience, and sent the two Uncles about their business — and not before it was time, seeing that the horses were steaming in a way that made it clear that, unless they were first winded, they would never reach the next posthouse. So they were given a moment’s rest. That done, they moved off of their own accord!

Throughout, Chichikov had been gazing at the young unknown with great attention, and had even made one or two attempts to enter into conversation with her: but without success. Indeed, when the ladies departed, it was as in a dream that he saw the girl’s comely presence, the delicate features of her face, and the slender outline of her form vanish from his sight; it was as in a dream that once more he saw only the road, the britchka, the three horses, Selifan, and the bare, empty fields. Everywhere in life — yes, even in the plainest, the dingiest ranks of society, as much as in those which are uniformly bright and presentable — a man may happen upon some phenomenon which is so entirely different from those which have hitherto fallen to his lot. Everywhere through the web of sorrow of which our lives are woven there may suddenly break a clear, radiant thread of joy; even as suddenly along the street of some poor, poverty-stricken village which, ordinarily, sees nought but a farm waggon there may came bowling a gorgeous coach with plated harness, picturesque horses, and a glitter of glass, so that the peasants stand gaping, and do not resume their caps until long after the strange equipage has become lost to sight. Thus the golden-haired maiden makes a sudden, unexpected appearance in our story, and as suddenly, as unexpectedly, disappears. Indeed, had it not been that the person concerned was

Chichikov, and not some youth of twenty summers — a hussar or a student or, in general, a man standing on the threshold of life — what thoughts would not have sprung to birth, and stirred and spoken, within him; for what a length of time would he not have stood entranced as he stared into the distance and forgot alike his journey, the business still to be done, the possibility of incurring loss through lingering — himself, his vocation, the world, and everything else that the world contains!

But in the present case the hero was a man of middle-age, and of cautious and frigid temperament. True, he pondered over the incident, but in more deliberate fashion than a younger man would have done. That is to say, his reflections were not so irresponsible and unsteady. “She was a comely damsel,” he said to himself as he opened his snuff-box and took a pinch. “But the important point is: Is she also a NICE DAMSEL? One thing she has in her favour — and that is that she appears only just to have left school, and not to have had time to become womanly in the worser sense. At present, therefore, she is like a child. Everything in her is simple, and she says just what she thinks, and laughs merely when she feels inclined. Such a damsel might be made into anything — or she might be turned into worthless rubbish. The latter, I surmise, for trudging after her she will have a fond mother and a bevy of aunts, and so forth — persons who, within a year, will have filled her with womanishness to the point where her own father wouldn’t know her. And to that there will be added pride and affectation, and she will begin to observe established rules, and to rack her brains as to how, and how much, she ought to talk, and to whom, and where, and so forth. Every moment will see her growing timorous and confused lest she be saying too much. Finally, she will develop into a confirmed prevaricator, and end by marrying the devil knows whom!” Chichikov paused awhile. Then he went on: “Yet I should like to know who she is, and who her father is, and whether he is a rich landowner of good standing, or merely a respectable man who has acquired a fortune in the service of the Government. Should he allow her, on marriage, a dowry of, say, two hundred thousand roubles, she will be a very nice catch indeed. She might even, so to speak, make a man of good breeding happy.”

Indeed, so attractively did the idea of the two hundred thousand roubles begin to dance before his imagination that he felt a twinge of self-reproach because, during the hubbub, he had not inquired of the postillion or the coachman who the travellers might be. But soon the sight of Sobakevitch’s country house dissipated his thoughts, and forced him to return to his stock subject of reflection.

Sobakevitch’s country house and estate were of very fair size, and on each side of the mansion were expanses of birch and pine forest in two shades of green. The wooden edifice itself had dark-grey walls and a red-gabled roof, for it

was a mansion of the kind which Russia builds for her military settlers and for German colonists. A noticeable circumstance was the fact that the taste of the architect had differed from that of the proprietor — the former having manifestly been a pedant and desirous of symmetry, and the latter having wished only for comfort. Consequently he (the proprietor) had dispensed with all windows on one side of the mansion, and had caused to be inserted, in their place, only a small aperture which, doubtless, was intended to light an otherwise dark lumber-room. Likewise, the architect's best efforts had failed to cause the pediment to stand in the centre of the building, since the proprietor had had one of its four original columns removed. Evidently durability had been considered throughout, for the courtyard was enclosed by a strong and very high wooden fence, and both the stables, the coach-house, and the culinary premises were partially constructed of beams warranted to last for centuries. Nay, even the wooden huts of the peasantry were wonderful in the solidity of their construction, and not a clay wall or a carved pattern or other device was to be seen. Everything fitted exactly into its right place, and even the draw-well of the mansion was fashioned of the oakwood usually thought suitable only for mills or ships. In short, wherever Chichikov's eye turned he saw nothing that was not free from shoddy make and well and skilfully arranged. As he approached the entrance steps he caught sight of two faces peering from a window. One of them was that of a woman in a mobcap with features as long and as narrow as a cucumber, and the other that of a man with features as broad and as short as the Moldavian pumpkins (known as gorlianki) whereof balallaiki — the species of light, two-stringed instrument which constitutes the pride and the joy of the gay young fellow of twenty as he sits winking and smiling at the white-necked, white-bosomed maidens who have gathered to listen to his low-pitched tinkling — are fashioned. This scrutiny made, both faces withdrew, and there came out on to the entrance steps a lacquey clad in a grey jacket and a stiff blue collar. This functionary conducted Chichikov into the hall, where he was met by the master of the house himself, who requested his guest to enter, and then led him into the inner part of the mansion.

A covert glance at Sobakevitch showed our hero that his host exactly resembled a moderate-sized bear. To complete the resemblance, Sobakevitch's long frockcoat and baggy trousers were of the precise colour of a bear's hide, while, when shuffling across the floor, he made a criss-cross motion of the legs, and had, in addition, a constant habit of treading upon his companion's toes. As for his face, it was of the warm, ardent tint of a piatok . Persons of this kind — persons to whose designing nature has devoted not much thought, and in the fashioning of whose frames she has used no instruments so delicate as a file or a

gimlet and so forth — are not uncommon. Such persons she merely roughhews. One cut with a hatchet, and there results a nose; another such cut with a hatchet, and there materialises a pair of lips; two thrusts with a drill, and there issues a pair of eyes. Lastly, scorning to plane down the roughness, she sends out that person into the world, saying: “There is another live creature.” Sobakevitch was just such a ragged, curiously put together figure — though the above model would seem to have been followed more in his upper portion than in his lower. One result was that he seldom turned his head to look at the person with whom he was speaking, but, rather, directed his eyes towards, say, the stove corner or the doorway. As host and guest crossed the dining-room Chichikov directed a second glance at his companion. “He is a bear, and nothing but a bear,” he thought to himself. And, indeed, the strange comparison was inevitable. Incidentally, Sobakevitch’s Christian name and patronymic were Michael Semenovitch. Of his habit of treading upon other people’s toes Chichikov had become fully aware; wherefore he stepped cautiously, and, throughout, allowed his host to take the lead. As a matter of fact, Sobakevitch himself seemed conscious of his failing, for at intervals he would inquire: “I hope I have not hurt you?” and Chichikov, with a word of thanks, would reply that as yet he had sustained no injury.

At length they reached the drawing-room, where Sobakevitch pointed to an armchair, and invited his guest to be seated. Chichikov gazed with interest at the walls and the pictures. In every such picture there were portrayed either young men or Greek generals of the type of Movrogordato (clad in a red uniform and breaches), Kanaris, and others; and all these heroes were depicted with a solidity of thigh and a wealth of moustache which made the beholder simply shudder with awe. Among them there were placed also, according to some unknown system, and for some unknown reason, firstly, Bagration — tall and thin, and with a cluster of small flags and cannon beneath him, and the whole set in the narrowest of frames — and, secondly, the Greek heroine, Bobelina, whose legs looked larger than do the whole bodies of the drawing-room dandies of the present day. Apparently the master of the house was himself a man of health and strength, and therefore liked to have his apartments adorned with none but folk of equal vigour and robustness. Lastly, in the window, and suspected cheek by jowl with Bobelina, there hung a cage whence at intervals there peered forth a white-spotted blackbird. Like everything else in the apartment, it bore a strong resemblance to Sobakevitch. When host and guest had been conversing for two minutes or so the door opened, and there entered the hostess — a tall lady in a cap adorned with ribands of domestic colouring and manufacture. She entered deliberately, and held her head as erect as a palm.

“This is my wife, Theodulia Ivanovna,” said Sobakevitch.

Chichikov approached and took her hand. The fact that she raised it nearly to the level of his lips apprised him of the circumstance that it had just been rinsed in cucumber oil.

“My dear, allow me to introduce Paul Ivanovitch Chichikov,” added Sobakevitch. “He has the honour of being acquainted both with our Governor and with our Postmaster.”

Upon this Theodulia Ivanovna requested her guest to be seated, and accompanied the invitation with the kind of bow usually employed only by actresses who are playing the role of queens. Next, she took a seat upon the sofa, drew around her her merino gown, and sat thereafter without moving an eyelid or an eyebrow. As for Chichikov, he glanced upwards, and once more caught sight of Kanaris with his fat thighs and interminable moustache, and of Bobelina and the blackbird. For fully five minutes all present preserved a complete silence — the only sound audible being that of the blackbird’s beak against the wooden floor of the cage as the creature fished for grains of corn. Meanwhile Chichikov again surveyed the room, and saw that everything in it was massive and clumsy in the highest degree; as also that everything was curiously in keeping with the master of the house. For example, in one corner of the apartment there stood a hazelwood bureau with a bulging body on four grotesque legs — the perfect image of a bear. Also, the tables and the chairs were of the same ponderous, unrestful order, and every single article in the room appeared to be saying either, “I, too, am a Sobakevitch,” or “I am exactly like Sobakevitch.”

“I heard speak of you one day when I was visiting the President of the Council,” said Chichikov, on perceiving that no one else had a mind to begin a conversation. “That was on Thursday last. We had a very pleasant evening.”

“Yes, on that occasion I was not there,” replied Sobakevitch.

“What a nice man he is!”

“Who is?” inquired Sobakevitch, gazing into the corner by the stove.

“The President of the Local Council.”

“Did he seem so to you? True, he is a mason, but he is also the greatest fool that the world ever saw.”

Chichikov started a little at this mordant criticism, but soon pulled himself together again, and continued:

“Of course, every man has his weakness. Yet the President seems to be an excellent fellow.”

“And do you think the same of the Governor?”

“Yes. Why not?”

“Because there exists no greater rogue than he.”

“What? The Governor a rogue?” ejaculated Chichikov, at a loss to understand how the official in question could come to be numbered with thieves. “Let me say that I should never have guessed it. Permit me also to remark that his conduct would hardly seem to bear out your opinion — he seems so gentle a man.” And in proof of this Chichikov cited the purses which the Governor knitted, and also expatiated on the mildness of his features.

“He has the face of a robber,” said Sobakevitch. “Were you to give him a knife, and to turn him loose on a turnpike, he would cut your throat for two kopecks. And the same with the Vice-Governor. The pair are just Gog and Magog.”

“Evidently he is not on good terms with them,” thought Chichikov to himself. “I had better pass to the Chief of Police, which whom he DOES seem to be friendly.” Accordingly he added aloud: “For my own part, I should give the preference to the Head of the Gendarmery. What a frank, outspoken nature he has! And what an element of simplicity does his expression contain!”

“He is mean to the core,” remarked Sobakevitch coldly. “He will sell you and cheat you, and then dine at your table. Yes, I know them all, and every one of them is a swindler, and the town a nest of rascals engaged in robbing one another. Not a man of the lot is there but would sell Christ. Yet stay: ONE decent fellow there is — the Public Prosecutor; though even HE, if the truth be told, is little better than a pig.”

After these eulogia Chichikov saw that it would be useless to continue running through the list of officials — more especially since suddenly he had remembered that Sobakevitch was not at any time given to commending his fellow man.

“Let us go to luncheon, my dear,” put in Theodulia Ivanovna to her spouse.

“Yes; pray come to table,” said Sobakevitch to his guest; whereupon they consumed the customary glass of vodka (accompanied by sundry snacks of salted cucumber and other dainties) with which Russians, both in town and country, preface a meal. Then they filed into the dining-room in the wake of the hostess, who sailed on ahead like a goose swimming across a pond. The small dining-table was found to be laid for four persons — the fourth place being occupied by a lady or a young girl (it would have been difficult to say which exactly) who might have been either a relative, the housekeeper, or a casual visitor. Certain persons in the world exist, not as personalities in themselves, but as spots or specks on the personalities of others. Always they are to be seen sitting in the same place, and holding their heads at exactly the same angle, so that one comes within an ace of mistaking them for furniture, and thinks to oneself that never since the day of their birth can they have spoken a single

word.

"My dear," said Sobakevitch, "the cabbage soup is excellent." With that he finished his portion, and helped himself to a generous measure of niania — the dish which follows shtchi and consists of a sheep's stomach stuffed with black porridge, brains, and other things. "What niania this is!" he added to Chichikov. "Never would you get such stuff in a town, where one is given the devil knows what."

"Nevertheless the Governor keeps a fair table," said Chichikov.

"Yes, but do you know what all the stuff is MADE OF?" retorted Sobakevitch. "If you DID know you would never touch it."

"Of course I am not in a position to say how it is prepared, but at least the pork cutlets and the boiled fish seemed excellent."

"Ah, it might have been thought so; yet I know the way in which such things are bought in the market-place. They are bought by some rascal of a cook whom a Frenchman has taught how to skin a tomcat and then serve it up as hare."

"Ugh! What horrible things you say!" put in Madame.

"Well, my dear, that is how things are done, and it is no fault of mine that it is so. Moreover, everything that is left over — everything that WE (pardon me for mentioning it) cast into the slop-pail — is used by such folk for making soup."

"Always at table you begin talking like this!" objected his helpmeet.

"And why not?" said Sobakevitch. "I tell you straight that I would not eat such nastiness, even had I made it myself. Sugar a frog as much as you like, but never shall it pass MY lips. Nor would I swallow an oyster, for I know only too well what an oyster may resemble. But have some mutton, friend Chichikov. It is shoulder of mutton, and very different stuff from the mutton which they cook in noble kitchens — mutton which has been kicking about the market-place four days or more. All that sort of cookery has been invented by French and German doctors, and I should like to hang them for having done so. They go and prescribe diets and a hunger cure as though what suits their flaccid German systems will agree with a Russian stomach! Such devices are no good at all." Sobakevitch shook his head wrathfully. "Fellows like those are for ever talking of civilisation. As if THAT sort of thing was civilisation! Phew!" (Perhaps the speaker's concluding exclamation would have been even stronger had he not been seated at table.) "For myself, I will have none of it. When I eat pork at a meal, give me the WHOLE pig; when mutton, the WHOLE sheep; when goose, the WHOLE of the bird. Two dishes are better than a thousand, provided that one can eat of them as much as one wants."

And he proceeded to put precept into practice by taking half the shoulder of mutton on to his plate, and then devouring it down to the last morsel of gristle

and bone.

“My word!” reflected Chichikov. “The fellow has a pretty good holding capacity!”

“None of it for me,” repeated Sobakevitch as he wiped his hands on his napkin. “I don’t intend to be like a fellow named Plushkin, who owns eight hundred souls, yet dines worse than does my shepherd.”

“Who is Plushkin?” asked Chichikov.

“A miser,” replied Sobakevitch. “Such a miser as never you could imagine. Even convicts in prison live better than he does. And he starves his servants as well.”

“Really?” ejaculated Chichikov, greatly interested. “Should you, then, say that he has lost many peasants by death?”

“Certainly. They keep dying like flies.”

“Then how far from here does he reside?”

“About five versts.”

“Only five versts?” exclaimed Chichikov, feeling his heart beating joyously. “Ought one, when leaving your gates, to turn to the right or to the left?”

“I should be sorry to tell you the way to the house of such a cur,” said Sobakevitch. “A man had far better go to hell than to Plushkin’s.”

“Quite so,” responded Chichikov. “My only reason for asking you is that it interests me to become acquainted with any and every sort of locality.”

To the shoulder of mutton there succeeded, in turn, cutlets (each one larger than a plate), a turkey of about the size of a calf, eggs, rice, pastry, and every conceivable thing which could possibly be put into a stomach. There the meal ended. When he rose from table Chichikov felt as though a pood’s weight were inside him. In the drawing-room the company found dessert awaiting them in the shape of pears, plums, and apples; but since neither host nor guest could tackle these particular dainties the hostess removed them to another room. Taking advantage of her absence, Chichikov turned to Sobakevitch (who, prone in an armchair, seemed, after his ponderous meal, to be capable of doing little beyond belching and grunting — each such grunt or belch necessitating a subsequent signing of the cross over the mouth), and intimated to him a desire to have a little private conversation concerning a certain matter. At this moment the hostess returned.

“Here is more dessert,” she said. “Pray have a few radishes stewed in honey.”

“Later, later,” replied Sobakevitch. “Do you go to your room, and Paul Ivanovitch and I will take off our coats and have a nap.”

Upon this the good lady expressed her readiness to send for feather beds and cushions, but her husband expressed a preference for slumbering in an armchair,

and she therefore departed. When she had gone Sobakevitch inclined his head in an attitude of willingness to listen to Chichikov's business. Our hero began in a sort of detached manner — touching lightly upon the subject of the Russian Empire, and expatiating upon the immensity of the same, and saying that even the Empire of Ancient Rome had been of considerably smaller dimensions. Meanwhile Sobakevitch sat with his head drooping.

From that Chichikov went on to remark that, according to the statutes of the said Russian Empire (which yielded to none in glory — so much so that foreigners marvelled at it), peasants on the census lists who had ended their earthly careers were nevertheless, on the rendering of new lists, returned equally with the living, to the end that the courts might be relieved of a multitude of trifling, useless emendations which might complicate the already sufficiently complex mechanism of the State. Nevertheless, said Chichikov, the general equity of this measure did not obviate a certain amount of annoyance to landowners, since it forced them to pay upon a non-living article the tax due upon a living. Hence (our hero concluded) he (Chichikov) was prepared, owing to the personal respect which he felt for Sobakevitch, to relieve him, in part, of the irksome obligation referred to (in passing, it may be said that Chichikov referred to his principal point only guardedly, for he called the souls which he was seeking not "dead," but "non-existent").

Meanwhile Sobakevitch listened with bent head; though something like a trace of expression dawned in his face as he did so. Ordinarily his body lacked a soul — or, if he did posses a soul, he seemed to keep it elsewhere than where it ought to have been; so that, buried beneath mountains (as it were) or enclosed within a massive shell, its movements produced no sort of agitation on the surface.

"Well?" said Chichikov — though not without a certain tremor of diffidence as to the possible response.

"You are after dead souls?" were Sobakevitch's perfectly simple words. He spoke without the least surprise in his tone, and much as though the conversation had been turning on grain.

"Yes," replied Chichikov, and then, as before, softened down the expression "dead souls."

"They are to be found," said Sobakevitch. "Why should they not be?"

"Then of course you will be glad to get rid of any that you may chance to have?"

"Yes, I shall have no objection to SELLING them." At this point the speaker raised his head a little, for it had struck him that surely the would-be buyer must have some advantage in view.

"The devil!" thought Chichikov to himself. "Here is he selling the goods

before I have even had time to utter a word!”

“And what about the price?” he added aloud. “Of course, the articles are not of a kind very easy to appraise.”

“I should be sorry to ask too much,” said Sobakevitch. “How would a hundred roubles per head suit you?”

“What, a hundred roubles per head?” Chichikov stared open-mouthed at his host — doubting whether he had heard aright, or whether his host’s slow-moving tongue might not have inadvertently substituted one word for another.

“Yes. Is that too much for you?” said Sobakevitch. Then he added: “What is your own price?”

“My own price? I think that we cannot properly have understood one another — that you must have forgotten of what the goods consist. With my hand on my heart do I submit that eight grivni per soul would be a handsome, a VERY handsome, offer.”

“What? Eight grivni?”

“In my opinion, a higher offer would be impossible.”

“But I am not a seller of boots.”

“No; yet you, for your part, will agree that these souls are not live human beings?”

“I suppose you hope to find fools ready to sell you souls on the census list for a couple of groats apiece?”

“Pardon me, but why do you use the term ‘on the census list’? The souls themselves have long since passed away, and have left behind them only their names. Not to trouble you with any further discussion of the subject, I can offer you a rouble and a half per head, but no more.”

“You should be ashamed even to mention such a sum! Since you deal in articles of this kind, quote me a genuine price.”

“I cannot, Michael Semenovitch. Believe me, I cannot. What a man cannot do, that he cannot do.” The speaker ended by advancing another half-rouble per head.

“But why hang back with your money?” said Sobakevitch. “Of a truth I am not asking much of you. Any other rascal than myself would have cheated you by selling you old rubbish instead of good, genuine souls, whereas I should be ready to give you of my best, even were you buying only nut-kernels. For instance, look at wheelwright Michiev. Never was there such a one to build spring carts! And his handiwork was not like your Moscow handiwork — good only for an hour. No, he did it all himself, even down to the varnishing.”

Chichikov opened his mouth to remark that, nevertheless, the said Michiev had long since departed this world; but Sobakevitch’s eloquence had got too

thoroughly into its stride to admit of any interruption.

"And look, too, at Probka Stepan, the carpenter," his host went on. "I will wager my head that nowhere else would you find such a workman. What a strong fellow he was! He had served in the Guards, and the Lord only knows what they had given for him, seeing that he was over three arshins in height."

Again Chichikov tried to remark that Probka was dead, but Sobakevitch's tongue was borne on the torrent of its own verbiage, and the only thing to be done was to listen.

"And Milushkin, the bricklayer! He could build a stove in any house you liked! And Maksim Teliatnikov, the bootmaker! Anything that he drove his awl into became a pair of boots — and boots for which you would be thankful, although he WAS a bit foul of the mouth. And Eremi Sorokoplechin, too! He was the best of the lot, and used to work at his trade in Moscow, where he paid a tax of five hundred roubles. Well, THERE'S an assortment of serfs for you! — a very different assortment from what Plushkin would sell you!"

"But permit me," at length put in Chichikov, astounded at this flood of eloquence to which there appeared to be no end. "Permit me, I say, to inquire why you enumerate the talents of the deceased, seeing that they are all of them dead, and that therefore there can be no sense in doing so. 'A dead body is only good to prop a fence with,' says the proverb."

"Of course they are dead," replied Sobakevitch, but rather as though the idea had only just occurred to him, and was giving him food for thought. "But tell me, now: what is the use of listing them as still alive? And what is the use of them themselves? They are flies, not human beings."

"Well," said Chichikov, "they exist, though only in idea."

"But no — NOT only in idea. I tell you that nowhere else would you find such a fellow for working heavy tools as was Michiev. He had the strength of a horse in his shoulders." And, with the words, Sobakevitch turned, as though for corroboration, to the portrait of Bagration, as is frequently done by one of the parties in a dispute when he purports to appeal to an extraneous individual who is not only unknown to him, but wholly unconnected with the subject in hand; with the result that the individual is left in doubt whether to make a reply, or whether to betake himself elsewhere.

"Nevertheless, I CANNOT give you more than two roubles per head," said Chichikov.

"Well, as I don't want you to swear that I have asked too much of you and won't meet you halfway, suppose, for friendship's sake, that you pay me seventy-five roubles in assignats?"

"Good heavens!" thought Chichikov to himself. "Does the man take me for a

fool?” Then he added aloud: “The situation seems to me a strange one, for it is as though we were performing a stage comedy. No other explanation would meet the case. Yet you appear to be a man of sense, and possessed of some education. The matter is a very simple one. The question is: what is a dead soul worth, and is it of any use to any one?”

“It is of use to YOU, or you would not be buying such articles.”

Chichikov bit his lip, and stood at a loss for a retort. He tried to saying something about “family and domestic circumstances,” but Sobakevitch cut him short with:

“I don’t want to know your private affairs, for I never poke my nose into such things. You need the souls, and I am ready to sell them. Should you not buy them, I think you will repent it.”

“Two roubles is my price,” repeated Chichikov.

“Come, come! As you have named that sum, I can understand your not liking to go back upon it; but quote me a bona fide figure.”

“The devil fly away with him!” mused Chichikov. “However, I will add another half-rouble.” And he did so.

“Indeed?” said Sobakevitch. “Well, my last word upon it is — fifty roubles in assignats. That will mean a sheer loss to me, for nowhere else in the world could you buy better souls than mine.”

“The old skinflint!” muttered Chichikov. Then he added aloud, with irritation in his tone: “See here. This is a serious matter. Any one but you would be thankful to get rid of the souls. Only a fool would stick to them, and continue to pay the tax.”

“Yes, but remember (and I say it wholly in a friendly way) that transactions of this kind are not generally allowed, and that any one would say that a man who engages in them must have some rather doubtful advantage in view.”

“Have it your own away,” said Chichikov, with assumed indifference. “As a matter of fact, I am not purchasing for profit, as you suppose, but to humour a certain whim of mine. Two and a half roubles is the most that I can offer.”

“Bless your heart!” retorted the host. “At least give me thirty roubles in assignats, and take the lot.”

“No, for I see that you are unwilling to sell. I must say good-day to you.”

“Hold on, hold on!” exclaimed Sobakevitch, retaining his guest’s hand, and at the same moment treading heavily upon his toes — so heavily, indeed, that Chichikov gasped and danced with the pain.

“I BEG your pardon!” said Sobakevitch hastily. “Evidently I have hurt you. Pray sit down again.”

“No,” retorted Chichikov. “I am merely wasting my time, and must be off.”

“Oh, sit down just for a moment. I have something more agreeable to say.” And, drawing closer to his guest, Sobakevitch whispered in his ear, as though communicating to him a secret: “How about twenty-five roubles?”

“No, no, no!” exclaimed Chichikov. “I won’t give you even a QUARTER of that. I won’t advance another kopeck.”

For a while Sobakevitch remained silent, and Chichikov did the same. This lasted for a couple of minutes, and, meanwhile, the aquiline-nosed Bagration gazed from the wall as though much interested in the bargaining.

“What is your outside price?” at length said Sobakevitch.

“Two and a half roubles.”

“Then you seem to rate a human soul at about the same value as a boiled turnip. At least give me THREE roubles.”

“No, I cannot.”

“Pardon me, but you are an impossible man to deal with. However, even though it will mean a dead loss to me, and you have not shown a very nice spirit about it, I cannot well refuse to please a friend. I suppose a purchase deed had better be made out in order to have everything in order?”

“Of course.”

“Then for that purpose let us repair to the town.”

The affair ended in their deciding to do this on the morrow, and to arrange for the signing of a deed of purchase. Next, Chichikov requested a list of the peasants; to which Sobakevitch readily agreed. Indeed, he went to his writing-desk then and there, and started to indite a list which gave not only the peasants’ names, but also their late qualifications.

Meanwhile Chichikov, having nothing else to do, stood looking at the spacious form of his host; and as he gazed at his back as broad as that of a cart horse, and at the legs as massive as the iron standards which adorn a street, he could not help inwardly ejaculating:

“Truly God has endowed you with much! Though not adjusted with nicety, at least you are strongly built. I wonder whether you were born a bear or whether you have come to it through your rustic life, with its tilling of crops and its trading with peasants? Yet no; I believe that, even if you had received a fashionable education, and had mixed with society, and had lived in St. Petersburg, you would still have been just the kulak that you are. The only difference is that circumstances, as they stand, permit of your polishing off a stuffed shoulder of mutton at a meal; whereas in St. Petersburg you would have been unable to do so. Also, as circumstances stand, you have under you a number of peasants, whom you treat well for the reason that they are your property; whereas, otherwise, you would have had under you tchinovniks :

whom you would have bullied because they were NOT your property. Also, you would have robbed the Treasury, since a kulak always remains a money-grubber."

"The list is ready," said Sobakevitch, turning round.

"Indeed? Then please let me look at it." Chichikov ran his eye over the document, and could not but marvel at its neatness and accuracy. Not only were there set forth in it the trade, the age, and the pedigree of every serf, but on the margin of the sheet were jotted remarks concerning each serf's conduct and sobriety. Truly it was a pleasure to look at it.

"And do you mind handing me the earnest money?" said Sobakevitch?

"Yes, I do. Why need that be done? You can receive the money in a lump sum as soon as we visit the town."

"But it is always the custom, you know," asserted Sobakevitch.

"Then I cannot follow it, for I have no money with me. However, here are ten roubles."

"Ten roubles, indeed? You might as well hand me fifty while you are about it."

Once more Chichikov started to deny that he had any money upon him, but Sobakevitch insisted so strongly that this was not so that at length the guest pulled out another fifteen roubles, and added them to the ten already produced.

"Kindly give me a receipt for the money," he added.

"A receipt? Why should I give you a receipt?"

"Because it is better to do so, in order to guard against mistakes."

"Very well; but first hand me over the money."

"The money? I have it here. Do you write out the receipt, and then the money shall be yours."

"Pardon me, but how am I to write out the receipt before I have seen the cash?"

Chichikov placed the notes in Sobakevitch's hand; whereupon the host moved nearer to the table, and added to the list of serfs a note that he had received for the peasants, therewith sold, the sum of twenty-five roubles, as earnest money. This done, he counted the notes once more.

"This is a very OLD note," he remarked, holding one up to the light. "Also, it is a trifle torn. However, in a friendly transaction one must not be too particular."

"What a kulak!" thought Chichikov to himself. "And what a brute beast!"

"Then you do not want any WOMEN souls?" queried Sobakevitch.

"I thank you, no."

"I could let you have some cheap — say, as between friends, at a rouble a head?"

"No, I should have no use for them."

“Then, that being so, there is no more to be said. There is no accounting for tastes. ‘One man loves the priest, and another the priest’s wife,’ says the proverb.”

Chichikov rose to take his leave. “Once more I would request of you,” he said, “that the bargain be left as it is.”

“Of course, of course. What is done between friends holds good because of their mutual friendship. Good-bye, and thank you for your visit. In advance I would beg that, whenever you should have an hour or two to spare, you will come and lunch with us again. Perhaps we might be able to do one another further service?”

“Not if I know it!” reflected Chichikov as he mounted his britchka. “Not I, seeing that I have had two and a half roubles per soul squeezed out of me by a brute of a kulak!”

Altogether he felt dissatisfied with Sobakevitch’s behaviour. In spite of the man being a friend of the Governor and the Chief of Police, he had acted like an outsider in taking money for what was worthless rubbish. As the britchka left the courtyard Chichikov glanced back and saw Sobakevitch still standing on the verandah — apparently for the purpose of watching to see which way the guest’s carriage would turn.

“The old villain, to be still standing there!” muttered Chichikov through his teeth; after which he ordered Selifan to proceed so that the vehicle’s progress should be invisible from the mansion — the truth being that he had a mind next to visit Plushkin (whose serfs, to quote Sobakevitch, had a habit of dying like flies), but not to let his late host learn of his intention. Accordingly, on reaching the further end of the village, he hailed the first peasant whom he saw — a man who was in the act of hoisting a ponderous beam on to his shoulder before setting off with it, ant-like, to his hut.

“Hi!” shouted Chichikov. “How can I reach landowner Plushkin’s place without first going past the mansion here?”

The peasant seemed nonplussed by the question.

“Don’t you know?” queried Chichikov.

“No, barin,” replied the peasant.

“What? You don’t know skinflint Plushkin who feeds his people so badly?”

“Of course I do!” exclaimed the fellow, and added thereto an uncomplimentary expression of a species not ordinarily employed in polite society. We may guess that it was a pretty apt expression, since long after the man had become lost to view Chichikov was still laughing in his britchka. And, indeed, the language of the Russian populace is always forcible in its phraseology.

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CHAPTER VI

Chichikov's amusement at the peasant's outburst prevented him from noticing that he had reached the centre of a large and populous village; but, presently, a violent jolt aroused him to the fact that he was driving over wooden pavements of a kind compared with which the cobblestones of the town had been as nothing. Like the keys of a piano, the planks kept rising and falling, and unguarded passage over them entailed either a bump on the back of the neck or a bruise on the forehead or a bite on the tip of one's tongue. At the same time Chichikov noticed a look of decay about the buildings of the village. The beams of the huts had grown dark with age, many of their roofs were riddled with holes, others had but a tile of the roof remaining, and yet others were reduced to the rib-like framework of the same. It would seem as though the inhabitants themselves had removed the laths and traverses, on the very natural plea that the huts were no protection against the rain, and therefore, since the latter entered in bucketfuls, there was no particular object to be gained by sitting in such huts when all the time there was the tavern and the highroad and other places to resort to.

Suddenly a woman appeared from an outbuilding — apparently the housekeeper of the mansion, but so roughly and dirtily dressed as almost to seem indistinguishable from a man. Chichikov inquired for the master of the place.

"He is not at home," she replied, almost before her interlocutor had had time to finish. Then she added: "What do you want with him?"

"I have some business to do," said Chichikov.

"Then pray walk into the house," the woman advised. Then she turned upon him a back that was smeared with flour and had a long slit in the lower portion of its covering. Entering a large, dark hall which reeked like a tomb, he passed into an equally dark parlour that was lighted only by such rays as contrived to filter through a crack under the door. When Chichikov opened the door in question, the spectacle of the untidiness within struck him almost with amazement. It would seem that the floor was never washed, and that the room was used as a receptacle for every conceivable kind of furniture. On a table stood a ragged chair, with, beside it, a clock minus a pendulum and covered all over with cobwebs. Against a wall leant a cupboard, full of old silver, glassware, and china. On a writing table, inlaid with mother-of-pearl which, in places, had broken away and left behind it a number of yellow grooves (stuffed with putty),

lay a pile of finely written manuscript, an overturned marble press (turning green), an ancient book in a leather cover with red edges, a lemon dried and shrunken to the dimensions of a hazelnut, the broken arm of a chair, a tumbler containing the dregs of some liquid and three flies (the whole covered over with a sheet of notepaper), a pile of rags, two ink-encrusted pens, and a yellow toothpick with which the master of the house had picked his teeth (apparently) at least before the coming of the French to Moscow. As for the walls, they were hung with a medley of pictures. Among the latter was a long engraving of a battle scene, wherein soldiers in three-cornered hats were brandishing huge drums and slender lances. It lacked a glass, and was set in a frame ornamented with bronze fretwork and bronze corner rings. Beside it hung a huge, grimy oil painting representative of some flowers and fruit, half a water melon, a boar's head, and the pendent form of a dead wild duck. Attached to the ceiling there was a chandelier in a holland covering — the covering so dusty as closely to resemble a huge cocoon enclosing a caterpillar. Lastly, in one corner of the room lay a pile of articles which had evidently been adjudged unworthy of a place on the table. Yet what the pile consisted of it would have been difficult to say, seeing that the dust on the same was so thick that any hand which touched it would have at once resembled a glove. Prominently protruding from the pile was the shaft of a wooden spade and the antiquated sole of a shoe. Never would one have supposed that a living creature had tenanted the room, were it not that the presence of such a creature was betrayed by the spectacle of an old nightcap resting on the table.

Whilst Chichikov was gazing at this extraordinary mess, a side door opened and there entered the housekeeper who had met him near the outbuildings. But now Chichikov perceived this person to be a man rather than a woman, since a female housekeeper would have had no beard to shave, whereas the chin of the newcomer, with the lower portion of his cheeks, strongly resembled the curry-comb which is used for grooming horses. Chichikov assumed a questioning air, and waited to hear what the housekeeper might have to say. The housekeeper did the same. At length, surprised at the misunderstanding, Chichikov decided to ask the first question.

"Is the master at home?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied the person addressed.

"Then were is he?" continued Chichikov.

"Are you blind, my good sir?" retorted the other. "*I* am the master."

Involuntarily our hero started and stared. During his travels it had befallen him to meet various types of men — some of them, it may be, types which you and I have never encountered; but even to Chichikov this particular species was new.

In the old man’s face there was nothing very special — it was much like the wizened face of many another dotard, save that the chin was so greatly projected that whenever he spoke he was forced to wipe it with a handkerchief to avoid dribbling, and that his small eyes were not yet grown dull, but twinkled under their overhanging brows like the eyes of mice when, with attentive ears and sensitive whiskers, they snuff the air and peer forth from their holes to see whether a cat or a boy may not be in the vicinity. No, the most noticeable feature about the man was his clothes. In no way could it have been guessed of what his coat was made, for both its sleeves and its skirts were so ragged and filthy as to defy description, while instead of two posterior tails, there dangled four of those appendages, with, projecting from them, a torn newspaper. Also, around his neck there was wrapped something which might have been a stocking, a garter, or a stomacher, but was certainly not a tie. In short, had Chichikov chanced to encounter him at a church door, he would have bestowed upon him a copper or two (for, to do our hero justice, he had a sympathetic heart and never refrained from presenting a beggar with alms), but in the present case there was standing before him, not a mendicant, but a landowner — and a landowner possessed of fully a thousand serfs, the superior of all his neighbours in wealth of flour and grain, and the owner of storehouses, and so forth, that were crammed with homespun cloth and linen, tanned and undressed sheepskins, dried fish, and every conceivable species of produce. Nevertheless, such a phenomenon is rare in Russia, where the tendency is rather to prodigality than to parsimony.

For several minutes Plushkin stood mute, while Chichikov remained so dazed with the appearance of the host and everything else in the room, that he too, could not begin a conversation, but stood wondering how best to find words in which to explain the object of his visit. For a while he thought of expressing himself to the effect that, having heard so much of his host’s benevolence and other rare qualities of spirit, he had considered it his duty to come and pay a tribute of respect; but presently even HE came to the conclusion that this would be overdoing the thing, and, after another glance round the room, decided that the phrase “benevolence and other rare qualities of spirit” might to advantage give place to “economy and genius for method.” Accordingly, the speech mentally composed, he said aloud that, having heard of Plushkin’s talents for thrifty and systematic management, he had considered himself bound to make the acquaintance of his host, and to present him with his personal compliments (I need hardly say that Chichikov could easily have alleged a better reason, had any better one happened, at the moment, to have come into his head).

With toothless gums Plushkin murmured something in reply, but nothing is known as to its precise terms beyond that it included a statement that the devil

was at liberty to fly away with Chichikov's sentiments. However, the laws of Russian hospitality do not permit even of a miser infringing their rules; wherefore Plushkin added to the foregoing a more civil invitation to be seated.

"It is long since I last received a visitor," he went on. "Also, I feel bound to say that I can see little good in their coming. Once introduce the abominable custom of folk paying calls, and forthwith there will ensue such ruin to the management of estates that landowners will be forced to feed their horses on hay. Not for a long, long time have I eaten a meal away from home — although my own kitchen is a poor one, and has its chimney in such a state that, were it to become overheated, it would instantly catch fire."

"What a brute!" thought Chichikov. "I am lucky to have got through so much pastry and stuffed shoulder of mutton at Sobakevitch's!"

"Also," went on Plushkin, "I am ashamed to say that hardly a wisp of fodder does the place contain. But how can I get fodder? My lands are small, and the peasantry lazy fellows who hate work and think of nothing but the tavern. In the end, therefore, I shall be forced to go and spend my old age in roaming about the world."

"But I have been told that you possess over a thousand serfs?" said Chichikov.

"Who told you that? No matter who it was, you would have been justified in giving him the lie. He must have been a jester who wanted to make a fool of you. A thousand souls, indeed! Why, just reckon the taxes on them, and see what there would be left! For these three years that accursed fever has been killing off my serfs wholesale."

"Wholesale, you say?" echoed Chichikov, greatly interested.

"Yes, wholesale," replied the old man.

"Then might I ask you the exact number?"

"Fully eighty."

"Surely not?"

"But it is so."

"Then might I also ask whether it is from the date of the last census revision that you are reckoning these souls?"

"Yes, damn it! And since that date I have been bled for taxes upon a hundred and twenty souls in all."

"Indeed? Upon a hundred and twenty souls in all!" And Chichikov's surprise and elation were such that, this said, he remained sitting open-mouthed.

"Yes, good sir," replied Plushkin. "I am too old to tell you lies, for I have passed my seventieth year."

Somehow he seemed to have taken offence at Chichikov's almost joyous exclamation; wherefore the guest hastened to heave a profound sigh, and to

observe that he sympathised to the full with his host's misfortunes.

"But sympathy does not put anything into one's pocket," retorted Plushkin. "For instance, I have a kinsman who is constantly plaguing me. He is a captain in the army, damn him, and all day he does nothing but call me 'dear uncle,' and kiss my hand, and express sympathy until I am forced to stop my ears. You see, he has squandered all his money upon his brother-officers, as well as made a fool of himself with an actress; so now he spends his time in telling me that he has a sympathetic heart!"

Chichikov hastened to explain that HIS sympathy had nothing in common with the captain's, since he dealt, not in empty words alone, but in actual deeds; in proof of which he was ready then and there (for the purpose of cutting the matter short, and of dispensing with circumlocution) to transfer to himself the obligation of paying the taxes due upon such serfs as Plushkin's as had, in the unfortunate manner just described, departed this world. The proposal seemed to astonish Plushkin, for he sat staring open-eyed. At length he inquired:

"My dear sir, have you seen military service?"

"No," replied the other warily, "but I have been a member of the CIVIL Service."

"Oh! Of the CIVIL Service?" And Plushkin sat moving his lips as though he were chewing something. "Well, what of your proposal?" he added presently. "Are you prepared to lose by it?"

"Yes, certainly, if thereby I can please you."

"My dear sir! My good benefactor!" In his delight Plushkin lost sight of the fact that his nose was caked with snuff of the consistency of thick coffee, and that his coat had parted in front and was disclosing some very unseemly underclothing. "What comfort you have brought to an old man! Yes, as God is my witness!"

For the moment he could say no more. Yet barely a minute had elapsed before this instantaneously aroused emotion had, as instantaneously, disappeared from his wooden features. Once more they assumed a careworn expression, and he even wiped his face with his handkerchief, then rolled it into a ball, and rubbed it to and fro against his upper lip.

"If it will not annoy you again to state the proposal," he went on, "what you undertake to do is to pay the annual tax upon these souls, and to remit the money either to me or to the Treasury?"

"Yes, that is how it shall be done. We will draw up a deed of purchase as though the souls were still alive and you had sold them to myself."

"Quite so — a deed of purchase," echoed Plushkin, once more relapsing into thought and the chewing motion of the lips. "But a deed of such a kind will

entail certain expenses, and lawyers are so devoid of conscience! In fact, so extortionate is their avarice that they will charge one half a rouble, and then a sack of flour, and then a whole waggon-load of meal. I wonder that no one has yet called attention to the system."

Upon that Chichikov intimated that, out of respect for his host, he himself would bear the cost of the transfer of souls. This led Plushkin to conclude that his guest must be the kind of unconscionable fool who, while pretending to have been a member of the Civil Service, has in reality served in the army and run after actresses; wherefore the old man no longer disguised his delight, but called down blessings alike upon Chichikov's head and upon those of his children (he had never even inquired whether Chichikov possessed a family). Next, he shuffled to the window, and, tapping one of its panes, shouted the name of "Proshka." Immediately some one ran quickly into the hall, and, after much stamping of feet, burst into the room. This was Proshka — a thirteen-year-old youngster who was shod with boots of such dimensions as almost to engulf his legs as he walked. The reason why he had entered thus shod was that Plushkin only kept one pair of boots for the whole of his domestic staff. This universal pair was stationed in the hall of the mansion, so that any servant who was summoned to the house might don the said boots after wading barefooted through the mud of the courtyard, and enter the parlour dry-shod — subsequently leaving the boots where he had found them, and departing in his former barefooted condition. Indeed, had any one, on a slushy winter's morning, glanced from a window into the said courtyard, he would have seen Plushkin's servitors performing saltatory feats worthy of the most vigorous of stage-dancers.

"Look at that boy's face!" said Plushkin to Chichikov as he pointed to Proshka. "It is stupid enough, yet, lay anything aside, and in a trice he will have stolen it. Well, my lad, what do you want?"

He paused a moment or two, but Proshka made no reply.

"Come, come!" went on the old man. "Set out the samovar, and then give Mavra the key of the store-room — here it is — and tell her to get out some loaf sugar for tea. Here! Wait another moment, fool! Is the devil in your legs that they itch so to be off? Listen to what more I have to tell you. Tell Mavra that the sugar on the outside of the loaf has gone bad, so that she must scrape it off with a knife, and NOT throw away the scrapings, but give them to the poultry. Also, see that you yourself don't go into the storeroom, or I will give you a birching that you won't care for. Your appetite is good enough already, but a better one won't hurt you. Don't even TRY to go into the storeroom, for I shall be watching you from this window."

“You see,” the old man added to Chichikov, “one can never trust these fellows.” Presently, when Proshka and the boots had departed, he fell to gazing at his guest with an equally distrustful air, since certain features in Chichikov’s benevolence now struck him as a little open to question, and he had begin to think to himself: “After all, the devil only knows who he is — whether a braggart, like most of these spendthrifts, or a fellow who is lying merely in order to get some tea out of me.” Finally, his circumspection, combined with a desire to test his guest, led him to remark that it might be well to complete the transaction IMMEDIATELY, since he had not overmuch confidence in humanity, seeing that a man might be alive to-day and dead to-morrow.

To this Chichikov assented readily enough — merely adding that he should like first of all to be furnished with a list of the dead souls. This reassured Plushkin as to his guest’s intention of doing business, so he got out his keys, approached a cupboard, and, having pulled back the door, rummaged among the cups and glasses with which it was filled. At length he said:

“I cannot find it now, but I used to possess a splendid bottle of liquor. Probably the servants have drunk it all, for they are such thieves. Oh no: perhaps this is it!”

Looking up, Chichikov saw that Plushkin had extracted a decanter coated with dust.

“My late wife made the stuff,” went on the old man, “but that rascal of a housekeeper went and threw away a lot of it, and never even replaced the stopper. Consequently bugs and other nasty creatures got into the decanter, but I cleaned it out, and now beg to offer you a glassful.”

The idea of a drink from such a receptacle was too much for Chichikov, so he excused himself on the ground that he had just had luncheon.

“You have just had luncheon?” re-echoed Plushkin. “Now, THAT shows how invariably one can tell a man of good society, wheresoever one may be. A man of that kind never eats anything — he always says that he has had enough. Very different that from the ways of a rogue, whom one can never satisfy, however much one may give him. For instance, that captain of mine is constantly begging me to let him have a meal — though he is about as much my nephew as I am his grandfather. As it happens, there is never a bite of anything in the house, so he has to go away empty. But about the list of those good-for-nothing souls — I happen to possess such a list, since I have drawn one up in readiness for the next revision.”

With that Plushkin donned his spectacles, and once more started to rummage in the cupboard, and to smother his guest with dust as he untied successive packages of papers — so much so that his victim burst out sneezing. Finally he

extracted a much-scribbled document in which the names of the deceased peasants lay as close-packed as a cloud of midges, for there were a hundred and twenty of them in all. Chichikov grinned with joy at the sight of the multitude. Stuffing the list into his pocket, he remarked that, to complete the transaction, it would be necessary to return to the town.

"To the town?" repeated Plushkin. "But why? Moreover, how could I leave the house, seeing that every one of my servants is either a thief or a rogue? Day by day they pilfer things, until soon I shall have not a single coat to hang on my back."

"Then you possess acquaintances in the town?"

"Acquaintances? No. Every acquaintance whom I ever possessed has either left me or is dead. But stop a moment. I DO know the President of the Council. Even in my old age he has once or twice come to visit me, for he and I used to be schoolfellows, and to go climbing walls together. Yes, him I do know. Shall I write him a letter?"

"By all means."

"Yes, him I know well, for we were friends together at school."

Over Plushkin's wooden features there had gleamed a ray of warmth — a ray which expressed, if not feeling, at all events feeling's pale reflection. Just such a phenomenon may be witnessed when, for a brief moment, a drowning man makes a last re-appearance on the surface of a river, and there rises from the crowd lining the banks a cry of hope that even yet the exhausted hands may clutch the rope which has been thrown him — may clutch it before the surface of the unstable element shall have resumed for ever its calm, dread vacuity. But the hope is short-lived, and the hands disappear. Even so did Plushkin's face, after its momentary manifestation of feeling, become meaner and more insensible than ever.

"There used to be a sheet of clean writing paper lying on the table," he went on. "But where it is now I cannot think. That comes of my servants being such rascals."

Whit that he fell to looking also under the table, as well as to hurrying about with cries of "Mavra, Mavra!" At length the call was answered by a woman with a plateful of the sugar of which mention has been made; whereupon there ensued the following conversation.

"What have you done with my piece of writing paper, you pilferer?"

"I swear that I have seen no paper except the bit with which you covered the glass."

"Your very face tells me that you have made off with it."

"Why should I make off with it? 'Twould be of no use to me, for I can neither

read nor write."

"You lie! You have taken it away for the sexton to scribble upon."

"Well, if the sexton wanted paper he could get some for himself. Neither he nor I have set eyes upon your piece."

"Ah! Wait a bit, for on the Judgment Day you will be roasted by devils on iron spits. Just see if you are not!"

"But why should I be roasted when I have never even TOUCHED the paper? You might accuse me of any other fault than theft."

"Nay, devils shall roast you, sure enough. They will say to you, 'Bad woman, we are doing this because you robbed your master,' and then stoke up the fire still hotter."

"Nevertheless *I* shall continue to say, 'You are roasting me for nothing, for I never stole anything at all.' Why, THERE it is, lying on the table! You have been accusing me for no reason whatever!"

And, sure enough, the sheet of paper was lying before Plushkin's very eyes. For a moment or two he chewed silently. Then he went on:

"Well, and what are you making such a noise about? If one says a single word to you, you answer back with ten. Go and fetch me a candle to seal a letter with. And mind you bring a TALLOW candle, for it will not cost so much as the other sort. And bring me a match too."

Mavra departed, and Plushkin, seating himself, and taking up a pen, sat turning the sheet of paper over and over, as though in doubt whether to tear from it yet another morsel. At length he came to the conclusion that it was impossible to do so, and therefore, dipping the pen into the mixture of mouldy fluid and dead flies which the ink bottle contained, started to indite the letter in characters as bold as the notes of a music score, while momentarily checking the speed of his hand, lest it should meander too much over the paper, and crawling from line to line as though he regretted that there was so little vacant space left on the sheet.

"And do you happen to know any one to whom a few runaway serfs would be of use?" he asked as subsequently he folded the letter.

"What? You have some runaways as well?" exclaimed Chichikov, again greatly interested.

"Certainly I have. My son-in-law has laid the necessary information against them, but says that their tracks have grown cold. However, he is only a military man — that is to say, good at clinking a pair of spurs, but of no use for laying a plea before a court."

"And how many runaways have you?"

"About seventy."

“Surely not?”

“Alas, yes. Never does a year pass without a certain number of them making off. Yet so gluttonous and idle are my serfs that they are simply bursting with food, whereas I scarcely get enough to eat. I will take any price for them that you may care to offer. Tell your friends about it, and, should they find even a score of the runaways, it will repay them handsomely, seeing that a living serf on the census list is at present worth five hundred roubles.”

“Perhaps so, but I am not going to let any one but myself have a finger in this,” thought Chichikov to himself; after which he explained to Plushkin that a friend of the kind mentioned would be impossible to discover, since the legal expenses of the enterprise would lead to the said friend having to cut the very tail from his coat before he would get clear of the lawyers.

“Nevertheless,” added Chichikov, “seeing that you are so hard pressed for money, and that I am so interested in the matter, I feel moved to advance you — well, to advance you such a trifle as would scarcely be worth mentioning.”

“But how much is it?” asked Plushkin eagerly, and with his hands trembling like quicksilver.

“Twenty-five kopecks per soul.”

“What? In ready money?”

“Yes — in money down.”

“Nevertheless, consider my poverty, dear friend, and make it FORTY kopecks per soul.”

“Venerable sir, would that I could pay you not merely forty kopecks, but five hundred roubles. I should be only too delighted if that were possible, since I perceive that you, an aged and respected gentleman, are suffering for your own goodness of heart.”

“By God, that is true, that is true.” Plushkin hung his head, and wagged it feebly from side to side. “Yes, all that I have done I have done purely out of kindness.”

“See how instantaneously I have divined your nature! By now it will have become clear to you why it is impossible for me to pay you five hundred roubles per runaway soul: for by now you will have gathered the fact that I am not sufficiently rich. Nevertheless, I am ready to add another five kopecks, and so to make it that each runaway serf shall cost me, in all, thirty kopecks.”

“As you please, dear sir. Yet stretch another point, and throw in another two kopecks.”

“Pardon me, but I cannot. How many runaway serfs did you say that you possess? Seventy?”

“No; seventy-eight.”

“Seventy-eight souls at thirty kopecks each will amount to — to — ” only for a moment did our hero halt, since he was strong in his arithmetic, “ — will amount to twenty-four roubles, ninety-six kopecks.”

With that he requested Plushkin to make out the receipt, and then handed him the money. Plushkin took it in both hands, bore it to a bureau with as much caution as though he were carrying a liquid which might at any moment splash him in the face, and, arrived at the bureau, and glancing round once more, carefully packed the cash in one of his money bags, where, doubtless, it was destined to lie buried until, to the intense joy of his daughters and his son-in-law (and, perhaps, of the captain who claimed kinship with him), he should himself receive burial at the hands of Fathers Carp and Polycarp, the two priests attached to his village. Lastly, the money concealed, Plushkin re-seated himself in the armchair, and seemed at a loss for further material for conversation.

“Are you thinking of starting?” at length he inquired, on seeing Chichikov making a trifling movement, though the movement was only to extract from his pocket a handkerchief. Nevertheless the question reminded Chichikov that there was no further excuse for lingering.

“Yes, I must be going,” he said as he took his hat.

“Then what about the tea?”

“Thank you, I will have some on my next visit.”

“What? Even though I have just ordered the samovar to be got ready? Well, well! I myself do not greatly care for tea, for I think it an expensive beverage. Moreover, the price of sugar has risen terribly.”

“Proshka!” he then shouted. “The samovar will not be needed. Return the sugar to Mavra, and tell her to put it back again. But no. Bring the sugar here, and *I* will put it back.”

“Good-bye, dear sir,” finally he added to Chichikov. “May the Lord bless you! Hand that letter to the President of the Council, and let him read it. Yes, he is an old friend of mine. We knew one another as schoolfellows.”

With that this strange phenomenon, this withered old man, escorted his guest to the gates of the courtyard, and, after the guest had departed, ordered the gates to be closed, made the round of the outbuildings for the purpose of ascertaining whether the numerous watchmen were at their posts, peered into the kitchen (where, under the pretence of seeing whether his servants were being properly fed, he made a light meal of cabbage soup and gruel), rated the said servants soundly for their thievishness and general bad behaviour, and then returned to his room. Meditating in solitude, he fell to thinking how best he could contrive to recompense his guest for the latter’s measureless benevolence. “I will present him,” he thought to himself, “with a watch. It is a good silver article — not one

of those cheap metal affairs; and though it has suffered some damage, he can easily get that put right. A young man always needs to give a watch to his betrothed."

"No," he added after further thought. "I will leave him the watch in my will, as a keepsake."

Meanwhile our hero was bowling along in high spirit. Such an unexpected acquisition both of dead souls and of runaway serfs had come as a windfall. Even before reaching Plushkin's village he had had a presentiment that he would do successful business there, but not business of such pre-eminent profitableness as had actually resulted. As he proceeded he whistled, hummed with hand placed trumpetwise to his mouth, and ended by bursting into a burst of melody so striking that Selifan, after listening for a while, nodded his head and exclaimed, "My word, but the master CAN sing!"

By the time they reached the town darkness had fallen, and changed the character of the scene. The britchka bounded over the cobblestones, and at length turned into the hostelry's courtyard, where the travellers were met by Petrushka. With one hand holding back the tails of his coat (which he never liked to see fly apart), the valet assisted his master to alight. The waiter ran out with candle in hand and napkin on shoulder. Whether or not Petrushka was glad to see the barin return it is impossible to say, but at all events he exchanged a wink with Selifan, and his ordinarily morose exterior seemed momentarily to brighten.

"Then you have been travelling far, sir?" said the waiter, as he lit the way upstarts.

"Yes," said Chichikov. "What has happened here in the meanwhile?"

"Nothing, sir," replied the waiter, bowing, "except that last night there arrived a military lieutenant. He has got room number sixteen."

"A lieutenant?"

"Yes. He came from Riazan, driving three grey horses."

On entering his room, Chichikov clapped his hand to his nose, and asked his valet why he had never had the windows opened.

"But I did have them opened," replied Petrushka. Nevertheless this was a lie, as Chichikov well knew, though he was too tired to contest the point. After ordering and consuming a light supper of sucking pig, he undressed, plunged beneath the bedclothes, and sank into the profound slumber which comes only to such fortunate folk as are troubled neither with mosquitoes nor fleas nor excessive activity of brain.

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CHAPTER VII

When Chichikov awoke he stretched himself and realised that he had slept well. For a moment or two he lay on his back, and then suddenly clapped his hands at the recollection that he was now owner of nearly four hundred souls. At once he leapt out of bed without so much as glancing at his face in the mirror, though, as a rule, he had much solicitude for his features, and especially for his chin, of which he would make the most when in company with friends, and more particularly should any one happen to enter while he was engaged in the process of shaving. “Look how round my chin is!” was his usual formula. On the present occasion, however, he looked neither at chin nor at any other feature, but at once donned his flower-embroidered slippers of morroco leather (the kind of slippers in which, thanks to the Russian love for a dressing-gowned existence, the town of Torzhok does such a huge trade), and, clad only in a meagre shirt, so far forgot his elderliness and dignity as to cut a couple of capers after the fashion of a Scottish highlander — alighting neatly, each time, on the flat of his heels. Only when he had done that did he proceed to business. Planting himself before his dispatch-box, he rubbed his hands with a satisfaction worthy of an incorruptible rural magistrate when adjourning for luncheon; after which he extracted from the receptacle a bundle of papers. These he had decided not to deposit with a lawyer, for the reason that he would hasten matters, as well as save expense, by himself framing and fair-copying the necessary deeds of indenture; and since he was thoroughly acquainted with the necessary terminology, he proceeded to inscribe in large characters the date, and then in smaller ones, his name and rank. By two o’clock the whole was finished, and as he looked at the sheets of names representing bygone peasants who had ploughed, worked at handicrafts, cheated their masters, fetched, carried, and got drunk (though SOME of them may have behaved well), there came over him a strange, unaccountable sensation. To his eye each list of names seemed to possess a character of its own; and even individual peasants therein seemed to have taken on certain qualities peculiar to themselves. For instance, to the majority of Madame Korobotchka’s serfs there were appended nicknames and other additions; Plushkin’s list was distinguished by a conciseness of exposition which had led to certain of the items being represented merely by Christian name, patronymic, and a couple of dots; and Sobakevitch’s list was remarkable for its amplitude and circumstantiality, in that not a single peasant had such of his peculiar characteristics omitted as that the

deceased had been “excellent at joinery,” or “sober and ready to pay attention to his work.” Also, in Sobakevitch’s list there was recorded who had been the father and the mother of each of the deceased, and how those parents had behaved themselves. Only against the name of a certain Thedotov was there inscribed: “Father unknown, Mother the maidservant Kapitolina, Morals and Honesty good.” These details communicated to the document a certain air of freshness, they seemed to connote that the peasants in question had lived but yesterday. As Chichikov scanned the list he felt softened in spirit, and said with a sigh:

“My friends, what a concourse of you is here! How did you all pass your lives, my brethren? And how did you all come to depart hence?”

As he spoke his eyes halted at one name in particular — that of the same Peter Saveliev Neuvazhai Korito who had once been the property of the window Korobotchka. Once more he could not help exclaiming:

“What a series of titles! They occupy a whole line! Peter Saveliev, I wonder whether you were an artisan or a plain muzhik. Also, I wonder how you came to meet your end; whether in a tavern, or whether through going to sleep in the middle of the road and being run over by a train of waggons. Again, I see the name, ‘Probka Stepan, carpenter, very sober.’ That must be the hero of whom the Guards would have been so glad to get hold. How well I can imagine him tramping the country with an axe in his belt and his boots on his shoulder, and living on a few groats’-worth of bread and dried fish per day, and taking home a couple of half-rouble pieces in his purse, and sewing the notes into his breeches, or stuffing them into his boots! In what manner came you by your end, Probka Stepan? Did you, for good wages, mount a scaffold around the cupola of the village church, and, climbing thence to the cross above, miss your footing on a beam, and fall headlong with none at hand but Uncle Michai — the good uncle who, scratching the back of his neck, and muttering, ‘Ah, Vania, for once you have been too clever!’ straightway lashed himself to a rope, and took your place? ‘Maksim Teliatnikov, shoemaker.’ A shoemaker, indeed? ‘As drunk as a shoemaker,’ says the proverb. *I* know what you were like, my friend. If you wish, I will tell you your whole history. You were apprenticed to a German, who fed you and your fellows at a common table, thrashed you with a strap, kept you indoors whenever you had made a mistake, and spoke of you in uncomplimentary terms to his wife and friends. At length, when your apprenticeship was over, you said to yourself, ‘I am going to set up on my own account, and not just to scrape together a kopeck here and a kopeck there, as the Germans do, but to grow rich quick.’ Hence you took a shop at a high rent, bespoke a few orders, and set to work to buy up some rotten leather out of which

you could make, on each pair of boots, a double profit. But those boots split within a fortnight, and brought down upon your head dire showers of maledictions; with the result that gradually your shop grew empty of customers, and you fell to roaming the streets and exclaiming, ‘The world is a very poor place indeed! A Russian cannot make a living for German competition.’ Well, well! ‘Elizabeta Vorobei!’ But that is a WOMAN’S name! How comes SHE to be on the list? That villain Sobakevitch must have sneaked her in without my knowing it.”

“‘Grigori Goiezhai-ne-Doiedesh,’“ he went on. “What sort of a man were YOU, I wonder? Were you a carrier who, having set up a team of three horses and a tilt waggon, left your home, your native hovel, for ever, and departed to cart merchandise to market? Was it on the highway that you surrendered your soul to God, or did your friends first marry you to some fat, red-faced soldier’s daughter; after which your harness and team of rough, but sturdy, horses caught a highwayman’s fancy, and you, lying on your pallet, thought things over until, willy-nilly, you felt that you must get up and make for the tavern, thereafter blundering into an icehole? Ah, our peasant of Russia! Never do you welcome death when it comes!”

“And you, my friends?” continued Chichikov, turning to the sheet whereon were inscribed the names of Plushkin’s absconded serfs. “Although you are still alive, what is the good of you? You are practically dead. Whither, I wonder, have your fugitive feet carried you? Did you fare hardly at Plushkin’s, or was it that your natural inclinations led you to prefer roaming the wilds and plundering travellers? Are you, by this time, in gaol, or have you taken service with other masters for the tillage of their lands? ‘Eremei Kariakin, Nikita Volokita and Anton Volokita (son of the foregoing).’ To judge from your surnames, you would seem to have been born gadabouts . ‘Popov, household serf.’ Probably you are an educated man, good Popov, and go in for polite thieving, as distinguished from the more vulgar cut-throat sort. In my mind’s eye I seem to see a Captain of Rural Police challenging you for being without a passport; whereupon you stake your all upon a single throw. ‘To whom do you belong?’ asks the Captain, probably adding to his question a forcible expletive. ‘To such and such a landowner,’ stoutly you reply. ‘And what are you doing here?’ continues the Captain. ‘I have just received permission to go and earn my obrok,’ is your fluent explanation. ‘Then where is your passport?’ ‘At Miestchanin Pimenov’s.’ ‘Pimenov’s? Then are you Pimenov himself?’ ‘Yes, I am Pimenov himself.’ ‘He has given you his passport?’ ‘No, he has not given me his passport.’ ‘Come, come!’ shouts the Captain with another forcible expletive. ‘You are lying!’ ‘No, I am not,’ is your dogged reply. ‘It is only that last night I could not return him his

passport, because I came home late; so I handed it to Antip Prochorov, the bell-ringer, for him to take care of.' 'Bell-ringer, indeed! Then HE gave you a passport?' 'No; I did not receive a passport from him either.' 'What?' — and here the Captain shouts another expletive — 'How dare you keep on lying? Where is YOUR OWN passport?' 'I had one all right,' you reply cunningly, 'but must have dropped it somewhere on the road as I came along.' 'And what about that soldier's coat?' asks the Captain with an impolite addition. 'Whence did you get it? And what of the priest's cashbox and copper money?'' 'About them I know nothing,' you reply doggedly. 'Never at any time have I committed a theft.' 'Then how is it that the coat was found at your place?' 'I do not know. Probably some one else put it there.' 'You rascal, you rascal!' shouts the Captain, shaking his head, and closing in upon you. 'Put the leg-irons upon him, and off with him to prison!' 'With pleasure,' you reply as, taking a snuff-box from your pocket, you offer a pinch to each of the two gendarmes who are manacling you, while also inquiring how long they have been discharged from the army, and in what wars they may have served. And in prison you remain until your case comes on, when the justice orders you to be removed from Tsarev-Kokshaika to such and such another prison, and a second justice orders you to be transferred thence to Vesiegonsk or somewhere else, and you go flitting from gaol to gaol, and saying each time, as you eye your new habitation, 'The last place was a good deal cleaner than this one is, and one could play babki there, and stretch one's legs, and see a little society.'"

"'Abakum Thirov,'" Chichikov went on after a pause. "What of YOU, brother? Where, and in what capacity, are YOU disporting yourself? Have you gone to the Volga country, and become bitten with the life of freedom, and joined the fishermen of the river?"

Here, breaking off, Chichikov relapsed into silent meditation. Of what was he thinking as he sat there? Was he thinking of the fortunes of Abakum Thirov, or was he meditating as meditates every Russian when his thoughts once turn to the joys of an emancipated existence?

"Ah, well!" he sighed, looking at his watch. "It has now gone twelve o'clock. Why have I so forgotten myself? There is still much to be done, yet I go shutting myself up and letting my thoughts wander! What a fool I am!"

So saying, he exchanged his Scottish costume (of a shirt and nothing else) for attire of a more European nature; after which he pulled tight the waistcoat over his ample stomach, sprinkled himself with eau-de-Cologne, tucked his papers under his arm, took his fur cap, and set out for the municipal offices, for the purpose of completing the transfer of souls. The fact that he hurried along was not due to a fear of being late (seeing that the President of the Local Council was

an intimate acquaintance of his, as well as a functionary who could shorten or prolong an interview at will, even as Homer's Zeus was able to shorten or to prolong a night or a day, whenever it became necessary to put an end to the fighting of his favourite heroes, or to enable them to join battle), but rather to a feeling that he would like to have the affair concluded as quickly as possible, seeing that, throughout, it had been an anxious and difficult business. Also, he could not get rid of the idea that his souls were unsubstantial things, and that therefore, under the circumstances, his shoulders had better be relieved of their load with the least possible delay. Pulling on his cinnamon-coloured, bear-lined overcoat as he went, he had just stepped thoughtfully into the street when he collided with a gentleman dressed in a similar coat and an ear-lappeted fur cap. Upon that the gentleman uttered an exclamation. Behold, it was Manilov! At once the friends became folded in a strenuous embrace, and remained so locked for fully five minutes. Indeed, the kisses exchanged were so vigorous that both suffered from toothache for the greater portion of the day. Also, Manilov's delight was such that only his nose and lips remained visible — the eyes completely disappeared. Afterwards he spent about a quarter of an hour in holding Chichikov's hand and chafing it vigorously. Lastly, he, in the most pleasant and exquisite terms possible, intimated to his friend that he had just been on his way to embrace Paul Ivanovitch; and upon this followed a compliment of the kind which would more fittingly have been addressed to a lady who was being asked to accord a partner the favour of a dance. Chichikov had opened his mouth to reply — though even HE felt at a loss how to acknowledge what had just been said — when Manilov cut him short by producing from under his coat a roll of paper tied with red riband.

"What have you there?" asked Chichikov.

"The list of my souls."

"Ah!" And as Chichikov unrolled the document and ran his eye over it he could not but marvel at the elegant neatness with which it had been inscribed.

"It is a beautiful piece of writing," he said. "In fact, there will be no need to make a copy of it. Also, it has a border around its edge! Who worked that exquisite border?"

"Do not ask me," said Manilov.

"Did YOU do it?"

"No; my wife."

"Dear, dear!" Chichikov cried. "To think that I should have put her to so much trouble!"

"NOTHING could be too much trouble where Paul Ivanovitch is concerned."

Chichikov bowed his acknowledgements. Next, on learning that he was on his

way to the municipal offices for the purpose of completing the transfer, Manilov expressed his readiness to accompany him; wherefore the pair linked arm in arm and proceeded together. Whenever they encountered a slight rise in the ground — even the smallest unevenness or difference of level — Manilov supported Chichikov with such energy as almost to lift him off his feet, while accompanying the service with a smiling implication that not if HE could help it should Paul Ivanovitch slip or fall. Nevertheless this conduct appeared to embarrass Chichikov, either because he could not find any fitting words of gratitude or because he considered the proceeding tiresome; and it was with a sense of relief that he debouched upon the square where the municipal offices — a large, three-storied building of a chalky whiteness which probably symbolised the purity of the souls engaged within — were situated. No other building in the square could vie with them in size, seeing that the remaining edifices consisted only of a sentry-box, a shelter for two or three cabmen, and a long hoarding — the latter adorned with the usual bills, posters, and scrawls in chalk and charcoal. At intervals, from the windows of the second and third stories of the municipal offices, the incorruptible heads of certain of the attendant priests of Themis would peer quickly forth, and as quickly disappear again — probably for the reason that a superior official had just entered the room. Meanwhile the two friends ascended the staircase — nay, almost flew up it, since, longing to get rid of Manilov's ever-supporting arm, Chichikov hastened his steps, and Manilov kept darting forward to anticipate any possible failure on the part of his companion's legs. Consequently the pair were breathless when they reached the first corridor. In passing it may be remarked that neither corridors nor rooms evinced any of that cleanliness and purity which marked the exterior of the building, for such attributes were not troubled about within, and anything that was dirty remained so, and donned no meritricious, purely external, disguise. It was as though Themis received her visitors in neglige and a dressing-gown. The author would also give a description of the various offices through which our hero passed, were it not that he (the author) stands in awe of such legal haunts.

Approaching the first desk which he happened to encounter, Chichikov inquired of the two young officials who were seated at it whether they would kindly tell him where business relating to serf-indenture was transacted.

"Of what nature, precisely, IS your business?" countered one of the youthful officials as he turned himself round.

"I desire to make an application."

"In connection with a purchase?"

"Yes. But, as I say, I should like first to know where I can find the desk devoted to such business. Is it here or elsewhere?"

“You must state what it is you have bought, and for how much. THEN we shall be happy to give you the information.”

Chichikov perceived that the officials’ motive was merely one of curiosity, as often happens when young tchinovniks desire to cut a more important and imposing figure than is rightfully theirs.

“Look here, young sirs,” he said. “I know for a fact that all serf business, no matter to what value, is transacted at one desk alone. Consequently I again request you to direct me to that desk. Of course, if you do not know your business I can easily ask some one else.”

To this the tchinovniks made no reply beyond pointing towards a corner of the room where an elderly man appeared to be engaged in sorting some papers. Accordingly Chichikov and Manilov threaded their way in his direction through the desks; whereupon the elderly man became violently busy.

“Would you mind telling me,” said Chichikov, bowing, “whether this is the desk for serf affairs?”

The elderly man raised his eyes, and said stiffly:

“This is NOT the desk for serf affairs.”

“Where is it, then?”

“In the Serf Department.”

“And where might the Serf Department be?”

“In charge of Ivan Antonovitch.”

“And where is Ivan Antonovitch?”

The elderly man pointed to another corner of the room; whither Chichikov and Manilov next directed their steps. As they advanced, Ivan Antonovitch cast an eye backwards and viewed them askance. Then, with renewed ardour, he resumed his work of writing.

“Would you mind telling me,” said Chichikov, bowing, “whether this is the desk for serf affairs?”

It appeared as though Ivan Antonovitch had not heard, so completely did he bury himself in his papers and return no reply. Instantly it became plain that HE at least was of an age of discretion, and not one of your jejune chatterboxes and harum-scarums; for, although his hair was still thick and black, he had long ago passed his fortieth year. His whole face tended towards the nose — it was what, in common parlance, is known as a “pitcher-mug.”

“Would you mind telling me,” repeated Chichikov, “whether this is the desk for serf affairs?”

“It is that,” said Ivan Antonovitch, again lowering his jug-shaped jowl, and resuming his writing.

“Then I should like to transact the following business. From various

landowners in this canton I have purchased a number of peasants for transfer. Here is the purchase list, and it needs but to be registered."

"Have you also the vendors here?"

"Some of them, and from the rest I have obtained powers of attorney."

"And have you your statement of application?"

"Yes. I desire — indeed, it is necessary for me so to do — to hasten matters a little. Could the affair, therefore, be carried through to-day?"

"To-day? Oh, dear no!" said Ivan Antonovitch. "Before that can be done you must furnish me with further proofs that no impediments exist."

"Then, to expedite matters, let me say that Ivan Grigorievitch, the President of the Council, is a very intimate friend of mine."

"Possibly," said Ivan Antonovitch without enthusiasm. "But Ivan Grigorievitch alone will not do — it is customary to have others as well."

"Yes, but the absence of others will not altogether invalidate the transaction. I too have been in the service, and know how things can be done."

"You had better go and see Ivan Grigorievitch," said Ivan Antonovitch more mildly. "Should he give you an order addressed to whom it may concern, we shall soon be able to settle the matter."

Upon that Chichikov pulled from his pocket a paper, and laid it before Ivan Antonovitch. At once the latter covered it with a book. Chichikov again attempted to show it to him, but, with a movement of his head, Ivan Antonovitch signified that that was unnecessary.

"A clerk," he added, "will now conduct you to Ivan Grigorievitch's room."

Upon that one of the toilers in the service of Themis — a zealot who had offered her such heartfelt sacrifice that his coat had burst at the elbows and lacked a lining — escorted our friends (even as Virgil had once escorted Dante) to the apartment of the Presence. In this sanctum were some massive armchairs, a table laden with two or three fat books, and a large looking-glass. Lastly, in (apparently) sunlike isolation, there was seated at the table the President. On arriving at the door of the apartment, our modern Virgil seemed to have become so overwhelmed with awe that, without daring even to intrude a foot, he turned back, and, in so doing, once more exhibited a back as shiny as a mat, and having adhering to it, in one spot, a chicken's feather. As soon as the two friends had entered the hall of the Presence they perceived that the President was NOT alone, but, on the contrary, had seated by his side Sobakevitch, whose form had hitherto been concealed by the intervening mirror. The newcomers' entry evoked sundry exclamations and the pushing back of a pair of Government chairs as the voluminous-sleeved Sobakevitch rose into view from behind the looking-glass. Chichikov the President received with an embrace, and for a while the hall of the

Presence resounded with osculatory salutations as mutually the pair inquired after one another's health. It seemed that both had lately had a touch of that pain under the waistband which comes of a sedentary life. Also, it seemed that the President had just been conversing with Sobakevitch on the subject of sales of souls, since he now proceeded to congratulate Chichikov on the same — a proceeding which rather embarrassed our hero, seeing that Manilov and Sobakevitch, two of the vendors, and persons with whom he had bargained in the strictest privacy, were now confronting one another direct. However, Chichikov duly thanked the President, and then, turning to Sobakevitch, inquired after HIS health.

"Thank God, I have nothing to complain of," replied Sobakevitch: which was true enough, seeing that a piece of iron would have caught cold and taken to sneezing sooner than would that uncouthly fashioned landowner.

"Ah, yes; you have always had good health, have you not?" put in the President. "Your late father was equally strong."

"Yes, he even went out bear hunting alone," replied Sobakevitch.

"I should think that you too could worst a bear if you were to try a tussle with him," rejoined the President.

"Oh no," said Sobakevitch. "My father was a stronger man than I am." Then with a sigh the speaker added: "But nowadays there are no such men as he. What is even a life like mine worth?"

"Then you do not have a comfortable time of it?" exclaimed the President.

"No; far from it," rejoined Sobakevitch, shaking his head. "Judge for yourself, Ivan Grigorievitch. I am fifty years old, yet never in my life had been ill, except for an occasional carbuncle or boil. That is not a good sign. Sooner or later I shall have to pay for it." And he relapsed into melancholy.

"Just listen to the fellow!" was Chichikov's and the President's joint inward comment. "What on earth has HE to complain of?"

"I have a letter for you, Ivan Grigorievitch," went on Chichikov aloud as he produced from his pocket Plushkin's epistle.

"From whom?" inquired the President. Having broken the seal, he exclaimed: "Why, it is from Plushkin! To think that HE is still alive! What a strange world it is! He used to be such a nice fellow, and now — "

"And now he is a cur," concluded Sobakevitch, "as well as a miser who starves his serfs to death."

"Allow me a moment," said the President. Then he read the letter through. When he had finished he added: "Yes, I am quite ready to act as Plushkin's attorney. When do you wish the purchase deeds to be registered, Monsieur Chichikov — now or later?"

“Now, if you please,” replied Chichikov. “Indeed, I beg that, if possible, the affair may be concluded to-day, since to-morrow I wish to leave the town. I have brought with me both the forms of indenture and my statement of application.”

“Very well. Nevertheless we cannot let you depart so soon. The indentures shall be completed to-day, but you must continue your sojourn in our midst. I will issue the necessary orders at once.”

So saying, he opened the door into the general office, where the clerks looked like a swarm of bees around a honeycomb (if I may liken affairs of Government to such an article?).

“Is Ivan Antonovitch here?” asked the President.

“Yes,” replied a voice from within.

“Then send him here.”

Upon that the pitcher-faced Ivan Antonovitch made his appearance in the doorway, and bowed.

“Take these indentures, Ivan Antonovitch,” said the President, “and see that they — ”

“But first I would ask you to remember,” put in Sobakevitch, “that witnesses ought to be in attendance — not less than two on behalf of either party. Let us, therefore, send for the Public Prosecutor, who has little to do, and has even that little done for him by his chief clerk, Zolotucha. The Inspector of the Medical Department is also a man of leisure, and likely to be at home — if he has not gone out to a card party. Others also there are — all men who cumber the ground for nothing.”

“Quite so, quite so,” agreed the President, and at once dispatched a clerk to fetch the persons named.

“Also,” requested Chichikov, “I should be glad if you would send for the accredited representative of a certain lady landowner with whom I have done business. He is the son of a Father Cyril, and a clerk in your offices.”

“Certainly we shall call him here,” replied the President. “Everything shall be done to meet your convenience, and I forbid you to present any of our officials with a gratuity. That is a special request on my part. No friend of mine ever pays a copper.”

With that he gave Ivan Antonovitch the necessary instructions; and though they scarcely seemed to meet with that functionary’s approval, upon the President the purchase deeds had evidently produced an excellent impression, more especially since the moment when he had perceived the sum total to amount to nearly a hundred thousand roubles. For a moment or two he gazed into Chichikov’s eyes with an expression of profound satisfaction. Then he said:

“Well done, Paul Ivanovitch! You have indeed made a nice haul!”

“That is so,” replied Chichikov.

“Excellent business! Yes, excellent business!”

“I, too, conceive that I could not well have done better. The truth is that never until a man has driven home the piles of his life’s structure upon a lasting bottom, instead of upon the wayward chimeras of youth, will his aims in life assume a definite end.” And, that said, Chichikov went on to deliver himself of a very telling indictment of Liberalism and our modern young men. Yet in his words there seemed to lurk a certain lack of conviction. Somehow he seemed secretly to be saying to himself, “My good sir, you are talking the most absolute rubbish, and nothing but rubbish.” Nor did he even throw a glance at Sobakevitch and Manilov. It was as though he were uncertain what he might not encounter in their expression. Yet he need not have been afraid. Never once did Sobakevitch’s face move a muscle, and, as for Manilov, he was too much under the spell of Chichikov’s eloquence to do aught beyond nod his approval at intervals, and strike the kind of attitude which is assumed by lovers of music when a lady singer has, in rivalry of an accompanying violin, produced a note whereof the shrillness would exceed even the capacity of a bird’s throstle.

“But why not tell Ivan Grigorievitch precisely what you have bought?” inquired Sobakevitch of Chichikov. “And why, Ivan Grigorievitch, do YOU not ask Monsieur Chichikov precisely what his purchases have consisted of? What a splendid lot of serfs, to be sure! I myself have sold him my wheelwright, Michiev.”

“What? You have sold him Michiev?” exclaimed the President. “I know the man well. He is a splendid craftsman, and, on one occasion, made me a drozhki . Only, only — well, lately didn’t you tell me that he is dead?”

“That Michiev is dead?” re-echoed Sobakevitch, coming perilously near to laughing. “Oh dear no! That was his brother. Michiev himself is very much alive, and in even better health than he used to be. Any day he could knock you up a britchka such as you could not procure even in Moscow. However, he is now bound to work for only one master.”

“Indeed a splendid craftsman!” repeated the President. “My only wonder is that you can have brought yourself to part with him.”

“Then think you that Michiev is the ONLY serf with whom I have parted? Nay, for I have parted also with Probka Stepan, my carpenter, with Milushkin, my bricklayer, and with Teliatnikov, my bootmaker. Yes, the whole lot I have sold.”

And to the President’s inquiry why he had so acted, seeing that the serfs named were all skilled workers and indispensable to a household, Sobakevitch replied that a mere whim had led him to do so, and thus the sale had owed its

origin to a piece of folly. Then he hung his head as though already repenting of his rash act, and added:

"Although a man of grey hairs, I have not yet learned wisdom."

"But," inquired the President further, "how comes it about, Paul Ivanovitch, that you have purchased peasants apart from land? Is it for transferment elsewhere that you need them?"

"Yes."

"Very well, then. That is quite another matter. To what province of the country?"

"To the province of Kherson."

"Indeed? That region contains some splendid land," said the President; whereupon he proceeded to expatiate on the fertility of the Kherson pastures.

"And have you MUCH land there?" he continued.

"Yes; quite sufficient to accommodate the serfs whom I have purchased."

"And is there a river on the estate or a lake?"

"Both."

After this reply Chichikov involuntarily threw a glance at Sobakevitch; and though that landowner's face was as motionless as every other, the other seemed to detect in it: "You liar! Don't tell ME that you own both a river and a lake, as well as the land which you say you do."

Whilst the foregoing conversation had been in progress, various witnesses had been arriving on the scene. They consisted of the constantly blinking Public Prosecutor, the Inspector of the Medical Department, and others — all, to quote Sobakevitch, "men who cumbered the ground for nothing." With some of them, however, Chichikov was altogether unacquainted, since certain substitutes and supernumeraries had to be pressed into the service from among the ranks of the subordinate staff. There also arrived, in answer to the summons, not only the son of Father Cyril before mentioned, but also Father Cyril himself. Each such witness appended to his signature a full list of his dignities and qualifications: one man in printed characters, another in a flowing hand, a third in topsy-turvy characters of a kind never before seen in the Russian alphabet, and so forth. Meanwhile our friend Ivan Antonovitch comported himself with not a little address; and after the indentures had been signed, docketed, and registered, Chichikov found himself called upon to pay only the merest trifle in the way of Government percentage and fees for publishing the transaction in the Official Gazette. The reason of this was that the President had given orders that only half the usual charges were to be exacted from the present purchaser — the remaining half being somehow debited to the account of another applicant for serf registration.

“And now,” said Ivan Grigorievitch when all was completed, “we need only to wet the bargain.”

“For that too I am ready,” said Chichikov. “Do you but name the hour. If, in return for your most agreeable company, I were not to set a few champagne corks flying, I should be indeed in default.”

“But we are not going to let you charge yourself with anything whatsoever. WE must provide the champagne, for you are our guest, and it is for us — it is our duty, it is our bounden obligation — to entertain you. Look here, gentlemen. Let us adjourn to the house of the Chief of Police. He is the magician who needs but to wink when passing a fishmonger’s or a wine merchant’s. Not only shall we fare well at his place, but also we shall get a game of whist.”

To this proposal no one had any objection to offer, for the mere mention of the fish shop aroused the witnesses’ appetite. Consequently, the ceremony being over, there was a general reaching for hats and caps. As the party were passing through the general office, Ivan Antonovitch whispered in Chichikov’s ear, with a courteous inclination of his jug-shaped physiognomy:

“You have given a hundred thousand roubles for the serfs, but have paid ME only a trifle for my trouble.”

“Yes,” replied Chichikov with a similar whisper, “but what sort of serfs do you suppose them to be? They are a poor, useless lot, and not worth even half the purchase money.”

This gave Ivan Antonovitch to understand that the visitor was a man of strong character — a man from whom nothing more was to be expected.

“Why have you gone and purchased souls from Plushkin?” whispered Sobakevitch in Chichikov’s other ear.

“Why did YOU go and add the woman Vorobei to your list?” retorted Chichikov.

“Vorobei? Who is Vorobei?”

“The woman ‘Elizabet’ Vorobei — ’Elizabet,’ not ‘Elizabeta?’“

“I added no such name,” replied Sobakevitch, and straightway joined the other guests.

At length the party arrived at the residence of the Chief of Police. The latter proved indeed a man of spells, for no sooner had he learnt what was afoot than he summoned a brisk young constable, whispered in his ear, adding laconically, “You understand, do you not?” and brought it about that, during the time that the guests were cutting for partners at whist in an adjoining room, the dining-table became laden with sturgeon, caviare, salmon, herrings, cheese, smoked tongue, fresh roe, and a potted variety of the same — all procured from the local fish market, and reinforced with additions from the host’s own kitchen. The fact was

that the worthy Chief of Police filled the office of a sort of father and general benefactor to the town, and that he moved among the citizens as though they constituted part and parcel of his own family, and watched over their shops and markets as though those establishments were merely his own private larder. Indeed, it would be difficult to say — so thoroughly did he perform his duties in this respect — whether the post most fitted him, or he the post. Matters were also so arranged that though his income more than doubled that of his predecessors, he had never lost the affection of his fellow townsmen. In particular did the tradesmen love him, since he was never above standing godfather to their children or dining at their tables. True, he had differences of opinion with them, and serious differences at that; but always these were skilfully adjusted by his slapping the offended ones jovially on the shoulder, drinking a glass of tea with them, promising to call at their houses and play a game of chess, asking after their belongings, and, should he learn that a child of theirs was ill, prescribing the proper medicine. In short, he bore the reputation of being a very good fellow.

On perceiving the feast to be ready, the host proposed that his guests should finish their whist after luncheon; whereupon all proceeded to the room whence for some time past an agreeable odour had been tickling the nostrils of those present, and towards the door of which Sobakevitch in particular had been glancing since the moment when he had caught sight of a huge sturgeon reposing on the sideboard. After a glassful of warm, olive-coloured vodka apiece — vodka of the tint to be seen only in the species of Siberian stone whereof seals are cut — the company applied themselves to knife-and-fork work, and, in so doing, evinced their several characteristics and tastes. For instance, Sobakevitch, disdaining lesser trifles, tackled the large sturgeon, and, during the time that his fellow guests were eating minor comestibles, and drinking and talking, contrived to consume more than a quarter of the whole fish; so that, on the host remembering the creature, and, with fork in hand, leading the way in its direction and saying, “What, gentlemen, think you of this striking product of nature?” there ensued the discovery that of the said product of nature there remained little beyond the tail, while Sobakevitch, with an air as though at least HE had not eaten it, was engaged in plunging his fork into a much more diminutive piece of fish which happened to be resting on an adjacent platter. After his divorce from the sturgeon, Sobakevitch ate and drank no more, but sat frowning and blinking in an armchair.

Apparently the host was not a man who believed in sparing the wine, for the toasts drunk were innumerable. The first toast (as the reader may guess) was quaffed to the health of the new landowner of Kherson; the second to the

prosperity of his peasants and their safe transferment; and the third to the beauty of his future wife — a compliment which brought to our hero's lips a flickering smile. Lastly, he received from the company a pressing, as well as an unanimous, invitation to extend his stay in town for at least another fortnight, and, in the meanwhile, to allow a wife to be found for him.

"Quite so," agreed the President. "Fight us tooth and nail though you may, we intend to have you married. You have happened upon us by chance, and you shall have no reason to repent of it. We are in earnest on this subject."

"But why should I fight you tooth and nail?" said Chichikov, smiling. "Marriage would not come amiss to me, were I but provided with a betrothed."

"Then a betrothed you shall have. Why not? We will do as you wish."

"Very well," assented Chichikov.

"Bravo, bravo!" the company shouted. "Long live Paul Ivanovitch! Hurrah! Hurrah!" And with that every one approached to clink glasses with him, and he readily accepted the compliment, and accepted it many times in succession. Indeed, as the hours passed on, the hilarity of the company increased yet further, and more than once the President (a man of great urbanity when thoroughly in his cups) embraced the chief guest of the day with the heartfelt words, "My dearest fellow! My own most precious of friends!" Nay, he even started to crack his fingers, to dance around Chichikov's chair, and to sing snatches of a popular song. To the champagne succeeded Hungarian wine, which had the effect of still further heartening and enlivening the company. By this time every one had forgotten about whist, and given himself up to shouting and disputing. Every conceivable subject was discussed, including politics and military affairs; and in this connection guests voiced jejune opinions for the expression of which they would, at any other time, have soundly spanked their offspring. Chichikov, like the rest, had never before felt so gay, and, imagining himself really and truly to be a landowner of Kherson, spoke of various improvements in agriculture, of the three-field system of tillage , and of the beatific felicity of a union between two kindred souls. Also, he started to recite poetry to Sobakevitch, who blinked as he listened, for he greatly desired to go to sleep. At length the guest of the evening realised that matters had gone far enough, so begged to be given a lift home, and was accommodated with the Public Prosecutor's drozhki. Luckily the driver of the vehicle was a practised man at his work, for, while driving with one hand, he succeeded in leaning backwards and, with the other, holding Chichikov securely in his place. Arrived at the inn, our hero continued babbling awhile about a flaxen-haired damsel with rosy lips and a dimple in her right cheek, about villages of his in Kherson, and about the amount of his capital. Nay, he even issued seignorial instructions that Selifan should go and muster the peasants

about to be transferred, and make a complete and detailed inventory of them. For a while Selifan listened in silence; then he left the room, and instructed Petrushka to help the barin to undress. As it happened, Chichikov's boots had no sooner been removed than he managed to perform the rest of his toilet without assistance, to roll on to the bed (which creaked terribly as he did so), and to sink into a sleep in every way worthy of a landowner of Kherson. Meanwhile Petrushka had taken his master's coat and trousers of bilberry-coloured check into the corridor; where, spreading them over a clothes' horse, he started to flick and to brush them, and to fill the whole corridor with dust. Just as he was about to replace them in his master's room he happened to glance over the railing of the gallery, and saw Selifan returning from the stable. Glances were exchanged, and in an instant the pair had arrived at an instinctive understanding — an understanding to the effect that the barin was sound asleep, and that therefore one might consider one's own pleasure a little. Accordingly Petrushka proceeded to restore the coat and trousers to their appointed places, and then descended the stairs; whereafter he and Selifan left the house together. Not a word passed between them as to the object of their expedition. On the contrary, they talked solely of extraneous subjects. Yet their walk did not take them far; it took them only to the other side of the street, and thence into an establishment which immediately confronted the inn. Entering a mean, dirty courtyard covered with glass, they passed thence into a cellar where a number of customers were seated around small wooden tables. What thereafter was done by Selifan and Petrushka God alone knows. At all events, within an hour's time they issued, arm in arm, and in profound silence, yet remaining markedly assiduous to one another, and ever ready to help one another around an awkward corner. Still linked together — never once releasing their mutual hold — they spent the next quarter of an hour in attempting to negotiate the stairs of the inn; but at length even that ascent had been mastered, and they proceeded further on their way. Halting before his mean little pallet, Petrushka stood awhile in thought. His difficulty was how best to assume a recumbent position. Eventually he lay down on his face, with his legs trailing over the floor; after which Selifan also stretched himself upon the pallet, with his head resting upon Petrushka's stomach, and his mind wholly oblivious of the fact that he ought not to have been sleeping there at all, but in the servant's quarters, or in the stable beside his horses. Scarcely a moment had passed before the pair were plunged in slumber and emitting the most raucous snores; to which their master (next door) responded with snores of a whistling and nasal order. Indeed, before long every one in the inn had followed their soothing example, and the hostelry lay plunged in complete restfulness. Only in the window of the room of the newly-arrived lieutenant from Riazan did a light

remain burning. Evidently he was a devotee of boots, for he had purchased four pairs, and was now trying on a fifth. Several times he approached the bed with a view to taking off the boots and retiring to rest; but each time he failed, for the reason that the boots were so alluring in their make that he had no choice but to lift up first one foot, and then the other, for the purpose of scanning their elegant welts.

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CHAPTER VIII

It was not long before Chichikov's purchases had become the talk of the town; and various were the opinions expressed as to whether or not it was expedient to procure peasants for transferment. Indeed such was the interest taken by certain citizens in the matter that they advised the purchaser to provide himself and his convoy with an escort, in order to ensure their safe arrival at the appointed destination; but though Chichikov thanked the donors of this advice for the same, and declared that he should be very glad, in case of need, to avail himself of it, he declared also that there was no real need for an escort, seeing that the peasants whom he had purchased were exceptionally peace-loving folk, and that, being themselves consenting parties to the transferment, they would undoubtedly prove in every way tractable.

One particularly good result of this advertisement of his scheme was that he came to rank as neither more nor less than a millionaire. Consequently, much as the inhabitants had liked our hero in the first instance (as seen in Chapter I.), they now liked him more than ever. As a matter of fact, they were citizens of an exceptionally quiet, good-natured, easy-going disposition; and some of them were even well-educated. For instance, the President of the Local Council could recite the whole of Zhukovski's LUDMILLA by heart, and give such an impressive rendering of the passage "The pine forest was asleep and the valley at rest" (as well as of the exclamation "Phew!") that one felt, as he did so, that the pine forest and the valley really WERE as he described them. The effect was also further heightened by the manner in which, at such moments, he assumed the most portentous frown. For his part, the Postmaster went in more for philosophy, and diligently perused such works as Young's Night Thoughts, and Eckharthausen's A Key to the Mysteries of Nature; of which latter work he would make copious extracts, though no one had the slightest notion what they referred to. For the rest, he was a witty, florid little individual, and much addicted to a practice of what he called "embellishing" whatsoever he had to say — a feat which he performed with the aid of such by-the-way phrases as "my dear sir," "my good So-and-So," "you know," "you understand," "you may imagine," "relatively speaking," "for instance," and "et cetera"; of which phrases he would add sackfuls to his speech. He could also "embellish" his words by the simple expedient of half-closing, half-winking one eye; which trick communicated to some of his satirical utterances quite a mordant effect. Nor

were his colleagues a wit inferior to him in enlightenment. For instance, one of them made a regular practice of reading Karamzin, another of conning the Moscow Gazette, and a third of never looking at a book at all. Likewise, although they were the sort of men to whom, in their more intimate movements, their wives would very naturally address such nicknames as “Toby Jug,” “Marmot,” “Fatty,” “Pot Belly,” “Smutty,” “Kiki,” and “Buzz-Buzz,” they were men also of good heart, and very ready to extend their hospitality and their friendship when once a guest had eaten of their bread and salt, or spent an evening in their company. Particularly, therefore, did Chichikov earn these good folk’s approval with his taking methods and qualities — so much so that the expression of that approval bid fair to make it difficult for him to quit the town, seeing that, wherever he went, the one phrase dinned into his ears was “Stay another week with us, Paul Ivanovitch.” In short, he ceased to be a free agent. But incomparably more striking was the impression (a matter for unbounded surprise!) which he produced upon the ladies. Properly to explain this phenomenon I should need to say a great deal about the ladies themselves, and to describe in the most vivid of colours their social intercourse and spiritual qualities. Yet this would be a difficult thing for me to do, since, on the one hand, I should be hampered by my boundless respect for the womenfolk of all Civil Service officials, and, on the other hand — well, simply by the innate arduousness of the task. The ladies of N. were — But no, I cannot do it; my heart has already failed me. Come, come! The ladies of N. were distinguished for — But it is of no use; somehow my pen seems to refuse to move over the paper — it seems to be weighted as with a plummet of lead. Very well. That being so, I will merely say a word or two concerning the most prominent tints on the feminine palette of N. — merely a word or two concerning the outward appearance of its ladies, and a word or two concerning their more superficial characteristics. The ladies of N. were pre-eminently what is known as “presentable.” Indeed, in that respect they might have served as a model to the ladies of many another town. That is to say, in whatever pertained to “tone,” etiquette, the intricacies of decorum, and strict observance of the prevailing mode, they surpassed even the ladies of Moscow and St. Petersburg, seeing that they dressed with taste, drove about in carriages in the latest fashions, and never went out without the escort of a footman in gold-laced livery. Again, they looked upon a visiting card — even upon a make-shift affair consisting of an ace of diamonds or a two of clubs — as a sacred thing; so sacred that on one occasion two closely related ladies who had also been closely attached friends were known to fall out with one another over the mere fact of an omission to return a social call! Yes, in spite of the best efforts of husbands and kinsfolk to reconcile

the antagonists, it became clear that, though all else in the world might conceivably be possible, never could the hatchet be buried between ladies who had quarrelled over a neglected visit. Likewise strenuous scenes used to take place over questions of precedence — scenes of a kind which had the effect of inspiring husbands to great and knightly ideas on the subject of protecting the fair. True, never did a duel actually take place, since all the husbands were officials belonging to the Civil Service; but at least a given combatant would strive to heap contumely upon his rival, and, as we all know, that is a resource which may prove even more effectual than a duel. As regards morality, the ladies of N. were nothing if not censorious, and would at once be fired with virtuous indignation when they heard of a case of vice or seduction. Nay, even to mere frailty they would award the lash without mercy. On the other hand, should any instance of what they called "third personism" occur among THEIR OWN circle, it was always kept dark — not a hint of what was going on being allowed to transpire, and even the wronged husband holding himself ready, should he meet with, or hear of, the "third person," to quote, in a mild and rational manner, the proverb, "Whom concerns it that a friend should consort with friend?" In addition, I may say that, like most of the female world of St. Petersburg, the ladies of N. were pre-eminently careful and refined in their choice of words and phrases. Never did a lady say, "I blew my nose," or "I perspired," or "I spat." No, it had to be, "I relieved my nose through the expedient of wiping it with my handkerchief," and so forth. Again, to say, "This glass, or this plate, smells badly," was forbidden. No, not even a hint to such an effect was to be dropped. Rather, the proper phrase, in such a case, was "This glass, or this plate, is not behaving very well," — or some such formula.

In fact, to refine the Russian tongue the more thoroughly, something like half the words in it were cut out: which circumstance necessitated very frequent recourse to the tongue of France, since the same words, if spoken in French, were another matter altogether, and one could use even blunter ones than the ones originally objected to.

So much for the ladies of N., provided that one confines one's observations to the surface; yet hardly need it be said that, should one penetrate deeper than that, a great deal more would come to light. At the same time, it is never a very safe proceeding to peer deeply into the hearts of ladies; wherefore, restricting ourselves to the foregoing superficialities, let us proceed further on our way.

Hitherto the ladies had paid Chichikov no particular attention, though giving him full credit for his gentlemanly and urbane demeanour; but from the moment that there arose rumours of his being a millionaire other qualities of his began to be canvassed. Nevertheless, not ALL the ladies were governed by interested

motives, since it is due to the term “millionaire” rather than to the character of the person who bears it, that the mere sound of the word exercises upon rascals, upon decent folk, and upon folk who are neither the one nor the other, an undeniable influence. A millionaire suffers from the disadvantage of everywhere having to behold meanness, including the sort of meanness which, though not actually based upon calculations of self-interest, yet runs after the wealthy man with smiles, and doffs his hat, and begs for invitations to houses where the millionaire is known to be going to dine. That a similar inclination to meanness seized upon the ladies of N. goes without saying; with the result that many a drawing-room heard it whispered that, if Chichikov was not exactly a beauty, at least he was sufficiently good-looking to serve for a husband, though he could have borne to have been a little more rotund and stout. To that there would be added scornful references to lean husbands, and hints that they resembled tooth-brushes rather than men — with many other feminine additions. Also, such crowds of feminine shoppers began to repair to the Bazaar as almost to constitute a crush, and something like a procession of carriages ensued, so long grew the rank of vehicles. For their part, the tradesmen had the joy of seeing highly priced dress materials which they had brought at fairs, and then been unable to dispose of, now suddenly become tradeable, and go off with a rush. For instance, on one occasion a lady appeared at Mass in a bustle which filled the church to an extent which led the verger on duty to bid the commoner folk withdraw to the porch, lest the lady’s toilet should be soiled in the crush. Even Chichikov could not help privately remarking the attention which he aroused. On one occasion, when he returned to the inn, he found on his table a note addressed to himself. Whence it had come, and who had delivered it, he failed to discover, for the waiter declared that the person who had brought it had omitted to leave the name of the writer. Beginning abruptly with the words “I MUST write to you,” the letter went on to say that between a certain pair of souls there existed a bond of sympathy; and this verity the epistle further confirmed with rows of full stops to the extent of nearly half a page. Next there followed a few reflections of a correctitude so remarkable that I have no choice but to quote them. “What, I would ask, is this life of ours?” inquired the writer. “‘Tis nought but a vale of woe. And what, I would ask, is the world? ‘Tis nought but a mob of unthinking humanity.” Thereafter, incidentally remarking that she had just dropped a tear to the memory of her dear mother, who had departed this life twenty-five years ago, the (presumably) lady writer invited Chichikov to come forth into the wilds, and to leave for ever the city where, penned in noisome haunts, folk could not even draw their breath. In conclusion, the writer gave way to unconcealed despair, and wound up with the following verses:

“Two turtle doves to thee, one day,
My dust will show, congealed in death;
And, cooing wearily, they’ll say:
‘In grief and loneliness she drew her closing breath.’“

True, the last line did not scan, but that was a trifle, since the quatrain at least conformed to the mode then prevalent. Neither signature nor date were appended to the document, but only a postscript expressing a conjecture that Chichikov’s own heart would tell him who the writer was, and stating, in addition, that the said writer would be present at the Governor’s ball on the following night.

This greatly interested Chichikov. Indeed, there was so much that was alluring and provocative of curiosity in the anonymous missive that he read it through a second time, and then a third, and finally said to himself: “I SHOULD like to know who sent it!” In short, he took the thing seriously, and spent over an hour in considering the same. At length, muttering a comment upon the epistle’s efflorescent style, he refolded the document, and committed it to his dispatch-box in company with a play-bill and an invitation to a wedding — the latter of which had for the last seven years reposed in the self-same receptacle and in the self-same position. Shortly afterwards there arrived a card of invitation to the Governor’s ball already referred to. In passing, it may be said that such festivities are not infrequent phenomena in county towns, for the reason that where Governors exist there must take place balls if from the local gentry there is to be evoked that respectful affection which is every Governor’s due.

Thenceforth all extraneous thoughts and considerations were laid aside in favour of preparing for the coming function. Indeed, this conjunction of exciting and provocative motives led to Chichikov devoting to his toilet an amount of time never witnessed since the creation of the world. Merely in the contemplation of his features in the mirror, as he tried to communicate to them a succession of varying expressions, was an hour spent. First of all he strove to make his features assume an air of dignity and importance, and then an air of humble, but faintly satirical, respect, and then an air of respect guiltless of any alloy whatsoever. Next, he practised performing a series of bows to his reflection, accompanied with certain murmurs intended to bear a resemblance to a French phrase (though Chichikov knew not a single word of the Gallic tongue). Lastly came the performing of a series of what I might call “agreeable surprises,” in the shape of twitchings of the brow and lips and certain motions of the tongue. In short, he did all that a man is apt to do when he is not only alone, but also certain that he is handsome and that no one is regarding him through a chink. Finally he tapped himself lightly on the chin, and said, “Ah, good old face!” In the same way, when he started to dress himself for the ceremony, the

level of his high spirits remained unimpaired throughout the process. That is to say, while adjusting his braces and tying his tie, he shuffled his feet in what was not exactly a dance, but might be called the entr'acte of a dance: which performance had the not very serious result of setting a wardrobe a-rattle, and causing a brush to slide from the table to the floor.

Later, his entry into the ballroom produced an extraordinary effect. Every one present came forward to meet him, some with cards in their hands, and one man even breaking off a conversation at the most interesting point — namely, the point that "the Inferior Land Court must be made responsible for everything." Yes, in spite of the responsibility of the Inferior Land Court, the speaker cast all thoughts of it to the winds as he hurried to greet our hero. From every side resounded acclamations of welcome, and Chichikov felt himself engulfed in a sea of embraces. Thus, scarcely had he extricated himself from the arms of the President of the Local Council when he found himself just as firmly clasped in the arms of the Chief of Police, who, in turn, surrendered him to the Inspector of the Medical Department, who, in turn, handed him over to the Commissioner of Taxes, who, again, committed him to the charge of the Town Architect. Even the Governor, who hitherto had been standing among his womenfolk with a box of sweets in one hand and a lap-dog in the other, now threw down both sweets and lap-dog (the lap-dog giving vent to a yelp as he did so) and added his greeting to those of the rest of the company. Indeed, not a face was there to be seen on which ecstatic delight — or, at all events, the reflection of other people's ecstatic delight — was not painted. The same expression may be discerned on the faces of subordinate officials when, the newly arrived Director having made his inspection, the said officials are beginning to get over their first sense of awe on perceiving that he has found much to commend, and that he can even go so far as to jest and utter a few words of smiling approval. Thereupon every tchinovnik responds with a smile of double strength, and those who (it may be) have not heard a single word of the Director's speech smile out of sympathy with the rest, and even the gendarme who is posted at the distant door — a man, perhaps, who has never before compassed a smile, but is more accustomed to dealing out blows to the populace — summons up a kind of grin, even though the grin resembles the grimace of a man who is about to sneeze after inadvertently taking an over-large pinch of snuff. To all and sundry Chichikov responded with a bow, and felt extraordinarily at his ease as he did so. To right and left did he incline his head in the sidelong, yet unconstrained, manner that was his wont and never failed to charm the beholder. As for the ladies, they clustered around him in a shining bevy that was redolent of every species of perfume — of roses, of spring violets, and of mignonette; so much so that instinctively Chichikov raised his

nose to snuff the air. Likewise the ladies' dresses displayed an endless profusion of taste and variety; and though the majority of their wearers evinced a tendency to embonpoint, those wearers knew how to call upon art for the concealment of the fact. Confronting them, Chichikov thought to himself: "Which of these beauties is the writer of the letter?" Then again he snuffed the air. When the ladies had, to a certain extent, returned to their seats, he resumed his attempts to discern (from glances and expressions) which of them could possibly be the unknown authoress. Yet, though those glances and expressions were too subtle, too insufficiently open, the difficulty in no way diminished his high spirits. Easily and gracefully did he exchange agreeable bandinage with one lady, and then approach another one with the short, mincing steps usually affected by young-old dandies who are fluttering around the fair. As he turned, not without dexterity, to right and left, he kept one leg slightly dragging behind the other, like a short tail or comma. This trick the ladies particularly admired. In short, they not only discovered in him a host of recommendations and attractions, but also began to see in his face a sort of grand, Mars-like, military expression — a thing which, as we know, never fails to please the feminine eye. Certain of the ladies even took to bickering over him, and, on perceiving that he spent most of his time standing near the door, some of their number hastened to occupy chairs nearer to his post of vantage. In fact, when a certain dame chanced to have the good fortune to anticipate a hated rival in the race there very nearly ensued a most lamentable scene — which, to many of those who had been desirous of doing exactly the same thing, seemed a peculiarly horrible instance of brazen-faced audacity.

So deeply did Chichikov become plunged in conversation with his fair pursuers — or rather, so deeply did those fair pursuers enmesh him in the toils of small talk (which they accomplished through the expedient of asking him endless subtle riddles which brought the sweat to his brow in his attempts to guess them) — that he forgot the claims of courtesy which required him first of all to greet his hostess. In fact, he remembered those claims only on hearing the Governor's wife herself addressing him. She had been standing before him for several minutes, and now greeted him with suave expressement and the words, "So HERE you are, Paul Ivanovitch!" But what she said next I am not in a position to report, for she spoke in the ultra-refined tone and vein wherein ladies and gentlemen customarily express themselves in high-class novels which have been written by experts more qualified than I am to describe salons, and able to boast of some acquaintance with good society. In effect, what the Governor's wife said was that she hoped — she greatly hoped — that Monsieur Chichikov's heart still contained a corner — even the smallest possible corner — for those

whom he had so cruelly forgotten. Upon that Chichikov turned to her, and was on the point of returning a reply at least no worse than that which would have been returned, under similar circumstances, by the hero of a fashionable novelette, when he stopped short, as though thunderstruck.

Before him there was standing not only Madame, but also a young girl whom she was holding by the hand. The golden hair, the fine-drawn, delicate contours, the face with its bewitching oval — a face which might have served as a model for the countenance of the Madonna, since it was of a type rarely to be met with in Russia, where nearly everything, from plains to human feet, is, rather, on the gigantic scale; these features, I say, were those of the identical maiden whom Chichikov had encountered on the road when he had been fleeing from Nozdrev's. His emotion was such that he could not formulate a single intelligible syllable; he could merely murmur the devil only knows what, though certainly nothing of the kind which would have risen to the lips of the hero of a fashionable novel.

"I think that you have not met my daughter before?" said Madame. "She is just fresh from school."

He replied that he HAD had the happiness of meeting Mademoiselle before, and under rather unexpected circumstances; but on his trying to say something further his tongue completely failed him. The Governor's wife added a word or two, and then carried off her daughter to speak to some of the other guests.

Chichikov stood rooted to the spot, like a man who, after issuing into the street for a pleasant walk, has suddenly come to a halt on remembering that something has been left behind him. In a moment, as he struggles to recall what that something is, the mien of careless expectancy disappears from his face, and he no longer sees a single person or a single object in his vicinity. In the same way did Chichikov suddenly become oblivious to the scene around him. Yet all the while the melodious tongues of ladies were plying him with multitudinous hints and questions — hints and questions inspired with a desire to captivate. "Might we poor cumberers of the ground make so bold as to ask you what you are thinking of?" "Pray tell us where lie the happy regions in which your thoughts are wandering?" "Might we be informed of the name of her who has plunged you into this sweet abandonment of meditation?" — such were the phrases thrown at him. But to everything he turned a dead ear, and the phrases in question might as well have been stones dropped into a pool. Indeed, his rudeness soon reached the pitch of his walking away altogether, in order that he might go and reconnoitre wither the Governor's wife and daughter had retreated. But the ladies were not going to let him off so easily. Every one of them had made up her mind to use upon him her every weapon, and to exhibit whatsoever

might chance to constitute her best point. Yet the ladies' wiles proved useless, for Chichikov paid not the smallest attention to them, even when the dancing had begun, but kept raising himself on tiptoe to peer over people's heads and ascertain in which direction the bewitching maiden with the golden hair had gone. Also, when seated, he continued to peep between his neighbours' backs and shoulders, until at last he discovered her sitting beside her mother, who was wearing a sort of Oriental turban and feather. Upon that one would have thought that his purpose was to carry the position by storm; for, whether moved by the influence of spring, or whether moved by a push from behind, he pressed forward with such desperate resolution that his elbow caused the Commissioner of Taxes to stagger on his feet, and would have caused him to lose his balance altogether but for the supporting row of guests in the rear. Likewise the Postmaster was made to give ground; whereupon he turned and eyed Chichikov with mingled astonishment and subtle irony. But Chichikov never even noticed him; he saw in the distance only the golden-haired beauty. At that moment she was drawing on a long glove and, doubtless, pining to be flying over the dancing-floor, where, with clicking heels, four couples had now begun to thread the mazes of the mazurka. In particular was a military staff-captain working body and soul and arms and legs to compass such a series of steps as were never before performed, even in a dream. However, Chichikov slipped past the mazurka dancers, and, almost treading on their heels, made his way towards the spot where Madame and her daughter were seated. Yet he approached them with great diffidence and none of his late mincing and prancing. Nay, he even faltered as he walked; his every movement had about it an air of awkwardness.

It is difficult to say whether or not the feeling which had awakened in our hero's breast was the feeling of love; for it is problematical whether or not men who are neither stout nor thin are capable of any such sentiment. Nevertheless, something strange, something which he could not altogether explain, had come upon him. It seemed as though the ball, with its talk and its clatter, had suddenly become a thing remote — that the orchestra had withdrawn behind a hill, and the scene grown misty, like the carelessly painted-in background of a picture. And from that misty void there could be seen glimmering only the delicate outlines of the bewitching maiden. Somehow her exquisite shape reminded him of an ivory toy, in such fair, white, transparent relief did it stand out against the dull blur of the surrounding throng.

Herein we see a phenomenon not infrequently observed — the phenomenon of the Chichikovs of this world becoming temporarily poets. At all events, for a moment or two our Chichikov felt that he was a young man again, if not exactly a military officer. On perceiving an empty chair beside the mother and daughter,

he hastened to occupy it, and though conversation at first hung fire, things gradually improved, and he acquired more confidence.

At this point I must reluctantly deviate to say that men of weight and high office are always a trifle ponderous when conversing with ladies. Young lieutenants — or, at all events, officers not above the rank of captain — are far more successful at the game. How they contrive to be so God only knows. Let them but make the most inane of remarks, and at once the maiden by their side will be rocking with laughter; whereas, should a State Councillor enter into conversation with a damsel, and remark that the Russian Empire is one of vast extent, or utter a compliment which he has elaborated not without a certain measure of intelligence (however strongly the said compliment may smack of a book), of a surety the thing will fall flat. Even a witticism from him will be laughed at far more by him himself than it will by the lady who may happen to be listening to his remarks.

These comments I have interposed for the purpose of explaining to the reader why, as our hero conversed, the maiden began to yawn. Blind to this, however, he continued to relate to her sundry adventures which had befallen him in different parts of the world. Meanwhile (as need hardly be said) the rest of the ladies had taken umbrage at his behaviour. One of them purposely stalked past him to intimate to him the fact, as well as to jostle the Governor's daughter, and let the flying end of a scarf flick her face; while from a lady seated behind the pair came both a whiff of violets and a very venomous and sarcastic remark. Nevertheless, either he did not hear the remark or he PRETENDED not to hear it. This was unwise of him, since it never does to disregard ladies' opinions. Later-but too late — he was destined to learn this to his cost.

In short, dissatisfaction began to display itself on every feminine face. No matter how high Chichikov might stand in society, and no matter how much he might be a millionaire and include in his expression of countenance an indefinable element of grandness and martial ardour, there are certain things which no lady will pardon, whosoever be the person concerned. We know that at Governor's balls it is customary for the onlookers to compose verses at the expense of the dancers; and in this case the verses were directed to Chichikov's address. Briefly, the prevailing dissatisfaction grew until a tacit edict of proscription had been issued against both him and the poor young maiden.

But an even more unpleasant surprise was in store for our hero; for whilst the young lady was still yawning as Chichikov recounted to her certain of his past adventures and also touched lightly upon the subject of Greek philosophy, there appeared from an adjoining room the figure of Nozdrev. Whether he had come from the buffet, or whether he had issued from a little green retreat where a

game more strenuous than whist had been in progress, or whether he had left the latter resort unaided, or whether he had been expelled therefrom, is unknown; but at all events when he entered the ballroom, he was in an elevated condition, and leading by the arm the Public Prosecutor, whom he seemed to have been dragging about for a long while past, seeing that the poor man was glancing from side to side as though seeking a means of putting an end to this personally conducted tour. Certainly he must have found the situation almost unbearable, in view of the fact that, after deriving inspiration from two glasses of tea not wholly undiluted with rum, Nozdrev was engaged in lying unmercifully. On sighting him in the distance, Chichikov at once decided to sacrifice himself. That is to say, he decided to vacate his present enviable position and make off with all possible speed, since he could see that an encounter with the newcomer would do him no good. Unfortunately at that moment the Governor buttonholed him with a request that he would come and act as arbiter between him (the Governor) and two ladies — the subject of dispute being the question as to whether or not woman's love is lasting. Simultaneously Nozdrev descried our hero and bore down upon him.

"Ah, my fine landowner of Kherson!" he cried with a smile which set his fresh, spring-rose-pink cheeks a-quiver. "Have you been doing much trade in departed souls lately?" With that he turned to the Governor. "I suppose your Excellency knows that this man traffics in dead peasants?" he bawled. "Look here, Chichikov. I tell you in the most friendly way possible that every one here likes you — yes, including even the Governor. Nevertheless, had I my way, I would hang you! Yes, by God I would!"

Chichikov's discomfiture was complete.

"And, would you believe it, your Excellency," went on Nozdrev, "but this fellow actually said to me, 'Sell me your dead souls!' Why, I laughed till I nearly became as dead as the souls. And, behold, no sooner do I arrive here than I am told that he has bought three million roubles' worth of peasants for transferment! For transferment, indeed! And he wanted to bargain with me for my DEAD ones! Look here, Chichikov. You are a swine! Yes, by God, you are an utter swine! Is not that so, your Excellency? Is not that so, friend Prokurator ?"

But both his Excellency, the Public Prosecutor, and Chichikov were too taken aback to reply. The half-tipsy Nozdrev, without noticing them, continued his harangue as before.

"Ah, my fine sir!" he cried. "THIS time I don't mean to let you go. No, not until I have learnt what all this purchasing of dead peasants means. Look here. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Yes, *I* say that — *I* who am one of your best friends." Here he turned to the Governor again. "Your Excellency," he

continued, “you would never believe what inseperables this man and I have been. Indeed, if you had stood there and said to me, ‘Nozdrev, tell me on your honour which of the two you love best — your father or Chichikov?’ I should have replied, ‘Chichikov, by God!’“ With that he tackled our hero again, “Come, come, my friend!” he urged. “Let me imprint upon your cheeks a baiser or two. You will excuse me if I kiss him, will you not, your Excellency? No, do not resist me, Chichikov, but allow me to imprint at least one baiser upon your lily-white cheek.” And in his efforts to force upon Chichikov what he termed his “baisers” he came near to measuring his length upon the floor.

Every one now edged away, and turned a deaf ear to his further babblings; but his words on the subject of the purchase of dead souls had none the less been uttered at the top of his voice, and been accompanied with such uproarious laughter that the curiosity even of those who had happened to be sitting or standing in the remoter corners of the room had been aroused. So strange and novel seemed the idea that the company stood with faces expressive of nothing but a dumb, dull wonder. Only some of the ladies (as Chichikov did not fail to remark) exchanged meaning, ill-natured winks and a series of sarcastic smiles: which circumstance still further increased his confusion. That Nozdrev was a notorious liar every one, of course, knew, and that he should have given vent to an idiotic outburst of this sort had surprised no one; but a dead soul — well, what was one to make of Nozdrev’s reference to such a commodity?

Naturally this unseemly contretemps had greatly upset our hero; for, however foolish be a madman’s words, they may yet prove sufficient to sow doubt in the minds of saner individuals. He felt much as does a man who, shod with well-polished boots, has just stepped into a dirty, stinking puddle. He tried to put away from him the occurrence, and to expand, and to enjoy himself once more. Nay, he even took a hand at whist. But all was of no avail — matters kept going as awry as a badly-bent hoop. Twice he blundered in his play, and the President of the Council was at a loss to understand how his friend, Paul Ivanovitch, lately so good and so circumspect a player, could perpetrate such a mauvais pas as to throw away a particular king of spades which the President has been “trusting” as (to quote his own expression) “he would have trusted God.” At supper, too, matters felt uncomfortable, even though the society at Chichikov’s table was exceedingly agreeable and Nozdrev had been removed, owing to the fact that the ladies had found his conduct too scandalous to be borne, now that the delinquent had taken to seating himself on the floor and plucking at the skirts of passing lady dancers. As I say, therefore, Chichikov found the situation not a little awkward, and eventually put an end to it by leaving the supper room before the meal was over, and long before the hour when usually he returned to the inn.

In his little room, with its door of communication blocked with a wardrobe, his frame of mind remained as uncomfortable as the chair in which he was seated. His heart ached with a dull, unpleasant sensation, with a sort of oppressive emptiness.

"The devil take those who first invented balls!" was his reflection. "Who derives any real pleasure from them? In this province there exist want and scarcity everywhere: yet folk go in for balls! How absurd, too, were those overdressed women! One of them must have had a thousand roubles on her back, and all acquired at the expense of the overtaxed peasant, or, worse still, at that of the conscience of her neighbour. Yes, we all know why bribes are accepted, and why men become crooked in soul. It is all done to provide wives — yes, may the pit swallow them up! — with fal-lals. And for what purpose? That some woman may not have to reproach her husband with the fact that, say, the Postmaster's wife is wearing a better dress than she is — a dress which has cost a thousand roubles! 'Balls and gaiety, balls and gaiety' is the constant cry. Yet what folly balls are! They do not consort with the Russian spirit and genius, and the devil only knows why we have them. A grown, middle-aged man — a man dressed in black, and looking as stiff as a poker — suddenly takes the floor and begins shuffling his feet about, while another man, even though conversing with a companion on important business, will, the while, keep capering to right and left like a billy-goat! Mimicry, sheer mimicry! The fact that the Frenchman is at forty precisely what he was at fifteen leads us to imagine that we too, forsooth, ought to be the same. No; a ball leaves one feeling that one has done a wrong thing — so much so that one does not care even to think of it. It also leaves one's head perfectly empty, even as does the exertion of talking to a man of the world. A man of that kind chatters away, and touches lightly upon every conceivable subject, and talks in smooth, fluent phrases which he has culled from books without grazing their substance; whereas go and have a chat with a tradesman who knows at least ONE thing thoroughly, and through the medium of experience, and see whether his conversation will not be worth more than the prattle of a thousand chatterboxes. For what good does one get out of balls? Suppose that a competent writer were to describe such a scene exactly as it stands? Why, even in a book it would seem senseless, even as it certainly is in life. Are, therefore, such functions right or wrong? One would answer that the devil alone knows, and then spit and close the book."

Such were the unfavourable comments which Chichikov passed upon balls in general. With it all, however, there went a second source of dissatisfaction. That is to say, his principal grudge was not so much against balls as against the fact that at this particular one he had been exposed, he had been made to disclose the

circumstance that he had been playing a strange, an ambiguous part. Of course, when he reviewed the contretemps in the light of pure reason, he could not but see that it mattered nothing, and that a few rude words were of no account now that the chief point had been attained; yet man is an odd creature, and Chichikov actually felt pained by the could-shouldering administered to him by persons for whom he had not an atom of respect, and whose vanity and love of display he had only that moment been censuring. Still more, on viewing the matter clearly, he felt vexed to think that he himself had been so largely the cause of the catastrophe.

Yet he was not angry with HIMSELF — of that you may be sure, seeing that all of us have a slight weakness for sparing our own faults, and always do our best to find some fellow-creature upon whom to vent our displeasure — whether that fellow-creature be a servant, a subordinate official, or a wife. In the same way Chichikov sought a scapegoat upon whose shoulders he could lay the blame for all that had annoyed him. He found one in Nozdrev, and you may be sure that the scapegoat in question received a good drubbing from every side, even as an experienced captain or chief of police will give a knavish starosta or postboy a rating not only in the terms become classical, but also in such terms as the said captain or chief of police may invent for himself. In short, Nozdrev's whole lineage was passed in review; and many of its members in the ascending line fared badly in the process.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the town there was in progress an event which was destined to augment still further the unpleasantness of our hero's position. That is to say, through the outlying streets and alleys of the town there was clattering a vehicle to which it would be difficult precisely to assign a name, seeing that, though it was of a species peculiar to itself, it most nearly resembled a large, rickety water melon on wheels. Eventually this monstrosity drew up at the gates of a house where the archpriest of one of the churches resided, and from its doors there leapt a damsel clad in a jerkin and wearing a scarf over her head. For a while she thumped the gates so vigorously as to set all the dogs barking; then the gates stiffly opened, and admitted this unwieldy phenomenon of the road. Lastly, the barinia herself alighted, and stood revealed as Madame Korobotchka, widow of a Collegiate Secretary! The reason of her sudden arrival was that she had felt so uneasy about the possible outcome of Chichikov's whim, that during the three nights following his departure she had been unable to sleep a wink; whereafter, in spite of the fact that her horses were not shod, she had set off for the town, in order to learn at first hand how the dead souls were faring, and whether (which might God forfend!) she had not sold them at something like a third of their true value. The consequences of her venture the reader will learn

from a conversation between two ladies. We will reserve it for the ensuing chapter.

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CHAPTER IX

Next morning, before the usual hour for paying calls, there tripped from the portals of an orange-coloured wooden house with an attic storey and a row of blue pillars a lady in an elegant plaid cloak. With her came a footman in a many-caped greatcoat and a polished top hat with a gold band. Hastily, but gracefully, the lady ascended the steps let down from a koliaska which was standing before the entrance, and as soon as she had done so the footman shut her in, put up the steps again, and, catching hold of the strap behind the vehicle, shouted to the coachman, “Right away!” The reason of all this was that the lady was the possessor of a piece of intelligence that she was burning to communicate to a fellow-creature. Every moment she kept looking out of the carriage window, and perceiving, with almost speechless vexation, that, as yet, she was but half-way on her journey. The fronts of the houses appeared to her longer than usual, and in particular did the front of the white stone hospital, with its rows of narrow windows, seem interminable to a degree which at length forced her to ejaculate: “Oh, the cursed building! Positively there is no end to it!” Also, she twice adjured the coachman with the words, “Go quicker, Andrusha! You are a horribly long time over the journey this morning.” But at length the goal was reached, and the koliaska stopped before a one-storied wooden mansion, dark grey in colour, and having white carvings over the windows, a tall wooden fence and narrow garden in front of the latter, and a few meagre trees looming white with an incongruous coating of road dust. In the windows of the building were also a few flower pots and a parrot that kept alternately dancing on the floor of its cage and hanging on to the ring of the same with its beak. Also, in the sunshine before the door two pet dogs were sleeping. Here there lived the lady’s bosom friend. As soon as the bosom friend in question learnt of the newcomer’s arrival, she ran down into the hall, and the two ladies kissed and embraced one another. Then they adjourned to the drawing-room.

“How glad I am to see you!” said the bosom friend. “When I heard some one arriving I wondered who could possibly be calling so early. Parasha declared that it must be the Vice-Governor’s wife, so, as I did not want to be bored with her, I gave orders that I was to be reported ‘not at home.’“

For her part, the guest would have liked to have proceeded to business by communicating her tidings, but a sudden exclamation from the hostess imparted (temporarily) a new direction to the conversation.

“What a pretty chintz!” she cried, gazing at the other’s gown.

“Yes, it IS pretty,” agreed the visitor. “On the other hand, Praskovia Thedorovna thinks that — ”

In other words, the ladies proceeded to indulge in a conversation on the subject of dress; and only after this had lasted for a considerable while did the visitor let fall a remark which led her entertainer to inquire:

“And how is the universal charmer?”

“My God!” replied the other. “There has been SUCH a business! In fact, do you know why I am here at all?” And the visitor’s breathing became more hurried, and further words seemed to be hovering between her lips like hawks preparing to stoop upon their prey. Only a person of the unhumanity of a “true friend” would have had the heart to interrupt her; but the hostess was just such a friend, and at once interposed with:

“I wonder how any one can see anything in the man to praise or to admire. For my own part, I think — and I would say the same thing straight to his face — that he is a perfect rascal.”

“Yes, but do listen to what I have got to tell you.”

“Oh, I know that some people think him handsome,” continued the hostess, unmoved; “but *I* say that he is nothing of the kind — that, in particular, his nose is perfectly odious.”

“Yes, but let me finish what I was saying.” The guest’s tone was almost piteous in its appeal.

“What is it, then?”

“You cannot imagine my state of mind! You see, this morning I received a visit from Father Cyril’s wife — the Archpriest’s wife — you know her, don’t you? Well, whom do you suppose that fine gentleman visitor of ours has turned out to be?”

“The man who has built the Archpriest a poultry-run?”

“Oh dear no! Had that been all, it would have been nothing. No. Listen to what Father Cyril’s wife had to tell me. She said that, last night, a lady landowner named Madame Korobotchka arrived at the Archpriest’s house — arrived all pale and trembling — and told her, oh, such things! They sound like a piece out of a book. That is to say, at dead of night, just when every one had retired to rest, there came the most dreadful knocking imaginable, and some one screamed out, ‘Open the gates, or we will break them down!’ Just think! After this, how any one can say that the man is charming I cannot imagine.”

“Well, what of Madame Korobotchka? Is she a young woman or good looking?”

“Oh dear no! Quite an old woman.”

“Splendid indeed! So he is actually engaged to a person like that? One may heartily commend the taste of our ladies for having fallen in love with him!”

“Nevertheless, it is not as you suppose. Think, now! Armed with weapons from head to foot, he called upon this old woman, and said: ‘Sell me any souls of yours which have lately died.’ Of course, Madame Korobotchka answered, reasonably enough: ‘I cannot sell you those souls, seeing that they have departed this world;’ but he replied: ‘No, no! They are NOT dead. ‘Tis I who tell you that — I who ought to know the truth of the matter. I swear that they are still alive.’ In short, he made such a scene that the whole village came running to the house, and children screamed, and men shouted, and no one could tell what it was all about. The affair seemed to me so horrible, so utterly horrible, that I trembled beyond belief as I listened to the story. ‘My dearest madam,’ said my maid, Mashka, ‘pray look at yourself in the mirror, and see how white you are.’ ‘But I have no time for that,’ I replied, ‘as I must be off to tell my friend, Anna Grigorievna, the news.’ Nor did I lose a moment in ordering the koliaska. Yet when my coachman, Andrusha, asked me for directions I could not get a word out — I just stood staring at him like a fool, until I thought he must think me mad. Oh, Anna Grigorievna, if you but knew how upset I am!”

“What a strange affair!” commented the hostess. “What on earth can the man have meant by ‘dead souls’? I confess that the words pass my understanding. Curiously enough, this is the second time I have heard speak of those souls. True, my husband avers that Nozdrev was lying; yet in his lies there seems to have been a grain of truth.”

“Well, just think of my state when I heard all this! ‘And now,’ apparently said Korobotchka to the Archpriest’s wife, ‘I am altogether at a loss what to do, for, throwing me fifteen roubles, the man forced me to sign a worthless paper — yes, me, an inexperienced, defenceless widow who knows nothing of business.’ That such things should happen! TRY and imagine my feelings!”

“In my opinion, there is in this more than the dead souls which meet the eye.”

“I think so too,” agreed the other. As a matter of fact, her friend’s remark had struck her with complete surprise, as well as filled her with curiosity to know what the word “more” might possibly signify. In fact, she felt driven to inquire: “What do YOU suppose to be hidden beneath it all?”

“No; tell me what YOU suppose?”

“What *I* suppose? I am at a loss to conjecture.”

“Yes, but tell me what is in your mind?”

Upon this the visitor had to confess herself nonplussed; for, though capable of growing hysterical, she was incapable of propounding any rational theory. Consequently she felt the more that she needed tender comfort and advice.

“Then THIS is what I think about the dead souls,” said the hostess. Instantly the guest pricked up her ears (or, rather, they pricked themselves up) and straightened herself and became, somehow, more modish, and, despite her not inconsiderable weight, posed herself to look like a piece of thistledown floating on the breeze.

“The dead souls,” began the hostess.

“Are what, are what?” inquired the guest in great excitement.

“Are, are — ”

“Tell me, tell me, for heaven’s sake!”

“They are an invention to conceal something else. The man’s real object is, is — TO ABDUCT THE GOVERNOR’S DAUGHTER.”

So startling and unexpected was this conclusion that the guest sat reduced to a state of pale, petrified, genuine amazement.

“My God!” she cried, clapping her hands, “I should NEVER have guessed it!”

“Well, to tell you the truth, I guessed it as soon as ever you opened your mouth.”

“So much, then, for educating girls like the Governor’s daughter at school! Just see what comes of it!”

“Yes, indeed! And they tell me that she says things which I hesitate even to repeat.”

“Truly it wrings one’s heart to see to what lengths immorality has come.”

“Some of the men have quite lost their heads about her, but for my part I think her not worth noticing.”

“Of course. And her manners are unbearable. But what puzzles me most is how a travelled man like Chichikov could come to let himself in for such an affair. Surely he must have accomplices?”

“Yes; and I should say that one of those accomplices is Nozdrev.”

“Surely not?”

“CERTAINLY I should say so. Why, I have known him even try to sell his own father! At all events he staked him at cards.”

“Indeed? You interest me. I should never had thought him capable of such things.”

“I always guessed him to be so.”

The two ladies were still discussing the matter with acumen and success when there walked into the room the Public Prosecutor — bushy eyebrows, motionless features, blinking eyes, and all. At once the ladies hastened to inform him of the events related, adducing therewith full details both as to the purchase of dead souls and as to the scheme to abduct the Governor’s daughter; after which they departed in different directions, for the purpose of raising the rest of the town.

For the execution of this undertaking not more than half an hour was required. So thoroughly did they succeed in throwing dust in the public's eyes that for a while every one — more especially the army of public officials — was placed in the position of a schoolboy who, while still asleep, has had a bag of pepper thrown in his face by a party of more early-rising comrades. The questions now to be debated resolved themselves into two — namely, the question of the dead souls and the question of the Governor's daughter. To this end two parties were formed — the men's party and the feminine section. The men's party — the more absolutely senseless of the two — devoted its attention to the dead souls: the women's party occupied itself exclusively with the alleged abduction of the Governor's daughter. And here it may be said (to the ladies' credit) that the women's party displayed far more method and caution than did its rival faction, probably because the function in life of its members had always been that of managing and administering a household. With the ladies, therefore, matters soon assumed vivid and definite shape; they became clearly and irrefutably materialised; they stood stripped of all doubt and other impedimenta. Said some of the ladies in question, Chichikov had long been in love with the maiden, and the pair had kept tryst by the light of the moon, while the Governor would have given his consent (seeing that Chichikov was as rich as a Jew) but for the obstacle that Chichikov had deserted a wife already (how the worthy dames came to know that he was married remains a mystery), and the said deserted wife, pining with love for her faithless husband, had sent the Governor a letter of the most touching kind, so that Chichikov, on perceiving that the father and mother would never give their consent, had decided to abduct the girl. In other circles the matter was stated in a different way. That is to say, this section averred that Chichikov did NOT possess a wife, but that, as a man of subtlety and experience, he had bethought him of obtaining the daughter's hand through the expedient of first tackling the mother and carrying on with her an ardent liaison, and that, thereafter, he had made an application for the desired hand, but that the mother, fearing to commit a sin against religion, and feeling in her heart certain gnawings of conscience, had returned a blank refusal to Chichikov's request; whereupon Chichikov had decided to carry out the abduction alleged. To the foregoing, of course, there became appended various additional proofs and items of evidence, in proportion as the sensation spread to more remote corners of the town. At length, with these perfectings, the affair reached the ears of the Governor's wife herself. Naturally, as the mother of a family, and as the first lady in the town, and as a matron who had never before been suspected of things of the kind, she was highly offended when she heard the stories, and very justly so: with the result that her poor young daughter, though innocent, had to

endure about as unpleasant a tete-a-tete as ever befell a maiden of sixteen, while, for his part, the Swiss footman received orders never at any time to admit Chichikov to the house.

Having done their business with the Governor's wife, the ladies' party descended upon the male section, with a view to influencing it to their own side by asserting that the dead souls were an invention used solely for the purpose of diverting suspicion and successfully affecting the abduction. And, indeed, more than one man was converted, and joined the feminine camp, in spite of the fact that thereby such seceders incurred strong names from their late comrades — names such as "old women," "petticoats," and others of a nature peculiarly offensive to the male sex.

Also, however much they might arm themselves and take the field, the men could not compass such orderliness within their ranks as could the women. With the former everything was of the antiquated and rough-hewn and ill-fitting and unsuitable and badly-adapted and inferior kind; their heads were full of nothing but discord and triviality and confusion and slovenliness of thought. In brief, they displayed everywhere the male bent, the rude, ponderous nature which is incapable either of managing a household or of jumping to a conclusion, as well as remains always distrustful and lazy and full of constant doubt and everlasting timidity. For instance, the men's party declared that the whole story was rubbish — that the alleged abduction of the Governor's daughter was the work rather of a military than of a civilian culprit; that the ladies were lying when they accused Chichikov of the deed; that a woman was like a money-bag — whatsoever you put into her she thenceforth retained; that the subject which really demanded attention was the dead souls, of which the devil only knew the meaning, but in which there certainly lurked something that was contrary to good order and discipline. One reason why the men's party was so certain that the dead souls connoted something contrary to good order and discipline, was that there had just been appointed to the province a new Governor-General — an event which, of course, had thrown the whole army of provincial tchinovniks into a state of great excitement, seeing that they knew that before long there would ensue transferments and sentences of censure, as well as the series of official dinners with which a Governor-General is accustomed to entertain his subordinates. "Alas," thought the army of tchinovniks, "it is probable that, should he learn of the gross reports at present afloat in our town, he will make such a fuss that we shall never hear the last of them." In particular did the Director of the Medical Department turn pale at the thought that possibly the new Governor-General would surmise the term "dead folk" to connote patients in the local hospitals who, for want of proper preventative measures, had died of sporadic fever.

Indeed, might it not be that Chichikov was neither more nor less than an emissary of the said Governor-General, sent to conduct a secret inquiry? Accordingly he (the Director of the Medical Department) communicated this last supposition to the President of the Council, who, though at first inclined to ejaculate “Rubbish!” suddenly turned pale on propounding to himself the theory. “What if the souls purchased by Chichikov should REALLY be dead ones?” — a terrible thought considering that he, the President, had permitted their transferment to be registered, and had himself acted as Plushkin’s representative! What if these things should reach the Governor-General’s ears? He mentioned the matter to one friend and another, and they, in their turn, went white to the lips, for panic spreads faster and is even more destructive, than the dreaded black death. Also, to add to the tchinovniks’ troubles, it so befell that just at this juncture there came into the local Governor’s hands two documents of great importance. The first of them contained advices that, according to received evidence and reports, there was operating in the province a forger of rouble-notes who had been passing under various aliases and must therefore be sought for with the utmost diligence; while the second document was a letter from the Governor of a neighbouring province with regard to a malefactor who had there evaded apprehension — a letter conveying also a warning that, if in the province of the town of N. there should appear any suspicious individual who could produce neither references nor passports, he was to be arrested forthwith. These two documents left every one thunderstruck, for they knocked on the head all previous conceptions and theories. Not for a moment could it be supposed that the former document referred to Chichikov; yet, as each man pondered the position from his own point of view, he remembered that no one REALLY knew who Chichikov was; as also that his vague references to himself had — yes! — included statements that his career in the service had suffered much to the cause of Truth, and that he possessed a number of enemies who were seeking his life. This gave the tchinovniks further food for thought. Perhaps his life really DID stand in danger? Perhaps he really WAS being sought for by some one? Perhaps he really HAD done something of the kind above referred to? As a matter of fact, who was he? — not that it could actually be supposed that he was a forger of notes, still less a brigand, seeing that his exterior was respectable in the highest degree. Yet who was he? At length the tchinovniks decided to make enquiries among those of whom he had purchased souls, in order that at least it might be learnt what the purchases had consisted of, and what exactly underlay them, and whether, in passing, he had explained to any one his real intentions, or revealed to any one his identity. In the first instance, therefore, resort was had to Korobotchka. Yet little was gleaned from that source — merely a statement that

he had bought of her some souls for fifteen roubles apiece, and also a quantity of feathers, while promising also to buy some other commodities in the future, seeing that, in particular, he had entered into a contract with the Treasury for lard, a fact constituting fairly presumptive proof that the man was a rogue, seeing that just such another fellow had bought a quantity of feathers, yet had cheated folk all round, and, in particular, had done the Archpriest out of over a hundred roubles. Thus the net result of Madame's cross-examination was to convince the tchinovniks that she was a garrulous, silly old woman. With regard to Manilov, he replied that he would answer for Chichikov as he would for himself, and that he would gladly sacrifice his property in toto if thereby he could attain even a tithe of the qualities which Paul Ivanovitch possessed. Finally, he delivered on Chichikov, with acutely-knitted brows, a eulogy couched in the most charming of terms, and coupled with sundry sentiments on the subject of friendship and affection in general. True, these remarks sufficed to indicate the tender impulses of the speaker's heart, but also they did nothing to enlighten his examiners concerning the business that was actually at hand. As for Sobakevitch, that landowner replied that he considered Chichikov an excellent fellow, as well as that the souls whom he had sold to his visitor had been in the truest sense of the word alive, but that he could not answer for anything which might occur in the future, seeing that any difficulties which might arise in the course of the actual transferment of souls would not be HIS fault, in view of the fact that God was lord of all, and that fevers and other mortal complaints were so numerous in the world, and that instances of whole villages perishing through the same could be found on record.

Finally, our friends the tchinovniks found themselves compelled to resort to an expedient which, though not particularly savoury, is not infrequently employed — namely, the expedient of getting lacqueys quietly to approach the servants of the person concerning whom information is desired, and to ascertain from them (the servants) certain details with regard to their master's life and antecedents. Yet even from this source very little was obtained, since Petrushka provided his interrogators merely with a taste of the smell of his living-room, and Selifan confined his replies to a statement that the barin had "been in the employment of the State, and also had served in the Customs."

In short, the sum total of the results gathered by the tchinovniks was that they still stood in ignorance of Chichikov's identity, but that he MUST be some one; wherefore it was decided to hold a final debate on the subject on what ought to be done, and who Chichikov could possibly be, and whether or not he was a man who ought to be apprehended and detained as not respectable, or whether he was a man who might himself be able to apprehend and detain THEM as persons

lacking in respectability. The debate in question, it was proposed, should be held at the residence of the Chief of Police, who is known to our readers as the father and the general benefactor of the town.

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CHAPTER X

On assembling at the residence indicated, the tchinovniks had occasion to remark that, owing to all these cares and excitements, every one of their number had grown thinner. Yes, the appointment of a new Governor-General, coupled with the rumours described and the reception of the two serious documents above-mentioned, had left manifest traces upon the features of every one present. More than one frockcoat had come to look too large for its wearer, and more than one frame had fallen away, including the frames of the President of the Council, the Director of the Medical Department, and the Public Prosecutor. Even a certain Semen Ivanovitch, who, for some reason or another, was never alluded to by his family name, but who wore on his index finger a ring with which he was accustomed to dazzle his lady friends, had diminished in bulk. Yet, as always happens at such junctures, there were also present a score of brazen individuals who had succeeded in NOT losing their presence of mind, even though they constituted a mere sprinkling. Of them the Postmaster formed one, since he was a man of equable temperament who could always say: “WE know you, Governor-Generals! We have seen three or four of you come and go, whereas WE have been sitting on the same stools these thirty years.” Nevertheless a prominent feature of the gathering was the total absence of what is vulgarly known as “common sense.” In general, we Russians do not make a good show at representative assemblies, for the reason that, unless there be in authority a leading spirit to control the rest, the affair always develops into confusion. Why this should be so one could hardly say, but at all events a success is scored only by such gatherings as have for their object dining and festivity — to wit, gatherings at clubs or in German-run restaurants. However, on the present occasion, the meeting was NOT one of this kind; it was a meeting convoked of necessity, and likely in view of the threatened calamity to affect every tchinovnik in the place. Also, in addition to the great divergency of views expressed thereat, there was visible in all the speakers an invincible tendency to indecision which led them at one moment to make assertions, and at the next to contradict the same. But on at least one point all seemed to agree — namely, that Chichikov’s appearance and conversation were too respectable for him to be a forger or a disguised brigand. That is to say, all SEEMED to agree on the point; until a sudden shout arose from the direction of the Postmaster, who for some time past had been sitting plunged in thought.

"*I* can tell you," he cried, "who Chichikov is!"

"Who, then?" replied the crowd in great excitement.

"He is none other than Captain Kopeikin."

"And who may Captain Kopeikin be?"

Taking a pinch of snuff (which he did with the lid of his snuff-box half-open, lest some extraneous person should contrive to insert a not over-clean finger into the stuff), the Postmaster related the following story .

"After fighting in the campaign of 1812, there was sent home, wounded, a certain Captain Kopeikin — a headstrong, lively blade who, whether on duty or under arrest, made things lively for everybody. Now, since at Krasni or at Leipzig (it matters not which) he had lost an arm and a leg, and in those days no provision was made for wounded soldiers, and he could not work with his left arm alone, he set out to see his father. Unfortunately his father could only just support himself, and was forced to tell his son so; wherefore the Captain decided to go and apply for help in St. Petersburg, seeing that he had risked his life for his country, and had lost much blood in its service. You can imagine him arriving in the capital on a baggage waggon — in the capital which is like no other city in the world! Before him there lay spread out the whole field of life, like a sort of Arabian Nights — a picture made up of the Nevski Prospect, Gorokhovaia Street, countless tapering spires, and a number of bridges apparently supported on nothing — in fact, a regular second Nineveh. Well, he made shift to hire a lodging, but found everything so wonderfully furnished with blinds and Persian carpets and so forth that he saw it would mean throwing away a lot of money. True, as one walks the streets of St. Petersburg one seems to smell money by the thousand roubles, but our friend Kopeikin's bank was limited to a few score coppers and a little silver — not enough to buy a village with! At length, at the price of a rouble a day, he obtained a lodging in the sort of tavern where the daily ration is a bowl of cabbage soup and a crust of bread; and as he felt that he could not manage to live very long on fare of that kind he asked folk what he had better do. 'What you had better do?' they said. 'Well the Government is not here — it is in Paris, and the troops have not yet returned from the war; but there is a TEMPORARY Commission sitting, and you had better go and see what IT can do for you.' 'All right!' he said. 'I will go and tell the Commission that I have shed my blood, and sacrificed my life, for my country.' And he got up early one morning, and shaved himself with his left hand (since the expense of a barber was not worth while), and set out, wooden leg and all, to see the President of the Commission. But first he asked where the President lived, and was told that his house was in Naberezhnaia Street. And you may be sure that it was no peasant's hut, with its glazed windows and great mirrors and statues and

lacqueys and brass door handles! Rather, it was the sort of place which you would enter only after you had bought a cheap cake of soap and indulged in a two hours' wash. Also, at the entrance there was posted a grand Swiss footman with a baton and an embroidered collar — a fellow looking like a fat, over-fed pug dog. However, friend Kopeikin managed to get himself and his wooden leg into the reception room, and there squeezed himself away into a corner, for fear lest he should knock down the gilded china with his elbow. And he stood waiting in great satisfaction at having arrived before the President had so much as left his bed and been served with his silver wash-basin. Nevertheless, it was only when Kopeikin had been waiting four hours that a breakfast waiter entered to say, 'The President will soon be here.' By now the room was as full of people as a plate is of beans, and when the President left the breakfast-room he brought with him, oh, such dignity and refinement, and such an air of the metropolis! First he walked up to one person, and then up to another, saying: 'What do YOU want? And what do YOU want? What can I do for YOU? What is YOUR business?' And at length he stopped before Kopeikin, and Kopeikin said to him: 'I have shed my blood, and lost both an arm and a leg, for my country, and am unable to work. Might I therefore dare to ask you for a little help, if the regulations should permit of it, or for a gratuity, or for a pension, or something of the kind?' Then the President looked at him, and saw that one of his legs was indeed a wooden one, and that an empty right sleeve was pinned to his uniform. 'Very well,' he said. 'Come to me again in a few days' time.' Upon this friend Kopeikin felt delighted. 'NOW I have done my job!' he thought to himself; and you may imagine how gaily he trotted along the pavement, and how he dropped into a tavern for a glass of vodka, and how he ordered a cutlet and some caper sauce and some other things for luncheon, and how he called for a bottle of wine, and how he went to the theatre in the evening! In short, he did himself thoroughly well. Next, he saw in the street a young English lady, as graceful as a swan, and set off after her on his wooden leg. 'But no,' he thought to himself. 'To the devil with that sort of thing just now! I will wait until I have drawn my pension. For the present I have spent enough.' (And I may tell you that by now he had got through fully half his money.) Two or three days later he went to see the President of the Commission again. 'I should be glad to know,' he said, 'whether by now you can do anything for me in return for my having shed my blood and suffered sickness and wounds on military service.' 'First of all,' said the President, 'I must tell you that nothing can be decided in your case without the authority of the Supreme Government. Without that sanction we cannot move in the matter. Surely you see how things stand until the army shall have returned from the war? All that I can advise you to do is wait for the Minister to return,

and, in the meanwhile, to have patience. Rest assured that then you will not be overlooked. And if for the moment you have nothing to live upon, this is the best that I can do for you.' With that he handed Kopeikin a trifle until his case should have been decided. However, that was not what Kopeikin wanted. He had supposed that he would be given a gratuity of a thousand roubles straight away; whereas, instead of 'Drink and be merry,' it was 'Wait, for the time is not yet.' Thus, though his head had been full of soup plates and cutlets and English girls, he now descended the steps with his ears and his tail down — looking, in fact, like a poodle over which the cook has poured a bucketful of water. You see, St. Petersburg life had changed him not a little since first he had got a taste of it, and, now that the devil only knew how he was going to live, it came all the harder to him that he should have no more sweets to look forward to. Remember that a man in the prime of years has an appetite like a wolf; and as he passed a restaurant he could see a round-faced, holland-shirted, snow-white aproned fellow of a French chef preparing a dish delicious enough to make it turn to and eat itself; while, again, as he passed a fruit shop he could see delicacies looking out of a window for fools to come and buy them at a hundred roubles apiece. Imagine, therefore, his position! On the one hand, so to speak, were salmon and water-melons, while on the other hand was the bitter fare which passed at a tavern for luncheon. 'Well,' he thought to himself, 'let them do what they like with me at the Commission, but I intend to go and raise the whole place, and to tell every blessed functionary there that I have a mind to do as I choose.' And in truth this bold impertinence of a man did have the hardihood to return to the Commission. 'What do you want?' said the President. 'Why are you here for the third time? You have had your orders given you.' 'I daresay I have,' he retorted, 'but I am not going to be put off with THEM. I want some cutlets to eat, and a bottle of French wine, and a chance to go and amuse myself at the theatre.' 'Pardon me,' said the President. 'What you really need (if I may venture to mention it) is a little patience. You have been given something for food until the Military Committee shall have met, and then, doubtless, you will receive your proper reward, seeing that it would not be seemly that a man who has served his country should be left destitute. On the other hand, if, in the meanwhile, you desire to indulge in cutlets and theatre-going, please understand that we cannot help you, but you must make your own resources, and try as best you can to help yourself.' You can imagine that this went in at one of Kopeikin's ears, and out at the other; that it was like shooting peas at a stone wall. Accordingly he raised a turmoil which sent the staff flying. One by one, he gave the mob of secretaries and clerks a real good hammering. 'You, and you, and you,' he said, 'do not even know your duties. You are law-breakers.' Yes, he trod every man of them under

foot. At length the General himself arrived from another office, and sounded the alarm. What was to be done with a fellow like Kopeikin? The President saw that strong measures were imperative. ‘Very well,’ he said. ‘Since you decline to rest satisfied with what has been given you, and quietly to await the decision of your case in St. Petersburg, I must find you a lodging. Here, constable, remove the man to gaol.’ Then a constable who had been called to the door — a constable three ells in height, and armed with a carbine — a man well fitted to guard a bank — placed our friend in a police waggon. ‘Well,’ reflected Kopeikin, ‘at least I shan’t have to pay my fare for THIS ride. That’s one comfort.’ Again, after he had ridden a little way, he said to himself: ‘they told me at the Commission to go and make my own means of enjoying myself. Very good. I’ll do so.’ However, what became of Kopeikin, and whither he went, is known to no one. He sank, to use the poet’s expression, into the waters of Lethe, and his doings now lie buried in oblivion. But allow me, gentlemen, to piece together the further threads of the story. Not two months later there appeared in the forests of Riazan a band of robbers: and of that band the chieftain was none other than — ”

“Allow me,” put in the Head of the Police Department. “You have said that Kopeikin had lost an arm and a leg; whereas Chichikov — ”

To say anything more was unnecessary. The Postmaster clapped his hand to his forehead, and publicly called himself a fool, though, later, he tried to excuse his mistake by saying that in England the science of mechanics had reached such a pitch that wooden legs were manufactured which would enable the wearer, on touching a spring, to vanish instantaneously from sight.

Various other theories were then propounded, among them a theory that Chichikov was Napoleon, escaped from St. Helena and travelling about the world in disguise. And if it should be supposed that no such notion could possibly have been broached, let the reader remember that these events took place not many years after the French had been driven out of Russia, and that various prophets had since declared that Napoleon was Antichrist, and would one day escape from his island prison to exercise universal sway on earth. Nay, some good folk had even declared the letters of Napoleon’s name to constitute the Apocalyptic cipher!

As a last resort, the tchinovniks decided to question Nozdrev, since not only had the latter been the first to mention the dead souls, but also he was supposed to stand on terms of intimacy with Chichikov. Accordingly the Chief of Police dispatched a note by the hand of a commissionaire. At the time Nozdrev was engaged on some very important business — so much so that he had not left his room for four days, and was receiving his meals through the window, and no visitors at all. The business referred to consisted of the marking of several dozen

selected cards in such a way as to permit of his relying upon them as upon his bosom friend. Naturally he did not like having his retirement invaded, and at first consigned the commissionaire to the devil; but as soon as he learnt from the note that, since a novice at cards was to be the guest of the Chief of Police that evening, a call at the latter's house might prove not wholly unprofitable he relented, unlocked the door of his room, threw on the first garments that came to hand, and set forth. To every question put to him by the tchinovniks he answered firmly and with assurance. Chichikov, he averred, had indeed purchased dead souls, and to the tune of several thousand roubles. In fact, he (Nozdrev) had himself sold him some, and still saw no reason why he should not have done so. Next, to the question of whether or not he considered Chichikov to be a spy, he replied in the affirmative, and added that, as long ago as his and Chichikov's joint schooldays, the said Chichikov had been known as "The Informer," and repeatedly been thrashed by his companions on that account. Again, to the question of whether or not Chichikov was a forger of currency notes the deponent, as before, responded in the affirmative, and appended thereto an anecdote illustrative of Chichikov's extraordinary dexterity of hand — namely, an anecdote to that effect that, once upon a time, on learning that two million roubles worth of counterfeit notes were lying in Chichikov's house, the authorities had placed seals upon the building, and had surrounded it on every side with an armed guard; whereupon Chichikov had, during the night, changed each of these seals for a new one, and also so arranged matters that, when the house was searched, the forged notes were found to be genuine ones!

Again, to the question of whether or not Chichikov had schemed to abduct the Governor's daughter, and also whether it was true that he, Nozdrev, had undertaken to aid and abet him in the act, the witness replied that, had he not undertaken to do so, the affair would never have come off. At this point the witness pulled himself up, on realising that he had told a lie which might get him into trouble; but his tongue was not to be denied — the details trembling on its tip were too alluring, and he even went on to cite the name of the village church where the pair had arranged to be married, that of the priest who had performed the ceremony, the amount of the fees paid for the same (seventy-five roubles), and statements (1) that the priest had refused to solemnise the wedding until Chichikov had frightened him by threatening to expose the fact that he (the priest) had married Mikhail, a local corn dealer, to his paramour, and (2) that Chichikov had ordered both a koliaska for the couple's conveyance and relays of horses from the post-houses on the road. Nay, the narrative, as detailed by Nozdrev, even reached the point of his mentioning certain of the postillions by name! Next, the tchinovniks sounded him on the question of Chichikov's

possible identity with Napoleon; but before long they had reason to regret the step, for Nozdrev responded with a rambling rigmarole such as bore no resemblance to anything possibly conceivable. Finally, the majority of the audience left the room, and only the Chief of Police remained to listen (in the hope of gathering something more); but at last even he found himself forced to disclaim the speaker with a gesture which said: “The devil only knows what the fellow is talking about!” and so voiced the general opinion that it was no use trying to gather figs of thistles.

Meanwhile Chichikov knew nothing of these events; for, having contracted a slight chill, coupled with a sore throat, he had decided to keep his room for three days; during which time he gargled his throat with milk and fig juice, consumed the fruit from which the juice had been extracted, and wore around his neck a poultice of camomile and camphor. Also, to while away the hours, he made new and more detailed lists of the souls which he had bought, perused a work by the Duchesse de la Valliere , rummaged in his portmanteau, looked through various articles and papers which he discovered in his dispatch-box, and found every one of these occupations tedious. Nor could he understand why none of his official friends had come to see him and inquire after his health, seeing that, not long since, there had been standing in front of the inn the drozhkis both of the Postmaster, the Public Prosecutor, and the President of the Council. He wondered and wondered, and then, with a shrug of his shoulders, fell to pacing the room. At length he felt better, and his spirits rose at the prospect of once more going out into the fresh air; wherefore, having shaved a plentiful growth of hair from his face, he dressed with such alacrity as almost to cause a split in his trousers, sprinkled himself with eau-de-Cologne, and wrapping himself in warm clothes, and turning up the collar of his coat, sallied forth into the street. His first destination was intended to be the Governor’s mansion, and, as he walked along, certain thoughts concerning the Governor’s daughter would keep whirling through his head, so that almost he forgot where he was, and took to smiling and cracking jokes to himself.

Arrived at the Governor’s entrance, he was about to divest himself of his scarf when a Swiss footman greeted him with the words, “I am forbidden to admit you.”

“What?” he exclaimed. “You do not know me? Look at me again, and see if you do not recognise me.”

“Of course I recognise you,” the footman replied. “I have seen you before, but have been ordered to admit any one else rather than Monsieur Chichikov.”

“Indeed? And why so?”

“Those are my orders, and they must be obeyed,” said the footman,

confronting Chichikov with none of that politeness with which, on former occasions, he had hastened to divest our hero of his wrappings. Evidently he was of opinion that, since the gentry declined to receive the visitor, the latter must certainly be a rogue.

"I cannot understand it," said Chichikov to himself. Then he departed, and made his way to the house of the President of the Council. But so put about was that official by Chichikov's entry that he could not utter two consecutive words — he could only murmur some rubbish which left both his visitor and himself out of countenance. Chichikov wondered, as he left the house, what the President's muttered words could have meant, but failed to make head or tail of them. Next, he visited, in turn, the Chief of Police, the Vice-Governor, the Postmaster, and others; but in each case he either failed to be accorded admittance or was received so strangely, and with such a measure of constraint and conversational awkwardness and absence of mind and embarrassment, that he began to fear for the sanity of his hosts. Again and again did he strive to divine the cause, but could not do so; so he went wandering aimlessly about the town, without succeeding in making up his mind whether he or the officials had gone crazy. At length, in a state bordering upon bewilderment, he returned to the inn — to the establishment whence, that every afternoon, he had set forth in such exuberance of spirits. Feeling the need of something to do, he ordered tea, and, still marvelling at the strangeness of his position, was about to pour out the beverage when the door opened and Nozdrev made his appearance.

"What says the proverb?" he began. "'To see a friend, seven versts is not too long a round to make.' I happened to be passing the house, saw a light in your window, and thought to myself: 'Now, suppose I were to run up and pay him a visit? It is unlikely that he will be asleep.' Ah, ha! I see tea on your table! Good! Then I will drink a cup with you, for I had wretched stuff for dinner, and it is beginning to lie heavy on my stomach. Also, tell your man to fill me a pipe. Where is your own pipe?"

"I never smoke," rejoined Chichikov drily.

"Rubbish! As if I did not know what a chimney-pot you are! What is your man's name? Hi, Vakhramei! Come here!"

"Petrushka is his name, not Vakhramei."

"Indeed? But you USED to have a man called Vakhramei, didn't you?"

"No, never."

"Oh, well. Then it must be Derebin's man I am thinking of. What a lucky fellow that Derebin is! An aunt of his has gone and quarrelled with her son for marrying a serf woman, and has left all her property to HIM, to Derebin. Would that *I* had an aunt of that kind to provide against future contingencies! But why

have you been hiding yourself away? I suppose the reason has been that you go in for abstruse subjects and are fond of reading" (why Nozdrev should have drawn these conclusions no one could possibly have said — least of all Chichikov himself). "By the way, I can tell you of something that would have found you scope for your satirical vein" (the conclusion as to Chichikov's "satirical vein" was, as before, altogether unwarranted on Nozdrev's part). "That is to say, you would have seen merchant Likhachev losing a pile of money at play. My word, you would have laughed! A fellow with me named Perependev said: 'Would that Chichikov had been here! It would have been the very thing for him!'" (As a matter of fact, never since the day of his birth had Nozdrev met any one of the name of Perependev.) "However, my friend, you must admit that you treated me rather badly the day that we played that game of chess; but, as I won the game, I bear you no malice. A propos, I am just from the President's, and ought to tell you that the feeling against you in the town is very strong, for every one believes you to be a forger of currency notes. I myself was sent for and questioned about you, but I stuck up for you through thick and thin, and told the tchinovniks that I had been at school with you, and had known your father. In fact, I gave the fellows a knock or two for themselves."

"You say that I am believed to be a forger?" said Chichikov, starting from his seat.

"Yes," said Nozdrev. "Why have you gone and frightened everybody as you have done? Some of our folk are almost out of their minds about it, and declare you to be either a brigand in disguise or a spy. Yesterday the Public Prosecutor even died of it, and is to be buried to-morrow" (this was true in so far as that, on the previous day, the official in question had had a fatal stroke — probably induced by the excitement of the public meeting). "Of course, *I* don't suppose you to be anything of the kind, but, you see, these fellows are in a blue funk about the new Governor-General, for they think he will make trouble for them over your affair. A propos, he is believed to be a man who puts on airs, and turns up his nose at everything; and if so, he will get on badly with the dvoriane, seeing that fellows of that sort need to be humoured a bit. Yes, my word! Should the new Governor-General shut himself up in his study, and give no balls, there will be the very devil to pay! By the way, Chichikov, that is a risky scheme of yours."

"What scheme to you mean?" Chichikov asked uneasily.

"Why, that scheme of carrying off the Governor's daughter. However, to tell the truth, I was expecting something of the kind. No sooner did I see you and her together at the ball than I said to myself: 'Ah, ha! Chichikov is not here for nothing!' For my own part, I think you have made a poor choice, for I can see

nothing in her at all. On the other hand, the niece of a friend of mine named Bikusov — she IS a girl, and no mistake! A regular what you might call ‘miracle in muslin!’“

“What on earth are you talking about?” asked Chichikov with his eyes distended. “HOW could I carry off the Governor’s daughter? What on earth do you mean?”

“Come, come! What a secretive fellow you are! My only object in having come to see you is to lend you a helping hand in the matter. Look here. On condition that you will lend me three thousand roubles, I will stand you the cost of the wedding, the koliaska, and the relays of horses. I must have the money even if I die for it.”

Throughout Nozdrev’s maunderings Chichikov had been rubbing his eyes to ascertain whether or not he was dreaming. What with the charge of being a forger, the accusation of having schemed an abduction, the death of the Public Prosecutor (whatever might have been its cause), and the advent of a new Governor-General, he felt utterly dismayed.

“Things having come to their present pass,” he reflected, “I had better not linger here — I had better be off at once.”

Getting rid of Nozdrev as soon as he could, he sent for Selifan, and ordered him to be up at daybreak, in order to clean the britchka and to have everything ready for a start at six o’clock. Yet, though Selifan replied, “Very well, Paul Ivanovitch,” he hesitated awhile by the door. Next, Chichikov bid Petrushka get out the dusty portmanteau from under the bed, and then set to work to cram into it, pell-mell, socks, shirts, collars (both clean and dirty), boot trees, a calendar, and a variety of other articles. Everything went into the receptacle just as it came to hand, since his one object was to obviate any possible delay in the morning’s departure. Meanwhile the reluctant Selifan slowly, very slowly, left the room, as slowly descended the staircase (on each separate step of which he left a muddy foot-print), and, finally, halted to scratch his head. What that scratching may have meant no one could say; for, with the Russian populace, such a scratching may mean any one of a hundred things.

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CHAPTER XI

Nevertheless events did not turn out as Chichikov had intended they should. In the first place, he overslept himself. That was check number one. In the second place, on his rising and inquiring whether the britchka had been harnessed and everything got ready, he was informed that neither of those two things had been done. That was check number two. Beside himself with rage, he prepared to give Selifan the wigging of his life, and, meanwhile, waited impatiently to hear what the delinquent had got to say in his defence. It goes without saying that when Selifan made his appearance in the doorway he had only the usual excuses to offer — the sort of excuses usually offered by servants when a hasty departure has become imperatively necessary.

"Paul Ivanovitch," he said, "the horses require shoeing."

"Blockhead!" exclaimed Chichikov. "Why did you not tell me of that before, you damned fool? Was there not time enough for them to be shod?"

"Yes, I suppose there was," agreed Selifan. "Also one of the wheels is in want of a new tyre, for the roads are so rough that the old tyre is worn through. Also, the body of the britchka is so rickety that probably it will not last more than a couple of stages."

"Rascal!" shouted Chichikov, clenching his fists and approaching Selifan in such a manner that, fearing to receive a blow, the man backed and dodged aside. "Do you mean to ruin me, and to break all our bones on the road, you cursed idiot? For these three weeks past you have been doing nothing at all; yet now, at the last moment, you come here stammering and playing the fool! Do you think I keep you just to eat and to drive yourself about? You must have known of this before? Did you, or did you not, know it? Answer me at once."

"Yes, I did know it," replied Selifan, hanging his head.

"Then why didn't you tell me about it?"

Selifan had no reply immediately ready, so continued to hang his head while quietly saying to himself: "See how well I have managed things! I knew what was the matter, yet I did not say."

"And now," continued Chichikov, "go you at once and fetch a blacksmith. Tell him that everything must be put right within two hours at the most. Do you hear? If that should not be done, I, I — I will give you the best flogging that ever you had in your life." Truly Chichikov was almost beside himself with fury.

Turning towards the door, as though for the purpose of going and carrying out

his orders, Selifan halted and added:

"That skewbald, barin — you might think it well to sell him, seeing that he is nothing but a rascal? A horse like that is more of a hindrance than a help."

"What? Do you expect me to go NOW to the market-place and sell him?"

"Well, Paul Ivanovitch, he is good for nothing but show, since by nature he is a most cunning beast. Never in my life have I seen such a horse."

"Fool! Whenever I may wish to sell him I SHALL sell him. Meanwhile, don't you trouble your head about what doesn't concern you, but go and fetch a blacksmith, and see that everything is put right within two hours. Otherwise I will take the very hair off your head, and beat you till you haven't a face left. Be off! Hurry!"

Selifan departed, and Chichikov, his ill-humour vented, threw down upon the floor the poignard which he always took with him as a means of instilling respect into whomsoever it might concern, and spent the next quarter of an hour in disputing with a couple of blacksmiths — men who, as usual, were rascals of the type which, on perceiving that something is wanted in a hurry, at once multiplies its terms for providing the same. Indeed, for all Chichikov's storming and raging as he dubbed the fellows robbers and extortioners and thieves, he could make no impression upon the pair, since, true to their character, they declined to abate their prices, and, even when they had begun their work, spent upon it, not two hours, but five and a half. Meanwhile he had the satisfaction of experiencing that delightful time with which all travellers are familiar — namely, the time during which one sits in a room where, except for a litter of string, waste paper, and so forth, everything else has been packed. But to all things there comes an end, and there arrived also the long-awaited moment when the britchka had received the luggage, the faulty wheel had been fitted with a new tyre, the horses had been re-shod, and the predatory blacksmiths had departed with their gains. "Thank God!" thought Chichikov as the britchka rolled out of the gates of the inn, and the vehicle began to jolt over the cobblestones. Yet a feeling which he could not altogether have defined filled his breast as he gazed upon the houses and the streets and the garden walls which he might never see again. Presently, on turning a corner, the britchka was brought to a halt through the fact that along the street there was filing a seemingly endless funeral procession. Leaning forward in his britchka, Chichikov asked Petrushka whose obsequies the procession represented, and was told that they represented those of the Public Prosecutor. Disagreeably shocked, our hero hastened to raise the hood of the vehicle, to draw the curtains across the windows, and to lean back into a corner. While the britchka remained thus halted Selifan and Petrushka, their caps doffed, sat watching the progress of the cortege, after they

had received strict instructions not to greet any fellow-servant whom they might recognise. Behind the hearse walked the whole body of tchinovniks, bare-headed; and though, for a moment or two, Chichikov feared that some of their number might discern him in his britchka, he need not have disturbed himself, since their attention was otherwise engaged. In fact, they were not even exchanging the small talk customary among members of such processions, but thinking exclusively of their own affairs, of the advent of the new Governor-General, and of the probable manner in which he would take up the reins of administration. Next came a number of carriages, from the windows of which peered the ladies in mourning toilets. Yet the movements of their hands and lips made it evident that they were indulging in animated conversation — probably about the Governor-General, the balls which he might be expected to give, and their own eternal fripperies and gewgaws. Lastly came a few empty drozhkis. As soon as the latter had passed, our hero was able to continue on his way. Throwing back the hood of the britchka, he said to himself:

"Ah, good friend, you have lived your life, and now it is over! In the newspapers they will say of you that you died regretted not only by your subordinates, but also by humanity at large, as well as that, a respected citizen, a kind father, and a husband beyond reproach, you went to your grave amid the tears of your widow and orphans. Yet, should those journals be put to it to name any particular circumstance which justified this eulogy of you, they would be forced to fall back upon the fact that you grew a pair of exceptionally thick eyebrows!"

With that Chichikov bid Selifan quicken his pace, and concluded: "After all, it is as well that I encountered the procession, for they say that to meet a funeral is lucky."

Presently the britchka turned into some less frequented streets, lines of wooden fencing of the kind which mark the outskirts of a town began to file by, the cobblestones came to an end, the macadam of the highroad succeeded to them, and once more there began on either side of the turnpike a procession of verst stones, road menders, and grey villages; inns with samovars and peasant women and landlords who came running out of yards with seivefuls of oats; pedestrians in worn shoes which, it might be, had covered eight hundred versts; little towns, bright with booths for the sale of flour in barrels, boots, small loaves, and other trifles; heaps of slag; much repaired bridges; expanses of field to right and to left; stout landowners; a mounted soldier bearing a green, iron-clamped box inscribed: "The — th Battery of Artillery"; long strips of freshly-tilled earth which gleamed green, yellow, and black on the face of the countryside. With it mingled long-drawn singing, glimpses of elm-tops amid

mist, the far-off notes of bells, endless clouds of rocks, and the illimitable line of the horizon.

Ah, Russia, Russia, from my beautiful home in a strange land I can still see you! In you everything is poor and disordered and unhomely; in you the eye is neither cheered nor dismayed by temerities of nature which a yet more temerarious art has conquered; in you one beholds no cities with lofty, many-windowed mansions, lofty as crags, no picturesque trees, no ivy-clad ruins, no waterfalls with their everlasting spray and roar, no beetling precipices which confuse the brain with their stony immensity, no vistas of vines and ivy and millions of wild roses and ageless lines of blue hills which look almost unreal against the clear, silvery background of the sky. In you everything is flat and open; your towns project like points or signals from smooth levels of plain, and nothing whatsoever enchants or deludes the eye. Yet what secret, what invincible force draws me to you? Why does there ceaselessly echo and re-echo in my ears the sad song which hovers throughout the length and the breadth of your borders? What is the burden of that song? Why does it wail and sob and catch at my heart? What say the notes which thus painfully caress and embrace my soul, and flit, uttering their lamentations, around me? What is it you seek of me, O Russia? What is the hidden bond which subsists between us? Why do you regard me as you do? Why does everything within you turn upon me eyes full of yearning? Even at this moment, as I stand dumbly, fixedly, perplexedly contemplating your vastness, a menacing cloud, charged with gathering rain, seems to overshadow my head. What is it that your boundless expanses presage? Do they not presage that one day there will arise in you ideas as boundless as yourself? Do they not presage that one day you too will know no limits? Do they not presage that one day, when again you shall have room for their exploits, there will spring to life the heroes of old? How the power of your immensity enfolds me, and reverberates through all my being with a wild, strange spell, and flashes in my eyes with an almost supernatural radiance! Yes, a strange, brilliant, unearthly vista indeed do you disclose, O Russia, country of mine!

“Stop, stop, you fool!” shouted Chichikov to Selifan; and even as he spoke a troika, bound on Government business, came chattering by, and disappeared in a cloud of dust. To Chichikov’s curses at Selifan for not having drawn out of the way with more alacrity a rural constable with moustaches of the length of an arshin added his quota.

What a curious and attractive, yet also what an unreal, fascination the term “highway” connotes! And how interesting for its own sake is a highway! Should the day be a fine one (though chilly) in mellowing autumn, press closer your travelling cloak, and draw down your cap over your ears, and snuggle cosily,

comfortably into a corner of the britchka before a last shiver shall course through your limbs, and the ensuing warmth shall put to flight the autumnal cold and damp. As the horses gallop on their way, how delightfully will drowsiness come stealing upon you, and make your eyelids droop! For a while, through your somnolence, you will continue to hear the hard breathing of the team and the rumbling of the wheels; but at length, sinking back into your corner, you will relapse into the stage of snoring. And when you awake — behold! you will find that five stages have slipped away, and that the moon is shining, and that you have reached a strange town of churches and old wooden cupolas and blackened spires and white, half-timbered houses! And as the moonlight glints hither and thither, almost you will believe that the walls and the streets and the pavements of the place are spread with sheets — sheets shot with coal-black shadows which make the wooden roofs look all the brighter under the slanting beams of the pale luminary. Nowhere is a soul to be seen, for every one is plunged in slumber. Yet no. In a solitary window a light is flickering where some good burgher is mending his boots, or a baker drawing a batch of dough. O night and powers of heaven, how perfect is the blackness of your infinite vault — how lofty, how remote its inaccessible depths where it lies spread in an intangible, yet audible, silence! Freshly does the lulling breath of night blow in your face, until once more you relapse into snoring oblivion, and your poor neighbour turns angrily in his corner as he begins to be conscious of your weight. Then again you awake, but this time to find yourself confronted with only fields and steppes. Everywhere in the ascendant is the desolation of space. But suddenly the ciphers on a verst stone leap to the eye! Morning is rising, and on the chill, gradually paling line of the horizon you can see gleaming a faint gold streak. The wind freshens and grows keener, and you snuggle closer in your cloak; yet how glorious is that freshness, and how marvellous the sleep in which once again you become enfolded! A jolt! — and for the last time you return to consciousness. By now the sun is high in the heavens, and you hear a voice cry “gently, gently!” as a farm waggon issues from a by-road. Below, enclosed within an ample dike, stretches a sheet of water which glistens like copper in the sunlight. Beyond, on the side of a slope, lie some scattered peasants’ huts, a manor house, and, flanking the latter, a village church with its cross flashing like a star. There also comes wafted to your ear the sound of peasants’ laughter, while in your inner man you are becoming conscious of an appetite which is not to be withstood.

Oh long-drawn highway, how excellent you are! How often have I in weariness and despondency set forth upon your length, and found in you salvation and rest! How often, as I followed your leading, have I been visited with wonderful thoughts and poetic dreams and curious, wild impressions!

At this moment our friend Chichikov also was experiencing visions of a not wholly prosaic nature. Let us peep into his soul and share them. At first he remained unconscious of anything whatsoever, for he was too much engaged in making sure that he was really clear of the town; but as soon as he saw that it had completely disappeared, with its mills and factories and other urban appurtenances, and that even the steeples of the white stone churches had sunk below the horizon, he turned his attention to the road, and the town of N. vanished from his thoughts as completely as though he had not seen it since childhood. Again, in its turn, the road ceased to interest him, and he began to close his eyes and to loll his head against the cushions. Of this let the author take advantage, in order to speak at length concerning his hero; since hitherto he (the author) has been prevented from so doing by Nozdrev and balls and ladies and local intrigues — by those thousand trifles which seem trifles only when they are introduced into a book, but which, in life, figure as affairs of importance. Let us lay them aside, and betake ourselves to business.

Whether the character whom I have selected for my hero has pleased my readers is, of course, exceedingly doubtful. At all events the ladies will have failed to approve him for the fair sex demands in a hero perfection, and, should there be the least mental or physical stain on him — well, woe betide! Yes, no matter how profoundly the author may probe that hero's soul, no matter how clearly he may portray his figure as in a mirror, he will be given no credit for the achievement. Indeed, Chichikov's very stoutness and plenitude of years may have militated against him, for never is a hero pardoned for the former, and the majority of ladies will, in such case, turn away, and mutter to themselves: "Phew! What a beast!" Yes, the author is well aware of this. Yet, though he could not, to save his life, take a person of virtue for his principal character, it may be that this story contains themes never before selected, and that in it there projects the whole boundless wealth of Russian psychology; that it portrays, as well as Chichikov, the peasant who is gifted with the virtues which God has sent him, and the marvellous maiden of Russia who has not her like in all the world for her beautiful feminine spirituality, the roots of which lie buried in noble aspirations and boundless self-denial. In fact, compared with these types, the virtuous of other races seem lifeless, as does an inanimate volume when compared with the living word. Yes, each time that there arises in Russia a movement of thought, it becomes clear that the movement sinks deep into the Slavonic nature where it would but have skimmed the surface of other nations. — But why am I talking like this? Whither am I tending? It is indeed shameful that an author who long ago reached man's estate, and was brought up to a course of severe introspection and sober, solitary self-enlightenment, should give

way to such jejune wandering from the point. To everything its proper time and place and turn. As I was saying, it does not lie in me to take a virtuous character for my hero: and I will tell you why. It is because it is high time that a rest were given to the “poor, but virtuous” individual; it is because the phrase “a man of worth” has grown into a by-word; it is because the “man of worth” has become converted into a horse, and there is not a writer but rides him and flogs him, in and out of season; it is because the “man of worth” has been starved until he has not a shred of his virtue left, and all that remains of his body is but the ribs and the hide; it is because the “man of worth” is for ever being smuggled upon the scene; it is because the “man of worth” has at length forfeited every one’s respect. For these reasons do I reaffirm that it is high time to yoke a rascal to the shafts. Let us yoke that rascal.

Our hero’s beginnings were both modest and obscure. True, his parents were dvoriane, but he in no way resembled them. At all events, a short, squab female relative who was present at his birth exclaimed as she lifted up the baby: “He is altogether different from what I had expected him to be. He ought to have taken after his maternal grandmother, whereas he has been born, as the proverb has it, ‘like not father nor mother, but like a chance passer-by.’“ Thus from the first life regarded the little Chichikov with sour distaste, and as through a dim, frost-encrusted window. A tiny room with diminutive casements which were never opened, summer or winter; an invalid father in a dressing-gown lined with lambskin, and with an ailing foot swathed in bandages — a man who was continually drawing deep breaths, and walking up and down the room, and spitting into a sandbox; a period of perpetually sitting on a bench with pen in hand and ink on lips and fingers; a period of being eternally confronted with the copy-book maxim, “Never tell a lie, but obey your superiors, and cherish virtue in your heart;” an everlasting scraping and shuffling of slippers up and down the room; a period of continually hearing a well-known, strident voice exclaim: “So you have been playing the fool again!” at times when the child, weary of the mortal monotony of his task, had added a superfluous embellishment to his copy; a period of experiencing the ever-familiar, but ever-unpleasant, sensation which ensued upon those words as the boy’s ear was painfully twisted between two long fingers bent backwards at the tips — such is the miserable picture of that youth of which, in later life, Chichikov preserved but the faintest of memories! But in this world everything is liable to swift and sudden change; and, one day in early spring, when the rivers had melted, the father set forth with his little son in a teliezshka drawn by a sorrel steed of the kind known to horsy folk as a soroka, and having as coachman the diminutive hunchback who, father of the only serf family belonging to the elder Chichikov, served as general

factotum in the Chichikov establishment. For a day and a half the soroka conveyed them on their way; during which time they spent the night at a roadside inn, crossed a river, dined off cold pie and roast mutton, and eventually arrived at the county town. To the lad the streets presented a spectacle of unwonted brilliancy, and he gaped with amazement. Turning into a side alley wherein the mire necessitated both the most strenuous exertions on the soroka's part and the most vigorous castigation on the part of the driver and the barin, the conveyance eventually reached the gates of a courtyard which, combined with a small fruit garden containing various bushes, a couple of apple-trees in blossom, and a mean, dirty little shed, constituted the premises attached to an antiquated-looking villa. Here there lived a relative of the Chichikovs, a wizened old lady who went to market in person and dried her stockings at the samovar. On seeing the boy, she patted his cheek and expressed satisfaction at his physique; whereupon the fact became disclosed that here he was to abide for a while, for the purpose of attending a local school. After a night's rest his father prepared to betake himself homeward again; but no tears marked the parting between him and his son, he merely gave the lad a copper or two and (a far more important thing) the following injunctions. "See here, my boy. Do your lessons well, do not idle or play the fool, and above all things, see that you please your teachers. So long as you observe these rules you will make progress, and surpass your fellows, even if God shall have denied you brains, and you should fail in your studies. Also, do not consort overmuch with your comrades, for they will do you no good; but, should you do so, then make friends with the richer of them, since one day they may be useful to you. Also, never entertain or treat any one, but see that every one entertains and treats YOU. Lastly, and above all else, keep and save your every kopeck. To save money is the most important thing in life. Always a friend or a comrade may fail you, and be the first to desert you in a time of adversity; but never will a KOPECK fail you, whatever may be your plight. Nothing in the world cannot be done, cannot be attained, with the aid of money." These injunctions given, the father embraced his son, and set forth on his return; and though the son never again beheld his parent, the latter's words and precepts sank deep into the little Chichikov's soul.

The next day young Pavlushka made his first attendance at school. But no special aptitude in any branch of learning did he display. Rather, his distinguishing characteristics were diligence and neatness. On the other hand, he developed great intelligence as regards the PRACTICAL aspect of life. In a trice he divined and comprehended how things ought to be worked, and, from that time forth, bore himself towards his school-fellows in such a way that, though they frequently gave him presents, he not only never returned the compliment,

but even on occasions pocketed the gifts for the mere purpose of selling them again. Also, boy though he was, he acquired the art of self-denial. Of the trifle which his father had given him on parting he spent not a kopeck, but, the same year, actually added to his little store by fashioning a bullfinch of wax, painting it, and selling the same at a handsome profit. Next, as time went on, he engaged in other speculations — in particular, in the scheme of buying up eatables, taking his seat in class beside boys who had plenty of pocket-money, and, as soon as such opulent individuals showed signs of failing attention (and, therefore, of growing appetite), tendering them, from beneath the desk, a roll of pudding or a piece of gingerbread, and charging according to degree of appetite and size of portion. He also spent a couple of months in training a mouse, which he kept confined in a little wooden cage in his bedroom. At length, when the training had reached the point that, at the several words of command, the mouse would stand upon its hind legs, lie down, and get up again, he sold the creature for a respectable sum. Thus, in time, his gains attained the amount of five roubles; whereupon he made himself a purse and then started to fill a second receptacle of the kind. Still more studied was his attitude towards the authorities. No one could sit more quietly in his place on the bench than he. In the same connection it may be remarked that his teacher was a man who, above all things, loved peace and good behaviour, and simply could not abide clever, witty boys, since he suspected them of laughing at him. Consequently any lad who had once attracted the master's attention with a manifestation of intelligence needed but to shuffle in his place, or unintentionally to twitch an eyebrow, for the said master at once to burst into a rage, to turn the supposed offender out of the room, and to visit him with unmerciful punishment. "Ah, my fine fellow," he would say, "I'LL cure you of your impudence and want of respect! I know you through and through far better than you know yourself, and will take good care that you have to go down upon your knees and curb your appetite." Whereupon the wretched lad would, for no cause of which he was aware, be forced to wear out his breeches on the floor and go hungry for days. "Talents and gifts," the schoolmaster would declare, "are so much rubbish. I respect only good behaviour, and shall award full marks to those who conduct themselves properly, even if they fail to learn a single letter of their alphabet: whereas to those in whom I may perceive a tendency to jocularity I shall award nothing, even though they should outdo Solon himself." For the same reason he had no great love of the author Krylov, in that the latter says in one of his Fables: "In my opinion, the more one sings, the better one works;" and often the pedagogue would relate how, in a former school of his, the silence had been such that a fly could be heard buzzing on the wing, and for the space of a whole year not a single pupil

sneezed or coughed in class, and so complete was the absence of all sound that no one could have told that there was a soul in the place. Of this mentor young Chichikov speedily appraised the mentality; wherefore he fashioned his behaviour to correspond with it. Not an eyelid, not an eyebrow, would he stir during school hours, howsoever many pinches he might receive from behind; and only when the bell rang would he run to anticipate his fellows in handing the master the three-cornered cap which that dignitary customarily sported, and then to be the first to leave the class-room, and contrive to meet the master not less than two or three times as the latter walked homeward, in order that, on each occasion, he might doff his cap. And the scheme proved entirely successful. Throughout the period of his attendance at school he was held in high favour, and, on leaving the establishment, received full marks for every subject, as well as a diploma and a book inscribed (in gilt letters) “For Exemplary Diligence and the Perfection of Good Conduct.” By this time he had grown into a fairly good-looking youth of the age when the chin first calls for a razor; and at about the same period his father died, leaving behind him, as his estate, four waistcoats completely worn out, two ancient frockcoats, and a small sum of money. Apparently he had been skilled only in RECOMMENDING the saving of kopecks — not in ACTUALLY PRACTISING the art. Upon that Chichikov sold the old house and its little parcel of land for a thousand roubles, and removed, with his one serf and the serf’s family, to the capital, where he set about organising a new establishment and entering the Civil Service. Simultaneously with his doing so, his old schoolmaster lost (through stupidity or otherwise) the establishment over which he had hitherto presided, and in which he had set so much store by silence and good behaviour. Grief drove him to drink, and when nothing was left, even for that purpose, he retired — ill, helpless, and starving — into a broken-down, cheerless hovel. But certain of his former pupils — the same clever, witty lads whom he had once been wont to accuse of impertinence and evil conduct generally — heard of his pitiable plight, and collected for him what money they could, even to the point of selling their own necessaries. Only Chichikov, when appealed to, pleaded inability, and compromised with a contribution of a single piatak : which his old schoolfellows straightway returned him — full in the face, and accompanied with a shout of “Oh, you skinflint!” As for the poor schoolmaster, when he heard what his former pupils had done, he buried his face in his hands, and the tears gushed from his failing eyes as from those of a helpless infant. “God has brought you but to weep over my death-bed,” he murmured feebly; and added with a profound sigh, on hearing of Chichikov’s conduct: “Ah, Pavlushka, how a human being may become changed! Once you were a good lad, and gave me no trouble; but now you are

become proud indeed!”

Yet let it not be inferred from this that our hero’s character had grown so blase and hard, or his conscience so blunted, as to preclude his experiencing a particle of sympathy or compassion. As a matter of fact, he was capable both of the one and the other, and would have been glad to assist his old teacher had no great sum been required, or had he not been called upon to touch the fund which he had decided should remain intact. In other words, the father’s injunction, “Guard and save every kopeck,” had become a hard and fast rule of the son’s. Yet the youth had no particular attachment to money for money’s sake; he was not possessed with the true instinct for hoarding and niggardliness. Rather, before his eyes there floated ever a vision of life and its amenities and advantages — a vision of carriages and an elegantly furnished house and recherche dinners; and it was in the hope that some day he might attain these things that he saved every kopeck and, meanwhile, stinted both himself and others. Whenever a rich man passed him by in a splendid drozhki drawn by swift and handsomely-caparisoned horses, he would halt as though deep in thought, and say to himself, like a man awakening from a long sleep: “That gentleman must have been a financier, he has so little hair on his brow.” In short, everything connected with wealth and plenty produced upon him an ineffaceable impression. Even when he left school he took no holiday, so strong in him was the desire to get to work and enter the Civil Service. Yet, for all the encomiums contained in his diploma, he had much ado to procure a nomination to a Government Department; and only after a long time was a minor post found for him, at a salary of thirty or fourty roubles a year. Nevertheless, wretched though this appointment was, he determined, by strict attention to business, to overcome all obstacles, and to win success. And, indeed, the self-denial, the patience, and the economy which he displayed were remarkable. From early morn until late at night he would, with indefatigable zeal of body and mind, remain immersed in his sordid task of copying official documents — never going home, snatching what sleep he could on tables in the building, and dining with the watchman on duty. Yet all the while he contrived to remain clean and neat, to preserve a cheerful expression of countenance, and even to cultivate a certain elegance of movement. In passing, it may be remarked that his fellow tchinovniks were a peculiarly plain, unsightly lot, some of them having faces like badly baked bread, swollen cheeks, receding chins, and cracked and blistered upper lips. Indeed, not a man of them was handsome. Also, their tone of voice always contained a note of sullenness, as though they had a mind to knock some one on the head; and by their frequent sacrifices to Bacchus they showed that even yet there remains in the Slavonic nature a certain element of paganism. Nay, the Director’s room itself they would

invade while still licking their lips, and since their breath was not over-aromatic, the atmosphere of the room grew not over-pleasant. Naturally, among such an official staff a man like Chichikov could not fail to attract attention and remark, since in everything — in cheerfulness of demeanour, in suavity of voice, and in complete neglect of the use of strong potions — he was the absolute antithesis of his companions. Yet his path was not an easy one to tread, for over him he had the misfortune to have placed in authority a Chief Clerk who was a graven image of elderly insensibility and inertia. Always the same, always unapproachable, this functionary could never in his life have smiled or asked civilly after an acquaintance's health. Nor had any one ever seen him a whit different in the street or at his own home from what he was in the office, or showing the least interest in anything whatever, or getting drunk and relapsing into jollity in his cups, or indulging in that species of wild gaiety which, when intoxicated, even a burglar affects. No, not a particle of this was there in him. Nor, for that matter, was there in him a particle of anything at all, whether good or bad: which complete negativeness of character produced rather a strange effect. In the same way, his wizened, marble-like features reminded one of nothing in particular, so primly proportioned were they. Only the numerous pockmarks and dimples with which they were pitted placed him among the number of those over whose faces, to quote the popular saying, "The Devil has walked by night to grind peas." In short, it would seem that no human agency could have approached such a man and gained his goodwill. Yet Chichikov made the effort. As a first step, he took to consulting the other's convenience in all manner of insignificant trifles — to cleaning his pens carefully, and, when they had been prepared exactly to the Chief Clerk's liking, laying them ready at his elbow; to dusting and sweeping from his table all superfluous sand and tobacco ash; to procuring a new mat for his inkstand; to looking for his hat — the meanest-looking hat that ever the world beheld — and having it ready for him at the exact moment when business came to an end; to brushing his back if it happened to become smeared with whitewash from a wall. Yet all this passed as unnoticed as though it had never been done. Finally, Chichikov sniffed into his superior's family and domestic life, and learnt that he possessed a grown-up daughter on whose face also there had taken place a nocturnal, diabolical grinding of peas. HERE was a quarter whence a fresh attack might be delivered! After ascertaining what church the daughter attended on Sundays, our hero took to contriving to meet her in a neat suit and a well-starched dickey: and soon the scheme began to work. The surly Chief Clerk wavered for a while; then ended by inviting Chichikov to tea. Nor could any man in the office have told you how it came about that before long Chichikov had removed to the Chief Clerk's house, and become a person

necessary — indeed indispensable — to the household, seeing that he bought the flour and the sugar, treated the daughter as his betrothed, called the Chief Clerk "Papenka," and occasionally kissed "Papenka's" hand. In fact, every one at the office supposed that, at the end of February (i.e. before the beginning of Lent) there would take place a wedding. Nay, the surly father even began to agitate with the authorities on Chichikov's behalf, and so enabled our hero, on a vacancy occurring, to attain the stool of a Chief Clerk. Apparently this marked the consummation of Chichikov's relations with his host, for he hastened stealthily to pack his trunk and, the next day, figured in a fresh lodging. Also, he ceased to call the Chief Clerk "Papenka," or to kiss his hand; and the matter of the wedding came to as abrupt a termination as though it had never been mooted. Yet also he never failed to press his late host's hand, whenever he met him, and to invite him to tea; while, on the other hand, for all his immobility and dry indifference, the Chief Clerk never failed to shake his head with a muttered, "Ah, my fine fellow, you have grown too proud, you have grown too proud."

The foregoing constituted the most difficult step that our hero had to negotiate. Thereafter things came with greater ease and swifter success. Everywhere he attracted notice, for he developed within himself everything necessary for this world — namely, charm of manner and bearing, and great diligence in business matters. Armed with these resources, he next obtained promotion to what is known as "a fat post," and used it to the best advantage; and even though, at that period, strict inquiry had begun to be made into the whole subject of bribes, such inquiry failed to alarm him — nay, he actually turned it to account and thereby manifested the Russian resourcefulness which never fails to attain its zenith where extortion is concerned. His method of working was the following. As soon as a petitioner or a suitor put his hand into his pocket, to extract thence the necessary letters of recommendation for signature, Chichikov would smilingly exclaim as he detained his interlocutor's hand: "No, no! Surely you do not think that I — ? But no, no! It is our duty, it is our obligation, and we do not require rewards for doing our work properly. So far as YOUR matter is concerned, you may rest easy. Everything shall be carried through to-morrow. But may I have your address? There is no need to trouble yourself, seeing that the documents can easily be brought to you at your residence." Upon which the delighted suitor would return home in raptures, thinking: "Here, at long last, is the sort of man so badly needed. A man of that kind is a jewel beyond price." Yet for a day, for two days — nay, even for three — the suitor would wait in vain so far as any messengers with documents were concerned. Then he would repair to the office — to find that his business had not so much as been entered upon! Lastly, he would confront the "jewel beyond price." "Oh, pardon me, pardon me!"

Chichikov would exclaim in the politest of tones as he seized and grasped the visitor's hands. "The truth is that we have SUCH a quantity of business on hand! But the matter shall be put through to-morrow, and in the meanwhile I am most sorry about it." And with this would go the most fascinating of gestures. Yet neither on the morrow, nor on the day following, nor on the third would documents arrive at the suitor's abode. Upon that he would take thought as to whether something more ought not to have been done; and, sure enough, on his making inquiry, he would be informed that "something will have to be given to the copyists." "Well, there can be no harm in that," he would reply. "As a matter of fact, I have ready a tchetvertak or two." "Oh, no, no," the answer would come. "Not a tchetvertak per copyist, but a rouble, is the fee." "What? A rouble per copyist?" "Certainly. What is there to grumble at in that? Of the money the copyists will receive a tchetvertak apiece, and the rest will go to the Government." Upon that the disillusioned suitor would fly out upon the new order of things brought about by the inquiry into illicit fees, and curse both the tchinovniks and their uppish, insolent behaviour. "Once upon a time," would the suitor lament, "one DID know what to do. Once one had tipped the Director a bank-note, one's affair was, so to speak, in the hat. But now one has to pay a rouble per copyist after waiting a week because otherwise it was impossible to guess how the wind might set! The devil fly away with all 'disinterested' and 'trustworthy' tchinovniks!" And certainly the aggrieved suitor had reason to grumble, seeing that, now that bribe-takers had ceased to exist, and Directors had uniformly become men of honour and integrity, secretaries and clerks ought not with impunity to have continued their thievish ways. In time there opened out to Chichikov a still wider field, for a Commission was appointed to supervise the erection of a Government building, and, on his being nominated to that body, he proved himself one of its most active members. The Commission got to work without delay, but for a space of six years had some trouble with the building in question. Either the climate hindered operations or the materials used were of the kind which prevents official edifices from ever rising higher than the basement. But, meanwhile, OTHER quarters of the town saw arise, for each member of the Commission, a handsome house of the NON-official style of architecture. Clearly the foundation afforded by the soil of those parts was better than that where the Government building was still engaged in hanging fire! Likewise the members of the Commission began to look exceedingly prosperous, and to blossom out into family life; and, for the first time in his existence, even Chichikov also departed from the iron laws of his self-imposed restraint and inexorable self-denial, and so far mitigated his heretofore asceticism as to show himself a man not averse to those amenities which, during his youth, he had been

capable of renouncing. That is to say, certain superfluities began to make their appearance in his establishment. He engaged a good cook, took to wearing linen shirts, bought for himself cloth of a pattern worn by no one else in the province, figured in checks shot with the brightest of reds and browns, fitted himself out with two splendid horses (which he drove with a single pair of reins, added to a ring attachment for the trace horse), developed a habit of washing with a sponge dipped in eau-de-Cologne, and invested in soaps of the most expensive quality, in order to communicate to his skin a more elegant polish.

But suddenly there appeared upon the scene a new Director — a military man, and a martinet as regarded his hostility to bribe-takers and anything which might be called irregular. On the very day after his arrival he struck fear into every breast by calling for accounts, discovering hosts of deficits and missing sums, and directing his attention to the aforesaid fine houses of civilian architecture. Upon that there ensued a complete reshuffling. Tchinovniks were retired wholesale, and the houses were sequestrated to the Government, or else converted into various pious institutions and schools for soldiers' children. Thus the whole fabric, and especially Chichikov, came crashing to the ground. Particularly did our hero's agreeable face displease the new Director. Why that was so it is impossible to say, but frequently, in cases of the kind, no reason exists. However, the Director conceived a mortal dislike to him, and also extended that enmity to the whole of Chichikov's colleagues. But inasmuch as the said Director was a military man, he was not fully acquainted with the myriad subtleties of the civilian mind; wherefore it was not long before, by dint of maintaining a discreet exterior, added to a faculty for humouring all and sundry, a fresh gang of tchinovniks succeeded in restoring him to mildness, and the General found himself in the hands of greater thieves than before, but thieves whom he did not even suspect, seeing that he believed himself to have selected men fit and proper, and even ventured to boast of possessing a keen eye for talent. In a trice the tchinovniks concerned appraised his spirit and character; with the result that the entire sphere over which he ruled became an agency for the detection of irregularities. Everywhere, and in every case, were those irregularities pursued as a fisherman pursues a fat sturgeon with a gaff; and to such an extent did the sport prove successful that almost in no time each participator in the hunt was seen to be in possession of several thousand roubles of capital. Upon that a large number of the former band of tchinovniks also became converted to paths of rectitude, and were allowed to re-enter the Service; but not by hook or by crook could Chichikov worm his way back, even though, incited thereto by sundry items of paper currency, the General's first secretary and principal bear leader did all he could on our hero's behalf. It seemed that the

General was the kind of man who, though easily led by the nose (provided it was done without his knowledge) no sooner got an idea into his head than it stuck there like a nail, and could not possibly be extracted; and all that the wily secretary succeeded in procuring was the tearing up of a certain dirty fragment of paper — even that being effected only by an appeal to the General's compassion, on the score of the unhappy fate which, otherwise, would befall Chichikov's wife and children (who, luckily, had no existence in fact).

"Well," said Chichikov to himself, "I have done my best, and now everything has failed. Lamenting my misfortune won't help me, but only action." And with that he decided to begin his career anew, and once more to arm himself with the weapons of patience and self-denial. The better to effect this, he had, of course to remove to another town. Yet somehow, for a while, things miscarried. More than once he found himself forced to exchange one post for another, and at the briefest of notice; and all of them were posts of the meanest, the most wretched, order. Yet, being a man of the utmost nicety of feeling, the fact that he found himself rubbing shoulders with anything but nice companions did not prevent him from preserving intact his innate love of what was decent and seemly, or from cherishing the instinct which led him to hanker after office fittings of lacquered wood, with neatness and orderliness everywhere. Nor did he at any time permit a foul word to creep into his speech, and would feel hurt even if in the speech of others there occurred a scornful reference to anything which pertained to rank and dignity. Also, the reader will be pleased to know that our hero changed his linen every other day, and in summer, when the weather was very hot, EVERY day, seeing that the very faintest suspicion of an unpleasant odour offended his fastidiousness. For the same reason it was his custom, before being valeted by Petrushka, always to plug his nostrils with a couple of cloves. In short, there were many occasions when his nerves suffered rackings as cruel as a young girl's, and so helped to increase his disgust at having once more to associate with men who set no store by the decencies of life. Yet, though he braced himself to the task, this period of adversity told upon his health, and he even grew a trifle shabby. More than once, on happening to catch sight of himself in the mirror, he could not forbear exclaiming: "Holy Mother of God, but what a nasty-looking brute I have become!" and for a long while afterwards could not with anything like sang-froid contemplate his reflection. Yet throughout he bore up stoutly and patiently — and ended by being transferred to the Customs Department. It may be said that the department had long constituted the secret goal of his ambition, for he had noted the foreign elegancies with which its officials always contrived to provide themselves, and had also observed that invariably they were able to send presents of china and cambric to

their sisters and aunts — well, to their lady friends generally. Yes, more than once he had said to himself with a sigh: “THAT is the department to which I ought to belong, for, given a town near the frontier, and a sensible set of colleagues, I might be able to fit myself out with excellent linen shirts.” Also, it may be said that most frequently of all had his thoughts turned towards a certain quality of French soap which imparted a peculiar whiteness to the skin and a peerless freshness to the cheeks. Its name is known to God alone, but at least it was to be procured only in the immediate neighbourhood of the frontier. So, as I say, Chichikov had long felt a leaning towards the Customs, but for a time had been restrained from applying for the same by the various current advantages of the Building Commission; since rightly he had adjudged the latter to constitute a bird in the hand, and the former to constitute only a bird in the bush. But now he decided that, come what might, into the Customs he must make his way. And that way he made, and then applied himself to his new duties with a zeal born of the fact that he realised that fortune had specially marked him out for a Customs officer. Indeed, such activity, perspicuity, and ubiquity as his had never been seen or thought of. Within four weeks at the most he had so thoroughly got his hand in that he was conversant with Customs procedure in every detail. Not only could he weigh and measure, but also he could divine from an invoice how many arshins of cloth or other material a given piece contained, and then, taking a roll of the latter in his hand, could specify at once the number of pounds at which it would tip the scale. As for searchings, well, even his colleagues had to admit that he possessed the nose of a veritable bloodhound, and that it was impossible not to marvel at the patience wherewith he would try every button of the suspected person, yet preserve, throughout, a deadly politeness and an icy sang-froid which surpass belief. And while the searched were raging, and foaming at the mouth, and feeling that they would give worlds to alter his smiling exterior with a good, resounding slap, he would move not a muscle of his face, nor abate by a jot the urbanity of his demeanour, as he murmured, “Do you mind so far incommoding yourself as to stand up?” or “Pray step into the next room, madam, where the wife of one of our staff will attend you,” or “Pray allow me to slip this penknife of mine into the lining of your coat” (after which he would extract thence shawls and towels with as much nonchalance as he would have done from his own travelling-trunk). Even his superiors acknowledged him to be a devil at the job, rather than a human being, so perfect was his instinct for looking into cart-wheels, carriage-poles, horses’ ears, and places whither an author ought not to penetrate even in thought — places whither only a Customs official is permitted to go. The result was that the wretched traveller who had just crossed the frontier would, within a few minutes, become wholly at sea, and, wiping

away the perspiration, and breaking out into body flushes, would be reduced to crossing himself and muttering, “Well, well, well!” In fact, such a traveller would feel in the position of a schoolboy who, having been summoned to the presence of the headmaster for the ostensible purpose of being give an order, has found that he receives, instead, a sound flogging. In short, for some time Chichikov made it impossible for smugglers to earn a living. In particular, he reduced Polish Jewry almost to despair, so invincible, so almost unnatural, was the rectitude, the incorruptibility which led him to refrain from converting himself into a small capitalist with the aid of confiscated goods and articles which, “to save excessive clerical labour,” had failed to be handed over to the Government. Also, without saying it goes that such phenomenally zealous and disinterested service attracted general astonishment, and, eventually, the notice of the authorities; whereupon he received promotion, and followed that up by mooting a scheme for the infallible detection of contrabandists, provided that he could be furnished with the necessary authority for carrying out the same. At once such authority was accorded him, as also unlimited power to conduct every species of search and investigation. And that was all he wanted. It happened that previously there had been formed a well-found association for smuggling on regular, carefully prepared lines, and that this daring scheme seemed to promise profit to the extent of some millions of money: yet, though he had long had knowledge of it, Chichikov had said to the association’s emissaries, when sent to buy him over, “The time is not yet.” But now that he had got all the reins into his hands, he sent word of the fact to the gang, and with it the remark, “The time is NOW.” Nor was he wrong in his calculations, for, within the space of a year, he had acquired what he could not have made during twenty years of non-fraudulent service. With similar sagacity he had, during his early days in the department, declined altogether to enter into relations with the association, for the reason that he had then been a mere cipher, and would have come in for nothing large in the way of takings; but now — well, now it was another matter altogether, and he could dictate what terms he liked. Moreover, that the affair might progress the more smoothly, he suborned a fellow tchinovnik of the type which, in spite of grey hairs, stands powerless against temptation; and, the contract concluded, the association duly proceeded to business. Certainly business began brilliantly. But probably most of my readers are familiar with the oft-repeated story of the passage of Spanish sheep across the frontier in double fleeces which carried between their outer layers and their inner enough lace of Brabant to sell to the tune of millions of roubles; wherefore I will not recount the story again beyond saying that those journeys took place just when Chichikov had become head of the Customs, and that, had he not a hand in the enterprise,

not all the Jews in the world could have brought it to success. By the time that three or four of these ovine invasions had taken place, Chichikov and his accomplice had come to be the possessors of four hundred thousand roubles apiece; while some even aver that the former's gains totalled half a million, owing to the greater industry which he had displayed in the matter. Nor can any one but God say to what a figure the fortunes of the pair might not eventually have attained, had not an awkward contretemps cut right across their arrangements. That is to say, for some reason or another the devil so far deprived these tchinovnik-conspirators of sense as to make them come to words with one another, and then to engage in a quarrel. Beginning with a heated argument, this quarrel reached the point of Chichikov — who was, possibly, a trifle tipsy — calling his colleague a priest's son; and though that description of the person so addressed was perfectly accurate, he chose to take offence, and to answer Chichikov with the words (loudly and incisively uttered), "It is YOU who have a priest for your father," and to add to that (the more to incense his companion), "Yes, mark you! THAT is how it is." Yet, though he had thus turned the tables upon Chichikov with a tu quoque, and then capped that exploit with the words last quoted, the offended tchinovnik could not remain satisfied, but went on to send in an anonymous document to the authorities. On the other hand, some aver that it was over a woman that the pair fell out — over a woman who, to quote the phrase then current among the staff of the Customs Department, was "as fresh and as strong as the pulp of a turnip," and that night-birds were hired to assault our hero in a dark alley, and that the scheme miscarried, and that in any case both Chichikov and his friend had been deceived, seeing that the person to whom the lady had really accorded her favours was a certain staff-captain named Shamsharev. However, only God knows the truth of the matter. Let the inquisitive reader ferret it out for himself. The fact remains that a complete exposure of the dealings with the contrabandists followed, and that the two tchinovniks were put to the question, deprived of their property, and made to formulate in writing all that they had done. Against this thunderbolt of fortune the State Councillor could make no headway, and in some retired spot or another sank into oblivion; but Chichikov put a brave face upon the matter, for, in spite of the authorities' best efforts to smell out his gains, he had contrived to conceal a portion of them, and also resorted to every subtle trick of intellect which could possibly be employed by an experienced man of the world who has a wide knowledge of his fellows. Nothing which could be effected by pleasantness of demeanour, by moving oratory, by clouds of flattery, and by the occasional insertion of a coin into a palm did he leave undone; with the result that he was retired with less ignominy than was his companion, and escaped actual trial on a

criminal charge. Yet he issued stripped of all his capital, stripped of his imported effects, stripped of everything. That is to say, all that remained to him consisted of ten thousand roubles which he had stored against a rainy day, two dozen linen shirts, a small britchka of the type used by bachelors, and two serving-men named Selifan and Petrushka. Yes, and an impulse of kindness moved the tchinovniks of the Customs also to set aside for him a few cakes of the soap which he had found so excellent for the freshness of the cheeks. Thus once more our hero found himself stranded. And what an accumulation of misfortunes had descended upon his head! — though, true, he termed them "suffering in the Service in the cause of Truth." Certainly one would have thought that, after these buffetings and trials and changes of fortune — after this taste of the sorrows of life — he and his precious ten thousand roubles would have withdrawn to some peaceful corner in a provincial town, where, clad in a stuff dressing-gown, he could have sat and listened to the peasants quarrelling on festival days, or (for the sake of a breath of fresh air) have gone in person to the poulterer's to finger chickens for soup, and so have spent a quiet, but not wholly useless, existence; but nothing of the kind took place, and therein we must do justice to the strength of his character. In other words, although he had undergone what, to the majority of men, would have meant ruin and discouragement and a shattering of ideals, he still preserved his energy. True, downcast and angry, and full of resentment against the world in general, he felt furious with the injustice of fate, and dissatisfied with the dealings of men; yet he could not forbear courting additional experiences. In short, the patience which he displayed was such as to make the wooden persistency of the German — a persistency merely due to the slow, lethargic circulation of the Teuton's blood — seem nothing at all, seeing that by nature Chichikov's blood flowed strongly, and that he had to employ much force of will to curb within himself those elements which longed to burst forth and revel in freedom. He thought things over, and, as he did so, a certain spice of reason appeared in his reflections.

"How have I come to be what I am?" he said to himself. "Why has misfortune overtaken me in this way? Never have I wronged a poor person, or robbed a widow, or turned any one out of doors: I have always been careful only to take advantage of those who possess more than their share. Moreover, I have never gleaned anywhere but where every one else was gleaning; and, had I not done so, others would have gleaned in my place. Why, then, should those others be prospering, and I be sunk as low as a worm? What am I? What am I good for? How can I, in future, hope to look any honest father of a family in the face? How shall I escape being tortured with the thought that I am cumbering the ground? What, in the years to come, will my children say, save that 'our father was a

brute, for he left us nothing to live upon?'"

Here I may remark that we have seen how much thought Chichikov devoted to his future descendants. Indeed, had not there been constantly recurring to his mind the insistent question, "What will my children say?" he might not have plunged into the affair so deeply. Nevertheless, like a wary cat which glances hither and thither to see whether its mistress be not coming before it can make off with whatsoever first falls to its paw (butter, fat, lard, a duck, or anything else), so our future founder of a family continued, though weeping and bewailing his lot, to let not a single detail escape his eye. That is to say, he retained his wits ever in a state of activity, and kept his brain constantly working. All that he required was a plan. Once more he pulled himself together, once more he embarked upon a life of toil, once more he stinted himself in everything, once more he left clean and decent surroundings for a dirty, mean existence. In other words, until something better should turn up, he embraced the calling of an ordinary attorney — a calling which, not then possessed of a civic status, was jostled on very side, enjoyed little respect at the hands of the minor legal fry (or, indeed, at its own), and perforce met with universal slights and rudeness. But sheer necessity compelled Chichikov to face these things. Among commissions entrusted to him was that of placing in the hands of the Public Trustee several hundred peasants who belonged to a ruined estate. The estate had reached its parlous condition through cattle disease, through rascally bailiffs, through failures of the harvest, through such epidemic diseases that had killed off the best workmen, and, last, but not least, through the senseless conduct of the owner himself, who had furnished a house in Moscow in the latest style, and then squandered his every kopeck, so that nothing was left for his further maintenance, and it became necessary to mortgage the remains — including the peasants — of the estate. In those days mortgage to the Treasury was an innovation looked upon with reserve, and, as attorney in the matter, Chichikov had first of all to "entertain" every official concerned (we know that, unless that be previously done, unless a whole bottle of madeira first be emptied down each clerical throat, not the smallest legal affair can be carried through), and to explain, for the barring of future attachments, that half of the peasants were dead.

"And are they entered on the revision lists?" asked the secretary. "Yes," replied Chichikov. "Then what are you boggling at?" continued the Secretary. "Should one soul die, another will be born, and in time grow up to take the first one's place." Upon that there dawned on our hero one of the most inspired ideas which ever entered the human brain. "What a simpleton I am!" he thought to himself. "Here am I looking about for my mittens when all the time I have got

them tucked into my belt. Why, were I myself to buy up a few souls which are dead — to buy them before a new revision list shall have been made, the Council of Public Trust might pay me two hundred roubles apiece for them, and I might find myself with, say, a capital of two hundred thousand roubles! The present moment is particularly propitious, since in various parts of the country there has been an epidemic, and, glory be to God, a large number of souls have died of it. Nowadays landowners have taken to card-playing and junketting and wasting their money, or to joining the Civil Service in St. Petersburg; consequently their estates are going to rack and ruin, and being managed in any sort of fashion, and succeeding in paying their dues with greater difficulty each year. That being so, not a man of the lot but would gladly surrender to me his dead souls rather than continue paying the poll-tax; and in this fashion I might make — well, not a few kopecks. Of course there are difficulties, and, to avoid creating a scandal, I should need to employ plenty of finesse; but man was given his brain to USE, not to neglect. One good point about the scheme is that it will seem so improbable that in case of an accident, no one in the world will believe in it. True, it is illegal to buy or mortgage peasants without land, but I can easily pretend to be buying them only for transferment elsewhere. Land is to be acquired in the provinces of Taurida and Kherson almost for nothing, provided that one undertakes subsequently to colonise it; so to Kherson I will 'transfer' them, and long may they live there! And the removal of my dead souls shall be carried out in the strictest legal form; and if the authorities should want confirmation by testimony, I shall produce a letter signed by my own superintendent of the Khersonian rural police — that is to say, by myself. Lastly, the supposed village in Kherson shall be called Chichikovoe — better still Pavlovskoe, according to my Christian name."

In this fashion there germinated in our hero's brain that strange scheme for which the reader may or may not be grateful, but for which the author certainly is so, seeing that, had it never occurred to Chichikov, this story would never have seen the light.

After crossing himself, according to the Russian custom, Chichikov set about carrying out his enterprise. On pretence of selecting a place wherein to settle, he started forth to inspect various corners of the Russian Empire, but more especially those which had suffered from such unfortunate accidents as failures of the harvest, a high rate of mortality, or whatsoever else might enable him to purchase souls at the lowest possible rate. But he did not tackle his landowners haphazard: he rather selected such of them as seemed more particularly suited to his taste, or with whom he might with the least possible trouble conclude identical agreements; though, in the first instance, he always tried, by getting on

terms of acquaintanceship — better still, of friendship — with them, to acquire the souls for nothing, and so to avoid purchase at all. In passing, my readers must not blame me if the characters whom they have encountered in these pages have not been altogether to their liking. The fault is Chichikov's rather than mine, for he is the master, and where he leads we must follow. Also, should my readers gird at me for a certain dimness and want of clarity in my principal characters and actors, that will be tantamount to saying that never do the broad tendency and the general scope of a work become immediately apparent. Similarly does the entry to every town — the entry even to the Capital itself — convey to the traveller such an impression of vagueness that at first everything looks grey and monotonous, and the lines of smoky factories and workshops seem never to be coming to an end; but in time there will begin also to stand out the outlines of six-storied mansions, and of shops and balconies, and wide perspectives of streets, and a medley of steeples, columns, statues, and turrets — the whole framed in rattle and roar and the infinite wonders which the hand and the brain of men have conceived. Of the manner in which Chichikov's first purchases were made the reader is aware. Subsequently he will see also how the affair progressed, and with what success or failure our hero met, and how Chichikov was called upon to decide and to overcome even more difficult problems than the foregoing, and by what colossal forces the levers of his far-flung tale are moved, and how eventually the horizon will become extended until everything assumes a grandiose and a lyrical tendency. Yes, many a verst of road remains to be travelled by a party made up of an elderly gentleman, a britchka of the kind affected by bachelors, a valet named Petrushka, a coachman named Selifan, and three horses which, from the Assessor to the skewbald, are known to us individually by name. Again, although I have given a full description of our hero's exterior (such as it is), I may yet be asked for an inclusive definition also of his moral personality. That he is no hero compounded of virtues and perfections must be already clear. Then WHAT is he? A villain? Why should we call him a villain? Why should we be so hard upon a fellow man? In these days our villains have ceased to exist. Rather it would be fairer to call him an ACQUIRER. The love of acquisition, the love of gain, is a fault common to many, and gives rise to many and many a transaction of the kind generally known as "not strictly honourable." True, such a character contains an element of ugliness, and the same reader who, on his journey through life, would sit at the board of a character of this kind, and spend a most agreeable time with him, would be the first to look at him askance if he should appear in the guise of the hero of a novel or a play. But wise is the reader who, on meeting such a character, scans him carefully, and, instead of shrinking from him with distaste,

probes him to the springs of his being. The human personality contains nothing which may not, in the twinkling of an eye, become altogether changed — nothing in which, before you can look round, there may not spring to birth some cankerous worm which is destined to suck thence the essential juice. Yes, it is a common thing to see not only an overmastering passion, but also a passion of the most petty order, arise in a man who was born to better things, and lead him both to forget his greatest and most sacred obligations, and to see only in the veriest trifles the Great and the Holy. For human passions are as numberless as is the sand of the seashore, and go on to become his most insistent of masters. Happy, therefore, the man who may choose from among the gamut of human passions one which is noble! Hour by hour will that instinct grow and multiply in its measureless beneficence; hour by hour will it sink deeper and deeper into the infinite paradise of his soul. But there are passions of which a man cannot rid himself, seeing that they are born with him at his birth, and he has no power to abjure them. Higher powers govern those passions, and in them is something which will call to him, and refuse to be silenced, to the end of his life. Yes, whether in a guise of darkness, or whether in a guise which will become converted into a light to lighten the world, they will and must attain their consummation on life's field: and in either case they have been evoked for man's good. In the same way may the passion which drew our Chichikov onwards have been one that was independent of himself; in the same way may there have lurked even in his cold essence something which will one day cause men to humble themselves in the dust before the infinite wisdom of God.

Yet that folk should be dissatisfied with my hero matters nothing. What matters is the fact that, under different circumstances, their approval could have been taken as a foregone conclusion. That is to say, had not the author pried over-deeply into Chichikov's soul, nor stirred up in its depths what shunned and lay hidden from the light, nor disclosed those of his hero's thoughts which that hero would have not have disclosed even to his most intimate friend; had the author, indeed, exhibited Chichikov just as he exhibited himself to the townsmen of N. and Manilov and the rest; well, then we may rest assured that every reader would have been delighted with him, and have voted him a most interesting person. For it is not nearly so necessary that Chichikov should figure before the reader as though his form and person were actually present to the eye as that, on concluding a perusal of this work, the reader should be able to return, unharrowed in soul, to that cult of the card-table which is the solace and delight of all good Russians. Yes, readers of this book, none of you really care to see humanity revealed in its nakedness. "Why should we do so?" you say. "What would be the use of it? Do we not know for ourselves that human life contains

much that is gross and contemptible? Do we not with our own eyes have to look upon much that is anything but comforting? Far better would it be if you would put before us what is comely and attractive, so that we might forget ourselves a little." In the same fashion does a landowner say to his bailiff: "Why do you come and tell me that the affairs of my estate are in a bad way? I know that without YOUR help. Have you nothing else to tell me? Kindly allow me to forget the fact, or else to remain in ignorance of it, and I shall be much obliged to you." Whereafter the said landowner probably proceeds to spend on his diversion the money which ought to have gone towards the rehabilitation of his affairs.

Possibly the author may also incur censure at the hands of those so-called "patriots" who sit quietly in corners, and become capitalists through making fortunes at the expense of others. Yes, let but something which they conceive to be derogatory to their country occur — for instance, let there be published some book which voices the bitter truth — and out they will come from their hiding-places like a spider which perceives a fly to be caught in its web. "Is it well to proclaim this to the world, and to set folk talking about it?" they will cry. "What you have described touches US, is OUR affair. Is conduct of that kind right? What will foreigners say? Does any one care calmly to sit by and hear himself traduced? Why should you lead foreigners to suppose that all is not well with us, and that we are not patriotic?" Well, to these sage remarks no answer can really be returned, especially to such of the above as refer to foreign opinion. But see here. There once lived in a remote corner of Russia two natives of the region indicated. One of those natives was a good man named Kifa Mokievitch, and a man of kindly disposition; a man who went through life in a dressing-gown, and paid no heed to his household, for the reason that his whole being was centred upon the province of speculation, and that, in particular, he was preoccupied with a philosophical problem usually stated by him thus: "A beast," he would say, "is born naked. Now, why should that be? Why should not a beast be born as a bird is born — that is to say, through the process of being hatched from an egg? Nature is beyond the understanding, however much one may probe her." This was the substance of Kifa Mokievitch's reflections. But herein is not the chief point. The other of the pair was a fellow named Mofi Kifovitch, and son to the first named. He was what we Russians call a "hero," and while his father was pondering the parturition of beasts, his, the son's, lusty, twenty-year-old temperament was violently struggling for development. Yet that son could tackle nothing without some accident occurring. At one moment would he crack some one's fingers in half, and at another would he raise a bump on somebody's nose; so that both at home and abroad every one and everything — from the serving-

maid to the yard-dog — fled on his approach, and even the bed in his bedroom became shattered to splinters. Such was Mofi Kifovitch; and with it all he had a kindly soul. But herein is not the chief point. “Good sir, good Kifa Mokievitch,” servants and neighbours would come and say to the father, “what are you going to do about your Moki Kifovitch? We get no rest from him, he is so above himself.” “That is only his play, that is only his play,” the father would reply. “What else can you expect? It is too late now to start a quarrel with him, and, moreover, every one would accuse me of harshness. True, he is a little conceited; but, were I to reprove him in public, the whole thing would become common talk, and folk would begin giving him a dog’s name. And if they did that, would not their opinion touch me also, seeing that I am his father? Also, I am busy with philosophy, and have no time for such things. Lastly, Moki Kifovitch is my son, and very dear to my heart.” And, beating his breast, Kifa Mokievitch again asserted that, even though his son should elect to continue his pranks, it would not be for HIM, for the father, to proclaim the fact, or to fall out with his offspring. And, this expression of paternal feeling uttered, Kifa Mokievitch left Moki Kifovitch to his heroic exploits, and himself returned to his beloved subject of speculation, which now included also the problem, “Suppose elephants were to take to being hatched from eggs, would not the shell of such eggs be of a thickness proof against cannonballs, and necessitate the invention of some new type of firearm?” Thus at the end of this little story we have these two denizens of a peaceful corner of Russia looking thence, as from a window, in less terror of doing what was scandalous than of having it SAID of them that they were acting scandalously. Yes, the feeling animating our so-called “patriots” is not true patriotism at all. Something else lies beneath it. Who, if not an author, is to speak aloud the truth? Men like you, my pseudo-patriots, stand in dread of the eye which is able to discern, yet shrink from using your own, and prefer, rather, to glance at everything unheedingly. Yes, after laughing heartily over Chichikov’s misadventures, and perhaps even commending the author for his dexterity of observation and pretty turn of wit, you will look at yourselves with redoubled pride and a self-satisfied smile, and add: “Well, we agree that in certain parts of the provinces there exists strange and ridiculous individuals, as well as unconscionable rascals.”

Yet which of you, when quiet, and alone, and engaged in solitary self-communion, would not do well to probe YOUR OWN souls, and to put to YOURSELVES the solemn question, “Is there not in ME an element of Chichikov?” For how should there not be? Which of you is not liable at any moment to be passed in the street by an acquaintance who, nudging his neighbour, may say of you, with a barely suppressed sneer: “Look! there goes

Chichikov! That is Chichikov who has just gone by!”

But here are we talking at the top of our voices whilst all the time our hero lies slumbering in his britchka! Indeed, his name has been repeated so often during the recital of his life’s history that he must almost have heard us! And at any time he is an irritable, irascible fellow when spoken of with disrespect. True, to the reader Chichikov’s displeasure cannot matter a jot; but for the author it would mean ruin to quarrel with his hero, seeing that, arm in arm, Chichikov and he have yet far to go.

“Tut, tut, tut!” came in a shout from Chichikov. “Hi, Selifan!”

“What is it?” came the reply, uttered with a drawl.

“What is it? Why, how dare you drive like that? Come! Bestir yourself a little!”

And indeed, Selifan had long been sitting with half-closed eyes, and hands which bestowed no encouragement upon his somnolent steeds save an occasional flicking of the reins against their flanks; whilst Petrushka had lost his cap, and was leaning backwards until his head had come to rest against Chichikov’s knees — a position which necessitated his being awakened with a cuff. Selifan also roused himself, and apportioned to the skewbald a few cuts across the back of a kind which at least had the effect of inciting that animal to trot; and when, presently, the other two horses followed their companion’s example, the light britchka moved forwards like a piece of thistledown. Selifan flourished his whip and shouted, “Hi, hi!” as the inequalities of the road jerked him vertically on his seat; and meanwhile, reclining against the leather cushions of the vehicle’s interior, Chichikov smiled with gratification at the sensation of driving fast. For what Russian does not love to drive fast? Which of us does not at times yearn to give his horses their head, and to let them go, and to cry, “To the devil with the world!”? At such moments a great force seems to uplift one as on wings; and one flies, and everything else flies, but contrariwise — both the verst stones, and traders riding on the shafts of their waggons, and the forest with dark lines of spruce and fir amid which may be heard the axe of the woodcutter and the croaking of the raven. Yes, out of a dim, remote distance the road comes towards one, and while nothing save the sky and the light clouds through which the moon is cleaving her way seem halted, the brief glimpses wherein one can discern nothing clearly have in them a pervading touch of mystery. Ah, troika, troika, swift as a bird, who was it first invented you? Only among a hardy race of folk can you have come to birth — only in a land which, though poor and rough, lies spread over half the world, and spans versts the counting whereof would leave one with aching eyes. Nor are you a modishly-fashioned vehicle of the road — a thing of clamps and iron. Rather, you are a vehicle but shapen and

fitted with the axe or chisel of some handy peasant of Yaroslav. Nor are you driven by a coachman clothed in German livery, but by a man bearded and mittened. See him as he mounts, and flourishes his whip, and breaks into a long-drawn song! Away like the wind go the horses, and the wheels, with their spokes, become transparent circles, and the road seems to quiver beneath them, and a pedestrian, with a cry of astonishment, halts to watch the vehicle as it flies, flies, flies on its way until it becomes lost on the ultimate horizon — a speck amid a cloud of dust!

And you, Russia of mine — are not you also speeding like a troika which nought can overtake? Is not the road smoking beneath your wheels, and the bridges thundering as you cross them, and everything being left in the rear, and the spectators, struck with the portent, halting to wonder whether you be not a thunderbolt launched from heaven? What does that awe-inspiring progress of yours foretell? What is the unknown force which lies within your mysterious steeds? Surely the winds themselves must abide in their manes, and every vein in their bodies be an ear stretched to catch the celestial message which bids them, with iron-girded breasts, and hooves which barely touch the earth as they gallop, fly forward on a mission of God? Whither, then, are you speeding, O Russia of mine? Whither? Answer me! But no answer comes — only the weird sound of your collar-bells. Rent into a thousand shreds, the air roars past you, for you are overtaking the whole world, and shall one day force all nations, all empires to stand aside, to give you way!

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PART II

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CHAPTER I

Why do I so persistently paint the poverty, the imperfections of Russian life, and delve into the remotest depths, the most retired holes and corners, of our Empire for my subjects? The answer is that there is nothing else to be done when an author's idiosyncrasy happens to incline him that way. So again we find ourselves in a retired spot. But what a spot!

Imagine, if you can, a mountain range like a gigantic fortress, with embrasures and bastions which appear to soar a thousand versts towards the heights of heaven, and, towering grandly over a boundless expanse of plain, are broken up into precipitous, overhanging limestone cliffs. Here and there those cliffs are seamed with water-courses and gullies, while at other points they are rounded off into spurs of green — spurs now coated with fleece-like tufts of young undergrowth, now studded with the stumps of felled trees, now covered with timber which has, by some miracle, escaped the woodman's axe. Also, a river winds awhile between its banks, then leaves the meadow land, divides into runlets (all flashing in the sun like fire), plunges, re-united, into the midst of a thicket of elder, birth, and pine, and, lastly, speeds triumphantly past bridges and mills and weirs which seem to be lying in wait for it at every turn.

At one particular spot the steep flank of the mountain range is covered with billowy verdure of denser growth than the rest; and here the aid of skilful planting, added to the shelter afforded by a rugged ravine, has enabled the flora of north and south so to be brought together that, twined about with sinuous hop-tendrils, the oak, the spruce fir, the wild pear, the maple, the cherry, the thorn, and the mountain ash either assist or check one another's growth, and everywhere cover the declivity with their straggling profusion. Also, at the edge of the summit there can be seen mingling with the green of the trees the red roofs of a manorial homestead, while behind the upper stories of the mansion proper and its carved balcony and a great semi-circular window there gleam the tiles and gables of some peasants' huts. Lastly, over this combination of trees and roofs there rises — overtopping everything with its gilded, sparkling steeple — an old village church. On each of its pinnacles a cross of carved gilt is stayed with supports of similar gilding and design; with the result that from a distance the gilded portions have the effect of hanging without visible agency in the air. And the whole — the three successive tiers of woodland, roofs, and crosses whole — lies exquisitely mirrored in the river below, where hollow willows,

grotesquely shaped (some of them rooted on the river's banks, and some in the water itself, and all drooping their branches until their leaves have formed a tangle with the water lilies which float on the surface), seem to be gazing at the marvellous reflection at their feet.

Thus the view from below is beautiful indeed. But the view from above is even better. No guest, no visitor, could stand on the balcony of the mansion and remain indifferent. So boundless is the panorama revealed that surprise would cause him to catch at his breath, and exclaim: "Lord of Heaven, but what a prospect!" Beyond meadows studded with spinneys and water-mills lie forests belted with green; while beyond, again, there can be seen showing through the slightly misty air strips of yellow heath, and, again, wide-rolling forests (as blue as the sea or a cloud), and more heath, paler than the first, but still yellow. Finally, on the far horizon a range of chalk-topped hills gleams white, even in dull weather, as though it were lightened with perpetual sunshine; and here and there on the dazzling whiteness of its lower slopes some plaster-like, nebulous patches represent far-off villages which lie too remote for the eye to discern their details. Indeed, only when the sunlight touches a steeple to gold does one realise that each such patch is a human settlement. Finally, all is wrapped in an immensity of silence which even the far, faint echoes of persons singing in the void of the plain cannot shatter.

Even after gazing at the spectacle for a couple of hours or so, the visitor would still find nothing to say, save: "Lord of Heaven, but what a prospect!" Then who is the dweller in, the proprietor of, this manor — a manor to which, as to an impregnable fortress, entrance cannot be gained from the side where we have been standing, but only from the other approach, where a few scattered oaks offer hospitable welcome to the visitor, and then, spreading above him their spacious branches (as in friendly embrace), accompany him to the facade of the mansion whose top we have been regarding from the reverse aspect, but which now stands frontwise on to us, and has, on one side of it, a row of peasants' huts with red tiles and carved gables, and, on the other, the village church, with those glittering golden crosses and gilded open-work charms which seem to hang suspended in the air? Yes, indeed! — to what fortunate individual does this corner of the world belong? It belongs to Andrei Ivanovitch Tientietnikov, landowner of the canton of Tremalakhan, and, withal, a bachelor of about thirty.

Should my lady readers ask of me what manner of man is Tientietnikov, and what are his attributes and peculiarities, I should refer them to his neighbours. Of these, a member of the almost extinct tribe of intelligent staff officers on the retired list once summed up Tientietnikov in the phrase, "He is an absolute blockhead;" while a General who resided ten versts away was heard to remark

that “he is a young man who, though not exactly a fool, has at least too much crowded into his head. I myself might have been of use to him, for not only do I maintain certain connections with St. Petersburg, but also — ” And the General left his sentence unfinished. Thirdly, a captain-superintendent of rural police happened to remark in the course of conversation: “To-morrow I must go and see Tientietnikov about his arrears.” Lastly, a peasant of Tientietnikov’s own village, when asked what his barin was like, returned no answer at all. All of which would appear to show that Tientietnikov was not exactly looked upon with favour.

To speak dispassionately, however, he was not a bad sort of fellow — merely a star-gazer; and since the world contains many watchers of the skies, why should Tientietnikov not have been one of them? However, let me describe in detail a specimen day of his existence — one that will closely resemble the rest, and then the reader will be enabled to judge of Tientietnikov’s character, and how far his life corresponded to the beauties of nature with which he lived surrounded.

On the morning of the specimen day in question he awoke very late, and, raising himself to a sitting posture, rubbed his eyes. And since those eyes were small, the process of rubbing them occupied a very long time, and throughout its continuance there stood waiting by the door his valet, Mikhailo, armed with a towel and basin. For one hour, for two hours, did poor Mikhailo stand there: then he departed to the kitchen, and returned to find his master still rubbing his eyes as he sat on the bed. At length, however, Tientietnikov rose, washed himself, donned a dressing-gown, and moved into the drawing-room for morning tea, coffee, cocoa, and warm milk; of all of which he partook but sparingly, while munching a piece of bread, and scattering tobacco ash with complete insouciance. Two hours did he sit over this meal, then poured himself out another cup of the rapidly cooling tea, and walked to the window. This faced the courtyard, and outside it, as usual, there took place the following daily altercation between a serf named Grigory (who purported to act as butler) and the housekeeper, Perfilievna.

Grigory. Ah, you nuisance, you good-for-nothing, you had better hold your stupid tongue.

Perfilievna. Yes; and don’t you wish that I would?

Grigory. What? You so thick with that bailiff of yours, you housekeeping jade!

Perfilievna. Nay, he is as big a thief as you are. Do you think the barin doesn’t know you? And there he is! He must have heard everything!

Grigory. Where?

Perfilievna. There — sitting by the window, and looking at us!

Next, to complete the hubbub, a serf child which had been clouted by its

mother broke out into a bawl, while a borzoi puppy which had happened to get splashed with boiling water by the cook fell to yelping vociferously. In short, the place soon became a babel of shouts and squeals, and, after watching and listening for a time, the barin found it so impossible to concentrate his mind upon anything that he sent out word that the noise would have to be abated.

The next item was that, a couple of hours before luncheon time, he withdrew to his study, to set about employing himself upon a weighty work which was to consider Russia from every point of view: from the political, from the philosophical, and from the religious, as well as to resolve various problems which had arisen to confront the Empire, and to define clearly the great future to which the country stood ordained. In short, it was to be the species of compilation in which the man of the day so much delights. Yet the colossal undertaking had progressed but little beyond the sphere of projection, since, after a pen had been gnawed awhile, and a few strokes had been committed to paper, the whole would be laid aside in favour of the reading of some book; and that reading would continue also during luncheon and be followed by the lighting of a pipe, the playing of a solitary game of chess, and the doing of more or less nothing for the rest of the day.

The foregoing will give the reader a pretty clear idea of the manner in which it was possible for this man of thirty-three to waste his time. Clad constantly in slippers and a dressing-gown, Tientietnikov never went out, never indulged in any form of dissipation, and never walked upstairs. Nothing did he care for fresh air, and would bestow not a passing glance upon all those beauties of the countryside which moved visitors to such ecstatic admiration. From this the reader will see that Andrei Ivanovitch Tientietnikov belonged to that band of sluggards whom we always have with us, and who, whatever be their present appellation, used to be known by the nicknames of “lollopers,” “bed pressers,” and “marmots.” Whether the type is a type originating at birth, or a type resulting from untoward circumstances in later life, it is impossible to say. A better course than to attempt to answer that question would be to recount the story of Tientietnikov’s boyhood and upbringing.

Everything connected with the latter seemed to promise success, for at twelve years of age the boy — keen-witted, but dreamy of temperament, and inclined to delicacy — was sent to an educational establishment presided over by an exceptional type of master. The idol of his pupils, and the admiration of his assistants, Alexander Petrovitch was gifted with an extraordinary measure of good sense. How thoroughly he knew the peculiarities of the Russian of his day! How well he understood boys! How capable he was of drawing them out! Not a practical joker in the school but, after perpetrating a prank, would voluntarily

approach his preceptor and make to him free confession. True, the preceptor would put a stern face upon the matter, yet the culprit would depart with head held higher, not lower, than before, since in Alexander Petrovitch there was something which heartened — something which seemed to say to a delinquent: “Forward you! Rise to your feet again, even though you have fallen!” Not lectures on good behaviour was it, therefore, that fell from his lips, but rather the injunction, “I want to see intelligence, and nothing else. The boy who devotes his attention to becoming clever will never play the fool, for under such circumstances, folly disappears of itself.” And so folly did, for the boy who failed to strive in the desired direction incurred the contempt of all his comrades, and even dunces and fools of senior standing did not dare to raise a finger when saluted by their juniors with opprobrious epithets. Yet “This is too much,” certain folk would say to Alexander. “The result will be that your students will turn out prigs.” “But no,” he would reply. “Not at all. You see, I make it my principle to keep the incapables for a single term only, since that is enough for them; but to the clever ones I allot a double course of instruction.” And, true enough, any lad of brains was retained for this finishing course. Yet he did not repress all boyish playfulness, since he declared it to be as necessary as a rash to a doctor, inasmuch as it enabled him to diagnose what lay hidden within.

Consequently, how the boys loved him! Never was there such an attachment between master and pupils. And even later, during the foolish years, when foolish things attract, the measure of affection which Alexander Petrovitch retained was extraordinary. In fact, to the day of his death, every former pupil would celebrate the birthday of his late master by raising his glass in gratitude to the mentor dead and buried — then close his eyelids upon the tears which would come trickling through them. Even the slightest word of encouragement from Alexander Petrovitch could throw a lad into a transport of tremulous joy, and arouse in him an honourable emulation of his fellows. Boys of small capacity he did not long retain in his establishment; whereas those who possessed exceptional talent he put through an extra course of schooling. This senior class — a class composed of specially-selected pupils — was a very different affair from what usually obtains in other colleges. Only when a boy had attained its ranks did Alexander demand of him what other masters indiscreetly require of mere infants — namely the superior frame of mind which, while never indulging in mockery, can itself bear ridicule, and disregard the fool, and keep its temper, and repress itself, and eschew revenge, and calmly, proudly retain its tranquillity of soul. In short, whatever avails to form a boy into a man of assured character, that did Alexander Petrovitch employ during the pupil’s youth, as well as constantly put him to the test. How well he understood the art of life!

Of assistant tutors he kept but few, since most of the necessary instruction he imparted in person, and, without pedantic terminology and inflated diction and views, could so transmit to his listeners the inmost spirit of a lesson that even the youngest present absorbed its essential elements. Also, of studies he selected none but those which may help a boy to become a good citizen; and therefore most of the lectures which he delivered consisted of discourses on what may be awaiting a youth, as well as of such demarcations of life's field that the pupil, though seated, as yet, only at the desk, could beforehand bear his part in that field both in thought and spirit. Nor did the master CONCEAL anything. That is to say, without mincing words, he invariably set before his hearers the sorrows and the difficulties which may confront a man, the trials and the temptations which may beset him. And this he did in terms as though, in every possible calling and capacity, he himself had experienced the same. Consequently, either the vigorous development of self-respect or the constant stimulus of the master's eye (which seemed to say to the pupil, "Forward!" — that word which has become so familiar to the contemporary Russian, that word which has worked such wonders upon his sensitive temperament); one or the other, I repeat, would from the first cause the pupil to tackle difficulties, and only difficulties, and to hunger for prowess only where the path was arduous, and obstacles were many, and it was necessary to display the utmost strength of mind. Indeed, few completed the course of which I have spoken without issuing therefrom reliable, seasoned fighters who could keep their heads in the most embarrassing of official positions, and at times when older and wiser men, distracted with the annoyances of life, had either abandoned everything or, grown slack and indifferent, had surrendered to the bribe-takers and the rascals. In short, no ex-pupil of Alexander Petrovitch ever wavered from the right road, but, familiar with life and with men, armed with the weapons of prudence, exerted a powerful influence upon wrongdoers.

For a long time past the ardent young Tientietnikov's excitable heart had also beat at the thought that one day he might attain the senior class described. And, indeed, what better teacher could he have had befall him than its preceptor? Yet just at the moment when he had been transferred thereto, just at the moment when he had reached the coveted position, did his instructor come suddenly by his death! This was indeed a blow for the boy — indeed a terrible initial loss! In his eyes everything connected with the school seemed to undergo a change — the chief reason being the fact that to the place of the deceased headmaster there succeeded a certain Thedor Ivanovitch, who at once began to insist upon certain external rules, and to demand of the boys what ought rightly to have been demanded only of adults. That is to say, since the lads' frank and open

demeanour savoured to him only of lack of discipline, he announced (as though in deliberate spite of his predecessor) that he cared nothing for progress and intellect, but that heed was to be paid only to good behaviour. Yet, curiously enough, good behaviour was just what he never obtained, for every kind of secret prank became the rule; and while, by day, there reigned restraint and conspiracy, by night there began to take place chambering and wantonness.

Also, certain changes in the curriculum of studies came about, for there were engaged new teachers who held new views and opinions, and confused their hearers with a multitude of new terms and phrases, and displayed in their exposition of things both logical sequence and a zest for modern discovery and much warmth of individual bias. Yet their instruction, alas! contained no LIFE — in the mouths of those teachers a dead language savoured merely of carrion. Thus everything connected with the school underwent a radical alteration, and respect for authority and the authorities waned, and tutors and ushers came to be dubbed “Old Thedor,” “Crusty,” and the like. And sundry other things began to take place — things which necessitated many a penalty and expulsion; until, within a couple of years, no one who had known the school in former days would now have recognised it.

Nevertheless Tientietnikov, a youth of retiring disposition, experienced no leanings towards the nocturnal orgies of his companions, orgies during which the latter used to flirt with damsels before the very windows of the headmaster’s rooms, nor yet towards their mockery of all that was sacred, simply because fate had cast in their way an injudicious priest. No, despite its dreaminess, his soul ever remembered its celestial origin, and could not be diverted from the path of virtue. Yet still he hung his head, for, while his ambition had come to life, it could find no sort of outlet. Truly ‘twere well if it had NOT come to life, for throughout the time that he was listening to professors who gesticulated on their chairs he could not help remembering the old preceptor who, invariably cool and calm, had yet known how to make himself understood. To what subjects, to what lectures, did the boy not have to listen! — to lectures on medicine, and on philosophy, and on law, and on a version of general history so enlarged that even three years failed to enable the professor to do more than finish the introduction thereto, and also the account of the development of some self-governing towns in Germany. None of the stuff remained fixed in Tientietnikov’s brain save as shapeless clots; for though his native intellect could not tell him how instruction ought to be imparted, it at least told him that THIS was not the way. And frequently, at such moments he would recall Alexander Petrovitch, and give way to such grief that scarcely did he know what he was doing.

But youth is fortunate in the fact that always before it there lies a future; and

in proportion as the time for his leaving school drew nigh, Tientietnikov's heart began to beat higher and higher, and he said to himself: "This is not life, but only a preparation for life. True life is to be found in the Public Service. There at least will there be scope for activity." So, bestowing not a glance upon that beautiful corner of the world which never failed to strike the guest or chance visitor with amazement, and reverencing not a whit the dust of his ancestors, he followed the example of most ambitious men of his class by repairing to St. Petersburg (whither, as we know, the more spirited youth of Russia from every quarter gravitates — there to enter the Public Service, to shine, to obtain promotion, and, in a word, to scale the topmost peaks of that pale, cold, deceptive elevation which is known as society). But the real starting-point of Tientietnikov's ambition was the moment when his uncle (one State Councillor Onifri Ivanovitch) instilled into him the maxim that the only means to success in the Service lay in good handwriting, and that, without that accomplishment, no one could ever hope to become a Minister or Statesman. Thus, with great difficulty, and also with the help of his uncle's influence, young Tientietnikov at length succeeded in being posted to a Department. On the day that he was conducted into a splendid, shining hall — a hall fitted with inlaid floors and lacquered desks as fine as though this were actually the place where the great ones of the Empire met for discussion of the fortunes of the State; on the day that he saw legions of handsome gentlemen of the quill-driving profession making loud scratchings with pens, and cocking their heads to one side; lastly on the day that he saw himself also allotted a desk, and requested to copy a document which appeared purposely to be one of the pettiest possible order (as a matter of fact it related to a sum of three roubles, and had taken half a year to produce) — well, at that moment a curious, an unwonted sensation seized upon the inexperienced youth, for the gentlemen around him appeared so exactly like a lot of college students. And, the further to complete the resemblance, some of them were engaged in reading trashy translated novels, which they kept hurriedly thrusting between the sheets of their apportioned work whenever the Director appeared, as though to convey the impression that it was to that work alone that they were applying themselves. In short, the scene seemed to Tientietnikov strange, and his former pursuits more important than his present, and his preparation for the Service preferable to the Service itself. Yes, suddenly he felt a longing for his old school; and as suddenly, and with all the vividness of life, there appeared before his vision the figure of Alexander Petrovitch. He almost burst into tears as he beheld his old master, and the room seemed to swim before his eyes, and the tchinovniks and the desks to become a blur, and his sight to grow dim. Then he thought to himself with an effort: "No, no! I WILL apply myself to my work,

however petty it be at first." And hardening his heart and recovering his spirit, he determined then and there to perform his duties in such a manner as should be an example to the rest.

But where are compensations to be found? Even in St. Petersburg, despite its grim and murky exterior, they exist. Yes, even though thirty degrees of keen, cracking frost may have bound the streets, and the family of the North Wind be wailing there, and the Snowstorm Witch have heaped high the pavements, and be blinding the eyes, and powdering beards and fur collars and the shaggy manes of horses — even THEN there will be shining hospitably through the swirling snowflakes a fourth-floor window where, in a cosy room, and by the light of modest candles, and to the hiss of the samovar, there will be in progress a discussion which warms the heart and soul, or else a reading aloud of a brilliant page of one of those inspired Russian poets with whom God has dowered us, while the breast of each member of the company is heaving with a rapture unknown under a noontide sky.

Gradually, therefore, Tientietnikov grew more at home in the Service. Yet never did it become, for him, the main pursuit, the main object in life, which he had expected. No, it remained but one of a secondary kind. That is to say, it served merely to divide up his time, and enable him the more to value his hours of leisure. Nevertheless, just when his uncle was beginning to flatter himself that his nephew was destined to succeed in the profession, the said nephew elected to ruin his every hope. Thus it befell. Tientietnikov's friends (he had many) included among their number a couple of fellows of the species known as "embittered." That is to say, though good-natured souls of that curiously restless type which cannot endure injustice, nor anything which it conceives to be such, they were thoroughly unbalanced of conduct themselves, and, while demanding general agreement with their views, treated those of others with the scantiest of ceremony. Nevertheless these two associates exercised upon Tientietnikov — both by the fire of their eloquence and by the form of their noble dissatisfaction with society — a very strong influence; with the result that, through arousing in him an innate tendency to nervous resentment, they led him also to notice trifles which before had escaped his attention. An instance of this is seen in the fact that he conceived against Thedor Thedorovitch Lienitsin, Director of one of the Departments which was quartered in the splendid range of offices before mentioned, a dislike which proved the cause of his discerning n the man a host of hitherto unmarked imperfections. Above all things did Tientietnikov take it into his head that, when conversing with his superiors, Lienitsin became, of the moment, a stick of luscious sweetmeat, but that, when conversing with his inferiors, he approximated more to a vinegar cruet. Certain it is that, like all

petty-minded individuals, Lienitsin made a note of any one who failed to offer him a greeting on festival days, and that he revenged himself upon any one whose visiting-card had not been handed to his butler. Eventually the youth's aversion almost attained the point of hysteria; until he felt that, come what might, he MUST insult the fellow in some fashion. To that task he applied himself con amore; and so thoroughly that he met with complete success. That is to say, he seized on an occasion to address Lienitsin in such fashion that the delinquent received notice either to apologies or to leave the Service; and when of these alternatives he chose the latter his uncle came to him, and made a terrified appeal. "For God's sake remember what you are doing!" he cried. "To think that, after beginning your career so well, you should abandon it merely for the reason that you have not fallen in with the sort of Director whom you prefer! What do you mean by it, what do you mean by it? Were others to regard things in the same way, the Service would find itself without a single individual. Reconsider your conduct — forego your pride and conceit, and make Lienitsin amends."

"But, dear Uncle," the nephew replied, "that is not the point. The point is, not that I should find an apology difficult to offer, seeing that, since Lienitsin is my superior, and I ought not to have addressed him as I did, I am clearly in the wrong. Rather, the point is the following. To my charge there has been committed the performance of another kind of service. That is to say, I am the owner of three hundred peasant souls, a badly administered estate, and a fool of a bailiff. That being so, whereas the State will lose little by having to fill my stool with another copyist, it will lose very much by causing three hundred peasant souls to fail in the payment of their taxes. As I say (how am I to put it?), I am a landowner who has preferred to enter the Public Service. Now, should I employ myself henceforth in conserving, restoring, and improving the fortunes of the souls whom God has entrusted to my care, and thereby provide the State with three hundred law-abiding, sober, hard-working taxpayers, how will that service of mine rank as inferior to the service of a department-directing fool like Lienitsin?"

On hearing this speech, the State Councillor could only gape, for he had not expected Tientietnikov's torrent of words. He reflected a few moments, and then murmured:

"Yes, but, but — but how can a man like you retire to rustication in the country? What society will you get there? Here one meets at least a general or a prince sometimes; indeed, no matter whom you pass in the street, that person represents gas lamps and European civilisation; but in the country, no matter what part of it you are in, not a soul is to be encountered save muzhiks and their

women. Why should you go and condemn yourself to a state of vegetation like that?”

Nevertheless the uncle’s expostulations fell upon deaf ears, for already the nephew was beginning to think of his estate as a retreat of a type more likely to nourish the intellectual faculties and afford the only profitable field of activity. After unearthing one or two modern works on agriculture, therefore, he, two weeks later, found himself in the neighbourhood of the home where his boyhood had been spent, and approaching the spot which never failed to enthral the visitor or guest. And in the young man’s breast there was beginning to palpitate a new feeling — in the young man’s soul there were reawakening old, long-concealed impressions; with the result that many a spot which had long been faded from his memory now filled him with interest, and the beautiful views on the estate found him gazing at them like a newcomer, and with a beating heart. Yes, as the road wound through a narrow ravine, and became engulfed in a forest where, both above and below, he saw three-centuries-old oaks which three men could not have spanned, and where Siberian firs and elms overtopped even the poplars, and as he asked the peasants to tell him to whom the forest belonged, and they replied, “To Tientietnikov,” and he issued from the forest, and proceeded on his way through meadows, and past spinneys of elder, and of old and young willows, and arrived in sight of the distant range of hills, and, crossing by two different bridges the winding river (which he left successively to right and to left of him as he did so), he again questioned some peasants concerning the ownership of the meadows and the flooded lands, and was again informed that they all belonged to Tientietnikov, and then, ascending a rise, reached a tableland where, on one side, lay ungarnered fields of wheat and rye and barley, and, on the other, the country already traversed (but which now showed in shortened perspective), and then plunged into the shade of some forked, umbrageous trees which stood scattered over turf and extended to the manor-house itself, and caught glimpses of the carved huts of the peasants, and of the red roofs of the stone manorial outbuildings, and of the glittering pinnacles of the church, and felt his heart beating, and knew, without being told by any one, whither he had at length arrived — well, then the feeling which had been growing within his soul burst forth, and he cried in ecstasy:

“Why have I been a fool so long? Why, seeing that fate has appointed me to be ruler of an earthly paradise, did I prefer to bind myself in servitude as a scribe of lifeless documents? To think that, after I had been nurtured and schooled and stored with all the knowledge necessary for the diffusion of good among those under me, and for the improvement of my domain, and for the fulfilment of the manifold duties of a landowner who is at once judge, administrator, and

constable of his people, I should have entrusted my estate to an ignorant bailiff, and sought to maintain an absentee guardianship over the affairs of serfs whom I have never met, and of whose capabilities and characters I am yet ignorant! To think that I should have deemed true estate-management inferior to a documentary, fantastical management of provinces which lie a thousand versts away, and which my foot has never trod, and where I could never have effected aught but blunders and irregularities!"

Meanwhile another spectacle was being prepared for him. On learning that the barin was approaching the mansion, the muzhiks collected on the verandah in very variety of picturesque dress and tonsure; and when these good folk surrounded him, and there arose a resounding shout of "Here is our Foster Father! He has remembered us!" and, in spite of themselves, some of the older men and women began weeping as they recalled his grandfather and great-grandfather, he himself could not restrain his tears, but reflected: "How much affection! And in return for what? In return for my never having come to see them — in return for my never having taken the least interest in their affairs!" And then and there he registered a mental vow to share their every task and occupation.

So he applied himself to supervising and administering. He reduced the amount of the barstchina , he decreased the number of working-days for the owner, and he augmented the sum of the peasants' leisure-time. He also dismissed the fool of a bailiff, and took to bearing a personal hand in everything — to being present in the fields, at the threshing-floor, at the kilns, at the wharf, at the freighting of barges and rafts, and at their conveyance down the river: wherefore even the lazy hands began to look to themselves. But this did not last long. The peasant is an observant individual, and Tientietnikov's muzhiks soon scented the fact that, though energetic and desirous of doing much, the barin had no notion how to do it, nor even how to set about it — that, in short, he spoke by the book rather than out of his personal knowledge. Consequently things resulted, not in master and men failing to understand one another, but in their not singing together, in their not producing the very same note.

That is to say, it was not long before Tientietnikov noticed that on the manorial lands, nothing prospered to the extent that it did on the peasants'. The manorial crops were sown in good time, and came up well, and every one appeared to work his best, so much so that Tientietnikov, who supervised the whole, frequently ordered mugs of vodka to be served out as a reward for the excellence of the labour performed. Yet the rye on the peasants' land had formed into ear, and the oats had begun to shoot their grain, and the millet had filled before, on the manorial lands, the corn had so much as grown to stalk, or the ears

had sprouted in embryo. In short, gradually the barin realised that, in spite of favours conferred, the peasants were playing the rogue with him. Next he resorted to remonstrance, but was met with the reply, “How could we not do our best for our barin? You yourself saw how well we laboured at the ploughing and the sowing, for you gave us mugs of vodka for our pains.”

“Then why have things turned out so badly?” the barin persisted.

“Who can say? It must be that a grub has eaten the crop from below. Besides, what a summer has it been — never a drop of rain!”

Nevertheless, the barin noted that no grub had eaten the PEASANTS’ crops, as well as that the rain had fallen in the most curious fashion — namely, in patches. It had obliged the muzhiks, but had shed a mere sprinkling for the barin.

Still more difficult did he find it to deal with the peasant women. Ever and anon they would beg to be excused from work, or start making complaints of the severity of the barstchina. Indeed, they were terrible folk! However, Tientietnikov abolished the majority of the tithes of linen, hedge fruit, mushrooms, and nuts, and also reduced by one-half other tasks proper to the women, in the hope that they would devote their spare time to their own domestic concerns — namely, to sewing and mending, and to making clothes for their husbands, and to increasing the area of their kitchen gardens. Yet no such result came about. On the contrary, such a pitch did the idleness, the quarrelsomeness, and the intriguing and caballing of the fair sex attain that their helpmeets were for ever coming to the barin with a request that he would rid one or another of his wife, since she had become a nuisance, and to live with her was impossible.

Next, hardening his heart, the barin attempted severity. But of what avail was severity? The peasant woman remained always the peasant woman, and would come and whine that she was sick and ailing, and keep pitifully hugging to herself the mean and filthy rags which she had donned for the occasion. And when poor Tientietnikov found himself unable to say more to her than just, “Get out of my sight, and may the Lord go with you!” the next item in the comedy would be that he would see her, even as she was leaving his gates, fall to contending with a neighbour for, say, the possession of a turnip, and dealing out slaps in the face such as even a strong, healthy man could scarcely have compassed!

Again, amongst other things, Tientietnikov conceived the idea of establishing a school for his people; but the scheme resulted in a farce which left him in sackcloth and ashes. In the same way he found that, when it came to a question of dispensing justice and of adjusting disputes, the host of juridical subtleties with which the professors had provided him proved absolutely useless. That is to

say, the one party lied, and the other party lied, and only the devil could have decided between them. Consequently he himself perceived that a knowledge of mankind would have availed him more than all the legal refinements and philosophical maxims in the world could do. He lacked something; and though he could not divine what it was, the situation brought about was the common one of the barin failing to understand the peasant, and the peasant failing to understand the barin, and both becoming disaffected. In the end, these difficulties so chilled Tientietnikov's enthusiasm that he took to supervising the labours of the field with greatly diminished attention. That is to say, no matter whether the scythes were softly swishing through the grass, or ricks were being built, or rafts were being loaded, he would allow his eyes to wander from his men, and to fall to gazing at, say, a red-billed, red-legged heron which, after strutting along the bank of a stream, would have caught a fish in its beak, and be holding it awhile, as though in doubt whether to swallow it. Next he would glance towards the spot where a similar bird, but one not yet in possession of a fish, was engaged in watching the doings of its mate. Lastly, with eyebrows knitted, and face turned to scan the zenith, he would drink in the smell of the fields, and fall to listening to the winged population of the air as from earth and sky alike the manifold music of winged creatures combined in a single harmonious chorus. In the rye the quail would be calling, and, in the grass, the corncrake, and over them would be wheeling flocks of twittering linnets. Also, the jacksnipe would be uttering its croak, and the lark executing its roulades where it had become lost in the sunshine, and cranes sending forth their trumpet-like challenge as they deployed towards the zenith in triangle-shaped flocks. In fact, the neighbourhood would seem to have become converted into one great concert of melody. O Creator, how fair is Thy world where, in remote, rural seclusion, it lies apart from cities and from highways!

But soon even this began to pall upon Tientietnikov, and he ceased altogether to visit his fields, or to do aught but shut himself up in his rooms, where he refused to receive even the bailiff when that functionary called with his reports. Again, although, until now, he had to a certain extent associated with a retired colonel of hussars — a man saturated with tobacco smoke — and also with a student of pronounced, but immature, opinions who culled the bulk of his wisdom from contemporary newspapers and pamphlets, he found, as time went on, that these companions proved as tedious as the rest, and came to think their conversation superficial, and their European method of comporting themselves — that is to say, the method of conversing with much slapping of knees and a great deal of bowing and gesticulation — too direct and unadorned. So these and every one else he decided to "drop," and carried this resolution into effect with a

certain amount of rudeness. On the next occasion that Varvar Nikolaievitch Vishnepokromov called to indulge in a free-and-easy symposium on politics, philosophy, literature, morals, and the state of financial affairs in England (he was, in all matters which admit of superficial discussion, the pleasantest fellow alive, seeing that he was a typical representative both of the retired fire-eater and of the school of thought which is now becoming the rage) — when, I say, this next happened, Tientietnikov merely sent out to say that he was not at home, and then carefully showed himself at the window. Host and guest exchanged glances, and, while the one muttered through his teeth “The cur!” the other relieved his feelings with a remark or two on swine. Thus the acquaintance came to an abrupt end, and from that time forth no visitor called at the mansion.

Tientietnikov in no way regretted this, for he could now devote himself wholly to the projection of a great work on Russia. Of the scale on which this composition was conceived the reader is already aware. The reader also knows how strange, how unsystematic, was the system employed in it. Yet to say that Tientietnikov never awoke from his lethargy would not be altogether true. On the contrary, when the post brought him newspapers and reviews, and he saw in their printed pages, perhaps, the well-known name of some former comrade who had succeeded in the great field of Public Service, or had conferred upon science and the world’s work some notable contribution, he would succumb to secret and suppressed grief, and involuntarily there would burst from his soul an expression of aching, voiceless regret that he himself had done so little. And at these times his existence would seem to him odious and repellent; at these times there would uprise before him the memory of his school days, and the figure of Alexander Petrovitch, as vivid as in life. And, slowly welling, the tears would course over Tientietnikov’s cheeks.

What meant these repinings? Was there not disclosed in them the secret of his galling spiritual pain — the fact that he had failed to order his life aright, to confirm the lofty aims with which he had started his course; the fact that, always poorly equipped with experience, he had failed to attain the better and the higher state, and there to strengthen himself for the overcoming of hindrances and obstacles; the fact that, dissolving like overheated metal, his bounteous store of superior instincts had failed to take the final tempering; the fact that the tutor of his boyhood, a man in a thousand, had prematurely died, and left to Tientietnikov no one who could restore to him the moral strength shattered by vacillation and the will power weakened by want of virility — no one, in short, who could cry hearteningly to his soul “Forward!” — the word for which the Russian of every degree, of every class, of every occupation, of every school of thought, is for ever hungering.

Indeed, WHERE is the man who can cry aloud for any of us, in the Russian tongue dear to our soul, the all-compelling command “Forward!”? Who is there who, knowing the strength and the nature and the inmost depths of the Russian genius, can by a single magic incantation divert our ideals to the higher life? Were there such a man, with what tears, with what affection, would not the grateful sons of Russia repay him! Yet age succeeds to age, and our callow youth still lies wrapped in shameful sloth, or strives and struggles to no purpose. God has not yet given us the man able to sound the call.

One circumstance which almost aroused Tientietnikov, which almost brought about a revolution in his character, was the fact that he came very near to falling in love. Yet even this resulted in nothing. Ten versts away there lived the general whom we have heard expressing himself in highly uncomplimentary terms concerning Tientietnikov. He maintained a General-like establishment, dispensed hospitality (that is to say, was glad when his neighbours came to pay him their respects, though he himself never went out), spoke always in a hoarse voice, read a certain number of books, and had a daughter — a curious, unfamiliar type, but full of life as life itself. This maiden’s name was Ulinka, and she had been strangely brought up, for, losing her mother in early childhood, she had subsequently received instruction at the hands of an English governess who knew not a single word of Russian. Moreover her father, though excessively fond of her, treated her always as a toy; with the result that, as she grew to years of discretion, she became wholly wayward and spoilt. Indeed, had any one seen the sudden rage which would gather on her beautiful young forehead when she was engaged in a heated dispute with her father, he would have thought her one of the most capricious beings in the world. Yet that rage gathered only when she had heard of injustice or harsh treatment, and never because she desired to argue on her own behalf, or to attempt to justify her own conduct. Also, that anger would disappear as soon as ever she saw any one whom she had formerly disliked fall upon evil times, and, at his first request for alms would, without consideration or subsequent regret, hand him her purse and its whole contents. Yes, her every act was strenuous, and when she spoke her whole personality seemed to be following hot-foot upon her thought — both her expression of face and her diction and the movements of her hands. Nay, the very folds of her frock had a similar appearance of striving; until one would have thought that all her self were flying in pursuit of her words. Nor did she know reticence: before any one she would disclose her mind, and no force could compel her to maintain silence when she desired to speak. Also, her enchanting, peculiar gait — a gait which belonged to her alone — was so absolutely free and unfettered that every one involuntarily gave her way. Lastly, in her presence churls seemed to become

confused and fall to silence, and even the roughest and most outspoken would lose their heads, and have not a word to say; whereas the shy man would find himself able to converse as never in his life before, and would feel, from the first, as though he had seen her and known her at some previous period — during the days of some unremembered childhood, when he was at home, and spending a merry evening among a crowd of romping children. And for long afterwards he would feel as though his man's intellect and estate were a burden.

This was what now befell Tientietnikov; and as it did so a new feeling entered into his soul, and his dreamy life lightened for a moment.

At first the General used to receive him with hospitable civility, but permanent concord between them proved impossible; their conversation always merged into dissension and soreness, seeing that, while the General could not bear to be contradicted or worsted in an argument, Tientietnikov was a man of extreme sensitiveness. True, for the daughter's sake, the father was for a while deferred to, and thus peace was maintained; but this lasted only until the time when there arrived, on a visit to the General, two kinswomen of his — the Countess Bordirev and the Princess Uziakin, retired Court dames, but ladies who still kept up a certain connection with Court circles, and therefore were much fawned upon by their host. No sooner had they appeared on the scene than (so it seemed to Tientietnikov) the General's attitude towards the young man became colder — either he ceased to notice him at all or he spoke to him familiarly, and as to a person having no standing in society. This offended Tientietnikov deeply, and though, when at length he spoke out on the subject, he retained sufficient presence of mind to compress his lips, and to preserve a gentle and courteous tone, his face flushed and his inner man was boiling.

"General," he said, "I thank you for your condescension. By addressing me in the second person singular, you have admitted me to the circle of your most intimate friends. Indeed, were it not that a difference of years forbids any familiarity on my part, I should answer you in similar fashion."

The General sat aghast. At length, rallying his tongue and his faculties, he replied that, though he had spoken with a lack of ceremony, he had used the term "thou" merely as an elderly man naturally employs it towards a junior (he made no reference to difference of rank).

Nevertheless, the acquaintance broke off here, and with it any possibility of love-making. The light which had shed a momentary gleam before Tientietnikov's eyes had become extinguished for ever, and upon it there followed a darkness denser than before. Henceforth everything conduced to evolve the regime which the reader has noted — that regime of sloth and inaction which converted Tientietnikov's residence into a place of dirt and

neglect. For days at a time would a broom and a heap of dust be left lying in the middle of a room, and trousers tossing about the salon, and pairs of worn-out braces adorning the what-not near the sofa. In short, so mean and untidy did Tientietnikov's mode of life become, that not only his servants, but even his very poultry ceased to treat him with respect. Taking up a pen, he would spend hours in idly sketching houses, huts, waggons, troikas, and flourishes on a piece of paper; while at other times, when he had sunk into a reverie, the pen would, all unknowingly, sketch a small head which had delicate features, a pair of quick, penetrating eyes, and a raised coiffure. Then suddenly the dreamer would perceive, to his surprise, that the pen had executed the portrait of a maiden whose picture no artist could adequately have painted; and therewith his despondency would become greater than ever, and, believing that happiness did not exist on earth, he would relapse into increased ennui, increased neglect of his responsibilities.

But one morning he noticed, on moving to the window after breakfast, that not a word was proceeding either from the butler or the housekeeper, but that, on the contrary, the courtyard seemed to smack of a certain bustle and excitement. This was because through the entrance gates (which the kitchen maid and the scullion had run to open) there were appearing the noses of three horses — one to the right, one in the middle, and one to the left, after the fashion of triumphal groups of statuary. Above them, on the box seat, were seated a coachman and a valet, while behind, again, there could be discerned a gentleman in a scarf and a fur cap. Only when the equipage had entered the courtyard did it stand revealed as a light spring britchka. And as it came to a halt, there leapt on to the verandah of the mansion an individual of respectable exterior, and possessed of the art of moving with the neatness and alertness of a military man.

Upon this Tientietnikov's heart stood still. He was unused to receiving visitors, and for the moment conceived the new arrival to be a Government official, sent to question him concerning an abortive society to which he had formerly belonged. (Here the author may interpolate the fact that, in Tientietnikov's early days, the young man had become mixed up in a very absurd affair. That is to say, a couple of philosophers belonging to a regiment of hussars had, together with an aesthete who had not yet completed his student's course and a gambler who had squandered his all, formed a secret society of philanthropic aims under the presidency of a certain old rascal of a freemason and the ruined gambler aforesaid. The scope of the society's work was to be extensive: it was to bring lasting happiness to humanity at large, from the banks of the Thames to the shores of Kamtchatka. But for this much money was needed: wherefore from the noble-minded members of the society generous

contributions were demanded, and then forwarded to a destination known only to the supreme authorities of the concern. As for Tientietnikov's adhesion, it was brought about by the two friends already alluded to as "embittered" — good-hearted souls whom the wear and tear of their efforts on behalf of science, civilisation, and the future emancipation of mankind had ended by converting into confirmed drunkards. Perhaps it need hardly be said that Tientietnikov soon discovered how things stood, and withdrew from the association; but, meanwhile, the latter had had the misfortune so to have engaged in dealings not wholly creditable to gentlemen of noble origin as likewise to have become entangled in dealings with the police. Consequently, it is not to be wondered at that, though Tientietnikov had long severed his connection with the society and its policy, he still remained uneasy in his mind as to what might even yet be the result.)

However, his fears vanished the instant that the guest saluted him with marked politeness and explained, with many deferential poises of the head, and in terms at once civil and concise, that for some time past he (the newcomer) had been touring the Russian Empire on business and in the pursuit of knowledge, that the Empire abounded in objects of interest — not to mention a plenitude of manufactures and a great diversity of soil, and that, in spite of the fact that he was greatly struck with the amenities of his host's domain, he would certainly not have presumed to intrude at such an inconvenient hour but for the circumstance that the inclement spring weather, added to the state of the roads, had necessitated sundry repairs to his carriage at the hands of wheelwrights and blacksmiths. Finally he declared that, even if this last had NOT happened, he would still have felt unable to deny himself the pleasure of offering to his host that meed of homage which was the latter's due.

This speech — a speech of fascinating bonhomie — delivered, the guest executed a sort of shuffle with a half-boot of patent leather studded with buttons of mother-of-pearl, and followed that up by (in spite of his pronounced rotundity of figure) stepping backwards with all the elan of an india-rubber ball.

From this the somewhat reassured Tientietnikov concluded that his visitor must be a literary, knowledge-seeking professor who was engaged in roaming the country in search of botanical specimens and fossils; wherefore he hastened to express both his readiness to further the visitor's objects (whatever they might be) and his personal willingness to provide him with the requisite wheelwrights and blacksmiths. Meanwhile he begged his guest to consider himself at home, and, after seating him in an armchair, made preparations to listen to the newcomer's discourse on natural history.

But the newcomer applied himself, rather, to phenomena of the internal world,

saying that his life might be likened to a barque tossed on the crests of perfidious billows, that in his time he had been fated to play many parts, and that on more than one occasion his life had stood in danger at the hands of foes. At the same time, these tidings were communicated in a manner calculated to show that the speaker was also a man of PRACTICAL capabilities. In conclusion, the visitor took out a cambric pocket-handkerchief, and sneezed into it with a vehemence wholly new to Tientietnikov's experience. In fact, the sneeze rather resembled the note which, at times, the trombone of an orchestra appears to utter not so much from its proper place on the platform as from the immediate neighbourhood of the listener's ear. And as the echoes of the drowsy mansion resounded to the report of the explosion there followed upon the same a wave of perfume, skilfully wafted abroad with a flourish of the eau-de-Cologne-scented handkerchief.

By this time the reader will have guessed that the visitor was none other than our old and respected friend Paul Ivanovitch Chichikov. Naturally, time had not spared him his share of anxieties and alarms; wherefore his exterior had come to look a trifle more elderly, his frockcoat had taken on a suggestion of shabbiness, and britchka, coachman, valet, horses, and harness alike had about them a sort of second-hand, worse-for-wear effect. Evidently the Chichikovian finances were not in the most flourishing of conditions. Nevertheless, the old expression of face, the old air of breeding and refinement, remained unimpaired, and our hero had even improved in the art of walking and turning with grace, and of dexterously crossing one leg over the other when taking a seat. Also, his mildness of diction, his discreet moderation of word and phrase, survived in, if anything, increased measure, and he bore himself with a skill which caused his tactfulness to surpass itself in sureness of aplomb. And all these accomplishments had their effect further heightened by a snowy immaculateness of collar and dickey, and an absence of dust from his frockcoat, as complete as though he had just arrived to attend a nameday festival. Lastly, his cheeks and chin were of such neat clean-shavenness that no one but a blind man could have failed to admire their rounded contours.

From that moment onwards great changes took place in Tientietnikov's establishment, and certain of its rooms assumed an unwonted air of cleanliness and order. The rooms in question were those assigned to Chichikov, while one other apartment — a little front chamber opening into the hall — became permeated with Petrushka's own peculiar smell. But this lasted only for a little while, for presently Petrushka was transferred to the servants' quarters, a course which ought to have been adopted in the first instance.

During the initial days of Chichikov's sojourn, Tientietnikov feared rather to

lose his independence, inasmuch as he thought that his guest might hamper his movements, and bring about alterations in the established routine of the place. But these fears proved groundless, for Paul Ivanovitch displayed an extraordinary aptitude for accommodating himself to his new position. To begin with, he encouraged his host in his philosophical inertia by saying that the latter would help Tientietnikov to become a centenarian. Next, in the matter of a life of isolation, he hit things off exactly by remarking that such a life bred in a man a capacity for high thinking. Lastly, as he inspected the library and dilated on books in general, he contrived an opportunity to observe that literature safeguarded a man from a tendency to waste his time. In short, the few words of which he delivered himself were brief, but invariably to the point. And this discretion of speech was outdone by his discretion of conduct. That is to say, whether entering or leaving the room, he never wearied his host with a question if Tientietnikov had the air of being disinclined to talk; and with equal satisfaction the guest could either play chess or hold his tongue. Consequently Tientietnikov said to himself:

"For the first time in my life I have met with a man with whom it is possible to live. In general, not many of the type exist in Russia, and, though clever, good-humoured, well-educated men abound, one would be hard put to it to find an individual of equable temperament with whom one could share a roof for centuries without a quarrel arising. Anyway, Chichikov is the first of his sort that I have met."

For his part, Chichikov was only too delighted to reside with a person so quiet and agreeable as his host. Of a wandering life he was temporarily weary, and to rest, even for a month, in such a beautiful spot, and in sight of green fields and the slow flowering of spring, was likely to benefit him also from the hygienic point of view. And, indeed, a more delightful retreat in which to recuperate could not possibly have been found. The spring, long retarded by previous cold, had now begun in all its comeliness, and life was rampant. Already, over the first emerald of the grass, the dandelion was showing yellow, and the red-pink anemone was hanging its tender head; while the surface of every pond was a swarm of dancing gnats and midges, and the water-spider was being joined in their pursuit by birds which gathered from every quarter to the vantage-ground of the dry reeds. Every species of creature also seemed to be assembling in concourse, and taking stock of one another. Suddenly the earth became populous, the forest had opened its eyes, and the meadows were lifting up their voice in song. In the same way had choral dances begun to be weaved in the village, and everywhere that the eye turned there was merriment. What brightness in the green of nature, what freshness in the air, what singing of birds

in the gardens of the mansion, what general joy and rapture and exaltation! Particularly in the village might the shouting and singing have been in honour of a wedding!

Chichikov walked hither, thither, and everywhere — a pursuit for which there was ample choice and facility. At one time he would direct his steps along the edge of the flat tableland, and contemplate the depths below, where still there lay sheets of water left by the floods of winter, and where the island-like patches of forest showed leafless boughs; while at another time he would plunge into the thicket and ravine country, where nests of birds weighted branches almost to the ground, and the sky was darkened with the criss-cross flight of cawing rooks. Again, the drier portions of the meadows could be crossed to the river wharves, whence the first barges were just beginning to set forth with pea-meal and barley and wheat, while at the same time one's ear would be caught with the sound of some mill resuming its functions as once more the water turned the wheel. Chichikov would also walk afield to watch the early tillage operations of the season, and observe how the blackness of a new furrow would make its way across the expanse of green, and how the sower, rhythmically striking his hand against the pannier slung across his breast, would scatter his fistfuls of seed with equal distribution, apportioning not a grain too much to one side or to the other.

In fact, Chichikov went everywhere. He chatted and talked, now with the bailiff, now with a peasant, now with a miller, and inquired into the manner and nature of everything, and sought information as to how an estate was managed, and at what price corn was selling, and what species of grain was best for spring and autumn grinding, and what was the name of each peasant, and who were his kinsfolk, and where he had bought his cow, and what he fed his pigs on. Chichikov also made inquiry concerning the number of peasants who had lately died: but of these there appeared to be few. And suddenly his quick eye discerned that Tientietnikov's estate was not being worked as it might have been — that much neglect and listlessness and pilfering and drunkenness was abroad; and on perceiving this, he thought to himself: "What a fool is that Tientietnikov! To think of letting a property like this decay when he might be drawing from it an income of fifty thousand roubles a year!"

Also, more than once, while taking these walks, our hero pondered the idea of himself becoming a landowner — not now, of course, but later, when his chief aim should have been achieved, and he had got into his hands the necessary means for living the quiet life of the proprietor of an estate. Yes, and at these times there would include itself in his castle-building the figure of a young, fresh, fair-faced maiden of the mercantile or other rich grade of society, a woman who could both play and sing. He also dreamed of little descendants who should

perpetuate the name of Chichikov; perhaps a frolicsome little boy and a fair young daughter, or possibly, two boys and quite two or three daughters; so that all should know that he had really lived and had his being, that he had not merely roamed the world like a spectre or a shadow; so that for him and his the country should never be put to shame. And from that he would go on to fancy that a title appended to his rank would not be a bad thing — the title of State Councillor, for instance, which was deserving of all honour and respect. Ah, it is a common thing for a man who is taking a solitary walk so to detach himself from the irksome realities of the present that he is able to stir and to excite and to provoke his imagination to the conception of things he knows can never really come to pass!

Chichikov's servants also found the mansion to their taste, and, like their master, speedily made themselves at home in it. In particular did Petrushka make friends with Grigory the butler, although at first the pair showed a tendency to outbrag one another — Petrushka beginning by throwing dust in Grigory's eyes on the score of his (Petrushka's) travels, and Grigory taking him down a peg or two by referring to St. Petersburg (a city which Petrushka had never visited), and Petrushka seeking to recover lost ground by dilating on towns which he HAD visited, and Grigory capping this by naming some town which is not to be found on any map in existence, and then estimating the journey thither as at least thirty thousand versts — a statement which would so completely flabbergast the henchman of Chichikov's suite that he would be left staring open-mouthed, amid the general laughter of the domestic staff. However, as I say, the pair ended by swearing eternal friendship with one another, and making a practice of resorting to the village tavern in company.

For Selifan, however, the place had a charm of a different kind. That is to say, each evening there would take place in the village a singing of songs and a weaving of country dances; and so shapely and buxom were the maidens — maidens of a type hard to find in our present-day villages on large estates — that he would stand for hours wondering which of them was the best. White-necked and white-bosomed, all had great roving eyes, the gait of peacocks, and hair reaching to the waist. And as, with his hands clasping theirs, he glided hither and thither in the dance, or retired backwards towards a wall with a row of other young fellows, and then, with them, returned to meet the damsels — all singing in chorus (and laughing as they sang it), "Boyars, show me my bridegroom!" and dusk was falling gently, and from the other side of the river there kept coming far, faint, plaintive echoes of the melody — well, then our Selifan hardly knew whether he were standing upon his head or his heels. Later, when sleeping and when waking, both at noon and at twilight, he would seem still to be holding

a pair of white hands, and moving in the dance.

Chichikov's horses also found nothing of which to disapprove. Yes, both the bay, the Assessor, and the skewbald accounted residence at Tientietnikov's a most comfortable affair, and voted the oats excellent, and the arrangement of the stables beyond all cavil. True, on this occasion each horse had a stall to himself; yet, by looking over the intervening partition, it was possible always to see one's fellows, and, should a neighbour take it into his head to utter a neigh, to answer it at once.

As for the errand which had hitherto led Chichikov to travel about Russia, he had now decided to move very cautiously and secretly in the matter. In fact, on noticing that Tientietnikov went in absorbedly for reading and for talking philosophy, the visitor said to himself, "No — I had better begin at the other end," and proceeded first to feel his way among the servants of the establishment. From them he learnt several things, and, in particular, that the barin had been wont to go and call upon a certain General in the neighbourhood, and that the General possessed a daughter, and that she and Tientietnikov had had an affair of some sort, but that the pair had subsequently parted, and gone their several ways. For that matter, Chichikov himself had noticed that Tientietnikov was in the habit of drawing heads of which each representation exactly resembled the rest.

Once, as he sat tapping his silver snuff-box after luncheon, Chichikov remarked:

"One thing you lack, and only one, Andrei Ivanovitch."

"What is that?" asked his host.

"A female friend or two," replied Chichikov.

Tientietnikov made no rejoinder, and the conversation came temporarily to an end.

But Chichikov was not to be discouraged; wherefore, while waiting for supper and talking on different subjects, he seized an opportunity to interject:

"Do you know, it would do you no harm to marry."

As before, Tientietnikov did not reply, and the renewed mention of the subject seemed to have annoyed him.

For the third time — it was after supper — Chichikov returned to the charge by remarking:

"To-day, as I was walking round your property, I could not help thinking that marriage would do you a great deal of good. Otherwise you will develop into a hypochondriac."

Whether Chichikov's words now voiced sufficiently the note of persuasion, or whether Tientietnikov happened, at the moment, to be unusually disposed to

frankness, at all events the young landowner sighed, and then responded as he expelled a puff of tobacco smoke:

"To attain anything, Paul Ivanovitch, one needs to have been born under a lucky star."

And he related to his guest the whole history of his acquaintanceship and subsequent rupture with the General.

As Chichikov listened to the recital, and gradually realised that the affair had arisen merely out of a chance word on the General's part, he was astounded beyond measure, and gazed at Tientietnikov without knowing what to make of him.

"Andrei Ivanovitch," he said at length, "what was there to take offence at?"

"Nothing, as regards the actual words spoken," replied the other. "The offence lay, rather, in the insult conveyed in the General's tone." Tientietnikov was a kindly and peaceable man, yet his eyes flashed as he said this, and his voice vibrated with wounded feeling.

"Yet, even then, need you have taken it so much amiss?"

"What? Could I have gone on visiting him as before?"

"Certainly. No great harm had been done?"

"I disagree with you. Had he been an old man in a humble station of life, instead of a proud and swaggering officer, I should not have minded so much. But, as it was, I could not, and would not, brook his words."

"A curious fellow, this Tientietnikov!" thought Chichikov to himself.

"A curious fellow, this Chichikov!" was Tientietnikov's inward reflection.

"I tell you what," resumed Chichikov. "To-morrow I myself will go and see the General."

"To what purpose?" asked Tientietnikov, with astonishment and distrust in his eyes.

"To offer him an assurance of my personal respect."

"A strange fellow, this Chichikov!" reflected Tientietnikov.

"A strange fellow, this Tientietnikov!" thought Chichikov, and then added aloud: "Yes, I will go and see him at ten o'clock to-morrow; but since my britchka is not yet altogether in travelling order, would you be so good as to lend me your koliaska for the purpose?"

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CHAPTER II

Tientietnikov's good horses covered the ten versts to the General's house in a little over half an hour. Descending from the koliaska with features attuned to deference, Chichikov inquired for the master of the house, and was at once ushered into his presence. Bowing with head held respectfully on one side and hands extended like those of a waiter carrying a trayful of teacups, the visitor inclined his whole body forward, and said:

"I have deemed it my duty to present myself to your Excellency. I have deemed it my duty because in my heart I cherish a most profound respect for the valiant men who, on the field of battle, have proved the saviours of their country."

That this preliminary attack did not wholly displease the General was proved by the fact that, responding with a gracious inclination of the head, he replied:

"I am glad to make your acquaintance. Pray be so good as to take a seat. In what capacity or capacities have you yourself seen service?"

"Of my service," said Chichikov, depositing his form, not exactly in the centre of the chair, but rather on one side of it, and resting a hand upon one of its arms, " — of my service the scene was laid, in the first instance, in the Treasury; while its further course bore me successively into the employ of the Public Buildings Commission, of the Customs Board, and of other Government Offices. But, throughout, my life has resembled a barque tossed on the crests of perfidious billows. In suffering I have been swathed and wrapped until I have come to be, as it were, suffering personified; while of the extent to which my life has been sought by foes, no words, no colouring, no (if I may so express it?) painter's brush could ever convey to you an adequate idea. And now, at length, in my declining years, I am seeking a corner in which to eke out the remainder of my miserable existence, while at the present moment I am enjoying the hospitality of a neighbour of your acquaintance."

"And who is that?"

"Your neighbour Tientietnikov, your Excellency."

Upon that the General frowned.

"Led me add," put in Chichikov hastily, "that he greatly regrets that on a former occasion he should have failed to show a proper respect for — for — "

"For what?" asked the General.

"For the services to the public which your Excellency has rendered. Indeed, he

cannot find words to express his sorrow, but keeps repeating to himself: ‘Would that I had valued at their true worth the men who have saved our fatherland!’“

“And why should he say that?” asked the mollified General. “I bear him no grudge. In fact, I have never cherished aught but a sincere liking for him, a sincere esteem, and do not doubt but that, in time, he may become a useful member of society.”

“In the words which you have been good enough to utter,” said Chichikov with a bow, “there is embodied much justice. Yes, Tientietnikov is in very truth a man of worth. Not only does he possess the gift of eloquence, but also he is a master of the pen.”

“Ah, yes; he DOES write rubbish of some sort, doesn’t he? Verses, or something of the kind?”

“Not rubbish, your Excellency, but practical stuff. In short, he is inditing a history.”

“A HISTORY? But a history of what?”

“A history of, of — ” For a moment or two Chichikov hesitated. Then, whether because it was a General that was seated in front of him, or because he desired to impart greater importance to the subject which he was about to invent, he concluded: “A history of Generals, your Excellency.”

“Of Generals? Of WHAT Generals?”

“Of Generals generally — of Generals at large. That is to say, and to be more precise, a history of the Generals of our fatherland.”

By this time Chichikov was floundering badly. Mentally he spat upon himself and reflected: “Gracious heavens! What rubbish I am talking!”

“Pardon me,” went on his interlocutor, “but I do not quite understand you. Is Tientietnikov producing a history of a given period, or only a history made up of a series of biographies? Also, is he including ALL our Generals, or only those who took part in the campaign of 1812?”

“The latter, your Excellency — only the Generals of 1812,” replied Chichikov. Then he added beneath his breath: “Were I to be killed for it, I could not say what that may be supposed to mean.”

“Then why should he not come and see me in person?” went on his host. “Possibly I might be able to furnish him with much interesting material?”

“He is afraid to come, your Excellency.”

“Nonsense! Just because of a hasty word or two! I am not that sort of man at all. In fact, I should be very happy to call upon HIM.”

“Never would he permit that, your Excellency. He would greatly prefer to be the first to make advances.” And Chichikov added to himself: “What a stroke of luck those Generals were! Otherwise, the Lord knows where my tongue might

have landed me!”

At this moment the door into the adjoining room opened, and there appeared in the doorway a girl as fair as a ray of the sun — so fair, indeed, that Chichikov stared at her in amazement. Apparently she had come to speak to her father for a moment, but had stopped short on perceiving that there was some one with him. The only fault to be found in her appearance was the fact that she was too thin and fragile-looking.

“May I introduce you to my little pet?” said the General to Chichikov. “To tell you the truth, I do not know your name.”

“That you should be unacquainted with the name of one who has never distinguished himself in the manner of which you yourself can boast is scarcely to be wondered at.” And Chichikov executed one of his sidelong, deferential bows.

“Well, I should be delighted to know it.”

“It is Paul Ivanovitch Chichikov, your Excellency.” With that went the easy bow of a military man and the agile backward movement of an india-rubber ball.

“Ulinka, this is Paul Ivanovitch,” said the General, turning to his daughter. “He has just told me some interesting news — namely, that our neighbour Tientietnikov is not altogether the fool we had at first thought him. On the contrary, he is engaged upon a very important work — upon a history of the Russian Generals of 1812.”

“But who ever supposed him to be a fool?” asked the girl quickly. “What happened was that you took Vishnepokromov’s word — the word of a man who is himself both a fool and a good-for-nothing.”

“Well, well,” said the father after further good-natured dispute on the subject of Vishnepokromov. “Do you now run away, for I wish to dress for luncheon. And you, sir,” he added to Chichikov, “will you not join us at table?”

Chichikov bowed so low and so long that, by the time that his eyes had ceased to see nothing but his own boots, the General’s daughter had disappeared, and in her place was standing a bewhiskered butler, armed with a silver soap-dish and a hand-basin.

“Do you mind if I wash in your presence?” asked the host.

“By no means,” replied Chichikov. “Pray do whatsoever you please in that respect.”

Upon that the General fell to scrubbing himself — incidentally, to sending soapsuds flying in every direction. Meanwhile he seemed so favourably disposed that Chichikov decided to sound him then and there, more especially since the butler had left the room.

“May I put to you a problem?” he asked.

“Certainly,” replied the General. “What is it?”

“It is this, your Excellency. I have a decrepit old uncle who owns three hundred souls and two thousand roubles-worth of other property. Also, except for myself, he possesses not a single heir. Now, although his infirm state of health will not permit of his managing his property in person, he will not allow me either to manage it. And the reason for his conduct — his very strange conduct — he states as follows: ‘I do not know my nephew, and very likely he is a spendthrift. If he wishes to show me that he is good for anything, let him go and acquire as many souls as *I* have acquired; and when he has done that I will transfer to him my three hundred souls as well.”

“The man must be an absolute fool,” commented the General.

“Possibly. And were that all, things would not be as bad as they are. But, unfortunately, my uncle has gone and taken up with his housekeeper, and has had children by her. Consequently, everything will now pass to THEM.”

“The old man must have taken leave of his senses,” remarked the General. “Yet how *I* can help you I fail to see.”

“Well, I have thought of a plan. If you will hand me over all the dead souls on your estate — hand them over to me exactly as though they were still alive, and were purchasable property — I will offer them to the old man, and then he will leave me his fortune.”

At this point the General burst into a roar of laughter such as few can ever have heard. Half-dressed, he subsided into a chair, threw back his head, and guffawed until he came near to choking. In fact, the house shook with his merriment, so much so that the butler and his daughter came running into the room in alarm.

It was long before he could produce a single articulate word; and even when he did so (to reassure his daughter and the butler) he kept momentarily relapsing into spluttering chuckles which made the house ring and ring again.

Chichikov was greatly taken aback.

“Oh, that uncle!” bellowed the General in paroxysms of mirth. “Oh, that blessed uncle! WHAT a fool he’ll look! Ha, ha, ha! Dead souls offered him instead of live ones! Oh, my goodness!”

“I suppose I’ve put my foot in it again,” ruefully reflected Chichikov. “But, good Lord, what a man the fellow is to laugh! Heaven send that he doesn’t burst of it!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” broke out the General afresh. “WHAT a donkey the old man must be! To think of his saying to you: ‘You go and fit yourself out with three hundred souls, and I’ll cap them with my own lot’! My word! What a jackass!”

“A jackass, your Excellency?”

“Yes, indeed! And to think of the jest of putting him off with dead souls! Ha, ha, ha! WHAT wouldn’t I give to see you handing him the title deeds? Who is he? What is he like? Is he very old?”

“He is eighty, your Excellency.”

“But still brisk and able to move about, eh? Surely he must be pretty strong to go on living with his housekeeper like that?”

“Yes. But what does such strength mean? Sand runs away, your Excellency.”

“The old fool! But is he really such a fool?”

“Yes, your Excellency.”

“And does he go out at all? Does he see company? Can he still hold himself upright?”

“Yes, but with great difficulty.”

“And has he any teeth left?”

“No more than two at the most.”

“The old jackass! Don’t be angry with me, but I must say that, though your uncle, he is also a jackass.”

“Quite so, your Excellency. And though it grieves ME to have to confess that he is my uncle, what am I to do with him?”

Yet this was not altogether the truth. What would have been a far harder thing for Chichikov to have confessed was the fact that he possessed no uncles at all.

“I beg of you, your Excellency,” he went on, “to hand me over those, those — ”

“Those dead souls, eh? Why, in return for the jest I will give you some land as well. Yes, you can take the whole graveyard if you like. Ha, ha, ha! The old man! Ha, ha, ha! WHAT a fool he’ll look! Ha, ha, ha!”

And once more the General’s guffaws went ringing through the house.

[At this point there is a long hiatus in the original.]

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CHAPTER III

“If Colonel Koshkarev should turn out to be as mad as the last one it is a bad look-out,” said Chichikov to himself on opening his eyes amid fields and open country — everything else having disappeared save the vault of heaven and a couple of low-lying clouds.

“Selifan,” he went on, “did you ask how to get to Colonel Koshkarev’s?”

“Yes, Paul Ivanovitch. At least, there was such a clatter around the koliaska that I could not; but Petrushka asked the coachman.”

“You fool! How often have I told you not to rely on Petrushka? Petrushka is a blockhead, an idiot. Besides, at the present moment I believe him to be drunk.”

“No, you are wrong, barin,” put in the person referred to, turning his head with a sidelong glance. “After we get down the next hill we shall need but to keep bending round it. That is all.”

“Yes, and I suppose you’ll tell me that sivnkha is the only thing that has passed your lips? Well, the view at least is beautiful. In fact, when one has seen this place one may say that one has seen one of the beauty spots of Europe.” This said, Chichikov added to himself, smoothing his chin: “What a difference between the features of a civilised man of the world and those of a common lacquey!”

Meanwhile the koliaska quickened its pace, and Chichikov once more caught sight of Tientietnikov’s aspen-studded meadows. Undulating gently on elastic springs, the vehicle cautiously descended the steep incline, and then proceeded past water-mills, rumbled over a bridge or two, and jolted easily along the rough-set road which traversed the flats. Not a molehill, not a mound jarred the spine. The vehicle was comfort itself.

Swiftly there flew by clumps of osiers, slender elder trees, and silver-leaved poplars, their branches brushing against Selifan and Petrushka, and at intervals depriving the valet of his cap. Each time that this happened, the sullen-faced servitor fell to cursing both the tree responsible for the occurrence and the landowner responsible for the tree being in existence; yet nothing would induce him thereafter either to tie on the cap or to steady it with his hand, so complete was his assurance that the accident would never be repeated. Soon to the foregoing trees there became added an occasional birch or spruce fir, while in the dense undergrowth around their roots could be seen the blue iris and the yellow wood-tulip. Gradually the forest grew darker, as though eventually the obscurity

would become complete. Then through the trunks and the boughs there began to gleam points of light like glittering mirrors, and as the number of trees lessened, these points grew larger, until the travellers debouched upon the shore of a lake four versts or so in circumference, and having on its further margin the grey, scattered log huts of a peasant village. In the water a great commotion was in progress. In the first place, some twenty men, immersed to the knee, to the breast, or to the neck, were dragging a large fishing-net inshore, while, in the second place, there was entangled in the same, in addition to some fish, a stout man shaped precisely like a melon or a hogshead. Greatly excited, he was shouting at the top of his voice: "Let Kosma manage it, you lout of a Denis! Kosma, take the end of the rope from Denis! Don't bear so hard on it, Thoma Bolshoy ! Go where Thoma Menshov is! Damn it, bring the net to land, will you!" From this it became clear that it was not on his own account that the stout man was worrying. Indeed, he had no need to do so, since his fat would in any case have prevented him from sinking. Yes, even if he had turned head over heels in an effort to dive, the water would persistently have borne him up; and the same if, say, a couple of men had jumped on his back — the only result would have been that he would have become a trifle deeper submerged, and forced to draw breath by spouting bubbles through his nose. No, the cause of his agitation was lest the net should break, and the fish escape: wherefore he was urging some additional peasants who were standing on the bank to lay hold of and to pull at, an extra rope or two.

"That must be the barin — Colonel Koshkarev," said Selifan.

"Why?" asked Chichikov.

"Because, if you please, his skin is whiter than the rest, and he has the respectable paunch of a gentleman."

Meanwhile good progress was being made with the hauling in of the barin; until, feeling the ground with his feet, he rose to an upright position, and at the same moment caught sight of the koliaska, with Chichikov seated therein, descending the declivity.

"Have you dined yet?" shouted the barin as, still entangled in the net, he approached the shore with a huge fish on his back. With one hand shading his eyes from the sun, and the other thrown backwards, he looked, in point of pose, like the Medici Venus emerging from her bath.

"No," replied Chichikov, raising his cap, and executing a series of bows.

"Then thank God for that," rejoined the gentleman.

"Why?" asked Chichikov with no little curiosity, and still holding his cap over his head.

"Because of THIS. Cast off the net, Thoma Menshov, and pick up that

sturgeon for the gentleman to see. Go and help him, Telepen Kuzma."

With that the peasants indicated picked up by the head what was a veritable monster of a fish.

"Isn't it a beauty — a sturgeon fresh run from the river?" exclaimed the stout barin. "And now let us be off home. Coachman, you can take the lower road through the kitchen garden. Run, you lout of a Thoma Bolshoy, and open the gate for him. He will guide you to the house, and I myself shall be along presently."

Thereupon the barelegged Thoma Bolshoy, clad in nothing but a shirt, ran ahead of the koliaska through the village, every hut of which had hanging in front of it a variety of nets, for the reason that every inhabitant of the place was a fisherman. Next, he opened a gate into a large vegetable enclosure, and thence the koliaska emerged into a square near a wooden church, with, showing beyond the latter, the roofs of the manorial homestead.

"A queer fellow, that Koshkarev!" said Chichikov to himself.

"Well, whatever I may be, at least I'm here," said a voice by his side. Chichikov looked round, and perceived that, in the meanwhile, the barin had dressed himself and overtaken the carriage. With a pair of yellow trousers he was wearing a grass-green jacket, and his neck was as guiltless of a collar as Cupid's. Also, as he sat sideways in his drozhki, his bulk was such that he completely filled the vehicle. Chichikov was about to make some remark or another when the stout gentleman disappeared; and presently his drozhki re-emerged into view at the spot where the fish had been drawn to land, and his voice could be heard reiterating exhortations to his serfs. Yet when Chichikov reached the verandah of the house he found, to his intense surprise, the stout gentleman waiting to welcome the visitor. How he had contrived to convey himself thither passed Chichikov's comprehension. Host and guest embraced three times, according to a bygone custom of Russia. Evidently the barin was one of the old school.

"I bring you," said Chichikov, "a greeting from his Excellency."

"From whom?"

"From your relative General Alexander Dmitrievitch."

"Who is Alexander Dmitrievitch?"

"What? You do not know General Alexander Dmitrievitch Betrishev?" exclaimed Chichikov with a touch of surprise.

"No, I do not," replied the gentleman.

Chichikov's surprise grew to absolute astonishment.

"How comes that about?" he ejaculated. "I hope that I have the honour of addressing Colonel Koshkarev?"

"Your hopes are vain. It is to my house, not to his, that you have come; and I

am Peter Petrovitch Pietukh — yes, Peter Petrovitch Pietukh."

Chichikov, dumbfounded, turned to Selifan and Petrushka.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "I told you to drive to the house of Colonel Koshkarev, whereas you have brought me to that of Peter Petrovitch Pietukh."

"All the same, your fellows have done quite right," put in the gentleman referred to. "Do you" (this to Selifan and Petrushka) "go to the kitchen, where they will give you a glassful of vodka apiece. Then put up the horses, and be off to the servants' quarters."

"I regret the mistake extremely," said Chichikov.

"But it is not a mistake. When you have tried the dinner which I have in store for you, just see whether you think IT a mistake. Enter, I beg of you." And, taking Chichikov by the arm, the host conducted him within, where they were met by a couple of youths.

"Let me introduce my two sons, home for their holidays from the Gymnasium ," said Pietukh. "Nikolasha, come and entertain our good visitor, while you, Aleksasha, follow me." And with that the host disappeared.

Chichikov turned to Nikolasha, whom he found to be a budding man about town, since at first he opened a conversation by stating that, as no good was to be derived from studying at a provincial institution, he and his brother desired to remove, rather, to St. Petersburg, the provinces not being worth living in.

"I quite understand," Chichikov thought to himself. "The end of the chapter will be confectioners' assistants and the boulevards."

"Tell me," he added aloud, "how does your father's property at present stand?"

"It is all mortgaged," put in the father himself as he re-entered the room. "Yes, it is all mortgaged, every bit of it."

"What a pity!" thought Chichikov. "At this rate it will not be long before this man has no property at all left. I must hurry my departure." Aloud he said with an air of sympathy: "That you have mortgaged the estate seems to me a matter of regret."

"No, not at all," replied Pietukh. "In fact, they tell me that it is a good thing to do, and that every one else is doing it. Why should I act differently from my neighbours? Moreover, I have had enough of living here, and should like to try Moscow — more especially since my sons are always begging me to give them a metropolitan education."

"Oh, the fool, the fool!" reflected Chichikov. "He is for throwing up everything and making spendthrifts of his sons. Yet this is a nice property, and it is clear that the local peasants are doing well, and that the family, too, is

comfortably off. On the other hand, as soon as ever these lads begin their education in restaurants and theatres, the devil will away with every stick of their substance. For my own part, I could desire nothing better than this quiet life in the country."

"Let me guess what is in your mind," said Pietukh.

"What, then?" asked Chichikov, rather taken aback.

"You are thinking to yourself: 'That fool of a Pietukh has asked me to dinner, yet not a bite of dinner do I see.' But wait a little. It will be ready presently, for it is being cooked as fast as a maiden who has had her hair cut off plaits herself a new set of tresses."

"Here comes Platon Mikhalitch, father!" exclaimed Aleksasha, who had been peeping out of the window.

"Yes, and on a grey horse," added his brother.

"Who is Platon Mikhalitch?" inquired Chichikov.

"A neighbour of ours, and an excellent fellow."

The next moment Platon Mikhalitch himself entered the room, accompanied by a sporting dog named Yarb. He was a tall, handsome man, with extremely red hair. As for his companion, it was of the keen-muzzled species used for shooting.

"Have you dined yet?" asked the host.

"Yes," replied Platon.

"Indeed? What do you mean by coming here to laugh at us all? Do I ever go to YOUR place after dinner?"

The newcomer smiled. "Well, if it can bring you any comfort," he said, "let me tell you that I ate nothing at the meal, for I had no appetite."

"But you should see what I have caught — what sort of a sturgeon fate has brought my way! Yes, and what crucians and carp!"

"Really it tires one to hear you. How come you always to be so cheerful?"

"And how come YOU always to be so gloomy?" retorted the host.

"How, you ask? Simply because I am so."

"The truth is you don't eat enough. Try the plan of making a good dinner. Weariness of everything is a modern invention. Once upon a time one never heard of it."

"Well, boast away, but have you yourself never been tired of things?"

"Never in my life. I do not so much as know whether I should find time to be tired. In the morning, when one awakes, the cook is waiting, and the dinner has to be ordered. Then one drinks one's morning tea, and then the bailiff arrives for HIS orders, and then there is fishing to be done, and then one's dinner has to be eaten. Next, before one has even had a chance to utter a snore, there enters once again the cook, and one has to order supper; and when she has departed, behold,

back she comes with a request for the following day's dinner! What time does THAT leave one to be weary of things?"

Throughout this conversation, Chichikov had been taking stock of the newcomer, who astonished him with his good looks, his upright, picturesque figure, his appearance of fresh, unwasted youthfulness, and the boyish purity, innocence, and clarity of his features. Neither passion nor care nor aught of the nature of agitation or anxiety of mind had ventured to touch his unsullied face, or to lay a single wrinkle thereon. Yet the touch of life which those emotions might have imparted was wanting. The face was, as it were, dreaming, even though from time to time an ironical smile disturbed it.

"I, too, cannot understand," remarked Chichikov, "how a man of your appearance can find things wearisome. Of course, if a man is hard pressed for money, or if he has enemies who are lying in wait for his life (as have certain folk of whom I know), well, then — "

"Believe me when I say," interrupted the handsome guest, "that, for the sake of a diversion, I should be glad of ANY sort of an anxiety. Would that some enemy would conceive a grudge against me! But no one does so. Everything remains eternally dull."

"But perhaps you lack a sufficiency of land or souls?"

"Not at all. I and my brother own ten thousand desiatins of land, and over a thousand souls."

"Curious! I do not understand it. But perhaps the harvest has failed, or you have sickness about, and many of your male peasants have died of it?"

"On the contrary, everything is in splendid order, for my brother is the best of managers."

"Then to find things wearisome!" exclaimed Chichikov. "It passes my comprehension." And he shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, we will soon put weariness to flight," interrupted the host. "Aleksasha, do you run helter-skelter to the kitchen, and there tell the cook to serve the fish pasties. Yes, and where have that gawk of an Emelian and that thief of an Antoshka got to? Why have they not handed round the zakuski?"

At this moment the door opened, and the "gawk" and the "thief" in question made their appearance with napkins and a tray — the latter bearing six decanters of variously-coloured beverages. These they placed upon the table, and then ringed them about with glasses and platefuls of every conceivable kind of appetiser. That done, the servants applied themselves to bringing in various comestibles under covers, through which could be heard the hissing of hot roast viands. In particular did the "gawk" and the "thief" work hard at their tasks. As a matter of fact, their appellations had been given them merely to spur them to

greater activity, for, in general, the barin was no lover of abuse, but, rather, a kind-hearted man who, like most Russians, could not get on without a sharp word or two. That is to say, he needed them for his tongue as he need a glass of vodka for his digestion. What else could you expect? It was his nature to care for nothing mild.

To the zakuski succeeded the meal itself, and the host became a perfect glutton on his guests' behalf. Should he notice that a guest had taken but a single piece of a comestible, he added thereto another one, saying: "Without a mate, neither man nor bird can live in this world." Should any one take two pieces, he added thereto a third, saying: "What is the good of the number 2? God loves a trinity." Should any one take three pieces, he would say: "Where do you see a waggon with three wheels? Who builds a three-cornered hut?" Lastly, should any one take four pieces, he would cap them with a fifth, and add thereto the punning quip, "Na piat opiat ". After devouring at least twelve steaks of sturgeon, Chichikov ventured to think to himself, "My host cannot possibly add to THEM," but found that he was mistaken, for, without a word, Pietukh heaped upon his plate an enormous portion of spit-roasted veal, and also some kidneys. And what veal it was!

"That calf was fed two years on milk," he explained. "I cared for it like my own son."

"Nevertheless I can eat no more," said Chichikov.

"Do you try the veal before you say that you can eat no more."

"But I could not get it down my throat. There is no room left."

"If there be no room in a church for a newcomer, the beadle is sent for, and room is very soon made — yes, even though before there was such a crush that an apple couldn't have been dropped between the people. Do you try the veal, I say. That piece is the titbit of all."

So Chichikov made the attempt; and in very truth the veal was beyond all praise, and room was found for it, even though one would have supposed the feat impossible.

"Fancy this good fellow removing to St. Petersburg or Moscow!" said the guest to himself. "Why, with a scale of living like this, he would be ruined in three years." For that matter, Pietukh might well have been ruined already, for hospitality can dissipate a fortune in three months as easily as it can in three years.

The host also dispensed the wine with a lavish hand, and what the guests did not drink he gave to his sons, who thus swallowed glass after glass. Indeed, even before coming to table, it was possible to discern to what department of human accomplishment their bent was turned. When the meal was over, however, the

guests had no mind for further drinking. Indeed, it was all that they could do to drag themselves on to the balcony, and there to relapse into easy chairs. Indeed, the moment that the host subsided into his seat — it was large enough for four — he fell asleep, and his portly presence, converting itself into a sort of blacksmith's bellows, started to vent, through open mouth and distended nostrils, such sounds as can have greeted the reader's ear but seldom — sounds as of a drum being beaten in combination with the whistling of a flute and the strident howling of a dog.

"Listen to him!" said Platon.

Chichikov smiled.

"Naturally, on such dinners as that," continued the other, "our host does NOT find the time dull. And as soon as dinner is ended there can ensue sleep."

"Yes, but, pardon me, I still fail to understand why you should find life wearisome. There are so many resources against ennui!"

"As for instance?"

"For a young man, dancing, the playing of one or another musical instrument, and — well, yes, marriage."

"Marriage to whom?"

"To some maiden who is both charming and rich. Are there none in these parts?"

"No."

"Then, were I you, I should travel, and seek a maiden elsewhere." And a brilliant idea therewith entered Chichikov's head. "This last resource," he added, "is the best of all resources against ennui."

"What resource are you speaking of?"

"Of travel."

"But whither?"

"Well, should it so please you, you might join me as my companion." This said, the speaker added to himself as he eyed Platon: "Yes, that would suit me exactly, for then I should have half my expenses paid, and could charge him also with the cost of mending the koliaska."

"And whither should we go?"

"In that respect I am not wholly my own master, as I have business to do for others as well as for myself. For instance, General Betristchev — an intimate friend and, I might add, a generous benefactor of mine — has charged me with commissions to certain of his relatives. However, though relatives are relatives, I am travelling likewise on my own account, since I wish to see the world and the whirligig of humanity — which, in spite of what people may say, is as good as a living book or a second education." As a matter of fact, Chichikov was

reflecting, “Yes, the plan is an excellent one. I might even contrive that he should have to bear the whole of our expenses, and that his horses should be used while my own should be put out to graze on his farm.”

“Well, why should I not adopt the suggestion?” was Platon’s thought. “There is nothing for me to do at home, since the management of the estate is in my brother’s hands, and my going would cause him no inconvenience. Yes, why should I not do as Chichikov has suggested?”

Then he added aloud:

“Would you come and stay with my brother for a couple of days? Otherwise he might refuse me his consent.”

“With great pleasure,” said Chichikov. “Or even for three days.”

“Then here is my hand on it. Let us be off at once.” Platon seemed suddenly to have come to life again.

“Where are you off to?” put in their host unexpectedly as he roused himself and stared in astonishment at the pair. “No, no, my good sirs. I have had the wheels removed from your koliaska, Monsieur Chichikov, and have sent your horse, Platon Mikhalitch, to a grazing ground fifteen versts away. Consequently you must spend the night here, and depart to-morrow morning after breakfast.”

What could be done with a man like Pietukh? There was no help for it but to remain. In return, the guests were rewarded with a beautiful spring evening, for, to spend the time, the host organised a boating expedition on the river, and a dozen rowers, with a dozen pairs of oars, conveyed the party (to the accompaniment of song) across the smooth surface of the lake and up a great river with towering banks. From time to time the boat would pass under ropes, stretched across for purposes of fishing, and at each turn of the rippling current new vistas unfolded themselves as tier upon tier of woodland delighted the eye with a diversity of timber and foliage. In unison did the rowers ply their sculls, yet it was though of itself that the skiff shot forward, bird-like, over the glassy surface of the water; while at intervals the broad-shouldered young oarsman who was seated third from the bow would raise, as from a nightingale’s throat, the opening staves of a boat song, and then be joined by five or six more, until the melody had come to pour forth in a volume as free and boundless as Russia herself. And Pietukh, too, would give himself a shake, and help lustily to support the chorus; and even Chichikov felt acutely conscious of the fact that he was a Russian. Only Platon reflected: “What is there so splendid in these melancholy songs? They do but increase one’s depression of spirits.”

The journey homeward was made in the gathering dusk. Rhythmically the oars smote a surface which no longer reflected the sky, and darkness had fallen when they reached the shore, along which lights were twinkling where the fisherfolk

were boiling live eels for soup. Everything had now wended its way homeward for the night; the cattle and poultry had been housed, and the herdsmen, standing at the gates of the village cattle-pens, amid the trailing dust lately raised by their charges, were awaiting the milk-pails and a summons to partake of the eel-broth. Through the dusk came the hum of humankind, and the barking of dogs in other and more distant villages; while, over all, the moon was rising, and the darkened countryside was beginning to glimmer to light again under her beams. What a glorious picture! Yet no one thought of admiring it. Instead of galloping over the countryside on frisky cobs, Nikolasha and Aleksasha were engaged in dreaming of Moscow, with its confectioners' shops and the theatres of which a cadet, newly arrived on a visit from the capital, had just been telling them; while their father had his mind full of how best to stuff his guests with yet more food, and Platon was given up to yawning. Only in Chichikov was a spice of animation visible. "Yes," he reflected, "some day I, too, will become lord of such a country place." And before his mind's eye there arose also a helpmeet and some little Chichikovs.

By the time that supper was finished the party had again over-eaten themselves, and when Chichikov entered the room allotted him for the night, he lay down upon the bed, and prodded his stomach. "It is as tight as a drum," he said to himself. "Not another titbit of veal could now get into it." Also, circumstances had so brought it about that next door to him there was situated his host's apartment; and since the intervening wall was thin, Chichikov could hear every word that was said there. At the present moment the master of the house was engaged in giving the cook orders for what, under the guise of an early breakfast, promised to constitute a veritable dinner. You should have heard Pietukh's behests! They would have excited the appetite of a corpse.

"Yes," he said, sucking his lips, and drawing a deep breath, "in the first place, make a pasty in four divisions. Into one of the divisions put the sturgeon's cheeks and some viaziga , and into another division some buckwheat porridge, young mushrooms and onions, sweet milk, calves' brains, and anything else that you may find suitable — anything else that you may have got handy. Also, bake the pastry to a nice brown on one side, and but lightly on the other. Yes, and, as to the under side, bake it so that it will be all juicy and flaky, so that it shall not crumble into bits, but melt in the mouth like the softest snow that ever you heard of." And as he said this Pietukh fairly smacked his lips.

"The devil take him!" muttered Chichikov, thrusting his head beneath the bedclothes to avoid hearing more. "The fellow won't give one a chance to sleep."

Nevertheless he heard through the blankets:

“And garnish the sturgeon with beetroot, smelts, peppered mushrooms, young radishes, carrots, beans, and anything else you like, so as to have plenty of trimmings. Yes, and put a lump of ice into the pig’s bladder, so as to swell it up.”

Many other dishes did Pietukh order, and nothing was to be heard but his talk of boiling, roasting, and stewing. Finally, just as mention was being made of a turkey cock, Chichikov fell asleep.

Next morning the guest’s state of repletion had reached the point of Platon being unable to mount his horse; wherefore the latter was dispatched homeward with one of Pietukh’s grooms, and the two guests entered Chichikov’s koliaska. Even the dog trotted lazily in the rear; for he, too, had over-eaten himself.

“It has been rather too much of a good thing,” remarked Chichikov as the vehicle issued from the courtyard.

“Yes, and it vexes me to see the fellow never tire of it,” replied Platon.

“Ah,” thought Chichikov to himself, “if *I* had an income of seventy thousand roubles, as you have, I’d very soon give tiredness one in the eye! Take Murazov, the tax-farmer — he, again, must be worth ten millions. What a fortune!”

“Do you mind where we drive?” asked Platon. “I should like first to go and take leave of my sister and my brother-in-law.”

“With pleasure,” said Chichikov.

“My brother-in-law is the leading landowner hereabouts. At the present moment he is drawing an income of two hundred thousand roubles from a property which, eight years ago, was producing a bare twenty thousand.”

“Truly a man worthy of the utmost respect! I shall be most interested to make his acquaintance. To think of it! And what may his family name be?”

“Kostanzhoglo.”

“And his Christian name and patronymic?”

“Constantine Thedorovitch.”

“Constantine Thedorovitch Kostanzhoglo. Yes, it will be a most interesting event to make his acquaintance. To know such a man must be a whole education.”

Here Platon set himself to give Selifan some directions as to the way, a necessary proceeding in view of the fact that Selifan could hardly maintain his seat on the box. Twice Petrushka, too, had fallen headlong, and this necessitated being tied to his perch with a piece of rope. “What a clown!” had been Chichikov’s only comment.

“This is where my brother-in-law’s land begins,” said Platon.

“They give one a change of view.”

And, indeed, from this point the countryside became planted with timber; the rows of trees running as straight as pistol-shots, and having beyond them, and on

higher ground, a second expanse of forest, newly planted like the first; while beyond it, again, loomed a third plantation of older trees. Next there succeeded a flat piece of the same nature.

"All this timber," said Platon, "has grown up within eight or ten years at the most; whereas on another man's land it would have taken twenty to attain the same growth."

"And how has your brother-in-law effected this?"

"You must ask him yourself. He is so excellent a husbandman that nothing ever fails with him. You see, he knows the soil, and also knows what ought to be planted beside what, and what kinds of timber are the best neighbourhood for grain. Again, everything on his estate is made to perform at least three or four different functions. For instance, he makes his timber not only serve as timber, but also serve as a provider of moisture and shade to a given stretch of land, and then as a fertiliser with its fallen leaves. Consequently, when everywhere else there is drought, he still has water, and when everywhere else there has been a failure of the harvest, on his lands it will have proved a success. But it is a pity that I know so little about it all as to be unable to explain to you his many expedients. Folk call him a wizard, for he produces so much. Nevertheless, personally I find what he does uninteresting."

"Truly an astonishing fellow!" reflected Chichikov with a glance at his companion. "It is sad indeed to see a man so superficial as to be unable to explain matters of this kind."

At length the manor appeared in sight — an establishment looking almost like a town, so numerous were the huts where they stood arranged in three tiers, crowned with three churches, and surrounded with huge ricks and barns. "Yes," thought Chichikov to himself, "one can see what a jewel of a landowner lives here." The huts in question were stoutly built and the intervening alleys well laid-out; while, wherever a waggon was visible, it looked serviceable and more or less new. Also, the local peasants bore an intelligent look on their faces, the cattle were of the best possible breed, and even the peasants' pigs belonged to the porcine aristocracy. Clearly there dwelt here peasants who, to quote the song, were accustomed to "pick up silver by the shovelful." Nor were Englishified gardens and parterres and other conceits in evidence, but, on the contrary, there ran an open view from the manor house to the farm buildings and the workmen's cots, so that, after the old Russian fashion, the barin should be able to keep an eye upon all that was going on around him. For the same purpose, the mansion was topped with a tall lantern and a superstructure — a device designed, not for ornament, nor for a vantage-spot for the contemplation of the view, but for supervision of the labourers engaged in distant fields. Lastly, the brisk, active

servants who received the visitors on the verandah were very different menials from the drunken Petrushka, even though they did not wear swallow-tailed coats, but only Cossack tchekmenu of blue homespun cloth.

The lady of the house also issued on to the verandah. With her face of the freshness of "blood and milk" and the brightness of God's daylight, she as nearly resembled Platon as one pea resembles another, save that, whereas he was languid, she was cheerful and full of talk.

"Good day, brother!" she cried. "How glad I am to see you! Constantine is not at home, but will be back presently."

"Where is he?"

"Doing business in the village with a party of factors," replied the lady as she conducted her guests to the drawing-room.

With no little curiosity did Chichikov gaze at the interior of the mansion inhabited by the man who received an annual income of two hundred thousand roubles; for he thought to discern therefrom the nature of its proprietor, even as from a shell one may deduce the species of oyster or snail which has been its tenant, and has left therein its impression. But no such conclusions were to be drawn. The rooms were simple, and even bare. Not a fresco nor a picture nor a bronze nor a flower nor a china what-not nor a book was there to be seen. In short, everything appeared to show that the proprietor of this abode spent the greater part of his time, not between four walls, but in the field, and that he thought out his plans, not in sybaritic fashion by the fireside, nor in an easy chair beside the stove, but on the spot where work was actually in progress — that, in a word, where those plans were conceived, there they were put into execution. Nor in these rooms could Chichikov detect the least trace of a feminine hand, beyond the fact that certain tables and chairs bore drying-boards whereon were arranged some sprinklings of flower petals.

"What is all this rubbish for?" asked Platon.

"It is not rubbish," replied the lady of the house. "On the contrary, it is the best possible remedy for fever. Last year we cured every one of our sick peasants with it. Some of the petals I am going to make into an ointment, and some into an infusion. You may laugh as much as you like at my potting and preserving, yet you yourself will be glad of things of the kind when you set out on your travels."

Platon moved to the piano, and began to pick out a note or two.

"Good Lord, what an ancient instrument!" he exclaimed. "Are you not ashamed of it, sister?"

"Well, the truth is that I get no time to practice my music. You see," she added to Chichikov, "I have an eight-year-old daughter to educate; and to hand her over

to a foreign governess in order that I may have leisure for my own piano-playing — well, that is a thing which I could never bring myself to do."

"You have become a wearisome sort of person," commented Platon, and walked away to the window. "Ah, here comes Constantine," presently he added.

Chichikov also glanced out of the window, and saw approaching the verandah a brisk, swarthy-complexioned man of about forty, a man clad in a rough cloth jacket and a velveteen cap. Evidently he was one of those who care little for the niceties of dress. With him, bareheaded, there came a couple of men of a somewhat lower station in life, and all three were engaged in an animated discussion. One of the barin's two companions was a plain peasant, and the other (clad in a blue Siberian smock) a travelling factor. The fact that the party halted awhile by the entrance steps made it possible to overhear a portion of their conversation from within.

"This is what you peasants had better do," the barin was saying. "Purchase your release from your present master. I will lend you the necessary money, and afterwards you can work for me."

"No, Constantine Thedorovitch," replied the peasant. "Why should we do that? Remove us just as we are. You will know how to arrange it, for a cleverer gentleman than you is nowhere to be found. The misfortune of us muzhiks is that we cannot protect ourselves properly. The tavern-keepers sell us such liquor that, before a man knows where he is, a glassful of it has eaten a hole through his stomach, and made him feel as though he could drink a pail of water. Yes, it knocks a man over before he can look around. Everywhere temptation lies in wait for the peasant, and he needs to be cunning if he is to get through the world at all. In fact, things seem to be contrived for nothing but to make us peasants lose our wits, even to the tobacco which they sell us. What are folk like ourselves to do, Constantine Thedorovitch? I tell you it is terribly difficult for a muzhik to look after himself."

"Listen to me. This is how things are done here. When I take on a serf, I fit him out with a cow and a horse. On the other hand, I demand of him thereafter more than is demanded of a peasant anywhere else. That is to say, first and foremost I make him work. Whether a peasant be working for himself or for me, never do I let him waste time. I myself toil like a bullock, and I force my peasants to do the same, for experience has taught me that that is the only way to get through life. All the mischief in the world comes through lack of employment. Now, do you go and consider the matter, and talk it over with your mir ."

"We have done that already, Constantine Thedorovitch, and our elders' opinion is: 'There is no need for further talk. Every peasant belonging to

Constantine Thedorovitch is well off, and hasn't to work for nothing. The priests of his village, too, are men of good heart, whereas ours have been taken away, and there is no one to bury us.'"

"Nevertheless, do you go and talk the matter over again."

"We will, barin."

Here the factor who had been walking on the barin's other side put in a word.

"Constantine Thedorovitch," he said, "I beg of you to do as I have requested."

"I have told you before," replied the barin, "that I do not care to play the huckster. I am not one of those landowners whom fellows of your sort visit on the very day that the interest on a mortgage is due. Ah, I know your fraternity thoroughly, and know that you keep lists of all who have mortgages to repay. But what is there so clever about that? Any man, if you pinch him sufficiently, will surrender you a mortgage at half-price, — any man, that is to say, except myself, who care nothing for your money. Were a loan of mine to remain out three years, I should never demand a kopeck of interest on it."

"Quite so, Constantine Thedorovitch," replied the factor. "But I am asking this of you more for the purpose of establishing us on a business footing than because I desire to win your favour. Prey, therefore, accept this earnest money of three thousand roubles." And the man drew from his breast pocket a dirty roll of bank-notes, which, carelessly receiving, Kostanzhoglo thrust, uncounted, into the back pocket of his overcoat.

"Hm!" thought Chichikov. "For all he cares, the notes might have been a handkerchief."

When Kostanzhoglo appeared at closer quarters — that is to say, in the doorway of the drawing-room — he struck Chichikov more than ever with the swarthiness of his complexion, the dishevelment of his black, slightly grizzled locks, the alertness of his eye, and the impression of fiery southern origin which his whole personality diffused. For he was not wholly a Russian, nor could he himself say precisely who his forefathers had been. Yet, inasmuch as he accounted genealogical research no part of the science of estate-management, but a mere superfluity, he looked upon himself as, to all intents and purposes, a native of Russia, and the more so since the Russian language was the only tongue he knew.

Platon presented Chichikov, and the pair exchanged greetings.

"To get rid of my depression, Constantine," continued Platon, "I am thinking of accompanying our guest on a tour through a few of the provinces."

"An excellent idea," said Kostanzhoglo. "But precisely whither?" he added, turning hospitably to Chichikov.

"To tell you the truth," replied that personage with an affable inclination of the

head as he smoothed the arm of his chair with his hand, “I am travelling less on my own affairs than on the affairs of others. That is to say, General Betristchev, an intimate friend, and, I might add, a generous benefactor, of mine, has charged me with commissions to some of his relatives. Nevertheless, though relatives are relatives, I may say that I am travelling on my own account as well, in that, in addition to possible benefit to my health, I desire to see the world and the whirligig of humanity, which constitute, so to speak, a living book, a second course of education.”

“Yes, there is no harm in looking at other corners of the world besides one’s own.”

“You speak truly. There IS no harm in such a proceeding. Thereby one may see things which one has not before encountered, one may meet men with whom one has not before come in contact. And with some men of that kind a conversation is as precious a benefit as has been conferred upon me by the present occasion. I come to you, most worthy Constantine Thedorovitch, for instruction, and again for instruction, and beg of you to assuage my thirst with an exposition of the truth as it is. I hunger for the favour of your words as for manna.”

“But how so? What can *I* teach you?” exclaimed Kostanzhoglo in confusion. “I myself was given but the plainest of educations.”

“Nay, most worthy sir, you possess wisdom, and again wisdom. Wisdom only can direct the management of a great estate, that can derive a sound income from the same, that can acquire wealth of a real, not a fictitious, order while also fulfilling the duties of a citizen and thereby earning the respect of the Russian public. All this I pray you to teach me.”

“I tell you what,” said Kostanzhoglo, looking meditatively at his guest. “You had better stay with me for a few days, and during that time I can show you how things are managed here, and explain to you everything. Then you will see for yourself that no great wisdom is required for the purpose.”

“Yes, certainly you must stay here,” put in the lady of the house. Then, turning to her brother, she added: “And you too must stay. Why should you be in such a hurry?”

“Very well,” he replied. “But what say YOU, Paul Ivanovitch?”

“I say the same as you, and with much pleasure,” replied Chichikov. “But also I ought to tell you this: that there is a relative of General Betristchev’s, a certain Colonel Koshkarev — ”

“Yes, we know him; but he is quite mad.”

“As you say, he is mad, and I should not have been intending to visit him, were it not that General Betristchev is an intimate friend of mine, as well as, I

might add, my most generous benefactor."

"Then," said Kostanzhoglo, "do you go and see Colonel Koshkarev NOW. He lives less than ten versts from here, and I have a gig already harnessed. Go to him at once, and return here for tea."

"An excellent idea!" cried Chichikov, and with that he seized his cap.

Half an hour's drive sufficed to bring him to the Colonel's establishment. The village attached to the manor was in a state of utter confusion, since in every direction building and repairing operations were in progress, and the alleys were choked with heaps of lime, bricks, and beams of wood. Also, some of the huts were arranged to resemble offices, and superscribed in gilt letters "Depot for Agricultural Implements," "Chief Office of Accounts," "Estate Works Committee," "Normal School for the Education of Colonists," and so forth.

Chichikov found the Colonel posted behind a desk and holding a pen between his teeth. Without an instant's delay the master of the establishment — who seemed a kindly, approachable man, and accorded to his visitor a very civil welcome — plunged into a recital of the labour which it had cost him to bring the property to its present condition of affluence. Then he went on to lament the fact that he could not make his peasantry understand the incentives to labour which the riches of science and art provide; for instance, he had failed to induce his female serfs to wear corsets, whereas in Germany, where he had resided for fourteen years, every humble miller's daughter could play the piano. None the less, he said, he meant to peg away until every peasant on the estate should, as he walked behind the plough, indulge in a regular course of reading Franklin's Notes on Electricity, Virgil's Georgics, or some work on the chemical properties of soil.

"Good gracious!" mentally exclaimed Chichikov. "Why, I myself have not had time to finish that book by the Duchesse de la Valliere!"

Much else the Colonel said. In particular did he aver that, provided the Russian peasant could be induced to array himself in German costume, science would progress, trade increase, and the Golden Age dawn in Russia.

For a while Chichikov listened with distended eyes. Then he felt constrained to intimate that with all that he had nothing to do, seeing that his business was merely to acquire a few souls, and thereafter to have their purchase confirmed.

"If I understand you aright," said the Colonel, "you wish to present a Statement of Plea?"

"Yes, that is so."

"Then kindly put it into writing, and it shall be forwarded to the Office for the Reception of Reports and Returns. Thereafter that Office will consider it, and return it to me, who will, in turn, dispatch it to the Estate Works Committee, who

will, in turn, revise it, and present it to the Administrator, who, jointly with the Secretary, will — ”

“Pardon me,” expostulated Chichikov, “but that procedure will take up a great deal of time. Why need I put the matter into writing at all? It is simply this. I want a few souls which are — well, which are, so to speak, dead.”

“Very good,” commented the Colonel. “Do you write down in your Statement of Plea that the souls which you desire are, ‘so to speak, dead.’“

“But what would be the use of my doing so? Though the souls are dead, my purpose requires that they should be represented as alive.”

“Very good,” again commented the Colonel. “Do you write down in your Statement that ‘it is necessary’ (or, should you prefer an alternative phrase, ‘it is requested,’ or ‘it is desiderated,’ or ‘it is prayed,’) ‘that the souls be represented as alive.’ At all events, WITHOUT documentary process of that kind, the matter cannot possibly be carried through. Also, I will appoint a Commissioner to guide you round the various Offices.”

And he sounded a bell; whereupon there presented himself a man whom, addressing as “Secretary,” the Colonel instructed to summon the “Commissioner.” The latter, on appearing, was seen to have the air, half of a peasant, half of an official.

“This man,” the Colonel said to Chichikov, “will act as your escort.”

What could be done with a lunatic like Koshkarev? In the end, curiosity moved Chichikov to accompany the Commissioner. The Committee for the Reception of Reports and Returns was discovered to have put up its shutters, and to have locked its doors, for the reason that the Director of the Committee had been transferred to the newly-formed Committee of Estate Management, and his successor had been annexed by the same Committee. Next, Chichikov and his escort rapped at the doors of the Department of Estate Affairs; but that Department’s quarters happened to be in a state of repair, and no one could be made to answer the summons save a drunken peasant from whom not a word of sense was to be extracted. At length the escort felt himself removed to remark:

“There is a deal of foolishness going on here. Fellows like that drunkard lead the barin by the nose, and everything is ruled by the Committee of Management, which takes men from their proper work, and sets them to do any other it likes. Indeed, only through the Committee does ANYTHING get done.”

By this time Chichikov felt that he had seen enough; wherefore he returned to the Colonel, and informed him that the Office for the Reception of Reports and Returns had ceased to exist. At once the Colonel flamed to noble rage. Pressing Chichikov’s hand in token of gratitude for the information which the guest had furnished, he took paper and pen, and noted eight searching questions under

three separate headings: (1) “Why has the Committee of Management presumed to issue orders to officials not under its jurisdiction?” (2) “Why has the Chief Manager permitted his predecessor, though still in retention of his post, to follow him to another Department?” and (3) “Why has the Committee of Estate Affairs suffered the Office for the Reception of Reports and Returns to lapse?”

“Now for a row!” thought Chichikov to himself, and turned to depart; but his host stopped him, saying:

“I cannot let you go, for, in addition to my honour having become involved, it behoves me to show my people how the regular, the organised, administration of an estate may be conducted. Herewith I will hand over the conduct of your affair to a man who is worth all the rest of the staff put together, and has had a university education. Also, the better to lose no time, may I humbly beg you to step into my library, where you will find notebooks, paper, pens, and everything else that you may require. Of these articles pray make full use, for you are a gentleman of letters, and it is your and my joint duty to bring enlightenment to all.”

So saying, he ushered his guest into a large room lined from floor to ceiling with books and stuffed specimens. The books in question were divided into sections — a section on forestry, a section on cattle-breeding, a section on the raising of swine, and a section on horticulture, together with special journals of the type circulated merely for the purposes of reference, and not for general reading. Perceiving that these works were scarcely of a kind calculated to while away an idle hour, Chichikov turned to a second bookcase. But to do so was to fall out of the frying-pan into the fire, for the contents of the second bookcase proved to be works on philosophy, while, in particular, six huge volumes confronted him under a label inscribed “A Preparatory Course to the Province of Thought, with the Theory of Community of Effort, Co-operation, and Subsistence, in its Application to a Right Understanding of the Organic Principles of a Mutual Division of Social Productivity.” Indeed, wheresoever Chichikov looked, every page presented to his vision some such words as “phenomenon,” “development,” “abstract,” “contents,” and “synopsis.” “This is not the sort of thing for me,” he murmured, and turned his attention to a third bookcase, which contained books on the Arts. Extracting a huge tome in which some by no means reticent mythological illustrations were contained, he set himself to examine these pictures. They were of the kind which pleases mostly middle-aged bachelors and old men who are accustomed to seek in the ballet and similar frivolities a further spur to their waning passions. Having concluded his examination, Chichikov had just extracted another volume of the same species when Colonel Koshkarev returned with a document of some sort and a radiant

countenance.

“Everything has been carried through in due form!” he cried. “The man whom I mentioned is a genius indeed, and I intend not only to promote him over the rest, but also to create for him a special Department. Herewith shall you hear what a splendid intellect is his, and how in a few minutes he has put the whole affair in order.”

“May the Lord be thanked for that!” thought Chichikov. Then he settled himself while the Colonel read aloud:

“‘After giving full consideration to the Reference which your Excellency has entrusted to me, I have the honour to report as follows:

“‘(1) In the Statement of Plea presented by one Paul Ivanovitch Chichikov, Gentleman, Chevalier, and Collegiate Councillor, there lurks an error, in that an oversight has led the Petitioner to apply to Revisional Souls the term “Dead.” Now, from the context it would appear that by this term the Petitioner desires to signify Souls Approaching Death rather than Souls Actually Deceased: wherefore the term employed betrays such an empirical instruction in letters as must, beyond doubt, have been confined to the Village School, seeing that in truth the Soul is Deathless.’

“The rascal!” Koshkarev broke off to exclaim delightedly. “He has got you there, Monsieur Chichikov. And you will admit that he has a sufficiently incisive pen?

“‘(2) On this Estate there exist no Unmortgaged Souls whatsoever, whether Approaching Death or Otherwise; for the reason that all Souls thereon have been pledged not only under a First Deed of Mortgage, but also (for the sum of One Hundred and Fifty Roubles per Soul) under a Second, — the village of Gurmailovka alone excepted, in that, in consequence of a Suit having been brought against Landowner Priadistchev, and of a caveat having been pronounced by the Land Court, and of such caveat having been published in No. 42 of the Gazette of Moscow, the said Village has come within the Jurisdiction of the Court Above-Mentioned.”

“Why did you not tell me all this before?” cried Chichikov furiously. “Why you have kept me dancing about for nothing?”

“Because it was absolutely necessary that you should view the matter through forms of documentary process. This is no jest on my part. The inexperienced may see things subconsciously, yet is imperative that he should also see them CONSCIOUSLY.”

But to Chichikov’s patience an end had come. Seizing his cap, and casting all ceremony to the winds, he fled from the house, and rushed through the courtyard. As it happened, the man who had driven him thither had, warned by

experience, not troubled even to take out the horses, since he knew that such a proceeding would have entailed not only the presentation of a Statement of Plea for fodder, but also a delay of twenty-four hours until the Resolution granting the same should have been passed. Nevertheless the Colonel pursued his guest to the gates, and pressed his hand warmly as he thanked him for having enabled him (the Colonel) thus to exhibit in operation the proper management of an estate. Also, he begged to state that, under the circumstances, it was absolutely necessary to keep things moving and circulating, since, otherwise, slackness was apt to supervene, and the working of the machine to grow rusty and feeble; but that, in spite of all, the present occasion had inspired him with a happy idea — namely, the idea of instituting a Committee which should be entitled "The Committee of Supervision of the Committee of Management," and which should have for its function the detection of backsliders among the body first mentioned.

It was late when, tired and dissatisfied, Chichikov regained Kostanzhoglo's mansion. Indeed, the candles had long been lit.

"What has delayed you?" asked the master of the house as Chichikov entered the drawing-room.

"Yes, what has kept you and the Colonel so long in conversation together?" added Platon.

"This — the fact that never in my life have I come across such an imbecile," was Chichikov's reply.

"Never mind," said Kostanzhoglo. "Koshkarev is a most reassuring phenomenon. He is necessary in that in him we see expressed in caricature all the more crying follies of our intellectuals — of the intellectuals who, without first troubling to make themselves acquainted with their own country, borrow silliness from abroad. Yet that is how certain of our landowners are now carrying on. They have set up 'offices' and factories and schools and 'commissions,' and the devil knows what else besides. A fine lot of wiseacres! After the French War in 1812 they had to reconstruct their affairs: and see how they have done it! Yet so much worse have they done it than a Frenchman would have done that any fool of a Peter Petrovitch Pietukh now ranks as a good landowner!"

"But he has mortgaged the whole of his estate?" remarked Chichikov.

"Yes, nowadays everything is being mortgaged, or is going to be." This said, Kostanzhoglo's temper rose still further. "Out upon your factories of hats and candles!" he cried. "Out upon procuring candle-makers from London, and then turning landowners into hucksters! To think of a Russian pomiestchik , a member of the noblest of callings, conducting workshops and cotton mills! Why, it is for the wenches of towns to handle looms for muslin and lace."

“But you yourself maintain workshops?” remarked Platon.

“I do; but who established them? They established themselves. For instance, wool had accumulated, and since I had nowhere to store it, I began to weave it into cloth — but, mark you, only into good, plain cloth of which I can dispose at a cheap rate in the local markets, and which is needed by peasants, including my own. Again, for six years on end did the fish factories keep dumping their offal on my bank of the river; wherefore, at last, as there was nothing to be done with it, I took to boiling it into glue, and cleared forty thousand roubles by the process.”

“The devil!” thought Chichikov to himself as he stared at his host. “What a fist this man has for making money!”

“Another reason why I started those factories,” continued Kostanzhoglo, “is that they might give employment to many peasants who would otherwise have starved. You see, the year happened to have been a lean one — thanks to those same industry-mongering landowners, in that they had neglected to sow their crops; and now my factories keep growing at the rate of a factory a year, owing to the circumstance that such quantities of remnants and cuttings become so accumulated that, if a man looks carefully to his management, he will find every sort of rubbish to be capable of bringing in a return — yes, to the point of his having to reject money on the plea that he has no need of it. Yet I do not find that to do all this I require to build a mansion with facades and pillars!”

“Marvellous!” exclaimed Chichikov. “Beyond all things does it surprise me that refuse can be so utilised.”

“Yes, and that is what can be done by SIMPLE methods. But nowadays every one is a mechanic, and wants to open that money chest with an instrument instead of simply. For that purpose he hies him to England. Yes, THAT is the thing to do. What folly!” Kostanzhoglo spat and added: “Yet when he returns from abroad he is a hundred times more ignorant than when he went.”

“Ah, Constantine,” put in his wife anxiously, “you know how bad for you it is to talk like this.”

“Yes, but how am I to help losing my temper? The thing touches me too closely, it vexes me too deeply to think that the Russian character should be degenerating. For in that character there has dawned a sort of Quixotism which never used to be there. Yes, no sooner does a man get a little education into his head than he becomes a Don Quixote, and establishes schools on his estate such as even a madman would never have dreamed of. And from that school there issues a workman who is good for nothing, whether in the country or in the town — a fellow who drinks and is for ever standing on his dignity. Yet still our landowners keep taking to philanthropy, to converting themselves into

philanthropic knights-errant, and spending millions upon senseless hospitals and institutions, and so ruining themselves and turning their families adrift. Yes, that is all that comes of philanthropy."

Chichikov's business had nothing to do with the spread of enlightenment, he was but seeking an opportunity to inquire further concerning the putting of refuse to lucrative uses; but Kostanzhoglo would not let him get a word in edgeways, so irresistibly did the flow of sarcastic comment pour from the speaker's lips.

"Yes," went on Kostanzhoglo, "folk are always scheming to educate the peasant. But first make him well-off and a good farmer. THEN he will educate himself fast enough. As things are now, the world has grown stupid to a degree that passes belief. Look at the stuff our present-day scribblers write! Let any sort of a book be published, and at once you will see every one making a rush for it. Similarly will you find folk saying: 'The peasant leads an over-simple life. He ought to be familiarised with luxuries, and so led to yearn for things above his station.' And the result of such luxuries will be that the peasant will become a rag rather than a man, and suffer from the devil only knows what diseases, until there will remain in the land not a boy of eighteen who will not have experienced the whole gamut of them, and found himself left with not a tooth in his jaws or a hair on his pate. Yes, that is what will come of infecting the peasant with such rubbish. But, thank God, there is still one healthy class left to us — a class which has never taken up with the 'advantages' of which I speak. For that we ought to be grateful. And since, even yet, the Russian agriculturist remains the most respect-worthy man in the land, why should he be touched? Would to God every one were an agriculturist!"

"Then you believe agriculture to be the most profitable of occupations?" said Chichikov.

"The best, at all events — if not the most profitable. 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou till the land.' To quote that requires no great wisdom, for the experience of ages has shown us that, in the agricultural calling, man has ever remained more moral, more pure, more noble than in any other. Of course I do not mean to imply that no other calling ought to be practised: simply that the calling in question lies at the root of all the rest. However much factories may be established privately or by the law, there will still lie ready to man's hand all that he needs — he will still require none of those amenities which are sapping the vitality of our present-day folk, nor any of those industrial establishments which make their profit, and keep themselves going, by causing foolish measures to be adopted which, in the end, are bound to deprave and corrupt our unfortunate masses. I myself am determined never to establish any manufacture, however

profitable, which will give rise to a demand for ‘higher things,’ such as sugar and tobacco — no not if I lose a million by my refusing to do so. If corruption MUST overtake the MIR, it shall not be through my hands. And I think that God will justify me in my resolve. Twenty years have I lived among the common folk, and I know what will inevitably come of such things.”

“But what surprises me most,” persisted Chichikov, “is that from refuse it should be possible, with good management, to make such an immensity of profit.”

“And as for political economy,” continued Kostanzhoglo, without noticing him, and with his face charged with bilious sarcasm, “ — as for political economy, it is a fine thing indeed. Just one fool sitting on another fool’s back, and flogging him along, even though the rider can see no further than his own nose! Yet into the saddle will that fool climb — spectacles and all! Oh, the folly, the folly of such things!” And the speaker spat derisively.

“That may be true,” said his wife. “Yet you must not get angry about it. Surely one can speak on such subjects without losing one’s temper?”

“As I listen to you, most worthy Constantine Thedorovitch,” Chichikov hastened to remark, “it becomes plain to me that you have penetrated into the meaning of life, and laid your finger upon the essential root of the matter. Yet supposing, for a moment, we leave the affairs of humanity in general, and turn our attention to a purely individual affair, might I ask you how, in the case of a man becoming a landowner, and having a mind to grow wealthy as quickly as possible (in order that he may fulfil his bounden obligations as a citizen), he can best set about it?”

“How he can best set about growing wealthy?” repeated Kostanzhoglo. “Why, — ”

“Let us go to supper,” interrupted the lady of the house, rising from her chair, and moving towards the centre of the room, where she wrapped her shivering young form in a shawl. Chichikov sprang up with the alacrity of a military man, offered her his arm, and escorted her, as on parade, to the dining-room, where awaiting them there was the soup-toureen. From it the lid had just been removed, and the room was redolent of the fragrant odour of early spring roots and herbs. The company took their seats, and at once the servants placed the remainder of the dishes (under covers) upon the table and withdrew, for Kostanzhoglo hated to have servants listening to their employers’ conversation, and objected still more to their staring at him all the while that he was eating.

When the soup had been consumed, and glasses of an excellent vintage resembling Hungarian wine had been poured out, Chichikov said to his host:

“Most worthy sir, allow me once more to direct your attention to the subject of

which we were speaking at the point when the conversation became interrupted. You will remember that I was asking you how best a man can set about, proceed in, the matter of growing...”

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... “A property for which, had he asked forty thousand, I should still have demanded a reduction.”

“Hm!” thought Chichikov; then added aloud: “But why do you not purchase it yourself?”

“Because to everything there must be assigned a limit. Already my property keeps me sufficiently employed. Moreover, I should cause our local dvoriane to begin crying out in chorus that I am exploiting their extremities, their ruined position, for the purpose of acquiring land for under its value. Of that I am weary.”

“How readily folk speak evil!” exclaimed Chichikov.

“Yes, and the amount of evil-speaking in our province surpasses belief. Never will you hear my name mentioned without my being called also a miser and a usurer of the worst possible sort; whereas my accusers justify themselves in everything, and say that, ‘though we have wasted our money, we have started a demand for the higher amenities of life, and therefore encouraged industry with our wastefulness, a far better way of doing things than that practised by Kostanzhoglo, who lives like a pig.’“

“Would *I* could live in your ‘piggish’ fashion!” ejaculated Chichikov.

“And so forth, and so forth. Yet what are the ‘higher amenities of life’? What good can they do to any one? Even if a landowner of the day sets up a library, he never looks at a single book in it, but soon relapses into card-playing — the usual pursuit. Yet folk call me names simply because I do not waste my means upon the giving of dinners! One reason why I do not give such dinners is that they weary me; and another reason is that I am not used to them. But come you to my house for the purpose of taking pot luck, and I shall be delighted to see you. Also, folk foolishly say that I lend money on interest; whereas the truth is that if you should come to me when you are really in need, and should explain to me openly how you propose to employ my money, and I should perceive that you are purposing to use that money wisely, and that you are really likely to profit thereby — well, in that case you would find me ready to lend you all that you might ask without interest at all.”

“That is a thing which it is well to know,” reflected Chichikov.

“Yes,” repeated Kostanzhoglo, “under those circumstances I should never refuse you my assistance. But I do object to throwing my money to the winds. Pardon me for expressing myself so plainly. To think of lending money to a man

who is merely devising a dinner for his mistress, or planning to furnish his house like a lunatic, or thinking of taking his paramour to a masked ball or a jubilee in honour of some one who had better never have been born!”

And, spitting, he came near to venting some expression which would scarcely have been becoming in the presence of his wife. Over his face the dark shadow of hypochondria had cast a cloud, and furrows had formed on his brow and temples, and his every gesture bespoke the influence of a hot, nervous rancour.

“But allow me once more to direct your attention to the subject of our recently interrupted conversation,” persisted Chichikov as he sipped a glass of excellent raspberry wine. “That is to say, supposing I were to acquire the property which you have been good enough to bring to my notice, how long would it take me to grow rich?”

“That would depend on yourself,” replied Kostanzhoglo with grim abruptness and evident ill-humour. “You might either grow rich quickly or you might never grow rich at all. If you made up your mind to grow rich, sooner or later you would find yourself a wealthy man.”

“Indeed?” ejaculated Chichikov.

“Yes,” replied Kostanzhoglo, as sharply as though he were angry with Chichikov. “You would merely need to be fond of work: otherwise you would effect nothing. The main thing is to like looking after your property. Believe me, you would never grow weary of doing so. People would have it that life in the country is dull; whereas, if I were to spend a single day as it is spent by some folk, with their stupid clubs and their restaurants and their theatres, I should die of ennui. The fools, the idiots, the generations of blind dullards! But a landowner never finds the days wearisome — he has not the time. In his life not a moment remains unoccupied; it is full to the brim. And with it all goes an endless variety of occupations. And what occupations! Occupations which genuinely uplift the soul, seeing that the landowner walks with nature and the seasons of the year, and takes part in, and is intimate with, everything which is evolved by creation. For let us look at the round of the year’s labours. Even before spring has arrived there will have begun a general watching and a waiting for it, and a preparing for sowing, and an apportioning of crops, and a measuring of seed grain by byres, and drying of seed, and a dividing of the workers into teams. For everything needs to be examined beforehand, and calculations must be made at the very start. And as soon as ever the ice shall have melted, and the rivers be flowing, and the land have dried sufficiently to be workable, the spade will begin its task in kitchen and flower garden, and the plough and the harrow their tasks in the field; until everywhere there will be tilling and sowing and planting. And do you understand what the sum of that labour will mean? It will mean that the harvest

is being sown, that the welfare of the world is being sown, that the food of millions is being put into the earth. And thereafter will come summer, the season of reaping, endless reaping; for suddenly the crops will have ripened, and rye-sheaf will be lying heaped upon rye-sheaf, with, elsewhere, stocks of barley, and of oats, and of wheat. And everything will be teeming with life, and not a moment will there need to be lost, seeing that, had you even twenty eyes, you would have need for them all. And after the harvest festivities there will be grain to be carted to byre or stacked in ricks, and stores to be prepared for the winter, and storehouses and kilns and cattle-sheds to be cleaned for the same purpose, and the women to be assigned their tasks, and the totals of everything to be calculated, so that one may see the value of what has been done. And lastly will come winter, when in every threshing-floor the flail will be working, and the grain, when threshed, will need to be carried from barn to binn, and the mills require to be seen to, and the estate factories to be inspected, and the workmen's huts to be visited for the purpose of ascertaining how the muzhik is faring (for, given a carpenter who is clever with his tools, I, for one, am only too glad to spend an hour or two in his company, so cheering to me is labour). And if, in addition, one discerns the end to which everything is moving, and the manner in which the things of earth are everywhere multiplying and multiplying, and bringing forth more and more fruit to one's profiting, I cannot adequately express what takes place in a man's soul. And that, not because of the growth in his wealth — money is money and no more — but because he will feel that everything is the work of his own hands, and that he has been the cause of everything, and its creator, and that from him, as from a magician, there has flowed bounty and goodness for all. In what other calling will you find such delights in prospect?" As he spoke, Kostanzhoglo raised his face, and it became clear that the wrinkles had fled from it, and that, like the Tsar on the solemn day of his crowning, Kostanzhoglo's whole form was diffusing light, and his features had in them a gentle radiance. "In all the world," he repeated, "you will find no joys like these, for herein man imitates the God who projected creation as the supreme happiness, and now demands of man that he, too, should act as the creator of prosperity. Yet there are folk who call such functions tedious!"

Kostanzhoglo's mellifluous periods fell upon Chichikov's ear like the notes of a bird of paradise. From time to time he gulped, and his softened eyes expressed the pleasure which it gave him to listen.

"Constantine, it is time to leave the table," said the lady of the house, rising from her seat. Every one followed her example, and Chichikov once again acted as his hostess's escort — although with less dexterity of deportment than before, owing to the fact that this time his thoughts were occupied with more essential

matters of procedure.

“In spite of what you say,” remarked Platon as he walked behind the pair, “I, for my part, find these things wearisome.”

But the master of the house paid no attention to his remark, for he was reflecting that his guest was no fool, but a man of serious thought and speech who did not take things lightly. And, with the thought, Kostanzhoglo grew lighter in soul, as though he had warmed himself with his own words, and were exulting in the fact that he had found some one capable of listening to good advice.

When they had settled themselves in the cosy, candle-lighted drawing-room, with its balcony and the glass door opening out into the garden — a door through which the stars could be seen glittering amid the slumbering tops of the trees — Chichikov felt more comfortable than he had done for many a day past. It was as though, after long journeying, his own roof-tree had received him once more — had received him when his quest had been accomplished, when all that he wished for had been gained, when his travelling-staff had been laid aside with the words “It is finished.” And of this seductive frame of mind the true source had been the eloquent discourse of his hospitable host. Yes, for every man there exist certain things which, instantly that they are said, seem to touch him more closely, more intimately, than anything has done before. Nor is it an uncommon occurrence that in the most unexpected fashion, and in the most retired of retreats, one will suddenly come face to face with a man whose burning periods will lead one to forget oneself and the tracklessness of the route and the discomfort of one’s nightly halting-places, and the futility of crazes and the falseness of tricks by which one human being deceives another. And at once there will become engraven upon one’s memory — vividly, and for all time — the evening thus spent. And of that evening one’s remembrance will hold true, both as to who was present, and where each such person sat, and what he or she was wearing, and what the walls and the stove and other trifling features of the room looked like.

In the same way did Chichikov note each detail that evening — both the appointments of the agreeable, but not luxuriously furnished, room, and the good-humoured expression which reigned on the face of the thoughtful host, and the design of the curtains, and the amber-mounted pipe smoked by Platon, and the way in which he kept puffing smoke into the fat jowl of the dog Yarb, and the sneeze which, on each such occasion, Yarb vented, and the laughter of the pleasant-faced hostess (though always followed by the words “Pray do not tease him any more”) and the cheerful candle-light, and the cricket chirping in a corner, and the glass door, and the spring night which, laying its elbows upon the

tree-tops, and spangled with stars, and vocal with the nightingales which were pouring forth warbled ditties from the recesses of the foliage, kept glancing through the door, and regarding the company within.

“How it delights me to hear your words, good Constantine Thedorovitch!” said Chichikov. “Indeed, nowhere in Russia have I met with a man of equal intellect.”

Kostanzhoglo smiled, while realising that the compliment was scarcely deserved.

“If you want a man of GENUINE intellect,” he said, “I can tell you of one. He is a man whose boot soles are worth more than my whole body.”

“Who may he be?” asked Chichikov in astonishment.

“Murazov, our local Commissioner of Taxes.”

“Ah! I have heard of him before,” remarked Chichikov.

“He is a man who, were he not the director of an estate, might well be a director of the Empire. And were the Empire under my direction, I should at once appoint him my Minister of Finance.”

“I have heard tales beyond belief concerning him — for instance, that he has acquired ten million roubles.”

“Ten? More than forty. Soon half Russia will be in his hands.”

“You don’t say so?” cried Chichikov in amazement.

“Yes, certainly. The man who has only a hundred thousand roubles to work with grows rich but slowly, whereas he who has millions at his disposal can operate over a greater radius, and so back whatsoever he undertakes with twice or thrice the money which can be brought against him. Consequently his field becomes so spacious that he ends by having no rivals. Yes, no one can compete with him, and, whatsoever price he may fix for a given commodity, at that price it will have to remain, nor will any man be able to outbid it.”

“My God!” muttered Chichikov, crossing himself, and staring at Kostanzhoglo with his breath catching in his throat. “The mind cannot grasp it — it petrifies one’s thoughts with awe. You see folk marvelling at what Science has achieved in the matter of investigating the habits of cowbugs, but to me it is a far more marvellous thing that in the hands of a single mortal there can become accumulated such gigantic sums of money. But may I ask whether the great fortune of which you speak has been acquired through honest means?”

“Yes; through means of the most irreproachable kind — through the most honourable of methods.”

“Yet so improbable does it seem that I can scarcely believe it. Thousands I could understand, but millions — !”

“On the contrary, to make thousands honestly is a far more difficult matter

than to make millions. Millions are easily come by, for a millionaire has no need to resort to crooked ways; the way lies straight before him, and he needs but to annex whatsoever he comes across. No rival will spring up to oppose him, for no rival will be sufficiently strong, and since the millionaire can operate over an extensive radius, he can bring (as I have said) two or three roubles to bear upon any one else's one. Consequently, what interest will he derive from a thousand roubles? Why, ten or twenty per cent. at the least."

"And it is beyond measure marvellous that the whole should have started from a single kopeck."

"Had it started otherwise, the thing could never have been done at all. Such is the normal course. He who is born with thousands, and is brought up to thousands, will never acquire a single kopeck more, for he will have been set up with the amenities of life in advance, and so never come to stand in need of anything. It is necessary to begin from the beginning rather than from the middle; from a kopeck rather than from a rouble; from the bottom rather than from the top. For only thus will a man get to know the men and conditions among which his career will have to be carved. That is to say, through encountering the rough and the tumble of life, and through learning that every kopeck has to be beaten out with a three-kopeck nail, and through worsting knave after knave, he will acquire such a degree of perspicuity and wariness that he will err in nothing which he may tackle, and never come to ruin. Believe me, it is so. The beginning, and not the middle, is the right starting point. No one who comes to me and says, 'Give me a hundred thousand roubles, and I will grow rich in no time,' do I believe, for he is likely to meet with failure rather than with the success of which he is so assured. 'Tis with a kopeck, and with a kopeck only, that a man must begin."

"If that is so, *I* shall grow rich," said Chichikov, involuntarily remembering the dead souls. "For of a surety *I* began with nothing."

"Constantine, pray allow Paul Ivanovitch to retire to rest," put in the lady of the house. "It is high time, and I am sure you have talked enough."

"Yes, beyond a doubt you will grow rich," continued Kostanzhoglo, without heeding his wife. "For towards you there will run rivers and rivers of gold, until you will not know what to do with all your gains."

As though spellbound, Chichikov sat in an aureate world of ever-growing dreams and fantasies. All his thoughts were in a whirl, and on a carpet of future wealth his tumultuous imagination was weaving golden patterns, while ever in his ears were ringing the words, "towards you there will run rivers and rivers of gold."

"Really, Constantine, DO allow Paul Ivanovitch to go to bed."

“What on earth is the matter?” retorted the master of the household testily. “Pray go yourself if you wish to.” Then he stopped short, for the snoring of Platon was filling the whole room, and also — outrivalling it — that of the dog Yarb. This caused Kostanzhoglo to realise that bedtime really had arrived; wherefore, after he had shaken Platon out of his slumbers, and bidden Chichikov good night, all dispersed to their several chambers, and became plunged in sleep.

All, that is to say, except Chichikov, whose thoughts remained wakeful, and who kept wondering and wondering how best he could become the owner, not of a fictitious, but of a real, estate. The conversation with his host had made everything clear, had made the possibility of his acquiring riches manifest, had made the difficult art of estate management at once easy and understandable; until it would seem as though particularly was his nature adapted for mastering the art in question. All that he would need to do would be to mortgage the dead souls, and then to set up a genuine establishment. Already he saw himself acting and administering as Kostanzhoglo had advised him — energetically, and through personal oversight, and undertaking nothing new until the old had been thoroughly learned, and viewing everything with his own eyes, and making himself familiar with each member of his peasantry, and abjuring all superfluities, and giving himself up to hard work and husbandry. Yes, already could he taste the pleasure which would be his when he had built up a complete industrial organisation, and the springs of the industrial machine were in vigorous working order, and each had become able to reinforce the other. Labour should be kept in active operation, and, even as, in a mill, flour comes flowing from grain, so should cash, and yet more cash, come flowing from every atom of refuse and remnant. And all the while he could see before him the landowner who was one of the leading men in Russia, and for whom he had conceived such an unbounded respect. Hitherto only for rank or for opulence had Chichikov respected a man — never for mere intellectual power; but now he made a first exception in favour of Kostanzhoglo, seeing that he felt that nothing undertaken by his host could possibly come to naught. And another project which was occupying Chichikov’s mind was the project of purchasing the estate of a certain landowner named Khlobuev. Already Chichikov had at his disposal ten thousand roubles, and a further fifteen thousand he would try and borrow of Kostanzhoglo (seeing that the latter had himself said that he was prepared to help any one who really desired to grow rich); while, as for the remainder, he would either raise the sum by mortgaging the estate or force Khlobuev to wait for it — just to tell him to resort to the courts if such might be his pleasure.

Long did our hero ponder the scheme; until at length the slumber which had, these four hours past, been holding the rest of the household in its embraces

enfolded also Chichikov, and he sank into oblivion.

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CHAPTER IV

Next day, with Platon and Constantine, Chichikov set forth to interview Khlobuev, the owner whose estate Constantine had consented to help Chichikov to purchase with a non-interest-bearing, uncovenanted loan of ten thousand roubles. Naturally, our hero was in the highest of spirits. For the first fifteen versts or so the road led through forest land and tillage belonging to Platon and his brother-in-law; but directly the limit of these domains was reached, forest land began to be replaced with swamp, and tillage with waste. Also, the village in Khlobuev's estate had about it a deserted air, and as for the proprietor himself, he was discovered in a state of drowsy dishevelment, having not long left his bed. A man of about forty, he had his cravat crooked, his frockcoat adorned with a large stain, and one of his boots worn through. Nevertheless he seemed delighted to see his visitors.

"What?" he exclaimed. "Constantine Thedorovitch and Platon Mikhalitch? Really I must rub my eyes! Never again in this world did I look to see callers arriving. As a rule, folk avoid me like the devil, for they cannot disabuse their minds of the idea that I am going to ask them for a loan. Yes, it is my own fault, I know, but what would you? To the end will swine cheat swine. Pray excuse my costume. You will observe that my boots are in holes. But how can I afford to get them mended?"

"Never mind," said Constantine. "We have come on business only. May I present to you a possible purchaser of your estate, in the person of Paul Ivanovitch Chichikov?"

"I am indeed glad to meet you!" was Khlobuev's response. "Pray shake hands with me, Paul Ivanovitch."

Chichikov offered one hand, but not both.

"I can show you a property worth your attention," went on the master of the estate. "May I ask if you have yet dined?"

"Yes, we have," put in Constantine, desirous of escaping as soon as possible. "To save you further trouble, let us go and view the estate at once."

"Very well," replied Khlobuev. "Pray come and inspect my irregularities and futilities. You have done well to dine beforehand, for not so much as a fowl is left in the place, so dire are the extremities to which you see me reduced."

Sighing deeply, he took Platon by the arm (it was clear that he did not look for any sympathy from Constantine) and walked ahead, while Constantine and

Chichikov followed.

“Things are going hard with me, Platon Mikhalitch,” continued Khlobuev. “How hard you cannot imagine. No money have I, no food, no boots. Were I still young and a bachelor, it would have come easy to me to live on bread and cheese; but when a man is growing old, and has got a wife and five children, such trials press heavily upon him, and, in spite of himself, his spirits sink.”

“But, should you succeed in selling the estate, that would help to put you right, would it not?” said Platon.

“How could it do so?” replied Khlobuev with a despairing gesture. “What I might get for the property would have to go towards discharging my debts, and I should find myself left with less than a thousand roubles besides.”

“Then what do you intend to do?”

“God knows.”

“But is there NOTHING to which you could set your hand in order to clear yourself of your difficulties?”

“How could there be?”

“Well, you might accept a Government post.”

“Become a provincial secretary, you mean? How could I obtain such a post? They would not offer me one of the meanest possible kind. Even supposing that they did, how could I live on a salary of five hundred roubles — I who have a wife and five children?”

“Then try and obtain a bailiff’s post.”

“Who would entrust their property to a man who has squandered his own estate?”

“Nevertheless, when death and destitution threaten, a man must either do something or starve. Shall I ask my brother to use his influence to procure you a post?”

“No, no, Platon Mikhalitch,” sighed Khlobuev, gripping the other’s hand. “I am no longer serviceable — I am grown old before my time, and find that liver and rheumatism are paying me for the sins of my youth. Why should the Government be put to a loss on my account? — not to speak of the fact that for every salaried post there are countless numbers of applicants. God forbid that, in order to provide me with a livelihood further burdens should be imposed upon an impoverished public!”

“Such are the results of improvident management!” thought Platon to himself. “The disease is even worse than my slothfulness.”

Meanwhile Kostanzhoglo, walking by Chichikov’s side, was almost taking leave of his senses.

“Look at it!” he cried with a wave of his hand. “See to what wretchedness the

peasant has become reduced! Should cattle disease come, Khlobuev will have nothing to fall back upon, but will be forced to sell his all — to leave the peasant without a horse, and therefore without the means to labour, even though the loss of a single day's work may take years of labour to rectify. Meanwhile it is plain that the local peasant has become a mere dissolute, lazy drunkard. Give a muzhik enough to live upon for twelve months without working, and you will corrupt him for ever, so inured to rags and vagrancy will he grow. And what is the good of that piece of pasture there — of that piece on the further side of those huts? It is a mere flooded tract. Were it mine, I should put it under flax, and clear five thousand roubles, or else sow it with turnips, and clear, perhaps, four thousand. And see how the rye is drooping, and nearly laid. As for wheat, I am pretty sure that he has not sown any. Look, too, at those ravines! Were they mine, they would be standing under timber which even a rook could not top. To think of wasting such quantities of land! Where land wouldn't bear corn, I should dig it up, and plant it with vegetables. What ought to be done is that Khlobuev ought to take a spade into his own hands, and to set his wife and children and servants to do the same; and even if they died of the exertion, they would at least die doing their duty, and not through guzzling at the dinner table."

This said, Kostanzhoglo spat, and his brow flushed with grim indignation.

Presently they reached an elevation whence the distant flashing of a river, with its flood waters and subsidiary streams, caught the eye, while, further off, a portion of General Betristchev's homestead could be discerned among the trees, and, over it, a blue, densely wooded hill which Chichikov guessed to be the spot where Tientietnikov's mansion was situated.

"This is where I should plant timber," said Chichikov. "And, regarded as a site for a manor house, the situation could scarcely be beaten for beauty of view."

"You seem to get great store upon views and beauty," remarked Kostanzhoglo with reproof in his tone. "Should you pay too much attention to those things, you might find yourself without crops or view. Utility should be placed first, not beauty. Beauty will come of itself. Take, for example, towns. The fairest and most beautiful towns are those which have built themselves — those in which each man has built to suit his own exclusive circumstances and needs; whereas towns which men have constructed on regular, string-taut lines are no better than collections of barracks. Put beauty aside, and look only to what is NECESSARY."

"Yes, but to me it would always be irksome to have to wait. All the time that I was doing so I should be hungering to see in front of the me the sort of prospect which I prefer."

"Come, come! Are you a man of twenty-five — you who have served as a

tchinovnik in St. Petersburg? Have patience, have patience. For six years work, and work hard. Plant, sow, and dig the earth without taking a moment's rest. It will be difficult, I know — yes, difficult indeed; but at the end of that time, if you have thoroughly stirred the soil, the land will begin to help you as nothing else can do. That is to say, over and above your seventy or so pairs of hands, there will begin to assist in the work seven hundred pairs of hands which you cannot see. Thus everything will be multiplied tenfold. I myself have ceased even to have to lift a finger, for whatsoever needs to be done gets done of itself. Nature loves patience: always remember that. It is a law given her of God Himself, who has blessed all those who are strong to endure."

"To hear your words is to be both encouraged and strengthened," said Chichikov. To this Kostanzhoglo made no reply, but presently went on:

"And see how that piece of land has been ploughed! To stay here longer is more than I can do. For me, to have to look upon such want of orderliness and foresight is death. Finish your business with Khlobuev without me, and whatsoever you do, get this treasure out of that fool's hands as quickly as possible, for he is dishonouring God's gifts."

And Kostanzhoglo, his face dark with the rage that was seething in his excitable soul, left Chichikov, and caught up the owner of the establishment.

"What, Constantine Thedorovitch?" cried Khlobuev in astonishment. "Just arrived, you are going already?"

"Yes; I cannot help it; urgent business requires me at home." And entering his gig, Kostanzhoglo drove rapidly away. Somehow Khlobuev seemed to divine the cause of his sudden departure.

"It was too much for him," he remarked. "An agriculturist of that kind does not like to have to look upon the results of such feckless management as mine. Would you believe it, Paul Ivanovitch, but this year I have been unable to sow any wheat! Am I not a fine husbandman? There was no seed for the purpose, nor yet anything with which to prepare the ground. No, I am not like Constantine Thedorovitch, who, I hear, is a perfect Napoleon in his particular line. Again and again the thought occurs to me, 'Why has so much intellect been put into that head, and only a drop or two into my own dull pate?' Take care of that puddle, gentlemen. I have told my peasants to lay down planks for the spring, but they have not done so. Nevertheless my heart aches for the poor fellows, for they need a good example, and what sort of an example am I? How am *I* to give them orders? Pray take them under your charge, Paul Ivanovitch, for I cannot teach them orderliness and method when I myself lack both. As a matter of fact, I should have given them their freedom long ago, had there been any use in my doing so; for even I can see that peasants must first be afforded the means of

earning a livelihood before they can live. What they need is a stern, yet just, master who shall live with them, day in, day out, and set them an example of tireless energy. The present-day Russian — I know of it myself — is helpless without a driver. Without one he falls asleep, and the mould grows over him."

"Yet I cannot understand WHY he should fall asleep and grow mouldy in that fashion," said Platon. "Why should he need continual surveillance to keep him from degenerating into a drunkard and a good-for-nothing?"

"The cause is lack of enlightenment," said Chichikov.

"Possibly — only God knows. Yet enlightenment has reached us right enough. Do we not attend university lectures and everything else that is befitting? Take my own education. I learnt not only the usual things, but also the art of spending money upon the latest refinement, the latest amenity — the art of familiarising oneself with whatsoever money can buy. How, then, can it be said that I was educated foolishly? And my comrades' education was the same. A few of them succeeded in annexing the cream of things, for the reason that they had the wit to do so, and the rest spent their time in doing their best to ruin their health and squander their money. Often I think there is no hope for the present-day Russian. While desiring to do everything, he accomplishes nothing. One day he will scheme to begin a new mode of existence, a new dietary; yet before evening he will have so over-eaten himself as to be unable to speak or do aught but sit staring like an owl. The same with every one."

"Quite so," agreed Chichikov with a smile. "'Tis everywhere the same story."

"To tell the truth, we are not born to common sense. I doubt whether Russia has ever produced a really sensible man. For my own part, if I see my neighbour living a regular life, and making money, and saving it, I begin to distrust him, and to feel certain that in old age, if not before, he too will be led astray by the devil — led astray in a moment. Yes, whether or not we be educated, there is something we lack. But what that something is passes my understanding."

On the return journey the prospect was the same as before. Everywhere the same slovenliness, the same disorder, was displaying itself unadorned: the only difference being that a fresh puddle had formed in the middle of the village street. This want and neglect was noticeable in the peasants' quarters equally with the quarters of the barin. In the village a furious woman in greasy sackcloth was beating a poor young wench within an ace of her life, and at the same time devoting some third person to the care of all the devils in hell; further away a couple of peasants were stoically contemplating the virago — one scratching his rump as he did so, and the other yawning. The same yawn was discernible in the buildings, for not a roof was there but had a gaping hole in it. As he gazed at the scene Platon himself yawned. Patch was superimposed upon patch, and, in place

of a roof, one hut had a piece of wooden fencing, while its crumbling window-frames were stayed with sticks purloined from the barin's barn. Evidently the system of upkeep in vogue was the system employed in the case of Trishkin's coat — the system of cutting up the cuffs and the collar into mendings for the elbows.

"No, I do not admire your way of doing things," was Chichikov's unspoken comment when the inspection had been concluded and the party had re-entered the house. Everywhere in the latter the visitors were struck with the way in which poverty went with glittering, fashionable profusion. On a writing-table lay a volume of Shakespeare, and, on an occasional table, a carved ivory back-scratcher. The hostess, too, was elegantly and fashionably attired, and devoted her whole conversation to the town and the local theatre. Lastly, the children — bright, merry little things — were well-dressed both as regards boys and girls. Yet far better would it have been for them if they had been clad in plain striped smocks, and running about the courtyard like peasant children. Presently a visitor arrived in the shape of a chattering, gossiping woman; whereupon the hostess carried her off to her own portion of the house, and, the children following them, the men found themselves alone.

"How much do you want for the property?" asked Chichikov of Khlobuev. "I am afraid I must request you to name the lowest possible sum, since I find the estate in a far worse condition than I had expected to do."

"Yes, it IS in a terrible state," agreed Khlobuev. "Nor is that the whole of the story. That is to say, I will not conceal from you the fact that, out of a hundred souls registered at the last revision, only fifty survive, so terrible have been the ravages of cholera. And of these, again, some have absconded; wherefore they too must be reckoned as dead, seeing that, were one to enter process against them, the costs would end in the property having to pass en bloc to the legal authorities. For these reasons I am asking only thirty-five thousand roubles for the estate."

Chichikov (it need hardly be said) started to haggle.

"Thirty-five thousand?" he cried. "Come, come! Surely you will accept TWENTY-five thousand?"

This was too much for Platon's conscience.

"Now, now, Paul Ivanovitch!" he exclaimed. "Take the property at the price named, and have done with it. The estate is worth at least that amount — so much so that, should you not be willing to give it, my brother-in-law and I will club together to effect the purchase."

"That being so," said Chichikov, taken aback, "I beg to agree to the price in question. At the same time, I must ask you to allow me to defer payment of one-

half of the purchase money until a year from now."

"No, no, Paul Ivanovitch. Under no circumstances could I do that. Pay me half now, and the rest in... You see, I need the money for the redemption of the mortgage."

"That places me in a difficulty," remarked Chichikov. "Ten thousand roubles is all that at the moment I have available." As a matter of fact, this was not true, seeing that, counting also the money which he had borrowed of Kostanzhoglo, he had at his disposal TWENTY thousand. His real reason for hesitating was that he disliked the idea of making so large a payment in a lump sum.

"I must repeat my request, Paul Ivanovitch," said Khlobuev, " — namely, that you pay me at least fifteen thousand immediately."

"The odd five thousand *I* will lend you," put in Platon to Chichikov.

"Indeed?" exclaimed Chichikov as he reflected: "So he also lends money!"

In the end Chichikov's dispatch-box was brought from the koliaska, and Khlobuev received thence ten thousand roubles, together with a promise that the remaining five thousand should be forthcoming on the morrow; though the promise was given only after Chichikov had first proposed that THREE thousand should be brought on the day named, and the rest be left over for two or three days longer, if not for a still more protracted period. The truth was that Paul Ivanovitch hated parting with money. No matter how urgent a situation might have been, he would still have preferred to pay a sum to-morrow rather than to-day. In other words, he acted as we all do, for we all like keeping a petitioner waiting. "Let him rub his back in the hall for a while," we say. "Surely he can bide his time a little?" Yet of the fact that every hour may be precious to the poor wretch, and that his business may suffer from the delay, we take no account. "Good sir," we say, "pray come again to-morrow. To-day I have no time to spare you."

"Where do you intend henceforth to live?" inquired Platon. "Have you any other property to which you can retire?"

"No," replied Khlobuev. "I shall remove to the town, where I possess a small villa. That would have been necessary, in any case, for the children's sake. You see, they must have instruction in God's word, and also lessons in music and dancing; and not for love or money can these things be procured in the country.

"Nothing to eat, yet dancing lessons for his children!" reflected Chichikov.

"An extraordinary man!" was Platon's unspoken comment.

"However, we must contrive to wet our bargain somehow," continued Khlobuev. "Hi, Kirushka! Bring that bottle of champagne."

"Nothing to eat, yet champagne to drink!" reflected Chichikov. As for Platon, he did not know WHAT to think.

In Khlobuev's eyes it was de rigueur that he should provide a guest with champagne; but, though he had sent to the town for some, he had been met with a blank refusal to forward even a bottle of kvass on credit. Only the discovery of a French dealer who had recently transferred his business from St. Petersburg, and opened a connection on a system of general credit, saved the situation by placing Khlobuev under the obligation of patronising him.

The company drank three glassfuls apiece, and so grew more cheerful. In particular did Khlobuev expand, and wax full of civility and friendliness, and scatter witticisms and anecdotes to right and left. What knowledge of men and the world did his utterances display! How well and accurately could he divine things! With what appositeness did he sketch the neighbouring landowners! How clearly he exposed their faults and failings! How thoroughly he knew the story of certain ruined gentry — the story of how, why, and through what cause they had fallen upon evil days! With what comic originality could he describe their little habits and customs!

In short, his guests found themselves charmed with his discourse, and felt inclined to vote him a man of first-rate intellect.

"What most surprises me," said Chichikov, "is how, in view of your ability, you come to be so destitute of means or resources."

"But I have plenty of both," said Khlobuev, and with that went on to deliver himself of a perfect avalanche of projects. Yet those projects proved to be so uncouth, so clumsy, so little the outcome of a knowledge of men and things, that his hearers could only shrug their shoulders and mentally exclaim: "Good Lord! What a difference between worldly wisdom and the capacity to use it!" In every case the projects in question were based upon the imperative necessity of at once procuring from somewhere two hundred — or at least one hundred — thousand roubles. That done (so Khlobuev averred), everything would fall into its proper place, the holes in his pockets would become stopped, his income would be quadrupled, and he would find himself in a position to liquidate his debts in full. Nevertheless he ended by saying: "What would you advise me to do? I fear that the philanthropist who would lend me two hundred thousand roubles or even a hundred thousand, does not exist. It is not God's will that he should."

"Good gracious!" inwardly ejaculated Chichikov. "To suppose that God would send such a fool two hundred thousand roubles!"

"However," went on Khlobuev, "I possess an aunt worth three millions — a pious old woman who gives freely to churches and monasteries, but finds a difficulty in helping her neighbour. At the same time, she is a lady of the old school, and worth having a peep at. Her canaries alone number four hundred, and, in addition, there is an army of pug-dogs, hangers-on, and servants. Even

the youngest of the servants is sixty, but she calls them all ‘young fellows,’ and if a guest happens to offend her during dinner, she orders them to leave him out when handing out the dishes. THERE’S a woman for you!”

Platon laughed.

“And what may her family name be?” asked Chichikov. “And where does she live?”

“She lives in the county town, and her name is Alexandra Ivanovna Khanasarov.”

“Then why do you not apply to her?” asked Platon earnestly. “It seems to me that, once she realised the position of your family, she could not possibly refuse you.”

“Alas! nothing is to be looked for from that quarter,” replied Khlobuev. “My aunt is of a very stubborn disposition — a perfect stone of a woman. Moreover, she has around her a sufficient band of favourites already. In particular is there a fellow who is aiming for a Governorship, and to that end has managed to insinuate himself into the circle of her kinsfolk. By the way,” the speaker added, turning to Platon, “would you do me a favour? Next week I am giving a dinner to the associated guilds of the town.”

Platon stared. He had been unaware that both in our capitals and in our provincial towns there exists a class of men whose lives are an enigma — men who, though they will seem to have exhausted their substance, and to have become enmeshed in debt, will suddenly be reported as in funds, and on the point of giving a dinner! And though, at this dinner, the guests will declare that the festival is bound to be their host’s last fling, and that for a certainty he will be haled to prison on the morrow, ten years or more will elapse, and the rascal will still be at liberty, even though, in the meanwhile, his debts will have increased!

In the same way did the conduct of Khlobuev’s menage afford a curious phenomenon, for one day the house would be the scene of a solemn Te Deum, performed by a priest in vestments, and the next of a stage play performed by a troupe of French actors in theatrical costume. Again, one day would see not a morsel of bread in the house, and the next day a banquet and generous largesse given to a party of artists and sculptors. During these seasons of scarcity (sufficiently severe to have led any one but Khlobuev to seek suicide by hanging or shooting), the master of the house would be preserved from rash action by his strongly religious disposition, which, contriving in some curious way to conform with his irregular mode of life, enabled him to fall back upon reading the lives of saints, ascetics, and others of the type which has risen superior to its misfortunes. And at such times his spirit would become softened, his thoughts full of gentleness, and his eyes wet with tears; he would fall to saying his prayers, and

invariably some strange coincidence would bring an answer thereto in the shape of an unexpected measure of assistance. That is to say, some former friend of his would remember him, and send him a trifle in the way of money; or else some female visitor would be moved by his story to let her impulsive, generous heart proffer him a handsome gift; or else a suit whereof tidings had never even reached his ears would end by being decided in his favour. And when that happened he would reverently acknowledge the immensity of the mercy of Providence, gratefully tender thanksgiving for the same, and betake himself again to his irregular mode of existence.

"Somehow I feel sorry for the man," said Platon when he and Chichikov had taken leave of their host, and left the house.

"Perhaps so, but he is a hopeless prodigal," replied the other. "Personally I find it impossible to compassionate such fellows."

And with that the pair ceased to devote another thought to Khlobuev. In the case of Platon, this was because he contemplated the fortunes of his fellows with the lethargic, half-somnolent eye which he turned upon all the rest of the world; for though the sight of distress of others would cause his heart to contract and feel full of sympathy, the impression thus produced never sank into the depths of his being. Accordingly, before many minutes were over he had ceased to bestow a single thought upon his late host. With Chichikov, however, things were different. Whereas Platon had ceased to think of Khlobuev no more than he had ceased to think of himself, Chichikov's mind had strayed elsewhere, for the reason that it had become taken up with grave meditation on the subject of the purchase just made. Suddenly finding himself no longer a fictitious proprietor, but the owner of a real, an actually existing, estate, he became contemplative, and his plans and ideas assumed such a serious vein as imparted to his features an unconsciously important air.

"Patience and hard work!" he muttered to himself. "The thing will not be difficult, for with those two requisites I have been familiar from the days of my swaddling clothes. Yes, no novelty will they be to me. Yet, in middle age, shall I be able to compass the patience whereof I was capable in my youth?"

However, no matter how he regarded the future, and no matter from what point of view he considered his recent acquisition, he could see nothing but advantage likely to accrue from the bargain. For one thing, he might be able to proceed so that, first the whole of the estate should be mortgaged, and then the better portions of land sold outright. Or he might so contrive matters as to manage the property for a while (and thus become a landowner like Kostanzhoglo, whose advice, as his neighbour and his benefactor, he intended always to follow), and then to dispose of the property by private treaty (provided

he did not wish to continue his ownership), and still to retain in his hands the dead and abandoned souls. And another possible coup occurred to his mind. That is to say, he might contrive to withdraw from the district without having repaid Kostanzhoglo at all! Truly a splendid idea! Yet it is only fair to say that the idea was not one of Chichikov's own conception. Rather, it had presented itself — mocking, laughing, and winking — unbidden. Yet the impudent, the wanton thing! Who is the procreator of suddenly born ideas of the kind? The thought that he was now a real, an actual, proprietor instead of a fictitious — that he was now a proprietor of real land, real rights of timber and pasture, and real serfs who existed not only in the imagination, but also in veritable actuality — greatly elated our hero. So he took to dancing up and down in his seat, to rubbing his hands together, to winking at himself, to holding his fist, trumpet-wise, to his mouth (while making believe to execute a march), and even to uttering aloud such encouraging nicknames and phrases as "bulldog" and "little fat capon." Then suddenly recollecting that he was not alone, he hastened to moderate his behaviour and endeavoured to stifle the endless flow of his good spirits; with the result that when Platon, mistaking certain sounds for utterances addressed to himself, inquired what his companion had said, the latter retained the presence of mind to reply "Nothing."

Presently, as Chichikov gazed about him, he saw that for some time past the koliaska had been skirting a beautiful wood, and that on either side the road was bordered with an edging of birch trees, the tenderly-green, recently-opened leaves of which caused their tall, slender trunks to show up with the whiteness of a snowdrift. Likewise nightingales were warbling from the recesses of the foliage, and some wood tulips were glowing yellow in the grass. Next (and almost before Chichikov had realised how he came to be in such a beautiful spot when, but a moment before, there had been visible only open fields) there glimmered among the trees the stony whiteness of a church, with, on the further side of it, the intermittent, foliage-buried line of a fence; while from the upper end of a village street there was advancing to meet the vehicle a gentleman with a cap on his head, a knotted cudgel in his hands, and a slender-limbed English dog by his side.

"This is my brother," said Platon. "Stop, coachman." And he descended from the koliaska, while Chichikov followed his example. Yarb and the strange dog saluted one another, and then the active, thin-legged, slender-tongued Azor relinquished his licking of Yarb's blunt jowl, licked Platon's hands instead, and, leaping upon Chichikov, slobbered right into his ear.

The two brothers embraced.

"Really, Platon," said the gentleman (whose name was Vassili), "what do you

mean by treating me like this?”

“How so?” said Platon indifferently.

“What? For three days past I have seen and heard nothing of you! A groom from Pietukh’s brought your cob home, and told me you had departed on an expedition with some barin. At least you might have sent me word as to your destination and the probable length of your absence. What made you act so? God knows what I have not been wondering!”

“Does it matter?” rejoined Platon. “I forgot to send you word, and we have been no further than Constantine’s (who, with our sister, sends you his greeting). By the way, may I introduce Paul Ivanovitch Chichikov?”

The pair shook hands with one another. Then, doffing their caps, they embraced.

“What sort of man is this Chichikov?” thought Vassili. “As a rule my brother Platon is not over-nice in his choice of acquaintances.” And, eyeing our hero as narrowly as civility permitted, he saw that his appearance was that of a perfectly respectable individual.

Chichikov returned Vassili’s scrutiny with a similar observance of the dictates of civility, and perceived that he was shorter than Platon, that his hair was of a darker shade, and that his features, though less handsome, contained far more life, animation, and kindliness than did his brother’s. Clearly he indulged in less dreaming, though that was an aspect which Chichikov little regarded.

“I have made up my mind to go touring our Holy Russia with Paul Ivanovitch,” said Platon. “Perhaps it will rid me of my melancholy.”

“What has made you come to such a sudden decision?” asked the perplexed Vassili (very nearly he added: “Fancy going travelling with a man whose acquaintance you have just made, and who may turn out to be a rascal or the devil knows what!” But, in spite of his distrust, he contented himself with another covert scrutiny of Chichikov, and this time came to the conclusion that there was no fault to be found with his exterior).

The party turned to the right, and entered the gates of an ancient courtyard attached to an old-fashioned house of a type no longer built — the type which has huge gables supporting a high-pitched roof. In the centre of the courtyard two great lime trees covered half the surrounding space with shade, while beneath them were ranged a number of wooden benches, and the whole was encircled with a ring of blossoming lilacs and cherry trees which, like a beaded necklace, reinforced the wooden fence, and almost buried it beneath their clusters of leaves and flowers. The house, too, stood almost concealed by this greenery, except that the front door and the windows peered pleasantly through the foliage, and that here and there between the stems of the trees there could be

caught glimpses of the kitchen regions, the storehouses, and the cellar. Lastly, around the whole stood a grove, from the recesses of which came the echoing songs of nightingales.

Involuntarily the place communicated to the soul a sort of quiet, restful feeling, so eloquently did it speak of that care-free period when every one lived on good terms with his neighbour, and all was simple and unsophisticated. Vassili invited Chichikov to seat himself, and the party approached, for that purpose, the benches under the lime trees; after which a youth of about seventeen, and clad in a red shirt, brought decanters containing various kinds of kvass (some of them as thick as syrup, and others hissing like aerated lemonade), deposited the same upon the table, and, taking up a spade which he had left leaning against a tree, moved away towards the garden. The reason of this was that in the brothers' household, as in that of Kostanzhoglo, no servants were kept, since the whole staff were rated as gardeners, and performed that duty in rotation — Vassili holding that domestic service was not a specialised calling, but one to which any one might contribute a hand, and therefore one which did not require special menials to be kept for the purpose. Moreover, he held that the average Russian peasant remains active and willing (rather than lazy) only so long as he wears a shirt and a peasant's smock; but that as soon as ever he finds himself put into a German tailcoat, he becomes awkward, sluggish, indolent, disinclined to change his vest or take a bath, fond of sleeping in his clothes, and certain to breed fleas and bugs under the German apparel. And it may be that Vassili was right. At all events, the brothers' peasantry were exceedingly well clad — the women, in particular, having their head-dresses spangled with gold, and the sleeves of their blouses embroidered after the fashion of a Turkish shawl.

"You see here the species of kvass for which our house has long been famous," said Vassili to Chichikov. The latter poured himself out a glassful from the first decanter which he lighted upon, and found the contents to be linden honey of a kind never tasted by him even in Poland, seeing that it had a sparkle like that of champagne, and also an effervescence which sent a pleasant spray from the mouth into the nose.

"Nectar!" he proclaimed. Then he took some from a second decanter. It proved to be even better than the first. "A beverage of beverages!" he exclaimed. "At your respected brother-in-law's I tasted the finest syrup which has ever come my way, but here I have tasted the very finest kvass."

"Yet the recipe for the syrup also came from here," said Vassili, "seeing that my sister took it with her. By the way, to what part of the country, and to what places, are you thinking of travelling?"

"To tell the truth," replied Chichikov, rocking himself to and fro on the bench,

and smoothing his knee with his hand, and gently inclining his head, “I am travelling less on my own affairs than on the affairs of others. That is to say, General Betristchev, an intimate friend, and, I might add, a generous benefactor of mine, has charged me with commissions to some of his relatives. Nevertheless, though relatives are relatives, I may say that I am travelling on my own account as well, in that, in addition to possible benefit to my health, I desire to see the world and the whirligig of humanity, which constitute, to so speak, a living book, a second course of education.”

Vassili took thought. “The man speaks floridly,” he reflected, “yet his words contain a certain element of truth.” After a moment’s silence he added to Platon: “I am beginning to think that the tour might help you to bestir yourself. At present you are in a condition of mental slumber. You have fallen asleep, not so much from weariness or satiety, as through a lack of vivid perceptions and impressions. For myself, I am your complete antithesis. I should be only too glad if I could feel less acutely, if I could take things less to heart.”

“Emotion has become a disease with you,” said Platon. “You seek your own troubles, and make your own anxieties.”

“How can you say that when ready-made anxieties greet one at every step?” exclaimed Vassili. “For example, have you heard of the trick which Lienitsin has just played us — of his seizing the piece of vacant land whither our peasants resort for their sports? That piece I would not sell for all the money in the world. It has long been our peasants’ play-ground, and all the traditions of our village are bound up with it. Moreover, for me, old custom is a sacred thing for which I would gladly sacrifice everything else.”

“Lienitsin cannot have known of this, or he would not have seized the land,” said Platon. “He is a newcomer, just arrived from St. Petersburg. A few words of explanation ought to meet the case.”

“But he DOES know of what I have stated; he DOES know of it. Purposely I sent him word to that affect, yet he has returned me the rudest of answers.”

“Then go yourself and explain matters to him.”

“No, I will not do that; he has tried to carry off things with too high a hand. But YOU can go if you like.”

“I would certainly go were it not that I scarcely like to interfere. Also, I am a man whom he could easily hoodwink and outwit.”

“Would it help you if *I* were to go?” put in Chichikov. “Pray enlighten me as to the matter.”

Vassili glanced at the speaker, and thought to himself: “What a passion the man has for travelling!”

“Yes, pray give me an idea of the kind of fellow,” repeated Chichikov, “and

also outline to me the affair."

"I should be ashamed to trouble you with such an unpleasant commission," replied Vassili. "He is a man whom I take to be an utter rascal. Originally a member of a family of plain dvoriane in this province, he entered the Civil Service in St. Petersburg, then married some one's natural daughter in that city, and has returned to lord it with a high hand. I cannot bear the tone he adopts. Our folk are by no means fools. They do not look upon the current fashion as the Tsar's ukaz any more than they look upon St. Petersburg as the Church."

"Naturally," said Chichikov. "But tell me more of the particulars of the quarrel."

"They are these. He needs additional land and, had he not acted as he has done, I would have given him some land elsewhere for nothing; but, as it is, the pestilent fellow has taken it into his head to — "

"I think I had better go and have a talk with him. That might settle the affair. Several times have people charged me with similar commissions, and never have they repented of it. General Betristchev is an example."

"Nevertheless I am ashamed that you should be put to the annoyance of having to converse with such a fellow."

[At this point there occurs a long hiatus.]

"And above all things, such a transaction would need to be carried through in secret," said Chichikov. "True, the law does not forbid such things, but there is always the risk of a scandal."

"Quite so, quite so," said Lienitsin with head bent down.

"Then we agree!" exclaimed Chichikov. "How charming! As I say, my business is both legal and illegal. Though needing to effect a mortgage, I desire to put no one to the risk of having to pay the two roubles on each living soul; wherefore I have conceived the idea of relieving landowners of that distasteful obligation by acquiring dead and absconded souls who have failed to disappear from the revision list. This enables me at once to perform an act of Christian charity and to remove from the shoulders of our more impoverished proprietors the burden of tax-payment upon souls of the kind specified. Should you yourself care to do business with me, we will draw up a formal purchase agreement as though the souls in question were still alive."

"But it would be such a curious arrangement," muttered Lienitsin, moving his chair and himself a little further away. "It would be an arrangement which, er — er — "

"Would involve you in no scandal whatever, seeing that the affair would be carried through in secret. Moreover, between friends who are well-disposed towards one another — "

“Nevertheless — ”

Chichikov adopted a firmer and more decided tone. “I repeat that there would be no scandal,” he said. “The transaction would take place as between good friends, and as between friends of mature age, and as between friends of good status, and as between friends who know how to keep their own counsel.” And, so saying, he looked his interlocutor frankly and generously in the eyes.

Nevertheless Lienitsin’s resourcefulness and acumen in business matters failed to relieve his mind of a certain perplexity — and the less so since he had contrived to become caught in his own net. Yet, in general, he possessed neither a love for nor a talent for underhand dealings, and, had not fate and circumstances favoured Chichikov by causing Lienitsin’s wife to enter the room at that moment, things might have turned out very differently from what they did. Madame was a pale, thin, insignificant-looking young lady, but none the less a lady who wore her clothes a la St. Petersburg, and cultivated the society of persons who were unimpeachably comme il faut. Behind her, borne in a nurse’s arms, came the first fruits of the love of husband and wife. Adopting his most telling method of approach (the method accompanied with a sidelong inclination of the head and a sort of hop), Chichikov hastened to greet the lady from the metropolis, and then the baby. At first the latter started to bellow disapproval, but the words “Agoo, agoo, my pet!” added to a little cracking of the fingers and a sight of a beautiful seal on a watch chain, enabled Chichikov to weedle the infant into his arms; after which he fell to swinging it up and down until he had contrived to raise a smile on its face — a circumstance which greatly delighted the parents, and finally inclined the father in his visitor’s favour. Suddenly, however — whether from pleasure or from some other cause — the infant misbehaved itself!

“My God!” cried Madame. “He has gone and spoilt your frockcoat!”

True enough, on glancing downwards, Chichikov saw that the sleeve of his brand-new garment had indeed suffered a hurt. “If I could catch you alone, you little devil,” he muttered to himself, “I’d shoot you!”

Host, hostess and nurse all ran for eau-de-Cologne, and from three sides set themselves to rub the spot affected.

“Never mind, never mind; it is nothing,” said Chichikov as he strove to communicate to his features as cheerful an expression as possible. “What does it matter what a child may spoil during the golden age of its infancy?”

To himself he remarked: “The little brute! Would it could be devoured by wolves. It has made only too good a shot, the cussed young ragamuffin!”

How, after this — after the guest had shown such innocent affection for the little one, and magnanimously paid for his so doing with a brand-new suit —

could the father remain obdurate? Nevertheless, to avoid setting a bad example to the countryside, he and Chichikov agreed to carry through the transaction PRIVATELY, lest, otherwise, a scandal should arise.

"In return," said Chichikov, "would you mind doing me the following favour? I desire to mediate in the matter of your difference with the Brothers Platonov. I believe that you wish to acquire some additional land? Is not that so?"

[Here there occurs a hiatus in the original.]

Everything in life fulfils its function, and Chichikov's tour in search of a fortune was carried out so successfully that not a little money passed into his pockets. The system employed was a good one: he did not steal, he merely used. And every one of us at times does the same: one man with regard to Government timber, and another with regard to a sum belonging to his employer, while a third defrauds his children for the sake of an actress, and a fourth robs his peasantry for the sake of smart furniture or a carriage. What can one do when one is surrounded on every side with roguery, and everywhere there are insanely expensive restaurants, masked balls, and dances to the music of gipsy bands? To abstain when every one else is indulging in these things, and fashion commands, is difficult indeed!

Chichikov was for setting forth again, but the roads had now got into a bad state, and, in addition, there was in preparation a second fair — one for the dvoriane only. The former fair had been held for the sale of horses, cattle, cheese, and other peasant produce, and the buyers had been merely cattle-jobbers and kulaks; but this time the function was to be one for the sale of manorial produce which had been bought up by wholesale dealers at Nizhni Novgorod, and then transferred hither. To the fair, of course, came those ravishers of the Russian purse who, in the shape of Frenchmen with pomades and Frenchwomen with hats, make away with money earned by blood and hard work, and, like the locusts of Egypt (to use Kostanzhoglo's term) not only devour their prey, but also dig holes in the ground and leave behind their eggs.

Although, unfortunately, the occurrence of a bad harvest retained many landowners at their country houses, the local tchinovniks (whom the failure of the harvest did NOT touch) proceeded to let themselves go — as also, to their undoing, did their wives. The reading of books of the type diffused, in these modern days, for the inoculation of humanity with a craving for new and superior amenities of life had caused every one to conceive a passion for experimenting with the latest luxury; and to meet this want the French wine merchant opened a new establishment in the shape of a restaurant as had never before been heard of in the province — a restaurant where supper could be procured on credit as regarded one-half, and for an unprecedentedly low sum as

regarded the other. This exactly suited both heads of boards and clerks who were living in hope of being able some day to resume their bribes-taking from suitors. There also developed a tendency to compete in the matter of horses and liveried flunkeys; with the result that despite the damp and snowy weather exceedingly elegant turnouts took to parading backwards and forwards. Whence these equipages had come God only knows, but at least they would not have disgraced St. Petersburg. From within them merchants and attorneys doffed their caps to ladies, and inquired after their health, and likewise it became a rare sight to see a bearded man in a rough fur cap, since every one now went about clean-shaven and with dirty teeth, after the European fashion.

"Sir, I beg of you to inspect my goods," said a tradesman as Chichikov was passing his establishment. "Within my doors you will find a large variety of clothing."

"Have you a cloth of bilberry-coloured check?" inquired the person addressed.

"I have cloths of the finest kind," replied the tradesman, raising his cap with one hand, and pointing to his shop with the other. Chichikov entered, and in a trice the proprietor had dived beneath the counter, and appeared on the other side of it, with his back to his wares and his face towards the customer. Leaning forward on the tips of his fingers, and indicating his merchandise with just the suspicion of a nod, he requested the gentleman to specify exactly the species of cloth which he required.

"A cloth with an olive-coloured or a bottle-tinted spot in its pattern — anything in the nature of bilberry," explained Chichikov.

"That being so, sir, I may say that I am about to show you clothes of a quality which even our illustrious capitals could not surpass. Hi, boy! Reach down that roll up there — number 34. No, NOT that one, fool! Such fellows as you are always too good for your job. There — hand it to me. This is indeed a nice pattern!"

Unfolding the garment, the tradesman thrust it close to Chichikov's nose in order that he might not only handle, but also smell it.

"Excellent, but not what I want," pronounced Chichikov. "Formerly I was in the Custom's Department, and therefore wear none but cloth of the latest make. What I want is of a ruddier pattern than this — not exactly a bottle-tinted pattern, but something approaching bilberry."

"I understand, sir. Of course you require only the very newest thing. A cloth of that kind I DO possess, sir, and though excessive in price, it is of a quality to match."

Carrying the roll of stuff to the light — even stepping into the street for the purpose — the shopman unfolded his prize with the words, "A truly beautiful

shade! A cloth of smoked grey, shot with flame colour!”

The material met with the customer’s approval, a price was agreed upon, and with incredible celerity the vendor made up the purchase into a brown-paper parcel, and stowed it away in Chichikov’s koliaska.

At this moment a voice asked to be shown a black frockcoat.

“The devil take me if it isn’t Khlobuev!” muttered our hero, turning his back upon the newcomer. Unfortunately the other had seen him.

“Come, come, Paul Ivanovitch!” he expostulated. “Surely you do not intend to overlook me? I have been searching for you everywhere, for I have something important to say to you.”

“My dear sir, my very dear sir,” said Chichikov as he pressed Khlobuev’s hand, “I can assure you that, had I the necessary leisure, I should at all times be charmed to converse with you.” And mentally he added: “Would that the Evil One would fly away with you!”

Almost at the same time Murazov, the great landowner, entered the shop. As he did so our hero hastened to exclaim: “Why, it is Athanasi Vassilievitch! How ARE you, my very dear sir?”

“Well enough,” replied Murazov, removing his cap (Khlobuev and the shopman had already done the same). “How, may I ask, are YOU?”

“But poorly,” replied Chichikov, “for of late I have been troubled with indigestion, and my sleep is bad. I do not get sufficient exercise.”

However, instead of probing deeper into the subject of Chichikov’s ailments, Murazov turned to Khlobuev.

“I saw you enter the shop,” he said, “and therefore followed you, for I have something important for your ear. Could you spare me a minute or two?”

“Certainly, certainly,” said Khlobuev, and the pair left the shop together.

“I wonder what is afoot between them,” said Chichikov to himself.

“A wise and noble gentleman, Athanasi Vassilievitch!” remarked the tradesman. Chichikov made no reply save a gesture.

“Paul Ivanovitch, I have been looking for you everywhere,” Lienitsin’s voice said from behind him, while again the tradesman hastened to remove his cap. “Pray come home with me, for I have something to say to you.”

Chichikov scanned the speaker’s face, but could make nothing of it. Paying the tradesman for the cloth, he left the shop.

Meanwhile Murazov had conveyed Khlobuev to his rooms.

“Tell me,” he said to his guest, “exactly how your affairs stand. I take it that, after all, your aunt left you something?”

“It would be difficult to say whether or not my affairs are improved,” replied Khlobuev. “True, fifty souls and thirty thousand roubles came to me from

Madame Khanasarova, but I had to pay them away to satisfy my debts. Consequently I am once more destitute. But the important point is that there was trickery connected with the legacy, and shameful trickery at that. Yes, though it may surprise you, it is a fact that that fellow Chichikov — ”

“Yes, Semen Semenovitch, but, before you go on to speak of Chichikov, pray tell me something about yourself, and how much, in your opinion, would be sufficient to clear you of your difficulties?”

“My difficulties are grievous,” replied Khlobuev. “To rid myself of them, and also to have enough to go on with, I should need to acquire at least a hundred thousand roubles, if not more. In short, things are becoming impossible for me.”

“And, had you the money, what should you do with it?”

“I should rent a tenement, and devote myself to the education of my children. Not a thought should I give to myself, for my career is over, seeing that it is impossible for me to re-enter the Civil Service and I am good for nothing else.”

“Nevertheless, when a man is leading an idle life he is apt to incur temptations which shun his better-employed brother.”

“Yes, but beyond question I am good for nothing, so broken is my health, and such a martyr I am to dyspepsia.”

“But how to you propose to live without working? How can a man like you exist without a post or a position of any kind? Look around you at the works of God. Everything has its proper function, and pursues its proper course. Even a stone can be used for one purpose or another. How, then, can it be right for a man who is a thinking being to remain a drone?”

“But I should not be a drone, for I should employ myself with the education of my children.”

“No, Semen Semenovitch — no: THAT you would find the hardest task of all. For how can a man educate his children who has never even educated himself? Instruction can be imparted to children only through the medium of example; and would a life like yours furnish them with a profitable example — a life which has been spent in idleness and the playing of cards? No, Semen Semenovitch. You had far better hand your children over to me. Otherwise they will be ruined. Do not think that I am jesting. Idleness has wrecked your life, and you must flee from it. Can a man live with nothing to keep him in place? Even a journeyman labourer who earns the barest pittance may take an interest in his occupation.”

“Athanasi Vassilievitch, I have tried to overcome myself, but what further resource lies open to me? Can I who am old and incapable re-enter the Civil Service and spend year after year at a desk with youths who are just starting their careers? Moreover, I have lost the trick of taking bribes; I should only hinder

both myself and others; while, as you know, it is a department which has an established caste of its own. Therefore, though I have considered, and even attempted to obtain, every conceivable post, I find myself incompetent for them all. Only in a monastery should I — ”

“Nay, nay. Monasteries, again, are only for those who have worked. To those who have spent their youth in dissipation such havens say what the ant said to the dragonfly — namely, ‘Go you away, and return to your dancing.’ Yes, even in a monastery do folk toil and toil — they do not sit playing whist.” Murazov looked at Khlobuev, and added: “Semen Semenovitch, you are deceiving both yourself and me.”

Poor Khlobuev could not utter a word in reply, and Murazov began to feel sorry for him.

“Listen, Semen Semenovitch,” he went on. “I know that you say your prayers, and that you go to church, and that you observe both Matins and Vespers, and that, though averse to early rising, you leave your bed at four o’clock in the morning before the household fires have been lit.”

“Ah, Athanasi Vassilievitch,” said Khlobuev, “that is another matter altogether. That I do, not for man’s sake, but for the sake of Him who has ordered all things here on earth. Yes, I believe that He at least can feel compassion for me, that He at least, though I be foul and lowly, will pardon me and receive me when all men have cast me out, and my best friend has betrayed me and boasted that he has done it for a good end.”

Khlobuev’s face was glowing with emotion, and from the older man’s eyes also a tear had started.

“You will do well to hearken unto Him who is merciful,” he said. “But remember also that, in the eyes of the All-Merciful, honest toil is of equal merit with a prayer. Therefore take unto yourself whatsoever task you may, and do it as though you were doing it, not unto man, but unto God. Even though to your lot there should fall but the cleaning of a floor, clean that floor as though it were being cleaned for Him alone. And thence at least this good you will reap: that there will remain to you no time for what is evil — for card playing, for feasting, for all the life of this gay world. Are you acquainted with Ivan Potapitch?”

“Yes, not only am I acquainted with him, but I also greatly respect him.”

“Time was when Ivan Potapitch was a merchant worth half a million roubles. In everything did he look but for gain, and his affairs prospered exceedingly, so much so that he was able to send his son to be educated in France, and to marry his daughter to a General. And whether in his office or at the Exchange, he would stop any friend whom he encountered and carry him off to a tavern to drink, and spend whole days thus employed. But at last he became bankrupt, and

God sent him other misfortunes also. His son! Ah, well! Ivan Potapitch is now my steward, for he had to begin life over again. Yet once more his affairs are in order, and, had it been his wish, he could have restarted in business with a capital of half a million roubles. ‘But no,’ he said. ‘A steward am I, and a steward will I remain to the end; for, from being full-stomached and heavy with dropsy, I have become strong and well.’ Not a drop of liquor passes his lips, but only cabbage soup and gruel. And he prays as none of the rest of us pray, and he helps the poor as none of the rest of us help them; and to this he would add yet further charity if his means permitted him to do so.”

Poor Khlobuev remained silent, as before.

The elder man took his two hands in his.

“Semen Semenovitch,” he said, “you cannot think how much I pity you, or how much I have had you in my thoughts. Listen to me. In the monastery there is a recluse who never looks upon a human face. Of all men whom I know he has the broadest mind, and he breaks not his silence save to give advice. To him I went and said that I had a friend (though I did not actually mention your name) who was in great trouble of soul. Suddenly the recluse interrupted me with the words: ‘God’s work first, and our own last. There is need for a church to be built, but no money wherewith to build it. Money must be collected to that end.’ Then he shut to the wicket. I wondered to myself what this could mean, and concluded that the recluse had been unwilling to accord me his counsel. Next I repaired to the Archimandrite, and had scarce reached his door when he inquired of me whether I could commend to him a man meet to be entrusted with the collection of alms for a church — a man who should belong to the dvoriane or to the more lettered merchants, but who would guard the trust as he would guard the salvation of his soul. On the instant thought I to myself: ‘Why should not the Holy Father appoint my friend Semen Semenovitch? For the way of suffering would benefit him greatly; and as he passed with his ledger from landowner to peasant, and from peasant to townsman, he would learn where folk dwell, and who stands in need of aught, and thus would become better acquainted with the countryside than folk who dwell in cities. And, thus become, he would find that his services were always in demand.’ Only of late did the Governor-General say to me that, could he but be furnished with the name of a secretary who should know his work not only by the book but also by experience, he would give him a great sum, since nothing is to be learned by the former means, and, through it, much confusion arises.”

“You confound me, you overwhelm me!” said Khlobuev, staring at his companion in open-eyed astonishment. “I can scarcely believe that your words are true, seeing that for such a trust an active, indefatigable man would be

necessary. Moreover, how could I leave my wife and children unprovided for?"

"Have no fear," said Murazov, "I myself will take them under my care, as well as procure for the children a tutor. Far better and nobler were it for you to be travelling with a wallet, and asking alms on behalf of God, then to be remaining here and asking alms for yourself alone. Likewise, I will furnish you with a tilt-waggon, so that you may be saved some of the hardships of the journey, and thus be preserved in good health. Also, I will give you some money for the journey, in order that, as you pass on your way, you may give to those who stand in greater need than their fellows. Thus, if, before giving, you assure yourself that the recipient of the alms is worthy of the same, you will do much good; and as you travel you will become acquainted with all men and sundry, and they will treat you, not as a tchinovnik to be feared, but as one to whom, as a petitioner on behalf of the Church, they may unloose their tongues without peril."

"I feel that the scheme is a splendid one, and would gladly bear my part in it were it not likely to exceed my strength."

"What is there that does NOT exceed your strength?" said Murazov. "Nothing is wholly proportionate to it — everything surpasses it. Help from above is necessary: otherwise we are all powerless. Strength comes of prayer, and of prayer alone. When a man crosses himself, and cries, 'Lord, have mercy upon me!' he soon stems the current and wins to the shore. Nor need you take any prolonged thought concerning this matter. All that you need do is to accept it as a commission sent of God. The tilt-waggon can be prepared for you immediately; and then, as soon as you have been to the Archimandrite for your book of accounts and his blessing, you will be free to start on your journey."

"I submit myself to you, and accept the commission as a divine trust."

And even as Khlobuev spoke he felt renewed vigour and confidence arise in his soul, and his mind begin to awake to a sense of hopefulness of eventually being able to put to flight his troubles. And even as it was, the world seemed to be growing dim to his eyes....

Meanwhile, plea after plea had been presented to the legal authorities, and daily were relatives whom no one had before heard of putting in an appearance. Yes, like vultures to a corpse did these good folk come flocking to the immense property which Madam Khanasarov had left behind her. Everywhere were heard rumours against Chichikov, rumours with regard to the validity of the second will, rumours with regard to will number one, and rumours of larceny and concealment of funds. Also, there came to hand information with regard both to Chichikov's purchase of dead souls and to his conniving at contraband goods during his service in the Customs Department. In short, every possible item of evidence was exhumed, and the whole of his previous history investigated. How

the authorities had come to suspect and to ascertain all this God only knows, but the fact remains that there had fallen into the hands of those authorities information concerning matters of which Chichikov had believed only himself and the four walls to be aware. True, for a time these matters remained within the cognisance of none but the functionaries concerned, and failed to reach Chichikov's ears; but at length a letter from a confidential friend gave him reason to think that the fat was about to fall into the fire. Said the letter briefly: "Dear sir, I beg to advise you that possibly legal trouble is pending, but that you have no cause for uneasiness, seeing that everything will be attended to by yours very truly." Yet, in spite of its tenor, the epistle reassured its recipient. "What a genius the fellow is!" thought Chichikov to himself. Next, to complete his satisfaction, his tailor arrived with the new suit which he had ordered. Not without a certain sense of pride did our hero inspect the frockcoat of smoked grey shot with flame colour and look at it from every point of view, and then try on the breeches — the latter fitting him like a picture, and quite concealing any deficiencies in the matter of his thighs and calves (though, when buckled behind, they left his stomach projecting like a drum). True, the customer remarked that there appeared to be a slight tightness under the right armpit, but the smiling tailor only rejoined that that would cause the waist to fit all the better. "Sir," he said triumphantly, "you may rest assured that the work has been executed exactly as it ought to have been executed. No one, except in St. Petersburg, could have done it better." As a matter of fact, the tailor himself hailed from St. Petersburg, but called himself on his signboard "Foreign Costumier from London and Paris" — the truth being that by the use of a double-barrelled flourish of cities superior to mere "Karlsruhe" and "Copenhagen" he designed to acquire business and cut out his local rivals.

Chichikov graciously settled the man's account, and, as soon as he had gone, paraded at leisure, and con amore, and after the manner of an artist of aesthetic taste, before the mirror. Somehow he seemed to look better than ever in the suit, for his cheeks had now taken on a still more interesting air, and his chin an added seductiveness, while his white collar lent tone to his neck, the blue satin tie heightened the effect of the collar, the fashionable dickey set off the tie, the rich satin waistcoat emphasised the dickey, and the smoked-grey-shot-with-flame-colour frockcoat, shining like silk, splendidly rounded off the whole. When he turned to the right he looked well: when he turned to the left he looked even better. In short, it was a costume worthy of a Lord Chamberlain or the species of dandy who shrinks from swearing in the Russian language, but amply relieves his feelings in the language of France. Next, inclining his head slightly to one side, our hero endeavoured to pose as though he were addressing a

middle-aged lady of exquisite refinement; and the result of these efforts was a picture which any artist might have yearned to portray. Next, his delight led him gracefully to execute a hop in ballet fashion, so that the wardrobe trembled and a bottle of eau-de-Cologne came crashing to the floor. Yet even this contretemps did not upset him; he merely called the offending bottle a fool, and then debated whom first he should visit in his attractive guise.

Suddenly there resounded through the hall a clatter of spurred heels, and then the voice of a gendarme saying: “You are commanded to present yourself before the Governor-General!” Turning round, Chichikov stared in horror at the spectacle presented; for in the doorway there was standing an apparition wearing a huge moustache, a helmet surmounted with a horsehair plume, a pair of crossed shoulder-belts, and a gigantic sword! A whole army might have been combined into a single individual! And when Chichikov opened his mouth to speak the apparition repeated, “You are commanded to present yourself before the Governor-General,” and at the same moment our hero caught sight both of a second apparition outside the door and of a coach waiting beneath the window. What was to be done? Nothing whatever was possible. Just as he stood — in his smoked-grey-shot-with-flame-colour suit — he had then and there to enter the vehicle, and, shaking in every limb, and with a gendarme seated by his side, to start for the residence of the Governor-General.

And even in the hall of that establishment no time was given him to pull himself together, for at once an aide-de-camp said: “Go inside immediately, for the Prince is awaiting you.” And as in a dream did our hero see a vestibule where couriers were being handed dispatches, and then a salon which he crossed with the thought, “I suppose I am not to be allowed a trial, but shall be sent straight to Siberia!” And at the thought his heart started beating in a manner which the most jealous of lovers could not have rivalled. At length there opened a door, and before him he saw a study full of portfolios, ledgers, and dispatch-boxes, with, standing behind them, the gravely menacing figure of the Prince.

“There stands my executioner,” thought Chichikov to himself. “He is about to tear me to pieces as a wolf tears a lamb.”

Indeed, the Prince’s lips were simply quivering with rage.

“Once before did I spare you,” he said, “and allow you to remain in the town when you ought to have been in prison: yet your only return for my clemency has been to revert to a career of fraud — and of fraud as dishonourable as ever a man engaged in.”

“To what dishonourable fraud do you refer, your Highness?” asked Chichikov, trembling from head to foot.

The Prince approached, and looked him straight in the eyes.

“Let me tell you,” he said, “that the woman whom you induced to witness a certain will has been arrested, and that you will be confronted with her.”

The world seemed suddenly to grow dim before Chichikov’s sight.

“Your Highness,” he gasped, “I will tell you the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I am guilty — yes, I am guilty; but I am not so guilty as you think, for I was led away by rascals.”

“That any one can have led you away is impossible,” retorted the Prince. “Recorded against your name there stand more felonies than even the most hardened liar could have invented. I believe that never in your life have you done a deed not innately dishonourable — that not a kopeck have you ever obtained by aught but shameful methods of trickery and theft, the penalty for which is Siberia and the knut. But enough of this! From this room you will be conveyed to prison, where, with other rogues and thieves, you will be confined until your trial may come on. And this is lenient treatment on my part, for you are worse, far worse, than the felons who will be your companions. THEY are but poor men in smocks and sheepskins, whereas YOU — ” Without concluding his words, the Prince shot a glance at Chichikov’s smoked-grey-shot-with-flame-colour apparel.

Then he touched a bell.

“Your Highness,” cried Chichikov, “have mercy upon me! You are the father of a family! Spare me for the sake of my aged mother!”

“Rubbish!” exclaimed the Prince. “Even as before you besought me for the sake of a wife and children whom you did not even possess, so now you would speak to me of an aged mother!”

“Your Highness,” protested Chichikov, “though I am a wretch and the lowest of rascals, and though it is true that I lied when I told you that I possessed a wife and children, I swear that, as God is my witness, it has always been my DESIRE to possess a wife, and to fulfil all the duties of a man and a citizen, and to earn the respect of my fellows and the authorities. But what could be done against the force of circumstances? By hook or by crook I have ever been forced to win a living, though confronted at every step by wiles and temptations and traitorous enemies and despoilers. So much has this been so that my life has, throughout, resembled a barque tossed by tempestuous waves, a barque driven at the mercy of the winds. Ah, I am only a man, your Highness!”

And in a moment the tears had gushed in torrents from his eyes, and he had fallen forward at the Prince’s feet — fallen forward just as he was, in his smoked-grey-shot-with-flame-colour frockcoat, his velvet waistcoat, his satin tie, and his exquisitely fitting breeches, while from his neatly brushed pate, as again and again he struck his hand against his forehead, there came an odorous

whiff of best-quality eau-de-Cologne.

“Away with him!” exclaimed the Prince to the gendarme who had just entered. “Summon the escort to remove him.”

“Your Highness!” Chichikov cried again as he clasped the Prince’s knees; but, shuddering all over, and struggling to free himself, the Prince repeated his order for the prisoner’s removal.

“Your Highness, I say that I will not leave this room until you have accorded me mercy!” cried Chichikov as he clung to the Prince’s leg with such tenacity that, frockcoat and all, he began to be dragged along the floor.

“Away with him, I say!” once more the Prince exclaimed with the sort of indefinable aversion which one feels at the sight of a repulsive insect which he cannot summon up the courage to crush with his boot. So convulsively did the Prince shudder that Chichikov, clinging to his leg, received a kick on the nose. Yet still the prisoner retained his hold; until at length a couple of burly gendarmes tore him away and, grasping his arms, hurried him — pale, dishevelled, and in that strange, half-conscious condition into which a man sinks when he sees before him only the dark, terrible figure of death, the phantom which is so abhorrent to all our natures — from the building. But on the threshold the party came face to face with Murazov, and in Chichikov’s heart the circumstance revived a ray of hope. Wresting himself with almost supernatural strength from the grasp of the escorting gendarmes, he threw himself at the feet of the horror-stricken old man.

“Paul Ivanovitch,” Murazov exclaimed, “what has happened to you?”

“Save me!” gasped Chichikov. “They are taking me away to prison and death!”

Yet almost as he spoke the gendarmes seized him again, and hurried him away so swiftly that Murazov’s reply escaped his ears.

A damp, mouldy cell which reeked of soldiers’ boots and leggings, an unvarnished table, two sorry chairs, a window closed with a grating, a crazy stove which, while letting the smoke emerge through its cracks, gave out no heat — such was the den to which the man who had just begun to taste the sweets of life, and to attract the attention of his fellows with his new suit of smoked-grey-shot-with-flame-colour, now found himself consigned. Not even necessaries had he been allowed to bring away with him, nor his dispatch-box which contained all his booty. No, with the indenture deeds of the dead souls, it was lodged in the hands of a tchinovnik; and as he thought of these things Chichikov rolled about the floor, and felt the cankerous worm of remorse seize upon and gnaw at his heart, and bite its way ever further and further into that heart so defenceless against its ravages, until he made up his mind that, should he have to suffer

another twenty-four hours of this misery, there would no longer be a Chichikov in the world. Yet over him, as over every one, there hung poised the All-Saving Hand; and, an hour after his arrival at the prison, the doors of the gaol opened to admit Murazov.

Compared with poor Chichikov's sense of relief when the old man entered his cell, even the pleasure experienced by a thirsty, dusty traveller when he is given a drink of clear spring water to cool his dry, parched throat fades into insignificance.

"Ah, my deliverer!" he cried as he rose from the floor, where he had been grovelling in heartrending paroxysms of grief. Seizing the old man's hand, he kissed it and pressed it to his bosom. Then, bursting into tears, he added: "God Himself will reward you for having come to visit an unfortunate wretch!"

Murazov looked at him sorrowfully, and said no more than "Ah, Paul Ivanovitch, Paul Ivanovitch! What has happened?"

"What has happened?" cried Chichikov. "I have been ruined by an accursed woman. That was because I could not do things in moderation — I was powerless to stop myself in time, Satan tempted me, and drove me from my senses, and bereft me of human prudence. Yes, truly I have sinned, I have sinned! Yet how came I so to sin? To think that a dvorianin — yes, a dvorianin — should be thrown into prison without process or trial! I repeat, a dvorianin! Why was I not given time to go home and collect my effects? Whereas now they are left with no one to look after them! My dispatch-box, my dispatch-box! It contained my whole property, all that my heart's blood and years of toil and want have been needed to acquire. And now everything will be stolen, Athanasi Vassilievitch — everything will be taken from me! My God!"

And, unable to stand against the torrent of grief which came rushing over his heart once more, he sobbed aloud in tones which penetrated even the thickness of the prison walls, and made dull echoes awake behind them. Then, tearing off his satin tie, and seizing by the collar, the smoked-grey-shot-with-flame-colour frockcoat, he stripped the latter from his shoulders.

"Ah, Paul Ivanovitch," said the old man, "how even now the property which you have acquired is blinding your eyes, and causing you to fail to realise your terrible position!"

"Yes, my good friend and benefactor," wailed poor Chichikov despairingly, and clasping Murazov by the knees. "Yet save me if you can! The Prince is fond of you, and would do anything for your sake."

"No, Paul Ivanovitch; however much I might wish to save you, and however much I might try to do so, I could not help you as you desire; for it is to the power of an inexorable law, and not to the authority of any one man, that you

have rendered yourself subject."

"Satan tempted me, and has ended by making of me an outcast from the human race!" Chichikov beat his head against the wall and struck the table with his fist until the blood spurted from his hand. Yet neither his head nor his hand seemed to be conscious of the least pain.

"Calm yourself, Paul Ivanovitch," said Murazov. "Calm yourself, and consider how best you can make your peace with God. Think of your miserable soul, and not of the judgment of man."

"I will, Athanasi Vassilievitch, I will. But what a fate is mine! Did ever such a fate befall a man? To think of all the patience with which I have gathered my kopecks, of all the toil and trouble which I have endured! Yet what I have done has not been done with the intention of robbing any one, nor of cheating the Treasury. Why, then, did I gather those kopecks? I gathered them to the end that one day I might be able to live in plenty, and also to have something to leave to the wife and children whom, for the benefit and welfare of my country, I hoped eventually to win and maintain. That was why I gathered those kopecks. True, I worked by devious methods — that I fully admit; but what else could I do? And even devious methods I employed only when I saw that the straight road would not serve my purpose so well as a crooked. Moreover, as I toiled, the appetite for those methods grew upon me. Yet what I took I took only from the rich; whereas villains exist who, while drawing thousands a year from the Treasury, despoil the poor, and take from the man with nothing even that which he has. Is it not the cruelty of fate, therefore, that, just when I was beginning to reap the harvest of my toil — to touch it, so to speak, with the tip of one finger — there should have arisen a sudden storm which has sent my barque to pieces on a rock? My capital had nearly reached the sum of three hundred thousand roubles, and a three-storied house was as good as mine, and twice over I could have bought a country estate. Why, then, should such a tempest have burst upon me? Why should I have sustained such a blow? Was not my life already like a barque tossed to and fro by the billows? Where is Heaven's justice — where is the reward for all my patience, for my boundless perseverance? Three times did I have to begin life afresh, and each time that I lost my all I began with a single kopeck at a moment when other men would have given themselves up to despair and drink. How much did I not have to overcome. How much did I not have to bear! Every kopeck which I gained I had to make with my whole strength; for though, to others, wealth may come easily, every coin of mine had to be 'forged with a nail worth three kopecks' as the proverb has it. With such a nail — with the nail of an iron, unwearying perseverance — did *I* forge my kopecks."

Convulsively sobbing with a grief which he could not repress, Chichikov sank

upon a chair, tore from his shoulders the last ragged, trailing remnants of his frockcoat, and hurled them from him. Then, thrusting his fingers into the hair which he had once been so careful to preserve, he pulled it out by handfuls at a time, as though he hoped through physical pain to deaden the mental agony which he was suffering.

Meanwhile Murazov sat gazing in silence at the unwonted spectacle of a man who had lately been mincing with the gait of a worldling or a military fop now writhing in dishevelment and despair as he poured out upon the hostile forces by which human ingenuity so often finds itself outwitted a flood of invective.

"Paul Ivanovitch, Paul Ivanovitch," at length said Murazov, "what could not each of us rise to be did we but devote to good ends the same measure of energy and of patience which we bestow upon unworthy objects! How much good would not you yourself have effected! Yet I do not grieve so much for the fact that you have sinned against your fellow as I grieve for the fact that you have sinned against yourself and the rich store of gifts and opportunities which has been committed to your care. Though originally destined to rise, you have wandered from the path and fallen."

"Ah, Athanasi Vassilievitch," cried poor Chichikov, clasping his friends hands, "I swear to you that, if you would but restore me my freedom, and recover for me my lost property, I would lead a different life from this time forth. Save me, you who alone can work my deliverance! Save me!"

"How can I do that? So to do I should need to procure the setting aside of a law. Again, even if I were to make the attempt, the Prince is a strict administrator, and would refuse on any consideration to release you."

"Yes, but for you all things are possible. It is not the law that troubles me: with that I could find a means to deal. It is the fact that for no offence at all I have been cast into prison, and treated like a dog, and deprived of my papers and dispatch-box and all my property. Save me if you can."

Again clasping the old man's knees, he bedewed them with his tears.

"Paul Ivanovitch," said Murazov, shaking his head, "how that property of yours still seals your eyes and ears, so that you cannot so much as listen to the promptings of your own soul!"

"Ah, I will think of my soul, too, if only you will save me."

"Paul Ivanovitch," the old man began again, and then stopped. For a little while there was a pause.

"Paul Ivanovitch," at length he went on, "to save you does not lie within my power. Surely you yourself see that? But, so far as I can, I will endeavour to, at all events, lighten your lot and procure your eventual release. Whether or not I shall succeed I do not know; but I will make the attempt. And should I, contrary

to my expectations, prove successful, I beg of you, in return for these my efforts, to renounce all thought of benefit from the property which you have acquired. Sincerely do I assure you that, were I myself to be deprived of my property (and my property greatly exceeds yours in magnitude), I should not shed a single tear. It is not the property of which men can deprive us that matters, but the property of which no one on earth can deprive or despoil us. You are a man who has seen something of life — to use your own words, you have been a barque tossed hither and thither by tempestuous waves: yet still will there be left to you a remnant of substance on which to live, and therefore I beseech you to settle down in some quiet nook where there is a church, and where none but plain, good-hearted folk abide. Or, should you feel a yearning to leave behind you posterity, take in marriage a good woman who shall bring you, not money, but an aptitude for simple, modest domestic life. But this life — the life of turmoil, with its longings and its temptations — forget, and let it forget YOU; for there is no peace in it. See for yourself how, at every step, it brings one but hatred and treachery and deceit."

"Indeed, yes!" agreed the repentant Chichikov. "Gladly will I do as you wish, since for many a day past have I been longing to amend my life, and to engage in husbandry, and to reorder my affairs. A demon, the tempter Satan himself, has beguiled me and led me from the right path."

Suddenly there had recurred to Chichikov long-unknown, long-unfamiliar feelings. Something seemed to be striving to come to life again in him — something dim and remote, something which had been crushed out of his boyhood by the dreary, deadening education of his youthful days, by his desolate home, by his subsequent lack of family ties, by the poverty and niggardliness of his early impressions, by the grim eye of fate — an eye which had always seemed to be regarding him as through a misty, mournful, frost-encrusted window-pane, and to be mocking at his struggles for freedom. And as these feelings came back to the penitent a groan burst from his lips, and, covering his face with his hands, he moaned: "It is all true, it is all true!"

"Of little avail are knowledge of the world and experience of men unless based upon a secure foundation," observed Murazov. "Though you have fallen, Paul Ivanovitch, awake to better things, for as yet there is time."

"No, no!" groaned Chichikov in a voice which made Murazov's heart bleed. "It is too late, too late. More and more is the conviction gaining upon me that I am powerless, that I have strayed too far ever to be able to do as you bid me. The fact that I have become what I am is due to my early schooling; for, though my father taught me moral lessons, and beat me, and set me to copy maxims into a book, he himself stole land from his neighbours, and forced me to help him. I

have even known him to bring an unjust suit, and defraud the orphan whose guardian he was! Consequently I know and feel that, though my life has been different from his, I do not hate roguery as I ought to hate it, and that my nature is coarse, and that in me there is no real love for what is good, no real spark of that beautiful instinct for well-doing which becomes a second nature, a settled habit. Also, never do I yearn to strive for what is right as I yearn to acquire property. This is no more than the truth. What else could I do but confess it?"

The old man sighed.

"Paul Ivanovitch," he said, "I know that you possess will-power, and that you possess also perseverance. A medicine may be bitter, yet the patient will gladly take it when assured that only by its means can he recover. Therefore, if it really be that you have no genuine love for doing good, do good by FORCING yourself to do so. Thus you will benefit yourself even more than you will benefit him for whose sake the act is performed. Only force yourself to do good just once and again, and, behold, you will suddenly conceive the TRUE love for well-doing. That is so, believe me. 'A kingdom is to be won only by striving,' says the proverb. That is to say, things are to be attained only by putting forth one's whole strength, since nothing short of one's whole strength will bring one to the desired goal. Paul Ivanovitch, within you there is a source of strength denied to many another man. I refer to the strength of an iron perseverance. Cannot THAT help you to overcome? Most men are weak and lack will-power, whereas I believe that you possess the power to act a hero's part."

Sinking deep into Chichikov's heart, these words would seem to have aroused in it a faint stirring of ambition, so much so that, if it was not fortitude which shone in his eyes, at all events it was something virile, and of much the same nature.

"Athanasi Vassilievitch," he said firmly, "if you will but petition for my release, as well as for permission for me to leave here with a portion of my property, I swear to you on my word of honour that I will begin a new life, and buy a country estate, and become the head of a household, and save money, nor for myself, but for others, and do good everywhere, and to the best of my ability, and forget alike myself and the feasting and debauchery of town life, and lead, instead, a plain, sober existence."

"In that resolve may God strengthen you!" cried the old man with unbounded joy. "And I, for my part, will do my utmost to procure your release. And though God alone knows whether my efforts will be successful, at all events I hope to bring about a mitigation of your sentence. Come, let me embrace you! How you have filled my heart with gladness! With God's help, I will now go to the Prince."

And the next moment Chichikov found himself alone. His whole nature felt shaken and softened, even as, when the bellows have fanned the furnace to a sufficient heat, a plate compounded even of the hardest and most fire-resisting metal dissolves, glows, and turns to the liquefied state.

"I myself can feel but little," he reflected, "but I intend to use my every faculty to help others to feel. I myself am but bad and worthless, but I intend to do my utmost to set others on the right road. I myself am but an indifferent Christian, but I intend to strive never to yield to temptation, but to work hard, and to till my land with the sweat of my brow, and to engage only in honourable pursuits, and to influence my fellows in the same direction. For, after all, am I so very useless? At least I could maintain a household, for I am frugal and active and intelligent and steadfast. The only thing is to make up my mind to it."

Thus Chichikov pondered; and as he did so his half-awakened energies of soul touched upon something. That is to say, dimly his instinct divined that every man has a duty to perform, and that that duty may be performed here, there, and everywhere, and no matter what the circumstances and the emotions and the difficulties which compass a man about. And with such clearness did Chichikov mentally picture to himself the life of grateful toil which lies removed from the bustle of towns and the temptations which man, forgetful of the obligation of labour, has invented to beguile an hour of idleness that almost our hero forgot his unpleasant position, and even felt ready to thank Providence for the calamity which had befallen him, provided that it should end in his being released, and in his receiving back a portion of his property.

Presently the massive door of the cell opened to admit a tchinovnik named Samosvitov, a robust, sensual individual who was reputed by his comrades to be something of a rake. Had he served in the army, he would have done wonders, for he would have stormed any point, however dangerous and inaccessible, and captured cannon under the very noses of the foe; but, as it was, the lack of a more warlike field for his energies caused him to devote the latter principally to dissipation. Nevertheless he enjoyed great popularity, for he was loyal to the point that, once his word had been given, nothing would ever make him break it. At the same time, some reason or another led him to regard his superiors in the light of a hostile battery which, come what might, he must breach at any weak or unguarded spot or gap which might be capable of being utilised for the purpose.

"We have all heard of your plight," he began as soon as the door had been safely closed behind him. "Yes, every one has heard of it. But never mind. Things will yet come right. We will do our very best for you, and act as your humble servants in everything. Thirty thousand roubles is our price — no more."

"Indeed?" said Chichikov. "And, for that, shall I be completely exonerated?"

“Yes, completely, and also given some compensation for your loss of time.”

“And how much am I to pay in return, you say?”

“Thirty thousand roubles, to be divided among ourselves, the Governor-General’s staff, and the Governor-General’s secretary.”

“But how is even that to be managed, for all my effects, including my dispatch-box, will have been sealed up and taken away for examination?”

“In an hour’s time they will be within your hands again,” said Samosvitov. “Shall we shake hands over the bargain?”

Chichikov did so with a beating heart, for he could scarcely believe his ears.

“For the present, then, farewell,” concluded Samosvitov. “I have instructed a certain mutual friend that the important points are silence and presence of mind.”

“Hm!” thought Chichikov. “It is to my lawyer that he is referring.”

Even when Samosvitov had departed the prisoner found it difficult to credit all that had been said. Yet not an hour had elapsed before a messenger arrived with his dispatch-box and the papers and money therein practically undisturbed and intact! Later it came out that Samosvitov had assumed complete authority in the matter. First, he had rebuked the gendarmes guarding Chichikov’s effects for lack of vigilance, and then sent word to the Superintendent that additional men were required for the purpose; after which he had taken the dispatch-box into his own charge, removed from it every paper which could possibly compromise Chichikov, sealed up the rest in a packet, and ordered a gendarme to convey the whole to their owner on the pretence of forwarding him sundry garments necessary for the night. In the result Chichikov received not only his papers, but also some warm clothing for his hypersensitive limbs. Such a swift recovery of his treasures delighted him beyond expression, and, gathering new hope, he began once more to dream of such allurements as theatre-going and the ballet girl after whom he had for some time past been dangling. Gradually did the country estate and the simple life begin to recede into the distance: gradually did the town house and the life of gaiety begin to loom larger and larger in the foreground. Oh, life, life!

Meanwhile in Government offices and chancellories there had been set on foot a boundless volume of work. Clerical pens slaved, and brains skilled in legal casus toiled; for each official had the artist’s liking for the curved line in preference to the straight. And all the while, like a hidden magician, Chichikov’s lawyer imparted driving power to that machine which caught up a man into its mechanism before he could even look round. And the complexity of it increased and increased, for Samosvitov surpassed himself in importance and daring. On learning of the place of confinement of the woman who had been arrested, he presented himself at the doors, and passed so well for a smart young officer of

gendarmery that the sentry saluted and sprang to attention.

"Have you been on duty long?" asked Samosvitov.

"Since this morning, your Excellency."

"And shall you soon be relieved?"

"In three hours from now, your Excellency."

"Presently I shall want you, so I will instruct your officer to have you relieved at once."

"Very good, your Excellency."

Hastening home, thereafter, at top speed, and donning the uniform of a gendarme, with a false moustache and a pair of false whiskers — an ensemble in which the devil himself would not have known him, Samosvitov then made for the gaol where Chichikov was confined, and, en route, impressed into the service the first street woman whom he encountered, and handed her over to the care of two young fellows of like sort with himself. The next step was to hurry back to the prison where the original woman had been interned, and there to intimate to the sentry that he, Samosvitov (with whiskers and rifle complete), had been sent to relieve the said sentry at his post — a proceeding which, of course, enabled the newly-arrived relief to ensure, while performing his self-assumed turn of duty, that for the woman lying under arrest there should be substituted the woman recently recruited to the plot, and that the former should then be conveyed to a place of concealment where she was highly unlikely to be discovered.

Meanwhile, Samosvitov's feats in the military sphere were being rivalled by the wonders worked by Chichikov's lawyer in the civilian field of action. As a first step, the lawyer caused it to be intimated to the local Governor that the Public Prosecutor was engaged in drawing up a report to his, the local Governor's, detriment; whereafter the lawyer caused it to be intimated also to the Chief of Gendarmery that a certain confidential official was engaged in doing the same by HIM; whereafter, again, the lawyer confided to the confidential official in question that, owing to the documentary exertions of an official of a still more confidential nature than the first, he (the confidential official first-mentioned) was in a fair way to find himself in the same boat as both the local Governor and the Chief of Gendarmery: with the result that the whole trio were reduced to a frame of mind in which they were only too glad to turn to him (Samosvitov) for advice. The ultimate and farcical upshot was that report came crowding upon report, and that such alleged doings were brought to light as the sun had never before beheld. In fact, the documents in question employed anything and everything as material, even to announcing that such and such an individual had an illegitimate son, that such and such another kept a paid

mistress, and that such and such a third was troubled with a gadabout wife; whereby there became interwoven with and welded into Chichikov's past history and the story of the dead souls such a crop of scandals and innuendoes that by no manner of means could any mortal decide to which of these rubbishy romances to award the palm, since all them presented an equal claim to that honour. Naturally, when, at length, the dossier reached the Governor-General himself it simply flabbergasted the poor man; and even the exceptionally clever and energetic secretary to whom he deputed the making of an abstract of the same very nearly lost his reason with the strain of attempting to lay hold of the tangled end of the skein. It happened that just at that time the Prince had several other important affairs on hand, and affairs of a very unpleasant nature. That is to say, famine had made its appearance in one portion of the province, and the tchinovniks sent to distribute food to the people had done their work badly; in another portion of the province certain Raskolniki were in a state of ferment, owing to the spreading of a report than an Antichrist had arisen who would not even let the dead rest, but was purchasing them wholesale — wherefore the said Raskolniki were summoning folk to prayer and repentance, and, under cover of capturing the Antichrist in question, were bludgeoning non-Antichrists in batches; lastly, the peasants of a third portion of the province had risen against the local landowners and superintendents of police, for the reason that certain rascals had started a rumour that the time was come when the peasants themselves were to become landowners, and to wear frockcoats, while the landowners in being were about to revert to the peasant state, and to take their own wares to market; wherefore one of the local volosts, oblivious of the fact that an order of things of that kind would lead to a superfluity alike of landowners and of superintendents of police, had refused to pay its taxes, and necessitated recourse to forcible measures. Hence it was in a mood of the greatest possible despondency that the poor Prince was sitting plunged when word was brought to him that the old man who had gone bail for Chichikov was waiting to see him.

"Show him in," said the Prince; and the old man entered.

"A fine fellow your Chichikov!" began the Prince angrily. "You defended him, and went bail for him, even though he had been up to business which even the lowest thief would not have touched!"

"Pardon me, your Highness; I do not understand to what you are referring."

"I am referring to the matter of the fraudulent will. The fellow ought to have been given a public flogging for it."

"Although to exculpate Chichikov is not my intention, might I ask you whether you do not think the case is non-proven? At all events, sufficient

evidence against him is still lacking."

"What? We have as chief witness the woman who personated the deceased, and I will have her interrogated in your presence."

Touching a bell, the Prince ordered her to be sent for.

"It is a most disgraceful affair," he went on; "and, ashamed though I am to have to say it, some of our leading tchinovniks, including the local Governor himself, have become implicated in the matter. Yet you tell me that this Chichikov ought not to be confined among thieves and rascals!" Clearly the Governor-General's wrath was very great indeed.

"Your Highness," said Murazov, "the Governor of the town is one of the heirs under the will: wherefore he has a certain right to intervene. Also, the fact that extraneous persons have meddled in the matter is only what is to be expected from human nature. A rich woman dies, and no exact, regular disposition of her property is made. Hence there comes flocking from every side a cloud of fortune hunters. What else could one expect? Such is human nature."

"Yes, but why should such persons go and commit fraud?" asked the Prince irritably. "I feel as though not a single honest tchinovnik were available — as though every one of them were a rogue."

"Your Highness, which of us is altogether beyond reproach? The tchinovniks of our town are human beings, and no more. Some of them are men of worth, and nearly all of them men skilled in business — though also, unfortunately, largely inter-related."

"Now, tell me this, Athanasi Vassilievitch," said the Prince, "for you are about the only honest man of my acquaintance. What has inspired in you such a penchant for defending rascals?"

"This," replied Murazov. "Take any man you like of the persons whom you thus term rascals. That man none the less remains a human being. That being so, how can one refuse to defend him when all the time one knows that half his errors have been committed through ignorance and stupidity? Each of us commits faults with every step that we take; each of us entails unhappiness upon others with every breath that we draw — and that although we may have no evil intention whatever in our minds. Your Highness himself has, before now, committed an injustice of the gravest nature."

"*I* have?" cried the Prince, taken aback by this unexpected turn given to the conversation.

Murazov remained silent for a moment, as though he were debating something in his thoughts. Then he said:

"Nevertheless it is as I say. You committed the injustice in the case of the lad Dierpiennikov."

“What, Athanasi Vassilievitch? The fellow had infringed one of the Fundamental Laws! He had been found guilty of treason!”

“I am not seeking to justify him; I am only asking you whether you think it right that an inexperienced youth who had been tempted and led away by others should have received the same sentence as the man who had taken the chief part in the affair. That is to say, although Dierpiennikov and the man Voron-Drianni received an equal measure of punishment, their CRIMINALITY was not equal.”

“If,” exclaimed the Prince excitedly, “you know anything further concerning the case, for God’s sake tell it me at once. Only the other day did I forward a recommendation that St. Petersburg should remit a portion of the sentence.”

“Your Highness,” replied Murazov, “I do not mean that I know of anything which does not lie also within your own cognisance, though one circumstance there was which might have told in the lad’s favour had he not refused to admit it, lest another should suffer injury. All that I have in my mind is this. On that occasion were you not a little over-hasty in coming to a conclusion? You will understand, of course, that I am judging only according to my own poor lights, and for the reason that on more than one occasion you have urged me to be frank. In the days when I myself acted as a chief of gendarmery I came in contact with a great number of accused — some of them bad, some of them good; and in each case I found it well also to consider a man’s past career, for the reason that, unless one views things calmly, instead of at once decrying a man, he is apt to take alarm, and to make it impossible thereafter to get any real confession from him. If, on the other hand, you question a man as friend might question friend, the result will be that straightway he will tell you everything, nor ask for mitigation of his penalty, nor bear you the least malice, in that he will understand that it is not you who have punished him, but the law.”

The Prince relapsed into thought; until presently there entered a young tchinovnik. Portfolio in hand, this official stood waiting respectfully. Care and hard work had already imprinted their insignia upon his fresh young face; for evidently he had not been in the Service for nothing. As a matter of fact, his greatest joy was to labour at a tangled case, and successfully to unravel it.

[At this point a long hiatus occurs in the original.]

“I will send corn to the localities where famine is worst,” said Murazov, “for I understand that sort of work better than do the tchinovniks, and will personally see to the needs of each person. Also, if you will allow me, your Highness, I will go and have a talk with the Raskolniki. They are more likely to listen to a plain man than to an official. God knows whether I shall succeed in calming them, but at least no tchinovnik could do so, for officials of the kind merely draw up reports and lose their way among their own documents — with the result that

nothing comes of it. Nor will I accept from you any money for these purposes, since I am ashamed to devote as much as a thought to my own pocket at a time when men are dying of hunger. I have a large stock of grain lying in my granaries; in addition to which, I have sent orders to Siberia that a new consignment shall be forwarded me before the coming summer."

"Of a surety will God reward you for your services, Athanasi Vassilievitch! Not another word will I say to you on the subject, for you yourself feel that any words from me would be inadequate. Yet tell me one thing: I refer to the case of which you know. Have I the right to pass over the case? Also, would it be just and honourable on my part to let the offending tchinovniks go unpunished?"

"Your Highness, it is impossible to return a definite answer to those two questions: and the more so because many rascals are at heart men of rectitude. Human problems are difficult things to solve. Sometimes a man may be drawn into a vicious circle, so that, having once entered it, he ceases to be himself."

"But what would the tchinovniks say if I allowed the case to be passed over? Would not some of them turn up their noses at me, and declare that they have effected my intimidation? Surely they would be the last persons in the world to respect me for my action?"

"Your Highness, I think this: that your best course would be to call them together, and to inform them that you know everything, and to explain to them your personal attitude (exactly as you have explained it to me), and to end by at once requesting their advice and asking them what each of them would have done had he been placed in similar circumstances."

"What? You think that those tchinovniks would be so accessible to lofty motives that they would cease thereafter to be venal and meticulous? I should be laughed at for my pains."

"I think not, your Highness. Even the baser section of humanity possesses a certain sense of equity. Your wisest plan, your Highness, would be to conceal nothing and to speak to them as you have just spoken to me. If, at present, they imagine you to be ambitious and proud and unapproachable and self-assured, your action would afford them an opportunity of seeing how the case really stands. Why should you hesitate? You would but be exercising your undoubted right. Speak to them as though delivering not a message of your own, but a message from God."

"I will think it over," the Prince said musingly, "and meanwhile I thank you from my heart for your good advice."

"Also, I should order Chichikov to leave the town," suggested Murazov.

"Yes, I will do so. Tell him from me that he is to depart hence as quickly as possible, and that the further he should remove himself, the better it will be for

him. Also, tell him that it is only owing to your efforts that he has received a pardon at my hands."

Murazov bowed, and proceeded from the Prince's presence to that of Chichikov. He found the prisoner cheerfully enjoying a hearty dinner which, under hot covers, had been brought him from an exceedingly excellent kitchen. But almost the first words which he uttered showed Murazov that the prisoner had been having dealings with the army of bribe-takers; as also that in those transactions his lawyer had played the principal part.

"Listen, Paul Ivanovitch," the old man said. "I bring you your freedom, but only on this condition — that you depart out of the town forthwith. Therefore gather together your effects, and waste not a moment, lest worse befall you. Also, of all that a certain person has contrived to do on your behalf I am aware; wherefore let me tell you, as between ourselves, that should the conspiracy come to light, nothing on earth can save him, and in his fall he will involve others rather then be left unaccompanied in the lurch, and not see the guilt shared. How is it that when I left you recently you were in a better frame of mind than you are now? I beg of you not to trifle with the matter. Ah me! what boots that wealth for which men dispute and cut one another's throats? Do they think that it is possible to prosper in this world without thinking of the world to come? Believe me when I say that, until a man shall have renounced all that leads humanity to contend without giving a thought to the ordering of spiritual wealth, he will never set his temporal goods either upon a satisfactory foundation. Yes, even as times of want and scarcity may come upon nations, so may they come upon individuals. No matter what may be said to the contrary, the body can never dispense with the soul. Why, then, will you not try to walk in the right way, and, by thinking no longer of dead souls, but only of your only living one, regain, with God's help, the better road? I too am leaving the town to-morrow. Hasten, therefore, lest, bereft of my assistance, you meet with some dire misfortune."

And the old man departed, leaving Chichikov plunged in thought. Once more had the gravity of life begun to loom large before him.

"Yes, Murazov was right," he said to himself. "It is time that I were moving."

Leaving the prison — a warder carrying his effects in his wake — he found Selifan and Petrushka overjoyed at seeing their master once more at liberty.

"Well, good fellows?" he said kindly. "And now we must pack and be off."

"True, true, Paul Ivanovitch," agreed Selifan. "And by this time the roads will have become firmer, for much snow has fallen. Yes, high time is it that we were clear of the town. So weary of it am I that the sight of it hurts my eyes."

"Go to the coachbuilder's," commanded Chichikov, "and have sledge-runners fitted to the koliaska."

Chichikov then made his way into the town — though not with the object of paying farewell visits (in view of recent events, that might have given rise to some awkwardness), but for the purpose of paying an unobtrusive call at the shop where he had obtained the cloth for his latest suit. There he now purchased four more arshins of the same smoked-grey-shot-with-flame-colour material as he had had before, with the intention of having it made up by the tailor who had fashioned the previous costume; and by promising double remuneration he induced the tailor in question so to hasten the cutting out of the garments that, through sitting up all night over the work, the man might have the whole ready by break of day. True, the goods were delivered a trifle after the appointed hour, yet the following morning saw the coat and breeches completed; and while the horses were being put to, Chichikov tried on the clothes, and found them equal to the previous creation, even though during the process he caught sight of a bald patch on his head, and was led mournfully to reflect: "Alas! Why did I give way to such despair? Surely I need not have torn my hair out so freely?"

Then, when the tailor had been paid, our hero left the town. But no longer was he the old Chichikov — he was only a ruin of what he had been, and his frame of mind might have been compared to a building recently pulled down to make room for a new one, while the new one had not yet been erected owing to the non-receipt of the plans from the architect. Murazov, too, had departed, but at an earlier hour, and in a tilt-waggon with Ivan Potapitch.

An hour later the Governor-General issued to all and sundry officials a notice that, on the occasion of his departure for St. Petersburg, he would be glad to see the corps of tchinovniks at a private meeting. Accordingly all ranks and grades of officialdom repaired to his residence, and there awaited — not without a certain measure of trepidation and of searching of heart — the Governor-General's entry. When that took place he looked neither clear nor dull. Yet his bearing was proud, and his step assured. The tchinovniks bowed — some of them to the waist, and he answered their salutations with a slight inclination of the head. Then he spoke as follows:

"Since I am about to pay a visit to St. Petersburg, I have thought it right to meet you, and to explain to you privately my reasons for doing so. An affair of a most scandalous character has taken place in our midst. To what affair I am referring I think most of those present will guess. Now, an automatic process has led to that affair bringing about the discovery of other matters. Those matters are no less dishonourable than the primary one; and to that I regret to have to add that there stand involved in them certain persons whom I had hitherto believed to be honourable. Of the object aimed at by those who have complicated matters to the point of making their resolution almost impossible by ordinary methods I am

aware; as also I am aware of the identity of the ringleader, despite the skill with which he has sought to conceal his share in the scandal. But the principal point is, that I propose to decide these matters, not by formal documentary process, but by the more summary process of court-martial, and that I hope, when the circumstances have been laid before his Imperial Majesty, to receive from him authority to adopt the course which I have mentioned. For I conceive that when it has become impossible to resolve a case by civil means, and some of the necessary documents have been burnt, and attempts have been made (both through the adduction of an excess of false and extraneous evidence and through the framing of fictitious reports) to cloud an already sufficiently obscure investigation with an added measure of complexity, — when all these circumstances have arisen, I conceive that the only possible tribunal to deal with them is a military tribunal. But on that point I should like your opinion."

The Prince paused for a moment or two, as though awaiting a reply; but none came, seeing that every man had his eyes bent upon the floor, and many of the audience had turned white in the face.

"Then," he went on, "I may say that I am aware also of a matter which those who have carried it through believe to lie only within the cognisance of themselves. The particulars of that matter will not be set forth in documentary form, but only through process of myself acting as plaintiff and petitioner, and producing none but ocular evidence."

Among the throng of tchinovniks some one gave a start, and thereby caused others of the more apprehensive sort to fall to trembling in their shoes.

"Without saying does it go that the prime conspirators ought to undergo deprivation of rank and property, and that the remainder ought to be dismissed from their posts; for though that course would cause a certain proportion of the innocent to suffer with the guilty, there would seem to be no other course available, seeing that the affair is one of the most disgraceful nature, and calls aloud for justice. Therefore, although I know that to some my action will fail to serve as a lesson, since it will lead to their succeeding to the posts of dismissed officials, as well as that others hitherto considered honourable will lose their reputation, and others entrusted with new responsibilities will continue to cheat and betray their trust, — although all this is known to me, I still have no choice but to satisfy the claims of justice by proceeding to take stern measures. I am also aware that I shall be accused of undue severity; but, lastly, I am aware that it is my duty to put aside all personal feeling, and to act as the unconscious instrument of that retribution which justice demands."

Over ever face there passed a shudder. Yet the Prince had spoken calmly, and not a trace of anger or any other kind of emotion had been visible on his

features.

"Nevertheless," he went on, "the very man in whose hands the fate of so many now lies, the very man whom no prayer for mercy could ever have influenced, himself desires to make a request of you. Should you grant that request, all will be forgotten and blotted out and pardoned, for I myself will intercede with the Throne on your behalf. That request is this. I know that by no manner of means, by no preventive measures, and by no penalties will dishonesty ever be completely extirpated from our midst, for the reason that its roots have struck too deep, and that the dishonourable traffic in bribes has become a necessity to, even the mainstay of, some whose nature is not innately venal. Also, I know that, to many men, it is an impossibility to swim against the stream. Yet now, at this solemn and critical juncture, when the country is calling aloud for saviours, and it is the duty of every citizen to contribute and to sacrifice his all, I feel that I cannot but issue an appeal to every man in whom a Russian heart and a spark of what we understand by the word 'nobility' exist. For, after all, which of us is more guilty than his fellow? It may be to ME the greatest culpability should be assigned, in that at first I may have adopted towards you too reserved an attitude, that I may have been over-hasty in repelling those who desired but to serve me, even though of their services I did not actually stand in need. Yet, had they really loved justice and the good of their country, I think that they would have been less prone to take offence at the coldness of my attitude, but would have sacrificed their feelings and their personality to their superior convictions. For hardly can it be that I failed to note their overtures and the loftiness of their motives, or that I would not have accepted any wise and useful advice proffered. At the same time, it is for a subordinate to adapt himself to the tone of his superior, rather than for a superior to adapt himself to the tone of his subordinate. Such a course is at once more regular and more smooth of working, since a corps of subordinates has but one director, whereas a director may have a hundred subordinates. But let us put aside the question of comparative culpability. The important point is, that before us all lies the duty of rescuing our fatherland. Our fatherland is suffering, not from the incursion of a score of alien tongues, but from our own acts, in that, in addition to the lawful administration, there has grown up a second administration possessed of infinitely greater powers than the system established by law. And that second administration has established its conditions, fixed its tariff of prices, and published that tariff abroad; nor could any ruler, even though the wisest of legislators and administrators, do more to correct the evil than limit it in the conduct of his more venal tchinovniks by setting over them, as their supervisors, men of superior rectitude. No, until each of us shall come to feel that, just as arms were taken up during the period of the

upheaval of nations, so now each of us must make a stand against dishonesty, all remedies will end in failure. As a Russian, therefore — as one bound to you by consanguinity and identity of blood — I make to you my appeal. I make it to those of you who understand wherein lies nobility of thought. I invite those men to remember the duty which confronts us, whatsoever our respective stations; I invite them to observe more closely their duty, and to keep more constantly in mind their obligations of holding true to their country, in that before us the future looms dark, and that we can scarcely....”

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The Short Story Collections



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EVENINGS ON A FARM NEAR DIKANKA



Translated by Constance Garnett

This collection of short stories was written from 1831 to 1832. The tales first appeared in various magazines and were published in book form when Gogol was twenty two. Containing many of Gogol's early impressions and memories of childhood, the stories present images of humble peasant life in the Ukraine. . They are also heavily laced with Ukrainian folklore and cultural references, offering a unique perspective into life in the country during that time period.

Evenings on a Farm Near Dikankath is was Gogol's groundbreaking work, forming the style he would use in his later and more famous works. The collection established him as a new power in Russian literature, whose unique blend of horror with humour was original and very popular with his readers.

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Two Russian film adaptations of the story collection

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Volume I

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The Fair at Sorochintsï

I

I am weary of the hut,
Aie, take me from my home,
To where there's noise and bustle,
To where the girls are dancing gaily,
Where the boys are making merry!

From an old ballad

How intoxicating, how magnificent is a summer day in Little Russia! How luxuriously warm the hours when midday glitters in stillness and sultry heat and the blue fathomless ocean covering the plain like a dome seems to be slumbering, bathed in languor, clasping the fair earth and holding it close in its ethereal embrace! Upon it, not a cloud; in the plain, not a sound. Everything might be dead; only above in the heavenly depths a lark is trilling, and from the airy heights the silvery notes drop down upon adoring earth, and from time to time the cry of a gull or the ringing note of a quail sounds in the steppe. The towering oaks stand, idle and apathetic, like aimless wayfarers, and the dazzling gleams of sunshine light up picturesque masses of leaves, casting onto others a shadow black as night, only flecked with gold when the wind blows. The insects of the air flit like sparks of emerald, topaz, and ruby about the gay vegetable gardens, topped by stately sunflowers. Gray haystacks and golden sheaves of wheat, like tents, stray over the plain. The broad branches of cherries, of plums, apples, and pears bent under their load of fruit, the sky with its pure mirror, the river in its green, proudly erect frame—how full of delight is the Little Russian summer!

Such was the splendor of a day in the hot August of eighteen hundred... eighteen hundred... yes, it will be about thirty years ago, when the road eight miles beyond the village of Sorochintsy bustled with people hurrying to the fair from all the farms, far and near. From early morning, wagons full of fish and salt had trailed in an endless chain along the road. Mountains of pots wrapped in hay moved along slowly, as though weary of being shut up in the dark; only here and there a brightly painted tureen or crock boastfully peeped out from behind the hurdle that held the high pile on the wagon, and attracted wishful glances from

the devotees of such luxury. Many of the passers-by looked enviously at the tall potter, the owner of these treasures, who walked slowly behind his goods, carefully wrapping his proud crocks in the alien hay that would engulf them.

On one side of the road, apart from all the rest, a team of weary oxen dragged a wagon piled up with sacks, hemp, linen, and various household goods and followed by their owner, in a clean linen shirt and dirty linen trousers. With a lazy hand he wiped from his swarthy face the streaming perspiration that even trickled from his long mustaches, powdered by the relentless barber who, uninvited, visits fair and foul alike and has for countless years forcibly sprinkled all mankind with dust. Beside him, tied to the wagon, walked a mare, whose meek air betrayed her advancing years.

Many of the passers-by, especially the young men, took off their caps as they met our peasant. But it was not his gray mustaches or his dignified step that led them to do so; one had but to raise one’s eyes a little discover the reason for this deference: on the wagon was sitting his pretty daughter, with a round face, black eyebrows arching evenly above her clear brown eyes, carelessly smiling rosy lips, and with red and blue ribbons twisted in the long braids which, with a bunch of wild flowers, crowned her charming head. Everything seemed to interest her; everything was new and wonderful... and her pretty eyes were racing all the time from one object to another. She might well be diverted! It was her first visit to a fair! A girl of eighteen for the first time at a fair!... But none of the passers-by knew what it had cost her to persuade her father to bring her, though he would have been ready enough but for her spiteful stepmother, who had learned to manage him as cleverly as he drove his old mare, now as a reward for long years of service being taken to be sold. The irrepressible woman... But we are forgetting that she, too, was sitting on the top of the load dressed in a smart green woolen pelisse, adorned with little tails to imitate ermine, though they were red in color, in a gorgeous *plakhta* checked like a chessboard, and a flowered chintz cap that gave a particularly majestic air to her fat red face, the expression of which betrayed something so unpleasant and savage that everyone hastened in alarm to turn from her to the bright face of her daughter.

The river Psiol gradually came into our travelers’ view; already in the distance they felt its cool freshness, the more welcome after the exhausting, wearisome heat. Through the dark and light green foliage of the birches and poplars, carelessly scattered over the plain, there were glimpses of the cold glitter of the water, and the lovely river unveiled her shining silvery bosom, over which the green tresses of the trees drooped luxuriantly. Willful as a beauty in those enchanting hours when her faithful mirror so jealously frames her brow full of pride and dazzling splendor, her lily shoulders, and her marble neck, shrouded

by the dark waves of her hair, when with disdain she flings aside one ornament to replace it by another and there is no end to her whims—the river almost every year changes her course, picks out a new channel, and surrounds herself with new and varied scenes. Rows of watermills tossed up great waves with their heavy wheels and flung them violently down again, churning them into foam, scattering froth and making a great clatter. At that moment the wagon with the persons we have described reached the bridge, and the river lay before them in all her beauty and grandeur like a sheet of glass. Sky, green and dark blue forest, men, wagons of pots, watermills—all were standing or walking upside down, and not sinking into the lovely blue depths.

Our fair maiden mused, gazing at the glorious view, and even forgot to crack the sunflower seeds with which she had been busily engaged all the way, when all at once the words, “What a girl!” caught her ear. Looking around, she saw a group of young villagers standing on the bridge, of whom one, dressed rather more smartly than the others in a white jacket and gray astrakhan cap, was jauntily looking at the passers-by with his arms akimbo. The girl could not but notice his sunburnt but pleasant face and fiery eyes, which seemed to look right through her, and she lowered her eyes at the thought that he might have uttered those words.

“A fine girl!” the young man in the white jacket went on, keeping his eyes fixed on her. “I’d give all I have to kiss her. And there’s a devil sitting in front!”

There were peals of laughter all around; but the slow-moving peasant’s gaily dressed wife was not pleased at such a greeting: her red cheeks blazed and a torrent of choice language fell like rain on the head of the unruly youth.

“I wish you’d choke, you worthless bum! May your father crack his head on a pot! May he slip down on the ice, the damned antichrist! May the devil singe his beard in the next world!”

“Isn’t she swearing!” said the young man, staring at her as though puzzled at such a sharp volley of unexpected greetings. “And she can bring her tongue to utter words like that, the witch! She’s a hundred if she’s a day!”

“A hundred!” the elderly charmer interrupted. “You infidel! go and wash your face! You worthless rake! I’ve never seen your mother, but I know she’s trash. And your father is trash, and your aunt is trash! A hundred, indeed! Why, the milk is scarcely dry on his...”

At that moment the wagon began to descend from the bridge and the last words could not be heard; but, without stopping to think, he picked up a handful of mud and threw it at her. The throw achieved more than he could have hoped: the new chintz cap was spattered all over, and the laughter of the rowdy pranksters was louder than ever. The buxom charmer was boiling with rage; but

by this time the wagon was far away, and she wreaked her vengeance on her innocent stepdaughter and her torpid husband, who, long since accustomed to such onslaughts, preserved a determined silence and received the stormy language of his angry spouse with indifference. In spite of all that, her tireless tongue went on clacking until they reached the house of their old friend and crony, the Cossack Tsibulya, on the outskirts of the village. The meeting of the old friends, who had not seen each other for a long time, put this unpleasant incident out of their minds for a while, as our travelers talked of the fair and rested after their long journey.

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II

Good heavens! what isn’t there at that fair! Wheels, window-panes, tar, tobacco, straps, onions, all sorts of haberdashery... so that even if you had thirty rubles in your purse you could not buy everything at the fair.

From a Little Russian comedy

You have no doubt heard a rushing waterfall when everything is quivering and filled with uproar, and a chaos of strange vague sounds floats like a whirlwind around you. Are you not instantly overcome by the same feelings in the turmoil of the village fair, when all the people become one huge monster that moves its massive body through the square and the narrow streets, with shouting, laughing, and clatter? Noise, swearing, bellowing, bleating, roaring—all blend into one jarring uproar. Oxen, sacks, hay, gypsies, pots, peasant women, cakes, caps—everything is bright, gaudy, discordant, flitting in groups, shifting to and fro before your eyes. The different voices drown one another, and not a single word can be caught, can be saved from the deluge; not one cry is distinct. Only the clapping of hands after each bargain is heard on all sides. A wagon breaks down, there is the clank of iron, the thud of boards thrown onto the ground, and one’s head is so dizzy one does not know which way to turn.

The peasant whose acquaintance we have already made had been for some time elbowing his way through the crowd with his black-browed daughter; he went up to one wagonload, fingered another, inquired the prices; and meanwhile his thoughts kept revolving around his ten sacks of wheat and the old mare he had brought to sell. From his daughter’s face it could be seen that she was not especially pleased to be wasting time by the wagons of flour and wheat. She longed to be where red ribbons, earrings, crosses made of copper and pewter, and coins were smartly displayed under linen awnings. But even where she was she found many objects worthy of notice: she was amused at the sight of a gypsy and a peasant, who clapped hands so that they both cried out with pain; of a drunken Jew kneeing a woman on the rump; of women hucksters quarreling with abusive words and gestures of contempt; of a Great Russian with one hand stroking his goat’s beard, with another... But at that moment she felt someone pull her by the embroidered sleeve of her blouse. She looked around—and the bright-eyed young man in the white jacket stood before her. She started and her heart throbbed, as it had never done before at any joy or grief; it seemed strange

and delightful, and she could not make out what had happened to her.

“Don’t be frightened, dear heart, don’t be frightened!” he said to her in a low voice, taking her hand. “I’ll say nothing to hurt you!”

“Perhaps it is true that you will say nothing to hurt me,” the girl thought to herself; “only it is strange... it might be the Evil One! One knows that it is not right... but I haven’t the strength to take away my hand.”

The peasant looked around and was about to say something to his daughter, but on the other side he heard the word “wheat.” That magic word instantly made him join two dealers who were talking loudly, and riveted his attention upon them so that nothing could have distracted it. This is what the dealers were saying.

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III

Do you see what a sort of a fellow he is?
Not many like him in the world.
Tosses off vodka like beer!

KOTLYAREVSKY, *The Aeneid*

"So you think, neighbor, that our wheat won't sell well?" said a man, who looked like an artisan of some big village, in dirty tar-stained trousers of coarse homespun material, to another, with a big bump on his forehead, wearing a dark blue jacket patched in different parts.

"It's not a matter of thinking: I am ready to put a halter around my neck and hang from that tree like a sausage in the hut before Christmas, if we sell a single bushel."

"What nonsense are you talking, neighbor? No wheat has been brought except ours," answered the man in the homespun trousers.

"Yes, you may say what you like," thought the father of our beauty, who had not missed a single word of the dealer's conversation. "I have ten sacks here in reserve."

"Well, you see, it's like this: if there is any devilry mixed up in a thing, you will get no more profit from it than a hungry Muscovite," the man with the bump on his forehead said significantly.

"What do you mean by devilry?" retorted the man in the homespun trousers.

"Did you hear what people are saying?" went on he of the bumpy forehead, giving him a sidelong look out of his gloomy eyes.

"Well?"

"Ah, you may say, well! The assessor, may he never wipe his lips again after the gentry's plum brandy, has set aside an evil spot for the fair, where you may burst before you get rid of a single grain. Do you see that old dilapidated barn which stands there, see, under the hill?" (At this point the inquisitive peasant went closer and was all attention.) "All manner of devilish tricks go on in that barn, and not a single fair has taken place in this spot without trouble. The district clerk passed it late last night and all of a sudden a pig's snout looked out from the window of the loft, and grunted so that it sent a shiver down his back. You may be sure that the *red jacket* will be seen again!"

"What's that about a red jacket?"

Our attentive listener’s hair stood up on his head at these words. He looked around in alarm and saw that his daughter and the young man were calmly standing in each other’s arms, murmuring soft nothings to each other and oblivious of every colored jacket in the world. This dispelled his terror and restored his equanimity.

“Aha-ha-ha, neighbor! You know how to hug a girl, it seems! I had been married three days before I learned to hug my late Khveska, and I owed that to a friend who was my best man: he gave me a hint.”

The youth saw at once that his fair one’s father was not very bright, and began making a plan for disposing him in his favor.

“I believe you don’t know me, good friend, but I recognized you at once.”

“Maybe you did.”

“If you like I’ll tell you your name and your surname and everything about you: your name is Solopy Cherevik.”

“Yes, Solopy Cherevik.”

“Well, have a good look: don’t you know me?”

“No, I don’t know you. No offense meant: I’ve seen so many faces of all sorts in my day, how the hell can one remember them all?”

“I am sorry you don’t remember Golopupenko’s son!”

“Why, is Okhrim your father?”

“Who else? Maybe he’s the devil if he’s not!”

At this the friends took off their caps and proceeded to kiss each other; our Golopupenko’s son made up his mind, however, to attack his new acquaintance without loss of time.

“Well, Solopy, you see, your daughter and I have so taken to each other that we are ready to spend our lives together.”

“Well, Paraska,” said Cherevik, laughing and turning to his daughter; “maybe you really might, as they say... you and he... graze on the same grass! Come, shall we shake hands on it? And now, my new son-in-law, buy me a glass!”

And all three found themselves in the famous refreshment bar of the fair—a Jewess’s booth, decorated with a huge assortment of jars, bottles, and flasks of every kind and description.

“Well, you are a smart fellow! I like you for that,” said Cherevik, a little exhilarated, seeing how his intended son-in-law filled a pint mug and, without winking an eyelash, tossed it off at a gulp, flinging down the mug afterward and smashing it to bits. “What do you say, Paraska? Haven’t I found you a fine husband? Look, look how he downs his drink!”

And laughing and staggering he went with her toward his wagon; while our young man made his way to the booths where fancy goods were displayed,

where there were even dealers from Gadyach and Mirgorod, the two famous towns of the province of Poltava, to pick out the best wooden pipe in a smart copper setting, a flowered red kerchief and cap, for wedding presents to his father-in-law and everyone else who must have one.

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IV

If it’s a man, it doesn’t matter,
But if there’s a woman, you see
There is need to please her.

KOTLYAREVSKY

“Well, wife, I have found a husband for my daughter!”

“This is a moment to look for husbands, I must say! You are a fool—a fool! It must have been ordained at your birth that you should remain one! Whoever has seen, whoever has heard of such a thing as a decent man running after husbands at a time like this? You had much better be thinking how to get your wheat off your hands. A nice young man he must be, too! I’m certain he is the shabbiest scarecrow in the place!”

“Oh, he’s not anything like that! You should see what a young man he is! His jacket alone is worth more than your pelisse and red boots. And how he downs his vodka! The devil confound me and you too if ever I have seen a fellow before toss off a pint without winking!”

“To be sure, if he is a drunkard and a vagabond he is a man after your own heart. I wouldn’t mind betting it’s the very same rascal who pestered us on the bridge. I am sorry I haven’t come across him yet: I’d let him know.”

“Well, Khivrya, what if it were the same: why is he a rascal?”

“Eh! Why is he a rascal? Ah, you birdbrain! Do you hear? Why is he a rascal? Where were your stupid eyes when we were driving past the mills? They might insult his wife here, right before his snuff-clogged nose, and he would not care a damn!”

“I see no harm in him, anyway: he is a fine fellow! Except that he plastered your mug with dung for an instant.”

“Aha! I see you won’t let me say a word! What’s the meaning of it? It’s not like you! You must have managed to get a drop before you have sold anything.”

Here Cherevik himself realized that he had said too much and instantly put his hands over his head, doubtless expecting that his wrathful wife would promptly seize his hair in her wifely claws.

“Go to the devil! So much for our wedding!” he thought to himself, retreating before his wife’s attack. “I shall have to refuse a good fellow for no rhyme or

reason. Merciful God! Why didst Thou send such a plague on us poor sinners? With so many trashy things in the world, Thou must needs go and create wives!”

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V

Droop not, plane tree,
Still art thou green.
Fret not, little Cossack,
  Still art thou young.

Little Russian song

The fellow in the white jacket sitting by his wagon gazed absent-mindedly at the crowd that moved noisily about him. The weary sun, after blazing through morning and noon, was tranquilly with-drawing from the earth, and the daylight was going out in a bright lovely glow. The tops of the white booths and tents stood out with dazzling brightness, suffused in a faint rosy tint of fiery light. The panes in the window frames piled up for sale glittered; the green goblets and bottles on the tables in the drinking booths flashed like fire; the heaps of melons and pumpkins looked as though they were cast in gold and dark copper. There was less talk, and the weary tongues of merchants, peasants, and gypsies moved more slowly and deliberately. Here and there lights began gleaming, and savory steam from cooking dumplings floated over the hushed streets. "What are you grieving over, Grytsko?" a tall swarthy gypsy cried, slapping our young friend on the shoulder. “Come, let me have your oxen for twenty rubles!”

“It’s nothing but oxen and oxen with you. All that you gypsies care for is profit; cheating and deceiving honest folk!”

“Tfoo, the devil! You do seem to be in trouble! You are angered at having tied yourself up with a girl, maybe?”

“No, that’s not my way: I keep my word; what I have once done stands forever. But it seems that old grumbler Cherevik has not a half pint of conscience: he gave his word, but he has taken it back.... Well, it is no good blaming him: he is a blockhead and that’s the fact. It’s all the doing of that old witch whom we jeered at on the bridge today! Ah, if I were the Czar or some great lord I would first hang all the fools who let themselves be saddled by women....”

“Well, will you let the oxen go for twenty, if we make Cherevik give you Paraska?”

Grytsko stared at him in surprise. There was a look spiteful, malicious, ignoble, and at the same time haughty in the gypsy’s swarthy face: any man

looking at him would have recognized that there were great qualities in that strange soul, though their only reward on earth would be the gallows. The mouth, completely sunken between the nose and the pointed chin and forever curved in a mocking smile, the little eyes that gleamed like fire, and the lightning flashes of intrigue and enterprise forever flitting over his face—all this seemed in keeping with the strange costume he wore. The dark brown full coat which looked as though it would drop into dust at a touch; the long black hair that fell in tangled tresses on his shoulders; the shoes on his bare sunburnt feet, all seemed to be in character and part of him.

“I’ll let you have them for fifteen, not twenty, if only you don’t deceive me!” the young man answered, keeping his searching gaze fixed on the gypsy.

“Fifteen? Done! Mind you don’t forget; fifteen! Here is a blue note as a pledge!”

“But if you deceive me?”

“If I do, the pledge is yours!”

“Right! Well, let’s shake hands on the bargain!”

“Let’s!”

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VI

What a misfortune! Roman is coming; here he is, he'll give me a drubbing in a minute; and you, too, master Khomo, will not get off without trouble.

From a Little Russian comedy

"This way, Afanasy Ivanovich! The fence is lower here, put your foot up and don't be afraid: my idiot has gone off for the night with his crony to the wagons to see that the Muscovites don't steal anything but ill-luck."

So Cherevik's menacing spouse fondly encouraged the priest's son, who was faintheartedly clinging to the fence. He soon climbed onto the top and stood there for some time in hesitation, like a long terrible phantom, looking where he could best jump and at last coming down with a crash among the rank weeds.

"How dreadful! I hope you have not hurt yourself? Please God, you've not broken your neck!" Khivrya faltered anxiously.

"Sh! It's all right, it's all right, dear Khavronya Nikiforovna," the priest's son brought out in a painful whisper, getting onto his feet, "except for being afflicted by the nettles, that serpentlike weed, to use the words of our late head priest."

"Let us go into the house; there is nobody there. I was beginning to think you were ill or asleep, Afanasy Ivanovich: you did not come and did not come. How are you? I hear that your honored father has had a run of good luck!"

"Nothing to speak of, Khavronya Nikiforovna: during the whole fast Father has received nothing but fifteen sacks of spring wheat, four sacks of millet, a hundred buns; and as for fowls they don't amount to fifty, and the eggs were mostly rotten. But the truly sweet offerings, so to say, can only come from you, Khavronya Nikiforovna!" the priest's son continued, with a tender glance at her as he edged nearer.

"Here is an offering for you, Afanasy Ivanovich!" she said, setting some bowls on the table and coyly fastening the buttons of her jacket as though they had not been undone on purpose, "curd doughnuts, wheaten dumplings, buns, and cakes!"

"I bet they have been made by the cleverest hands of any daughter of Eve!" said the priest's son, setting to work upon the cakes and with the other hand drawing the curd doughnuts toward him.

"Though indeed, Khavronya Nikiforovna, my heart thirsts for a gift from you sweeter than any buns or dumplings!"

"Well, I don't know what dainty you will ask for next, Afanasy Ivanovich!"

answered the buxom beauty, pretending not to understand.

“Your love, of course, incomparable Khavronya Nikiforovna!” the priest’s son whispered, holding a doughnut in one hand and encircling her ample waist with his arm.

“Goodness knows what you are thinking about, Afanasy Ivanovich!” said Khivrya, bashfully casting down her eyes. “Why, I wouldn’t be surprised if you tried to kiss me next!”

“As for that, I must tell you,” the young man went on. “When I was still at the seminary, I remember as though it were today...”

At that moment there was a sound of barking and a knock at the gate. Khivrya ran out quickly and came back looking pale.

“Afanasy Ivanovich, we are caught: there are a lot of people knocking, and I think I heard Tsibulya’s voice...”

A dumpling stuck in the young man’s throat.... His eyes almost popped out of his head, as though someone had just come from the other world to visit him.

“Climb up here!” cried the panic-stricken Khivrya, pointing to some boards that lay across the rafters just below the ceiling, loaded with all sorts of domestic odds and ends.

Danger gave our hero courage. Recovering a little, he clambered on the stove and from there climbed cautiously onto the boards, while Khivrya ran headlong to the gate, as the knocking was getting louder and more insistent.

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VII

But here are miracles, gentlemen!

From a Little Russian comedy

A strange incident had taken place at the fair: there were rumors all over the place that the *red jacket* had been seen somewhere among the wares. The old woman who sold pretzels thought she saw the devil in the shape of a pig, bending over the wagons as though looking for something. The news soon flew to every corner of the now resting camp, and everyone would have thought it a crime to disbelieve it, in spite of the fact that the pretzel seller, whose stall was next to the drinking booth, had been staggering about all day and could not walk straight. To this was added the story—by now greatly exaggerated—of the wonder seen by the district clerk in the dilapidated barn; so toward night people were all huddling together; their peace of mind was destroyed, and everyone was too terrified to close an eye; while those who were not cast in a heroic mold, and had secured a night's lodging in a hut, made their way homeward. Among the latter were Cherevik with his daughter and his friend Tsibulya, and they, together with the friends who had offered to keep them company, were responsible for the loud knocking that had so alarmed Khivrya. Tsibulya was already a little exhilarated. This could be seen from his twice driving around the yard with his wagon before he could find the hut. His guests, too, were all rather merry, and they unceremoniously pushed into the hut before their host. Our Cherevik's wife sat as though on thorns, when they began rummaging in every corner of the hut.

"Well, gossip," cried Tsibulya as he entered, "you are still shaking with fever?"

"Yes, I am not well," answered Khivrya, looking uneasily toward the boards on the rafters.

"Come, wife, get the bottle out of the wagon!" said Tsibulya to his wife, who had come in with him, "we will empty it with these good folk, for the damned women have given us such a scare that one is ashamed to admit it. Yes, friends, there was really no sense in our coming here!" he went on, taking a pull out of an earthenware jug. "I don't mind betting a new cap that the women thought they would have a laugh at us. Why, if it were Satan—who's Satan? Spit on him! If he stood here before me this very minute, I'll be a son of a bitch if I wouldn't make a fig at him!"

"Why did you turn so pale, then?" cried one of the visitors, who was a head

taller than any of the rest and tried on every occasion to display his valor.

“I?... Bless you! Are you dreaming?”

The visitors laughed; the boastful hero smiled complacently.

“As though he could turn pale now!” put in another; “his cheeks are as red as a poppy; he is not a Tsibulya now, but a beet—or, rather, the *red jacket* itself that frightened us all so.”

The bottle went the round of the table, and made the visitors more exhilarated than ever. At this point Cherevik, greatly disturbed about the *red jacket*, which would not let his inquisitive mind rest, appealed to his friend:

“Come, friend, kindly tell me! I keep asking about this damned *jacket* and can get no answer from anyone!”

“Eh, friend, it’s not a thing to talk about at night; however, to satisfy you and these good friends” (saying this he turned toward his guests) “who want, I see, to know about these strange doings as much as you do. Well, so be it. Listen!”

Here he scratched his shoulder, mopped his face with the skirt of his coat, leaned both arms on the table, and began:

“Once upon a time a devil was kicked out of hell, what for I cannot say...”

“How so, friend?” Cherevik interrupted. “How could it be that a devil was turned out of hell?”

“I can’t help it, crony, if he was turned out, he was—as a peasant turns a dog out of his hut. Perhaps a whim came over him to do a good deed—and so they showed him the door. And the poor devil was so homesick, so homesick for hell that he was ready to hang himself. Well, what could he do about it? In his trouble he took to drink. He settled in the broken-down barn which you have seen at the bottom of the hill and which no good man will pass now without making the sign of the cross as a safeguard; and the devil became such a rake you would not find another like him among the fellows: he sat day and night in the tavern!”

At this point Cherevik interrupted again:

“Goodness knows what you are saying, friend! How could anyone let a devil into a tavern? Why, thank God, he has claws on his paws and horns on his head.”

“Ah, that was just it—he had a cap and gloves on. Who could recognize him? Well, he kept it up till he had drunk away all he had with him. They gave him credit for a long time, but at last they would give no more. The devil had to pawn his red jacket for less than a third of its value to the Jew who sold vodka in those days at Sorochintsy. He pawned it and said to him: ‘Mind now, Jew, I shall come to you for my jacket in a year’s time; take care of it!’ And he disappeared and no more was seen of him. The Jew examined the coat thoroughly: the cloth was better than anything you could get in Mirgorod, and the red of it glowed like fire, so that one could not take one’s eyes off it! And it seemed to the Jew a long

time to wait till the end of the year. He scratched his earlocks and got nearly five gold pieces for it from a gentleman who was passing by. The Jew forgot all about the date set. But all of a sudden one evening a man turns up: ‘Come, Jew, hand me over my jacket!’ At first the Jew did not know him, but afterward when he had had a good look at him, he pretended he had never seen him before. ‘What jacket? I have no jacket. I know nothing about your jacket!’ The other walked away; only, when the Jew locked himself up in his room and, after counting over the money in his chests, flung a sheet around his shoulders and began saying his prayers in Jewish fashion, all at once he heard a rustle... and there were pigs’ snouts looking in at every window.”

At that moment an indistinct sound not unlike the grunt of a pig was audible; everyone turned pale. Drops of sweat stood out on Tsibulya’s face.

“What was it?” cried the panic-stricken Cherevik.

“Nothing,” answered Tsibulya, trembling all over.

“Eh?” responded one of the guests.

“Did you speak?”

“No!”

“Who was it grunted?”

“God knows why we are so flustered! It’s nothing!”

They all turned about fearfully and began rummaging in the corners. Khivrya was more dead than alive.

“Oh, you are a bunch of women!” she shouted. “You are not fit to be Cossacks and men! You ought to sit spinning yarn! Maybe someone misbehaved, God forgive him, or someone’s bench creaked, and you are all in a fluster as though you were out of your heads!”

This put our heroes to shame and made them pull themselves together. Tsibulya took a pull at the jug and went on with his story.

“The Jew fainted from terror; but the pigs with legs as long as stilts climbed in at the windows and so revived him in an instant with a three-thonged whip, making him skip higher than this ceiling. The Jew fell at their feet and confessed everything.... Only the jacket could not be restored in a hurry. The gentleman had been robbed of it on the road by a gypsy who sold it to a peddler woman, and she brought it back again to the fair at Sorochintsy; but no one would buy anything from her after that. The woman wondered and wondered and at last saw what it was: there was no doubt the red jacket was at the bottom of it; it was not for nothing that she had felt stifled when she put it on. Without stopping to think she flung it in the fire—the devilish thing would not burn!... ‘Ah, that’s a gift from the devil!’ she thought. The woman managed to thrust it into the wagon of a peasant who had come to the fair to sell his butter. The silly fellow was

delighted; but no one would ask for his butter. ‘Ah, it’s an evil hand foisted that red jacket on me!’ He took his ax and chopped it into bits; he looked at it—and each bit joined up to the next till it was whole again! Crossing himself, he went at it with the ax again; he flung the bits all over the place and went away. But ever since then, just at the time of the fair, the devil walks all over the market place with the face of a pig, grunting and collecting the pieces of his jacket. Now they say there is only the left sleeve missing. People have been shy of the place ever since, and it is ten years since the fair has been held on it. But in an evil hour the assessor...”

The rest of the sentence died away on the speaker’s lips: there was a loud rattle at the window, the panes fell tinkling on the floor, and a frightening pig’s snout peered in through the window, rolling its eyes as though asking, “What are you doing here, folks?”

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VIII

His tail between his legs like a dog,
Like Cain, trembling all over;
The snuff dropped from his nose.

KOTLYAREVSKY, *The Aeneid*

Everyone in the room was numb with horror. Tsibulya sat petrified with his mouth open; his eyes were bulging as if he wanted to shoot with them; his outspread fingers were frozen in the air. The tall hero, in overwhelming terror, leaped up and struck his head against the rafter; the boards shifted, and with a thud and a crash the priest's son fell to the floor.

"Aie, aie, aie!" one of the party screamed desperately, flopping on the locker in alarm, and waving his arms and legs.

"Save me!" wailed another, hiding his head under a sheepskin.

Tsibulya, roused from his numbness by this second horror, crept shuddering under his wife's skirts. The valiant hero crawled into the oven in spite of the narrowness of the opening, and closed the oven door on himself. And Cherevik, clapping a basin on his head instead of a cap, dashed to the door as though he had been scalded, and ran through the streets like a lunatic, not knowing where he was going; only weariness caused him to slacken his pace. His heart was thumping like an oil press; streams of perspiration rolled down him. He was on the point of sinking to the ground in exhaustion when all at once he heard someone running after him.... His breath failed him.

"The devil! The devil!" came a shout behind him, and all he felt was something falling with a thud on the top of him. Then his senses deserted him and, like the dread inmate of a narrow coffin, he remained lying dumb and motionless in the middle of the road.

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IX

In front, like anyone else;
Behind, I swear, like a devil!

From a folk tale

“Do you hear, Vlas?” one of the crowd asleep in the street said, sitting up; “someone spoke of the devil near us!”

“What is it to me?” the gypsy near him grumbled, stretching. “They may talk of all their kindred for all I care!”

“But he bawled, you know, as though he were being strangled!”

“A man will cry out anything in his sleep!”

“Say what you like, we must have a look. Strike a light!”

The other gypsy, grumbling to himself, rose to his feet, sent a shower of sparks flying like lightning flashes, blew the tinder with his lips, and with a *kaganets* in his hands—the usual Little Russian lamp consisting of a broken pot full of mutton fat—set off, lighting the way before him.

“Stop! There is something lying here! Show a light this way!”

Here they were joined by several others.

“What’s lying there, Vlas?”

“Why, it looks like two men: one on top, the other under. Which of them is the devil I can’t make out yet!”

“Why, who is on top?”

“A woman!”

“Oh, well, then that’s the devil!”

A general shout of laughter roused almost the whole street.

“A woman straddling a man! I suppose she knows how to ride!” one of the bystanders exclaimed.

“Look, boys!” said another, picking up a broken piece of the basin of which only one half still remained on Cherevik’s head, “what a cap this fine fellow put on!”

The growing noise and laughter brought our corpses to life, and Cherevik and his spouse, full of the panic they had known, gazed with bulging eyes in terror at the swarthy faces of the gypsies; in the dim and flickering light they looked like a wild horde of dark subterranean creatures, reeking of hell.

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X

Fie upon you, away with you, image of the Devil!

From a Little Russian comedy

The freshness of morning breathed over the awakening folk of Sorochintsy. Clouds of smoke from all the chimneys floated to meet the rising sun. The fair began to hum with life. Sheep were bleating, horses neighing; the cackle of geese and peddler women sounded all over the encampment again—and terrible tales of the *red jacket,* which had roused such alarm in the mysterious hours of darkness, vanished with the return of morning.

Stretching and yawning, Cherevik lay drowsily under his friend Tsibulya's thatched barn among oxen and sacks of flour and wheat. And apparently he had no desire to part with his dreams, when all at once he heard a voice, familiar as his own stove, the blessed refuge of his lazy hours, or as the tavern kept by his cousin not ten paces from his own door.

"Get up, get up!" his tender wife squeaked in his ear, tugging at his arm with all her might.

Cherevik, instead of answering, blew out his cheeks and began waving his hands, as though beating a drum.

"Idiot!" she shouted, retreating out of reach of his arms, which almost struck her in the face.

Cherevik sat up, rubbed his eyes, and looked about him.

"The devil take me, my dear, if I didn't imagine that your face was a drum on which I was forced to beat an alarm, like a soldier, by those pig-faces that Tsibulya was telling us about...."

"Stop talking nonsense! Go, make haste and take the mare to market! We are a laughingstock, upon my word: we've come to the fair and not sold a handful of hemp...."

"Of course, wife," Cherevik agreed, "they will laugh at us now, to be sure."

"Go along, go along! They are laughing at you as it is!"

"You see, I haven't washed yet," Cherevik went on, yawning, scratching his back, and trying to gain time.

"What a moment to be fussy about cleanliness! When have you cared about that? Here's the towel, wipe your ugly face."

Here she snatched up something that lay crumpled up—and darted back in horror: it was the cuff of a red jacket!

“Go along and get to work,” she repeated, recovering herself, on seeing that her husband was motionless with terror and his teeth were chattering.

“A fine sale there will be now!” he muttered to himself as he untied the mare and led her to the market place. “It was not for nothing that, while I was getting ready for this cursed fair, my heart was as heavy as though someone had put a dead cow on my back, and twice the oxen turned homeward of their own accord. And now that I come to think of it, I do believe it was Monday when we started. And so everything has gone wrong! And the damned devil can never be satisfied: he might have worn his jacket without one sleeve—but no, he can’t let honest folk rest in peace. Now if I were the devil—God forbid—do you suppose I’d go hanging around at night after a lot of damned rags?”

Here our Cherevik’s meditations were interrupted by a thick harsh voice. Before him stood a tall gypsy.

“What have you for sale, good man?”

Cherevik was silent for a moment; he looked at the gypsy from head to foot and said with unruffled composure, neither stopping nor letting go the bridle:

“You can see for yourself what I am selling.”

“Harness?” said the gypsy, looking at the bridle which the other had in his hand.

“Yes, harness, if a mare is the same thing as harness.”

“But damn it, neighbor, one would think you had fed her on straw!”

“Straw?”

Here Cherevik would have pulled at the bridle to lead his mare forward and convict the shameless slanderer of his lie; but his hand slipped and struck his own chin. He looked—in it was a severed bridle, and tied to the bridle—oh horror! his hair stood up on his head—a piece of a red sleeve!... Spitting, crossing himself, and brandishing his arms, he ran away from the unexpected gift and, running faster than a boy, vanished in the crowd.

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XI

For my own corn I have been beaten.

Proverb

“Catch him! catch him!” cried several young men at a narrow street corner, and Cherevik felt himself suddenly seized by strong hands.

“Tie him up! That’s the fellow who stole an honest man’s mare.”

“Damn it! What are you tieing me up for?”

“Imagine his asking! Why did you want to steal a mare from a peasant at the fair, Cherevik?”

“You’re out of your minds, fellows! Who has ever heard of a man stealing from himself?”

“That’s an old trick! An old trick! Why were you running your hardest, as though the devil were on your heels?”

“Anyone would run when the devil’s garment...”

“Aie, my good soul, try that on others! You’ll catch it yet from the court assessor, to teach you to go scaring people with tales of the devil.”

“Catch him! catch him!” came a shout from the other end of the street. “There he is, there is the runaway!”

And Cherevik beheld his friend Tsibulya in the most pitiful plight with his hands tied behind him, led along by several young men.

“Strange things are happening!” said one of them. “You should hear what this scoundrel says! You have only to look at his face to see he is a thief. When we began asking him why he was running like one possessed, he says he put his hand in his pocket and instead of his snuff pulled out a bit of the devil’s jacket and it burst into a red flame—and he took to his heels!”

“Aha! why, these two are birds of a feather! We had better tie them together!”

XII

“In what am I to blame, good folks?

Why are you beating me?” said our poor wretch.

“Why are you falling upon me?

What for, what for?” he said, bursting into tears,
Streams of bitter tears, and clutching at his sides.

ARTEMOVSKY-GULAK, *Master and Dog*

“Maybe you really have picked up something, friend?” Cherevik asked, as he lay bound beside Tsibulya in a thatched shanty.

“You too, friend! May my arms and legs wither if ever I stole anything in my life, except maybe buns and cream from my mother, and that only before I was ten years old.”

“Why has this trouble come upon us? It’s not so bad for you: you are charged, anyway, with stealing from somebody else; but what have I, unlucky wretch, done to deserve such a foul slander, as stealing my mare from myself? It seems it was written at our birth that we should have no luck!”

“Woe to us, forlorn and forsaken!”

At this point the two friends fell to weeping violently.

“What’s the matter with you, Cherevik?” said Grytsko, entering at that moment. “Who tied you up like that?”

“Ah, Golopupenko, Golopupenko!” cried Cherevik, delighted. “Here, this is the fellow I was telling you about. Ah, he is a smart one! God strike me dead on the spot if he did not toss off a whole jug, almost as big as your head, and never turned a hair!”

“What made you ignore such a fine fellow, then, friend?”

“Here, you see,” Cherevik went on, addressing Grytsko, “God has punished me, it seems, for having wronged you. Forgive me, good lad! I swear I’d be glad to do anything for you.... But what would you have me do? There’s the devil in my old woman!”

“I am not one to hold a grudge, Cherevik! If you like, I’ll set you free!”

Here he made a sign to the other fellows and the same ones who were guarding them ran to untie them.

“Then you must do your part, too: a wedding! And let us keep it up so that our legs ache with dancing for a year afterwards!”

“Good, good!” said Cherevik, striking his hands together. “I feel as pleased as though the soldiers had carried off my old woman! Why give it another thought? Whether she likes it or not, the wedding shall be today—and that’s all there is to it!”

“Mind now, Solopy: in an hour’s time I will be with you; but now go home—there you will find purchasers for your mare and your wheat.”

“What! has the mare been found?”

“Yes.”

Cherevik was struck dumb with joy and stood still, gazing after Grytsko.

“Well, Grytsko, have we mishandled the job?” said the tall gypsy to the

hurrying young man. “The oxen are mine now, aren’t they?”

“Yours! yours!”

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XIII

Fear not, fear not, little mother,
Put on your red boots
Trample your foes
Under foot
So that your ironshod
Heels may clang,
So that your foes
May be hushed and still.

A wedding song

Paraska mused, sitting alone in the hut with her pretty chin propped on her hand. Many dreams hovered about her little head. At times a faint smile stirred her crimson lips and some joyful feeling lifted her dark brows, while at times a cloud of pensiveness set them frowning above her clear brown eyes.

“But what if it does not come true as he said?” she whispered with an expression of doubt. “What if they don’t let me marry him? If... No, no; that will not be! My stepmother does just as she likes; why mayn’t I do as I like? I’ve plenty of obstinacy too. How handsome he is! How wonderfully his black eyes glow! How delightfully he says, ‘Paraska darling!’ How his white jacket suits him! But his belt ought to be a bit brighter!... I will weave him one when we settle in a new hut. I can’t help being pleased when I think,” she went on, taking from her bosom a little red-paper-framed mirror bought at the fair and gazing into it, “how I shall meet her one day somewhere and she may burst before I bow to her, nothing will induce me. No, stepmother, you’ve kicked me for the last time. The sand will rise up on the rocks and the oak bend down to the water like a willow before I bow down before you. But I was forgetting... let me try on a cap, even if it has to be my stepmother’s, and see how it suits me to look like a wife?”

Then she got up, holding the mirror in her hand and bending her head down to it, walked in excitement about the room, as though in dread of falling, seeing below her, instead of the floor, the ceiling with the boards laid on the rafters from which the priest’s son had so lately dropped, and the shelves set with pots.

“Why, I am like a child,” she cried, “afraid to take a step!”

And she began tapping with her feet, growing bolder as she went on; at last she laid her left hand on her hip and went off into a dance, clinking with her

metaled heels, holding the mirror before her, and singing her favorite song:

Little green periwinkle,
  Twine lower to me!
And you, black-browed dear one,
  Come nearer to me!
Little green periwinkle,
  Twine lower to me!
And you, black-browed dear one,
  Come nearer to me!

At that moment Cherevik peeped in at the door, and seeing his daughter dancing before the mirror, he stood still. For a long time he watched, laughing at the innocent prank of his daughter, who was apparently so absorbed that she noticed nothing; but when he heard the familiar notes of the song, his muscles began working: he stepped forward, his arms jauntily akimbo, and forgetting all he had to do, began dancing. A loud shout of laughter from his friend Tsibulya startled both of them.

“Here is a pretty thing! The dad and his daughter getting up a wedding on their own account! Make haste and come along: the bridegroom has arrived!”

At the last words Paraska flushed a deeper crimson than the ribbon which bound her head, and her lighthearted parent remembered his errand.

“Well, daughter, let us make haste! Khivrya is so pleased that I have sold the mare,” he went on, looking timorously about him, “that she has run off to buy herself aprons and all sorts of rags, so we must get it all over before she is back.”

Paraska had no sooner stepped over the threshold than she felt herself caught in the arms of the young man in the white jacket who with a crowd of people was waiting for her in the street.

“God bless you!” said Cherevik, joining their hands. “May their lives together cleave as the wreaths of flowers they weave.”

At this point a hubbub was heard in the crowd.

“I’d burst before I’d allow it!” screamed Cherevik’s helpmate, who was being shoved back by the laughing crowd.

“Don’t excite yourself, wife!” Cherevik said coolly, seeing that two sturdy gypsies held her hands, “what is done can’t be undone: I don’t like going back on a bargain!”

“No, no, that shall never be!” screamed Khivrya, but no one heeded her; several couples surrounded the happy pair and formed an impenetrable dancing wall around them.

A strange feeling, hard to put into words, would have overcome anyone watching how the whole crowd was transformed into a scene of unity and harmony, at one stroke of the bow of the fiddler, who had long twisted mustaches and wore a homespun jacket. Men whose sullen faces seemed to have known no gleam of a smile for years were tapping with their feet and wriggling their shoulders; everything was heaving, everything was dancing. But an even stranger and more disturbing feeling would have been stirred in the heart at the sight of old women, whose ancient faces breathed the indifference of the tomb, shoving their way between the young, laughing, living human beings. Caring for nothing, indifferent, long removed from the joy of childhood, wanting only drink, it was as if a puppeteer were tugging the strings that held his wooden puppets, making them do things that seemed human; yet they slowly wagged their drunken heads, dancing after the rejoicing crowd, not casting one glance at the young couple.

The sounds of laughter, song, and uproar grew fainter and fainter. The strains of the fiddle were lost in vague and feeble notes, and died away in the wind. In the distance there was still the sound of dancing feet, something like the faraway murmur of the sea, and soon all was stillness and emptiness again.

Is it not thus that joy, lovely and fleeting guest, flies from us? In vain the last solitary note tries to express gaiety. In its own echo it hears melancholy and emptiness and listens to it, bewildered. Is it not thus that those who have been playful friends in free and stormy youth, one by one stray, lost, about the world and leave their old comrade lonely and forlorn at last? Sad is the lot of one left behind! Heavy and sorrowful is his heart and nothing can help him!

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St John’s Eve

(RELATED BY THE SACRISTAN OF THE DIKANKA CHURCH)

Thoma Grigorovitch had a very strange sort of eccentricity: to the day of his death he never liked to tell the same thing twice. There were times when, if you asked him to relate a thing afresh, behold, he would interpolate new matter, or alter it so that it was impossible to recognize it. Once on a time, one of those gentlemen (it is hard for us simple people to put a name to them, to say whether they are scribblers or not scribblers: but it is just the same thing as the usurers at our yearly fairs; they clutch and beg and steal every sort of frippery, and issue mean little volumes, no thicker than an ABC book, every month, or even every week), — one of these gentlemen wormed this same story out of Thoma Grigorovitch, and he completely forgot about it. But that same young gentleman in the pea-green caftan, whom I have mentioned, and one of whose Tales you have already read, I think, came from Poltava, bringing with him a little book, and, opening it in the middle, shows it to us. Thoma Grigorovitch was on the point of setting his spectacles astride of his nose, but recollected that he had forgotten to wind thread about them, and stick them together with wax, so he passed it over to me. As I understand something about reading and writing, and do not wear spectacles, I undertook to read it. I had not turned two leaves, when all at once he caught me by the hand, and stopped me.

“Stop! tell me first what you are reading.”

I confess that I was a trifle stunned by such a question.

“What! what am I reading, Thoma Grigorovitch? These were your very words.”

“Who told you that they were my words?”

“Why, what more would you have? Here it is printed: RELATED BY SUCH AND
SUCH A SACRISTAN.”

“Spit on the head of the man who printed that! he lies, the dog of a
Moscow pedler! Did I say that? ‘TWAS JUST THE SAME AS THOUGH ONE HADN’T
HIS WITS ABOUT HIM. Listen. I’ll tell it to you on the spot.”

We moved up to the table, and he began.

* * * *

My grandfather (the kingdom of heaven be his! may he eat only wheaten rolls and makovniki [FOOTNOTE: Poppy-seeds cooked in honey, and dried in square cakes.] with honey in the other world!) could tell a story wonderfully well. When he used to begin on a tale, you wouldn't stir from the spot all day, but keep on listening. He was no match for the story-teller of the present day, when he begins to lie, with a tongue as though he had had nothing to eat for three days, so that you snatch your cap and flee from the house. As I now recall it, — my old mother was alive then, — in the long winter evenings when the frost was crackling out of doors, and had so sealed up hermetically the narrow panes of our cottage, she used to sit before the hackling-comb, drawing out a long thread in her hand, rocking the cradle with her foot, and humming a song, which I seem to hear even now.

The fat-lamp, quivering and flaring up as though in fear of something, lighted us within our cottage; the spindle hummed; and all of us children, collected in a cluster, listened to grandfather, who had not crawled off the oven for more than five years, owing to his great age. But the wondrous tales of the incursions of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, the Poles, the bold deeds of Podkova, of Poltor-Kozhukh, and Sagaidatchnii, did not interest us so much as the stories about some deed of old which always sent a shiver through our frames, and made our hair rise upright on our heads. Sometimes such terror took possession of us in consequence of them, that, from that evening on, Heaven knows what a marvel everything seemed to us. If you chance to go out of the cottage after nightfall for anything, you imagine that a visitor from the other world has lain down to sleep in your bed; and I should not be able to tell this a second time were it not that I had often taken my own smock, at a distance, as it lay at the head of the bed, for the Evil One rolled up in a ball! But the chief thing about grandfather's stories was, that he never had lied in all his life; and whatever he said was so, was so.

I will now relate to you one of his marvellous tales. I know that there are a great many wise people who copy in the courts, and can even read civil documents, who, if you were to put into their hand a simple prayer-book, could not make out the first letter in it, and would show all their teeth in derision — which is wisdom. These people laugh at everything you tell them. Such incredulity has spread abroad in the world! What then? (Why, may God and the Holy Virgin cease to love me if it is not possible that even you will not believe me!) Once he said something about witches; . . . What then? Along comes one of these head- breakers, — and doesn't believe in witches! Yes, glory to God that I have lived so long in the world! I have seen heretics, to whom it would be easier to lie in confession than it would to our brothers and equals to take snuff, and

those people would deny the existence of witches! But let them just dream about something, and they won't even tell what it was! There's no use in talking about them!

* * * *

ST. JOHN'S EVE.

No one could have recognized this village of ours a little over a hundred years ago: a hamlet it was, the poorest kind of a hamlet. Half a score of miserable izbas, unplastered, badly thatched, were scattered here and there about the fields. There was not an inclosure or decent shed to shelter animals or wagons. That was the way the wealthy lived; and if you had looked for our brothers, the poor, — why, a hole in the ground, — that was a cabin for you! Only by the smoke could you tell that a God-created man lived there. You ask why they lived so? It was not entirely through poverty: almost every one led a wandering, Cossack life, and gathered not a little plunder in foreign lands; it was rather because there was no reason for setting up a well-ordered khata (wooden house). How many people were wandering all over the country, — Crimeans, Poles, Lithuanians! It was quite possible that their own countrymen might make a descent, and plunder everything. Anything was possible.

In this hamlet a man, or rather a devil in human form, often made his appearance. Why he came, and whence, no one knew. He prowled about, got drunk, and suddenly disappeared as if into the air, and there was not a hint of his existence. Then, again, behold, he seemed to have dropped from the sky, and went flying about the streets of the village, of which no trace now remains, and which was not more than a hundred paces from Dikanka. He would collect together all the Cossacks he met; then there were songs, laughter, money in abundance, and vodka flowed like water. . . . He would address the pretty girls, and give them ribbons, earrings, strings of beads, — more than they knew what to do with. It is true that the pretty girls rather hesitated about accepting his presents: God knows, perhaps they had passed through unclean hands. My grandfather's aunt, who kept a tavern at that time, in which Basavriuk (as they called that devil-man) often had his carouses, said that no consideration on the face of the earth would have induced her to accept a gift from him. And then, again, how avoid accepting? Fear seized on every one when he knit his bristly brows, and gave a sidelong glance which might send your feet, God knows whither; but if you accept, then the next night some fiend from the swamp, with horns on his head, comes to call, and begins to squeeze your neck, when there is

a string of beads upon it; or bite your finger, if there is a ring upon it; or drag you by the hair, if ribbons are braided in it. God have mercy, then, on those who owned such gifts! But here was the difficulty: it was impossible to get rid of them; if you threw them into the water, the diabolical ring or necklace would skim along the surface, and into your hand.

There was a church in the village, — St. Pantelei, if I remember rightly. There lived there a priest, Father Athanasii of blessed memory. Observing that Basavriuk did not come to church, even on Easter, he determined to reprove him, and impose penance upon him. Well, he hardly escaped with his life. “Hark ye, pannotche!” [Footnote: Sir] he thundered in reply, “learn to mind your own business instead of meddling in other people’s, if you don’t want that goat’s throat of yours stuck together with boiling kutya.” [Footnote: A dish of rice or wheat flour, with honey and raisins, which is brought to the church on the celebration of memorial masses] What was to be done with this unrepentant man? Father Athanasii contented himself with announcing that any one who should make the acquaintance of Basavriuk would be counted a Catholic, an enemy of Christ’s church, not a member of the human race.

In this village there was a Cossack named Korzh, who had a laborer whom people called Peter the Orphan — perhaps because no one remembered either his father or mother. The church starost, it is true, said that they had died of the pest in his second year; but my grandfather’s aunt would not hear to that, and tried with all her might to furnish him with parents, although poor Peter needed them about as much as we need last year’s snow. She said that his father had been in Zaporozhe, taken prisoner by the Turks, underwent God only knows what tortures, and having, by some miracle, disguised himself as a eunuch, had made his escape. Little cared the black-browed youths and maidens about his parents. They merely remarked, that if he only had a new coat, a red sash, a black lambskin cap, with dandified blue crown, on his head, a Turkish sabre hanging by his side, a whip in one hand and a pipe with handsome mountings in the other, he would surpass all the young men. But the pity was, that the only thing poor Peter had was a gray svitka with more holes in it than there are gold-pieces in a Jew’s pocket. And that was not the worst of it, but this: that Korzh had a daughter, such a beauty as I think you can hardly have chanced to see. My deceased grandfather’s aunt used to say — and you know that it is easier for a woman to kiss the Evil One than to call anybody a beauty, without malice be it said — that this Cossack maiden’s cheeks were as plump and fresh as the pinkest poppy when just bathed in God’s dew, and, glowing, it unfolds its petals, and coquets with the rising sun; that her brows were like black cords, such as our maidens buy nowadays, for their crosses and ducats, of the Moscow pedlers who

visit the villages with their baskets, and evenly arched as though peeping into her clear eyes; that her little mouth, at sight of which the youths smacked their lips, seemed made to emit the songs of nightingales; that her hair, black as the raven's wing, and soft as young flax (our maidens did not then plait their hair in clubs interwoven with pretty, bright-hued ribbons) fell in curls over her kuntush. [Footnote: Upper garment in Little Russia.] Eh! may I never intone another alleluia in the choir, if I would not have kissed her, in spite of the gray which is making its way all through the old wool which covers my pate, and my old woman beside me, like a thorn in my side! Well, you know what happens when young men and maids live side by side. In the twilight the heels of red boots were always visible in the place where Pidorka chatted with her Petrus. But Korzh would never have suspected anything out of the way, only one day — it is evident that none but the Evil One could have inspired him — Petrus took it into his head to kiss the Cossack maiden's rosy lips with all his heart in the passage, without first looking well about him; and that same Evil One — may the son of a dog dream of the holy cross! — caused the old graybeard, like a fool, to open the cottage-door at that same moment. Korzh was petrified, dropped his jaw, and clutched at the door for support. Those unlucky kisses had completely stunned him. It surprised him more than the blow of a pestle on the wall, with which, in our days, the muzhik generally drives out his intoxication for lack of fuses and powder.

Recovering himself, he took his grandfather's hunting-whip from the wall, and was about to belabor Peter's back with it, when Pidorka's little six-year-old brother Ivas rushed up from somewhere or other, and, grasping his father's legs with his little hands, screamed out, "Daddy, daddy! don't beat Petrus!" What was to be done? A father's heart is not made of stone. Hanging the whip again upon the wall, he led him quietly from the house. "If you ever show yourself in my cottage again, or even under the windows, look out, Petro! by Heaven, your black moustache will disappear; and your black locks, though wound twice about your ears, will take leave of your pate, or my name is not Terentiy Korzh." So saying, he gave him a little taste of his fist in the nape of his neck, so that all grew dark before Petrus, and he flew headlong. So there was an end of their kissing. Sorrow seized upon our doves; and a rumor was rife in the village, that a certain Pole, all embroidered with gold, with moustaches, sabres, spurs, and pockets jingling like the bells of the bag with which our sacristan Taras goes through the church every day, had begun to frequent Korzh's house. Now, it is well known why the father is visited when there is a black-browed daughter about. So, one day, Pidorka burst into tears, and clutched the hand of her Ivas. "Ivas, my dear! Ivas, my love! fly to Petrus, my child of gold, like an arrow from

a bow. Tell him all: I would have loved his brown eyes, I would have kissed his white face, but my fate decrees not so. More than one towel have I wet with burning tears. I am sad, I am heavy at heart. And my own father is my enemy. I will not marry that Pole, whom I do not love. Tell him they are preparing a wedding, but there will be no music at our wedding: ecclesiastics will sing instead of pipes and kobzas. [Footnote: Eight-stringed musical instrument.] I shall not dance with my bridegroom: they will carry me out. Dark, dark will be my dwelling, — of maple wood; and, instead of chimneys, a cross will stand upon the roof."

Petro stood petrified, without moving from the spot, when the innocent child lisped out Pidorka's words to him. "And I, unhappy man, thought to go to the Crimea and Turkey, win gold and return to thee, my beauty! But it may not be. The evil eye has seen us. I will have a wedding, too, dear little fish, I too; but no ecclesiastics will be at that wedding. The black crow will caw, instead of the pope, over me; the smooth field will be my dwelling; the dark blue clouds my roof-tree. The eagle will claw out my brown eyes: the rain will wash the Cossack's bones, and the whirlwinds will dry them. But what am I? Of whom, to whom, am I complaining? 'T is plain, God willed it so. If I am to be lost, then so be it!" and he went straight to the tavern.

My late grandfather's aunt was somewhat surprised on seeing Petrus in the tavern, and at an hour when good men go to morning mass; and she stared at him as though in a dream, when he demanded a jug of brandy, about half a pailful. But the poor fellow tried in vain to drown his woe. The vodka stung his tongue like nettles, and tasted more bitter than wormwood. He flung the jug from him upon the ground. "You have sorrowed enough, Cossack," growled a bass voice behind him. He looked round — Basavriuk! Ugh, what a face! His hair was like a brush, his eyes like those of a bull. "I know what you lack: here it is." Then he jingled a leather purse which hung from his girdle, and smiled diabolically. Petro shuddered. "He, he, he! yes, how it shines!" he roared, shaking out ducats into his hand: "he, he, he! and how it jingles! And I only ask one thing for a whole pile of such shiners." — "It is the Evil One!" exclaimed Petro: "Give them here! I'm ready for anything!" They struck hands upon it. "See here, Petro, you are ripe just in time: to-morrow is St. John the Baptist's day. Only on this one night in the year does the fern blossom. Delay not. I will await thee at midnight in the Bear's ravine."

I do not believe that chickens await the hour when the woman brings their corn with as much anxiety as Petrus awaited the evening. And, in fact, he looked to see whether the shadows of the trees were not lengthening, if the sun were not turning red towards setting; and the longer he watched, the more impatient he

grew. How long it was! Evidently, God's day had lost its end somewhere. And now the sun is gone. The sky is red only on one side, and it is already growing dark. It grows colder in the fields. It gets dusky and more dusky, and at last quite dark. At last! With heart almost bursting from his bosom, he set out on his way, and cautiously descended through the dense woods into the deep hollow called the Bear's ravine. Basavriuk was already waiting there. It was so dark, that you could not see a yard before you. Hand in hand they penetrated the thin marsh, clinging to the luxuriant thorn bushes, and stumbling at almost every step. At last they reached an open spot. Petro looked about him: he had never chanced to come there before. Here Basavriuk halted.

"Do you see, before you stand three hillocks? There are a great many sorts of flowers upon them. But may some power keep you from plucking even one of them. But as soon as the fern blossoms, seize it, and look not round, no matter what may seem to be going on behind thee."

Petro wanted to ask — and behold he was no longer there. He approached the three hillocks — where were the flowers? He saw nothing. The wild steppe-grass darkled around, and stifled everything in its luxuriance. But the lightning flashed; and before him stood a whole bed of flowers, all wonderful, all strange: and there were also the simple fronds of fern. Petro doubted his senses, and stood thoughtfully before them, with both hands upon his sides.

"What prodigy is this? one can see these weeds ten times in a day: what marvel is there about them? was not devil's-face laughing at me?"

Behold! the tiny flower-bud crimsons, and moves as though alive. It is a marvel, in truth. It moves, and grows larger and larger, and flushes like a burning coal. The tiny star flashes up, something bursts softly, and the flower opens before his eyes like a flame, lighting the others about it. "Now is the time," thought Petro, and extended his hand. He sees hundreds of shaggy hands reach from behind him, also for the flower; and there is a running about from place to place, in the rear. He half shut his eyes, plucked sharply at the stalk, and the flower remained in his hand. All became still. Upon a stump sat Basavriuk, all blue like a corpse. He moved not so much as a finger. His eyes were immovably fixed on something visible to him alone: his mouth was half open and speechless. All about, nothing stirred. Ugh! it was horrible! — But then a whistle was heard, which made Petro's heart grow cold within him; and it seemed to him that the grass whispered, and the flowers began to talk among themselves in delicate voices, like little silver bells; the trees rustled in waving contention; — Basavriuk's face suddenly became full of life, and his eyes sparkled. "The witch has just returned," he muttered between his teeth. "See here, Petro: a beauty will stand before you in a moment; do whatever she commands; if not — you are lost

for ever.” Then he parted the thorn-bush with a knotty stick, and before him stood a tiny izba, on chicken’s legs, as they say. Basavriuk smote it with his fist, and the wall trembled. A large black dog ran out to meet them, and with a whine, transforming itself into a cat, flew straight at his eyes. “Don’t be angry, don’t be angry, you old Satan!” said Basavriuk, employing such words as would have made a good man stop his ears. Behold, instead of a cat, an old woman with a face wrinkled like a baked apple, and all bent into a bow: her nose and chin were like a pair of nut-crackers. “A stunning beauty!” thought Petro; and cold chills ran down his back. The witch tore the flower from his hand, bent over, and muttered over it for a long time, sprinkling it with some kind of water. Sparks flew from her mouth, froth appeared on her lips.

“Throw it away,” she said, giving it back to Petro.

Petro threw it, and what wonder was this? the flower did not fall straight to the earth, but for a long while twinkled like a fiery ball through the darkness, and swam through the air like a boat: at last it began to sink lower and lower, and fell so far away, that the little star, hardly larger than a poppy-seed, was barely visible. “Here!” croaked the old woman, in a dull voice: and Basavriuk, giving him a spade, said: “Dig here, Petro: here you will see more gold than you or Korzh ever dreamed of.”

Petro spat on his hands, seized the spade, applied his foot, and turned up the earth, a second, a third, a fourth time. . . . There was something hard: the spade clinked, and would go no farther. Then his eyes began to distinguish a small, iron-bound coffer. He tried to seize it; but the chest began to sink into the earth, deeper, farther, and deeper still: and behind him he heard a laugh, more like a serpent’s hiss. “No, you shall not see the gold until you procure human blood,” said the witch, and led up to him a child of six, covered with a white sheet, indicating by a sign that he was to cut off his head. Petro was stunned. A trifle, indeed, to cut off a man’s, or even an innocent child’s, head for no reason whatever! In wrath he tore off the sheet enveloping his head, and behold! before him stood Ivas. And the poor child crossed his little hands, and hung his head. . . . Petro flew upon the witch with the knife like a madman, and was on the point of laying hands on her. . . .

“What did you promise for the girl?” . . . thundered Basavriuk; and like a shot he was on his back. The witch stamped her foot: a blue flame flashed from the earth; it illumined it all inside, and it was as if moulded of crystal; and all that was within the earth became visible, as if in the palm of the hand. Ducats, precious stones in chests and kettles, were piled in heaps beneath the very spot they stood on. His eyes burned, . . . his mind grew troubled. . . . He grasped the knife like a madman, and the innocent blood spurted into his eyes. Diabolical

laughter resounded on all sides. Misshaped monsters flew past him in herds. The witch, fastening her hands in the headless trunk, like a wolf drank its blood. . . . All went round in his head. Collecting all his strength, he set out to run. Everything turned red before him. The trees seemed steeped in blood, and burned and groaned. The sky glowed and glowered. . . . Burning points, like lightning, flickered before his eyes. Utterly exhausted, he rushed into his miserable hovel, and fell to the ground like a log. A death-like sleep overpowered him.

Two days and two nights did Petro sleep, without once awakening. When he came to himself, on the third day, he looked long at all the corners of his hut; but in vain did he endeavor to recollect; his memory was like a miser's pocket, from which you cannot entice a quarter of a kopek. Stretching himself, he heard something clash at his feet. He looked, . . . two bags of gold. Then only, as if in a dream, he recollected that he had been seeking some treasure, that something had frightened him in the woods. . . . But at what price he had obtained it, and how, he could by no means understand.

Korzh saw the sacks, — and was mollified. "Such a Petrus, quite unheard of! yes, and did I not love him? Was he not to me as my own son?" And the old fellow carried on his fiction until it reduced him to tears. Pidorka began to tell him how some passing gypsies had stolen Ivas; but Petro could not even recall him — to such a degree had the Devil's influence darkened his mind! There was no reason for delay. The Pole was dismissed, and the wedding-feast prepared; rolls were baked, towels and handkerchiefs embroidered; the young people were seated at table; the wedding-loaf was cut; banduras, cymbals, pipes, kobzi, sounded, and pleasure was rife . . .

A wedding in the olden times was not like one of the present day. My grandfather's aunt used to tell — what doings! — how the maidens — in festive head-dresses of yellow, blue, and pink ribbons, above which they bound gold braid; in thin chemisettes embroidered on all the seams with red silk, and strewn with tiny silver flowers; in morocco shoes, with high iron heels — danced the gorlitza as swimmingly as peacocks, and as wildly as the whirlwind; how the youths — with their ship-shaped caps upon their heads, the crowns of gold brocade, with a little slit at the nape where the hair-net peeped through, and two horns projecting, one in front and another behind, of the very finest black lambskin; in kuntushas of the finest blue silk with red borders — stepped forward one by one, their arms akimbo in stately form, and executed the gopak; how the lads — in tall Cossack caps, and light cloth svitkas, girt with silver embroidered belts, their short pipes in their teeth — skipped before them, and talked nonsense. Even Korzh could not contain himself, as he gazed at the young

people, from getting gay in his old age. Bandura in hand, alternately puffing at his pipe and singing, a brandy- glass upon his head, the gray-beard began the national dance amid loud shouts from the merry-makers. What will not people devise in merry mood! They even began to disguise their faces. They did not look like human beings. They are not to be compared with the disguises which we have at our weddings nowadays. What do they do now? Why, imitate gypsies and Moscow pedlers. No! then one used to dress himself as a Jew, another as the Devil: they would begin by kissing each other, and ended by seizing each other by the hair. . . . God be with them! you laughed till you held your sides. They dressed themselves in Turkish and Tartar garments. All upon them glowed like a conflagration, . . . and then they began to joke and play pranks. . . . Well, then away with the saints! An amusing thing happened to my grandfather's aunt, who was at this wedding. She was dressed in a voluminous Tartar robe, and, wine-glass in hand, was entertaining the company. The Evil One instigated one man to pour vodka over her from behind. Another, at the same moment, evidently not by accident, struck a light, and touched it to her; . . . the flame flashed up; poor aunt, in terror, flung her robe from her, before them all. . . . Screams, laughter, jest, arose, as if at a fair. In a word, the old folks could not recall so merry a wedding.

Pidorka and Petrus began to live like a gentleman and lady. There was plenty of everything, and everything was handsome. . . . But honest people shook their heads when they looked at their way of living. "From the Devil no good can come," they unanimously agreed. "Whence, except from the tempter of orthodox people, came this wealth? Where else could he get such a lot of gold? Why, on the very day that he got rich, did Basavriuk vanish as if into thin air?" Say, if you can, that people imagine things! In fact, a month had not passed, and no one would have recognized Petrus. Why, what had happened to him? God knows. He sits in one spot, and says no word to any one: he thinks continually, and seems to be trying to recall something. When Pidorka succeeds in getting him to speak, he seems to forget himself, carries on a conversation, and even grows cheerful; but if he inadvertently glances at the sacks, "Stop, stop! I have forgotten," he cries, and again plunges into reverie, and again strives to recall something. Sometimes when he has sat long in a place, it seems to him as though it were coming, just coming back to mind, . . . and again all fades away. It seems as if he is sitting in the tavern: they bring him vodka; vodka stings him; vodka is repulsive to him. Some one comes along, and strikes him on the shoulder; . . . but beyond that everything is veiled in darkness before him. The perspiration streams down his face, and he sits exhausted in the same place.

What did not Pidorka do? She consulted the sorceress; and they poured out

fear, and brewed stomach ache,[Footnote: “To pour out fear,” is done with us in case of fear; when it is desired to know what caused it, melted lead or wax is poured into water, and the object whose form it assumes is the one which frightened the sick person; after this, the fear departs. Sonyashnitza is brewed for giddiness, and pain in the bowels. To this end, a bit of stump is burned, thrown into a jug, and turned upside down into a bowl filled with water, which is placed on the patient’s stomach: after an incantation, he is given a spoonful of this water to drink.] — but all to no avail. And so the summer passed. Many a Cossack had mowed and reaped: many a Cossack, more enterprising than the rest, had set off upon an expedition. Flocks of ducks were already crowding our marshes, but there was not even a hint of improvement.

It was red upon the steppes. Ricks of grain, like Cossacks’ caps, dotted the fields here and there. On the highway were to be encountered wagons loaded with brushwood and logs. The ground had become more solid, and in places was touched with frost. Already had the snow begun to besprinkle the sky, and the branches of the trees were covered with rime like rabbit-skin. Already on frosty days the red-breasted finch hopped about on the snow-heaps like a foppish Polish nobleman, and picked out grains of corn; and children, with huge sticks, chased wooden tops upon the ice; while their fathers lay quietly on the stove, issuing forth at intervals with lighted pipes in their lips, to growl, in regular fashion, at the orthodox frost, or to take the air, and thresh the grain spread out in the barn. At last the snow began to melt, and the ice rind slipped away: but Petro remained the same; and, the longer it went on, the more morose he grew. He sat in the middle of the cottage as though nailed to the spot, with the sacks of gold at his feet. He grew shy, his hair grew long, he became terrible; and still he thought of but one thing, still he tried to recall something, and got angry and ill-tempered because he could not recall it. Often, rising wildly from his seat, he gesticulates violently, fixes his eyes on something as though desirous of catching it: his lips move as though desirous of uttering some long-forgotten word — and remain speechless. Fury takes possession of him: he gnaws and bites his hands like a man half crazy, and in his vexation tears out his hair by the handful, until, calming down, he falls into forgetfulness, as it were, and again begins to recall, and is again seized with fury and fresh tortures. . . . What visitation of God is this?

Pidorka was neither dead nor alive. At first it was horrible to her to remain alone in the cottage; but, in course of time, the poor woman grew accustomed to her sorrow. But it was impossible to recognize the Pidorka of former days. No blush, no smile: she was thin and worn with grief, and had wept her bright eyes away. Once, some one who evidently took pity on her advised her to go to the

witch who dwelt in the Bear’s ravine, and enjoyed the reputation of being able to cure every disease in the world. She determined to try this last remedy: word by word she persuaded the old woman to come to her. This was St. John’s Eve, as it chanced. Petro lay insensible on the bench, and did not observe the new- comer. Little by little he rose, and looked about him. Suddenly he trembled in every limb, as though he were on the scaffold: his hair rose upon his head, . . . and he laughed such a laugh as pierced Pidorka’s heart with fear. “I have remembered, remembered!” he cried in terrible joy; and, swinging a hatchet round his head, he flung it at the old woman with all his might. The hatchet penetrated the oaken door two vershok (three inches and a half). The old woman disappeared; and a child of seven in a white blouse, with covered head, stood in the middle of the cottage. . . . The sheet flew off. “Ivas!” cried Pidorka, and ran to him; but the apparition became covered from head to foot with blood, and illumined the whole room with red light. . . . She ran into the passage in her terror, but, on recovering herself a little, wished to help him; in vain! the door had slammed to behind her so securely that she could not open it. People ran up, and began to knock: they broke in the door, as though there was but one mind among them. The whole cottage was full of smoke; and just in the middle, where Petrus had stood, was a heap of ashes, from which smoke was still rising. They flung themselves upon the sacks: only broken potsherds lay there instead of ducats. The Cossacks stood with staring eyes and open mouths, not daring to move a hair, as if rooted to the earth, such terror did this wonder inspire in them.

I do not remember what happened next. Pidorka took a vow to go upon a pilgrimage, collected the property left her by her father, and in a few days it was as if she had never been in the village. Whither she had gone, no one could tell. Officious old women would have despatched her to the same place whither Petro had gone; but a Cossack from Kief reported that he had seen in a cloister, a nun withered to a mere skeleton, who prayed unceasingly; and her fellow villagers recognized her as Pidorka, by all the signs, — that no one had ever heard her utter a word; that she had come on foot, and had brought a frame for the ikon of God’s mother, set with such brilliant stones that all were dazzled at the sight.

But this was not the end, if you please. On the same day that the Evil One made way with Petrus, Basavriuk appeared again; but all fled from him. They knew what sort of a bird he was, — none else than Satan, who had assumed human form in order to unearth treasures; and, since treasures do not yield to unclean hands, he seduced the young. That same year, all deserted their earth huts, and collected in a village; but, even there, there was no peace, on account of that accursed Basavriuk. My late grandfather’s aunt said that he was particularly angry with her, because she had abandoned her former tavern, and

tried with all his might to revenge himself upon her. Once the village elders were assembled in the tavern, and, as the saying goes, were arranging the precedence at the table, in the middle of which was placed a small roasted lamb, shame to say. They chattered about this, that, and the other, — among the rest about various marvels and strange things. Well, they saw something; it would have been nothing if only one had seen it, but all saw it; and it was this: the sheep raised his head; his goggling eyes became alive and sparkled; and the black, bristling moustache, which appeared for one instant, made a significant gesture at those present. All, at once, recognized Basavriuk's countenance in the sheep's head: my grandfather's aunt thought it was on the point of asking for vodka. . . . The worthy elders seized their hats, and hastened home.

Another time, the church starost [Footnote: Elder] himself, who was fond of an occasional private interview with my grandfather's brandy- glass, had not succeeded in getting to the bottom twice, when he beheld the glass bowing very low to him. "Satan take you, let us make the sign of the cross over you!" . . . And the same marvel happened to his better- half. She had just begun to mix the dough in a huge kneading-trough, when suddenly the trough sprang up. "Stop, stop! where are you going?" Putting its arms akimbo, with dignity, it went skipping all about the cottage. . . . You may laugh, but it was no laughing-matter to our grandfathers. And in vain did Father Athanasii go through all the village with holy water, and chase the Devil through all the streets with his brush; and my late grandfather's aunt long complained that, as soon as it was dark, some one came knocking at her door, and scratching at the wall.

Well! All appears to be quiet now, in the place where our village stands; but it was not so very long ago — my father was still alive — that I remember how a good man could not pass the ruined tavern, which a dishonest race had long managed for their own interest. From the smoke- blackened chimneys, smoke poured out in a pillar, and rising high in the air, as if to take an observation, rolled off like a cap, scattering burning coals over the steppe; and Satan (the son of a dog should not be mentioned) sobbed so pitifully in his lair, that the startled ravens rose in flocks from the neighboring oak-wood, and flew through the air with wild cries.

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May Night

OR THE DROWNED MAIDEN

I

Songs were echoing in the village street. It was just the time when the young men and girls, tired with the work and cares of the day, were in the habit of assembling for the dance. In the mild evening light, cheerful songs blended with mild melodies. A mysterious twilight obscured the blue sky and made everything seem indistinct and distant. It was growing dark, but the songs were not hushed.

A young Cossack, Levko by name, the son of the village headman, had stolen away from the singers, guitar in hand. With his embroidered cap set awry on his head, and his hand playing over the strings, he stepped a measure to the music. Then he stopped at the door of a house half hidden by blossoming cherry-trees. Whose house was it? To whom did the door lead? After a little while he played and sang:

“The night is nigh, the sun is down,
Come out to me, my love, my own!”

“No one is there; my bright-eyed beauty is fast asleep,” said the Cossack to himself as he finished the song and approached the window. “Hanna, Hanna, are you asleep, or won’t you come to me? Perhaps you are afraid someone will see us, or will not expose your delicate face to the cold! Fear nothing! The evening is warm, and there is no one near. And if anyone comes I will wrap you in my caftan, fold you in my arms, and no one will see us. And if the wind blows cold, I will press you close to my heart, warm you with my kisses, and lay my cap on your tiny feet, my darling. Only throw me a single glance. No, you are not asleep, you proud thing!” he exclaimed now louder, in a voice which betrayed his annoyance at the humiliation. “You are laughing at me! Good-bye!”

Then he turned away, set his cap jauntily, and, still lightly touching his guitar, stepped back from the window. Just then the wooden handle of the door turned with a grating noise, and a girl who counted hardly seventeen springs looked out timidly through the darkness, and still keeping hold of the handle, stepped over the threshold. In the twilight her bright eyes shone like little stars, her coral necklace gleamed, and the pink flush on her cheeks did not escape the Cossack’s observation.

“How impatient you are!” she said in a whisper. “You get angry so quickly!

Why did you choose such a time? There are crowds of people in the street…. I tremble all over.”

“Don’t tremble, my darling! Come close to me!” said the Cossack, putting down his guitar, which hung on a long strap round his neck, and sitting down with her on the door-step. “You know I find it hard to be only an hour without seeing you.”

“Do you know what I am thinking of?” interrupted the young girl, looking at him thoughtfully. “Something whispers to me that we shall not see so much of each other in the future. The people here are not well disposed to you, the girls look so envious, and the young fellows…. I notice also that my mother watches me carefully for some time past. I must confess I was happier when among strangers.” Her face wore a troubled expression as she spoke.

“You are only two months back at home, and are already tired of it!” said the Cossack. “And of me too perhaps?”

“Oh no!” she replied, smiling. “I love you, you black-eyed Cossack! I love you because of your dark eyes, and my heart laughs in my breast when you look at me. I feel so happy when you come down the street stroking your black moustache, and enjoy listening to your song when you play the guitar!”

“Oh my Hanna!” exclaimed the Cossack, kissing the girl and drawing her closer to him.

“Stop, Levko! Tell me whether you have spoken to your father?”

“About what?” he answered absent-mindedly. “About my marrying you? Yes, I did.” But he seemed to speak almost reluctantly.

“Well? What more?”

“What can you make of him? The old curmudgeon pretends to be deaf; he will not listen to anything, and blames me for loafing with fellows, as he says, about the streets. But don’t worry, Hanna! I give you my word as a Cossack, I will break his obstinacy.”

“You only need to say a word, Levko, and it shall be as you wish. I know that of myself. Often I do not wish to obey you, but you speak only a word, and I involuntarily do what you wish. Look, look!” she continued, laying her head on his shoulder and raising her eyes to the sky, the immeasurable heaven of the Ukraine; “there far away are twinkling little stars — one, two, three, four, five. Is it not true that those are angels opening the windows of their bright little homes and looking down on us. Is it not so, Levko? They are looking down on earth. If men had wings like birds, how high they could fly. But ah! not even our oaks reach the sky. Still people say there is in some distant land a tree whose top reaches to heaven, and that God descends by it on the earth, the night before Easter.”

“No, Hanna. God has a long ladder which reaches from heaven to earth. Before Easter Sunday holy angels set it up, and as soon as God puts His foot on the first rung, all evil spirits take to flight and fall in swarms into hell. That is why on Easter Day there are none of them on earth.”

“How gently the water ripples! Like a child in the cradle,” continued Hanna, pointing to the pool begirt by dark maples and weeping-willows, whose melancholy branches drooped in the water. On a hill near the wood slumbered an old house with closed shutters. The roof was covered with moss and weeds; leafy apple-trees had grown high up before the windows; the wood cast deep shadows on it; a grove of nut-trees spread from the foot of the hill as far as the pool.

“I remember as if in a dream,” said Hanna, keeping her eyes fixed on the house, “a long, long time ago, when I was little and lived with mother, someone told a terrible story about this house. You must know it — tell me.”

“God forbid, my dear child! Old women and stupid people talk a lot of nonsense. It would only frighten you and spoil your sleep.”

“Tell me, my darling, my black-eyed Cossack,” she said, pressing her cheek to his. “No, you don’t love me; you have certainly another sweetheart! I will not be frightened, and will sleep quite quietly. If you refuse to tell me, *that* would keep me awake. I would keep on worrying and thinking about it. Tell me, Levko!”

“Certainly it is true what people say, that the devil possesses girls, and stirs up their curiosity. Well then, listen. Long ago there lived in that house an elderly man who had a beautiful daughter white as snow, just like you. His wife had been dead a long time, and he was thinking of marrying again.

“‘Will you pet me as before, father, if you take a second wife?’ asked his daughter.

“‘Yes, my daughter,’ he answered, ‘I shall love you more than ever, and give you yet more rings and necklaces.’

“So he brought a young wife home, who was beautiful and white and red, but she cast such an evil glance at her stepdaughter that she cried aloud, but not a word did her sulky stepmother speak to her all day long.

“When night came, and her father and his wife had retired, the young girl locked herself up in her room, and feeling melancholy began to weep bitterly. Suddenly she spied a hideous black cat creeping towards her; its fur was aflame and its claws struck on the ground like iron. In her terror the girl sprang on a chair; the cat followed her. Then she sprang into bed; the cat sprang after her, and seizing her by the throat began to choke her. She tore the creature away, and flung it on the ground, but the terrible cat began to creep towards her again. Rendered desperate with terror, she seized her father’s sabre which hung on the

wall, and struck at the cat, wounding one of its paws. The animal disappeared, whimpering.

“The next day the young wife did not leave her bedroom; the third day she appeared with her hand bound up.

“The poor girl perceived that her stepmother was a witch, and that she had wounded her hand.

“On the fourth day her father told her to bring water, to sweep the floor like a servant-maid, and not to show herself where he and his wife sat. She obeyed him, though with a heavy heart. On the fifth day he drove her barefooted out of the house, without giving her any food for her journey. Then she began to sob and covered her face with her hands.

“‘You have ruined your own daughter, father!’ she cried; ‘and the witch has ruined your soul. May God forgive you! He will not allow me to live much longer.’

“And do you see,” continued Levko, turning to Hanna and pointing to the house, “do you see that high bank; from that bank she threw herself into the water, and has been no more seen on earth.”

“And the witch?” Hanna interrupted, timidly fastening her tearful eyes on him.

“The witch? Old women say that when the moon shines, all those who have been drowned come out to warm themselves in its rays, and that they are led by the witch’s stepdaughter. One night she saw her stepmother by the pool, caught hold of her, and dragged her screaming into the water. But this time also the witch played her a trick; she changed herself into one of those who had been drowned, and so escaped the chastisement she would have received at their hands.

“Let anyone who likes believe the old women’s stories. They say that the witch’s stepdaughter gathers together those who have been drowned every night, and looks in their faces in order to find out which of them is the witch; but has not done so yet. Such are the old wives’ tales. It is said to be the intention of the present owner to erect a distillery on the spot. But I hear voices. They are coming home from the dancing. Good-bye, Hanna! Sleep well, and don’t think of all that nonsense.” So saying he embraced her, kissed her, and departed.

“Good-bye, Levko!” said Hanna, still gazing at the dark pine wood.

The brilliant moon was now rising and filling all the earth with splendour. The pool shone like silver, and the shadows of the trees stood out in strong relief.

“Good-bye, Hanna!” she heard again as she spoke, and felt the light pressure of a kiss.

“You have come back!” she said, looking round, but started on seeing a stranger before her.

There was another “Good-bye, Hanna!” and again she was kissed.

“Has the devil brought a second?” she exclaimed angrily.

“Good-bye, dear Hanna!”

“There is a third!”

“Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye, Hanna!” and kisses rained from all sides.

“Why, there is a whole band of them!” cried Hanna, tearing herself from the youths who had gathered round. “Are they never tired of the eternal kissing? I shall soon not be able to show myself on the street!” So saying, she closed the door and bolted it.

II
THE VILLAGE HEADMAN

Do you know a Ukraine night? No, you do not know a night in the Ukraine. Gaze your full on it. The moon shines in the midst of the sky; the immeasurable vault of heaven seems to have expanded to infinity; the earth is bathed in silver light; the air is warm, voluptuous, and redolent of innumerable sweet scents. Divine night! Magical night! Motionless, but inspired with divine breath, the forests stand, casting enormous shadows and wrapped in complete darkness. Calmly and placidly sleep the lakes surrounded by dark green thickets. The virginal groves of the hawthorns and cherry-trees stretch their roots timidly into the cool water; only now and then their leaves rustle unwillingly when that freebooter, the night-wind, steals up to kiss them. The whole landscape is hushed in slumber; but there is a mysterious breath upon the heights. One falls into a weird and unearthly mood, and silvery apparitions rise from the depths. Divine night! Magical night! Suddenly the woods, lakes, and steppes become alive. The nightingales of the Ukraine are singing, and it seems as though the moon itself were listening to their song. The village sleeps as though under a magic spell; the cottages shine in the moonlight against the darkness of the woods behind them. The songs grow silent, and all is still. Only here and there is a glimmer of light in some small window. Some families, sitting up late, are finishing their supper at the thresholds of their houses.

“No, the ‘gallop’ is not danced like that! Now I see, it does not go properly! What did my godfather tell me? So then! Hop! tralala! Hop! tralala! Hop! Hop! Hop!” Thus a half-intoxicated, middle-aged Cossack talked to himself as he danced through the street. “By heaven, a ‘gallop’ is not danced like that! What is the use of lying! On with it then! Hop! tralala! Hop! tralala! Hop! Hop! Hop!”

“See that fool there! If he were only a young fellow! But to see a grown man dancing, and the children laughing at him,” exclaimed an old woman who was

passing by, carrying a bundle of straw. “Go home! It is quite time to go to sleep!”

“I am going!” said the Cossack, standing still. “I am going. What do I care about the headman? He thinks because he is the eldest, and throws cold water on people, and carries his head high. As to being headman — I myself am a headman. Yes indeed — otherwise — — ” As he spoke, he stepped up to the door of the first cottage he came to, stood at the window, drumming with his fingers on the glass, and feeling for the door-handle. “Woman, open! Woman, open quickly I tell you! It is time for me to go to sleep!”

“Where are you going, Kalenik? That is the wrong house!” some young girls who were returning from the dance called to him as they passed. “Shall we show you yours?”

“Yes, please, ladies!”

“Ladies! Just listen to him!” one of them exclaimed. “How polite Kalenik is! We will show you the house — but no, first dance before us!”

“Dance before you? Oh, you are clever girls!” said Kalenik in a drawling voice, and laughing. He threatened them with his finger, and stumbled, not being able to stand steadily. “And will you let yourselves be kissed? I will kiss the lot.” With tottering steps he began to run after them.

The girls cried out and ran apart; but they soon plucked up courage and went on the other side of the road, when they saw that Kalenik was not firm on his legs.

“There is your house!” they called to him, pointing to one which was larger than the rest, and which belonged to the village headman.

Kalenik turned towards it, and began again to revile the headman.

But who is this headman to whose disadvantage so much has been said? Oh, he is a very important person in the village. Before Kalenik reaches his house, we shall doubtless find enough time to say something about him. Everyone in the village takes off his cap at the sight of him, and even the smallest girls wish him good morning. Which of the young Cossacks would not like to be a headman? The headman has an entry everywhere, and every stalwart rustic stands respectfully, cap in hand, so long as the headman feels round his snuff-box with his thick, coarse finger. In parish-meetings and other assemblies, although his power may be limited by the votes of the majority, the headman still maintains the upper hand, and sends whom he chooses to make roads or dig ditches. In outward manners he is morose and severe, and not fond of talking. Long ago, when the Empress Catherine of blessed memory journeyed to the Crimea, he was chosen as one of her escort for two whole days, and had the high honour of sitting with the imperial coachman on the box.

Since then the headman has formed the habit of shaking his head solemnly and thoughtfully, of stroking his long, drooping moustache, and of darting hawk-like glances from his eyes. Whatever the topic of conversation may be, he manages to refer to his having accompanied the Empress, and sat on the box of the imperial coach. He often pretends to be hard of hearing, especially when he hears something that he does not like. He has an aversion for dandies, and himself wears under a black caftan of cloth, made at home, a simple, embroidered, woollen waist-band. No one has seen him wear any other dress except, of course, on the occasion of the Czarina's journey to the Crimea, when he wore a blue Cossack's uniform. Hardly anyone in the village remembers that time, and he keeps the uniform packed up in a chest.

The headman is a widower, but his sister-in-law lives with him. She cooks his dinner and supper, keeps the house and furniture clean, weaves linen, and acts as housekeeper generally. The village gossips say that she is not a relation of his; but we must remark that the headman has many enemies who spread all kinds of slanders about him. We have now said what we considered to be necessary about the headman, and the drunken Kalenik is not yet half-way to his house. He continued to abuse the headman in terms which might be expected from one in his condition.

III
AN UNEXPECTED RIVAL — THE CONSPIRACY

"No, you fellows, I won't. What is the good of all those silly goings-on? Aren't you tired of these foolish jokes? People already call us good-for-nothing scapegraces. Better go to bed!" So Levko said one evening to his companions, who were trying to persuade him to take part with them in further practical jokes. "Farewell, brothers! Good night!" he said, and left them with quick steps.

"Does my bright-eyed Hanna sleep?" he thought as he passed the house shaded by the cherry-trees. Then in the silence he heard the sound of a whispered conversation. Levko stood still. Between the trees there glimmered something white. "What is that?" he thought, as he crept closer and hid himself behind a tree.

By the light of the moon he saw the face of a girl standing opposite him. It was Hanna. But who was the tall man who had his back turned to him? In vain he strained his eyes; the whole figure was hidden in shadow, and the slightest forward step on Levko's part would expose him to the risk of discovery. He therefore leant quietly against the tree, and determined to remain where he was. Then he heard the girl utter his name distinctly.

“Levko? Levko is a baby,” said the tall man in an undertone. “If I ever find him with you, I will pull his hair.”

“I should like to know what rascal is boasting of pulling my hair,” said Levko to himself, stretching out his head and endeavouring to miss no word. But the stranger continued to speak so low that he was inaudible.

“What, aren’t you ashamed?” said Hanna after he had finished. “You are lying and deceiving me; I will never believe that you love me.”

“I know,” continued the tall man, “that Levko has talked nonsense to you and turned your head.” (Here it seemed to the Cossack as though the stranger’s voice were not quite unknown to him, and that he must have heard it somewhere or other.) “But Levko shall learn to know me,” continued the stranger. “He thinks I don’t notice his rascally tricks; but he will yet feel the weight of my fists, the scoundrel!”

At these words Levko could no longer restrain his wrath. He came three steps nearer, and took a run in order to plant a blow which would have stretched the stranger on the ground in spite of his strength. At that moment, however, a ray of light fell on the latter’s face, and Levko stood transfixed, for he saw it was his father. But he only expressed his surprise by an involuntary shake of the head and a low whistle.

On the other side there was the sound of approaching footsteps. Hanna ran hastily into the house and closed the door behind her.

“Good-bye, Hanna!” cried one of the youths, who had stolen up and embraced the headman, but started back alarmed when he felt a rough moustache.

“Good-bye, my darling!” cried another, but speedily executed a somersault in consequence of a violent blow from the headman.

“Good-bye, good-bye, Hanna!” exclaimed several youths, falling on his neck.

“Go to the deuce, you infernal scoundrels!” shouted the headman, defending himself with both hands and feet. “What kind of Hanna do you take me for? Hang yourselves like your fathers did, you children of the devil! Falling on one like flies on honey! I will show you who Hanna is!”

“The headman! The headman! It is the headman!” cried the youths, running away in all directions.

“Aha, father!” said Levko to himself, recovering from his astonishment and looking after the headman as he departed, cursing and scolding. “Those are the tricks you like to play! Splendid! And I wonder and puzzle my head why he pretends to be deaf when I only touch on the matter! Wait, you old sinner, I will teach you to cajole other people’s sweethearts. Hi! you fellows, come here!” he cried, beckoning to the youths, who gathered round him. “Come nearer! I told you to go to bed, but I am differently minded now, and am ready to go round

with you all night.”

“That is reasonable,” exclaimed a broad-shouldered, stout fellow, who was regarded as the chief toper and good-for-nothing in the village. “I always feel uncomfortable if I do not have a good fling, and play some practical jokes. I always feel as though there were something wanting, as though I had lost my cap or my pipe — in a word, I don’t feel like a proper Cossack then!”

“Do you really want to bait the headman?” asked Levko.

“The headman?”

“Yes, the headman. I don’t know for whom he takes himself. He carries on as though he were a duke. It is not only that he treats us as if we were his serfs, but he comes after our girls.”

“Quite right! That is true!” exclaimed all the youths together.

“But are we made of any worse stuff than he? We are, thank God! free Cossacks. Let us show him so.”

“Yes, we will show him!” they shouted. “But when we go for the headman, we must not forget his clerk.”

“The clerk shall have his share, too. Just now a song that suits the headman occurs to me. Go on! I will teach it you!” continued Levko, striking the strings of his guitar. “But listen! Disguise yourselves as well as you can.”

“Hurrah for the Cossacks!” cried the stout reveller, dancing and clapping his hands. “Long live freedom! When one lets the reins go, one thinks of the good old times. It feels as jolly as though one were in paradise. Hurrah, you fellows! Go ahead!”

The youths rushed noisily through the village street, and the pious old women, aroused from their sleep, looked through the windows, crossed themselves drowsily, and thought, “There they go, the wild young fellows!”

IV
WILD PRANKS

Only in one house at the end of the street there still burned a light; it was the headman’s. He had long finished his supper, and would certainly have gone to sleep but that he had a guest with him, the brandy-distiller. The latter had been sent to superintend the building of a distillery for the lords of the manor, who possessed small allotments between the lands of the free Cossacks. At the upper end of the table, in the place of honour, sat the guest — a short, stout man with small, merry eyes. He smoked his short pipe with obvious satisfaction, spitting every moment and constantly pushing the tobacco down in the bowl. The clouds of smoke collected over his head, and veiled him in a bluish mist. It seemed as

though the broad chimney of a distillery, which was bored at always being perched up on the roof, had hit upon the idea of taking a little recreation, and had now settled itself comfortably at the headman's table. Close under his nose bristled his short, thick moustache, which in the dim, smoky atmosphere resembled a mouse which the distiller had caught and held in his mouth, usurping the functions of a dining-room cat. The headman sat there, as master of the house, wearing only his shirt and linen breeches. His eagle eye began to grow dim like the setting sun, and to half close. At the lower end of the table sat, smoking his pipe, one of the village council, of which the headman was superintendent. Out of respect for the latter he had not removed his caftan.

"How soon do you think," asked the headman, turning to the distiller and putting his hand before his gaping mouth, "will you have the distillery put up?"

"With God's help we shall be distilling brandy this autumn. On Conception Day I bet the headman will be tracing the figure eight with his feet on his way home." So saying, the distiller laughed so heartily that his small eyes disappeared altogether, his body was convulsed, and his twitching lips actually let go of the reeking pipe for a moment.

"God grant it!" said the headman, on whose face the shadow of a smile was visible. "Now, thank heaven, the number of distilleries is increasing a little; but in the old days, when I accompanied the Czarina on the Perejlaslov Road, and the late Besborodko — — "

"Yes, my friend, those were bad times. Then from Krementchuk to Romen there were hardly two distilleries. And now — but have you heard what the infernal Germans have invented? They say they will no longer use wood for fuel in the distilleries, but devilish steam." At these words the distiller stared at the table reflectively, and at his arms resting on it. "But how they can use steam — by heavens! I don't know."

"What fools these Germans are!" said the headman. "I should like to give these sons of dogs a good thrashing. Whoever heard of cooking with steam? At this rate one will not be able to get a spoonful of porridge or a bit of bacon into one's mouth."

"And you, friend," broke in the headman's sister-in-law, who was sitting by the stove; "will you be with us the whole time without your wife?"

"Do I want her then? If she were only passably good-looking — — "

"She is not pretty, then?" asked the headman with a questioning glance.

"How should she be; as old as Satan, and with a face as full of wrinkles as an empty purse," said the distiller, shaking again with laughter.

Then a noise was heard at the door, which opened and a Cossack stepped over the threshold without removing his cap, and remained standing in an absent-

minded way in the middle of the room, with open mouth and gazing at the ceiling. It was Kalenik, whose acquaintance we have already made.

“Now I am at home,” he said, taking his seat by the door, without taking any notice of those present. “Ah! to what a length Satan made the road stretch. I went on and on, and there was no end. My legs are quite broken. Woman, bring me my fur blanket to lie down on. There it is in the corner; but mind you don’t upset the little pot of snuff. But no; better not touch it! Leave it alone! You are really quite drunk — I had better get it myself.”

Kalenik tried to rise, but an invincible power fettered him to his seat.

“That’s a nice business!” said the headman. “He comes into a strange house, and behaves as though he were at home! Push him out, in heaven’s name!”

“Let him rest a bit, friend!” said the distiller, seizing the headman’s arm. “The man is very useful; if we had only plenty of this kind, our distillery would get on grandly….” For the rest, it was not good-nature which inspired these words. The distiller was full of superstition, and to turn out a man who had already sat down, seemed to him to be tantamount to invoking the devil.

“That comes of being old,” grumbled Kalenik, stretching himself out along the seat. “People might say I was drunk, but no, I am not! Why should I lie? I am ready to tell the headman to his face! Who is the headman anyway? May he break his neck, the son of a dog! I spit at him! May he be run over by a cart, the one-eyed devil!”

“Ah! the drunken sot has crawled into the house, and now he lays his paws on the table,” said the headman, rising angrily; but at that moment a heavy stone, breaking a window-pane to pieces, fell at his feet. The headman remained standing. “If I knew,” he said, “what jail-bird has thrown it, I would give him something. What devil’s trick is this?” he continued, looking at the stone, which he held in his hand, with burning eyes. “I wish I could choke him with it!”

“Stop! Stop! God preserve you, friend!” broke in the distiller, looking pale. “God keep you in this world and the next, but don’t curse anyone so.”

“Ah! now we have his defender! May he be ruined!”

“Listen, friend! You don’t know what happened to my late mother-in-law.”

“Your mother-in-law?”

“Yes, my mother-in-law. One evening, perhaps rather earlier than this, they were sitting at supper, my late mother-in-law, my father-in-law, their two servants, and five children. My mother-in-law emptied some dumplings from the cooking-pot into a dish in order to cool them. But the others, being hungry after the day’s work, did not wait till they were quite cooled, but stuck their long wooden forks into them and ate them at once. All at once a stranger entered — heaven knows whence! — and asked to be allowed to share their meal. They

could not refuse to feed a hungry man, and gave him also a wooden fork. But the guest made as short work with the dumplings as a cow with hay. Before the family had each of them finished his or her dumpling and reached out their forks again for another, the dish had been swept as clean as the floor of a nobleman's drawing-room. My mother-in-law emptied out some more dumplings; she thought to herself, 'Now the guest is satisfied, and will not be so greedy.' But on the contrary, he began to swallow them faster than ever, and emptied the second dish also. 'May one of them choke you!' said my mother-in-law under her breath. Suddenly the guest seemed to try to clear his throat, and fell back. They rushed to his help, but his breath had stopped and he was dead."

"Served him right, the cursed glutton!"

"But it turned out quite otherwise; since that time my mother-in-law has no rest. No sooner is it dark than the dead man approaches the house. He then sits astride the chimney, the scoundrel, holding a dumpling between his teeth. During the day it is quite quiet — one hears and sees nothing; but as soon as it begins to grow dark, and one casts a look at the roof, there he is comfortably perched on the chimney!"

"A wonderful story, friend! I heard something similar from my late — — "

Then the headman suddenly stopped. Outside there were noises, and the stamping of dancers' feet. The strings of a guitar were being struck gently, to the accompaniment of a voice. Then the guitar was played more loudly, many voices joined in, and the whole chorus struck up a song in ridicule of the headman.

When it was over, the distiller said, with his head bent a little on one side, to the headman who was almost petrified by the audacity of the serenaders, "A fine song, my friend!"

"Very fine! Only it is a pity that they insult the headman."

He folded his arms with a certain measure of composure on the table, and prepared to listen further, for the singing and noise outside continued. A sharp observer, however, would have seen that it was not mere torpidity which made the headman sit so quietly. In the same way a crafty cat often allows an inexperienced mouse to play about her tail, while she is quickly devising a plan to cut it off from the mouse-hole. The headman's one eye was still fastened on the window, and his hand, after he had given the village councillor a sign, was reaching for the door-handle, when suddenly a loud noise and shouts were heard from the street. The distiller, who beside many other characteristics possessed a keen curiosity, laid down his pipe quickly and ran into the street; but the ne'er-do-wells had all dispersed.

"No, you don't escape me!" cried the headman, dragging someone muffled up in a sheepskin coat with the hair turned outwards, by the arm.

The distiller rapidly seized a favourable moment to look at the face of this disturber of the peace; but he started back when he saw a long beard and a grim, painted face.

“No, you don’t escape me!” exclaimed the headman again as he dragged his prisoner into the vestibule.

The latter offered no resistance, and followed him as quietly as though it had been his own house.

“Karpo, open the store-room!” the headman called to the village councillor. “We will throw him in there! Then we will awake the clerk, call the village council together, catch this impudent rabble, and pass our sentence on them at once.”

The village councillor unlocked the store-room; then in the darkness of the vestibule, the prisoner made a desperate effort to break loose from the headman’s arms.

“Ah! you would, would you?” exclaimed the headman, holding him more firmly by the collar.

“Let me go! It is I!” a half-stifled voice was heard saying.

“It is no good, brother! You may squeal if you choose, like the devil, instead of imitating a woman, but you won’t get round me.” So saying, he thrust the prisoner with such violence into the dark room that he fell on the ground and groaned aloud.

The victorious headman, accompanied by the village councillor, now betook himself to the clerk’s; they were followed by the distiller, who was veiled in clouds of tobacco-smoke, and resembled a steamer.

They were all three walking reflectively with bent heads, when suddenly, turning into a dark side-alley, they uttered a cry and started back in consequence of coming into collision with three other men, who on their side shouted with equal loudness. The headman saw with his one eye, to his no small astonishment, the clerk with two village councillors.

“I was just coming to you, Mr Notary.”

“And I was on my way to your honour.”

“These are strange goings-on, Mr Notary.”

“Indeed they are, your honour.”

“Have you seen them then?” asked the headman, surprised.

“The young fellows are roaming about the streets using vile language. They are abusing your honour in a way — in a word, it is a scandal. A drunken Russian would be ashamed to use such words.”

The lean notary, in his gaily striped breeches and yeast-coloured waistcoat, kept on stretching forward and drawing back his neck while he talked.

“Hardly had I gone to sleep,” he continued, “than the cursed loafers woke me up with their shameful songs and their noise. I meant to give them a sound rating, but while I was putting on my breeches and vest, they all ran away. But the ringleader has not escaped; for the present he is shut up in the hut which we use as a prison. I was very curious to know who the scapegrace is, but his face is as sooty as the devil’s when he forges nails for sinners.”

“What clothes does he wear, Mr Notary?”

“The son of a dog wears a black sheepskin coat turned inside out, your honour.”

“Aren’t you telling me a lie, Mr Notary? The same good-for-nothing is now shut up in my store-room under lock and key.”

“No, your honour! You have drawn the long bow a little yourself, and should not be vexed at what I say.”

“Bring a light! We will take a look at him at once!”

They returned to the headman’s house; the store-room door was opened, and the headman groaned for sheer amazement as he saw his sister-in-law standing before him.

“Tell me then,” she said, stepping forward, “have you quite lost your senses? Had you a single particle of brains in your one-eyed fish-head when you locked me up in the dark room? It is a mercy I did not break my head against the iron door hinge. Didn’t I shout out that it was I? Then he seized me, the cursed bear, with his iron claws, and pushed me in. May Satan hereafter so push you into hell!” The last words she spoke from the street, having wisely gone out of his reach.

“Yes, now I see that it is you!” said the headman, who had slowly recovered his composure.

“Is he not a scamp and a scoundrel, Mr Clerk?” he continued.

“Yes, certainly, your honour.”

“Isn’t it high time to give all these loose fellows a lesson, that they may at last betake themselves to their work?”

“Yes, it is high time, your honour.”

“The fools have combined in a gang. What the deuce is that? It sounded like my sister-in-law’s voice. The blockheads think that I am like her, an ordinary Cossack.”

Here he coughed and cleared his throat, and a gleam in his eyes showed that he was about to say something very important. “In the year one thousand — I cannot keep these cursed dates in my memory, if I was to be killed for it. Well, never mind when it was, the Commissary Ledatcho was commanded to choose out a Cossack who was cleverer than the rest. Yes,” he added, raising his

forefinger, “cleverer than the rest, to accompany the Czar. Then I was — — ”

“Yes, yes,” the notary interrupted him, “we all know, headman, that you well deserved the imperial favour. But confess now that I was right: you made a mistake when you declared that you had caught the vagabond in the reversed sheepskin.”

“This disguised devil I will have imprisoned to serve as a warning to the rest. They will have to learn what authority means. Who has appointed the headman, if not the Czar? Then we will tackle the other fellows. I don’t forget how the scamps drove a whole herd of swine into my garden, which ate up all the cabbages and cucumbers; I don’t forget how those sons of devils refused to thrash my rye for me. I don’t forget — to the deuce with them! We must first find out who this scoundrel in the sheepskin really is.”

“He is a sly dog anyway,” said the distiller, whose cheeks during the whole conversation had been as full of smoke as a siege-cannon, and whose lips, when he took his pipe out of his mouth, seemed to emit sparks.

Meanwhile they had approached a small ruined hut. Their curiosity had mounted to the highest pitch, and they pressed round the door. The notary produced a key and tried to turn the lock, but it did not fit; it was the key of his trunk. The impatience of the onlookers increased. He plunged his hand into the wide pocket of his gaily striped breeches, bent his back, scraped with his feet, uttered imprecations, and at last cried triumphantly, “I have it!”

At these words the hearts of our heroes beat so loud, that the turning of the key in the lock was almost inaudible. At last the door opened, and the headman turned as white as a sheet. The distiller felt a shiver run down his spine, and his hair stood on end. Terror and apprehension were stamped on the notary’s face; the village councillors almost sank into the ground and could not shut their wide-open mouths. Before them stood the headman’s sister-in-law!

She was not less startled than they, but recovered herself somewhat, and made a movement as if to approach them.

“Stop!” cried the headman in an excited voice, and slammed the door again. “Sirs, Satan is behind this!” he continued. “Bring fire quickly! Never mind the hut! Set it alight and burn it up so that not even the witch’s bones remain.”

“Wait a minute, brother!” exclaimed the distiller. “Your hair is grey, but you are not very intelligent; no ordinary fire will burn a witch. Only the fire of a pipe can do it. I will manage it all right.” So saying, he shook some glowing ashes from his pipe on to a bundle of straw, and began to fan the flame.

Despair gave the unfortunate woman courage; she began to implore them in a loud voice.

“Stop a moment, brother! Perhaps we are incurring guilt needlessly. Perhaps

she is really no witch!” said the notary. “If the person sitting in there declares herself ready to make the sign of the cross, then she is not a child of the devil.”

The proposal was accepted. “Look out, Satan!” continued the notary, speaking at a chink in the door. “If you promise not to move, we will open the door.”

The door was opened.

“Cross yourself!” exclaimed the headman, looking round him for a safe place of retreat in case of necessity.

His sister-in-law crossed herself.

“The deuce! It is really you, sister-in-law!”

“What evil spirit dragged you into this hole, friend?” asked the notary.

The headman’s sister related amid sobs how the rioters had seized her on the street, and in spite of her resistance, pushed her through a large window into the hut, on which they had closed the shutters. The notary looked and found that the bolt of the shutter had been wrenched off, and that it was held in its place by a wooden bar placed across it outside.

“You are a nice fellow, you one-eyed Satan!” she now exclaimed, advancing towards the headman, who stepped backwards and continued to contemplate her from head to foot. “I know your thoughts; you were glad of an opportunity to get me shut up in order to run after that petticoat, so that no one could see the grey-haired sinner making a fool of himself. You think I don’t know how you talked this evening with Hanna. Oh, I know everything. You must get up earlier if you want to make a fool of me, you great stupid! I have endured for a long time, but at last don’t take it ill if — —”

She made a threatening gesture with her fist, and ran away swiftly, leaving the headman quite taken aback.

“The devil really has something to do with it!” he thought, rubbing his bald head.

“We have him!” now exclaimed the two village councillors as they approached.

“Whom have you?” asked the headman.

“The devil in the sheepskin.”

“Bring him here!” cried the headman, seizing the prisoner by the arm. “Are you mad? This is the drunken Kalenik!”

“It is witchcraft! He was in our hands, your honour!” replied the village councillors. “The rascals were rushing about in the narrow side-streets, dancing and behaving like idiots — the devil take them! How it was we got hold of this fellow instead of him, heaven only knows!”

“In virtue of my authority, and that of the village assembly,” said the headman, “I issue the order to seize these robbers and other young vagabonds which may

be met with in the streets, and to bring them before me to be dealt with."

"Excuse us, your honour," answered the village councillors, bowing low. "If you could only see the hideous faces they had; may heaven punish us if ever anyone has seen such miscreations since he was born and baptised. These devils might frighten one into an illness."

"I'll teach you to be afraid! You won't obey then? You are certainly in the conspiracy with them! You mutineers! What is the meaning of that? What? You abet robbery and murder! You! — I will inform the Commissary. Go at once, do you hear; fly like birds. I shall — you will — — "

They all dispersed in different directions.

V
THE DROWNED GIRL

Without troubling himself in the least about those who had been sent to pursue him, the originator of all this confusion slowly walked towards the old house and the pool. We hardly need to say it was Levko. His black fur coat was buttoned up; he carried his cap in his hand, and the perspiration was pouring down his face. The moon poured her light on the gloomy majesty of the dark maple-wood.

The coolness of the air round the motionless pool enticed the weary wanderer to rest by it a while. Universal silence prevailed, only that in the forest thickets the nightingales' songs were heard. An overpowering drowsiness closed his eyes; his tired limbs relaxed, and his head nodded.

"Ah! am I going to sleep?" he said, rising and rubbing his eyes.

He looked round; the night seemed to him still more beautiful. The moonlight seemed to have an intoxicating quality about it, a glamour which he had never perceived before. The landscape was veiled in a silver mist. The air was redolent with the perfume of the apple-blossoms and the night-flowers. Entranced, he gazed on the motionless pool. The old, half-ruined house was clearly reflected without a quiver in the water. But instead of dark shutters, he saw light streaming from brilliantly lit windows. Presently one of them opened. Holding his breath, and without moving a muscle, he fastened his eyes on the pool and seemed to penetrate its depths. What did he see? First he saw at the window a graceful, curly head with shining eyes, propped on a white arm; the head moved and smiled. His heart suddenly began to beat. The water began to break into ripples, and the window closed.

Quietly he withdrew from the pool, and looked towards the house. The dark shutters were flung back; the window-panes gleamed in the moonlight. "How little one can believe what people say!" he thought to himself. "The house is

brand-new, and looks as though it had only just been painted. It is certainly inhabited."

He stepped nearer cautiously, but the house was quite silent. The clear song of the nightingales rose powerfully and distinctly on the air, and as they died away one heard the chirping and rustling of the grasshoppers, and the marshbird clapping his slippery beak in the water.

Levko felt enraptured with the sweetness and stillness of the night. He struck the strings of his guitar and sang:

"Oh lovely moon
Thou steepst in light
The house where my darling
Sleeps all night."

A window opened gently, and the same girl whose image he had seen in the pool looked out and listened attentively to the song. Her long-lashed eyelids were partly drooping over her eyes; she was as pale as the moonlight, but wonderfully beautiful. She smiled, and a shiver ran through Levko.

"Sing me a song, young Cossack!" she said gently, bending her head sideways and quite closing her eyes.

"What song shall I sing you, dear girl?"

Tears rolled down her pale cheeks. "Cossack," she said, and there was something inexpressibly touching in her tone, "Cossack, find my stepmother for me. I will do everything for you; I will reward you; I will give you abundant riches. I have armlets embroidered with silk and coral necklaces; I will give you a girdle set with pearls. I have gold. Cossack, seek my stepmother for me. She is a terrible witch; she allowed me no peace in the beautiful world. She tortured me; she made me work like a common maid-servant. Look at my face; she has banished the redness from my cheeks with her unholy magic. Look at my white neck; they cannot be washed away, they cannot be washed away — the blue marks of her iron claws. Look at my white feet; they did not walk on carpets, but on hot sand, on damp ground, on piercing thorns. And my eyes — look at them; they are almost blind with weeping. Seek my stepmother!"

Her voice, which had gradually become louder, stopped, and she wept.

The Cossack felt overpowered by sympathy and grief. "I am ready to do everything to please you, dear lady," he cried with deep emotion; "but where and how can I find her?"

"Look, look!" she said quickly, "she is here! She dances on the lake-shore with my maidens, and warms herself in the moonlight. Yet she is cunning and sly. She has assumed the shape of one who is drowned, yet I know and hear that she is present. I am so afraid of her. Because of her I cannot swim free and light

as a fish. I sink and fall to the bottom like a piece of iron. Look for her, Cossack!”

Levko cast a glance at the lake-shore. In a silvery mist there moved, like shadows, girls in white dresses decked with May flowers; gold necklaces and coins gleamed on their necks; but they were very pale, as though formed of transparent clouds. They danced nearer him, and he could hear their voices, somewhat like the sound of reeds stirred in the quiet evening by the breeze.

“Let us play the raven-game! Let us play the raven-game!”

“Who will be the raven?”

Lots were cast, and a girl stepped out of the line of the dancers.

Levko observed her attentively. Her face and clothing resembled those of the others; but she was evidently unwilling to play the part assigned her. The dancers revolved rapidly round her, without her being able to catch one of them.

“No, I won’t be the raven any more,” she said, quite exhausted. “I do not like to rob the poor mother-hen of her chickens.”

“You are not a witch,” thought Levko.

The girls again gathered together in order to cast lots who should be the raven.

“I will be the raven!” called one from the midst.

Levko watched her closely. Boldly and rapidly she ran after the dancers, and made every effort to catch her prey. Levko began to notice that her body was not transparent like the others; there was something black in the midst of it. Suddenly there was a cry; the “raven” had rushed on a girl, embraced her, and it seemed to Levko as though she had stretched out claws, and as though her face shone with malicious joy.

“Witch!” he cried out, pointing at her suddenly with his finger, and turning towards the house.

The girl at the window laughed, and the other girls dragged the “raven” screaming along with them.

“How shall I reward you, Cossack?” said the maiden. “I know you do not need gold; you love Hanna, but her harsh father will not allow you to marry. But give him this note, and he will cease to hinder it.”

She stretched out her white hand, and her face shone wonderfully. With strange shudders and a beating heart, he grasped the paper and — awoke.

VI
THE AWAKENING

“Have I then been really asleep?” Levko asked himself as he stood up. “Everything seemed so real, as though I were awake. Wonderful! Wonderful!”

he repeated, looking round him. The position of the moon vertical overhead showed that it was midnight; a waft of coolness came from the pool. The ruined house with the closed shutters stood there with a melancholy aspect; the moss and weeds which grew thickly upon it showed that it had not been entered by any human foot for a long time. Then he suddenly opened his hand, which had been convulsively clenched during his sleep, and cried aloud with astonishment when he saw the note in it. “Ah! if I could only read,” he thought, turning it this way and that. At that moment he heard a noise behind him.

“Fear nothing! Lay hold of him! What are you afraid of? There are ten of us. I wager that he is a man, and not the devil.”

It was the headman encouraging his companions.

Levko felt himself seized by several arms, many of which were trembling with fear.

“Throw off your mask, friend! Cease trying to fool us,” said the headman, taking him by the collar. But he started back when he saw him closely. “Levko! My son!” he exclaimed, letting his arms sink. “It is you, miserable boy! I thought some rascal, or disguised devil, was playing these tricks; but now it seems you have cooked this mess for your own father — placed yourself at the head of a band of robbers, and composed songs to ridicule him. Eh, Levko! What is the meaning of that? It seems your back is itching. Tie him fast!”

“Stop, father! I have been ordered to give you this note,” said Levko.

“Let me see it then! But bind him all the same.”

“Wait, headman,” said the notary, unfolding the note; “it is the Commissary’s handwriting!”

“The Commissary’s?”

“The Commissary’s?” echoed the village councillors mechanically.

“The Commissary’s? Wonderful! Still more incomprehensible!” thought Levko.

“Read! Read!” said the headman. “What does the Commissary write?”

“Let us hear!” exclaimed the distiller, holding his pipe between his teeth, and lighting it.

The notary cleared his throat and began to read.

“‘Order to the headman, Javtuk Makohonenko.

“‘It has been brought to our knowledge that you, old id — — ’”

“Stop! Stop! That is unnecessary!” exclaimed the headman. “Even if I have not heard it, I know that that is not the chief matter. Read further!”

“‘Consequently I order you at once to marry your son, Levko Makohonenko, to the Cossack’s daughter, Hanna Petritchenka, to repair the bridges on the post-road, and to give no horses belonging to the lords of the manor to the county-

court magistrates without my knowledge. If on my arrival I do not find these orders carried out, I shall hold you singly responsible.

“‘Lieut. Kosma Derkatch-Drischpanowski,

“‘*Commissary*.’”

“There we have it!” exclaimed the headman, with his mouth open. “Have you heard it? The headman is made responsible for everything, and therefore everyone has to obey him without contradiction! Otherwise, I beg to resign my office. And you,” he continued, turning to Levko, “I will have married, as the Commissary directs, though it seems to me strange how he knows of the affair; but you will get a taste of my knout first — the one, you know, which hangs on the wall at my bed-head. But how did you get hold of the note?”

Levko, in spite of the astonishment which the unexpected turn of affairs caused him, had had the foresight to prepare an answer, and to conceal the way in which the note had come into his possession. “I was in the town last night,” he said, “and met the Commissary just as he was alighting from his droshky. When he heard from which village I was he gave me the note and bid me tell you by word of mouth, father, that he would dine with us on his way back.”

“Did he say that?”

“Yes.”

“Have you heard it?” said the headman, with a solemn air turning to his companions. “The Commissary himself, in his own person, comes to us, that is to me, to dine.” The headman lifted a finger and bent his head as though he were listening to something. “The Commissary, do you hear, the Commissary is coming to dine with me! What do you think, Mr Notary? And what do you think, friend? That is not a little honour, is it?”

“As far as I can recollect,” the notary broke in, “no Commissary has ever dined with a headman.”

“All headmen are not alike,” he answered with a self-satisfied air. Then he uttered a hoarse laugh and said, “What do you think, Mr Notary? Isn’t it right to order that in honour of the distinguished guest, a fowl, linen, and other things should be offered by every cottage?”

“Yes, they should.”

“And when is the wedding to be, father?” asked Levko.

“Wedding! I should like to celebrate your wedding in my way! Well, in honour of the distinguished guest, to-morrow the pope(1) will marry you. Let the Commissary see that you are punctual. Now, children, we will go to bed. Go to your houses. The present occasion reminds me of the time when I — — ” At these words the headman assumed his customary solemn air.

“Now the headman will relate how he accompanied the Czarina!” said Levko

to himself, and hastened quickly, and full of joy, to the cherry-tree-shaded house, which we know. “May God bless you, beloved, and the holy angels smile on you. To no one will I relate the wonders of this night except to you, Hanna; you alone will believe it, and pray with me for the repose of the souls of the poor drowned maidens.”

He approached the house; the window was open; the moonbeams fell on Hanna, who was sleeping by it. Her head was supported on her arm; her cheeks glowed; her lips moved, gently murmuring his name.

“Sleep sweetly, my darling. Dream of everything that is good, and yet the awaking will surpass all.” He made the sign of the cross over her, closed the window, and gently withdrew.

In a few moments the whole village was buried in slumber. Only the moon hung as brilliant and wonderful as before in the immensity of the Ukraine sky. The divine night continued her reign in solemn stillness, while the earth lay bathed in silvery radiance. The universal silence was only broken here and there by the bark of a dog; only the drunken Kalenik still wandered about the empty streets seeking for his house.

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The Lost Letter

A TALE TOLD BY THE SEXTON OF THE N...CHURCH

So you want me to tell you another story about Grandad? Certainly, why not amuse you with some more...? Ah, the old days, the old days! What joy, what gladness it brings to the heart when one hears of what was done in the world so long, long ago, that the year and the month are forgotten! And when some kinsman of one's own is mixed up in it, a grandfather or great grandfather—then I'm done for: may I choke while praying to St. Varvara if I don't think that I'm doing it all myself, as though I had crept into my great-grandfather's soul, or my great-grandfather's soul were playing tricks in me.... But then, our girls and young women are to blame for plaguing me; if I only let them catch a glimpse of me, it's "Foma Grigorievich! Foma Grigorievich! Come now, some terrible tale! Come now, come now...!" Tara-ta-ta, ta-ta-ta and they keep on and on....

don't grudge telling them a story, of course, but you should see what happens to them when they are in bed. Why, I know every one of them is trembling under the quilt as though she were in a fever and would be glad to creep under her sheepskin, head and all. If a rat scratches against a pot, or she herself touches the poker with her foot—it's "Lord preserve us!" and her heart's in her heels. But it's all over the next day; she'll pester me again to tell her a frightening story, and that's how it goes. Well, what am I to tell you? Nothing comes into my mind at the minute... oh yes, I'll tell you how the witches played "Fools" with my grandfather. But I must beg you first, good friends, not to interrupt me or I will make a hash of it not fit to put to one's lips. My Grandad, I must tell you, was a leading Cossack in his day. He knew his ABC's and even how to abbreviate. On a saint's day, he would boom out the Acts of the Apostles in a voice that would make a priest's son of today feel small. Well, you know without my telling you that in those days if you collected all who could read and write from the whole of Baturin you wouldn't need your cap to contain them: there wouldn't be a handful altogether. So it's no wonder that everyone who met my Grandad offered him a bow, and a low one too.

One day our noble Hetman took it into his head to send a letter to the Czarina about something. The secretary of the regiment in those days—damn, I can't remember his name, the devil take him... Viskryak, no, that's not it, Motuzochka, that's not it, Goloputsek—no, not Goloputsek... all I know is that it was a peculiar name that began in an odd way—he sent for my Grandad and told him

that the Hetman himself had named him as messenger to the Czarina. My Grandad never liked to waste time getting ready: he sewed the letter in his cap, led out his horse, kissed his wife and his two sucking pigs, as he used to call his sons, of whom one was my own father, and he made the dust fly behind him that day as though fifteen fellows had been playing a rough game in the middle of the street. The cock had not crowed for the fourth time next morning before Grandad had already reached Konotop. There used to be a fair there in those days: there were such crowds moving up and down the streets that it made one giddy to watch them. But as it was early the people were all stretched out on the ground asleep. Beside a cow would be lying a rakish boy with a nose as red as a bullfinch; a little further a peddler woman with flints, packets of bluing, buckshot, and pretzels was snoring where she sat; a gypsy lay under a cart, a dealer on a wagon of fish; while a Muscovite with a big beard, carrying belts and sleeves for sale, sprawled with his legs stuck out in the middle of the road.... In fact, there was rabble of all sorts, as there always is at fairs. My Grandad stopped to have a good look around. Meanwhile, little by little, there began to be a stir in the booths: the Jewesses made a clatter with the bottles; smoke rolled up in rings here and there, and the smell of hot doughnuts floated all over the encampment. It came into my Grandad’s mind that he had no steel and tinder nor tobacco with him, so he began sauntering about the fair. He had not gone twenty paces when he met a Dnieper Cossack. Trousers red as fire, a full-skirted blue coat and bright-flowered girdle, a saber at his side, and a pipe with a fine brass chain right down to his heels—a regular Dnieper Cossack, that’s all you can say! Ah, they were something! One would stand up, stretch himself, stroke his gallant mustaches, clink with his iron heels—and off he would go! And how he would go! And how he would go! His legs would whirl around like a spindle in a woman’s hands: his fingers would pluck at all the strings of the bandore like a whirlwind, and then pressing it to his side he would begin dancing, burst into song—his whole soul rejoicing...! Yes, the good old days are over; you don’t see such Cossacks nowadays! No. So they met. One word leads to another, it doesn’t take long to make friends. They fell to chatting and chatting, so that Grandad quite forgot about his journey. They had a drinking bout, as at a wedding before Lent. Only at last I suppose they got tired of smashing the pots and flinging money to the crowd, and indeed, one can’t stay forever at a fair! So the new friends agreed not to part, but to travel on together. It was getting on toward evening when they rode out into the open country. The sun had set; here and there streaks of red glowed in the sky where the sun had been; the country was gay with different-colored fields like the checked petticoats our black-browed peasant wives wear on holidays.

Our Dnieper Cossack talked away like mad. Grandad and another jaunty fellow who had joined them began to think that there was a devil in him. Where did it all come from? Tales and stories of such marvels that sometimes Grandad held his sides and almost split his stomach with laughing. But the farther they went the darker it grew, and with it the gay talk grew more disconnected. At last our storyteller was completely silent and started at the slightest rustle.

"Aha, neighbor!" they said to him, "you have started nodding in earnest: you are wishing now that you were at home and on the stove!"

"It's no use keeping secrets from you," he said, suddenly turning around and fixing his eyes upon them. "Do you know that I sold my soul to the devil long ago?"

"As though that were something unheard of! Who hasn't had dealings with the devil in his day? That's why you must drain the cup of pleasure to the dregs, as the saying is."

"Ah, friends! I would, but this night the fatal hour has come! Brothers!" he said, clasping their hands, "do not give me up! Watch over me one night! Never will I forget your friendship!"

Why not help a man in such trouble? Grandad vowed straight off he'd sooner have the forelock cut off his own head than let the devil sniff his snout at a Christian soul.

Our Cossacks would perhaps have ridden on further, if the whole sky had not clouded over as though covered by a black blanket and if it had not turned as dark as under a sheepskin. But there was a light twinkling in the distance and the horses, feeling that a stall was near, quickened their pace, pricking up their ears and staring into the darkness. It seemed as though the light flew to meet them, and the Cossacks saw before them a tavern, leaning on one side like a peasant woman on her way home from a merry christening party. In those days taverns were not what they are now. There was nowhere for a good man to turn around or dance a *gopak*—indeed, he had nowhere to lie down, even if the drink had gone to his head and his wobbly legs began making circles all over the floor. The yard was all blocked up with dealers' wagons; under the sheds, in the mangers, in the barns, men were snoring like tomcats, one curled up and another sprawling. But one was busy. The tavern keeper, in front of his little pot-lamp, was making notches in a stick to mark the number of quarts and pints the dealers had drained.

Grandad, after ordering a third of a pailful for the three of them, went off to the barn. They lay down side by side. But before he had time to turn around he saw that his friends were already sleeping like the dead. Waking the third Cossack, the one who had joined them, Grandad reminded him of the promise

given to their comrade. The man sat up, rubbed his eyes, and fell asleep again. There was nothing he could do; he had to watch alone. To drive away sleep in some way, he examined all the wagons, looked at the horses, lighted his pipe, came back, and sat down again beside his comrades. All was still; it seemed as though not a fly were moving. Then he imagined that something gray poked out its horns from a wagon close by.... Then his eyes began to close, so that he was obliged to rub them every minute with his fist and to keep them open with the rest of the vodka. But soon, when they were a little clearer, everything had vanished. At last a little later something strange showed itself again under the wagon.... Grandad opened his eyes as wide as he could, but the cursed sleepiness made everything misty before them; his hands felt numb, his head rolled back, and he fell into such a sound sleep that he lay as though dead. Grandad slept for hours, and he only sprang to his feet when the sun was baking his shaven head. After stretching twice and scratching his back, he noticed that there were no longer so many wagons standing there as in the evening. The dealers, it seemed, had trailed off before dawn. He looked for his companions—the Cossack was still asleep, but the Dnieper Cossack was gone. No one could tell him anything when he asked; only his coat was still lying in the same place. Grandad was frightened and didn't know what to think. He went to look for the horses—no sign of his or the Dnieper Cossack's! What could that mean? Supposing the Evil One had taken the Dnieper Cossack, who had taken the horses? Thinking it over, Grandad concluded that probably the devil had come on foot, and as it's a long journey to hell he had carried off his horse. He was terribly upset at not having kept his Cossack word.

"Well," he thought, "there is nothing to be done; I will go on foot. Maybe I shall come across some horse dealer on his way from the fair. I shall manage somehow to buy a horse." But when he reached for his cap, his cap was not there either. Grandad wrung his hands when he remembered that the day before he had changed caps for a time with the Dnieper Cossack. Who else could have carried it off if not the devil himself! Some Hetman's messenger! A nice job he'd made of taking the letter to the Czarina! At this point my Grandad fell to bestowing such names on the devil as I imagine must have set him sneezing more than once in hell. But cursing is not much use, and however often my Grandad scratched his head, he could not think of any plan. What was he to do? He turned to ask advice of others: he got together all the good folk who were in the tavern at the time, dealers and simple wayfarers, told them how it all happened and what a misfortune had befallen him. The dealers pondered for a long time. Leaning their chins on their whips, they shook their heads and said that they had never heard of such a marvel in Christendom as a devil carrying off a Hetman's letter. Others

added that when the devil or a Muscovite stole anything, you whistle in the dark for it. Only the tavern keeper sat silent in the corner. Grandad went up to him, too. When a man says nothing, you may be sure he thinks a great deal. But the tavern keeper was sparing of his words, and if Grandad had not felt in his pocket for five silver coins, he might have gone on standing before him to no purpose.

“I will tell you how to find the letter,” said the tavern keeper, leading him aside. His words lifted a weight from Grandad’s heart. “I see from your eyes that you are a Cossack and not a woman. Listen now! Near the tavern you will find a turn on the right into the forest. As soon as it begins to grow dark you must be ready to start. There are gypsies living in the forest and they come out of their dens to forge iron on nights on which none but witches go abroad on their pokers. What their real trade is you had best not inquire. There will be much knocking in the forest, only don’t you go where you hear the knocking; there’ll be a little path facing you near a burnt tree: go by that little path, go on and on.... The thorns may scratch you, thick bushes may block the path, but you continue on and do not stop until you come to a little stream. There you will see whom you need. But don’t forget to take in your pockets that for which pockets are made.... You understand, both devils and men prize that.” Saying this, the tavern keeper went off to his corner and would not say another word.

My late Grandad was by no means a coward; if he met a wolf, he would grab him straightway by the tail; if he used his fist among the Cossacks, they would fall to the ground like pears. But a shudder ran down him when he stepped into the forest on such a dark night. Not one little star in the sky. Dark and dim as a wine cellar; there was no sound, except far, far overhead a cold wind playing in the treetops, and the trees swayed like the heads of drunken Cossacks while their leaves whispered a tipsy song. And there was such a cold blast that Grandad thought of his sheepskin, and all at once it was as though a hundred hammers began tapping in the forest with a noise that set his ears ringing. And the whole forest was lit up for a moment as though by summer lightning. At once Grandad caught sight of a little path winding between the bushes. And here was the burnt tree and here were the thorn bushes! So everything was as he had been told; no, the tavern keeper had not deceived him. It was not altogether pleasant tearing his way through the prickly bushes; he had never in his life known the damned thorns and twigs to scratch so badly. He almost cried out at every step. Little by little he came into an open place, and as far as he could see the trees seemed wider apart, and as he went on he came upon bigger trees than he had ever seen even on the other side of Poland. And behold, among the trees gleamed a little stream, dark as tempered steel. For a long time Grandad stopped on the bank, looking in all directions. On the other bank a light was twinkling; it seemed

every minute on the point of going out, and then it was reflected again in the stream, trembling like a Pole in the hands of Cossacks. And here was the little bridge!

“Perhaps only the devil’s chariot uses this bridge,” he said. Grandad stepped out boldly, however, and before another man would have had time to get out his horn and take a pinch of snuff he was on the other side. Only now he saw that there were people sitting around a fire, and they had such charming pig-faces that at any other time God knows he would have given anything to escape making their acquaintance. But now he couldn’t avoid it: he had to make friends with them. So Grandad tossed off a low bow, saying: “God help you, good people!”

No one nodded his head; they all sat in silence and kept dropping something into the fire. Seeing one place empty, Grandad, without making a fuss, sat down. The charming pig-faces said nothing, Grandad said nothing either. For a long time they sat in silence. Grandad was already beginning to be bored; he fumbled in his pocket, pulled out his pipe, looked around—not one of them glanced at him.

“Well, your honors, will you be so kind; as a matter of fact, in a manner of speaking...” (Grandad had knocked about the world a good bit and knew how to turn a phrase, and maybe even if he had been before the Czar he would not have been at a loss.)

“In a manner of speaking, not to forget myself nor to slight you —a pipe I have, but that with which to light it I lack.” To this speech, too, there was not a word. But one of the pig-faces thrust a hot brand straight into Grandad’s face, so that if he had not turned aside a little he might have parted with one eye forever. At last, seeing that time was being wasted, he made up his mind to tell his story whether the pig-faces would listen or not.

They pricked up their ears and stretched out their paws. Grandad guessed what that meant; he pulled out all the money he had with him and flung it to them as though to dogs. As soon as he had flung the money, everything was in a turmoil before him, the earth shook, and all at once—he never knew how to explain this part— he found himself almost in hell itself.

“Merciful heavens!” groaned Grandad when he had taken a good look around. What wonders were here! One ugly face after another, as the saying is. The witches were as many as the snow-flakes that fall on occasion at Christmas. They were all dressed up and painted like fine ladies at a fair. And the whole bunch of them were dancing some sort of devil’s jig as though they were drunk. What a dust they raised, God help us! Any Christian would have shuddered to see how high the devils skipped. In spite of his terror, my Grandad started

laughing when he saw the devils, with their dogs' faces on their little German legs, wag their tails, twist, and turn about the witches, like our boys about the pretty girls, while the musicians beat on their cheeks with their fists as though they were tambourines and whistled with their noses as though they were horns. As soon as they saw Grandad, they pressed around him in a crowd. Pig-faces, dog-faces, goat-faces, bird-faces, and horse-faces—all craned forward, and here they were actually trying to kiss him. Grandad could not help spitting, he was so disgusted! At last they caught hold of him and made him sit down at a table, as long, maybe, as the road from Konotop to Baturin.

"Well, this is not altogether so bad!" thought Grandad, seeing on the table pork, sausages, onion minced with cabbage, and many other dainties. "The damned scum doesn't keep the fasts, it seems."

My Grandad, I may as well tell you, was by no means averse to good fare on occasion. He ate with good appetite, the dear man, and so without wasting words he pulled toward him a bowl of sliced bacon fat and a smoked ham, took up a fork not much smaller than those with which a peasant pitches hay, picked out the most solid piece, laid it on a piece of bread, and—lo and behold!—put it in another mouth just close beside his very ear, and, indeed, there was the sound of another fellow's jaws chewing it and clacking with his teeth, so that all the table could hear. Grandad didn't mind; he picked up another piece, and this time it seemed as though he had caught it with his lips, but again it did not go down his gullet. A third time he tried—again he missed it. Grandad flew into a rage; he forgot his fright and in whose claws he was, and ran up to the witches: "Do you mean to mock me, you pagan bitches? If you don't this very minute give me back my Cossack cap—may I be a Catholic if I don't twist your pig-snouts to the back of your heads!"

He had finished the last word when the monsters grinned and set up such a roar of laughter that it sent a chill to my Grandad's heart.

"Good!" shrieked one of the witches, whom Grandad took to be the leader among them because she was almost the greatest beauty of the lot; "we will give you back your cap, but not until you win it back from us in three games of 'Fools'!"

What was he to do? For a Cossack to sit down and play "Fools" with a lot of women! Grandad kept refusing and refusing, but in the end sat down. They brought the cards, a greasy pack such as we only see used by priests' wives to tell the girls their fortunes and what their husbands will be like.

"Listen!" barked the witch again: "if you win one game, the cap is yours; if you are left 'Fool' in every one of the three games, it's no use your fuming: you'll never see your cap nor maybe the world again!"

“Deal, deal, you old witch! What will be, will be.”

Well, the cards were dealt. Grandad picked up his—he couldn’t bear to look at them, they were such trash; they could have at least given him one trump just for the fun of it. Of the other suits the highest was a ten and he hadn’t even a pair; while the witch kept giving him five at once. It was his fate to be left “Fool”! As soon as Grandad was left “Fool,” the monsters began neighing, barking, and grunting on all sides: “Fool, fool, fool!”

“Shout till you burst, you bitches,” cried Grandad putting his fingers in his ears.

“Well,” he thought, “the witch didn’t play fair; now I am going to deal myself.” He dealt; he turned up the trump and looked at his cards; they were first-rate, he had trumps. And at first things could not have gone better; till the witch put down five cards with kings among them.

Grandad had nothing in his hand but trumps! In a flash he beat all the kings with trumps!

“Ha-ha! but that’s not like a Cossack! What are you covering them with, neighbor?”

“What with? With trumps!”

“Maybe to your thinking they are trumps, but to our thinking they are not!”

Lo and behold! the cards were really of another suit! What devilry was this? A second time he was “Fool” and the devils started shrieking again: “Fool! fool!” so that the table rocked and the cards danced upon it.

Grandad flew into a passion; he dealt for the last time. Again he had a good hand. The witch put down five again; Grandad covered them and took from the pack a handful of trumps.

“Trump!” he shouted, flinging a card on the table so that it spun around like a basket; without saying a word she covered it with the eight of another suit.

“What are you beating my trump with, old devil?”

The witch lifted her card and under it was the six of another suit not trumps.

“What damned trickery!” said Grandad, and in his great anger he struck the table with his fist as hard as he could. Luckily the witch had a poor hand; this time, as luck would have it, Grandad had pairs. He began drawing cards out of the pack, but it was of no use; such trash came that Grandad let his hands fall. There was not one good card in the pack. So he just played anything—a six. The witch had to take it, and she could not cover it. “So there! What do you say to that? Aie, Aie! There is something wrong, I’ll be damned!” Then on the sly under the table Grandad made the sign of the cross over the cards, and behold—he had in his hand the ace, king, and jack of trumps, and the card he had just played was not a six but the queen!

“Well, I’ve been the fool! King of trumps! Well, have you taken it? Aie, you bitches! Would you like the ace too? The ace! the jack...!”

Thunder boomed in hell; the witch went into convulsions, and all of a sudden the cap flew smack into Grandad’s face.

“No, no, that’s not enough!” shouted Grandad, plucking up his courage and putting on his cap. “If my gallant horse is not standing before me at once, may a thunderbolt strike me dead in this foul place if I do not make the sign of the holy cross over all of you!”

And he was just raising his hand to do it when the horse’s bones rattled before him.

“Here is your horse!”

The poor man burst out crying like an infant as he looked at the bones. He grieved for his old comrade!

“Give me some sort of a horse,” he said, “to get out of your den!” A devil cracked a whip—a highly spirited horse rose up under him and Grandad soared upward like a bird.

Terror came over him, however, when the horse, heeding neither shout nor rein, galloped over ditches and bogs. The places he went through were such that it made him shudder at the mere telling of it. He looked down and was more terrified than ever: an abyss, a fearful precipice! But that was nothing to the satanic beast; he leaped straight over it. Grandad tried to hold on; he could not. Over tree stumps, over hillocks he flew headlong into a ditch, and fell so hard on the ground at the bottom that it seemed he had breathed his last. Anyway, he could remember nothing of what happened to him then; and when he came to himself a little and looked about him, it was broad daylight; he caught glimpses of familiar places and found himself lying on the roof of his own hut.

Grandad crossed himself as he climbed down. What devils’ tricks! Damn it all! What strange things befall a man! He looked at his hands: they were bathed in blood; he looked into a pail of water— and saw that his face was also bathed in blood. Washing himself thoroughly so that he would not scare the children, he went quietly into the hut—and what did he see! The children staggered back toward him and pointed in alarm, saying: “Look! Look! Mother’s jumping like mad!” And indeed, his wife was sitting asleep before her loom, holding her spindle in her hands, and in her sleep was bouncing up and down on the bench. Grandad, taking her gently by the hand, woke her. “Good morning, wife! Are you quite well?” For a long while she gazed at him with bulging eyes, but at last recognized Grandad and told him that she had dreamed that the stove was riding around the hut shoveling out the pots and tubs with a spade... and devil knows what else.

“Well,” said Grandad, “you have had it asleep, I have had it awake. I see I must have our hut blessed; but I cannot linger now.”

Saying this Grandad rested a little, then got out his horse and did not stop by day or by night till he arrived and gave the letter to the Czarina herself. There Grandad beheld such wonderful things that for long after he used to tell the tale: how they brought him to the palace, and it was so high that if you were to set ten huts one on top of another they probably would still not be high enough; how he glanced into one room—nothing, into another—nothing, into a third—still nothing, into a fourth even—nothing, but in the fifth there she was sitting in her golden crown, in a new gray gown and red boots, eating golden dumplings; how she had bade them fill a whole cap with five-ruble notes for him; how... I can’t remember it all! As for his rumpus with the devils, Grandad forgot even to think about it; and if it happened that someone reminded him of it, Grandad would say nothing, as though the matter did not concern him, and we had the greatest trouble persuading him to tell us how it had all happened. And apparently to punish him for not rushing out at once after that to have the hut blessed, every year just at that same time a strange thing happened to his wife— she would dance and nothing could stop her. No matter what anyone did, her legs would go their own way, and something forced her to dance.

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Volume II

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Christmas Eve

The last day before Christmas had passed. A clear winter night had come; the stars peeped out; the moon rose majestically in the sky to light good people and all the world so that all might enjoy singing *kolyadki* and praising the Lord. It was freezing harder than in the morning; but it was so still that the crunch of the snow under the boot could be heard half a mile away. Not one group of boys had appeared under the hut windows yet; only the moon peeped in at them stealthily as though calling to the girls who were dressing up in their best to make haste and run out on the crunching snow. At that moment the smoke rose in puffs from a hut chimney and passed like a cloud over the sky, and a witch on a broomstick rose up in the air with the smoke.

If the assessor of Sorochintsy, in his cap edged with lambskin and cut like a Turk's, in his dark blue overcoat lined with black astrakhan, had driven by at that moment with his three hired horses and the fiendishly braided whip with which it is his habit to urge on his coachman, he would certainly have noticed her, for there is not a witch in the world who could elude the eyes of the Sorochintsy assessor. He can count on his fingers how many suckling pigs every peasant woman's sow has farrowed and how much linen is lying in her chest and just which of her clothes and household belongings her good man pawns on Sunday at the tavern. But the Sorochintsy assessor did not drive by, and, indeed, what business is it of his? He has his own district. Meanwhile, the witch rose so high in the air that she was only a little black patch gleaming aloft. But wherever that little patch appeared, there the stars one after another vanished. Soon the witch had gathered a whole sleeveful of them. Three or four were still shining. All at once from the opposite side another little patch appeared, grew larger, began to lengthen out, and was no longer a little patch. A shortsighted man would never have made out what it was, even if he had put the wheels of the commissar's chaise on his nose as spectacles. At first it looked like a regular German: the narrow little face, continually twisting and turning and sniffing at everything, ended in a little round heel, like our pigs' snouts; the legs were so thin that if the mayor of Yareski had had legs like that, he would certainly have broken them in the first Cossack dance. But from behind he was for all the world a district attorney in uniform, for he had a tail as long and pointed as the uniform coattails are nowadays. It was only from the goat-beard under his chin, from the little horns sticking from his forehead, and from his being no whiter than a chimney

sweep, that one could tell that he was not a German or a district attorney, but simply the devil, who had one last night left him to wander about the wide world and teach good folk to sin. On the morrow when the first bells rang for prayer, he would run with his tail between his legs straight off to his lair.

Meanwhile the devil stole silently up to the moon and stretched his hand out to seize it, but drew it back quickly as though he were scorched, sucked his fingers and danced about, then ran up from the other side and again skipped away and drew back his hand. But in spite of all his failures the sly devil did not give up his tricks. Running up, he suddenly seized the moon with both hands; grimacing and blowing, he kept flinging it from one hand to the other, like a peasant who has picked up an ember for his pipe with bare fingers; at last, he hurriedly put it in his pocket and ran on as though nothing had happened.

No one in Dikanka noticed that the devil had stolen the moon. It is true the district clerk, crawling out of the tavern on all fours, saw the moon for no reason whatever dancing in the sky, and he swore that he had to the whole village; but people shook their heads and even made fun of him. But what motive led the devil to this illegal act? Why, this was how it was: he knew that the rich Cossack, Chub, had been invited by the sexton to a supper of rice soup at which a kinsman of the sexton’s, who had come from the bishop’s choir, wore a dark blue coat and could take the very lowest bass note, the mayor, the Cossack Sverbiguz, and some others were to be present, and at which besides the Christmas soup there were to be spiced vodka, saffron vodka, and good things of all sorts. And meanwhile his daughter, the greatest beauty in the village, was left at home, and there was no doubt that the blacksmith, a very strong and fine young fellow, would pay her a visit, and him the devil hated more than Father Kondrat’s sermons. In his spare time the blacksmith had taken up painting and was reckoned the finest artist in the whole countryside. Even the Cossack officer L—ko, who was still strong and hearty in those days, sent for him to Poltava expressly to paint a picket fence around his house. All the bowls from which the Cossacks of Dikanka gulped their borsht had been painted by the blacksmith. He was a God-fearing man and often painted icons of the saints: even now you may find his Luke the Evangelist in the church of T—. But the triumph of his art was a picture painted on the church wall in the chapel on the right. In it he depicted St. Peter on the Day of Judgment with the keys in his hand driving the Evil Spirit out of hell; the frightened devil was running in all directions, foreseeing his doom, while the sinners, who had been imprisoned before, were chasing him and striking him with whips, blocks of wood, and anything they could get hold of. While the artist was working at this picture and painting it on a big wooden board, the devil did all he could to hinder him; he gave him a nudge on the arm,

unseen, blew some ashes from the forge in the smithy, and scattered them on the picture; but, in spite of it all, the work was finished, the picture was brought into the church and put on the wall of the side chapel, and from that day the devil had sworn to revenge himself on the blacksmith.

He had only one night left to wander upon earth; but he was looking for some means of venting his anger on the blacksmith that night. And that was why he made up his mind to steal the moon, reckoning that old Chub was lazy and slow to move, and the sexton's hut a good distance away: the road passed by cross paths beside the mills and the graveyard and went around a ravine. On a moonlight night spiced vodka and saffron vodka might have tempted Chub; but in such darkness it was doubtful whether anyone could drag him from the stove and bring him out of the cottage. And the blacksmith, who had for a long time been on bad terms with him, would on no account have ventured, strong as he was, to visit the daughter when the father was at home.

And so, as soon as the devil had hidden the moon in his pocket, it became so dark all over the world that not everyone could have found the way to the tavern, let alone to the sexton's. The witch shrieked when she suddenly found herself in darkness. Then the devil running up, all bows and smiles, put his arm around her, and began whispering in her ear the sort of thing that is usually whispered to all females. Things are oddly arranged in our world! All who live in it are always trying to outdo and imitate one another. In the old days the judge and the police captain were the only ones in Mirgorod who used to wear cloth overcoats lined with sheepskin in the winter, while all the minor officials wore plain sheepskin; but nowadays the assessor and the chamberlain have managed to get themselves new cloth overcoats lined with astrakhan. The year before last the treasury clerk and the district clerk bought dark blue duck at sixty kopeks a yard. The sexton has got himself cotton trousers for the summer and a striped vest of camel's hair. In fact everyone tries to be somebody! When will folks give up being vain! I am ready to bet that many would be surprised to see the devil carrying on in that way. What is most annoying is that, no doubt, he fancies himself a handsome fellow, though his figure is a shameful sight. With a face, as Foma Grigorievich used to say, the abomination of abominations, yet even he plays the dashing hero! But in the sky and under the sky it was growing so dark that there was no seeing what followed between them.

"So you have not been to see the sexton in his new hut, friend?" said the Cossack Chub, coming out at his door, to a tall lean peasant in a short sheepskin, whose stubby beard showed that for at least two weeks it had not been touched by the broken piece of scythe with which, for lack of a razor, peasants usually shave their beards. "There will be a fine drinking party there tonight!" Chub

went on, grinning as he spoke. “If only we are not late!”

Hereupon Chub set straight the belt that closely girt his sheepskin, pulled his cap more firmly on his head, and gripped his whip, the terror and the enemy of tiresome dogs; but glancing upward, he stopped. “What the hell! Look! look, Panas...!”

“What?” articulated his friend, and he too turned his face upward.

“What, indeed! There is no moon!”

“What a nuisance! There really is no moon.”

“That’s just it, there isn’t!” Chub said, with some annoyance at his friend’s imperturbable indifference. “You don’t care, I’ll bet.”

“Well, what can I do about it?”

“Some devil,” Chub went on, wiping his mustaches with his sleeve, “has to go and meddle—may he never have a glass of vodka to drink in the mornings, the dog! I swear it’s as though to mock us.... As I sat indoors I looked out of the window and the night was lovely! It was light, the snow was sparkling in the moonlight; you could see everything as though it were day. And here, before I’m out of the door, you can’t see your hand before your face! May he break his teeth on a crust of buckwheat bread!”

Chub went on grumbling and swearing for a long while, and at the same time he was hesitant about what to decide. He had a desperate longing to gossip about all sorts of nonsense at the sexton’s where no doubt the mayor was already sitting, as well as the bass choir singer, and Mikita, the tar dealer, who used to come once every two weeks on his way to Poltava, and who cracked such jokes that all the village worthies held their sides from laughing. Already in his mind’s eye Chub saw the spiced vodka on the table. All this was enticing, it is true, but the darkness of the night recalled the charms of laziness so dear to every Cossack. How nice it would be now to lie on the stove with his legs tucked under him, quietly smoking his pipe and listening through a delicious drowsiness to the songs and carols of the lighthearted boys and girls who gathered in groups under the windows! He would undoubtedly have decided on the latter course had he been alone; but for the two together, it was not so dreary and terrible to go through the dark night; besides he did not care to seem sluggish and cowardly to others. When he had finished swearing he turned again to his friend.

“So there is no moon, friend?”

“No!”

“It’s strange, really! Let me have a pinch of snuff! You have splendid snuff, friend! Where do you get it?”

“Splendid! What the hell do you mean by splendid?” answered the friend, shutting the birchbark snuffbox with patterns pricked out upon it. “It wouldn’t

make an old hen sneeze!”

“I remember,” Chub still went on, “the innkeeper, Zuzulya, once brought me some snuff from Nyezhin. Ah, that was snuff! it was good snuff! So what is it to be? It’s dark, you know!”

“So maybe we’ll stay at home,” his friend said, taking hold of the door handle.

If his friend had not said that, Chub would certainly have made up his mind to stay at home; but now something seemed egging him on to oppose it. “No, friend, let us go! It won’t do; we must go!”

Even as he was saying it, he was angry with himself for having said it. He very much disliked going out on such a night, but it was a comfort to him that he was acting on his own decision and not following advice.

His friend looked around and scratched his shoulders with the handle of his whip, without the slightest sign of anger on his face, like a man to whom it is a matter of complete indifference whether he sits at home or goes out—and the two friends set off on their road.

Now let us see what Chub’s daughter, the beauty, was doing all by herself. Before Oksana was seventeen, people were talking about nothing but her in almost the whole world, both on this side of Dikanka and on the other side of Dikanka. The young men were unanimous in declaring that there never had been and never would be a finer girl in the village. Oksana heard and knew all that was said about her and, like a beauty, was full of caprices. If, instead of a checked skirt and an apron, she had been dressed as a lady, she could never have kept a servant. The young men ran after her in crowds, but, losing patience, by degrees gave up on the obstinate beauty, and turned to others who were not so spoiled. Only the blacksmith was persistent and would not abandon his courtship, although he was treated not a bit better than the rest. When her father went out, Oksana spent a long while dressing herself in her best and preening before a little mirror in a pewter frame; she could not tear herself away from admiring herself.

“What put it into folks’ heads to spread it abroad that I am pretty?” she said, as it were without thinking, simply to talk to herself about something. “Folks lie, I am not pretty at all!”

But the fresh animated face reflected in the mirror, its youthfulness, its sparkling black eyes and inexpressibly charming smile that stirred the soul, at once proved the contrary.

“Can my black eyebrows and my eyes,” the beauty went on, still holding the mirror, “be so beautiful that there are none like them in the world? What is there pretty in that turned-up nose, and in those cheeks and those lips? Is my black hair pretty? Ough, my curls might frighten one in the evening, they twist and

twine around my head like long snakes! I see now that I am not pretty at all!” And, moving the mirror a little further away, she cried out: “No, I am pretty! Ah, how pretty! Wonderful! What a joy I shall be to the man whose wife I become! How my husband will admire me! He’ll be wild with joy. He will kiss me to death!”

“Wonderful girl!” whispered the blacksmith, coming in softly. “And hasn’t she a little conceit! She’s been standing looking in the mirror for an hour and can’t tear herself away, and praising herself aloud, too!”

“Yes, boys, I am a match for you! Just look at me!” the pretty coquette went on: “how gracefully I step; my chemise is embroidered with red silk. And the ribbons on my head! You will never see richer braid! My father bought me all this so that the finest young man in the world may marry me.” And, laughing, she turned around and saw the blacksmith....

She uttered a shriek and stood still, coldly facing him.

The blacksmith’s hands dropped helplessly to his sides.

It is hard to describe what the dark face of the lovely girl expressed. There was sternness in it, and through the sternness a sort of defiance of the embarrassed blacksmith, and at the same time a hardly perceptible flush of anger delicately suffused her face; and all this was so mingled and so indescribably pretty that to give her a million kisses was the best thing that could have been done at the moment.

“Why have you come here?” was how Oksana began. “Do you want me to shove you out of the door with a spade? You are all very clever at coming to see us. You sniff out in a minute when there are no fathers in the house. Oh, I know you! Well, is my chest ready?”

“It will be ready, my little heart, it will be ready after Christmas. If only you knew how I have worked at it; for two nights I didn’t leave the smithy. But then, no priest’s wife will have a chest like it. The iron I bound it with is better than what I put on the officer’s chariot, when I worked at Poltava. And how it will be painted! You won’t find one like it if you wander over the whole neighborhood with your little white feet! Red and blue flowers will be scattered over the whole ground. It will glow like fire. Don’t be angry with me! Allow me at least to speak to you, to look at you!”

“Who’s forbidding you? Speak and look!”

Then she sat down on the bench, glanced again in the mirror, and began arranging her hair. She looked at her neck, at her chemise embroidered in red silk, and a subtle feeling of complacency could be read on her lips and fresh cheeks, and was reflected in her eyes.

“Allow me to sit beside you,” said the blacksmith.

“Sit down,” said Oksana, with the same emotion still perceptible on her lips and in her gratified eyes.

“Wonderful, lovely Oksana, allow me to kiss you!” ventured the blacksmith, growing bolder, and he drew her toward him with the intention of snatching a kiss. But Oksana turned away her cheek, which had been very close to the blacksmith’s lips, and pushed him away.

“What more do you want? When there’s honey he must have a spoonful! Go away, your hands are harder than iron. And you smell of smoke. I believe you have smeared me all over with your soot.”

Then she picked up the mirror and began preening again.

“She does not love me!” the blacksmith thought to himself, hanging his head. “It’s all play to her while I stand before her like a fool and cannot take my eyes off her. And I should like to stand before her always and never to take my eyes off her! Wonderful girl! What would I not give to know what is in her heart, and whom she loves. But no, she cares for nobody. She is admiring herself; she is tormenting poor me, while I am so sad that everything is darkness to me. I love her as no man in the world ever has loved or ever will.”

“Is it true that your mother’s a witch?” Oksana said, and she laughed. And the blacksmith felt that everything within him was laughing. That laugh echoed as if it were at once in his heart and in his softly tingling veins, and for all that, his soul was angry that he had not the right to kiss that sweetly laughing face.

“What care I for Mother? You are father and mother to me and all that is precious in the world. If the Czar summoned me and said: ‘Smith Vakula, ask me for all that is best in my kingdom; I will give you anything. I will bid them make you a golden forge and you shall work with silver hammers.”I don’t care,’ I should say to the Czar, ‘for precious stones or a golden forge nor for all your kingdom: give me rather my Oksana.’”

“You see, what a fellow you are! Only my father’s no fool either. You’ll see that, when he doesn’t marry your mother!” Oksana said, smiling slyly. “But the girls are not here.... What’s the meaning of it? We ought to have been singing long ago. I am getting tired of waiting.”

“Let them stay away, my beauty!”

“I should hope not! I expect the boys will come with them. And then there will be dances. I can imagine what funny stories they will tell!”

“So you’ll be merry with them?”

“Yes, merrier than with you. Ah! someone knocked; I expect it is the girls and the boys.”

“What’s the use of my staying longer?” the blacksmith said to himself. “She is jeering at me. I am no more to her than an old rusty horseshoe. But if that’s so,

anyway I won’t let another man laugh at me. If only I see for certain that she likes someone better than me, I’ll teach him to keep away...”

A knock at the door and a cry of “Open!” ringing out sharply in the frost interrupted his reflections.

“Stop, I’ll open the door,” said the blacksmith, and he went out, intending in his anger to break the ribs of anyone who might be there.

The frost grew sharper, and up above it turned so cold that the devil kept hopping from one hoof to the other and blowing into his fists, trying to warm his frozen hands. And indeed it is small wonder that he should be cold, being used day after day to knocking about in hell, where, as we all know, it is not so cold as it is with us in winter, and where, putting on his cap and standing before the hearth, like a real cook, he fries sinners with as much satisfaction as a peasant woman fries a sausage at Christmas.

The witch herself felt that it was cold, although she was warmly clad; and so, throwing her arms upward, she stood with one foot out, and putting herself into the attitude of a man flying along on skates, without moving a single muscle, she dropped through the air, as though on an icy slope, and straight into her chimney.

The devil started after her in the same way. But as the creature is nimbler than any dandy in stockings, there is no wonder that he reached the top of the chimney almost on the neck of his mistress, and both found themselves in a roomy oven among the pots.

The witch stealthily moved back the oven door to see whether her son, Vakula, had invited visitors to the hut; but seeing that there was no one, except the sacks that lay in the middle of the floor, she crept out of the oven, flung off her warm pelisse, rearranged her clothing, and no one could have told that she had been riding on a broom the minute before.

Vakula’s mother was not more than forty years old. She was neither pretty nor ugly. Indeed, it is hard to be pretty at such an age. However, she was so clever at attracting even the resolute Cossacks (who, it may not be amiss to observe, do not care much about beauty) that the mayor and the sexton, Osip Nikiforovich (if his wife were not at home, of course), and the Cossack Korny Chub, and the Cossack Kasian Sverbiguz, were all lavishing attentions on her. And it must be said to her credit that she was very skillful in managing them: not one of them dreamed that he had a rival. If a God-fearing peasant or a gentleman (as the Cossacks call themselves) wearing a cape with a hood went to church on Sunday or, if the weather was bad, to the tavern, how could he fail to look in on Solokha, eat curd dumplings with sour cream, and gossip in the warm hut with its chatty and agreeable mistress? And the Cossack would purposely go a long way around before reaching the tavern, and would call that “looking in on his way.” And

when Solokha went to church on a holiday, dressed in a bright-checked *plakhta* with a cotton *zapaska*, and above it a dark blue overskirt on the back of which gold flourishes were embroidered, and took up her stand close to the right side of the choir, the sexton would be sure to begin coughing and unconsciously screw up his eyes in her direction; the mayor would smooth his mustaches, begin twisting the curl behind his ear, and say to the man standing next to him: “Ah, a nice woman, a hell of a woman!” Solokha would bow to each one of them, and each one would think that she was bowing to him alone.

But anyone fond of meddling in other people’s business would notice at once that Solokha was most gracious to the Cossack Chub. Chub was a widower. Eight stacks of wheat always stood before his hut. Two pairs of stalwart oxen poked their heads out of the barn with the thatched roof by the roadside and mooed every time they saw their crony, the cow, or their uncle, the fat bull, pass. A bearded billygoat used to clamber onto the roof, from which he would bleat in a harsh voice like the police captain’s, taunting the turkeys when they came out into the yard, and turning his back when he saw his enemies, the boys, who used to jeer at his beard. In Chub’s trunks there was plenty of linen and many caftans and old-fashioned overcoats with gold braid on them; his wife had been fond of fine clothes. In his vegetable patch, besides poppies, cabbages, and sunflowers, two beds were sown every year with tobacco. All this Solokha thought would not be improper to join to her own farm, and, already reckoning in what good condition it would be when it passed into her hands, she felt doubly well-disposed to old Chub. And to prevent her son Vakula from courting Chub’s daughter and succeeding in getting possession of it all himself (then he would very likely not let her interfere in anything), she had recourse to the common maneuver of all women of forty— that is, setting Chub against the blacksmith as often as she could. Possibly these sly tricks and subtleties were the reason that the old women were beginning here and there, particularly when they had drunk a drop too much at some merry gathering, to say that Solokha was certainly a witch, that the boy Kizyakolupenko had seen a tail on her back no bigger than a peasant woman’s spindle; that, no longer ago than the Thursday before last, she had run across the road in the form of a black cat; that on one occasion a sow had run up to the priest’s wife, had crowed like a cock, put Father Kondrat’s cap on her head, and run away again....

It happened that just when the old women were talking about this, a cowherd, Tymish Korostyavy, came up. He did not fail to tell them how in the summer, just before St. Peter’s Fast, when he had lain down to sleep in the stable, putting some straw under his head, he saw with his own eyes a witch, with her hair down, in nothing but her chemise, begin milking the cows, and he could not stir

he was so spellbound, and she had smeared his lips with something so nasty that he was spitting the whole day afterwards. But all that was somewhat doubtful, for the only one who can see a witch is the assessor of Sorochintsy. And so all the notable Cossacks waved their hands impatiently when they heard such tales. “They are lying, the bitches!” was their usual answer.

After she had crept out of the stove and rearranged herself, Solokha, like a good housewife, began tidying up and putting everything in its place; but she did not touch the sacks. “Vakula brought those in, let him take them out himself!” she thought. Meanwhile the devil, who had chanced to turn around just as he was flying into the chimney, had caught sight of Chub arm-in-arm with his neighbor already a long way from home. Instantly he flew out of the chimney, cut across their road, and began flinging up heaps of frozen snow in all directions. A blizzard sprang up. All was whiteness in the air. The snow zigzagged behind and in front and threatened to plaster up the eyes, the mouth, and the ears of the friends. And the devil flew back to the chimney again, certain that Chub would go back home with his neighbor, would find the blacksmith there and probably give him such a scolding that it would be a long time before he would be able to handle a brush and paint offensive caricatures.

As a matter of fact, as soon as the blizzard began and the wind blew straight in their faces, Chub expressed his regret, and pulling his hood further down on his head showered abuse on himself, the devil, and his friend. His annoyance was feigned, however. Chub was really glad of the snowstorm. They had still eight times as far to go as they had gone already before they would reach the sexton’s. They turned around. The wind blew on the back of their heads, but they could see nothing through the whirling snow.

“Stop, friend! I think we are going wrong,” said Chub, after walking on a little. “I do not see a single hut. Oh, what a snowstorm! You go a little that way and see whether you find the road, and meanwhile I’ll look this way. It was the foul fiend put it into my head to go trudging out in such a storm! Don’t forget to shout when you find the road. Oh, what a heap of snow Satan has driven into my eyes!”

The road was not to be seen, however. Chub’s friend, turning off, wandered up and down in his high boots, and at last came straight upon the tavern. This lucky find so cheered him that he forgot everything and, shaking the snow off, walked straight in, not worrying himself in the least about the friend he had left on the road. Meanwhile Chub thought that he had found the road. Standing still, he started shouting at the top of his voice, but, seeing that his friend did not appear, he made up his mind to go on alone. After walking on a little he saw his own hut. Snowdrifts lay all about it and on the roof. Clapping his frozen hands

together, he began knocking on the door and shouting peremptorily to his daughter to open it.

“What do you want here?” the blacksmith called grimly, as he came out.

Chub, recognizing the blacksmith’s voice, stepped back a little. “Ah, no, it’s not my hut,” he said to himself. “The blacksmith doesn’t come into my hut. Though, as I look it over, it is not the blacksmith’s either. Whose place can it be? I know! I didn’t recognize it! It’s where lame Levchenko lives, who has lately married a young wife. His is the only hut that is like mine. I did think it was a little strange that I had reached home so soon. But Levchenko is at the sexton’s now, I know that. Why is the blacksmith here...? Ah, a-ha! he comes to see his young wife. So that’s it! Good...! Now I understand it all.”

“Who are you and what are you hanging about at people’s doors for?” said the blacksmith more grimly than before, coming closer to him.

“No, I am not going to tell him who I am,” thought Chub. “I wouldn’t be surprised if he gave me a good beating, the damned brute.” And, disguising his voice, he answered: “It’s me, good man! I have come for your pleasure, to sing carols under your windows.”

“Go to hell with your carols!” Vakula shouted angrily. “Why are you standing there? Do you hear! Get out of here!”

Chub already had that prudent intention; but it annoyed him to be forced to obey the blacksmith’s orders. It seemed as though some evil spirit nudged his arm and compelled him to say something contradictory. “Why are you screaming like that?” he said in the same voice. “I want to sing carols and that’s all there is to it!”

“Aha! I see words aren’t enough for you!” And with that Chub felt a very painful blow on his shoulder.

“So I see you are beginning to fight now!” he said, stepping back a little.

“Get away, get away!” shouted the blacksmith, giving Chub another shove.

“Well, you are the limit!” said Chub in a voice that betrayed pain, annoyance, and timidity. “You are fighting in earnest, I see, and hitting pretty hard, too.”

“Get away, get away!” shouted the blacksmith, and slammed the door.

“Look, how he swaggered!” said Chub when he was left alone in the road. “Just try going near him! What a fellow! He’s a somebody! Do you suppose I won’t have the law on you? No, my dear boy, I am going straight to the commissar. I’ll teach you! I don’t care if you are a blacksmith and a painter. But I must look at my back and shoulders; I believe they are black and blue. The bastard must have hit hard. It’s a pity that it is cold, and I don’t want to take off my pelisse. You wait, you fiend of a blacksmith; may the devil give you a beating and your smithy, too; I’ll make you dance! Ah, the damned rascal! But

he is not at home, now. I expect Solokha is all alone. H'm... it's not far off, I might go! It's such weather now that no one will interrupt us. There's no saying what may happen.... Aie, how hard that damned blacksmith did hit!"

Here Chub, rubbing his back, started off in a different direction. The agreeable possibilities awaiting him in a tryst with Solokha eased the pain a little and made him insensible even to the frost, the crackling of which could be heard on all the roads in spite of the howling of the storm. At moments a look of mawkish sweetness came into his face, though the blizzard soaped his beard and mustaches with snow more briskly than any barber who tyrannically holds his victim by the nose. But if everything had not been hidden by the flying snow, Chub might have been seen long afterward stopping and rubbing his back as he said: "The damned blacksmith did hit hard!" and then going on his way again.

While the nimble dandy with the tail and goat-beard was flying out of the chimney and back again into the chimney, the pouch which hung on a shoulder-belt at his side, and in which he had put the stolen moon, chanced to catch in something in the stove and came open—and the moon took advantage of this accident to fly up through the chimney of Solokha's hut and to float smoothly through the sky. Everything was flooded with light. It was as though there had been no snowstorm. The snow sparkled, a broad silvery plain, studded with crystal stars. The frost seemed less cold. Groups of boys and girls appeared with sacks. Songs rang out, and under almost every hut window were crowds of carol singers.

How wonderful is the light of the moon! It is hard to put into words how pleasant it is on such a night to mingle in a group of singing, laughing girls and among boys ready for every jest and sport which the gaily smiling night can suggest. It is warm under the thick pelisse; the cheeks glow brighter than ever from the frost, and the devil himself prompts to mischief.

Groups of girls with sacks burst into Chub's hut and gathered around Oksana. The blacksmith was deafened by the shouts, the laughter, the stories. They fought with one another in telling the beauty some bit of news, in emptying their sacks and boasting of the little loaves, sausages, and curd dumplings of which they had already gathered a fair harvest from their singing. Oksana seemed to be highly pleased and delighted; she chatted first with one and then with another and laughed without ceasing.

With what envy and anger the blacksmith looked at this gaiety, and this time he cursed the carol singing, though he was passionately fond of it himself.

"Ah, Odarka!" said the lighthearted beauty, turning to one of the girls, "you have some new slippers. Ah, how pretty! And with gold on them! It's nice for you, Odarka, you have a man who will buy you anything, but I have no one to

get me such splendid slippers."

"Don't grieve, my precious Oksana!" said the blacksmith. "I will get you slippers such as not many a lady wears."

"You!" said Oksana, with a quick and proud glance at him. "I should like to know where you'll get hold of slippers such as I could put on my feet. Perhaps you will bring me the very ones the Czarina wears?"

"You see the sort she wants!" cried the crowd of girls, laughing.

"Yes!" the beauty went on proudly, "all of you be my witnesses: if the blacksmith Vakula brings me the very slippers the Czarina wears, here's my word on it: I'll marry him that very day."

The girls carried off the capricious beauty with them.

"Laugh away! Laugh away!" thought the blacksmith as he followed them out. "I laugh at myself! I wonder and can't think what I have done with my senses! She does not love me—well, let her go! As though there were no one in the world but Oksana. Thank God, there are lots of fine girls besides her in the village. And what is Oksana? She'll never make a good housewife; the only thing she is good at is dressing up. No, it's enough! It's time I gave up playing the fool!"

But at the very time when the blacksmith was making up his mind to be resolute, some evil spirit set floating before him the laughing image of Oksana saying mockingly, "Get me the Czarina's slippers, blacksmith, and I will marry you!" Everything within him was stirred and he could think of nothing but Oksana.

The crowds of carol singers, the boys in one party and the girls in another, hurried from one street to the next. But the blacksmith went on and saw nothing, and took no part in the merrymaking which he had once loved more than anything.

Meanwhile the devil was making love in earnest at Solokha's: he kissed her hand with the same airs and graces as the assessor does the priest's daughter's, put his hand on his heart, sighed, and said bluntly that, if she would not consent to gratify his passion and reward his devotion in the usual way, he was ready for anything: would fling himself in the water and let his soul go straight to hell. Solokha was not so cruel; besides, the devil, as we know, was alone with her. She was fond of seeing a crowd hanging about her and was rarely without company. That evening, however, she was expecting to spend alone, because all the noteworthy inhabitants of the village had been invited to keep Christmas Eve at the sexton's. But it turned out otherwise: the devil had only just urged his suit, when suddenly they heard a knock and the voice of the resolute mayor. Solokha ran to open the door, while the nimble devil crept into a sack that was lying on

the floor.

The mayor, after shaking the snow off his cap and drinking a glass of vodka from Solokha's hand, told her that he had not gone to the sexton's because it had begun to snow, and seeing a light in her hut, had dropped in, meaning to spend the evening with her.

The mayor had hardly had time to say this when they heard a knock at the door and the voice of the sexton: "Hide me somewhere," whispered the mayor. "I don't want to meet him now."

Solokha thought for some time where to hide so bulky a visitor; at last she selected the biggest coalsack. She shot the coal out into a barrel, and the brave mayor, mustaches, head, pelisse, and all, crept into the sack.

The sexton walked in, clearing his throat and rubbing his hands, and told her that no one had come to his party and that he was heartily glad of this opportunity to enjoy a visit to her and was not afraid of the snowstorm. Then he went closer to her and, with a cough and a smirk, touched her plump bare arm with his long fingers and said with an air expressive both of slyness and satisfaction: "And what have you here, magnificent Solokha?" and saying this he stepped back a little.

"What do you mean? My arm, Osip Nikiforovich!" answered Solokha.

"H'm! your arm! He-he-he!" cried the sexton, highly delighted with his opening. And he paced up and down the room.

"And what have you here, incomparable Solokha...?" he said with the same air, going up to her again, lightly touching her neck and skipping back again in the same way.

"As though you don't see, Osip Nikiforovich!" answered Solokha; "my neck and my necklace on my neck."

"H'm! A necklace on your neck! He-he-he!" and the sexton walked again up and down the room, rubbing his hands.

"And what have you here, incomparable Solokha...?" There's no telling what the sexton (a carnal-minded man) might have touched next with his long fingers, when suddenly they heard a knock at the door and the voice of the Cossack Chub.

"Oh dear, someone who's not wanted!" cried the sexton in alarm. "What now if I am caught here, a person of my position...! It will come to Father Kondfat's ears...."

But the sexton's apprehensions were really of a different nature; he was more afraid that his doings might come to the knowledge of his better half, whose terrible hand had already turned his thick mane into a very scanty one. "For God's sake, virtuous Solokha!" he said, trembling all over, "your loving-

kindness, as it says in the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter thirt... thirt... What a knocking, aie, what a knocking! Ough, hide me somewhere!”

Solokha turned the coal out of another sack, and the sexton, whose proportions were not too ample, crept into it and settled at the very bottom, so that another half-sack of coal might have been put in on top of him.

“Good evening, Solokha!” said Chub, as he came into the hut. “Maybe you didn’t expect me, eh? You didn’t, did you? Perhaps I am in the way...?” Chub went on with a good-humored and significant expression on his face, which betrayed that his slow-moving mind was at work and preparing to utter some sarcastic and amusing jest.

“Maybe you had some entertaining companion here...! Maybe you have someone in hiding already? Eh?” And enchanted by this observation of his, Chub laughed, inwardly triumphant at being the only man who enjoyed Solokha’s favor. “Come, Solokha, let me have a drink of vodka now. I believe my throat’s frozen stiff with this damned frost. God has sent us weather for Christmas Eve! How it has come on, do you hear, Solokha, how it has come on...? Ah, my hands are stiff, I can’t unbutton my sheepskin! How the storm has come on...”

“Open the door!” a voice rang out in the street, accompanied by a thump on the door.

“Someone is knocking,” said Chub, standing still.

“Open!” the shout rang out louder still.

“It’s the blacksmith!” cried Chub, grabbing his pelisse. “Solokha, put me where you like; for nothing in the world will I show myself to that damned brute. May he have a pimple as big as a pile of hay under each of his eyes, the bastard!”

Solokha, herself alarmed, flew about like one distraught and, forgetting what she was doing, gestured to Chub to creep into the very sack in which the sexton was already sitting. The poor sexton dared not betray his pain by a cough or a groan when the heavy Cossack sat down almost on his head and put a frozen boot on each side of his face.

The blacksmith walked in, not saying a word nor removing his cap, and almost fell down on the bench. It could be seen that he was in a very bad humor.

At the very moment when Solokha was shutting the door after him, someone knocked at the door again. This was the Cossack Sverbiguz. He could not be hidden in the sack, because no sack big enough could be found anywhere. He was fatter than the mayor and taller than Chub’s neighbor Panas. And so Solokha led him into the garden to hear from him there all that he had to tell her.

The blacksmith looked absent-mindedly at the corners of his hut, listening

from time to time to the voices of the carol singers floating far away through the village. At last his eyes rested on the sacks. “Why are those sacks lying there? They ought to have been cleared away long ago. This foolish love has made me stupid. Tomorrow’s Christmas and trash of all sorts is still lying about the hut. I’ll carry them to the smithy!”

The blacksmith stooped down to the huge sacks, tied them up more tightly, and prepared to hoist them on his shoulders. But it was evident that his thoughts were straying, God knows where, or he would have heard how Chub gasped when the hair of his head was twisted in the string that tied the sack and the brave mayor began hiccuping quite distinctly.

“Can nothing drive that wretched Oksana out of my head?” the blacksmith was saying. “I don’t want to think about her; but I keep thinking and thinking and, as luck will have it, of her and nothing else. How is it that thoughts creep into the mind against the will? The devil! The sacks seem to have grown heavier than they were! Something besides coal must have been put into them. I am a fool! I forget that now everything seems heavier to me. In the old days I could bend and unbend a copper coin or a horseshoe with one hand, and now I can’t lift sacks of coal. I shall be blown over by the wind next... No!” he cried, pulling himself together after a pause, “I am not a weak woman! I won’t let anyone make an ass of me! If there were ten such sacks, I would lift them all.” And he briskly hoisted on his shoulders the sacks which two strong men could not have carried. “I’ll take this one too,” he went on, picking up the little one at the bottom of which the devil lay curled up. “I believe I put my tools in this one.” Saying this he went out of the hut whistling the song: “I Can’t Be Bothered with a Wife.”

The singing, laughter, and shouts sounded louder and louder in the streets. The crowds of jostling people were reinforced by newcomers from neighboring villages. The boys were full of mischief and wild pranks. Often among the carols some gay song was heard which one of the young Cossacks had made up on the spot. All at once one of the crowd would sing out a New Year’s song instead of a carol and bawl at the top of his voice:

Kind one, good one Give us a dumpling, A heap of *kasha”* And a ring of sausage!

A roar of laughter rewarded the wag. Little windows were thrown up and the withered hand of an old woman (the old women, together with the sedate fathers, were the only people left indoors) was thrust out with a sausage or a piece of pie.

The boys and the girls fought with one another in holding out their sacks and catching their booty. In one place the boys, coming together from all sides, surrounded a group of girls. There was loud noise and clamor; one flung a

snowball, another pulled away a sack full of all sorts of good things. In another place, the girls caught a boy, gave him a kick, and sent him flying headlong with his sack into the snow. It seemed as though they were ready to make merry the whole night through. And, as though by design, the night was so splendidly warm. And the light of the moon seemed brighter still from the glitter of the snow.

The blacksmith stood still with his sacks. He thought he heard among the crowd of girls the voice and shrill laugh of Oksana. Every vein in his body throbbed; flinging the sacks on the ground so that the sexton at the bottom groaned over the bruise he received, and the mayor gave a loud hiccup, he strolled with the little sack on his shoulders together with a group of boys after a crowd of girls, among whom he heard the voice of Oksana.

“Yes, it is she! She stands like a queen, her black eyes sparkling. A handsome boy is telling her something. It must be amusing, for she is laughing. But she is always laughing.” As it were unconsciously, he could not say how, the blacksmith squeezed his way through the crowd and stood beside her.

“Oh, Vakula, you here! Good evening!” said the beauty, with a smile which almost drove Vakula mad. “Well, have you sung many carols? Oh, but what a little sack! And have you got the slippers that the Czarina wears? Get me the slippers and I will marry you...!” And laughing, she ran off with the other girls.

The blacksmith stood as though rooted to the spot. “No, I cannot bear it; it’s too much for me...” he said at last. “But, my God, why is she so fiendishly beautiful? Her eyes, her words and everything, well, they scorch me, they fairly scorch me.... No, I cannot control myself. It’s time to put an end to it all. Damn my soul, I’ll go and drown myself in the hole in the ice and it will all be over!”

Then with a resolute step he walked on, caught up with the group of girls, overtook Oksana, and said in a firm voice: “Farewell, Oksana! Find any lover you like, make a fool of whom you like; but me you will not see again in this world.”

The beauty seemed amazed and would have said something, but with a wave of his hand the blacksmith ran away.

“Where are you off to, Vakula?” said the boys, seeing the blacksmith running.

“Goodbye, friends!” the blacksmith shouted in answer. “Please God we shall meet again in the other world, but we shall not walk together again in this. Farewell! Do not remember evil of me! Tell Father Kondrat to sing a requiem mass for my sinful soul. Sinner that I am, for the sake of worldly things I did not finish painting the candles for the icons of the Martyr and the Virgin Mary. All the goods which will be found in my chest are for the Church. Farewell!”

Saying this, the blacksmith started running again with the sack upon his back.

“He has gone crazy!” said the boys.

“A lost soul!” an old woman, who was passing, muttered devoutly. “I must go and tell them that the blacksmith has hanged himself!”

Meanwhile, after running through several streets, Vakula stopped to catch his breath. “Where am I running?” he thought, “as though everything were over already. I’ll try one way more: I’ll go to the Dnieper Cossack Puzaty Patsyuk; they say he knows all the devils and can do anything he likes. I’ll go to him, for my soul is lost anyway!”

At that the devil, who had lain for a long while without moving, skipped for joy in the sack; but the blacksmith, thinking that he had somehow twitched the sack with his hand and caused the movement himself, gave the sack a punch with his big fist and, shaking it on his shoulders, set off to Puzaty Patsyuk.

This Puzaty Patsyuk certainly at one time had been a Dnieper Cossack; but no one knew whether he had been turned out of the camp or whether he had run away from Zaporozhye of his own accord.

For a long time, ten years or perhaps fifteen, he had been living in Dikanka. At first he had lived like a true Dnieper Cossack: he had done no work, slept three-quarters of the day, eaten as much as six hay cutters, and drunk almost a whole pailful at a time. He had somewhere to put it all, however, for though Patsyuk was not very tall he was fairly bulky horizontally. Moreover, the trousers he used to wear were so full that, however long a step he took, no trace of his leg was visible, and it seemed as though a wine distiller’s machine were moving down the street. Perhaps it was this that gave rise to his nickname, Puzaty. Before many weeks had passed after his coming to the village, everyone had found out that he was a wizard. If anyone were ill, he called in Patsyuk at once: Patsyuk had only to whisper a few words and it was as though the ailment had been lifted off by his hand. If it happened that a hungry gentleman was choked by a fishbone, Patsyuk could punch him so skillfully on the back that the bone went the proper way without causing any harm to the gentleman’s throat. Of late years he was rarely seen anywhere. The reason for that was perhaps laziness, though possibly also the fact that it was every year becoming increasingly difficult for him to pass through a doorway. People had of late been obliged to go to him if they had need of him.

Not without some timidity, the blacksmith opened the door and saw Patsyuk sitting Turkish-fashion on the floor before a little tub on which stood a bowl of dumplings. This bowl stood as though purposely planned on a level with his mouth. Without moving a single finger, he bent his head a little toward the bowl and sipped the soup, from time to time catching the dumplings with his teeth.

“Well,” thought Vakula to himself, “this fellow’s even lazier than Chub: he

does eat with a spoon, at least, while this fellow won't even lift his hand!"

Patsyuk must have been entirely engrossed in the dumplings, for he seemed to be quite unaware of the entrance of the blacksmith, who offered him a very low bow as soon as he stepped on the threshold.

"I have come to ask you a favor, Patsyuk!" said Vakula, bowing again.

Puzaty Patsyuk lifted his head and again began swallowing dumplings.

"They say that you—no offense meant..." the blacksmith said, taking heart, "I speak of this not by way of any insult to you— that you are a little akin to the devil."

When he had uttered these words, Vakula was alarmed, thinking that he had expressed himself too bluntly and had not sufficiently softened his language; and, expecting that Patsyuk would pick up the tub together with the bowl and fling them straight at his head, he turned aside a little and covered his face with his sleeve so that the hot dumpling soup might not spatter it. But Patsyuk looked up and again began swallowing the dumplings.

The blacksmith, reassured, made up his mind to go on. "I have come to you, Patsyuk. God give you everything, goods of all sorts in abundance and bread in proportion!" (The blacksmith would sometimes throw in a fashionable word: he had got into the way of it during his stay in Poltava when he was painting the fence for the officer.) "There is nothing but ruin before me, a sinner! Nothing in the world will help! What will be, will be. I have to ask help from the devil himself. Well, Patsyuk," the blacksmith said, trying to break Patsyuk's silence, "what am I to do?"

"If you need the devil, then go to the devil," answered Patsyuk, not lifting his eyes to him, but still chewing away at the dumplings.

"It is for that that I have come to you," answered the blacksmith, offering him another bow. "I suppose that nobody in the world but you knows the way to him!"

Patsyuk answered not a word, but ate up the remaining dumplings. "Do me a kindness, good man, do not refuse me!" persisted the blacksmith. "Whether it is pork or sausage or buckwheat flour or linen, say—millet or anything else in case of need... as is usual between good people... we will not grudge it. Tell me at least how, for instance, to get on the road to him."

"He need not go far who has the devil on his shoulders!" Patsyuk pronounced carelessly, without changing his position.

Vakula fastened his eyes upon him as though the interpretation of those words were written on his brow. "What does he mean?" his face asked dumbly, while his mouth stood half-open ready to swallow the first word like a dumpling.

But Patsyuk was still silent.

Then Vakula noticed that there were neither dumplings nor a tub before him; but two wooden bowls were standing on the floor instead—one was filled with turnovers, the other with some cream. His thoughts and his eyes unconsciously fastened on these dainties. “Let us see,” he said to himself, “how Patsyuk will eat the turnovers. He certainly won’t want to bend down to lap them up like the dumplings; besides he couldn’t—he must first dip the turnovers in the cream.”

He had hardly time to think this when Patsyuk opened his mouth, looked at the turnovers, and opened his mouth wider still. At that moment a turnover popped out of the bowl, splashed into the cream, turned over on the other side, leaped upward, and flew straight into his mouth. Patsyuk ate it and opened his mouth again, and another turnover went through the same performance. The only trouble he took was to munch it up and swallow it.

“What a miracle!” thought the blacksmith, his mouth dropping open with surprise, and at the same moment he was aware that a turnover was creeping toward him and was already smearing his mouth with cream. Pushing away the turnover and wiping his lips, the blacksmith began to reflect what marvels there are in the world and to what subtle devices the evil spirit may lead a man, saying to himself at the same time that no one but Patsyuk could help him.

“I’ll bow to him once more; maybe he will explain properly.... He’s a devil, though! Why, today is a fast day and he is eating turnovers with meat in them! What a fool I am, really. I am standing here and preparing to sin! Back...!” And the pious blacksmith ran headlong out of the hut.

But the devil, sitting in the sack and already gloating over his prey, could not endure letting such a glorious capture slip through his fingers. As soon as the blacksmith put down the sack the devil skipped out of it and straddled his neck.

A cold shudder ran over the blacksmith’s skin; pale and scared, he did not know what to do; he was on the point of crossing himself.... But the devil, putting his snout down to Vakula’s right ear, said: “It’s me, your friend; I’ll do anything for a friend and comrade! I’ll give you as much money as you like,” he squeaked into his left ear. “Oksana shall be yours this very day,” he whispered, turning his snout again to the right ear. The blacksmith stood still, hesitating.

“Very well,” he said at last; “for such a price I am ready to be yours!”

The devil clasped his hands in delight and began galloping up and down on the blacksmith’s neck. “Now the blacksmith is done for!” he thought to himself: “now I’ll pay you back, my sweet fellow, for all your paintings and false tales thrown up at the devils! What will my comrades say now when they learn that the most pious man of the whole village is in my hands!”

Here the devil laughed with joy, thinking how he would taunt all the long-tailed crew in hell, how furious the lame devil, who was considered the most

resourceful among them, would be.

“Well, Vakula!” piped the devil, not dismounting from his neck, as though afraid he might escape, “you know nothing is done without a contract.”

“I am ready!” said the blacksmith. “I have heard that among you contracts are signed with blood. Wait. I’ll get a nail out of my pocket!”

And he put his hand behind him and caught the devil by the tail.

“What a man you are for a joke!” cried the devil, laughing. “Come, let go, that’s enough mischief!”

“Wait a minute, friend!” cried the blacksmith, “and what do you think of this?” As he said that he made the sign of the cross and the devil became as meek as a lamb. “Wait a minute,” said the blacksmith, pulling him by the tail to the ground: “I’ll teach you to entice good men and honest Christians into sin.”

Here the blacksmith leaped on the devil and lifted his hand to make the sign of the cross.

“Have mercy, Vakula!” the devil moaned piteously; “I will do anything you want, anything; only let me off with my life: do not lay the terrible cross upon me!”

“Ah, so that’s your tone now, you damned German! Now I know what to do. Carry me at once on your back! Do you hear? And fly like a bird!”

“Where?” asked the miserable devil.

“To Petersburg, straight to the Czarina!” And the blacksmith almost fainted with terror as he felt himself soaring into the air.

Oksana stood for a long time pondering on the strange words of the blacksmith. Already an inner voice was telling her that she had treated him too cruelly. “What if he really does make up his mind to do something dreadful! I wouldn’t be surprised! Perhaps his sorrow will make him fall in love with another girl, and in his anger he will begin calling her the greatest beauty in the village. But no, he loves me. I am so beautiful! He will not give me up for anything; he is playing, he is pretending. In ten minutes he will come back to look at me, for certain. I really was angry. I must, as though it were against my will, let him kiss me. Won’t he be delighted!” And the frivolous beauty went back to jesting with her companions.

“Stop,” said one of them, “the blacksmith has forgotten his sacks: look what fat sacks! He has made more by his carol singing than we have. I bet they must have put here at least a quarter of a sheep, and I am sure that there are no end of sausages and loaves in them. Wonderful! we shall have enough to feast on all Christmas week!”

“Are they the blacksmith’s sacks?” asked Oksana. “We had better drag them to my hut and have a good look at what he has put in them.”

All the girls laughingly approved of this proposal.

“But we can’t lift them!” the whole group cried, trying to move the sacks.

“Wait a minute,” said Oksana; “let us run for a sled and take them away on it!”

And the crowd of girls ran out to get a sled.

The captives were terribly bored with staying in the sacks, although the sexton had poked a fair-sized hole to peep through. If there had been no one about, he might have found a way to creep out; but to creep out of a sack in front of everybody, to be a laughingstock... that thought restrained him, and he made up his mind to wait, only uttering a slight groan under Chub’s ill-mannered boots.

Chub himself was no less eager for freedom, feeling that there was something under him that was terribly uncomfortable to sit upon. But as soon as he heard his daughter’s plan, he felt relieved and did not want to creep out, reflecting that it must be at least a hundred paces and perhaps two hundred to his hut; if he crept out, he would have to rearrange himself, button up his sheepskin, fasten his belt—such a lot of trouble! Besides, his winter cap had been left at Solokha’s. Let the girls drag him in the sled.

But things turned out not at all as Chub was expecting. Just when the girls were running to fetch the sled, his lean neighbor, Panas, came out of the tavern, upset and ill-humored. The woman who kept the tavern could not be persuaded to serve him on credit. He thought to sit on in the tavern in the hope that some godly gentleman would come along and treat him; but as ill-luck would have it, all the gentlefolk were staying at home and like good Christians were eating rice and honey in the bosom of their families. Meditating on the degeneration of manners and the hard heart of the Jewess who kept the tavern, Panas made his way up to the sacks and stopped in amazement. “My word, what sacks somebody has flung down in the road!” he said, looking about him in all directions. “I’ll bet there is pork in them. Some carol singer is in luck to get so many gifts of all sorts! What fat sacks! Suppose they are only stuffed full of buckwheat cake and biscuits, that’s worth having; if there should be nothing but biscuits in them, that would be welcome, too; the Jewess would give me a dram of vodka for each cake. Let’s make haste and get them away before anyone sees.”

Here he flung on his shoulder the sack with Chub and the sexton in it, but felt it was too heavy. “No, it’ll be too heavy for one to carry,” he said; “and here by good luck comes the weaver Shapuvalenko. Good evening, Ostap!”

“Good evening!” said the weaver, stopping.

“Where are you going?”

“Oh, nowhere in particular.”

“Help me carry these sacks, good man! Someone has been singing carols, and

has dropped them in the middle of the road. We'll share the things."

"Sacks? sacks of what? White loaves or biscuits?"

"Oh, all sorts of things, I expect."

They hurriedly pulled some sticks out of the fence, laid the sack on them, and carried it on their shoulders.

"Where shall we take it? To the tavern?" the weaver asked on the way.

"That's just what I was thinking; but, you know, the damned Jewess won't trust us, she'll think we have stolen it somewhere; besides, I have only just come from the tavern. We'll take it to my hut. No one will hinder us there; the wife's not at home."

"Are you sure she is not at home?" the cautious weaver inquired.

"Thank God that I am not quite a fool yet," said Panas; "the devil would hardly take me where she is. I'm sure she will be trailing around with the other women till daybreak."

"Who is there?" shouted Panas' wife, opening the door of the hut as she heard the noise in the porch made by the two friends with the sack. Panas was dumbfounded.

"Well, that's it!" said the weaver, letting his hands fall.

Panas' wife was a treasure of a kind that is not uncommon in this world. Like her husband, she hardly ever stayed at home, but almost every day visited various cronies and well-to-do old women, flattered them, and ate with good appetite at their expense; she only quarreled with her husband in the mornings, as it was only then that she sometimes saw him. Their hut was twice as old as the district clerk's trousers; there was no straw in places on their thatched roof. Only the remnants of a fence could be seen, for everyone, as he went out of his house, thought it unnecessary to take a stick for the dogs, relying on passing by Panas' vegetable garden and pulling one out of his fence. The stove was not heated for three days at a time. Whatever the tender wife managed to beg from good Christians she hid as far as possible out of her husband's reach, and often robbed him of his gains if he had not had time to spend them on drink. In spite of his habitual imperturbability Panas did not like to give way to her, and consequently left his house every day with both eyes blackened, while his better half, sighing and groaning, waddled off to tell her old friends of her husband's unmannerliness and the blows she had to put up with from him.

Now you can imagine how disconcerted were the weaver and Panas by this unexpected apparition. Dropping the sack, they stood before it, and concealed it with the skirts of their coats, but it was already too late: Panas' wife, though she did not see well with her old eyes, had observed the sack.

"Well, that's good!" she said, with a face which betrayed the joy of a vulture.

“That’s good, that you have gained so much singing carols! That’s how it always is with good Christians; but no, I’m sure you have stolen it somewhere. Show me your sack at once, do you hear, show me this very minute!”

“The bald devil may show you, but we won’t,” said Panas, assuming a dignified air.

“What’s it to do with you?” said the weaver. “We’ve sung the carols, not you.”

“Yes, you will show me, you wretched drunkard!” screamed the wife, striking her tall husband on the chin with her fist and forcing her way toward the sack. But the weaver and Panas manfully defended the sack and compelled her to beat a retreat. Before they recovered themselves the wife ran out again with a poker in her hands. She nimbly hit her husband a blow on the arms and the weaver one on his back and reached for the sack.

“Why did we let her pass?” said the weaver, regaining his senses.

“Yes, we let her pass! Why did you let her pass?” said Panas coolly.

“Your poker is made of iron, it seems!” said the weaver after a brief silence, rubbing his back. “My wife bought one last year at the fair, gave twenty-five kopeks; that one’s all right... it doesn’t hurt...”

Meanwhile the triumphant wife, setting a lamp on the floor, untied the sack and peeped into it.

But her old eyes, which had so well described the sack, this time certainly deceived her.

“Oh, but there is a whole pig lying here!” she shrieked, clapping her hands in glee.

“A pig! Do you hear, a whole pig!” The weaver nudged Panas. “And it’s all your fault.”

“It can’t be helped!” replied Panas, shrugging his shoulders.

“Can’t be helped! Why are we standing still? Let us take away the sack! Here, come on! Go away, go away, it’s our pig!” shouted the weaver, stepping forward.

“Move away, move away, you devilish woman! It’s not your property!” said Panas, approaching.

His wife picked up the poker again, but at that moment Chub crawled out of the sack and stood in the middle of the room, stretching like a man who has just waked up from a long sleep.

Panas’ wife shrieked, slapping her skirts, and they all stood with open mouths.

“Why did she say it was a pig, the ass! It’s not a pig!” said Panas, staring open-eyed.

“God! What a man has been dropped into a sack!” said the weaver, staggering back in alarm. “You may say what you please, you can burst if you like, but the foul fiend has had a hand in it. Why, he would not go through a window!”

“It’s Chub!” cried Panas, looking more closely.

“Why, who did you think it was?” said Chub, laughing. “Well, haven’t I played you a fine trick? I’ll bet you meant to eat me as pork! Wait a minute, I’ll console you: there is something in the sack; if not a whole pig, it’s certainly a little porker or some live beast. Something kept moving under me.”

The weaver and Panas flew to the sack, the lady of the house clutched at the other side of it, and the battle would have been renewed had not the sexton, seeing that now he had no chance of concealment, scrambled out of the sack of his own accord.

The woman, astounded, let go of the leg by which she was beginning to drag the sexton out of the sack.

“Here’s another of them!” cried the weaver in horror, “the devil knows what has happened to the world.... My head’s going around.... Men are put into sacks instead of cakes or sausages!”

“It’s the sexton!” said Chub, more surprised than any of them. “Well, then! You’re a nice one, Solokha! To put one in a sack... I thought at the time her hut was very full of sacks.... Now I understand it all: she had a couple of men hidden in each sack. While I thought it was only me she... So now you know her!”

The girls were a little surprised on finding that one sack was missing.

“Well, there is nothing we can do, we must be content with this one,” murmured Oksana.

The mayor made up his mind to keep quiet, reasoning that if he called out to them to untie the sack and let him out, the foolish girls would run away in all directions; they would think that the devil was in the sack—and he would be left in the street till next day. Meanwhile the girls, linking arms together, flew like a whirlwind with the sled over the crunching snow. Many of them sat on the sled for fun; others even clambered on top of the mayor. The mayor made up his mind to endure everything.

At last they arrived, threw open the door into the outer room of the hut, and dragged in the sack amid laughter.

“Let us see what is in it,” they all cried, hastening to untie it.

At this point the hiccup which had tormented the mayor became so much worse that he began hiccuping and coughing loudly.

“Ah, there is someone in it!” they all shrieked, and rushed out of doors in horror.

“What the devil is it? Where are you tearing off to as though you were all possessed?” said Chub, walking in at the door.

“Oh, Daddy!” cried Oksana, “there is someone in the sack!”

“In the sack? Where did you get this sack?”

“The blacksmith threw it in the middle of the road,” they all said at once.

“So that’s it; didn’t I say so?” Chub thought to himself. “What are you frightened at? Let us look. Come now, my man—I beg you won’t be offended at our not addressing you by your proper name —crawl out of the sack!”

The mayor did crawl out.

“Oh!” shrieked the girls.

“So the mayor got into one, too,” Chub thought to himself in bewilderment, scanning him from head to foot. “Well, I’ll be damned!” He could say nothing more.

The mayor himself was no less confused and did not know how to begin. “I think it is a cold night,” he said, addressing Chub.

“There is a bit of a frost,” answered Chub. “Allow me to ask you what you rub your boots with, goose fat or tar?” He had not meant to say that; he had meant to ask: “How did you get into that sack, mayor?” and he did not himself understand how he came to say something utterly different.

“Tar is better,” said the mayor. “Well, good night, Chub!” And pulling his winter cap down over his head, he walked out of the hut.

“Why was I such a fool as to ask him what he rubbed his boots with?” said Chub, looking toward the door by which the mayor had gone out.

“Well, Solokha is a fine one! To put a man like that in a sack...! My word, she is a devil of a woman! While I, poor fool... But where is that damned sack?”

“I flung it in the corner, there is nothing more in it,” said Oksana.

“I know all about that; nothing in it, indeed! Give it here; there is another one in it! Shake it well... What, nothing? My word, the cursed woman! And to look at her she is like a saint, as though she had never tasted anything but lenten fare...!”

But we will leave Chub to pour out his anger at leisure and will go back to the blacksmith, for it must be past eight o’clock.

At first it seemed dreadful to Vakula, particularly when he rose up from the earth to such a height that he Could see nothing below, and flew like a fly so close under the moon that if he had not bent down he would have caught his cap in it. But in a little while he gained confidence and even began mocking the devil. (He was extremely amused by the way the devil sneezed and coughed when he took the little cyprus-wood cross off his neck and held it down to him. He purposely raised his hand to scratch his head, and the devil, thinking he was going to make the sign of the cross over him, flew along more swiftly than ever.) It was quite light at that height. The air was transparent, bathed in a light silvery mist. Everything was visible, and he could even see a sorcerer whisk by them like a hurricane, sitting in a pot, and the stars gathering together to play hide-

and-seek, a whole swarm of spirits whirling away in a cloud, a devil dancing in the light of the moon and taking off his cap at the sight of the blacksmith galloping by, a broom flying back home, from which evidently a witch had just alighted at her destination.... And they met many other nasty things. They all stopped at the sight of the blacksmith to stare at him for a moment, and then whirled off and went on their way again. The blacksmith flew on till all at once Petersburg flashed before him, glittering with lights. (For a certain reason the city was illuminated that day.) The devil, flying over the city gate, turned into a horse and the blacksmith found himself mounted on a fiery steed in the middle of the street.

My goodness! the clatter, the uproar, the brilliant light; the walls rose up, four stories on each side; the thud of the horses' hoofs and the rumble of the wheels echoed and resounded from every quarter; houses seemed to pop up out of the ground at every step; the bridges trembled; carriages raced along; sled drivers and postilions shouted; the snow crunched under the thousand sleds flying from all parts; people passing along on foot huddled together, crowded under the houses which were studded with little lamps, and their immense shadows flitted over the walls with their heads reaching the roofs and the chimneys.

The blacksmith looked about him in amazement. It seemed to him as though all the houses had fixed their innumerable fiery eyes upon him, watching. Good Lord! he saw so many gentlemen in cloth fur-lined overcoats that he did not know whom to take off his cap to. "Good God, how many gentlemen are here!" thought the blacksmith. "I think everyone who comes along the street in a fur coat is the assessor and again the assessor! And those who are driving about in such wonderful chaises with glass windows, if they are not police captains they certainly must be commissars or perhaps something even more important." His words were cut short by a question from the devil:

"Am I to go straight to the Czarina?"

"No, I'm frightened," thought the blacksmith. "The Dnieper Cossacks, who marched in the autumn through Dikanka, are stationed here, where I don't know. They came from the camp with papers for the Czarina; anyway, I might ask their advice. Hey, Satan! creep into my pocket and take me to the Dnieper Cossacks."

And in one minute the devil became so thin and small that he had no difficulty creeping into the blacksmith's pocket. And before Vakula had time to look around he found himself in front of a big house, went up a staircase, hardly knowing what he was doing, opened a door, and drew back a little from the brilliant light on seeing the smartly furnished room; but he regained confidence a little when he recognized the Cossacks who had ridden through Dikanka and now, sitting on silk-covered sofas, their tar-smeared boots tucked under them,

were smoking the strongest tobacco, usually called “root.”

“Good day to you, gentlemen! God be with you, this is where we meet again,” said the blacksmith, going up to them and tossing off a low bow.

“What man is that?” the one who was sitting just in front of the blacksmith asked another who was further away.

“You don’t know me?” said the blacksmith. “It’s me, Vakula the blacksmith! When you rode through Dikanka in the autumn you stayed nearly two days with me. God give you all health and long years! And I put a new iron hoop on the front wheel of your chaise!”

“Oh!” said the same Cossack, “it’s that blacksmith who paints so well. Good day to you, neighbor! How has God brought you here?”

“Oh, I just wanted to have a look around. I was told...”

“Well, neighbor,” said the Cossack, drawing himself up with dignity and wishing to show he could speak Russian too, “well, it’s a big city.”

The blacksmith, too, wanted to preserve his reputation and not to seem like a novice. Moreover, as we have had occasion to see before, he too could speak as if from a book.

“A considerable town!” he answered casually. “There is no denying the houses are very large, the pictures that are hanging up are uncommonly good. Many of the houses are painted exuberantly with letters in gold leaf. The configuration is superb, there is no other word for it!”

The Dnieper Cossacks, hearing the blacksmith express himself in such a manner, drew the most flattering conclusions in regard to him.

“We will have a little more talk with you, neighbor; now we are going at once to the Czarina.”

“To the Czarina? Oh, be so kind, gentlemen, as to take me with you!”

“You?” a Cossack pronounced in the tone in which an old man speaks to his four-year-old charge when the latter asks to be seated on a real, big horse. “What would you do there? No, we can’t do that. We are going to talk about our own affairs to the Czarina.” And his face assumed an expression of great significance.

“Please take me!” the blacksmith persisted.

“Ask them to!” he whispered softly to the devil, banging on the pocket with his fist.

He had hardly said this, when another Cossack said: “Let’s take him, friends!”

“Yes, let’s take him!” others joined in.

“Put on the same clothing as we are wearing, then.”

The blacksmith was hastily putting on a green coat when all at once the door opened and a man covered with gold braid said it was time to go.

Again the blacksmith was moved to wonder, as he was whisked along in an

immense coach swaying on springs, as four-storied houses raced by him on both sides and the rumbling pavement seemed to be moving under the horses' hoofs.

"My goodness, how light it is!" thought the blacksmith to himself. "At home it is not so light as this in the daytime."

The coaches stopped in front of the palace. The Cossacks got out, went into a magnificent vestibule, and began ascending a brilliantly lighted staircase.

"What a staircase!" the blacksmith murmured to himself, "it's a pity to trample it with one's feet. What decorations! They say the stories are untrue! The devil they are! My goodness! what banisters, what workmanship! At least fifty rubles must have been spent on the iron alone!"

When they had mounted the stairs, the Cossacks walked through the first drawing room. The blacksmith followed them timidly, afraid of slipping on the parquet at every footstep. They walked through three drawing rooms, the blacksmith still overwhelmed with admiration. On entering the fourth, he could not help going up to a picture hanging on the wall. It was the Holy Virgin with the Child in her arms.

"What a picture! What a wonderful painting!" he thought. "It seems to be speaking! It seems to be alive! And the Holy Child! It's pressing its little hands together and laughing, poor thing! And the colors! My goodness, what colors! I think there is not a kopek worth of ochre on it; it's all emerald green and crimson lake. And the blue simply glows! A fine piece of work! I'm sure the background was put in with the most expensive white lead. Wonderful as that painting is, though, this copper handle," he went on, going up to the door and fingering the lock, "is even more wonderful. Ah, what a fine finish! That's all done, I imagine, by German blacksmiths, and it must be terribly expensive."

Perhaps the blacksmith would have gone on reflecting for a long time, if a flunkey in livery had not nudged his arm and reminded him not to lag behind the others. The Cossacks passed through two more rooms and then stopped. They were told to wait in the third, in which there was a group of several generals in gold-braided uniforms. The Cossacks bowed in all directions and stood together.

A minute later, a rather thickset man of majestic stature, wearing the uniform of a Hetman and yellow boots, walked in, accompanied by a retinue. His hair was in disorder, he squinted a little, his face wore an expression of haughty dignity, and the habit of command could be seen in every movement. All the generals, who had been walking up and down rather superciliously in their gold uniforms, bustled about and seemed with low bows to be hanging on every word he uttered and even on his slightest gesture, so as to fly at once to carry out his wishes. But the Hetman did not even notice all that: he barely nodded to them and went up to the Cossacks.

The Cossacks all bowed low, to the ground.

“Are you all here?” he asked deliberately, speaking a little through his nose.

“All, little father!” answered the Cossacks, bowing again.

“Don’t forget to speak as I have told you!”

“No, little father, we will not forget.”

“Is that the Czar?” asked the blacksmith of one of the Cossacks.

“Czar, indeed! It’s Potiomkin himself,” answered the other.

Voices were heard in the other room, and the blacksmith did not know which way to look for the number of ladies who walked in, wearing satin gowns with long trains, and courtiers in gold-laced coats with their hair tied in a tail at the back. He could see a blur of brilliance and nothing more.

The Cossacks all bowed down at once to the floor and cried out with one voice: “Have mercy, little mother, mercy!”

The blacksmith, too, though seeing nothing, stretched himself very zealously on the floor.

“Get up!” An imperious and at the same time pleasant voice sounded above them. Some of the courtiers bustled about and nudged the Cossacks.

“We will not get up, little mother! We will not get up! We will die, but we will not get up!” they shouted.

Potiomkin bit his lips. At last he went up himself and whispered sternly to one of the Cossacks. They rose to their feet.

Then the blacksmith, too, ventured to raise his head, and saw standing before him a short and, indeed, rather stout woman with blue eyes, and at the same time with that majestically smiling air which was so well able to subdue everything and could only belong to a queen.

“His Excellency has promised to make me acquainted today with my people whom I have not seen before,” said the lady with the blue eyes, scrutinizing the men with curiosity.

“Are you well cared for here?” she went on, going nearer to them.

“Thank you, little mother! The provisions they give us are excellent, though the mutton here is not at all like what we have in Zaporozhye... What does our daily fare matter...?”

Potiomkin frowned, seeing that the Cossacks were saying something quite different from what he had taught them....

One of them, drawing himself up with dignity, stepped forward:

“Be gracious, little mother! How have your faithful people angered you? Have we taken the hand of the vile Tartar? Have we come to agreement with the Turk? Have we been false to you in deed or in thought? How have we lost your favor? First we heard that you were commanding fortresses to be built everywhere

against us; then we heard you mean to turn us into carbineers; now we hear of new oppressions. How are your Zaporozhye troops in fault? In having brought your army across the Perekop and helped your generals to slaughter the Tartars in the Crimea...?”

Potiomkin casually rubbed with a little brush the diamonds with which his hands were studded and said nothing.

“What is it you want?” Catherine asked anxiously.

The Cossacks looked meaningly at one another.

“Now is the time! The Czarina asks what we want!” the blacksmith said to himself, and he suddenly flopped down on the floor.

“Your Imperial Majesty, do not command me to be punished! Show me mercy! Of what, be it said without offense to your Imperial Graciousness, are the little slippers made that are on your feet? I think there is no Swede nor a shoemaker in any kingdom in the world who can make them like that. Merciful heavens, if only my wife could wear such slippers!”

The Empress laughed. The courtiers laughed too. Potiomkin frowned and smiled at the same time. The Cossacks began nudging the blacksmith under the arm, wondering whether he had not gone out of his mind.

“Stand up!” the Empress said graciously. “If you wish to have slippers like these, it is very easy to arrange it. Bring him at once the very best slippers with gold on them! Indeed, this simpleheartedness greatly pleases me! Here you have a subject worthy of your witty pen!” the Empress went on, turning to a gentleman with a full but rather pale face, who stood a little apart from the others and whose modest coat with big mother-of-pearl buttons on it showed that he was not one of the courtiers.

“You are too gracious, your Imperial Majesty. It needs a La Fontaine at least to do justice to it!” answered the man with the mother-of-pearl buttons, bowing.

“I tell you sincerely, I have not yet got over my delight at your *Brigadier*, You read so wonderfully well! I have heard, though,” the Empress went on, turning again to the Cossacks, “that none of you are married in your camp.”

“What next, little mother! Why, you know yourself, a man cannot live without a wife,” answered the same Cossack who had talked to the blacksmith, and the blacksmith wondered, hearing him address the Czarina, as though purposely, in coarse language, speaking like a peasant, as it is commonly called, though he could speak as if from a book.

“They are sly fellows!” he thought to himself. “I’ll bet he does not do that for nothing.”

“We are not monks,” the Cossack went on, “but sinful folk. Ready like all honest Christians to fall into sin. There are among us many who have wives, but

do not live with them in the camp. There are some who have wives in Poland; there are some who have wives in the Ukraine; there are some who have wives even in Turkey.”

At that moment they brought the blacksmith the slippers.

“God, what fine embroidery!” he cried joyfully, taking the slippers. “Your Imperial Majesty! If the slippers on your feet are like this—and in them Your Honor, I expect, goes skating on the ice—what must the feet themselves be like! They must be made of pure sugar at least, I should think!”

The Empress, who had in fact very well-shaped and charming feet, could not help smiling at hearing such a compliment from the lips of a simplehearted blacksmith, who in his Dnieper Cossack uniform might be considered a handsome fellow in spite of his swarthy face.

Delighted with such gracious attention, the blacksmith would have liked to question the pretty Czarina thoroughly about everything: whether it was true that Czars eat nothing but honey, fat bacon, and such; but, feeling that the Cossacks were digging him in the ribs, he made up his mind to keep quiet. And when the Empress, turning to the older men, began questioning them about their manner of life and customs in the camp, he, stepping back, stooped down to his pocket, and said softly: “Get me away from here, quickly!” And at once he found himself outside the city gates.

“He is drowned! I swear he is drowned! May I never leave this spot if he is not drowned!” lisped the weaver’s fat wife, standing with a group of Dikanka women in the middle of the street.

“Why, am I a liar, then? Have I stolen anyone’s cow? Have I put the evil eye on someone, that I am not to be believed?” shouted a purple-nosed woman in a Cossack coat, waving her arms. “May I never want to drink water again if old Dame Pereperchikha didn’t see with her own eyes the blacksmith hanging himself!”

“Has the blacksmith hanged himself? Well, I never!” said the mayor, coming out of Chub’s hut, and he stopped and pressed closer to the group.

“You had better say, may you never want to drink vodka, you old drunkard!” answered the weaver’s wife. “He must be as crazy as you to hang himself! He drowned himself! He drowned himself in the hole in the ice! I know that as well as I know that you were in the tavern just now.”

“You disgrace! See what she throws up at me!” the woman with the purple nose retorted wrathfully. “You had better hold your tongue, you wretch! Do you think I don’t know that the sexton comes to see you every evening?”

The weaver’s wife flared up.

“What about the sexton? Whom does he go to? What lies are you telling?”

“The sexton?” piped the sexton’s wife, squeezing her way up to the combatants, in an old blue cotton coat lined with hareskin. “I’ll let the sexton know! Who was it said the sexton?”

“Well, this is the lady the sexton visits!” said the woman with the purple nose, pointing to the weaver’s wife.

“So it’s you, you bitch!” said the sexton’s wife, stepping up to the weaver’s wife. “So it’s you, is it, witch, who cast a spell over him and gave him foul poison to make him come to you!”

“Get behind me, Satan!” said the weaver’s wife, staggering back.

“Oh, you cursed witch, may you never live to see your children! Wretched creature! Tfoo!”

Here the sexton’s wife spat straight into the other woman’s face.

The weaver’s wife tried to do the same, but spat instead on the unshaven chin of the mayor, who had come close to the combatants so that he might hear the quarrel better.

“Ah, nasty woman!” cried the mayor, wiping his face with the skirt of his coat and lifting his whip.

This gesture sent them all flying in different directions, cursing loudly.

“How disgusting!” repeated the mayor, still wiping his face. “So the blacksmith is drowned! My goodness! What a fine painter he was! What good knives and reaping hooks and plows he could forge! What a strong man he was! Yes,” he went on musing; “there are not many fellows like that in our village. To be sure, I did notice while I was in that damned sack that the poor fellow was very much depressed. So that is the end of the blacksmith! He was and is not! And I was meaning to have my dapple mare shod...!” And filled with such Christian reflections, the mayor quietly made his way to his own hut.

Oksana was much troubled when the news reached her. She put little faith in the woman Pereperchikha’s having seen it and in the women’s talk; she knew that the blacksmith was too pious a man to bring himself to send his soul to perdition. But what if he really had gone away, intending never to return to the village? And, indeed, in any place it would be hard to find as fine a fellow as the blacksmith. And how he had loved her! He had endured her whims longer than any one of them.... All night long the beauty turned over from her right side to her left and her left to her right, and could not fall asleep. Naked, she tossed sensuously in the darkness of her room. She reviled herself almost aloud; grew peaceful; made up her mind to think of nothing—and kept thinking all the time. She was in a perfect fever, and by the morning head over ears in love with the blacksmith.

Chub expressed neither pleasure nor sorrow at Vakula’s fate. His thoughts

were absorbed by one subject: he could not forget the treachery of Solokha and never stopped abusing her even in his sleep.

Morning came. Even before daybreak the church was full of people. Elderly women in white linen wimples, in white cloth tunics, crossed themselves piously at the church porch. Ladies in green and yellow blouses, some even in dark blue overdresses with gold streamers behind, stood in front of them. Girls who had a whole shopful of ribbons twined on their heads, and necklaces, crosses, and coins around their necks, tried to make their way closer to the icon-stand. But in front of all stood the gentlemen and humble peasants with mustaches, with forelocks, with thick necks and newly shaven chins, for the most part wearing hooded cloaks, below which peeped a white or sometimes a dark blue jacket. Wherever one looked every face had a festive air. The mayor was licking his lips in anticipation of the sausage with which he would break his fast; the girls were thinking how they would skate with the boys on the ice; the old women murmured prayers more zealously than ever. All over the church one could hear the Cossack Sverbiguz bowing to the ground. Only Oksana stood feeling unlike herself: she prayed without praying. So many different feelings, each more amazing, each more distressing than the other, crowded upon her heart that her face expressed nothing but overwhelming confusion; tears quivered in her eyes. The girls could not think why it was and did not suspect that the blacksmith was responsible. However, not only Oksana was concerned about the blacksmith. All the villagers observed that the holiday did not seem like a holiday, that something was lacking. To make things worse, the sexton was hoarse after his travels in the sack and he wheezed scarcely audibly; it is true that the chorister who was on a visit to the village sang the bass splendidly, but how much better it would have been if they had had the blacksmith too, who used always when they were singing *Our Father* or the *Holy Cherubhim* to step up into the choir and from there sing it with the same chant with which it is sung in Poltava. Moreover, he alone performed the duty of a churchwarden. Matins were already over; after matins mass was over.... Where indeed could the blacksmith have vanished to?

It was still night as the devil flew even more swiftly back with the blacksmith, and in a flash Vakula found himself inside his own hut. At that moment the cock crowed.

“Where are you off to?” cried the blacksmith, catching the devil by his tail as he was about to run away. “Wait a moment, friend, that’s not all: I haven’t thanked you yet.” Then, seizing a switch, he gave him three lashes, and the poor devil started running like a peasant who has just had a beating from the tax assessor. And so, instead of tricking, tempting, and fooling others, the enemy of

mankind was fooled himself. After that Vakula went into the outer room, made himself a hole in the hay, and slept till dinnertime. When he woke up he was frightened at seeing that the sun was already high. “I’ve overslept myself and missed matins and mass!”

Then the worthy blacksmith was overwhelmed with distress, thinking that no doubt God, as a punishment for his sinful intention of damning his soul, had sent this heavy sleep, which had prevented him from even being in church on this solemn holiday. However, comforting himself with the thought that next week he would confess all this to the priest and that from that day he would begin making fifty genuflections a day for a whole year, he glanced into the hut; but there was no one there. Apparently Solokha had not yet returned.

Carefully he drew out from the breast of his coat the slippers and again marveled at the costly workmanship and at the wonderful adventure of the previous night. He washed and dressed himself in his best, put on the very clothes which he had got from the Dnieper Cossacks, took out of a chest a new cap of good astrakhan with a dark blue top not once worn since he had bought it while staying in Poltava; he also took out a new girdle of rainbow colors; he put all this together with a whip in a kerchief and set off straight to see Chub.

Chub opened his eyes wide when the blacksmith walked into his hut, and did not know what to wonder at most: the blacksmith’s having risen from the dead, the blacksmith’s having dared to come to see him, or the blacksmith’s being dressed up as such a dandy, like a Dnieper Cossack. But he was even more astonished when Vakula untied the kerchief and laid before him a new cap and a girdle such as had never been seen in the village, and then fell down on his knees before him, and said in a tone of entreaty: “Have mercy, father! Be not angry! Here is a whip; beat me as much as your heart may desire. I give myself up, I repent of everything! Beat, but only be not angry. You were once a comrade of my father’s, you ate bread and salt together and drank the cup of goodwill.”

It was not without secret satisfaction that Chub saw the blacksmith, who had never bowed to anyone in the village and who could twist five-kopek pieces and horseshoes in his hands like pancakes, lying now at his feet. In order to maintain his dignity still further, Chub took the whip and gave him three strokes on the back. “Well, that’s enough; get up! Always obey the old! Let us forget everything that has passed between us. Come, tell me now what is it that you want?”

“Give me Oksana for my wife, father!”

Chub thought a little, looked at the cap and the girdle. The cap was delightful and the girdle, too, was not inferior to it; he thought of the treacherous Solokha and said resolutely: “Good! send the matchmakers!”

“Aie!” shrieked Oksana, as she crossed the threshold and saw the blacksmith, and she gazed at him with astonishment and delight.

“Look, what slippers I have brought you!” said Vakula, “they are the same as the Czarina wears!”

“No, no! I don’t want slippers!” she said, waving her arms and keeping her eyes fixed upon him. “I am ready without slippers...” She blushed and could say no more.

The blacksmith went up to her and took her by the hand; the beauty looked down. Never before had she looked so exquisitely lovely. The enchanted blacksmith gently kissed her; her face flushed crimson and she was even lovelier.

The bishop of blessed memory was driving through Dikanka. He admired the site on which the village stands, and as he drove down the street stopped before a new hut.

“And whose is this hut so gaily painted?” asked his Reverence of a beautiful woman, who was standing near the door with a baby in her arms.

“The blacksmith Vakula’s!” Oksana, for it was she, told him, bowing.

“Splendid! splendid work!” said his Reverence, examining the doors and windows. The windows were all outlined with a ring of red paint; everywhere on the doors there were Cossacks on horseback with pipes in their teeth.

But his Reverence was even warmer in his praise of Vakula when he learned that by way of church penance he had painted free of charge the whole of the left choir in green with red flowers.

But that was not all. On the wall, to one side as you go in at the church, Vakula had painted the devil in hell—such a loathsome figure that everyone spat as he passed. And the women would take a child up to the picture, if it would go on crying in their arms, and would say: “There, look! What a *kaka!*” And the child, restraining its tears, would steal a glance at the picture and nestle closer to its mother.

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A Terrible Vengeance

I

There was a bustle and an uproar in a quarter of Kiev: Gorobets, Captain of the Cossacks, was celebrating his son's wedding. A great many people had come as guests to the wedding. In the old days they liked good food, better still liked drinking, and best of all they liked merrymaking. Among others the Dnieper Cossack Mikitka came on his sorrel horse straight from a riotous orgy at the Pereshlay Plain, where for seven days and seven nights he had been entertaining the Polish king's soldiers with red wine. The Captain's adopted brother, Danilo Burulbash, came too, with his young wife Katerina and his year-old son, from beyond the Dnieper where his farmstead lay between two mountains. The guests marveled at the fair face of the young wife Katerina, her eyebrows as black as German velvet, her beautiful cloth dress and underskirt of blue silk, and her boots with silver heels; but they marveled still more that her old father had not come with her. He had been living in that region for scarcely a year, and for twenty-one years before nothing had been heard of him and he had only come back to his daughter when she was married and had borne a son. No doubt he would have many strange stories to tell. How could he fail to have them, after being so long in foreign parts! Everything there is different: the people are not the same and there are no Christian churches.... But he had not come.

They brought the guests spiced vodka with raisins and plums in it and wedding bread on a big dish. The musicians began on the bottom crust, in which coins had been baked, and put their fiddles, cymbals, and tambourines down for a brief rest. Meanwhile the girls and young women, after wiping their mouths with embroidered handkerchiefs, stepped out again to the center of the room, and the young men, putting their arms akimbo and looking haughtily about them, were on the point of going to meet them, when the old Captain brought out two icons to bless the young couple. These icons had come to him from the venerable hermit, Father Varfolomey. They had no rich setting, there was no gleam of gold or silver on them, but no evil power dare approach the man in whose house they stand. Raising the icons on high the Captain was about to deliver a brief prayer... when all at once the children playing on the ground cried out in terror, and the people drew back, and everyone pointed with their fingers in alarm at a Cossack who was standing in their midst. Who he was nobody

knew. But he had already danced splendidly and had diverted the people standing around him. But when the Captain lifted up the icons, at once the Cossack's face completely changed: his nose grew longer and twisted to one side, his rolling eyes turned from brown to green, his lips turned blue, his chin quivered and grew pointed like a spear, a tusk peeped out of his mouth, a hump appeared behind his head, and the Cossack turned into an old man.

"It is he! It is he!" shouted the crowd, huddling close together.

"The sorcerer has appeared again!" cried the mothers, snatching up their children.

Majestically and with dignity the Captain stepped forward and, turning the icons toward him, said in a loud voice: "Away, image of Satan! This is no place for you!" And, hissing and clacking his teeth like a wolf, the strange old man vanished.

Talk and conjecture arose among the people and the hubbub was like the roar of the sea in bad weather.

"What is this sorcerer?" asked the young people, who knew nothing about him.

"There will be trouble!" muttered their elders, shaking their heads. And everywhere about the spacious courtyard folks gathered in groups listening to the story of the dreadful sorcerer. But almost everyone told it differently and no one could tell anything certain about him.

A barrel of mead was rolled out and many gallons of Greek wine were brought into the yard. The guests regained their lightheadedness. The orchestra struck up —the girls, the young women, the gallant Cossacks in their gay-colored coats flew around in the dance. After a glass, old folks of ninety, of a hundred, began dancing too, remembering the years that had passed. They feasted till late into the night and feasted as none feast nowadays. The guests began to disperse, but only a few made their way home; many of them stayed to spend the night in the Captain's wide courtyard; and even more Cossacks dropped to sleep uninvited under the benches, on the floor, by their horses, by the stables; wherever the tipplers stumbled, there they lay, snoring for the whole town to hear.

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II

There was a soft light all over the earth: the moon had come up from behind the mountain. It covered the steep bank of the Dnieper as with a costly damask muslin, white as snow, and the shadows drew back further into the pine forest.

A boat, hollowed out of an oak tree, was floating in the Dnieper. Two young Cossacks were sitting in the bow; their black Cossack caps were cocked on one side; and the drops flew in all directions from their oars as sparks fly from a flint.

Why were the Cossacks not singing? Why were they not telling of the Polish priests who go about the Ukraine forcing the Cossack people to turn Catholic, or of the two days' fight with the Tartars at the Salt Lake? How could they sing, how could they tell of gallant deeds? Their lord, Danilo, was deep in thought, and the sleeve of his crimson coat hung out of the boat and was dipped in the water; their mistress, Katerina, was softly rocking her child and keeping her eyes fixed upon it, while her beautiful gown was made wet by the spray which fell like fine gray dust.

Sweet it is to look from mid-Dnieper at the lofty mountains, at the broad meadows, at the green forests! Those mountains are not mountains; they end in peaks below, as above, and both under and above them lie the high heavens. Those forests on the hills are not forests: they are the hair that covers the shaggy head of the wood demon. Down below he washes his beard in the water, and under his beard and over his head lie the high heavens. Those meadows are not meadows: they are a green girdle encircling the round sky; and above and below the moon hovers over them.

Lord Danilo looks not about him; he looks at his young wife. "Why are you so deep in sadness, my young wife, my golden Katerina?"

"I am not deep in sadness, Danilo! I am full of dread at the strange tales of the sorcerer. They say when he was born he was terrible to look at... and not one of the children would play with him. Listen, Danilo, what dreadful things they say: he thought all were mocking him. If he met a man in the dark he thought that he opened his mouth and grinned at him; and next day they found that man dead. I marveled and was frightened hearing those tales," said Katerina, taking out a kerchief and wiping the face of the sleeping child. The kerchief had been embroidered by her with leaves and fruits in red silk.

Lord Danilo said not a word, but looked into the darkness where far away

beyond the forest there was the dark ridge of an earthen wall and beyond the wall rose an old castle. Three lines furrowed his brow; his left hand stroked his gallant mustaches.

“It is not that he is a sorcerer that is cause for fear,” he said, “but that he is here for some evil. What whim has brought him here? I have heard it said that the Poles mean to build a fort to cut off our way to the Dnieper Cossacks. That may be true.... I will scatter that devil’s nest if any rumor reaches me that he harbors our foes there. I will burn the old sorcerer so that even the crows will find nothing to peck at. And I think he lacks not store of gold and wealth of all kinds. It’s there the devil lives! If he has gold... We shall soon row by the crosses —that’s the graveyard! There lie his evil forefathers. I am told they were all ready to sell themselves to Satan for a brass coin—soul and threadbare coat and all. If truly he has gold, there is no time to lose: there is not always booty to be won in war....”

“I know what you are planning: my heart tells me no good will come from your meeting him. But you are breathing so hard, you are looking so fierce, your brows are knitted so angrily above your eyes...”

“Hold your tongue, woman!” said Danilo wrathfully. “If one has dealings with you, one will turn into a woman, oneself. You, give me a light for my pipe!” Here he turned to one of the rowers who, knocking some hot ash from his pipe, began putting it into his master’s. “She would scare me with the sorcerer!” Danilo went on. “A Cossack, thank God, fears neither devil nor Catholic priest. What should we come to if we listened to women? No good, should we, boys? The best wife for us is a pipe and a sharp sword!”

Katerina sat silent, looking down into the slumbering river; and the wind ruffled the water into eddies and all the Dnieper shimmered with silver like a wolf’s skin in the night.

The boat turned and hugged the wooded bank. A graveyard came into sight; tumbledown crosses stood huddled together. No guelder rose grows among them, no grass is green there; only the moon warms them from the heavenly heights.

“Do you hear the shouts? Someone is calling for our help!” said Danilo, turning to his oarsmen.

“We hear shouts, and they are coming from that bank,” the two young men cried together, pointing to the graveyard.

But all was still again. The boat turned, following the curve of the projecting bank. All at once the rowers dropped their oars and stared before them without moving. Danilo stopped too: a chill of horror surged through the Cossack’s veins.

A cross on one of the graves tottered and a withered corpse rose slowly up out of the earth. Its beard reached to its waist; the nails on its fingers were longer than the fingers themselves. It slowly raised its hands upward. Its face was all twisted and distorted. One could see it was suffering terrible torments. “I am stifling, stifling!” it moaned in a strange, inhuman voice. Its voice seemed to scrape on the heart like a knife, and suddenly it disappeared under the earth. Another cross tottered and again a dead body came forth, more frightening and taller than the one before; it was all hairy, with a beard to its knees and even longer claws. Still more terribly it shouted: “I am stifling!” and vanished into the earth. A third cross tottered, a third corpse appeared. It seemed like a skeleton rising from the earth; its beard reached to its heels; the nails on its fingers pierced the ground. Terribly it raised its hands toward the sky as though it would seize the moon, and shrieked as though someone were sawing its yellow bones....

The child asleep on Katerina’s lap screamed and woke up; the lady screamed too; the oarsmen let their caps fall in the river; even their master shuddered.

Suddenly it all vanished as though it had never been; but it was a long time before the rowers took up their oars again. Burulbash looked anxiously at his young wife who, panic-stricken, was rocking the screaming child in her arms; he pressed her to his heart and kissed her on the forehead.

“Fear not, Katerina! Look, there is nothing!” he said, pointing around. “It is the sorcerer who frightens people so that they will not break into his foul lair. He only scares women! Let me hold my son!”

With those words Danilo lifted up his son and kissed him. “Why, Ivan, you are not afraid of sorcerers, are you? Say: ‘No, Daddy, I’m a Cossack!’ Stop crying! soon we shall be home! Then Mother will give you your porridge, put you to bed in your cradle, and sing:

Lullaby, my little son,
Lullaby to sleep!
Play about and grow a man!
To the glory of the Cossacks
And destruction of our foes.

Listen, Katerina! It seems that your father will not live at peace with us. He was sullen, gloomy, as though angry, when he came.... If he doesn’t like it, why come? He would not drink to Cossack freedom! He has never fondled the child! At first I would have trusted him with all that lay in my heart, but I could not do it; the words stuck in my throat. No, he has not a Cossack heart! When Cossack

hearts meet, they almost leap out of the breast to greet each other! Well, my friends, is the bank near? I will give you new caps. You, Stetsko, I will give one made of velvet and gold. I took it from a Tartar with his head; I got all his gear, too; I let nothing go but his soul. Well, here is land! Here, we are home, Ivan, but still you cry! Take him, Katerina...!”

They all got out. A thatched roof came into sight behind the mountain: it was Danilo’s ancestral home. Beyond it was another mountain, and then the open plain, and there you might travel a hundred miles and not see a single Cossack.

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III

Danilo’s farm lay between two mountains in a narrow valley that ran down to the Dnieper. It was a low-pitched house like the hut of an ordinary Cossack, and there was only one large room in it; but he and his wife and their old maidservant and ten picked young Cossacks all had their places in it. There were oak shelves running around the walls at the top. Bowls and cooking pots were piled upon them. Among them were silver goblets and drinking cups mounted in gold, gifts or booty brought from the war. Lower down hung costly swords, guns, spears; willingly or unwillingly, they had come from the Tartars, the Turks, and the Poles, and many a dent there was in them. Looking at them, Danilo was reminded of his encounters. At the bottom of the wall were smooth-planed oak benches; beside them, in front of the stove, the cradle hung on cords from a ring fixed in the ceiling. The whole floor of the room was leveled and plastered with clay. On the benches slept Danilo and his wife; on the stove the old maidservant; the child played and was lulled to sleep in the cradle; and on the floor the young Cossacks slept in a row. But a Cossack likes best to sleep on the flat earth in the open air; he needs no feather bed or pillow; he piles fresh hay under his head and stretches at his ease upon the grass. It rejoices his heart to wake up in the night and look up at the lofty sky spangled with stars and to shiver at the chill of night which refreshes his Cossack bones; stretching and muttering through his sleep, he lights his pipe and wraps himself more closely in his sheepskin.

Burulbash did not wake early after the merrymaking of the day before; when he woke he sat on a bench in a corner and began sharpening a new Turkish saber, for which he had just bartered something; and Katerina set to work embroidering a silken towel with gold thread.

All at once Katerina’s father came in, angry and frowning, with an outlandish pipe in his teeth; he went up to his daughter and began questioning her sternly, asking what was the reason she had come home so late the night before.

“It is not her but me you should question about that, father-in-law! Not the wife but the husband is responsible. That’s our way here, don’t be disturbed about it,” said Danilo, going on with his work. “Perhaps in infidel lands it is not so—I don’t know.”

The color came into the father-in-law’s face; there was an ominous gleam in his eye. “Who, if not a father, should watch over his daughter!” he muttered to himself. “Well, I ask you: where were you roving so late at night?”

“Ah, that’s it at last, dear father-in-law! To that I will answer that I have left swaddling clothes behind me long ago. I can ride a horse, I can wield a sharp sword, and there are other things I can do... I can refuse to answer to anyone for what I do.”

“I know, I see, Danilo, you seek a quarrel! A man who is not frank has some evil in his mind.”

“You may think as you please,” said Danilo, “and I will think as I please. Thank God, I’ve had no part in any dishonorable deed so far; I have always stood for the Orthodox faith and my fatherland, not like some vagabonds who go tramping God knows where while good Christians are fighting to the death, and afterward come back to reap the harvest they have not sown. They are worse than the Uniats: they never go into the Church of God. It is such men that should be strictly questioned as to where they have been.”

“Ah, Cossack! Do you know... I am no great shot; my bullet only pierces the heart at seven hundred feet; I am nothing to boast of at swordplay either: I leave bits of my opponent behind, though in truth, the pieces are smaller than the grains you use for porridge.”

“I am ready,” said Danilo jauntily, making the sign of the cross in the air with the saber, as though he knew what he had sharpened it for.

“Danilo!” Katerina cried aloud, seizing him by the arm and hanging on it, “think what you are doing, madman, see against whom you are lifting your hand! Father, your hair is white as snow, but you have flown into a rage like a senseless boy!”

“Wife!” Danilo cried menacingly, “you know I will have no interference! You mind your woman’s business!”

There was a terrible clatter of swords; steel hacked steel and the Cossacks sent sparks flying like dust. Katerina went out weeping into another room, flung herself on the bed, and covered her ears that she might not hear the clash of the swords. But the Cossacks did not fight so faintheartedly that she could smother the sound of their blows. Her heart was ready to break; she seemed to hear all over her the clank of the swords. “No, I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it.... Perhaps the red blood is already flowing out of his white body; maybe by now my dear one is helpless, and I am lying here!” And pale all over, scarcely breathing, she went back.

A terrible and even fight it was; neither of the Cossacks was winning the day. At one moment Katerina’s father attacked and Danilo seemed to give way; then Danilo attacked and the sullen father seemed to yield; and again they were equal. They boiled with rage, they swung their swords... Ough! The swords clashed... and with a clatter the blades flew out of the handles.

“Thank God!” said Katerina, but she screamed again when she saw that the Cossacks had picked up their muskets. They put in the flints and drew the triggers.

Danilo fired and missed. Her father took aim... He was old, he did not see so well as the younger man, but his hand did not tremble. A shot rang out... Danilo staggered; the red blood stained the left sleeve of his Cossack coat.

“No!” he cried, “I will not yield so easily. Not the left but the right hand is master. I have a Turkish pistol hanging on the wall: never yet has it failed me. Come down from the wall, old comrade! Do your friend a service!” Danilo stretched out his hand.

“Danilo!” cried Katerina in despair, clutching his hands and falling at his feet. “Not for myself I beseech you. There is but one end for me: unworthy is the wife who will outlive her husband; Dnieper, the cold Dnieper, will be my grave.... But look at your son, Danilo, look at your son! Who will cherish the poor child? Who will be kind to him? Who will teach him to race on the black stallion, to fight for faith and freedom, to drink and carouse like a Cossack? You must perish, my son, you must perish! Your father will not think of you! See how he turns away his head. Oh, I know you now! You are a wild beast and not a man! You have the heart of a wolf and the mind of a crafty reptile! I thought there was a drop of pity in you, that there was human feeling in your breast of stone. I have been terribly deceived! This will be a delight to you. Your bones will dance in the grave with joy when they hear the foul brutes of Poles throwing your son into the flames, when your son shrieks under the knife or the scalding water. Oh, I know you! You would be glad to rise up from the grave and fan the flames under him with your cap!”

“Stop, Katerina! Come, my precious Ivan, let me kiss you! No, my child, no one shall touch a hair of your head. You shall grow up to the glory of your fatherland; like a whirlwind you shall fly at the head of the Cossacks with a velvet cap on your head and a sharp sword in your hand. Give me your hand, Father! Let us forget what has been between us! For what wrong I have done you I ask pardon. Why do you not give me your hand?” said Danilo to Katerina’s father, who stood without moving, with no sign of anger nor of reconciliation on his face.

“Father!” cried Katerina, embracing and kissing him, “don’t be merciless, forgive Danilo: he will never offend you again!”

“For your sake only, my daughter, I forgive him!” he answered, kissing her with a strange glitter in his eyes.

Katerina shuddered faintly: the kiss and the strange glitter seemed uncanny to her. She leaned her elbows on the table, at which Danilo was bandaging his

wounded hand, while he wondered if he had acted like a Cossack in asking pardon when he had done no wrong.

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IV

The day broke, but without sunshine: the sky was overcast and a fine rain was falling on the plains, on the forest, and on the broad Dnieper. Katerina woke up, but not joyfully: her eyes were tear-stained, and she was restless and uneasy.

“My dear husband, my precious husband! I have had a strange dream!”

“What dream, my sweet wife Katerina?”

“I had a strange dream, and as vivid as though it were real, that my father was that very monster whom we saw at the Captain’s.

But I beg you, do not put faith in the dream: one dreams all manner of foolishness. I dreamed that I was standing before him, was trembling and frightened, my whole body racked with pain at every word he said. If only you had heard what he said...”

“What did he say, my darling Katerina?”

“He said: ‘Look at me, Katerina, how handsome I am! People are wrong in saying I am ugly. I should make you a fine husband. See what a look there is in my eyes!’ Then he turned his fiery eyes upon me. I cried out and woke up...”

“Yes, dreams tell many a true thing. But do you know that all is not quiet beyond the mountain? I believe the Poles may have begun to show themselves again. Gorobets sent me a message to keep alert, but he need not have troubled —I am not asleep as it is. My Cossacks have piled up a dozen barricades during the night. We will treat Poland to leaden plums and the Poles will dance to our sticks.”

“And Father, does he know of this?”

“Your father is a burden on my back! I’ll be damned if I can understand him. Perhaps he has committed many sins in foreign lands. What other reason can there be? Here he has lived with us more than a month and not once has he made merry like a true Cossack! He would not drink mead! Do you hear, Katerina, he would not drink the mead which I wrung out of the Jews at Brest. Boy!” cried Danilo, “run to the cellar, boy, and bring me the Jews’ mead! He won’t even drink vodka! What do you make of that? I believe, my lady Katerina, that he does not believe in Christ. Eh, what do you think?”

“God forgive you for what you are saying, my lord Danilo!”

“Strange, wife!” Danilo went on, taking the earthenware mug from the Cossack, “even the damned Catholics have a weakness for vodka; it is only the Turks who do not drink. Well, Stetsko, have you had a good sip of mead in the

cellar?”

“I just tried it, sir.”

“You are lying, you son of a bitch! See how the flies have settled on your mustache! I can see from your eyes that you have gulped down half a pailful. Oh, you Cossacks! What reckless fellows! Ready to give all else to a comrade, but he keeps his drink to himself. It is a long time, my lady Katerina, since I have been drunk. Eh?”

“A long time indeed! Why, last...”

“Don’t be afraid; don’t be afraid, I won’t drink more than a mugful! And here is the Turkish abbot at the door!” he muttered through his teeth, seeing his father-in-law stooping to come in.

“What’s this, my daughter!” said the father, taking his cap off his head and adjusting his girdle where hung a saber set with precious stones; “the sun is already high and your dinner is not ready.”

“Dinner is ready, my lord and father, we will serve it at once! Bring out the pot of dumplings!” said the young mistress to the old maidservant who was wiping the wooden bowls. “Stop, I had better get it out myself, while you call the men.”

They all sat down on the floor in a ring; facing the icons sat the father, on his left Danilo, on his right Katerina, and ten of Danilo’s most trusted Cossacks in blue and yellow coats.

“I don’t like these dumplings!” said the father, laying down his spoon after eating a little. “There is no flavor in them!”

“I know you like Jewish noodles better,” thought Danilo. “Why do you say there is no flavor in the dumplings, father-in-law? Are they badly made or what? My Katerina makes dumplings such as the Hetman does not often taste. And there is no need to despise them: it is a Christian dish! All holy people and godly saints have eaten dumplings!”

Not a word from the father. Danilo, too, said no more.

They served roast boar with cabbage and plums.

“I don’t like pork,” said Katerina’s father, picking out a spoonful of cabbage.

“Why don’t you like pork?” said Danilo. “It is only Turks and Jews who won’t eat pork.”

The father frowned more angrily than ever.

He ate nothing but some baked flour pudding with milk over it, and instead of vodka drank some black liquid from a bottle he took out of his bosom.

After dinner Danilo slept like a hero and only woke toward evening. He sat down to write to the Cossack troops, while his young wife sat on the stove, rocking the cradle with her foot. The lord Danilo sat there, his left eye on his writing while his right eye looked out of the window. From the window far away

he could see the shining mountains and the Dnieper; beyond the Dnieper lay the dark blue forest; overhead glimmered the clear night sky. But the lord Danilo was not gazing at the faraway sky and the blue forest; he was watching the projecting tongue of land on which stood the old castle. He thought that a light gleamed at a narrow little window in the castle. But everything was still; it must have been his imagination. All he could hear was the hollow murmur of the Dnieper down below and, from three sides, the resounding splash of the waves suddenly awakening. It was not in turmoil. Like an old man, it merely muttered and grumbled, finding nothing that pleased it. Everything about it had changed; it was feuding with the mountains, the woods, and the meadows on its banks, carrying its complaints to the Black Sea.

And now on the wide expanse of the Dnieper the black speck of a boat appeared and again there was a gleam of light in the castle. Danilo gave a low whistle and the faithful servant ran in at the sound.

“Make haste, Stetsko, bring with you a sharp sword and a musket, and follow me!”

“Are you going out?” asked Katerina.

“I am, wife. I must inspect everything and see that all is in order.”

“But I am afraid to be left alone. I am weary with sleep: what if I should have the same dream again? And, indeed, I am not sure it was a dream—it was all so vivid.”

“The old woman will stay with you, and there are Cossacks sleeping in the porch and in the courtyard.”

“The old woman is asleep already, and somehow I put no trust in the Cossacks. Listen, Danilo: lock me in the room and take the key with you. Then I shall not be so afraid; and let the Cossacks lie before the door.”

“So be it!” said Danilo, wiping the dust off his musket and loading it with powder.

The faithful Stetsko stood ready with all the Cossack’s equipment. Danilo put on his astrakhan cap, closed the window, bolted and locked the door, and stepping between his sleeping Cossacks, went out of the courtyard toward the mountains.

The sky was almost completely clear again. A fresh breeze blew lightly from the Dnieper. But for the wail of a gull in the distance all was silent. But a faint rustle stirred... Burulbash and his faithful servant stealthily hid behind the brambles that screened a barricade of felled trunks. Someone in a scarlet coat, with two pistols and a sword at his side, came down the mountainside. “It’s my father-in-law,” said Danilo, watching him from behind the bushes.

“Where is he going at this hour, and what is he up to? Be alert, Stetsko: keep a

sharp watch which road your mistress's father takes."

The man in the scarlet coat went down to the riverbank and turned toward the jutting tongue of land.

"Ah, so that is where he is going," said Danilo. "Tell me, Stetsko, hasn't he gone to the sorcerer's den?"

"Nowhere else, for certain, my lord Danilo! Or we should have seen him on the other side; but he disappeared near the castle."

"Wait a minute: let us get out and follow his track. There is some secret in this. Yes, Katerina, I told you your father was an evil man; he does nothing like a good Christian."

Danilo and his faithful servant leaped out on the tongue of land. Soon they were out of sight; the slumbering forest around the castle hid them. A gleam of light came into an upper window; the Cossacks stood below wondering how to climb to it; no gate nor door was to be seen; doubtless there was a door in the courtyard, but how could they climb in? They could hear in the distance the clanking of chains and the stirring of dogs.

"Why am I wasting time?" said Danilo, seeing a big oak tree by the window. "Stay here, friend! I will climb up the oak; from it I can look straight into the window."

With this he took off his girdle, put down his sword so that it might not jingle, and gripping the branches, lifted himself up. There was still a light at the window. Sitting on a branch close to the window, he held on to the tree and looked in: it was light in the room but there was no candle. On the wall were mysterious symbols; weapons were hanging there, but all were strange—not such as are worn by Turks or Tartars or Poles or Christians or the gallant Swedish people. Bats flitted to and fro under the ceiling and their shadows flitted to and fro over the floor, the doors, and the walls. Then the door noiselessly opened. Someone in a scarlet coat walked in and went straight up to the table, which was covered with a white cloth. "It is he; it is my father-in-law!" Danilo crept a little lower down and huddled closer to the tree.

But his father-in-law had no time to look whether anyone were peeping in at the window. He came in, morose and ill-humored; he drew the cloth off the table, and at once the room was filled with transparent blue light, but the waves of pale golden light with which the room had been filled, eddied and dived, as in a blue sea, without mingling with it, and ran through it in streaks like the lines in marble. Then he set a pot upon the table and began scattering some herbs in it.

Danilo looked more attentively and saw that he was no longer wearing the scarlet coat; and that now he had on wide trousers, such as Turks wear, with pistols in his girdle, and on his head a strange cap embroidered all over with

letters that were neither Russian nor Polish. As he looked at his face the face began to change: his nose grew longer and hung right down over his lips; in one instant his mouth stretched to his ears; a crooked tooth peeped out beyond his lips; and Danilo saw before him the same sorcerer who had appeared at the Captain’s wedding feast. “Your dream was true, Katerina!” thought Burulbash.

The sorcerer began pacing around the table; the symbols on the wall began changing more rapidly, the bats flitted more swiftly up and down and to and fro. The blue light grew dimmer and dimmer and at last seemed to fade away. And now there was only a dim pinkish light in the room. It spread through the room and a faint ringing sound was heard. The light seemed to flood every corner, and suddenly it vanished and all was darkness. Nothing was heard but a murmur like the wind in the quiet evening hour when hovering over the mirrorlike water it bends the silvery willows lower into its depths. And it seemed to Danilo as though the moon were shining in the room, the stars were moving, there were vague glimpses of the bright blue sky within it, and he even felt the chill of night coming from it. And Danilo imagined (he began fingering his mustaches to make sure he was not dreaming) that it was no longer the sky but his own hut he was seeing through the window; his Tartar and Turkish swords were hanging on the walls; around the walls were the shelves with pots and pans; on the table stood bread and salt; the cradle hung from the ceiling... but hideous faces appeared where the icons should have been; on the stove... but a thick mist hid all and it was dark again. And accompanied by a faint ringing sound the rosy light flooded the room again, and again the sorcerer stood motionless in his strange turban. The sounds grew louder and deeper, the delicate rosy light shone more brilliant, and something white like a cloud hovered in the middle of the room; and it seemed to Danilo that the cloud was not a cloud, but that a woman was standing there; but what was she made of? Surely not of air? Why did she stand without touching the floor, without leaning on anything, why did the rosy light and the magic symbols on the wall show through her? And now she moved her transparent head; a soft light shone in her pale blue eyes; her hair curled and fell over her shoulders like a pale gray mist; a faint flush colored her lips like the scarcely perceptible crimson glimmer of dawn glowing through the white transparent sky of morning; the brows darkened a little... Ah, it was Katerina! Danilo felt his limbs turned to stone; he tried to speak, but his lips moved without uttering a sound.

The sorcerer stood without moving. “Where have you been?” he asked, and the figure standing before him trembled.

“Oh, why did you call me up?” she moaned softly. “I was so happy. I was in the place where I was born and lived for fifteen years. Ah, how good it was

there! How green and fragrant was the meadow where I used to play in childhood! The darling wild flowers were the same as ever, and our hut and the garden! Oh, how my dear mother embraced me! How much love there was in her eyes! She caressed me, she kissed my lips and my cheeks, combed out my fair hair with a fine comb... Father!" Then she bent her pale eyes on the sorcerer. "Why did you murder my mother?"

The sorcerer shook his finger at her menacingly. "Did I ask you to speak of that?" And the ethereal beauty trembled. "Where is your mistress now?"

"My mistress Katerina has fallen asleep and I was glad of it: I flew up and darted off. For long years I have longed to see my mother. I was suddenly fifteen again, I felt light as a bird. Why have you sent for me?"

"You remember all I said to you yesterday?" the sorcerer said, so softly that it was hard to catch the words.

"I remember, I remember! But what would I not give to forget them. Poor Katerina, there is much she doesn't know that her soul knows!"

"It is Katerina's soul," thought Danilo, but still he dared not stir.

"Repent, Father! Is it not dreadful that after every murder you commit the dead rise up from their graves?"

"You are at your old tune again!" said the sorcerer menacingly. "I will have my way, I will make you do as I will. Katerina shall love me..."

"Oh, you are a monster and not my father!" she moaned. "No, your will shall not be done! It is true that by your foul spells you have power to call up and torture her soul; but only God can make her do what He wills. No, never shall Katerina, so long as I am living in her body, bring herself to so ungodly a deed. Father, a terrible judgment is at hand! Even if you were not my father, you would never make me false to my faithful and beloved husband. Even if my husband were not true and dear to me, I would not betray him, for God detests souls that are faithless and false to their vows."

Then she fixed her pale eyes on the window under which Danilo was sitting, and was silent and still as death.

"What are you looking at? Whom do you see there...?" cried the sorcerer.

The wraith of Katerina trembled. But already Danilo was on the ground and with his faithful Stetsko making his way to his mountain home. "Terrible, terrible!" he murmured to himself, feeling a thrill of fear in his Cossack heart, and he rapidly crossed his courtyard, in which the Cossacks slept as soundly as ever, all but one who sat on guard smoking a pipe.

The sky was all studded with stars.

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V

“How glad I am you have awakened me!” said Katerina, wiping her eyes with the embroidered sleeve of her nightgown and looking intently at her husband as he stood facing her. “What a terrible dream I have had! I could hardly breathe! Ough...! I thought I was dying....”

“What was your dream? Was it like this?” And Burulbash told his wife all that he had seen.

“How did you know it, husband?” asked Katerina in amazement. “But no, many things you tell me I did not know. No, I did not dream that my father murdered my mother; I did not dream of the dead. No, Danilo, you have not told the dream right. Oh, what a terrible man my father is!”

“And it is no wonder that you have not dreamed of that. You do not know a tenth part of what your soul knows. Do you know your father is the Antichrist? Only last year when I was getting ready to go with the Poles against the Crimean Tartars (I was still allied with that faithless people then), the Father Superior of the Bratsky Monastery (he is a holy man, wife) told me that the Antichrist has the power to call up every man’s soul; for the soul wanders freely when the body is asleep and flies with the archangels about the dwelling of God. I disliked your father’s face from the first. I would not have married you had I known you had such a father; I would have given you up and not have taken upon myself the sin of being allied to the brood of Antichrist.”

“Danilo!” cried Katerina, hiding her face in her hands and bursting into tears. “In what have I been to blame? Have I been false to you, my beloved husband? How have I roused your wrath? Have I not served you truly? Do I say a word to cross you when you come back merry from a drinking bout? Have I not borne you a black-browed son?”

“Do not weep, Katerina; now I know you and nothing would make me abandon you. The sin all lies at your father’s door.”

“No, do not call him my father! He is not my father. God is my witness I disown him, I disown my father! He is Antichrist, a rebel against God! If he were perishing, if he were drowning, I would not hold out a hand to save him; if his throat were parched by some magic herb I would not give him a drop of water. You are my father!”

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VI

In a deep underground cellar at Danilo's the sorcerer lay bound in iron chains behind a door with three locks, while his devilish castle above the Dnieper was on fire and the waves, glowing red as blood, splashed and surged around the ancient walls. It was not for sorcery, it was not for ungodly deeds that the sorcerer lay in the underground cellar—for his wickedness God was his judge; it was for secret treachery that he was imprisoned, for plotting with the foes of Orthodox Russia to sell to the Catholics the Ukrainian people and burn Christian churches. The sorcerer was gloomy; thoughts black as night strayed through his mind; he had but one day left to live and on the morrow he would take leave of the world; his punishment was awaiting him on the morrow. It was no light one: it would be an act of mercy if he were boiled alive in a cauldron or his sinful skin were flayed from him. The sorcerer was sad, his head was bowed. Perhaps he was already repenting on the eve of death; but his sins were not such as God would forgive. Above him was a little window covered with an iron grating. Clanking his chains, he stood to look out of the window and see whether his daughter were passing. She was gentle and forgiving as a dove; would she not have mercy on her father...? But there was no one. The road ran below the window; no one passed along it. Beneath it rippled the Dnieper; it cared for no one; it murmured, and it splashed monotonously, drearily.

Then someone appeared upon the road—it was a Cossack! And the prisoner heaved a deep sigh. Again the road was empty. In the distance someone was coming down the hill... a green overskirt flapped in the wind... a golden headdress glittered on her head... It was she! He pressed still closer to the window. Now she was coming nearer...

"Katerina, daughter! Have pity on me, be merciful!"

She was silent, she would not listen, she did not turn her eyes toward the prison, and had already passed, already vanished. The whole world was empty; dismally the Dnieper murmured; it made hearts sad; but did the sorcerer know anything of such sadness?

The day was drawing to a close. Now the sun was setting; now it had vanished. Now it was evening, it was cool; an ox was lowing somewhere; sounds of voices floated from afar: people doubtless going home from their work and making merry; a boat flashed into sight on the Dnieper... no one thought of the prisoner. A silver crescent gleamed in the sky; now someone came along the

road in the opposite direction; it was hard to tell the figure in the darkness; it was Katerina coming back.

“Daughter, for Christ’s sake! even the savage wolf cubs will not tear their mother in pieces—daughter, give one look at least to your guilty father!”

She heeded not but walked on.

“Daughter, for the sake of your unhappy mother...”

She stopped.

“Come close and hear my last words!”

“Why do you call me, enemy of God? Do not call me daughter! There is no kinship between us. What do you want of me for the sake of my unhappy mother?”

“Katerina, my end is near; I know that your husband means to tie me to the tail of a wild mare and send it racing in the open country, and maybe he will invent an end more dreadful yet...”

“But is there in the world a punishment bad enough for your sins? You may be sure no one will plead for you.”

“Katerina! It is not punishment in this world that I fear but in the next.... You are innocent, Katerina; your soul will fly about God in paradise; but your ungodly father’s soul will burn in a fire everlasting and never will that fire be quenched; it will burn more and more hotly; no drop of dew will fall upon it, nor will the wind breathe on it...”

“I can do nothing to ease that punishment,” said Katerina, turning away.

“Katerina, stay for one word! You can save my soul! You know not yet how good and merciful is God. Have you heard of the Apostle Paul, what a sinful man he was—but afterward he repented and became a saint?”

“What can I do to save your soul?” said Katerina. “It is not for a weak woman like me to think of that.”

“If I could but get out, I would abandon everything. I will repent, I will go into a cave, I will wear a hair shirt next to my skin and spend day and night in prayer. I will give up not only meat, but even fish I will not taste! I will lay nothing under me when I lie down to sleep! And I will pray without ceasing, pray without ceasing! And if God’s mercy does not release me from at least a hundredth part of my sins, I will bury myself up to the neck in the earth or entomb myself in a wall of stone; I will take neither food nor drink and perish; and I will give all my goods to the monks that they may sing a requiem for me for forty days and forty nights.”

Katerina pondered. “If I were to unlock you I could not undo your fetters.”

“I do not fear chains,” he said. “You say that they have fettered my hands and feet? No, I threw a mist over their eyes and held out a dry tree instead of hands.

Here, see: I have not a chain upon me now!” he said, walking into the middle of the cellar. “I should not have been contained by these walls either; but your husband does not know what walls these are: they were built by a holy hermit, and no evil power can deliver a prisoner from them without the very key with which the hermit used to lock his cell. Just such a cell will I build for myself, incredible sinner that I have been, when I am free again.”

“Listen, I will let you out; but what if you deceive me,” said Katerina, standing still at the door, “and instead of repenting, again become the devil’s comrade?”

“No, Katerina, I have not long left to live; my end is near even if I am not put to death. Can you believe that I will give myself up to eternal punishment?”

The key grated in the lock.

“Farewell! God in His mercy keep you, my child!” said the sorcerer, kissing her.

“Do not touch me, you fearful sinner; make haste and go...” said Katerina.

But he was gone.

“I let him out!” she said to herself, terror-stricken, looking wildly at the walls. “What answer shall I give my husband now? I am undone. There is nothing left but to bury myself alive!” and sobbing she almost fell upon the block on which the prisoner had been sitting. “But I have saved a soul,” she said softly. “I have done a godly deed; but my husband... I have deceived him for the first time. Oh, how terrible, how hard it will be for me to lie to him! Someone is coming! It is he! my husband!” She uttered a desperate shriek and fell senseless on the ground.

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VII

“It is I, my daughter! It is, I, my darling!” Katerina heard, as she revived and saw the old maidservant before her. The woman bent down and seemed to whisper to her, and stretching out her withered old hand, sprinkled her with water.

“Where am I?” said Katerina, sitting up and looking around her. “The Dnieper is splashing before me, behind me are the mountains... Where have you taken me, granny?”

“I have taken you out; I have carried you in my arms from the stifling cellar; I locked up the cellar again that you might not be in trouble with my lord Danilo.”

“Where is the key?” asked Katerina, looking at her girdle. “I don’t see it.”

“Your husband has taken it, to have a look at the sorcerer, my child.”

“To look! Granny, I am lost!” cried Katerina.

“God mercifully preserve us from that, my child! Only hold your peace, my little lady, no one will know anything.”

“He has escaped, the cursed Antichrist! Do you hear, Katerina, he has escaped!” said Danilo, coming up to his wife. His eyes flashed fire; his sword hung clanking at his side. His wife was like one dead.

“Has someone let him out, dear husband?” she brought out trembling.

“Yes, someone has—you are right: the devil. Look, where he was is a log chained to the wall. It is God’s pleasure, it seems, that the devil should not fear a Cossack’s hands! If any one of my Cossacks had dreamed of such a thing and I knew of it... I could find no punishment bad enough for him!”

“And if I had done it?” Katerina could not resist saying, and she stopped, panic-stricken.

“If you had done it you would be no wife to me. I would sew you up in a sack and drown you in mid-Dnieper...!”

Katerina could hardly breathe and she felt the hair stand up on her head.

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VIII

On the frontier road the Poles had gathered at a tavern and feasted there for two days. There were not a few of the rabble. They had doubtless met for some raid: some had muskets; there was jingling of spurs and clanking of swords. The nobles made merry and boasted; they talked of their marvelous deeds; they mocked at the Orthodox Christians, calling the Ukrainian people their serfs, and insolently twirled their mustaches and sprawled on the benches. There was a Catholic priest among them, too; but he was like them and had not even the semblance of a Christian priest; he drank and caroused with them and uttered shameful words with his foul tongue. The servants were no better than their masters: tucking up the sleeves of their tattered coats, they walked about with a swagger as though they were of consequence. They played cards, struck each other on the nose with cards; they had brought with them other men's wives; there was shouting, quarreling...! Their masters were at the height of their revelry, playing all sorts of tricks; pulling the Jewish tavern keeper by the beard, painting a cross on his impious brow, shooting blanks at the women, and dancing the *Cracovienne* with their impious priest. Such sinfulness had never been seen on Russian soil even among the Tartars; it was God's chastisement, seemingly, for the sins of Russia that she should be put to so great a shame! In the midst of the bedlam, talk could be heard of lord Danilo's farmstead above the Dnieper, of his lovely wife... The gang of thieves was plotting foul deeds!

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IX

The lord Danilo sat at the table in his house, leaning on his elbow, thinking. The lady Katerina sat on the stove, singing.

“I am sad, my wife!” said lord Danilo. “My head aches and my heart aches. I feel weighed down. It seems my death is hovering not far away.”

“Oh, my precious husband! lean your head upon me! Why do you cherish such black thoughts?” thought Katerina, but dared not utter the words. It was bitter to her, feeling her guilt, to receive her husband’s caresses.

“Listen, wife!” said Danilo, “do not desert our son when I am no more. God will give you no happiness either in this world or the next if you forsake him. Sad it will be for my bones to rot in the damp earth; sadder still it will be for my soul!”

“What are you saying, my husband? Was it not you who mocked at us weak women? And now you are talking like a weak woman yourself. You must live many years yet.”

“No, Katerina, my heart feels death near at hand. The world has become a sad place; cruel days are coming. Ah, I remember, I remember the good years—they will not return! He was living then, the honor and glory of our army, old Konashevich! The Cossack regiments pass before my eyes as though it were today. Those were golden days, Katerina! The old Hetman sat on a black stallion; his mace shone in his hand; the soldiers stood around him, and on each side moved the red sea of the Dnieper Cossacks. The Hetman began to speak—and all stood as though turned to stone. The old man wept when he told us of old days and battles long ago. Ah, Katerina, if only you knew how we fought in those days with the Turks! The scar on my head shows even now. Four bullets pierced me in four places and not one of the wounds has quite healed. How much gold we took in those days! The Cossacks filled their caps with precious stones. What horses, Katerina! If you only knew, what horses, Katerina, we drove away with us! Ah, I shall never fight like that! One would think I am not old and I am strong in body, yet the sword drops out of my hand, I live doing nothing and know not what I live for. There is no order in the Ukraine: the colonels and the captains quarrel like dogs: there is no chief over them all. Our gentry imitate Polish fashions and have copied their sly ways... they have sold their souls, accepting the Uniat faith. The Jews are oppressing the poor. Oh, those days, those days! Those days that are past! Whither have you fled, my

years? Go to the cellar, boy, and bring me a jug of mead! I will drink to the life of the past and to the years that have gone!”

“How shall we receive our guests, lord Danilo? The Poles are coming from the direction of the meadow,” said Stetsko, coming into the hut.

“I know what they are coming for,” said Danilo. “Saddle the horses, my faithful men! Put on your harness!. Bare your swords! Don’t forget to take your rations of lead: we must do honor to our guests!”

But before the Cossacks had time to saddle their horses and load their guns, the Poles covered the mountainside as leaves cover the ground in autumn.

“Ah, here we have foes to try our strength with!” said Danilo, looking at the stout Poles swaying majestically on their gold-harnessed steeds in the front ranks. “It seems it is my lot to have one more glorious jaunt! Take your pleasure, Cossack soul, for the last time! Go ahead, Cossacks, the festival for which we waited has come!”

And the festival was kept on the mountains and great was the merrymaking: swords were playing, bullets flying, horses neighing and prancing. The shouting dazed the brain; the smoke blinded the eye. All was confusion, but the Cossack knew where was friend, where was foe; whenever a bullet whistled a gallant rider dropped from the saddle, whenever a sword flashed—a head fell to the ground, babbling meaningless words.

But the red crest of Danilo’s Cossack cap could always be seen in the crowd; the gold girdle of his dark blue coat gleamed bright, the mane on his black horse fluttered in the breeze. Like a bird he flew here and there, shouting and waving his Damascus sword and hacking to right and to left. Hack away, Cossack, make merry! Cheer your gallant heart; but look not at the gold trappings and tunics: trample under foot the gold and jewels! Stab, Cossack! Wreak your will, Cossack! But look back: already the godless Poles are setting fire to the huts and driving away the frightened cattle. And like a whirlwind Danilo turned around, and the cap with the red crest gleamed now by the huts while the crowd about him scattered.

Hour after hour the Poles fought with the Cossacks; there were not many left of either; but lord Danilo did not slacken; with his long spear he thrust Poles from the saddle and his spirited steed trampled them under foot. Already his courtyard was almost cleared, already the Poles were flying in all directions; already the Cossacks were stripping the golden coats and rich trappings from the slain; already Danilo was setting off in pursuit, when he looked around to call his men together... and was overwhelmed with fury: he saw Katerina’s father. There he stood on the hillside aiming his musket at him. Danilo urged his horse straight upon him... Cossack, you go to your doom! Then came the crack of a shot —and

the sorcerer vanished behind the hill. Only the faithful Stetsko caught a glimpse of the scarlet coat and the strange hat. The Cossack staggered and fell to the ground. The faithful Stetsko flew to his master's aid: his lord lay stretched on the ground with his bright eyes closed while the red blood spurted from his breast. But he became aware of his faithful servant's presence; slowly he raised his eyelids and his eyes gleamed: "Farewell, Stetsko! Tell Katerina not to forsake her son! And do not you, my faithful servant, forsake him either!" and he ceased. His gallant soul flew from his noble body; his lips turned blue; the Cossack slept, never to wake again.

His faithful servant sobbed and beckoned to Katerina: "Come, lady, come! deeply has your lord been carousing; in drunken sleep he lies on the damp earth; and long will it be before he awakens!"

Katerina wrung her hands and fell like a sheaf of wheat on the dead body: "Husband, is it you lying here with closed eyes? Rise up, stretch out your hand! Stand up! Look, if only once, at your Katerina, move your lips, utter one word...! But you are mute, you are mute, my noble lord! You have turned blue as the Black Sea. Your heart is not beating! Why are you so cold, my lord? It seems my tears are not scalding, they have no power to warm you! It seems my weeping is not loud, it will not waken you! Who will lead your regiments now? Who will gallop on your black horse, loudly calling, and lead the Cossacks, waving your sword? Cossacks, Cossacks, where is your honor and glory? Your honor and glory is lying with closed eyes on the damp earth. Bury me, bury me with him! Throw earth upon my eyes! Press the maple boards upon my white breasts! My beauty is useless to me now!"

Katerina grieved and wept; while the distant horizon was covered with dust: the old Captain Gorobets was galloping to the rescue.

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X

Lovely is the Dnieper in tranquil weather when, freely and smoothly, its waters glide through forests and mountains. Not a sound, not a ripple is stirring. You look and cannot tell whether its majestic expanse moves or does not move; and it might be of molten crystal and like a blue road made of mirror, immeasurably broad, endlessly long, twining and twisting about the green world. Sweet it is then for the burning sun to peep at itself from the heights and to plunge its beams in the cool of its glassy waves, and for the forests on the banks to watch their bright reflections in the water. Wreathed in green, they press with the wild flowers close to the river's edge, and bending over look in and are never tired of gazing and admiring their bright reflection, and smile and greet it with nodding branches. In mid-Dnieper they dare not look: none but the sun and the blue sky gaze into it; rarely a bird flies to the middle of the river. Glorious it is! No river like it in the world! Lovely too is the Dnieper on a warm summer night when all are sleeping— man, beast, and bird—while God alone majestically surveys earth and heaven and majestically shakes His robe, showering stars that glow and shine above the world and are all reflected together in the Dnieper. All of them the Dnieper holds in its dark bosom; not one escapes it till quenched in the sky. The black forests dotted with sleeping crows and the mountains cleft asunder in ages past strive, hanging over, to conceal the river in their long shadows, but in vain! There is nothing in the world that could hide the Dnieper. Deep, deep blue it flows, spreading its waters far and wide at midnight as at midday; it is seen far, far away, as far as the eye of man can see. Shrinking from the cold of night and huddling closer to the bank, it leaves behind a silver trail gleaming like the blade of a Damascus sword, while the deep blue water slumbers again. Lovely then, too, is the Dnieper, and no river is like it in the world! When dark blue storm clouds pile in masses over the sky, the dark forest totters to its roots, the oaks creak, and the lightning slashing through the storm clouds suddenly lights up the whole world—terrible then is the Dnieper! Then its mountainous billows roar, flinging themselves against the hillside, and flashing and moaning rush back and wail and lament in the distance. So the old mother laments as she lets her Cossack son go to the war. Bold and reckless, he rides his black stallion, arms akimbo and jaunty cap on one side, while she, sobbing, runs after him, seizes him by the stirrup, catches the bridle, and wrings her hands over him, bathed in bitter tears.

Strange and black are the burnt tree stumps and stones on the jutting bank between the warring waves. And the landing boat is beaten against the bank, thrown upward, and flung back again. What Cossack dared row out in a boat when the old Dnieper was raging? Surely he knew not that the river swallows men like flies.

The boat reached the bank; out of it stepped the sorcerer. He was in no happy mood: bitter to him was the funeral feast which the Cossacks had kept over their slain master. Heavily had the Poles paid for it: forty-four of them in all their harness and thirty-three servants were hacked to pieces, while the others were captured with their horses to be sold to the Tartars.

He went down stone steps between the burnt stumps to a place where he had a cave dug deep in the earth. He went in softly, not letting the door creak, put a pot on the table that was covered with a cloth, and began with his long hands strewing into it some strange herbs; he took a ladle made of some rare wood, scooped up some water with it, and poured it out, moving his lips and repeating an incantation. The cave was flooded with rosy light and his face was terrible to look upon: it seemed covered with blood, only the deep wrinkles showed up black upon it, and his eyes blazed as though they were on fire. Foul sinner! His beard was gray, his face was lined with wrinkles, he was shriveled with age, and still he persisted in his godless design. A white cloud began to hover in the cave and something like joy gleamed in his face; but why did he suddenly stand motionless with his mouth open, not daring to stir; why did his hair rise up on his head? The features of a strange face appeared to him from the cloud. Unbidden, uninvited it had come to visit him; it grew more distinct and fastened its eyes immovably upon him. The features, eyebrows, eyes, lips—all were unfamiliar; never in his life had he seen them. And there was nothing terrible, seemingly, about it, but he was overwhelmed with horror. The strange, marvelous face still looked fixedly at him from the cloud. Then the cloud vanished, but the unfamiliar face was more distinct than ever and the piercing eyes were still riveted on him. The sorcerer turned white as a sheet; he shrieked in a wild, unnatural voice and overturned the pot... The face disappeared.

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XI

“Take comfort, my dear sister!” said old Captain Gorobets. “Rarely do dreams come true!”

“Lie down, sister,” said his young daughter-in-law. “I will fetch a wise woman; no evil power can stand against her; she will help you.”

“Fear nothing!” said his son, touching his sword. “No one shall harm you!”

Gloomily and with dull eyes Katerina looked at them all and found no word to say.

“I myself brought about my ruin: I let him out!” she said at last. “He gives me no peace! Here I have been ten days with you in Kiev and my sorrow is no less. I thought that at least I could bring up my son to avenge... I dreamed of him, looking terrible! God forbid that you should ever see him like that! My heart is still throbbing. ‘I will kill your child, Katerina,’ he shouted, ‘if you do not marry me...’ “And she flung herself sobbing on the cradle; and the frightened child stretched out its little hands and cried.

The Captain’s son was boiling with anger as he heard such words.

The Captain himself was roused.” Let him try coming here, the accursed Antichrist; he will learn whether there is still strength in the old Cossack’s arm. God sees,” he said, turning his keen eyes to heaven, “whether I did not hasten to give a hand to brother Danilo. It was His holy will! I found him lying on the cold bed upon which so many, many Cossacks have been laid. But what a funeral feast we had for him! We did not leave a single Pole alive! Be comforted, my child. No one shall dare to harm you, so long as I or my son live.”

As he finished speaking the old Cossack captain approached the cradle, and the child saw hanging from a strap his red pipe set in silver and the pouch with the shiny flints, and stretched out its arms toward him and laughed. “He takes after his father,” said the old captain, unfastening the pipe and giving it to the child. “He is not out of the cradle, but he is thinking of a pipe already!”

Katerina heaved a sigh and fell to rocking the cradle. They agreed to spend the night together and soon afterward they were all asleep; Katerina, too, fell asleep.

All was quiet in the courtyard; everyone slept but the Cossacks who were keeping watch. Suddenly Katerina woke with a scream, and the others woke too. “He is slain, he is murdered!” she cried, and flew to the cradle. All surrounded the cradle and were numb with horror when they saw that the child in it was dead. None uttered a sound, not knowing what to think of so horrible a crime.

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XII

Far from the Ukraine, beyond Poland and the populous town of Lemberg, run ranges of high mountains. Mountain after mountain, like chains of stone flung to the right and to the left over the land, they fetter it with layers of rock to keep out the resounding turbulent sea. These stony chains stretch into Wallachia and the Sedmigrad region and stand like a huge horseshoe between the Galician and Hungarian peoples. There are no such mountains in our country. The eye shrinks from viewing them and no human foot has climbed to their tops. They are a wonderful sight. Were they perhaps caused by some angry sea that broke away from its wide shores in a storm and threw its monstrous waves aloft only to have them turn to stone, and remain motionless in the air? Or did heavy storm clouds fall from heaven and cumber up the earth? For they have the same gray color and their white crests flash and sparkle in the sun.

Until you get to the Carpathian Mountains you may hear Russian speech, and just beyond the mountain there are still here and there echoes of our native tongue; but further beyond, faith and speech are different. The numerous Hungarian people live there; they ride, fight, and drink like any Cossack, and do not grudge gold pieces from their pockets for their horses' trappings and costly coats. There are great wide lakes among the mountains. They are still as glass and reflect bare mountaintops and the green slopes below like mirrors.

But who rides through the night on a huge black horse whether stars shine or not? What hero of superhuman stature gallops under the mountains, above the lakes, is mirrored with his gigantic horse in the still waters and throws his vast reflection on the mountains?

His plated armor glitters; his saber rattles against the saddle; his helmet is tilted forward; his mustaches are black; his eyes are closed, his eyelashes are drooping—he is asleep and drowsily holds the reins; and on the same horse sits with him a young child, and he too is asleep and drowsily holds on to the hero. Who is he, where goes he, and why? Who knows? Not one day nor two has he been traveling over the mountains. Day breaks, the sun shines, and he is seen no more; only from time to time the mountain people behold a long shadow flitting over the mountains, though the sky is bright and there is no cloud upon it. But as soon as night brings back the darkness, he appears again and is reflected in the lakes and his quivering shadow follows him. He has crossed many mountains and at last he reaches Krivan. There is no mountain in the Carpathians higher

than this one; it towers like a monarch above the others. There the horse and his rider halted and sank into even deeper slumber and the clouds descended and covered them and hid them from view.

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XIII

“Hush... don’t knock like that, nurse: my child is asleep. My baby cried a long time, now he is asleep. I am going to the forest, nurse! But why do you look at me like this? You are hideous: there are iron pincers coming out of your eyes... ugh, how long they are, and they blaze like fire! You must be a witch! Oh, if you are a witch, go away! You will steal my son. How absurd the Captain is; he thinks it is enjoyable for me to live in Kiev. No, my husband and my son are here. Who will look after the house? I went out so quietly that even the dog and the cat did not hear me. Do you want to grow young again, nurse? That’s not hard at all; you need only dance. Look, how I dance.”

And uttering these incoherent sentences Katerina began dancing, looking wildly about her and putting her arms akimbo. With a shriek she tapped with her feet; her silver heels clanked regardless of time or tune. Her black tresses floated loose about her white neck. Like a bird she flew around without resting, waving her hands and nodding her head, and it seemed as though she must either fall helpless to the ground or soar away from earth altogether.

The old nurse stood mournfully, her wrinkled face wet with tears; the trusty Cossacks had heavy hearts as they looked at their mistress. At last she was exhausted and languidly tapped with her feet on the same spot, imagining that she was dancing. “I have a necklace, lads,” she said, stopping at last, “and you have not...! Where is my husband?” she cried suddenly, drawing a Turkish dagger out of her girdle. “Oh, this is not the knife I need.” With that, tears of grief came into her eyes. “My father’s heart is far away; it will not reach it. His heart is wrought of iron; it was forged by a witch in the furnace of hell. Why does not my father come? Does not he know that it is time to stab him? He wants me to come myself, it seems...” and breaking off she laughed strangely. “A funny story came into my mind: I remembered how my husband was buried. He was buried alive, you know... It did make me laugh...! Listen, listen!” and instead of speaking she began to sing:

A bloodstained cart races on,
A Cossack lies upon it
Shot through the breast, stabbed to the heart.
In his right hand he holds a spear
And blood is trickling from it,

A stream of blood is flowing.
A plane tree stands over the river,
Above the tree a raven croaks.
A mother is weeping for the Cossack.
Weep not, mother, do not grieve!
For your son is married.
He chose a pretty lady for his bride,
A mound of earth in the bare fields
Without a door or window.
And this is how my story ends.
A fish was dancing with a crab,
And may a fever take his mother
If he will not love me!

This was how she muddled lines from different songs. She had been living two days in her own house and would not hear of Kiev. She would not say her prayers, refused to see anyone, and wandered from morning till night in the dark oak thickets. Sharp twigs scratched her white face and shoulders; the wind fluttered her loose hair; the autumn leaves rustled under her feet—she looked at nothing. At the hour when the glow of sunset dies away and before the stars come out or the moon shines, it is frightening to walk in the forest: unbaptized infants claw at the trees and clutch at the branches; sobbing and laughing, they hover over the road and the expanses of nettles; maidens who have lost their souls rise up one after the other from the depths of the Dnieper, their green tresses stream over their shoulders, the water drips splashing to the ground from their long hair; and a maiden shines through the water as through a veil of crystal; her lips smile mysteriously, her cheeks glow, her eyes bewitch the soul... as though she might burn with love, as though she might kiss one to death. Flee, Christian! Her lips are ice, her bed—the cold water; she will drag you under water. Katerina looked at no one; in her frenzy she had no fear of the water sprites; she wandered at night with her knife, seeking her father.

In the early morning a visitor arrived, a man of handsome appearance in a scarlet coat, and inquired for the lord Danilo; he heard all the story, wiped his tear-stained eyes with his sleeves, and shrugged his shoulders. He said that he had fought side by side with Burulbash; side by side they had done battle with the Turks and the Crimeans; never had he thought that the lord Danilo would meet with such an end. The visitor told them many other things and wanted to see the lady Katerina.

At first Katerina heard nothing of what the guest said; but afterward she began

to listen to his words as though understanding. He told her how Danilo and he had lived together like brothers; how once they had hidden under a dam from the Crimeans... Katerina listened and kept her eyes fixed upon him.

“She will recover,” the Cossacks thought, looking at her, “this guest will heal her! She is listening like one who understands!”

The visitor began meanwhile describing how Danilo had once, in a confidential conversation, said to him: “Listen, brother Kopryan, when it is God’s will that I am gone, you take Katerina, take her for your wife...”

Katerina looked piercingly at him. “Aie!” she shrieked, “it is he, it is my father!” and she flew at him with her knife.

For a long time he struggled, trying to snatch the knife from her; at last he snatched it away, raised it to strike—and a terrible deed was done: the father killed his crazed daughter.

The astounded Cossacks rushed at him, but the sorcerer had already leaped upon his horse and was gone.

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XIV

An extraordinary marvel appeared outside Kiev. All the nobles and the hetmans assembled to see the miracle: in all directions even the ends of the earth had become visible. Far off was the dark blue of the mouth of the Dnieper and beyond that the Black Sea. Men who had traveled recognized the Crimea jutting like a mountain out of the sea and the marshy Sivash. On the right could be seen the Galician land.

“And what is that?” people asked the old men, pointing to white and gray crests looming far away in the sky, looking more like clouds than anything else.

“Those are the Carpathian Mountains!” said the old men. “Among them are some that are forever covered with snow, and the clouds cling to them and hover there at night.”

Then a new miracle happened: the clouds vanished from the highest peak and on the top of it appeared a horseman, in full knightly armor, with his eyes closed, and he could be distinctly seen as though he were standing close to them.

Then among the marveling and fearful people, one leaped on a horse, and looking wildly about him as though to see whether he were pursued, hurriedly set his horse galloping at its utmost speed. It was the sorcerer. Why was he so panic-stricken? Looking in terror at the marvelous knight, he had recognized the face which had appeared to him when he was working his spells. He could not have said why his whole soul was thrown into confusion at this sight, and looking fearfully about him, he raced till he was overtaken by night and the stars began to come out. Then he turned homeward, perhaps to ask the Evil One what was meant by this marvel. He was just about to leap with his horse over a stream which lay across his path when his horse suddenly stopped in full gallop, looked around at him—and, marvelous to relate, laughed aloud! Two rows of white teeth gleamed horribly in the darkness. The sorcerer’s hair stood up on his head. He uttered a wild scream, wept like one frantic, and turned his horse straight for Kiev. He felt as though he were being pursued on all sides: the trees that surrounded him in the dark forest strove to strangle him, nodding their black beards and stretching out their long branches; the stars seemed to be racing ahead of him and pointing to the sinner; the very road seemed to be flying after him.

The desperate sorcerer fled to the holy places in Kiev.

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XV

A holy hermit sat alone in his cave before a little lamp and did not take his eyes off the holy book. It was many years since he had first shut himself up in his cave; he had already made himself a coffin in which he would lie down to sleep. The holy man closed his book and fell to praying.... Suddenly a man of a strange and terrible aspect ran into the cave. At first the holy hermit was astounded and stepped back upon seeing such a man. He was trembling all over like an aspen leaf; his eyes rolled in their sockets, a light of terror gleamed in them; his hideous face made one shudder.

“Father, pray! pray!” he shouted desperately, “pray for a lost soul!” and he sank to the ground.

The holy hermit crossed himself, took up his book, opened it, and stepped back in horror, dropping the book: “No, incredible sinner! There is no mercy for you! Away! I cannot pray for you!”

“No?” the sorcerer cried frantically.

“Look! the letters in the holy book are dripping with blood.... There has never been such a sinner in the world!”

“Father! you are mocking me!”

“Away, accursed sinner! I am not mocking you. I am overcome with fear. It is not good for a man to be with you!”

“No, no! You are mocking, say not so... I see that your lips are smiling and the rows of your old teeth are gleaming white!”

And like one possessed he flew at the holy hermit and killed him.

A terrible moan was heard and echoed through the forest and the fields. Dry withered arms with long claws rose up from beyond the forest; they trembled and disappeared.

And now he felt no fear. All was confusion: there was a noise in his ears, a noise in his head as though he were drunk, and everything before his eyes was veiled as though by spiders’ webs. Leaping on his horse he rode straight to Kanev, thinking from there to go through Cherkassy direct to the Crimean Tartars, though he knew not why. He rode one day and a second and still Kanev was not in sight. The road was the same; he should have reached it long before, but there was no sign of Kanev. Far away there gleamed the cupolas of churches; but that was not Kanev but Shumsk. The sorcerer was amazed to find that he had traveled the wrong way. He turned back toward Kiev, and a day later a town

appeared—not Kiev but Galich, a town further from Kiev than Shumsk and not far from Hungary. At a loss what to do he turned back, but felt again that he was going backward as he went on. No one in the world could tell what was in the sorcerer's mind; and had anyone seen and known, he would never have slept peacefully at night or laughed again in his life. It was not malice, not terror, and not fierce anger. There is no word in the world to say what it was. He was burning, scalding; he would have liked to trample the whole country from Kiev to Galich with all the people and everything in it and drown it in the Black Sea. But it was not from malice he would do it: no, he knew not why he wanted it. He shuddered when he saw the Carpathian Mountains and lofty Krivan, its crest capped with a gray cloud; the horse still galloped on and now was racing among the mountains. The clouds suddenly lifted, and facing him appeared the horseman in his terrible majesty.... The sorcerer tried to stop, he tugged at the rein; the horse neighed wildly, tossed its mane, and dashed toward the horseman. Then the sorcerer felt everything die within him, while the motionless horseman stirred and suddenly opened his eyes, saw the sorcerer flying toward him, and roared with laughter. The wild laugh echoed through the mountains like a clap of thunder and resounded in the sorcerer's heart, setting his whole body throbbing. He felt that some mighty being had taken possession of him and was moving within him, hammering on his heart and his veins... so fearfully did that laugh resound within him!

The horseman stretched out his mighty hand, seized the sorcerer, and lifted him into the air. The sorcerer died instantly and he opened his eyes after his death: but he was dead and looked out of dead eyes. Neither the living nor the risen from the dead have such a terrible look in their eyes. He rolled his dead eyes from side to side and saw dead men rising up from Kiev, from Galicia and the Carpathian Mountains, exactly like him.

Pale, very pale, one taller than another, one bonier than another, they thronged around the horseman who held this awful prey in his hand. The horseman laughed once more and dropped the sorcerer down a precipice. And all the corpses leaped into the precipice and fastened their teeth in the dead man's flesh. Another, taller and more terrible than all the rest, tried to rise from the ground but could not—he had not the power, he had grown so immense in the earth; and if he had risen he would have overturned the Carpathians and the whole of the Sedmigrad and the Turkish lands. He only stirred slightly, but that set the whole earth quaking, and overturned many huts and crushed many people.

And often in the Carpathians a sound is heard as though a thousand mills were churning up the water with their wheels: it is the sound of the dead men gnawing a corpse in the endless abyss which no living man has seen for none dares to

approach it. It sometimes happens that the earth trembles from one end to another: that is said by the learned men to be due to a mountain near the sea from which flames issue and hot streams flow. But the old men who live in Hungary and Galicia know better, and say that it is the dead man who has grown so immense in the earth trying to rise that makes the earth quake.

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XVI

A crowd had gathered around an old bandore player in the town of Glukhov and had been listening for an hour to the blind man's playing. No bandore player sang so well and such marvelous songs. First he sang of the leaders of the Dnieper Cossacks in the old days, of Sagaydachny and Khmelnitzky. Times were different then: the Cossacks were at the height of their glory, they trampled their foes underfoot and no one dared to mock them. The old man sang merry songs too, and looked about at the crowd as though his eyes could see, and his fingers with little sheaths of bone fixed to them danced like flies over the strings, and it seemed that the strings themselves were playing; and the crowd, the old people looking down and the young staring at the singer, dared not even whisper.

"Now," said the old man, "I will sing to you of what happened long ago." The people pressed closer and the blind man sang:

"In the days of Stepan, prince of Sedmigrad (the prince of Sedmigrad was also king of the Poles), there lived two Cossacks: Ivan and Petro. They lived together like brothers: 'See here, Ivan,' said Petro, 'whatever you gain, let us go halves; when one is merry, the other is merry too; when one is sad, the other is sad too; when one Wins booty, we share it; when one gets taken prisoner, the other sells everything to ransom him or else goes himself into captivity.'

And, indeed, whatever the Cossacks gained they shared equally: if they drove away herds of cattle or horses—they shared them.

"King Stepan waged war on the Turks. He had been fighting with the Turks three weeks and could not drive them out. And the Turks had a Pasha who with a few janissaries could slaughter a whole regiment. So King Stepan proclaimed that if a brave warrior could be found to bring him the Pasha dead or alive he would give him a reward equal to the pay of the whole army.

"'Let us go and catch the Pasha, brother,' said Ivan to Petro. And the two Cossacks set off, one one way, one the other.

"Whether Petro would have been successful or not there is no telling; but Ivan brought the Pasha with a lasso around his neck to the King. 'Brave fellow!' said King Stepan, and he commanded that he should be given a sum equal to the pay of the whole army, and that he should be given land wherever he chose and as many cattle as he pleased. As soon as Ivan received the reward from the King,

he shared the money that very day with Petro. Petro took half of the King's money, but could not bear the thought that Ivan had been so honored by the King, and he hid deep in his heart desire for vengeance.

"The two Cossacks were journeying to the land beyond the Carpathians that the King had granted to Ivan. Ivan had set his son on the horse behind him, tying the child to himself. The boy had fallen asleep; Ivan, too, began to doze. A Cossack should not sleep, the mountains paths are perilous...! But the Cossack had a horse who knew the way; it would not stumble or leave the path. There is a precipice between the mountains; no one has ever seen the bottom of it; it is deep as the sky is high. The road passed just above the precipice; two men could ride abreast on it, but for three it was too narrow. The horse began stepping cautiously with the slumbering Cossack on its back. Petro rode beside him; he trembled all over and was breathless with joy. He looked around and thrust his sworn brother into the precipice; and the horse, the Cossack, and the baby fell into the abyss.

"But Ivan grasped a branch and only the horse dropped to the bottom. He began scrambling up with his son upon his back. He looked up when he was nearly at the top and saw that Petro was holding a lance ready to push him back. 'Merciful God! better I had never raised my eyes again than I should see my own brother holding a lance ready to push me back...! Dear brother, stab me if that is my fate, but take my son: what has the innocent child done that he should be doomed to so cruel a death?' Petro laughed and thrust at him with the lance; the Cossack fell with his child to the bottom. Petro took all his goods and began to live like a Pasha. No one had such droves of horses as Petro; no one had such flocks of sheep. And Petro died.

"After he was dead, God summoned the two brothers, Ivan and Petro, to the judgment seat. 'This man is a great sinner,' said God. 'Ivan, it will take me long to find a punishment for him; you select a punishment for him!' For a long time Ivan pondered what punishment to fix and at last he said:

"'That man did me a great injury: he betrayed his brother like a Judas and robbed me of my honorable name and offspring. And a man without honorable name and offspring is like a seed of wheat dropped into the earth only to die there, if it does not sprout, no one knows that the seed has been dropped into the earth.

"'Let it be, O Lord, that none of his descendants may be happy upon earth; that the last of his race may be the worst criminal that has ever been seen, and

that at every crime he commits, his ancestors, unable to rest in their graves and suffering torments unknown to the world of the living, should rise from the tomb! And that the Judas, Petro, should be unable to rise and that hence he should suffer pain all the more intense; that he should bite the earth like one possessed and writhe in the ground in anguish!

"'And when the time comes that that man's wickedness has reached its full measure, let me, O Lord God, rise on my horse from the precipice to the highest peak of the mountains, and let him come to me and I will throw him from that mountain into the deepest abyss. And let all his dead ancestors, wherever they lived in their lifetime, come from various parts of the earth to gnaw him for the sufferings he inflicted upon them, and let them gnaw him forever, and I shall rejoice looking at his sufferings. And let the Judas, Petro, be unable to rise out of the earth. Let him lust to gnaw but be forced to gnaw himself, and let his bones grow bigger and bigger as time goes on, so that his pain may be the greater. That torture will be worse for him than any other, for there is no greater torture for a man than to long for vengeance and be unable to accomplish it.'

"'A terrible punishment thou has devised, O man...!' God said. 'All shall be as thou hast said; but thou shalt sit forever on thy horse there and shalt not enter the kingdom of heaven!' And so it all was fulfilled; the strange horseman still sits on his steed in the Carpathians and sees the dead men gnawing the corpse in the bottomless abyss and feels how the dead Petro grows larger under the earth, gnaws his bones in dreadful agony, and sets the earth quaking fearfully."

The blind man had finished his song; he began thrumming the strings again and singing amusing ballads about Khoma and Yerioma and Stkyar Stokoza.... But his listeners, old and young, could not rouse themselves from reverie; they still stood with bowed heads, thinking of the terrible story of long ago.

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Ivan Fyodorovich Shponka and His Aunt

There is a story about this story: we were told it by Stepan Ivanovich Kurochka, who came over from Gadyach. You must know that my memory is incredibly poor: you may tell me a thing or not tell it, it is all the same. It is just pouring water into a sieve. Being aware of this weakness, I purposely begged him to write the story down in a notebook. Well, God give him good health, he was always a kind man to me, he began to work and wrote it down. I put it in the little table; I believe you know it: it stands in the corner as you come in by the door.... But there, I forgot that you had never been in my house. My old woman, with whom I have lived thirty years, has never learned to read—no use hiding one's shortcomings. Well, I noticed that she baked the pies on paper of some sort. She bakes pies beautifully, dear readers; you will never taste better pies anywhere. I happened to look on the underside of a pie —what did I see? Written words! My heart seemed to tell me at once: I went to the table; only half the book was there! All the other pages she had carried off for the pies. What could I do? There is no fighting at our age!

Last year I happened to be passing through Gadyach. Before I reached the town I purposely tied a knot in my handkerchief so that I might not forget to ask Stepan Ivanovich about it. That was not all: I vowed to myself that as soon as ever I sneezed in the town I would be sure to think of it. It was all no use. I drove through the town and sneezed and blew my nose too, but still I forgot it; and I only thought of it nearly six miles after I had passed through the town gate. Well, it couldn't be helped, I had to publish it without the end. However, if anyone particularly wants to know what happened later on in the story, he need only go on purpose to Gadyach and ask Stepan Ivanovich. He will be glad to tell the story all over again from the beginning. He lives not far from the brick church. There is a little lane close by, and as soon as you turn into the lane it is the second or third gate. Or better still, when you see a big post with a quail on it in the yard and coming to meet you a fat peasant woman in a green skirt (you should know, he is a bachelor), that is his yard. Though you may also meet him in the market, where he is to be seen every morning before nine o'clock, choosing fish and vegetables for his table and talking to Father Antip or the Jewish contractor. You will know him at once, for there is no one else who has trousers of printed linen and a yellow cotton coat. And another thing to help you recognize him—he always swings his arms as he walks. Denis Petrovich, the

assessor, now deceased, always used to say when he saw him in the distance: “Look, look, here comes our windmill!”

I

IVAN FIODOROVICH SHPONKA

It is four years since Ivan Fiodorovich retired from the army and came to live on his farm Vytrebenki. When he was still Vanyusha, he was at the Gadyach district school, and I must say he was a very well-behaved and industrious boy. Nikifor Timofeevich Deeprichastie the teacher of Russian grammar, used to say that if all the boys had been as anxious to do their best as Shponka, he would not have brought into the classroom the maplewood ruler with which, as he confessed, he was tired of hitting the lazy and mischievous boys’ hands. Vanyusha’s exercise book was always neat, with a ruled margin, and not the tiniest blot anywhere. He always sat quietly with his arms folded and his eyes fixed on the teacher, and he never used to stick scraps of paper on the back of the boy sitting in front of him, never cut the bench, and never played at shoving the other boys off the bench before the teacher came in. If anyone wanted a penknife to sharpen his quill, he immediately asked Ivan Fiodorovich, knowing that he always had a penknife, and Ivan Fiodorovich, then called simply Vanyusha, would take it out of a little leather case attached to a buttonhole of his gray coat, and would only request that the sharp edge should not be used for scraping the quill, pointing out that there was a blunt side for the purpose. Such good conduct soon attracted the attention of the Latin teacher, whose cough in the passage was enough to reduce the class to terror, even before his frieze coat and pockmarked face had appeared in the doorway. This terrifying teacher, who always had two birches lying on his desk and half of whose pupils were always on their knees, made Ivan Fiodorovich monitor, although there were many boys in the class of much greater ability. Here I cannot omit an incident which had an influence on the whole of his future life. One of the boys entrusted to his charge tried to induce his monitor to write *scit* on his report, though he had not learned his lesson, by bringing into class a pancake soaked in butter and wrapped in paper. Though Ivan Fiodorovich was usually conscientious, on this occasion he was hungry and could not resist the temptation; he took the pancake, held a book up before him, and began eating it, and he was so absorbed in this occupation that he did not observe that a deathly silence had fallen upon the class. He woke up with horror only when a terrible hand protruding from a frieze overcoat seized

him by the ear and dragged him into the middle of the room. “Hand over that pancake! Hand it over, I tell you, you rascal!” said the terrifying teacher; he seized the buttery pancake in his fingers and flung it out of the window, sternly forbidding the boys running about in the yard to pick it up. Then he proceeded on the spot to whack Ivan Fiodorovich very painfully on the hands; and quite rightly—the hands were responsible for taking it and no other part of the body. Anyway, the timidity which had always been characteristic of him was more marked from that time forward. Possibly the same incident was the explanation of his feeling no desire to enter the civil service, having learned by experience that one is not always successful in hiding one’s misdeeds.

He was very nearly fifteen when he advanced to the second class, where instead of the four rules of arithmetic and the abridged catechism, he went on to the unabridged one, the book describing the duties of man, and fractions. But seeing that the further you went into the forest the thicker the wood became, and receiving the news that his father had departed this life, he stayed only two years longer at school, and with his mother’s consent went into the P—infantry regiment.

The P—infantry regiment was not at all of the class to which many infantry regiments belong, and, although it was for the most part stationed in villages, it was in no way inferior to many cavalry regiments. The majority of the officers drank hard and were really as good at dragging Jews around by their earlocks as any Hussars; some of them even danced the mazurka, and the colonel of the regiment never missed an opportunity of mentioning the fact when he was talking to anyone in company. “Among my officers,” he used to say, patting himself on the belly after every word, “a number dance the mazurka, quite a number of them, really a great number of them indeed.” To show our readers the degree of culture of the P—infantry regiment, we must add that two of the officers were passionately fond of the game of bank and used to gamble away their uniforms, caps, overcoats, sword knots, and even their underclothes, which is more than you could say about every cavalry regiment.

Contact with such comrades did not, however, diminish Ivan Fiodorovich’s timidity; and as he did not drink hard liquor, preferring instead a wineglassful of ordinary vodka before dinner and supper, did not dance the mazurka or play bank, naturally he was bound to be always left alone. And so it came to pass that while the others were driving about with hired horses, visiting the less important landowners, he, sitting at home, spent his time in pursuits peculiar to a mild and gentle soul: he either polished his buttons, or read a fortunetelling book or set mousetraps in the corners of his room, or failing everything he would take off his uniform and lie on his bed.

On the other hand, no one in the regiment was more punctual in his duties than Ivan Fiodorovich, and he drilled his platoon in such a way that the commander of the company always held him up as a model to the others. Consequently in a short time, only eleven years after becoming an ensign, he was promoted to be a second lieutenant.

During that time he had received the news that his mother was dead, and his aunt, his mother's sister, whom he only knew from her bringing him in his childhood—and even sending him when he was at Gadyach—dried pears and extremely nice honeycakes which she made herself (she was on bad terms with his mother and so Ivan Fiodorovich had not seen her in later years), this aunt, in the goodness of her heart, undertook to look after his little estate and in due time informed him of the fact by letter.

Ivan Fiodorovich, having the fullest confidence in his aunt's good sense, continued to perform his duties as before. Some men in his position would have grown conceited at such promotion, but pride was a feeling of which he knew nothing, and as lieutenant he was the same Ivan Fiodorovich as he had been when an ensign. He spent another four years in the regiment after his promotion, an event of great importance to him, and was about to leave the Mogiliov district for Great Russia with his regiment when he received a letter as follows:

MY DEAR NEPHEW, IVAN FIODOROVICH, I am sending you some linen: five pairs of socks and four shirts of fine linen; and what is more I want to talk to you of something serious; since you have already a rank of some importance, as I suppose you are aware, and have reached a time of life when it is fitting to take up the management of your land, there is no reason for you to remain longer in military service. I am getting old and can no longer see to everything on your farm; and in fact there is a great deal that I want to talk to you about in person.

Come, Vanyusha! Looking forward to the real pleasure of seeing you, I remain your very affectionate aunt

VASILISA TSUPCHEVSKA

P.S.—There is a wonderful turnip in our vegetable garden, more like a potato than a turnip.

A week after receiving this letter Ivan Fiodorovich wrote an answer as follows:

HONORED MADAM, AUNTIE, VASILISA KASHPOROVNA,

Thank you very much for sending the linen. My socks especially are very old;

my orderly has darned them four times and that has made them very tight. As to your views in regard to my service in the army, I completely agree with you, and the day before yesterday I sent in my papers. As soon as I get my discharge I will engage a chaise. As to your commission in regard to the wheat seed and Siberian grain, I cannot carry it out; there is none in all the Mogiliov province. Pigs here are mostly fed on brewers' grains together with a little beer when it has grown flat. With the greatest respect, honored madam and auntie, I remain your nephew

IVAN SHPONKA

At last Ivan Fiodorovich received his discharge with the grade of lieutenant, hired for forty rubles a Jew to drive from Mogiliov to Gadyach, and set off in the chaise just at the time when the trees are clothed with young and still scanty leaves, the whole earth is bright with fresh green, and there is the fragrance of spring over all the fields.

II

THE JOURNEY

Nothing of great interest occurred on the journey. They traveled more than two weeks. Ivan Fiodorovich might have arrived a little sooner than that, but the devout Jew kept the Sabbath on the Saturdays and, putting his horse blanket over his head, prayed the whole day. Ivan Fiodorovich, however, as I have had occasion to mention already, was a man who did not give way to being bored. During these intervals he undid his trunk, took out his underclothes, inspected them thoroughly to see whether they were properly washed and folded; carefully removed the fluff from his new uniform, which had been made without epaulets, and repacked it all in the best possible way. He was not fond of reading in general; and if he did sometimes look into a fortunetelling book, it was because he liked to find again what he had already read several times. In the same way one who lives in the town goes every day to the club, not for the sake of hearing anything new there, but in order to meet there friends with whom it has been his habit to chat at the club from time immemorial. In the same way a government clerk will read a directory of addresses with immense satisfaction several times a day with no ulterior object; he is simply entertained by the printed list of names. "Ah! Ivan Gavrilovich So-and-so..." he murmurs mutely to himself. "And here

again am I! h’m...!” and next time he reads it over again with exactly the same exclamations.

After a two-week journey Ivan Fiodorovich reached a little village some eighty miles from Gadyach. This was on Friday. The sun had long set when with the chaise and the Jew he reached an inn.

This inn differed in no respects from other little village inns. As a rule the traveler is zealously regaled in them with hay and oats, as though he were a posthorse. But should he want to lunch as decent people lunch, he keeps his appetite intact for some future opportunity. Ivan Fiodorovich, knowing all this, had provided himself beforehand with two bundles of pretzels and a sausage, and asking for a glass of vodka, of which there is never a shortage in any inn, he began his supper, sitting down on a bench before an oak table which was fixed immovably in the clay floor.

Meanwhile he heard the rattle of a chaise. The gates creaked but it was a long while before the chaise drove into the yard. A loud voice was engaged in scolding the old woman who kept the inn. “I will drive in,” Ivan Fiodorovich heard, “but if I am bitten by a single bug in your inn, I will beat you, I swear I will, you old witch! and I won’t give you anything for your hay either!”

A minute later the door opened and there walked—or rather squeezed himself—in a fat man in a green coat. His head rested immovably on his short neck, which seemed even thicker because of a double chin. To judge from his appearance, he belonged to that class of men who do not trouble their heads about trifles and whose whole life has passed easily.

“I wish you good day, honored sir!” he pronounced on seeing Ivan Fiodorovich.

Ivan Fiodorovich bowed in silence.

“Allow me to ask, to whom have I the honor of speaking?” the fat newcomer continued.

At such a question Ivan Fiodorovich involuntarily got up and stood at attention as he usually did when the colonel asked him a question. “Retired Lieutenant Ivan Fiodorovich Shponka,” he answered.

“And may I ask what place you are bound for?”

“My own farm Vytrebenki.”

“Vytrebenki!” cried the stern questioner. “Allow me, honored sir, allow me!” he said, going toward him, and waving his arms as though someone were hindering him or as though he were making his way through a crowd, he folded Ivan Fiodorovich in an embrace and kissed him first on the right cheek and then on the left and then on the right again. Ivan Fiodorovich was much gratified by this kiss, for his lips were pressed against the stranger’s fat cheeks as though

against soft cushions.

“Allow me to make your acquaintance, my dear sir!” the fat man continued: “I am a landowner of the same district of Gadyach and your neighbor; I live not more than four miles from your Vytrebenki in the village of Khortyshche; and my name is Grigory Grigorievich Storchenko. You really must, sir, you really must pay me a visit at Khortyshche. I won’t speak to you if you don’t. I am in haste now on business... Why, what’s this?” he said in a mild voice to his lackey, a boy in a Cossack coat with patched elbows and a bewildered expression, who came in and put bundles and boxes on the table. “What’s this, what’s the meaning of it?” and by degrees Grigory Grigorievich’s voice grew more and more threatening. “Did I tell you to put them here, my good lad? Did I tell you to put them here, you rascal? Didn’t I tell you to heat the chicken up first, you dirty scoundrel? Get out!” he shouted stamping. “Wait, you ugly rogue! Where’s the basket with the bottles? Ivan Fiodorovich!” he said, pouring out a glass of liqueur, “I beg you to take some cordial!”

“Oh, really, I cannot... I have already had occasion...” Ivan Fiodorovich began hesitatingly.

“I won’t hear a word, sir!” the gentleman raised his voice, “I won’t hear a word! I won’t budge till you drink it....”

Ivan Fiodorovich, seeing that it was impossible to refuse, not without gratification emptied the glass.

“This is a chicken, sir,” said the fat Grigory Grigorievich, carving it in its wooden box. “I must tell you that my cook Yavdokha is fond of a drop at times and so she makes things too dry. Hey, boy!” here he turned to the boy in the Cossack coat who was bringing in a feather bed and pillows, “make my bed on the floor in the middle of the room! Make sure you put plenty of hay under the pillow! And pull a bit of hemp from the woman’s spindle to stop up my ears for the night! I must tell you, sir, that I have the habit of stopping up my ears at night ever since the damned occasion when a cockroach crawled into my left ear in a Great Russian inn. Those damned Russians, as I found out afterward, eat their soup with cockroaches in it. Impossible to describe what happened to me; there was such a tickling, such a tickling in my ear... I was almost mad! I was cured by a simple old woman in our district, and by what, do you suppose? Simply by charming it. What do you think, my dear sir, about doctors? What I think is that they simply hoax us and make fools of us: some old women know a dozen times as much as all these doctors.”

“Indeed, what you say is perfectly true, sir. There certainly are cases...” Here Ivan Fiodorovich paused as though he could not find the right word. It may not be improper to mention here that he was at no time lavish of words. This may

have been due to timidity, or it may have been due to a desire to express himself elegantly.

“Shake up the hay properly, shake it up properly!” said Grigory Grigorievich to his servant. “The hay is so bad around here that you may come upon a twig in it any minute. Allow me, sir, to wish you a good night! We shall not see each other tomorrow. I am setting off before dawn. Your Jew will keep the Sabbath because tomorrow is Saturday, so it is no good for you to get up early. Don’t forget my invitation; I won’t speak to you if you don’t come to see me at Khortyshche.”

At this point Grigory Grigorievich’s servant pulled off his coat and high boots and gave him his dressing gown instead, and Grigory Grigorievich stretched on his bed, and it looked as though one huge feather bed were lying on another.

“Hey, boy! where are you, rascal? Come here and arrange my quilt. Hey, boy, prop up my head with hay! Have you watered the horses yet? Some more hay! here, under this side! And arrange the bedspread properly, you rascal! That’s right, more! Ough...!”

Then Grigory Grigorievich heaved two sighs and filled the whole room with a terrible whistling through his nose, snoring so loudly at times that the old woman who was snoozing on the stove, suddenly waking up, looked about her in all directions, but seeing nothing, subsided and went to sleep again.

When Ivan Fiodorovich woke up next morning, the fat gentleman was no longer there. This was the only noteworthy incident that occurred on the journey. Two days later he drew near his little farm.

He felt his heart begin to throb when the windmill waving its sails peeped out and, as the Jew drove his nag up the hill, the row of willows came into sight below. The pond gleamed bright and shining through them and a breath of freshness rose from it. Here he used to bathe in the old days; in that pond he used to wade with the peasant lads up to his neck after crayfish. The covered cart mounted the dam and Ivan Fiodorovich saw the little old house thatched with reeds, and the apple trees and cherry trees which he used to climb on the sly as a boy. He had no sooner driven into the yard than dogs of all kinds, brown, black, gray, spotted, ran up from every side. Some flew under the horse’s hoofs, barking; others ran behind the cart, noticing that the axle was smeared with bacon fat; one, standing near the kitchen and keeping his paw on a bone, uttered a volley of shrill barks; and another barked from the distance, running to and fro wagging his tail and seeming to say: “Look, good Christians! What a fine young fellow I am!” Boys in dirty shirts ran out to stare. A sow who was promenading in the yard with sixteen little pigs lifted her snout with an inquisitive air and grunted louder than usual. In the yard a number of hempen sheets were lying on

the ground covered with wheat, millet, and barley drying in the sun. A good many different kinds of herbs, such as wild chicory and hawkweed, were drying on the roof.

Ivan Fiodorovich was so occupied looking at all this that he was only roused when a spotted dog bit the Jew on the calf of his leg as he was getting down from the box. The servants who ran out, that is, the cook and another woman and two girls in woolen petticoats, after the first exclamations: “It’s our young master!” informed him that his aunt was sowing sweet corn together with the girl Palashka and Omelko the coachman, who often performed the duties of a gardener and watchman also. But his aunt, who had seen the covered cart in the distance, was already on the spot. And Ivan Fiodorovich was astonished when she almost lifted him from the ground in her arms, hardly able to believe that this could be the aunt who had written to him of her old age and infirmities.

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III

THE AUNT

Aunt Vasilisa Kashporovna was at this time about fifty. She had never married, and commonly declared that she valued her maiden state above everything. Though, indeed, to the best of my memory, no one ever courted her. This was due to the fact that all men were rather timid in her presence, and never had the courage to make her an offer. “A girl of great character, Vasilisa Kashporovna!” all the young men used to say, and they were quite right, too, for there was no one Vasilisa Kashporovna could not get the better of. With her own manly hand, tugging every day at his forelock, she could, unaided, turn the drunken miller, a worthless fellow, into a perfect treasure. She was of almost gigantic stature and her breadth and strength were fully in proportion. It seemed as though nature had made an unpardonable mistake in condemning her to wear a dark brown gown with little flounces on weekdays and a red cashmere shawl on Sunday and on her name day, though a dragoon’s mustaches and high topboots would have suited her better than anything. On the other hand, her pursuits completely corresponded with her appearance: she rowed the boat herself and was more skillful with the oars than any fisherman; shot game; stood over the mowers all the while they were at work; knew the exact number of the melons, of all kinds, in the vegetable garden; took a toll of five kopeks from every wagon that crossed her dam; climbed the trees and shook down the pears; beat lazy vassals with her terrible hand and with the same menacing hand bestowed a glass of vodka on the deserving. Almost at the same moment she was scolding, dyeing yarn, racing to the kitchen, brewing kvass, making jam with honey; she was busy all day long and everywhere in the nick of time. The result of all this was that Ivan Fiodorovich’s little property, which had consisted of eighteen serfs at the last census, was flourishing in the fullest sense of the word. Moreover, she had a very warm affection for her nephew and carefully saved kopeks for him.

From the time of his arrival at his home Ivan Fiodorovich’s life was completely changed and took an entirely different turn. It seemed as though nature had designed him expressly for looking after an estate of eighteen serfs. His aunt observed that he would make an excellent farmer, though she did not yet permit him to meddle in every branch of the management. “He’s still a child,” she used to say, though Ivan Fiodorovich was in fact not far from forty.

“How should he know it all?”

However, he was always in the fields with the reapers and mowers, and this was a source of unutterable pleasure to his gentle heart. The sweep of a dozen or more gleaming scythes in unison; the sound of the grass falling in even swathes; the caroling songs of the reapers at intervals, at one time joyous as the welcoming of a guest, at another mournful as a parting; the calm pure evening—and what an evening! How free and fresh the air! How everything revived; the steppe flushed red, then turned dark blue and gleamed with flowers; quails, bustards, gulls, grasshoppers, thousands of insects, and all of them whistling, buzzing, chirping, calling, and suddenly blending into a harmonious chorus; nothing was silent for an instant, while the sun set and was hidden. Oh, how fresh and delightful it was! Here and there about the fields campfires were built and cauldrons set over them, and around the fires the mowers sat down; the steam from the dumplings floated upward; the twilight turned grayer.... It is hard to say what passed in Ivan Fiodorovich at such times. When he joined the mowers, he forgot to try their dumplings, though he liked them very much, and stood motionless, watching a gull disappear in the sky or counting the sheaves of wheat dotted over the field.

In a short time Ivan Fiodorovich was spoken of as a great farmer.

His aunt never tired of rejoicing over her nephew and never lost an opportunity of boasting of him. One day—it was just after the end of the harvest, that is, at the end of July—Vasilisa Kashporovna took Ivan Fiodorovich by the arm with a mysterious air, and said she wanted now to speak to him of a matter which had long been on her mind.

“You are aware, dear Ivan Fiodorovich,” she began “that there are eighteen serfs on your farm, though, indeed, that is by the census register, and in reality they may amount to more, they may be twenty-four. But that is not the point. You know the copse that lies behind our vegetable ground, and no doubt you know the broad meadow behind it; there are very nearly sixty acres in it; and the grass is so good that it is worth a hundred rubles every year, especially if, as they say, a cavalry regiment is to be stationed at Gadyach.”

“To be sure, Auntie, I know: the grass is very good.”

“You needn’t tell me the grass is very good, I know it; but do you know that all that land is by rights yours? Why do you look so surprised? Listen, Ivan Fiodorovich! You remember Stepan Kuzmich? What am I saying: ‘you remember’! You were so little that you could not even pronounce his name. Yes, indeed! How could you remember! When I came on the very eve of Christmas and took you in my arms, you almost ruined my dress; luckily I was just in time to hand you to your nurse, Matryona; you were such a horrid little thing then...!

But that is not the point. All the land beyond our farm, and the village of Khortyshche itself belonged to Stepan Kuzmich. I must tell you that before you were in this world he used to visit your mama—though, indeed, only when your father was not at home. Not that I say it to blame her—God rest her soul!—though your poor mother was always unfair to me! But that is not the point. Be that as it may, Stepan Kuzmich made a gift to you of that same estate of which I have been speaking. But your poor mama, in confidence, was a very strange character. The devil himself (God forgive me for the nasty word!) would have been puzzled trying to understand her. What she did with that deed —God only knows. It's my opinion that it is in the hands of that old bachelor, Grigory Grigorievich Storchenko. That potbellied scoundrel has got hold of the whole estate. I'd bet anything you like that he has hidden that deed."

"Allow me to ask, Auntie: isn't he the Storchenko whose acquaintance I made at the inn?" Here Ivan Fiodorovich described his meeting with Storchenko.

"Who knows," said his aunt after a moment's thought, "perhaps he is not a rascal. It's true that it's only six months since he came to live among us; there's no finding out what a man is in that time. The old lady, his mother, is a very sensible woman, so I hear, and they say she is a great hand at pickling cucumbers; her own serf girls can make wonderful rugs. But as you say he gave you such a friendly welcome, go and see him; perhaps the old sinner will listen to his conscience and will give up what is not his. If you like you can go in the chaise, only those confounded brats have pulled out all the nails at the back; we must tell the coachman, Omelko, to nail the leather on better everywhere."

"What for, Auntie? I will take the trap that you sometimes go out shooting in."

With that the conversation ended.

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IV

THE DINNER

It was about dinnertime when Ivan Fiodorovich drove into the hamlet of Khortyshche, and he felt a little timid as he approached the country house. It was a long house, not thatched with reeds like the houses of many of the neighboring landowners, but with a wooden roof. Two barns in the yard also had wooden roofs: the gate was of oak. Ivan Fiodorovich felt like a dandy who, on arriving at a ball, sees everyone more smartly dressed than himself. He stopped his horse by the barn as a sign of respect and went on foot toward the front door.

“Ah, Ivan Fiodorovich!” cried the fat man Grigory Grigorievich, who was crossing the yard in his coat but without necktie, vest, and suspenders. But apparently this attire weighed oppressively on his bulky person, for the perspiration was streaming down him.

“Why, you said you would come as soon as you had seen your aunt, and all this time you have not been here?” After these words Ivan Fiodorovich’s lips found themselves again in contact with the same cushions.

“I’ve been busy looking after the land... I have come just for a minute to see you on business....”

“For a minute? Well, that won’t do. Hey, boy!” shouted the fat gentleman, and the same boy in the Cossack coat ran out of the kitchen. “Tell Kasian to shut the gate tight, do you hear! make it fast! And unharness this gentleman’s horse this minute. Please come indoors; it is so hot out here that my shirt’s soaked.”

On going indoors Ivan Fiodorovich made up his mind to lose no time and in spite of his shyness to act with decision.

“My aunt had the honor... she told me that a deed of the late Stepan Kuzmich’s...”

It is difficult to describe the unpleasant grimace made by the broad face of Grigory Grigorievich at these words.

“Oh dear, I hear nothing!” he responded. “I must tell you that a cockroach got into my left ear (those damned Russians breed cockroaches in all their huts); no pen can describe what agony it was, it kept tickling and tickling. An old woman cured me by the simplest means...”

“I meant to say...” Ivan Fiodorovich ventured to interrupt, seeing that Grigory Grigorievich was intentionally changing the subject; “that in the late Stepan

Kuzmich’s will mention is made, so to speak, of a deed... According to it I ought...”

“I know; so your aunt has told you that story already. It’s a lie, I swear it is! My uncle made no deed. Though, indeed, some such thing is referred to in the will. But where is it? No one has produced it. I tell you this because I sincerely wish you well. I assure you it is a lie!”

Ivan Fiodorovich said nothing, reflecting that possibly his aunt really might be mistaken.

“Ah, here comes Mother with my sisters!” said Grigory Grigorievich, “so dinner is ready. Let us go!”

And he drew Ivan Fiodorovich by the hand into a room in which vodka and snacks were on a table.

At the same time a short little old lady, a coffeepot in a cap, with two young ladies, one fair and one dark, came in. Ivan Fiodorovich, like a well-bred gentleman, went up to kiss the old lady’s hand and then to kiss the hands of the two young ladies.

“This is our neighbor, Ivan Fiodorovich Shponka, Mother,” said Grigory Grigorievich.

The old lady looked intently at Ivan Fiodorovich, or perhaps it only seemed that she looked intently at him. She was good-natured simplicity itself, though; she looked as though she would like to ask Ivan Fiodorovich: “How many cucumbers has your aunt pickled for the winter?”

“Have you had some vodka?” the old lady asked.

“You can’t be yourself, Mother,” said Grigory Grigorievich. “Who asks a visitor whether he has had anything? You offer it to him, that’s all. Whether he wants to drink or not is his business. Ivan Fiodorovich! the centaury-flavored vodka or the Trofimov brand? Which do you prefer? And you, Ivan Ivanovich, why are you standing there?” Grigory Grigorievich said, turning around, and Ivan Fiodorovich saw the gentleman so addressed approaching the vodka, in a frock coat and an immense stand-up collar, which covered the whole back of his head, so that his head sat in it, as though it were a chaise.

Ivan Ivanovich went up to the vodka and rubbed his hands, carefully examined the wineglass, filled it, held it up to the light, and poured all the vodka at once into his mouth. He did not, however, swallow it at once, but rinsed his mouth thoroughly with it first before finally swallowing it, and then after eating some bread and salted mushrooms, he turned to Ivan Fiodorovich.

“Is it not Ivan Fiodorovich, Mr. Shponka, I have the honor of addressing?”

“Yes, certainly,” answered Ivan Fiodorovich.

“You have changed a great deal, sir, since I saw you last. Why!” he continued,

“I remember you when you were that high!” As he spoke he held his hand a yard from the floor. “Your poor father, God grant him the kingdom of heaven, was a rare man. He used to have melons such as you never see anywhere now. Here, for instance,” he went on, drawing him aside, “they’ll set melons before you on the table—such melons! You won’t care to look at them! Would you believe it, sir, he used to have watermelons,” he pronounced with a mysterious air, flinging out his arms as if he were about to embrace a stout tree trunk, “God bless me, they were as big as this!”

“Come to dinner!” said Grigory Grigorievich, taking Ivan Fiodorovich by the arm.

Grigory Grigorievich sat down in his usual place at the end of the table, draped with an enormous tablecloth which made him resemble the Greek heroes depicted by barbers on their signs. Ivan Fiodorovich, blushing, sat down in the place assigned to him, facing the two young ladies; and Ivan Ivanovich did not let slip the chance of sitting down beside him, inwardly rejoicing that he had someone to whom he could impart his various bits of information.

“You shouldn’t take the end, Ivan Fiodorovich! It’s a turkey!” said the old lady, addressing Ivan Fiodorovich, to whom the village waiter in a gray frock coat patched with black was offering a dish. “Take the back!”

“Mother! no one asked you to interfere!” commented Grigory Grigorievich. “You may be sure our visitor knows what to take himself! Ivan Fiodorovich! take a wing, the other one there with the gizzard! But why have you taken so little? Take a leg! Why do you gape at him?” he asked the waiter holding the dish. “Ask him! Go down on your knees, rascal! Say, at once, ‘Ivan Fiodorovich, take a leg!’”

“Ivan Fiodorovich, take a leg!” the waiter bawled, kneeling down.

“H’m! do you call this a turkey?” Ivan Ivanovich muttered in a low voice, turning to his neighbor with an air of disdain. “Is that what a turkey ought to look like? If you could see my turkeys! I assure you there is more fat on one of them than on a dozen of these. Would you believe me, sir, they are really a repulsive sight when they walk about my yard, they are so fat...!”

“Ivan Ivanovich, you are telling lies!” said Grigory Grigorievich, overhearing these remarks.

“I tell you,” Ivan Ivanovich went on talking to his neighbor, affecting not to hear what Grigory Grigorievich had said, “last year when I sent them to Gadyach, they offered me fifty kopeks apiece for them, and I wouldn’t take even that.”

“Ivan Ivanovich! I tell you, you are lying!” observed Grigory Grigorievich, dwelling on each syllable for greater distinctness and speaking more loudly than

before.

But Ivan Ivanovich behaved as though the words could not possibly refer to him; he went on as before, but in a much lower voice: “Yes, sir, I would not take it. There is not a gentleman in Gadyach..”

“Ivan Ivanovich! You are a fool, and that’s the truth,” Grigory Grigorievich said in a loud voice. “Ivan Fiodorovich knows all about it better than you do, and doesn’t believe you.”

At this Ivan Ivanovich was really offended: he said no more, but began downing the turkey, even though it was not so fat as those that were a repulsive sight.

The clatter of knives, spoons, and plates took the place of conversation for a time, but loudest of all was the sound made by Grigory Grigorievich, smacking his lips over the marrow of the mutton bones.

“Have you,” inquired Ivan Ivanovich after an interval of silence, poking his head out of the chaise, “read *The Travels of Korobeynikov to Holy Places*? It’s a real delight to heart and soul! Such books aren’t published nowadays. I very much regret that I did not notice in what year it was written.”

Ivan Fiodorovich, hearing mention of a book, applied himself diligently to taking sauce.

“It is truly marvelous, sir, when you think that a humble artisan visited all those places: over two thousand miles, sir! over two thousand miles! Truly, it was divine grace that enabled him to reach Palestine and Jerusalem.”

“So you say,” said Ivan Fiodorovich, who had heard a great deal about Jerusalem from his orderly, “that he visited Jerusalem.”

“What are you saying, Ivan Fiodorovich?” Grigory Grigorievich inquired from the end of the table.

“I had occasion to observe what distant lands there are in the world!” said Ivan Fiodorovich, genuinely gratified that he had succeeded in uttering so long and difficult a sentence.

“Don’t you believe him, Ivan Fiodorovich!” said Grigory Grigorievich, who had not quite caught what he said. “He always tells fibs!”

Meanwhile dinner was over. Grigory Grigorievich went to his own room, as his habit was, for a little nap; and the visitors followed their aged hostess and the young ladies into the drawing room, where the same table on which they had left vodka when they went out to dinner was now as though by some magical transformation covered with little saucers of jam of various sorts and dishes of cherries and different kinds of melons.

The absence of Grigory Grigorievich could be seen in everything: the old lady became more disposed to talk and, of her own accord, without being asked,

revealed several secrets in regard to the making of apple cheese and the drying of pears. Even the young ladies began talking; though the fair one, who looked some six years younger than her sister and who was apparently about twenty-five, was rather silent.

But Ivan Ivanovich was more talkative and livelier than anyone. Feeling secure that no one would snub or contradict him, he talked of cucumbers and of planting potatoes and of how much more sensible people were in the old days—no comparison with what people are now!—and of how as time goes on everything improves and the most intricate inventions are discovered. He was, indeed, one of those persons who take great pleasure in relieving their souls by conversation and will talk of anything that possibly can be talked about. If the conversation touched upon grave and solemn subjects, Ivan Ivanovich sighed after each word and nodded his head slightly: if the subject were of a more domestic character, he would pop his head out of his chaise and make faces from which one could almost, it seemed, read how to make pear kvass, how large were the melons of which he was speaking, and how fat were the geese that were running about in his yard.

At last, with great difficulty and not before evening, Ivan Fiodorovich succeeded in taking his leave, and although he was usually ready to give way and they almost kept him for the night by force, he persisted in his intention of going—and went.

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V

HIS AUNT’S NEW PLANS

“Well, did you get the deed out of the old reprobate?” Such was the question with which Ivan Fiodorovich was greeted by his aunt, who had been expecting him for some hours in the porch and had at last been unable to resist going out to the gate.

“No, Auntie,” said Ivan Fiodorovich, getting out of the trap: “Grigory Grigorievich has no deed!”

“And you believed him? He was lying, the damned scoundrel! Some day I’ll come across him and I will give him a drubbing with my own hands. Oh, I’d get rid of some of his fat for him! Though perhaps we ought first to consult our court assessor and see if we couldn’t get the law on him.... But that’s not the point now. Well, was the dinner good?”

“Very... yes, excellent, Auntie!”

“Well, what did you have? Tell me. The old lady, I know, is a great hand at looking after the cooking.”

“Curd fritters with sour cream, Auntie; a stew of stuffed pigeons...”

“And a turkey with pickled plums?” asked his aunt, for she was herself very skillful in the preparation of that dish.

“Yes, there was a turkey, too...! Very handsome young ladies, Grigory Grigorievich’s sisters, especially the fair one!”

“Ah!” said Auntie, and she looked intently at Ivan Fiodorovich, who dropped his eyes, blushing. A new idea flashed into her mind. “Come, tell me,” she said eagerly and with curiosity, “what are her eyebrows like?” We should note that the aunt considered fine eyebrows as the most important item in a woman’s looks.

“Her eyebrows, Auntie, are exactly like what you described yours as being when you were young. And there are little freckles all over her face.”

“Ah,” commented his aunt, well pleased with Ivan Fiodorovich’s observation, though he had had no idea of paying her a compliment. “What sort of dress was she wearing? Though, indeed, it’s hard to get good material nowadays, such as I have here, for instance, in this dress. But that’s not the point. Well, did you talk to her about anything?”

“Talk... how do you mean, Auntie? Perhaps you are imagining...”

“Well, what of it, there would be nothing strange in that! Such is God’s will! It may have been ordained at your birth that you should make a match of it.”

“I don’t know how you can say such a thing, Auntie. That shows that you don’t know me at all....”

“Well, well, now he is offended,” said his aunt. “He’s still only a child!” she thought to herself: “he knows nothing! We must bring them together—let them get to know each other!”

The aunt went to have a look at the kitchen and left Ivan Fiodorovich alone. But from that time on she thought of nothing but seeing her nephew married as soon as possible and fondling his little ones. Her brain was absorbed in making preparations for the wedding, and it was noticeable that she bustled about more busily than ever, though the work was the worse rather than the better for it. Often when she was making the pies, a job which she never left to the cook, she would forget everything, and imagining that a tiny great-nephew was standing by her asking for some pie, would absently hold out her hands with the nicest bit for him, and the watchdog, taking advantage of this, would snatch the dainty morsel and by its loud munching rouse her from her reverie, for which it was always beaten with the poker. She even abandoned her favorite pursuits and did not go out shooting, especially after she shot a crow by mistake for a partridge, a thing which had never happened to her before.

At last, four days later, everyone saw the chaise brought out of the carriage house into the yard. The coachman Omelko (he was also the gardener and the watchman) had been hammering from early morning, nailing on the leather and continually chasing away the dogs who licked the wheels. I think it my duty to inform my readers that this was the very chaise in which Adam used to drive; and therefore, if anyone tries to convince you that some other chaise was Adam’s, it is an absolute lie, and his chaise is certainly not the genuine article. It is impossible to say how it survived the Flood. It must be supposed that there was a special carriage house for it in Noah’s Ark. I am very sorry that I cannot give a vivid picture of it for my readers. It is enough to say that Vasilisa Kashporovna was very well satisfied with its structure and always expressed regret that the old style of carriages had gone out of fashion. The chaise had been constructed a little on one side, that is, the right half was much higher than the left, and this pleased her particularly, because, as she said, a fat person could sit on one side and a tall person on the other. Inside the chaise, however, there was room for five small persons or three as big as the aunt.

About midday Omelko, having finished with the chaise, brought out of the stable three horses that were only a little younger than the chaise, and began harnessing them to the magnificent vehicle with a rope. Ivan Fiodorovich and his

aunt, one on the left side and the other on the right, stepped in and the chaise drove off. The peasants they met on the road, seeing this sumptuous chaise (Vasilisa Kashporovna rarely drove out in it), stopped respectfully, taking off their caps and bowing low.

Two hours later the chaise stopped at the front door—I think I need not say—of Storchenko's house. Grigory Grigorievich was not at home. His old mother and the two young ladies came into the dining room to receive the guests. The aunt walked in with a majestic step, with a great air stopped short with one foot forward, and said in a loud voice:

"I am delighted, dear madam, to have the honor to offer you my respects in person; and at the same time to thank you for your hospitality to my nephew, who has been warm in his praises of it. Your buckwheat is very good, madam—I saw it as we drove into the village. May I ask how many sheaves you get to the acre?"

After that followed kisses all around. As soon as they were seated in the drawing room, the old lady began:

"About the buckwheat I cannot tell you: that's Grigory Grigorievich's department: it's long since I have had anything to do with the farming; indeed I am not equal to it, I am old now! In the old days I remember the buckwheat stood up to my waist; now goodness knows what it is like, though they do say everything is better now." At that point the old lady heaved a sigh, and some observers would have heard in that sigh the sigh of a past age, of the eighteenth century.

"I have heard, madam, that your own serf girls can make excellent carpets," said Vasilisa Kashporovna, and with that touched on the old lady's most sensitive nerve; at those words she seemed to brighten up, and she talked readily of the way to dye the yarn and prepare the thread.

From carpets the conversation passed easily to the pickling of cucumbers and drying of pears. In short, before the end of an hour the two ladies were talking together as though they had been friends all their lives. Vasilisa Kashporovna had already said a great deal to her in such a low voice that Ivan Fiodorovich could not hear what she was saying.

"Yes, would you like to have a look at them?" said the old lady, getting up.

The young ladies and Vasilisa Kashporovna also got up and all moved toward the serf girls' room. The aunt signaled, however, to Ivan Fiodorovich to remain, and whispered something to the old lady.

"Mashenka," said the latter, addressing the fair-haired young lady, "stay with our visitor and talk with him, so that he doesn't become bored!"

The fair-haired young lady remained and sat down on the sofa. Ivan

Fiodorovich sat on his chair as though on thorns, blushed and cast down his eyes; but the young lady appeared not to notice this and sat unconcernedly on the sofa, carefully scrutinizing the windows and the walls, or watching the cat timorously running around under the chairs.

Ivan Fiodorovich grew a little bolder and would have begun a conversation; but it seemed as though he had lost all his words on the way. Not a single idea came into his mind.

The silence lasted for nearly a quarter of an hour. The young lady went on sitting as before.

At last Ivan Fiodorovich plucked up his courage.

“There are a great many flies in summer, madam!” he said in a half-trembling voice.

“A very great many!” answered the young lady. “My brother has made a swatter out of an old slipper of Mama’s but there are still lots of them.”

Here the conversation stalled again, and Ivan Fiodorovich was utterly unable to find anything to say.

At last the old lady and his aunt and the dark-haired young lady came back again. After a little more conversation, Vasilisa Kashporovna took leave of the old lady and her daughters in spite of their entreaties that they stay the night. The three ladies came out on the steps to see their visitors off, and continued for some time nodding to the aunt and nephew, as they looked out of the chaise.

“Well, Ivan Fiodorovich, what did you talk about when you were alone with the young lady?” his aunt asked him on the way home.

“Maria Grigorievna is a modest and well-behaved young lady!” said Ivan Fiodorovich.

“Listen, Ivan Fiodorovich, I want to talk seriously to you. Here you are thirty-eight, thank God; you have obtained a good rank in the service—it’s time to think about children! You must have a wife...”

“What, Auntie!” cried Ivan Fiodorovich, panic-stricken, “a wife! No, Auntie, for goodness’ sake... You make me quite ashamed... I’ve never had a wife... I wouldn’t know what to do with her!”

“You’ll find out, Ivan Fiodorovich, you’ll find out,” said his aunt, smiling, and she thought to herself: “What next, he is a perfect baby, he knows nothing!”

“Yes, Ivan Fiodorovich!” she went on aloud, “we could not find a better wife for you than Maria Grigorievna. Besides, you are very much attracted by her. I have had a good talk with the old lady about it: she’ll be delighted to see you her son-in-law. It’s true that we don’t know what that old scoundrel Grigorievich will say to it; but we won’t consider him, and if he takes it into his head not to give her a dowry, we’ll have the law on him....”

At that moment the chaise drove into the yard and the ancient nags grew more lively, feeling that their stable was not far off.

“Listen, Omelko! Let the horses have a good rest first, and don’t take them down to drink the minute they are unharnessed; they are overheated.”

“Well, Ivan Fiodorovich,” his aunt went on as she got out of the chaise, “I advise you to think it over carefully. I must run to the kitchen: I forgot to tell Solokha what to get for supper, and I expect the wretched girl won’t have thought of it herself.”

But Ivan Fiodorovich stood as though thunderstruck. It was true that Maria Grigorievna was a very nice-looking young lady; but to get married...! It seemed to him so strange, so peculiar, he couldn’t think of it without horror. Living with a wife...! Unthinkable! He would not be alone in his own room, but they would always have to be together...! Perspiration came out on his face as he sank more deeply into meditation.

He went to bed earlier than usual but in spite of all his efforts he could not go to sleep. But at last sleep, that universal comforter, came to him; but such sleep! He had never had such incoherent dreams. First, he dreamed that everything was whirling noisily around him, and he was running and running, as fast as his legs could carry him... Now he was at his last gasp... All at once someone caught him by the ear. “Aie! who is it?”

“It is I, your wife!” a voice resounded loudly in his ear—and he woke up. Then he imagined that he was married, that everything in their little house was so peculiar, so strange: a double bed stood in his room instead of a single one; his wife was sitting on a chair. He felt strange; he did not know how to approach her, what to say to her, and then he noticed that she had the face of a goose. He turned aside and saw another wife, also with the face of a goose. Turning in another direction, he saw still a third wife; and behind him was still another. Then he was seized by panic: he dashed away into the garden; but there it was hot. He took off his hat, and—saw a wife sitting in it. Drops of sweat came out on his face. He put his hand in his pocket for his handkerchief and in his pocket too there was a wife; he took some cotton out of his ear—and there too sat a wife.... Then he suddenly began hopping on one leg, and his aunt, looking at him, said with a dignified air: “Yes, you must hop on one leg now, for you are a married man.” He went toward her, but his aunt was no longer an aunt but a belfry, and he felt that someone was dragging him by a rope up the belfry. “Who is it pulling me?” Ivan Fiodorovich asked plaintively. “It is I, your wife. I am pulling you because you are a bell.”

“No, I am not a bell, I am Ivan Fiodorovich,” he cried. “Yes, you are a bell,” said the colonel of the P— infantry regiment, who happened to be passing. Then

he suddenly dreamed that his wife was not a human being at all but a sort of woolen material, and that he went into a shop in Mogiliov. “What sort of material would you like?” asked the shopkeeper. “You had better take a wife, that is the most fashionable material! It wears well! Everyone is having coats made of it now.” The shopkeeper measured and cut off his wife. Ivan Fiodorovich put her under his arm and went off to a Jewish tailor. “No,” said the Jew, “that is poor material! No one has coats made of that now....”

Ivan Fiodorovich woke up in terror, not knowing where he was; he was dripping with cold perspiration.

As soon as he got up in the morning, he went at once to his fortunetelling book, at the end of which a virtuous bookseller had in the goodness of his heart and unselfishness inserted an abridged dream interpreter. But there was absolutely nothing in it that remotely resembled this incoherent dream.

Meanwhile a new scheme, of which you shall hear more in the following chapter, matured in his aunt’s brain.

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A Bewitched Place

A TRUE STORY TOLD BY THE SEXTON

I swear, I am sick of telling stories! Why, what would you expect? It really is tiresome; one goes on telling stories and there is no getting out of it! Oh, very well, I will tell you a story, then; only remember, it is for the last time. Well, we were talking about a man’s being able to get the better, as the saying is, of the devil. To be sure, if it comes to that, all sorts of things do happen in this world.... Better not say so, though: if the devil wants to bamboozle you he will, I swear he will.... Now, you see, my father had the four of us; I was only a moron then, I wasn’t more than eleven, no, not yet eleven. I remember as though it were today when I was running on all fours and began barking like a dog, my dad shouted at me, shaking his head: “Aie, Foma, Foma, you are almost old enough to be married and you are as foolish as a young mule.”

My grandfather was still living then and fairly—may his hiccup ease up in the other world—strong on his legs. At times he would imagine things... But how am I to tell a story like this? Here one of you has been raking an ember for his pipe out of the stove for the last hour and the other has run behind the cupboard for something. It’s too much...! It wouldn’t bother me if you didn’t want to hear what I had to say, but you kept annoying me for a story... If you want to listen, then listen!

Just at the beginning of spring Father went with the wagons to the Crimea to sell tobacco; but I don’t remember whether he loaded two or three wagons; tobacco brought a good price in those days. He took my three-year-old brother with him to train him early as a dealer. Grandad, Mother, and I and a brother and another brother were left at home. Grandad had sown melons on a bit of ground by the roadway and went to stay at the shanty there; he took us with him, too, to scare the sparrows and the magpies away from the garden. I can’t say we didn’t enjoy it: sometimes we’d eat so many cucumbers, melons, turnips, onions, and peas that I swear, you would have thought there were cocks crowing in our stomachs. Well, to be sure, it was profitable too: travelers jog along the road, everyone wants to treat himself to a melon, and, besides that, from the neighboring farms they would often bring us fowls, turkeys, eggs, to exchange for our vegetables. We did very well.

But what pleased Grandad more than anything was that some fifty dealers

would pass with their wagonloads every day. They are people, you know, who have seen life: if one of them wants to tell you anything, you would do well to perk up your ears, and to Grandad it was like dumplings to a hungry man. Sometimes there would be a meeting with old acquaintances—everyone knew Grandad—and you know yourself how it is when old folks get together: it is this and that, and so then and so then, and so this happened and that happened... Well, they just go on. They remember things that happened, God knows when.

One evening—why, it seems as though it might have happened today—the sun had begun to set. Grandad was walking about the garden removing the leaves with which he covered the watermelons in the day to save them from being scorched by the sun.

“Look, Ostap,” I said to my brother, “here come some wagoners!”

“Where are the wagoners?” said Grandad, as he put a mark on the big melon so that the boys wouldn’t eat it by accident.

There were, as a fact, six wagons trailing along the road; a wagoner, whose mustache had gone gray, was walking ahead of them. He was still—what shall I say?—ten paces off, when he stopped.

“Good day, Maxim, so it has pleased God we should meet here.”

Grandad screwed up his eyes. “Ah, good day, good day! Where do you come from? And Bolyachka here, too! Good day, good day, brother! What the devil! why, they are all here: Krutotryshchenko too! and Pecherytsya! and Koveliok and Stetsko! Good day! Ha, ha, ho, ho...!” And they began kissing each other.

They took the oxen out of the shafts and let them graze on the grass; they left the wagons on the road and they all sat down in a circle in front of the shanty and lit their pipes. Though they had no thought for their pipes; well, between telling stories and chattering, I don’t believe they smoked a pipe apiece.

After supper Grandad began regaling his visitors with melons. So, taking a melon each, they trimmed it neatly with a knife (they were all old hands, had been about a good deal, and knew how to eat in company—I daresay they would have been ready to sit down even at a gentleman’s table); after cleaning the melon well, everyone made a hole with his finger in it, drank the juice, and began cutting it up into pieces and putting them into his mouth.

“Why are you standing there gaping, boys?” said my grandfather. “Dance, you sons of bitches! Where’s your pipe, Ostap? Now then, the Cossack dance! Foma, arms akimbo! Come, that’s it, hey, hop!”

I was an energetic boy in those days. Cursed old age! Now I can’t move like that; instead of cutting capers, my legs can only trip and stumble. For a long time Grandad watched us as he sat with the dealers. I noticed that his legs wouldn’t keep still; it was as though something was tugging at them.

“Look, Foma,” said Ostap, “if the old fellow isn’t going to dance.”

What do you think, he had hardly uttered the words when the old man could resist it no longer! He wanted, you know, to show off in front of the dealers.

“Now, you little bastards, is that the way to dance? This is the way to dance!” he said, getting up on his feet, stretching out his arms, and tapping with his heels.

Well, there is no denying that he did dance; he couldn’t have danced better if it had been with the Hetman’s wife. We stood aside and the old man went whirling all over the flat area beside the cucumber beds. But as soon as he had got halfway through the dance and wanted to do his best and cut some more capers, his feet wouldn’t lift from the ground, no matter what he did! “What a plague!” He moved backwards and forwards again, got to the middle of the dance again, but he couldn’t go on with it! Whatever he did—he couldn’t do it, and he didn’t do it! His legs were stiff as though made of wood. “Look, the place is bewitched, look, it is a spell of Satan! The enemy of mankind has a hand in it!” Well, he couldn’t disgrace himself before the dealers like that, could he? He made a fresh start and began cutting tiny trifling capers, a joy to see; up to the middle—then no! it wouldn’t be danced, and that is all!

“Ah, you damned Satan! I hope you choke on a rotten melon, that you perish before you grow up, you son of a bitch. See what shame he has brought me to in my old age...!” And indeed someone did laugh behind his back.

He looked around: no melon garden, no dealers, nothing; behind, in front, on both sides was a flat field. “Ay! Sss!... Well, I never!” he began screwing up his eyes—the place doesn’t seem quite unfamiliar: on one side a copse, behind the copse some sort of post sticking up which can be seen far away against the sky. Damn it all! but that’s the dovehouse in the priest’s garden! On the other side, too, there is something grayish; he looked closer: it was the district clerk’s threshing barn. So this was where the devil had dragged him! Going around in a circle, he found a little path. There was no moon; instead of it a white blur glimmered through a dark cloud.

“There will be a high wind tomorrow,” thought Grandad. All at once there was the gleam of a light on a little grave to one side of the path. “Well, I never!” Grandad stood still, put his arms akimbo, and stared at it. The light went out; far away and a little further yet, another twinkled. “A treasure!” cried Grandad. “I’ll bet anything it’s a treasure!” And he was just about to spit on his hands to begin digging when he remembered that he had no spade or shovel with him. “Oh, what a pity! Well—who knows?— maybe I’ve only to lift the turf and there it lies, the precious dear! Well, there’s nothing I can do; I’ll mark the place anyway so as not to forget it afterwards.”

So pulling along a large branch that must have been broken off by a high wind, he laid it on the little grave where the light gleamed and then he continued along the path. The young oak copse grew thinner; he caught a glimpse of a fence. “There, didn’t I say that it was the priest’s garden?” thought Grandad. “Here’s his fence; now it is not three-quarters of a mile to the melon patch.”

It was pretty late, though, when he came home, and he wouldn’t have any dumplings. Waking my brother Ostap, he only asked him whether it was long since the dealers had gone, and then rolled himself up in his sheepskin. And when Ostap started to ask him: “And what did the devils do with you today, Grandad?”

“Don’t ask,” he said, wrapping himself up tighter than ever, “don’t ask, Ostap, or your hair will turn gray!”

And he began snoring so that the startled sparrows which had been flocking together to the melon patch rose up in the air and flew away. But how was it that he could sleep? There’s no denying, he was a sly beast. God give him the kingdom of heaven, he could always get out of any scrape; sometimes he would pitch such a yarn that you would have to bite your lips.

Next day as soon as it began to get light Grandad put on his coat, fastened his belt, took a spade and shovel under his arm, put on his cap, drank a mug of kvass, wiped his lips with the skirt of his coat, and went straight to the priest’s vegetable garden. He passed both the hedges and the low oak copse, and there was a path winding out between the trees and coming out into the open country; it seemed the same. He came out of the copse and the place seemed exactly the same as yesterday. He saw the dovehouse sticking out, but he could not see the threshing barn. “No, this isn’t the place, it must be a little farther; it seems I must turn a little toward the threshing barn!” He turned back a little and began going along another path—then he could see the barn but not the dovehouse. Again he turned, and a little nearer to the dovehouse the barn was hidden. As though to spite him it began to drizzle. He ran again toward the barn—the dovehouse vanished; toward the dovehouse—the barn vanished.

“You damned Satan, may you never live to see your children!” he cried. And the rain came down in buckets.

Taking off his new boots and wrapping them in a handkerchief, so that they might not be warped by the rain, he ran off at a trot like some gentleman’s saddle horse. He crept into the shanty, drenched through, covered himself with his sheepskin, and began grumbling between his teeth and cursing the devil with words such as I had never heard in my life. I must admit I would really have blushed if it had happened in broad daylight.

Next day I woke up and looked; Grandad was walking about the melon patch

as though nothing had happened, covering the melons with burdock leaves. At dinner the old man began talking again and scaring my young brother, saying he would trade him for a fowl instead of a melon; and after dinner he made a pipe out of a bit of wood and began playing on it; and to amuse us gave us a melon which was twisted in three coils like a snake; he called it a Turkish one. I don't see such melons anywhere nowadays; it is true he got the seed from somewhere far away. In the evening, after supper, Grandad went with the spade to dig a new bed for late pumpkins. He began passing that bewitched place and he couldn't resist saying, "Cursed place!" He went into the middle of it, to the spot where he could not finish the dance the day before, and in his anger struck it with his spade. In a flash—that same field was all around him again: on one side he saw the dovehouse and on the other the threshing barn. "Well, it's a good thing I brought my spade. And there's the path, and there is the little grave! And there's the branch lying on it, and there, see there, is the light! If only I have made no mistake!"

He ran up stealthily, holding the spade in the air as though he were going to hit a hog that had poked its nose into a melon patch, and stopped before the grave. The light went out. On the grave lay a stone overgrown with weeds. "I must lift up that stone," thought Grandad, and tried to dig around it on all sides. The damned stone was huge! But planting his feet on the ground he shoved it off the grave. "Goo!" it rolled down the slope. "That's the right road for you to take! Now we'll get things done quickly!"

At this point Grandad stopped, took out his horn, sprinkled a little snuff in his hand, and was about to raise it to his nose when all at once—"Tchee-hee!" something sneezed above his head so that the trees shook and Grandad's face was spattered all over. "You might at least turn aside when you want to sneeze," said Grandad, wiping his eyes. He looked around—there was no one there. "No, it seems the devil doesn't like the snuff," he went on, putting back the horn in his bosom and picking up his spade. "He's a fool! Neither his grandfather nor his father ever had a pinch of snuff like that!" He began digging; the ground was soft, the spade had no trouble biting into it. Then something clanked. Pushing aside the earth he saw a cauldron.

"Ah, you darling, here you are!" cried Grandad, thrusting the spade under it.

"Ah, you darling, here you are!" piped a bird's beak, pecking the cauldron.

Grandad looked around and dropped the spade.

"Ah, you darling, here you are!" bleated a sheep's head from the top of the trees.

"Ah, you darling, here you are!" roared a bear, poking its snout out from behind a tree. A shudder ran down Grandad's back.

“Why, one is afraid to say a word here!” he muttered to himself.

“One is afraid to say a word here!” piped the bird’s beak.

“Afraid to say a word here!” bleated the sheep’s head.

“To say a word here!” roared the bear.

“Hm!” said Grandad, and he felt terrified.

“Hm!” piped the beak.

“Hm!” bleated the sheep.

“Hm!” roared the bear.

Grandad turned around in astonishment. Heaven help us, what a night! No stars nor moon; pits all around him, a bottomless precipice at his feet and a crag hanging over his head and looking every minute as though it would break off and come down on him. And Grandad imagined that a horrible face peeped out from behind it. “Oo! Oo!” a nose like a blacksmith’s bellows. You could pour a bucket of water into each nostril! Lips like two logs! Red eyes seemed to be popping out, and a tongue was thrust out too, and jeering. “The devil take you!” said Grandad, flinging down the cauldron. “Damn you and your treasure! What an ugly snout!” And he was just going to cut and run, but he looked around and stopped, seeing that everything was as before. “It’s only the damned devil trying to frighten me!”

He set to work at the cauldron again. No, it was too heavy! What was he to do? He couldn’t leave it now! So exerting himself to his utmost, he clutched at it. “Come, heave ho! again, again!” and he dragged it out. “Ough, now for a pinch of snuff!”

He took out his horn. Before shaking any out, though, he took a good look around to be sure there was no one there. He thought there was no one; but then it seemed to him that the trunk of the tree was gasping and blowing, ears made their appearance, there were red eyes, puffing nostrils, a wrinkled nose and it seemed on the point of sneezing. “No, I won’t have a pinch of snuff!” thought Grandad, putting away the horn. “Satan will be spitting in my eyes again!” He made haste to snatch up the cauldron and began running as fast as his legs could carry him; only he felt something behind him scratching on his legs with twigs.... “Aie, aie, aie!” was all that Grandad could cry as he ran as fast as he could; and it was not till he reached the priest’s vegetable garden that he paused for breath.

“Where can Grandad be gone?” we wondered, waiting three hours for him. Mother had come from the farm long ago and brought a pot of hot dumplings. Still no sign of Grandad! Again we had supper without him. After supper Mother washed the pot and was looking for a spot to throw the dishwater because there were melon beds all around, when she saw a barrel rolling straight toward her! It was quite dark. She felt sure one of the boys was hiding behind it in mischief

and shoving it toward her. “That’s right, I’ll throw the water at him,” she said, and flung the hot dishwater at the barrel.

“Aie!” shouted a bass voice. Imagine that: Grandad! Well, who would have known him! I swear we thought it was a barrel coming up! I must admit, though it was a sin, we really thought it funny when Grandad’s gray head was all drenched in the dishwater and decked with melon peelings.

“Oh, you devil of a woman!” said Grandad, wiping his head with the skirt of his coat. “What a hot bath she has given me, as though I were a pig before Christmas! Well, boys, now you will have something for pretzels! You’ll go about dressed in gold jackets, you puppies! Look what I have brought you!” said Grandad, and opened the cauldron.

What do you suppose there was in it? Come, think, make a guess! Eh? Gold? Well now, it wasn’t gold—it was filth, slop, I am ashamed to say what it was. Grandad spat, dropped the cauldron, and washed his hands.

And from that time forward Grandad made us two swear never to trust the devil. “Don’t you believe it!” he would often say to us. “Whatever the foe of our Lord Christ says, he is always lying, the son of a bitch! There isn’t a kopek’s worth of truth in him!” And if ever the old man heard that things were not right in some place: “Come, boys, let’s cross ourselves! That’s it! That’s it! Properly!” and he would begin making the sign of the cross. And that accursed place where he couldn’t finish the dance he fenced in, and he asked that we fling all the garbage there, all the weeds and litter which he raked off the melon patch.

So you see how the devil fools a man. I know that bit of ground well; later on some neighboring Cossacks hired it from Dad for a melon patch. It’s marvelous ground and there is always a wonderful crop on it; but there has never been anything good on that bewitched place. They may sow it properly, but there’s no saying what it is that comes up: not a melon—not a pumpkin—not a cucumber, the devil only knows what to make of it.

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ARABESQUES



Translated by Constance Garnett

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THE PORTRAIT

PART I

Nowhere did so many people pause as before the little picture-shop in the Shtchukinui Dvor. This little shop contained, indeed, the most varied collection of curiosities. The pictures were chiefly oil-paintings covered with dark varnish, in frames of dingy yellow. Winter scenes with white trees; very red sunsets, like raging conflagrations, a Flemish boor, more like a turkey-cock in cuffs than a human being, were the prevailing subjects. To these must be added a few engravings, such as a portrait of Khozreff-Mirza in a sheepskin cap, and some generals with three-cornered hats and hooked noses. Moreover, the doors of such shops are usually festooned with bundles of those publications, printed on large sheets of bark, and then coloured by hand, which bear witness to the native talent of the Russian.

On one was the Tzarevna Miliktrisa Kirbitievna; on another the city of Jerusalem. There are usually but few purchasers of these productions, but gazers are many. Some truant lackey probably yawns in front of them, holding in his hand the dishes containing dinner from the cook-shop for his master, who will not get his soup very hot. Before them, too, will most likely be standing a soldier wrapped in his cloak, a dealer from the old-clothes mart, with a couple of penknives for sale, and a huckstress, with a basketful of shoes. Each expresses admiration in his own way. The muzhiks generally touch them with their fingers; the dealers gaze seriously at them; serving boys and apprentices laugh, and tease each other with the coloured caricatures; old lackeys in frieze cloaks look at them merely for the sake of yawning away their time somewhere; and the hucksters, young Russian women, halt by instinct to hear what people are gossiping about, and to see what they are looking at.

At the time our story opens, the young painter, Tchartkoff, paused involuntarily as he passed the shop. His old cloak and plain attire showed him to be a man who was devoted to his art with self-denying zeal, and who had no time to trouble himself about his clothes. He halted in front of the little shop, and at first enjoyed an inward laugh over the monstrosities in the shape of pictures.

At length he sank unconsciously into a reverie, and began to ponder as to what sort of people wanted these productions? It did not seem remarkable to him that the Russian populace should gaze with rapture upon “Eruslanoff Lazarevitch,”

on “The Glutton” and “The Carouser,” on “Thoma and Erema.” The delineations of these subjects were easily intelligible to the masses. But where were there purchases for those streaky, dirty oil-paintings? Who needed those Flemish boors, those red and blue landscapes, which put forth some claims to a higher stage of art, but which really expressed the depths of its degradation? They did not appear the works of a self-taught child. In that case, in spite of the caricature of drawing, a sharp distinction would have manifested itself. But here were visible only simple dullness, steady-going incapacity, which stood, through self-will, in the ranks of art, while its true place was among the lowest trades. The same colours, the same manner, the same practised hand, belonging rather to a manufacturing automaton than to a man!

He stood before the dirty pictures for some time, his thoughts at length wandering to other matters. Meanwhile the proprietor of the shop, a little grey man, in a frieze cloak, with a beard which had not been shaved since Sunday, had been urging him to buy for some time, naming prices, without even knowing what pleased him or what he wanted. “Here, I’ll take a silver piece for these peasants and this little landscape. What painting! it fairly dazzles one; only just received from the factory; the varnish isn’t dry yet. Or here is a winter scene--take the winter scene; fifteen rubles; the frame alone is worth it. What a winter scene!” Here the merchant gave a slight fillip to the canvas, as if to demonstrate all the merits of the winter scene. “Pray have them put up and sent to your house. Where do you live? Here, boy, give me some string!”

“Hold, not so fast!” said the painter, coming to himself, and perceiving that the brisk dealer was beginning in earnest to pack some pictures up. He was rather ashamed not to take anything after standing so long in front of the shop; so saying, “Here, stop! I will see if there is anything I want here!” he stooped and began to pick up from the floor, where they were thrown in a heap, some worn, dusty old paintings. There were old family portraits, whose descendants, probably could not be found on earth; with torn canvas and frames minus their gilding; in short, trash. But the painter began his search, thinking to himself, “Perhaps I may come across something.” He had heard stories about pictures of the great masters having been found among the rubbish in cheap print-sellers’ shops.

The dealer, perceiving what he was about, ceased his importunities, and took up his post again at the door, hailing the passers-by with, “Hither, friends, here are pictures; step in, step in; just received from the makers!” He shouted his fill, and generally in vain, had a long talk with a rag-merchant, standing opposite, at the door of his shop; and finally, recollecting that he had a customer in his shop, turned his back on the public and went inside. “Well, friend, have you chosen

anything?” said he. But the painter had already been standing motionless for some time before a portrait in a large and originally magnificent frame, upon which, however, hardly a trace of gilding now remained.

It represented an old man, with a thin, bronzed face and high cheek-bones; the features seemingly depicted in a moment of convulsive agitation. He wore a flowing Asiatic costume. Dusty and defaced as the portrait was, Tchartkoff saw, when he had succeeded in removing the dirt from the face, traces of the work of a great artist. The portrait appeared to be unfinished, but the power of the handling was striking. The eyes were the most remarkable picture of all: it seemed as though the full power of the artist’s brush had been lavished upon them. They fairly gazed out of the portrait, destroying its harmony with their strange liveliness. When he carried the portrait to the door, the eyes gleamed even more penetratingly. They produced nearly the same impression on the public. A woman standing behind him exclaimed, “He is looking, he is looking!” and jumped back. Tchartkoff experienced an unpleasant feeling, inexplicable even to himself, and placed the portrait on the floor.

“Well, will you take the portrait?” said the dealer.

“How much is it?” said the painter.

“Why chaffer over it? give me seventy-five kopeks.”

“No.”

“Well, how much will you give?”

“Twenty kopeks,” said the painter, preparing to go.

“What a price! Why, you couldn’t buy the frame for that! Perhaps you will decide to purchase to-morrow. Sir, sir, turn back! Add ten kopeks. Take it, take it! give me twenty kopeks. To tell the truth, you are my only customer to-day, and that’s the only reason.”

Thus Tchartkoff quite unexpectedly became the purchaser of the old portrait, and at the same time reflected, “Why have I bought it? What is it to me?” But there was nothing to be done. He pulled a twenty-kopek piece from his pocket, gave it to the merchant, took the portrait under his arm, and carried it home. On the way thither, he remembered that the twenty-kopek piece he had given for it was his last. His thoughts at once became gloomy. Vexation and careless indifference took possession of him at one and the same moment. The red light of sunset still lingered in one half the sky; the houses facing that way still gleamed with its warm light; and meanwhile the cold blue light of the moon grew brighter. Light, half-transparent shadows fell in bands upon the ground. The painter began by degrees to glance up at the sky, flushed with a transparent light; and at the same moment from his mouth fell the words, “What a delicate tone! What a nuisance! Deuce take it!” Re-adjusting the portrait, which kept

slipping from under his arm, he quickened his pace.

Weary and bathed in perspiration, he dragged himself to Vasilievsky Ostroff. With difficulty and much panting he made his way up the stairs flooded with soap-suds, and adorned with the tracks of dogs and cats. To his knock there was no answer: there was no one at home. He leaned against the window, and disposed himself to wait patiently, until at last there resounded behind him the footsteps of a boy in a blue blouse, his servant, model, and colour-grinder. This boy was called Nikita, and spent all his time in the streets when his master was not at home. Nikita tried for a long time to get the key into the lock, which was quite invisible, by reason of the darkness.

Finally the door was opened. Tchartkoff entered his ante-room, which was intolerably cold, as painters' rooms always are, which fact, however, they do not notice. Without giving Nikita his coat, he went on into his studio, a large room, but low, fitted up with all sorts of artistic rubbish--plaster hands, canvases, sketches begun and discarded, and draperies thrown over chairs. Feeling very tired, he took off his cloak, placed the portrait abstractedly between two small canvasses, and threw himself on the narrow divan. Having stretched himself out, he finally called for a light.

"There are no candles," said Nikita.

"What, none?"

"And there were none last night," said Nikita. The artist recollected that, in fact, there had been no candles the previous evening, and became silent. He let Nikita take his coat off, and put on his old worn dressing-gown.

"There has been a gentleman here," said Nikita.

"Yes, he came for money, I know," said the painter, waving his hand.

"He was not alone," said Nikita.

"Who else was with him?"

"I don't know, some police officer or other."

"But why a police officer?"

"I don't know why, but he says because your rent is not paid."

"Well, what will come of it?"

"I don't know what will come of it: he said, 'If he won't pay, why, let him leave the rooms.' They are both coming again to-morrow."

"Let them come," said Tchartkoff, with indifference; and a gloomy mood took full possession of him.

Young Tchartkoff was an artist of talent, which promised great things: his work gave evidence of observation, thought, and a strong inclination to approach nearer to nature.

"Look here, my friend," his professor said to him more than once, "you have

talent; it will be a shame if you waste it: but you are impatient; you have but to be attracted by anything, to fall in love with it, you become engrossed with it, and all else goes for nothing, and you won't even look at it. See to it that you do not become a fashionable artist. At present your colouring begins to assert itself too loudly; and your drawing is at times quite weak; you are already striving after the fashionable style, because it strikes the eye at once. Have a care! society already begins to have its attraction for you: I have seen you with a shiny hat, a foppish neckerchief. . . . It is seductive to paint fashionable little pictures and portraits for money; but talent is ruined, not developed, by that means. Be patient; think out every piece of work, discard your foppishness; let others amass money, your own will not fail you."

The professor was partly right. Our artist sometimes wanted to enjoy himself, to play the fop, in short, to give vent to his youthful impulses in some way or other; but he could control himself withal. At times he would forget everything, when he had once taken his brush in his hand, and could not tear himself from it except as from a delightful dream. His taste perceptibly developed. He did not as yet understand all the depths of Raphael, but he was attracted by Guido's broad and rapid handling, he paused before Titian's portraits, he delighted in the Flemish masters. The dark veil enshrouding the ancient pictures had not yet wholly passed away from before them; but he already saw something in them, though in private he did not agree with the professor that the secrets of the old masters are irremediably lost to us. It seemed to him that the nineteenth century had improved upon them considerably, that the delineation of nature was more clear, more vivid, more close. It sometimes vexed him when he saw how a strange artist, French or German, sometimes not even a painter by profession, but only a skilful dauber, produced, by the celerity of his brush and the vividness of his colouring, a universal commotion, and amassed in a twinkling a funded capital. This did not occur to him when fully occupied with his own work, for then he forgot food and drink and all the world. But when dire want arrived, when he had no money wherewith to buy brushes and colours, when his implacable landlord came ten times a day to demand the rent for his rooms, then did the luck of the wealthy artists recur to his hungry imagination; then did the thought which so often traverses Russian minds, to give up altogether, and go down hill, utterly to the bad, traverse his. And now he was almost in this frame of mind.

"Yes, it is all very well, to be patient, be patient!" he exclaimed, with vexation; "but there is an end to patience at last. Be patient! but what money have I to buy a dinner with to-morrow? No one will lend me any. If I did bring myself to sell all my pictures and sketches, they would not give me twenty kopeks for the

whole of them. They are useful; I feel that not one of them has been undertaken in vain; I have learned something from each one. Yes, but of what use is it? Studies, sketches, all will be studies, trial-sketches to the end. And who will buy, not even knowing me by name? Who wants drawings from the antique, or the life class, or my unfinished love of a Psyche, or the interior of my room, or the portrait of Nikita, though it is better, to tell the truth, than the portraits by any of the fashionable artists? Why do I worry, and toil like a learner over the alphabet, when I might shine as brightly as the rest, and have money, too, like them?”

Thus speaking, the artist suddenly shuddered, and turned pale. A convulsively distorted face gazed at him, peeping forth from the surrounding canvas; two terrible eyes were fixed straight upon him; on the mouth was written a menacing command of silence. Alarmed, he tried to scream and summon Nikita, who already was snoring in the ante-room; but he suddenly paused and laughed. The sensation of fear died away in a moment; it was the portrait he had bought, and which he had quite forgotten. The light of the moon illuminating the chamber had fallen upon it, and lent it a strange likeness to life.

He began to examine it. He moistened a sponge with water, passed it over the picture several times, washed off nearly all the accumulated and incrusted dust and dirt, hung it on the wall before him, wondering yet more at the remarkable workmanship. The whole face had gained new life, and the eyes gazed at him so that he shuddered; and, springing back, he exclaimed in a voice of surprise: “It looks with human eyes!” Then suddenly there occurred to him a story he had heard long before from his professor, of a certain portrait by the renowned Leonardo da Vinci, upon which the great master laboured several years, and still regarded as incomplete, but which, according to Vasari, was nevertheless deemed by all the most complete and finished product of his art. The most finished thing about it was the eyes, which amazed his contemporaries; the very smallest, barely visible veins in them being reproduced on the canvas.

But in the portrait now before him there was something singular. It was no longer art; it even destroyed the harmony of the portrait; they were living, human eyes! It seemed as though they had been cut from a living man and inserted. Here was none of that high enjoyment which takes possession of the soul at the sight of an artist’s production, no matter how terrible the subject he may have chosen.

Again he approached the portrait, in order to observe those wondrous eyes, and perceived, with terror, that they were gazing at him. This was no copy from Nature; it was life, the strange life which might have lighted up the face of a dead man, risen from the grave. Whether it was the effect of the moonlight, which brought with it fantastic thoughts, and transformed things into strange

likenesses, opposed to those of matter-of-fact day, or from some other cause, but it suddenly became terrible to him, he knew not why, to sit alone in the room. He draw back from the portrait, turned aside, and tried not to look at it; but his eye involuntarily, of its own accord, kept glancing sideways towards it. Finally, he became afraid to walk about the room. It seemed as though some one were on the point of stepping up behind him; and every time he turned, he glanced timidly back. He had never been a coward; but his imagination and nerves were sensitive, and that evening he could not explain his involuntary fear. He seated himself in one corner, but even then it seemed to him that some one was peeping over his shoulder into his face. Even Nikita's snores, resounding from the ante-room, did not chase away his fear. At length he rose from the seat, without raising his eyes, went behind a screen, and lay down on his bed. Through the cracks of the screen he saw his room lit up by the moon, and the portrait hanging stiffly on the wall. The eyes were fixed upon him in a yet more terrible and significant manner, and it seemed as if they would not look at anything but himself. Overpowered with a feeling of oppression, he decided to rise from his bed, seized a sheet, and, approaching the portrait, covered it up completely.

Having done this, he lay done more at ease on his bed, and began to meditate upon the poverty and pitiful lot of the artist, and the thorny path lying before him in the world. But meanwhile his eye glanced involuntarily through the joint of the screen at the portrait muffled in the sheet. The light of the moon heightened the whiteness of the sheet, and it seemed to him as though those terrible eyes shone through the cloth. With terror he fixed his eyes more steadfastly on the spot, as if wishing to convince himself that it was all nonsense. But at length he saw--saw clearly; there was no longer a sheet--the portrait was quite uncovered, and was gazing beyond everything around it, straight at him; gazing as it seemed fairly into his heart. His heart grew cold. He watched anxiously; the old man moved, and suddenly, supporting himself on the frame with both arms, raised himself by his hands, and, putting forth both feet, leapt out of the frame. Through the crack of the screen, the empty frame alone was now visible. Footsteps resounded through the room, and approached nearer and nearer to the screen. The poor artist's heart began beating fast. He expected every moment, his breath failing for fear, that the old man would look round the screen at him. And lo! he did look from behind the screen, with the very same bronzed face, and with his big eyes roving about.

Tchartkoff tried to scream, and felt that his voice was gone; he tried to move; his limbs refused their office. With open mouth, and failing breath, he gazed at the tall phantom, draped in some kind of a flowing Asiatic robe, and waited for what it would do. The old man sat down almost on his very feet, and then pulled

out something from among the folds of his wide garment. It was a purse. The old man untied it, took it by the end, and shook it. Heavy rolls of coin fell out with a dull thud upon the floor. Each was wrapped in blue paper, and on each was marked, “1000 ducats.” The old man protruded his long, bony hand from his wide sleeves, and began to undo the rolls. The gold glittered. Great as was the artist’s unreasoning fear, he concentrated all his attention upon the gold, gazing motionless, as it made its appearance in the bony hands, gleamed, rang lightly or dully, and was wrapped up again. Then he perceived one packet which had rolled farther than the rest, to the very leg of his bedstead, near his pillow. He grasped it almost convulsively, and glanced in fear at the old man to see whether he noticed it.

But the old man appeared very much occupied: he collected all his rolls, replaced them in the purse, and went outside the screen without looking at him. Tchartkoff’s heart beat wildly as he heard the rustle of the retreating footsteps sounding through the room. He clasped the roll of coin more closely in his hand, quivering in every limb. Suddenly he heard the footsteps approaching the screen again. Apparently the old man had recollected that one roll was missing. Lo! again he looked round the screen at him. The artist in despair grasped the roll with all his strength, tried with all his power to make a movement, shrieked--and awoke.

He was bathed in a cold perspiration; his heart beat as hard as it was possible for it to beat; his chest was oppressed, as though his last breath was about to issue from it. “Was it a dream?” he said, seizing his head with both hands. But the terrible reality of the apparition did not resemble a dream. As he woke, he saw the old man step into the frame: the skirts of the flowing garment even fluttered, and his hand felt plainly that a moment before it had held something heavy. The moonlight lit up the room, bringing out from the dark corners here a canvas, there the model of a hand: a drapery thrown over a chair; trousers and dirty boots. Then he perceived that he was not lying in his bed, but standing upright in front of the portrait. How he had come there, he could not in the least comprehend. Still more surprised was he to find the portrait uncovered, and with actually no sheet over it. Motionless with terror, he gazed at it, and perceived that the living, human eyes were fastened upon him. A cold perspiration broke out upon his forehead. He wanted to move away, but felt that his feet had in some way become rooted to the earth. And he felt that this was not a dream. The old man’s features moved, and his lips began to project towards him, as though he wanted to suck him in. With a yell of despair he jumped back--and awoke.

“Was it a dream?” With his heart throbbing to bursting, he felt about him with both hands. Yes, he was lying in bed, and in precisely the position in which he

had fallen asleep. Before him stood the screen. The moonlight flooded the room. Through the crack of the screen, the portrait was visible, covered with the sheet, as it should be, just as he had covered it. And so that, too, was a dream? But his clenched fist still felt as though something had been held in it. The throbbing of his heart was violent, almost terrible; the weight upon his breast intolerable. He fixed his eyes upon the crack, and stared steadfastly at the sheet. And lo! he saw plainly the sheet begin to open, as though hands were pushing from underneath, and trying to throw it off. “Lord God, what is it!” he shrieked, crossing himself in despair--and awoke.

And was this, too, a dream? He sprang from his bed, half-mad, and could not comprehend what had happened to him. Was it the oppression of a nightmare, the raving of fever, or an actual apparition? Striving to calm, as far as possible, his mental tumult, and stay the wildly rushing blood, which beat with straining pulses in every vein, he went to the window and opened it. The cool breeze revived him. The moonlight lay on the roofs and the white walls of the houses, though small clouds passed frequently across the sky. All was still: from time to time there struck the ear the distant rumble of a carriage. He put his head out of the window, and gazed for some time. Already the signs of approaching dawn were spreading over the sky. At last he felt drowsy, shut to the window, stepped back, lay down in bed, and quickly fell, like one exhausted, into a deep sleep.

He awoke late, and with the disagreeable feeling of a man who has been half-suffocated with coal-gas: his head ached painfully. The room was dim: an unpleasant moisture pervaded the air, and penetrated the cracks of his windows. Dissatisfied and depressed as a wet cock, he seated himself on his dilapidated divan, not knowing what to do, what to set about, and at length remembered the whole of his dream. As he recalled it, the dream presented itself to his mind as so oppressively real that he even began to wonder whether it were a dream, whether there were not something more here, whether it were not really an apparition. Removing the sheet, he looked at the terrible portrait by the light of day. The eyes were really striking in their liveliness, but he found nothing particularly terrible about them, though an indescribably unpleasant feeling lingered in his mind. Nevertheless, he could not quite convince himself that it was a dream. It struck him that there must have been some terrible fragment of reality in the vision. It seemed as though there were something in the old man’s very glance and expression which said that he had been with him that night: his hand still felt the weight which had so recently lain in it as if some one had but just snatched it from him. It seemed to him that, if he had only grasped the roll more firmly, it would have remained in his hand, even after his awakening.

“My God, if I only had a portion of that money!” he said, breathing heavily;

and in his fancy, all the rolls of coin, with their fascinating inscription, “1000 ducats,” began to pour out of the purse. The rolls opened, the gold glittered, and was wrapped up again; and he sat motionless, with his eyes fixed on the empty air, as if he were incapable of tearing himself from such a sight, like a child who sits before a plate of sweets, and beholds, with watering mouth, other people devouring them.

At last there came a knock on the door, which recalled him unpleasantly to himself. The landlord entered with the constable of the district, whose presence is even more disagreeable to poor people than is the presence of a beggar to the rich. The landlord of the little house in which Tchartkoff lived resembled the other individuals who own houses anywhere in the Vasilievsky Ostroff, on the St. Petersburg side, or in the distant regions of Kolomna--individuals whose character is as difficult to define as the colour of a threadbare surtout. In his youth he had been a captain and a braggart, a master in the art of flogging, skilful, foppish, and stupid; but in his old age he combined all these various qualities into a kind of dim indefiniteness. He was a widower, already on the retired list, no longer boasted, nor was dandified, nor quarrelled, but only cared to drink tea and talk all sorts of nonsense over it. He walked about his room, and arranged the ends of the tallow candles; called punctually at the end of each month upon his lodgers for money; went out into the street, with the key in his hand, to look at the roof of his house, and sometimes chased the porter out of his den, where he had hidden himself to sleep. In short, he was a man on the retired list, who, after the turmoils and wildness of his life, had only his old-fashioned habits left.

“Please to see for yourself, Varukh Kusmitch,” said the landlord, turning to the officer, and throwing out his hands, “this man does not pay his rent, he does not pay.”

“How can I when I have no money? Wait, and I will pay.”

“I can’t wait, my good fellow,” said the landlord angrily, making a gesture with the key which he held in his hand. “Lieutenant-Colonel Potogonkin has lived with me seven years, seven years already; Anna Petrovna Buchmisteroff rents the coach-house and stable, with the exception of two stalls, and has three household servants: that is the kind of lodgers I have. I say to you frankly, that this is not an establishment where people do not pay their rent. Pay your money at once, please, or else clear out.”

“Yes, if you rented the rooms, please to pay,” said the constable, with a slight shake of the head, as he laid his finger on one of the buttons of his uniform.

“Well, what am I to pay with? that’s the question. I haven’t a groschen just at present.”

“In that case, satisfy the claims of Ivan Ivanovitch with the fruits of your profession,” said the officer: “perhaps he will consent to take pictures.”

“No, thank you, my good fellow, no pictures. Pictures of holy subjects, such as one could hang upon the walls, would be well enough; or some general with a star, or Prince Kutusoff’s portrait. But this fellow has painted that muzhik, that muzhik in his blouse, his servant who grinds his colours! The idea of painting his portrait, the hog! I’ll thrash him well: he took all the nails out of my bolts, the scoundrel! Just see what subjects! Here he has drawn his room. It would have been well enough had he taken a clean, well-furnished room; but he has gone and drawn this one, with all the dirt and rubbish he has collected. Just see how he has defaced my room! Look for yourself. Yes, and my lodgers have been with me seven years, the lieutenant-colonel, Anna Petrovna Buchmisteroff. No, I tell you, there is no worse lodger than a painter: he lives like a pig--God have mercy!”

The poor artist had to listen patiently to all this. Meanwhile the officer had occupied himself with examining the pictures and studies, and showed that his mind was more advanced than the landlord’s, and that he was not insensible to artistic impressions.

“Heh!” said he, tapping one canvas, on which was depicted a naked woman, “this subject is--lively. But why so much black under her nose? did she take snuff?”

“Shadow,” answered Tchartkoff gruffly, without looking at him.

“But it might have been put in some other place: it is too conspicuous under the nose,” observed the officer. “And whose likeness is this?” he continued, approaching the old man’s portrait. “It is too terrible. Was he really so dreadful? Ah! why, he actually looks at one! What a thunder-cloud! From whom did you paint it?”

“Ah! it is from a--” said Tchartkoff, but did not finish his sentence: he heard a crack. It seems that the officer had pressed too hard on the frame of the portrait, thanks to the weight of his constable’s hands. The small boards at the side caved in, one fell on the floor, and with it fell, with a heavy crash, a roll of blue paper. The inscription caught Tchartkoff’s eye--”1000 ducats.” Like a madman, he sprang to pick it up, grasped the roll, and gripped it convulsively in his hand, which sank with the weight.

“Wasn’t there a sound of money?” inquired the officer, hearing the noise of something falling on the floor, and not catching sight of it, owing to the rapidity with which Tchartkoff had hastened to pick it up.

“What business is it of yours what is in my room?”

“It’s my business because you ought to pay your rent to the landlord at once;

because you have money, and won't pay, that's why it's my business."

"Well, I will pay him to-day."

"Well, and why wouldn't you pay before, instead of giving trouble to your landlord, and bothering the police to boot?"

"Because I did not want to touch this money. I will pay him in full this evening, and leave the rooms to-morrow. I will not stay with such a landlord."

"Well, Ivan Ivanovitch, he will pay you," said the constable, turning to the landlord. "But in case you are not satisfied in every respect this evening, then you must excuse me, Mr. Painter." So saying, he put on his three-cornered hat, and went into the ante-room, followed by the landlord hanging his head, and apparently engaged in meditation.

"Thank God, Satan has carried them off!" said Tchartkoff, as he heard the outer door of the ante-room close. He looked out into the ante-room, sent Nikita off on some errand, in order to be quite alone, fastened the door behind him, and, returning to his room, began with wildly beating heart to undo the roll.

In it were ducats, all new, and bright as fire. Almost beside himself, he sat down beside the pile of gold, still asking himself, "Is not this all a dream?" There were just a thousand in the roll, the exterior of which was precisely like what he had seen in his dream. He turned them over, and looked at them for some minutes. His imagination recalled up all the tales he had heard of hidden hoards, cabinets with secret drawers, left by ancestors for their spendthrift descendants, with firm belief in the extravagance of their life. He pondered this: "Did not some grandfather, in the present instance, leave a gift for his grandchild, shut up in the frame of a family portrait?" Filled with romantic fancies, he began to think whether this had not some secret connection with his fate? whether the existence of the portrait was not bound up with his own, and whether his acquisition of it was not due to a kind of predestination?

He began to examine the frame with curiosity. On one side a cavity was hollowed out, but concealed so skilfully and neatly by a little board, that, if the massive hand of the constable had not effected a breach, the ducats might have remained hidden to the end of time. On examining the portrait, he marvelled again at the exquisite workmanship, the extraordinary treatment of the eyes. They no longer appeared terrible to him; but, nevertheless, each time he looked at them a disagreeable feeling involuntarily lingered in his mind.

"No," he said to himself, "no matter whose grandfather you were, I'll put a glass over you, and get you a gilt frame." Then he laid his hand on the golden pile before him, and his heart beat faster at the touch. "What shall I do with them?" he said, fixing his eyes on them. "Now I am independent for at least three years: I can shut myself up in my room and work. I have money for colours

now; for food and lodging--no one will annoy and disturb me now. I will buy myself a first-class lay figure, I will order a plaster torso, and some model feet, I will have a Venus. I will buy engravings of the best pictures. And if I work three years to satisfy myself, without haste or with the idea of selling, I shall surpass all, and may become a distinguished artist."

Thus he spoke in solitude, with his good judgment prompting him; but louder and more distinct sounded another voice within him. As he glanced once more at the gold, it was not thus that his twenty-two years and fiery youth reasoned. Now everything was within his power on which he had hitherto gazed with envious eyes, had viewed from afar with longing. How his heart beat when he thought of it! To wear a fashionable coat, to feast after long abstinence, to hire handsome apartments, to go at once to the theatre, to the confectioner's, to . . . other places; and seizing his money, he was in the street in a moment.

First of all he went to the tailor, was clothed anew from head to foot, and began to look at himself like a child. He purchased perfumes and pomades; hired the first elegant suite of apartments with mirrors and plateglass windows which he came across in the Nevsky Prospect, without haggling about the price; bought, on the impulse of the moment, a costly eye-glass; bought, also on the impulse, a number of neckties of every description, many more than he needed; had his hair curled at the hairdresser's; rode through the city twice without any object whatever; ate an immense quantity of sweetmeats at the confectioner's; and went to the French Restaurant, of which he had heard rumours as indistinct as though they had concerned the Empire of China. There he dined, casting proud glances at the other visitors, and continually arranging his curls in the glass. There he drank a bottle of champagne, which had been known to him hitherto only by hearsay. The wine rather affected his head; and he emerged into the street, lively, pugnacious, and ready to raise the Devil, according to the Russian expression. He strutted along the pavement, levelling his eye-glass at everybody. On the bridge he caught sight of his former professor, and slipped past him neatly, as if he did not see him, so that the astounded professor stood stock-still on the bridge for a long time, with a face suggestive of a note of interrogation.

All his goods and chattels, everything he owned, easels, canvas, pictures, were transported that same evening to his elegant quarters. He arranged the best of them in conspicuous places, threw the worst into a corner, and promenaded up and down the handsome rooms, glancing constantly in the mirrors. An unconquerable desire to take the bull by the horns, and show himself to the world at once, had arisen in his mind. He already heard the shouts, "Tchartkoff! Tchartkoff! Tchartkoff paints! What talent Tchartkoff has!" He paced the room in

a state of rapture.

The next day he took ten ducats, and went to the editor of a popular journal asking his charitable assistance. He was joyfully received by the journalist, who called him on the spot, “Most respected sir,” squeezed both his hands, and made minute inquiries as to his name, birthplace, residence. The next day there appeared in the journal, below a notice of some newly invented tallow candles, an article with the following heading:--

“TCHARTKOFF’S IMMENSE TALENT

“We hasten to delight the cultivated inhabitants of the capital with a discovery which we may call splendid in every respect. All are agreed that there are among us many very handsome faces, but hitherto there has been no means of committing them to canvas for transmission to posterity. This want has now been supplied: an artist has been found who unites in himself all desirable qualities. The beauty can now feel assured that she will be depicted with all the grace of her charms, airy, fascinating, butterfly-like, flitting among the flowers of spring. The stately father of a family can see himself surrounded by his family. Merchant, warrior, citizen, statesman--hasten one and all, wherever you may be. The artist’s magnificent establishment [Nevsky Prospect, such and such a number] is hung with portraits from his brush, worthy of Van Dyck or Titian. We do not know which to admire most, their truth and likeness to the originals, or the wonderful brilliancy and freshness of the colouring. Hail to you, artist! you have drawn a lucky number in the lottery. Long live Andrei Petrovitch!” (The journalist evidently liked familiarity.) “Glorify yourself and us. We know how to prize you. Universal popularity, and with it wealth, will be your meed, though some of our brother journalists may rise against you.”

The artist read this article with secret satisfaction; his face beamed. He was mentioned in print; it was a novelty to him: he read the lines over several times. The comparison with Van Dyck and Titian flattered him extremely. The praise, “Long live Andrei Petrovitch,” also pleased him greatly: to be spoken of by his Christian name and patronymic in print was an honour hitherto totally unknown to him. He began to pace the chamber briskly, now he sat down in an armchair, now he sprang up, and seated himself on the sofa, planning each moment how he would receive visitors, male and female; he went to his canvas and made a rapid sweep of the brush, endeavouring to impart a graceful movement to his hand.

The next day, the bell at his door rang. He hastened to open it. A lady entered, accompanied by a girl of eighteen, her daughter, and followed by a lackey in a furred livery-coat.

“You are the painter Tchartkoff?”

The artist bowed.

“A great deal is written about you: your portraits, it is said, are the height of perfection.” So saying, the lady raised her glass to her eyes and glanced rapidly over the walls, upon which nothing was hanging. “But where are your portraits?”

“They have been taken away” replied the artist, somewhat confusedly: “I have but just moved into these apartments; so they are still on the road, they have not arrived.”

“You have been in Italy?” asked the lady, levelling her glass at him, as she found nothing else to point it at.

“No, I have not been there; but I wish to go, and I have deferred it for a while. Here is an arm-chair, madame: you are fatigued?”

“Thank you: I have been sitting a long time in the carriage. Ah, at last I behold your work!” said the lady, running to the opposite wall, and bringing her glass to bear upon his studies, sketches, views and portraits which were standing there on the floor. “It is charming. Lise! Lise, come here. Rooms in the style of Teniers. Do you see? Disorder, disorder, a table with a bust upon it, a hand, a palette; dust, see how the dust is painted! It is charming. And here on this canvas is a woman washing her face. What a pretty face! Ah! a little muzhik! So you do not devote yourself exclusively to portraits?”

“Oh! that is mere rubbish. I was trying experiments, studies.”

“Tell me your opinion of the portrait painters of the present day. Is it not true that there are none now like Titian? There is not that strength of colour, that--that-- What a pity that I cannot express myself in Russian.” The lady was fond of paintings, and had gone through all the galleries in Italy with her eye-glass. “But Monsieur Nohl--ah, how well he paints! what remarkable work! I think his faces have been more expression than Titian’s. You do not know Monsieur Nohl?”

“Who is Nohl?” inquired the artist.

“Monsieur Nohl. Ah, what talent! He painted her portrait when she was only twelve years old. You must certainly come to see us. Lise, you shall show him your album. You know, we came expressly that you might begin her portrait immediately.”

“What? I am ready this very moment.” And in a trice he pulled forward an easel with a canvas already prepared, grasped his palette, and fixed his eyes on the daughter’s pretty little face. If he had been acquainted with human nature, he might have read in it the dawning of a childish passion for balls, the dawning of sorrow and misery at the length of time before dinner and after dinner, the heavy traces of uninterested application to various arts, insisted upon by her mother for the elevation of her mind. But the artist saw only the tender little face, a seductive subject for his brush, the body almost as transparent as porcelain, the delicate white neck, and the aristocratically slender form. And he prepared

beforehand to triumph, to display the delicacy of his brush, which had hitherto had to deal only with the harsh features of coarse models, and severe antiques and copies of classic masters. He already saw in fancy how this delicate little face would turn out.

“Do you know,” said the lady with a positively touching expression of countenance, “I should like her to be painted simply attired, and seated among green shadows, like meadows, with a flock or a grove in the distance, so that it could not be seen that she goes to balls or fashionable entertainments. Our balls, I must confess, murder the intellect, deaden all remnants of feeling. Simplicity! would there were more simplicity!” Alas, it was stamped on the faces of mother and daughter that they had so overdanced themselves at balls that they had become almost wax figures.

Tchartkoff set to work, posed his model, reflected a bit, fixed upon the idea, waved his brush in the air, settling the points mentally, and then began and finished the sketching in within an hour. Satisfied with it, he began to paint. The task fascinated him; he forgot everything, forgot the very existence of the aristocratic ladies, began even to display some artistic tricks, uttering various odd sounds and humming to himself now and then as artists do when immersed heart and soul in their work. Without the slightest ceremony, he made the sitter lift her head, which finally began to express utter weariness.

“Enough for the first time,” said the lady.

“A little more,” said the artist, forgetting himself.

“No, it is time to stop. Lise, three o’clock!” said the lady, taking out a tiny watch which hung by a gold chain from her girdle. “How late it is!”

“Only a minute,” said Tchartkoff innocently, with the pleading voice of a child.

But the lady appeared to be not at all inclined to yield to his artistic demands on this occasion; she promised, however, to sit longer the next time.

“It is vexatious, all the same,” thought Tchartkoff to himself: “I had just got my hand in;” and he remembered no one had interrupted him or stopped him when he was at work in his studio on Vasilievsky Ostroff. Nikita sat motionless in one place. You might even paint him as long as you pleased; he even went to sleep in the attitude prescribed him. Feeling dissatisfied, he laid his brush and palette on a chair, and paused in irritation before the picture.

The woman of the world’s compliments awoke him from his reverie. He flew to the door to show them out: on the stairs he received an invitation to dine with them the following week, and returned with a cheerful face to his apartments. The aristocratic lady had completely charmed him. Up to that time he had looked upon such beings as unapproachable, born solely to ride in magnificent

carriages, with liveried footmen and stylish coachmen, and to cast indifferent glances on the poor man travelling on foot in a cheap cloak. And now, all of a sudden, one of these very beings had entered his room; he was painting her portrait, was invited to dinner at an aristocratic house. An unusual feeling of pleasure took possession of him: he was completely intoxicated, and rewarded himself with a splendid dinner, an evening at the theatre, and a drive through the city in a carriage, without any necessity whatever.

But meanwhile his ordinary work did not fall in with his mood at all. He did nothing but wait for the moment when the bell should ring. At last the aristocratic lady arrived with her pale daughter. He seated them, drew forward the canvas with skill, and some efforts of fashionable airs, and began to paint. The sunny day and bright light aided him not a little: he saw in his dainty sitter much which, caught and committed to canvas, would give great value to the portrait. He perceived that he might accomplish something good if he could reproduce, with accuracy, all that nature then offered to his eyes. His heart began to beat faster as he felt that he was expressing something which others had not even seen as yet. His work engrossed him completely: he was wholly taken up with it, and again forgot the aristocratic origin of the sitter. With heaving breast he saw the delicate features and the almost transparent body of the fair maiden grow beneath his hand. He had caught every shade, the slight sallowness, the almost imperceptible blue tinge under the eyes--and was already preparing to put in the tiny mole on the brow, when he suddenly heard the mother’s voice behind him.

“Ah! why do you paint that? it is not necessary: and you have made it here, in several places, rather yellow; and here, quite so, like dark spots.”

The artist undertook to explain that the spots and yellow tinge would turn out well, that they brought out the delicate and pleasing tones of the face. He was informed that they did not bring out tones, and would not turn out well at all. It was explained to him that just to-day Lise did not feel quite well; that she never was sallow, and that her face was distinguished for its fresh colouring.

Sadly he began to erase what his brush had put upon the canvas. Many a nearly imperceptible feature disappeared, and with it vanished too a portion of the resemblance. He began indifferently to impart to the picture that commonplace colouring which can be painted mechanically, and which lends to a face, even when taken from nature, the sort of cold ideality observable on school programmes. But the lady was satisfied when the objectionable tone was quite banished. She merely expressed surprise that the work lasted so long, and added that she had heard that he finished a portrait completely in two sittings. The artist could not think of any answer to this. The ladies rose, and prepared to

depart. He laid aside his brush, escorted them to the door, and then stood disconsolate for a long while in one spot before the portrait.

He gazed stupidly at it; and meanwhile there floated before his mind's eye those delicate features, those shades, and airy tints which he had copied, and which his brush had annihilated. Engrossed with them, he put the portrait on one side and hunted up a head of Psyche which he had some time before thrown on canvas in a sketchy manner. It was a pretty little face, well painted, but entirely ideal, and having cold, regular features not lit up by life. For lack of occupation, he now began to tone it up, imparting to it all he had taken note of in his aristocratic sitter. Those features, shadows, tints, which he had noted, made their appearance here in the purified form in which they appear when the painter, after closely observing nature, subordinates himself to her, and produces a creation equal to her own.

Psyche began to live: and the scarcely dawning thought began, little by little, to clothe itself in a visible form. The type of face of the fashionable young lady was unconsciously transferred to Psyche, yet nevertheless she had an expression of her own which gave the picture claims to be considered in truth an original creation. Tchartkoff gave himself up entirely to his work. For several days he was engrossed by it alone, and the ladies surprised him at it on their arrival. He had not time to remove the picture from the easel. Both ladies uttered a cry of amazement, and clasped their hands.

"Lise, Lise! Ah, how like! Superb, superb! What a happy thought, too, to drape her in a Greek costume! Ah, what a surprise!"

The artist could not see his way to disabuse the ladies of their error. Shamefacedly, with drooping head, he murmured, "This is Psyche."

"In the character of Psyche? Charming!" said the mother, smiling, upon which the daughter smiled too. "Confess, Lise, it pleases you to be painted in the character of Psyche better than any other way? What a sweet idea! But what treatment! It is Correggio himself. I must say that, although I had read and heard about you, I did not know you had so much talent. You positively must paint me too." Evidently the lady wanted to be portrayed as some kind of Psyche too.

"What am I to do with them?" thought the artist. "If they will have it so, why, let Psyche pass for what they choose:" and added aloud, "Pray sit a little: I will touch it up here and there."

"Ah! I am afraid you will . . . it is such a capital likeness now!"

But the artist understood that the difficulty was with respect to the sallowness, and so he reassured them by saying that he only wished to give more brilliancy and expression to the eyes. In truth, he was ashamed, and wanted to impart a little more likeness to the original, lest any one should accuse him of actual

barefaced flattery. And the features of the pale young girl at length appeared more closely in Psyche’s countenance.

“Enough,” said the mother, beginning to fear that the likeness might become too decided. The artist was remunerated in every way, with smiles, money, compliments, cordial pressures of the hand, invitations to dinner: in short, he received a thousand flattering rewards.

The portrait created a furore in the city. The lady exhibited it to her friends, and all admired the skill with which the artist had preserved the likeness, and at the same time conferred more beauty on the original. The last remark, of course, was prompted by a slight tinge of envy. The artist was suddenly overwhelmed with work. It seemed as if the whole city wanted to be painted by him. The door-bell rang incessantly. From one point of view, this might be considered advantageous, as presenting to him endless practice in variety and number of faces. But, unfortunately, they were all people who were hard to get along with, either busy, hurried people, or else belonging to the fashionable world, and consequently more occupied than any one else, and therefore impatient to the last degree. In all quarters, the demand was merely that the likeness should be good and quickly executed. The artist perceived that it was a simple impossibility to finish his work; that it was necessary to exchange power of treatment for lightness and rapidity, to catch only the general expression, and not waste labour on delicate details.

Moreover, nearly all of his sitters made stipulations on various points. The ladies required that mind and character should be represented in their portraits; that all angles should be rounded, all unevenness smoothed away, and even removed entirely if possible; in short, that their faces should be such as to cause every one to stare at them with admiration, if not fall in love with them outright. When they sat to him, they sometimes assumed expressions which greatly amazed the artist; one tried to express melancholy; another, meditation; a third wanted to make her mouth appear small on any terms, and puckered it up to such an extent that it finally looked like a spot about as big as a pinhead. And in spite of all this, they demanded of him good likenesses and unconstrained naturalness. The men were no better: one insisted on being painted with an energetic, muscular turn to his head; another, with upturned, inspired eyes; a lieutenant of the guard demanded that Mars should be visible in his eyes; an official in the civil service drew himself up to his full height in order to have his uprightness expressed in his face, and that his hand might rest on a book bearing the words in plain characters, “He always stood up for the right.”

At first such demands threw the artist into a cold perspiration. Finally he acquired the knack of it, and never troubled himself at all about it. He

understood at a word how each wanted himself portrayed. If a man wanted Mars in his face, he put in Mars: he gave a Byronic turn and attitude to those who aimed at Byron. If the ladies wanted to be Corinne, Undine, or Aspasia, he agreed with great readiness, and threw in a sufficient measure of good looks from his own imagination, which does no harm, and for the sake of which an artist is even forgiven a lack of resemblance. He soon began to wonder himself at the rapidity and dash of his brush. And of course those who sat to him were in ecstasies, and proclaimed him a genius.

Tchartkoff became a fashionable artist in every sense of the word. He began to dine out, to escort ladies to picture galleries, to dress foppishly, and to assert audibly that an artist should belong to society, that he must uphold his profession, that artists mostly dress like showmakers, do not know how to behave themselves, do not maintain the highest tone, and are lacking in all polish. At home, in his studio, he carried cleanliness and spotlessness to the last extreme, set up two superb footmen, took fashionable pupils, dressed several times a day, curled his hair, practised various manners of receiving his callers, and busied himself in adorning his person in every conceivable way, in order to produce a pleasing impression on the ladies. In short, it would soon have been impossible for any one to have recognised in him the modest artist who had formerly toiled unknown in his miserable quarters in the Vasilievsky Ostroff.

He now expressed himself decidedly concerning artists and art; declared that too much credit had been given to the old masters; that even Raphael did not always paint well, and that fame attached to many of his works simply by force of tradition: that Michael Angelo was a braggart because he could boast only a knowledge of anatomy; that there was no grace about him, and that real brilliancy and power of treatment and colouring were to be looked for in the present century. And there, naturally, the question touched him personally. “I do not understand,” said he, “how others toil and work with difficulty: a man who labours for months over a picture is a dauber, and no artist in my opinion; I don’t believe he has any talent: genius works boldly, rapidly. Here is this portrait which I painted in two days, this head in one day, this in a few hours, this in little more than an hour. No, I confess I do not recognise as art that which adds line to line; that is a handicraft, not art.” In this manner did he lecture his visitors; and the visitors admired the strength and boldness of his works, uttered exclamations on hearing how fast they had been produced, and said to each other, “This is talent, real talent! see how he speaks, how his eyes gleam! There is something really extraordinary in his face!”

It flattered the artist to hear such reports about himself. When printed praise appeared in the papers, he rejoiced like a child, although this praise was

purchased with his money. He carried the printed slips about with him everywhere, and showed them to friends and acquaintances as if by accident. His fame increased, his works and orders multiplied. Already the same portraits over and over again wearied him, by the same attitudes and turns, which he had learned by heart. He painted them now without any great interest in his work, brushing in some sort of a head, and giving them to his pupil's to finish. At first he had sought to devise a new attitude each time. Now this had grown wearisome to him. His brain was tired with planning and thinking. It was out of his power; his fashionable life bore him far away from labour and thought. His work grew cold and colourless; and he betook himself with indifference to the reproduction of monotonous, well-worn forms. The eternally spick-and-span uniforms, and the so-to-speak buttoned-up faces of the government officials, soldiers, and statesmen, did not offer a wide field for his brush: it forgot how to render superb draperies and powerful emotion and passion. Of grouping, dramatic effect and its lofty connections, there was nothing. In face of him was only a uniform, a corsage, a dress-coat, and before which the artist feels cold and all imagination vanishes. Even his own peculiar merits were no longer visible in his works, yet they continued to enjoy renown; although genuine connoisseurs and artists merely shrugged their shoulders when they saw his latest productions. But some who had known Tchartkoff in his earlier days could not understand how the talent of which he had given such clear indications in the outset could so have vanished; and strove in vain to divine by what means genius could be extinguished in a man just when he had attained to the full development of his powers.

But the intoxicated artist did not hear these criticisms. He began to attain to the age of dignity, both in mind and years: to grow stout, and increase visibly in flesh. He often read in the papers such phrases as, "Our most respected Andrei Petrovitch; our worthy Andrei Petrovitch." He began to receive offers of distinguished posts in the service, invitations to examinations and committees. He began, as is usually the case in maturer years, to advocate Raphael and the old masters, not because he had become thoroughly convinced of their transcendent merits, but in order to snub the younger artists. His life was already approaching the period when everything which suggests impulse contracts within a man; when a powerful chord appeals more feebly to the spirit; when the touch of beauty no longer converts virgin strength into fire and flame, but when all the burnt-out sentiments become more vulnerable to the sound of gold, hearken more attentively to its seductive music, and little by little permit themselves to be completely lulled to sleep by it. Fame can give no pleasure to him who has stolen it, not won it; so all his feelings and impulses turned towards

wealth. Gold was his passion, his ideal, his fear, his delight, his aim. The bundles of bank-notes increased in his coffers; and, like all to whose lot falls this fearful gift, he began to grow inaccessible to every sentiment except the love of gold. But something occurred which gave him a powerful shock, and disturbed the whole tenor of his life.

One day he found upon his table a note, in which the Academy of Painting begged him, as a worthy member of its body, to come and give his opinion upon a new work which had been sent from Italy by a Russian artist who was perfecting himself there. The painter was one of his former comrades, who had been possessed with a passion for art from his earliest years, had given himself up to it with his whole soul, estranged himself from his friends and relatives, and had hastened to that wonderful Rome, at whose very name the artist's heart beats wildly and hotly. There he buried himself in his work from which he permitted nothing to entice him. He visited the galleries unweariedly, he stood for hours at a time before the works of the great masters, seizing and studying their marvellous methods. He never finished anything without revising his impressions several times before these great teachers, and reading in their works silent but eloquent counsels. He gave each impartially his due, appropriating from all only that which was most beautiful, and finally became the pupil of the divine Raphael alone, as a great poet, after reading many works, at last made Homer's "Iliad" his only breviary, having discovered that it contains all one wants, and that there is nothing which is not expressed in it in perfection. And so he brought away from his school the grand conception of creation, the mighty beauty of thought, the high charm of that heavenly brush.

When Tchartkoff entered the room, he found a crowd of visitors already collected before the picture. The most profound silence, such as rarely settles upon a throng of critics, reigned over all. He hastened to assume the significant expression of a connoisseur, and approached the picture; but, O God! what did he behold!

Pure, faultless, beautiful as a bride, stood the picture before him. The critics regarded this new hitherto unknown work with a feeling of involuntary wonder. All seemed united in it: the art of Raphael, reflected in the lofty grace of the grouping; the art of Correggio, breathing from the finished perfection of the workmanship. But more striking than all else was the evident creative power in the artist's mind. The very minutest object in the picture revealed it; he had caught that melting roundness of outline which is visible in nature only to the artist creator, and which comes out as angles with a copyist. It was plainly visible how the artist, having imbibed it all from the external world, had first stored it in his mind, and then drawn it thence, as from a spiritual source, into

one harmonious, triumphant song. And it was evident, even to the uninitiated, how vast a gulf there was fixed between creation and a mere copy from nature. Involuntary tears stood ready to fall in the eyes of those who surrounded the picture. It seemed as though all joined in a silent hymn to the divine work.

Motionless, with open mouth, Tchartkoff stood before the picture. At length, when by degrees the visitors and critics began to murmur and comment upon the merits of the work, and turning to him, begged him to express an opinion, he came to himself once more. He tried to assume an indifferent, everyday expression; strove to utter some such commonplace remark as; “Yes, to tell the truth, it is impossible to deny the artist’s talent; there is something in it;” but the speech died upon his lips, tears and sobs burst forth uncontrollably, and he rushed from the room like one beside himself.

In a moment he stood in his magnificent studio. All his being, all his life, had been aroused in one instant, as if youth had returned to him, as if the dying sparks of his talent had blazed forth afresh. The bandage suddenly fell from his eyes. Heavens! to think of having mercilessly wasted the best years of his youth, of having extinguished, trodden out perhaps, that spark of fire which, cherished in his breast, might perhaps have been developed into magnificence and beauty, and have extorted too, its meed of tears and admiration! It seemed as though those impulses which he had known in other days re-awoke suddenly in his soul.

He seized a brush and approached his canvas. One thought possessed him wholly, one desire consumed him; he strove to depict a fallen angel. This idea was most in harmony with his frame of mind. The perspiration started out upon his face with his efforts; but, alas! his figures, attitudes, groups, thoughts, arranged themselves stiffly, disconnectedly. His hand and his imagination had been too long confined to one groove; and the fruitless effort to escape from the bonds and fetters which he had imposed upon himself, showed itself in irregularities and errors. He had despised the long, wearisome ladder to knowledge, and the first fundamental law of the future great man, hard work. He gave vent to his vexation. He ordered all his later productions to be taken out of his studio, all the fashionable, lifeless pictures, all the portraits of hussars, ladies, and councillors of state.

He shut himself up alone in his room, would order no food, and devoted himself entirely to his work. He sat toiling like a scholar. But how pitifully wretched was all which proceeded from his hand! He was stopped at every step by his ignorance of the very first principles: simple ignorance of the mechanical part of his art chilled all inspiration and formed an impassable barrier to his imagination. His brush returned involuntarily to hackneyed forms: hands folded themselves in a set attitude; heads dared not make any unusual turn; the very

garments turned out commonplace, and would not drape themselves to any unaccustomed posture of the body. And he felt and saw this all himself.

“But had I really any talent?” he said at length: “did not I deceive myself?” Uttering these words, he turned to the early works which he had painted so purely, so unselfishly, in former days, in his wretched cabin yonder in lonely Vasilievsky Ostroff. He began attentively to examine them all; and all the misery of his former life came back to him. “Yes,” he cried despairingly, “I had talent: the signs and traces of it are everywhere visible--”

He paused suddenly, and shivered all over. His eyes encountered other eyes fixed immovably upon him. It was that remarkable portrait which he had bought in the Shtchukinui Dvor. All this time it had been covered up, concealed by other pictures, and had utterly gone out of his mind. Now, as if by design, when all the fashionable portraits and paintings had been removed from the studio, it looked forth, together with the productions of his early youth. As he recalled all the strange events connected with it; as he remembered that this singular portrait had been, in a manner, the cause of his errors; that the hoard of money which he had obtained in such peculiar fashion had given birth in his mind to all the wild caprices which had destroyed his talent--madness was on the point of taking possession of him. At once he ordered the hateful portrait to be removed.

But his mental excitement was not thereby diminished. His whole being was shaken to its foundation; and he suffered that fearful torture which is sometimes exhibited when a feeble talent strives to display itself on a scale too great for it and cannot do so. A horrible envy took possession of him--an envy which bordered on madness. The gall flew to his heart when he beheld a work which bore the stamp of talent. He gnashed his teeth, and devoured it with the glare of a basilisk. He conceived the most devilish plan which ever entered into the mind of man, and he hastened with the strength of madness to carry it into execution. He began to purchase the best that art produced of every kind. Having bought a picture at a great price, he transported it to his room, flung himself upon it with the ferocity of a tiger, cut it, tore it, chopped it into bits, and stamped upon it with a grin of delight.

The vast wealth he had amassed enabled him to gratify this devilish desire. He opened his bags of gold and unlocked his coffers. No monster of ignorance ever destroyed so many superb productions of art as did this raging avenger. At any auction where he made his appearance, every one despaired at once of obtaining any work of art. It seemed as if an angry heaven had sent this fearful scourge into the world expressly to destroy all harmony. Scorn of the world was expressed in his countenance. His tongue uttered nothing save biting and censorious words. He swooped down like a harpy into the street: and his

acquaintances, catching sight of him in the distance, sought to turn aside and avoid a meeting with him, saying that it poisoned all the rest of the day.

Fortunately for the world and art, such a life could not last long: his passions were too overpowering for his feeble strength. Attacks of madness began to recur more frequently, and ended at last in the most frightful illness. A violent fever, combined with galloping consumption, seized upon him with such violence, that in three days there remained only a shadow of his former self. To this was added indications of hopeless insanity. Sometimes several men were unable to hold him. The long-forgotten, living eyes of the portrait began to torment him, and then his madness became dreadful. All the people who surrounded his bed seemed to him horrible portraits. The portrait doubled and quadrupled itself; all the walls seemed hung with portraits, which fastened their living eyes upon him; portraits glared at him from the ceiling, from the floor; the room widened and lengthened endlessly, in order to make room for more of the motionless eyes. The doctor who had undertaken to attend him, having learned something of his strange history, strove with all his might to fathom the secret connection between the visions of his fancy and the occurrences of his life, but without the slightest success. The sick man understood nothing, felt nothing, save his own tortures, and gave utterance only to frightful yells and unintelligible gibberish. At last his life ended in a final attack of unutterable suffering. Nothing could be found of all his great wealth; but when they beheld the mutilated fragments of grand works of art, the value of which exceeded a million, they understood the terrible use which had been made of it.

PART II

A THRONG of carriages and other vehicles stood at the entrance of a house in which an auction was going on of the effects of one of those wealthy art-lovers who have innocently passed for Maecenases, and in a simple-minded fashion expended, to that end, the millions amassed by their thrifty fathers, and frequently even by their own early labours. The long saloon was filled with the most motley throng of visitors, collected like birds of prey swooping down upon an unburied corpse. There was a whole squadron of Russian shop-keepers from the Gostinnui Dvor, and from the old-clothes mart, in blue coats of foreign make. Their faces and expressions were a little more natural here, and did not display that fictitious desire to be subservient which is so marked in the Russian shop-keeper when he stands before a customer in his shop. Here they stood upon no ceremony, although the saloons were full of those very aristocrats before whom, in any other place, they would have been ready to sweep, with reverence, the

dust brought in by their feet. They were quite at their ease, handling pictures and books without ceremony, when desirous of ascertaining the value of the goods, and boldly upsetting bargains mentally secured in advance by noble connoisseurs. There were many of those infallible attendants of auctions who make it a point to go to one every day as regularly as to take their breakfast; aristocratic connoisseurs who look upon it as their duty not to miss any opportunity of adding to their collections, and who have no other occupation between twelve o'clock and one; and noble gentlemen, with garments very threadbare, who make their daily appearance without any selfish object in view, but merely to see how it all goes off.

A quantity of pictures were lying about in disorder: with them were mingled furniture, and books with the cipher of the former owner, who never was moved by any laudable desire to glance into them. Chinese vases, marble slabs for tables, old and new furniture with curving lines, with griffins, sphinxes, and lions' paws, gilded and ungilded, chandeliers, sconces, all were heaped together in a perfect chaos of art.

The auction appeared to be at its height.

The surging throng was competing for a portrait which could not but arrest the attention of all who possessed any knowledge of art. The skilled hand of an artist was plainly visible in it. The portrait, which had apparently been several times restored and renovated, represented the dark features of an Asiatic in flowing garments, and with a strange and remarkable expression of countenance; but what struck the buyers more than anything else was the peculiar liveliness of the eyes. The more they were looked at, the more did they seem to penetrate into the gazer's heart. This peculiarity, this strange illusion achieved by the artist, attracted the attention of nearly all. Many who had been bidding gradually withdrew, for the price offered had risen to an incredible sum. There remained only two well-known aristocrats, amateurs of painting, who were unwilling to forego such an acquisition. They grew warm, and would probably have run the bidding up to an impossible sum, had not one of the onlookers suddenly exclaimed, "Permit me to interrupt your competition for a while: I, perhaps, more than any other, have a right to this portrait."

These words at once drew the attention of all to him. He was a tall man of thirty-five, with long black curls. His pleasant face, full of a certain bright nonchalance, indicated a mind free from all wearisome, worldly excitement; his garments had no pretence to fashion: all about him indicated the artist. He was, in fact, B. the painter, a man personally well known to many of those present.

"However strange my words may seem to you," he continued, perceiving that the general attention was directed to him, "if you will listen to a short story, you

may possibly see that I was right in uttering them. Everything assures me that this is the portrait which I am looking for."

A natural curiosity illuminated the faces of nearly all present; and even the auctioneer paused as he was opening his mouth, and with hammer uplifted in the air, prepared to listen. At the beginning of the story, many glanced involuntarily towards the portrait; but later on, all bent their attention solely on the narrator, as his tale grew gradually more absorbing.

"You know that portion of the city which is called Kolomna," he began. "There everything is unlike anything else in St. Petersburg. Retired officials remove thither to live; widows; people not very well off, who have acquaintances in the senate, and therefore condemn themselves to this for nearly the whole of their lives; and, in short, that whole list of people who can be described by the words ash-coloured--people whose garments, faces, hair, eyes, have a sort of ashy surface, like a day when there is in the sky neither cloud nor sun. Among them may be retired actors, retired titular councillors, retired sons of Mars, with ruined eyes and swollen lips.

"Life in Kolomna is terribly dull: rarely does a carriage appear, except, perhaps, one containing an actor, which disturbs the universal stillness by its rumble, noise, and jingling. You can get lodgings for five rubles a month, coffee in the morning included. Widows with pensions are the most aristocratic families there; they conduct themselves well, sweep their rooms often, chatter with their friends about the dearness of beef and cabbage, and frequently have a young daughter, a taciturn, quiet, sometimes pretty creature; an ugly dog, and wall-clocks which strike in a melancholy fashion. Then come the actors whose salaries do not permit them to desert Kolomna, an independent folk, living, like all artists, for pleasure. They sit in their dressing-gowns, cleaning their pistols, gluing together all sorts of things out of cardboard, playing draughts and cards with any friend who chances to drop in, and so pass away the morning, doing pretty nearly the same in the evening, with the addition of punch now and then. After these great people and aristocracy of Kolomna, come the rank and file. It is as difficult to put a name to them as to remember the multitude of insects which breed in stale vinegar. There are old women who get drunk, who make a living by incomprehensible means, like ants, dragging old clothes and rags from the Kalinkin Bridge to the old clothes-mart, in order to sell them for fifteen kopeks--in short, the very dregs of mankind, whose conditions no beneficent, political economist has devised any means of ameliorating.

"I have mentioned them in order to point out how often such people find themselves under the necessity of seeking immediate temporary assistance and having recourse to borrowing. Hence there settles among them a peculiar race of

money-lenders who lend small sums on security at an enormous percentage. Among these usurers was a certain . . . but I must not omit to mention that the occurrence which I have undertaken to relate occurred the last century, in the reign of our late Empress Catherine the Second. So, among the usurers, at that epoch, was a certain person--an extraordinary being in every respect, who had settled in that quarter of the city long before. He went about in flowing Asiatic garb; his dark complexion indicated a Southern origin, but to what particular nation he belonged, India, Greece, or Persia, no one could say with certainty. Of tall, almost colossal stature, with dark, thin, ardent face, heavy overhanging brows, and an indescribably strange colour in his large eyes of unwonted fire, he differed sharply and strongly from all the ash-coloured denizens of the capital.

"His very dwelling was unlike the other little wooden houses. It was of stone, in the style of those formerly much affected by Genoese merchants, with irregular windows of various sizes, secured with iron shutters and bars. This usurer differed from other usurers also in that he could furnish any required sum, from that desired by the poor old beggar-woman to that demanded by the extravagant grandee of the court. The most gorgeous equipages often halted in front of his house, and from their windows sometimes peeped forth the head of an elegant high-born lady. Rumour, as usual, reported that his iron coffers were full of untold gold, treasures, diamonds, and all sorts of pledges, but that, nevertheless, he was not the slave of that avarice which is characteristic of other usurers. He lent money willingly, and on very favourable terms of payment apparently, but, by some curious method of reckoning, made them mount to an incredible percentage. So said rumour, at any rate. But what was strangest of all was the peculiar fate of those who received money from him: they all ended their lives in some unhappy way. Whether this was simply the popular superstition, or the result of reports circulated with an object, is not known. But several instances which happened within a brief space of time before the eyes of every one were vivid and striking.

"Among the aristocracy of that day, one who speedily drew attention to himself was a young man of one of the best families who had made a figure in his early years in court circles, a warm admirer of everything true and noble, zealous in his love for art, and giving promise of becoming a Maecenas. He was soon deservedly distinguished by the Empress, who conferred upon him an important post, fully proportioned to his deserts--a post in which he could accomplish much for science and the general welfare. The youthful dignitary surrounded himself with artists, poets, and learned men. He wished to give work to all, to encourage all. He undertook, at his own expense, a number of useful publications; gave numerous orders to artists; offered prizes for the

encouragement of different arts; spent a great deal of money, and finally ruined himself. But, full of noble impulses, he did not wish to relinquish his work, sought to raise a loan, and finally betook himself to the well-known usurer. Having borrowed a considerable sum from him, the man in a short time changed completely. He became a persecutor and oppressor of budding talent and intellect. He saw the bad side in everything produced, and every word he uttered was false.

“Then, unfortunately, came the French Revolution. This furnished him with an excuse for every kind of suspicion. He began to discover a revolutionary tendency in everything; to concoct terrible and unjust accusations, which made scores of people unhappy. Of course, such conduct could not fail in time to reach the throne. The kind-hearted Empress was shocked; and, full of the noble spirit which adorns crowned heads, she uttered words still engraven on many hearts. The Empress remarked that not under a monarchical government were high and noble impulses persecuted; not there were the creations of intellect, poetry, and art contemned and oppressed. On the other hand, monarchs alone were their protectors. Shakespeare and Moliere flourished under their magnanimous protection, while Dante could not find a corner in his republican birthplace. She said that true geniuses arise at the epoch of brilliancy and power in emperors and empires, but not in the time of monstrous political apparitions and republican terrorism, which, up to that time, had never given to the world a single poet; that poet-artists should be marked out for favour, since peace and divine quiet alone compose their minds, not excitement and tumult; that learned men, poets, and all producers of art are the pearls and diamonds in the imperial crown: by them is the epoch of the great ruler adorned, and from them it receives yet greater brilliancy.

“As the Empress uttered these words she was divinely beautiful for the moment, and I remember old men who could not speak of the occurrence without tears. All were interested in the affair. It must be remarked, to the honour of our national pride, that in the Russian’s heart there always beats a fine feeling that he must adopt the part of the persecuted. The dignitary who had betrayed his trust was punished in an exemplary manner and degraded from his post. But he read a more dreadful punishment in the faces of his fellow-countrymen: universal scorn. It is impossible to describe what he suffered, and he died in a terrible attack of raving madness.

“Another striking example also occurred. Among the beautiful women in which our northern capital assuredly is not poor, one decidedly surpassed the rest. Her loveliness was a combination of our Northern charms with those of the South, a gem such as rarely makes its appearance on earth. My father said that

he had never beheld anything like it in the whole course of his life. Everything seemed to be united in her, wealth, intellect, and wit. She had throngs of admirers, the most distinguished of them being Prince R., the most noble-minded of all young men, the finest in face, and an ideal of romance in his magnanimous and knightly sentiments. Prince R. was passionately in love, and was requited by a like ardent passion.

“But the match seemed unequal to the parents. The prince’s family estates had not been in his possession for a long time, his family was out of favour, and the sad state of his affairs was well known to all. Of a sudden the prince quitted the capital, as if for the purpose of arranging his affairs, and after a short interval reappeared, surrounded with luxury and splendour. Brilliant balls and parties made him known at court. The lady’s father began to relent, and the wedding took place. Whence this change in circumstances, this unheard-of-wealth, came, no one could fully explain; but it was whispered that he had entered into a compact with the mysterious usurer, and had borrowed money of him. However that may have been, the wedding was a source of interest to the whole city, and the bride and bridegroom were objects of general envy. Every one knew of their warm and faithful love, the long persecution they had had to endure from every quarter, the great personal worth of both. Ardent women at once sketched out the heavenly bliss which the young couple would enjoy. But it turned out very differently.

“In the course of a year a frightful change came over the husband. His character, up to that time so noble, became poisoned with jealous suspicions, irritability, and inexhaustible caprices. He became a tyrant to his wife, a thing which no one could have foreseen, and indulged in the most inhuman deeds, and even in blows. In a year’s time no one would have recognised the woman who, such a little while before, had dazzled and drawn about her throngs of submissive adorers. Finally, no longer able to endure her lot, she proposed a divorce. Her husband flew into a rage at the very suggestion. In the first outburst of passion, he chased her about the room with a knife, and would doubtless have murdered her then and there, if they had not seized him and prevented him. In a fit of madness and despair he turned the knife against himself, and ended his life amid the most horrible sufferings.

“Besides these two instances which occurred before the eyes of all the world, stories circulated of many more among the lower classes, nearly all of which had tragic endings. Here an honest sober man became a drunkard; there a shopkeeper’s clerk robbed his master; again, a driver who had conducted himself properly for a number of years cut his passenger’s throat for a groschen. It was impossible that such occurrences, related, not without embellishments, should

not inspire a sort of involuntary horror amongst the sedate inhabitants of Kolomna. No one entertained any doubt as to the presence of an evil power in the usurer. They said that he imposed conditions which made the hair rise on one's head, and which the miserable wretch never afterward dared reveal to any other being; that his money possessed a strange power of attraction; that it grew hot of itself, and that it bore strange marks. And it is worthy of remark, that all the colony of Kolomna, all these poor old women, small officials, petty artists, and insignificant people whom we have just recapitulated, agreed that it was better to endure anything, and to suffer the extreme of misery, rather than to have recourse to the terrible usurer. Old women were even found dying of hunger, who preferred to kill their bodies rather than lose their soul. Those who met him in the street experienced an involuntary sense of fear. Pedestrians took care to turn aside from his path, and gazed long after his tall, receding figure. In his face alone there was sufficient that was uncommon to cause any one to ascribe to him a supernatural nature. The strong features, so deeply chiselled; the glowing bronze of his complexion; the incredible thickness of his brows; the intolerable, terrible eyes--everything seemed to indicate that the passions of other men were pale compared to those raging within him. My father stopped short every time he met him, and could not refrain each time from saying, 'A devil, a perfect devil!' But I must introduce you as speedily as possible to my father, the chief character of this story.

"My father was a remarkable man in many respects. He was an artist of rare ability, a self-taught artist, without teachers or schools, principles and rules, carried away only by the thirst for perfection, and treading a path indicated by his own instincts, for reasons unknown, perchance, even to himself. Through some lofty and secret instinct he perceived the presence of a soul in every object. And this secret instinct and personal conviction turned his brush to Christian subjects, grand and lofty to the last degree. His was a strong character: he was an honourable, upright, even rough man, covered with a sort of hard rind without, not entirely lacking in pride, and given to expressing himself both sharply and scornfully about people. He worked for very small results; that is to say, for just enough to support his family and obtain the materials he needed; he never, under any circumstances, refused to aid any one, or to lend a helping hand to a poor artist; and he believed with the simple, reverent faith of his ancestors. At length, by his unintermitting labour and perseverance in the path he had marked out for himself, he began to win the approbation of those who honoured his self-taught talent. They gave him constant orders for churches, and he never lacked employment.

"One of his paintings possessed a strong interest for him. I no longer recollect

the exact subject: I only know that he needed to represent the Spirit of Darkness in it. He pondered long what form to give him: he wished to concentrate in his face all that weighs down and oppresses a man. In the midst of his meditations there suddenly occurred to his mind the image of the mysterious usurer; and he thought involuntarily, ‘That’s how I ought to paint the Devil!’ Imagine his amazement when one day, as he was at work in his studio, he heard a knock at the door, and directly after there entered that same terrible usurer.

“‘You are an artist?’ he said to my father abruptly.

“‘I am,’ answered my father in surprise, waiting for what should come next.

“‘Good! Paint my portrait. I may possibly die soon. I have no children; but I do not wish to die completely, I wish to live. Can you paint a portrait that shall appear as though it were alive?’

“My father reflected, ‘What could be better! he offers himself for the Devil in my picture.’ He promised. They agreed upon a time and price; and the next day my father took palette and brushes and went to the usurer’s house. The lofty court-yard, dogs, iron doors and locks, arched windows, coffers, draped with strange covers, and, last of all, the remarkable owner himself, seated motionless before him, all produced a strange impression on him. The windows seemed intentionally so encumbered below that they admitted the light only from the top. ‘Devil take him, how well his face is lighted!’ he said to himself, and began to paint assiduously, as though afraid that the favourable light would disappear. ‘What power!’ he repeated to himself. ‘If I only accomplish half a likeness of him, as he is now, it will surpass all my other works: he will simply start from the canvas if I am only partly true to nature. What remarkable features!’ He redoubled his energy; and began himself to notice how some of his sitter’s traits were making their appearance on the canvas.

“But the more closely he approached resemblance, the more conscious he became of an aggressive, uneasy feeling which he could not explain to himself. Notwithstanding this, he set himself to copy with literal accuracy every trait and expression. First of all, however, he busied himself with the eyes. There was so much force in those eyes, that it seemed impossible to reproduce them exactly as they were in nature. But he resolved, at any price, to seek in them the most minute characteristics and shades, to penetrate their secret. As soon, however, as he approached them in resemblance, and began to redouble his exertions, there sprang up in his mind such a terrible feeling of repulsion, of inexplicable expression, that he was forced to lay aside his brush for a while and begin anew. At last he could bear it no longer: he felt as if these eyes were piercing into his soul, and causing intolerable emotion. On the second and third days this grew still stronger. It became horrible to him. He threw down his brush, and declared

abruptly that he could paint the stranger no longer. You should have seen how the terrible usurer changed countenance at these words. He threw himself at his feet, and besought him to finish the portrait, saying that his fate and his existence depended on it; that he had already caught his prominent features; that if he could reproduce them accurately, his life would be preserved in his portrait in a supernatural manner; that by that means he would not die completely; that it was necessary for him to continue to exist in the world.

"My father was frightened by these words: they seemed to him strange and terrible to such a degree, that he threw down his brushes and palette and rushed headlong from the room.

"The thought of it troubled him all day and all night; but the next morning he received the portrait from the usurer, by a woman who was the only creature in his service, and who announced that her master did not want the portrait, and would pay nothing for it, and had sent it back. On the evening of the same day he learned that the usurer was dead, and that preparations were in progress to bury him according to the rites of his religion. All this seemed to him inexplicably strange. But from that day a marked change showed itself in his character. He was possessed by a troubled, uneasy feeling, of which he was unable to explain the cause; and he soon committed a deed which no one could have expected of him. For some time the works of one of his pupils had been attracting the attention of a small circle of connoisseurs and amateurs. My father had perceived his talent, and manifested a particular liking for him in consequence. Suddenly the general interest in him and talk about him became unendurable to my father who grew envious of him. Finally, to complete his vexation, he learned that his pupil had been asked to paint a picture for a recently built and wealthy church. This enraged him. 'No, I will not permit that fledgling to triumph!' said he: 'it is early, friend, to think of consigning old men to the gutters. I still have powers, God be praised! We'll soon see which will put down the other.'

"And this straightforward, honourable man employed intrigues which he had hitherto abhorred. He finally contrived that there should be a competition for the picture which other artists were permitted to enter into. Then he shut himself up in his room, and grasped his brush with zeal. It seemed as if he were striving to summon all his strength up for this occasion. And, in fact, the result turned out to be one of his best works. No one doubted that he would bear off the palm. The pictures were placed on exhibition, and all the others seemed to his as night to day. But of a sudden, one of the members present, an ecclesiastical personage if I mistake not, made a remark which surprised every one. 'There is certainly much talent in this artist's picture,' said he, 'but no holiness in the faces: there is even,

on the contrary, a demoniacal look in the eyes, as though some evil feeling had guided the artist's hand.' All looked, and could not but acknowledge the truth of these words. My father rushed forward to his picture, as though to verify for himself this offensive remark, and perceived with horror that he had bestowed the usurer's eyes upon nearly all the figures. They had such a diabolical gaze that he involuntarily shuddered. The picture was rejected; and he was forced to hear, to his indescribable vexation, that the palm was awarded to his pupil.

"It is impossible to describe the state of rage in which he returned home. He almost killed my mother, he drove the children away, broke his brushes and easels, tore down the usurer's portrait from the wall, demanded a knife, and ordered a fire to be built in the chimney, intending to cut it in pieces and burn it. A friend, an artist, caught him in the act as he entered the room--a jolly fellow, always satisfied with himself, inflated by unattainable wishes, doing daily anything that came to hand, and taking still more gaily to his dinner and little carouses.

"'What are you doing? What are you preparing to burn?' he asked, and stepped up to the portrait. 'Why, this is one of your very best works. It is the usurer who died a short time ago: yes, it is a most perfect likeness. You did not stop until you had got into his very eyes. Never did eyes look as these do now.'

"'Well, I'll see how they look in the fire!' said my father, making a movement to fling the portrait into the grate.

"'Stop, for Heaven's sake!' exclaimed his friend, restraining him: 'give it to me, rather, if it offends your eyes to such a degree.' My father resisted, but yielded at length; and the jolly fellow, well pleased with his acquisition, carried the portrait home with him.

"When he was gone, my father felt more calm. The burden seemed to have disappeared from his soul in company with the portrait. He was surprised himself at his evil feelings, his envy, and the evident change in his character. Reviewing his acts, he became sad at heart; and not without inward sorrow did he exclaim, 'No, it was God who punished me! my picture, in fact, was meant to ruin my brother-man. A devilish feeling of envy guided my brush, and that devilish feeling must have made itself visible in it.'

"He set out at once to seek his former pupil, embraced him warmly, begged his forgiveness, and endeavoured as far as possible to excuse his own fault. His labours continued as before; but his face was more frequently thoughtful. He prayed more, grew more taciturn, and expressed himself less sharply about people: even the rough exterior of his character was modified to some extent. But a certain occurrence soon disturbed him more than ever. He had seen nothing for a long time of the comrade who had begged the portrait of him. He

had already decided to hunt him up, when the latter suddenly made his appearance in his room. After a few words and questions on both sides, he said, ‘Well, brother, it was not without cause that you wished to burn that portrait. Devil take it, there’s something horrible about it! I don’t believe in sorcerers; but, begging your pardon, there’s an unclean spirit in it.’

“‘How so?’ asked my father.

“‘Well, from the very moment I hung it up in my room I felt such depression--just as if I wanted to murder some one. I never knew in my life what sleeplessness was; but I suffered not from sleeplessness alone, but from such dreams!--I cannot tell whether they were dreams, or what; it was as if a demon were strangling one: and the old man appeared to me in my sleep. In short, I can’t describe my state of mind. I had a sensation of fear, as if expecting something unpleasant. I felt as if I could not speak a cheerful or sincere word to any one: it was just as if a spy were sitting over me. But from the very hour that I gave that portrait to my nephew, who asked for it, I felt as if a stone had been rolled from my shoulders, and became cheerful, as you see me now. Well, brother, you painted the very Devil!’

“During this recital my father listened with unswerving attention, and finally inquired, ‘And your nephew now has the portrait?’

“‘My nephew, indeed! he could not stand it!’ said the jolly fellow: ‘do you know, the soul of that usurer has migrated into it; he jumps out of the frame, walks about the room; and what my nephew tells of him is simply incomprehensible. I should take him for a lunatic, if I had not undergone a part of it myself. He sold it to some collector of pictures; and he could not stand it either, and got rid of it to some one else.’

“This story produced a deep impression on my father. He grew seriously pensive, fell into hypochondria, and finally became fully convinced that his brush had served as a tool of the Devil; and that a portion of the usurer’s vitality had actually passed into the portrait, and was now troubling people, inspiring diabolical excitement, beguiling painters from the true path, producing the fearful torments of envy, and so forth. Three catastrophes which occurred afterwards, three sudden deaths of wife, daughter, and infant son, he regarded as a divine punishment on him, and firmly resolved to withdraw from the world.

“As soon as I was nine years old, he placed me in an academy of painting, and, paying all his debts, retired to a lonely cloister, where he soon afterwards took the vows. There he amazed every one by the strictness of his life, and his untiring observance of all the monastic rules. The prior of the monastery, hearing of his skill in painting, ordered him to paint the principal picture in the church. But the humble brother said plainly that he was unworthy to touch a brush, that

his was contaminated, that with toil and great sacrifice must he first purify his spirit in order to render himself fit to undertake such a task. He increased the rigours of monastic life for himself as much as possible. At last, even they became insufficient, and he retired, with the approval of the prior, into the desert, in order to be quite alone. There he constructed himself a cell from branches of trees, ate only uncooked roots, dragged about a stone from place to place, stood in one spot with his hands lifted to heaven, from the rising until the going down of the sun, reciting prayers without cessation. In this manner did he for several years exhaust his body, invigorating it, at the same time, with the strength of fervent prayer.

"At length, one day he returned to the cloister, and said firmly to the prior, 'Now I am ready. If God wills, I will finish my task.' The subject he selected was the Birth of Christ. A whole year he sat over it, without leaving his cell, barely sustaining himself with coarse food, and praying incessantly. At the end of the year the picture was ready. It was a really wonderful work. Neither prior nor brethren knew much about painting; but all were struck with the marvellous holiness of the figures. The expression of reverent humility and gentleness in the face of the Holy Mother, as she bent over the Child; the deep intelligence in the eyes of the Holy Child, as though he saw something afar; the triumphant silence of the Magi, amazed by the Divine Miracle, as they bowed at his feet: and finally, the indescribable peace which emanated from the whole picture--all this was presented with such strength and beauty, that the impression it made was magical. All the brethren threw themselves on their knees before it; and the prior, deeply affected, exclaimed, 'No, it is impossible for any artist, with the assistance only of earthly art, to produce such a picture: a holy, divine power has guided thy brush, and the blessing of Heaven rested upon thy labour!'

"By that time I had completed my education at the academy, received the gold medal, and with it the joyful hope of a journey to Italy--the fairest dream of a twenty-year-old artist. It only remained for me to take leave of my father, from whom I had been separated for twelve years. I confess that even his image had long faded from my memory. I had heard somewhat of his grim saintliness, and rather expected to meet a hermit of rough exterior, a stranger to everything in the world, except his cell and his prayers, worn out, tried up, by eternal fasting and penance. But how great was my surprise when a handsome old man stood before me! No traces of exhaustion were visible on his countenance: it beamed with the light of a heavenly joy. His beard, white as snow, and his thin, almost transparent hair of the same silvery hue, fell picturesquely upon his breast, and upon the folds of his black gown, even to the rope with which his poor monastic garb was girded. But most surprising to me of all was to hear from his mouth such words

and thoughts about art as, I confess, I long shall bear in mind, and I sincerely wish that all my comrades would do the same.

"'I expected you, my son,' he said, when I approached for his blessing. 'The path awaits you in which your life is henceforth to flow. Your path is pure--desert it not. You have talent: talent is the most priceless of God's gifts--destroy it not. Search out, subject all things to your brush; but in all see that you find the hidden soul, and most of all, strive to attain to the grand secret of creation. Blessed is the elect one who masters that! There is for him no mean object in nature. In lowly themes the artist creator is as great as in great ones: in the despicable there is nothing for him to despise, for it passes through the purifying fire of his mind. An intimation of God's heavenly paradise is contained for the artist in art, and by that alone is it higher than all else. But by as much as triumphant rest is grander than every earthly emotion, by so much is the lofty creation of art higher than everything else on earth. Sacrifice everything to it, and love it with passion--not with the passion breathing with earthly desire, but a peaceful, heavenly passion. It cannot plant discord in the spirit, but ascends, like a resounding prayer, eternally to God. But there are moments, dark moments--' He paused, and I observed that his bright face darkened, as though some cloud crossed it for a moment. 'There is one incident of my life,' he said. 'Up to this moment, I cannot understand what that terrible being was of whom I painted a likeness. It was certainly some diabolical apparition. I know that the world denies the existence of the Devil, and therefore I will not speak of him. I will only say that I painted him with repugnance: I felt no liking for my work, even at the time. I tried to force myself, and, stifling every emotion in a hard-hearted way, to be true to nature. I have been informed that this portrait is passing from hand to hand, and sowing unpleasant impressions, inspiring artists with feelings of envy, of dark hatred towards their brethren, with malicious thirst for persecution and oppression. May the Almighty preserve you from such passions! There is nothing more terrible.'

"He blessed and embraced me. Never in my life was I so grandly moved. Reverently, rather than with the feeling of a son, I leaned upon his breast, and kissed his scattered silver locks.

"Tears shone in his eyes. 'Fulfil my one request, my son,' said he, at the moment of parting. 'You may chance to see the portrait I have mentioned somewhere. You will know it at once by the strange eyes, and their peculiar expression. Destroy it at any cost.'

"Judge for yourselves whether I could refuse to promise, with an oath, to fulfil this request. In the space of fifteen years I had never succeeded in meeting with anything which in any way corresponded to the description given me by my

father, until now, all of a sudden, at an auction--”

The artist did not finish his sentence, but turned his eyes to the wall in order to glance once more at the portrait. The entire throng of auditors made the same movement, seeking the wonderful portrait with their eyes. But, to their extreme amazement, it was no longer on the wall. An indistinct murmur and exclamation ran through the crowd, and then was heard distinctly the word, “stolen.” Some one had succeeded in carrying it off, taking advantage of the fact that the attention of the spectators was distracted by the story. And those present long remained in a state of surprise, not knowing whether they had really seen those remarkable eyes, or whether it was simply a dream which had floated for an instant before their eyesight, strained with long gazing at old pictures.

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NEVSKY PROSPECT

There is nothing finer than Nevsky Prospekt, not in Petersburg anyway: it is the making of the city. What splendor does it lack, that fairest of our city thoroughfares? I know that not one of the poor clerks that live there would trade Nevsky Prospekt for all the blessings of the world. Not only the young man of twenty-five summers with a fine mustache and a splendidly cut coat, but even the veteran with white hairs sprouting on his chin and a head as smooth as a silver dish is enthusiastic over Nevsky Prospekt. And the ladies! Nevsky Prospekt is even more attractive to the ladies. And indeed, to whom is it not attractive? As soon as you step into Nevsky Prospekt you are in an atmosphere of gaiety. Though you may have some necessary and important business, yet as soon as you are there you forget all about it. This is the one place where people put in an appearance without being forced to, without being driven there by the needs and commercial interests that swallow up all Petersburg. A man met on Nevsky Prospekt seems less of an egoist than in the other streets where greed, selfishness, and covetousness are apparent in all who walk or drive along them. Nevsky Prospekt is the general channel of communication in Petersburg. The man who lives on the Petersburg or Viborg Side who hasn't seen his friend at Peski or at the Moscow Gate for years may be sure to meet him on Nevsky Prospekt. No directory list at an information bureau supplies such accurate information as Nevsky Prospekt. All-powerful Nevsky Prospekt! Sole place of entertainment for the poor man in Petersburg! How wonderfully clean are its surfaces, and, my God, how many feet leave their traces on it! The clumsy, dirty boots of the ex-soldier, under whose weight the very granite seems to crack, and the miniature, ethereal little shoes of the young lady who turns her head toward the glittering shop windows as the sunflower turns to the sun, and the rattling saber of the ambitious lieutenant which marks a sharp scratch along it—all print the scars of strength or weakness on it! What changes pass over it in a single day! What transformations it goes through between one dawn and the next!

Let us begin with earliest morning, when all Petersburg smells of hot, freshly baked bread and is filled with old women in ragged clothes who are making their raids on the churches and on compassionate passers-by. At such a time, Nevsky Prospekt is empty: the stout shopkeepers and their assistants are still asleep in their linen shirts or soaping their noble cheeks and drinking their coffee; beggars gather near the doors of the cafe where the drowsy Ganymede, who the day

before flew around with the cups of chocolate like a fly, crawls out with no necktie on, broom in hand, and throws stale pies and scraps at them. Working people move through the streets: sometimes peasants cross the avenue, hurrying to their work, in high boots caked with mortar which even the Ekaterieninsky Canal, famous for its cleanness, could not wash off. At this hour it is not proper for ladies to walk out, because Russian people like to explain their meaning in rude expressions such as they would not hear even in a theater. Sometimes a drowsy government clerk trudges along with a portfolio under his arm, if the way to his department lies through Nevsky Prospekt. It may be confidently stated that at this period, that is, up to twelve o'clock, Nevsky Prospekt is not the goal for any man, but simply the means of reaching it: it is filled with people who have their occupations, their anxieties, and their annoyances, and are not thinking about the avenue. Peasants talk about ten kopeks or seven coppers; old men and women wave their hands or talk to themselves, sometimes with very striking gesticulations, but no one listens to them or laughs at them with the exception perhaps of street boys in homespun smocks, streaking like lightning along Nevsky Prospekt with empty bottles or pairs of boots from the cobblers in their arms. At that hour you may put on what you like, and even if you wear a cap instead of a hat, or the ends of your collar stick out too far from your necktie, no one notices it.

At twelve o'clock tutors of all nationalities descend upon Nevsky Prospekt with their young charges in fine cambric collars. English Joneses and French Cocos walk arm in arm with the nurslings entrusted to their parental care, and with becoming dignity explain to them that the signboards over the shops are put there so that people may know what is to be found within. Governesses, pale Misses, and rosy Mademoiselles walk majestically behind their light and nimble charges, telling them to hold themselves more upright or not to drop their left shoulder; in short, at this hour Nevsky Prospekt plays its pedagogic part. But as two o'clock approaches, the governesses, tutors, and children are fewer; and finally are crowded out by their tender papas walking arm in arm with their high-strung wives in gaudy dresses of every possible color. Gradually these are joined by all who have finished their rather important domestic duties, such as talking to the doctor about the weather and the pimple that has come out on their nose, inquiring after the health of their horses and their promising and gifted children, reading in the newspaper a leading article and the announcements of the arrivals and departures, and finally drinking a cup of tea or coffee. They are joined, too, by those whose enviable destiny has called them to the blessed vocation of clerks on special duties, and by those who serve in the Department of Foreign Affairs and are distinguished by the dignity of their pursuits and their habits. My

God! What splendid positions and duties there are! How they elevate and sweeten the soul! But, alas, I am not in the service and am denied the pleasure of watching the refined behavior of my superiors. Everything you meet on the Nevsky Prospekt is brimming over with propriety: the men in long jackets with their hands in their pockets, the ladies in pink, white, or pale blue satin coats and stylish hats. Here you meet unique whiskers, drooping with extraordinary and amazing elegance below the necktie, velvety, satiny whiskers, as black as sable or as coal, but alas! invariably the property of members of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Providence has denied black whiskers to clerks in other departments; they are forced, to their great disgust, to wear red ones. Here you meet marvelous mustaches that no pen, no brush could do justice to, mustaches to which the better part of a life has been devoted, the objects of prolonged care by day and by night; mustaches upon which enchanting perfumes are sprinkled and on which the rarest and most expensive kinds of pomade are lavished; mustaches which are wrapped up at night in the most expensive vellum; mustaches to which their possessors display the most touching devotion and which are the envy of passers-by. Thousands of varieties of hats, dresses, and kerchiefs, flimsy and bright-colored, for which their owners feel sometimes an adoration that lasts two whole days, dazzle everyone on Nevsky Prospect. A whole sea of butterflies seem to have flown up from their flower stalks and to be floating in a glittering cloud above the beetles of the male sex. Here you meet waists of a slim delicacy beyond dreams of elegance, no thicker than the neck of a bottle, and respectfully step aside for fear of a careless nudge with a discourteous elbow; your heart beats with apprehension lest an incautious breath snap in two the exquisite products of art and nature. And the ladies’ sleeves that you meet on Nevsky Prospekt! Ah, how exquisite! They are like two balloons and the lady might suddenly float up into the air, were she not held down by the gentleman accompanying her; for it would be as easy and agreeable for a lady to be lifted into the air as for a glass of champagne to be lifted to the lips. Nowhere do people bow with such dignity and ease as on Nevsky Prospekt. Here you meet with a unique smile, a smile that is the acme of art, that will sometimes melt you with pleasure, sometimes make you bow your head and feel lower than the grass, sometimes make you hold it high and feel loftier than the Admiralty spire. Here you meet people conversing about a concert or the weather with extraordinary dignity and sense of their own importance. Here you meet a thousand incredible types and figures. Good heavens! what strange characters are met on Nevsky Prospekt! There are numbers of people who, when they meet you, invariably stare at your boots, and when they have passed, turn around to have a look at the skirts of your coat. I have never been able to discover the

reason for it. At first I thought they were bootmakers, but they're not: they are for the most part clerks in various departments and many of them are very good at referring a case from one department to another; or they are people who spend their time walking about or reading the paper in restaurants—in fact they are usually very respectable people. In this blessed period between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, when everyone seems to be walking on Nevsky Prospekt, there is a display of all the finest things the genius of man has produced. One displays a smart overcoat with the best beaver on it, the second —a lovely Greek nose, the third—superb whiskers, the fourth—a pair of pretty eyes and a marvelous hat, the fifth—a signet ring on a jaunty forefinger, the sixth —a foot in a bewitching shoe, the seventh—a necktie that excites wonder, and the eighth—a mustache that reduces one to stupefaction. But three o'clock strikes and the display is over, the crowd grows less thick... At three o'clock there is a fresh change. Suddenly it is like spring on Nevsky Prospekt; it is covered with government clerks in green uniforms. Hungry titular, lower court, and other councilors do their best to quicken their pace. Young collegiate registrars and provincial and collegiate secretaries are in haste to be in time to parade on Nevsky Prospekt with a dignified air, trying to look as if they had not been sitting in an office for the last six hours. But the elderly collegiate secretaries and titular and lower court councilors walk quickly with bowed heads: they are not disposed to amuse themselves by looking at the passers-by; they have not yet completely torn themselves away from their office cares; in their heads is a full list of work begun and not yet finished; for a long time, instead of the signboards, they seem to see a cardboard rack of papers or the full face of the head of their office.

From four o'clock Nevsky Prospekt is empty, and you hardly meet a single government clerk. Some seamstress from a shop runs across Nevsky Prospekt with a box in her hands. Some pathetic victim of a benevolent attorney, cast adrift in a frieze overcoat; some eccentric visitor to whom all hours are alike; a tall, lanky Englishwoman with a handbag and a book in her hand; a foreman in a high-waisted coat of cotton with a narrow beard, a ramshackle figure, back, arms, head, and legs all twisting and turning as he walks deferentially along the pavement; sometimes a humble craftsman... those are the only people that we meet at that hour on Nevsky Prospekt.

But as soon as dusk descends upon the houses and streets and the policeman covered with a piece of coarse material climbs up his ladder to light the lamp, and engravings which do not venture to show themselves by day peep out of the lower windows of the shops, Nevsky Prospekt revives again and begins to stir. Then comes that mysterious time when the street lamps throw a marvelous

alluring light upon everything. You meet a great number of young men, for the most part bachelors, in warm frock coats and overcoats. There is a suggestion at this time of some aim, or rather something like an aim, something extremely unaccountable; the steps of all are more rapid and altogether very uneven; long shadows flit over the walls and pavement and their heads almost reach the Police Bridge. Young collegiate registrars, provincial and collegiate secretaries walk up and down for hours, but the elderly collegiate registrars, the titular and lower court secretaries are for the most part at home, either because they are married, or because the German cook living in their house gives them a very good dinner. Here you may meet some of the respectable-looking old gentlemen who with such dignity and propriety walked on Nevsky Prospekt at two o'clock. You may see them now racing along like the young government clerks to peep under the hat of some lady spotted in the distance, whose thick lips and fat cheeks plastered with rouge are so attractive to many, and above all to the shopmen, workmen, and shopkeepers, who promenade in crowds, always in coats of German cut and usually arm in arm.

"Hey!" cried Lieutenant Pirogov on such an evening, nudging a young man who walked beside him in a dress coat and cloak. "Did you see her?"

"I did; lovely, a perfect Bianca of Perugino."

"But which do you mean?"

"The lady with the dark hair... And what eyes! Good God, what eyes! Her attitude and stunning figure and the lines of the face... exquisite!"

"I am talking of the blonde who passed after her on the other side. Why don't you go after the brunette if you find her so attractive?"

"Oh, how can you!" cried the young man in the dress coat, turning crimson. "As though she were one of the women who walk on Nevsky Prospekt at night. She must be a very distinguished lady," he went on with a sigh. "Why, her cloak alone is worth eighty rubles."

"You fool!" cried Pirogov, giving him a violent shove in the direction in which the brilliant cloak was fluttering. "Move on, you idiot, don't waste time. I'll follow the blonde."

"We know what you all are," Pirogov thought to himself, with a self-satisfied and confident smile, convinced that no beauty could withstand him.

The young man in the dress coat and cloak with timid and tremulous step walked in the direction in which the bright-colored cloak was fluttering, at one moment shining brilliantly as it approached a street lamp, at the next shrouded in darkness as it moved further away. His heart throbbed and he unconsciously quickened his pace. He dared not even imagine that he could have a claim on the attention of the beauty who was retreating into the distance, and still less could

he admit the evil thought suggested by Lieutenant Pirogov. All he wanted was to see the house, to discover where this exquisite creature lived who seemed to have flown straight down from heaven onto the Nevsky Prospekt, and who would probably fly away, no one could tell where. He darted along so fast that he was continually jostling dignified, gray-whiskered gentlemen off the pavement. This young man belonged to a class which is a great exception among us, and he no more belonged to the common run of Petersburg citizens than a face that appears to us in a dream belongs to the world of actual fact. This exceptional class is very rare in the town where all are officials, shopkeepers, or German craftsmen. He was an artist. A strange phenomenon, is it not? A Petersburg artist. An artist in the land of snows. An artist in the land of the Finns where everything is wet, flat, pale, gray, foggy. These artists are utterly unlike the Italian artists, proud and ardent as Italy and her skies. The Russian artist on the contrary is, as a rule, mild, gentle, retiring, carefree, and quietly devoted to his art; he drinks tea with a couple of friends in his little room, modestly discusses his favorite subjects, and does not trouble his head at all about anything superfluous. He frequently employs some old beggar woman, and makes her sit for six hours on end in order to transfer to canvas her pitiful, almost inanimate countenance. He draws a sketch in perspective of his studio with all sorts of artistic litter lying about, copies plaster-of-Paris hands and feet, turned coffee-colored by time and dust, a broken easel, a palette lying upside down, a friend playing the guitar, walls smeared with paint, with an open window through which there is a glimpse of the pale Neva and poor fishermen in red shirts. Almost all these artists paint in gray, muddy colors that bear the unmistakable imprint of the north. For all that, they all work with instinctive enjoyment. They are often endowed with real talent, and if only they were breathing the fresh air of Italy, they would no doubt develop as freely, broadly, and brilliantly as a plant at last brought from indoors into the open air. They are, as a rule, very timid; stars and thick epaulets reduce them to such a confused state that they ask less for their pictures than they had intended. They are sometimes fond of dressing smartly, but anything smart they wear always looks too startling and rather like a patch. You sometimes meet them in an excellent coat and a muddy cloak, an expensive velvet vest and a coat covered with paint, just as on one of their unfinished landscapes you sometimes see the head of a nymph, for which the artist could find no other place, sketched on the background of an earlier work which he had once painted with pleasure. Such an artist never looks you straight in the face; or, if he does look at you, it is with a vague, indefinite expression. He does not transfix you with the vulturelike eye of an observer or the hawklike glance of a cavalry officer. This is because he sees at the same time your features and the features of some plaster-of-Paris

Hercules standing in his room, or because he is imagining a picture which he dreams of producing later on. This makes him often answer incoherently, sometimes quite incomprehensibly, and the muddle in his head increases his shyness. To this class belonged the young man we have described, an artist called Piskarev, retiring, shy, but carrying in his soul sparks of feeling, ready at a fitting opportunity to burst into flame. With secret dread he hastened after the lady who had made so strong an impression on him, and he seemed to be surprised at his audacity. The unknown girl who had so captured his eyes, his thoughts, and his feelings suddenly turned her head and glanced at him.

Good God, what divine features! The dazzling whiteness of the exquisite brow was framed by hair lovely as an agate. They curled, those marvelous tresses, and some of them strayed below the hat and caressed the cheek, flushed by the chill of evening with a delicate fresh color. A swarm of exquisite visions hovered about her lips. All the memories of childhood, all the visions that rise from dreaming and quiet inspiration in the lamplight—all seemed to be blended, mingled, and reflected on her delightful lips. She glanced at Piskarev and his heart quivered at that glance; her glance was severe, a look of anger came into her face at the sight of this impudent pursuit; but on that lovely face even anger was bewitching. Overcome by shame and timidity he stood still, dropping his eyes; but how could he lose this divine being without discovering the sanctuary in which she was enshrined? Such was the thought in the mind of the young dreamer, and he resolved to follow her. But, to avoid her notice, he fell back a good distance, looked aimlessly from side to side, and examined the signboards on the shops, yet he did not lose sight of a single step the unknown lady took. Passers-by were less frequent; the street became quieter. The beauty looked around and he fancied that her lips were curved in a faint smile. He trembled all over and could not believe his eyes. No, it was the deceptive light of the street lamp which had thrown that trace of a smile upon her lips; no his own imagination was mocking him. But he held his breath and everything in him quivered, all his feelings were ablaze and everything before him was lost in a sort of mist; the pavement seemed to be moving under his feet, carriages drawn by trotting horses seemed to stand still, the bridge stretched out and seemed broken in the center, the houses were upside down, a sentry box seemed to be reeling toward him, and the sentry’s halberd, and the gilt letters of the signboard and the scissors painted on it, all seemed to be flashing across his very eyelash. And all this was produced by one glance, by one turn of a pretty head. Hearing nothing, seeing nothing, understanding nothing, he followed the light traces of the lovely feet, trying to moderate the swiftness of his own steps which moved in time with the throbbing of his heart. At moments he was overcome with doubt

whether the look on her face was really so gracious; and then for an instant he stood still; but the beating of his heart, the irresistible violence and turmoil of his feelings drove him forward. He did not even notice a four-storied house that loomed before him; four rows of windows, all lighted up, burst upon him all at once, and he was brought to a sudden stop by striking against the iron railing of the entrance. He saw the lovely stranger fly up the stairs, look around, lay a finger on her lips, and make a sign for him to follow her. His knees trembled, his feelings, his thoughts were aflame. A thrill of joy, unbearably acute, flashed like lightning through his heart. No, it was not a dream! Good God, what happiness in one instant! What a lifetime's rapture in two minutes!

But was it not all a dream? Could it be true that this girl for whom he would gladly have given his life for one heavenly glance, that she who made him feel such bliss just to be near the house where she lived, could she really have been so kind and attentive to him? He flew up the stairs. He was conscious of no earthly thought; he was not aflame with earthly passion. No, at that moment he was pure and chaste as a virginal youth burning with the vague spiritual craving for love. And what would have awakened base thoughts in a dissolute man, in him made them still holier. This confidence, shown him by a weak and lovely creature, laid upon him the sacred duty of chivalrous austerity, the sacred duty to carry out all her commands. All that he desired was that those commands should be as difficult, as hard to carry out as possible, so that more effort be required to overcome all obstacles. He did not doubt that some mysterious and at the same time important circumstance compelled the unknown lady to confide in him; that she would certainly require some important service from him, and he felt in himself enough strength and resolution for anything.

The staircase went around and around, and his thoughts whirled around and around with it. "Be careful!" a voice rang out like a harpstring, sending a fresh thrill through him. On the dark landing of the fourth floor the blonde stranger knocked at a door; it was opened and they went in together. A woman of rather attractive appearance met them with a candle in her hand, but she looked so strangely and impudently at Piskarev that he dropped his eyes. They went into the room. Three female figures in different corners of the room met his eye. One was laying out cards; another was sitting at the piano and with two fingers strumming out a pitiful travesty of an old polonaise; the third was sitting before a mirror combing her long hair, and had apparently no intention of discontinuing her toilette because of the arrival of an unknown visitor. An unpleasant untidiness, usually only seen in the neglected rooms of bachelors, was everywhere apparent. The furniture, which was fairly good, was covered with dust. Spiders' webs stretched over the carved cornice; through the open door of

another room he caught the gleam of a spurred boot and the red edging of a uniform; a man’s loud voice and a woman’s laugh rang out without restraint.

Good God, where had he come! At first he would not believe it, and began looking more attentively at the objects that filled the room; but the bare walls and uncurtained windows betrayed the absence of a careful housewife; the faded faces of these pitiful creatures, one of whom was sitting just under his nose and staring at him as coolly as though he were a spot on someone’s dress—all convinced him that he had come into one of those revolting places in which the pitiful vice that springs from a poor education and the terrible overpopulation of a great town finds shelter, one of those places in which man sacrilegiously tramples and derides all that is pure and holy, all that makes life beautiful, where woman, the beauty of the world, the crown of creation, is transformed into a strange, equivocal creature, where she loses with her purity of her heart all that is womanly, revoltingly adopts the swagger and impudence of man, and ceases to be the delicate, the lovely creature, so different from us. Piskarev looked at her from head to foot with troubled eyes, as though trying to make sure whether this was really she who had so enchanted him and had brought him flying from Nevsky Prospekt. But she stood before him lovely as ever; her eyes were even more heavenly. She was fresh, not more than seventeen; it could be seen that she had not long been in the grip of vice; it had as yet left no trace upon her cheeks, they were fresh and faintly flushed with color; she was lovely.

He stood motionless before her and was ready to allow himself to be once again deceived. But the beautiful girl was tired of this long silence and gave a meaning smile, looking straight into his eyes. That smile was full of a sort of pitiful insolence; it was so strange and as incongruous with her face as a sanctimonious air with the brutal face of a bribetaker or a manual of bookkeeping with a poet. He shuddered. She opened her lovely lips and began saying something, but all that she said was so stupid, so vulgar... As though intelligence were lost with innocence! He wanted to hear no more. He was absurd! Simple as a child! Instead of taking advantage of such graciousness, instead of rejoicing at such an opportunity, as anyone else in his place would probably have done, he dashed away like a wild antelope and ran out into the street.

He sat in his room with his head bowed and his hands hanging loose, like a poor man who has found a precious pearl and at once dropped it into the sea. “Such a beauty, such divine features! And where? In such a place...” That was all that he could say.

Nothing, indeed, moves us to such pity as the sight of beauty touched by the putrid breath of vice. Ugliness may go with it, but beauty, tender beauty... In our

thoughts it blends with nothing but purity and innocence. The beauty who had so enchanted poor Piskarev really was a rare and extraordinary exception. Her presence in those vile surroundings seemed even more incredible. All her features were so purely molded, the whole expression of her lovely face wore the stamp of such nobility, that it was impossible to think that vice already held her in its grip. She should have been the priceless pearl, the whole world, the paradise, the wealth of a devoted husband; she should have been the lovely, gentle star of some quiet family circle, and with the faintest movement of her lovely lips should have given her sweet commands there. She would have been a divinity in the crowded ballroom, on the glistening parquet, in the glow of candles surrounded by the silent adoration of a crowd of admirers; but, alas! by some terrible machination of the fiendish spirit, eager to destroy the harmony of life, she had been flung with satanic laughter into this horrible swamp.

Exhausted by heartbreaking pity, he sat before a candle that was burned low in the socket. Midnight was long past, the belfry chime rang out half-past twelve, and still he sat without stirring, neither asleep nor fully awake. Sleep, abetted by his stillness, was beginning to steal over him, and already the room was beginning to disappear, and only the light of the candle still shone through the dreams that were overpowering him, when all at once a knock at the door made him start and wake up. The door opened and a footman in gorgeous livery walked in. Never had a gorgeous livery peeped into his lonely room. At such an hour of the night!... He was amazed, and with impatient curiosity looked intently at the footman who entered.

“The lady,” the footman pronounced with a deferential bow, “whom you visited some hours ago bade me invite you and sent the carriage to fetch you.”

Piskarev was speechless with amazement: the carriage, a footman in livery!... No, there must be some mistake—

“My good man,” he said timidly, “you must have come to the wrong door. Your mistress must have sent you for someone else and not for me.”

“No, sir, I am not mistaken. Did you not accompany my mistress home? It’s in Liteyny Street, on the fourth floor.”

“I did.”

“Then, if so, please make haste; my mistress is very anxious to see you, and begs you come straight to her house.”

Piskarev ran down the stairs. A carriage was, in fact, standing in the courtyard. He got into it, the door was slammed, the cobbles of the pavement resounded under the wheels and the hoofs, and the illuminated panorama of houses and lamps and signboards passed by the carriage windows. Piskarev pondered all the way and could not explain this adventure. A house of her own, a carriage, a

footman in gorgeous livery... He could not reconcile all this with the room on the fourth floor, the dusty windows, and the jangling piano. The carriage stopped before a brightly lighted entrance, and he was at once struck by the procession of carriages, the talk of the coachmen, the brilliantly lighted windows, and the strains of music. The footman in gorgeous livery helped him out of the carriage and respectfully led him into a hall with marble columns, with a porter in gold lace, with cloaks and fur coats flung here and there, and a brilliant lamp. An airy staircase with shining banisters, fragrant with perfume, led upward. He was already mounting it; hesitating at the first step and panic-stricken at the crowds of people, he went into the first room. The extraordinary brightness and variety of the scene completely staggered him; it seemed to him as though some demon had crumbled the whole world into bits and mixed all these bits indiscriminately together. The gleaming shoulders of the ladies and the black tailcoats, the chandeliers, the lamps, the ethereal floating gauze, the filmy ribbons, and the fat bass looking out from behind the railing of the orchestra—everything was dazzling. He saw at the same instant such numbers of respectable old or middle-aged men with stars on their evening coats and ladies sitting in rows or stepping so lightly, proudly, and graciously over the parquet floor; he heard so many French and English words; moreover, the young men in black evening clothes were filled with such dignity, spoke or kept silence with such gentlemanly decorum, were so incapable of saying anything inappropriate, made jokes so majestically, smiled so politely wore such superb whiskers, so skillfully displayed their elegant hands as they straightened their neckties; the ladies were so ethereal, so steeped in perfect self-satisfaction and rapture, so enchantingly cast down their eyes, that... but Piskarev’s subdued air, as he leaned timidly against a column, was enough to show that he was completely overwhelmed. At that moment the crowd stood around a group of dancers. They whirled around, draped in the transparent creations of Paris, in garments woven of air itself; effortlessly they touched the parquet floor with their lovely feet, as ethereal as though they walked on air. But one among them was lovelier, more splendid, and more brilliantly dressed than the rest. An indescribable, subtle perfection of taste was apparent in all her attire, and at the same time it seemed as though she cared nothing for it, as though it had come unconsciously, of itself. She looked and did not look at the crowd of spectators crowding around her, she cast down her lovely long eyelashes indifferently, and the gleaming whiteness of her face was still more dazzling when she bent her head and a light shadow lay on her enchanting brow.

Piskarev did his utmost to make his way through the crowd and get a better look at her; but to his intense annoyance a huge head of curly black hair was

continually screening her from him; moreover, the crush was so great that he did not dare to press forward or to step back, for fear of jostling against some privy councilor. But at last he squeezed his way to the front and glanced at his clothes, anxious that everything should be neat. Heavenly Creator! What was his horror! he had on his everyday coat, and it was all smeared with paint; in his haste to leave he had actually forgotten to change into suitable clothes. He blushed up to his ears and, dropping his eyes in confusion, would have gone away, but there was absolutely nowhere he could go; court chamberlains in brilliant uniforms formed an inexorable compact wall behind him. By now his desire was to be as far away as possible from the beauty of the lovely brows and eyelashes. In terror he raised his eyes to see whether she were looking at him. Good God! she stood facing him.... What did it mean? “It is she!” he cried almost at the top of his voice. It was really she—the one he had met on Nevsky Prospekt and had escorted home.

Meanwhile she raised her eyelashes and looked at all with her bright eyes. “Aie, aie, aie, how beautiful!...” was all he could say with bated breath. She scanned the faces around her, all eager to catch her attention, but with an air of weariness and indifference she looked away and met Piskarev’s eyes. Oh heavens! What paradise! Oh God, for strength to bear this! Life cannot contain it, such rapture tears it asunder and bears away the soul! She made a sign to him, but not by hand nor by inclination of the head; no, it was in her ravishing eyes, so subtle, so imperceptible that no one else could see it, but he saw it! He understood it! The dance lasted a long time; the languorous music seemed to flag and die away and again it broke out, shrill and thunderous; at last the dance was over. She sat down. Her bosom heaved under the light cloud of gossamer, her hand (Oh, heavens! what a wonderful hand!) dropped on her knee, rested on her filmy gown which seemed to be breathing music under her hand, and its delicate lilac hue made that lovely hand look more dazzlingly white than ever. Just to touch it and nothing more! No other desires—they would be insolence.... He stood behind her chair, not daring to speak, not daring to breathe. “Have you been bored?” she asked. “I have been bored too. I see that you hate me....” she added, lowering her long eyelashes.

“Hate you? I?... I?...?” Piskarev, completely overwhelmed, tried to say something, and he would probably have poured out a stream of incoherent words, but at that moment a court chamberlain with a magnificently curled shock of hair came up making witty and polite remarks. He agreeably displayed a row of rather good teeth, and at every jest his wit drove a sharp nail into Piskarev’s heart. At last someone fortunately addressed the court chamberlain with a question.

“How unbearable it is!” she said, lifting her heavenly eyes to him. “J will sit at the other end of the room; be there!” She glided through the crowd and vanished. He pushed his way through the crowd like one possessed, and in a flash was there.

Yes, it was she! She sat like a queen, finer than all, lovelier than all, and her eyes sought him.

“Are you here?” she asked softly. “I will be frank with you: no doubt you think the circumstances of our meeting strange. Can you imagine that I belong to the degraded class of beings among whom you met me? You think my conduct strange, but I will re. veal a secret to you. Can you promise never to betray it?” she asked, fixing her eyes upon him.

“Oh I will, I will, I will!...”

But at that moment an elderly man shook hands with her and began speaking in a language Piskarev did not understand. She looked at the artist with an imploring gaze, and gestured to him to remain where he was and await her return; but much too impatient, he could not obey a command even from her lips. He followed her, but the crowd parted them. He could no longer see the lilac dress; in consternation he forced his way from room to room and elbowed all he met mercilessly, but in all the rooms gentlemen were sitting at whist plunged in dead silence. In a corner of the room some elderly people were arguing about the superiority of military to civil service; in another some young men in superb dress coats were making a few light remarks about the voluminous works of a poet. Piskarev felt that a gentleman of venerable appearance had taken him by the button of his coat and was submitting some very just observation to his criticism, but he rudely thrust him aside without even noticing that he had a very distinguished order on his breast. He ran into another room—she was not there; into a third—she was not there either. “Where is she? Give her to me! Oh, I cannot live without another look at her! I want to hear what she meant to tell me!” But his search was in vain. Anxious and exhausted, he huddled in a corner and looked at the crowd. But everything seemed blurred to his strained eyes. At last the walls of his own room began to grow distinct. He raised his eyes: before him stood a candlestick with the light flickering in the socket; the whole candle had burned away and the melted wax lay on his table.

So he had been asleep! My God, what a splendid dream! And why had he awakened? Why had it not lasted one minute longer? She would no doubt have appeared again! The unwelcome dawn was peeping in at his window with its unpleasant, dingy light. The room was in such a gray, untidy muddle... Oh, how revolting was reality! What was it compared to dreams? He undressed quickly and got into bed, wrapping himself up in a blanket, anxious to recapture the

dream that had flown. Sleep certainly did not take long to come, but it presented him with something quite different from what he desired: at one moment Lieutenant Pirogov with his pipe, then the porter of the Academy, then an actual civil councilor, then the head of a Finnish woman who had sat for him for a portrait, and such absurd things.

He lay in bed till the middle of the day, longing to dream again, but she did not appear. If only she had shown her lovely features for one minute, if only her light step had rustled, if only her hand, shining white as driven snow, had for one instant appeared before him.

Dismissing everything, forgetting everything, he sat with a crushed and hopeless expression, full of nothing but his dream. He never thought of touching anything; his eyes were fixed in a vacant, lifeless stare upon the windows that looked into the yard, where a dirty watercarrier was pouring water that froze in the air, and the cracked voice of a peddler bleated like a goat, “Old clothes for sale.” The sounds of everyday reality rung strangely in his ears. He sat on till evening in this manner, and then flung himself eagerly into bed. For hours he struggled with sleeplessness; at last he overcame it. Again a dream, a vulgar, horrid dream. “God, have mercy! For one minute, just for one minute, let me see her!”

Again he waited for the evening, again he fell asleep. He dreamed of a government clerk who was at the same time a government clerk and a bassoon. Oh, this was intolerable! At last she appeared! Her head and her curls... she gazed at him... for—oh, how brief a moment, and then again mist, again some stupid dream.

At last, dreaming became his life and from that time his life was strangely turned upside down; he might be said to sleep when he was awake and to come to life when he was asleep. Anyone seeing him sitting dumbly before his empty table or walking along the street would certainly have taken him for a lunatic or a man deranged by drink: his eyes had a perfectly vacant look, his natural absent-mindedness increased and drove every sign of feeling and emotion out of his face. He only revived at the approach of night.

Such a condition destroyed his health, and the worst torture for him was the fact that sleep began to desert him altogether. Anxious to save the only treasure left him, he used every means to regain it. He had heard that there were means of inducing sleep—one need only take opium. But where could he get opium? He thought of a Persian who sold shawls and, whenever he saw Piskarev, asked him to paint a beautiful woman for him. He decided to go to him, assuming that he would be sure to have the drug he wanted.

The Persian received him, sitting on a sofa with his legs crossed under him.

“What do you want opium for?” he asked.

Piskarev told him about his sleeplessness.

“Very well, you must paint me a beautiful woman, and I will give you opium. She must be a real beauty: let her eyebrows be black and her eyes be as big as olives; and let me be lying near her smoking my pipe. Do you hear, she must be beautiful! She must be beautiful!”

Piskarev promised everything. The Persian went out for a minute and came back with a little jar filled with a dark liquid; he carefully poured some of it into another jar and gave it to Piskarev, telling him to take not more than seven drops in water. Piskarev greedily clutched the precious little jar, with which he would not have parted for a pile of gold, and dashed home.

When he got home he poured several drops into a glass of water and, swallowing it, lay down to sleep.

Oh God, what joy! She! She again, but now in quite a different world! Oh, how charmingly she sat at the window of a bright little country house! In her dress was the simplicity in which the poet’s thought is clothed. And her hair! Merciful heavens! how simple it was and how it suited her. A short shawl was thrown lightly around her graceful throat; everything about her was modest, everything about her showed a mysterious, inexplicable sense of taste. How charming her graceful carriage! How musical the sound of her steps and the rustle of her simple gown! How lovely her arm encircled by a bracelet of hair! She said to him with a tear in her eye: “Don’t look down upon me; I am not at all what you take me for. Look at me, look at me more carefully and tell me: am I capable of what you imagine?”

“Oh no, no! May he who should dare to think it, may he...”

But he awoke, deeply moved, harassed, with tears in his eyes. “Better that you had not existed! had not lived in this world, but had been an artist’s creation! I would never have left the canvas, I would have gazed at you forever and kissed you! I would have lived and breathed in you, as in the loveliest of dreams, and then I should have been happy. I should have desired nothing more; I would have called upon you as my guardian angel at sleeping and at waking, and I would have gazed upon you if ever I had to paint the divine and holy. But as it is... how terrible life is! What good is it that she lives? Is a madman’s life a source of joy to his friends and family who once loved him? My God! what is our life! An eternal battle between dream and reality!” Such ideas absorbed him continually. He thought of nothing, he almost gave up eating, and with the impatience and passion of a lover waited for the evening and his coveted dreams. The continual concentration of his thoughts on one subject at last so completely mastered his whole being and imagination that the coveted image appeared

before him almost every day, always in positions that were the very opposite of reality, for his thoughts were as pure as a child's. Through these dreams, the subject of them became in his imagination purer and was completely transformed.

The opium inflamed his thoughts more than ever, and if there ever was a man passionately, terribly, and ruinously in love to the utmost pitch of madness, he was that luckless man.

Of all his dreams one delighted him more than any: he saw himself in his studio. He was in good spirits and sitting happily with the palette in his hand! And she was there. She was his wife. She sat beside him, leaning her lovely elbow on the back of his chair and looking at his work. Her eyes were languid and weary with excess of bliss; everything in his room breathed of paradise; it was so bright, so neat. Good God! she leaned her lovely head on his bosom... He had never had a better dream than that. He got up after it fresher, less absent-minded than before. A strange idea came into his mind. "Perhaps," he thought, "she has been drawn into vice by some terrible misfortune, through no will of her own; perhaps her soul is disposed to penitence; perhaps she herself is longing to escape from her awful position. And am I to stand aside indifferently and let her ruin herself when I have only to hold out a hand to save her from drowning?" His thoughts carried him further. "No one knows me," he said to himself, "and no one cares what I do, and I have nothing to do with anyone either. If she shows herself genuinely penitent and changes her mode of life, I will marry her. I ought to marry her, and no doubt will do much better than many who marry their housekeepers or sometimes the most contemptible creatures. My action will be disinterested and very likely a good deed. I shall restore to the world the loveliest of its ornaments!"

Making this reckless plan, he felt the color flushing in his cheek; he went up to the mirror and was frightened at his hollow cheeks and the paleness of his face. He began carefully dressing; he washed, smoothed his hair, put on a new coat, a smart vest, flung on his cloak, and went out into the street. He breathed the fresh air and had a feeling of freshness in his heart, like a convalescent who has gone out for the first time after a long illness. His heart throbbed when he turned into the street which he had not passed through again since that fatal meeting.

He was a long time looking for the house. He walked up and down the street twice, uncertain before which to stop. At last one of them seemed to him to be the one. He ran quickly up the stairs and knocked at the door: the door opened and who came out to meet him? His ideal, his mysterious divinity, the original of his dream pictures—she who was his life, in whom he lived so terribly, so agonizingly, so blissfully—she, she herself, stood before him! He trembled; he

could hardly stand on his feet for weakness, overcome by the rush of joy. She stood before him as lovely as ever, though her eyes looked sleepy, though a pallor had crept over her face, no longer quite so fresh; but still she was lovely.

“Ah!” she cried on seeing Piskarev and rubbing her eyes (it was two o’clock in the afternoon); “why did you run away from us that day?”

He sat down in a chair, feeling faint, and looked at her.

“And I am only just awake; I was brought home at seven in the morning. I was quite drunk,” she added with a smile.

Oh, better you had been dumb and could not speak at all than uttering such words! She had shown him in a flash the whole panorama of her life. But, in spite of that, struggling with his feelings, he made up his mind to try whether his admonitions would have any effect on her. Pulling himself together, he began in a trembling but ardent voice depicting her awful position. She listened to him with a look of attention and with the feeling of wonder which we display at the insight of something strange and unexpected. She looked with a faint smile toward her friend who was sitting in a corner, and who stopped cleaning a comb and also listened with attention to this new preacher.

“It is true that I am poor,” said Piskarev, at last, after a prolonged and persuasive appeal, “but we will work, we will do our best, side by side, to improve our position. Yes, nothing is sweeter than to owe everything to one’s own work. I will sit at my pictures, you shall sit by me and inspire my work, while you are busy with sewing or some other handicraft, and we shall not want anything.”

“Indeed!” she interrupted his speech with an expression of scorn. “I am not a washerwoman or a seamstress who has to work!”

Oh God! In those words the whole of an ugly, degraded life was portrayed, the life of the true followers of vice, full of emptiness and idleness!

“Marry me!” her friend who had till then sat silent in the corner put in, with a saucy air. “When I am your wife I will sit like this!” As she spoke she pursed up her pitiful face and assumed a silly expression, which greatly amused the beauty.

Oh, that was too much! That was more than he could bear! He rushed away with every thought and feeling in a turmoil. His mind was clouded: stupidly, aimlessly, he wandered about all day, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, feeling nothing. No one could say whether he slept anywhere or not; only next day, by some blind instinct, he found his way to his room, pale and looking terrible, with his hair disheveled and signs of madness in his face. He locked himself in his room and admitted no one, asked for nothing. Four days passed and his door was not once opened; at last a week had passed, and still the door was locked. People went to the door and began calling him, but there was no answer; at last the door

was broken open and his corpse was found with the throat cut. A bloodstained razor lay on the floor. From his arms flung out convulsively and his terribly distorted face, it might be concluded that his hand had faltered and that he had suffered in agony before his soul left his sinful body.

So perished the victim of a frantic passion, poor Piskarev, the gentle, timid, modest, childishly simple-hearted artist whose spark of talent might with time have glowed into the full bright flame of genius. No one wept for him; no one was seen beside his dead body except the police inspector and the indifferent face of the town doctor. His coffin was taken to Okhta quickly, without even religious rites; only a soldier who followed it wept, and that only because he had had a glass too many of vodka. Even Lieutenant Pirogov did not come to look at the dead body of the poor luckless artist to whom he had extended his exalted patronage. He had no thoughts to spare for him; indeed, he was absorbed in a very exciting adventure. But let us turn to him. I do not like corpses, and it is always disagreeable to me when a long funeral procession crosses my path and some veteran dressed like a Capuchin monk takes a pinch of snuff with his left hand because he has a torch in his right. I always feel annoyed at the sight of a magnificent catafalque with a velvet pall; but my annoyance is mingled with sadness when I see a cart dragging the red, uncovered coffin of some poor fellow and only some old beggar woman who has met it at the crossways follows it weeping, because she has nothing else to do.

I believe we left Lieutenant Pirogov at the moment when he parted with Piskarev and went in pursuit of the blonde charmer. The latter was a lively, rather attractive little creature. She stopped before every shop and gazed at the sashes, kerchiefs, earrings, gloves, and other trifles in the shop windows, was continually twisting and turning and gazing about her in all directions and looking behind her. “You’ll be mine, you darling!” Pirogov said confidently, as he pursued her, turning up the collar of his coat for fear of meeting someone of his acquaintance. We should, however, let the reader know what sort of person Lieutenant Pirogov was.

But before we describe Lieutenant Pirogov, we should say something of the circle to which Lieutenant Pirogov belonged. There are officers who form a kind of middle class in Petersburg. You will always find one of them at every evening party, at every dinner given by a civil councilor or an actual civil councilor who has risen to that grade through forty years of service. A couple of pale daughters, as colorless as Petersburg, some of them already gone to seed, the tea table, the piano, the impromptu dance, are all inseparable from the gay epaulet which gleams in the lamplight between the virtuous young lady and the black coat of her brother or of some old friend of the family. It is extremely difficult to arouse

and divert these phlegmatic misses. To do so requires a great deal of skill, or rather perhaps the absence of all skill. One has to say what is not too clever or too amusing and to talk of the trivialities that women love. One must give credit for that to the gentlemen we are discussing. They have a special gift for making these drab beauties laugh and listen. Exclamations, smothered in laughter, of "Oh, do stop! Aren't you ashamed to be so absurd!" are often their highest reward. They rarely, one may say never, get into higher circles: from those regions they are completely crowded out by the so-called aristocrats. At the same time, they pass for well-bred, highly educated men. They are fond of talking about literature; praise Bulgarin, Pushkin, and Gretch, and speak with contempt and witty sarcasm of A. A. Orlov. They never miss a public lecture, though it may be on bookkeeping or even forestry. You will always find one of them at the theater, whatever the play, unless, indeed, it be one of the farces of the "Filatka" class, which greatly offend their fastidious taste. They are priceless at the theater and the greatest asset to managers. They are particularly fond of fine verses in a play, and they are greatly given to calling loudly for the actors; many of them, by teaching in government establishments or preparing pupils for them, arrive at the moment when they can afford a carriage and a pair of horses. Then their circle becomes wider and in the end they succeed in marrying a merchant's daughter who can play the piano, with a dowry of a hundred thousand, or something near it, in cash, and a lot of bearded relations. They can never achieve this honor, however, till they have reached the rank of colonel at least, for Russian merchants, though there may still be a smell of cabbage about them, will never consent to see their daughters married to any but generals or at least colonels. Such are the leading characteristics of this class of young men. But Lieutenant Pirogov had a number of talents belonging to him individually. He recited verses from *Dimitry Donsky* and *Woe from Wit* with great effect, and had a talent for blowing smoke out of a pipe in rings so successfully that he could string a dozen of them together in a chain; he could tell a very good story to the effect that a cannon was one thing and a unicorn was another. It is difficult to enumerate all the qualities with which fate had endowed Pirogov. He was fond of talking about actresses and dancers, but not quite in such a crude way as young lieutenants commonly hold forth on that subject. He was very much pleased with his rank in the service, to which he had only lately been promoted, and although he did occasionally say as he lay on the sofa: "O dear, vanity, all is vanity. What if I am a lieutenant?" yet his vanity was secretly much flattered by his new dignity; he often tried in conversation to allude to it in a roundabout way, and on one occasion when he jostled against a copying clerk in the street who struck him as uncivil he promptly stopped him and, in a few but vigorous

words, pointed out to him that there was a lieutenant standing before him and not any other kind of officer. He was especially eloquent in his observations because two very nice-looking ladies were passing at the moment. Pirogov displayed a passion for everything artistic in general and encouraged the artist Piskarev; this may have been partly due to a desire to see his manly face portrayed on canvas. But enough of Pirogov's good qualities. Man is such a strange creature that one can never enumerate all his good points, and the more we look into him the more new characteristics we discover and the description of them would be endless. And so Pirogov continued to pursue the unknown blonde, and from time to time he addressed her with questions to which she responded infrequently with abrupt and incoherent sounds. They passed by the dark Kazansky gate into Meshchansky Street—a street of tobacconists and little shops, of German artisans and Finnish nymphs. The fair lady ran faster than ever, and scurried in at the gate of a rather dirty-looking house. Pirogov followed her. She ran up a narrow, dark staircase and went in at a door through which Pirogov boldly followed her. He found himself in a big room with black walls and a grimy ceiling. A heap of iron screws, locksmith's tools, shining tin coffeepots, and candlesticks lay on the table; the floor was littered with brass and iron filings. Pirogov saw at once that this was a workman's lodging. The unknown charmer darted away through a side door. He hesitated for a minute, but, following the Russian rule, decided to push forward. He went into the other room, which was quite unlike the first and very neatly furnished, showing that it was inhabited by a German. He was struck by an extremely strange sight: before him sat Schiller. Not the Schiller who wrote *William Tell* and the *History of the Thirty Years' War,* but the famous Schiller, the ironmonger and tinsmith of Meshchansky Street. Beside Schiller stood Hoffmann—not the writer Hoffmann, but a rather high-class bootmaker who lived in Ofitsersky Street and was a great friend of Schiller's. Schiller was drunk and was sitting on a chair, stamping and saying something excitedly. All this would not have surprised Pirogov, but what did surprise him was the extraordinary attitude of the two figures. Schiller was sitting with his head upraised and his rather thick nose in the air, while Hoffmann was holding this nose between his finger and thumb and was flourishing the blade of his cobbler's knife over its surface. Both men were talking in German, and so Lieutenant Pirogov, whose knowledge of German was confined to *"Gut Morgen,"* could not make out what was going on. However, what Schiller said amounted to this: "I don't want it, I have no need of a nose!" he said, waving his hands, "I use three pounds of snuff a month on my nose alone. And I pay in a dirty Russian shop, for a German shop does not keep Russian snuff. I pay in a dirty Russian shop forty kopeks a pound—that makes

one ruble twenty kopeks, twelve times one ruble twenty kopeks—that makes fourteen rubles forty kopeks. Do you hear, friend Hoffmann? Fourteen rubles forty kopeks on my nose alone! And on holidays I take a pinch of rappee, for I don't care to use that rotten Russian snuff on a holiday. In a year I use two pounds of rappee at two rubles a pound. Six and fourteen makes twenty rubles forty kopeks on snuff alone. It's robbery! I ask you, my friend Hoffmann, isn't it?" Hoffmann, who was drunk himself, answered in the affirmative. "Twenty rubles and forty kopeks! Damn it, I am a Swabian! I have a king in Germany. I don't want a nose! Cut off my nose! Here is my nose."

And had it not been for Lieutenant Pirogov's suddenly appearing, Hoffmann would certainly, for no rhyme or reason, have cut off Schiller's nose, for he already had his knife in position, as though he were going to cut a sole.

Schiller seemed very much annoyed that an unknown and uninvited person should so inopportunely interrupt him. Although he was in a state of intoxication, he felt that it was rather improper to be seen in the presence of an outsider in such a state and engaged in such proceedings. Meanwhile Pirogov made a slight bow and, with his characteristic agreeableness, said: "Excuse me...!"

"Get out!" Schiller responded emphatically.

Lieutenant Pirogov was taken aback at this. Such treatment was absolutely new to him. A smile which had begun faintly to appear on his face vanished at once. With a feeling of wounded dignity he said: "I am surprised, sir... I suppose you have—not observed... I am an officer..."

"And what's an officer? I'm a Swabian." (At this Schiller banged the table with his fist.) "I can be an officer; a year and half a cadet, two years a lieutenant, and tomorrow an officer. But I don't want to serve. This is what I'd do to officers: phoo!" Schiller held his open hand before him and spat into it.

Lieutenant Pirogov saw that there was nothing for him to do but withdraw. Such a proceeding, however, was quite out of keeping with his rank, and was disagreeable to him. He stopped several times on the stairs as though trying to rally his forces and to think how to make Schiller feel his impudence. At last he decided that Schiller might be excused because his head was full of beer; besides, he recalled the image of the charming blonde, and he made up his mind to consign the incident to oblivion.

Early next morning Lieutenant Pirogov appeared at the tinsmith's workshop. In the outer room he was met by the blonde charmer, who asked him in a rather severe voice, which went admirably with her little face: "What do you want?"

"Oh, good morning, my cutie! Don't you recognize me? You little rogue, what delicious eyes!"

As he said this Lieutenant Pirogov tried very charmingly to chuck her under the chin; but the lady uttered a frightened exclamation and with the same severity asked: “What do you want?”

“To see you, that’s all that I want,” answered Lieutenant Pirogov, smiling rather agreeably and going nearer; but noticing that the timid beauty was about to slip through the door, he added: “I want to order some spurs, my dear. Can you make me some spurs? Though indeed no spur is needed to make me love you; a bridle is what one needs, not a spur. What charming little hands!”

Lieutenant Pirogov was particularly agreeable in declarations of this kind.

“I will call my husband at once,” cried the German, and went out, and within a few minutes Pirogov saw Schiller come in with sleepy-looking eyes; he had only just waked up after the drunkenness of the previous day. As he looked at the officer he remembered as though in a confused dream what had happened the previous day. He could recall nothing exactly as it was, but felt that he had done something stupid and so received the officer with a very sullen face. “I can’t ask less than fifteen rubles for a pair of spurs,” he said, hoping to get rid of Pirogov, for as a respectable German he was ashamed to look at anyone who had seen him in an undignified condition. Schiller liked to drink without witnesses, in company with two or three friends, and at such times locked himself in and would not admit even his own workmen.

“Why are they so expensive?” asked Pirogov genially.

“German work,” Schiller pronounced coolly, stroking his chin. “A Russian will undertake to make them for two rubles.”

“Well, to show you that I like you and should be glad to make your acquaintance, I will pay fifteen rubles.”

Schiller pondered for a minute; as a respectable German he felt a little ashamed. Hoping to put him off, he declared that he could not undertake it for a fortnight. But Pirogov, without making any objections, readily agreed to this.

The German mused and began wondering how he could best do the work so as to make it really worth fifteen rubles.

At this moment the blonde charmer came into the room and began looking for something on the table, which was covered with coffeepots. The lieutenant took advantage of Schiller’s deep thought, stepped up to her, and pressed her arm, which was bare to the shoulder.

This was very distasteful to Schiller. “*Meine Frau!*”

“*Was wollen Sie doch?*” said the blonde to her husband.

“*Gehn Sie* to the kitchen!” The blonde withdrew.

“In two weeks then?” said Pirogov.

“Yes, in two weeks,” replied Schiller, still pondering. “I have a lot of work

now.”

“Goodbye for now, I will call again.”

“Goodbye,” said Schiller, closing the door after him.

Lieutenant Pirogov made up his mind not to relinquish his pursuit, though the blonde had so plainly rebuffed him. He could not conceive that anyone could resist him, especially as his politeness and the brilliant rank of a lieutenant gave him a full claim to attention. It must be mentioned also that despite her attractiveness Schiller’s wife was extremely stupid. Stupidity, however, adds a special charm to a pretty wife. I have known several husbands, anyway, who were enraptured by the stupidity of their wives and saw in it evidence of childlike innocence. Beauty works perfect miracles. All spiritual defects in a beauty, far from exciting revulsion, become somehow wonderfully attractive; even vice adds an aura of charm to the beautiful; but when beauty disappears, a woman needs to be twenty times as intelligent as a man merely to inspire respect, to say nothing of love. Schiller’s wife, however, for all her stupidity was always faithful to her duties, and consequently it was no easy task for Pirogov to succeed in his bold enterprise. But there is always a pleasure in overcoming difficulties, and the blonde became more and more attractive to him every day. He began inquiring pretty frequently about the progress of the spurs, so that at last Schiller was weary of it. He did his utmost to finish the spurs quickly; at last they were done.

“Oh, what splendid workmanship,” cried Lieutenant Pirogov on seeing the spurs. “Good Heavens, how well they’re made! Our general hasn’t spurs like that.”

A feeling of self-complacency filled Schiller’s soul. His eyes began to sparkle, and he felt inwardly reconciled to Pirogov. “The Russian officer is an intelligent man,” he thought to himself.

“So, then, you could make a sheath for a dagger or for anything else?”

“Indeed I can,” said Schiller with a smile.

“Then make me a sheath for a dagger. I will bring it you. I have a very fine Turkish dagger, but I want to have another sheath for it.”

This was like a bomb dropped upon Schiller. His brows suddenly knitted.

“So that’s what you are after,” he thought to himself, inwardly swearing at himself for having praised his own work. To refuse it now he felt would be dishonest; besides, the Russian officer had praised his workmanship. Slightly shaking his head, he gave his consent; but the kiss which Pirogov impudently printed on the lips of the pretty wife as he went out reduced the tinsmith to stupefaction.

I think it will not be superfluous to make the reader better acquainted with

Schiller himself. Schiller was a real German in the full sense of the word. From the age of twenty, that happy time when the Russian lives without a thought of the next day, Schiller had already mapped out his whole life and did not deviate from his plan under any circumstances. He made it a rule to get up at seven, to dine at two, to be punctual in everything, and to get drunk every Sunday. He set, as a goal, saving fifty thousand in the course of ten years, and all this was as certain and as unalterable as fate, for sooner would a government clerk forget to look in at the porter's lodge of his chief than a German would bring himself to break his word. Never under any circumstances did he increase his expenses, and if the price of potatoes went up much above the ordinary he did not spend one copper more on them but simply diminished the amount he bought, and although he was left sometimes feeling rather hungry, he soon got used to it. His exactitude was such that he made it his rule to kiss his wife twice in twenty-four hours but not more, and that he might not exceed the number he never put more than one small teaspoonful of pepper in his soup; on Sunday, however, this rule was not so strictly kept, for then Schiller used to drink two bottles of beer and one bottle of herb-flavored vodka which, however, he always abused. He did not drink like an Englishman, who locks his doors directly after dinner and gets drunk in solitude. On the contrary, like a German he always drank with inspiration either in the company of Hoffmann the bootmaker or with Kuntz the carpenter, who was also a German and a great drunkard. Such was the disposition of the worthy Schiller, who was indeed placed in a very difficult position. Though he was phlegmatic and a German, Pirogov's behavior excited in him a feeling resembling jealousy. He racked his brains and could not think of how to get rid of this Russian officer. Meanwhile Pirogov, smoking a pipe in the company of his fellow officers— since Providence has ordained that wherever there is an officer there is a pipe—alluded significantly and with an agreeable smile on his lips to his little intrigue with the pretty German, with whom he was, according to his account, already on the best of terms, though as a matter of fact he had almost lost all hope of winning her favor.

One day he was walking along Meshchansky Street looking at the house adorned by Schiller's signboard with coffeepots and samovars on it; to his great joy he caught sight of the blonde charmer's head thrust out of the window watching the passers-by. He stopped, blew her a kiss, and said: "*Gut Morgen.*"

The fair lady bowed to him as to an acquaintance.

"Is your husband at home?"

"Yes," she answered.

"And when is he out?"

"He is not at home on Sundays," said the foolish little German.

“That’s not bad,” Pirogov thought to himself. “I must take advantage of that.”

And the following Sunday he suddenly and unexpectedly stood facing the blonde German. Schiller really was not at home. The pretty wife was frightened; but Pirogov on this occasion behaved rather warily, he was very respectful in his manner, and, making his bows, displayed all the elegance of his supple figure in his close-fitting uniform. He made polite and agreeable jests, but the foolish little German responded with nothing but monosyllables. At last, having made his attack from all sides and seeing that nothing would entertain her, he suggested that they dance. The German agreed immediately, for all German girls are passionately fond of dancing. Pirogov rested great hopes upon this: in the first place it gave her pleasure, in the second place it displayed his figure and dexterity; and thirdly he could get so much closer to her in dancing and put his arm around the pretty German and lay the foundation for everything else; in short, he reckoned on complete success resulting from it. He began humming a gavotte, knowing that Germans must have something sedate. The pretty German walked into the middle of the room and lifted her shapely foot. This attitude so enchanted Pirogov that he flew to kiss her. The lady began to scream, and this only enhanced her charm in Pirogov’s eyes. He was showering kisses on her when the door suddenly opened and Schiller walked in, with Hoffmann and Kuntz the carpenter. All these worthy persons were as drunk as cobblers.

But... I leave the reader to imagine the wrath and indignation of Schiller.

“Ruffian!” he shouted in the utmost indignation. “How dare you kiss my wife? You are a son of a bitch and not a Russian officer. Go to hell! That’s right, isn’t it, friend Hoffmann? I am a German and not a Russian swine.” (Hoffmann gave him an affirmative answer.) “Oh, I don’t want to wear horns! Take him by the collar, friend Hoffmann; I won’t have it,” he went on, brandishing his arms violently, while his whole face was the color of his red vest. “I have been living in Petersburg for eight years, I have a mother in Swabia and an uncle in Nuremburg. I am a German and not a horned ox. Undress him, my friend Hoffmann. Hold him by his arms and his legs, comrade Kuntz!”

And the Germans seized Pirogov by his arms and his legs.

He tried in vain to get away; these three tradesmen were among the sturdiest people in Petersburg, and they treated him so roughly and disrespectfully that I cannot find words to do justice to this unfortunate incident.

I am sure that next day Schiller was in a high fever, that he was trembling like a leaf, expecting from moment to moment the arrival of the police, that he would have given anything in the world for what had happened on the previous day to be a dream. But what has been cannot be changed. No comparison could do justice to Pirogov’s anger and indignation. The very thought of such an insult

drove him to fury. He thought Siberia and the lash too slight a punishment for Schiller. He flew home to dress himself and go at once straight to the general to paint for him in the most vivid colors the seditious insolence of the Germans. He meant to lodge a complaint in writing with the general staff; and, if the punishment meted out to the offenders was not satisfactory, to carry the matter to higher authorities.

But all this ended rather strangely; on the way to the general he went into a cafe, ate two cream puffs, read something out of *The Northern Bee* and left the cafe with his wrath somewhat cooled. Then a pleasant fresh evening led him to take a few turns along Nevsky Prospekt; by nine o'clock he had recovered his serenity and decided that he had better not disturb the general on Sunday; especially as he would be sure to be away somewhere. And so he went to spend the evening with one of the directors of the control committee, where he met a very agreeable party of government officials and officers of his regiment. There he spent a very pleasant evening, and so distinguished himself in the mazurka that not only the ladies but even their partners were moved to admiration.

"Marvelously is our world arranged," I thought as I walked two days later along Nevsky Prospekt, and mused over these two incidents. "How strangely, how unaccountably Fate plays with us! Do we ever get what we desire? Do we ever attain what our powers seem specially fitted for? Everything goes contrary to what we expect. Fate gives splendid horses to one man and he drives in his carriage without noticing their beauty, while another who is consumed by a passion for horses has to go on foot, and all the satisfaction he gets is clicking with his tongue when trotting horses are led past him. One has an excellent cook, but unluckily so small a mouth that he cannot take more than two pecks; another has a mouth as big as the arch of the Staff headquarters, but alas, has to be content with a German dinner of potatoes. What strange pranks Fate plays with us!"

But strangest of all are the incidents that take place on Nevsky Prospekt. Oh, do not trust that Nevsky Prospekt! I always wrap myself more closely in my cloak when I pass along it and try not to look at the objects which meet me. Everything is a cheat, everything is a dream, everything is other than it seems! You think that the gentleman who walks along in a splendidly cut coat is very wealthy?—not at all. All his wealth lies in his coat. You think that those two stout men who stand facing the church that is being built are criticizing its architecture?—not at all: they are talking about how peculiarly two crows are sitting facing each other. You think that that enthusiast waving his arms about is describing how his wife was playing ball out of window with an officer who was a complete stranger to him?—not so at all, he is talking of Lafayette. You

imagine those ladies... but ladies are least of all to be trusted. Do not look into the shop windows; the trifles exhibited in them are delightful but they have an odor of money about them. But God save you from peeping under the ladies' hats! However attractively in the evening a fair lady's cloak may flutter in the distance, nothing would induce me to follow her and try to get a closer view. Keep your distance, for God's sake, keep your distance from the street lamp! and pass by it quickly, as quickly as you can! It is a happy escape if you get off with nothing worse than some of its stinking oil on your foppish coat. But even apart from the street lamp, everything breathes deception. It deceives at all hours, the Nevsky Prospekt does, but most of all when night falls in masses of shadow on it, throwing into relief the white and dun-colored walls of the houses, when all the town is transformed into noise and brilliance, when myriads of carriages roll over bridges, postilions shout and jolt up and down on their horses, and when the devil himself lights the street lamps to show everything in false colors.

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DIARY OF A MADMAN

October 3rd. — A strange occurrence has taken place to-day. I got up fairly late, and when Mawra brought me my clean boots, I asked her how late it was. When I heard it had long struck ten, I dressed as quickly as possible.

To tell the truth, I would rather not have gone to the office at all to-day, for I know beforehand that our department-chief will look as sour as vinegar. For some time past he has been in the habit of saying to me, “Look here, my friend; there is something wrong with your head. You often rush about as though you were possessed. Then you make such confused abstracts of the documents that the devil himself cannot make them out; you write the title without any capital letters, and add neither the date nor the docket-number.” The long-legged scoundrel! He is certainly envious of me, because I sit in the director’s work-room, and mend His Excellency’s pens. In a word, I should not have gone to the office if I had not hoped to meet the accountant, and perhaps squeeze a little advance out of this skinflint.

A terrible man, this accountant! As for his advancing one’s salary once in a way — you might sooner expect the skies to fall. You may beg and beseech him, and be on the very verge of ruin — this grey devil won’t budge an inch. At the same time, his own cook at home, as all the world knows, boxes his ears.

I really don’t see what good one gets by serving in our department. There are no plums there. In the fiscal and judicial offices it is quite different. There some ungainly fellow sits in a corner and writes and writes; he has such a shabby coat and such an ugly mug that one would like to spit on both of them. But you should see what a splendid country-house he has rented. He would not condescend to accept a gilt porcelain cup as a present. “You can give that to your family doctor,” he would say. Nothing less than a pair of chestnut horses, a fine carriage, or a beaver-fur coat worth three hundred roubles would be good enough for him. And yet he seems so mild and quiet, and asks so amiably, “Please lend me your penknife; I wish to mend my pen.” Nevertheless, he knows how to scarify a petitioner till he has hardly a whole stitch left on his body.

In our office it must be admitted everything is done in a proper and gentlemanly way; there is more cleanness and elegance than one will ever find in Government offices. The tables are mahogany, and everyone is addressed as “sir.” And truly, were it not for this official propriety, I should long ago have sent in my resignation.

I put on my old cloak, and took my umbrella, as a light rain was falling. No one was to be seen on the streets except some women, who had flung their skirts over their heads. Here and there one saw a cabman or a shopman with his umbrella up. Of the higher classes one only saw an official here and there. One I saw at the street-crossing, and thought to myself, “Ah! my friend, you are not going to the office, but after that young lady who walks in front of you. You are just like the officers who run after every petticoat they see.”

As I was thus following the train of my thoughts, I saw a carriage stop before a shop just as I was passing it. I recognised it at once; it was our director’s carriage. “He has nothing to do in the shop,” I said to myself; “it must be his daughter.”

I pressed myself close against the wall. A lackey opened the carriage door, and, as I had expected, she fluttered like a bird out of it. How proudly she looked right and left; how she drew her eyebrows together, and shot lightnings from her eyes — good heavens! I am lost, hopelessly lost!

But why must she come out in such abominable weather? And yet they say women are so mad on their finery!

She did not recognise me. I had wrapped myself as closely as possible in my cloak. It was dirty and old-fashioned, and I would not have liked to have been seen by her wearing it. Now they wear cloaks with long collars, but mine has only a short double collar, and the cloth is of inferior quality.

Her little dog could not get into the shop, and remained outside. I know this dog; its name is “Meggy.”

Before I had been standing there a minute, I heard a voice call, “Good day, Meggy!”

Who the deuce was that? I looked round and saw two ladies hurrying by under an umbrella — one old, the other fairly young. They had already passed me when I heard the same voice say again, “For shame, Meggy!”

What was that? I saw Meggy sniffing at a dog which ran behind the ladies. The deuce! I thought to myself, “I am not drunk? That happens pretty seldom.”

“No, Fidel, you are wrong,” I heard Meggy say quite distinctly. “I was — bow — wow! — I was — bow! wow! wow! — very ill.”

What an extraordinary dog! I was, to tell the truth, quite amazed to hear it talk human language. But when I considered the matter well, I ceased to be astonished. In fact, such things have already happened in the world. It is said that in England a fish put its head out of water and said a word or two in such an extraordinary language that learned men have been puzzling over them for three years, and have not succeeded in interpreting them yet. I also read in the paper of two cows who entered a shop and asked for a pound of tea.

Meanwhile what Meggy went on to say seemed to me still more remarkable. She added, “I wrote to you lately, Fidel; perhaps Polkan did not bring you the letter.”

Now I am willing to forfeit a whole month’s salary if I ever heard of dogs writing before. This has certainly astonished me. For some little time past I hear and see things which no other man has heard and seen.

“I will,” I thought, “follow that dog in order to get to the bottom of the matter. Accordingly, I opened my umbrella and went after the two ladies. They went down Bean Street, turned through Citizen Street and Carpenter Street, and finally halted on the Cuckoo Bridge before a large house. I know this house; it is Sverkoff’s. What a monster he is! What sort of people live there! How many cooks, how many bagmen! There are brother officials of mine also there packed on each other like herrings. And I have a friend there, a fine player on the cornet.”

The ladies mounted to the fifth story. “Very good,” thought I; “I will make a note of the number, in order to follow up the matter at the first opportunity.”

October 4th. — To-day is Wednesday, and I was as usual in the office. I came early on purpose, sat down, and mended all the pens.

Our director must be a very clever man. The whole room is full of bookcases. I read the titles of some of the books; they were very learned, beyond the comprehension of people of my class, and all in French and German. I look at his face; see! how much dignity there is in his eyes. I never hear a single superfluous word from his mouth, except that when he hands over the documents, he asks “What sort of weather is it?”

No, he is not a man of our class; he is a real statesman. I have already noticed that I am a special favourite of his. If now his daughter also — ah! what folly — let me say no more about it!

I have read the *Northern Bee*. What foolish people the French are! By heavens! I should like to tackle them all, and give them a thrashing. I have also read a fine description of a ball given by a landowner of Kursk. The landowners of Kursk write a fine style.

Then I noticed that it was already half-past twelve, and the director had not yet left his bedroom. But about half-past one something happened which no pen can describe.

The door opened. I thought it was the director; I jumped up with my documents from the seat, and — then — she — herself — came into the room. Ye saints! how beautifully she was dressed. Her garments were whiter than a swan’s plumage — oh how splendid! A sun, indeed, a real sun!

She greeted me and asked, “Has not my father come yet?”

Ah! what a voice. A canary bird! A real canary bird!

“Your Excellency,” I wanted to exclaim, “don’t have me executed, but if it must be done, then kill me rather with your own angelic hand.” But, God knows why, I could not bring it out, so I only said, “No, he has not come yet.”

She glanced at me, looked at the books, and let her handkerchief fall. Instantly I started up, but slipped on the infernal polished floor, and nearly broke my nose. Still I succeeded in picking up the handkerchief. Ye heavenly choirs, what a handkerchief! So tender and soft, of the finest cambric. It had the scent of a general’s rank!

She thanked me, and smiled so amiably that her sugar lips nearly melted. Then she left the room.

After I had sat there about an hour, a flunkey came in and said, “You can go home, Mr Ivanovitch; the director has already gone out!”

I cannot stand these lackeys! They hang about the vestibules, and scarcely vouchsafe to greet one with a nod. Yes, sometimes it is even worse; once one of these rascals offered me his snuff-box without even getting up from his chair. “Don’t you know then, you country-bumpkin, that I am an official and of aristocratic birth?”

This time, however, I took my hat and overcoat quietly; these people naturally never think of helping one on with it. I went home, lay a good while on the bed, and wrote some verses in my note:

“‘Tis an hour since I saw thee,
And it seems a whole long year;
If I loathe my own existence,
How can I live on, my dear?”

I think they are by Pushkin.

In the evening I wrapped myself in my cloak, hastened to the director’s house, and waited there a long time to see if she would come out and get into the carriage. I only wanted to see her once, but she did not come.

November 6th. — Our chief clerk has gone mad. When I came to the office to-day he called me to his room and began as follows: “Look here, my friend, what wild ideas have got into your head?”

“How! What? None at all,” I answered.

“Consider well. You are already past forty; it is quite time to be reasonable. What do you imagine? Do you think I don’t know all your tricks? Are you trying to pay court to the director’s daughter? Look at yourself and realise what you are! A nonentity, nothing else. I would not give a kopeck for you. Look well in

the glass. How can you have such thoughts with such a caricature of a face?”

May the devil take him! Because his own face has a certain resemblance to a medicine-bottle, because he has a curly bush of hair on his head, and sometimes combs it upwards, and sometimes plasters it down in all kinds of queer ways, he thinks that he can do everything. I know well, I know why he is angry with me. He is envious; perhaps he has noticed the tokens of favour which have been graciously shown me. But why should I bother about him? A councillor! What sort of important animal is that? He wears a gold chain with his watch, buys himself boots at thirty roubles a pair; may the deuce take him! Am I a tailor’s son or some other obscure cabbage? I am a nobleman! I can also work my way up. I am just forty-two — an age when a man’s real career generally begins. Wait a bit, my friend! I too may get to a superior’s rank; or perhaps, if God is gracious, even to a higher one. I shall make a name which will far outstrip yours. You think there are no able men except yourself? I only need to order a fashionable coat and wear a tie like yours, and you would be quite eclipsed.

But I have no money — that is the worst part of it!

November 8th. — I was at the theatre. “The Russian House-Fool” was performed. I laughed heartily. There was also a kind of musical comedy which contained amusing hits at barristers. The language was very broad; I wonder the censor passed it. In the comedy lines occur which accuse the merchants of cheating; their sons are said to lead immoral lives, and to behave very disrespectfully towards the nobility.

The critics also are criticised; they are said only to be able to find fault, so that authors have to beg the public for protection.

Our modern dramatists certainly write amusing things. I am very fond of the theatre. If I have only a kopeck in my pocket, I always go there. Most of my fellow-officials are uneducated boors, and never enter a theatre unless one throws free tickets at their head.

One actress sang divinely. I thought also of — but silence!

November 9th. — About eight o’clock I went to the office. The chief clerk pretended not to notice my arrival. I for my part also behaved as though he were not in existence. I read through and collated documents. About four o’clock I left. I passed by the director’s house, but no one was to be seen. After dinner I lay for a good while on the bed.

November 11th. — To-day I sat in the director’s room, mended twenty-three pens for him, and for Her — for Her Excellence, his daughter, four more.

The director likes to see many pens lying on his table. What a head he must have! He continually wraps himself in silence, but I don't think the smallest trifle escapes his eye. I should like to know what he is generally thinking of, what is really going on in this brain; I should like to get acquainted with the whole manner of life of these gentlemen, and get a closer view of their cunning courtiers' arts, and all the activities of these circles. I have often thought of asking His Excellence about them; but — the deuce knows why! — every time my tongue failed me and I could get nothing out but my meteorological report.

I wish I could get a look into the spare-room whose door I so often see open. And a second small room behind the spare-room excites my curiosity. How splendidly it is fitted up; what a quantity of mirrors and choice china it contains! I should also like to cast a glance into those regions where Her Excellency, the daughter, wields the sceptre. I should like to see how all the scent-bottles and boxes are arranged in her boudoir, and the flowers which exhale so delicious a scent that one is half afraid to breathe. And her clothes lying about which are too ethereal to be called clothes — but silence!

To-day there came to me what seemed a heavenly inspiration. I remembered the conversation between the two dogs which I had overheard on the Nevski Prospect. "Very good," I thought; "now I see my way clear. I must get hold of the correspondence which these two silly dogs have carried on with each other. In it I shall probably find many things explained."

I had already once called Meggy to me and said to her, "Listen, Meggy! Now we are alone together; if you like, I will also shut the door so that no one can see us. Tell me now all that you know about your mistress. I swear to you that I will tell no one."

But the cunning dog drew in its tail, ruffled up its hair, and went quite quietly out of the door, as though it had heard nothing.

I had long been of the opinion that dogs are much cleverer than men. I also believed that they could talk, and that only a certain obstinacy kept them from doing so. They are especially watchful animals, and nothing escapes their observation. Now, cost what it may, I will go to-morrow to Sverkoff's house in order to ask after Fidel, and if I have luck, to get hold of all the letters which Meggy has written to her.

November 12th. — To-day about two o'clock in the afternoon I started in order, by some means or other, to see Fidel and question her.

I cannot stand this smell of Sauerkraut which assails one's olfactory nerves from all the shops in Citizen Street. There also exhales such an odour from under each house door, that one must hold one's nose and pass by quickly. There

ascends also so much smoke and soot from the artisans' shops that it is almost impossible to get through it.

When I had climbed up to the sixth story, and had rung the bell, a rather pretty girl with a freckled face came out. I recognised her as the companion of the old lady. She blushed a little and asked "What do you want?"

"I want to have a little conversation with your dog."

She was a simple-minded girl, as I saw at once. The dog came running and barking loudly. I wanted to take hold of it, but the abominable beast nearly caught hold of my nose with its teeth. But in a corner of the room I saw its sleeping-basket. Ah! that was what I wanted. I went to it, rummaged in the straw, and to my great satisfaction drew out a little packet of small pieces of paper. When the hideous little dog saw this, it first bit me in the calf of the leg, and then, as soon as it had become aware of my theft, it began to whimper and to fawn on me; but I said, "No, you little beast; good-bye!" and hastened away.

I believe the girl thought me mad; at any rate she was thoroughly alarmed.

When I reached my room I wished to get to work at once, and read through the letters by daylight, since I do not see well by candle-light; but the wretched Mawra had got the idea of sweeping the floor. These blockheads of Finnish women are always clean where there is no need to be.

I then went for a little walk and began to think over what had happened. Now at last I could get to the bottom of all facts, ideas and motives! These letters would explain everything. Dogs are clever fellows; they know all about politics, and I will certainly find in the letters all I want, especially the character of the director and all his relationships. And through these letters I will get information about her who — but silence!

Towards evening I came home and lay for a good while on the bed.

November 13th. — Now let us see! The letter is fairly legible but the handwriting is somewhat doggish.

"Dear Fidel! — I cannot get accustomed to your ordinary name, as if they could not have found a better one for you! Fidel! How tasteless! How ordinary! But this is not the time to discuss it. I am very glad that we thought of corresponding with each other."

(The letter is quite correctly written. The punctuation and spelling are perfectly right. Even our head clerk does not write so simply and clearly, though he declares he has been at the University. Let us go on.)

"I think that it is one of the most refined joys of this world to interchange thoughts, feelings, and impressions."

(H’m! This idea comes from some book which has been translated from German. I can’t remember the title.)

“I speak from experience, although I have not gone farther into the world than just before our front door. Does not my life pass happily and comfortably? My mistress, whom her father calls Sophie, is quite in love with me.”

(Ah! Ah! — but better be silent!)

“Her father also often strokes me. I drink tea and coffee with cream. Yes, my dear, I must confess to you that I find no satisfaction in those large, gnawed-at bones which Polkan devours in the kitchen. Only the bones of wild fowl are good, and that only when the marrow has not been sucked out of them. They taste very nice with a little sauce, but there should be no green stuff in it. But I know nothing worse than the habit of giving dogs balls of bread kneaded up. Someone sits at table, kneads a bread-ball with dirty fingers, calls you and sticks it in your mouth. Good manners forbid your refusing it, and you eat it — with disgust it is true, but you eat it.”

(The deuce! What is this? What rubbish! As if she could find nothing more suitable to write about! I will see if there is anything more reasonable on the second page.)

“I am quite willing to inform you of everything that goes on here. I have already mentioned the most important person in the house, whom Sophie calls ‘Papa.’ He is a very strange man.”

(Ah! Here we are at last! Yes, I knew it; they have a politician’s penetrating eye for all things. Let us see what she says about “Papa.”)

“… a strange man. Generally he is silent; he only speaks seldom, but about a week ago he kept on repeating to himself, ‘Shall I get it or not?’ In one hand he took a sheet of paper; the other he stretched out as though to receive something, and repeated, ‘Shall I get it or not?’ Once he turned to me with the question, ‘What do you think, Meggy?’ I did not understand in the least what he meant, sniffed at his boots, and went away. A week later he came home with his face beaming. That morning he was visited by several officers in uniform who congratulated him. At the dinner-table he was in a better humour than I have ever seen him before.”

(Ah! he is ambitious then! I must make a note of that.)

“Pardon, my dear, I hasten to conclude, etc., etc. To-morrow I will finish the letter.”

. . . . . .

“Now, good morning; here I am again at your service. To-day my mistress Sophie …”

(Ah! we will see what she says about Sophie. Let us go on!)

“… was in an unusually excited state. She went to a ball, and I was glad that I could write to you in her absence. She likes going to balls, although she gets dreadfully irritated while dressing. I cannot understand, my dear, what is the pleasure in going to a ball. She comes home from the ball at six o’clock in the early morning, and to judge by her pale and emaciated face, she has had nothing to eat. I could, frankly speaking, not endure such an existence. If I could not get partridge with sauce, or the wing of a roast chicken, I don’t know what I should do. Porridge with sauce is also tolerable, but I can get up no enthusiasm for carrots, turnips, and artichokes.”

The style is very unequal! One sees at once that it has not been written by a man. The beginning is quite intelligent, but at the end the canine nature breaks out. I will read another letter; it is rather long and there is no date.

“Ah, my dear, how delightful is the arrival of spring! My heart beats as though it expected something. There is a perpetual ringing in my ears, so that I often stand with my foot raised, for several minutes at a time, and listen towards the door. In confidence I will tell you that I have many admirers. I often sit on the window-sill and let them pass in review. Ah! if you knew what miscreations there are among them; one, a clumsy house-dog, with stupidity written on his face, walks the street with an important air and imagines that he is an extremely important person, and that the eyes of all the world are fastened on him. I don’t pay him the least attention, and pretend not to see him at all.

“And what a hideous bulldog has taken up his post opposite my window! If he stood on his hind-legs, as the monster probably cannot, he would be taller by a head than my mistress’s papa, who himself has a stately figure. This lout seems, moreover, to be very impudent. I growl at him, but he does not seem to mind that at all. If he at least would only wrinkle his forehead! Instead of that, he stretches out his tongue, droops his big ears, and stares in at the window — this rustic boor! But do you think, my dear, that my heart remains proof against all temptations? Alas no! If you had only seen that gentlemanly dog who crept through the fence of the neighbouring house. ‘Treasure’ is his name. Ah, my dear, what a delightful snout he has!”

(To the deuce with the stuff! What rubbish it is! How can one blacken paper with such absurdities. Give me a man. I want to see a man! I need some food to nourish and refresh my mind, and get this silliness instead. I will turn the page to see if there is anything better on the other side.)

“Sophie sat at the table and sewed something. I looked out of the window and amused myself by watching the passers-by. Suddenly a flunkey entered and

announced a visitor — ’Mr Teploff.’

“‘Show him in!’ said Sophie, and began to embrace me. ‘Ah! Meggy, Meggy, do you know who that is? He is dark, and belongs to the Royal Household; and what eyes he has! Dark and brilliant as fire.’

“Sophie hastened into her room. A minute later a young gentleman with black whiskers entered. He went to the mirror, smoothed his hair, and looked round the room. I turned away and sat down in my place.

“Sophie entered and returned his bow in a friendly manner.

“I pretended to observe nothing, and continued to look out of the window. But I leant my head a little on one side to hear what they were talking about. Ah, my dear! what silly things they discussed — how a lady executed the wrong figure in dancing; how a certain Boboff, with his expansive shirt-frill, had looked like a stork and nearly fallen down; how a certain Lidina imagined she had blue eyes when they were really green, etc.

“I do not know, my dear, what special charm she finds in her Mr Teploff, and why she is so delighted with him.”

(It seems to me myself that there is something wrong here. It is impossible that this Teploff should bewitch her. We will see further.)

“If this gentleman of the Household pleases her, then she must also be pleased, according to my view, with that official who sits in her papa’s writing-room. Ah, my dear, if you know what a figure he is! A regular tortoise!”

(What official does she mean?)

“He has an extraordinary name. He always sits there and mends the pens. His hair looks like a truss of hay. Her papa always employs him instead of a servant.”

(I believe this abominable little beast is referring to me. But what has my hair got to do with hay?)

“Sophie can never keep from laughing when she sees him.”

You lie, cursed dog! What a scandalous tongue! As if I did not know that it is envy which prompts you, and that here there is treachery at work — yes, the treachery of the chief clerk. This man hates me implacably; he has plotted against me, he is always seeking to injure me. I’ll look through one more letter; perhaps it will make the matter clearer.

“Fidel, my dear, pardon me that I have not written for so long. I was floating in a dream of delight. In truth, some author remarks, ‘Love is a second life.’ Besides, great changes are going on in the house. The young chamberlain is always here. Sophie is wildly in love with him. Her papa is quite contented. I

heard from Gregor, who sweeps the floor, and is in the habit of talking to himself, that the marriage will soon be celebrated. Her papa will at any rate get his daughter married to a general, a colonel, or a chamberlain.”

Deuce take it! I can read no more. It is all about chamberlains and generals. I should like myself to be a general — not in order to sue for her hand and all that — no, not at all; I should like to be a general merely in order to see people wriggling, squirming, and hatching plots before me.

And then I should like to tell them that they are both of them not worth spitting on. But it is vexatious! I tear the foolish dog’s letters up in a thousand pieces.

December 3rd. — It is not possible that the marriage should take place; it is only idle gossip. What does it signify if he is a chamberlain! That is only a dignity, not a substantial thing which one can see or handle. His chamberlain’s office will not procure him a third eye in his forehead. Neither is his nose made of gold; it is just like mine or anyone else’s nose. He does not eat and cough, but smells and sneezes with it. I should like to get to the bottom of the mystery — whence do all these distinctions come? Why am I only a titular councillor?

Perhaps I am really a count or a general, and only appear to be a titular councillor. Perhaps I don’t even know who and what I am. How many cases there are in history of a simple gentleman, or even a burgher or peasant, suddenly turning out to be a great lord or baron? Well, suppose that I appear suddenly in a general’s uniform, on the right shoulder an epaulette, on the left an epaulette, and a blue sash across my breast, what sort of a tune would my beloved sing then? What would her papa, our director, say? Oh, he is ambitious! He is a freemason, certainly a freemason; however much he may conceal it, I have found it out. When he gives anyone his hand, he only reaches out two fingers. Well, could not I this minute be nominated a general or a superintendent? I should like to know why I am a titular councillor — why just that, and nothing more?

December 5th. — To-day I have been reading papers the whole morning. Very strange things are happening in Spain. I have not understood them all. It is said that the throne is vacant, the representatives of the people are in difficulties about finding an occupant, and riots are taking place.

All this appears to me very strange. How can the throne be vacant? It is said that it will be occupied by a woman. A woman cannot sit on a throne. That is impossible. Only a king can sit on a throne. They say that there is no king there,

but that is not possible. There cannot be a kingdom without a king. There must be a king, but he is hidden away somewhere. Perhaps he is actually on the spot, and only some domestic complications, or fears of the neighbouring Powers, France and other countries, compel him to remain in concealment; there might also be other reasons.

December 8th. — I was nearly going to the office, but various considerations kept me from doing so. I keep on thinking about these Spanish affairs. How is it possible that a woman should reign? It would not be allowed, especially by England. In the rest of Europe the political situation is also critical; the Emperor of Austria — —

These events, to tell the truth, have so shaken and shattered me, that I could really do nothing all day. Mawra told me that I was very absent-minded at table. In fact, in my absent-mindedness I threw two plates on the ground so that they broke in pieces.

After dinner I felt weak, and did not feel up to making abstracts of reports. I lay most of the time on my bed, and thought of the Spanish affairs.

The year 2000: April 43rd. — To-day is a day of splendid triumph. Spain has a king; he has been found, and I am he. I discovered it to-day; all of a sudden it came upon me like a flash of lightning.

I do not understand how I could imagine that I am a titular councillor. How could such a foolish idea enter my head? It was fortunate that it occurred to no one to shut me up in an asylum. Now it is all clear, and as plain as a pikestaff. Formerly — I don’t know why — everything seemed veiled in a kind of mist. That is, I believe, because people think that the human brain is in the head. Nothing of the sort; it is carried by the wind from the Caspian Sea.

For the first time I told Mawra who I am. When she learned that the king of Spain stood before her, she struck her hands together over her head, and nearly died of alarm. The stupid thing had never seen the king of Spain before!

I comforted her, however, at once by assuring her that I was not angry with her for having hitherto cleaned my boots badly. Women are stupid things; one cannot interest them in lofty subjects. She was frightened because she thought all kings of Spain were like Philip II. But I explained to her that there was a great difference between me and him. I did not go to the office. Why the deuce should I? No, my dear friends, you won’t get me there again! I am not going to worry myself with your infernal documents any more.

Marchember 86. Between day and night. — To-day the office-messenger came

and summoned me, as I had not been there for three weeks. I went just for the fun of the thing. The chief clerk thought I would bow humbly before him, and make excuses; but I looked at him quite indifferently, neither angrily nor mildly, and sat down quietly at my place as though I noticed no one. I looked at all this rabble of scribblers, and thought, “If you only knew who is sitting among you! Good heavens! what a to-do you would make. Even the chief clerk would bow himself to the earth before me as he does now before the director.”

A pile of reports was laid before me, of which to make abstracts, but I did not touch them with one finger.

After a little time there was a commotion in the office, and there a report went round that the director was coming. Many of the clerks vied with each other to attract his notice; but I did not stir. As he came through our room, each one hastily buttoned up his coat; but I had no idea of doing anything of the sort. What is the director to me? Should I stand up before him? Never. What sort of a director is he? He is a bottle-stopper, and no director. A quite ordinary, simple bottle-stopper — nothing more. I felt quite amused as they gave me a document to sign.

They thought I would simply put down my name — ”So-and-so, Clerk.” Why not? But at the top of the sheet, where the director generally writes his name, I inscribed “Ferdinand VIII.” in bold characters. You should have seen what a reverential silence ensued. But I made a gesture with my hand, and said, “Gentlemen, no ceremony please!” Then I went out, and took my way straight to the director’s house.

He was not at home. The flunkey wanted not to let me in, but I talked to him in such a way that he soon dropped his arms.

I went straight to Sophie’s dressing-room. She sat before the mirror. When she saw me, she sprang up and took a step backwards; but I did not tell her that I was the king of Spain.

But I told her that a happiness awaited her, beyond her power to imagine; and that in spite of all our enemies’ devices we should be united. That was all which I wished to say to her, and I went out. Oh, what cunning creatures these women are! Now I have found out what woman really is. Hitherto no one knew whom a woman really loves; I am the first to discover it — she loves the devil. Yes, joking apart, learned men write nonsense when they pronounce that she is this and that; she loves the devil — that is all. You see a woman looking through her lorgnette from a box in the front row. One thinks she is watching that stout gentleman who wears an order. Not a bit of it! She is watching the devil who stands behind his back. He has hidden himself there, and beckons to her with his finger. And she marries him — actually — she marries him!

That is all ambition, and the reason is that there is under the tongue a little blister in which there is a little worm of the size of a pin's head. And this is constructed by a barber in Bean Street; I don't remember his name at the moment, but so much is certain that, in conjunction with a midwife, he wants to spread Mohammedanism all over the world, and that in consequence of this a large number of people in France have already adopted the faith of Islam.

No date. The day had no date. — I went for a walk incognito on the Nevski Prospect. I avoided every appearance of being the king of Spain. I felt it below my dignity to let myself be recognised by the whole world, since I must first present myself at court. And I was also restrained by the fact that I have at present no Spanish national costume. If I could only get a cloak! I tried to have a consultation with a tailor, but these people are real asses! Moreover, they neglect their business, dabble in speculation, and have become loafers. I will have a cloak made out of my new official uniform which I have only worn twice. But to prevent this botcher of a tailor spoiling it, I will make it myself with closed doors, so that no one sees me. Since the cut must be altogether altered, I have used the scissors myself.

I don't remember the date. The devil knows what month it was. The cloak is quite ready. Mawra exclaimed aloud when I put it on. I will, however, not present myself at court yet; the Spanish deputation has not yet arrived. It would not be befitting if I appeared without them. My appearance would be less imposing. From hour to hour I expect them.

The 1st. — The extraordinary long delay of the deputies in coming astonishes me. What can possibly keep them? Perhaps France has a hand in the matter; it is certainly hostilely inclined. I went to the post office to inquire whether the Spanish deputation had come. The postmaster is an extraordinary blockhead who knows nothing. "No," he said to me, "there is no Spanish deputation here; but if you want to send them a letter, we will forward it at the fixed rate." The deuce! What do I want with a letter? Letters are nonsense. Letters are written by apothecaries….

Madrid, February 30th. — So I am in Spain after all! It has happened so quickly that I could hardly take it in. The Spanish deputies came early this morning, and I got with them into the carriage. This unexpected promptness seemed to me strange. We drove so quickly that in half an hour we were at the Spanish frontier. Over all Europe now there are cast-iron roads, and the steamers

go very fast. A wonderful country, this Spain!

As we entered the first room, I saw numerous persons with shorn heads. I guessed at once that they must be either grandees or soldiers, at least to judge by their shorn heads.

The Chancellor of the State, who led me by the hand, seemed to me to behave in a very strange way; he pushed me into a little room and said, “Stay here, and if you call yourself ‘King Ferdinand’ again, I will drive the wish to do so out of you.”

I knew, however, that that was only a test, and I reasserted my conviction; on which the Chancellor gave me two such severe blows with a stick on the back, that I could have cried out with the pain. But I restrained myself, remembering that this was a usual ceremony of old-time chivalry when one was inducted into a high position, and in Spain the laws of chivalry prevail up to the present day. When I was alone, I determined to study State affairs; I discovered that Spain and China are one and the same country, and it is only through ignorance that people regard them as separate kingdoms. I advise everyone urgently to write down the word “Spain” on a sheet of paper; he will see that it is quite the same as China.

But I feel much annoyed by an event which is about to take place to-morrow; at seven o’clock the earth is going to sit on the moon. This is foretold by the famous English chemist, Wellington. To tell the truth, I often felt uneasy when I thought of the excessive brittleness and fragility of the moon. The moon is generally repaired in Hamburg, and very imperfectly. It is done by a lame cooper, an obvious blockhead who has no idea how to do it. He took waxed thread and olive-oil — hence that pungent smell over all the earth which compels people to hold their noses. And this makes the moon so fragile that no men can live on it, but only noses. Therefore we cannot see our noses, because they are on the moon.

When I now pictured to myself how the earth, that massive body, would crush our noses to dust, if it sat on the moon, I became so uneasy, that I immediately put on my shoes and stockings and hastened into the council-hall to give the police orders to prevent the earth sitting on the moon.

The grandees with the shorn heads, whom I met in great numbers in the hall, were very intelligent people, and when I exclaimed, “Gentlemen! let us save the moon, for the earth is going to sit on it,” they all set to work to fulfil my imperial wish, and many of them clambered up the wall in order to take the moon down. At that moment the Imperial Chancellor came in. As soon as he appeared, they all scattered, but I alone, as king, remained. To my astonishment, however, the Chancellor beat me with the stick and drove me to my room. So powerful are

ancient customs in Spain!

January in the same year, following after February. — I can never understand what kind of a country this Spain really is. The popular customs and rules of court etiquette are quite extraordinary. I do not understand them at all, at all. To-day my head was shorn, although I exclaimed as loudly as I could, that I did not want to be a monk. What happened afterwards, when they began to let cold water trickle on my head, I do not know. I have never experienced such hellish torments. I nearly went mad, and they had difficulty in holding me. The significance of this strange custom is entirely hidden from me. It is a very foolish and unreasonable one.

Nor can I understand the stupidity of the kings who have not done away with it before now. Judging by all the circumstances, it seems to me as though I had fallen into the hands of the Inquisition, and as though the man whom I took to be the Chancellor was the Grand Inquisitor. But yet I cannot understand how the king could fall into the hands of the Inquisition. The affair may have been arranged by France — especially Polignac — he is a hound, that Polignac! He has sworn to compass my death, and now he is hunting me down. But I know, my friend, that you are only a tool of the English. They are clever fellows, and have a finger in every pie. All the world knows that France sneezes when England takes a pinch of snuff.

The 25th. — To-day the Grand Inquisitor came into my room; when I heard his steps in the distance, I hid myself under a chair. When he did not see me, he began to call. At first he called “Poprishchin!” I made no answer. Then he called “Axanti Ivanovitch! Titular Councillor! Nobleman!” I still kept silence. “Ferdinand the Eighth, King of Spain!” I was on the point of putting out my head, but I thought, “No, brother, you shall not deceive me! You shall not pour water on my head again!”

But he had already seen me and drove me from under the chair with his stick. The cursed stick really hurts one. But the following discovery compensated me for all the pain, i.e. that every cock has his Spain under his feathers. The Grand Inquisitor went angrily away, and threatened me with some punishment or other. I felt only contempt for his powerless spite, for I know that he only works like a machine, like a tool of the English.

34 March. February, 349. — No, I have no longer power to endure. O God! what are they going to do with me? They pour cold water on my head. They take no notice of me, and seem neither to see nor hear. Why do they torture me? What

do they want from one so wretched as myself? What can I give them? I possess nothing. I cannot bear all their tortures; my head aches as though everything were turning round in a circle. Save me! Carry me away! Give me three steeds swift as the wind! Mount your seat, coachman, ring bells, gallop horses, and carry me straight out of this world. Farther, ever farther, till nothing more is to be seen!

Ah! the heaven bends over me already; a star glimmers in the distance; the forest with its dark trees in the moonlight rushes past; a bluish mist floats under my feet; music sounds in the cloud; on the one side is the sea, on the other, Italy; beyond I also see Russian peasants' houses. Is not my parents' house there in the distance? Does not my mother sit by the window? O mother, mother, save your unhappy son! Let a tear fall on his aching head! See how they torture him! Press the poor orphan to your bosom! He has no rest in this world; they hunt him from place to place.

Mother, mother, have pity on your sick child! And do you know that the Bey of Algiers has a wart under his nose?

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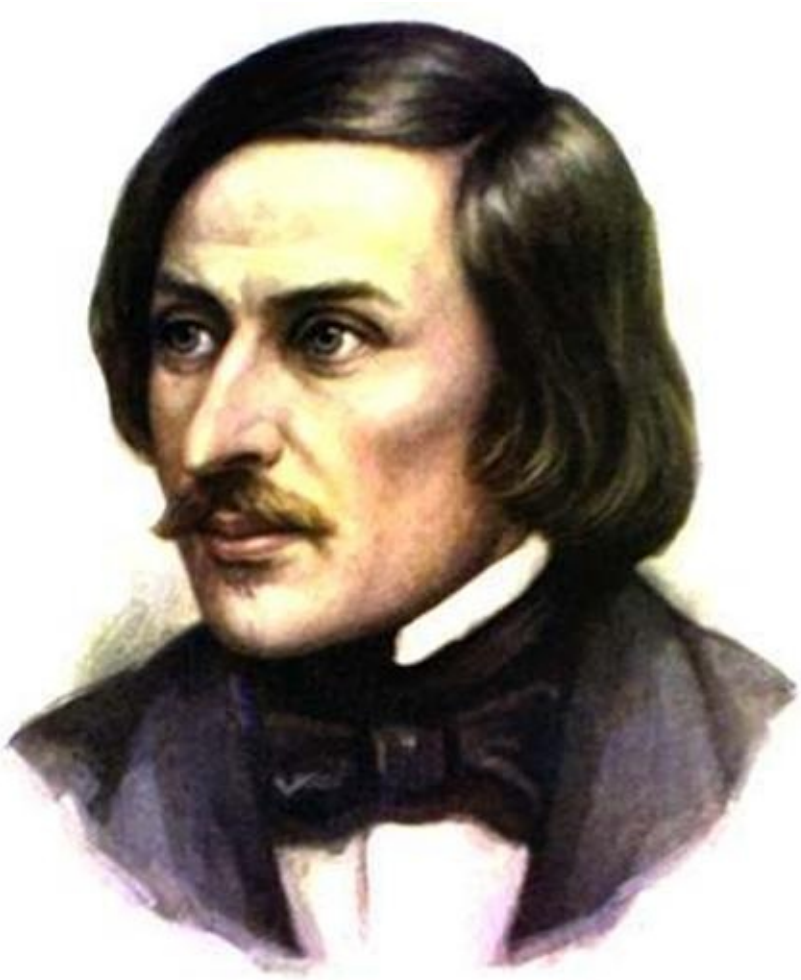


Translated by Constance Garnett

This 1835 collection of short stories was originally intended to be a sequel to *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*. The four tales are similarly based on Ukrainian folklore and feature characters generally believed to be portrayals of people Gogol knew while living in Ukraine, including his grandparents.

Though grouped together, the stories are entirely separate from each other in terms of narrative. The collection was first published in two volumes, with two stories in each part. The first and third stories represent Gogol's Shponka tradition, where realistic settings become unreal due to their intense depiction of reality, with the use of Gothic elements at other times too. The other two tales adhere to a more Romantic and nostalgic tradition of storytelling.

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THE OLD FASHIONED FARMERS

I am very fond of the modest life of those isolated owners of distant villages, which are usually called “old-fashioned” in Little Russia [the Ukraine], and which, like ruinous and picturesque houses, are beautiful through their simplicity and complete contrast to a new, regular building, whose walls the rain has never yet washed, whose roof is not yet covered with mould, and whose porch, undeprived of its stucco, does not yet show its red bricks. I love sometimes to enter for a moment the sphere of this unusually isolated life, where no wish flies beyond the palings surrounding the little yard, beyond the hedge of the garden filled with apples and plums, beyond the izbás [cottages] of the village surrounding it, having on one side, shaded by willows, elder-bushes and pear-trees. The life of the modest owners is so quiet, so quiet, that you forget yourself for a moment, and think that the passions, wishes, and the uneasy offspring of the Evil One, which keep the world in an uproar, do not exist at all, and that you have only beheld them in some brilliant, dazzling vision.

I can see now the low-roofed little house, with its veranda of slender, blackened tree-trunks, surrounding it on all sides, so that, in case of a thunder or hail storm, the window-shutters could be shut without your getting wet; behind it, fragrant wild-cherry trees, whole rows of dwarf fruit-trees, overtopped by crimson cherries and a purple sea of plums, covered with a lead-colored bloom, luxuriant maples, under the shade of which rugs were spread for repose; in front of the house the spacious yard, with short, fresh grass, through which paths had been trodden from the store-houses to the kitchen, from the kitchen to the apartments of the family; a long-legged goose drinking water, with her young goslings, soft as down; the picket-fence hung with bunches of dried pears and apples, and rugs put out to air; a cart full of melons standing near the store-house; the oxen unyoked, and lying lazily beside it.

All this has for me an indescribable charm, perhaps because I no longer see it, and because anything from which we are separated is pleasing to us. However that may be, from the moment that my brichka [trap] drove up to the porch of this little house, my soul entered into a wonderfully pleasant and peaceful state: the horses trotted merrily up to the porch; the coachman climbed very quietly down from the seat, and filled his pipe, as though he had arrived at his own house; the very bark which the phlegmatic dogs set up was soothing to my ears.

But more than all else, the owners of this isolated nook — an old man and old

woman — hastening anxiously out to meet me, pleased me. Their faces present themselves to me even now, sometimes, in the crowd and commotion, amid fashionable dress-suits; and then suddenly a half-dreaming state overpowers me, and the past flits before me. On their countenances are always depicted such goodness, such cheerfulness, and purity of heart, that you involuntarily renounce, if only for a brief space of time, all bold conceptions, and imperceptibly enter with all your feeling into this lowly bucolic life.

To this day I cannot forget two old people of the last century, who are, alas! no more; but my heart is still full of pity, and my feelings are strangely moved when I fancy myself driving up sometimes to their former dwelling, now deserted, and see the cluster of decaying cottages, the weedy pond, and where the little house used to stand, an overgrown pit, and nothing more. It is melancholy. But let us return to our story.

Afanasii Ivanovich Tovstogub, and his wife Pulcheria Ivanovna Tovstogubikha, according to the neighboring muzhiks' [peasants'] way of putting it, were the old people whom I began to tell about. If I were a painter, and wished the represent Philemon and Baucis on canvas I could have found no better models than they. Afanasii Ivanovich was sixty years old, Pulcheria Ivanovna was fifty-five. Afanasii Ivanovich was tall, always wore a sheepskin jacket covered with camel's hair, sat all doubled up, and was almost always smiling, whether he was telling a story or only listening. Pulcheria Ivanovna was rather serious, and hardly ever laughed; but her face and eyes expressed so much goodness, so much readiness to treat you to all the best they owned, that you would probably have found a smile too repellingly sweet for her kind face.

The delicate wrinkles were so agreeably disposed upon their countenances, that an artist would certainly have approplife, led by the old patriotic, simple-hearted, and, at the same time, wealthy families, which always offer a contrast to those baser Little Russians, who work up from tar-burners and pedlers, throng the courtrooms like grasshoppers, squeeze the last kopek from their fellow-countrymen, crowd Petersburg with scandal- mongers, finally acquire a capital, and triumphantly add an f to their surnames ending in o. No, they did not resemble those despicable and miserable creatures, but all ancient and native Little Russian families.

It was impossible to behold without sympathy their mutual affection. They never called each other thou, but always you — "You, Afanasii Ivanovich"; "You, Pulcheria Ivanovna."

"Was it you who sold the chair, Afanasii Ivanovich?"

"No matter. Don't you be angry, Pulcheria Ivanovna: it was I."

They never had any children, so all their affection was concentrated upon

themselves. At one time, in his youth, Afanasii Ivanovich served in the militia, and was afterwards brevet-major; but that was very long ago, and Afanasii Ivanovich hardly ever thought of it himself. Afanasii Ivanovich married at thirty, while he was still young and wore embroidered waist-coats. He even very cleverly abducted Pulcheria Ivanovna, whose parents did not wish to give her to him. But this, too he recollected very little about; at least, he never mentioned it.

All these long-past and unusual events had given place to a quiet and lonely life, to those dreamy yet harmonious fancies which you experience seated on a country balcony facing the garden, when the beautiful rain patters luxuriously on the leaves, flows the murmuring rivulets, inclining your limbs to repose, and meanwhile the rainbow creeps from behind the trees, and its arch shines dully with its seven hues in the sky; or when your calash rolls on, pushing its way among green bushes, and the quail calls, and the fragrant grass, with the ears of grain and field-flowers, creeps into the door of your carriage, pleasantly striking against your hands and face.

He always listened with a pleasant smile to his guests: sometimes he talked himself but generally he asked questions. He was not one of the old men who weary you with praises of the old times, and complaints of the new: on the contrary, as he put questions to you, he exhibited the greatest curiosity about, and sympathy with, the circumstances of your life, your success, or lack of success, in which kind old men usually are interested; although it closely resembles the curiosity of a child, who examines the seal on your fob while he is asking his questions. Then, it might be said that his face beamed with kindness.

The rooms of the little house in which our old people lived were small, low-studded, such as are generally to be seen with old-fashioned people. In each room stood a huge stove, which occupied nearly one- third of the space. These little rooms were frightfully warm, because both Afanasii Ivanovich and Pulcheria Ivanovna were fond of heat. All their fuel was stored in the vestibule, which was always filled nearly to the ceiling with straw, which is generally used in Little Russia in the place of wood. The crackling and blaze of burning straw render the ante-rooms extremely pleasant on winter evenings, when some lively youth, chilled with his pursuit of some brunette maid, rushes in, beating his hands together.

The walls of the rooms were adorned with pictures in narrow, old-fashioned frames. I am positive that their owners had long ago forgotten their subjects; and, if some of them had been carried off, they probably would not have noticed it. Two of them were large portraits in oil: one represented some bishop; the other, Peter III. From a narrow frame gazed the Duchess of La Vallière, spotted by flies. Around the windows and above the doors were a multitude of small

pictures, which you grow accustomed to regard as spots on the wall, and which you never look at. The floor in nearly all the rooms was of clay, but smoothly plastered down, and more cleanly kept than any polished floor of wood in a wealthy house, languidly swept by a sleepy gentleman in livery. Pulcheria Ivanovna's room was all furnished with chests and boxes, and little chests and little boxes. A multitude of little packages and bags, containing seeds — flower-seeds, vegetable-seeds, watermelon-seeds — hung on the walls. A great many balls of various colored woollens, scraps of old dresses, sewed together during half a century, were stuffed away in the riated them. It seemed as though you might read their whole life in them, the pure, peaceful corners, in the chests, and between the chests. Pulcheria Ivanovna was a famous housewife, and saved up every thing; though she sometimes did not know herself what use she could ever make of it.

But the most noticeable thing about the house was the singing doors. Just as soon as day arrived, the songs of the doors resounded throughout the house. I cannot say why they sang. Either the rusty hinges were the cause, or else the mechanic who made them concealed some secret in them; but it was worthy of note, that each door had its own particular voice: the door leading to the bedroom sang the thinnest of sopranos; the dining-room door growled a bass; but the one which led into the vestibule gave out a strange, quavering, yet groaning sound, so that, if you listened to it, you heard at last, quite clearly. "Batiushka [Little Father], I am freezing." I know that this noise is very displeasing to many, but I am very fond of it; and if I chance to hear a door squeak here, I seem to see the country; the low-ceiled chamber, lighted by a candle in an old-fashioned candlestick; the supper on the table; May darkness; night peeping in from the garden through the open windows upon the table set with dishes; the nightingale, which floods the garden, house, and the distant river with her trills; the rustle and the murmuring of the boughs,… and, O God! what a long chain of reminiscences is woven!

The chairs in the room were of wood, and massive, in the style which generally distinguished those of olden times; all had high, turned backs of natural wood, without any paint or varnish; they were not even upholstered, and somewhat resembled those which are still used by bishops. Three-cornered tables stood in the corners, a square one before the sofa; and there was a large mirror in a thin gold frame, carved in leaves, which the flies had covered with black spots; in front of the sofa was a mat with flowers resembling birds, and birds resembling flowers. And this constituted nearly the whole furniture of the far from elegant little house where my old people lived. The maids' room was filled with young and elderly serving-women in striped petticoats, to whom

Pulcheria Ivanovna sometimes gave some trifles to sew, and whom she made pick over berries, but who ran about the kitchen or slept the greater part of the time. Pulcheria Ivanovna regarded it as a necessity to keep them in the house; and she looked strictly after their morals, but to no purpose.

Upon the window-panes buzzed a terrible number of flies, overpowered by the heavy bass of the bumble- bee, sometimes accompanied by the penetrating shriek of the wasp; but, as soon as the candles were brought in, this whole horde betook themselves to their night quarters, and covered the entire ceiling with a black cloud.

Afanasii Ivanovich very rarely occupied himself with the farming; although he sometimes went out to the mowers and reapers, and gazed quite intently at their work. All the burden of management devolved upon Pulcheria Ivanovna. Pulcheria Ivanovna's house-keeping consisted of an incessant unlocking and locking of the storeroom, in salting, drying, preserving innumerable quantities of fruits and vegetables. Her house was exactly like a chemical laboratory. A fire was constantly laid under the apple-tree; and the kettle or the brass pan with preserves, jelly, marmalade — made with honey, with sugar, and I know not with what else — was hardly ever removed from the tripod. Under another tree the coachman was forever distilling vodka with peach-leaves, with wild cherry, cherry-flowers, gentian, or cherry-stones in a copper still; and at the end of the process, he never was able to control his tongue, chattered all sorts of nonsense, which Pulcheria Ivanovna did not understand, and took himself off to the kitchen to sleep. Such a quantity of all this stuff was preserved, salted, and dried, that it would probably have overwhelmed the whole yard at last (for Pulcheria Ivanovna loved to lay in a store beyond what was calculated for consumption), if the greater part of it had not been devoured by the maid-servants, who crept into the storeroom, and over-ate themselves to such a fearful extent, that they groaned and complained of their stomachs for a whole day afterwards.

It was less possible for Pulcheria Ivanovna to attend to the agricultural department. The steward conspired with the village elder to rob in the most shameless manner. They had got into a habit of going to their master's forest as though to their own; they manufactured a lot of sledges, and sold them at the neighboring fair; besides which they sold all the stout oaks to the neighboring Cossacks for beams, for a mill. Only once Pulcheria Ivanovna wished to inspect her forest. For this purpose the droshky, with its huge leather apron, was harnessed. As soon as the coachman shook his reins, and the horses (which had served in the militia) started, it filled the air with strange sounds, as though fifes, tambourines, and drums were suddenly audible: every nail and iron bolt rattled so, that, when the pani [mistress] drove from the door, they could be heard clear

to the mill, although that was not less than two versts1 away. Pulcheria Ivanovna could not fail to observe the terrible havoc in the forest, and the loss of oaks which she recollected from her childhood as being centuries old. “Why have the oaks become so scarce, Nichípor?” she said to the steward, who was also present. “See that the hairs on your head do not become scarce.”

“Why are they scarce?” said the steward. “They disappeared, they disappeared altogether: the lightning struck them, and the worms ate them. They disappeared pani, they disappeared.”

Pulcheria Ivanovna was quite satisfied with this answer, and on returning home merely gave orders that double guards should be placed over the Spanish cherries and the large winter-pear trees in the garden.

These worthy managers — the steward and the village elder — considered it quite unnecessary to bring all the flour to the storehouses at the manor, and that half was quite sufficient for the masters, and finally, that half was brought sprinkled or wet through — what had been rejected at the fair. But no matter how the steward and village elder plundered, or how horribly they devoured things at the house, from the housekeeper down to the pigs, who not only made way with frightful quantities of plums and apples, but even shook the trees with their snouts in order to bring down a whole shower of fruit; no matter how the sparrows and crows pecked, or how many presents the servants carried to their friends in other villages, including even old linen and yarn from the storeroom, which all brought up eventually at the universal source, namely, the tavern; no matter how guests, phlegmatic coachmen, and lackeys stole — yet the fruitful earth yielded such an abundance, Afanasii Ivanovich and Pulcheria Ivanovna needed so little, that all this abominable robbery seemed to pass quite unperceived in their household.

Both the old folks, in accordance with old-fashioned customs, were very fond of eating. As soon as daylight dawned (they always rose early), and the doors had begun their many-toned concert, they seated themselves at table, and drank coffee. When Afanasii Ivanovich had drunk his coffee, he went out, and, flirting his handkerchief, said, “Kish, kish! go away from the veranda, geese!” In the yard he generally encountered the steward; he usually entered into conversation with him, inquired about the work with the greatest minuteness, and communicated such a number of observations and orders as would have caused any one to wonder at his knowledge of affairs; and no novice would have ventured to suppose that such an acute master could be robbed. But his steward was a clever rascal: he knew well what answers it was necessary to give, and, better still, how to manage things.

After this, Afanasii Ivanovich returned to the room, and said, approaching

Pulcheria Ivanovna, “Well, Pulcheria Ivanovna, is it time to eat something, perhaps?”

“What shall we have to eat now, Afanasii Ivanovich — some wheat and tallow cakes, or some pies with poppy-seeds, or some salted mushrooms?”

“Some mushrooms, then, if you please, or some pies,” replied Afanasii Ivanovich; and then suddenly a table-cloth would make its appearance on the table, with the pies and mushrooms.

An hour before dinner, Afanasii Ivanovich took another snack, and drank vodka from an ancient silver cup, ate mushrooms, divers dried fish, and other things. They sat down to dine at twelve o’clock. Besides the dishes and sauce-boats, there stood upon the table a multitude of pots with covers pasted on, that the appetizing products of the savory old-fashioned cooking might not be exhaled abroad. At dinner the conversation turned upon subjects closely connected with the meal.

“It seems to me,” Afanasii Ivanovich generally observed, “that this groats is burned a little. Does it strike you so, Pulcheria Ivanovna?”

“No, Afanasii Ivanovich: put on a little more butter, and then it will not taste burned; or take this mushroom sauce, and pour over it.”

“If you please,” said Afanasii Ivanovich, handing his plate, “let us see how that will do.”

After dinner Afanasii Ivanovich went to lie down for an hour, after which Pulcheria Ivanovna brought him a sliced watermelon, and said, “Here, try this, Afanasii Ivanovich; see what a good melon it is.”

“Don’t trust it because it is red in the centre, Pulcheria Ivanovna,” said Afanasii Ivanovich, taking a good- sized chunk. “Sometimes they are red, but not good.”

But the watermelon slowly disappeared. Then Afanasii Ivanovich ate a few pears, and went out for a walk in the garden with Pulcheria Ivanovna. On returning to the house Pulcheria went about her own affairs; but he sat down on the veranda facing the yard, and observed how the storeroom’s interior was constantly disclosed, and again concealed; and how the girls jostled one another as they carried in, or brought out, all sorts of stuff in wooden boxes, sieves, trays, and other receptacles for fruit. After waiting a while, he sent for Pulcheria Ivanovna, or went to her himself, and said, “What is there for me to eat, Pulcheria Ivanovna?”

“What is there?” said Pulcheria Ivanovna: “shall I go and tell them to bring you some berry tarts which I had set aside for you?”

“That would be good,” replied Afanasii Ivanovich.

“Or perhaps you could eat some kissel [sour jelly]?”

“That is good too,” replied Afanasii Ivanovich; whereupon all was brought immediately, and eaten in due course.

Before supper Afanasii Ivanovich took another snack. At half-past nine they sat down to supper. After supper they went directly to bed, and universal silence settled down upon this busy yet quiet nook.

The chamber in which Afanasii Ivanovich and Pulcheria Ivanovna slept was so hot that very few people could have stayed in it more than a few hours; but Afanasii Ivanovich, for the sake of more warmth, slept upon the stove-bench, although the excessive heat caused him to rise several times in the course of the night, and walk about the room. Sometimes Afanasii Ivanovich groaned as he walked about the room.

Then Pulcheria Ivanovna inquired, “Why do you groan, Afanasii Ivanovich?”

“God knows, Pulcheria Ivanovna! it seems as if my stomach ached a little,” said Afanasii Ivanovich.

“Hadn’t you better eat something, Afanasii Ivanovich?”

“I don’t know — perhaps it would be well, Pulcheria Ivanovna. By the way, what is there to eat?”

“Sour milk, or some stewed dried pears.”

“If you please, I will try them,” said Afanasii Ivanovich. The sleepy maid was sent to ransack the cupboards, and Afanasii Ivanovich ate a plateful; after which he remarked, “Now I seem to feel relieved.”

Sometimes when the weather was clear, and the rooms were very much heated, Afanasii Ivanovich got merry, and loved to tease Pulcheria Ivanovna, and talk of something out of the ordinary.

“Well, Pulcheria Ivanovna,” he said, “what if our house were to suddenly burn down, what would become of us?”

“God forbid!” ejaculated Pulcheria Ivanovna, crossing herself.

“Well, now, just suppose a case, that our house should burn down. Where should we go then?”

“God knows what you are saying, Afanasii Ivanovich! How could our house burn down? God will not permit that.”

“Well, but if it did burn?”

“Well, then, we should go to the kitchen. You could occupy for a time the room which the housekeeper now has.”

“But if the kitchen burned too?”

“The idea! God will preserve us from such a catastrophe as the house and the kitchen both burning down. In that case, we could go into the store-house while a new house was being built.”

“And if the store-house burned also?”

“God knows what you are saying! I won’t listen to you! it is a sin to talk so, and God will punish you for such speeches.”

But Afanasii Ivanovich, content with having had his joke over Pulcheria Ivanovna, sat quietly in his chair, and smiled.

But the old people were most interesting of all to me when they had visitors. Then everything about their house assumed a different aspect. It may be said that these good people only lived for their guests. They vied with each other in offering you everything which the place produced. But the most pleasing feature of it all to me was, that, in all their kindliness, there was nothing feigned. Their kindness and readiness to oblige were so gently expressed in their faces, so became them, that you involuntarily yielded to their requests. These were the outcome of the pure, clear simplicity of their good, sincere souls. Their joy was not at all of the sort with which the official of the court favors you, when he has become a personage through your exertions, and calls you his benefactor, and fawns at your feet. No guest was ever permitted to depart on the day of his arrival: he must needs pass the night with them.

“How is it possible to set out at so late an hour upon so long a journey!” Pulcheria Ivanovna always observed. (The visitor usually lived three or four versts from them.)

“Of course,” said Afanasii Ivanovich, “it is impossible on all accounts; robbers, or some other evil men, will attack you.”

“May God in his mercy deliver us from robbers!” said Pulcheria Ivanovna. “And why mention such things at night? Robbers, or no robbers, it is dark, and no fit time to travel. And your coachman,… I know your coachman; he is so weak and small, any horse could kill him; besides, he has probably been drinking, and is now asleep somewhere.”

And the visitor was obliged to remain. But the evening in the warm, low room, cheerful, strewn with stories, the steam rising from the food upon the table, which was always nourishing, and cooked in a masterly manner — this was his reward. I seem now to see Afanasii Ivanovich bending to seat himself at the table, with his constant smile, and listening with attention, and even with delight, to his guest. The conversation often turned on politics. The guest, who also emerged but rarely from his village, frequently with significant mien and mysterious expression of countenance, aired his surmises, and told how the French had formed a secret compact with the English to let Buonaparte loose upon Russia again, or talked merely of the impending war; and then Afanasii Ivanovich often remarked, without appearing to look at Pulcheria Ivanovna: “I am thinking of going to the war myself. Why cannot I go to the war?”

“You have been already,” broke in Pulcheria Ivanovna. “Don’t believe him,”

she said, turning to the visitor; “what good would he, an old man, do in the war? The very first soldier would shoot him; by Heaven, he would shoot him! he would take aim, and fire at him.”

“What?” said Afanasii Ivanovich. “I would shoot him.”

“Just listen to him!” interposed Pulcheria Ivanovna. “Why should he go to the war? And his pistols have been rusty this long time, and are lying in the storeroom. If you could only see them! the powder would burst them before they would fire. He will blow his hands off, and disfigure his face, and be miserable forever after!”

“What’s that?” said Afanasii Ivanovich. “I will buy myself new arms: I will take my sword or a Cossack lance.”

“These are all inventions: as soon as a thing comes into his head, he begins to talk about it!” interrupted Pulcheria Ivanovna with vexation. “I know that he is jesting, but it is unpleasant to hear him all the same. He always talks so; sometimes you listen and listen, until it is perfectly frightful.”

But Afanasii Ivanovich, satisfied with having frightened Pulcheria Ivanovna, laughed as he sat doubled up in his chair.

Pulcheria Ivanovna seemed to me most noteworthy when she offered her guest zakuska.2

“Here,” she said, taking the cork from a decanter, “is genuine yarrow or sage vodka; if any one’s shoulder-blades or loins ache, this is a very good remedy: here is some with gentian; if you have a ringing in your ears, or eruption on your face, this is very good: and this is distilled with peach-kernels; here, take a glass; what a fine perfume! If ever any one, in getting out of bed, strikes himself against the corner of the clothes- press or table, and a bump comes on his forehead, all he has to do is to drink a glass of this before meals — and it all disappears out of hand, as though it had never been.” Then followed a catalogue of the other decanters, almost all of which possessed some healing properties. Having loaded down her guest with this complete apothecary shop, she led him to where a multitude of dishes were set out. “Here are mushrooms with summer-savory; and here are some with cloves and walnuts. A Turkish woman taught me how to pickle them, at a time when there were still Turkish prisoners among us. She was a good Turk, and it was not noticeable that she professed the Turkish faith: she behaved very nearly as we do, only she would not eat pork; they say that it is forbidden by their laws. Here are mushrooms with currant-leaves and nutmeg; and here, some with clove-pinks. These are the first I have cooked in vinegar. I don’t know how good they are. I learned the secret from Ivan’s father: you must first spread oak-leaves in a small cask, and then sprinkle on pepper and saltpetre, and then more, until it becomes the color of hawk-weed, and then

spread the liquid over the mushrooms. And here are cheese-tarts; these are different: and here are some pies with cabbage and buckwheat flour, which Afanasii Ivanovich is extremely fond of."

"Yes," added Afanasii Ivanovich, "I am very fond of them; they are soft and a little tart."

Pulcheria Ivanovna was generally in very good spirits when they had visitors. Good old woman! she belonged entirely to her guests. I loved to stay with them; and though I over-ate myself horribly, like all who visited them, and although it was very bad for me, still, I was always glad to go to them. Besides, I think the air of Little Russia must possess some special properties which aid digestion; for if any one undertook to eat here, in that way, there is no doubt but that he would find himself lying on the table instead of in bed.

Good old people!… But my story approaches a very sad event, which changed forever the life in that peaceful nook. This event appears all the more striking because it resulted from the most insignificant cause. But, in accordance with the primitive arrangement of things, the most trifling causes produce the greatest events, and the grandest undertakings end in the most insignificant results. Some warrior collects all the forces of his empire, fights for several years, his colonels distinguish themselves, and at last it all ends in the acquisition of a bit of land on which no one would even plant potatoes; but sometimes, on the other hand, a couple of sausage-makers in different towns quarrel over some trifle, and the quarrel at last extends to the towns, and then to the villages and hamlets, and then to the whole empire. But we will drop these reflections; they lead nowhere: and besides, I am not fond of reflections when they remain mere reflections.

Pulcheria Ivanovna had a little gray cat, which almost always lay coiled up in a ball at her feet. Pulcheria Ivanovna stroked her occasionally, and with her finger tickled her neck, which the petted cat stretched out as long as possible. It was impossible to say that Pulcheria Ivanovna loved her so very much, but she had simply become attached to her from having become used to seeing her about continually. But Afanasii Ivanovich often joked at such an attachment.

"I cannot see, Pulcheria Ivanovna, what you find attractive in that cat; of what use is she? If you had a dog, that would be quite another thing; you can take a dog out hunting, but what is a cat good for?"

"Be quiet, Afanasii Ivanovich," said Pulcheria Ivanovna: "you just like to talk, and that's all. A dog is not clean; a dog soils things and breaks everything: but the cat is a peaceable beast; she does no harm to any one."

But it made no difference to Afanasii Ivanovich whether it was a cat or a dog; he only said it to tease Pulcheria Ivanovna.

Behind their garden was a large wood, which had been spared by the

enterprising steward, possibly because the sound of the axe might have reached the ears of Pulcheria Ivanovna. It was dense, neglected: the old tree-trunks were concealed by luxuriant hazel-bushes, and resembled the feathered legs of pigeons. In this wood dwelt wild-cats. The wild forest-cats must not be confounded with those which run about the roofs of houses: being in the city, they are much more civilized, in spite of their savage nature, than the denizens of the woods. These, on the contrary, are mostly fierce and wild: they are always lean and ugly, and miauw in rough, untutored voices. They sometimes scratch for themselves underground passages to the store-houses, and steal tallow. They occasionally make their appearance in the kitchen, springing suddenly in at an open window, when they see that the cook has gone off among the grass. As a rule, noble feelings are unknown to them: they live by thievery, and strangle the little sparrows in their very nests. These cats had a long conference with Pulcheria Ivanovna's tame cat, through a hole under the store-house, and finally led her astray, as a detachment of soldiers leads astray a dull peasant. Pulcheria Ivanovna noticed that her cat was missing, and sent to look for her; but no cat was to be found. Three days passed: Pulcheria Ivanovna felt sorry, but finally forgot all about her loss.

One day she had been inspecting her vegetable-garden, and was returning with her hands full of fresh green cucumbers, which she had picked for Afanasii Ivanovich, when a most pitiful miauwing struck her ear. She instinctively called, "Kitty! kitty!" and out from the tall grass came her gray cat, thin and starved. It was evident that she had not had a mouthful of food for days. Pulcheria Ivanovna continued to call her; but the cat stood crying before her, and did not venture to approach. It was plain that she had become quite wild in that time. Pulcheria Ivanovna stepped forward, still calling the cat, which followed her timidly to the fence. Finally, seeing familiar places, it entered the room.

Pulcheria Ivanovna at once ordered milk and meat to be given her, and, sitting down by her, enjoyed the avidity with which her poor pet swallowed morsel after morsel, and lapped the milk. The gray runaway fattened before her very eyes, and began to eat less eagerly. Pulcheria Ivanovna reached out her hand to stroke her; but the ungrateful animal had evidently become too well used to robber cats, or adopted some romantic notion about love and poverty being better than a palace, for the cats were as poor as church-mice. However that may be, she sprang through the window, and none of the servants were able to catch her.

The old woman reflected. "It is my death which has come for me," she said to herself; and nothing could cheer her. All day she was sad. In vain did Afanasii Ivanovich jest, and want to know why she had suddenly grown so grave. Pulcheria Ivanovna either made no reply, or one which was in no way

satisfactory to Afanasii Ivanovich. The next day she was visibly thinner.

“What is the matter with you, Pulcheria Ivanovna? You are not ill?”

“No, I am not ill, Afanasii Ivanovich. I want to tell you about a strange occurrence. I know that I shall die this year: my death has already come for me.”

Afanasii Ivanovich’s mouth became distorted with pain. Nevertheless, he tried to conquer the sad feeling in his mind, and said, smiling, “God only knows what you are talking about, Pulcheria Ivanovna! You must have drunk some peach infusion instead of your usual herb-tea.”

“No, Afanasii Ivanovich, I have not drunk the peach,” said Pulcheria Ivanovna.

And Afanasii Ivanovich was sorry that he had made fun of Pulcheria Ivanovna; and as he looked at her, a tear hung on his lashes.

“I beg you, Afanasii Ivanovich, to fulfil my wishes,” said Pulcheria Ivanovna. “When I die, bury me by the church-wall. Put my grayish dress on me — the one with small flowers on a cinnamon ground. My satin dress with red stripes, you must not put on me; a corpse needs no clothes. Of what use are they to her? But it will be good for you. Make yourself a fine dressing-gown, in case visitors come, so that you can make a good appearance when you receive them.”

“God knows what you are saying, Pulcheria Ivanovna!” said Afanasii Ivanovich. “Death will come some time, but you frighten one with such remarks.”

“No, Afanasii Ivanovich: I know when my death is to be. But do not sorrow for me. I am old, and stricken in years; and you, too, are old. We shall soon meet in the other world.”

But Afanasii Ivanovich sobbed like a child.

“It is a sin to weep, Afanasii Ivanovich. Do not sin and anger God by your grief. I am not sorry to die: I am only sorry for one thing” — a heavy sob broke her speech for a moment — ”I am sorry because I do not know whom I shall leave with you, who will look after you when I am dead. You are like a little child: the one who attends you must love you.” And her face expressed such deep and heart-felt sorrow, that I do not know whether any one could have beheld her, and remained unmoved.

“Mind, Yavdokha,” she said, turning to the housekeeper, whom she had ordered to be summoned expressly, “that you look after your master when I am dead, and cherish him like the apple of your eye, like your own child. See that everything he likes is prepared in the kitchen; that his linen and clothes are always clean; that, when visitors happen in, you dress him properly: otherwise he will come forth in his old dressing- gown, for he often forgets now whether it is a festival or an ordinary day. Do not take your eyes off him, Yavdokha. I will

pray for you in the other world, and God will reward you. Do not forget, Yavdokha. You are old — you have not long to live. Take no sins upon your soul. If you do not look well to him, you will have no happiness in the world. I will beg God myself to give you an unhappy ending. And you will be unhappy yourself, and your children will be unhappy; and none of your race will ever have God's blessing."

Poor old woman! she thought not of the great moment which awaited her, nor of her soul, nor of the future life: she thought only of her poor companion, with whom she had passed her life, and whom she was leaving an orphan and unprotected. After this fashion, she arranged everything with great skill: so that, after her death, Afanasii Ivanovich might not perceive her absence. Her faith in her approaching end was so firm and her mind was so fixed upon it, that, in a few days, she actually took to her bed, and was unable to take any nourishment.

Afanasii Ivanovich was all attention, and never left her bedside. "Perhaps you could eat something, Pulcheria Ivanovna," he said, looking uneasily into her eyes. But Pulcheria Ivanovna made no reply. At length, after a long silence, she moved her lips, as though desirous of saying something — and her breath fled.

Afanasii Ivanovich was utterly amazed. It seemed to him so terrible, that he did not even weep. He gazed at her with troubled eyes, as though he did not comprehend the meaning of a corpse.

They laid the dead woman on a table, dressed her in the dress she herself had designated, crossed her arms, and placed a wax candle in her hand. He looked on without feeling. A throng of people of every class filled the court. Long tables were spread in the yard, and covered with heaps of kutya,3

fruit-wine, and pies. The visitors talked, wept, looked at the dead woman, discussed her qualities, gazed at him; but he looked upon it all as a stranger might. At last they carried out the dead woman: the people thronged after, and he followed. The priests were in full vestments, the sun shone, the infants cried in their mothers' arms, the larks sang, the children in their little blouses ran and capered along the road. Finally they placed the coffin over the grave. They bade him approach and kiss the dead woman for the last time. He approached, and kissed her. Tears appeared in his eyes, but unfeeling tears. The coffin was lowered: the priest took the shovel, and flung in the first earth. The full choir of deacons and two sacristans sang the requiem under the blue, cloudless sky. The laborers grasped their shovels; and the grave was soon filled, the earth levelled off. Then he pressed forward. All stood aside to make room for him, wishing to know his object. He raised his eyes, looked about in a bewildered way, and said, "And so you have buried her! Why?" — He paused, and did not finish his sentence. But when he returned home, when he saw that his chamber was empty,

that even the chair on which Pulcheria Ivanovna was wont to sit had been carried out, he sobbed, sobbed violently, irrepressibly; and tears ran in streams from his dim eyes.

Five years passed. What grief will time not efface! What passion is not cured in unequal battle with it! I knew a man in the bloom of his youthful strength, full of true nobility and worth; I knew that he loved, tenderly, passionately, wildly, boldly, modestly; and in my presence, before my very eyes, almost, the object of his passion — a girl, gentle, beautiful as an angel — was struck by insatiable Death. I never beheld such a terrible outburst of spiritual suffering, such mad, fiery grief, such consuming despair, as agitated the unfortunate lover. I never thought that a man could make for himself such a hell, where there was neither shadow nor form, nor any thing in any way resembling hope.… They tried never to let him out of sight: they concealed all weapons from him by which he could commit suicide. Two weeks later he regained control of himself; he began to laugh and jest; they gave him his freedom, and the first use he made of it was to buy a pistol. One day a sudden shot startled his relatives terribly: they rushed into the room, and beheld him stretched out, with his skull crushed. A physician who chanced to be present, and who enjoyed a universal reputation for skill, discovered some signs of life in him, found that the wound was not fatal; and he was cured, to the great amazement of all. The watchfulness over him was redoubled; even at table, they never put a knife near him, and tried to keep everything away from him with which he could injure himself. But he soon found a fresh opportunity, and threw himself under the wheels of a passing carriage. His hand and feet were crushed, but again he was cured. A year after this I saw him in a crowded salon. He was talking gayly, as he covered a card; and behind him, leaning upon the back of his chair, stood his young wife, turning over his counters.

Being in the vicinity during the course of the five years already mentioned, which succeeded Pulcheria Ivanovna’s death, I went to the little farm of Afanasii Ivanovich, to inquire after my old neighbor, with whom I had formerly spent the day so agreeably, dining always on the choicest delicacies of his kind- hearted wife. When I drove up to the door, the house seemed twice as old; the peasants’ izbás were lying completely on one side, without doubt, exactly like their owners; the fence and hedge around the courtyard were completely dilapidated; and I myself saw the cook pull out a paling to heat the stove, when she had only a couple of steps to take in order to get the kindling-wood which had been piled there expressly. I stepped sadly upon the veranda: the same dogs, now blind, or with broken legs, raised their bushy tails, all matted with burs, and barked.

The old man came out to meet me. So, this was he! I recognized him at once,

but he was twice as bent as formerly. He knew me, and greeted me with the smile already so well known to me. I followed him into the room. All there seemed the same as in the past; but I observed a sort of strange disorder, a tangible absence of something: in a word, I experienced that strange sensation which takes possession of us when we enter, for the first time, the dwelling of a widower whom we had heretofore known as inseparable from the companion who has been with him all his life. This sensation resembles the one we feel when we see before us a man whom we had always known as healthy, without his legs. In everything was visible the absence of painstaking Pulcheria Ivanovna. At table they gave us a knife without a handle: the dishes were not prepared with so much art. I did not care to inquire about the management of the estate: I was even afraid to glance at the farm-buildings.

When we sat down at the table, a maid fastened a napkin in front of Afanasii Ivanovich; and it was very well that she did so, for otherwise he would have spotted his dressing-gown all over with gravy. I tried to interest him in something, and told him various bits of news. He listened with his usual smile, but his glance was at times quite unintelligent; and thoughts did not wander there, but only disappeared. He frequently raised a spoonful of porridge, and, instead of carrying it to his mouth, carried it to his nose; and, instead of sticking his fork into the chicken, he struck the decanter with it; and then the servant, taking his hand, guided it to the chicken. We sometimes waited several minutes for the next course. Afanasii Ivanovich remarked it himself, and said, “Why are they so long in bringing the food?” But I saw through a crack of the door that the boy who brought the dishes was not thinking of it at all, but was fast asleep, with his head leaning on a stool.

“This is the dish,” said Afanasii Ivanovich, when they brought us mnishki [curds and flour] with cream — ”this is the dish,” he continued, and I observed that his voice began to quiver, and that tears were ready to peep from his leaden eyes; but he collected all his strength, striving to repress them: “This is the dish which the — the — the de — ceas” — and the tears suddenly burst forth: his hand fell upon the plate, the plate was overturned, flew from the table, and was broken; the gravy ran all over him. He sat stupidly holding his spoon, and tears like a never-ceasing fountain flowed, flowed in streams down upon his napkin.

“O God!” I thought, as I looked at him, “five years of all-obliterating time,… an old man, an already apathetic old man, who, in all his life, apparently, was never agitated by any strong spiritual emotion, whose whole life seemed to consist in sitting on a high chair, in eating dried fish and pears, in telling good-natured stories — and yet so long and fervent a grief! Which wields the most powerful sway over us, passion or habit? Or are all our strong impulses, all the

whirlwinds of our desire and boiling passions, but the consequence of our fierce young growth, and only for that reason seem deep and annihilating?" However that may be, all our passion, on that occasion, seemed to me child's play beside this long, slow, almost insensible habit. Several times he tried to pronounce the dead woman's name; but in the middle of the word his peaceful and ordinary face became convulsively distorted, and a childlike fit of weeping cut me to the heart.

No: these were not the tears of which old people are generally so lavish, when representing to us their wretched condition and unhappiness. Neither were these the tears which they drop over a glass of punch. No: these were tears which flowed without asking a reason, distilled from the bitter pain of a heart already growing cold.

He did not live long after this. I heard of his death recently. It was strange, though, that the circumstances attending his death somewhat resembled those of Pulcheria Ivanovna's. One day Afanasii Ivanovich decided to take a short stroll in the garden. As he went slowly down the path, with his usual carelessness, a strange thing happened to him. All at once he heard some one behind him say, in a distinct voice, "Afanasii Ivanovich." He turned round, but there was no one there. He looked on all sides: he peered into the shrubbery — no one anywhere. The day was calm, and the sun shone clear. He pondered for a moment. His face lighted up; and at length he exclaimed, "It is Pulcheria Ivanovna calling me!"

It has doubtless happened to you, at some time or other, to hear a voice calling you by name, which the peasants explain by saying that a man's spirit is longing for him, and calls him, and that death inevitably follows. I confess that this mysterious call has always been very terrifying to me. I remember to have often heard it in my childhood. Sometimes some one suddenly pronounced my name distinctly behind me. The day, on such occasions, was usually bright and sunny. Not a leaf on a tree moved. The silence was deathlike: even the grasshoppers had ceased to whir. There was not a soul in the garden. But I must confess, that, if the wildest and most stormy night, with the utmost inclemency of the elements, had overtaken me alone in the midst of an impassable forest, I should not have been so much alarmed by it as by this fearful stillness amid a cloudless day. On such occasions, I usually ran in the greatest terror, catching my breath, from the garden, and only regained composure when I encountered some person, the sight of whom dispelled the terrible inward solitude.

He yielded himself up utterly to his moral conviction that Pulcheria Ivanovna was calling him. He yielded with the will of a submissive child, withered away, coughed, melted away like a candle and at length expired like it, when nothing remains to feed its poor flame. "Lay me beside Pulcheria Ivanovna" — that was

all he said before his death.

His wish was fulfilled; and they buried him beside the church, close to Pulcheria Ivanovna's grave. The guests at the funeral were few, but there was a throng of common and poor people. The house was already quite deserted. The enterprising clerk and village elder carried off to their izbás all the old household utensils and things which the housekeeper did not manage to appropriate

There shortly appeared, from some unknown quarter, a distant relative, the heir of the property, who had served as lieutenant in some regiment, I forget which, and was a great reformer. He immediately perceived the great waste and neglect in the management. This decided him to root out, re-arrange, and introduce order into everything. He purchased six fine English scythes, nailed a number on each izbá, and finally managed so well, that in six months the estate was in the hands of trustees. The wise trustees (consisting of an ex-assessor and a captain of the staff in faded uniform) promptly carried off all the hens and eggs. The izbás, nearly all of which were lying on the ground, fell into complete ruin. The muzhiks wandered off, and were mostly numbered among the runaways. The real owner himself (who lived on peaceable terms with his trustees, and drank punch with them) very rarely entered his village, and did not long live there. From that time forth, he has been going about to all the fairs in Little Russia, carefully inquiring prices at various large establishments, which sell at wholesale, flour, hemp, honey, and so forth, but he buys only the smallest trifles, such as a flint, a nail to clean his pipe, or anything, the value of which at wholesale does not exceed a ruble.

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TARAS BULBA

This novella can be located via this link.

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VIY

The "Viy" is a monstrous creation of popular fancy. It is the name which the inhabitants of Little Russia give to the king of the gnomes, whose eyelashes reach to the ground. The following story is a specimen of such folk-lore. I have made no alterations, but reproduce it in the same simple form in which I heard it. — Author's Note.

I

As soon as the clear seminary bell began sounding in Kieff in the morning, the pupils would come flocking from all parts of the town. The students of grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and theology hastened with their books under their arms over the streets.

The "grammarians" were still mere boys. On the way they pushed against each other and quarrelled with shrill voices. Nearly all of them wore torn or dirty clothes, and their pockets were always crammed with all kinds of things — push-bones, pipes made out of pens, remains of confectionery, and sometimes even young sparrows. The latter would sometimes begin to chirp in the midst of deep silence in the school, and bring down on their possessors severe canings and thrashings.

The "rhetoricians" walked in a more orderly way. Their clothes were generally untorn, but on the other hand their faces were often strangely decorated; one had a black eye, and the lips of another resembled a single blister, etc. These spoke to each other in tenor voices.

The "philosophers" talked in a tone an octave lower; in their pockets they only had fragments of tobacco, never whole cakes of it; for what they could get hold of, they used at once. They smelt so strongly of tobacco and brandy, that a workman passing by them would often remain standing and sniffing with his nose in the air, like a hound.

About this time of day the market-place was generally full of bustle, and the market women, selling rolls, cakes, and honey-tarts, plucked the sleeves of those who wore coats of fine cloth or cotton.

"Young sir! Young sir! Here! Here!" they cried from all sides. "Rolls and cakes and tasty tarts, very delicious! I have baked them myself!"

Another drew something long and crooked out of her basket and cried, "Here is a sausage, young sir! Buy a sausage!"

"Don't buy anything from her!" cried a rival. "See how greasy she is, and what a dirty nose and hands she has!"

But the market women carefully avoided appealing to the philosophers and theologians, for these only took handfuls of eatables merely to taste them.

Arrived at the seminary, the whole crowd of students dispersed into the low, large class-rooms with small windows, broad doors, and blackened benches. Suddenly they were filled with a many-toned murmur. The teachers heard the pupils' lessons repeated, some in shrill and others in deep voices which sounded like a distant booming. While the lessons were being said, the teachers kept a sharp eye open to see whether pieces of cake or other dainties were protruding from their pupils' pockets; if so, they were promptly confiscated.

When this learned crowd arrived somewhat earlier than usual, or when it was known that the teachers would come somewhat late, a battle would ensue, as though planned by general agreement. In this battle all had to take part, even the monitors who were appointed to look after the order and morality of the whole school. Two theologians generally arranged the conditions of the battle: whether each class should split into two sides, or whether all the pupils should divide themselves into two halves.

In each case the grammarians began the battle, and after the rhetoricians had joined in, the former retired and stood on the benches, in order to watch the fortunes of the fray. Then came the philosophers with long black moustaches, and finally the thick-necked theologians. The battle generally ended in a victory for the latter, and the philosophers retired to the different class-rooms rubbing their aching limbs, and throwing themselves on the benches to take breath.

When the teacher, who in his own time had taken part in such contests, entered the class-room he saw by the heated faces of his pupils that the battle had been very severe, and while he caned the hands of the rhetoricians, in another room another teacher did the same for the philosophers.

On Sundays and Festival Days the seminarists took puppet-theatres to the citizens' houses. Sometimes they acted a comedy, and in that case it was always a theologian who took the part of the hero or heroine — Potiphar or Herodias, etc. As a reward for their exertions, they received a piece of linen, a sack of maize, half a roast goose, or something similar. All the students, lay and clerical, were very poorly provided with means for procuring themselves necessary subsistence, but at the same time very fond of eating; so that, however much food was given to them, they were never satisfied, and the gifts bestowed by rich landowners were never adequate for their needs.

Therefore the Commissariat Committee, consisting of philosophers and theologians, sometimes dispatched the grammarians and rhetoricians under the leadership of a philosopher — themselves sometimes joining in the expedition — with sacks on their shoulders, into the town, in order to levy a contribution on

the fleshpots of the citizens, and then there was a feast in the seminary.

The most important event in the seminary year was the arrival of the holidays; these began in July, and then generally all the students went home. At that time all the roads were thronged with grammarians, rhetoricians, philosophers, and theologians. He who had no home of his own, would take up his quarters with some fellow-student's family; the philosophers and theologians looked out for tutors' posts, taught the children of rich farmers, and received for doing so a pair of new boots and sometimes also a new coat.

A whole troop of them would go off in close ranks like a regiment; they cooked their porridge in common, and encamped under the open sky. Each had a bag with him containing a shirt and a pair of socks. The theologians were especially economical; in order not to wear out their boots too quickly, they took them off and carried them on a stick over their shoulders, especially when the road was very muddy. Then they tucked up their breeches over their knees and waded bravely through the pools and puddles. Whenever they spied a village near the highway, they at once left it, approached the house which seemed the most considerable, and began with loud voices to sing a psalm. The master of the house, an old Cossack engaged in agriculture, would listen for a long time with his head propped in his hands, then with tears on his cheeks say to his wife, "What the students are singing sounds very devout; bring out some lard and anything else of the kind we have in the house."

After thus replenishing their stores, the students would continue their way. The farther they went, the smaller grew their numbers, as they dispersed to their various houses, and left those whose homes were still farther on.

On one occasion, during such a march, three students left the main-road in order to get provisions in some village, since their stock had long been exhausted. This party consisted of the theologian Khalava, the philosopher Thomas Brutus, and the rhetorician Tiberius Gorobetz.

The first was a tall youth with broad shoulders and of a peculiar character; everything which came within reach of his fingers he felt obliged to appropriate. Moreover, he was of a very melancholy disposition, and when he had got intoxicated he hid himself in the most tangled thickets so that the seminary officials had the greatest trouble in finding him.

The philosopher Thomas Brutus was a more cheerful character. He liked to lie for a long time on the same spot and smoke his pipe; and when he was merry with wine, he hired a fiddler and danced the "tropak." Often he got a whole quantity of "beans," i.e. thrashings; but these he endured with complete philosophic calm, saying that a man cannot escape his destiny.

The rhetorician Tiberius Gorobetz had not yet the right to wear a moustache,

to drink brandy, or to smoke tobacco. He only wore a small crop of hair, as though his character was at present too little developed. To judge by the great bumps on his forehead, with which he often appeared in the class-room, it might be expected that some day he would be a valiant fighter. Khalava and Thomas often pulled his hair as a mark of their special favour, and sent him on their errands.

Evening had already come when they left the high-road; the sun had just gone down, and the air was still heavy with the heat of the day. The theologian and the philosopher strolled along, smoking in silence, while the rhetorician struck off the heads of the thistles by the wayside with his stick. The way wound on through thick woods of oak and walnut; green hills alternated here and there with meadows. Twice already they had seen cornfields, from which they concluded that they were near some village; but an hour had already passed, and no human habitation appeared. The sky was already quite dark, and only a red gleam lingered on the western horizon.

“The deuce!” said the philosopher Thomas Brutus. “I was almost certain we would soon reach a village.”

The theologian still remained silent, looked round him, then put his pipe again between his teeth, and all three continued their way.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed the philosopher, and stood still. “Now the road itself is disappearing.”

“Perhaps we shall find a farm farther on,” answered the theologian, without taking his pipe out of his mouth.

Meanwhile the night had descended; clouds increased the darkness, and according to all appearance there was no chance of moon or stars appearing. The seminarists found that they had lost the way altogether.

After the philosopher had vainly sought for a footpath, he exclaimed, “Where have we got to?”

The theologian thought for a while, and said, “Yes, it is really dark.”

The rhetorician went on one side, lay on the ground, and groped for a path; but his hands encountered only fox-holes. All around lay a huge steppe over which no one seemed to have passed. The wanderers made several efforts to get forward, but the landscape grew wilder and more inhospitable.

The philosopher tried to shout, but his voice was lost in vacancy, no one answered; only, some moments later, they heard a faint groaning sound, like the whimpering of a wolf.

“Curse it all! What shall we do?” said the philosopher.

“Why, just stop here, and spend the night in the open air,” answered the theologian. So saying, he felt in his pocket, brought out his timber and steel, and

lit his pipe.

But the philosopher could not agree with this proposal; he was not accustomed to sleep till he had first eaten five pounds of bread and five of dripping, and so he now felt an intolerable emptiness in his stomach. Besides, in spite of his cheerful temperament, he was a little afraid of the wolves.

“No, Khalava,” he said, “that won’t do. To lie down like a dog and without any supper! Let us try once more; perhaps we shall find a house, and the consolation of having a glass of brandy to drink before going to sleep.”

At the word “brandy,” the theologian spat on one side and said, “Yes, of course, we cannot remain all night in the open air.”

The students went on and on, and to their great joy they heard the barking of dogs in the distance. After listening a while to see from which direction the barking came, they went on their way with new courage, and soon espied a light.

“A village, by heavens, a village!” exclaimed the philosopher.

His supposition proved correct; they soon saw two or three houses built round a court-yard. Lights glimmered in the windows, and before the fence stood a number of trees. The students looked through the crevices of the gates and saw a court-yard in which stood a large number of roving tradesmen’s carts. In the sky there were now fewer clouds, and here and there a star was visible.

“See, brother!” one of them said, “we must now cry ‘halt!’ Cost what it may, we must find entrance and a night’s lodging.”

The three students knocked together at the gate, and cried “Open!”

The door of one of the houses creaked on its hinges, and an old woman wrapped in a sheepskin appeared. “Who is there?” she exclaimed, coughing loudly.

“Let us spend the night here, mother; we have lost our way, our stomachs are empty, and we do not want to spend the night out of doors.”

“But what sort of people are you?”

“Quite harmless people; the theologian Khalava, the philosopher Brutus, and the rhetorician Gorobetz.”

“It is impossible,” answered the old woman. “The whole house is full of people, and every corner occupied. Where can I put you up? You are big and heavy enough to break the house down. I know these philosophers and theologians; when once one takes them in, they eat one out of house and home. Go farther on! There is no room here for you!”

“Have pity on us, mother! How can you be so heartless? Don’t let Christians perish. Put us up where you like, and if we eat up your provisions, or do any other damage, may our hands wither up, and all the punishment of heaven light on us!”

The old woman seemed a little touched. “Well,” she said after a few moments’ consideration, “I will let you in; but I must put you in different rooms, for I should have no quiet if you were all together at night.”

“Do just as you like; we won’t say any more about it,” answered the students.

The gates moved heavily on their hinges, and they entered the court-yard.

“Well now, mother,” said the philosopher, following the old woman, “if you had a little scrap of something! By heavens! my stomach is as empty as a drum. I have not had a bit of bread in my mouth since early this morning!”

“Didn’t I say so?” replied the old woman. “There you go begging at once. But I have no food in the house, nor any fire.”

“But we will pay for everything,” continued the philosopher.

“We will pay early to-morrow in cash.”

“Go on and be content with what you get. You are fine fellows whom the devil has brought here!”

Her reply greatly depressed the philosopher Thomas; but suddenly his nose caught the odour of dried fish; he looked at the breeches of the theologian, who walked by his side, and saw a huge fish’s tail sticking out of his pocket. The latter had already seized the opportunity to steal a whole fish from one of the carts standing in the court-yard. He had not done this from hunger so much as from the force of habit. He had quite forgotten the fish, and was looking about to see whether he could not find something else to appropriate. Then the philosopher put his hand in the theologian’s pocket as though it were his own, and laid hold of his prize.

The old woman found a special resting-place for each student; the rhetorician she put in a shed, the theologian in an empty store-room, and the philosopher in a sheep’s stall.

As soon as the philosopher was alone, he devoured the fish in a twinkling, examined the fence which enclosed the stall, kicked away a pig from a neighbouring stall, which had inquiringly inserted its nose through a crevice, and lay down on his right side to sleep like a corpse.

Then the low door opened, and the old woman came crouching into the stall.

“Well, mother, what do you want here?” asked the philosopher.

She made no answer, but came with outstretched arms towards him.

The philosopher shrank back; but she still approached, as though she wished to lay hold of him. A terrible fright seized him, for he saw the old hag’s eyes sparkle in an extraordinary way. “Away with you, old witch, away with you!” he shouted. But she still stretched her hands after him.

He jumped up in order to rush out, but she placed herself before the door, fixed her glowing eyes upon him, and again approached him. The philosopher

tried to push her away with his hands, but to his astonishment he found that he could neither lift his hands nor move his legs, nor utter an audible word. He only heard his heart beating, and saw the old woman approach him, place his hands crosswise on his breast, and bend his head down. Then with the agility of a cat she sprang on his shoulders, struck him on the side with a broom, and he began to run like a race-horse, carrying her on his shoulders.

All this happened with such swiftness, that the philosopher could scarcely collect his thoughts. He laid hold of his knees with both hands in order to stop his legs from running; but to his great astonishment they kept moving forward against his will, making rapid springs like a Caucasian horse.

Not till the house had been left behind them and a wide plain stretched before them, bordered on one side by a black gloomy wood, did he say to himself, “Ah! it is a witch!”

The half-moon shone pale and high in the sky. Its mild light, still more subdued by intervening clouds, fell like a transparent veil on the earth. Woods, meadows, hills, and valleys — all seemed to be sleeping with open eyes; nowhere was a breath of air stirring. The atmosphere was moist and warm; the shadows of the trees and bushes fell sharply defined on the sloping plain. Such was the night through which the philosopher Thomas Brutus sped with his strange rider.

A strange, oppressive, and yet sweet sensation took possession of his heart. He looked down and saw how the grass beneath his feet seemed to be quite deep and far away; over it there flowed a flood of crystal-clear water, and the grassy plain looked like the bottom of a transparent sea. He saw his own image, and that of the old woman whom he carried on his back, clearly reflected in it. Then he beheld how, instead of the moon, a strange sun shone there; he heard the deep tones of bells, and saw them swinging. He saw a water-nixie rise from a bed of tall reeds; she turned to him, and her face was clearly visible, and she sang a song which penetrated his soul; then she approached him and nearly reached the surface of the water, on which she burst into laughter and again disappeared.

Did he see it or did he not see it? Was he dreaming or was he awake? But what was that below — wind or music? It sounded and drew nearer, and penetrated his soul like a song that rose and fell. “What is it?” he thought as he gazed into the depths, and still sped rapidly along.

The perspiration flowed from him in streams; he experienced simultaneously a strange feeling of oppression and delight in all his being. Often he felt as though he had no longer a heart, and pressed his hand on his breast with alarm.

Weary to death, he began to repeat all the prayers which he knew, and all the formulas of exorcism against evil spirits. Suddenly he experienced a certain

relief. He felt that his pace was slackening; the witch weighed less heavily on his shoulders, and the thick herbage of the plain was again beneath his feet, with nothing especial to remark about it.

“Splendid!” thought the philosopher Thomas, and began to repeat his exorcisms in a still louder voice.

Then suddenly he wrenched himself away from under the witch, and sprang on her back in his turn. She began to run, with short, trembling steps indeed, but so rapidly that he could hardly breathe. So swiftly did she run that she hardly seemed to touch the ground. They were still on the plain, but owing to the rapidity of their flight everything seemed indistinct and confused before his eyes. He seized a stick that was lying on the ground, and began to belabour the hag with all his might. She uttered a wild cry, which at first sounded raging and threatening; then it became gradually weaker and more gentle, till at last it sounded quite low like the pleasant tones of a silver bell, so that it penetrated his innermost soul. Involuntarily the thought passed through his mind:

“Is she really an old woman?”

“Ah! I can go no farther,” she said in a faint voice, and sank to the earth.

He knelt beside her, and looked in her eyes. The dawn was red in the sky, and in the distance glimmered the gilt domes of the churches of Kieff. Before him lay a beautiful maiden with thick, dishevelled hair and long eyelashes. Unconsciously she had stretched out her white, bare arms, and her tear-filled eyes gazed at the sky.

Thomas trembled like an aspen-leaf. Sympathy, and a strange feeling of excitement, and a hitherto unknown fear overpowered him. He began to run with all his might. His heart beat violently, and he could not explain to himself what a strange, new feeling had seized him. He did not wish to return to the village, but hastened towards Kieff, thinking all the way as he went of his weird, unaccountable adventure.

There were hardly any students left in the town; they were all scattered about the country, and had either taken tutors’ posts or simply lived without occupation; for at the farms in Little Russia one can live comfortably and at ease without paying a farthing. The great half-decayed building in which the seminary was established was completely empty; and however much the philosopher searched in all its corners for a piece of lard and bread, he could not find even one of the hard biscuits which the seminarists were in the habit of hiding.

But the philosopher found a means of extricating himself from his difficulties by making friends with a certain young widow in the market-place who sold ribbons, etc. The same evening he found himself being stuffed with cakes and

fowl; in fact it is impossible to say how many things were placed before him on a little table in an arbour shaded by cherry-trees.

Later on the same evening the philosopher was to be seen in an ale-house. He lay on a bench, smoked his pipe in his usual way, and threw the Jewish publican a gold piece. He had a jug of ale standing before him, looked on all who went in and out in a cold-blooded, self-satisfied way, and thought no more of his strange adventure.

. . . . . .

About this time a report spread about that the daughter of a rich colonel, whose estate lay about fifty versts distant from Kieff, had returned home one day from a walk in a quite broken-down condition. She had scarcely enough strength to reach her father's house; now she lay dying, and had expressed a wish that for three days after her death the prayers for the dead should be recited by a Kieff seminarist named Thomas Brutus.

This fact was communicated to the philosopher by the rector of the seminary himself, who sent for him to his room and told him that he must start at once, as a rich colonel had sent his servants and a kibitka for him. The philosopher trembled, and was seized by an uncomfortable feeling which he could not define. He had a gloomy foreboding that some evil was about to befall him. Without knowing why, he declared that he did not wish to go.

"Listen, Thomas," said the rector, who under certain circumstances spoke very politely to his pupils; "I have no idea of asking you whether you wish to go or not. I only tell you that if you think of disobeying, I will have you so soundly flogged on the back with young birch-rods, that you need not think of having a bath for a long time."

The philosopher scratched the back of his head, and went out silently, intending to make himself scarce at the first opportunity. Lost in thought, he descended the steep flight of steps which led to the court-yard, thickly planted with poplars; there he remained standing for a moment, and heard quite distinctly the rector giving orders in a loud voice to his steward, and to another person, probably one of the messengers sent by the colonel.

"Thank your master for the peeled barley and the eggs," said the rector; "and tell him that as soon as the books which he mentions in his note are ready, I will send them. I have already given them to a clerk to be copied. And don't forget to remind your master that he has some excellent fish, especially prime sturgeon, in his ponds; he might send me some when he has the opportunity, as here in the market the fish are bad and dear. And you, Jantukh, give the colonel's man a glass of brandy. And mind you tie up the philosopher, or he will show you a clean pair of heels."

“Listen to the scoundrel!” thought the philosopher. “He has smelt a rat, the long-legged stork!”

He descended into the court-yard and beheld there a kibitka, which he at first took for a barn on wheels. It was, in fact, as roomy as a kiln, so that bricks might have been made inside it. It was one of those remarkable Cracow vehicles in which Jews travelled from town to town in scores, wherever they thought they would find a market. Six stout, strong, though somewhat elderly Cossacks were standing by it. Their gold-braided coats of fine cloth showed that their master was rich and of some importance; and certain little scars testified to their valour on the battle-field.

“What can I do?” thought the philosopher. “There is no escaping one’s destiny.” So he stepped up to the Cossacks and said “Good day, comrades.”

“Welcome, Mr Philosopher!” some of them answered.

“Well, I am to travel with you! It is a magnificent vehicle,” he continued as he got into it. “If there were only musicians present, one might dance in it.”

“Yes, it is a roomy carriage,” said one of the Cossacks, taking his seat by the coachman. The latter had tied a cloth round his head, as he had already found an opportunity of pawning his cap in the ale-house. The other five, with the philosopher, got into the capacious kibitka, and sat upon sacks which were filled with all sorts of articles purchased in the city.

“I should like to know,” said the philosopher, “if this equipage were laden with salt or iron, how many horses would be required to draw it?”

“Yes,” said the Cossack who sat by the coachman, after thinking a short time, “it would require a good many horses.”

After giving this satisfactory answer, the Cossack considered himself entitled to remain silent for the whole of the rest of the journey.

The philosopher would gladly have found out who the colonel was, and what sort of a character he had. He was also curious to know about his daughter, who had returned home in such a strange way and now lay dying, and whose destiny seemed to be mingled with his own; and wanted to know the sort of life that was lived in the colonel’s house. But the Cossacks were probably philosophers like himself, for in answer to his inquiries they only blew clouds of tobacco and settled themselves more comfortably on their sacks.

Meanwhile, one of them addressed to the coachman on the box a brief command: “Keep your eyes open, Overko, you old sleepy-head, and when you come to the ale-house on the road to Tchukrailoff, don’t forget to pull up and wake me and the other fellows if we are asleep.” Then he began to snore pretty loud. But in any case his admonition was quite superfluous; for scarcely had the enormous equipage begun to approach the aforesaid ale-house, than they all

cried with one mouth “Halt! Halt!” Besides this, Overko’s horse was accustomed to stop outside every inn of its own accord.

In spite of the intense July heat, they all got out and entered a low, dirty room where a Jewish innkeeper received them in a friendly way as old acquaintances. He brought in the skirt of his long coat some sausages, and laid them on the table, where, though forbidden by the Talmud, they looked very seductive. All sat down at table, and it was not long before each of the guests had an earthenware jug standing in front of him. The philosopher Thomas had to take part in the feast, and as the Little Russians when they are intoxicated always begin to kiss each other or to weep, the whole room soon began to echo with demonstrations of affection.

“Come here, come here, Spirid, let me embrace thee!”

“Come here, Dorosch, let me press you to my heart!”

One Cossack, with a grey moustache, the eldest of them all, leant his head on his hand and began to weep bitterly because he was an orphan and alone in God’s wide world. Another tall, loquacious man did his best to comfort him, saying, “Don’t weep, for God’s sake, don’t weep! For over there — God knows best.”

The Cossack who had been addressed as Dorosch was full of curiosity, and addressed many questions to the philosopher Thomas. “I should like to know,” he said, “what you learn in your seminary; do you learn the same things as the deacon reads to us in church, or something else?”

“Don’t ask,” said the consoler; “let them learn what they like. God knows what is to happen; God knows everything.”

“No, I will know,” answered Dorosch, “I will know what is written in their books; perhaps it is something quite different from that in the deacon’s book.”

“O good heavens!” said the other, “why all this talk? It is God’s will, and one cannot change God’s arrangements.”

“But I will know everything that is written; I will enter the seminary too, by heaven I will! Do you think perhaps I could not learn? I will learn everything, everything.”

“Oh, heavens!” exclaimed the consoler, and let his head sink on the table, for he could no longer hold it upright.

The other Cossacks talked about the nobility, and why there was a moon in the sky.

When the philosopher Thomas saw the state they were in, he determined to profit by it, and to make his escape. In the first place he turned to the grey-headed Cossack, who was lamenting the loss of his parents. “But, little uncle,” he said to him, “why do you weep so? I too am an orphan! Let me go, children;

why do you want me?”

“Let him go!” said some of them, “he is an orphan, let him go where he likes.”

They were about to take him outside themselves, when the one who had displayed a special thirst for knowledge, stopped them, saying, “No, I want to talk with him about the seminary; I am going to the seminary myself.”

Moreover, it was not yet certain whether the philosopher could have executed his project of flight, for when he tried to rise from his chair, he felt as though his feet were made of wood, and he began to see such a number of doors leading out of the room that it would have been difficult for him to have found the right one.

It was not till evening that the company remembered that they must continue their journey. They crowded into the kibitka, whipped up the horses, and struck up a song, the words and sense of which were hard to understand. During a great part of the night, they wandered about, having lost the road which they ought to have been able to find blindfolded. At last they drove down a steep descent into a valley, and the philosopher noticed, by the sides of the road, hedges, behind which he caught glimpses of small trees and house-roofs. All these belonged to the colonel’s estate.

It was already long past midnight. The sky was dark, though little stars glimmered here and there; no light was to be seen in any of the houses. They drove into a large court-yard, while the dogs barked. On all sides were barns and cottages with thatched roofs. Just opposite the gateway was a house, which was larger than the others, and seemed to be the colonel’s dwelling. The kibitka stopped before a small barn, and the travellers hastened into it and laid themselves down to sleep. The philosopher however attempted to look at the exterior of the house, but, rub his eyes as he might, he could distinguish nothing; the house seemed to turn into a bear, and the chimney into the rector of the seminary. Then he gave it up and lay down to sleep.

When he woke up the next morning, the whole house was in commotion; the young lady had died during the night. The servants ran hither and thither in a distracted state; the old women wept and lamented; and a number of curious people gazed through the enclosure into the court-yard, as though there were something special to be seen. The philosopher began now to inspect the locality and the buildings, which he had not been able to do during the night.

The colonel’s house was one of those low, small buildings, such as used formerly to be constructed in Russia. It was thatched with straw; a small, high-peaked gable, with a window shaped like an eye, was painted all over with blue and yellow flowers and red crescent-moons; it rested on little oaken pillars, which were round above the middle, hexagonal below, and whose capitals were adorned with quaint carvings. Under this gable was a small staircase with seats

at the foot of it on either side.

The walls of the house were supported by similar pillars. Before the house stood a large pear-tree of pyramidal shape, whose leaves incessantly trembled. A double row of buildings formed a broad street leading up to the colonel's house. Behind the barns near the entrance-gate stood two three-cornered wine-houses, also thatched with straw; each of the stone walls had a door in it, and was covered with all kinds of paintings. On one was represented a Cossack sitting on a barrel and swinging a large pitcher over his head; it bore the inscription "I will drink all that!" Elsewhere were painted large and small bottles, a beautiful girl, a running horse, a pipe, and a drum bearing the words "Wine is the Cossack's joy."

In the loft of one of the barns one saw through a huge round window a drum and some trumpets. At the gate there stood two cannons. All this showed that the colonel loved a cheerful life, and the whole place often rang with sounds of merriment. Before the gate were two windmills, and behind the house gardens sloped away; through the tree-tops the dark chimneys of the peasants' houses were visible. The whole village lay on a broad, even plateau, in the middle of a mountain-slope which culminated in a steep summit on the north side. When seen from below, it looked still steeper. Here and there on the top the irregular stems of the thick steppe-brooms showed in dark relief against the blue sky. The bare clay soil made a melancholy impression, worn as it was into deep furrows by rain-water. On the same slope there stood two cottages, and over one of them a huge apple-tree spread its branches; the roots were supported by small props, whose interstices were filled with mould. The apples, which were blown off by the wind, rolled down to the court-yard below. A road wound round the mountain to the village.

When the philosopher looked at this steep slope, and remembered his journey of the night before, he came to the conclusion that either the colonel's horses were very sagacious, or that the Cossacks must have very strong heads, as they ventured, even when the worse for drink, on such a road with the huge kibitka.

When the philosopher turned and looked in the opposite direction, he saw quite another picture. The village reached down to the plain; meadows stretched away to an immense distance, their bright green growing gradually dark; far away, about twenty versts off, many other villages were visible. To the right of these meadows were chains of hills, and in the remote distance one saw the Dnieper shimmer and sparkle like a mirror of steel.

"What a splendid country!" said the philosopher to himself. "It must be fine to live here! One could catch fish in the Dnieper, and in the ponds, and shoot and snare partridges and bustards; there must be quantities here. Much fruit might be dried here and sold in the town, or, better still, brandy might be distilled from it,

for fruit-brandy is the best of all. But what prevents me thinking of my escape after all?”

Behind the hedge he saw a little path which was almost entirely concealed by the high grass of the steppe. The philosopher approached it mechanically, meaning at first to walk a little along it unobserved, and then quite quietly to gain the open country behind the peasants’ houses. Suddenly he felt the pressure of a fairly heavy hand on his shoulder.

Behind him stood the same old Cossack who yesterday had so bitterly lamented the death of his father and mother, and his own loneliness. “You are giving yourself useless trouble, Mr Philosopher, if you think you can escape from us,” he said. “One cannot run away here; and besides, the roads are too bad for walkers. Come to the colonel; he has been waiting for you for some time in his room.”

“Yes, of course! What are you talking about? I will come with the greatest pleasure,” said the philosopher, and followed the Cossack.

The colonel was an elderly man; his moustache was grey, and his face wore the signs of deep sadness. He sat in his room by a table, with his head propped on both hands. He seemed about five-and-fifty, but his attitude of utter despair, and the pallor on his face, showed that his heart had been suddenly broken, and that all his former cheerfulness had for ever disappeared.

When Thomas entered with the Cossack, he answered their deep bows with a slight inclination of the head.

“Who are you, whence do you come, and what is your profession, my good man?” asked the colonel in an even voice, neither friendly nor austere.

“I am a student of philosophy; my name is Thomas Brutus.”

“And who was your father?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“And your mother?”

“I don’t know either; I know that I must have had a mother, but who she was, and where she lived, by heavens, I do not know.”

The colonel was silent, and seemed for a moment lost in thought. “Where did you come to know my daughter?”

“I do not know her, gracious sir; I declare I do not know her.”

“Why then has she chosen you, and no one else, to offer up prayers for her?”

The philosopher shrugged his shoulders. “God only knows. It is a well-known fact that grand people often demand things which the most learned man cannot comprehend; and does not the proverb say, ‘Dance, devil, as the Lord commands!’”

“Aren’t you talking nonsense, Mr Philosopher?”

“May the lightning strike me on the spot if I lie.”

“If she had only lived a moment longer,” said the colonel sadly, “then I had certainly found out everything. She said, ‘Let no one offer up prayers for me, but send, father, at once to the seminary in Kieff for the student Thomas Brutus; he shall pray three nights running for my sinful soul — he knows.’ But what he really knows she never said. The poor dove could speak no more, and died. Good man, you are probably well known for your sanctity and devout life, and she has perhaps heard of you.”

“What? Of me?” said the philosopher, and took a step backward in amazement. “I and sanctity!” he exclaimed, and stared at the colonel. “God help us, gracious sir! What are you saying? It was only last Holy Thursday that I paid a visit to the tart-shop.”

“Well, she must at any rate have had some reason for making the arrangement, and you must begin your duties to-day.”

“I should like to remark to your honour — naturally everyone who knows the Holy Scripture at all can in his measure — but I believe it would be better on this occasion to send for a deacon or subdeacon. They are learned people, and they know exactly what is to be done. I have not got a good voice, nor any official standing.”

“You may say what you like, but I shall carry out all my dove’s wishes. If you read the prayers for her three nights through in the proper way, I will reward you; and if not — I advise the devil himself not to oppose me!”

The colonel spoke the last words in such an emphatic way that the philosopher quite understood them.

“Follow me!” said the colonel.

They went into the hall. The colonel opened a door which was opposite his own. The philosopher remained for a few minutes in the hall in order to look about him; then he stepped over the threshold with a certain nervousness.

The whole floor of the room was covered with red cloth. In a corner under the icons of the saints, on a table covered with a gold-bordered, velvet cloth, lay the body of the girl. Tall candles, round which were wound branches of the “calina,” stood at her head and feet, and burned dimly in the broad daylight. The face of the dead was not to be seen, as the inconsolable father sat before his daughter, with his back turned to the philosopher. The words which the latter overheard filled him with a certain fear:

“I do not mourn, my daughter, that in the flower of your age you have prematurely left the earth, to my grief; but I mourn, my dove, that I do not know my deadly enemy who caused your death. Had I only known that anyone could even conceive the idea of insulting you, or of speaking a disrespectful word to

you, I swear by heaven he would never have seen his children again, if he had been as old as myself; nor his father and mother, if he had been young. And I would have thrown his corpse to the birds of the air, and the wild beasts of the steppe. But woe is me, my flower, my dove, my light! I will spend the remainder of my life without joy, and wipe the bitter tears which flow out of my old eyes, while my enemy will rejoice and laugh in secret over the helpless old man!”

He paused, overpowered by grief, and streams of tears flowed down his cheeks.

The philosopher was deeply affected by the sight of such inconsolable sorrow. He coughed gently in order to clear his throat. The colonel turned and signed to him to take his place at the head of the dead girl, before a little prayer-desk on which some books lay.

“I can manage to hold out for three nights,” thought the philosopher; “and then the colonel will fill both my pockets with ducats.”

He approached the dead girl, and after coughing once more, began to read, without paying attention to anything else, and firmly resolved not to look at her face.

Soon there was deep silence, and he saw that the colonel had left the room. Slowly he turned his head in order to look at the corpse. A violent shudder thrilled through him; before him lay a form of such beauty as is seldom seen upon earth. It seemed to him that never in a single face had so much intensity of expression and harmony of feature been united. Her brow, soft as snow and pure as silver, seemed to be thinking; the fine, regular eyebrows shadowed proudly the closed eyes, whose lashes gently rested on her cheeks, which seemed to glow with secret longing; her lips still appeared to smile. But at the same time he saw something in these features which appalled him; a terrible depression seized his heart, as when in the midst of dance and song someone begins to chant a dirge. He felt as though those ruby lips were coloured with his own heart’s blood. Moreover, her face seemed dreadfully familiar.

“The witch!” he cried out in a voice which sounded strange to himself; then he turned away and began to read the prayers with white cheeks. It was the witch whom he had killed.

II

When the sun had sunk below the horizon, the corpse was carried into the church. The philosopher supported one corner of the black-draped coffin upon his shoulder, and felt an ice-cold shiver run through his body. The colonel walked in front of him, with his right hand resting on the edge of the coffin.

The wooden church, black with age and overgrown with green lichen, stood quite at the end of the village in gloomy solitude; it was adorned with three

round cupolas. One saw at the first glance that it had not been used for divine worship for a long time.

Lighted candles were standing before almost every icon. The coffin was set down before the altar. The old colonel kissed his dead daughter once more, and then left the church, together with the bearers of the bier, after he had ordered his servants to look after the philosopher and to take him back to the church after supper.

The coffin-bearers, when they returned to the house, all laid their hands on the stove. This custom is always observed in Little Russia by those who have seen a corpse.

The hunger which the philosopher now began to feel caused him for a while to forget the dead girl altogether. Gradually all the domestics of the house assembled in the kitchen; it was really a kind of club, where they were accustomed to gather. Even the dogs came to the door, wagging their tails in order to have bones and offal thrown to them.

If a servant was sent on an errand, he always found his way into the kitchen to rest there for a while, and to smoke a pipe. All the Cossacks of the establishment lay here during the whole day on and under the benches — in fact, wherever a place could be found to lie down in. Moreover, everyone was always leaving something behind in the kitchen — his cap, or his whip, or something of the sort. But the numbers of the club were not complete till the evening, when the groom came in after tying up his horses in the stable, the cowherd had shut up his cows in their stalls, and others collected there who were not usually seen in the day-time. During supper-time even the tongues of the laziest were set in motion. They talked of all and everything — of the new pair of breeches which someone had ordered for himself, of what might be in the centre of the earth, and of the wolf which someone had seen. There were a number of wits in the company — a class which is always represented in Little Russia.

The philosopher took his place with the rest in the great circle which sat round the kitchen door in the open-air. Soon an old woman with a red cap issued from it, bearing with both hands a large vessel full of hot “galuchkis,” which she distributed among them. Each drew out of his pocket a wooden spoon, or a one-pronged wooden fork. As soon as their jaws began to move a little more slowly, and their wolfish hunger was somewhat appeased, they began to talk. The conversation, as might be expected, turned on the dead girl.

“Is it true,” said a young shepherd, “is it true — though I cannot understand it — that our young mistress had traffic with evil spirits?”

“Who, the young lady?” answered Dorosch, whose acquaintance the philosopher had already made in the kibitka. “Yes, she was a regular witch! I can

swear that she was a witch!”

“Hold your tongue, Dorosch!” exclaimed another — the one who, during the journey, had played the part of a consoler. “We have nothing to do with that. May God be merciful to her! One ought not to talk of such things.”

But Dorosch was not at all inclined to be silent; he had just visited the wine-cellar with the steward on important business, and having stooped two or three times over one or two casks, he had returned in a very cheerful and loquacious mood.

“Why do you ask me to be silent?” he answered. “She has ridden on my own shoulders, I swear she has.”

“Say, uncle,” asked the young shepherd, “are there signs by which to recognise a sorceress?”

“No, there are not,” answered Dorosch; “even if you knew the Psalter by heart, you could not recognise one.”

“Yes, Dorosch, it is possible; don’t talk such nonsense,” retorted the former consoler. “It is not for nothing that God has given each some special peculiarity; the learned maintain that every witch has a little tail.”

“Every old woman is a witch,” said a grey-headed Cossack quite seriously.

“Yes, you are a fine lot,” retorted the old woman who entered at that moment with a vessel full of fresh “galuchkis.” “You are great fat pigs!”

A self-satisfied smile played round the lips of the old Cossack whose name was Javtuch, when he found that his remark had touched the old woman on a tender point. The shepherd burst into such a deep and loud explosion of laughter as if two oxen were lowing together.

This conversation excited in the philosopher a great curiosity, and a wish to obtain more exact information regarding the colonel’s daughter. In order to lead the talk back to the subject, he turned to his next neighbour and said, “I should like to know why all the people here think that the young lady was a witch. Has she done harm to anyone, or killed them by witchcraft?”

“Yes, there are reports of that kind,” answered a man, whose face was as flat as a shovel. “Who does not remember the huntsman Mikita, or the — — ”

“What has the huntsman Mikita got to do with it?” asked the philosopher.

“Stop; I will tell you the story of Mikita,” interrupted Dorosch.

“No, I will tell it,” said the groom, “for he was my godfather.”

“I will tell the story of Mikita,” said Spirid.

“Yes, yes, Spirid shall tell it,” exclaimed the whole company; and Spirid began.

“You, Mr Philosopher Thomas, did not know Mikita. Ah! he was an extraordinary man. He knew every dog as though he were his own father. The

present huntsman, Mikola, who sits three places away from me, is not fit to hold a candle to him, though good enough in his way; but compared to Mikita, he is a mere milksop."

"You tell the tale splendidly," exclaimed Dorosch, and nodded as a sign of approval.

Spirid continued.

"He saw a hare in the field quicker than you can take a pinch of snuff. He only needed to whistle 'Come here, Rasboy! Come here, Bosdraja!' and flew away on his horse like the wind, so that you could not say whether he went quicker than the dog or the dog than he. He could empty a quart pot of brandy in the twinkling of an eye. Ah! he was a splendid huntsman, only for some time he always had his eyes fixed on the young lady. Either he had fallen in love with her or she had bewitched him — in short, he went to the dogs. He became a regular old woman; yes, he became the devil knows what — it is not fitting to relate it."

"Very good," remarked Dorosch.

"If the young lady only looked at him, he let the reins slip out of his hands, called Bravko instead of Rasboy, stumbled, and made all kinds of mistakes. One day when he was currycombing a horse, the young lady came to him in the stable. 'Listen, Mikita,' she said. 'I should like for once to set my foot on you.' And he, the booby, was quite delighted, and answered, 'Don't only set your foot there, but sit on me altogether.' The young lady lifted her white little foot, and as soon as he saw it, his delight robbed him of his senses. He bowed his neck, the idiot, took her feet in both hands, and began to trot about like a horse all over the place. Whither they went he could not say; he returned more dead than alive, and from that time he wasted away and became as dry as a chip of wood. At last someone coming into the stable one day found instead of him only a handful of ashes and an empty jug; he had burned completely out. But it must be said he was a huntsman such as the world cannot match."

When Spirid had ended his tale, they all began to vie with one another in praising the deceased huntsman.

"And have you heard the story of Cheptchicha?" asked Dorosch, turning to Thomas.

"No."

"Ha! Ha! One sees they don't teach you much in your seminary. Well, listen. We have here in our village a Cossack called Cheptoun, a fine fellow. Sometimes indeed he amuses himself by stealing and lying without any reason; but he is a fine fellow for all that. His house is not far away from here. One evening, just about this time, Cheptoun and his wife went to bed after they had finished their day's work. Since it was fine weather, Cheptchicha went to sleep in the court-

yard, and Cheptoun in the house — no! I mean Cheptchicha went to sleep in the house on a bench and Cheptoun outside — — ”

“No, Cheptchicha didn’t go to sleep on a bench, but on the ground,” interrupted the old woman who stood at the door.

Dorosch looked at her, then at the ground, then again at her, and said after a pause, “If I tore your dress off your back before all these people, it wouldn’t look pretty.”

The rebuke was effectual. The old woman was silent, and did not interrupt again.

Dorosch continued.

“In the cradle which hung in the middle of the room lay a one-year-old child. I do not know whether it was a boy or a girl. Cheptchicha had lain down, and heard on the other side of the door a dog scratching and howling loud enough to frighten anyone. She was afraid, for women are such simple folk that if one puts out one’s tongue at them behind the door in the dark, their hearts sink into their boots. ‘But,’ she thought to herself, ‘I must give this cursed dog one on the snout to stop his howling!’ So she seized the poker and opened the door. But hardly had she done so than the dog rushed between her legs straight to the cradle. Then Cheptchicha saw that it was not a dog but the young lady; and if it had only been the young lady as she knew her it wouldn’t have mattered, but she looked quite blue, and her eyes sparkled like fiery coals. She seized the child, bit its throat, and began to suck its blood. Cheptchicha shrieked, ‘Ah! my darling child!’ and rushed out of the room. Then she saw that the house-door was shut and rushed up to the attic and sat there, the stupid woman, trembling all over. Then the young lady came after her and bit her too, poor fool! The next morning Cheptoun carried his wife, all bitten and wounded, down from the attic, and the next day she died. Such strange things happen in the world. One may wear fine clothes, but that does not matter; a witch is and remains a witch.”

After telling his story, Dorosch looked around him with a complacent air, and cleaned out his pipe with his little finger in order to fill it again. The story of the witch had made a deep impression on all, and each of them had something to say about her. One had seen her come to the door of his house in the form of a hayrick; from others she had stolen their caps or their pipes; she had cut off the hair-plaits of many girls in the village, and drunk whole pints of the blood of others.

At last the whole company observed that they had gossiped over their time, for it was already night. All looked for a sleeping place — some in the kitchen and others in the barn or the court-yard.

“Now, Mr Thomas, it is time that we go to the dead,” said the grey-headed

Cossack, turning to the philosopher. All four — Spirid, Dorosch, the old Cossack, and the philosopher — betook themselves to the church, keeping off with their whips the wild dogs who roamed about the roads in great numbers and bit the sticks of passers-by in sheer malice.

Although the philosopher had seized the opportunity of fortifying himself beforehand with a stiff glass of brandy, yet he felt a certain secret fear which increased as he approached the church, which was lit up within. The strange tales he had heard had made a deep impression on his imagination. They had passed the thick hedges and trees, and the country became more open. At last they reached the small enclosure round the church; behind it there were no more trees, but a huge, empty plain dimly visible in the darkness. The three Cossacks ascended the steep steps with Thomas, and entered the church. Here they left the philosopher, expressing their hope that he would successfully accomplish his duties, and locked him in as their master had ordered.

He was left alone. At first he yawned, then he stretched himself, blew on both hands, and finally looked round him. In the middle of the church stood the black bier; before the dark pictures of saints burned the candles, whose light only illuminated the icons, and cast a faint glimmer into the body of the church; all the corners were in complete darkness. The lofty icons seemed to be of considerable age; only a little of the original gilt remained on their broken traceries; the faces of the saints had become quite black and looked uncanny.

Once more the philosopher cast a glance around him. “Bother it!” said he to himself. “What is there to be afraid about? No living creature can get in, and as for the dead and those who come from the ‘other side,’ I can protect myself with such effectual prayers that they cannot touch me with the tips of their fingers. There is nothing to fear,” he repeated, swinging his arms. “Let us begin the prayers!”

As he approached one of the side-aisles, he noticed two packets of candles which had been placed there.

“That is fine,” he thought. “I must illuminate the whole church, till it is as bright as day. What a pity that one cannot smoke in it.”

He began to light the candles on all the wall-brackets and all the candelabra, as well as those already burning before the holy pictures; soon the whole church was brilliantly lit up. Only the darkness in the roof above seemed still denser by contrast, and the faces of the saints peering out of the frames looked as unearthly as before. He approached the bier, looked nervously at the face of the dead girl, could not help shuddering slightly, and involuntarily closed his eyes. What terrible and extraordinary beauty!

He turned away and tried to go to one side, but the strange curiosity and

peculiar fascination which men feel in moments of fear, compelled him to look again and again, though with a similar shudder. And in truth there was something terrible about the beauty of the dead girl. Perhaps she would not have inspired so much fear had she been less beautiful; but there was nothing ghastly or deathlike in the face, which wore rather an expression of life, and it seemed to the philosopher as though she were watching him from under her closed eyelids. He even thought he saw a tear roll from under the eyelash of her right eye, but when it was half-way down her cheek, he saw that it was a drop of blood.

He quickly went into one of the stalls, opened his book, and began to read the prayers in a very loud voice in order to keep up his courage. His deep voice sounded strange to himself in the grave-like silence; it aroused no echo in the silent and desolate wooden walls of the church.

“What is there to be afraid of?” he thought to himself. “She will not rise from her bier, since she fears God’s word. She will remain quietly resting. Yes, and what sort of a Cossack should I be, if I were afraid? The fact is, I have drunk a little too much — that is why I feel so queer. Let me take a pinch of snuff. It is really excellent — first-rate!”

At the same time he cast a furtive glance over the pages of the prayer-book towards the bier, and involuntarily he said to himself, “There! See! She is getting up! Her head is already above the edge of the coffin!”

But a death-like silence prevailed; the coffin was motionless, and all the candles shone steadily. It was an awe-inspiring sight, this church lit up at midnight, with the corpse in the midst, and no living soul near but one. The philosopher began to sing in various keys in order to stifle his fears, but every moment he glanced across at the coffin, and involuntarily the question came to his lips, “Suppose she rose up after all?”

But the coffin did not move. Nowhere was there the slightest sound nor stir. Not even did a cricket chirp in any corner. There was nothing audible but the slight sputtering of some distant candle, or the faint fall of a drop of wax.

“Suppose she rose up after all?”

He raised his head. Then he looked round him wildly and rubbed his eyes. Yes, she was no longer lying in the coffin, but sitting upright. He turned away his eyes, but at once looked again, terrified, at the coffin. She stood up; then she walked with closed eyes through the church, stretching out her arms as though she wanted to seize someone.

She now came straight towards him. Full of alarm, he traced with his finger a circle round himself; then in a loud voice he began to recite the prayers and formulas of exorcism which he had learnt from a monk who had often seen witches and evil spirits.

She had almost reached the edge of the circle which he had traced; but it was evident that she had not the power to enter it. Her face wore a bluish tint like that of one who has been several days dead.

Thomas had not the courage to look at her, so terrible was her appearance; her teeth chattered and she opened her dead eyes, but as in her rage she saw nothing, she turned in another direction and felt with outstretched arms among the pillars and corners of the church in the hope of seizing him.

At last she stood still, made a threatening gesture, and then lay down again in the coffin.

The philosopher could not recover his self-possession, and kept on gazing anxiously at it. Suddenly it rose from its place and began hurtling about the church with a whizzing sound. At one time it was almost directly over his head; but the philosopher observed that it could not pass over the area of his charmed circle, so he kept on repeating his formulas of exorcism. The coffin now fell with a crash in the middle of the church, and remained lying there motionless. The corpse rose again; it had now a greenish-blue colour, but at the same moment the distant crowing of a cock was audible, and it lay down again.

The philosopher's heart beat violently, and the perspiration poured in streams from his face; but heartened by the crowing of the cock, he rapidly repeated the prayers.

As the first light of dawn looked through the windows, there came a deacon and the grey-haired Javtuk, who acted as sacristan, in order to release him. When he had reached the house, he could not sleep for a long time; but at last weariness overpowered him, and he slept till noon. When he awoke, his experiences of the night appeared to him like a dream. He was given a quart of brandy to strengthen him.

At table he was again talkative and ate a fairly large sucking pig almost without assistance. But none the less he resolved to say nothing of what he had seen, and to all curious questions only returned the answer, "Yes, some wonderful things happened."

The philosopher was one of those men who, when they have had a good meal, are uncommonly amiable. He lay down on a bench, with his pipe in his mouth, looked blandly at all, and expectorated every minute.

But as the evening approached, he became more and more pensive. About supper-time nearly the whole company had assembled in order to play "krapli." This is a kind of game of skittles, in which, instead of bowls, long staves are used, and the winner has the right to ride on the back of his opponent. It provided the spectators with much amusement; sometimes the groom, a huge man, would clamber on the back of the swineherd, who was slim and short and

shrunken; another time the groom would present his own back, while Dorosch sprang on it shouting, “What a regular ox!” Those of the company who were more staid sat by the threshold of the kitchen. They looked uncommonly serious, smoked their pipes, and did not even smile when the younger ones went into fits of laughter over some joke of the groom or Spirid.

Thomas vainly attempted to take part in the game; a gloomy thought was firmly fixed like a nail in his head. In spite of his desperate efforts to appear cheerful after supper, fear had overmastered his whole being, and it increased with the growing darkness.

“Now it is time for us to go, Mr Student!” said the grey-haired Cossack, and stood up with Dorosch. “Let us betake ourselves to our work.”

Thomas was conducted to the church in the same way as on the previous evening; again he was left alone, and the door was bolted behind him.

As soon as he found himself alone, he began to feel in the grip of his fears. He again saw the dark pictures of the saints in their gilt frames, and the black coffin, which stood menacing and silent in the middle of the church.

“Never mind!” he said to himself. “I am over the first shock. The first time I was frightened, but I am not so at all now — no, not at all!”

He quickly went into a stall, drew a circle round him with his finger, uttered some prayers and formulas for exorcism, and then began to read the prayers for the dead in a loud voice and with the fixed resolution not to look up from the book nor take notice of anything.

He did so for an hour, and began to grow a little tired; he cleared his throat and drew his snuff-box out of his pocket, but before he had taken a pinch he looked nervously towards the coffin.

A sudden chill shot through him. The witch was already standing before him on the edge of the circle, and had fastened her green eyes upon him. He shuddered, looked down at the book, and began to read his prayers and exorcisms aloud. Yet all the while he was aware how her teeth chattered, and how she stretched out her arms to seize him. But when he cast a hasty glance towards her, he saw that she was not looking in his direction, and it was clear that she could not see him.

Then she began to murmur in an undertone, and terrible words escaped her lips — words that sounded like the bubbling of boiling pitch. The philosopher did not know their meaning, but he knew that they signified something terrible, and were intended to counteract his exorcisms.

After she had spoken, a stormy wind arose in the church, and there was a noise like the rushing of many birds. He heard the noise of their wings and claws as they flapped against and scratched at the iron bars of the church windows.

There were also violent blows on the church door, as if someone were trying to break it in pieces.

The philosopher's heart beat violently; he did not dare to look up, but continued to read the prayers without a pause. At last there was heard in the distance the shrill sound of a cock's crow. The exhausted philosopher stopped and gave a great sigh of relief.

Those who came to release him found him more dead than alive; he had leant his back against the wall, and stood motionless, regarding them without any expression in his eyes. They were obliged almost to carry him to the house; he then shook himself, asked for and drank a quart of brandy. He passed his hand through his hair and said, "There are all sorts of horrors in the world, and such dreadful things happen that — — " Here he made a gesture as though to ward off something. All who heard him bent their heads forward in curiosity. Even a small boy, who ran on everyone's errands, stood by with his mouth wide open.

Just then a young woman in a close-fitting dress passed by. She was the old cook's assistant, and very coquettish; she always stuck something in her bodice by way of ornament, a ribbon or a flower, or even a piece of paper if she could find nothing else.

"Good day, Thomas," she said, as she saw the philosopher. "Dear me! what has happened to you?" she exclaimed, striking her hands together.

"Well, what is it, you silly creature?"

"Good heavens! You have grown quite grey!"

"Yes, so he has!" said Spirid, regarding him more closely. "You have grown as grey as our old Javtuk."

When the philosopher heard that, he hastened into the kitchen, where he had noticed on the wall a dirty, three-cornered piece of looking-glass. In front of it hung some forget-me-nots, evergreens, and a small garland — a proof that it was the toilette-glass of the young coquette. With alarm he saw that it actually was as they had said — his hair was quite grizzled.

He sank into a reverie; at last he said to himself, "I will go to the colonel, tell him all, and declare that I will read no more prayers. He must send me back at once to Kieff." With this intention he turned towards the door-steps of the colonel's house.

The colonel was sitting motionless in his room; his face displayed the same hopeless grief which Thomas had observed on it on his first arrival, only the hollows in his cheeks had deepened. It was obvious that he took very little or no food. A strange paleness made him look almost as though made of marble.

"Good day," he said as he observed Thomas standing, cap in hand, at the door. "Well, how are you getting on? All right?"

“Yes, sir, all right! Such hellish things are going on, that one would like to rush away as far as one’s feet can carry one.”

“How so?”

“Your daughter, sir…. When one considers the matter, she is, of course, of noble descent — no one can dispute that; but don’t be angry, and may God grant her eternal rest!”

“Very well! What about her?”

“She is in league with the devil. She inspires one with such dread that all prayers are useless.”

“Pray! Pray! It was not for nothing that she sent for you. My dove was troubled about her salvation, and wished to expel all evil influences by means of prayer.”

“I swear, gracious sir, it is beyond my power.”

“Pray! Pray!” continued the colonel in the same persuasive tone. “There is only one night more; you are doing a Christian work, and I will reward you richly.”

“However great your rewards may be, I will not read the prayers any more, sir,” said Thomas in a tone of decision.

“Listen, philosopher!” said the colonel with a menacing air. “I will not allow any objections. In your seminary you may act as you like, but here it won’t do. If I have you knouted, it will be somewhat different to the rector’s canings. Do you know what a strong ‘kantchuk’ is?”

“Of course I do,” said the philosopher in a low voice; “a number of them together are insupportable.”

“Yes, I think so too. But you don’t know yet how hot my fellows can make it,” replied the colonel threateningly. He sprang up, and his face assumed a fierce, despotic expression, betraying the savagery of his nature, which had been only temporarily modified by grief. “After the first flogging they pour on brandy and then repeat it. Go away and finish your work. If you don’t obey, you won’t be able to stand again, and if you do, you will get a thousand ducats.”

“That is a devil of a fellow,” thought the philosopher to himself, and went out. “One can’t trifle with him. But wait a little, my friend; I will escape you so cleverly, that even your hounds can’t find me!”

He determined, under any circumstances, to run away, and only waited till the hour after dinner arrived, when all the servants were accustomed to take a nap on the hay in the barn, and to snore and puff so loudly that it sounded as if machinery had been set up there. At last the time came. Even Javtuch stretched himself out in the sun and closed his eyes. Tremblingly, and on tiptoe, the philosopher stole softly into the garden, whence he thought he could escape

more easily into the open country. This garden was generally so choked up with weeds that it seemed admirably adapted for such an attempt. With the exception of a single path used by the people of the house, the whole of it was covered with cherry-trees, elder-bushes, and tall heath-thistles with fibrous red buds. All these trees and bushes had been thickly overgrown with ivy, which formed a kind of roof. Its tendrils reached to the hedge and fell down on the other side in snake-like curves among the small, wild field-flowers. Behind the hedge which bordered the garden was a dense mass of wild heather, in which it did not seem probable that anyone would care to venture himself, and the strong, stubborn stems of which seemed likely to baffle any attempt to cut them.

As the philosopher was about to climb over the hedge, his teeth chattered, and his heart beat so violently that he felt frightened at it. The skirts of his long cloak seemed to cling to the ground as though they had been fastened to it by pegs. When he had actually got over the hedge he seemed to hear a shrill voice crying behind him “Whither? Whither?”

He jumped into the heather and began to run, stumbling over old roots and treading on unfortunate moles. When he had emerged from the heather he saw that he still had a wide field to cross, behind which was a thick, thorny underwood. This, according to his calculation, must stretch as far as the road leading to Kieff, and if he reached it he would be safe. Accordingly he ran over the field and plunged into the thorny copse. Every sharp thorn he encountered tore a fragment from his coat. Then he reached a small open space; in the centre of it stood a willow, whose branches hung down to the earth, and close by flowed a clear spring bright as silver. The first thing the philosopher did was to lie down and drink eagerly, for he was intolerably thirsty.

“Splendid water!” he said, wiping his mouth. “This is a good place to rest in.”

“No, better run farther; perhaps we are being followed,” said a voice immediately behind him.

Thomas started and turned; before him stood Javtuch.

“This devil of a Javtuch!” he thought. “I should like to seize him by the feet and smash his hang-dog face against the trunk of a tree.”

“Why did you go round such a long way?” continued Javtuch. “You had much better have chosen the path by which I came; it leads directly by the stable. Besides, it is a pity about your coat. Such splendid cloth! How much did it cost an ell? Well, we have had a long enough walk; it is time to go home.”

The philosopher followed Javtuch in a very depressed state.

“Now the accursed witch will attack me in earnest,” he thought. “But what have I really to fear? Am I not a Cossack? I have read the prayers for two nights already; with God’s help I will get through the third night also. It is plain that the

witch must have a terrible load of guilt upon her, else the evil one would not help her so much."

Feeling somewhat encouraged by these reflections, he returned to the court-yard and asked Dorosch, who sometimes, by the steward's permission, had access to the wine-cellar, to fetch him a small bottle of brandy. The two friends sat down before a barn and drank a pretty large one. Suddenly the philosopher jumped up and said, "I want musicians! Bring some musicians!"

But without waiting for them he began to dance the "tropak" in the court-yard. He danced till tea-time, and the servants, who, as is usual in such cases, had formed a small circle round him, grew at last tired of watching him, and went away saying, "By heavens, the man can dance!"

Finally the philosopher lay down in the place where he had been dancing, and fell asleep. It was necessary to pour a bucket of cold water on his head to wake him up for supper. At the meal he enlarged on the topic of what a Cossack ought to be, and how he should not be afraid of anything in the world.

"It is time," said Javtuch; "let us go."

"I wish I could put a lighted match to your tongue," thought the philosopher; then he stood up and said, "Let us go."

On their way to the church, the philosopher kept looking round him on all sides, and tried to start a conversation with his companions; but both Javtuch and Dorosch remained silent. It was a weird night. In the distance wolves howled continually, and even the barking of the dogs had something unearthly about it.

"That doesn't sound like wolves howling, but something else," remarked Dorosch.

Javtuch still kept silence, and the philosopher did not know what answer to make.

They reached the church and walked over the old wooden planks, whose rotten condition showed how little the lord of the manor cared about God and his soul. Javtuch and Dorosch left the philosopher alone, as on the previous evenings.

There was still the same atmosphere of menacing silence in the church, in the centre of which stood the coffin with the terrible witch inside it.

"I am not afraid, by heavens, I am not afraid!" he said; and after drawing a circle round himself as before, he began to read the prayers and exorcisms.

An oppressive silence prevailed; the flickering candles filled the church with their clear light. The philosopher turned one page after another, and noticed that he was not reading what was in the book. Full of alarm, he crossed himself and began to sing a hymn. This calmed him somewhat, and he resumed his reading, turning the pages rapidly as he did so.

Suddenly in the midst of the sepulchral silence the iron lid of the coffin sprang open with a jarring noise, and the dead witch stood up. She was this time still more terrible in aspect than at first. Her teeth chattered loudly and her lips, through which poured a stream of dreadful curses, moved convulsively. A whirlwind arose in the church; the icons of the saints fell on the ground, together with the broken window-panes. The door was wrenched from its hinges, and a huge mass of monstrous creatures rushed into the church, which became filled with the noise of beating wings and scratching claws. All these creatures flew and crept about, seeking for the philosopher, from whose brain the last fumes of intoxication had vanished. He crossed himself ceaselessly and uttered prayer after prayer, hearing all the time the whole unclean swarm rustling about him, and brushing him with the tips of their wings. He had not the courage to look at them; he only saw one uncouth monster standing by the wall, with long, shaggy hair and two flaming eyes. Over him something hung in the air which looked like a gigantic bladder covered with countless crabs' claws and scorpions' stings, and with black clods of earth hanging from it. All these monsters stared about seeking him, but they could not find him, since he was protected by his sacred circle.

"Bring the Viy! Bring the Viy!" cried the witch.

A sudden silence followed; the howling of wolves was heard in the distance, and soon heavy footsteps resounded through the church. Thomas looked up furtively and saw that an ungainly human figure with crooked legs was being led into the church. He was quite covered with black soil, and his hands and feet resembled knotted roots. He trod heavily and stumbled at every step. His eyelids were of enormous length. With terror, Thomas saw that his face was of iron. They led him in by the arms and placed him near Thomas's circle.

"Raise my eyelids! I can't see anything!" said the Viy in a dull, hollow voice, and they all hastened to help in doing so.

"Don't look!" an inner voice warned the philosopher; but he could not restrain from looking.

"There he is!" exclaimed the Viy, pointing an iron finger at him; and all the monsters rushed on him at once.

Struck dumb with terror, he sank to the ground and died.

At that moment there sounded a cock's crow for the second time; the earth-spirits had not heard the first one. In alarm they hurried to the windows and the door to get out as quickly as possible. But it was too late; they all remained hanging as though fastened to the door and the windows.

When the priest came he stood amazed at such a desecration of God's house, and did not venture to read prayers there. The church remained standing as it

was, with the monsters hanging on the windows and the door. Gradually it became overgrown with creepers, bushes, and wild heather, and no one can discover it now.

. . . . . .

When the report of this event reached Kieff, and the theologian Khalava heard what a fate had overtaken the philosopher Thomas, he sank for a whole hour into deep reflection. He had greatly altered of late; after finishing his studies he had become bell-ringer of one of the chief churches in the city, and he always appeared with a bruised nose, because the belfry staircase was in a ruinous condition.

“Have you heard what has happened to Thomas?” said Tiberius Gorobetz, who had become a philosopher and now wore a moustache.

“Yes; God had appointed it so,” answered the bell-ringer. “Let us go to the ale-house; we will drink a glass to his memory.”

The young philosopher, who, with the enthusiasm of a novice, had made such full use of his privileges as a student that his breeches and coat and even his cap reeked of brandy and tobacco, agreed readily to the proposal.

“He was a fine fellow, Thomas,” said the bell-ringer as the limping innkeeper set the third jug of beer before him. “A splendid fellow! And lost his life for nothing!”

“I know why he perished,” said Gorobetz; “because he was afraid. If he had not feared her, the witch could have done nothing to him. One ought to cross oneself incessantly and spit exactly on her tail, and then not the least harm can happen. I know all about it, for here, in Kieff, all the old women in the market-place are witches.”

The bell-ringer nodded assent. But being aware that he could not say any more, he got up cautiously and went out, swaying to the right and left in order to find a hiding-place in the thick steppe grass outside the town. At the same time, in accordance with his old habits, he did not forget to steal an old boot-sole which lay on the ale-house bench.

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THE TALE OF HOW IVAN IVANOVICH QUARRELED WITH IVAN NIKIFOROVICH

CHAPTER I

IVAN IVANOVITCH AND IVAN NIKIFOROVITCH

A fine pelisse has Ivan Ivanovitch! splendid! And what lambskin! deuce take it, what lambskin! blue-black with silver lights. I'll forfeit, I know not what, if you find any one else owning such a one. Look at it, for heaven's sake, especially when he stands talking with any one! look at him side-ways: what a pleasure it is! To describe it is impossible: velvet! silver! fire! Nikolai the Wonder-worker, saint of God! why have I not such a pelisse? He had it made before Agafya Fedosyevna went to Kief. You know Agafya Fedosyevna who bit the assessor's ear off?

Ivan Ivanovitch is a very handsome man. What a house he has in Mirgorod! Around it on every side is a balcony on oaken pillars, and on the balcony are benches. Ivan Ivanovitch, when the weather gets too warm, throws off his pelisse and his remaining upper garments, and sits, in his shirt sleeves, on the balcony to observe what is going on in the courtyard and the street. What apples and pears he has under his very windows! You have but to open the window and the branches force themselves through into the room. All this is in front of the house; but you should see what he has in the garden. What is there not there? Plums, cherries, every sort of vegetable, sunflowers, cucumbers, melons, peas, a threshing-floor, and even a forge.

A very fine man, Ivan Ivanovitch! He is very fond of melons: they are his favourite food. As soon as he has dined, and come out on his balcony, in his shirt sleeves, he orders Gapka to bring two melons, and immediately cuts them himself, collects the seeds in a paper, and begins to eat. Then he orders Gapka to fetch the ink-bottle, and, with his own hand, writes this inscription on the paper of seeds: "These melons were eaten on such and such a date." If there was a guest present, then it reads, "Such and such a person assisted."

The late judge of Mirgorod always gazed at Ivan Ivanovitch's house with pleasure. The little house is very pretty. It pleases me because sheds and other

little additions are built on to it on all sides; so that, looking at it from a distance, only roofs are visible, rising one above another, and greatly resembling a plate full of pancakes, or, better still, fungi growing on the trunk of a tree. Moreover, the roof is all overgrown with weeds: a willow, an oak, and two apple-trees lean their spreading branches against it. Through the trees peep little windows with carved and white-washed shutters, which project even into the street.

A very fine man, Ivan Ivanovitch! The commissioner of Poltava knows him too. Dorosh Tarasovitch Pukhivotchka, when he leaves Khorola, always goes to his house. And when Father Peter, the Protopope who lives at Koliberdas, invites a few guests, he always says that he knows of no one who so well fulfils all his Christian duties and understands so well how to live as Ivan Ivanovitch.

How time flies! More than ten years have already passed since he became a widower. He never had any children. Gapka has children and they run about the court-yard. Ivan Ivanovitch always gives each of them a cake, or a slice of melon, or a pear.

Gapka carries the keys of the storerooms and cellars; but the key of the large chest which stands in his bedroom, and that of the centre storeroom, Ivan Ivanovitch keeps himself; Gapka is a healthy girl, with ruddy cheeks and calves, and goes about in coarse cloth garments.

And what a pious man is Ivan Ivanovitch! Every Sunday he dons his pelisse and goes to church. On entering, he bows on all sides, generally stations himself in the choir, and sings a very good bass. When the service is over, Ivan Ivanovitch cannot refrain from passing the poor people in review. He probably would not have cared to undertake this tiresome work if his natural goodness had not urged him to it. “Good-day, beggar!” he generally said, selecting the most crippled old woman, in the most patched and threadbare garments. “Whence come you, my poor woman?”

“I come from the farm, sir. ‘Tis two days since I have eaten or drunk: my own children drove me out.”

“Poor soul! why did you come hither?”

“To beg alms, sir, to see whether some one will not give me at least enough for bread.”

“Hm! so you want bread?” Ivan Ivanovitch generally inquired.

“How should it be otherwise? I am as hungry as a dog.”

“Hm!” replied Ivan Ivanovitch usually, “and perhaps you would like butter too?”

“Yes; everything which your kindness will give; I will be content with all.”

“Hm! Is butter better than bread?”

“How is a hungry person to choose? Anything you please, all is good.”

Thereupon the old woman generally extended her hand.

"Well, go with God's blessing," said Ivan Ivanovitch. "Why do you stand there? I'm not beating you." And turning to a second and a third with the same questions, he finally returns home, or goes to drink a little glass of vodka with his neighbour, Ivan Nikiforovitch, or the judge, or the chief of police.

Ivan Ivanovitch is very fond of receiving presents. They please him greatly.

A very fine man too is Ivan Nikiforovitch. They are such friends as the world never saw. Anton Prokofievitch Pupopuz, who goes about to this hour in his cinnamon-coloured surtout with blue sleeves and dines every Sunday with the judge, was in the habit of saying that the Devil himself had bound Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch together with a rope: where one went, the other followed.

Ivan Nikiforovitch has never married. Although it was reported that he was married it was completely false. I know Ivan Nikiforovitch very well, and am able to state that he never even had any intention of marrying. Where do all these scandals originate? In the same way it was rumoured that Ivan Nikiforovitch was born with a tail! But this invention is so clumsy and at the same time so horrible and indecent that I do not even consider it necessary to refute it for the benefit of civilised readers, to whom it is doubtless known that only witches, and very few even of these, have tails. Witches, moreover, belong more to the feminine than to the masculine gender.

In spite of their great friendship, these rare friends are not always agreed between themselves. Their characters can best be judged by comparing them. Ivan Ivanovitch has the usual gift of speaking in an extremely pleasant manner. Heavens! How he does speak! The feeling can best be described by comparing it to that which you experience when some one combs your head or draws his finger softly across your heel. You listen and listen until you drop your head. Pleasant, exceedingly pleasant! like the sleep after a bath. Ivan Nikiforovitch, on the contrary, is more reticent; but if he once takes up his parable, look out for yourself! He can talk your head off.

Ivan Ivanovitch is tall and thin: Ivan Nikiforovitch is rather shorter in stature, but he makes it up in thickness. Ivan Ivanovitch's head is like a radish, tail down; Ivan Nikiforovitch's like a radish with the tail up. Ivan Ivanovitch lolls on the balcony in his shirt sleeves after dinner only: in the evening he dons his pelisse and goes out somewhere, either to the village shop, where he supplies flour, or into the fields to catch quail. Ivan Nikiforovitch lies all day at his porch: if the day is not too hot he generally turns his back to the sun and will not go anywhere. If it happens to occur to him in the morning he walks through the yard, inspects the domestic affairs, and retires again to his room. In early days he

used to call on Ivan Ivanovitch. Ivan Ivanovitch is a very refined man, and never utters an impolite word. Ivan Nikiforovitch is not always on his guard. On such occasions Ivan Ivanovitch usually rises from his seat, and says, “Enough, enough, Ivan Nikiforovitch! It’s better to go out at once than to utter such godless words.”

Ivan Ivanovitch gets into a terrible rage if a fly falls into his beet-soup. Then he is fairly beside himself; he flings away his plate and the housekeeper catches it. Ivan Nikiforovitch is very fond of bathing; and when he gets up to the neck in water, orders a table and a samovar, or tea urn, to be placed on the water, for he is very fond of drinking tea in that cool position. Ivan Ivanovitch shaves twice a week; Ivan Nikiforovitch once. Ivan Ivanovitch is extremely curious. God preserve you if you begin to tell him anything and do not finish it! If he is displeased with anything he lets it be seen at once. It is very hard to tell from Ivan Nikiforovitch’s countenance whether he is pleased or angry; even if he is rejoiced at anything, he will not show it. Ivan Ivanovitch is of a rather timid character: Ivan Nikiforovitch, on the contrary, has, as the saying is, such full folds in his trousers that if you were to inflate them you might put the courtyard, with its storehouses and buildings, inside them.

Ivan Ivanovitch has large, expressive eyes, of a snuff colour, and a mouth shaped something like the letter V; Ivan Nikiforovitch has small, yellowish eyes, quite concealed between heavy brows and fat cheeks; and his nose is the shape of a ripe plum. If Ivanovitch treats you to snuff, he always licks the cover of his box first with his tongue, then taps on it with his finger and says, as he raises it, if you are an acquaintance, “Dare I beg you, sir, to give me the pleasure?” if a stranger, “Dare I beg you, sir, though I have not the honour of knowing your rank, name, and family, to do me the favour?” but Ivan Nikiforovitch puts his box straight into your hand and merely adds, “Do me the favour.” Neither Ivan Ivanovitch nor Ivan Nikiforovitch loves fleas; and therefore, neither Ivan Ivanovitch nor Ivan Nikiforovitch will, on no account, admit a Jew with his wares, without purchasing of him remedies against these insects, after having first rated him well for belonging to the Hebrew faith.

But in spite of numerous dissimilarities, Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch are both very fine fellows.

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CHAPTER II

FROM WHICH MAY BE SEEN WHENCE AROSE THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN IVAN IVANOVITCH AND IVAN NIKIFOROVITCH

One morning--it was in July--Ivan Ivanovitch was lying on his balcony. The day was warm; the air was dry, and came in gusts. Ivan Ivanovitch had been to town, to the mower's, and at the farm, and had succeeded in asking all the muzhiks and women whom he met all manner of questions. He was fearfully tired and had laid down to rest. As he lay there, he looked at the storehouse, the courtyard, the sheds, the chickens running about, and thought to himself, "Heavens! What a well-to-do man I am! What is there that I have not? Birds, buildings, granaries, everything I take a fancy to; genuine distilled vodka; pears and plums in the orchard; poppies, cabbages, peas in the garden; what is there that I have not? I should like to know what there is that I have not?"

As he put this question to himself, Ivan Ivanovitch reflected; and meantime his eyes, in their search after fresh objects, crossed the fence into Ivan Nikiforovitch's yard and involuntarily took note of a curious sight. A fat woman was bringing out clothes, which had been packed away, and spreading them out on the line to air. Presently an old uniform with worn trimmings was swinging its sleeves in the air and embracing a brocade gown; from behind it peeped a court-coat, with buttons stamped with coats-of-arms, and moth-eaten collar; and white kersymere pantaloons with spots, which had once upon a time clothed Ivan Nikiforovitch's legs, and might now possibly fit his fingers. Behind them were speedily hung some more in the shape of the letter pi. Then came a blue Cossack jacket, which Ivan Nikiforovitch had had made twenty years before, when he was preparing to enter the militia, and allowed his moustache to grow. And one after another appeared a sword, projecting into the air like a spit, and the skirts of a grass-green caftan-like garment, with copper buttons the size of a five-kopek piece, unfolded themselves. From among the folds peeped a vest bound with gold, with a wide opening in front. The vest was soon concealed by an old petticoat belonging to his dead grandmother, with pockets which would have held a water-melon.

All these things piled together formed a very interesting spectacle for Ivan

Ivanovitch; while the sun's rays, falling upon a blue or green sleeve, a red binding, or a scrap of gold brocade, or playing in the point of a sword, formed an unusual sight, similar to the representations of the Nativity given at farmhouses by wandering bands; particularly that part where the throng of people, pressing close together, gaze at King Herod in his golden crown or at Anthony leading his goat.

Presently the old woman crawled, grunting, from the storeroom, dragging after her an old-fashioned saddle with broken stirrups, worn leather holsters, and saddle-cloth, once red, with gilt embroidery and copper disks.

"Here's a stupid woman," thought Ivan Ivanovitch. "She'll be dragging Ivan Nikiforovitch out and airing him next."

Ivan Ivanovitch was not so far wrong in his surmise. Five minutes later, Ivan Nikiforovitch's nankeen trousers appeared, and took nearly half the yard to themselves. After that she fetched out a hat and a gun. "What's the meaning of this?" thought Ivan Ivanovitch. "I never knew Ivan Nikiforovitch had a gun. What does he want with it? Whether he shoots, or not, he keeps a gun! Of what use is it to him? But it's a splendid thing. I have long wanted just such a one. I should like that gun very much: I like to amuse myself with a gun. Hello, there, woman, woman!" shouted Ivan Ivanovitch, beckoning to her.

The old woman approached the fence.

"What's that you have there, my good woman?"

"A gun, as you see."

"What sort of a gun?"

"Who knows what sort of a gun? If it were mine, perhaps I should know what it is made of; but it is my master's, therefore I know nothing of it."

Ivan Ivanovitch rose, and began to examine the gun on all sides, and forgot to reprove the old woman for hanging it and the sword out to air.

"It must be iron," went on the old woman.

"Hm, iron! why iron?" said Ivan Ivanovitch. "Has your master had it long?"

"Yes; long, perhaps."

"It's a nice gun!" continued Ivan Ivanovitch. "I will ask him for it. What can he want with it? I'll make an exchange with him for it. Is your master at home, my good woman?"

"Yes."

"What is he doing? lying down?"

"Yes, lying down."

"Very well, I will come to him."

Ivan Ivanovitch dressed himself, took his well-seasoned stick for the benefit of the dogs, for, in Mirgorod, there are more dogs than people to be met in the

street, and went out.

Although Ivan Nikiforovitch's house was next door to Ivan Ivanovitch's, so that you could have got from one to the other by climbing the fence, yet Ivan Ivanovitch went by way of the street. From the street it was necessary to turn into an alley which was so narrow that if two one-horse carts chanced to meet they could not get out, and were forced to remain there until the drivers, seizing the hind-wheels, dragged them back in opposite directions into the street, whilst pedestrians drew aside like flowers growing by the fence on either hand. Ivan Ivanovitch's waggon-shed adjoined this alley on one side; and on the other were Ivan Nikiforovitch's granary, gate, and pigeon-house.

Ivan Ivanovitch went up to the gate and rattled the latch. Within arose the barking of dogs; but the motley-haired pack ran back, wagging their tails when they saw the well-known face. Ivan Ivanovitch traversed the courtyard, in which were collected Indian doves, fed by Ivan Nikiforovitch's own hand, melon-rinds, vegetables, broken wheels, barrel-hoops, and a small boy wallowing with dirty blouse--a picture such as painters love. The shadows of the fluttering clothes covered nearly the whole of the yard and lent it a degree of coolness. The woman greeted him with a bend of her head and stood, gaping, in one spot. The front of the house was adorned with a small porch, with its roof supported on two oak pillars--a welcome protection from the sun, which at that season in Little Russia loves not to jest, and bathes the pedestrian from head to foot in perspiration. It may be judged how powerful Ivan Ivanovitch's desire to obtain the coveted article was when he made up his mind, at such an hour, to depart from his usual custom, which was to walk abroad only in the evening.

The room which Ivan Ivanovitch entered was quite dark, for the shutters were closed; and the ray of sunlight passing through a hole made in one of them took on the colours of the rainbow, and, striking the opposite wall, sketched upon it a parti-coloured picture of the outlines of roofs, trees, and the clothes suspended in the yard, only upside down. This gave the room a peculiar half-light.

"God assist you!" said Ivan Ivanovitch.

"Ah! how do you do, Ivan Ivanovitch?" replied a voice from the corner of the room. Then only did Ivan Ivanovitch perceive Ivan Nikiforovitch lying upon a rug which was spread on the floor. "Excuse me for appearing before you in a state of nature."

"Not at all. You have been asleep, Ivan Nikiforovitch?"

"I have been asleep. Have you been asleep, Ivan Ivanovitch?"

"I have."

"And now you have risen?"

"Now I have risen. Christ be with you, Ivan Nikiforovitch! How can you sleep

until this time? I have just come from the farm. There's very fine barley on the road, charming! and the hay is tall and soft and golden!"

"Gorpina!" shouted Ivan Nikiforovitch, "fetch Ivan Ivanovitch some vodka, and some pastry and sour cream!"

"Fine weather we're having to-day."

"Don't praise it, Ivan Ivanovitch! Devil take it! You can't get away from the heat."

"Now, why need you mention the devil! Ah, Ivan Nikiforovitch! you will recall my words when it's too late. You will suffer in the next world for such godless words."

"How have I offended you, Ivan Ivanovitch? I have not attacked your father nor your mother. I don't know how I have insulted you."

"Enough, enough, Ivan Nikiforovitch!"

"By Heavens, Ivan Ivanovitch, I did not insult you!"

"It's strange that the quails haven't come yet to the whistle."

"Think what you please, but I have not insulted you in any way."

"I don't know why they don't come," said Ivan Ivanovitch, as if he did not hear Ivan Nikiforovitch; "it is more than time for them already; but they seem to need more time for some reason."

"You say that the barley is good?"

"Splendid barley, splendid!"

A silence ensued.

"So you are having your clothes aired, Ivan Nikiforovitch?" said Ivan Ivanovitch at length.

"Yes; those cursed women have ruined some beautiful clothes; almost new they were too. Now I'm having them aired; the cloth is fine and good. They only need turning to make them fit to wear again."

"One thing among them pleased me extremely, Ivan Nikiforovitch."

"What was that?"

"Tell me, please, what use do you make of the gun that has been put to air with the clothes?" Here Ivan Ivanovitch offered his snuff. "May I ask you to do me the favour?"

"By no means! take it yourself; I will use my own." Thereupon Ivan Nikiforovitch felt about him, and got hold of his snuff-box. "That stupid woman! So she hung the gun out to air. That Jew at Sorotchintzi makes good snuff. I don't know what he puts in it, but it is so very fragrant. It is a little like tansy. Here, take a little and chew it; isn't it like tansy?"

"Ivan Nikiforovitch, I want to talk about that gun; what are you going to do with it? You don't need it."

“Why don’t I need it? I might want to go shooting.”

“God be with you, Ivan Nikiforovitch! When will you go shooting? At the millennium, perhaps? So far as I know, or any one can recollect, you never killed even a duck; yes, and you are not built to go shooting. You have a dignified bearing and figure; how are you to drag yourself about the marshes, especially when your garment, which it is not polite to mention in conversation by name, is being aired at this very moment? No; you require rest, repose.” Ivan Ivanovitch as has been hinted at above, employed uncommonly picturesque language when it was necessary to persuade any one. How he talked! Heavens, how he could talk! “Yes, and you require polite actions. See here, give it to me!”

“The idea! The gun is valuable; you can’t find such guns anywhere nowadays. I bought it of a Turk when I joined the militia; and now, to give it away all of a sudden! Impossible! It is an indispensable article.”

“Indispensable for what?”

“For what? What if robbers should attack the house? . . . Indispensable indeed! Glory to God! I know that a gun stands in my storehouse.”

“A fine gun that! Why, Ivan Nikiforovitch, the lock is ruined.”

“What do you mean by ruined? It can be set right; all that needs to be done is to rub it with hemp-oil, so that it may not rust.”

“I see in your words, Ivan Nikiforovitch, anything but a friendly disposition towards me. You will do nothing for me in token of friendship.”

“How can you say, Ivan Ivanovitch, that I show you no friendship? You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Your oxen pasture on my steppes and I have never interfered with them. When you go to Poltava, you always ask for my waggon, and what then? Have I ever refused? Your children climb over the fence into my yard and play with my dogs--I never say anything; let them play, so long as they touch nothing; let them play!”

“If you won’t give it to me, then let us make some exchange.”

“What will you give me for it?” Thereupon Ivan Nikiforovitch raised himself on his elbow, and looked at Ivan Ivanovitch.

“I will give you my dark-brown sow, the one I have fed in the sty. A magnificent sow. You’ll see, she’ll bring you a litter of pigs next year.”

“I do not see, Ivan Ivanovitch, how you can talk so. What could I do with your sow? Make a funeral dinner for the devil?”

“Again! You can’t get along without the devil! It’s a sin! by Heaven, it’s a sin, Ivan Nikiforovitch!”

“What do you mean, Ivan Ivanovitch, by offering the deuce knows what kind of a sow for my gun?”

“Why is she ‘the deuce knows what,’ Ivan Nikiforovitch?”

“Why? You can judge for yourself perfectly well; here’s the gun, a known thing; but the deuce knows what that sow is like! If it had not been you who said it, Ivan Ivanovitch, I might have put an insulting construction on it.”

“What defect have you observed in the sow?”

“For what do you take me--for a sow?”

“Sit down, sit down! I won’t-- No matter about your gun; let it rot and rust where it stands in the corner of the storeroom. I don’t want to say anything more about it!”

After this a pause ensued.

“They say,” began Ivan Ivanovitch, “that three kings have declared war against our Tzar.”

“Yes, Peter Feodorovitch told me so. What sort of war is this, and why is it?”

“I cannot say exactly, Ivan Nikiforovitch, what the cause is. I suppose the kings want us to adopt the Turkish faith.”

“Fools! They would have it,” said Ivan Nikiforovitch, raising his head.

“So, you see, our Tzar has declared war on them in consequence. ‘No,’ says he, ‘do you adopt the faith of Christ!’“

“Oh, our people will beat them, Ivan Ivanovitch!”

“They will. So you won’t exchange the gun, Ivan Nikiforovitch?”

“It’s a strange thing to me, Ivan Ivanovitch, that you, who seem to be a man distinguished for sense, should talk such nonsense. What a fool I should be!”

“Sit down, sit down. God be with it! let it burst! I won’t mention it again.”

At this moment lunch was brought in.

Ivan Ivanovitch drank a glass and ate a pie with sour cream. “Listen, Ivan Nikiforovitch: I will give you, besides the sow, two sacks of oats. You did not sow any oats. You’ll have to buy some this year in any case.”

“By Heaven, Ivan Ivanovitch, I must tell you you are very foolish! Who ever heard of swapping a gun for two sacks of oats? Never fear, you don’t offer your coat.”

“But you forget, Ivan Nikiforovitch, that I am to give you the sow too.”

“What! two sacks of oats and a sow for a gun?”

“Why, is it too little?”

“For a gun?”

“Of course, for a gun.”

“Two sacks for a gun?”

“Two sacks, not empty, but filled with oats; and you’ve forgotten the sow.”

“Kiss your sow; and if you don’t like that, then go to the Evil One!”

“Oh, get angry now, do! See here; they’ll stick your tongue full of red-hot needles in the other world for such godless words. After a conversation with

you, one has to wash one's face and hands and fumigate one's self."

"Excuse me, Ivan Ivanovitch; my gun is a choice thing, a most curious thing; and besides, it is a very agreeable decoration in a room."

"You go on like a fool about that gun of yours, Ivan Nikiforovitch," said Ivan Ivanovitch with vexation; for he was beginning to be really angry.

"And you, Ivan Ivanovitch, are a regular goose!"

If Ivan Nikiforovitch had not uttered that word they would not have quarrelled, but would have parted friends as usual; but now things took quite another turn. Ivan Ivanovitch flew into a rage.

"What was that you said, Ivan Nikiforovitch?" he said, raising his voice.

"I said you were like a goose, Ivan Ivanovitch!"

"How dare you, sir, forgetful of decency and the respect due to a man's rank and family, insult him with such a disgraceful name!"

"What is there disgraceful about it? And why are you flourishing your hands so, Ivan Ivanovitch?"

"How dared you, I repeat, in disregard of all decency, call me a goose?"

"I spit on your head, Ivan Ivanovitch! What are you screeching about?"

Ivan Ivanovitch could no longer control himself. His lips quivered; his mouth lost its usual V shape, and became like the letter O; he glared so that he was terrible to look at. This very rarely happened with Ivan Ivanovitch: it was necessary that he should be extremely angry at first.

"Then, I declare to you," exclaimed Ivan Ivanovitch, "that I will no longer know you!"

"A great pity! By Heaven, I shall never weep on that account!" retorted Ivan Nikiforovitch. He lied, by Heaven, he lied! for it was very annoying to him.

"I will never put my foot inside your house gain!"

"Oho, ho!" said Ivan Nikiforovitch, vexed, yet not knowing himself what to do, and rising to his feet, contrary to his custom. "Hey, there, woman, boy!" Thereupon there appeared at the door the same fat woman and the small boy, now enveloped in a long and wide coat. "Take Ivan Ivanovitch by the arms and lead him to the door!"

"What! a nobleman?" shouted Ivan Ivanovitch with a feeling of vexation and dignity. "Just do it if you dare! Come on! I'll annihilate you and your stupid master. The crows won't be able to find your bones." Ivan Ivanovitch spoke with uncommon force when his spirit was up.

The group presented a striking picture: Ivan Nikiforovitch standing in the middle of the room; the woman with her mouth wide open and a senseless, terrified look on her face, and Ivan Ivanovitch with uplifted hand, as the Roman tribunes are depicted. This was a magnificent spectacle: and yet there was but

one spectator; the boy in the ample coat, who stood quite quietly and picked his nose with his finger.

Finally Ivan Ivanovitch took his hat. “You have behaved well, Ivan Nikiforovitch, extremely well! I shall remember it.”

“Go, Ivan Ivanovitch, go! and see that you don’t come in my way: if you do, I’ll beat your ugly face to a jelly, Ivan Ivanovitch!”

“Take that, Ivan Nikiforovitch!” retorted Ivan Ivanovitch, making an insulting gesture and banged the door, which squeaked and flew open again behind him.

Ivan Nikiforovitch appeared at it and wanted to add something more; but Ivan Ivanovitch did not glance back and hastened from the yard.

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CHAPTER III

WHAT TOOK PLACE AFTER IVAN IVANOVITCH'S QUARREL WITH IVAN NIKIFOROVITCH

And thus two respectable men, the pride and honour of Mirgorod, had quarrelled, and about what? About a bit of nonsense--a goose. They would not see each other, broke off all connection, though hitherto they had been known as the most inseparable friends. Every day Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch had sent to inquire about each other's health, and often conversed together from their balconies and said such charming things as did the heart good to listen to. On Sundays, Ivan Ivanovitch, in his lambskin pelisse, and Ivan Nikiforovitch, in his cinnamon-coloured nankeen spencer, used to set out for church almost arm in arm; and if Ivan Ivanovitch, who had remarkably sharp eyes, was the first to catch sight of a puddle or any dirt in the street, which sometimes happened in Mirgorod, he always said to Ivan Nikiforovitch, "Look out! don't put your foot there, it's dirty." Ivan Nikiforovitch, on his side, exhibited the same touching tokens of friendship; and whenever he chanced to be standing, always held out his hand to Ivan Ivanovitch with his snuff-box, saying: "Do me the favour!" And what fine managers both were!-- And these two friends!-- When I heard of it, it struck me like a flash of lightning. For a long time I would not believe it. Ivan Ivanovitch quarrelling with Ivan Nikiforovitch! Such worthy people! What is to be depended upon, then, in this world?

When Ivan Ivanovitch reached home, he remained for some time in a state of strong excitement. He usually went, first of all, to the stable to see whether his mare was eating her hay; for he had a bay mare with a white star on her forehead, and a very pretty little mare she was too; then to feed the turkeys and the little pigs with his own hand, and then to his room, where he either made wooden dishes, for he could make various vessels of wood very tastefully, quite as well as any turner, or read a book printed by Liubia, Garia, and Popoff (Ivan Ivanovitch could never remember the name, because the serving-maid had long before torn off the top part of the title-page while amusing the children), or rested on the balcony. But now he did not betake himself to any of his ordinary occupations. Instead, on encountering Gapka, he at once began to scold her for

loitering about without any occupation, though she was carrying groats to the kitchen; flung a stick at a cock which came upon the balcony for his customary treat; and when the dirty little boy, in his little torn blouse, ran up to him and shouted: “Papa, papa! give me a honey-cake,” he threatened him and stamped at him so fiercely that the frightened child fled, God knows whither.

But at last he bethought himself, and began to busy himself about his every-day duties. He dined late, and it was almost night when he lay down to rest on the balcony. A good beet-soup with pigeons, which Gapka had cooked for him, quite drove from his mind the occurrences of the morning. Again Ivan Ivanovitch began to gaze at his belongings with satisfaction. At length his eye rested on the neighbouring yard; and he said to himself, “I have not been to Ivan Nikiforovitch’s to-day: I’ll go there now.” So saying, Ivan Ivanovitch took his stick and his hat, and directed his steps to the street; but scarcely had he passed through the gate than he recollected the quarrel, spit, and turned back. Almost the same thing happened at Ivan Nikiforovitch’s house. Ivan Ivanovitch saw the woman put her foot on the fence, with the intention of climbing over into his yard, when suddenly Ivan Nikiforovitch’s voice was heard crying: “Come back! it won’t do!” But Ivan Ivanovitch found it very tiresome. It is quite possible that these worthy men would have made their peace next day if a certain occurrence in Ivan Nikiforovitch’s house had not destroyed all hopes and poured oil upon the fire of enmity which was ready to die out.

*

On the evening of that very day, Agafya Fedosyevna arrived at Ivan Nikiforovitch’s. Agafya Fedosyevna was not Ivan Nikiforovitch’s relative, nor his sister-in-law, nor even his fellow-godparent. There seemed to be no reason why she should come to him, and he was not particularly glad of her company; still, she came, and lived on him for weeks at a time, and even longer. Then she took possession of the keys and took the management of the whole house into her own hands. This was extremely displeasing to Ivan Nikiforovitch; but he, to his amazement, obeyed her like a child; and although he occasionally attempted to dispute, yet Agafya Fedosyevna always got the better of him.

I must confess that I do not understand why things are so arranged, that women should seize us by the nose as deftly as they do the handle of a teapot. Either their hands are so constructed or else our noses are good for nothing else. And notwithstanding the fact that Ivan Nikiforovitch’s nose somewhat resembled a plum, she grasped that nose and led him about after her like a dog. He even, in her presence, involuntarily altered his ordinary manner of life.

Agafya Fedosyevna wore a cap on her head, and a coffee-coloured cloak with yellow flowers and had three warts on her nose. Her figure was like a cask, and

it would have been as hard to tell where to look for her waist as for her to see her nose without a mirror. Her feet were small and shaped like two cushions. She talked scandal, ate boiled beet-soup in the morning, and swore extremely; and amidst all these various occupations her countenance never for one instant changed its expression, which phenomenon, as a rule, women alone are capable of displaying.

As soon as she arrived, everything went wrong.

“Ivan Nikiforovitch, don’t you make peace with him, nor ask his forgiveness; he wants to ruin you; that’s the kind of man he is! you don’t know him yet!” That cursed woman whispered and whispered, and managed so that Ivan Nikiforovitch would not even hear Ivan Ivanovitch mentioned.

Everything assumed another aspect. If his neighbour’s dog ran into the yard, it was beaten within an inch of its life; the children, who climbed over the fence, were sent back with howls, their little shirts stripped up, and marks of a switch behind. Even the old woman, when Ivan Ivanovitch ventured to ask her about something, did something so insulting that Ivan Ivanovitch, being an extremely delicate man, only spit, and muttered, “What a nasty woman! even worse than her master!”

Finally, as a climax to all the insults, his hated neighbour built a goose-shed right against his fence at the spot where they usually climbed over, as if with the express intention of redoubling the insult. This shed, so hateful to Ivan Ivanovitch, was constructed with diabolical swiftness--in one day.

This aroused wrath and a desire for revenge in Ivan Ivanovitch. He showed no signs of bitterness, in spite of the fact that the shed encroached on his land; but his heart beat so violently that it was extremely difficult for him to preserve his calm appearance.

He passed the day in this manner. Night came-- Oh, if I were a painter, how magnificently I would depict the night’s charms! I would describe how all Mirgorod sleeps; how steadily the myriads of stars gaze down upon it; how the apparent quiet is filled far and near with the barking of dogs; how the love-sick sacristan steals past them, and scales the fence with knightly fearlessness; how the white walls of the houses, bathed in the moonlight, grow whiter still, the overhanging trees darker; how the shadows of the trees fall blacker, the flowers and the silent grass become more fragrant, and the crickets, unharmonious cavaliers of the night, strike up their rattling song in friendly fashion on all sides. I would describe how, in one of the little, low-roofed, clay houses, the black-browed village maid, tossing on her lonely couch, dreams with heaving bosom of some hussar’s spurs and moustache, and how the moonlight smiles upon her cheeks. I would describe how the black shadows of the bats flit along the white

road before they alight upon the white chimneys of the cottages.

But it would hardly be within my power to depict Ivan Ivanovitch as he crept out that night, saw in hand; or the various emotions written on his countenance! Quietly, most quietly, he crawled along and climbed upon the goose-shed. Ivan Nikiforovitch's dogs knew nothing, as yet, of the quarrel between them; and so they permitted him, as an old friend, to enter the shed, which rested upon four oaken posts. Creeping up to the nearest post he applied his saw and began to cut. The noise produced by the saw caused him to glance about him every moment, but the recollection of the insult restored his courage. The first post was sawed through. Ivan Ivanovitch began upon the next. His eyes burned and he saw nothing for terror.

All at once he uttered an exclamation and became petrified with fear. A ghost appeared to him; but he speedily recovered himself on perceiving that it was a goose, thrusting its neck out at him. Ivan Ivanovitch spit with vexation and proceeded with his work. The second post was sawed through; the building trembled. His heart beat so violently when he began on the third, that he had to stop several times. The post was more than half sawed through when the frail building quivered violently.

Ivan Ivanovitch had barely time to spring back when it came down with a crash. Seizing his saw, he ran home in the greatest terror and flung himself upon his bed, without having sufficient courage to peep from the window at the consequences of his terrible deed. It seemed to him as though Ivan Nikiforovitch's entire household--the old woman, Ivan Nikiforovitch, the boy in the endless coat, all with sticks, and led by Agafya Fedosyevna--were coming to tear down and destroy his house.

Ivan Ivanovitch passed the whole of the following day in a perfect fever. It seemed to him that his detested neighbour would set fire to his house at least in revenge for this; and so he gave orders to Gapka to keep a constant lookout, everywhere, and see whether dry straw were laid against it anywhere. Finally, in order to forestall Ivan Nikiforovitch, he determined to enter a complaint against him before the district judge of Mirgorod. In what it consisted can be learned from the following chapter.

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CHAPTER IV

WHAT TOOK PLACE BEFORE THE DISTRICT JUDGE OF MIRGOROD

A wonderful town is Mirgorod! How many buildings are there with straw, rush, and even wooden roofs! On the right is a street, on the left a street, and fine fences everywhere. Over them twine hop-vines, upon them hang pots; from behind them the sunflowers show their sun-like heads, poppies blush, fat pumpkins peep; all is luxury itself! The fence is invariably garnished with articles which render it still more picturesque: woman's widespread undergarments of checked woollen stuff, shirts, or trousers. There is no such thing as theft or rascality in Mirgorod, so everybody hangs upon his fence whatever strikes his fancy. If you go on to the square, you will surely stop and admire the view: such a wonderful pool is there! The finest you ever saw. It occupies nearly the whole of the square. A truly magnificent pool! The houses and cottages, which at a distance might be mistaken for hayricks, stand around it, lost in admiration of its beauty.

But I agree with those who think that there is no better house than that of the district judge. Whether it is of oak or birch is nothing to the point; but it has, my dear sirs, eight windows! eight windows in a row, looking directly on the square and upon that watery expanse which I have just mentioned, and which the chief of police calls a lake. It alone is painted the colour of granite. All the other houses in Mirgorod are merely whitewashed. Its roof is of wood, and would have been even painted red, had not the government clerks eaten the oil which had been prepared for that purpose, as it happened during a fast; and so the roof remained unpainted. Towards the square projects a porch, which the chickens frequently visit, because that porch is nearly always strewn with grain or something edible, not intentionally, but through the carelessness of visitors.

The house is divided into two parts: one of which is the court-room; the other the jail. In the half which contains the court-room are two neat, whitewashed rooms, the front one for clients, the other having a table adorned with ink-spots, and with a looking-glass upon it, and four oak chairs with tall backs; whilst along the wall stand iron-bound chests, in which are preserved bundles of papers relating to district law-suits. Upon one of the chests stood at that time a pair of

boots, polished with wax.

The court had been open since morning. The judge, a rather stout man, though thinner than Ivan Nikiforovitch, with a good-natured face, a greasy dressing-gown, a pipe, and a cup of tea, was conversing with the clerk of the court.

The judge's lips were directly under his nose, so that he could snuff his upper lip as much as he liked. It served him instead of a snuff-box, for the snuff intended for his nose almost always lodged upon it. So the judge was talking with the assistant. A barefooted girl stood holding a tray with cups at once side of them. At the end of the table, the secretary was reading the decision in some case, but in such a mournful and monotonous voice that the condemned man himself would have fallen asleep while listening to it. The judge, no doubt, would have been the first to do so had he not entered into an engrossing conversation while it was going on.

"I expressly tried to find out," said the judge, sipping his already cold tea from the cup, "how they manage to sing so well. I had a splendid thrush two years ago. Well, all of a sudden he was completely done for, and began to sing, God knows what! He got worse and worse and worse and worse as time went on; he began to rattle and get hoarse--just good for nothing! And this is how it happened: a little lump, not so big as a pea, had come under his throat. It was only necessary to prick that little swelling with a needle--Zachar Prokofievitch taught me that; and, if you like, I'll just tell you how it was. I went to him--"

"Shall I read another, Demyan Demyanovitch?" broke in the secretary, who had not been reading for several minutes.

"Have you finished already? Only think how quickly! And I did not hear a word of it! Where is it? Give it me and I'll sign it. What else have you there?"

"The case of Cossack Bokitok for stealing a cow."

"Very good; read it!-- Yes, so I went to him--I can even tell you in detail how he entertained me. There was vodka, and dried sturgeon, excellent! Yes, not our sturgeon," there the judge smacked his tongue and smiled, upon which his nose took a sniff at its usual snuff-box, "such as our Mirgorod shops sell us. I ate no herrings, for, as you know, they give me heart-burn; but I tasted the caviare--very fine caviare, too! There's no doubt it, excellent! Then I drank some peach-brandy, real gentian. There was saffron-brandy also; but, as you know, I never take that. You see, it was all very good. In the first place, to whet your appetite, as they say, and then to satisfy it-- Ah! speak of an angel," exclaimed the judge, all at once, catching sight of Ivan Ivanovitch as he entered.

"God be with us! I wish you a good-morning," said Ivan Ivanovitch, bowing all round with his usual politeness. How well he understood the art of fascinating everybody in his manner! I never beheld such refinement. He knew his own

worth quite well, and therefore looked for universal respect as his due. The judge himself handed Ivan Ivanovitch a chair; and his nose inhaled all the snuff resting on his upper lip, which, with him, was always a sign of great pleasure.

“What will you take, Ivan Ivanovitch?” he inquired: “will you have a cup of tea?”

“No, much obliged,” replied Ivan Ivanovitch, as he bowed and seated himself.

“Do me the favour--one little cup,” repeated the judge.

“No, thank you; much obliged for your hospitality,” replied Ivan Ivanovitch, and rose, bowed, and sat down again.

“Just one little cup,” repeated the judge.

“No, do not trouble yourself, Demyan Demyanovitch.” Whereupon Ivan Ivanovitch again rose, bowed, and sat down.

“A little cup!”

“Very well, then, just a little cup,” said Ivan Ivanovitch, and reached out his hand to the tray. Heavens! What a height of refinement there was in that man! It is impossible to describe what a pleasant impression such manners produce!

“Will you not have another cup?”

“I thank you sincerely,” answered Ivan Ivanovitch, turning his cup upside down upon the tray and bowing.

“Do me the favour, Ivan Ivanovitch.”

“I cannot; much obliged.” Thereupon Ivan Ivanovitch bowed and sat down.

“Ivan Ivanovitch, for the sake of our friendship, just one little cup!”

“No: I am extremely indebted for your hospitality.” So saying, Ivan Ivanovitch bowed and seated himself.

“Only a cup, one little cup!”

Ivan Ivanovitch put his hand out to the tray and took a cup. Oh, the deuce! How can a man contrive to support his dignity!

“Demyan Demyanovitch,” said Ivan Ivanovitch, swallowing the last drain, “I have pressing business with you; I want to enter a complaint.”

Then Ivan Ivanovitch set down his cup, and drew from his pocket a sheet of stamped paper, written over. “A complaint against my enemy, my declared enemy.”

“And who is that?”

“Ivan Nikiforovitch Dovgotchkun.”

At these words, the judge nearly fell off his chair. “What do you say?” he exclaimed, clasping his hands; “Ivan Ivanovitch, is this you?”

“You see yourself that it is I.”

“The Lord and all the saints be with you! What! You! Ivan Ivanovitch! you have fallen out with Ivan Nikiforovitch! Is it your mouth which says that?

Repeat it! Is not some one hid behind you who is speaking instead of you?”

“What is there incredible about it? I can’t endure the sight of him: he has done me a deadly injury--he has insulted my honour.”

“Holy Trinity! How am I to believe my mother now? Why, every day, when I quarrel with my sister, the old woman says, ‘Children, you live together like dogs. If you would only take pattern by Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch, they are friends indeed! such friends! such worthy people!’ There you are with your friend! Tell me what this is about. How is it?”

“It is a delicate business, Demyan Demyanovitch; it is impossible to relate it in words: be pleased rather to read my plaint. Here, take it by this side; it is more convenient.”

“Read it, Taras Tikhonovitch,” said the judge, turning to the secretary.

Taras Tikhonovitch took the plaint; and blowing his nose, as all district judges’ secretaries blow their noses, with the assistance of two fingers, he began to read:--

“From the nobleman and landed proprietor of the Mirgorod District, Ivan Pererepenko, son of Ivan, a plaint: concerning which the following points are to be noted:--

“1. Ivan Dovgotchkun, son of Nikifor, nobleman, known to all the world for his godless acts, which inspire disgust, and in lawlessness exceed all bounds, on the seventh day of July of this year 1810, inflicted upon me a deadly insult, touching my personal honour, and likewise tending to the humiliation and confusion of my rank and family. The said nobleman, of repulsive aspect, has also a pugnacious disposition, and is full to overflowing with blasphemy and quarrelsome words.”

Here the reader paused for an instant to blow his nose again; but the judge folded his hands in approbation and murmured to himself, “What a ready pen! Lord! how this man does write!”

Ivan Ivanovitch requested that the reading might proceed, and Taras Tikhonovitch went on:--

“The said Ivan Dovgotchkun, son of Nikifor, when I went to him with a friendly proposition, called me publicly by an epithet insulting and injurious to my honour, namely, a goose, whereas it is known to the whole district of Mirgorod, that I never was named after that disgusting creature, and have no intention of ever being named after it. The proof of my noble extraction is that, in the baptismal register to be found in the Church of the Three Bishops, the day of my birth, and likewise the fact of my baptism, are inscribed. But a goose, as is well known to every one who has any knowledge of science, cannot be inscribed in the baptismal register; for a goose is not a man but a fowl; which, likewise, is

sufficiently well known even to persons who have not been to college. But the said evil-minded nobleman, being privy to all these facts, affronted me with the aforesaid foul word, for no other purpose than to offer a deadly insult to my rank and station.

“2. And the same impolite and indecent nobleman, moreover, attempted injury to my property, inherited by me from my father, a member of the clerical profession, Ivan Pererepenko, son of Onisieff, of blessed memory, inasmuch that he, contrary to all law, transported directly opposite my porch a goose-shed, which was done with no other intention that to emphasise the insult offered me; for the said shed had, up to that time, stood in a very suitable situation, and was still sufficiently strong. But the loathsome intention of the aforesaid nobleman consisted simply in this: viz., in making me a witness of unpleasant occurrences; for it is well known that no man goes into a shed, much less into a goose-shed, for polite purposes. In the execution of his lawless deed, the two front posts trespassed on my land, received by me during the lifetime of my father, Ivan Pererepenko, son of Onisieff, of blessed memory, beginning at the granary, thence in a straight line to the spot where the women wash the pots.

“3. The above-described nobleman, whose very name and surname inspire thorough disgust, cherishes in his mind a malicious design to burn me in my own house. Which the infallible signs, hereinafter mentioned, fully demonstrate; in the first place, the said wicked nobleman has begun to emerge frequently from his apartments, which he never did formerly on account of his laziness and the disgusting corpulence of his body; in the second place, in his servants’ apartments, adjoining the fence, surrounding my own land, received by me from my father of blessed memory, Ivan Pererepenko, son of Onisieff, a light burns every day, and for a remarkably long period of time, which is also a clear proof of the fact. For hitherto, owing to his repulsive niggardliness, not only the tallow-candle but also the grease-lamp has been extinguished.

“And therefore I pray that the said nobleman, Ivan Dovgotchkun, son of Nikifor, being plainly guilty of incendiarism, of insult to my rank, name, and family, and of illegal appropriation of my property, and, worse than all else, of malicious and deliberate addition to my surname, of the nickname of goose, be condemned by the court, to fine, satisfaction, costs, and damages, and, being chained, be removed to the town jail, and that judgment be rendered upon this, my plaint, immediately and without delay.

“Written and composed by Ivan Pererepenko, son of Ivan, nobleman, and landed proprietor of Mirgorod.”

After the reading of the plaint was concluded, the judge approached Ivanovitch, took him by the button, and began to talk to him after this fashion:

“What are you doing, Ivan Ivanovitch? Fear God! throw away that plaint, let it go! may Satan carry it off! Better take Ivan Nikiforovitch by the hand and kiss him, buy some Santurinski or Nikopolski liquor, make a punch, and call me in. We will drink it up together and forget all unpleasantness.”

“No, Demyan Demyanovitch! it’s not that sort of an affair,” said Ivan Ivanovitch, with the dignity which always became him so well; “it is not an affair which can be arranged by a friendly agreement. Farewell! Good-day to you, too, gentlemen,” he continued with the same dignity, turning to them all. “I hope that my plaint will lead to proper action being taken;” and out he went, leaving all present in a state of stupefaction.

The judge sat down without uttering a word; the secretary took a pinch of snuff; the clerks upset some broken fragments of bottles which served for inkstands; and the judge himself, in absence of mind, spread out a puddle of ink upon the table with his finger.

“What do you say to this, Dorofei Trofimovitch?” said the judge, turning to the assistant after a pause.

“I’ve nothing to say,” replied the clerk.

“What things do happen!” continued the judge. He had not finished saying this before the door creaked and the front half of Ivan Nikiforovitch presented itself in the court-room; the rest of him remaining in the ante-room. The appearance of Ivan Nikiforovitch, and in court too, seemed so extraordinary that the judge screamed; the secretary stopped reading; one clerk, in his frieze imitation of a dress-coat, took his pen in his lips; and the other swallowed a fly. Even the constable on duty and the watchman, a discharged soldier who up to that moment had stood by the door scratching about his dirty tunic, with chevrons on its arm, dropped his jaw and trod on some one’s foot.

“What chance brings you here? How is your health, Ivan Nikiforovitch?”

But Ivan Nikiforovitch was neither dead nor alive; for he was stuck fast in the door, and could not take a step either forwards or backwards. In vain did the judge shout into the ante-room that some one there should push Ivan Nikiforovitch forward into the court-room. In the ante-room there was only one old woman with a petition, who, in spite of all the efforts of her bony hands, could accomplish nothing. Then one of the clerks, with thick lips, a thick nose, eyes which looked askance and intoxicated, broad shoulders, and ragged elbows, approached the front half of Ivan Nikiforovitch, crossed his hands for him as though he had been a child, and winked at the old soldier, who braced his knee against Ivan Nikiforovitch’s belly, so, in spite of the latter’s piteous moans, he was squeezed out into the ante-room. Then they pulled the bolts, and opened the other half of the door. Meanwhile the clerk and his assistant, breathing hard with

their friendly exertions, exhaled such a strong odour that the court-room seemed temporarily turned into a drinking-room.

“Are you hurt, Ivan Nikiforovitch? I will tell my mother to send you a decoction of brandy, with which you need but to rub your back and stomach and all your pains will disappear.”

But Ivan Nikiforovitch dropped into a chair, and could utter no word beyond prolonged oh’s. Finally, in a faint and barely audible voice from fatigue, he exclaimed, “Wouldn’t you like some?” and drawing his snuff-box from his pocket, added, “Help yourself, if you please.”

“Very glad to see you,” replied the judge; “but I cannot conceive what made you put yourself to so much trouble, and favour us with so unexpected an honour.”

“A plaint!” Ivan Nikiforovitch managed to ejaculate.

“A plaint? What plaint?”

“A complaint . . .” here his asthma entailed a prolonged pause--”Oh! a complaint against that rascal--Ivan Ivanovitch Pererepenko!”

“And you too! Such particular friends! A complaint against such a benevolent man?”

“He’s Satan himself!” ejaculated Ivan Nikiforovitch abruptly.

The judge crossed himself.

“Take my plaint, and read it.”

“There is nothing to be done. Read it, Taras Tikhonovitch,” said the judge, turning to the secretary with an expression of displeasure, which caused his nose to sniff at his upper lip, which generally occurred only as a sign of great enjoyment. This independence on the part of his nose caused the judge still greater vexation. He pulled out his handkerchief, and rubbed off all the snuff from his upper lip in order to punish it for its daring.

The secretary, having gone through the usual performance, which he always indulged in before he began to read, that is to say, blowing his nose without the aid of a pocket-handkerchief, began in his ordinary voice, in the following manner:--

“Ivan Dovgotchkun, son of Nikifor, nobleman of the Mirgorod District, presents a plaint, and begs to call attention to the following points:--

“1. Through his hateful malice and plainly manifested ill-will, the person calling himself a nobleman, Ivan Pererepenko, son of Ivan, perpetrates against me every manner of injury, damage, and like spiteful deeds, which inspire me with terror. Yesterday afternoon, like a brigand and thief, with axes, saws, chisels, and various locksmith’s tools, he came by night into my yard and into my own goose-shed located within it, and with his own hand, and in outrageous

manner, destroyed it; for which very illegal and burglarious deed on my side I gave no manner of cause.

“2. The same nobleman Pererepenko has designs upon my life; and on the 7th of last month, cherishing this design in secret, he came to me, and began, in a friendly and insidious manner, to ask of me a gun which was in my chamber, and offered me for it, with the miserliness peculiar to him, many worthless objects, such as a brown sow and two sacks of oats. Divining at that time his criminal intentions, I endeavoured in every way to dissuade him from it: but the said rascal and scoundrel, Ivan Pererepenko, son of Ivan, abused me like a muzhik, and since that time has cherished against me an irreconcilable enmity. His sister was well known to every one as a loose character, and went off with a regiment of chasseurs which was stationed at Mirgorod five years ago; but she inscribed her husband as a peasant. His father and mother too were not law-abiding people, and both were inconceivable drunkards. The afore-mentioned nobleman and robber, Pererepenko, in his beastly and blameworthy actions, goes beyond all his family, and under the guise of piety does the most immoral things. He does not observe the fasts; for on the eve of St. Philip’s this atheist bought a sheep, and next day ordered his mistress, Gapka, to kill it, alleging that he needed tallow for lamps and candles at once.

“Therefore I pray that the said nobleman, a manifest robber, church-thief, and rascal, convicted of plundering and stealing, may be put in irons, and confined in the jail or the government prison, and there, under supervision, deprived of his rank and nobility, well flogged, and banished to forced labour in Siberia, and that he may be commanded to pay damages and costs, and that judgment may be rendered on this my petition.

“To this plaint, Ivan Dovgotchkun, son of Nikifor, noble of the Mirgorod district, has set his hand.”

As soon as the secretary had finished reading, Ivan Nikiforovitch seized his hat and bowed, with the intention of departing.

“Where are you going, Ivan Nikiforovitch?” the judge called after him. “Sit down a little while. Have some tea. Orishko, why are you standing there, you stupid girl, winking at the clerks? Go, bring tea.”

But Ivan Nikiforovitch, in terror at having got so far from home, and at having undergone such a fearful quarantine, made haste to crawl through the door, saying, “Don’t trouble yourself. It is with pleasure that I--” and closed it after him, leaving all present stupefied.

There was nothing to be done. Both plaints were entered; and the affair promised to assume a sufficiently serious aspect when an unforeseen occurrence lent an added interest to it. As the judge was leaving the court in company with

the clerk and secretary, and the employees were thrusting into sacks the fowls, eggs, loaves, pies, cracknels, and other odds and ends brought by the plaintiffs--just at that moment a brown sow rushed into the room and snatched, to the amazement of the spectators, neither a pie nor a crust of bread but Ivan Nikiforovitch’s plaint, which lay at the end of the table with its leaves hanging over. Having seized the document, mistress sow ran off so briskly that not one of the clerks or officials could catch her, in spite of the rulers and ink-bottles they hurled after her.

This extraordinary occurrence produced a terrible muddle, for there had not even been a copy taken of the plaint. The judge, that is to say, his secretary and the assistant debated for a long time upon such an unheard-of affair. Finally it was decided to write a report of the matter to the governor, as the investigation of the matter pertained more to the department of the city police. Report No. 389 was despatched to him that same day; and also upon that day there came to light a sufficiently curious explanation, which the reader may learn from the following chapter.

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CHAPTER V

IN WHICH ARE DETAILED THE DELIBERATIONS OF TWO IMPORTANT PERSONAGES OF MIRGOROD

As soon as Ivan Ivanovitch had arranged his domestic affairs and stepped out upon the balcony, according to his custom, to lie down, he saw, to his indescribable amazement, something red at the gate. This was the red facings of the chief of police's coat, which were polished equally with his collar, and resembled varnished leather on the edges.

Ivan Ivanovitch thought to himself, "It's not bad that Peter Feodorovitch has come to talk it over with me." But he was very much surprised to see that the chief was walking remarkably fast and flourishing his hands, which was very rarely the case with him. There were eight buttons on the chief of police's uniform: the ninth, torn off in some manner during the procession at the consecration of the church two years before, the police had not been able to find up to this time: although the chief, on the occasion of the daily reports made to him by the sergeants, always asked, "Has that button been found?" These eight buttons were strewn about him as women sow beans--one to the right and one to the left. His left foot had been struck by a ball in the last campaign, and so he limped and threw it out so far to one side as to almost counteract the efforts of the right foot. The more briskly the chief of police worked his walking apparatus the less progress he made in advance. So while he was getting to the balcony, Ivan Ivanovitch had plenty of time to lose himself in surmises as to why the chief was flourishing his hands so vigorously. This interested him the more, as the matter seemed one of unusual importance; for the chief had on a new dagger.

"Good morning, Peter Feodorovitch!" cried Ivan Ivanovitch, who was, as has already been stated, exceedingly curious, and could not restrain his impatience as the chief of police began to ascend to the balcony, yet never raised his eyes, and kept grumbling at his foot, which could not be persuaded to mount the step at the first attempt.

"I wish my good friend and benefactor, Ivan Ivanovitch, a good-day," replied the chief.

"Pray sit down. I see that you are weary, as your lame foot hinders--"

“My foot!” screamed the chief, bestowing upon Ivan Ivanovitch a glance such as a giant might cast upon a pigmy, a pedant upon a dancing-master: and he stretched out his foot and stamped upon the floor with it. This boldness cost him dear; for his whole body wavered and his nose struck the railing; but the brave preserver of order, with the purpose of making light of it, righted himself immediately, and began to feel in his pocket as if to get his snuff-box. “I must report to you, my dear friend and benefactor, Ivan Ivanovitch, that never in all my days have I made such a march. Yes, seriously. For instance, during the campaign of 1807-- Ah! I will tell to you how I crawled through the enclosure to see a pretty little German.” Here the chief closed one eye and executed a diabolically sly smile.

“Where have you been to-day?” asked Ivan Ivanovitch, wishing to cut the chief short and bring him more speedily to the object of his visit. He would have very much liked to inquire what the chief meant to tell him, but his extensive knowledge of the world showed him the impropriety of such a question; and so he had to keep himself well in hand and await a solution, his heart, meanwhile, beating with unusual force.

“Ah, excuse me! I was going to tell you--where was I?” answered the chief of police. “In the first place, I report that the weather is fine to-day.”

At these last words, Ivan Ivanovitch nearly died.

“But permit me,” went on the chief. “I have come to you to-day about a very important affair.” Here the chief’s face and bearing assumed the same careworn aspect with which he had ascended to the balcony.

Ivan Ivanovitch breathed again, and shook as if in a fever, omitting not, as was his habit, to put a question. “What is the important matter? Is it important?”

“Pray judge for yourself; in the first place I venture to report to you, dear friend and benefactor, Ivan Ivanovitch, that you-- I beg you to observe that, for my own part, I should have nothing to say; but the rules of government require it--that you have transgressed the rules of propriety.”

“What do you mean, Peter Feodorovitch? I don’t understand at all.”

“Pardon me, Ivan Ivanovitch! how can it be that you do not understand? Your own beast has destroyed an important government document; and you can still say, after that, that you do not understand!”

“What beast?”

“Your own brown sow, with your permission, be it said.”

“How can I be responsible? Why did the door-keeper of the court open the door?”

“But, Ivan Ivanovitch, your own brown sow. You must be responsible.”

“I am extremely obliged to you for comparing me to a sow.”

“But I did not say that, Ivan Ivanovitch! By Heaven! I did not say so! Pray judge from your own clear conscience. It is known to you without doubt, that in accordance with the views of the government, unclean animals are forbidden to roam about the town, particularly in the principal streets. Admit, now, that it is prohibited.”

“God knows what you are talking about! A mighty important business that a sow got into the street!”

“Permit me to inform you, Ivan Ivanovitch, permit me, permit me, that this is utterly inadvisable. What is to be done? The authorities command, we must obey. I don’t deny that sometimes chickens and geese run about the street, and even about the square, pray observe, chickens and geese; but only last year, I gave orders that pigs and goats were not to be admitted to the public squares, which regulations I directed to be read aloud at the time before all the people.”

“No, Peter Feodorovitch, I see nothing here except that you are doing your best to insult me.”

“But you cannot say that, my dearest friend and benefactor, that I have tried to insult you. Bethink yourself: I never said a word to you last year when you built a roof a whole foot higher than is allowed by law. On the contrary, I pretended not to have observed it. Believe me, my dearest friend, even now, I would, so to speak--but my duty--in a word, my duty demands that I should have an eye to cleanliness. Just judge for yourself, when suddenly in the principal street--”

“Fine principal streets yours are! Every woman goes there and throws down any rubbish she chooses.”

“Permit me to inform you, Ivan Ivanovitch, that it is you who are insulting me. That does sometimes happen, but, as a rule, only besides fences, sheds, or storehouses; but that a filthy sow should intrude herself in the main street, in the square, now is a matter--”

“What sort of a matter? Peter Feodorovitch! surely a sow is one of God’s creatures!”

“Agreed. Everybody knows that you are a learned man, that you are acquainted with sciences and various other subjects. I never studied the sciences: I began to learn to write in my thirteenth year. Of course you know that I was a soldier in the ranks.”

“Hm!” said Ivan Ivanovitch.

“Yes,” continued the chief of police, “in 1801 I was in the Forty-second Regiment of chasseurs, lieutenant in the fourth company. The commander of our company was, if I may be permitted to mention it, Captain Eremeeff.” Thereupon the chief of police thrust his fingers into the snuff-box which Ivan Ivanovitch was holding open, and stirred up the snuff.

Ivan Ivanovitch answered, “Hm!”

“But my duty,” went on the chief of police, “is to obey the commands of the authorities. Do you know, Ivan Ivanovitch, that a person who purloins a government document in the court-room incurs capital punishment equally with other criminals?”

“I know it; and, if you like, I can give you lessons. It is so decreed with regard to people, as if you, for instance, were to steal a document; but a sow is an animal, one of God’s creatures.”

“Certainly; but the law reads, ‘Those guilty of theft’--I beg of you to listen most attentively--’Those guilty!’ Here is indicated neither race nor sex nor rank: of course an animal can be guilty. You may say what you please; but the animal, until the sentence is pronounced by the court, should be committed to the charge of the police as a transgressor of the law.”

“No, Peter Feodorovitch,” retorted Ivan Ivanovitch coolly, “that shall not be.”

“As you like: only I must carry out the orders of the authorities.”

“What are you threatening me with? Probably you want to send that one-armed soldier after her. I shall order the woman who tends the door to drive him off with the poker: he’ll get his last arm broken.”

“I dare not dispute with you. In case you will not commit the sow to the charge of the police, then do what you please with her: kill her for Christmas, if you like, and make hams of her, or eat her as she is. Only I should like to ask you, in case you make sausages, to send me a couple, such as your Gapka makes so well, of blood and lard. My Agrafena Trofimovna is extremely fond of them.”

“I will send you a couple of sausages if you permit.”

“I shall be extremely obliged to you, dear friend and benefactor. Now permit me to say one word more. I am commissioned by the judge, as well as by all our acquaintances, so to speak, to effect a reconciliation between you and your friend, Ivan Nikiforovitch.”

“What! with that brute! I to be reconciled to that clown! Never! It shall not be, it shall not be!” Ivan Ivanovitch was in a remarkably determined frame of mind.

“As you like,” replied the chief of police, treating both nostrils to snuff. “I will not venture to advise you; but permit me to mention--here you live at enmity, and if you make peace. . .”

But Ivan Ivanovitch began to talk about catching quail, as he usually did when he wanted to put an end to a conversation. So the chief of police was obliged to retire without having achieved any success whatever.

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CHAPTER VI

FROM WHICH THE READER CAN EASILY DISCOVER WHAT IS CONTAINED IN IT

In spite of all the judge's efforts to keep the matter secret, all Mirgorod knew by the next day that Ivan Ivanovitch's sow had stolen Ivan Nikiforovitch's petition. The chief of police himself, in a moment of forgetfulness, was the first to betray himself. When Ivan Nikiforovitch was informed of it he said nothing: he merely inquired, "Was it the brown one?"

But Agafya Fedosyevna, who was present, began again to urge on Ivan Nikiforovitch. "What's the matter with you, Ivan Nikiforovitch? People will laugh at you as at a fool if you let it pass. How can you remain a nobleman after that? You will be worse than the old woman who sells the honeycakes with hemp-seed oil you are so fond of."

And the mischief-maker persuaded him. She hunted up somewhere a middle-aged man with dark complexion, spots all over his face, and a dark-blue surtout patched on the elbows, a regular official scribbler. He blacked his boots with tar, wore three pens behind his ear, and a glass vial tied to his buttonhole with a string instead of an ink-bottle: ate as many as nine pies at once, and put the tenth in his pocket, and wrote so many slanders of all sorts on a single sheet of stamped paper that no reader could get through all at one time without interspersing coughs and sneezes. This man laboured, toiled, and wrote, and finally concocted the following document:-

"To the District Judge of Mirgorod, from the noble, Ivan Dovgotchkun, son of Nikifor.

"In pursuance of my plaint which was presented by me, Ivan Dovgotchkun, son of Nikifor, against the nobleman, Ivan Pererepenko, son of Ivan, to which the judge of the Mirgorod district court has exhibited indifference; and the shameless, high-handed deed of the brown sow being kept secret, and coming to my ears from outside parties.

"And the said neglect, plainly malicious, lies incontestably at the judge's door; for the sow is a stupid animal, and therefore unfitted for the theft of papers. From which it plainly appears that the said frequently mentioned sow was not otherwise than instigated to the same by the opponent, Ivan Pererepenko, son of

Ivan, calling himself a nobleman, and already convicted of theft, conspiracy against life, and desecration of a church. But the said Mirgorod judge, with the partisanship peculiar to him, gave his private consent to this individual; for without such consent the said sow could by no possible means have been admitted to carry off the document; for the judge of the district court of Mirgorod is well provided with servants: it was only necessary to summon a soldier, who is always on duty in the reception-room, and who, although he has but one eye and one somewhat damaged arm, has powers quite adequate to driving out a sow, and to beating it with a stick, from which is credibly evident the criminal neglect of the said Mirgorod judge and the incontestable sharing of the Jew-like spoils therefrom resulting from these mutual conspirators. And the aforesaid robber and nobleman, Ivan Pererepenko, son of Ivan, having disgraced himself, finished his turning on his lathe. Wherefore, I, the noble Ivan Dovgotchkun, son of Nikifor, declare to the said district judge in proper form that if the said brown sow, or the man Pererepenko, be not summoned to the court, and judgment in accordance with justice and my advantage pronounced upon her, then I, Ivan Dovgotchkun, son of Nikifor, shall present a plaint, with observance of all due formalities, against the said district judge for his illegal partisanship to the superior courts.

"Ivan Dovgotchkun, son of Nikifor, noble of the Mirgorod District."

This petition produced its effect. The judge was a man of timid disposition, as all good people generally are. He betook himself to the secretary. But the secretary emitted from his lips a thick "Hm," and exhibited on his countenance that indifferent and diabolically equivocal expression which Satan alone assumes when he sees his victim hastening to his feet. One resource remained to him, to reconcile the two friends. But how to set about it, when all attempts up to that time had been so unsuccessful? Nevertheless, it was decided to make another effort; but Ivan Ivanovitch declared outright that he would not hear of it, and even flew into a violent passion; whilst Ivan Nikiforovitch, in lieu of an answer, turned his back and would not utter a word.

Then the case went on with the unusual promptness upon which courts usually pride themselves. Documents were dated, labelled, numbered, sewed together, registered all in one day, and the matter laid on the shelf, where it continued to lie, for one, two, or three years. Many brides were married; a new street was laid out in Mirgorod; one of the judge's double teeth fell out and two of his eye-teeth; more children than ever ran about Ivan Ivanovitch's yard; Ivan Nikiforovitch, as a reproof to Ivan Ivanovitch, constructed a new goose-shed, although a little farther back than the first, and built himself completely off from his neighbour, so that these worthy people hardly ever beheld each other's faces; but still the

case lay in the cabinet, which had become marbled with ink-pots.

In the meantime a very important event for all Mirgorod had taken place. The chief of police had given a reception. Whence shall I obtain the brush and colours to depict this varied gathering and magnificent feast? Take your watch, open it, and look what is going on inside. A fearful confusion, is it not? Now, imagine almost the same, if not a greater, number of wheels standing in the chief of police's courtyard. How many carriages and waggons were there! One was wide behind and narrow in front; another narrow behind and wide in front. One was a carriage and a waggon combined; another neither a carriage nor a waggon. One resembled a huge hayrick or a fat merchant's wife; another a dilapidated Jew or a skeleton not quite freed from the skin. One was a perfect pipe with long stem in profile; another, resembling nothing whatever, suggested some strange, shapeless, fantastic object. In the midst of this chaos of wheels rose coaches with windows like those of a room. The drivers, in grey Cossack coats, gaberdines, and white hare-skin coats, sheepskin hats and caps of various patterns, and with pipes in their hands, drove the unharnessed horses through the yard.

What a reception the chief of police gave! Permit me to run through the list of those who were there: Taras Tarasovitch, Evpl Akinfovitch, Evtikhiy Evtikhievitch, Ivan Ivanovitch--not that Ivan Ivanovitch but another--Gabba Bavrilonovitch, our Ivan Ivanovitch, Elevferiy Elevferievitch, Makar Nazarevitch, Thoma Grigorovitch--I can say no more: my powers fail me, my hand stops writing. And how many ladies were there! dark and fair, tall and short, some fat like Ivan Nikiforovitch, and some so thin that it seemed as though each one might hide herself in the scabbard of the chief's sword. What head-dresses! what costumes! red, yellow, coffee-colour, green, blue, new, turned, re-made dresses, ribbons, reticules. Farewell, poor eyes! you will never be good for anything any more after such a spectacle. And how long the table was drawn out! and how all talked! and what a noise they made! What is a mill with its driving-wheel, stones, beams, hammers, wheels, in comparison with this? I cannot tell you exactly what they talked about, but presumably of many agreeable and useful things, such as the weather, dogs, wheat, caps, and dice. At length Ivan Ivanovitch--not our Ivan Ivanovitch, but the other, who had but one eye--said, "It strikes me as strange that my right eye," this one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch always spoke sarcastically about himself, "does not see Ivan Nikiforovitch, Gospodin Dovgotchkun."

"He would not come," said the chief of police.

"Why not?"

"It's two years now, glory to God! since they quarrelled; that is, Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch; and where one goes, the other will not go."

“You don’t say so!” Thereupon one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch raised his eye and clasped his hands. “Well, if people with good eyes cannot live in peace, how am I to live amicably, with my bad one?”

At these words they all laughed at the tops of their voices. Every one liked one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch, because he cracked jokes in that style. A tall, thin man in a frieze coat, with a plaster on his nose, who up to this time had sat in the corner, and never once altered the expression of his face, even when a fly lighted on his nose, rose from his seat, and approached nearer to the crowd which surrounded one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch. “Listen,” said Ivan Ivanovitch, when he perceived that quite a throng had collected about him; “suppose we make peace between our friends. Ivan Ivanovitch is talking with the women and girls; let us send quietly for Ivan Nikiforovitch and bring them together.”

Ivan Ivanovitch’s proposal was unanimously agreed to; and it was decided to send at once to Ivan Nikiforovitch’s house, and beg him, at any rate, to come to the chief of police’s for dinner. But the difficult question as to who was to be intrusted with this weighty commission rendered all thoughtful. They debated long as to who was the most expert in diplomatic matters. At length it was unanimously agreed to depute Anton Prokofievitch to do this business.

But it is necessary, first of all, to make the reader somewhat acquainted with this noteworthy person. Anton Prokofievitch was a truly good man, in the fullest meaning of the term. If any one in Mirgorod gave him a neckerchief or underclothes, he returned thanks; if any one gave him a fillip on the nose, he returned thanks too. If he was asked, “Why, Anton Prokofievitch, do you wear a light brown coat with blue sleeves?” he generally replied, “Ah, you haven’t one like it! Wait a bit, it will soon fade and will be alike all over.” And, in point of fact, the blue cloth, from the effects of the sun, began to turn cinnamon colour, and became of the same tint as the rest of the coat. But the strange part of it was that Anton Prokofievitch had a habit of wearing woollen clothing in summer and nankeen in winter.

Anton Prokofievitch had no house of his own. He used to have one on the outskirts of the town; but he sold it, and with the purchase-money bought a team of brown horses and a little carriage in which he drove about to stay with the squires. But as the horses were a deal of trouble and money was required for oats, Anton Prokofievitch bartered them for a violin and a housemaid, with twenty-five paper rubles to boot. Afterwards Anton Prokofievitch sold the violin, and exchanged the girl for a morocco and gold tobacco-pouch; now he has such a tobacco-pouch as no one else has. As a result of this luxury, he can no longer go about among the country houses, but has to remain in the town and pass the night at different houses, especially of those gentlemen who take pleasure in

tapping him on the nose. Anton Prokofievitch is very fond of good eating, and plays a good game at cards. Obeying orders always was his forte; so, taking his hat and cane, he set out at once on his errand.

But, as he walked along, he began to ponder in what manner he should contrive to induce Ivan Nikiforovitch to come to the assembly. The unbending character of the latter, who was otherwise a worthy man, rendered the undertaking almost hopeless. How, indeed, was he to persuade him to come, when even rising from his bed cost him so great an effort? But supposing that he did rise, how could he get him to come, where, as he doubtless knew, his irreconcilable enemy already was? The more Anton Prokofievitch reflected, the more difficulties he perceived. The day was sultry, the sun beat down, the perspiration poured from him in streams. Anton Prokofievitch was a tolerably sharp man in many respects though they did tap him on the nose. In bartering, however, he was not fortunate. He knew very well when to play the fool, and sometimes contrived to turn things to his own profit amid circumstances and surroundings from which a wise man could rarely escape without loss.

His ingenious mind had contrived a means of persuading Ivan Nikiforovitch; and he was proceeding bravely to face everything when an unexpected occurrence somewhat disturbed his equanimity. There is no harm, at this point, in admitting to the reader that, among other things, Anton Prokofievitch was the owner of a pair of trousers of such singular properties that whenever he put them on the dogs always bit his calves. Unfortunately, he had donned this particular pair of trousers; and he had hardly given himself up to meditation before a fearful barking on all sides saluted his ears. Anton Prokofievitch raised such a yell, no one could scream louder than he, that not only did the well-known woman and the occupant of the endless coat rush out to meet him, but even the small boys from Ivan Ivanovitch’s yard. But although the dogs succeeded in tasting only one of his calves, this sensibility diminished his courage, and he entered the porch with a certain amount of timidity.

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CHAPTER VII

HOW A RECONCILIATION WAS SOUGHT TO BE EFFECTED AND A LAW SUIT ENSUED

“Ah! how do you do? Why do you irritate the dogs?” said Ivan Nikiforovitch, on perceiving Anton Prokofievitch; for no one spoke otherwise than jestingly with Anton Prokofievitch.

“Hang them! who’s been irritating them?” retorted Anton Prokofievitch.

“You have!”

“By Heavens, no! You are invited to dinner by Peter Feodorovitch.”

“Hm!”

“He invited you in a more pressing manner than I can tell you. ‘Why,’ says he, ‘does Ivan Nikiforovitch shun me like an enemy? He never comes round to have a chat, or make a call.’“

Ivan Nikiforovitch stroked his beard.

“‘If,’ says he, ‘Ivan Nikiforovitch does not come now, I shall not know what to think: surely, he must have some design against me. Pray, Anton Prokofievitch, persuade Ivan Nikiforovitch!’ Come, Ivan Nikiforovitch, let us go! a very choice company is already met there.”

Ivan Nikiforovitch began to look at a cock, which was perched on the roof, crowing with all its might.

“If you only knew, Ivan Nikiforovitch,” pursued the zealous ambassador, “what fresh sturgeon and caviare Peter Feodorovitch has had sent to him!” Whereupon Ivan Nikiforovitch turned his head and began to listen attentively. This encouraged the messenger. “Come quickly: Thoma Grigorovitch is there too. Why don’t you come?” he added, seeing that Ivan Nikiforovitch still lay in the same position. “Shall we go, or not?”

“I won’t!”

This “I won’t” startled Anton Prokofievitch. He had fancied that his alluring representations had quite moved this very worthy man; but instead, he heard that decisive “I won’t.”

“Why won’t you?” he asked, with a vexation which he very rarely exhibited, even when they put burning paper on his head, a trick which the judge and the chief of police were particularly fond of indulging in.

Ivan Nikiforovitch took a pinch of snuff.

“Just as you like, Ivan Nikiforovitch. I do not know what detains you.”

“Why don’t I go?” said Ivan Nikiforovitch at length: “because that brigand will be there!” This was his ordinary way of alluding to Ivan Ivanovitch. “Just God! and is it long?”

“He will not be there, he will not be there! May the lightning kill me on the spot!” returned Anton Prokofievitch, who was ready to perjure himself ten times in an hour. “Come along, Ivan Nikiforovitch!”

“You lie, Anton Prokofievitch! he is there!”

“By Heaven, by Heaven, he’s not! May I never stir from this place if he’s there! Now, just think for yourself, what object have I in lying? May my hands and feet wither!-- What, don’t you believe me now? May I perish right here in your presence! Don’t you believe me yet?”

Ivan Nikiforovitch was entirely reassured by these asseverations, and ordered his valet, in the boundless coat, to fetch his trousers and nankeen spencer.

To describe how Ivan Nikiforovitch put on his trousers, how they wound his neckerchief about his neck, and finally dragged on his spencer, which burst under the left sleeve, would be quite superfluous. Suffice it to say, that during the whole of the time he preserved a becoming calmness of demeanour, and answered not a word to Anton Prokofievitch’s proposition to exchange something for his Turkish tobacco-pouch.

Meanwhile, the assembly awaited with impatience the decisive moment when Ivan Nikiforovitch should make his appearance and at length comply with the general desire that these worthy people should be reconciled to each other. Many were almost convinced that Ivan Nikiforovitch would not come. Even the chief of police offered to bet with one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch that he would not come; and only desisted when one-eyed Ivan Ivanovitch demanded that he should wager his lame foot against his own bad eye, at which the chief of police was greatly offended, and the company enjoyed a quiet laugh. No one had yet sat down to the table, although it was long past two o’clock, an hour before which in Mirgorod, even on ceremonial occasions, every one had already dined.

No sooner did Anton Prokofievitch show himself in the doorway, then he was instantly surrounded. Anton Prokofievitch, in answer to all inquiries, shouted the all-decisive words, “He will not come!” No sooner had he uttered them than a hailstorm of reproaches, scoldings, and, possibly, even fillips were about to descend upon his head for the ill success of his mission, when all at once the door opened, and--Ivan Nikiforovitch entered.

If Satan himself or a corpse had appeared, it would not have caused such consternation amongst the company as Ivan Nikiforovitch’s unexpected arrival

created. But Anton Prokofievitch only went off into a fit of laughter, and held his sides with delight at having played such a joke upon the company.

At all events, it was almost past the belief of all that Ivan Nikiforovitch could, in so brief a space of time, have attired himself like a respectable gentleman. Ivan Ivanovitch was not there at the moment: he had stepped out somewhere. Recovering from their amazement, the guests expressed an interest in Ivan Nikiforovitch's health, and their pleasure at his increase in breadth. Ivan Nikiforovitch kissed every one, and said, "Very much obliged!"

Meantime, the fragrance of the beet-soup was wafted through the apartment, and tickled the nostrils of the hungry guests very agreeably. All rushed headlong to table. The line of ladies, loquacious and silent, thin and stout, swept on, and the long table soon glittered with all the hues of the rainbow. I will not describe the courses: I will make no mention of the curd dumplings with sour cream, nor of the dish of pig's fry that was served with the soup, nor of the turkey with plums and raisins, nor of the dish which greatly resembled in appearance a boot soaked in kvas, nor of the sauce, which is the swan's song of the old-fashioned cook, nor of that other dish which was brought in all enveloped in the flames of spirit, and amused as well as frightened the ladies extremely. I will say nothing of these dishes, because I like to eat them better than to spend many words in discussing them.

Ivan Ivanovitch was exceedingly pleased with the fish dressed with horse-radish. He devoted himself especially to this useful and nourishing preparation. Picking out all the fine bones from the fish, he laid them on his plate; and happening to glance across the table--Heavenly Creator; but this was strange! Opposite him sat Ivan Nikiforovitch.

At the very same instant Ivan Nikiforovitch glanced up also-- No, I can do no more-- Give me a fresh pen with a fine point for this picture! mine is flabby. Their faces seemed to turn to stone whilst still retaining their defiant expression. Each beheld a long familiar face, to which it should have seemed the most natural of things to step up, involuntarily, as to an unexpected friend, and offer a snuff-box, with the words, "Do me the favour," or "Dare I beg you to do me the favour?" Instead of this, that face was terrible as a forerunner of evil. The perspiration poured in streams from Ivan Ivanovitch and Ivan Nikiforovitch.

All the guests at the table grew dumb with attention, and never once took their eyes off the former friends. The ladies, who had been busy up to that time on a sufficiently interesting discussion as to the preparation of capons, suddenly cut their conversation short. All was silence. It was a picture worthy of the brush of a great artist.

At length Ivan Ivanovitch pulled out his handkerchief and began to blow his

nose; whilst Ivan Nikiforovitch glanced about and his eye rested on the open door. The chief of police at once perceived this movement, and ordered the door to be fastened. Then both of the friends began to eat, and never once glanced at each other again.

As soon as dinner was over, the two former friends both rose from their seats, and began to look for their hats, with a view to departure. Then the chief beckoned; and Ivan Ivanovitch--not our Ivan Ivanovitch, but the other with the one eye--got behind Ivan Nikiforovitch, and the chief stepped behind Ivan Ivanovitch, and the two began to drag them backwards, in order to bring them together, and not release them till they had shaken hands with each other. Ivan Ivanovitch, the one-eyed, pushed Ivan Nikiforovitch, with tolerable success, towards the spot where stood Ivan Ivanovitch. But the chief of police directed his course too much to one side, because he could not steer himself with his refractory leg, which obeyed no orders whatever on this occasion, and, as if with malice and aforethought, swung itself uncommonly far, and in quite the contrary direction, possibly from the fact that there had been an unusual amount of fruit wine after dinner, so that Ivan Ivanovitch fell over a lady in a red gown, who had thrust herself into the very midst, out of curiosity.

Such an omen forboded no good. Nevertheless, the judge, in order to set things to rights, took the chief of police's place, and, sweeping all the snuff from his upper lip with his nose, pushed Ivan Ivanovitch in the opposite direction. In Mirgorod this is the usual manner of effecting a reconciliation: it somewhat resembles a game of ball. As soon as the judge pushed Ivan Ivanovitch, Ivan Ivanovitch with the one eye exerted all his strength, and pushed Ivan Nikiforovitch, from whom the perspiration streamed like rain-water from a roof. In spite of the fact that the friends resisted to the best of their ability, they were nevertheless brought together, for the two chief movers received reinforcements from the ranks of their guests.

Then they were closely surrounded on all sides, not to be released until they had decided to give one another their hands. "God be with you, Ivan Nikiforovitch and Ivan Ivanovitch! declare upon your honour now, that what you quarrelled about were mere trifles, were they not? Are you not ashamed of yourselves before people and before God?"

"I do not know," said Ivan Nikiforovitch, panting with fatigue, though it is to be observed that he was not at all disinclined to a reconciliation, "I do not know what I did to Ivan Ivanovitch; but why did he destroy my coop and plot against my life?"

"I am innocent of any evil designs!" said Ivan Ivanovitch, never looking at Ivan Nikiforovitch. "I swear before God and before you, honourable noblemen, I

did nothing to my enemy! Why does he calumniate me and insult my rank and family?”

“How have I insulted you, Ivan Ivanovitch?” said Ivan Nikiforovitch. One moment more of explanation, and the long enmity would have been extinguished. Ivan Nikiforovitch was already feeling in his pocket for his snuff-box, and was about to say, “Do me the favour.”

“Is it not an insult,” answered Ivan Ivanovitch, without raising his eyes, “when you, my dear sir, insulted my honour and my family with a word which it is improper to repeat here?”

“Permit me to observe, in a friendly manner, Ivan Ivanovitch,” here Ivan Nikiforovitch touched Ivan Ivanovitch’s button with his finger, which clearly indicated the disposition of his mind, “that you took offence, the deuce only knows at what, because I called you a ‘goose’--”

It occurred to Ivan Nikiforovitch that he had made a mistake in uttering that word; but it was too late: the word was said. Everything went to the winds. It, on the utterance of this word without witnesses, Ivan Ivanovitch lost control of himself and flew into such a passion as God preserve us from beholding any man in, what was to be expected now? I put it to you, dear readers, what was to be expected now, when the fatal word was uttered in an assemblage of persons among whom were ladies, in whose presence Ivan Ivanovitch liked to be particularly polite? If Ivan Nikiforovitch had set to work in any other manner, if he had only said bird and not goose, it might still have been arranged, but all was at an end.

He gave one look at Ivan Nikiforovitch, but such a look! If that look had possessed active power, then it would have turned Ivan Nikiforovitch into dust. The guests understood the look and hastened to separate them. And this man, the very model of gentleness, who never let a single poor woman go by without interrogating her, rushed out in a fearful rage. Such violent storms do passions produce!

For a whole month nothing was heard of Ivan Ivanovitch. He shut himself up at home. His ancestral chest was opened, and from it were taken silver rubles, his grandfather’s old silver rubles! And these rubles passed into the ink-stained hands of legal advisers. The case was sent up to the higher court; and when Ivan Ivanovitch received the joyful news that it would be decided on the morrow, then only did he look out upon the world and resolve to emerge from his house. Alas! from that time forth the council gave notice day by day that the case would be finished on the morrow, for the space of ten years.

Five years ago, I passed through the town of Mirgorod. I came at a bad time. It was autumn, with its damp, melancholy weather, mud and mists. An unnatural

verdure, the result of incessant rains, covered with a watery network the fields and meadows, to which it is as well suited as youthful pranks to an old man, or roses to an old woman. The weather made a deep impression on me at the time: when it was dull, I was dull; but in spite of this, when I came to pass through Mirgorod, my heart beat violently. God, what reminiscences! I had not seen Mirgorod for twenty years. Here had lived, in touching friendship, two inseparable friends. And how many prominent people had died! Judge Demyan Demyanovitch was already gone: Ivan Ivanovitch, with the one eye, had long ceased to live.

I entered the main street. All about stood poles with bundles of straw on top: some alterations were in progress. Several dwellings had been removed. The remnants of board and wattled fences projected sadly here and there. It was a festival day. I ordered my basket chaise to stop in front of the church, and entered softly that no one might turn round. To tell the truth, there was no need of this: the church was almost empty; there were very few people; it was evident that even the most pious feared the mud. The candles seemed strangely unpleasant in that gloomy, or rather sickly, light. The dim vestibule was melancholy; the long windows, with their circular panes, were bedewed with tears of rain. I retired into the vestibule, and addressing a respectable old man, with greyish hair, said, “May I inquire if Ivan Nikiforovitch is still living?”

At that moment the lamp before the holy picture burned up more brightly and the light fell directly upon the face of my companion. What was my surprise, on looking more closely, to behold features with which I was acquainted! It was Ivan Nikiforovitch himself! But how he had changed!

“Are you well, Ivan Nikiforovitch? How old you have grown!”

“Yes, I have grown old. I have just come from Poltava to-day,” answered Ivan Nikiforovitch.

“You don’t say so! you have been to Poltava in such bad weather?”

“What was to be done? that lawsuit--”

At this I sighed involuntarily.

Ivan Nikiforovitch observed my sigh, and said, “Do not be troubled: I have reliable information that the case will be decided next week, and in my favour.”

I shrugged my shoulders, and went to seek news of Ivan Ivanovitch.

“Ivan Ivanovitch is here,” some one said to me, “in the choir.”

I saw a gaunt form. Was that Ivan Ivanovitch? His face was covered with wrinkles, his hair was perfectly white; but the pelisse was the same as ever. After the first greetings were over, Ivan Ivanovitch, turning to me with a joyful smile which always became his funnel-shaped face, said, “Have you been told the good news?”

“What news?” I inquired.

“My case is to be decided to-morrow without fail: the court has announced it decisively.”

I sighed more deeply than before, made haste to take my leave, for I was bound on very important business, and seated myself in my kibitka.

The lean nags known in Mirgorod as post-horses started, producing with their hoofs, which were buried in a grey mass of mud, a sound very displeasing to the ear. The rain poured in torrents upon the Jew seated on the box, covered with a rug. The dampness penetrated through and through me. The gloomy barrier with a sentry-box, in which an old soldier was repairing his weapons, was passed slowly. Again the same fields, in some places black where they had been dug up, in others of a greenish hue; wet daws and crows; monotonous rain; a tearful sky, without one gleam of light! . . . It is gloomy in this world, gentlemen!

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UNCOLLECTED SHORT STORIES



Translated by Constance Garnett

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THE MANTLE

In a certain Russian ministerial department — —
But it is perhaps better that I do not mention which department it was. There are in the whole of Russia no persons more sensitive than Government officials. Each of them believes if he is annoyed in any way, that the whole official class is insulted in his person.

Recently an Isprawnik (country magistrate) — I do not know of which town — is said to have drawn up a report with the object of showing that, ignoring Government orders, people were speaking of Isprawniks in terms of contempt. In order to prove his assertions, he forwarded with his report a bulky work of fiction, in which on about every tenth page an Isprawnik appeared generally in a drunken condition.

In order therefore to avoid any unpleasantness, I will not definitely indicate the department in which the scene of my story is laid, and will rather say “in a certain chancellery.”

Well, in a certain chancellery there was a certain man who, as I cannot deny, was not of an attractive appearance. He was short, had a face marked with smallpox, was rather bald in front, and his forehead and cheeks were deeply lined with furrows — to say nothing of other physical imperfections. Such was the outer aspect of our hero, as produced by the St Petersburg climate.

As regards his official rank — for with us Russians the official rank must always be given — he was what is usually known as a permanent titular councillor, one of those unfortunate beings who, as is well known, are made a butt of by various authors who have the bad habit of attacking people who cannot defend themselves.

Our hero’s family name was Bashmatchkin; his baptismal name Akaki Akakievitch. Perhaps the reader may think this name somewhat strange and far-fetched, but he can be assured that it is not so, and that circumstances so arranged it that it was quite impossible to give him any other name.

This happened in the following way. Akaki Akakievitch was born, if I am not mistaken, on the night of the 23rd of March. His deceased mother, the wife of an official and a very good woman, immediately made proper arrangements for his baptism. When the time came, she was lying on the bed before the door. At her right hand stood the godfather, Ivan Ivanovitch Jeroshkin, a very important person, who was registrar of the senate; at her left, the godmother Anna

Semenovna Byelobrushkova, the wife of a police inspector, a woman of rare virtues.

Three names were suggested to the mother from which to choose one for the child — Mokuja, Sossuja, or Khozdazat.

“No,” she said, “I don’t like such names.”

In order to meet her wishes, the church calendar was opened in another place, and the names Triphiliy, Dula, and Varakhasiy were found.

“This is a punishment from heaven,” said the mother. “What sort of names are these! I never heard the like! If it had been Varadat or Varukh, but Triphiliy and Varakhasiy!”

They looked again in the calendar and found Pavsikakhiy and Vakhtisiy.

“Now I see,” said the mother, “this is plainly fate. If there is no help for it, then he had better take his father’s name, which was Akaki.”

So the child was called Akaki Akakievitch. It was baptised, although it wept and cried and made all kinds of grimaces, as though it had a presentiment that it would one day be a titular councillor.

We have related all this so conscientiously that the reader himself might be convinced that it was impossible for the little Akaki to receive any other name. When and how he entered the chancellery and who appointed him, no one could remember. However many of his superiors might come and go, he was always seen in the same spot, in the same attitude, busy with the same work, and bearing the same title; so that people began to believe he had come into the world just as he was, with his bald forehead and official uniform.

In the chancellery where he worked, no kind of notice was taken of him. Even the office attendants did not rise from their seats when he entered, nor look at him; they took no more notice than if a fly had flown through the room. His superiors treated him in a coldly despotic manner. The assistant of the head of the department, when he pushed a pile of papers under his nose, did not even say “Please copy those,” or “There is something interesting for you,” or make any other polite remark such as well-educated officials are in the habit of doing. But Akaki took the documents, without worrying himself whether they had the right to hand them over to him or not, and straightway set to work to copy them.

His young colleagues made him the butt of their ridicule and their elegant wit, so far as officials can be said to possess any wit. They did not scruple to relate in his presence various tales of their own invention regarding his manner of life and his landlady, who was seventy years old. They declared that she beat him, and inquired of him when he would lead her to the marriage altar. Sometimes they let a shower of scraps of paper fall on his head, and told him they were snowflakes.

But Akaki Akakievitch made no answer to all these attacks; he seemed

oblivious of their presence. His work was not affected in the slightest degree; during all these interruptions he did not make a single error in copying. Only when the horse-play grew intolerable, when he was held by the arm and prevented writing, he would say “Do leave me alone! Why do you always want to disturb me at work?” There was something peculiarly pathetic in these words and the way in which he uttered them.

One day it happened that when a young clerk, who had been recently appointed to the chancellery, prompted by the example of the others, was playing him some trick, he suddenly seemed arrested by something in the tone of Akaki’s voice, and from that moment regarded the old official with quite different eyes. He felt as though some supernatural power drew him away from the colleagues whose acquaintance he had made here, and whom he had hitherto regarded as well-educated, respectable men, and alienated him from them. Long afterwards, when surrounded by gay companions, he would see the figure of the poor little councillor and hear the words “Do leave me alone! Why will you always disturb me at work?” Along with these words, he also heard others: “Am I not your brother?” On such occasions the young man would hide his face in his hands, and think how little humane feeling after all was to be found in men’s hearts; how much coarseness and cruelty was to be found even in the educated and those who were everywhere regarded as good and honourable men.

Never was there an official who did his work so zealously as Akaki Akakievitch. “Zealously,” do I say? He worked with a passionate love of his task. While he copied official documents, a world of varied beauty rose before his eyes. His delight in copying was legible in his face. To form certain letters afforded him special satisfaction, and when he came to them he was quite another man; he began to smile, his eyes sparkled, and he pursed up his lips, so that those who knew him could see by his face which letters he was working at.

Had he been rewarded according to his zeal, he would perhaps — to his own astonishment — have been raised to the rank of civic councillor. However, he was not destined, as his colleagues expressed it, to wear a cross at his buttonhole, but only to get hæmorrhoids by leading a too sedentary life.

For the rest, I must mention that on one occasion he attracted a certain amount of attention. A director, who was a kindly man and wished to reward him for his long service, ordered that he should be entrusted with a task more important than the documents which he usually had to copy. This consisted in preparing a report for a court, altering the headings of various documents, and here and there changing the first personal pronoun into the third.

Akaki undertook the work; but it confused and exhausted him to such a degree that the sweat ran from his forehead and he at last exclaimed: “No! Please give

me again something to copy." From that time he was allowed to continue copying to his life's end.

Outside this copying nothing appeared to exist for him. He did not even think of his clothes. His uniform, which was originally green, had acquired a reddish tint. The collar was so narrow and so tight that his neck, although of average length, stretched far out of it, and appeared extraordinarily long, just like those of the cats with movable heads, which are carried about on trays and sold to the peasants in Russian villages.

Something was always sticking to his clothes — a piece of thread, a fragment of straw which had been flying about, etc. Moreover he seemed to have a special predilection for passing under windows just when something not very clean was being thrown out of them, and therefore he constantly carried about on his hat pieces of orange-peel and such refuse. He never took any notice of what was going on in the streets, in contrast to his colleagues who were always watching people closely and whom nothing delighted more than to see someone walking along on the opposite pavement with a rent in his trousers.

But Akaki Akakievitch saw nothing but the clean, regular lines of his copies before him; and only when he collided suddenly with a horse's nose, which blew its breath noisily in his face, did the good man observe that he was not sitting at his writing-table among his neat duplicates, but walking in the middle of the street.

When he arrived home, he sat down at once to supper, ate his cabbage-soup hurriedly, and then, without taking any notice how it tasted, a slice of beef with garlic, together with the flies and any other trifles which happened to be lying on it. As soon as his hunger was satisfied, he set himself to write, and began to copy the documents which he had brought home with him. If he happened to have no official documents to copy, he copied for his own satisfaction political letters, not for their more or less grand style but because they were directed to some high personage.

When the grey St Petersburg sky is darkened by the veil of night, and the whole of officialdom has finished its dinner according to its gastronomical inclinations or the depth of its purse — when all recover themselves from the perpetual scratching of bureaucratic pens, and all the cares and business with which men so often needlessly burden themselves, they devote the evening to recreation. One goes to the theatre; another roams about the streets, inspecting toilettes; another whispers flattering words to some young girl who has risen like a star in his modest official circle. Here and there one visits a colleague in his third or fourth story flat, consisting of two rooms with an entrance-hall and kitchen, fitted with some pretentious articles of furniture purchased by many

abstinences.

In short, at this time every official betakes himself to some form of recreation — playing whist, drinking tea, and eating cheap pastry or smoking tobacco in long pipes. Some relate scandals about great people, for in whatever situation of life the Russian may be, he always likes to hear about the aristocracy; others recount well-worn but popular anecdotes, as for example that of the commandant to whom it was reported that a rogue had cut off the horse’s tail on the monument of Peter the Great.

But even at this time of rest and recreation, Akaki Akakievitch remained faithful to his habits. No one could say that he had ever seen him in any evening social circle. After he had written as much as he wanted, he went to bed, and thought of the joys of the coming day, and the fine copies which God would give him to do.

So flowed on the peaceful existence of a man who was quite content with his post and his income of four hundred roubles a year. He might perhaps have reached an extreme old age if one of those unfortunate events had not befallen him, which not only happen to titular but to actual privy, court, and other councillors, and also to persons who never give advice nor receive it.

In St Petersburg all those who draw a salary of four hundred roubles or thereabouts have a terrible enemy in our northern cold, although some assert that it is very good for the health. About nine o’clock in the morning, when the clerks of the various departments betake themselves to their offices, the cold nips their noses so vigorously that most of them are quite bewildered. If at this time even high officials so suffer from the severity of the cold in their own persons that the tears come into their eyes, what must be the sufferings of the titular councillors, whose means do not allow of their protecting themselves against the rigour of winter? When they have put on their light cloaks, they must hurry through five or six streets as rapidly as possible, and then in the porter’s lodge warm themselves and wait till their frozen official faculties have thawed.

For some time Akaki had been feeling on his back and shoulders very sharp twinges of pain, although he ran as fast as possible from his dwelling to the office. After well considering the matter, he came to the conclusion that these were due to the imperfections of his cloak. In his room he examined it carefully, and discovered that in two or three places it had become so thin as to be quite transparent, and that the lining was much torn.

This cloak had been for a long time the standing object of jests on the part of Akaki’s merciless colleagues. They had even robbed it of the noble name of “cloak,” and called it a cowl. It certainly presented a remarkable appearance. Every year the collar had grown smaller, for every year the poor titular

councillor had taken a piece of it away in order to repair some other part of the cloak; and these repairs did not look as if they had been done by the skilled hand of a tailor. They had been executed in a very clumsy way and looked remarkably ugly.

After Akaki Akakievitch had ended his melancholy examination, he said to himself that he must certainly take his cloak to Petrovitch the tailor, who lived high up in a dark den on the fourth floor.

With his squinting eyes and pock-marked face, Petrovitch certainly did not look as if he had the honour to make frock-coats and trousers for high officials — that is to say, when he was sober, and not absorbed in more pleasant diversions.

I might dispense here with dwelling on this tailor; but since it is the custom to portray the physiognomy of every separate personage in a tale, I must give a better or worse description of Petrovitch. Formerly when he was a simple serf in his master's house, he was merely called Gregor. When he became free, he thought he ought to adorn himself with a new name, and dubbed himself Petrovitch; at the same time he began to drink lustily, not only on the high festivals but on all those which are marked with a cross in the calendar. By thus solemnly celebrating the days consecrated by the Church, he considered that he was remaining faithful to the traditions of his childhood; and when he quarrelled with his wife, he shouted that she was an earthly minded creature and a German. Of this lady we have nothing more to relate than that she was the wife of Petrovitch, and that she did not wear a kerchief but a cap on her head. For the rest, she was not pretty; only the soldiers looked at her as they passed, then they twirled their moustaches and walked on, laughing.

Akaki Akakievitch accordingly betook himself to the tailor's attic. He reached it by a dark, dirty, damp staircase, from which, as in all the inhabited houses of the poorer class in St Petersburg, exhaled an effluvia of spirits vexatious to nose and eyes alike. As the titular councillor climbed these slippery stairs, he calculated what sum Petrovitch could reasonably ask for repairing his cloak, and determined only to give him a rouble.

The door of the tailor's flat stood open in order to provide an outlet for the clouds of smoke which rolled from the kitchen, where Petrovitch's wife was just then cooking fish. Akaki, his eyes smarting, passed through the kitchen without her seeing him, and entered the room where the tailor sat on a large, roughly made, wooden table, his legs crossed like those of a Turkish pasha, and, as is the custom of tailors, with bare feet. What first arrested attention, when one approached him, was his thumb nail, which was a little misshapen but as hard and strong as the shell of a tortoise. Round his neck were hung several skeins of

thread, and on his knees lay a tattered coat. For some minutes he had been trying in vain to thread his needle. He was first of all angry with the gathering darkness, then with the thread.

“Why the deuce won’t you go in, you worthless scoundrel!” he exclaimed.

Akaki saw at once that he had come at an inopportune moment. He wished he had found Petrovitch at a more favourable time, when he was enjoying himself — when, as his wife expressed it, he was having a substantial ration of brandy. At such times the tailor was extraordinarily ready to meet his customer’s proposals with bows and gratitude to boot. Sometimes indeed his wife interfered in the transaction, and declared that he was drunk and promised to do the work at much too low a price; but if the customer paid a trifle more, the matter was settled.

Unfortunately for the titular councillor, Petrovitch had just now not yet touched the brandy flask. At such moments he was hard, obstinate, and ready to demand an exorbitant price.

Akaki foresaw this danger, and would gladly have turned back again, but it was already too late. The tailor’s single eye — for he was one-eyed — had already noticed him, and Akaki Akakievitch murmured involuntarily “Good day, Petrovitch.”

“Welcome, sir,” answered the tailor, and fastened his glance on the titular councillor’s hand to see what he had in it.

“I come just — merely — in order — I want — ”

We must here remark that the modest titular councillor was in the habit of expressing his thoughts only by prepositions, adverbs, or particles, which never yielded a distinct meaning. If the matter of which he spoke was a difficult one, he could never finish the sentence he had begun. So that when transacting business, he generally entangled himself in the formula “Yes — it is indeed true that — — ” Then he would remain standing and forget what he wished to say, or believe that he had said it.

“What do you want, sir?” asked Petrovitch, scrutinising him from top to toe with a searching look, and contemplating his collar, sleeves, coat, buttons — in short his whole uniform, although he knew them all very well, having made them himself. That is the way of tailors whenever they meet an acquaintance.

Then Akaki answered, stammering as usual, “I want — Petrovitch — this cloak — you see — it is still quite good, only a little dusty — and therefore it looks a little old. It is, however, still quite new, only that it is worn a little — there in the back and here in the shoulder — and there are three quite little splits. You see it is hardly worth talking about; it can be thoroughly repaired in a few minutes.”

Petrovitch took the unfortunate cloak, spread it on the table, contemplated it in silence, and shook his head. Then he stretched his hand towards the window-sill for his snuff-box, a round one with the portrait of a general on the lid. I do not know whose portrait it was, for it had been accidentally injured, and the ingenious tailor had gummed a piece of paper over it.

After Petrovitch had taken a pinch of snuff, he examined the cloak again, held it to the light, and once more shook his head. Then he examined the lining, took a second pinch of snuff, and at last exclaimed, “No! that is a wretched rag! It is beyond repair!”

At these words Akaki’s courage fell.

“What!” he cried in the querulous tone of a child. “Can this hole really not be repaired? Look! Petrovitch; there are only two rents, and you have enough pieces of cloth to mend them with.”

“Yes, I have enough pieces of cloth; but how should I sew them on? The stuff is quite worn out; it won’t bear another stitch.”

“Well, can’t you strengthen it with another piece of cloth?”

“No, it won’t bear anything more; cloth after all is only cloth, and in its present condition a gust of wind might blow the wretched mantle into tatters.”

“But if you could only make it last a little longer, do you see — really — — ”

“No!” answered Petrovitch decidedly. “There is nothing more to be done with it; it is completely worn out. It would be better if you made yourself foot bandages out of it for the winter; they are warmer than stockings. It was the Germans who invented stockings for their own profit.” Petrovitch never lost an opportunity of having a hit at the Germans. “You must certainly buy a new cloak,” he added.

“A new cloak?” exclaimed Akaki Akakievitch, and it grew dark before his eyes. The tailor’s work-room seemed to go round with him, and the only object he could clearly distinguish was the paper-patched general’s portrait on the tailor’s snuff-box. “A new cloak!” he murmured, as though half asleep. “But I have no money.”

“Yes, a new cloak,” repeated Petrovitch with cruel calmness.

“Well, even if I did decide on it — how much — — ”

“You mean how much would it cost?”

“Yes.”

“About a hundred and fifty roubles,” answered the tailor, pursing his lips. This diabolical tailor took a special pleasure in embarrassing his customers and watching the expression of their faces with his squinting single eye.

“A hundred and fifty roubles for a cloak!” exclaimed Akaki Akakievitch in a tone which sounded like an outcry — possibly the first he had uttered since his

birth.

“Yes,” replied Petrovitch. “And then the marten-fur collar and silk lining for the hood would make it up to two hundred roubles.”

“Petrovitch, I adjure you!” said Akaki Akakievitch in an imploring tone, no longer hearing nor wishing to hear the tailor’s words, “try to make this cloak last me a little longer.”

“No, it would be a useless waste of time and work.”

After this answer, Akaki departed, feeling quite crushed; while Petrovitch, with his lips firmly pursed up, feeling pleased with himself for his firmness and brave defence of the art of tailoring, remained sitting on the table.

Meanwhile Akaki wandered about the streets like a somnambulist, at random and without an object. “What a terrible business!” he said to himself. “Really, I could never have believed that it would come to that. No,” he continued after a short pause, “I could not have guessed that it would come to that. Now I find myself in a completely unexpected situation — in a difficulty that — — ”

As he thus continued his monologue, instead of approaching his dwelling, he went, without noticing it, in quite a wrong direction. A chimney-sweep brushed against him and blackened his back as he passed by. From a house where building was going on, a bucket of plaster of Paris was emptied on his head. But he saw and heard nothing. Only when he collided with a sentry, who, after he had planted his halberd beside him, was shaking out some snuff from his snuff-box with a bony hand, was he startled out of his reverie.

“What do you want?” the rough guardian of civic order exclaimed. “Can’t you walk on the pavement properly?”

This sudden address at last completely roused Akaki from his torpid condition. He collected his thoughts, considered his situation clearly, and began to take counsel with himself seriously and frankly, as with a friend to whom one entrusts the most intimate secrets.

“No!” he said at last. “To-day I will get nothing from Petrovitch — to-day he is in a bad humour — perhaps his wife has beaten him — I will look him up again next Sunday. On Saturday evenings he gets intoxicated; then the next day he wants a pick-me-up — his wife gives him no money — I squeeze a ten-kopeck piece into his hand; then he will be more reasonable and we can discuss the cloak further.”

Encouraged by these reflections, Akaki waited patiently till Sunday. On that day, having seen Petrovitch’s wife leave the house, he betook himself to the tailor’s and found him, as he had expected, in a very depressed state as the result of his Saturday’s dissipation. But hardly had Akaki let a word fall about the mantle than the diabolical tailor awoke from his torpor and exclaimed, “No,

nothing can be done; you must certainly buy a new cloak."

The titular councillor pressed a ten-kopeck piece into his hand.

"Thanks, my dear friend," said Petrovitch; "that will get me a pick-me-up, and I will drink your health with it. But as for your old mantle, what is the use of talking about it? It isn't worth a farthing. Let me only get to work; I will make you a splendid one, I promise!"

But poor Akaki Akakievitch still importuned the tailor to repair his old one.

"No, and again no," answered Petrovitch. "It is quite impossible. Trust me; I won't take you in. I will even put silver hooks and eyes on the collar, as is now the fashion."

This time Akaki saw that he must follow the tailor's advice, and again all his courage sank. He must have a new mantle made. But how should he pay for it? He certainly expected a Christmas bonus at the office; but that money had been allotted beforehand. He must buy a pair of trousers, and pay his shoemaker for repairing two pairs of boots, and buy some fresh linen. Even if, by an unexpected stroke of good luck, the director raised the usual bonus from forty to fifty roubles, what was such a small amount in comparison with the immense sum which Petrovitch demanded? A mere drop of water in the sea.

At any rate, he might expect that Petrovitch, if he were in a good humour, would lower the price of the cloak to eighty roubles; but where were these eighty roubles to be found? Perhaps he might succeed if he left no stone unturned, in raising half the sum; but he saw no means of procuring the other half. As regards the first half, he had been in the habit, as often as he received a rouble, of placing a kopeck in a money-box. At the end of each half-year he changed these copper coins for silver. He had been doing this for some time, and his savings just now amounted to forty roubles. Thus he already had half the required sum. But the other half!

Akaki made long calculations, and at last determined that he must, at least for a whole year, reduce some of his daily expenses. He would have to give up his tea in the evening, and copy his documents in his landlady's room, in order to economise the fuel in his own. He also resolved to avoid rough pavements as much as possible, in order to spare his shoes; and finally to give out less washing to the laundress.

At first he found these deprivations rather trying; but gradually he got accustomed to them, and at last took to going to bed without any supper at all. Although his body suffered from this abstinence, his spirit derived all the richer nutriment from perpetually thinking about his new cloak. From that time it seemed as though his nature had completed itself; as though he had married and possessed a companion on his life journey. This companion was the thought of

his new cloak, properly wadded and lined.

From that time he became more lively, and his character grew stronger, like that of a man who has set a goal before himself which he will reach at all costs. All that was indecisive and vague in his gait and gestures had disappeared. A new fire began to gleam in his eyes, and in his bold dreams he sometimes even proposed to himself the question whether he should not have a marten-fur collar made for his coat.

These and similar thoughts sometimes caused him to be absent-minded. As he was copying his documents one day he suddenly noticed that he had made a slip. “Ugh!” he exclaimed, and crossed himself.

At least once a month he went to Petrovitch to discuss the precious cloak with him, and to settle many important questions, e.g. where and at what price he should buy the cloth, and what colour he should choose.

Each of these visits gave rise to new discussions, but he always returned home in a happier mood, feeling that at last the day must come when all the materials would have been bought and the cloak would be lying ready to put on.

This great event happened sooner than he had hoped. The director gave him a bonus, not of forty or fifty, but of five-and-sixty roubles. Had the worthy official noticed that Akaki needed a new mantle, or was the exceptional amount of the gift only due to chance?

However that might be, Akaki was now richer by twenty roubles. Such an access of wealth necessarily hastened his important undertaking. After two or three more months of enduring hunger, he had collected his eighty roubles. His heart, generally so quiet, began to beat violently; he hastened to Petrovitch, who accompanied him to a draper’s shop. There, without hesitating, they bought a very fine piece of cloth. For more than half a year they had discussed the matter incessantly, and gone round the shops inquiring prices. Petrovitch examined the cloth, and said they would not find anything better. For the lining they chose a piece of such firm and thickly woven linen that the tailor declared it was better than silk; it also had a splendid gloss on it. They did not buy marten fur, for it was too dear, but chose the best catskin in the shop, which was a very good imitation of the former.

It took Petrovitch quite fourteen days to make the mantle, for he put an extra number of stitches into it. He charged twelve roubles for his work, and said he could not ask less; it was all sewn with silk, and the tailor smoothed the sutures with his teeth.

At last the day came — I cannot name it certainly, but it assuredly was the most solemn in Akaki’s life — when the tailor brought the cloak. He brought it early in the morning, before the titular councillor started for his office. He could

not have come at a more suitable moment, for the cold had again begun to be very severe.

Petrovitch entered the room with the dignified mien of an important tailor. His face wore a peculiarly serious expression, such as Akaki had never seen on it. He was fully conscious of his dignity, and of the gulf which separates the tailor who only repairs old clothes from the artist who makes new ones.

The cloak had been brought wrapped up in a large, new, freshly washed handkerchief, which the tailor carefully opened, folded, and placed in his pocket. Then he proudly took the cloak in both hands and laid it on Akaki Akakievitch's shoulders. He pulled it straight behind to see how it hung majestically in its whole length. Finally he wished to see the effect it made when unbuttoned. Akaki, however, wished to try the sleeves, which fitted wonderfully well. In brief, the cloak was irreproachable, and its fit and cut left nothing to be desired.

While the tailor was contemplating his work, he did not forget to say that the only reason he had charged so little for making it, was that he had only a low rent to pay and had known Akaki Akakievitch for a long time; he declared that any tailor who lived on the Nevski Prospect would have charged at least five-and-sixty roubles for making up such a cloak.

The titular councillor did not let himself be involved in a discussion on the subject. He thanked him, paid him, and then sallied forth on his way to the office.

Petrovitch went out with him, and remained standing in the street to watch Akaki as long as possible wearing the mantle; then he hurried through a cross-alley and came into the main street again to catch another glimpse of him.

Akaki went on his way in high spirits. Every moment he was acutely conscious of having a new cloak on, and smiled with sheer self-complacency. His head was filled with only two ideas: first that the cloak was warm, and secondly that it was beautiful. Without noticing anything on the road, he marched straight to the chancellery, took off his treasure in the hall, and solemnly entrusted it to the porter's care.

I do not know how the report spread in the office that Akaki's old cloak had ceased to exist. All his colleagues hastened to see his splendid new one, and then began to congratulate him so warmly that he at first had to smile with self-satisfaction, but finally began to feel embarrassed.

But how great was his surprise when his cruel colleagues remarked that he should formally "handsel" his cloak by giving them a feast! Poor Akaki was so disconcerted and taken aback, that he did not know what to answer nor how to excuse himself. He stammered out, blushing, that the cloak was not so new as it appeared; it was really second-hand.

One of his superiors, who probably wished to show that he was not too proud of his rank and title, and did not disdain social intercourse with his subordinates, broke in and said, “Gentlemen! Instead of Akaki Akakievitch, I will invite you to a little meal. Come to tea with me this evening. To-day happens to be my birthday.”

All the others thanked him for his kind proposal, and joyfully accepted his invitation. Akaki at first wished to decline, but was told that to do so would be grossly impolite and unpardonable, so he reconciled himself to the inevitable. Moreover, he felt a certain satisfaction at the thought that the occasion would give him a new opportunity of displaying his cloak in the streets. This whole day for him was like a festival day. In the cheerfullest possible mood he returned home, took off his cloak, and hung it up on the wall after once more examining the cloth and the lining. Then he took out his old one in order to compare it with Petrovitch’s masterpiece. His looks passed from one to the other, and he thought to himself, smiling, “What a difference!”

He ate his supper cheerfully, and after he had finished, did not sit down as usual to copy documents. No; he lay down, like a Sybarite, on the sofa and waited. When the time came, he made his toilette, took his cloak, and went out.

I cannot say where was the house of the superior official who so graciously invited his subordinates to tea. My memory begins to grow weak, and the innumerable streets and houses of St Petersburg go round so confusedly in my head that I have difficulty in finding my way about them. So much, however, is certain: that the honourable official lived in a very fine quarter of the city, and therefore very far from Akaki Akakievitch’s dwelling.

At first the titular councillor traversed several badly lit streets which seemed quite empty; but the nearer he approached his superior’s house, the more brilliant and lively the streets became. He met many people, among whom were elegantly dressed ladies, and men with beaverskin collars. The peasants’ sledges, with their wooden seats and brass studs, became rarer; while now every moment appeared skilled coachmen with velvet caps, driving lacquered sleighs covered with bearskins, and fine carriages.

At last he reached the house whither he had been invited. His host lived in a first-rate style; a lamp hung before his door, and he occupied the whole of the second story. As Akaki entered the vestibule, he saw a long row of galoshes; on a table a samovar was smoking and hissing; many cloaks, some of them adorned with velvet and fur collars, hung on the wall. In the adjoining room he heard a confused noise, which assumed a more decided character when a servant opened the door and came out bearing a tray full of empty cups, a milk-jug, and a basket of biscuits. Evidently the guests had been there some time and had already drunk

their first cup of tea.

After hanging his cloak on a peg, Akaki approached the room in which his colleagues, smoking long pipes, were sitting round the card-table and making a good deal of noise. He entered the room, but remained standing by the door, not knowing what to do; but his colleagues greeted him with loud applause, and all hastened into the vestibule to take another look at his cloak. This excitement quite robbed the good titular councillor of his composure; but in his simplicity of heart he rejoiced at the praises which were lavished on his precious cloak. Soon afterwards his colleagues left him to himself and resumed their whist parties.

Akaki felt much embarrassed, and did not know what to do with his feet and hands. Finally he sat down by the players; looked now at their faces and now at the cards; then he yawned and remembered that it was long past his usual bedtime. He made an attempt to go, but they held him back and told him that he could not do so without drinking a glass of champagne on what was for him such a memorable day.

Soon supper was brought. It consisted of cold veal, cakes, and pastry of various kinds, accompanied by several bottles of champagne. Akaki was obliged to drink two glasses of it, and found everything round him take on a more cheerful aspect. But he could not forget that it was already midnight and that he ought to have been in bed long ago. From fear of being kept back again, he slipped furtively into the vestibule, where he was pained to find his cloak lying on the ground. He carefully shook it, brushed it, put it on, and went out.

The street-lamps were still alight. Some of the small ale-houses frequented by servants and the lower classes were still open, and some had just been shut; but by the beams of light which shone through the chinks of the doors, it was easy to see that there were still people inside, probably male and female domestics, who were quite indifferent to their employers' interests.

Akaki Akakievitch turned homewards in a cheerful mood. Suddenly he found himself in a long street where it was very quiet by day and still more so at night. The surroundings were very dismal. Only here and there hung a lamp which threatened to go out for want of oil; there were long rows of wooden houses with wooden fences, but no sign of a living soul. Only the snow in the street glimmered faintly in the dim light of the half-extinguished lanterns, and the little houses looked melancholy in the darkness.

Akaki went on till the street opened into an enormous square, on the other side of which the houses were scarcely visible, and which looked like a terrible desert. At a great distance — God knows where! — glimmered the light in a sentry-box, which seemed to stand at the end of the world. At the same moment Akaki's cheerful mood vanished. He went in the direction of the light with a

vague sense of depression, as though some mischief threatened him. On the way he kept looking round him with alarm. The huge, melancholy expanse looked to him like a sea. “No,” he thought to himself, “I had better not look at it”; and he continued his way with his eyes fixed on the ground. When he raised them again he suddenly saw just in front of him several men with long moustaches, whose faces he could not distinguish. Everything grew dark before his eyes, and his heart seemed to be constricted.

“That is my cloak!” shouted one of the men, and seized him by the collar. Akaki tried to call for help. Another man pressed a great bony fist on his mouth, and said to him, “Just try to scream again!” At the same moment the unhappy titular councillor felt the cloak snatched away from him, and simultaneously received a kick which stretched him senseless in the snow. A few minutes later he came to himself and stood up; but there was no longer anyone in sight. Robbed of his cloak, and feeling frozen to the marrow, he began to shout with all his might; but his voice did not reach the end of the huge square. Continuing to shout, he ran with the rage of despair to the sentinel in the sentry-box, who, leaning on his halberd, asked him why the deuce he was making such a hellish noise and running so violently.

When Akaki reached the sentinel, he accused him of being drunk because he did not see that passers-by were robbed a short distance from his sentry-box.

“I saw you quite well,” answered the sentinel, “in the middle of the square with two men; I thought you were friends. It is no good getting so excited. Go to-morrow to the police inspector; he will take up the matter, have the thieves searched for, and make an examination.”

Akaki saw there was nothing to be done but to go home. He reached his dwelling in a state of dreadful disorder, his hair hanging wildly over his forehead, and his clothes covered with snow. When his old landlady heard him knocking violently at the door, she sprang up and hastened thither, only half-dressed; but at the sight of Akaki started back in alarm. When he told her what had happened, she clasped her hands together and said, “You should not go to the police inspector, but to the municipal Superintendent of the district. The inspector will put you off with fine words, and do nothing; but I have known the Superintendent for a long time. My former cook, Anna, is now in his service, and I often see him pass by under our windows. He goes to church on all the festival-days, and one sees at once by his looks that he is an honest man.”

After hearing this eloquent recommendation, Akaki retired sadly to his room. Those who can picture to themselves such a situation will understand what sort of a night he passed. As early as possible the next morning he went to the Superintendent’s house. The servants told him that he was still asleep. At ten

o’clock he returned, only to receive the same reply. At twelve o’clock the Superintendent had gone out.

About dinner-time the titular councillor called again, but the clerks asked him in a severe tone what was his business with their superior. Then for the first time in his life Akaki displayed an energetic character. He declared that it was absolutely necessary for him to speak with the Superintendent on an official matter, and that anyone who ventured to put difficulties in his way would have to pay dearly for it.

This left them without reply. One of the clerks departed, in order to deliver his message. When Akaki was admitted to the Superintendent’s presence, the latter’s way of receiving his story was somewhat singular. Instead of confining himself to the principal matter — the theft, he asked the titular councillor how he came to be out so late, and whether he had not been in suspicious company.

Taken aback by such a question, Akaki did not know what to answer, and went away without knowing whether any steps would be taken in the matter or not.

The whole day he had not been in his office — a perfectly new event in his life. The next day he appeared there again with a pale face and restless aspect, in his old cloak, which looked more wretched than ever. When his colleagues heard of his misfortune, some were cruel enough to laugh; most of them, however, felt a sincere sympathy with him, and started a subscription for his benefit; but this praiseworthy undertaking had only a very insignificant result, because these same officials had been lately called upon to contribute to two other subscriptions — in the first case to purchase a portrait of their director, and in the second to buy a work which a friend of his had published.

One of them, who felt sincerely sorry for Akaki, gave him some good advice for want of something better. He told him it was a waste of time to go again to the Superintendent, because even in case that this official succeeded in recovering the cloak, the police would keep it till the titular councillor had indisputably proved that he was the real owner of it. Akaki’s friend suggested to him to go to a certain important personage, who because of his connection with the authorities could expedite the matter.

In his bewilderment, Akaki resolved to follow this advice. It was not known what position this personage occupied, nor how high it really was; the only facts known were that he had only recently been placed in it, and that there must be still higher personages than himself, as he was leaving no stone unturned in order to get promotion. When he entered his private room, he made his subordinates wait for him on the stairs below, and no one had direct access to him. If anyone called with a request to see him, the secretary of the board informed the Government secretary, who in his turn passed it on to a higher

official, and the latter informed the important personage himself.

That is the way business is carried on in our Holy Russia. In the endeavour to resemble the higher officials, everyone imitates the manners of his superiors. Not long ago a titular councillor, who was appointed to the headship of a little office, immediately placed over the door of one of his two tiny rooms the inscription “Council-chamber.” Outside it were placed servants with red collars and lace-work on their coats, in order to announce petitioners, and to conduct them into the chamber which was hardly large enough to contain a chair.

But let us return to the important personage in question. His way of carrying things on was dignified and imposing, but a trifle complicated. His system might be summed up in a single word — ”severity.” This word he would repeat in a sonorous tone three times in succession, and the last time turn a piercing look on the person with whom he happened to be speaking. He might have spared himself the trouble of displaying so much disciplinary energy; the ten officials who were under his command feared him quite sufficiently without it. As soon as they were aware of his approach, they would lay down their pens, and hasten to station themselves in a respectful attitude as he passed by. In converse with his subordinates, he preserved a stiff, unbending attitude, and generally confined himself to such expressions as “What do you want? Do you know with whom you are speaking? Do you consider who is in front of you?”

For the rest, he was a good-natured man, friendly and amiable with his acquaintances. But the title of “District-Superintendent” had turned his head. Since the time when it had been bestowed upon him, he lived for a great part of the day in a kind of dizzy self-intoxication. Among his equals, however, he recovered his equilibrium, and then showed his real amiability in more than one direction; but as soon as he found himself in the society of anyone of less rank than himself, he entrenched himself in a severe taciturnity. This situation was all the more painful for him as he was quite aware that he might have passed his time more agreeably.

All who watched him at such moments perceived clearly that he longed to take part in an interesting conversation, but that the fear of displaying some unguarded courtesy, of appearing too confidential, and thereby doing a deadly injury to his dignity, held him back. In order to avoid such a risk, he maintained an unnatural reserve, and only spoke from time to time in monosyllables. He had driven this habit to such a pitch that people called him “The Tedious,” and the title was well deserved.

Such was the person to whose aid Akaki wished to appeal. The moment at which he came seemed expressly calculated to flatter the Superintendent’s vanity, and accordingly to help forward the titular councillor’s cause.

The high personage was seated in his office, talking cheerfully with an old friend whom he had not seen for several years, when he was told that a gentleman named Akakievitch begged for the honour of an interview.

“Who is the man?” asked the Superintendent in a contemptuous tone.

“An official,” answered the servant.

“He must wait. I have no time to receive him now.”

The high personage lied; there was nothing in the way of his granting the desired audience. His friend and himself had already quite exhausted various topics of conversation. Many long, embarrassing pauses had occurred, during which they had lightly tapped each other on the shoulder, saying, “So it was, you see.”

“Yes, Stepan.”

But the Superintendent refused to receive the petitioner, in order to show his friend, who had quitted the public service and lived in the country, his own importance, and how officials must wait in the vestibule till he chose to receive them.

At last, after they had discussed various other subjects with other intervals of silence, during which the two friends leaned back in their chairs and blew cigarette smoke in the air, the Superintendent seemed suddenly to remember that someone had sought an interview with him. He called the secretary, who stood with a roll of papers in his hand at the door, and told him to admit the petitioner.

When he saw Akaki approaching with his humble expression, wearing his shabby old uniform, he turned round suddenly towards him and said “What do you want?” in a severe voice, accompanied by a vibrating intonation which at the time of receiving his promotion he had practised before the looking-glass for eight days.

The modest Akaki was quite taken aback by his harsh manner; however, he made an effort to recover his composure, and to relate how his cloak had been stolen, but did not do so without encumbering his narrative with a mass of superfluous detail. He added that he had applied to His Excellence in the hope that through his making a representation to the police inspector, or some other high personage, the cloak might be traced.

The Superintendent found Akaki’s method of procedure somewhat unofficial. “Ah, sir,” he said, “don’t you know what steps you ought to take in such a case? Don’t you know the proper procedure? You should have handed in your petition at the chancellery. This in due course would have passed through the hands of the chief clerk and director of the bureau. It would then have been brought before my secretary, who would have made a communication to you.”

“Allow me,” replied Akaki, making a strenuous effort to preserve the

remnants of his presence of mind, for he felt that the perspiration stood on his forehead, “allow me to remark to Your Excellence that I ventured to trouble you personally in this matter because secretaries — secretaries are a hopeless kind of people.”

“What! How! Is it possible?” exclaimed the Superintendent. “How could you say such a thing? Where have you got your ideas from? It is disgraceful to see young people so rebellious towards their superiors.” In his official zeal the Superintendent overlooked the fact that the titular councillor was well on in the fifties, and that the word “young” could only apply to him conditionally, i.e. in comparison with a man of seventy. “Do you also know,” he continued, “with whom you are speaking? Do you consider before whom you are standing? Do you consider, I ask you, do you consider?” As he spoke, he stamped his foot, and his voice grew deeper.

Akaki was quite upset — nay, thoroughly frightened; he trembled and shook and could hardly remain standing upright. Unless one of the office servants had hurried to help him, he would have fallen to the ground. As it was, he was dragged out almost unconscious.

But the Superintendent was quite delighted at the effect he had produced. It exceeded all his expectations, and filled with satisfaction at the fact that his words made such an impression on a middle-aged man that he lost consciousness, he cast a side-glance at his friend to see what effect the scene had produced on him. His self-satisfaction was further increased when he observed that his friend also was moved, and looked at him half-timidly.

Akaki had no idea how he got down the stairs and crossed the street, for he felt more dead than alive. In his whole life he had never been so scolded by a superior official, let alone one whom he had never seen before.

He wandered in the storm which raged without taking the least care of himself, nor sheltering himself on the side-walk against its fury. The wind, which blew from all sides and out of all the narrow streets, caused him to contract inflammation of the throat. When he reached home he was unable to speak a word, and went straight to bed.

Such was the result of the Superintendent’s lecture.

The next day Akaki had a violent fever. Thanks to the St Petersburg climate, his illness developed with terrible rapidity. When the doctor came, he saw that the case was already hopeless; he felt his pulse and ordered him some poultices, merely in order that he should not die without some medical help, and declared at once that he had only two days to live. After giving this opinion, he said to Akaki’s landlady, “There is no time to be lost; order a pine coffin, for an oak one would be too expensive for this poor man.”

Whether the titular councillor heard these words, whether they excited him and made him lament his tragic lot, no one ever knew, for he was delirious all the time. Strange pictures passed incessantly through his weakened brain. At one time he saw Petrovitch the tailor and asked him to make a cloak with nooses attached for the thieves who persecuted him in bed, and begged his old landlady to chase away the robbers who were hidden under his coverlet. At another time he seemed to be listening to the Superintendent's severe reprimand, and asking his forgiveness. Then he uttered such strange and confused remarks that the old woman crossed herself in alarm. She had never heard anything of the kind in her life, and these ravings astonished her all the more because the expression "Your Excellency" constantly occurred in them. Later on he murmured wild disconnected words, from which it could only be gathered that his thoughts were continually revolving round a cloak.

At last Akaki breathed his last. Neither his room nor his cupboard were officially sealed up, for the simple reason that he had no heir and left nothing behind him but a bundle of goose-quills, a notebook of white paper, three pairs of socks, some trouser buttons, and his old coat.

Into whose possession did these relics pass? Heaven only knows! The writer of this narrative has never inquired.

Akaki was wrapped in his shroud, and laid to rest in the churchyard. The great city of St Petersburg continued its life as though he had never existed. Thus disappeared a human creature who had never possessed a patron or friend, who had never elicited real hearty sympathy from anyone, nor even aroused the curiosity of the naturalists, though they are most eager to subject a rare insect to microscopic examination.

Without a complaint he had borne the scorn and contempt of his colleagues; he had proceeded on his quiet way to the grave without anything extraordinary happening to him — only towards the end of his life he had been joyfully excited by the possession of a new cloak, and had then been overthrown by misfortune.

Some days after his conversation with the Superintendent, his superior in the chancellery, where no one knew what had become of him, sent an official to his house to demand his presence. The official returned with the news that no one would see the titular councillor any more.

"Why?" asked all the clerks.

"Because he was buried four days ago."

In such a manner did Akaki's colleagues hear of his death.

The next day his place was occupied by an official of robuster fibre, a man who did not trouble to make so many fair transcripts of state documents.

. . . . . .

It seems as though Akaki’s story ended here, and that there was nothing more to be said of him; but the modest titular councillor was destined to attract more notice after his death than during his life, and our tale now assumes a somewhat ghostly complexion.

One day there spread in St Petersburg the report that near the Katinka Bridge there appeared every night a spectre in a uniform like that of the chancellery officials; that he was searching for a stolen cloak, and stripped all passers-by of their cloaks without any regard for rank or title. It mattered not whether they were lined with wadding, mink, cat, otter, bear, or beaverskin; he took all he could get hold of. One of the titular councillor’s former colleagues had seen the ghost, and quite clearly recognised Akaki. He ran as hard as he could and managed to escape, but had seen him shaking his fist in the distance. Everywhere it was reported that councillors, and not only titular councillors but also state-councillors, had caught serious colds in their honourable backs on account of these raids.

The police adopted all possible measures in order to get this ghost dead or alive into their power, and to inflict an exemplary punishment on him; but all their attempts were vain.

One evening, however, a sentinel succeeded in getting hold of the malefactor just as he was trying to rob a musician of his cloak. The sentinel summoned with all the force of his lungs two of his comrades, to whom he entrusted the prisoner while he sought for his snuff-box in order to bring some life again into his half-frozen nose. Probably his snuff was so strong that even a ghost could not stand it. Scarcely had the sentinel thrust a grain or two up his nostrils than the prisoner began to sneeze so violently that a kind of mist rose before the eyes of the sentinels. While the three were rubbing their eyes, the prisoner disappeared. Since that day, all the sentries were so afraid of the ghost that they did not even venture to arrest the living but shouted to them from afar “Go on! Go on!”

Meanwhile the ghost extended his depredations to the other side of the Katinka Bridge, and spread dismay and alarm in the whole of the quarter.

But now we must return to the Superintendent, who is the real origin of our fantastic yet so veracious story. First of all we must do him the justice to state that after Akaki’s departure he felt a certain sympathy for him. He was by no means without a sense of justice — no, he possessed various good qualities, but his infatuation about his title hindered him from showing his good side. When his friend left him, his thoughts began to occupy themselves with the unfortunate titular councillor, and from that moment onwards he saw him constantly in his mind’s eye, crushed by the severe reproof which had been administered to him.

This image so haunted him that at last one day he ordered one of his officials to find out what had become of Akaki, and whether anything could be done for him.

When the messenger returned with the news that the poor man had died soon after that interview, the Superintendent felt a pang in his conscience, and remained the whole day absorbed in melancholy brooding.

In order to banish his unpleasant sensations, he went in the evening to a friend's house, where he hoped to find pleasant society and what was the chief thing, some other officials of his own rank, so that he would not be obliged to feel bored. And in fact he did succeed in throwing off his melancholy thoughts there; he unbent and became lively, took an active part in the conversation, and passed a very pleasant evening. At supper he drank two glasses of champagne, which, as everyone knows, is an effective means of heightening one's cheerfulness.

As he sat in his sledge, wrapped in his mantle, on his way home, his mind was full of pleasant reveries. He thought of the society in which he had passed such a cheerful evening, and of all the excellent jokes with which he had made them laugh. He repeated some of them to himself half-aloud, and laughed at them again.

From time to time, however, he was disturbed in this cheerful mood by violent gusts of wind, which from some corner or other blew a quantity of snowflakes into his face, lifted the folds of his cloak, and made it belly like a sail, so that he had to exert all his strength to hold it firmly on his shoulders. Suddenly he felt a powerful hand seize him by the collar. He turned round, perceived a short man in an old, shabby uniform, and recognised with terror Akaki's face, which wore a deathly pallor and emaciation.

The titular councillor opened his mouth, from which issued a kind of corpse-like odour, and with inexpressible fright the Superintendent heard him say, "At last I have you — by the collar! I need your cloak. You did not trouble about me when I was in distress; you thought it necessary to reprimand me. Now give me your cloak."

The high dignitary nearly choked. In his office, and especially in the presence of his subordinates, he was a man of imposing manners. He only needed to fix his eye on one of them and they all seemed impressed by his pompous bearing. But, as is the case with many such officials, all this was only outward show; at this moment he felt so upset that he seriously feared for his health. Taking off his cloak with a feverish, trembling hand, he handed it to Akaki, and called to his coachman, "Drive home quickly."

When the coachman heard this voice, which did not sound as it usually did,

and had often been accompanied by blows of a whip, he bent his head cautiously and drove on apace.

Soon afterwards the Superintendent found himself at home. Cloakless, he retired to his room with a pale face and wild looks, and had such a bad night that on the following morning his daughter exclaimed “Father, are you ill?” But he said nothing of what he had seen, though a very deep impression had been made on him. From that day onwards he no longer addressed to his subordinates in a violent tone the words, “Do you know with whom you are speaking? Do you know who is standing before you?” Or if it ever did happen that he spoke to them in a domineering tone, it was not till he had first listened to what they had to say.

Strangely enough, from that time the spectre never appeared again. Probably it was the Superintendent’s cloak which he had been seeking so earnestly; now he had it and did not want anything more. Various persons, however, asserted that this formidable ghost was still to be seen in other parts of the city. A sentinel went so far as to say that he had seen him with his own eyes glide like a furtive shadow behind a house. But this sentinel was of such a nervous disposition that he had been chaffed about his timidity more than once. Since he did not venture to seize the flitting shadow, he stole after it in the darkness; but the shadow turned round and shouted at him “What do you want?” shaking an enormous fist, such as no man had ever possessed.

“I want nothing,” answered the sentry, quickly retiring.

This shadow, however, was taller than the ghost of the titular councillor, and had an enormous moustache. He went with great strides towards the Obuchoff Bridge, and disappeared in the darkness.

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THE NOSE

I

On the 25th March, 18 — , a very strange occurrence took place in St Petersburg. On the Ascension Avenue there lived a barber of the name of Ivan Jakovlevitch. He had lost his family name, and on his sign-board, on which was depicted the head of a gentleman with one cheek soaped, the only inscription to be read was, “Blood-letting done here.”

On this particular morning he awoke pretty early. Becoming aware of the smell of fresh-baked bread, he sat up a little in bed, and saw his wife, who had a special partiality for coffee, in the act of taking some fresh-baked bread out of the oven.

“To-day, Prasskovna Ossipovna,” he said, “I do not want any coffee; I should like a fresh loaf with onions.”

“The blockhead may eat bread only as far as I am concerned,” said his wife to herself; “then I shall have a chance of getting some coffee.” And she threw a loaf on the table.

For the sake of propriety, Ivan Jakovlevitch drew a coat over his shirt, sat down at the table, shook out some salt for himself, prepared two onions, assumed a serious expression, and began to cut the bread. After he had cut the loaf in two halves, he looked, and to his great astonishment saw something whitish sticking in it. He carefully poked round it with his knife, and felt it with his finger.

“Quite firmly fixed!” he murmured in his beard. “What can it be?”

He put in his finger, and drew out — a nose!

Ivan Jakovlevitch at first let his hands fall from sheer astonishment; then he rubbed his eyes and began to feel it. A nose, an actual nose; and, moreover, it seemed to be the nose of an acquaintance! Alarm and terror were depicted in Ivan’s face; but these feelings were slight in comparison with the disgust which took possession of his wife.

“Whose nose have you cut off, you monster?” she screamed, her face red with anger. “You scoundrel! You tippler! I myself will report you to the police! Such a rascal! Many customers have told me that while you were shaving them, you held them so tight by the nose that they could hardly sit still.”

But Ivan Jakovlevitch was more dead than alive; he saw at once that this nose

could belong to no other than to Kovaloff, a member of the Municipal Committee whom he shaved every Sunday and Wednesday.

“Stop, Prasskovna Ossipovna! I will wrap it in a piece of cloth and place it in the corner. There it may remain for the present; later on I will take it away.”

“No, not there! Shall I endure an amputated nose in my room? You understand nothing except how to strop a razor. You know nothing of the duties and obligations of a respectable man. You vagabond! You good-for-nothing! Am I to undertake all responsibility for you at the police-office? Ah, you soap-smearer! You blockhead! Take it away where you like, but don’t let it stay under my eyes!”

Ivan Jakovlevitch stood there flabbergasted. He thought and thought, and knew not what he thought.

“The devil knows how that happened!” he said at last, scratching his head behind his ear. “Whether I came home drunk last night or not, I really don’t know; but in all probability this is a quite extraordinary occurrence, for a loaf is something baked and a nose is something different. I don’t understand the matter at all.” And Ivan Jakovlevitch was silent. The thought that the police might find him in unlawful possession of a nose and arrest him, robbed him of all presence of mind. Already he began to have visions of a red collar with silver braid and of a sword — and he trembled all over.

At last he finished dressing himself, and to the accompaniment of the emphatic exhortations of his spouse, he wrapped up the nose in a cloth and issued into the street.

He intended to lose it somewhere — either at somebody’s door, or in a public square, or in a narrow alley; but just then, in order to complete his bad luck, he was met by an acquaintance, who showered inquiries upon him. “Hullo, Ivan Jakovlevitch! Whom are you going to shave so early in the morning?” etc., so that he could find no suitable opportunity to do what he wanted. Later on he did let the nose drop, but a sentry bore down upon him with his halberd, and said, “Look out! You have let something drop!” and Ivan Jakovlevitch was obliged to pick it up and put it in his pocket.

A feeling of despair began to take possession of him; all the more as the streets became more thronged and the merchants began to open their shops. At last he resolved to go to the Isaac Bridge, where perhaps he might succeed in throwing it into the Neva.

But my conscience is a little uneasy that I have not yet given any detailed information about Ivan Jakovlevitch, an estimable man in many ways.

Like every honest Russian tradesman, Ivan Jakovlevitch was a terrible drunkard, and although he shaved other people’s faces every day, his own was

always unshaved. His coat (he never wore an overcoat) was quite mottled, i.e. it had been black, but become brownish-yellow; the collar was quite shiny, and instead of the three buttons, only the threads by which they had been fastened were to be seen.

Ivan Jakovlevitch was a great cynic, and when Kovaloff, the member of the Municipal Committee, said to him, as was his custom while being shaved, “Your hands always smell, Ivan Jakovlevitch!” the latter answered, “What do they smell of?” “I don’t know, my friend, but they smell very strong.” Ivan Jakovlevitch after taking a pinch of snuff would then, by way of reprisals, set to work to soap him on the cheek, the upper lip, behind the ears, on the chin, and everywhere.

This worthy man now stood on the Isaac Bridge. At first he looked round him, then he leant on the railings of the bridge, as though he wished to look down and see how many fish were swimming past, and secretly threw the nose, wrapped in a little piece of cloth, into the water. He felt as though a ton weight had been lifted off him, and laughed cheerfully. Instead, however, of going to shave any officials, he turned his steps to a building, the sign-board of which bore the legend “Teas served here,” in order to have a glass of punch, when suddenly he perceived at the other end of the bridge a police inspector of imposing exterior, with long whiskers, three-cornered hat, and sword hanging at his side. He nearly fainted; but the police inspector beckoned to him with his hand and said, “Come here, my dear sir.”

Ivan Jakovlevitch, knowing how a gentleman should behave, took his hat off quickly, went towards the police inspector and said, “I hope you are in the best of health.”

“Never mind my health. Tell me, my friend, why you were standing on the bridge.”

“By heaven, gracious sir, I was on the way to my customers, and only looked down to see if the river was flowing quickly.”

“That is a lie! You won’t get out of it like that. Confess the truth.”

“I am willing to shave Your Grace two or even three times a week gratis,” answered Ivan Jakovlevitch.

“No, my friend, don’t put yourself out! Three barbers are busy with me already, and reckon it a high honour that I let them show me their skill. Now then, out with it! What were you doing there?”

Ivan Jakovlevitch grew pale. But here the strange episode vanishes in mist, and what further happened is not known.

II

Kovaloff, the member of the Municipal Committee, awoke fairly early that morning, and made a droning noise — ”Brr! Brr!” — through his lips, as he always did, though he could not say why. He stretched himself, and told his valet to give him a little mirror which was on the table. He wished to look at the heat-boil which had appeared on his nose the previous evening; but to his great astonishment, he saw that instead of his nose he had a perfectly smooth vacancy in his face. Thoroughly alarmed, he ordered some water to be brought, and rubbed his eyes with a towel. Sure enough, he had no longer a nose! Then he sprang out of bed, and shook himself violently! No, no nose any more! He dressed himself and went at once to the police superintendent.

But before proceeding further, we must certainly give the reader some information about Kovaloff, so that he may know what sort of a man this member of the Municipal Committee really was. These committee-men, who obtain that title by means of certificates of learning, must not be compared with the committee-men appointed for the Caucasus district, who are of quite a different kind. The learned committee-man — but Russia is such a wonderful country that when one committee-man is spoken of all the others from Riga to Kamschatka refer it to themselves. The same is also true of all other titled officials. Kovaloff had been a Caucasian committee-man two years previously, and could not forget that he had occupied that position; but in order to enhance his own importance, he never called himself “committee-man” but “Major.”

“Listen, my dear,” he used to say when he met an old woman in the street who sold shirt-fronts; “go to my house in Sadovaia Street and ask ‘Does Major Kovaloff live here?’ Any child can tell you where it is.”

Accordingly we will call him for the future Major Kovaloff. It was his custom to take a daily walk on the Neffsky Avenue. The collar of his shirt was always remarkably clean and stiff. He wore the same style of whiskers as those that are worn by governors of districts, architects, and regimental doctors; in short, all those who have full red cheeks and play a good game of whist. These whiskers grow straight across the cheek towards the nose.

Major Kovaloff wore a number of seals, on some of which were engraved armorial bearings, and others the names of the days of the week. He had come to St Petersburg with the view of obtaining some position corresponding to his rank, if possible that of vice-governor of a province; but he was prepared to be content with that of a bailiff in some department or other. He was, moreover, not disinclined to marry, but only such a lady who could bring with her a dowry of two hundred thousand roubles. Accordingly, the reader can judge for himself what his sensations were when he found in his face, instead of a fairly

symmetrical nose, a broad, flat vacancy.

To increase his misfortune, not a single droshky was to be seen in the street, and so he was obliged to proceed on foot. He wrapped himself up in his cloak, and held his handkerchief to his face as though his nose bled. “But perhaps it is all only my imagination; it is impossible that a nose should drop off in such a silly way,” he thought, and stepped into a confectioner’s shop in order to look into the mirror.

Fortunately no customer was in the shop; only small shop-boys were cleaning it out, and putting chairs and tables straight. Others with sleepy faces were carrying fresh cakes on trays, and yesterday’s newspapers stained with coffee were still lying about. “Thank God no one is here!” he said to himself. “Now I can look at myself leisurely.”

He stepped gingerly up to a mirror and looked.

“What an infernal face!” he exclaimed, and spat with disgust. “If there were only something there instead of the nose, but there is absolutely nothing.”

He bit his lips with vexation, left the confectioner’s, and resolved, quite contrary to his habit, neither to look nor smile at anyone on the street. Suddenly he halted as if rooted to the spot before a door, where something extraordinary happened. A carriage drew up at the entrance; the carriage door was opened, and a gentleman in uniform came out and hurried up the steps. How great was Kovaloff’s terror and astonishment when he saw that it was his own nose!

At this extraordinary sight, everything seemed to turn round with him. He felt as though he could hardly keep upright on his legs; but, though trembling all over as though with fever, he resolved to wait till the nose should return to the carriage. After about two minutes the nose actually came out again. It wore a gold-embroidered uniform with a stiff, high collar, trousers of chamois leather, and a sword hung at its side. The hat, adorned with a plume, showed that it held the rank of a state-councillor. It was obvious that it was paying “duty-calls.” It looked round on both sides, called to the coachman “Drive on,” and got into the carriage, which drove away.

Poor Kovaloff nearly lost his reason. He did not know what to think of this extraordinary procedure. And indeed how was it possible that the nose, which only yesterday he had on his face, and which could neither walk nor drive, should wear a uniform. He ran after the carriage, which fortunately had stopped a short way off before the Grand Bazar of Moscow. He hurried towards it and pressed through a crowd of beggar-women with their faces bound up, leaving only two openings for the eyes, over whom he had formerly so often made merry.

There were only a few people in front of the Bazar. Kovaloff was so agitated

that he could decide on nothing, and looked for the nose everywhere. At last he saw it standing before a shop. It seemed half buried in its stiff collar, and was attentively inspecting the wares displayed.

“How can I get at it?” thought Kovaloff. “Everything — the uniform, the hat, and so on — show that it is a state-councillor. How the deuce has that happened?”

He began to cough discreetly near it, but the nose paid him not the least attention.

“Honourable sir,” said Kovaloff at last, plucking up courage, “honourable sir.”

“What do you want?” asked the nose, and turned round.

“It seems to me strange, most respected sir — you should know where you belong — and I find you all of a sudden — where? Judge yourself.”

“Pardon me, I do not understand what you are talking about. Explain yourself more distinctly.”

“How shall I make my meaning plainer to him?” Then plucking up fresh courage, he continued, “Naturally — besides I am a Major. You must admit it is not befitting that I should go about without a nose. An old apple-woman on the Ascension Bridge may carry on her business without one, but since I am on the look out for a post; besides in many houses I am acquainted with ladies of high position — Madame Tchektyriev, wife of a state-councillor, and many others. So you see — I do not know, honourable sir, what you — — ” (here the Major shrugged his shoulders). “Pardon me; if one regards the matter from the point of view of duty and honour — you will yourself understand — — ”

“I understand nothing,” answered the nose. “I repeat, please explain yourself more distinctly.”

“Honourable sir,” said Kovaloff with dignity, “I do not know how I am to understand your words. It seems to me the matter is as clear as possible. Or do you wish — but you are after all my own nose!”

The nose looked at the Major and wrinkled its forehead. “There you are wrong, respected sir; I am myself. Besides, there can be no close relations between us. To judge by the buttons of your uniform, you must be in quite a different department to mine.” So saying, the nose turned away.

Kovaloff was completely puzzled; he did not know what to do, and still less what to think. At this moment he heard the pleasant rustling of a lady’s dress, and there approached an elderly lady wearing a quantity of lace, and by her side her graceful daughter in a white dress which set off her slender figure to advantage, and wearing a light straw hat. Behind the ladies marched a tall lackey with long whiskers.

Kovaloff advanced a few steps, adjusted his cambric collar, arranged his seals

which hung by a little gold chain, and with smiling face fixed his eyes on the graceful lady, who bowed lightly like a spring flower, and raised to her brow her little white hand with transparent fingers. He smiled still more when he spied under the brim of her hat her little round chin, and part of her cheek faintly tinted with rose-colour. But suddenly he sprang back as though he had been scorched. He remembered that he had nothing but an absolute blank in place of a nose, and tears started to his eyes. He turned round in order to tell the gentleman in uniform that he was only a state-councillor in appearance, but really a scoundrel and a rascal, and nothing else but his own nose; but the nose was no longer there. He had had time to go, doubtless in order to continue his visits.

His disappearance plunged Kovaloff into despair. He went back and stood for a moment under a colonnade, looking round him on all sides in hope of perceiving the nose somewhere. He remembered very well that it wore a hat with a plume in it and a gold-embroidered uniform; but he had not noticed the shape of the cloak, nor the colour of the carriages and the horses, nor even whether a lackey stood behind it, and, if so, what sort of livery he wore. Moreover, so many carriages were passing that it would have been difficult to recognise one, and even if he had done so, there would have been no means of stopping it.

The day was fine and sunny. An immense crowd was passing to and fro in the Neffsky Avenue; a variegated stream of ladies flowed along the pavement. There was his acquaintance, the Privy Councillor, whom he was accustomed to style "General," especially when strangers were present. There was Iarygin, his intimate friend who always lost in the evenings at whist; and there another Major, who had obtained the rank of committee-man in the Caucasus, beckoned to him.

"Go to the deuce!" said Kovaloff *sotto voce*. "Hi! coachman, drive me straight to the superintendent of police." So saying, he got into a droshky and continued to shout all the time to the coachman "Drive hard!"

"Is the police superintendent at home?" he asked on entering the front hall.

"No, sir," answered the porter, "he has just gone out."

"Ah, just as I thought!"

"Yes," continued the porter, "he has only just gone out; if you had been a moment earlier you would perhaps have caught him."

Kovaloff, still holding his handkerchief to his face, re-entered the droshky and cried in a despairing voice "Drive on!"

"Where?" asked the coachman.

"Straight on!"

"But how? There are cross-roads here. Shall I go to the right or the left?"

This question made Kovaloff reflect. In his situation it was necessary to have

recourse to the police; not because the affair had anything to do with them directly but because they acted more promptly than other authorities. As for demanding any explanation from the department to which the nose claimed to belong, it would, he felt, be useless, for the answers of that gentleman showed that he regarded nothing as sacred, and he might just as likely have lied in this matter as in saying that he had never seen Kovaloff.

But just as he was about to order the coachman to drive to the police-station, the idea occurred to him that this rascally scoundrel who, at their first meeting, had behaved so disloyally towards him, might, profiting by the delay, quit the city secretly; and then all his searching would be in vain, or might last over a whole month. Finally, as though visited with a heavenly inspiration, he resolved to go directly to an advertisement office, and to advertise the loss of his nose, giving all its distinctive characteristics in detail, so that anyone who found it might bring it at once to him, or at any rate inform him where it lived. Having decided on this course, he ordered the coachman to drive to the advertisement office, and all the way he continued to punch him in the back — ”Quick, scoundrel! quick!”

“Yes, sir!” answered the coachman, lashing his shaggy horse with the reins.

At last they arrived, and Kovaloff, out of breath, rushed into a little room where a grey-haired official, in an old coat and with spectacles on his nose, sat at a table holding his pen between his teeth, counting a heap of copper coins.

“Who takes in the advertisements here?” exclaimed Kovaloff.

“At your service, sir,” answered the grey-haired functionary, looking up and then fastening his eyes again on the heap of coins before him.

“I wish to place an advertisement in your paper — — ”

“Have the kindness to wait a minute,” answered the official, putting down figures on paper with one hand, and with the other moving two balls on his calculating-frame.

A lackey, whose silver-laced coat showed that he served in one of the houses of the nobility, was standing by the table with a note in his hand, and speaking in a lively tone, by way of showing himself sociable. “Would you believe it, sir, this little dog is really not worth twenty-four kopecks, and for my own part I would not give a farthing for it; but the countess is quite gone upon it, and offers a hundred roubles’ reward to anyone who finds it. To tell you the truth, the tastes of these people are very different from ours; they don’t mind giving five hundred or a thousand roubles for a poodle or a pointer, provided it be a good one.”

The official listened with a serious air while counting the number of letters contained in the note. At either side of the table stood a number of housekeepers, clerks and porters, carrying notes. The writer of one wished to sell a barouche,

which had been brought from Paris in 1814 and had been very little used; others wanted to dispose of a strong droshky which wanted one spring, a spirited horse seventeen years old, and so on. The room where these people were collected was very small, and the air was very close; but Kovaloff was not affected by it, for he had covered his face with a handkerchief, and because his nose itself was heaven knew where.

“Sir, allow me to ask you — I am in a great hurry,” he said at last impatiently.

“In a moment! In a moment! Two roubles, twenty-four kopecks — one minute! One rouble, sixty-four kopecks!” said the grey-haired official, throwing their notes back to the housekeepers and porters. “What do you wish?” he said, turning to Kovaloff.

“I wish — ” answered the latter, “I have just been swindled and cheated, and I cannot get hold of the perpetrator. I only want you to insert an advertisement to say that whoever brings this scoundrel to me will be well rewarded.”

“What is your name, please?”

“Why do you want my name? I have many lady friends — Madame Tchektyriev, wife of a state-councillor, Madame Podtotchina, wife of a Colonel. Heaven forbid that they should get to hear of it. You can simply write ‘committee-man,’ or, better, ‘Major.’”

“And the man who has run away is your serf.”

“Serf! If he was, it would not be such a great swindle! It is the nose which has absconded.”

“H’m! What a strange name. And this Mr Nose has stolen from you a considerable sum?”

“Mr Nose! Ah, you don’t understand me! It is my own nose which has gone, I don’t know where. The devil has played a trick on me.”

“How has it disappeared? I don’t understand.”

“I can’t tell you how, but the important point is that now it walks about the city itself a state-councillor. That is why I want you to advertise that whoever gets hold of it should bring it as soon as possible to me. Consider; how can I live without such a prominent part of my body? It is not as if it were merely a little toe; I would only have to put my foot in my boot and no one would notice its absence. Every Thursday I call on the wife of M. Tchektyriev, the state-councillor; Madame Podtotchina, a Colonel’s wife who has a very pretty daughter, is one of my acquaintances; and what am I to do now? I cannot appear before them like this.”

The official compressed his lips and reflected. “No, I cannot insert an advertisement like that,” he said after a long pause.

“What! Why not?”

“Because it might compromise the paper. Suppose everyone could advertise that his nose was lost. People already say that all sorts of nonsense and lies are inserted.”

“But this is not nonsense! There is nothing of that sort in my case.”

“You think so? Listen a minute. Last week there was a case very like it. An official came, just as you have done, bringing an advertisement for the insertion of which he paid two roubles, sixty-three kopecks; and this advertisement simply announced the loss of a black-haired poodle. There did not seem to be anything out of the way in it, but it was really a satire; by the poodle was meant the cashier of some establishment or other.”

“But I am not talking of a poodle, but my own nose; i.e. almost myself.”

“No, I cannot insert your advertisement.”

“But my nose really has disappeared!”

“That is a matter for a doctor. There are said to be people who can provide you with any kind of nose you like. But I see that you are a witty man, and like to have your little joke.”

“But I swear to you on my word of honour. Look at my face yourself.”

“Why put yourself out?” continued the official, taking a pinch of snuff. “All the same, if you don’t mind,” he added with a touch of curiosity, “I should like to have a look at it.”

The committee-man removed the handkerchief from before his face.

“It certainly does look odd,” said the official. “It is perfectly flat like a freshly fried pancake. It is hardly credible.”

“Very well. Are you going to hesitate any more? You see it is impossible to refuse to advertise my loss. I shall be particularly obliged to you, and I shall be glad that this incident has procured me the pleasure of making your acquaintance.” The Major, we see, did not even shrink from a slight humiliation.

“It certainly is not difficult to advertise it,” replied the official; “but I don’t see what good it would do you. However, if you lay so much stress on it, you should apply to someone who has a skilful pen, so that he may describe it as a curious, natural freak, and publish the article in the *Northern Bee*” (here he took another pinch) “for the benefit of youthful readers” (he wiped his nose), “or simply as a matter worthy of arousing public curiosity.”

The committee-man felt completely discouraged. He let his eyes fall absent-mindedly on a daily paper in which theatrical performances were advertised. Reading there the name of an actress whom he knew to be pretty, he involuntarily smiled, and his hand sought his pocket to see if he had a blue ticket — for in Kovaloff’s opinion superior officers like himself should not take a lesser-priced seat; but the thought of his lost nose suddenly spoilt everything.

The official himself seemed touched at his difficult position. Desiring to console him, he tried to express his sympathy by a few polite words. “I much regret,” he said, “your extraordinary mishap. Will you not try a pinch of snuff? It clears the head, banishes depression, and is a good preventive against hæmorrhoids.”

So saying, he reached his snuff-box out to Kovaloff, skilfully concealing at the same time the cover, which was adorned with the portrait of some lady or other.

This act, quite innocent in itself, exasperated Kovaloff. “I don’t understand what you find to joke about in the matter,” he exclaimed angrily. “Don’t you see that I lack precisely the essential feature for taking snuff? The devil take your snuff-box. I don’t want to look at snuff now, not even the best, certainly not your vile stuff!”

So saying, he left the advertisement office in a state of profound irritation, and went to the commissary of police. He arrived just as this dignitary was reclining on his couch, and saying to himself with a sigh of satisfaction, “Yes, I shall make a nice little sum out of that.”

It might be expected, therefore, that the committee-man’s visit would be quite inopportune.

This police commissary was a great patron of all the arts and industries; but what he liked above everything else was a cheque. “It is a thing,” he used to say, “to which it is not easy to find an equivalent; it requires no food, it does not take up much room, it stays in one’s pocket, and if it falls, it is not broken.”

The commissary accorded Kovaloff a fairly frigid reception, saying that the afternoon was not the best time to come with a case, that nature required one to rest a little after eating (this showed the committee-man that the commissary was acquainted with the aphorisms of the ancient sages), and that respectable people did not have their noses stolen.

The last allusion was too direct. We must remember that Kovaloff was a very sensitive man. He did not mind anything said against him as an individual, but he could not endure any reflection on his rank or social position. He even believed that in comedies one might allow attacks on junior officers, but never on their seniors.

The commissary’s reception of him hurt his feelings so much that he raised his head proudly, and said with dignity, “After such insulting expressions on your part, I have nothing more to say.” And he left the place.

He reached his house quite wearied out. It was already growing dark. After all his fruitless search, his room seemed to him melancholy and even ugly. In the vestibule he saw his valet Ivan stretched on the leather couch and amusing himself by spitting at the ceiling, which he did very cleverly, hitting every time

the same spot. His servant’s equanimity enraged him; he struck him on the forehead with his hat, and said, “You good-for-nothing, you are always playing the fool!”

Ivan rose quickly and hastened to take off his master’s cloak.

Once in his room, the Major, tired and depressed, threw himself in an armchair and, after sighing a while, began to soliloquise:

“In heaven’s name, why should such a misfortune befall me? If I had lost an arm or a leg, it would be less insupportable; but a man without a nose! Devil take it! — what is he good for? He is only fit to be thrown out of the window. If it had been taken from me in war or in a duel, or if I had lost it by my own fault! But it has disappeared inexplicably. But no! it is impossible,” he continued after reflecting a few moments, “it is incredible that a nose can disappear like that — quite incredible. I must be dreaming, or suffering from some hallucination; perhaps I swallowed, by mistake instead of water, the brandy with which I rub my chin after being shaved. That fool of an Ivan must have forgotten to take it away, and I must have swallowed it.”

In order to find out whether he were really drunk, the Major pinched himself so hard that he unvoluntarily uttered a cry. The pain convinced him that he was quite wide awake. He walked slowly to the looking-glass and at first closed his eyes, hoping to see his nose suddenly in its proper place; but on opening them, he started back. “What a hideous sight!” he exclaimed.

It was really incomprehensible. One might easily lose a button, a silver spoon, a watch, or something similar; but a loss like this, and in one’s own dwelling!

After considering all the circumstances, Major Kovaloff felt inclined to suppose that the cause of all his trouble should be laid at the door of Madame Podtotchina, the Colonel’s wife, who wished him to marry her daughter. He himself paid her court readily, but always avoided coming to the point. And when the lady one day told him point-blank that she wished him to marry her daughter, he gently drew back, declaring that he was still too young, and that he had to serve five years more before he would be forty-two. This must be the reason why the lady, in revenge, had resolved to bring him into disgrace, and had hired two sorceresses for that object. One thing was certain — his nose had not been cut off; no one had entered his room, and as for Ivan Jakovlevitch — he had been shaved by him on Wednesday, and during that day and the whole of Thursday his nose had been there, as he knew and well remembered. Moreover, if his nose had been cut off he would naturally have felt pain, and doubtless the wound would not have healed so quickly, nor would the surface have been as flat as a pancake.

All kinds of plans passed through his head: should he bring a legal action

against the wife of a superior officer, or should he go to her and charge her openly with her treachery?

His reflections were interrupted by a sudden light, which shone through all the chinks of the door, showing that Ivan had lit the wax-candles in the vestibule. Soon Ivan himself came in with the lights. Kovaloff quickly seized a handkerchief and covered the place where his nose had been the evening before, so that his blockhead of a servant might not gape with his mouth wide open when he saw his master's extraordinary appearance.

Scarcely had Ivan returned to the vestibule than a stranger's voice was heard there.

"Does Major Kovaloff live here?" it asked.

"Come in!" said the Major, rising rapidly and opening the door.

He saw a police official of pleasant appearance, with grey whiskers and fairly full cheeks — the same who at the commencement of this story was standing at the end of the Isaac Bridge. "You have lost your nose?" he asked.

"Exactly so."

"It has just been found."

"What — do you say?" stammered Major Kovaloff.

Joy had suddenly paralysed his tongue. He stared at the police commissary on whose cheeks and full lips fell the flickering light of the candle.

"How was it?" he asked at last.

"By a very singular chance. It has been arrested just as it was getting into a carriage for Riga. Its passport had been made out some time ago in the name of an official; and what is still more strange, I myself took it at first for a gentleman. Fortunately I had my glasses with me, and then I saw at once that it was a nose. I am shortsighted, you know, and as you stand before me I cannot distinguish your nose, your beard, or anything else. My mother-in-law can hardly see at all."

Kovaloff was beside himself with excitement. "Where is it? Where? I will hasten there at once."

"Don't put yourself out. Knowing that you need it, I have brought it with me. Another singular thing is that the principal culprit in the matter is a scoundrel of a barber living in the Ascension Avenue, who is now safely locked up. I had long suspected him of drunkenness and theft; only the day before yesterday he stole some buttons in a shop. Your nose is quite uninjured." So saying, the police commissary put his hand in his pocket and brought out the nose wrapped up in paper.

"Yes, yes, that is it!" exclaimed Kovaloff. "Will you not stay and drink a cup of tea with me?"

“I should like to very much, but I cannot. I must go at once to the House of Correction. The cost of living is very high nowadays. My mother-in-law lives with me, and there are several children; the eldest is very hopeful and intelligent, but I have no means for their education.”

After the commissary’s departure, Kovaloff remained for some time plunged in a kind of vague reverie, and did not recover full consciousness for several moments, so great was the effect of this unexpected good news. He placed the recovered nose carefully in the palm of his hand, and examined it again with the greatest attention.

“Yes, this is it!” he said to himself. “Here is the heat-boil on the left side, which came out yesterday.” And he nearly laughed aloud with delight.

But nothing is permanent in this world. Joy in the second moment of its arrival is already less keen than in the first, is still fainter in the third, and finishes by coalescing with our normal mental state, just as the circles which the fall of a pebble forms on the surface of water, gradually die away. Kovaloff began to meditate, and saw that his difficulties were not yet over; his nose had been recovered, but it had to be joined on again in its proper place.

And suppose it could not? As he put this question to himself, Kovaloff grew pale. With a feeling of indescribable dread, he rushed towards his dressing-table, and stood before the mirror in order that he might not place his nose crookedly. His hands trembled.

Very carefully he placed it where it had been before. Horror! It did not remain there. He held it to his mouth and warmed it a little with his breath, and then placed it there again; but it would not hold.

“Hold on, you stupid!” he said.

But the nose seemed to be made of wood, and fell back on the table with a strange noise, as though it had been a cork. The Major’s face began to twitch feverishly. “Is it possible that it won’t stick?” he asked himself, full of alarm. But however often he tried, all his efforts were in vain.

He called Ivan, and sent him to fetch the doctor who occupied the finest flat in the mansion. This doctor was a man of imposing appearance, who had magnificent black whiskers and a healthy wife. He ate fresh apples every morning, and cleaned his teeth with extreme care, using five different tooth-brushes for three-quarters of an hour daily.

The doctor came immediately. After having asked the Major when this misfortune had happened, he raised his chin and gave him a fillip with his finger just where the nose had been, in such a way that the Major suddenly threw back his head and struck the wall with it. The doctor said that did not matter; then, making him turn his face to the right, he felt the vacant place and said “H’m!”

then he made him turn it to the left and did the same; finally he again gave him a fillip with his finger, so that the Major started like a horse whose teeth are being examined. After this experiment, the doctor shook his head and said, “No, it cannot be done. Rather remain as you are, lest something worse happen. Certainly one could replace it at once, but I assure you the remedy would be worse than the disease.”

“All very fine, but how am I to go on without a nose?” answered Kovaloff. “There is nothing worse than that. How can I show myself with such a villainous appearance? I go into good society, and this evening I am invited to two parties. I know several ladies, Madame Tchektyriev, the wife of a state-councillor, Madame Podtotchina — although after what she has done, I don’t want to have anything to do with her except through the agency of the police. I beg you,” continued Kovaloff in a supplicating tone, “find some way or other of replacing it; even if it is not quite firm, as long as it holds at all; I can keep it in place sometimes with my hand, whenever there is any risk. Besides, I do not even dance, so that it is not likely to be injured by any sudden movement. As to your fee, be in no anxiety about that; I can well afford it.”

“Believe me,” answered the doctor in a voice which was neither too high nor too low, but soft and almost magnetic, “I do not treat patients from love of gain. That would be contrary to my principles and to my art. It is true that I accept fees, but that is only not to hurt my patients’ feelings by refusing them. I could certainly replace your nose, but I assure you on my word of honour, it would only make matters worse. Rather let Nature do her own work. Wash the place often with cold water, and I assure you that even without a nose, you will be just as well as if you had one. As to the nose itself, I advise you to have it preserved in a bottle of spirits, or, still better, of warm vinegar mixed with two spoonfuls of brandy, and then you can sell it at a good price. I would be willing to take it myself, provided you do not ask too much.”

“No, no, I shall not sell it at any price. I would rather it were lost again.”

“Excuse me,” said the doctor, taking his leave. “I hoped to be useful to you, but I can do nothing more; you are at any rate convinced of my good-will.” So saying, the doctor left the room with a dignified air.

Kovaloff did not even notice his departure. Absorbed in a profound reverie, he only saw the edge of his snow-white cuffs emerging from the sleeves of his black coat.

The next day he resolved, before bringing a formal action, to write to the Colonel’s wife and see whether she would not return to him, without further dispute, that of which she had deprived him.

The letter ran as follows:

“To Madame Alexandra Podtotchina,

“I hardly understand your method of action. Be sure that by adopting such a course you will gain nothing, and will certainly not succeed in making me marry your daughter. Believe me, the story of my nose has become well known; it is you and no one else who have taken the principal part in it. Its unexpected separation from the place which it occupied, its flight and its appearances sometimes in the disguise of an official, sometimes in proper person, are nothing but the consequence of unholy spells employed by you or by persons who, like you, are addicted to such honourable pursuits. On my part, I wish to inform you, that if the above-mentioned nose is not restored to-day to its proper place, I shall be obliged to have recourse to legal procedure.

“For the rest, with all respect, I have the honour to be your humble servant,

“Platon Kovaloff.”

The reply was not long in coming, and was as follows:

“Major Platon Kovaloff, —

“Your letter has profoundly astonished me. I must confess that I had not expected such unjust reproaches on your part. I assure you that the official of whom you speak has not been at my house, either disguised or in his proper person. It is true that Philippe Ivanovitch Potantchikoff has paid visits at my house, and though he has actually asked for my daughter’s hand, and was a man of good breeding, respectable and intelligent, I never gave him any hope.

“Again, you say something about a nose. If you intend to imply by that that I wished to snub you, i.e. to meet you with a refusal, I am very astonished because, as you well know, I was quite of the opposite mind. If after this you wish to ask for my daughter’s hand, I should be glad to gratify you, for such has also been the object of my most fervent desire, in the hope of the accomplishment of which, I remain, yours most sincerely,

“Alexandra Podtotchina.”

“No,” said Kovaloff, after having reperused the letter, “she is certainly not guilty. It is impossible. Such a letter could not be written by a criminal.” The committee-man was experienced in such matters, for he had been often officially deputed to conduct criminal investigations while in the Caucasus. “But then how and by what trick of fate has the thing happened?” he said to himself with a gesture of discouragement. “The devil must be at the bottom of it.”

Meanwhile the rumour of this extraordinary event had spread all over the city, and, as is generally the case, not without numerous additions. At that period there was a general disposition to believe in the miraculous; the public had recently been impressed by experiments in magnetism. The story of the floating chairs in Koniouchennaia Street was still quite recent, and there was nothing

astonishing in hearing soon afterwards that Major Kovaloff's nose was to be seen walking every day at three o'clock on the Neffsky Avenue. The crowd of curious spectators which gathered there daily was enormous. On one occasion someone spread a report that the nose was in Junker's stores and immediately the place was besieged by such a crowd that the police had to interfere and establish order. A certain speculator with a grave, whiskered face, who sold cakes at a theatre door, had some strong wooden benches made which he placed before the window of the stores, and obligingly invited the public to stand on them and look in, at the modest charge of twenty-four kopecks. A veteran colonel, leaving his house earlier than usual expressly for the purpose, had the greatest difficulty in elbowing his way through the crowd, but to his great indignation he saw nothing in the store window but an ordinary flannel waistcoat and a coloured lithograph representing a young girl darning a stocking, while an elegant youth in a waistcoat with large lappels watched her from behind a tree. The picture had hung in the same place for more than ten years. The colonel went off, growling savagely to himself, "How can the fools let themselves be excited by such idiotic stories?"

Then another rumour got abroad, to the effect that the nose of Major Kovaloff was in the habit of walking not on the Neffsky Avenue but in the Tauris Gardens. Some students of the Academy of Surgery went there on purpose to see it. A high-born lady wrote to the keeper of the gardens asking him to show her children this rare phenomenon, and to give them some suitable instruction on the occasion.

All these incidents were eagerly collected by the town wits, who just then were very short of anecdotes adapted to amuse ladies. On the other hand, the minority of solid, sober people were very much displeased. One gentleman asserted with great indignation that he could not understand how in our enlightened age such absurdities could spread abroad, and he was astonished that the Government did not direct their attention to the matter. This gentleman evidently belonged to the category of those people who wish the Government to interfere in everything, even in their daily quarrels with their wives.

But here the course of events is again obscured by a veil.

III

Strange events happen in this world, events which are sometimes entirely improbable. The same nose which had masqueraded as a state-councillor, and caused so much sensation in the town, was found one morning in its proper place, i.e. between the cheeks of Major Kovaloff, as if nothing had happened.

This occurred on 7th April. On awaking, the Major looked by chance into a mirror and perceived a nose. He quickly put his hand to it; it was there beyond a doubt!

“Oh!” exclaimed Kovaloff. For sheer joy he was on the point of performing a dance barefooted across his room, but the entrance of Ivan prevented him. He told him to bring water, and after washing himself, he looked again in the glass. The nose was there! Then he dried his face with a towel and looked again. Yes, there was no mistake about it!

“Look here, Ivan, it seems to me that I have a heat-boil on my nose,” he said to his valet.

And he thought to himself at the same time, “That will be a nice business if Ivan says to me ‘No, sir, not only is there no boil, but your nose itself is not there!’”

But Ivan answered, “There is nothing, sir; I can see no boil on your nose.”

“Good! Good!” exclaimed the Major, and snapped his fingers with delight.

At this moment the barber, Ivan Jakovlevitch, put his head in at the door, but as timidly as a cat which has just been beaten for stealing lard.

“Tell me first, are your hands clean?” asked Kovaloff when he saw him.

“Yes, sir.”

“You lie.”

“I swear they are perfectly clean, sir.”

“Very well; then come here.”

Kovaloff seated himself. Jakovlevitch tied a napkin under his chin, and in the twinkling of an eye covered his beard and part of his cheeks with a copious creamy lather.

“There it is!” said the barber to himself, as he glanced at the nose. Then he bent his head a little and examined it from one side. “Yes, it actually is the nose — really, when one thinks — — ” he continued, pursuing his mental soliloquy and still looking at it. Then quite gently, with infinite precaution, he raised two fingers in the air in order to take hold of it by the extremity, as he was accustomed to do.

“Now then, take care!” Kovaloff exclaimed.

Ivan Jakovlevitch let his arm fall and felt more embarrassed than he had ever done in his life. At last he began to pass the razor very lightly over the Major’s chin, and although it was very difficult to shave him without using the olfactory organ as a point of support, he succeeded, however, by placing his wrinkled thumb against the Major’s lower jaw and cheek, thus overcoming all obstacles and bringing his task to a safe conclusion.

When the barber had finished, Kovaloff hastened to dress himself, took a

droshky, and drove straight to the confectioner's. As he entered it, he ordered a cup of chocolate. He then stepped straight to the mirror; the nose was there!

He returned joyfully, and regarded with a satirical expression two officers who were in the shop, one of whom possessed a nose not much larger than a waistcoat button.

After that he went to the office of the department where he had applied for the post of vice-governor of a province or Government bailiff. As he passed through the hall of reception, he cast a glance at the mirror; the nose was there! Then he went to pay a visit to another committee-man, a very sarcastic personage, to whom he was accustomed to say in answer to his raillery, "Yes, I know, you are the funniest fellow in St Petersburg."

On the way he said to himself, "If the Major does not burst into laughter at the sight of me, that is a most certain sign that everything is in its accustomed place."

But the Major said nothing. "Very good!" thought Kovaloff.

As he returned, he met Madame Podtotchina with her daughter. He accosted them, and they responded very graciously. The conversation lasted a long time, during which he took more than one pinch of snuff, saying to himself, "No, you haven't caught me yet, coquettes that you are! And as to the daughter, I shan't marry her at all."

After that, the Major resumed his walks on the Neffsky Avenue and his visits to the theatre as if nothing had happened. His nose also remained in its place as if it had never quitted it. From that time he was always to be seen smiling, in a good humour, and paying attentions to pretty girls.

IV

Such was the occurrence which took place in the northern capital of our vast empire. On considering the account carefully we see that there is a good deal which looks improbable about it. Not to speak of the strange disappearance of the nose, and its appearance in different places under the disguise of a councillor of state, how was it that Kovaloff did not understand that one cannot decently advertise for a lost nose? I do not mean to say that he would have had to pay too much for the advertisement — that is a mere trifle, and I am not one of those who attach too much importance to money; but to advertise in such a case is not proper nor befitting.

Another difficulty is — how was the nose found in the baked loaf, and how did Ivan Jakovlevitch himself — no, I don't understand it at all!

But the most incomprehensible thing of all is, how authors can choose such

subjects for their stories. That really surpasses my understanding. In the first place, no advantage results from it for the country; and in the second place, no harm results either.

All the same, when one reflects well, there really is something in the matter. Whatever may be said to the contrary, such cases do occur — rarely, it is true, but now and then actually.

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THE CALASH

The town of B-- had become very lively since a cavalry regiment had taken up its quarters in it. Up to that date it had been mortally wearisome there. When you happened to pass through the town and glanced at its little mud houses with their incredibly gloomy aspect, the pen refuses to express what you felt. You suffered a terrible uneasiness as if you had just lost all your money at play, or had committed some terrible blunder in company. The plaster covering the houses, soaked by the rain, had fallen away in many places from their walls, which from white had become streaked and spotted, whilst old reeds served to thatch them.

Following a custom very common in the towns of South Russia, the chief of police has long since had all the trees in the gardens cut down to improve the view. One never meets anything in the town, unless it is a cock crossing the road, full of dust and soft as a pillow. At the slightest rain this dust is turned into mud, and then all the streets are filled with pigs. Displaying to all their grave faces, they utter such grunts that travellers only think of pressing their horses to get away from them as soon as possible. Sometimes some country gentleman of the neighbourhood, the owner of a dozen serfs, passes in a vehicle which is a kind of compromise between a carriage and a cart, surrounded by sacks of flour, and whipping up his bay mare with her colt trotting by her side. The aspect of the marketplace is mournful enough. The tailor’s house sticks out very stupidly, not squarely to the front but sideways. Facing it is a brick house with two windows, unfinished for fifteen years past, and further on a large wooden market-stall standing by itself and painted mud-colour. This stall, which was to serve as a model, was built by the chief of police in the time of his youth, before he got into the habit of falling asleep directly after dinner, and of drinking a kind of decoction of dried goose-berries every evening. All around the rest of the market-place are nothing but palings. But in the centre are some little sheds where a packet of round cakes, a stout woman in a red dress, a bar of soap, some pounds of bitter almonds, some lead, some cotton, and two shopmen playing at “svaika,” a game resembling quoits, are always to be seen.

But on the arrival of the cavalry regiment everything changed. The streets became more lively and wore quite another aspect. Often from their little houses the inhabitants would see a tall and well-made officer with a plumed hat pass by, on his way to the quarters of one of his comrades to discuss the chances of promotion or the qualities of a new tobacco, or perhaps to risk at play his

carriage, which might indeed be called the carriage of all the regiment, since it belonged in turn to every one of them. To-day it was the major who drove out in it, to-morrow it was seen in the lieutenant's coach-house, and a week later the major's servant was again greasing its wheels. The long hedges separating the houses were suddenly covered with soldiers' caps exposed to the sun, grey frieze cloaks hung in the doorways, and moustaches harsh and bristling as clothes brushes were to be met with in all the streets. These moustaches showed themselves everywhere, but above all at the market, over the shoulders of the women of the place who flocked there from all sides to make their purchases. The officers lent great animation to society at B--.

Society consisted up till then of the judge who was living with a deacon's wife, and of the chief of police, a very sensible man, but one who slept all day long from dinner till evening, and from evening till dinner-time.

This general liveliness was still further increased when the town of B-- became the residence of the general commanding the brigade to which the regiment belonged. Many gentlemen of the neighbourhood, whose very existence no one had even suspected, began to come into the town with the intention of calling on the officers, or, perhaps, of playing bank, a game concerning which they had up till then only a very confused notion, occupied as they were with their crops and the commissions of their wives and their hare-hunting. I am very sorry that I cannot recollect for what reason the general made up his mind one fine day to give a grand dinner. The preparations were overwhelming. The clatter of knives in the kitchen was heard as far as the town gates. The whole of the market was laid under contributions, so much so that the judge and the deacon's wife found themselves obliged that day to be satisfied with hasty puddings and cakes of flour. The little courtyard of the house occupied by the general was crowded with vehicles. The company only consisted of men, officers and gentlemen of the neighbourhood.

Amongst these latter was above all conspicuous Pythagoras Pythagoravitch Tchertokoutski, one of the leading aristocrats of the district of B--, the most fiery orator at the nobiliary elections and the owner of a very elegant turn-out. He had served in a cavalry regiment and had even passed for one of its most accomplished officers, having constantly shown himself at all the balls and parties wherever his regiment was quartered. Information respecting him may be asked of all the young ladies in the districts of Tamboff and Simbirsk. He would very probably have further extended his reputation in other districts if he had not been obliged to leave the service in consequence of one of those affairs which are spoken of as "a very unpleasant business." Had he given or received a blow? I cannot say with certainty, but what is indisputable is that he was asked to send

in his resignation. However, this accident had no unpleasant effect upon the esteem in which he had been held up till then.

Tchertokoutski always wore a coat of a military cut, spurs and moustache, in order not to have it supposed that he had served in the infantry, a branch of the service upon which he lavished the most contemptuous expressions. He frequented the numerous fairs to which flock the whole of the population of Southern Russia, consisting of nursemaids, tall girls, and burly gentlemen who go there in vehicles of such strange aspect that no one has ever seen their match even in a dream. He instinctively guessed the spot in which a regiment of cavalry was to be found and never failed to introduce himself to the officers. On perceiving them he bounded gracefully from his light phaeton and soon made acquaintance with them. At the last election he had given to the whole of the nobility a grand dinner during which he declared that if he were elected marshal he would put all gentlemen on the best possible footing. He usually behaved after the fashion of a great noble. He had married a rather pretty lady with a dowry of two hundred serfs and some thousands of rubles. This money was at once employed in the purchase of six fine horses, some gilt bronze locks, and a tame monkey. He further engaged a French cook. The two hundred peasants of the lady, as well as two hundred more belonging to the gentleman, were mortgaged to the bank. In a word, he was a regular nobleman. Besides himself, several other gentlemen were amongst the general's guests, but it is not worth while speaking of them. The officers of the regiment, amongst whom were the colonel and the fat major, formed the majority of those present. The general himself was rather stout; a good officer, nevertheless, according to his subordinates. He had a rather deep bass voice.

The dinner was magnificent; there were sturgeons, sterlets, bustards, asparagus, quail, partridges, mushrooms. The flavour of all these dishes supplied an irrefutable proof of the sobriety of the cook during the twenty-four hours preceding the dinner. Four soldiers, who had been given him as assistants, had not ceased working all night, knife in hand, at the composition of ragouts and jellies. The immense quantity of long-necked bottles, mingled with shorter ones, holding claret and madeira; the fine summer day, the wide-open windows, the plates piled up with ice on the table, the crumpled shirt-fronts of the gentlemen in plain clothes, and a brisk and noisy conversation, now dominated by the general's voice, and now besprinkled with champagne, were all in perfect harmony. The guests rose from the table with a pleasant feeling of repletion, and, after having lit their pipes, all stepped out, coffee-cups in hand, on to the verandah.

"We can see her now," said the general. "Here, my dear fellow," added he,

addressing his aide-de-camp, an active well-made young officer, “have the bay mare brought here. You shall see for yourselves, gentlemen.”

At these words the general took a long pull at his pipe.

“She is not quite recovered yet; there is not a decent stable in this cursed little place. But she is not bad looking--” puff--puff, the general here let out the smoke which he had kept in his mouth till then--”the little mare.”

“It is long since your excellency--” puff--puff--puff--”condescended to buy her?” asked Tchertokoutski.

Puff--puff--puff--puff. “Not very long, I had her from the breeding establishment two years ago.”

“And did your excellency condescend to take her ready broken, or to have her broken in here yourself?”

Puff--puff--puff--puff. “Here.”

As he spoke the general disappeared behind a cloud of smoke.

At that moment a soldier jumped out of the stable. The trampling of a horse’s hoofs was heard, and another soldier with immense moustaches, and wearing a long white tunic, appeared, leading by the bridle the terrified and quivering mare, which, suddenly rearing, lifted him off his feet.

“Come, come, Agrafena Ivanovna,” said he, leading her towards the verandah.

The mare’s name was Agrafena Ivanovna. Strong and bold as a Southern beauty, she suddenly became motionless.

The general began to look at her with evident satisfaction, and left off smoking. The colonel himself went down the steps and patted her neck. The major ran his hand down her legs, and all the other officers clicked their tongues at her.

Tchertokoutski left the verandah to take up a position beside the mare. The soldier who held her bridle drew himself up and stared fixedly at the guests.

“She is very fine, very fine,” said Tchertokoutski, “a very well-shaped beast. Will your excellency allow me to ask whether she is a good goer?”

“She goes well, but that idiot of a doctor, deuce take him, has given her some balls which have made her sneeze for the last two days.”

“She is a fine beast, a very fine beast. Has your excellency a turn-out to match the horse?”

“Turn-out! but she’s a saddle horse.”

“I know. I put the question, your excellency, to know if you have an equipage worthy of your other horses?”

“No, I have not much in the way of equipages; I must admit that, for some time past, I have been wanting to buy a calash, such as they build now-a-days. I have written about it to my brother who is now at St. Petersburg, but I do not

know whether he will be able to send me one."

"It seems to me, your excellency," remarked the colonel, "that there are no better calashes than those of Vienna."

"You are right." Puff--puff--puff.

"I have an excellent calash, your excellency, a real Viennese calash," said Tchertokoutski.

"That in which you came?"

"Oh no, I make use of that for ordinary service, but the other is something extraordinary. It is as light as a feather, and if you sit in it, it seems as if your nurse was rocking you in a cradle."

"It is very comfortable then?"

"Extremely comfortable; the cushions, the springs, and everything else are perfect."

"Ah! that is good."

"And what a quantity of things can be packed away in it. I have never seen anything like it, your excellency. When I was still in the service there was room enough in the body to stow away ten bottles of rum, twenty pounds of tobacco, six uniforms, and two pipes, the longest pipes imaginable, your excellency; and in the pockets inside you could stow away a whole bullock."

"That is very good."

"It cost four thousand rubles, your excellency."

"It ought to be good at that price. Did you buy it yourself?"

"No, your excellency, I had it by chance. It was bought by one of my oldest friends, a fine fellow with whom you would be very well pleased. We are very intimate. What is mine is his, and what is his is mine. I won it of him at cards. Would your excellency have the kindness to honour me at dinner to-morrow? You could see my calash."

"I don't know what to say. Alone I could not--but if you would allow me to come with these officers--"

"I beg of them to come too. I shall esteem it a great honour, gentlemen, to have the pleasure of seeing you at my house."

The colonel, the major, and the other officers thanked Tchertokoutski.

"I am of opinion myself, your excellency, that if one buys anything it should be good; it is not worth the trouble of getting, if it turns out bad. If you do me the honour of calling on me to-morrow, I will show you some improvements I have introduced on my estate."

The general looked at him, and puffed out a fresh cloud of smoke.

Tchertokoutski was charmed with his notion of inviting the officers, and mentally ordered in advance all manner of dishes for their entertainment. He

smiled at these gentlemen, who on their part appeared to increase their show of attention towards him, as was noticeable from the expression of their eyes and the little half-nods they bestowed upon him. His bearing assumed a certain ease, and his voice expressed his great satisfaction.

“Your excellency will make the acquaintance of the mistress of the house.”

“That will be most agreeable to me,” said the general, twirling his moustache.

Tchertokoutski was firmly resolved to return home at once in order to make all necessary preparations in good time. He had already taken his hat, but a strange fatality caused him to remain for some time at the general’s. The card tables had been set out, and all the company, separating into groups of four, scattered itself about the room. Lights were brought in. Tchertokoutski did not know whether he ought to sit down to whist. But as the officers invited him, he thought that the rules of good breeding obliged him to accept. He sat down. I do not know how a glass of punch found itself at his elbow, but he drank it off without thinking. After playing two rubbers, he found another glass close to his hand which he drank off in the same way, though not without remarking:

“It is really time for me to go, gentlemen.”

He began to play a fresh rubber. However, the conversation which was going on in every corner of the room took an especial turn. Those who were playing whist were quiet enough, but the others talked a great deal. A captain had taken up his position on a sofa, and leaning against a cushion, pipe in mouth, he captivated the attention of a circle of guests gathered about him by his eloquent narrative of amorous adventures. A very stout gentleman whose arms were so short that they looked like two potatoes hanging by his sides, listened to him with a very satisfied expression, and from time to time exerted himself to pull his tobacco-pouch out of his coat-tail pocket. A somewhat brisk discussion on cavalry drill had arisen in another corner, and Tchertokoutski, who had twice already played a knave for a king, mingled in the conversation by calling out from his place: “In what year?” or “What regiment?” without noticing that very often his question had no application whatever. At length, a few minutes before supper, play came to an end. Tchertokoutski could remember that he had won a great deal, but he did not take up his winnings, and after rising stood for some time in the position of a man who has no handkerchief in his pocket.

They sat down to supper. As might be expected, wine was not lacking, and Tchertokoutski kept involuntarily filling his glass with it, for he was surrounded with bottles. A lengthy conversation took place at table, but the guests carried it on after a strange fashion. A colonel, who had served in 1812, described a battle which had never taken place; and besides, no one ever could make out why he took a cork and stuck it into a pie. They began to break-up at three in the

morning. The coachmen were obliged to take several of them in their arms like bundles; and Tchertokoutski himself, despite his aristocratic pride, bowed so low to the company, that he took home two thistles in his moustache.

The coachman who drove him home found every one asleep. He routed out, after some trouble, the valet, who, after having ushered his master through the hall, handed him over to a maid-servant. Tchertokoutski followed her as well as he could to the best room, and stretched himself beside his pretty young wife, who was sleeping in a night-gown as white as snow. The shock of her husband falling on the bed awoke her--she stretched out her arms, opened her eyes, closed them quickly, and then opened them again quite wide, with a half-vexed air. Seeing that her husband did not pay the slightest attention to her, she turned over on the other side, rested her fresh and rosy cheek on her hand, and went to sleep again.

It was late--that is, according to country customs--when the lady awoke again. Her husband was snoring more loudly than ever. She recollected that he had come home at four o'clock, and not wishing to awaken him, got up alone, and put on her slippers, which her husband had had sent for her from St. Petersburg, and a white dressing-gown which fell about her like the waters of a fountain. Then she passed into her dressing-room, and after washing in water as fresh as herself, went to her toilet table. She looked at herself twice in the glass, and thought she looked very pretty that morning. This circumstance, a very insignificant one apparently, caused her to stay two hours longer than usual before her glass. She dressed herself very tastefully and went into the garden.

The weather was splendid: it was one of the finest days of the summer. The sun, which had almost reached the meridian, shed its most ardent rays; but a pleasant coolness reigned under the leafy arcades; and the flowers, warmed by the sun, exhaled their sweetest perfume. The pretty mistress of the house had quite forgotten that it was noon at least, and that her husband was still asleep. Already she heard the snores of two coachmen and a groom, who were taking their siesta in the stable, after having dined copiously. But she was still sitting in a bower from which the deserted high road could be seen, when all at once her attention was caught by a light cloud of dust rising in the distance. After looking at it for some moments, she ended by making out several vehicles, closely following one another. First came a light calash, with two places, in which was the general, wearing his large and glittering epaulettes, with the colonel. This was followed by another with four places, containing the captain, the aide-de-camp and two lieutenants. Further on, came the celebrated regimental vehicle, the present owner of which was the major, and behind that another in which were packed five officers, one on his comrade's knees, the procession being

closed by three more on three fine bays.

“Are they coming here?” thought the mistress of the house. “Good heavens, yes! they are leaving the main road.”

She gave a cry, clasped her hands, and ran straight across the flower-beds to her bedroom, where her husband was still sleeping soundly.

“Get up! get up! get up at once,” she cried, pulling him by the arm.

“What--what’s the matter?” murmured Tchertokoutski, stretching his limbs without opening his eyes.

“Get up, get up. Visitors have come, do you hear? visitors.”

“Visitors, what visitors?” After saying these words he uttered a little plaintive grunt like that of a sucking calf: “M-m-m. Let me kiss you.”

“My dear, get up at once, for heaven’s sake. The general has come with all his officers. Ah! goodness, you have got a thistle in your moustache.”

“The general! Has he come already? But why the deuce did not they wake me? And the dinner, is the dinner ready?”

“What dinner?”

“But haven’t I ordered a dinner?”

“A dinner! You got home at four o’clock in the morning and you did not answer a single word to all my questions. I did not wake you, since you had so little sleep.”

Tchertokoutski, his eyes staring out of his head, remained motionless for some moments as though a thunderbolt had struck him. All at once he jumped out of bed in his shirt.

“Idiot that I am,” he exclaimed, clasping his hand to his forehead; “I had invited them to dinner. What is to be done? are they far off?”

“They will be here in a moment.”

“My dear, hide yourself. Ho there, somebody. Hi there, you girl. Come here, you fool; what are you afraid of? The officers are coming here; tell them I am not at home, that I went out early this morning, that I am not coming back. Do you understand? Go and repeat it to all the servants. Be off, quick.”

Having uttered these words, he hurriedly slipped on his dressing-gown, and ran off to shut himself up in the coach-house, which he thought the safest hiding-place. But he fancied that he might be noticed in the corner in which he had taken refuge.

“This will be better,” said he to himself, letting down the steps of the nearest vehicle, which happened to be the calash. He jumped inside, closed the door, and, as a further precaution, covered himself with the leather apron. There he remained, wrapped in his dressing-gown, in a doubled-up position.

During this time the equipages had drawn up before the porch. The general got

out of his carriage and shook himself, followed by the colonel, arranging the feathers in his hat. After him came the stout major, his sabre under his arm, and the slim lieutenants, whilst the mounted officers also alighted.

“The master is not at home,” said a servant appearing at the top of a flight of steps.

“What! not at home; but he is coming home for dinner, is he not?”

“No, he is not; he has gone out for the day and will not be back till this time to-morrow.”

“Bless me,” said the general; “but what the deuce--”

“What a joke,” said the colonel laughing.

“No, no, such things are inconceivable,” said the general angrily. “If he could not receive us, why did he invite us?”

“I cannot understand, your excellency, how it is possible to act in such a manner,” observed a young officer.

“What?” said the general, who always made an officer under the rank of captain repeat his remarks twice over.

“I wondered, your excellency, how any one could do such a thing.”

“Quite so; if anything has happened he ought to have let us know.”

“There is nothing to be done, your excellency, we had better go back home,” said the colonel.

“Certainly, there is nothing to be done. However, we can see the calash without him; probably he has not taken it with him. Come here, my man.”

“What does your excellency want?”

“Show us your master’s new calash.”

“Have the kindness to step this way to the coach-house.”

The general entered the coach-house followed by his officers.

“Let me pull it a little forward, your excellency,” said the servant, “it is rather dark here.”

“That will do.”

The general and his officers walked around the calash, carefully inspecting the wheels and springs.

“There is nothing remarkable about it,” said the general; “it is a very ordinary calash.”

“Nothing to look at,” added the colonel; “there is absolutely nothing good about it.”

“It seems to me, your excellency, that it is not worth four thousand rubles,” remarked a young officer.

“What?”

“I said, your excellency, that I do not think that it is worth four thousand

rubles.”

“Four thousand! It is not worth two. Perhaps, however, the inside is well fitted. Unbutton the apron.”

And Tchertokoutski appeared before the officers’ eyes, clad in his dressing-gown and doubled up in a singular fashion.

“Hullo, there you are,” said the astonished general.

Then he covered Tchertokoutski up again and went off with his officers.

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THE OVERCOAT

In the department of--but it is better not to mention the department. There is nothing more irritable than departments, regiments, courts of justice, and, in a word, every branch of public service. Each individual attached to them nowadays thinks all society insulted in his person. Quite recently a complaint was received from a justice of the peace, in which he plainly demonstrated that all the imperial institutions were going to the dogs, and that the Czar’s sacred name was being taken in vain; and in proof he appended to the complaint a romance in which the justice of the peace is made to appear about once every ten lines, and sometimes in a drunken condition. Therefore, in order to avoid all unpleasantness, it will be better to describe the department in question only as a certain department.

So, in a certain department there was a certain official--not a very high one, it must be allowed--short of stature, somewhat pock-marked, red-haired, and short-sighted, with a bald forehead, wrinkled cheeks, and a complexion of the kind known as sanguine. The St. Petersburg climate was responsible for this. As for his official status, he was what is called a perpetual titular councillor, over which, as is well known, some writers make merry, and crack their jokes, obeying the praiseworthy custom of attacking those who cannot bite back.

His family name was Bashmatchkin. This name is evidently derived from “bashmak” (shoe); but when, at what time, and in what manner, is not known. His father and grandfather, and all the Bashmatchkins, always wore boots, which only had new heels two or three times a year. His name was Akakiy Akakievitch. It may strike the reader as rather singular and far-fetched, but he may rest assured that it was by no means far-fetched, and that the circumstances were such that it would have been impossible to give him any other.

This is how it came about.

Akakiy Akakievitch was born, if my memory fails me not, in the evening of the 23rd of March. His mother, the wife of a Government official and a very fine woman, made all due arrangements for having the child baptised. She was lying on the bed opposite the door; on her right stood the godfather, Ivan Ivanovitch Eroshkin, a most estimable man, who served as presiding officer of the senate, while the godmother, Anna Semenovna Byelobrushkova, the wife of an officer of the quarter, and a woman of rare virtues. They offered the mother her choice of three names, Mokiya, Sossiya, or that the child should be called after the

martyr Khozdazat. “No,” said the good woman, “all those names are poor.” In order to please her they opened the calendar to another place; three more names appeared, Triphiliy, Dula, and Varakhasiy. “This is a judgment,” said the old woman. “What names! I truly never heard the like. Varada or Varukh might have been borne, but not Triphiliy and Varakhasiy!” They turned to another page and found Pavsikakhiy and Vakhtisiy. “Now I see,” said the old woman, “that it is plainly fate. And since such is the case, it will be better to name him after his father. His father’s name was Akakiy, so let his son’s be Akakiy too.” In this manner he became Akakiy Akakievitch. They christened the child, whereat he wept and made a grimace, as though he foresaw that he was to be a titular councillor.

In this manner did it all come about. We have mentioned it in order that the reader might see for himself that it was a case of necessity, and that it was utterly impossible to give him any other name. When and how he entered the department, and who appointed him, no one could remember. However much the directors and chiefs of all kinds were changed, he was always to be seen in the same place, the same attitude, the same occupation; so that it was afterwards affirmed that he had been born in undress uniform with a bald head. No respect was shown him in the department. The porter not only did not rise from his seat when he passed, but never even glanced at him, any more than if a fly had flown through the reception-room. His superiors treated him in coolly despotic fashion. Some sub-chief would thrust a paper under his nose without so much as saying, “Copy,” or “Here’s a nice interesting affair,” or anything else agreeable, as is customary amongst well-bred officials. And he took it, looking only at the paper and not observing who handed it to him, or whether he had the right to do so; simply took it, and set about copying it.

The young officials laughed at and made fun of him, so far as their official wit permitted; told in his presence various stories concocted about him, and about his landlady, an old woman of seventy; declared that she beat him; asked when the wedding was to be; and strewed bits of paper over his head, calling them snow. But Akakiy Akakievitch answered not a word, any more than if there had been no one there besides himself. It even had no effect upon his work: amid all these annoyances he never made a single mistake in a letter. But if the joking became wholly unbearable, as when they jogged his hand and prevented his attending to his work, he would exclaim, “Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?” And there was something strange in the words and the voice in which they were uttered. There was in it something which moved to pity; so much that one young man, a new-comer, who, taking pattern by the others, had permitted himself to make sport of Akakiy, suddenly stopped short, as though all about

him had undergone a transformation, and presented itself in a different aspect. Some unseen force repelled him from the comrades whose acquaintance he had made, on the supposition that they were well-bred and polite men. Long afterwards, in his gayest moments, there recurred to his mind the little official with the bald forehead, with his heart-rending words, “Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?” In these moving words, other words resounded--”I am thy brother.” And the young man covered his face with his hand; and many a time afterwards, in the course of his life, shuddered at seeing how much inhumanity there is in man, how much savage coarseness is concealed beneath delicate, refined worldliness, and even, O God! in that man whom the world acknowledges as honourable and noble.

It would be difficult to find another man who lived so entirely for his duties. It is not enough to say that Akakiy laboured with zeal: no, he laboured with love. In his copying, he found a varied and agreeable employment. Enjoyment was written on his face: some letters were even favourites with him; and when he encountered these, he smiled, winked, and worked with his lips, till it seemed as though each letter might be read in his face, as his pen traced it. If his pay had been in proportion to his zeal, he would, perhaps, to his great surprise, have been made even a councillor of state. But he worked, as his companions, the wits, put it, like a horse in a mill.

Moreover, it is impossible to say that no attention was paid to him. One director being a kindly man, and desirous of rewarding him for his long service, ordered him to be given something more important than mere copying. So he was ordered to make a report of an already concluded affair to another department: the duty consisting simply in changing the heading and altering a few words from the first to the third person. This caused him so much toil that he broke into a perspiration, rubbed his forehead, and finally said, “No, give me rather something to copy.” After that they let him copy on forever.

Outside this copying, it appeared that nothing existed for him. He gave no thought to his clothes: his undress uniform was not green, but a sort of rusty-meal colour. The collar was low, so that his neck, in spite of the fact that it was not long, seemed inordinately so as it emerged from it, like the necks of those plaster cats which wag their heads, and are carried about upon the heads of scores of image sellers. And something was always sticking to his uniform, either a bit of hay or some trifle. Moreover, he had a peculiar knack, as he walked along the street, of arriving beneath a window just as all sorts of rubbish were being flung out of it: hence he always bore about on his hat scraps of melon rinds and other such articles. Never once in his life did he give heed to what was going on every day in the street; while it is well known that his young brother

officials train the range of their glances till they can see when any one’s trouser straps come undone upon the opposite sidewalk, which always brings a malicious smile to their faces. But Akakiy Akakievitch saw in all things the clean, even strokes of his written lines; and only when a horse thrust his nose, from some unknown quarter, over his shoulder, and sent a whole gust of wind down his neck from his nostrils, did he observe that he was not in the middle of a page, but in the middle of the street.

On reaching home, he sat down at once at the table, supped his cabbage soup up quickly, and swallowed a bit of beef with onions, never noticing their taste, and gulping down everything with flies and anything else which the Lord happened to send at the moment. His stomach filled, he rose from the table, and copied papers which he had brought home. If there happened to be none, he took copies for himself, for his own gratification, especially if the document was noteworthy, not on account of its style, but of its being addressed to some distinguished person.

Even at the hour when the grey St. Petersburg sky had quite dispersed, and all the official world had eaten or dined, each as he could, in accordance with the salary he received and his own fancy; when all were resting from the departmental jar of pens, running to and fro from their own and other people’s indispensable occupations, and from all the work that an uneasy man makes willingly for himself, rather than what is necessary; when officials hasten to dedicate to pleasure the time which is left to them, one bolder than the rest going to the theatre; another, into the street looking under all the bonnets; another wasting his evening in compliments to some pretty girl, the star of a small official circle; another--and this is the common case of all--visiting his comrades on the fourth or third floor, in two small rooms with an ante-room or kitchen, and some pretensions to fashion, such as a lamp or some other trifle which has cost many a sacrifice of dinner or pleasure trip; in a word, at the hour when all officials disperse among the contracted quarters of their friends, to play whist, as they sip their tea from glasses with a kopek’s worth of sugar, smoke long pipes, relate at times some bits of gossip which a Russian man can never, under any circumstances, refrain from, and, when there is nothing else to talk of, repeat eternal anecdotes about the commandant to whom they had sent word that the tails of the horses on the Falconet Monument had been cut off, when all strive to divert themselves, Akakiy Akakievitch indulged in no kind of diversion. No one could ever say that he had seen him at any kind of evening party. Having written to his heart’s content, he lay down to sleep, smiling at the thought of the coming day--of what God might send him to copy on the morrow.

Thus flowed on the peaceful life of the man, who, with a salary of four

hundred rubles, understood how to be content with his lot; and thus it would have continued to flow on, perhaps, to extreme old age, were it not that there are various ills strewn along the path of life for titular councillors as well as for private, actual, court, and every other species of councillor, even for those who never give any advice or take any themselves.

There exists in St. Petersburg a powerful foe of all who receive a salary of four hundred rubles a year, or thereabouts. This foe is no other than the Northern cold, although it is said to be very healthy. At nine o'clock in the morning, at the very hour when the streets are filled with men bound for the various official departments, it begins to bestow such powerful and piercing nips on all noses impartially that the poor officials really do not know what to do with them. At an hour when the foreheads of even those who occupy exalted positions ache with the cold, and tears start to their eyes, the poor titular councillors are sometimes quite unprotected. Their only salvation lies in traversing as quickly as possible, in their thin little cloaks, five or six streets, and then warming their feet in the porter's room, and so thawing all their talents and qualifications for official service, which had become frozen on the way.

Akakiy Akakievitch had felt for some time that his back and shoulders suffered with peculiar poignancy, in spite of the fact that he tried to traverse the distance with all possible speed. He began finally to wonder whether the fault did not lie in his cloak. He examined it thoroughly at home, and discovered that in two places, namely, on the back and shoulders, it had become thin as gauze: the cloth was worn to such a degree that he could see through it, and the lining had fallen into pieces. You must know that Akakiy Akakievitch's cloak served as an object of ridicule to the officials: they even refused it the noble name of cloak, and called it a cape. In fact, it was of singular make: its collar diminishing year by year, but serving to patch its other parts. The patching did not exhibit great skill on the part of the tailor, and was, in fact, baggy and ugly. Seeing how the matter stood, Akakiy Akakievitch decided that it would be necessary to take the cloak to Petrovitch, the tailor, who lived somewhere on the fourth floor up a dark stair-case, and who, in spite of his having but one eye, and pock-marks all over his face, busied himself with considerable success in repairing the trousers and coats of officials and others; that is to say, when he was sober and not nursing some other scheme in his head.

It is not necessary to say much about this tailor; but, as it is the custom to have the character of each personage in a novel clearly defined, there is no help for it, so here is Petrovitch the tailor. At first he was called only Grigoriy, and was some gentleman's serf; he commenced calling himself Petrovitch from the time when he received his free papers, and further began to drink heavily on all

holidays, at first on the great ones, and then on all church festivities without discrimination, wherever a cross stood in the calendar. On this point he was faithful to ancestral custom; and when quarrelling with his wife, he called her a low female and a German. As we have mentioned his wife, it will be necessary to say a word or two about her. Unfortunately, little is known of her beyond the fact that Petrovitch has a wife, who wears a cap and a dress; but cannot lay claim to beauty, at least, no one but the soldiers of the guard even looked under her cap when they met her.

Ascending the staircase which led to Petrovitch's room--which staircase was all soaked with dish-water, and reeked with the smell of spirits which affects the eyes, and is an inevitable adjunct to all dark stairways in St. Petersburg houses--ascending the stairs, Akakiy Akakievitch pondered how much Petrovitch would ask, and mentally resolved not to give more than two rubles. The door was open; for the mistress, in cooking some fish, had raised such a smoke in the kitchen that not even the beetles were visible. Akakiy Akakievitch passed through the kitchen unperceived, even by the housewife, and at length reached a room where he beheld Petrovitch seated on a large unpainted table, with his legs tucked under him like a Turkish pasha. His feet were bare, after the fashion of tailors who sit at work; and the first thing which caught the eye was his thumb, with a deformed nail thick and strong as a turtle's shell. About Petrovitch's neck hung a skein of silk and thread, and upon his knees lay some old garment. He had been trying unsuccessfully for three minutes to thread his needle, and was enraged at the darkness and even at the thread, growling in a low voice, "It won't go through, the barbarian! you pricked me, you rascal!"

Akakiy Akakievitch was vexed at arriving at the precise moment when Petrovitch was angry; he liked to order something of Petrovitch when the latter was a little downhearted, or, as his wife expressed it, "when he had settled himself with brandy, the one-eyed devil!" Under such circumstances, Petrovitch generally came down in his price very readily, and even bowed and returned thanks. Afterwards, to be sure, his wife would come, complaining that her husband was drunk, and so had fixed the price too low; but, if only a ten-kopek piece were added, then the matter was settled. But now it appeared that Petrovitch was in a sober condition, and therefore rough, taciturn, and inclined to demand, Satan only knows what price. Akakiy Akakievitch felt this, and would gladly have beat a retreat; but he was in for it. Petrovitch screwed up his one eye very intently at him, and Akakiy Akakievitch involuntarily said: "How do you do, Petrovitch?"

"I wish you a good morning, sir," said Petrovitch, squinting at Akakiy Akakievitch's hands, to see what sort of booty he had brought.

“Ah! I--to you, Petrovitch, this--” It must be known that Akakiy Akakievitch expressed himself chiefly by prepositions, adverbs, and scraps of phrases which had no meaning whatever. If the matter was a very difficult one, he had a habit of never completing his sentences; so that frequently, having begun a phrase with the words, “This, in fact, is quite--” he forgot to go on, thinking that he had already finished it.

“What is it?” asked Petrovitch, and with his one eye scanned Akakievitch’s whole uniform from the collar down to the cuffs, the back, the tails and the button-holes, all of which were well known to him, since they were his own handiwork. Such is the habit of tailors; it is the first thing they do on meeting one.

“But I, here, this--Petrovitch--a cloak, cloth--here you see, everywhere, in different places, it is quite strong--it is a little dusty, and looks old, but it is new, only here in one place it is a little--on the back, and here on one of the shoulders, it is a little worn, yes, here on this shoulder it is a little--do you see? that is all. And a little work--”

Petrovitch took the cloak, spread it out, to begin with, on the table, looked hard at it, shook his head, reached out his hand to the window-sill for his snuff-box, adorned with the portrait of some general, though what general is unknown, for the place where the face should have been had been rubbed through by the finger, and a square bit of paper had been pasted over it. Having taken a pinch of snuff, Petrovitch held up the cloak, and inspected it against the light, and again shook his head once more. After which he again lifted the general-adorned lid with its bit of pasted paper, and having stuffed his nose with snuff, closed and put away the snuff-box, and said finally, “No, it is impossible to mend it; it’s a wretched garment!”

Akakiy Akakievitch’s heart sank at these words.

“Why is it impossible, Petrovitch?” he said, almost in the pleading voice of a child; “all that ails it is, that it is worn on the shoulders. You must have some pieces--”

“Yes, patches could be found, patches are easily found,” said Petrovitch, “but there’s nothing to sew them to. The thing is completely rotten; if you put a needle to it--see, it will give way.”

“Let it give way, and you can put on another patch at once.”

“But there is nothing to put the patches on to; there’s no use in strengthening it; it is too far gone. It’s lucky that it’s cloth; for, if the wind were to blow, it would fly away.”

“Well, strengthen it again. How will this, in fact--”

“No,” said Petrovitch decisively, “there is nothing to be done with it. It’s a

thoroughly bad job. You'd better, when the cold winter weather comes on, make yourself some gaiters out of it, because stockings are not warm. The Germans invented them in order to make more money." Petrovitch loved, on all occasions, to have a fling at the Germans. "But it is plain you must have a new cloak."

At the word "new," all grew dark before Akakiy Akakievitch's eyes, and everything in the room began to whirl round. The only thing he saw clearly was the general with the paper face on the lid of Petrovitch's snuff-box. "A new one?" said he, as if still in a dream: "why, I have no money for that."

"Yes, a new one," said Petrovitch, with barbarous composure.

"Well, if it came to a new one, how would it--?"

"You mean how much would it cost?"

"Yes."

"Well, you would have to lay out a hundred and fifty or more," said Petrovitch, and pursed up his lips significantly. He liked to produce powerful effects, liked to stun utterly and suddenly, and then to glance sideways to see what face the stunned person would put on the matter.

"A hundred and fifty rubles for a cloak!" shrieked poor Akakiy Akakievitch, perhaps for the first time in his life, for his voice had always been distinguished for softness.

"Yes, sir," said Petrovitch, "for any kind of cloak. If you have a marten fur on the collar, or a silk-lined hood, it will mount up to two hundred."

"Petrovitch, please," said Akakiy Akakievitch in a beseeching tone, not hearing, and not trying to hear, Petrovitch's words, and disregarding all his "effects," "some repairs, in order that it may wear yet a little longer."

"No, it would only be a waste of time and money," said Petrovitch; and Akakiy Akakievitch went away after these words, utterly discouraged. But Petrovitch stood for some time after his departure, with significantly compressed lips, and without betaking himself to his work, satisfied that he would not be dropped, and an artistic tailor employed.

Akakiy Akakievitch went out into the street as if in a dream. "Such an affair!" he said to himself: "I did not think it had come to--" and then after a pause, he added, "Well, so it is! see what it has come to at last! and I never imagined that it was so!" Then followed a long silence, after which he exclaimed, "Well, so it is! see what already--nothing unexpected that--it would be nothing--what a strange circumstance!" So saying, instead of going home, he went in exactly the opposite direction without himself suspecting it. On the way, a chimney-sweep bumped up against him, and blackened his shoulder, and a whole hatful of rubbish landed on him from the top of a house which was building. He did not notice it; and only when he ran against a watchman, who, having planted his

halberd beside him, was shaking some snuff from his box into his horny hand, did he recover himself a little, and that because the watchman said, “Why are you poking yourself into a man’s very face? Haven’t you the pavement?” This caused him to look about him, and turn towards home.

There only, he finally began to collect his thoughts, and to survey his position in its clear and actual light, and to argue with himself, sensibly and frankly, as with a reasonable friend with whom one can discuss private and personal matters. “No,” said Akakiy Akakievitch, “it is impossible to reason with Petrovitch now; he is that--evidently his wife has been beating him. I’d better go to him on Sunday morning; after Saturday night he will be a little cross-eyed and sleepy, for he will want to get drunk, and his wife won’t give him any money; and at such a time, a ten-kopek piece in his hand will--he will become more fit to reason with, and then the cloak, and that--” Thus argued Akakiy Akakievitch with himself, regained his courage, and waited until the first Sunday, when, seeing from afar that Petrovitch’s wife had left the house, he went straight to him.

Petrovitch’s eye was, indeed, very much askew after Saturday: his head drooped, and he was very sleepy; but for all that, as soon as he knew what it was a question of, it seemed as though Satan jogged his memory. “Impossible,” said he: “please to order a new one.” Thereupon Akakiy Akakievitch handed over the ten-kopek piece. “Thank you, sir; I will drink your good health,” said Petrovitch: “but as for the cloak, don’t trouble yourself about it; it is good for nothing. I will make you a capital new one, so let us settle about it now.”

Akakiy Akakievitch was still for mending it; but Petrovitch would not hear of it, and said, “I shall certainly have to make you a new one, and you may depend upon it that I shall do my best. It may even be, as the fashion goes, that the collar can be fastened by silver hooks under a flap.”

Then Akakiy Akakievitch saw that it was impossible to get along without a new cloak, and his spirit sank utterly. How, in fact, was it to be done? Where was the money to come from? He might, to be sure, depend, in part, upon his present at Christmas; but that money had long been allotted beforehand. He must have some new trousers, and pay a debt of long standing to the shoemaker for putting new tops to his old boots, and he must order three shirts from the seamstress, and a couple of pieces of linen. In short, all his money must be spent; and even if the director should be so kind as to order him to receive forty-five rubles instead of forty, or even fifty, it would be a mere nothing, a mere drop in the ocean towards the funds necessary for a cloak: although he knew that Petrovitch was often wrong-headed enough to blurt out some outrageous price, so that even his own wife could not refrain from exclaiming, “Have you lost your senses, you fool?”

At one time he would not work at any price, and now it was quite likely that he had named a higher sum than the cloak would cost.

But although he knew that Petrovitch would undertake to make a cloak for eighty rubles, still, where was he to get the eighty rubles from? He might possibly manage half, yes, half might be procured, but where was the other half to come from? But the reader must first be told where the first half came from. Akakiy Akakievitch had a habit of putting, for every ruble he spent, a groschen into a small box, fastened with a lock and key, and with a slit in the top for the reception of money. At the end of every half-year he counted over the heap of coppers, and changed it for silver. This he had done for a long time, and in the course of years, the sum had mounted up to over forty rubles. Thus he had one half on hand; but where was he to find the other half? where was he to get another forty rubles from? Akakiy Akakievitch thought and thought, and decided that it would be necessary to curtail his ordinary expenses, for the space of one year at least, to dispense with tea in the evening; to burn no candles, and, if there was anything which he must do, to go into his landlady's room, and work by her light. When he went into the street, he must walk as lightly as he could, and as cautiously, upon the stones, almost upon tiptoe, in order not to wear his heels down in too short a time; he must give the laundress as little to wash as possible; and, in order not to wear out his clothes, he must take them off, as soon as he got home, and wear only his cotton dressing-gown, which had been long and carefully saved.

To tell the truth, it was a little hard for him at first to accustom himself to these deprivations; but he got used to them at length, after a fashion, and all went smoothly. He even got used to being hungry in the evening, but he made up for it by treating himself, so to say, in spirit, by bearing ever in mind the idea of his future cloak. From that time forth his existence seemed to become, in some way, fuller, as if he were married, or as if some other man lived in him, as if, in fact, he were not alone, and some pleasant friend had consented to travel along life's path with him, the friend being no other than the cloak, with thick wadding and a strong lining incapable of wearing out. He became more lively, and even his character grew firmer, like that of a man who has made up his mind, and set himself a goal. From his face and gait, doubt and indecision, all hesitating and wavering traits disappeared of themselves. Fire gleamed in his eyes, and occasionally the boldest and most daring ideas flitted through his mind; why not, for instance, have marten fur on the collar? The thought of this almost made him absent-minded. Once, in copying a letter, he nearly made a mistake, so that he exclaimed almost aloud, "Ugh!" and crossed himself. Once, in the course of every month, he had a conference with Petrovitch on the subject of the cloak,

where it would be better to buy the cloth, and the colour, and the price. He always returned home satisfied, though troubled, reflecting that the time would come at last when it could all be bought, and then the cloak made.

The affair progressed more briskly than he had expected. Far beyond all his hopes, the director awarded neither forty nor forty-five rubles for Akakiy Akakievitch's share, but sixty. Whether he suspected that Akakiy Akakievitch needed a cloak, or whether it was merely chance, at all events, twenty extra rubles were by this means provided. This circumstance hastened matters. Two or three months more of hunger and Akakiy Akakievitch had accumulated about eighty rubles. His heart, generally so quiet, began to throb. On the first possible day, he went shopping in company with Petrovitch. They bought some very good cloth, and at a reasonable rate too, for they had been considering the matter for six months, and rarely let a month pass without their visiting the shops to inquire prices. Petrovitch himself said that no better cloth could be had. For lining, they selected a cotton stuff, but so firm and thick that Petrovitch declared it to be better than silk, and even prettier and more glossy. They did not buy the marten fur, because it was, in fact, dear, but in its stead, they picked out the very best of cat-skin which could be found in the shop, and which might, indeed, be taken for marten at a distance.

Petrovitch worked at the cloak two whole weeks, for there was a great deal of quilting: otherwise it would have been finished sooner. He charged twelve rubles for the job, it could not possibly have been done for less. It was all sewed with silk, in small, double seams; and Petrovitch went over each seam afterwards with his own teeth, stamping in various patterns.

It was--it is difficult to say precisely on what day, but probably the most glorious one in Akakiy Akakievitch's life, when Petrovitch at length brought home the cloak. He brought it in the morning, before the hour when it was necessary to start for the department. Never did a cloak arrive so exactly in the nick of time; for the severe cold had set in, and it seemed to threaten to increase. Petrovitch brought the cloak himself as befits a good tailor. On his countenance was a significant expression, such as Akakiy Akakievitch had never beheld there. He seemed fully sensible that he had done no small deed, and crossed a gulf separating tailors who only put in linings, and execute repairs, from those who make new things. He took the cloak out of the pocket handkerchief in which he had brought it. The handkerchief was fresh from the laundress, and he put it in his pocket for use. Taking out the cloak, he gazed proudly at it, held it up with both hands, and flung it skilfully over the shoulders of Akakiy Akakievitch. Then he pulled it and fitted it down behind with his hand, and he draped it around Akakiy Akakievitch without buttoning it. Akakiy Akakievitch,

like an experienced man, wished to try the sleeves. Petrovitch helped him on with them, and it turned out that the sleeves were satisfactory also. In short, the cloak appeared to be perfect, and most seasonable. Petrovitch did not neglect to observe that it was only because he lived in a narrow street, and had no signboard, and had known Akakiy Akakievitch so long, that he had made it so cheaply; but that if he had been in business on the Nevsky Prospect, he would have charged seventy-five rubles for the making alone. Akakiy Akakievitch did not care to argue this point with Petrovitch. He paid him, thanked him, and set out at once in his new cloak for the department. Petrovitch followed him, and, pausing in the street, gazed long at the cloak in the distance, after which he went to one side expressly to run through a crooked alley, and emerge again into the street beyond to gaze once more upon the cloak from another point, namely, directly in front.

Meantime Akakiy Akakievitch went on in holiday mood. He was conscious every second of the time that he had a new cloak on his shoulders; and several times he laughed with internal satisfaction. In fact, there were two advantages, one was its warmth, the other its beauty. He saw nothing of the road, but suddenly found himself at the department. He took off his cloak in the ante-room, looked it over carefully, and confided it to the especial care of the attendant. It is impossible to say precisely how it was that every one in the department knew at once that Akakiy Akakievitch had a new cloak, and that the "cape" no longer existed. All rushed at the same moment into the ante-room to inspect it. They congratulated him and said pleasant things to him, so that he began at first to smile and then to grow ashamed. When all surrounded him, and said that the new cloak must be "christened," and that he must give a whole evening at least to this, Akakiy Akakievitch lost his head completely, and did not know where he stood, what to answer, or how to get out of it. He stood blushing all over for several minutes, and was on the point of assuring them with great simplicity that it was not a new cloak, that it was so and so, that it was in fact the old "cape."

At length one of the officials, a sub-chief probably, in order to show that he was not at all proud, and on good terms with his inferiors, said, "So be it, only I will give the party instead of Akakiy Akakievitch; I invite you all to tea with me to-night; it happens quite a propos, as it is my name-day." The officials naturally at once offered the sub-chief their congratulations and accepted the invitations with pleasure. Akakiy Akakievitch would have declined, but all declared that it was discourteous, that it was simply a sin and a shame, and that he could not possibly refuse. Besides, the notion became pleasant to him when he recollected that he should thereby have a chance of wearing his new cloak in the evening

also.

That whole day was truly a most triumphant festival day for Akakiy Akakievitch. He returned home in the most happy frame of mind, took off his cloak, and hung it carefully on the wall, admiring afresh the cloth and the lining. Then he brought out his old, worn-out cloak, for comparison. He looked at it and laughed, so vast was the difference. And long after dinner he laughed again when the condition of the “cape” recurred to his mind. He dined cheerfully, and after dinner wrote nothing, but took his ease for a while on the bed, until it got dark. Then he dressed himself leisurely, put on his cloak, and stepped out into the street. Where the host lived, unfortunately we cannot say: our memory begins to fail us badly; and the houses and streets in St. Petersburg have become so mixed up in our head that it is very difficult to get anything out of it again in proper form. This much is certain, that the official lived in the best part of the city; and therefore it must have been anything but near to Akakiy Akakievitch’s residence. Akakiy Akakievitch was first obliged to traverse a kind of wilderness of deserted, dimly-lighted streets; but in proportion as he approached the official’s quarter of the city, the streets became more lively, more populous, and more brilliantly illuminated. Pedestrians began to appear; handsomely dressed ladies were more frequently encountered; the men had otter skin collars to their coats; peasant waggoners, with their grate-like sledges stuck over with brass-headed nails, became rarer; whilst on the other hand, more and more drivers in red velvet caps, lacquered sledges and bear-skin coats began to appear, and carriages with rich hammer-cloths flew swiftly through the streets, their wheels scrunching the snow. Akakiy Akakievitch gazed upon all this as upon a novel sight. He had not been in the streets during the evening for years. He halted out of curiosity before a shop-window to look at a picture representing a handsome woman, who had thrown off her shoe, thereby baring her whole foot in a very pretty way; whilst behind her the head of a man with whiskers and a handsome moustache peeped through the doorway of another room. Akakiy Akakievitch shook his head and laughed, and then went on his way. Why did he laugh? Either because he had met with a thing utterly unknown, but for which every one cherishes, nevertheless, some sort of feeling; or else he thought, like many officials, as follows: “Well, those French! What is to be said? If they do go in anything of that sort, why--” But possibly he did not think at all.

Akakiy Akakievitch at length reached the house in which the sub-chief lodged. The sub-chief lived in fine style: the staircase was lit by a lamp; his apartment being on the second floor. On entering the vestibule, Akakiy Akakievitch beheld a whole row of goloshes on the floor. Among them, in the centre of the room, stood a samovar or tea-urn, humming and emitting clouds of

steam. On the walls hung all sorts of coats and cloaks, among which there were even some with beaver collars or velvet facings. Beyond, the buzz of conversation was audible, and became clear and loud when the servant came out with a trayful of empty glasses, cream-jugs, and sugar-bowls. It was evident that the officials had arrived long before, and had already finished their first glass of tea.

Akakiy Akakievitch, having hung up his own cloak, entered the inner room. Before him all at once appeared lights, officials, pipes, and card-tables; and he was bewildered by the sound of rapid conversation rising from all the tables, and the noise of moving chairs. He halted very awkwardly in the middle of the room, wondering what he ought to do. But they had seen him. They received him with a shout, and all thronged at once into the ante-room, and there took another look at his cloak. Akakiy Akakievitch, although somewhat confused, was frank-hearted, and could not refrain from rejoicing when he saw how they praised his cloak. Then, of course, they all dropped him and his cloak, and returned, as was proper, to the tables set out for whist.

All this, the noise, the talk, and the throng of people was rather overwhelming to Akakiy Akakievitch. He simply did not know where he stood, or where to put his hands, his feet, and his whole body. Finally he sat down by the players, looked at the cards, gazed at the face of one and another, and after a while began to gape, and to feel that it was wearisome, the more so as the hour was already long past when he usually went to bed. He wanted to take leave of the host; but they would not let him go, saying that he must not fail to drink a glass of champagne in honour of his new garment. In the course of an hour, supper, consisting of vegetable salad, cold veal, pastry, confectioner’s pies, and champagne, was served. They made Akakiy Akakievitch drink two glasses of champagne, after which he felt things grow livelier.

Still, he could not forget that it was twelve o’clock, and that he should have been at home long ago. In order that the host might not think of some excuse for detaining him, he stole out of the room quickly, sought out, in the ante-room, his cloak, which, to his sorrow, he found lying on the floor, brushed it, picked off every speck upon it, put it on his shoulders, and descended the stairs to the street.

In the street all was still bright. Some petty shops, those permanent clubs of servants and all sorts of folk, were open. Others were shut, but, nevertheless, showed a streak of light the whole length of the door-crack, indicating that they were not yet free of company, and that probably some domestics, male and female, were finishing their stories and conversations whilst leaving their masters in complete ignorance as to their whereabouts. Akakiy Akakievitch went on in a happy frame of mind: he even started to run, without knowing why, after

some lady, who flew past like a flash of lightning. But he stopped short, and went on very quietly as before, wondering why he had quickened his pace. Soon there spread before him those deserted streets, which are not cheerful in the daytime, to say nothing of the evening. Now they were even more dim and lonely: the lanterns began to grow rarer, oil, evidently, had been less liberally supplied. Then came wooden houses and fences: not a soul anywhere; only the snow sparkled in the streets, and mournfully veiled the low-roofed cabins with their closed shutters. He approached the spot where the street crossed a vast square with houses barely visible on its farther side, a square which seemed a fearful desert.

Afar, a tiny spark glimmered from some watchman's box, which seemed to stand on the edge of the world. Akakiy Akakievitch's cheerfulness diminished at this point in a marked degree. He entered the square, not without an involuntary sensation of fear, as though his heart warned him of some evil. He glanced back and on both sides, it was like a sea about him. "No, it is better not to look," he thought, and went on, closing his eyes. When he opened them, to see whether he was near the end of the square, he suddenly beheld, standing just before his very nose, some bearded individuals of precisely what sort he could not make out. All grew dark before his eyes, and his heart throbbed.

"But, of course, the cloak is mine!" said one of them in a loud voice, seizing hold of his collar. Akakiy Akakievitch was about to shout "watch," when the second man thrust a fist, about the size of a man's head, into his mouth, muttering, "Now scream!"

Akakiy Akakievitch felt them strip off his cloak and give him a push with a knee: he fell headlong upon the snow, and felt no more. In a few minutes he recovered consciousness and rose to his feet; but no one was there. He felt that it was cold in the square, and that his cloak was gone; he began to shout, but his voice did not appear to reach to the outskirts of the square. In despair, but without ceasing to shout, he started at a run across the square, straight towards the watchbox, beside which stood the watchman, leaning on his halberd, and apparently curious to know what kind of a customer was running towards him and shouting. Akakiy Akakievitch ran up to him, and began in a sobbing voice to shout that he was asleep, and attended to nothing, and did not see when a man was robbed. The watchman replied that he had seen two men stop him in the middle of the square, but supposed that they were friends of his; and that, instead of scolding vainly, he had better go to the police on the morrow, so that they might make a search for whoever had stolen the cloak.

Akakiy Akakievitch ran home in complete disorder; his hair, which grew very thinly upon his temples and the back of his head, wholly disordered; his body,

arms, and legs covered with snow. The old woman, who was mistress of his lodgings, on hearing a terrible knocking, sprang hastily from her bed, and, with only one shoe on, ran to open the door, pressing the sleeve of her chemise to her bosom out of modesty; but when she had opened it, she fell back on beholding Akakiy Akakievitch in such a state. When he told her about the affair, she clasped her hands, and said that he must go straight to the district chief of police, for his subordinate would turn up his nose, promise well, and drop the matter there. The very best thing to do, therefore, would be to go to the district chief, whom she knew, because Finnish Anna, her former cook, was now nurse at his house. She often saw him passing the house; and he was at church every Sunday, praying, but at the same time gazing cheerfully at everybody; so that he must be a good man, judging from all appearances. Having listened to this opinion, Akakiy Akakievitch betook himself sadly to his room; and how he spent the night there any one who can put himself in another's place may readily imagine.

Early in the morning, he presented himself at the district chief's; but was told that this official was asleep. He went again at ten and was again informed that he was asleep; at eleven, and they said: "The superintendent is not at home;" at dinner time, and the clerks in the ante-room would not admit him on any terms, and insisted upon knowing his business. So that at last, for once in his life, Akakiy Akakievitch felt an inclination to show some spirit, and said curtly that he must see the chief in person; that they ought not to presume to refuse him entrance; that he came from the department of justice, and that when he complained of them, they would see.

The clerks dared make no reply to this, and one of them went to call the chief, who listened to the strange story of the theft of the coat. Instead of directing his attention to the principal points of the matter, he began to question Akakiy Akakievitch: Why was he going home so late? Was he in the habit of doing so, or had he been to some disorderly house? So that Akakiy Akakievitch got thoroughly confused, and left him without knowing whether the affair of his cloak was in proper train or not.

All that day, for the first time in his life, he never went near the department. The next day he made his appearance, very pale, and in his old cape, which had become even more shabby. The news of the robbery of the cloak touched many; although there were some officials present who never lost an opportunity, even such a one as the present, of ridiculing Akakiy Akakievitch. They decided to make a collection for him on the spot, but the officials had already spent a great deal in subscribing for the director's portrait, and for some book, at the suggestion of the head of that division, who was a friend of the author; and so the sum was trifling.

One of them, moved by pity, resolved to help Akakiy Akakievitch with some good advice at least, and told him that he ought not to go to the police, for although it might happen that a police-officer, wishing to win the approval of his superiors, might hunt up the cloak by some means, still his cloak would remain in the possession of the police if he did not offer legal proof that it belonged to him. The best thing for him, therefore, would be to apply to a certain prominent personage; since this prominent personage, by entering into relations with the proper persons, could greatly expedite the matter.

As there was nothing else to be done, Akakiy Akakievitch decided to go to the prominent personage. What was the exact official position of the prominent personage remains unknown to this day. The reader must know that the prominent personage had but recently become a prominent personage, having up to that time been only an insignificant person. Moreover, his present position was not considered prominent in comparison with others still more so. But there is always a circle of people to whom what is insignificant in the eyes of others, is important enough. Moreover, he strove to increase his importance by sundry devices; for instance, he managed to have the inferior officials meet him on the staircase when he entered upon his service; no one was to presume to come directly to him, but the strictest etiquette must be observed; the collegiate recorder must make a report to the government secretary, the government secretary to the titular councillor, or whatever other man was proper, and all business must come before him in this manner. In Holy Russia all is thus contaminated with the love of imitation; every man imitates and copies his superior. They even say that a certain titular councillor, when promoted to the head of some small separate room, immediately partitioned off a private room for himself, called it the audience chamber, and posted at the door a lackey with red collar and braid, who grasped the handle of the door and opened to all comers; though the audience chamber could hardly hold an ordinary writing-table.

The manners and customs of the prominent personage were grand and imposing, but rather exaggerated. The main foundation of his system was strictness. “Strictness, strictness, and always strictness!” he generally said; and at the last word he looked significantly into the face of the person to whom he spoke. But there was no necessity for this, for the half-score of subordinates who formed the entire force of the office were properly afraid; on catching sight of him afar off they left their work and waited, drawn up in line, until he had passed through the room. His ordinary converse with his inferiors smacked of sternness, and consisted chiefly of three phrases: “How dare you?” “Do you know whom you are speaking to?” “Do you realise who stands before you?”

Otherwise he was a very kind-hearted man, good to his comrades, and ready to oblige; but the rank of general threw him completely off his balance. On receiving any one of that rank, he became confused, lost his way, as it were, and never knew what to do. If he chanced to be amongst his equals he was still a very nice kind of man, a very good fellow in many respects, and not stupid; but the very moment that he found himself in the society of people but one rank lower than himself he became silent; and his situation aroused sympathy, the more so as he felt himself that he might have been making an incomparably better use of his time. In his eyes there was sometimes visible a desire to join some interesting conversation or group; but he was kept back by the thought, “Would it not be a very great condescension on his part? Would it not be familiar? and would he not thereby lose his importance?” And in consequence of such reflections he always remained in the same dumb state, uttering from time to time a few monosyllabic sounds, and thereby earning the name of the most wearisome of men.

To this prominent personage Akakiy Akakievitch presented himself, and this at the most unfavourable time for himself though opportune for the prominent personage. The prominent personage was in his cabinet conversing gaily with an old acquaintance and companion of his childhood whom he had not seen for several years and who had just arrived when it was announced to him that a person named Bashmatchkin had come. He asked abruptly, “Who is he?”--”Some official,” he was informed. “Ah, he can wait! this is no time for him to call,” said the important man.

It must be remarked here that the important man lied outrageously: he had said all he had to say to his friend long before; and the conversation had been interspersed for some time with very long pauses, during which they merely slapped each other on the leg, and said, “You think so, Ivan Abramovitch!” “Just so, Stepan Varlamitch!” Nevertheless, he ordered that the official should be kept waiting, in order to show his friend, a man who had not been in the service for a long time, but had lived at home in the country, how long officials had to wait in his ante-room.

At length, having talked himself completely out, and more than that, having had his fill of pauses, and smoked a cigar in a very comfortable arm-chair with reclining back, he suddenly seemed to recollect, and said to the secretary, who stood by the door with papers of reports, “So it seems that there is a tchinovnik waiting to see me. Tell him that he may come in.” On perceiving Akakiy Akakievitch’s modest mien and his worn undress uniform, he turned abruptly to him and said, “What do you want?” in a curt hard voice, which he had practised in his room in private, and before the looking-glass, for a whole week before

being raised to his present rank.

Akakiy Akakievitch, who was already imbued with a due amount of fear, became somewhat confused: and as well as his tongue would permit, explained, with a rather more frequent addition than usual of the word “that,” that his cloak was quite new, and had been stolen in the most inhuman manner; that he had applied to him in order that he might, in some way, by his intermediation--that he might enter into correspondence with the chief of police, and find the cloak.

For some inexplicable reason this conduct seemed familiar to the prominent personage. “What, my dear sir!” he said abruptly, “are you not acquainted with etiquette? Where have you come from? Don’t you know how such matters are managed? You should first have entered a complaint about this at the court below: it would have gone to the head of the department, then to the chief of the division, then it would have been handed over to the secretary, and the secretary would have given it to me.”

“But, your excellency,” said Akakiy Akakievitch, trying to collect his small handful of wits, and conscious at the same time that he was perspiring terribly, “I, your excellency, presumed to trouble you because secretaries--are an untrustworthy race.”

“What, what, what!” said the important personage. “Where did you get such courage? Where did you get such ideas? What impudence towards their chiefs and superiors has spread among the young generation!” The prominent personage apparently had not observed that Akakiy Akakievitch was already in the neighbourhood of fifty. If he could be called a young man, it must have been in comparison with some one who was twenty. “Do you know to whom you speak? Do you realise who stands before you? Do you realise it? do you realise it? I ask you!” Then he stamped his foot and raised his voice to such a pitch that it would have frightened even a different man from Akakiy Akakievitch.

Akakiy Akakievitch’s senses failed him; he staggered, trembled in every limb, and, if the porters had not run to support him, would have fallen to the floor. They carried him out insensible. But the prominent personage, gratified that the effect should have surpassed his expectations, and quite intoxicated with the thought that his word could even deprive a man of his senses, glanced sideways at his friend in order to see how he looked upon this, and perceived, not without satisfaction, that his friend was in a most uneasy frame of mind, and even beginning, on his part, to feel a trifle frightened.

Akakiy Akakievitch could not remember how he descended the stairs and got into the street. He felt neither his hands nor feet. Never in his life had he been so rated by any high official, let alone a strange one. He went staggering on through the snow-storm, which was blowing in the streets, with his mouth wide open; the

wind, in St. Petersburg fashion, darted upon him from all quarters, and down every cross-street. In a twinkling it had blown a quinsy into his throat, and he reached home unable to utter a word. His throat was swollen, and he lay down on his bed. So powerful is sometimes a good scolding!

The next day a violent fever showed itself. Thanks to the generous assistance of the St. Petersburg climate, the malady progressed more rapidly than could have been expected: and when the doctor arrived, he found, on feeling the sick man's pulse, that there was nothing to be done, except to prescribe a fomentation, so that the patient might not be left entirely without the beneficent aid of medicine; but at the same time, he predicted his end in thirty-six hours. After this he turned to the landlady, and said, "And as for you, don't waste your time on him: order his pine coffin now, for an oak one will be too expensive for him." Did Akakiy Akakievitch hear these fatal words? and if he heard them, did they produce any overwhelming effect upon him? Did he lament the bitterness of his life?--We know not, for he continued in a delirious condition. Visions incessantly appeared to him, each stranger than the other. Now he saw Petrovitch, and ordered him to make a cloak, with some traps for robbers, who seemed to him to be always under the bed; and cried every moment to the landlady to pull one of them from under his coverlet. Then he inquired why his old mantle hung before him when he had a new cloak. Next he fancied that he was standing before the prominent person, listening to a thorough setting-down, and saying, "Forgive me, your excellency!" but at last he began to curse, uttering the most horrible words, so that his aged landlady crossed herself, never in her life having heard anything of the kind from him, the more so as those words followed directly after the words "your excellency." Later on he talked utter nonsense, of which nothing could be made: all that was evident being, that his incoherent words and thoughts hovered ever about one thing, his cloak.

At length poor Akakiy Akakievitch breathed his last. They sealed up neither his room nor his effects, because, in the first place, there were no heirs, and, in the second, there was very little to inherit beyond a bundle of goose-quills, a quire of white official paper, three pairs of socks, two or three buttons which had burst off his trousers, and the mantle already known to the reader. To whom all this fell, God knows. I confess that the person who told me this tale took no interest in the matter. They carried Akakiy Akakievitch out and buried him.

And St. Petersburg was left without Akakiy Akakievitch, as though he had never lived there. A being disappeared who was protected by none, dear to none, interesting to none, and who never even attracted to himself the attention of those students of human nature who omit no opportunity of thrusting a pin through a common fly, and examining it under the microscope. A being who

bore meekly the jibes of the department, and went to his grave without having done one unusual deed, but to whom, nevertheless, at the close of his life appeared a bright visitant in the form of a cloak, which momentarily cheered his poor life, and upon whom, thereafter, an intolerable misfortune descended, just as it descends upon the mighty of this world!

Several days after his death, the porter was sent from the department to his lodgings, with an order for him to present himself there immediately; the chief commanding it. But the porter had to return unsuccessful, with the answer that he could not come; and to the question, “Why?” replied, “Well, because he is dead! he was buried four days ago.” In this manner did they hear of Akakiy Akakievitch’s death at the department, and the next day a new official sat in his place, with a handwriting by no means so upright, but more inclined and slanting.

But who could have imagined that this was not really the end of Akakiy Akakievitch, that he was destined to raise a commotion after death, as if in compensation for his utterly insignificant life? But so it happened, and our poor story unexpectedly gains a fantastic ending.

A rumour suddenly spread through St. Petersburg that a dead man had taken to appearing on the Kalinkin Bridge and its vicinity at night in the form of a tchinovnik seeking a stolen cloak, and that, under the pretext of its being the stolen cloak, he dragged, without regard to rank or calling, every one’s cloak from his shoulders, be it cat-skin, beaver, fox, bear, sable; in a word, every sort of fur and skin which men adopted for their covering. One of the department officials saw the dead man with his own eyes and immediately recognised in him Akakiy Akakievitch. This, however, inspired him with such terror that he ran off with all his might, and therefore did not scan the dead man closely, but only saw how the latter threatened him from afar with his finger. Constant complaints poured in from all quarters that the backs and shoulders, not only of titular but even of court councillors, were exposed to the danger of a cold on account of the frequent dragging off of their cloaks.

Arrangements were made by the police to catch the corpse, alive or dead, at any cost, and punish him as an example to others in the most severe manner. In this they nearly succeeded; for a watchman, on guard in Kirushkin Alley, caught the corpse by the collar on the very scene of his evil deeds, when attempting to pull off the frieze coat of a retired musician. Having seized him by the collar, he summoned, with a shout, two of his comrades, whom he enjoined to hold him fast while he himself felt for a moment in his boot, in order to draw out his snuff-box and refresh his frozen nose. But the snuff was of a sort which even a corpse could not endure. The watchman having closed his right nostril with his

finger, had no sooner succeeded in holding half a handful up to the left than the corpse sneezed so violently that he completely filled the eyes of all three. While they raised their hands to wipe them, the dead man vanished completely, so that they positively did not know whether they had actually had him in their grip at all. Thereafter the watchmen conceived such a terror of dead men that they were afraid even to seize the living, and only screamed from a distance, “Hey, there! go your way!” So the dead tchinovnik began to appear even beyond the Kalinkin Bridge, causing no little terror to all timid people.

But we have totally neglected that certain prominent personage who may really be considered as the cause of the fantastic turn taken by this true history. First of all, justice compels us to say that after the departure of poor, annihilated Akakiy Akakievitch he felt something like remorse. Suffering was unpleasant to him, for his heart was accessible to many good impulses, in spite of the fact that his rank often prevented his showing his true self. As soon as his friend had left his cabinet, he began to think about poor Akakiy Akakievitch. And from that day forth, poor Akakiy Akakievitch, who could not bear up under an official reprimand, recurred to his mind almost every day. The thought troubled him to such an extent that a week later he even resolved to send an official to him, to learn whether he really could assist him; and when it was reported to him that Akakiy Akakievitch had died suddenly of fever, he was startled, hearkened to the reproaches of his conscience, and was out of sorts for the whole day.

Wishing to divert his mind in some way, and drive away the disagreeable impression, he set out that evening for one of his friends’ houses, where he found quite a large party assembled. What was better, nearly every one was of the same rank as himself, so that he need not feel in the least constrained. This had a marvellous effect upon his mental state. He grew expansive, made himself agreeable in conversation, in short, he passed a delightful evening. After supper he drank a couple of glasses of champagne--not a bad recipe for cheerfulness, as every one knows. The champagne inclined him to various adventures; and he determined not to return home, but to go and see a certain well-known lady of German extraction, Karolina Ivanovna, a lady, it appears, with whom he was on a very friendly footing.

It must be mentioned that the prominent personage was no longer a young man, but a good husband and respected father of a family. Two sons, one of whom was already in the service, and a good-looking, sixteen-year-old daughter, with a rather retrousse but pretty little nose, came every morning to kiss his hand and say, “Bonjour, papa.” His wife, a still fresh and good-looking woman, first gave him her hand to kiss, and then, reversing the procedure, kissed his. But the prominent personage, though perfectly satisfied in his domestic relations,

considered it stylish to have a friend in another quarter of the city. This friend was scarcely prettier or younger than his wife; but there are such puzzles in the world, and it is not our place to judge them. So the important personage descended the stairs, stepped into his sledge, said to the coachman, “To Karolina Ivanovna’s,” and, wrapping himself luxuriously in his warm cloak, found himself in that delightful frame of mind than which a Russian can conceive no better, namely, when you think of nothing yourself, yet when the thoughts creep into your mind of their own accord, each more agreeable than the other, giving you no trouble either to drive them away or seek them. Fully satisfied, he recalled all the gay features of the evening just passed, and all the mots which had made the little circle laugh. Many of them he repeated in a low voice, and found them quite as funny as before; so it is not surprising that he should laugh heartily at them. Occasionally, however, he was interrupted by gusts of wind, which, coming suddenly, God knows whence or why, cut his face, drove masses of snow into it, filled out his cloak-collar like a sail, or suddenly blew it over his head with supernatural force, and thus caused him constant trouble to disentangle himself.

Suddenly the important personage felt some one clutch him firmly by the collar. Turning round, he perceived a man of short stature, in an old, worn uniform, and recognised, not without terror, Akakiy Akakievitch. The official’s face was white as snow, and looked just like a corpse’s. But the horror of the important personage transcended all bounds when he saw the dead man’s mouth open, and, with a terrible odour of the grave, gave vent to the following remarks: “Ah, here you are at last! I have you, that--by the collar! I need your cloak; you took no trouble about mine, but reprimanded me; so now give up your own.”

The pallid prominent personage almost died of fright. Brave as he was in the office and in the presence of inferiors generally, and although, at the sight of his manly form and appearance, every one said, “Ugh! how much character he had!” at this crisis, he, like many possessed of an heroic exterior, experienced such terror, that, not without cause, he began to fear an attack of illness. He flung his cloak hastily from his shoulders and shouted to his coachman in an unnatural voice, “Home at full speed!” The coachman, hearing the tone which is generally employed at critical moments and even accompanied by something much more tangible, drew his head down between his shoulders in case of an emergency, flourished his whip, and flew on like an arrow. In a little more than six minutes the prominent personage was at the entrance of his own house. Pale, thoroughly scared, and cloakless, he went home instead of to Karolina Ivanovna’s, reached his room somehow or other, and passed the night in the direst distress; so that the next morning over their tea his daughter said, “You are very pale to-day, papa.”

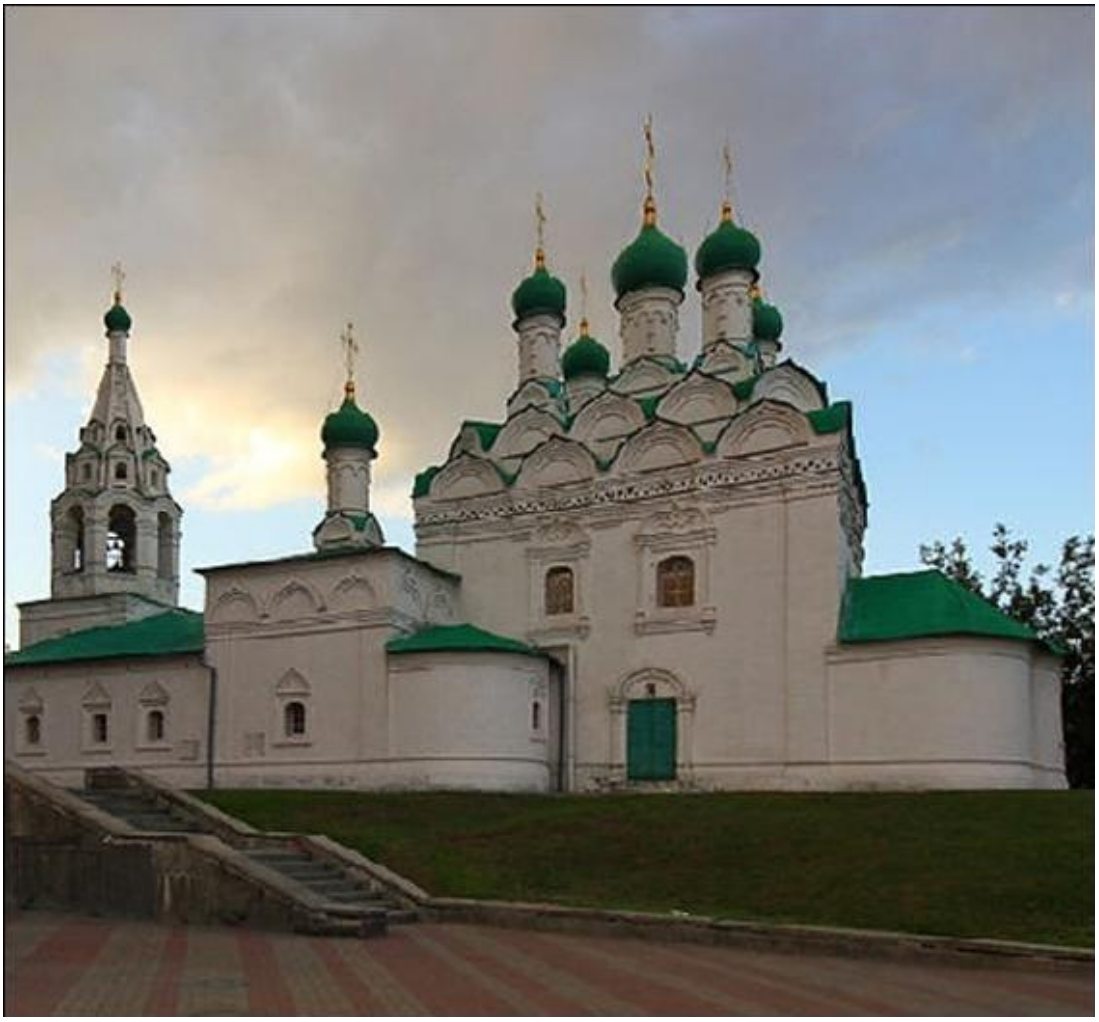
But papa remained silent, and said not a word to any one of what had happened to him, where he had been, or where he had intended to go.

This occurrence made a deep impression upon him. He even began to say: “How dare you? do you realise who stands before you?” less frequently to the under-officials, and if he did utter the words, it was only after having first learned the bearings of the matter. But the most noteworthy point was, that from that day forward the apparition of the dead tchinovnik ceased to be seen. Evidently the prominent personage’s cloak just fitted his shoulders; at all events, no more instances of his dragging cloaks from people’s shoulders were heard of. But many active and apprehensive persons could by no means reassure themselves, and asserted that the dead tchinovnik still showed himself in distant parts of the city.

In fact, one watchman in Kolomna saw with his own eyes the apparition come from behind a house. But being rather weak of body, he dared not arrest him, but followed him in the dark, until, at length, the apparition looked round, paused, and inquired, “What do you want?” at the same time showing a fist such as is never seen on living men. The watchman said, “It’s of no consequence,” and turned back instantly. But the apparition was much too tall, wore huge moustaches, and, directing its steps apparently towards the Obukhoff bridge, disappeared in the darkness of the night.

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The Short Stories



The Moscow church attended by Gogol in later years

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LIST OF SHORT STORIES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

THE FAIR AT SOROCHINTSÏ
ST JOHN'S EVE
MAY NIGHT
THE LOST LETTER
CHRISTMAS EVE
A TERRIBLE VENGEANCE
IVAN FYODOROVICH SHPONKA AND HIS AUNT
A BEWITCHED PLACE
THE PORTRAIT
NEVSKY PROSPECT
DIARY OF A MADMAN
THE OLD FASHIONED FARMERS
TARAS BULBA
VIY
THE TALE OF HOW IVAN IVANOVICH QUARRELED WITH IVAN NIKIFOROVICH
THE MANTLE
THE NOSE
THE CALASH
THE OVERCOAT

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LIST OF SHORT STORIES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

A BEWITCHED PLACE
A TERRIBLE VENGEANCE
CHRISTMAS EVE
DIARY OF A MADMAN
IVAN FYODOROVICH SHPONKA AND HIS AUNT
MAY NIGHT
NEVSKY PROSPECT
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THE TALE OF HOW IVAN IVANOVICH QUARRELED WITH IVAN NIKIFOROVICH
VIY

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The Plays



The house on Nikitsky Boulevard, Moscow, where Gogol lived and worked in his last years

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MARRIAGE



A Quite Incredible Incident

IN TWO ACTS

Translated by Constance Garnett

A satire of courtship and cowardice, this comedy was first performed in 1842. It tells the story of the civil servant Ivan Kuzmich Podkolyosin, who wants to find a suitable wife and so employs a matchmaker to help him in his search. In time, we learn that Podkolyosin has been in search of a bride for a long while due to his own indecisiveness, rather than the lack of a suitable partner.

Inspired by Gogol, the composer Modest Mussorgsky began an unfinished opera in 1868, with a libretto based on this comedy. *The Marriage* is now considered to be one of Mussorgsky's finest masterpieces. It was an experiment in Russian opera, using grotesque and satirical musical language, much in keeping with Gogol's text.

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Gogol, 1840

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ACT I

SCENE I

A Bachelor's Room Podkoliosin, *alone, is lying on a sofa smoking a pipe.*

Podkoliosin. Yes, as soon as one has time to begin thinking it over, one sees one must get married. Why, you go on and on living like this till you get sick of it at last! Here I've let the season slip by again, and yet everything is ready and the matchmaker has been coming here for the last three months. So help me, I begin to feel ashamed. Hey, Stepan!

(Enter STEPAN.)

Podkoliosin. Has Fiokla Ivanovna been?

Stepan. No, sir.

Podkoliosin. And have you been to the tailor?

Stepan. Yes.

Podkoliosin. Well, is he making the tails?

Stepan. Yes.

Podkoliosin. And how far has he got with it?

Stepan. Oh, he has done pretty well; he's started on the buttonholes.

Podkoliosin. What do you say?

Stepan. I say he has begun making the buttonholes already.

Podkoliosin. Did he ask what your master wants tails for?

Stepan. No, he didn't ask.

Podkoliosin. Perhaps he said: "Is your master thinking of getting married?"

Stepan. No, he didn't say anything.

Podkoliosin. But you saw some other tails there, didn't you? I suppose he is making them for other people too?

Stepan. Yes, he has a lot of them hanging up.

Podkoliosin. But I'm certain that the cloth in them is not so good as in mine?

Stepan. No, yours looks best.

Podkoliosin. What do you say?

Stepan. I say the cloth in yours looks best.

Podkoliosin. That's right. Well, didn't he ask, "What is your master having tails of such fine cloth for?"

Stepan. No.

Podkoliosin. Didn't he say anything of your master's wanting maybe to get married?

Stepan. No, he didn't say a word about that.

Podkoliosin. But you told him my rank and where I am serving?

Stepan. Yes, I did.

Podkoliosin. What did he say to that?

Stepan. He said: “I’ll do my best.”

Podkoliosin. That’s right. Now run along. *(Stepan goes out.)* To my thinking now black tails are somehow more dignified. Colored coats are more suitable for secretaries, titular councilors, and such small fry—something of the milksop about them. Persons of higher grade must pay more attention, as they say, to... there, I’ve forgotten the word! And it’s a good word, but I can’t think of it. Yes, my dear soul; say what you like, a court councilor is as good as a colonel, except perhaps for having no epaulets on his uniform. Hey, Stepan!

(Enter Stepan.)

Podkoliosin. Did you buy the shoe polish?

Stepan. Yes.

Podkoliosin. Where did you buy it? In the shop I told you of on Voznesensky Avenue?

Stepan. Yes, sir.

Podkoliosin. Well, is it good polish?

Stepan. Yes.

Podkoliosin. Have you tried cleaning my boots with it?

Stepan. Yes.

Podkoliosin. Well, does it shine?

Stepan. Yes, it shines all right.

Podkoliosin. And when he gave you the polish, didn’t he ask what your master wanted such polish for?

Stepan. No.

Podkoliosin. Didn’t he say, perhaps your master is intending to get married, maybe?

Stepan. No, he said nothing.

Podkoliosin. Oh, all right, you can go.

(Stepan goes out.)

Podkoliosin. You might think boots are a trivial matter, but, you know, if they are badly made and the polish looks rusty, you won’t be treated with the same respect in good society. It makes all the difference... But there is nothing so nasty as having corns—I’d rather put up with anything than have corns. Hey, Stepan!

(Enter Stepan.)

Stepan. What is it, sir?

Podkoliosin. Did you speak to the shoemaker about not giving me corns?

Stepan. Yes.

Podkoliosin. What does he say?

Stepan. He says, “all right.”—*(Stepan goes out.)*

Podkoliosin. Damn it all, it’s a troublesome business getting married! There’s this and that and the other. This must be just so and that must be just so. No, damn it all, it’s not so easy as they make out. Hey, Stepan! *(Enter Stepan.)* I’ve something more to say to you....

Stepan. The old woman is here.

Podkoliosin. Oh, she’s come, has she? Show her in. *(Stepan goes out.)* Yes, it is a business... there’s no denying... a difficult business. *(Enter Fiokla.)* Ah, good day, good day, Fiokla Ivanovna! Well, how goes it? Take a chair, sit down and tell me. Come, how goes it? What’s her name... Melania?...

Fiokla. Agafya Tikhonovna.

Podkoliosin. Yes, yes, Agafya Tikhonovna. And I expect she is an old maid of forty.

Fiokla. Oh no, what next? Why, when you are married, you’ll like her better and better every day and be grateful.

Podkoliosin. But you are telling lies, Fiokla Ivanovna.

Fiokla. I am too old to do that, my good sir. Dogs tell lies.

Podkoliosin. And the dowry, what about the dowry? Tell me again.

Fiokla. Well, the dowry is a brick house of two floors in the Moskovsky district, and so profitable that it’s a pleasure. The flour dealer alone pays seven hundred for his shop; and the beershop in the basement draws a lot of custom too; two wooden lodges—one made of wood throughout and the other on a brick

foundation, and each brings four hundred rubles a year. Then there is a vegetable garden in the Vyborgsky district. A shopkeeper has had it these three years under cabbage, and such a steady man, never takes a drop of anything, and three sons he has: two he has married off already, but the third he says is young yet: “Let him stay a bit in the shop to help with the work a little; I am old,” he says, “so let him sit in the shop a bit to help with the work.”

Podkoliosin. Well, what is she like?

Fiokla. Like sugar candy! Pink and white like milk and roses. So sweet that there is no word for it. Why, you will be so perfectly satisfied you’ll say to friend and foe, “Ah, it’s all thanks to Fiokla Ivanovna.”

Podkoliosin. But she’s not a lady by birth.

Fiokla. She is a tradesman’s daughter, but she is one that a general might be proud of. She won’t hear of a shopkeeper. “Whatever my husband’s like, even if he is nothing to look at,” she says, “he must be a gentleman.” Yes, she’s so genteel. And on a Sunday when she puts on her silk dress, my word, how it rustles! A regular princess!

Podkoliosin. Well, I asked you because you know I am a court councilor... you understand?...

Fiokla. Why, of course, I understand well enough. We have had a court councilor along already, but she refused him; didn’t like him. He was such a peculiar character; he could never open his mouth without telling a lie, and a fine-looking gentleman he was too. Well, there is nothing we can do about it, God made him so; it’s not his fault, he can’t help lying. It seems it’s God’s will.

Podkoliosin. Well, and haven’t you any others besides her?

Fiokla. Why, what more do you want? You couldn’t have anyone better.

Podkoliosin. She’s the best, is she?

Fiokla. You might go the world over and not find another like her.

Podkoliosin. We'll think it over, we'll think it over, my good soul. Look in again the day after tomorrow, we'll have another little talk, you know; I'll lie down a bit and you shall tell me...

Fiokla. But upon my word, sir, here I've been coming to you for the last three months and nothing to show for it. Here you sit in your dressing gown and keep smoking your pipe.

Podkoliosin. I'll bet you think that getting married is no more than calling "Hey, Stepan, bring my boots," pulling them on, and going out. One must think it over a little and look about one.

Fiokla. Well, to be sure, if you want to look, look; the goods are there to be looked at. Bid him bring your coat and drive around now while it's morning.

Podkoliosin. Now! But the weather is a bit uncertain; if I go out it might begin to rain.

Fiokla. Oh well, it's your loss! Why, your hair's going gray and soon you'll be too old for matrimony. Much good it is your being a court councilor! Why, we'll find plenty of gentlemen better, and we won't so much as look at you.

Podkoliosin. What nonsense are you talking? What possessed you to say that my hair's going gray? Where's the gray hair?

(Feels his hair.)

Fiokla. Of course you have gray hair—a man is bound to come to it. You'd better look out! This one's not right for him and that one is not right for him. Why, I've a captain in my eye with a voice like a trumpet—head and shoulders taller than you. He's in the Admiralty.

Podkoliosin. It’s a lie. I’ll look in the mirror—where did you pick up the notion that I’d gray hair? Hey, Stepan, bring a mirror! No, wait a minute, I’ll go myself. What next! God help us, this is worse than smallpox.

(Goes off into the next room.)

(Kochkariov runs in.)

Kochkariov. Where’s Podkoliosin?... *(Seeing Fiokla.)* How do you come here? Oh you!... I say, why the hell did you find me a wife?

Fiokla. What’s wrong? It’s the dispensation of Providence.

Kochkariov. Dispensation, indeed! Much good there is in having a wife! As though I couldn’t have done without her!

Fiokla. Why, you came pestering me yourself: “Find me a wife, granny”; you kept on at it.

Kochkariov. Ah, you old rat... and what are you here for? Surely Podkoliosin isn’t thinking...?

Fiokla. Why not? By the grace of God he is.

Kochkariov. You don’t mean it? Ah, the rascal, he never said a word to me about it. Isn’t he a son of a gun? I swear he is a sly one, eh?

(Enter Podkoliosin with a mirror in his hands, in which he is looking very attentively.)

Kochkariov *(stealing up behind him startles him)*. Boo!

Podkoliosin *(uttering a shriek and dropping the mirror).* Lunatic! What did you do that for?... What idiocy! You startled me so that my heart’s in my mouth.

Kochkariov. Come, never mind; it was a joke.

Podkoliosin. Nice jokes you think of! I can't get over the fright you gave me. And see, I've broken the mirror; it's a thing of some value, you know, it was bought at the English shop.

Kochkariov. Come, don't worry. I'll get you another mirror.

Podkoliosin. Oh yes, I'm sure. I know your other mirrors: they make you look ten years older and your face comes out all crooked.

Kochkariov. Well, I've more cause to be cross with you: you hide everything from me, your friend. So you are thinking of getting married?

Podkoliosin. What nonsense! I have never thought of such a thing.

Kochkariov. But here's the proof on the spot. *(Points to Fiokla.)* Here she stands; we all know what she is here for. Well, that's all right, that's all right. There's nothing wrong in it. It's a Christian duty, essential for the sake of your country, in fact. Allow me, allow me, I'll undertake to manage it all. *(To Fiokla)* Come, tell me how and who and all about it. Is she of noble family, an official's daughter or one of the merchant gentry, and what's her name?

Fiokla. Agafya Tikhonovna.

Kochkariov. Agafya Tikhonovna Brandakhlystova?

Fiokla. Oh no, Kuperdiagina.

Kochkariov. Lives in Shestilavochnaya Street, doesn't she?

Fiokla. Not at all; it's nearer Peski in Mylny Alley.

Kochkariov. Oh yes, in Mylny Alley, the wooden house just beyond the shop.

Fiokla. Not beyond the shop, but beyond the beer cellar.

Kochkariov. Next to the beer cellar? Well, I don't know it then.

Fiokla. Why, as you turn into the alley there's a sentry box facing you, and when you pass the sentry box, turn to the left and it'll be straight before you. That is, there'll be straight before you the wooden house where the dressmaker lives who used to live with the upper secretary of the Senate. You don't go into the dressmaker's, but just beyond her there'll be a second house, a brick house, so that's her house, the one I mean in which she is living, Agafya Tikhonovna, that is, the young lady.

Kochkariov. All right, all right. Now I'll see to it all, and you can clear out: you won't be wanted any more.

Fiokla. What next? Do you mean to arrange the wedding yourself?

Kochkariov. Yes, yes; only don't you meddle, don't you meddle now.

Fiokla. Ah, the shameless villain! Why, that's not a man's business; you step aside, sir, upon my word!

Kochkariov. Go along, go along! You know nothing about it, don't you meddle. Mind your own business. Be off!

Fiokla. He's simply taking the bread out of people's mouths, the godless fellow! Meddling in such a dirty mess. If I'd known I wouldn't have said a word.

(Goes out in vexation.)

Kochkariov. Well, old friend, this is a matter that mustn't be put off—let us go.

Podkoliosin. But I’ve done nothing yet, you know. I’ve scarcely given it a thought....

Kochkariov. Nonsense, nonsense! Only don’t be shy; I’ll get you married so that you won’t even feel it. We’ll go this very minute to the young lady and you’ll see how quickly it’ll all be done.

Podkoliosin. What next! Go this very minute!

Kochkariov. Why not, why put it off? See what comes of your not being married! Look at your room, what do you see in it? There stands a muddy boot and there’s a washbasin. Here’s a whole heap of tobacco on the table, and here you lie all day like a sluggard.

Podkoliosin. That’s true. I know how untidy it is.

Kochkariov. But when you have a wife you simply won’t know yourself or anything else: here you’ll have a sofa, a lapdog, a bird of some sort in a cage, needlework.... And just imagine: you’ll sit on the sofa, and all at once a pretty little woman will sit down beside you and put her little hand...

Podkoliosin. Ah, damn it, when you think what little hands there are—as white as milk, old friend.

Kochkariov. I should think so! As though hands were all!... Why, old friend... But there, there’s no word for it; the devil only knows what they haven’t got.

Podkoliosin. And you know, to tell you the truth, I do like it when a pretty girl sits beside me.

Kochkariov. There, you see, I needn’t tell you. Now we’ve only to arrange it all. Don’t you worry about anything. The wedding breakfast and all the rest of it I’ll see to.... You can’t do with less than a dozen of champagne whatever you say. Half a dozen bottles of Madeira, too, you must have. The bride’s sure to have a crowd of aunties and old lady friends, and they don’t like to do things by halves.

And we don’t want Rhine wine, damn it all, do we? And as for the wedding breakfast, I’ve a caterer in my eye, friend. He feeds one, the dog, so that one can’t get up from one’s chair.

Podkoliosin. I swear, you throw yourself into it as though the wedding were settled.

Kochkariov. And why not? Why put it off? You’ve made up your mind, haven’t you?

Podkoliosin. I? Well, no... I’ve not quite made up my mind yet.

Kochkariov. Well, I’ll be damned! You said just now you wanted it.

Podkoliosin. I only said it wouldn’t be a bad thing.

Kochkariov. Well, I’ll be... Why, we were on the very point of fixing it all up.... What is it? Do you dislike the idea of married life, or what?

Podkoliosin. No, I like it.

Kochkariov. Well then, what is it? What’s the difficulty?

Podkoliosin. Oh, there’s no difficulty. Only it’s strange...

Kochkariov. What’s strange?

Podkoliosin. Of course it’s strange. I’ve always been unmarried.... And now all at once to be married.

Kochkariov. Come, come... come, aren’t you ashamed? Well, I see I must talk to you seriously. I’ll talk to you openly, as a father to a son. Just look at yourself attentively—as you are looking now at me, for instance. Why, what are you now? Simply a log, you know, you’re of no importance whatever. Why, what are

you living for? Come, look in the mirror; what do you see there? A silly face and nothing else: but, just imagine, here beside you will be little ones, not two or three, you know, but maybe a whole half-dozen, and all as like you as two drops of water. Now you are a court councilor, a filing clerk, or some sort of superintendent, God knows what; but then, just imagine, you'll have a whole lot of little forwarding clerks about you, the little rascals, and one little rogue will stretch out his little paws and tug your whiskers while you'll bark at him like a dog: Bow! Bow-wow! Now, is there anything better than that, tell me?

Podkoliosin. But you know they are awfully mischievous: they'll spoil everything and throw my papers about.

Kochkariov. What if they are, they'll all be like you—think of that!

Podkoliosin. It really is pleasant, damn it all.... A little dumpling like that, a little puppy, and yet like me.

Kochkariov. Of course it's pleasant; come, let us go then.

Podkoliosin. Very well, let us go.

Kochkariov. Hey, Stepan, make haste and bring your master his things.

(Enter Stepan.)

Podkoliosin *(dressing before the mirror).* I think, though, I ought to put on a white vest.

Kochkariov. Nonsense, it doesn't matter.

Podkoliosin *(putting on a collar).* That confounded laundress has starched the collar so badly nothing will make it stand up. Tell the stupid woman, Stepan, that if she can't iron better than that, I'll engage someone else. I expect she is carrying on with her young man instead of ironing the collars.

Kochkariov. Come, make haste, old friend! How you do dawdle!

Podkoliosin. In a minute, in a minute. *(Puts on his coat and sits down.)* You know what, Ilya Fomich, you go alone.

Kochkariov. Well, what next! Are you mad? Me go! Why, which of us is getting married—you or I?

Podkoliosin. I don't feel like it, really; we'd better go tomorrow.

Kochkariov. Come, have you a grain of common sense? Aren't you a moron? You were quite ready—and all of a sudden you don't want to! Kindly tell me, aren't you a swine, aren't you a sneak to go on like that?"

Podkoliosin. Why are you scolding me, what for, what have I done to you?

Kochkariov. You are an idiot, a perfect idiot, anyone will tell you so. A fool, simply a fool, although you are a forwarding clerk. What am I doing my best for? Your benefit; someone else will get the goods if you don't look out. There he lies, the confounded bachelor. I swear, what do you look like?—Why, you are trash, a ninny, a booby, I might call you something worse... but the word is too improper. You are an old granny, worse than an old granny.

Podkoliosin. And you are a nice one, I must say. *(In an undertone)* Are you crazy? My servant's standing there and you go on scolding me before him in such language; you might have found some other place!

Kochkariov. But how can I help swearing at you, kindly tell me that? Who could help swearing at you? Who could resist swearing at you? Here, like a decent man, you have made up your mind to get married, you listen to the voice of reason, and all at once, from simple idiocy, as though you'd gone crazy, you blockhead...

Podkoliosin. Well, that's enough, I am coming. Why do you make such a fuss?

Kochkariov. You’re coming; of course, I should think so. *(To Stepan)* Bring his hat and overcoat.

Podkoliosin *(in the doorway).* What a peculiar fellow he is really! There’s no doing anything with him; he starts scolding all at once for no rhyme nor reason, he’s no notion how to behave.

Kochkariov. Well, it’s all over, I am not scolding you now.

(They both go out.)

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SCENE II

A room in Agafya Tikhonovna's house. Agafya Tikhonovna is laying out cards for fortunetelling. Her aunt, Arina Panteleimonovna, is looking over from behind.

Agafya. A journey again, Auntie! A king of diamonds is interested... tears... a love letter; on the left hand a club shows great sympathy, but some wicked woman is an obstacle.

Arina. And who would you think is the king of clubs?

Agafya. I don't know.

Arina. But I know who it is.

Agafya. Who?

Arina. A good tradesman in the drapery line, Aleksey Dimitrievich Starikov.

Agafya. Well, I am sure it's not he. I'll bet you anything it's not.

Arina. Don't argue, Agafya Tikhonovna, his hair is so dark. No one else could be king of clubs.

Agafya. Oh no: the king of clubs means a gentleman here—a shopkeeper couldn't be king of clubs.

Arina. Oh, Agafya Tikhonovna, you wouldn't talk like that if your poor papa, Tikhon Panteleimonovich, were living. He'd sometimes slap his hand on the table and cry: "I'd spit," he used to say, "on the man who is ashamed to be a

shopkeeper: and I'll never give my daughter," he used to say, "to a colonel. Let other people do as they like! And I'll never let my son go into the civil service," he'd say. "Doesn't the merchant," he'd say, "serve his Czar as much as anyone else?" And he'd thump like this on the table with all his five fingers. And he'd a hand as big as a bucket—and what a temper! And to tell the truth, he was the death of your mother; she'd have lived longer, poor dear, but for him.

Agafya. There, what if I have an angry husband like that! Oh, I won't marry a shopkeeper for anything!

Arina. But Aleksey Dimitrievich is not like that.

Agafya. I won't have him. I won't! He has a beard; as soon as he begins to eat, everything drops on his beard. No, no, I don't want him!

Arina. But where are you to find a decent gentleman? You won't pick him up in the streets, you know.

Agafya. Fiokla Ivanovna will find him; she promised to find the very best for me.

Arina. But she's a liar, you know, my love.

(Enter Fiokla.)

Fiokla. Oh no, Arina Panteleimonovna, it's too bad of you to slander me for nothing.

Agafya. Ah, it's Fiokla Ivanovna! Come, speak, tell me! Have you found him?

Fiokla. Yes, yes, only let me get my breath—I am worn out! I've been through every house on your business, I've toiled and moiled in offices and departments of barrack rooms.... Do you know, my dear, I was all but beaten, upon my word I was: that old woman that married the Aferovs fairly flew at me, calling me all sorts of names: "You are simply taking the bread out of my mouth, keep to your

own quarters," she said. "Well," I told her straight out, "for my young lady," I said, "I am ready to give any satisfaction, so don't be angry." But what a bunch of gentlemen I've got for you! As long as the world has stood, and as long as it will stand, there've never been any like them. Some will be here this very day. I ran on ahead on purpose to warn you.

Agafya. Today! Fiokla Ivanovna, darling, I'm frightened.

Fiokla. Don't you be scared, my dear! It's the usual thing. They'll come and have a look, nothing more, and you will have a look at them: if you don't care for them, well, they'll go.

Arina. Oh, I bet you've enticed a nice bunch.

Agafya. And are there many of them—how many?

Fiokla. Oh, there are six.

Agafya. Ough!

Fiokla. Come, my dear, why are you in such a flutter? It's best to have a choice: if one won't do, another may.

Agafya. Are they gentlemen?

Fiokla. All, every one of them: and such gentlemen as I've never seen before.

Agafya. Oh, what are they like, what are they like?

Fiokla. Wonderful, all such handsome and particular gentlemen.

First, Baltazar Baltazarovich Zhevakin, such a nice gentleman; he served in the navy—he's just the one for you. He says he must have a young lady on the plump side, he doesn't like them skinny. But Ivan Pavlovich, who's a managing

clerk in the Government Service, is such a grand gentleman that there's no approaching him. Such a fine-looking gentleman, stout: when he shouted at me: "Don't you talk nonsense to me, saying the young lady is this and that; tell me straight out what she's got in real property and what she's got in cash."

"So much of this and so much of that, my good sir!"—"You're lying, you daughter of a bitch!" and he rapped out such a word, my dear, but it wouldn't be proper to repeat it to you. I saw in the twinkling of an eye that he must be a gentleman of consequence!

Agafya. Well, and who else?

Fiokla. Then there's Nikanor Ivanovich Anuchkin. He's such a refined man, and his lips, my dear, are raspberries, perfect raspberries—such a nice gentleman. "I want my bride," he said, "to be good-looking and well educated, I want her to be able to speak French." Yes, a man of refined manners, a bit of a German; and he's so refined and delicate, and his legs so thin and slender...

Agafya. No, these slender men aren't quite... I don't know ... I see nothing in them....

Fiokla. Well, if you prefer someone more solid, take Ivan Pavlovich. You wouldn't choose anyone better; he now is a gentleman if anyone's a gentleman: he'd hardly get through the doorway, he's such a fine man.

Agafya. And how old is he?

Fiokla. Oh, he's still youngish: about fifty, or maybe not quite fifty.

Agafya. And what's his name?

Fiokla. His name's Ivan Pavlovich Yaichnitsa.

Agafya. Is that his surname?

Fiokla. Yes.

Agafya. Oh my goodness, what a surname! Really, Fiokla, dear, if I marry him shall I be called Agafya Tikhonovna Yaichnitsa? Good gracious, what an idea!

Fiokla. Well, my dear, there are names in Russia so queer you can only spit and cross yourself when you hear them. But there, if you don't like the name, take Baltazar Baltazarovich Zhevakin; he's a nice gentleman.

Agafya. And what is his hair like?

Fiokla. Nice hair.

Agafya. And his nose?

Fiokla. Aie... his nose is all right: everything is in its right place, and he's such a nice gentleman. Only you mustn't be perturbed; there's nothing in his apartment but a pipe, nothing else at all—no furniture.

Agafya. And who else?

Fiokla. Akinf Stepanovich Panteleyev, a titular councilor and clerk in the civil service; he stammers a little, but he's such a well-behaved man.

Arina. Oh, why do you keep on with your clerks? Isn't he fond of drink—that's what you'd better tell us.

Fiokla. Well, he does drink; I won't deny it, drink he does. There, that can't be helped—you see he's a titular councilor! But he's as smooth as silk.

Agafya. Oh no, I don't want my husband to be a drunkard.

Fiokla. That's as you like, my dear; if you don't like one, take another, though after all, what is there in his taking a drop too much now and again; he's not

drunk all week, you know. Some days he’s quite sober.

Agafya. Well, who else?

Fiokla. There is only one more, only he’s such a... God bless the man! the others are a bit better.

Agafya. But who is he?

Fiokla. I didn’t mean to speak of him. He’s a court councilor to be sure, and wears a ribbon in his buttonhole, but he’s got lead in his bottom, there’s no getting him out of his house.

Agafya. Well, and who else? You’ve only told us of five, but you said six.

Fiokla. Well, isn’t that enough for you? You are getting greedy; why, a minute ago you were frightened.

Arina. But what’s the use of them, all your gentlemen, though you may have six of them? I’ll bet one shopkeeper’ll be worth all the lot.

Fiokla. Oh no, Arina Panteleimonovna, a gentleman is thought much more of.

Arina. But what’s the use of that? Aleksey Dimitrievich, now, in his sable cap driving along in his sledge...?

Fiokla. But if a gentleman in epaulets meets him, he’ll say, “What are you about, you paltry shopkeeper, get out of my way!” or “Show me your best velvet, shopkeeper!” And he’ll answer, “With pleasure, sir!”—”And take off your hat, you oaf!” that’s what the gentleman will say.

Arina. And if the shopkeeper likes he won’t give him the cloth, and then your gentleman will be left naked and will have nothing to go about in.

Fiokla. And the gentleman will slash at the shopkeeper with his sword.

Arina. And the shopkeeper will make a complaint to the police.

Fiokla. And the gentleman will complain of the shopkeeper to the Senator.

Arina. And the shopkeeper'll go to the Governor.

Fiokla. And the gentleman...

Arina. Stuff and nonsense, gentleman indeed! A governor's more than a senator! How she goes on! A gentleman has to knuckle under just the same sometimes... *(A ring is heard.)* Surely that's someone at the bell?

Fiokla. Goodness, here they are!

Arina. Who?

Fiokla. They... Some of the gentlemen.

Agafya. *(Shrieks)* Ough!—*(Fiokla goes out.)*

Arina. Holy saints, have mercy upon our sins! And the room's not fit to be seen. *(Snatches up everything on the table and runs about the room.)* And the cloth, the cloth on the table absolutely black. Dunyashka, Dunyashka!

(Enter Dunyashka.)

Arina. Quick! a clean cloth! *(Pulls off the cloth and scurries about the room.)*

Agafya. Oh, Auntie, what am I to do, I am almost in my chemise.

Arina. Ah, my dear, make haste, run and get dressed! *(Scurries about the room;*

Dunyashka brings a cloth; there's a ring at the bell.) Run and say, "Coming directly."

(Dunyashka shouts into the distance, "Coming directly/")

Agafya. Auntie! my dress isn't ironed.

Arina. O Lord, have mercy upon us! Put on another.

Fiokla *(running in).* Why don't you come, Agafya Tikhonovna? Make haste, my dear. *(A ring is heard.)* My goodness, why, he's waiting still...

Arina. Dunyashka, show him in and ask him to wait.

(Dunyashka runs into the hall and opens the door. Voices are heard: "At home?"—"Yes, please walk in." All try inquisitively to look through the keyhole.)

Agafya. *(Shrieks)* Oh, what a fat man!

Fiokla. He's coming, he's coming!

(All run out full speed.)

(Enter Ivan Pavlovich Yaichnitsa and Dunyashka.)

Dunyashka. Please wait here.—*(Goes out.)*

Yaichnitsa. To be sure, if we must wait we'll wait, if only they're not long; I have only got away from the office for a minute. If the general takes it into his head to ask, "Where's the managing clerk?"—"He's gone to have a look at a young lady with a view to matrimony"... he might make me pay dearly for the young lady. I'll have another look at the description anyway. *(Reads)* "A brick house of two floors..." *(Raises his eyes upwards and scans the room.)* Yes!

(Goes on reading) “Two lodges: a lodge on a brick foundation and a wooden lodge.” Well, the wooden one is not worth much. “A chaise, a sledge for two horses adorned with carving, with a big rug and a small rug.” Maybe they’re only fit for firewood, but the old woman declares they’re first-class; all right, let’s suppose they’re first-class. “Two dozen silver spoons”—of course, you must have silver spoons in the house.... “Two fox-lined fur coats...” H’m! “Four big feather beds and two little ones.” *(Purses up his lips significantly.)* “A dozen silk and a dozen cotton dresses, two dressing gowns, two...” Come, that’s trumpery! House linen, table napkins... That’s all her affair. Though I’d better make sure of it all perhaps. Now they’ll probably promise a house and carriages, but when you’re married you’ll find nothing but feather beds and pillows.

(A ring at the bell. Dunyashka runs full speed across the room to open the door. Voices are heard: “At home?”— “Yes” Enter Anuchkin and Dunyashka.)

Dunyashka. Will you wait here. They’ll come in. *(She goes out. Anuchkin and Yaichnitsa bow to each other.)*

Yaichnitsa. Good day, sir!

Anuchkin. Have I not the honor of addressing the papa of the charming lady of the house?

Yaichnitsa. No indeed, I’m not a papa at all. I’ve no children yet, as a matter of fact.

Anuchkin. Oh, I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon!

Yaichnitsa *(aside).* There’s something suspicious about that man’s countenance; I shouldn’t be surprised if he’s come here on the same errand as I. *(Aloud)* No doubt you have some business with the lady of the house?

Anuchkin. Well, no... No business at all. I was out for a walk and just looked in.

Yaichnitsa *(aside).* That’s a lie. Out for a walk indeed! He wants to get married,

the scoundrel!

(A ring is heard. Dunyashka runs across the room to open the door. Voices in the hall? “At home?”—”Yes.”

Enter Zhevakin with Dunyashka.)

Zhevakin *(to Dunyashka).* Please brush me, my dear... You know what a terrible lot of dust there is in the street. Take off that bit of fluff, please. *(Turns around.)* That’s right! Thank you, my dear, but just look, isn’t there a spider crawling there? And isn’t there anything behind? Thanks, sweetie! There’s something there, I think. *(Strokes the sleeve of his coat with his hand and looks at Anuchkin and Yaichnitsa.)* It’s English cloth, you know! How it does wear! I bought it in ‘95, when our squadron was in Sicily and I was only a midshipman and had a uniform made of it then; in 1801, in the reign of Paul I, I was promoted to lieutenant, and the cloth was perfectly new; in 1814 I made a voyage around the world, and it was only a little worn at the seams then; then in 1815, when I left the navy, I had it turned inside out. Now I have been wearing it for ten years, and it’s still almost new! Thanks, sweetie. H’m... h’m, my cutie! *(Kisses his hand to her, and going up to the mirror slightly ruffles his hair.)*

Anuchkin. And what is Sicily like, allow me to ask... you were pleased to say Sicily; is it a nice country, Sicily?

Zhevakin. Oh, lovely! We spent thirty-four days there; the view, I assure you, is enchanting. Such mountains, pomegranate trees, and everywhere there are Italian girls, such rosebuds that you want to kiss them.

Anuchkin. And are they well educated?

Zhevakin. Superbly! Educated as none among us, except countesses perhaps. You would go down the street—well, a Russian lieutenant, naturally, with epaulets here *(points to his shoulders)*, with gold lace, and the dark little beauties —you know, almost every house has little balconies and roofs as flat as this floor —one looks up, and there’s a rosebud sitting... well, naturally, to show what one’s made of... *(bows and waves his hand)*... while she only does this *(makes a*

gesture with his hand). Naturally she's well dressed—some sort of silk stuff laced up in front, earrings all over the place... a dainty little morsel, in fact.

Anuchkin. And allow me to put one more question to you, What language do they use in Sicily?

Zhevakin. Oh, naturally, they all speak French.

Anuchkin. And do all the young ladies speak French?

Zhevakin. All, without exception. Perhaps you may not believe what I'm going to tell you: we stayed thirty-four days, and all that time I never heard one word of Russian from them.

Anuchkin. Not one word?

Zhevakin. Not one word. I am not speaking of the noblemen and other signors—that is, of their officers—but take a simple peasant of those parts who hauls about all sorts of stuff on his back, and try saying to him in Russian, "Give me some bread, brother." He won't understand, upon my word he won't; but say in French, "*Dateci del pane*" or "*Portate vino!"* he'll understand and actually bring it.

Yaichnitsa. That Sicily must be a curious country, I see. Here, you said a peasant; what's the peasant like? Is he exactly the same as the Russian peasant, broad in the shoulders, and does he plow the land or not?

Zhevakin. I cannot tell you: I didn't notice whether they plowed or not; but as for taking snuff, I assure you they don't only sniff it, but even chew it. Transport is very cheap too; it's almost all water there, and everywhere gondolas.... Naturally with a little Italian like a rosebud sitting in it wearing a little chemisette, a little kerchief!... There were English officers with us too. Well, they're sailors just the same as our fellows ... and at first certainly it was very strange; there was no understanding each other, but afterwards, as we came to know them better, we began to understand each other easily. You point like this at a bottle or glass—well, one knows at once that means a drink; you put your

fist to your mouth and just say with your lips “Puff-puff,” and you know it means smoking a pipe. In fact, I can assure you it’s quite an easy language —in three or four days the sailors could understand each other perfectly.

Yaichnitsa. Life in foreign lands is very interesting, as I see. I am very glad to make the acquaintance of a man who has seen something of the world. Allow me to ask with whom have I the honor of speaking?

Zhevakin. Zhevakin, retired naval lieutenant. Allow me to ask with whom I have the pleasure of conversing?

Yaichnitsa. I am a managing clerk, Ivan Pavlovich Yaichnitsa.

Zhevakin *(catching only the last word).* Yes, I’ve had a snack too. I knew I had a good long way to come, and it’s a cold day: I had just a herring with a little bread.

Yaichnitsa. No, I think you misunderstand me; that’s my surname, Yaichnitsa.

Zhevakin. Oh, I beg your pardon, I’m a little hard of hearing. I really thought you were pleased to observe that you’d eaten an omelet.

Yaichnitsa. Well, what am I to do? I did think of asking the general to be called “Yaichnitsyn,” but my people dissuaded me; they said it would be like *sobachiy syn.*

Zhevakin. It is like that sometimes. In our third squadron all the officers and the sailors too had the very queerest names: “Pomoikin, Yaryzhkin, Lieutenant Perepreev, and there was one midshipman, and a very good midshipman too, whose name was simply Dyrka. And the captain would shout at times, “Hey, you, Dyrka, come here!” and would always be joking at him: “Ah, you little *dyrka”* he used to say to him...

(A ring at the bell is heard; Fiokla runs across the room to open the door.)

Yaichnitsa. Ah, good day, ma'am.

Zhevakin. How are you, my dear?

Anuchkin. Good morning, Fiokla Ivanovna!

Fiokla *(running full speed).* Very well, very well, thank you, good gentlemen!

(She opens the door; voices are heard in the passage: "At home?"—"Yes"; then several words, hardly audible, to which Fiokla answers with annoyance, "You are a man!")

(Enter Kochkariov, Podkoliosin, and Fiokla.)

Kochkariov *(to Podkoliosin).* Remember, just courage, that's all. *(Looks about him and bows with some astonishment. To himself)* My, what a crowd! What does it mean? Surely they are not all after her! *(Nudges Fiokla and says to her, aside)* Where have you picked up all these crows?

Fiokla *(in a low voice).* There are no crows here, they are all honest gentlemen.

Kochkariov *(to her).* Threadbare guests drop in uninvited.

Fiokla. Look at home and you'll find nothing to boast of; your cap cost a ruble, but you don't have a pot to cook in.

Kochkariov. I'll bet yours are a fine lot with holes in their pockets. *(Aloud)* But what is she about? I suppose this is the door to her bedroom? *(Goes up to the door.)*

Fiokla. For shame! I tell you she has not finished dressing.

Kochkariov. Much harm in that! What does it matter? I'll just have a look and nothing more. *(Looks through the keyhole.)*

Zhevakin. Allow me to be curious also.

Yaichnitsa. Allow me just one little peep.

Kochkariov *(still looking).* But nothing can be seen, gentlemen! And there's no making out what that white thing is—a woman or a pillow. *(All surround the door, however, and try to get a glimpse.)* Sh... someone is coming! *(All skip away from the door.)*

(Enter Arina Panteleimonovna and Agafya Tikhonovna. All exchange bows with them.)

Arina. And to what are we indebted for the pleasure of your visit?

Yaichnitsa. I learned from the newspapers that you want to enter into a contract regarding the sale of timber and firewood, and so, as I am a managing clerk in a government office, I've come to inquire what kind of timber, the quantity of the wood, and the date when you can furnish it.

Arina. Though we are not taking any contracts, we are glad to see you. And what is your name?

Yaichnitsa. Ivan Pavlovich Yaichnitsa, collegiate assessor.

Arina. Please be seated. *(Turns to Zhevakin and looks at him.)* Allow me to inquire...

Zhevakin. I too saw an announcement of something in the newspaper. I thought I might as well come around; the weather seemed pleasant, and grass everywhere along the road.

Arina. And what is your name?

Zhevakin. I am a lieutenant in the naval reserve, my name's Baltazar Baltazarovich Zhevakin the second. There was another Zhevakin among us, but he left the navy before I did; he was wounded, ma'am, under the knee, and the bullet took such a peculiar turn that it didn't touch the knee itself but caught a sinew—threaded it like a needle, so when one stood next to him it seemed as though he were trying to hit you with his knee.

Arina. Please sit down. *(Turning to Anuchkin)* Allow me to inquire to what we are indebted?

Anuchkin. To my being a neighbor. Finding myself a rather near neighbor...

Arina. Aren't you living in widow Tulubov's house just opposite?

Anuchkin. I am living for the time in Peski, but I'm intending later to move into this neighborhood.

Arina. Please sit down. *(Turning to Kochkariov)* Allow me to inquire...?

Kochkriov. Do you mean to say you don't know me? *(Addressing Agafya Tikhonovna)* And don't you either, miss?

Agafya. I don't think I've ever seen you before.

Kochkariov. Oh, think again: you must have seen me somewhere.

Agafya. Really, I don't know. It wasn't at the Biriushkins', was it?

Kochkariov. Yes, at the Biriushkins'.

Agafya. Oh, you don't know; something dreadful's happened to her!

Kochkariov. To be sure, she's married.

Agafya. No, that would be a good thing, but she's broken her leg.

Arina. And broken it very badly too. She was coming home rather late in the chaise, and the coachman was drunk and upset her.

Kochkariov. Ah yes, to be sure, I remember there was something —either she got married or broke her leg.

Arina. And what is your name?

Kochkariov. Why, IIya Fomich Kochkariov; you know we're related: my wife is continually talking about it.... Allow me, allow me *(takes Podkoliosin by the hand, leads him tip)*, my friend Podkoliosin, Ivan Kuzmich, a court councilor; he is a forwarding clerk in the service, does all the business himself and has brought his department into perfect working order.

Arina. What is his name?

Kochkariov. Podkoliosin, Ivan Kuzmich Podkoliosin. There is a director in charge of the department just for show, but he, Ivan Kuzmich Podkoliosin, does all the work.

Arina. Oh indeed! pray sit down.

(Enter Starikov. He bows briskly and rapidly like a shopkeeper, slightly holding his sides.)

Starikov. Good day, Arina Panteleimonovna, ma'am! The boys in the bazaar told me that you've wood to sell, ma'am.

Agafya *(turning away disdainfully, in a low voice, but so that he hears).* This is not a shop.

Starikov. Phew! Have we come at the wrong time? Or has someone else got the

order?

Arina. Please come in, please come in, Aleksey Dmitrievich; though we've no wood to sell, we are glad to see you. Please sit down.

(All are seated. Silence.)

Yaichnitsa. It's strange weather today: in the morning it looked quite like rain, but now it seems to have passed over.

Agafya. Yes, this weather is beyond anything; sometimes fine and at other times quite wet. It's very disagreeable.

Zhevakin. Now, we were in Sicily with the squadron, ma'am, in the springtime —if you'll reckon it out it was our February: if you went out the sun would be shining, and then it would look like rain—and in a minute the rain would come on.

Yaichnitsa. What is most disagreeable is sitting alone in this weather. For a married man it's quite another matter, he's not bored; but if one's in solitude, then it's simply...

Zhevakin. Oh, deadly, perfectly deadly...

Anuchkin. Yes, one may say that...

Kochkariov. Oh, it's torture! One wishes one was dead! God preserve us from such a situation.

Yaichnitsa. And, miss, what would you say if you had to choose an object of your affections? Allow me to inquire your taste. Pardon me for coming so straight to the point. In what branch of the Service do you think it's more fitting for a husband to be?

Zhevakin. Would you, miss, care to have for a husband a man who has experienced the tempests of the ocean?

Kochkariov. No, no! To my thinking the best husband is a man who manages a whole department almost alone.

Anuchkin. Why be prejudiced? Why disdain a man who, though he has indeed served in the infantry, can appreciate the manners of the best society?

Yaichnitsa. Miss, it's for you to decide.

(Agafya Tikhonovna remains mute.)

Fiokla. Do answer, my dear, say something to them.

Yaichnitsa. What do you say to me?

Kochkariov. What is your opinion, Agafya Tikhonovna?

Fiokla *(aside to her).* Say something, say "Thank you," say "I am delighted"; it's not nice to sit like that.

Agafya *(in a low voice).* I am ashamed, I am really ashamed, I'm going, I'm really going, Auntie, you stay instead of me.

Fiokla. Oh, don't do that, don't go away, you'll disgrace yourself. There's no knowing what they will think.

Agafya *(in a low voice).* No, I can't stay, I can't, I really can't!

(Runs off.)

(Fiokla and Arina Panteleimonovna go out after her.)

Yaichnitsa. Well I never, they've all gone; what does that mean?

Kochkariov. Something must have happened.

Zhevakin. Something to do with the lady's dress... to fix something... to pin up the lady's chemisette or something.

(Enter Fiokla. All go to meet her with questions: "What is it? What's the matter?")

Kochkariov. Something happened, I suppose?

Fiokla. How could anything happen? Dear me, nothing's happened.

Kochkariov. Why did she go away then?

Fiokla. Oh, you made her feel bashful, that's why she went away; you put her into such confusion that she couldn't sit in her place. She begs you to excuse her and that you'll all come and drink a cup of tea in the evening.—*(Goes out.)*

Yaichnitsa *(aside).* Ough, I know their cup of tea! That's why I don't like matchmaking, it leads to such a fuss. Nothing doing today, but come tomorrow, and then again to tea the day after tomorrow, and then they must think it over. And yet it's a nonsensical business, nothing to rack the brains over! Hang it all, I'm a busy man, I've no time to waste.

Kochkariov *(to Podkoliosin).* The young lady is nice-looking, though, isn't she?

Podkoliosin. Yes, she's nice-looking.

Zhevakin. The little lady is pretty, though, isn't she?

Kochkariov *(aside).* Damn it! This fool's in love with her. He'll get in the way maybe. *(Aloud)* Not at all pretty, not at all.

Yaichnitsa. Her nose is too big.

Zhevakin. Oh no, I didn’t notice her nose, she’s such a little rosebud.

Anuchkin. I agree with you there. But no, she’s not quite it, not it at all... I doubt whether she is conversant with the deportment of the best society. And does she know French?

Zhevakin. But why, I make bold to ask, didn’t you try her, why didn’t you speak French to her? Perhaps she does know it.

Anuchkin. Do you imagine I speak French? No, I’ve not been so fortunate as to have the advantage of such an education. My father was a scoundrel, a brute. He never even thought of teaching me French. When I was still a child I could easily have learned; they need only have thrashed me well and I should have known French, I should certainly have known it!

Zhevakin. Well, but as it is, since you don’t know it, what would you gain by her knowing it...?

Anuchkin. No, no, a woman is quite a different matter, she must know French; without it she’ll be... *(gesticulates)* it will never be the proper thing.

Yaichnitsa *(aside).* Well, anyone else may trouble his head about that. I’ll go and have a look around at the house and lodges from outside; if everything is as it should be, I’ll settle it up this very evening. I’ve nothing to fear from these fellows—a wishy-washy lot. Young ladies aren’t fond of men like that.

(Goes out.)

Zhevakin. I’ll go and have a pipe. And aren’t we going the same way? Where, allow me to ask, do you live?

Anuchkin. In Peski, Petrovsky Lane.

Zhevakin. Yes, it will be out of my way. I live in Eighteenth Row, on the Island; still, I'll go with you.

(He goes out with Anuchkin.)

Starikov. Yes, this is all too high and mighty for me. Aie, Agafya Tikhonovna, you'll think of me yet! A very good day to you, gentlemen!—*(Bows and goes out.)*

Podkoliosin. What are we waiting for?

Kochkariov. But the girl is sweet, isn't she?

Podkoliosin. Why, I must confess she doesn't attract me.

Kochkariov. Well I never! What's this? Why, you agreed yourself that she was pretty.

Podkoliosin. Oh well, I don't know: her nose is too long and she doesn't speak French.

Kochkariov. What next! What do you want French for?

Podkoliosin. A young lady ought to know French anyway.

Kochkariov. Why?

Podkoliosin. Why, because... I really don't know why, but is it not the proper thing?

Kochkariov. There! One fool has just said it and he's picked it up. She's a beauty, she's a regular beauty; you won't find a girl like that anywhere.

Podkoliosin. Well, at first she did take my fancy too, but afterwards, when they began saying, her nose is too long, her nose is too long—well, I thought again and saw myself that her nose was too long.

Kochkariov. Oh you, you won't see through a stone wall in a hurry, you feebleminded creature! They said that on purpose to put you off; I didn't praise her either—that's how things are done. What a girl, my boy! Just look at her eyes: only the devil knows such eyes; they're speaking, they're breathing. And her nose? I don't know what to call her nose! The whiteness of alabaster! And indeed alabaster cannot always be compared with it. You look at it carefully yourself.

Podkoliosin *(smiling).* Yes, now I do see again that she may be called pretty.

Kochkariov. Of course she's pretty. Now that they've all gone, let's go in to see her, talk it over, and settle it.

Podkoliosin. Oh, I can't do that!

Kochkariov. Why not?

Podkoliosin. Why, such impertinence! There are a lot of us; let her choose herself.

Kochkariov. But why need you think about them? Are you afraid of rivals or what? If you like, I'll get rid of all of them in a minute.

Podkoliosin. Why, how will you do that?

Kochkariov. Oh, that's my business; only give me your word that you won't beg off afterwards.

Podkoliosin. Certainly I'll give it; I am not opposing you, I want to get married.

Kochariov. Your hand on it!

Podkoliosin *(giving his hand).* Take it!

Kochkariov. Well, that's all I want.

(Both go out.)

(Curtain.)

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ACT II

The Same Room in the House of Agafya Tikhonovna.

Agafya Tikhonovna *alone.*

Agafya. Ah, how difficult it is to choose! If there were only one or two gentlemen, but there are four—take which you like.

Nikanor Ivanovich isn't bad-looking, though of course he's rather thin. Ivan Kuzmich isn't bad-looking either. But to tell the truth Ivan Pavlovich too is a very presentable man, though he is fat. Now what am I to do? Now, Baltazar Baltazarovich again is a man of fine qualities. How difficult it is to decide! There's no telling how difficult! If only Nikanor Ivanovich's lips could be fitted to Ivan Kuzmich's nose, and if one could take some of Baltazar Baltazarovich's easy manners and add perhaps Ivan Pavlovich's sturdiness—then I could decide at once. But, as it is, it's hopeless! My head's begun to ache. I believe it would be best to cast lots. Rely on God's will in everything. Whichever is drawn shall be my husband. I'll write them all down on bits of paper, twist them into little screws, and then let be what is to be. *(Goes up to a little table and takes out of a drawer a pair of scissors and a piece of paper, cuts it up into slips, writes on them, and rolls them up, still talking.)* What an unhappy position a girl is in, particularly when she's in love. No man enters into her feelings, and indeed, they simply refuse to understand it. Here, they're all ready! I have only to put them in my purse, close my eyes, and then let be what is to be. *(Puts the slips of paper in her purse and shakes them together with her hand.)* How dreadful!... Ah God grant I pick out Nikanor Ivanovich! No, why him? Better Ivan Kuzmich. Why Ivan Kuzmich? In what way are the others worse?... No, no, I won't.... Whichever I pick out, that one it shall be. *(Fumbles in the purse and mstead of one picks out all.)* Ough! All! They've all come out! And my heart's beating like a hammer! No, one, one, it must be one! *(Puts the slips back in the purse and mixes them.)*

(At that moment Kochkariov enters stealthily and stands behind her.)

Ah, if I could draw out Baltazar... What am I saying! I meant Nikanor Ivanovich... No, I won’t, I won’t! Let fate decide.

Kochkariov. Take Ivan Kuzmich; he’s the best of them all.

Agafya. Ah! *(Utters a shriek and hides her face in both hands, afraid to look behind her.)*

Kochkariov. But why are you so scared? Don’t be frightened. It’s me. Yes, take Ivan Kuzmich.

Agafya. Oh, I am ashamed, you overheard.

Kochkariov. Never mind, never mind! Why, I am one of yourselves, a relation, you needn’t mind my hearing; do uncover your pretty face.

Agafya *(half uncovering her face).* I am really ashamed.

Kochkariov. Come, do take Ivan Kuzmich.

Agafya. Oh! *(Gives a shriek and puts her hands over her face again.)*

Kochkariov. Really, he’s a splendid man, he has done wonders in his office, simply a marvelous man!

Agafya *(uncovering her face a little).* And the others? Nikanor Ivanovich—he’s a nice man too, you know.

Kochkariov. I swear he’s good for nothing beside Ivan Kuzmich.

Agafya. Why so?

Kochkariov. The reason’s clear. Ivan Kuzmich is a man... well, simply a man... a man such as you don’t find every day.

Agafya. Well, but Ivan Pavlovich?

Kochkariov. Ivan Pavlovich is good for nothing either. They are all good for nothing.

Agafya. Do you mean all?

Kochkariov. Why, you’ve only to compare. Judge for yourself; anyway, he’s—Ivan Kuzmich! While the others are just anything, Ivan Pavloviches, Nikanor Ivanoviches... pooh!

Agafya. But you know they’re very... well-behaved, really.

Kochkariov. Well-behaved! Bullies, a most cantankerous bunch. Of course, if you want to be beaten the day after your wedding...

Agafya. Oh my goodness! That really would be a misfortune, nothing could be worse.

Kochkariov. No indeed! Nothing worse could be imagined.

Agafya. So you advise me that it’s best to take Ivan Kuzmich.

Kochkariov. Ivan Kuzmich: naturally Ivan Kuzmich. *(Aside)* I believe it’s working. Podkoliosin is sitting in a candy shop. I must run and get him.

Agafya. So you think Ivan Kuzmich?

Kochkariov. It must be Ivan Kuzmich.

Agafya. And the others... must I refuse them?

Kochkariov. Of course, refuse them.

Agafya. But how's that to be done? I should feel ashamed to do it.

Kochkariov. Why? Tell them you are too young and don't want to be married.

Agafya. But they won't believe it, you know. They'll begin asking why and how's that.

Kochkariov. Oh well, if you want to make an end of it once for all, say simply, "Go along with you, you fools!"

Agafya. I couldn't say such a thing.

Kochkariov. Oh well, you just try. I assure you that after that they'll all get lost.

Agafya. Wouldn't that be rather rude?

Kochkariov. But you'll never see them again, you know, so what does it matter?

Agafya. Well, it's not very nice somehow. They'll be angry.

Kochkariov. What does it matter if they are angry? If any harm would come of it, then it's a different thing, but the most that could happen in this case would be one of them spitting in your face—that's all.

Agafya. There, you see!

Kochkariov. But what harm is there in that? Why, good gracious, some people have had that experience more than once! I know one, too: a very handsome man with rosy cheeks; he went on nagging and worrying his chief for an increase of salary, till his chief couldn't bear it at last and spat right in his face. Yes, that he did! "There's your increase for you," he said. "Get away, Satan!" But he did

raise his salary, though. So what does it matter if they do spit? It would be different if there were no handkerchief near, but there it is in your pocket. *(A ring at the bell.)* There's a knock: one of them, I expect. I would rather not meet them just now. Haven't you another way out?

Agafya. Oh yes, by the back stairs. But really I am all in a tremble.

Kochkariov. It's all right. Only have presence of mind. Goodbye! *(Aside)* I'll make haste and bring Podkoliosin.

(Exit Kochkariov.)

(Enter Yaichnitsa.)

Yaichnitsa. I have purposely come a little earlier to have a word with you alone. Well, madam, as for my position in the Service, I imagine that is known to you. I am a collegiate assessor, a favorite with my superiors and obeyed by my subordinates. There's only one thing I lack—a partner to share my life.

Agafya. Yes, sir.

Yaichnitsa. Now I've found such a partner. That partner's you. Tell me straight out—yes or no? *(Stares at her shoulder.*

Aside) Oh, she's very different from some of these thin little Germans—there's something to her.

Agafya. I am still very young... I am not disposed to marry yet.

Yaichnitsa. Upon my soul! I'll be damned! Then why is the matchmaker busy with you? But perhaps you mean to say something else—explain yourself.... *(The bell rings.)* Damn it all! They never will let one attend to business.

(Enter Zhevakin.)

Zhevakin. Excuse me, madam, for being perhaps too early.

(Turns and sees Yaichnitsa.) Ah, someone already... My respects to Ivan Pavlovich!

Yaichnitsa *(aside).* Confound you with your respects! *(Aloud)* So how is to be, madam? Say but one word—yes or no?...

(The bell rings. Yaichnitsa curses with anger.) The bell again!

(Enter Anuchkin.)

Anuchkin. Perhaps, madam, I may be a little earlier than the rules of propriety would dictate... *(Seeing the others, utters an exclamation and bows.)* My respects!

Yaichnitsa *(aside).* Keep your respects to yourself!! It's an ill wind that's brought you: I wish your thin legs would shatter!

(Aloud) So how's it to be, madam—I am a busy man, I haven't much time to spare. Yes or no?

Agafya *(in confusion)...* You needn't... *(Aside)* I don't know what I'm saying.

Yaichnitsa. Needn't what?

Agafya. Never mind, sir, nothing... I didn't mean that...

(Pulling herself together.) Go along with you!... *(Aside, flinging up her hands in despair)* Oh my goodness, what have I said?

Yaichnitsa. "Go along with you." What does that mean? "Go along with you!" Allow me to inquire what you mean me to understand by that? *(Putting his arms*

akimbo, he goes up to her with a menacing air.)

Agafya *(glances into his face, utters a shriek).* Ough, he'll beat me, he'll beat me!—*(Runs out.)*

Yaichnitsa *stands open-mouthed. At* Agafya's *shriek* Arina Panteleimonovna *runs in, and after a look at his face she too screams: "Ough, he will beat us!" Runs out.)*

Yaichnitsa. Well, I'll be damned! What a strange business!

(A ring at the bell and voices are heard in the passage.)

Voice of Kochkariov. Come, go in, go in, what are you stopping for?

Voice of Podkoliosin. You go in first. I'll come in a minute; my trouser strap has come unbuttoned, I must fasten it.

Voice of Kochkariov. Oh, you'll slip off again.

Voice of Podkoliosin. I won't, really I won't!

(Enter Kochkariov.)

Kochkariov. Damn his strap!

Yaichnitsa *(turning to him).* Tell me, please, is the young lady crazy or what?

Kochkariov. Why, has anything happened?

Yaichnitsa. Yes, inexplicable behavior: she ran away and began screaming, "He'll beat me, he'll beat me!" What the devil does it mean?

Kochkariov. Oh well, it does happen to her at times: she's not too bright.

Yaichnitsa. You are a relation of hers, aren't you?

Kochkariov. Oh yes.

Yaichnitsa. And what sort of relation, allow me to inquire?

Kochkariov. I really don't know. My mother's aunt is something or other to her father, or her father is something or other to my aunt; my wife knows—it's their affair.

Yaichnitsa. And has she had these attacks long?

Kochkariov. Oh, she's been the same from childhood.

Yaichnitsa. Well, of course it would have been better if she had more sense; though, even if she is not too bright, it's not so bad if the items listed in the dowry are in good order.

Kochkariov. But she's got nothing, you know.

Yaichnitsa. Nothing! How about a brick house?

Kochkariov. Well, that's just talk. If only you knew how it's built! The walls are only faced with one thickness of brick, and inside all manner of litter, rubble, chips, and shavings.

Yaichnitsa. You don't mean it?

Kochkariov. Of course. Don't you know how houses are built nowadays? Anything will do so long as they are good enough to mortgage.

Yaichnitsa. But the house isn't mortgaged?

Kochkariov. Why, who told you so? It’s not only mortgaged, but no interest’s been paid for the last two years. Besides, there’s a brother in the senate who’s got an eye on the house too—a more grasping, quarrelsome fellow you never saw!

He’d rob his own mother of her last petticoat, the godless wretch.

Yaichnitsa. Then how was it the old matchmaker... Ah, the old beast, the monster in human form... *(Aside)* But perhaps he’s lying. I’ll put the old woman to the strictest examination! And if it’s true... well... I’ll make her sing on the wrong side of her mouth.

Anuchkin. Allow me also to trouble you with an inquiry. I confess, not knowing French, it’s excessively difficult to judge for oneself whether a woman speaks French or not. Does the young lady know French?

Kochkariov. Not a blessed syllable!

Anuchkin. Do you mean it?

Kochkariov. To be sure, I know it for a fact. She was at the same boarding school as my wife and was famed for her laziness, she was always in the dunce’s cap. And the French teachers simply beat her with a stick.

Anuchkin. Just imagine, from the very moment I set eyes on her I had a sort of presentiment that she did not know French.

Yaichnitsa. Oh, damn French! But how that confounded matchmaker... ah, the beast, the witch! If only you knew how she laid it on; a picture, a regular picture she painted! “A house, a lodge on a brick foundation,” she says, “silver spoons, a sledge—you’ve only to get in it and drive about!” In fact, you wouldn’t often come on such a description in a novel. Ah, you old hag! you wait till I come across you...

(Enter Fiokla. All on seeing her turn to her with the following words:)

Yaichnitsa. Ah, here she is! You just come here, you old sinner! Just come here!

Anuchkin. So this is how you've deceived me, Fiokla Ivanovna!

Kochkariov. Come and answer for your sins, you wicked woman!

Fiokla. I can't make out a word: you quite deafen me.

Yaichnitsa. The walls are only of one brick, you old slut, and you boasted that it had extra rooms and the devil knows what.

Fiokla. I don't know, I didn't build it. Maybe it had to be built with one-brick walls and that's why they built it so.

Yaichnitsa. And mortgaged into the bargain! May the devils devour you, you damned witch! *(Stamping.)*

Fiokla. My word, what a man! And scolding too. Anyone else would be thanking me for the pleasure of troubling about him.

Anuchkin. But, Fiokla Ivanovna, here you told me, too, that she knew French.

Fiokla. She does, my dear, she knows it all, and German too, and all the rest; whatever accomplishments you like, she knows them all.

Anuchkin. Oh no; it appears she speaks nothing but Russian....

Fiokla. What's amiss in that? Russian's easier to understand, and that's why she speaks Russian. But if she could speak any heathen tongue it would be none the better for you, and you wouldn't understand a word of it. There, I needn't tell you what Russian is—we all know what a language it is; the saints all spoke Russian.

Yaichnitsa. You come here, you confounded woman! Let me get at you!

Fiokla *(staggering nearer to the door).* I won't come, I know you; you're an ill-tempered man, you'll beat a person for nothing at all.

Yaichnitsa. Well, you can look out, my good woman, you won't get off so easily; wait till I take you to the police, I'll teach you how to cheat honest people. You shall see! And tell the young lady she's a scoundrel! Do you hear, mind you tell her.

(Goes out.)

Fiokla. My word, what a man, what a rage he's in! Because he's fat he thinks no one's a match for him. I say you're a scoundrel yourself, so there!

Anuchkin. I must confess, my good woman, I never imagined that you were going to deceive me like this. Had I known that the young lady was of such an education, well, I... well, I should never have set my foot in here. So that's how it is!

(Goes out.)

Fiokla. They are all crazy or they've had a drop too much. What a bunch for picking and choosing! They've gone mad from thinking too much.

(Kochkariov laughs aloud, looking at Fiokla and pointing his finger at her.)

Fiokla *(annoyed).* What are you hysterical about?

(Kochkariov goes on laughing.)

He is having a fit.

Kochkariov. Oh, the matchmaker! Oh, the matchmaker! she's a fine hand at making marriages, she knows how to manage things! *(Goes on laughing.)*

Fiokla. Ough, how he's running from the mouth! Your mother must have been crazy when she brought you into the world!

(Goes out angrily.)

Kochkariov *(goes on laughing).* Oh I can't! I really can't! I shall die, I feel I shall split with laughter. *(Goes on laughing. Zhevakin, looking at him, begins laughing too.)*

Kochkariov *(sinks on a chair exhausted).* Oh, I am worn out, I really am! I feel I shall burst if I laugh any more.

Zhevakin. I like the mirthfulness of your disposition. In Captain Boldyrev's squadron we had a midshipman, Anton Ivanovich Pyetukhov; he too was of a merry disposition. Sometimes it was enough for him if you just shook a finger at him—he'd go off laughing and laugh all day. And looking at him one would sometimes be amused oneself, and at last one would begin laughing too.

Kochkariov *(recovering his breath).* O Lord, have mercy on us sinners! Why, what was the stupid woman thinking of, how could she make a match? As though she could make a match! Now, if I make a match, I do the job!

Zhevakin. Really? So you really can arrange a marriage?

Kochkariov. I should think so! Anyone you like to anyone you like.

Zhevakin. If that's so, marry me to the young lady here.

Kochkariov. You? But why do you want to get married?

Zhevakin. Why? Well, allow me to observe that's rather a strange question; we

all know why.

Kochkariov. But you've just heard she has no dowry.

Zhevakin. Of course that's a pity, but with such a very charming young lady, with her attractions, one might manage without a dowry. A little room *(indicates size with his hands),* with here a little lobby, a little screen or something like this partition...

Kochkariov. But what is it you like so much about her?

Zhevakin. Well, to tell you the truth, I like her because she's a plump woman. I am a great lover of plumpness in women.

Kochkariov *(with a sidelong look at him, says aside).* Well, he's not much to look at himself; he's like a pouch with the tobacco shaken out of it. *(Aloud)* No, you ought not to get married at all.

Zhevakin. How's that?

Kochkariov. Well, confidentially, you are not a very handsome figure. Like a chicken's leg...

Zhevakin. A chicken's?

Kochkariov. Of course. What do you look like?

Zhevakin. How do you mean—a chicken's leg?

Kochkariov. Why, simply—a chicken's.

Zhevakin. But it seems to me that's a personal remark...

Kochkariov. Well, I tell you so because I know you're a sensible man; I

shouldn’t say it to anyone else. By all means I’ll marry you, only to another lady.

Zhevakin. No, I will beg you not to marry me to another lady.

Do me the favor to let it be this one.

Kochkariov. Very well, I’ll marry you, but only on one condition; you mustn’t interfere in anything or even let the young lady see you—I’ll manage it all without you.

Zhevakin. But how can it all be without me? I shall at least have to show myself.

Kochkariov. Not in the least necessary. Go home and wait:

everything shall be done this very evening.

Zhevakin *(rubs his hands).* Well, that will be nice! But don’t you need my certificate, my record of service? The young lady may want to make inquiries. I’ll run and fetch them in a minute.

Kochkariov. Nothing will be needed, you only go home and wait; I’ll let you know this very day. *(Accompanies him to the door.)* Yes, indeed, you may wait! *(Exit Zhevakin.)*

Say! How is it Podkoliosin doesn’t come? It’s strange. Can he be fastening his trouser strap all this time? Perhaps I’d better run and find him.

(Enter Agafya Tikhonovna.)

Agafya *(looking about her).* Well, have they gone? No one here?

Kochkariov. They’ve gone, they’ve gone, there’s no one here.

Agafya. Ah, if you only knew how I trembled all over! I’ve never felt anything

like it. But what a dreadful man that Yaichnitsa is, what a bully he will be to his wife. I keep imagining he'll come back in a minute.

Kochkariov. Oh, nothing will ever bring him back. I'll stake my head that neither of those two puts his nose in here again.

Agafya. And the third?

Kochkariov. What third?

(Zhevakin pops his head in at the door.)

Zhevakin. I should very much like to know how she'll speak of me with her pretty little mouth... the rosebud.

Agafya. Baltazar Baltazarovich?

Zhevakin. Ah, here it comes, here it comes! *(Rubs his hands.)*

Kochkariov. Ough, plague take him! I couldn't think of whom you were speaking. Why, he is simply out of the question, a regular ninny.

Zhevakin. What's the meaning of that? I must confess I can't make it out.

Agafya. Yet to look at him he seemed a very nice man.

Kochkariov. He drinks!

Zhevakin. I swear, I can't make it out!

Agafya. You don't say he's a drunkard too?

Kochkariov. Believe me, he's an out and out scoundrel.

Zhevakin *(aloud).* No, excuse me, that I did not ask you to say. To say a word in my favor, to praise me, would be a different thing. But if you want to go on in that way, to speak like that, please choose somebody else—no indeed, much obliged.

Kochkariov *(aside).* What possessed him to turn up? *(To Agafya Tikhonovna in a low voice)* Look, look, he can't stand on his legs. He zigzags every way; kick him out and make an end of it! *(Aside)* And Podkoliosin not here, not here. The scoundrel! Won't I pay him back in!—*(Goes out.)*

Zhevakin *(aside).* He promised to speak for me, and instead of that he's been abusing me! Very peculiar person! *(Aloud)*

Don't you believe, miss...

Agafya. Excuse me, I don't feel well... my head aches.

Zhevakin. But perhaps there's something about me you don't like? *(Pointing to his head)* You mustn't mind my having a little bald patch here: it's nothing; it came from a fever; the hair will grow soon.

Agafya. It's all the same to me what you have there.

Zhevakin. My complexion looks much nicer, miss, when I put on a black coat.

Agafya. So much the better for you. Goodbye! *(Goes out.)*

Zhevakin *(speaking to her as she goes).* Allow me, miss, do tell me the reason why, what for, is there some fundamental defect in me or what?... She's gone! Very strange thing! Here it's the seventeenth time it's happened to me, and every time in almost the same way: everything seems going well at first, but when it comes to the point—they go and refuse me. *(Walks about the room, pondering.)* Yes... this really will be the seventeenth young lady! And after all, what does she want?

What could she expect, for instance... on what grounds ...*? (Thinking a little)* It's strange, extremely strange. I could understand if I were ugly in some way. *(Looks himself over.)* I think no one could say that; everything is as it should be, thank God, nature's not been unkind to me. There's no understanding it! Hadn't I better go home perhaps and rummage in my box? I had a poem there which no woman could resist... I swear, it's beyond all comprehension! At first I seemed to be getting along beautifully.... So I've to steer another course it seems, but I am sorry, really sorry.

(Goes out.)

(Podkoliosin and Kochkariov come in and both look behind them.)

Kochkariov. He didn't notice us. Did you see how disappointed he looked?

Podkoliosin. Do you mean to say he's been refused too, like the others?

Kochkariov. Point-blank.

Podkoliosin *(with a self-satisfied smile).* How embarrassing it must be, though, to be refused!

Kochkariov. I should think so!

Podkoliosin. Still, I can hardly believe that she told you straight out that she prefers me to all the others.

Kochkariov. Prefers, you say! She's simply wild over you. So much in love! The endearing names she has bestowed upon you, such passion—she's simply boiling.

Podkoliosin *(with a self-satisfied smirk).* Well, what words won't a woman utter when the fancy takes her! We should never think of them: my sweet little snouty,

my sweet little roachy, my sweet little blacky...

Kochkariov. Oh, that's nothing. Wait till you're married, you'll see what pet names come in the first two months. Why, old friend, you'll melt like butter.

Podkoliosin *(with a chuckle).* Really?

Kochkariov. As I am an honest man! But look now, we must make haste and get to work; have it out with her, open your heart to her this very minute and ask for her hand.

Podkoliosin. This very minute? What are you talking about?

Kochkariov. It must be this very minute.... And here she is.

(Enter Agafya Tikhonovna.)

Kochkariov. I have brought you, miss, the mortal whom you see. Never has man been so in love, indeed I wouldn't wish my worst enemy...

Podkoliosin *(nudging him under his arm, softly).* Come, old friend, you're going too far, I think.

Kochkariov *(to him).* It's all right, it's all right! *(To her softly)* Be a little bolder, he's very modest, try to be as free and easy as you can. Give a twitch of your eyebrow, or look down and then suddenly raise your eyes and destroy him, the villain, or thrust out your shoulder and let him have a look at it, the bastard!— It's a pity you didn't put on your dress with the short sleeves; though that's nice too. *(Aloud)* Well, I'll leave you in pleasant company! I'll just peep for a brief minute into your dining room and your kitchen; I must see to things, the grocer from whom I ordered the supper will be here soon; perhaps the wines have been brought.... Goodbye for the present! *(To Podkoliosin)* Be bold! be bold!

(Goes out.)

Agafya. Please sit down.

(They sit down and remain silent.)

Podkoliosin. Are you fond of rowing, miss?

Agafya. Rowing?

Podkoliosin. It’s very pleasant rowing in a boat in the summer.

Agafya. Yes, we sometimes go on a trip with friends.

Podkoliosin. There’s no knowing what the summer will be like.

Agafya. It’s much to be hoped that it will be fine.

(Both are silent.)

Podkoliosin. What flower do you like best, miss?

Agafya. That one that has a strong scent, a carnation.

Podkoliosin. Flowers are just right for ladies.

Agafya. Yes, a delightful occupation. *(Silence.)* What church did you go to last Sunday?

Podkoliosin. The Church of the Ascension, but the week before I was at the Kazansky Cathedral. But one can pray just the same whatever church one is in. Only the decorations are finer in the cathedral. *(They are silent. Podkoliosin drums with his fingers on the table.)* The promenade at Ekaterinhofsky will be here soon.

Agafya. Yes, in another month, I think.

Podkoliosin. Not so long as a month.

Agafya. I expect it will be an agreeable festival.

Podkoliosin. Today's the eighth *(counts on his fingers),* ninth, tenth, eleventh... in twenty-two days.

Agafya. Think, how soon!

Podkoliosin. I don't count today. *(Silence.)* How brave the Russian people are!

Agafya. How do you mean?

Podkoliosin. The working men. They stand on the very top...

I passed by a house and a plasterer was at work and not a bit afraid.

Agafya. Yes. And where was that?

Podkoliosin. On the way by which I go every day to my office. You know I go every morning to the department. *(Silence.*

Podkoliosin again begins drumming with his fingers; at last he picks up his hat and begins bowing.)

Agafya. Why, are you going already...?

Podkoliosin. Yes, forgive me, perhaps I've been boring you.

Agafya. How can you! On the contrary, I must thank you for passing the time so pleasantly.

Podkoliosin *(smiling).* But really I think I’ve been boring you.

Agafya. Oh no, really!

Podkoliosin. Well, if not, then allow me some other time, one evening....

Agafya. I shall be delighted.

(They take leave of each other bowing. Podkoliosin goes oui.)

Agafya. What an excellent man! Only now I’ve come to know him thoroughly; no one could help liking him; he’s both well behaved and sensible. Yes, his friend spoke the truth just now: it’s only a pity that he’s gone away so soon. I should have liked to listen to him a little longer. How delightful to talk to him! And what’s so nice is that he’s not a chatterbox. I wanted to say two or three things to him too, but I must admit I am shy, my heart began beating so violently... What a splendid man! I’ll go and tell Auntie.

(Goes out.)

(Podkoliosin and Kochkariov enter.)

Kochkariov. But what are you going home for? What nonsense! What are you going home for?

Podkoliosin. Why, what am I to stay here for? I’ve said everything I should already.

Kochkariov. Then you’ve opened your heart to her?

Podkoliosin. No, that’s the only thing perhaps. I haven’t opened my heart yet.

Kochkariov. That’s a nice thing! Why haven’t you?

Podkoliosin. Oh well, would you have me before speaking of anything else blurt out all at once: “Let me marry you, miss!”

Kochkariov. Well then, what on earth, what nonsense have you been talking about for a good half-hour?

Podkoliosin. Well, we talked of all sorts of things, and I confess I was very much pleased. I spent the time very pleasantly.

Kochkariov. But, just think: when shall we have time to get through it all? Why, in another hour you have to go to church for the wedding!

Podkoliosin. Goodness, are you mad? The wedding today!...

Kochkariov. Why not?

Podkoliosin. The wedding today?

Kochkariov. But you gave me your word yourself; you said as soon as the others were kicked out you were ready to marry her at once.

Podkoliosin. Well, I don’t go back from my word now, only it can’t be this minute. You must let me have a month’s respite at least.

Kochkariov. A month?

Podkoliosin. Yes, of course.

Kochkariov. Are you mad?

Podkoliosin. It can’t be less than a month.

Kochkariov. But I've ordered the supper from the caterer, you blockhead! Come, I say, Ivan Kuzmich darling, don't be obstinate, get married now.

Podkoliosin. Upon my word, what are you saying, how can it be now?

Kochkariov. Ivan Kuzmich! Come, I entreat you. If you won't do it for your own sake, do it for mine anyway.

Podkoliosin. But I really can't.

Kochkariov. You can, darling, you can do anything; oh, please don't be a bore, sweetheart.

Podkoliosin. But I really can't, it would be awkward, quite awkward.

Kochkariov. But what's awkward? Who told you so? You judge for yourself, you are a sensible man, you know; I tell you this not to flatter you, not because you're a forwarding clerk, I simply say so from affection.... Come, surrender, make up your mind, look at it with the eye of a rational man.

Podkoliosin. Well, if it were possible, then I'd...

Kochkariov. Ivan Kuzmich! my pet, my angel, would you like me to go down on my knees to you?

Podkoliosin. Why, what for?...

Kochkariov *(going down on his knees).* Well, here I am on my knees! Come, you see I'm entreating you; I will never forget your kindness; don't be obstinate, darling!

Podkoliosin. Oh, I can't, old friend, I really can't.

Kochkariov *(getting up angrily).* Pig!

Podkoliosin. Very well, scold away.

Kochkariov. Stupid fellow! There never has been anyone so stupid.

Podkoliosin. Scold away, scold away.

Kochkariov. For whom have I done my best? Why have I taken all this trouble! It's all been for your benefit, you idiot. Why, what is it to me? I give you up on the spot, what is it to do with me?

Podkoliosin. Whoever asked you to take trouble? By all means give it up.

Kochkariov. But you'll be lost without me, you know, you'll do nothing without me. If we don't get you married, you'll stay a fool all your life.

Podkoliosin. What's that to do with you?

Kochkariov. It's for your sake I'm exerting myself, blockhead.

Podkoliosin. I don't want your exertions.

Kochkariov. Well then, go to hell!

Podkoliosin. Well, I will go.

Kochkariov. And a good journey to you!

Podkoliosin. All right, I will go.

Kochkariov. Do, do. And I hope you'll break your leg there directly. From the bottom of my heart I hope that a drunken cabman will drive his shaft into your throat! You're a rag, not a government clerk! Here I swear it's all over between

us now, and don’t let me ever set eyes on you again!

Podkoliosin. I won’t!

(Goes out.)

Kochkariov. Go to the devil, to your old friend! *(Opening the door shouts after him)* Idiot! *(Walks up and down the room in great agitation.)* Oh, has such a man ever been seen? What an idiot! Though, to tell the truth, I’m a nice one too. Come, tell me, please, I ask you all, am I not an idiot, a noodle, am I not an ass? Why have I been working hard, shouting till my throat is dry? What is he to me? a relation or what? And what am I to him, a nurse, an aunt, a godmother, or what? Why, why the devil am I worrying about him and upsetting myself? The evil one take him entirely! Goodness only knows what for! You may well ask a man sometimes what he does a thing for! The scoundrel! What a nasty revolting face! I could take you, you stupid beast, and flip you on the nose, the mouth, the ears, the teeth, and everywhere! *(In his anger makes several flips in the air.)* What’s so annoying is that he has walked off, he doesn’t care, it’s all like water off a duck’s back with him: that’s what’s insufferable! He’ll go home to his lodging, lie down and smoke his pipe. What a nasty creature! There are nasty faces of all sorts, but you’ll never invent one like his: you couldn’t think of a nastier face, I swear you couldn’t! But no, I’ll go. I’ll make a point of bringing him back, the wretch! I won’t let him sneak out of it. I’ll go and fetch the rascal!

(Runs off.)

(Soon after, Agafya enters.)

Agafya. My heart’s throbbing: there are no words for it. Everywhere, wherever I turn, Ivan Kuzmich seems standing before me. How true it is there’s no escaping one’s destiny. I’ve just been trying my utmost to think of something else, but whatever I take up—I tried winding wool, and embroidering the purse—but Ivan Kuzmich seems always to spring out upon me. *(A pause.)* And so at last I am to change my maiden state! They will take me, lead me to church, then leave me alone with a man—ough! It makes me shudder. Farewell to my girlhood. *(Weeps.)* How many years I’ve spent in peace... here I’ve gone on living and

now I have to be married. All sorts of troubles before me. Children, little boys, such quarrelsome creatures, and there'll be little girls: they'll grow up and will have to be married. And one must be thankful if they marry good men; but what if they marry drunkards or men who are ready to gamble away everything they have on! *(Begins by degrees sobbing again.)* I have not managed to enjoy my maiden state and have not even been single for twentyseven years. *(Changing her voice)* But why is Ivan Kuzmich away so long?

(Enter Podkoliosin, thrust onto the stage from the door by Kochkariov.)

Podkoliosin *(stammering).* I've come to you, miss, to explain one little point... only I should first like to know whether you'll not think it strange?

Agafya *(dropping her eyes).* What is it?

Podkoliosin. No, miss, do tell1 me first, will you not think it strange?

Agafya *(still looking down).* I can't tell what it is.

Podkoliosin. But confess, you will most likely think what I am saying to you is strange.

Agafya. Oh dear, how could I think it strange; it's pleasant to hear anything from you.

Podkoliosin. But you've never heard this yet. *(Agafya drops her eyes more than ever; at this moment Kochkariov enters stealthily and stands behind Podkoliosin's shoulders.)* The point is this... but perhaps I'd better tell you some other time.

Agafya. But what is it?

Podkoliosin. Why... I confess I was meaning to tell you now, but I cannot help hesitating still.

Kochkariov *(to himself, folding his arms).* Good Lord, what a man! He's simply an old woman's slipper, not a man: a mockery of a man, a satire on a man.

Agafya. Why do you hesitate?

Podkoliosin. Well, I am overcome by doubt somehow.

Kochkariov *(aloud).* How stupid it is, how stupid it is! Why, you see, miss, he's asking for your hand. He wants to declare he can't live without you: can't exist. He's only asking whether you consent to make him happy.

Podkoliosin *(almost panic-stricken, nudges him, saying quickly).* Upon my soul, what are you doing?

Kochkariov. So what do you say, miss? Do you consent to make this mortal happy?

Agafya. I do not dare to suppose that I could make him happy ... however, I consent.

Kochkariov. Naturally, naturally; so you should long ago! Give me your hands.

Podkoliosin. Presently. *(Tries to whisper something in his ear.*

Kochkariov shakes his fist at him and frowns. He gives his hand.)

Kochkariov *(joining their hands).* Well, God bless you!! I give my consent and approval to your union. Marriage is a thing ... it's not like calling a cab and taking a drive: it's a duty of a very different kind: it's a duty... I haven't the time now, but afterwards I'll tell you what a duty it is. Come, Ivan Kuzmich, kiss your bride. You may do that now; you should do that now. *(Agafya looks down.)* Never mind, never mind, miss. That's as it should be! Let him kiss you!

Podkoliosin. No, miss, allow me, allow me now. *(Kisses her and takes her*

hand.) What a lovely little hand! Why have you such a lovely little hand, miss?... And allow me, miss, I should like the wedding to be at once, at once.

Agafya. At once! Isn't that perhaps too soon?

Podkoliosin. I won't hear it! I should like it to be sooner. I should like the wedding to be this minute.

Kochkariov. Bravo! Excellent! Good man! I confess I always expected great things of you in the future. You'd better make haste now and get dressed, miss. As a matter of fact, I've sent for a carriage already, and have invited the wedding guests. They've all gone straight to the church. You've got your wedding dress ready, I know.

Agafya. Oh yes, I've had it a long time. I'll be ready in a minute.

(Goes out.)

Podkoliosin. Oh, thank you, old friend! Now I see all you've done for me. My own father would not have done what you have. I see that you've acted from affection. Thank you. I shall remember your kindness all my life. *(Moved)* Next spring I shall certainly visit your father's grave.

Kochkariov. It's all right, my boy. I am delighted too. Come, I'll kiss you. *(Kisses him on one cheek and then on the other.)* God grant that you live happily. *(They kiss each other.)* In abundance and prosperity. I hope you'll have a crowd of children...

Podkoliosin. Thank you, old friend! Indeed, only now at last I have grasped what life means. A quite new world is opening before me now. Now I see that it is all moving, living, feeling, that it is somehow effervescing; somehow or other one doesn't know oneself what's happening. Until now I saw nothing of this and did not understand it—that is, I was simply a man deprived of all understanding. I didn't reflect, didn't go into things, but just went on living, as every other man lives.

Kochkariov. I am delighted, delighted! Now I'm going just to have a look how the table's been laid. I'll be back in a minute.

(Aside) But still, it might be better to hide his hat in any case.

(Pick up the hat and goes out, taking it with him.)

Podkoliosin. What have I been till now, in reality? Did I understand the significance of life? I didn't. I understood nothing. What, what has my bachelor life been like? What was I good for? What did I do? I went on from day to day, did my work, went to the office, ate my dinner, and went to sleep—in fact, I've been the most frivolous and ordinary man in the world. Only now one sees how stupid everyone is who doesn't get married; yet if you come to think of it, what numbers of men go on living in blindness. If I were a king, I would order everyone to be married: absolutely everyone, so that there shouldn't be one bachelor in my kingdom. When one thinks, you know, in a few minutes one will be married! All at once, one will taste bliss such as is only to be found in fairy tales, which there's no expressing, nor finding words to express. *(After a brief pause)* But, say what you will, it is positively alarming when one thinks it over. To bind oneself for all one's life, for all one's days, come what may, and no getting out of it afterwards, no retracting it, nothing, nothing—everything over, everything settled. Why, even now it's impossible to turn back; in another minute I shall be in church: it's quite impossible to get away—there's the carriage there already and everything prepared. But is it really impossible to get away? Why, naturally it's impossible. There are people standing there, and at the door and everywhere. Why, they'll ask what for? I cannot. No! But here's the window open. What about the window? No, I can't; why, to be sure, it's undignified; besides, it's a long way from the ground... *(Goes up to the window.)* Oh well, it's not so high: there's only the one floor, and that's a low one. Oh no, how could I: I haven't even a cap. How can I go without a hat? So awkward! Though, after all, can't I go without a hat? What if I were to try, eh? Shall I try? *(Stands on the window, and saying, "Lord help me!" jumps into the street; is heard moaning and groaning below.)* Oh, it was a long way, though. Hi, cabman!

Cabman's Voice. Where to, sir?

Podkoliosin's Voice. Kanavka, near Semenovsky Bridge.

Cabman’s Voice. Ten kopeks.

Podkoliosin’s Voice. Settled! off! off! *(There is the rattle of a chaise driving away.)*

(Agafya, in her wedding dress, enters timidly, her head hanging.)

Agafya. I don’t know what’s the matter with me! Again I feel shy and am trembling all over. Oh! if only just for a minute he were not in the room; if only he’d gone to fetch something!

(Looks around timidly.) But where is he? There’s no one here.

Where has he gone? *(Opens the door into the passage and says)* Fiokla, where is Ivan Kuzmich gone?

Fiokla’s Voice. Why, he’s there.

Agafya. But where is “there”?

(Fiokla comes in.)

Fiokla. Why, he was sitting here in the room.

Agafya. But he isn’t here, you see.

Fiokla. Well, he didn’t come out of the room either: I was sitting in the passage.

Agafya. But where is he, then?

Fiokla. I can’t say; did he go the other way out, by the back stairs, or is he in Arina Panteleimonovna’s room?

Agafya. Auntie! Auntie!

(Enter Arina dressed in her best.)

Arina. What is it?

Agafya. Is Ivan Kuzmich with you?

Arina. No, he must be here; he hasn't been to see me.

Fiokla. Well, he hasn't been in the passage either. I was sitting there, you know.

Agafya. Well, he's not here either, you see.

(Enter Kochkariov.)

Kochkariov. What's the matter?

Agafya. Why, Ivan Kuzmich isn't here.

Kochkariov. Not here? Has he gone away?

Agafya. No, he hasn't gone away either.

Kochkariov. How's that? Not here and not gone away?

Fiokla. I can't think wherever he can have got to. I've been sitting in the passage all the time and never left my seat.

Arina. Well, he couldn't have gone out by the back stairs.

Kochkariov. Well, hang it all! he can't have got lost without leaving the room; can he be in hiding? Ivan Kuzmich, where are you? Stop now, don't play the fool! Come now, surrender. It's time you were in church! *(Looks behind the cupboard, even casts a sidelong glance under the chairs.)* It's incomprehensible! No, he couldn't have gone away, he couldn't possibly! he's here; why, his hat's in the next room. I put it there on purpose.

Arina. Shall we ask the girl whether she knows anything? She was standing in the street all the time.... Dunyashka! Dunyashka!

(Enter Dunyashka.)

Arina. Where is Ivan Kuzmich? Haven't you seen him?

Dunyashka. Why, the gentleman jumped out of the window.

(Agafya utters a shriek, clasping her hands.)

All Three. Out of the window?

Dunyashka. Yes, and then took a cab and drove away.

Arina. Are you speaking the truth?

Kochkariov. You're telling a lie. It can't be!

Dunyashka. Oh yes, he did jump out! The man at the grocery shop saw him too. He took a cab for ten kopeks and drove away.

Arina *(stepping up to Kochkariov)*. How's this, my good man, to make fun of us? Did you think to have a laugh at our expense? Are we here to be made fools of? Why, I am sixty and never have seen such a disgrace. If you are a respectable man, I'll spit in your face for doing such a thing. If you are a respectable man, you are acting like a scoundrel. To put a girl to shame before all the world! Why,

I’m not a lady, but I wouldn’t do such a thing, and you’re a gentleman! You’re gentleman enough to be a scoundrel and a rogue, it seems!

(Goes out in a rage and leads out Agafya.)

(Kochkariov stands as though overwhelmed.)

Fiokla. Well, so this is the man who knows how to do the job!

He can arrange a marriage without a matchmaker! I may have gentlemen on my list who are a motley crew and all sorts, but I haven’t any who’d jump out of a window. No, thank you.

Kochkariov. It’s nonsense, it can’t be so! I’ll run. I’ll bring him back.

(Goes out.)

Fiokla. Yes, you go and bring him back! You don’t know much about the business of getting married! If he’d run out of the door it would be another matter. But if a bridegroom jumps out of the window—the game is up!

(Curtain.)

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THE GAMBLERS



Translated by Constance Garnett

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CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

Ikharev
Gavriushka
Aleksey
Krugel
Shvokhnev
Uteshitelny
Glov, Mikhail Aleksandrovich
Glov, Aleksander Mikhailovich
Zamukhryshkin

His servant
A waiter
An elderly man
His son
A government clerk

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THE GAMBLERS

A Room in a Provincial Inn. Ikharev comes in, accompanied by Aleksey and Gavriushka.

Aleksey. Please walk in! Here is a nice little room! It’s very quiet, there is no noise here at all.

Ikharev. No noise, but I bet there are plenty of mounted cavalry, hoppers?

Aleksey. Your honor means fleas? Set your mind at rest. If a flea or a bug bites you, we take the responsibility; we make a point of that.

Ikharev *(to Gavriushka)*. Go and bring the things from the carriage. *(Gavriushka goes out. To Aleksey)* What’s your name?

Aleksey. Aleksey, sir.

Ikharev *(significantly)*. Tell me, who is staying here?

Aleksey. Oh, a lot of people. Almost all the rooms are full.

Ikharev. And who are they?

Aleksey. Piotr Petrovich Shvokhnev, Colonel Krugel, Stepan Ivanovich Uteshitelny.

Ikharev. Do they gamble?

Aleksey. Why, they have been playing cards for six nights on end.

Ikharev. Here is a couple of rubles! *(Thrusts them into his hand.)*

Aleksey *(bowing).* Much obliged, sir.

Ikharev. There will be more for you later.

Aleksey. Much obliged, sir.

Ikharev. Do they play together?

Aleksey. No; lately they played with Lieutenant Artunovsky till he lost all his money; they won thirty-six thousand from Prince Shenkin.

Ikharev. Here's another ten rubles for you. And if you serve me faithfully you'll have more. Tell me, did you buy the cards?

Aleksey. No, they bought them together.

Ikharev. From whom?

Aleksey. From the shop here, Vakhrameykin's.

Ikharev. That's a lie, that's a lie, you rogue!

Aleksey. They really did!

Ikharev. Very good. I shall have a word with you again. *(Gavriushka brings in a box.)* Bring it here! Now go and bring me things for washing and shaving.

(Servants go out.)

Ikharev *(opens the box, which is entirely filled with packs of cards).* A lovely sight, hey! Every pack is worth its weight in gold. Each has been won by the sweat of my brow. I may say, my eyes are still dizzy with the damned marks on their backs. But then, they are a solid investment that I might leave to my children. Here, this pack is a pearl beyond price. And that's why I have given it a name—it is Adelaida Ivanovna. You do your duty by me, darling, as well as your sister did it; you win me another eighty thousand, and when I get home I'll erect a marble monument to you—I'll order one in Moscow. *(Hearing a sound, hurriedly closes the box.)*

(Aleksey and Gavriushka come in, bringing a basin, a jug of water, and a towel.)

Ikharev. Where are these gentlemen now? Are they in?

Aleksey. Yes, they are in the lobby.

Ikharev. I'll go and see what sort of people they are.

(Goes out.)

Aleksey. Do you come from far?

Gavriushka. From Ryazan.

Aleksey. And are you from that province?

Gavriushka. No, we come from Smolensk.

Aleksey. I see. So your master lives in the Smolenski province?

Gavriushka. No, he doesn't. We have a hundred souls in Smolensk, and we have eighty in Kaluzhski province.

Aleksey. I understand. He has property in two provinces then?

Gavriushka. Yes, in two provinces. In the house alone we have Ignaty the butler, Pavlushka who used to travel about with the master, Gerasim the footman, Ivan another footman, Ivan the huntsman, another Ivan who plays in the band, then the cook Grigory, then the cook Semion, Varukh the gardener, Dementy the coachman—we have all those!

(Krugel and Shvokhnev enter cautiously.)

Krugel. I am afraid he will find us.

Shvokhnev. Nonsense, Stepan Ivanovich will keep him. *(To Aleksey)* Run along, my boy, they are calling you! *(Exit Aleksey. Shvokhnev goes rapidly up to Gavriushka.)* Where does your master come from?

Gavriushka. Why, he comes now from Ryazan.

Shvokhnev. Is he a landowner?

Gavriushka. Yes, sir.

Shovkhnev. Does he gamble?

Gavriushka. Yes, sir.

Shovkhnev. Here is a little something for you. *(Gives him paper money.)* Tell us all about him!

Gavriushka. You won’t tell my master?

Both. No, no, never fear!

Shvokhnev. Tell us, how is he doing now, has he been winning?

Gavriushka. Why, do you know Colonel Chebotariov?

Shvokhnev. No, why?

Gavriushka. Three weeks ago we cleaned him out of eighty thousand rubles as well as a Warsaw carriage, and a box, and a rug, and gold epaulets... the gold in them alone worth six hundred rubles.

Shvokhnev *(looks significantly at Krugel)*. Eh? Eighty thousand? *(Krugel shakes his head.)* Not quite above-board, you think? We shall find that out in a minute. *(To Gavriushka)* Tell me, when your master stays at home what does he do?

Gavriushka. What does he do? Why, to be sure, he is a gentleman and he behaves like one—he does nothing.

Shvokhnev. That's a lie. I bet you he is never without a card in his hands.

Gavriushka. I can't say. I have been only two weeks with the master; Pavlushka always used to go with him on his travels. We've Gerasim a footman too, and Ivan, another footman, and Ivan the huntsman, and another Ivan who plays in the band, Dementy the coachman, and the other day another one was brought from the village.

Shvokhnev *(to Krugel)*. Do you think he is a cardsharp?

Krugel. Very likely.

Shvokhnev. We might give it a try, anyway.

(Both run off.)

Gavriushka *(alone)*. They are shrewd gentlemen! But I am glad to have the money. That will be a cap for Matriona and some goodies for the little rascals. Eh, I like traveling! One is always picking up something; master sends you out

to buy something, and out of every ruble you can put some coppers into your pocket. What a fine life the gentry lead, when you think of it! Drive about wherever you like! He is tired of Smolensk, so he goes to Ryazan; if he doesn't care for Ryazan, then there's Kazan; if he doesn't care for Kazan, he can go to Yaroslav. I can't make up my mind which town is superior—Ryazan or Kazan? Kazan may be superior because in Kazan...

(Enter Ikharev.)

Ikharev. There is nothing special about them, I think. And yet ... Ah, I'd like to clean them out! My God, how I'd like to! It makes my heart beat to think of it. *(Takes a brush and soap, sits down before the mirror, and begins to shave.)* My hand is shaking, I can't shave properly.

Aleksey *(enters).* Shall I bring your honor something to eat?

Ikharev. Certainly, bring lunch for four—caviar, salmon, and four bottles of wine. And feed him. *(Points to Gavriushka.)*

Aleksey *(to Gavriushka)*. Come into the kitchen, everything is ready for you there.

(Exit Gavriushka.)

Ikharev *(goes on shaving).* Did they give you much?

Aleksey. Who, sir?

Ikharev. Come, don't wriggle out of it, tell me!

Aleksey. Yes, they gave me something for my service.

Ikharev. How much? Fifty rubles?

Aleksey. Yes, sir, fifty rubles.

Ikharev. And from me you will get not fifty rubles, but you see there is a hundred rubles lying on the table: take it. What are you afraid of? It won't bite you! Nothing is asked of you except honesty—do you understand? Whether the cards come from Vakharmeykin or any other shop is not my business, but here is another dozen. *(Gives him a sealed packet.)* Do you understand?

Aleksey. Of course I do. Your honor may rely on me, I'll see to it.

Ikharev. And put those cards out of sight in case you are seen or searched. *(Puts down the brush and soap and rubs his face with the towel. Aleksey goes out.)* It would be fine, awfully fine! How I'd love swindling them!

(Shvokhnev, Krugel and Stepan Ivanovich enter, bowing.)

Ikharev *(goes to meet them, bowing).* You must please excuse me: the room is not much to boast of—four chairs, that's all.

Uteshitelny. Warm welcome from one's host is better than any luxury.

Shvokhnev. It's not the room that matters but the company.

Uteshitelny. That's very true. I can't exist without company. *(To Krugel)* Do you remember, my good sir, how I came here all alone? Just imagine—no one I knew! The landlady is an old woman. On the stairs a chambermaid, a perfect monster; I see an infantry man dangling after her, obviously thankful for what he can get, poor fellow.... Deadly dull, in fact. All at once fate brought this gentleman along and chance threw us together.... Wasn't I pleased! I can't spend an hour, not an hour, without pleasant company. I always want to open my heart to everyone I meet.

Krugel. That's a vice in you, my friend, not a virtue. All excess is bad. I expect you've been taken in more than once.

Uteshitelny. Yes, I have, I have been and I always shall be. And yet I can't help being sincere.

Krugel. Well, I must admit that's beyond me—to be candid with everyone. Friends are a different matter.

Uteshitelny. Yes, but a man belongs to society.

Krugel. But not the whole of him!

Uteshitelny. Yes, the whole of him.

Krugel. No, not the whole of him.

Uteshitelny. Yes, the whole of him.

Krugel. No, not the whole of him.

Uteshitelny. Yes, the whole of him.

Shovkhnev *(to Uteshitelny)*. Don't argue, dear friend, you are wrong.

Uteshitelny *(hotly).* No, I'll prove it. It's a moral obligation. It's a... it's a... it's a... it's a duty! It's a... it's a ... it's a...

Shvokhnev. Come, now he's off! It's amazing how hot he gets: one can make sense of the first two or three words he says, but after that there's no making head or tail of it.

Uteshitelny. I can't help it, I can't! If it's a question of principle or duty, I don't know what I am saying. I usually warn people beforehand: "Gentlemen, if anything of the sort is discussed, you must excuse me, but I shall be absolutely carried away, absolutely." It's a regular intoxication, and my blood simply boils.

Ikharev *(to himself).* Oh no, my friend. We know the sort of people who grow hot and are carried away at the word “duty.” I dare say your blood does boil, but it’s not on that account. *(Aloud)* Well, gentlemen, while we are discussing our sacred duties, how would it be to sit down to a game of *shtoss?*

(During their conversation breakfast is served.)

Uteshitelny. By all means, if it is not for high stakes.

Krugel. I am never averse to an innocent pastime.

Ikharev. And what about cards, I suppose we can get them here?

Shvokhnev. Oh, you have only to ask for them!

Ikharev. Cards! *(Aleksey arranges the card table.)* And meanwhile, gentlemen, may I offer you...? *(points to the table and comes up to it).* The smoked salmon I think is not much, but the caviar isn’t so bad.

Shvokhnev *(putting a piece of salmon in his mouth).* No, the salmon is not bad either.

Krugel *(eating).* And the cheese is good. The caviar isn’t bad either.

Shvokhnev *(to Krugel)*. Do you remember the splendid cheese we had two weeks ago?

Krugel. No, I shall never forget the cheese I had at Piotr Aleksandrovich Aleksandrov’s.

Uteshitelny. But do you know when cheese is good, my friends? It’s when you have to eat one dinner on the top of another—that’s its true use. It’s just like a good quartermaster who says, “Welcome, gentlemen, there’s still room.”

Ikharev. Welcome, gentlemen, the cards are on the table.

Uteshitelny *(going up to the card table).* Ah, this is like old times! Look, Shvokhnev, cards, eh? How many years...

Ikharev *(aside).* Enough of your deception!

Uteshitelny. Would you like to hold the bank?

Ikharev. By all means: a small one, five hundred rubles. Will you cut? *(Deals. The game begins. Exclamations.)*

Shvokhnev. Four, an ace—ten on each.

Uteshitelny. Give me your pack, brother, I will pick a card for myself in the name of our marshall's wife. May she bring me luck!

Krugel. Allow me to add a nine.

Uteshitelny. Shvokhnev, give me the chalk. I'll put the stakes down and figure them out.

Shvokhnev. Damn it, double!

Uteshitelny. I go another five rubles!

Krugel. *Attendez!* Let me have a look. I think there must be two threes left in the pack.

Uteshitelny *(jumping up from his place, aside).* Damn it, there's something wrong here. These are different cards, that's obvious.

(The game goes on.)

Ikharev *(to Krugel).* May I ask, are both going?

Krugel. Yes, both.

Ikharev. You won't raise your stake?

Krugel. No.

Ikharev *(to Shvokhnev).* And you, aren't you staking?

Shvokhnev. Let me sit out this round. *(Gets up from his chair, goes hurriedly up to Uteshitelny and says rapidly)* Hell, old friend! He is cheating like anything! He is a first-rate cardsharp!

Uteshitelny *(disturbed).* We can't give up the eighty thousand, can we?

Shvokhnev. Of course we shall have to, if we can't get it.

Uteshitelny. Well, that's still the question, and meanwhile we must have it out with him.

Shvokhnev. How?

Uteshitelny. Make a clean breast of it.

Shvokhnev. What for?

Uteshitelny. I'll tell you later on. Come along. *(Both go up to Ikharev and slap him on either shoulder.)*

Uteshitelny. It's no use your going on firing blank shots!

Ikharev *(starting).* How so?

Uteshitelny. What's the good of talking? A man always spots his own sort.

Ikharev *(courteously).* Allow me to ask in what sense I am to understand...

Uteshitelny. Oh, simply, without wasting words or standing on ceremony. We see your skill and, believe me, we can do justice to your accomplishments. And so in the name of my comrades I suggest a friendly alliance. By combining our wits and our capital we may be much more successful than by acting separately.

Ikharev. How far may I credit your words?

Uteshitelny. I'll tell you how far: we meet frankness with frankness. We'll confess to you openly that we had agreed to swindle you, for we took you for an ordinary person. But now we see that you are familiar with the higher mysteries. And so, will you accept our friendship?

Ikharev. I cannot refuse such a kind offer.

Uteshitelny. And so let us all shake hands. *(All in turn shake Ikharev's hand.)* Henceforth all is in common; all pretense and ceremony laid aside! Allow me to ask how long have you studied the secrets of the science?

Ikharev. I must admit that I have had an inclination that way from my earliest youth. When I was at school, during lectures I used to hold a bank for my schoolmates under my desk.

Uteshitelny. I thought so. Such skill cannot be acquired without practice in the years of supple youth. Do you remember that wonderful child, Shvokhnev?

Ikharev. What child?

Uteshitelny. Tell him.

Shvokhnev. I shall never forget a case like that. His brother-inlaw *(pointing to Uteshitelny)* said to me, “Shvokhnev, would you like to see a prodigy? A boy of eleven, the son of Ivan Mikhailovich Kubyshev can play tricks with cards better than any cardsharp. Go to Tetushevsky county and see for yourself.” I went off there at once. I asked for Ivan Mikhailovich Kubyshev’s country house and went straight to see him. I sent in my name. A middle-aged man met me. I introduced myself and said, “Excuse me, I hear that God has blessed you with a son of rare parts.”—”Yes, I must confess it is so,” he said *(and I was pleased, you know, by the absence of affectation and pretense in him)*. “Though I am his father, and it is not for me to sing the praises of my own son, he really is a prodigy in a way. Mishka!” he said, “come here, show our visitor what you can do.” The boy was only a child, not as high as my shoulder, and nothing special to look at. But he began to deal the cards, and I was positively aghast. It baffles description.

Ikharev. Couldn’t you see how he did it?

Shvokhnev. Not at all, not the faintest trace. I simply stared.

Ikharev. That is extraordinary!

Uteshitelny. A phenomenon, a natural phenomenon!

Ikharev. And when I come to think what skill it needs, combined with keenness of sight and prolonged study of the marks on the cards...

Uteshitelny. That has all been made so much easier now. Marking of cards is out of fashion now. People try to study the key now.

Ikharev. You mean, the key of the pattern?

Uteshitelny. Yes, the key of the pattern on the back. In a town which I won’t mention by name there is a worthy individual who does nothing else at all. Every year he gets several hundred packs of cards from Moscow—from whom, is a question wrapped in obscurity—his whole duty consists in analyzing the marking of each card and sending out the key. Observe how the pattern on the two is arranged and how it differs on another. For that alone he gets five

thousand a year in cash.

Ikharev. It’s a very important duty, though.

Uteshitelny. It’s bound to be done like that. It’s what is called in economics division of labor. Take a carriage builder—he does not build the whole of the carriage himself; he hands over the job partly to the blacksmith, partly to the upholsterer.

Life would not be long enough without it.

Ikharev. Allow me to put one question to you: what methods have you adopted so far for getting your packs used? One can’t always bribe a servant.

Uteshitelny. God forbid! Besides, it’s risky. It sometimes means mortgaging yourself. We do things differently. This is how we set to work on one occasion. Our agent arrived at the fair and put up at the town inn, passing himself off for a trader; he hadn’t time to take a shop, he had all his boxes and parcels at the inn. He stayed at the inn, eating and drinking, ran up a bill, and suddenly disappeared without paying. The innkeeper ransacked his room and saw only one parcel left; he undid it and found a hundred dozen packs of cards. These were naturally at once sold by auction; they were sold a ruble under the regular price; the shopkeepers instantly stocked their shops with them; and in four days the whole town was lamenting its losses at cards.

Ikharev. That was very neat.

Shvokhnev. And then with that fellow, that country gentleman?

Ikharev. What about him?

Uteshitelny. That wasn’t badly managed either. I don’t know whether you know him, Arkady Andreievich Dergunov, a very wealthy man. He is a first-rate player, of exemplary honesty; there is no way of getting at him: he looks into everything himself, his servants are refined people, perfect gentlemen, his house

is a regular palace, his estate, his parks are all in the English style; in fact he is a Russian gentleman in the fullest sense of the word. How were we to set to work? There seemed simply no possibility. At last we thought of a plan. One morning a cart dashed by the very yard with a lot of young fellows. They were all as drunk as could be, bawling songs and driving at full speed. All the servants turned out to look at such a sight, as they always do, gaping and laughing. Then they noticed that something had dropped out of the cart, ran up and found a bag. They waved and shouted “Stop!” but no chance of that, no one heeded; they had raced off, leaving nothing but dust on the road. They undid the bag, found linen, clothes of some sort, two hundred rubles, and forty dozen packs of cards. Well, naturally they didn’t throw away the money, the cards found their way to the master’s tables, and next evening the master of the house and his visitors were left without a kopek in their pockets when the game was over.

Ikharev. Very clever! Why, that would be called roguery and all sorts of names, but you know it’s subtle intelligence, a refinement of culture.

Uteshitelny. People don’t understand gambling. It is no respecter of persons. It takes nothing into consideration. If my own father were to sit down to cards with me, I would cheat my father: he shouldn’t risk it! All men are equal at cards.

Ikharev. What they don’t understand is that a gambler may be the best of men. I know one who is fond of juggling with cards and all such tricks, but he would give his last kopek to a beggar. And yet nothing would make him refuse to join forces with two others and win for certain from a fourth. Well, gentlemen, since we are being so frank, I will show you a wonderful trick. Do you know what is meant by a composite or made-up pack in which one could guess any card a good way off?

Uteshitelny. Yes, but perhaps it’s a different sort.

Ikharev. I believe I can boast that you would not find another like it. It meant nearly six months’ work. I could not stand the sunlight for two weeks afterwards. The doctor thought I had inflammation of the eyes. *(Takes a pack out of the box.)*

Here it is! You may think it foolish, but it has a name like a human being.

Uteshitelny. A name?

Ikharev. Yes, a name: Adelaida Ivanovna.

Uteshitelny *(laughing).* Do you hear, Shvokhnev, that's a new idea—calling a pack of cards Adelaida Ivanovna. I think that's really witty.

Shvokhnev. Excellent! Adelaida Ivanovna. Very good.

Uteshitelny. Adelaida Ivanovna! A German girl. Krugel, that's the wife for you.

Krugel. Me a German! My grandfather was a German, it's true, but even he could not speak the language.

Uteshitelny *(examining the cards).* This is certainly a treasure.

Why, there are no signs on it at all. But can you really identify any card at any distance?

Ikharev. Try me. I will stand five paces away from you and I'll name every card from here. I'll hand over two thousand if I fail.

Uteshitelny. Well, what card is this?

Ikharev. A seven.

Uteshitelny. Right. And this one?

Ikharev. A jack.

Uteshitelny. Damn it, yes! And this one?

Ikharev. A three.

Uteshitelny. It's incredible!

Krugel *(shrugging his shoulders).* Incredible!

Shvokhnev. Incredible!

Uteshitelny. Let me have another look at it. *(Examines the pack.)'* It's marvelous! It deserves a name. But allow me to observe, it is difficult to make use of it except with very inexperienced players; you would have to slip it onto the table yourself.

Ikharev. But, of course, it is only done in the very heat of the game, when the stakes are so high that the most experienced player is a little agitated; and if a man is only a little off his guard you can do anything with him. You know that even the best players at times play themselves silly, as it's called. When a man has been playing for two days and two nights on end without a wink of sleep—well, he's played himself out. In the heat of the game I can always manage to change the cards. I assure you it all lies in being cool when the other man is excited. And there are thousands of ways of distracting people's attention. Suddenly accuse one of the players, say that his score is put down wrong. The eyes of all will turn upon him, and meantime the cards are changed.

Uteshitelny. Well, I see that in addition to your skill you possess the gift of coolness—that's a very important thing. Association with you will be all the more valuable to us. Let us drop ceremony, lay aside unnecessary etiquette, and speak to each other as comrades.

Ikharev. It is about time we did.

Uteshitelny. Waiter, champagne! To our friendly cooperation!

Ikharev. Yes, that's worth a drink.

Shvokhnev. Well, here we are gathered for heroic deeds, our weapons are in our hands, our forces are ready, only one thing is lacking...

Ikharev. That’s so, that’s so, a fortress for us to attack, that’s the trouble!

Uteshitelny. What’s to be done? There’s no foe in sight so far.

(Looking intently at Shvokhnev) Well? Your face seems to say that you know of one.

Shvokhnev. Yes, I do.... *(Pauses.)*

Uteshitelny. I know at whom you are hinting.

Ikharev *(eagerly).* Whom? Whom? Who is it?

Uteshitelny. Oh, it’s nonsense, all nonsense. There’s nothing in it. You see, a country gentleman is staying here, Mikhail Aleksandrovich Glov. But what’s the good of talking of him since he doesn’t play at all? We have had a try at him already....

I have been at him for a month; I have gained his affection and his confidence, but I have had no luck.

Ikharev. But couldn’t I see him? Perhaps... you never can tell.

Uteshitelny. Well, I can tell you beforehand that it is trouble thrown away.

Ikharev. But let us try, let us try him once more.

Shvokhnev. Well, bring him in, anyway. If we don’t succeed, we’ll simply have a talk. Why not try?

Uteshitelny. By all means, I don’t mind, I’ll get him.

Ikharev. Please bring him now!

Uteshitelny. Very well, very well.

(Goes out.)

Ikharev. Yes, indeed, you can never tell. Sometimes a thing seems quite out of the question...

Shvokhnev. I am of the same opinion myself. It is not God you have to deal with, but a man, and a man is always but a man.

He may say “no” today and “no” tomorrow and “no” the day after tomorrow, but on the fourth day, if you attack him properly, he will say “yes.” A man will make a pretense, you know, of being unapproachable, but, as you get to know him better, you will see there was no need for any anxiety.

Krugel. This man is not like that, though.

Ikharev. Oh, if only he were! You can’t imagine how eager I feel now to set to work. You must know that I won eighty thousand from Colonel Chebotariov last month. Since then I have had no practice. You can’t imagine how bored I have felt all this time! Bored to death!

Shvokhnev. I understand your condition. It is just like a general —what he must feel when there is no war!... It’s simply a deadly interval, my dear fellow, I know by myself. It’s no joking matter.

Ikharev. Would you believe it, it comes to such a pitch that if anyone were to start a game for five rubles I would be ready to sit down and play.

Shvokhnev. A natural thing. That’s how the most skillful players come to grief sometimes: they are so bored, they have no work, and they are driven by

desperation to play with some beggarly rat—and then they lose money for nothing!

Ikharev. IS this Glov rich?

Krugel. Oh, he has money. I believe about a thousand souls.

Ikharev. Ech! Damn it! Shall we make him drunk? Send for some champagne?

Shvokhnev. He never touches a drop.

Ikharev. What are we to do with him? How can we tackle him?

But yet I keep thinking... gambling is a tempting thing. I believe if he would only sit down beside players he couldn't resist.

Shvokhnev. Well, we'll try it. Krugel and I will have a game for very low stakes here, to one side. But you mustn't pay too much attention to him; old men are suspicious.

(They sit down at one side with cards. Uteshitelny and MIKHAIL ALEKSANDROVICH Glov, an elderly man, come in.)

Uteshitelny. Here, Ikharev, let me introduce—Mikhail Aleksandrovich Glov.

Ikharev. I have long been desirous of the honor... staying in the same inn...

Glov. I am very much pleased to make your acquaintance too.

I only regret that it is just as I am leaving.

Ikharev *(handing him a chair).* Please sit down.... Have you been staying in this town long?

(Uteshitelny, Shvokhnev, and Krugel whisper together.)

Glov. Ah, my good sir, how sick I am of the town! I shall be thankful, body and soul, to get out of it as quickly as possible.

Ikharev. YOU are detained by business, then?

Glov. Business? Yes. Such troublesome business too.

Ikharev. A lawsuit, I presume?

Glov. NO, thank God, there is no litigation, but all the same the circumstances are complicated. I am marrying my daughter, sir, a girl of eighteen—do you understand a father's position?

I've come to make various purchases, but the principal task is to raise a mortgage on my estate. It would all have been finished, but the Treasury hasn't paid the money so far. I am staying here for nothing at all.

Ikharev. And allow me to ask for what sum are you mortgaging your estate?

Glov. For two hundred thousand. They should pay it any day, but it keeps dragging on, and I am so sick of being here. I left everything at home, you know, expecting to be back very soon. My daughter is engaged to be married. Everything is being delayed... I have made up my mind not to wait any longer, but to leave it all.

Ikharev. Why? Won't you wait to receive the money?

Glov. What am I to do, sir? Consider my position: it is a month now since I have seen my wife and children. I don't even get any letters; God knows what is happening there. I am leaving the business to my son, who will stay here. I am sick of the whole thing. *(Turning to Shvokhnev and Krugel)* What are you doing, gentlemen? I believe I am interrupting you: you were engaged in something?

Krugel. Oh no. It’s of no consequence. We began playing to pass away the time.

Glov. Something like a game of *shtoss*, I believe?

Shvokhnev. Oh well! *Shtoss* for a kopek, just to pass the time.

Glov. Ah, my friends, listen to an old man. You are young people. Of course there is no harm in it, it’s just for diversion and you can’t lose much over kopek stakes, it’s true; but yet... ah, gentlemen, I’ve played myself and I know from experience, everything in the world begins in a small way, but small stakes quickly lead to big ones.

Shvokhnev *(to Ikharev)*. Well, the old man is off now! *(To Glov)* YOU always make a lot of every trifle. That’s the usual thing with all elderly people.

Glov. Oh, I am not so old. I judge from experience.

Shvokhnev. I am not speaking of you; but it is the way with old people in general: if, for instance, they have burned their fingers over anything, they are firmly convinced that everyone else is bound to do the same. If they’ve gone down some road and stumbled on a slippery place, they set up an outcry and make it a rule that no one must go down that way, because there is a slippery place there and everyone is sure to slip down on it, without considering that other people may be more careful and not have slippery boots on. No, they never think of that. If a man has been bitten by a dog in the street, all dogs bite, and so no one must go down the street.

Glov. That’s true, sir, it is so. On the one hand, there is that failing; but on the other, look at young people! They really are too reckless: they may break their necks any minute!

Shvokhnev. It is quite true that one never finds a happy medium.

When a man is young he is so wild that he is insufferable, when he is old he plays the saint so that he is insufferable again.

Glov. Have you such a bad opinion of old people?

Shvokhnev. NO, why a bad opinion? It’s the truth and nothing more.

Ikharev. Excuse my saying that it is rather a harsh view...

Uteshitelny. AS for cards, I fully agree with Mikhail Aleksandrovich. I used to play myself, play a lot: but I am thankful to say I have given it up forever—not because I lost money or thought luck was against me; I assure you, that’s of no consequence. The loss of money is not so important as losing one’s peace of mind. The mere agitation experienced during gambling, people may say what they like, but it obviously shortens one’s life.

Glov. That is so, sir, indeed! That’s a very wise observation!

Allow me to ask you an indiscreet question: though I have had the honor of your acquaintance for some time, so far...

Uteshitelny. What question?

Glov. Allow me to ask, though it’s a delicate subject, how old are you?

Uteshitelny. Thirty-nine.

Glov. Imagine! What’s thirty-nine? Still a young man—oh, if only we had more men in Russia so wise in their judgments!

Good heavens, the difference it would make! It would simply mean the golden age! Upon my word, how thankful I am to have made your acquaintance!

Ikharev. I can assure you I think as he does. I would never allow boys to touch a card. But why shouldn’t persons of discretion amuse themselves? Elderly people, for instance, who can’t dance?

Glov. Yes, that's quite true; but I assure you there are so many pleasures, so many duties, sacred duties I may say, in our lives.

Ah, gentlemen, listen to an old man! There is no better vocation for a man than family life and the domestic circle. Everything that is surrounding you, young men, is nothing but excitement, but you haven't tasted true bliss yet, while I—you will hardly believe it—am longing for the minute when I shall see my dear ones again! I imagine how my daughter will fling herself on my neck: "Papa, my dear papa!" My son is home again from high school, I haven't seen him for six months....

I have no words to describe it, no indeed. Well, after that, one doesn't care to look at cards.

Ikharev. But why do paternal feelings interfere with cards? Paternal feelings are one thing and cards are another...

(Enter Aleksey.)

Aleksey. *(to Glov)*. Your servant is asking about the trunks.

Shall he carry them out? The horses are ready.

Glov. I am coming! Excuse me, gentlemen, I will leave you for a brief moment.

(Goes out with Aleksey.)

Ikharev. Well, there is no hope at all!

Uteshitelny. I said so before. I don't understand how you fellows can fail to see what a man is made of. You have only to look at a man to see that he is not disposed to play.

Ikharev. Oh well, we ought to have tackled him thoroughly, though. Why did you back him up?

Uteshitelny. That’s the only way of doing it. With people like that you have to be subtle, or they guess at once that you want to fleece them.

Ikharev. Well, but what has it led to? Here he is going away all the same.

Uteshitelny. Well, wait, it is not all over yet!

(Enter Glov.)

Glov. I thank you most sincerely for your pleasant acquaintance; I am only sorry that I did not meet you earlier, but maybe God will bring us together again somewhere.

Shvokhnev. Oh, very likely. The world is a small place, and one always comes across people again; it’s all a matter of luck.

Glov. Yes, indeed, that’s perfectly true! It may chance that we shall meet tomorrow. It’s perfectly true. Goodbye, gentlemen.

Thank you most sincerely. And to you, Stepan Ivanovich, I am truly grateful, you have really relieved my solitude!

Uteshitelny. Please, there is no need. I did what I could.

Glov. Well, since you are so kind, will you do me one more favor? May I ask it of you?

Uteshitelny. What is it. Tell me! I am ready to do anything you like.

Glov. Set my mind at rest—you know an old father’s anxiety.

Uteshitelny. How?

Glov. I am leaving here my Sasha. He is a splendid fellow with a good heart, but one can't rely upon him entirely. He is twenty-two, well, what's that? Almost a child. He has finished his studies and he will hear of nothing now but the Hussars. I say to him: "It's still early, Sasha, wait a while and have a look round first. What do you see in the Hussars? How do you know, maybe you are better fitted for the civil service. You've scarcely seen anything of the world yet. You have plenty of time before you!" Well, you know what the young are! What dazzles him in the Hussars, you know, is the gold braid, the gorgeous uniform. What's one to do? You can't restrain their inclinations... so will you be so generous, my good Stepan Ivanovich! He will be left alone now; I have entrusted him with some little matters of business. He is a young man; anything may happen; I only hope the Treasury clerks won't cheat him.... I shouldn't wonder. So will you take him under your protection? Keep an eye on him and guard him from harm; will you be so kind, my good sir? *(Takes Uteshitelny by the hands.)*

Uteshitelny. Certainly, certainly. Anything a father can do for his own son I will do for him.

Glov. Ah, my good friend! *(They embrace and kiss each other.)*

One can always see when a man has a good heart! God will reward you for it! Goodbye, gentlemen, I sincerely wish you good luck.

Ikharev. Goodbye, a good journey to you!

Shvokhnev. I trust you may find all well at home.

Glov. I thank you, gentlemen.

Uteshitelny. I'll see you off and help you into your carriage.

Glov. Ah, how kind you are!

(Goes off with Uteshitelny.)

Ikharev. The bird has flown!

Shvokhnev. And he would have been worth plucking!

Ikharev. I must confess, when he said two hundred thousand, it sent a thrill to my heart.

Krugel. It is pleasant even to think of a sum like that.

Ikharev. And when you think how much money is wasted without the slightest benefit to anyone! Why, what's the good of his having two hundred thousand? It will all go on buying rags and frippery.

Shvokhnev. And it's all worthless trash!

Ikharev. And how much of it is wasted without being put into circulation! How many dead fortunes there are which lie like corpses in the banks! It's positively piteous. I have no desire to have more money than what is lying idle at the Board of Trustees.

Shvokhnev. I should be resigned to take half.

Krugel. I should be satisfied with a quarter.

Shvokhnev. Come, don't tell lies, German. You want more.

Krugel. AS I am an honest man...

Shvokhnev. YOU will cheat us.

(Uteshitelny comes in hurriedly, looking pleased.)

Uteshitelny. It’s all right, gentlemen, it’s all right! He has gone, damn him, so much the better! The son is left. The father has given him an authorization and the right to receive the money from the Treasury, and has commissioned me to look after everything. The son is a fine fellow, he is dying to be a Hussar. We shall reap a harvest! I will go and bring him to you this minute.

(Runs out.)

Ikharev. Hurrah for Uteshitelny!

Shvokhnev. Bravo! Things have taken a fine turn!

(All rub their hands in delight.)

Ikharev. Uteshitelny is a fine fellow! Now I see why he made up to the father and backed him up. And how smart it all was!

How subtle!

Shvokhnev. Oh, he has a remarkable talent for that sort of thing.

Krugel. Extraordinary abilities!

Ikharev. I must admit, when the father said he was leaving his son here, the idea flashed upon me too, but only for a moment, while he at once... How clever!

Shvokhnev. Oh, you don’t know him yet.

(Enter Uteshitelny with ALEKSANDER MIKHAILOVICH Glov, a young man.)

Uteshitelny. Gentlemen, let me introduce Aleksander Mikhailovich Glov—he is the best of company. Make a friend of him as of me.

Shvokhnev. Delighted! *(Shakes hands.)*

Ikharev. Your acquaintance is...

Krugel. We'll receive you with open arms.

Glov. Gentlemen, I...

Uteshitelny. NO ceremony, no ceremony.... Equality is the first thing. Glov, here you see all are comrades, and to hell with etiquette.

Shvokhnev. Yes!

Glov. Oh yes! *(Shakes hands with all of them.)*

Uteshitelny. That's right, bravo! Waiter, champagne! Do you notice, gentlemen, that one can see something of the Hussar about him already? Yes, your father—no offense meant—is a brute. Excuse me *(we are comrades, you know),* how could he think of putting this gallant young man into the ink-slinging service? Well, my boy, when is your sister's wedding to be?

Glov. The devil take her with her wedding! It annoys me that my father is keeping me three months in the country on her account.

Uteshitelny. But is she good-looking, your sister?

Glov. Too good-looking.... If she weren't my sister I wouldn't have let her go.

Uteshitelny. Bravo, bravo, Hussar! One can see the Hussar at once! Would you help me if I wanted to carry her off?

Glov. Why not? I would.

Uteshitelny. Bravo, Hussar! That's what's meant by a true Hussar, damn it all! Waiter, champagne! That's just what I like; I love such frank people. Stay, dear

boy, let me embrace you!

Shvokhnev. Let me embrace him too. *(Embraces him.)*

Ikharev. Allow me to embrace him! *(Embraces him.)*

Krugel. Well, if that's how it is, I'll embrace him too! *(Embraces him.)*

(Aleksey brings in a bottle with his finger on the cork, which goes off with a pop and flies to the ceiling; he fills their glasses.)

Uteshitelny. Gentlemen, to the health of the future Ensign of Hussars! May he be the greatest swordsman, the greatest flirt, the greatest drunkard... in fact, may he be all that he wishes...

ALL. May he be all that he wishes! *(They drink.)*

Glov. TO the health of all Hussars! *(Raises his glass.)*

ALL. TO the health of all Hussars! *(They drink.)*

Uteshitelny. Gentlemen, we must initiate him now into all the traditions of the Hussars! He drinks passably well, we can see, but that's a trifle. Then he must be a desperate card player!

Do you play *shtoss?*

Glov. I would play, I'd like to very much, but I have no money.

Uteshitelny. What nonsense, no money! You need only have enough to begin with and then you will have money: you will win it.

Glov. But I have nothing to begin with.

Uteshitelny. Oh, we will trust you. Why, you have an authorization for the receipt of the money from the Treasury. We can wait; and when they give it to you you can pay us; till then you can give us an I.O.U. But what am I talking about? As though you were destined to lose! You may win several thousand on the spot.

Glov. But if I lose?

Uteshitelny. For shame! Nice sort of Hussar you are! Naturally it's one of two things—either you win or you lose. But that's the very point, the chief zest lies in the risk. Where there is no risk, anyone is brave; if the result is certain, any paltry scribbler is bold and a Jew will scale a fortress.

Glov *(with a wave of his hand).* Damn it all! If that's how it is, I'll play! Why should I listen to my father?

Uteshitelny. Bravo, Ensign! Waiter, cards! *(Pours him out a glass.)* The greatest thing in life is boldness, dash, spirit.... So be it, gentlemen. I'll hold a bank of twenty-five thousand for you. *(Deals to right and to left.)* Well, Hussar... What is your stake, Shvokhnev? *(Deals.)* What a strange sequence of cards! It's a mathematical curiosity! The jack's beaten and the nine takes. What's there, what have you got? And the four takes, too! And the Hussar, the Hussar, what a Hussar! Did you notice, Shvokhnev, the masterly way he is raising his stakes? And the ace not out yet. Why don't you fill his glass, Shvokhnev? Here, here, here is the ace! There, Krugel has swept it all up. Germans always have luck! The four takes, the three takes. Bravo, bravo, Hussar! Do you hear, Shvokhnev? The Hussar has won nearly five thousand already.

Glov *(bends a card).* Damn it all, double my stake! And there is a nine on the table, I'll put another five hundred rubles on it!

Uteshitelny *(goes on turning up the cards).* Ah, bravo, Hussar! The seven is beaten.... Ah, no, *plie,* damn it all, *plie!* Ah, the Hussar has lost. Well, it can't be helped, my boy. We can't all be the lucky man. Krugel, don't go on weighing the chances! Stake on the one you pulled out. Bravo, the Hussar has won! Why don't you congratulate him? *(All drink and congratulate him, clinking their*

glasses.) They say the queen of spades always lets you down, but I shouldn't say so....

Do you remember your little brunette, Shvokhnev, whom you used to call the queen of spades? Where is she now, poor dear?

I expect she has gone to the dogs. Krugel, your card is beaten!

(To Ikharev) Yours is beaten too! Shvokhnev, yours is beaten too; the Hussar has lost too.

Glov. Damn it all, *va, banque!*

Uteshitelny. Bravo, Hussar! That's the true Hussar spirit at last!

Do you see, Shvokhnev, how the real feeling always comes out? Hitherto we could only see that he would make a Hussar, but now it is clear that he is a Hussar already. You see how a man's nature shows itself.... The Hussar's beaten.

Glov. *Va, banque!*

Uteshitelny. Bravo, Hussar! The whole fifty thousand? That's what I call doing it handsomely! You don't find many people who are capable of it. There's something heroic in it. The Hussar's come down again.

Glov. *Va, banque,* damn it all, *va, banque!*

Uteshitelny. Oho, Hussar, a hundred thousand! What a fellow, isn't he? And look at his eyes! Do you see how his eyes are glowing, Shvokhnev? He is a second Barclay-de-Tolly! Here's heroism for you! And the king still not out. There is a queen of diamonds for you, Shvokhnev! Here, German, here's a seven for you. Failure, nothing but trash! And there seems to be no king in the pack.... Ah, here he is, here he is.... The Hussar's beaten again!

Glov *(getting excited). Va, banque,* damn it all, *va, banque!*

Uteshitelny. NO, my boy, stop! You've lost two hundred thousand already. You must pay that first, you can't begin a new game until then; we can't trust you for so much.

Glov. But where am I to get the money? I haven't got it.

Uteshitelny. Give us an I.O.U.; here, write it.

Glov. Very well, I am willing. *(Takes a pen.)*

Uteshitelny. And give us the authorization for receiving the money too.

Glov. Here is the authorization too.

Uteshitelny. NOW sign this and then this. *(Gives him papers to sign.)*

Glov. Very well, I am ready to do anything. There, I've signed it. Now let us play again.

Uteshitelny. NO, my boy, wait a minute, show us the money first.

Glov. But I shall pay you, you may count on that.

Uteshitelny. NO, my boy, money on the table!

Glov. But what's this? It's an ugly trick.

Ikharev. NO, it's quite a different matter; the chances are not equal.

Shvokhnev. YOU might begin in order to win from us. We all know that if a man sits down to play without money he means to win for certain.

Glov. Well, what do you want? Fix any interest you like, I am ready for anything, I'll pay you twice over.

Uteshitelny. What do we want with your interest? We too are ready to pay you any interest you like if you give us a loan.

Glov *(resolutely and despairingly).* Well, say the last word, then: won't you play?

Shvokhnev. Bring the money and we will play at once.

Glov *(taking a pistol out of his pocket).* Then goodbye, gentlemen! You will not meet me again in this world.

(Runs out with a pistol.)

Uteshitelny *(in alarm).* What are you about? He's gone mad! Run after him! What if he really shoots himself! *(Runs out.)*

Ikharev. There will be a scandal if that devil of a fellow goes and shoots himself.

Shvokhnev. Oh, damn him, let him shoot himself, as long as it is not now; the money is not in our hands yet! That's the trouble!

Krugel. I am anxious, anyway. It's so possible...

(Enter Uteshitelny holding Glov by the hand with a pistol in it.)

Uteshitelny. What are you thinking about, my boy? Are you crazy? Do you hear, gentlemen, he was thrusting the pistol in his mouth? For shame!

ALL *(pressing around him).* How could you? How could you?

What next?

Shvokhnev. An intelligent man too! To think of shooting himself for such nonsense.

Ikharev. All Russia might shoot itself at that rate: everybody has either lost at cards or is going to lose, and if it weren't so—judge for yourself—how could anybody win?

Uteshitelny. YOU are simply a fool, allow me to tell you. You don't see your own luck. Don't you feel what you have gained by losing?

Glov *(with vexation).* Do you think I am such a fool as all that?

What gain is there in losing two hundred thousand, damn it!

Uteshitelny. Ah, you simpleton! Don't you see what glory you will gain in the regiment by it? It's not a trifling matter! Before you are even an ensign you've lost two hundred thousand. Why, the Hussars will carry you on their shoulders.

Glov *(growing more cheerful).* Do you imagine that I haven't the spirit to damn it all if it comes to that? The devil take it!

Hurrah for the Hussars!

Uteshitelny. Hurrah for the Hussars! Tra-la-la! Champagne!

(WAITER brings a bottle.)

Glov *(glass in hand).* Hurrah for the Hussars!

Ikharev. Hurrah for the Hussars, damn it all!

Shvokhnev. Tra-la-la! Hurrah for the Hussars!

Glov. I don’t care a rap if it comes to that! *(Puts his glass on the table.)* The only trouble is, how am I going home? My father, my father! *(Clutches his head.)*

Uteshitelny. But why should you go to your father? There’s no need.

Glov *(staring at him).* What?

Uteshitelny. YOU go straight from here into the regiment! We’ll give you the money for your equipment. We must give him two hundred rubles now, Shvokhnev, let the Ensign have some fun! I’ve noticed he has got his eye on a... that blackeyed girl, eh?

Glov. Hang it all, I’ll go straight to her, I’ll take her by storm!

Uteshitelny. A regular Hussar, isn’t he? Shvokhnev, haven’t you got two hundred rubles?

Ikharev. Here, I’ll give him that, let him have a jolly good time!

Glov *(takes the note and waves it in the air).* Champagne!

ALL. Champagne!

(WAITER brings bottles.)

Glov. Hurrah for the Hussars!

Uteshitelny. Hurrah!... Shvokhnev, I have an idea! Let us give him a tossing, as we used to in the regiment! Come, pick him up! *(All go up to him, seize him by the arms and legs, and toss him, singing to the well-known tune)*

ALL. He’s a jolly good fellow!

Glov *(raising his glass).* Hurrah!

ALL. Hurrah! *(They put him down on the ground. He smashes his glass on the ground; all smash their glasses, some on the ground, some on their boots.)*

Glov. I go straight to her!

Uteshitelny. And may we not follow you?

Glov. No, not one of you! And if anyone goes near her... the sword shall decide!

Uteshitelny. Ah, what a swashbuckler! Jealous and defiant as the devil! He will be a regular desperado, a gay Lothario, a daredevil.

Glov. Goodbye.

Shvokhnev. But come and tell us all about it afterwards.

(Glov goes out.)

Uteshitelny. We must treat him kindly till we get hold of the cash, and then to the devil with him!

Shvokhnev. The only thing I am afraid of is the Treasury may delay in paying the money.

Uteshitelny. Yes, that would be bad... but there are ways of hurrying them, you know. After all, one has to come to oiling the palm if business is to be done.

(Zamukhryshkin, a clerk, wearing a rather shabby coat, puts his head in at the door.)

Zamukhryshkin. Allow me to ask, is Aleksander Mikhailovich Glov here?

Shvokhnev. NO, he has just gone out. What do you want with him?

Zamukhryshkin. I've come about his business, about the payment of some money.

Uteshitelny. And who are you?

Zamukhryshkin. I am a clerk from the Treasury.

Uteshitelny. Ah, do come in! Please sit down! We all take a warm interest in the business, especially as we have had some friendly transactions with Aleksander Mikhailovich. And so you may readily understand that you will earn the substantial gratitude of this gentleman and this gentleman and this gentleman *(pointing to each in turn)*. The vital thing is to get the money out of the Treasury as quickly as possible.

Zamukhryshkin. Well, in any case it can't be paid in less than two weeks.

Uteshitelny. Oh, that's far too long. You forget the gratitude to come from us.

Zamukhryshkin. Oh, that's a matter of course. That's all taken for granted. How could I forget it? That's why I say "two weeks," or you might be hanging around for three months. We will not get the money for another ten days, we haven't a kopek at the Treasury at the moment. Last week we received a hundred and fifty thousand, but we paid it all out—three landowners are still waiting who mortgaged their estates in February.

Uteshitelny. Oh, well, that may be so for others, but you will treat us as friends.... We must become better acquainted.... But there! We are all friends here! What's your name, eh? Fentefley Perpentich, isn't it?

Zamukhryshkin. Psoy Stakhich.

Uteshitelny. Well, that's almost the same thing. Come then, Psoy Stakhich! We will all be like old friends. Tell us, how are you getting on? How is business?

How is your service?

Zamukhryshkin. Service? Oh, just as usual.

Uteshitelny. Well, there are different ways of making money in the Service. Do you get much?

Zamukhryshkin. AS you know, of course one must live.

Uteshitelny. Tell us openly, are they all sharks in the Treasury?

Zamukhryshkin. What next! I see you are joking. Ah, gentlemen... The gentlemen who write stories are always making jokes about people taking bribes, but when you look closer, our superiors take bribes too. Why, you too, gentlemen, though perhaps you give it a finer name, subscribing to this or that or God knows what; but in reality it comes to the same thing. The man is the same if the coat is different.

Uteshitelny. Here Psoy Stakhich has taken offense, I see. That comes of wounding a man’s sense of honor.

Zamukhryshkin. Well, honor, you know, is a delicate point. But there is nothing to take offense about. I have seen something of life, sir.

Uteshitelny. That’s enough. Let us have a friendly talk, Psoy Stakhich. Tell us how things are going on with you, how you are getting on, how is the world treating you? Have you a wife and children?

Zamukhryshkin. Thank God, the Lord has been bountiful. I have two sons attending the district school and two others, smaller, one running about in a smock and the other crawling on all fours.

Uteshitelny. But I bet they all know how to use their little hands. *(Makes a grabbing gesture.)*

Zamukhryshkin. Well, you will have your joke, gentlemen!

Here you are beginning again.

Uteshitelny. Never mind, never mind, Psoy Stakhich, I spoke as a friend. Why, there's nothing in it. We are all friends. Hey, bring a glass of champagne for Psoy Stakhich; make haste! We must get to know each other better. We'll come and pay you a visit.

Zamukhryshkin *(taking a glass).* You will be very welcome, gentlemen. I tell you plainly that you will get a better glass of tea with me than you would at the governor's.

Uteshitelny. A free gift, I bet, from the tea merchant?

Zamukhryshkin. Yes, straight from Kiakhta.

Uteshitelny. YOU don't say so, Psoy Stakhich? Why, you don't have to deal with merchants?

Zamukhryshkin *(emptying his glass, leaning his fists on his knees).* It was like this. A merchant here had to pay up pretty heavily, chiefly through his own stupidity. A landowner called Frakasov was mortgaging his estate; it was all arranged, and he had only to receive the money next day. He was starting a factory of some sort in partnership with the merchant. Well, you understand it is not for us to know whether the money is wanted for a factory or anything else, or with whom he is in partnership. That's not our business, but the merchant in his foolishness went spreading it all over the town that he was in partnership with him and was expecting money from hour to hour. We sent word to him that if he forwarded to us two thousand the money should be paid at once, or else he would have to wait! And the boilers and all sorts of tackle had already arrived for the factory, and the dealers were only waiting for the deposit money. The merchant saw there was nothing for it, he paid us two thousand as well as three pounds of tea each. People will call it a bribe, but it was only fair: he needn't have been so stupid. It was his own doing—why couldn't he hold his tongue?

Uteshitelny. Psoy Stakhich, about this little business, please. We'll give you something, but you do what's right with your superiors. Only, for God's sake, Psoy Stakhich, make haste!

Zamukhryshkin. We'll do our best. *(Getting up.)* But I tell you frankly, we can't do it as soon as you want it: as God's above, we haven't a kopek in the Treasury, but we'll do our best.

Uteshitelny. And how are we to inquire for you there?

Zamukhryshkin. Ask for Psoy Zamukhryshkin. Goodbye, gentlemen.

(Goes toward the door.)

Shvokhnev. Psoy Stakhich! *(Looks about him.)* Do your best!

Uteshitelny. Psoy Stakhich, make haste, let us have it!

Zamukhryshkin *(going out)*. I've told you already, I'll do my best!

Uteshitelny. Damn it all, how slow it is! *(Slaps himself on the forehead.)* Yes, I'll run after him, perhaps I may do something. I won't spare money. The devil take the man! I'll give him three thousand out of my own pocket.

(Runs off.)

Ikharev. Of course it would be better to get it as soon as possible.

Shvokhnev. We do so need it! We do so need it!

Krugel. Oh, if he could only get round him somehow!

Ikharev. Why, are you in such a...

(Uteshitelny enters.)

Uteshitelny *(despairingly).* Damn it all! He can't possibly do it in less than four days. I feel like banging my head against the wall!

Ikharev. But why are you in such a hurry? Can't you wait four days?

Shvokhnev. The fact is, it is very important for us.

Uteshitelny. Wait! But do you know that we are expected in Nizhny at the Fair from hour to hour? We haven't told him yet, but four days ago we had a message to hasten there as quickly as possible, bringing with us at all costs a sum of money. A dealer has brought six hundred thousand worth of iron. He will dispose of it finally on Tuesday and will receive the money in cash. And yesterday a man arrived with a halfmillion's worth of hemp.

Ikharev. Well, what of it?

Uteshitelny. What of it? Why, the old men have stayed at home and sent their sons instead.

Ikharev. But is it certain that the sons will play?

Uteshitelny. Why, where have you been living? In China? Don't you know what merchants' sons are? Why, a merchant brings up his son either to know nothing or to know only what is suitable for a nobleman and not for a merchant. Naturally all he cares about is walking arm-in-arm with officers and drinking. They are the most profitable people to us. They don't know, the fools, that for every ruble they get out of us they pay us back in thousands. But that's our luck. The merchant thinks of nothing but marrying his daughter to a general or getting a grade for his son.

Ikharev. And is the job perfectly safe?

Uteshitelny. Safe! They wouldn't have let us know if it hadn't been. The money

is almost in our hands, every minute is precious now.

Ikharev. Ah, damn it all! Why are we sitting here? We agreed to act together, friends!

Uteshitelny. Yes, that's to our mutual advantage. Let me tell you the idea that has occurred to me. You have no reason to hurry off for a moment: you have money —eighty thousand— give it to us and take Glov's I.O.U. You will receive a hundred and fifty thousand for certain, namely nearly twice the amount, and, indeed, you will be obliging us too, for we so need the money now that we shall be delighted to pay you three times over.

Ikharev. Certainly; why not? To prove to you that ties of friendship... *(Goes to his box and takes out a roll of notes.)* Here is the eighty thousand!

Uteshitelny. And here is the I.O.U. Now I'll run at once and fetch Glov, I must bring him and arrange it all in due form. Krugel, take the money to my room, here is the key of my strong box. *(Krugel goes out.)* Oh, if only we could manage to get away by evening!

(Goes out.)

Ikharev. Naturally, naturally, better not waste a minute here.

Shvokhnev. And I advise you too not to linger on. As soon as you get the money, come and join us. With two hundred thousand, you know, one could do anything and buy up the whole market.... Oh, I'd forgotten to speak to Krugel about something very important. Wait a minute, I shall be back directly.

(Runs hurriedly off.)

Ikharev *(alone).* How strangely things have turned out! In the morning I had only eighty thousand and before evening I have two hundred! For some men that means a lifetime of service, of effort, endless perseverance, privation, ill health —and here in a few hours, in a few minutes I am a ruling prince! It's no joke —

two hundred thousand! Where could you get two hundred thousand nowadays! What estate, what factory would bring you two hundred thousand? I can imagine what I should be like if I were to stay in the country and potter about looking after peasants and village elders, making some three thousand a year. Yes, education is not to be despised. You get crusted up with ignorance in the country and can't scrape it off with a knife afterwards. And what would one waste one's time over? Discussions with the village elder, with the peasants. But I prefer... talking to an educated man! Now I am independent, now my time is my own! I can devote myself to improving my mind. If I want to go to Petersburg, I can go to Petersburg. I will see the theaters and the Mint, and will walk by the Palace, along the English embankment in the Summer Garden. I'll go to Moscow, I'll dine at Yar's. I can dress in the fashion, I can be on an equality with others and perform the duties of a man of culture. And what is the origin of it all? To what am I indebted for it? To what is called cheating. And that's nonsense, it's not cheating at all! A man may become a cheat in one minute, but this has needed practice, study. Well, granting it is cheating.... But you see it's inevitable; what can one do without it? In a sense it is mere precaution. If I, for instance, didn't know all the tricks, if I hadn't mastered it all, they would have cheated me at once. They meant to cheat me, of course, but they saw it was not an ordinary man they had to do with, and they had recourse to my help. No, sense is a great asset, cunning is needed in the world. I look at life from quite a different point of view. To live as a fool lives is easy enough, but to live with subtlety, with art, to cheat everyone and not be cheated oneself, that's really a task and an object!

(Glov runs in hurriedly.)

Glov. Where are they? I've just been in their room, it's empty.

Ikharev. They were here just now; they have only gone out for a minute.

Glov. Gone out already? And have they taken the money from you?

Ikharev. Yes, I have come to an arrangement with them, I am only waiting on your account.

(Enter Aleksey.)

Aleksey *(addressing Glov).* Your honor asked for the gentlemen.

Glov. Yes.

Aleksey. But they've gone.

Glov. Gone?

Aleksey. Oh yes. They have had a chaise and horses standing ready for the last half-hour.

Glov *(wringing his hands).* Oh, we are both done!

Ikharev. What nonsense! I can't understand a word you are saying. Uteshitelny was to be back here in a minute. You know that all your debt is to be paid to me now, they have transferred it to me.

Glov. A debt! The devil you'll get! Don't you feel you've been made a fool of like a blockhead?

Ikharev. What nonsense you are talking! One can see you are still a bit fuddled.

Glov. It seems we both are. You'd better wake up! Do you think I am Glov? I am about as much Glov as you are the Emperor of China.

Ikharev *(uneasily).* Good gracious, what are you saying? What nonsense! And your father... and...

Glov. The old man? To begin with, he is not my father, and a devil of a child he is likely to have. And secondly, his name is not Glov either, but Krynitsyn, and he is not Mikhail Aleksandrovich, but Ivan Klimych, one of their gang.

Ikharev. Listen, tell the truth! This is not a joking matter.

Glov. A joking matter! I've had a hand in it and I am cheated too.

They promised me three thousand for my trouble!

Ikharev *(going up to him, emphatically).* Now, no trifling, I tell you! Do you suppose I am such a fool!... And the authorization? And the Treasury? And there was a clerk here just now from the Treasury, Psoy Stakhich Zamukhryshkin. Do you suppose I can't send for him this minute?

Glov. TO begin with, he is not a Treasury clerk but a retired lieutenant, one of their gang; and his name is not Stakhich Zamukhryshkin but Murzafeikin, and not Psoy Stakhich but Flor Semionovich.

Ikharev *(in despair).* But who are you? Are you a devil? Tell me, who are you?

Glov. Who am I? I was an honorable man, but I have been driven to be a rogue: they stripped me to my last rag, they did not leave me a shirt. What was I to do? I couldn't starve! For three thousand I undertook to play my part, to trick you and deceive you. I tell you this frankly: you see I am acting honorably.

Ikharev *(seizes him by the collar in a fury).* You swindler!

Aleksey *(aside).* Well, it's coming to blows, it seems. I'd better clear out.

(Goes out.)

Ikharev *(dragging Glov along).* Come along, come along!

Glov. Where? Where?

Ikharev *(in a frenzy).* Where? To the police!

Glov. But you have no case at all.

Ikharev. I've no case? To cheat, to rob me of money in the middle of the day in this scandalous fashion? I have no case? To use such underhand means! I have no case? When I've got you in prison in Nerchinsk, you can tell me I have no case. You wait a while, they'll catch your whole damned crew. I'll teach you to take advantage of the trustfulness and honesty of goodhearted people. The law! I'll have the law on you! *(Drags him along.)*

Glov. Yes, you might appeal to the law if you hadn't acted illegally yourself. But just think—why, you joined with them to deceive and fleece me, and the packs of cards were of your own manufacture. No, my friend, that's the point, that you have no right to complain.

Ikharev *(slapping himself on the forehead in despair).* Damn it all, that's true! *(Sinks helplessly on a chair; meanwhile Glov runs out.)* But what a diabolical trick!

Glov *(peeping in at the door).* Don't give way to despair! You have something to comfort you: you have Adelaida Ivanovna!

(Disappears.)

Ikharev *(furiously).* The devil take Adelaida Ivanovna! *(Snatches up the pack and flings it at the door. The cards fly to the floor.)* To think that there should exist such scoundrels to the shame and disgrace of mankind! I feel as though I should go mad—how devilishly it was all acted! How cunningly! The father and the son and the clerk Zamukhryshkin. And all trace is lost! And I can't even complain! *(Jumps up from his chair and walks about in excitement.)* What's the good of being cunning! What's the use of being clever! Of discovering and inventing means! Damnation take it! It's a waste of splendid zeal and effort! In a minute a rogue will steal up and outwit you! a scoundrel who at one stroke will destroy the edifice you've been working at for years! *(With a gesture of vexation)* Damn it, what a deceitful country it is! Luck is only thrust on stupid blockheads who understand nothing, think of nothing, do nothing, and only play boston for kopek stakes with battered old cards!

(Curtain.)

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THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR



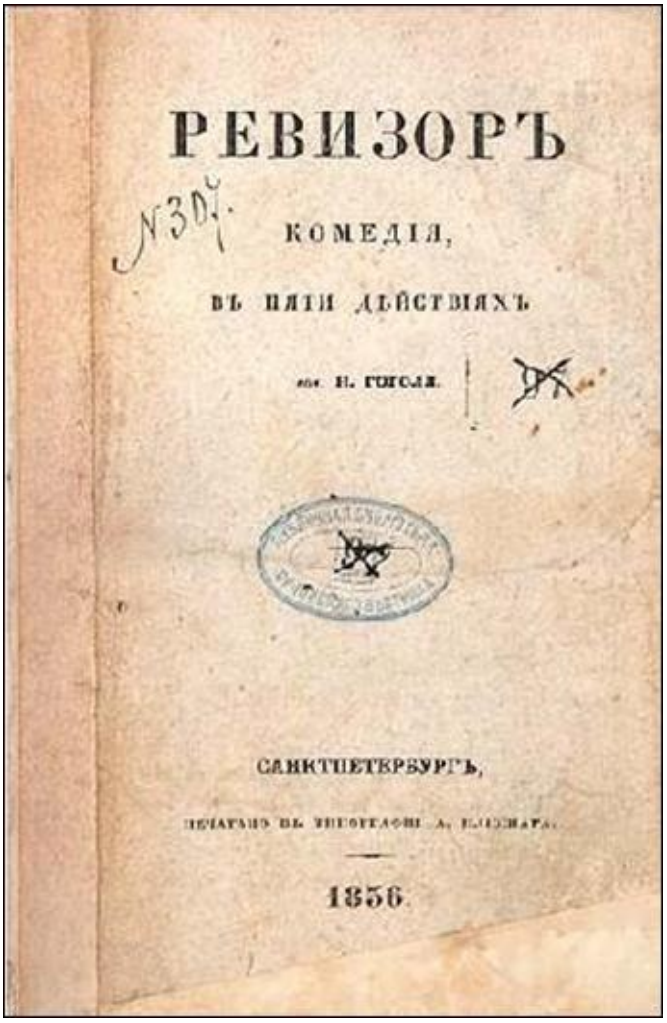
Translated by Thomas Seltzer

This satirical play was originally published in 1836 and then revised for an 1842 edition. Reportedly based on an anecdote recounted to Gogol by Pushkin, the drama is a comedy of errors, satirising greed and the political corruption of Imperial Russia. The comedy has won significant critical praise both within and out of Russia.

The dream-like scenes of the play concern the self-deception of the character Khlestakov, who personifies irresponsibility and naivety. The publication of *The Government Inspector* led to a great outcry in the reactionary press. It required the personal intervention of Tsar Nicholas I to have the play staged, with Mikhail Shchepkin taking the role of the Mayor.

The play opens with the corrupt officials of a small Russian town, headed by the Mayor, reacting with terror when they learn that an incognito inspector will soon be arriving to investigate them. The flurry of activity to cover up their considerable misdeeds is interrupted by the report that a suspicious person has arrived two weeks previously from Saint Petersburg and is staying at the inn. That person, however, is not an inspector; it is Khlestakov, a foppish civil servant with a wild imagination.

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РЕВИЗОРЪ

КОМЕДІЯ,

ВЪ ПЯТИ ДѢЙСТВІЯХЪ

Н. ГОГОЛЯ.

САНКТПЕТЕРБУРГЪ,

1856.

The first edition title page

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INTRODUCTION

The Inspector-General is a national institution. To place a purely literary valuation upon it and call it the greatest of Russian comedies would not convey the significance of its position either in Russian literature or in Russian life itself. There is no other single work in the modern literature of any language that carries with it the wealth of associations which the Inspector-General does to the educated Russian. The Germans have their Faust; but Faust is a tragedy with a cosmic philosophic theme. In England it takes nearly all that is implied in the comprehensive name of Shakespeare to give the same sense of bigness that a Russian gets from the mention of the Revizor.

That is not to say that the Russian is so defective in the critical faculty as to balance the combined creative output of the greatest English dramatist against Gogol's one comedy, or even to attribute to it the literary value of any of Shakespeare's better plays. What the Russian's appreciation indicates is the pregnant role that literature plays in the life of intellectual Russia. Here literature is not a luxury, not a diversion. It is bone of the bone, flesh of the flesh, not only of the intelligentsia, but also of a growing number of the common people, intimately woven into their everyday existence, part and parcel of their thoughts, their aspirations, their social, political and economic life. It expresses their collective wrongs and sorrows, their collective hopes and strivings. Not only does it serve to lead the movements of the masses, but it is an integral component element of those movements. In a word, Russian literature is completely bound up with the life of Russian society, and its vitality is but the measure of the spiritual vitality of that society.

This unique character of Russian literature may be said to have had its beginning with the Inspector-General. Before Gogol most Russian writers, with few exceptions, were but weak imitators of foreign models. The drama fashioned itself chiefly upon French patterns. The Inspector-General and later Gogol's novel, Dead Souls, established that tradition in Russian letters which was followed by all the great writers from Dostoyevsky down to Gorky.

As with one blow, Gogol shattered the notions of the theatre-going public of his day of what a comedy should be. The ordinary idea of a play at that time in Russia seems to have been a little like our own tired business man's. And the shock the Revizor gave those early nineteenth-century Russian audiences is not unlike the shocks we ourselves get when once in a while a theatrical manager is courageous enough to produce a bold modern European play. Only the intensity

of the shock was much greater. For Gogol dared not only bid defiance to the accepted method; he dared to introduce a subject-matter that under the guise of humor audaciously attacked the very foundation of the state, namely, the officialdom of the Russian bureaucracy. That is why the Revizor marks such a revolution in the world of Russian letters. In form it was realistic, in substance it was vital. It showed up the rottenness and corruption of the instruments through which the Russian government functioned. It held up to ridicule, directly, all the officials of a typical Russian municipality, and, indirectly, pointed to the same system of graft and corruption among the very highest servants of the crown.

What wonder that the Inspector-General became a sort of comedy-epic in the land of the Czars, the land where each petty town-governor is almost an absolute despot, regulating his persecutions and extortions according to the sage saying of the town-governor in the play, “That’s the way God made the world, and the Voltairean free-thinkers can talk against it all they like, it won’t do any good.” Every subordinate in the town administration, all the way down the line to the policemen, follow — not always so scrupulously — the law laid down by the same authority, “Graft no higher than your rank.” As in city and town, so in village and hamlet. It is the tragedy of Russian life, which has its roots in that more comprehensive tragedy, Russian despotism, the despotism that gives the sharp edge to official corruption. For there is no possible redress from it except in violent revolutions.

That is the prime reason why the Inspector-General, a mere comedy, has such a hold on the Russian people and occupies so important a place in Russian literature. And that is why a Russian critic says, “Russia possesses only one comedy, the Inspector-General.”

The second reason is the brilliancy and originality with which this national theme was executed. Gogol was above all else the artist. He was not a radical, nor even a liberal. He was strictly conservative. While hating the bureaucracy, yet he never found fault with the system itself or with the autocracy. Like most born artists, he was strongly individualistic in temperament, and his satire and ridicule were aimed not at causes, but at effects. Let but the individuals act morally, and the system, which Gogol never questioned, would work beautifully. This conception caused Gogol to concentrate his best efforts upon delineation of character. It was the characters that were to be revealed, their actions to be held up to scorn and ridicule, not the conditions which created the characters and made them act as they did. If any lesson at all was to be drawn from the play it was not a sociological lesson, but a moral one. The individual who sees himself mirrored in it may be moved to self-purgation; society has nothing to learn from it.

Yet the play lives because of the social message it carries. The creation proved greater than the creator. The author of the Revizor was a poor critic of his own work. The Russian people rejected his estimate and put their own upon it. They knew their officials and they entertained no illusions concerning their regeneration so long as the system that bred them continued to live. Nevertheless, as a keen satire and a striking exposition of the workings of the hated system itself, they hailed the Revizor with delight. And as such it has remained graven in Russia's conscience to this day.

It must be said that "Gogol himself grew with the writing of the Revizor." Always a careful craftsman, scarcely ever satisfied with the first version of a story or a play, continually changing and rewriting, he seems to have bestowed special attention on perfecting this comedy. The subject, like that of Dead Souls, was suggested to him by the poet Pushkin, and was based on a true incident. Pushkin at once recognized Gogol's genius and looked upon the young author as the rising star of Russian literature. Their acquaintance soon ripened into intimate friendship, and Pushkin missed no opportunity to encourage and stimulate him in his writings and help him with all the power of his great influence. Gogol began to work on the play at the close of 1834, when he was twenty-five years old. It was first produced in St. Petersburg, in 1836. Despite the many elaborations it had undergone before Gogol permitted it to be put on the stage, he still did not feel satisfied, and he began to work on it again in 1838. It was not brought down to its present final form until 1842.

Thus the Revizor occupied the mind of the author over a period of eight years, and resulted in a product which from the point of view of characterization and dramatic technique is almost flawless. Yet far more important is the fact that the play marked an epoch in Gogol's own literary development. When he began on it, his ambitions did not rise above making it a comedy of pure fun, but, gradually, in the course of his working on it, the possibilities of the subject unfolded themselves and influenced his entire subsequent career. His art broadened and deepened and grew more serious. If Pushkin's remark, that "behind his laughter you feel the sad tears," is true of some of Gogol's former productions, it is still truer of the Revizor and his later works.

A new life had begun for him, he tells us himself, when he was no longer "moved by childish notions, but by lofty ideas full of truth." "It was Pushkin," he writes, "who made me look at the thing seriously. I saw that in my writings I laughed vainly, for nothing, myself not knowing why. If I was to laugh, then I had better laugh over things that are really to be laughed at. In the Inspector-General I resolved to gather together all the bad in Russia I then knew into one heap, all the injustice that was practised in those places and in those human

relations in which more than in anything justice is demanded of men, and to have one big laugh over it all. But that, as is well known, produced an outburst of excitement. Through my laughter, which never before came to me with such force, the reader sensed profound sorrow. I myself felt that my laughter was no longer the same as it had been, that in my writings I could no longer be the same as in the past, and that the need to divert myself with innocent, careless scenes had ended along with my young years."

With the strict censorship that existed in the reign of Czar Nicholas I, it required powerful influence to obtain permission for the production of the comedy. This Gogol received through the instrumentality of his friend, Zhukovsky, who succeeded in gaining the Czar's personal intercession. Nicholas himself was present at the first production in April, 1836, and laughed and applauded, and is said to have remarked, "Everybody gets it, and I most of all."

Naturally official Russia did not relish this innovation in dramatic art, and indignation ran high among them and their supporters. Bulgarin led the attack. Everything that is usually said against a new departure in literature or art was said against the Revizor. It was not original. It was improbable, impossible, coarse, vulgar; lacked plot. It turned on a stale anecdote that everybody knew. It was a rank farce. The characters were mere caricatures. "What sort of a town was it that did not hold a single honest soul?"

Gogol's sensitive nature shrank before the tempest that burst upon him, and he fled from his enemies all the way out of Russia. "Do what you please about presenting the play in Moscow," he writes to Shchepkin four days after its first production in St. Petersburg. "I am not going to bother about it. I am sick of the play and all the fussing over it. It produced a great noisy effect. All are against me... they abuse me and go to see it. No tickets can be obtained for the fourth performance."

But the best literary talent of Russia, with Pushkin and Bielinsky, the greatest critic Russia has produced, at the head, ranged itself on his side.

Nicolay Vasilyevich Gogol was born in Sorochintzy, government of Poltava, in 1809. His father was a Little Russian, or Ukrainian, landowner, who exhibited considerable talent as a playwright and actor. Gogol was educated at home until the age of ten, then went to Niezhin, where he entered the gymnasium in 1821. Here he edited a students' manuscript magazine called the Star, and later founded a students' theatre, for which he was both manager and actor. It achieved such success that it was patronized by the general public.

In 1829 Gogol went to St. Petersburg, where he thought of becoming an actor, but he finally gave up the idea and took a position as a subordinate government clerk. His real literary career began in 1830 with the publication of a series of

stories of Little Russian country life called Nights on a Farm near Dikanka. In 1831 he became acquainted with Pushkin and Zhukovsky, who introduced the "shy Khokhol" (nickname for "Little Russian"), as he was called, to the house of Madame O. A. Smirnov, the centre of "an intimate circle of literary men and the flower of intellectual society." The same year he obtained a position as instructor of history at the Patriotic Institute, and in 1834 was made professor of history at the University of St. Petersburg. Though his lectures were marked by originality and vivid presentation, he seems on the whole not to have been successful as a professor, and he resigned in 1835.

During this period he kept up his literary activity uninterruptedly, and in 1835 published his collection of stories, Mirgorod, containing How Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich, Taras Bulba, and others. This collection firmly established his position as a leading author. At the same time he was at work on several plays. The Vladimir Cross, which was to deal with the higher St. Petersburg functionaries in the same way as the Revizor with the lesser town officials, was never concluded, as Gogol realized the impossibility of placing them on the Russian stage. A few strong scenes were published. The comedy Marriage, finished in 1835, still finds a place in the Russian theatrical repertoire. The Gamblers, his only other complete comedy, belongs to a later period.

After a stay abroad, chiefly in Italy, lasting with some interruptions for seven years (1836-1841), he returned to his native country, bringing with him the first part of his greatest work, Dead Souls. The novel, published the following year, produced a profound impression and made Gogol's literary reputation supreme. Pushkin, who did not live to see its publication, on hearing the first chapters read, exclaimed, "God, how sad our Russia is!" And Alexander Hertzen characterized it as "a wonderful book, a bitter, but not hopeless rebuke of contemporary Russia." Aksakov went so far as to call it the Russian national epic, and Gogol the Russian Homer.

Unfortunately the novel remained incomplete. Gogol began to suffer from a nervous illness which induced extreme hypochondria. He became excessively religious, fell under the influence of pietists and a fanatical priest, sank more and more into mysticism, and went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship at the Holy Sepulchre. In this state of mind he came to consider all literature, including his own, as pernicious and sinful.

After burning the manuscript of the second part of Dead Souls, he began to rewrite it, had it completed and ready for the press by 1851, but kept the copy and burned it again a few days before his death (1852), so that it is extant only in parts.

THOMAS SELTZER.

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CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

ANTON ANTONOVICH SKVOZNIK-DMUKHANOVSKY, the Governor.
ANNA ANDREYEVNA, his wife.
MARYA ANTONOVNA, his daughter.
LUKA LUKICH KHLOPOV, the Inspector of Schools.
His Wife.
AMMOS FIODOROVICH LIAPKIN-TIAPKIN, the Judge.
ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH ZEMLIANIKA, the Superintendent of Charities.
IVAN KUZMICH SHPEKIN, the Postmaster.
PIOTR IVANOVICH DOBCHINSKY. }
PIOTR IVANOVICH BOBCHINSKY. } Country Squires.
IVAN ALEKSANDROVICH KHLESTAKOV, an official from St. Petersburg.
OSIP, his servant.
CHRISTIAN IVANOVICH HÜBNER, the district Doctor.

FIODR ANDREYEVICH LULIUKOV. } ex-officials,
}esteemed
IVAN LAZAREVICH RASTAKOVSKY. }personages
STEPAN IVANOVICH KOROBKIN. }of the town.
STEPAN ILYICH UKHOVERTOV, the Police Captain.
SVISTUNOV. }
PUGOVITZYN. }Police Sergeants.
DERZHIMORDA. }
ABDULIN, a Merchant.
FEVRONYA PETROVA POSHLIOPKINA, the Locksmith's wife.
The Widow of a non-commissioned Officer.
MISHKA, the Governor's Servant.
Servant at the Inn.
Guests, Merchants, Citizens, and Petitioners.

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DIRECTIONS FOR ACTORS

THE GOVERNOR. — A man grown old in the service, by no means a fool in his own way. Though he takes bribes, he carries himself with dignity. He is of a rather serious turn and even given somewhat to ratiocination. He speaks in a voice neither too loud nor too low and says neither too much nor too little. Every word of his counts. He has the typical hard stern features of the official who has worked his way up from the lowest rank in the arduous government service. Coarse in his inclinations, he passes rapidly from fear to joy, from servility to arrogance. He is dressed in uniform with frogs and wears Hessian boots with spurs. His hair with a sprinkling of gray is close-cropped.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA. — A provincial coquette, still this side of middle age, educated on novels and albums and on fussing with household affairs and servants. She is highly inquisitive and has streaks of vanity. Sometimes she gets the upper hand over her husband, and he gives in simply because at the moment he cannot find the right thing to say. Her ascendency, however, is confined to mere trifles and takes the form of lecturing and twitting. She changes her dress four times in the course of the play.

KHLESTAKOV. — A skinny young man of about twenty-three, rather stupid, being, as they say, “without a czar in his head,” one of those persons called an “empty vessel” in the government offices. He speaks and acts without stopping to think and utterly lacks the power of concentration. The words burst from his mouth unexpectedly. The more naiveté and ingenousness the actor puts into the character the better will he sustain the role. Khlestakov is dressed in the latest fashion.

OSIP. — A typical middle-aged servant, grave in his address, with eyes always a bit lowered. He is argumentative and loves to read sermons directed at his master. His voice is usually monotonous. To his master his tone is blunt and sharp, with even a touch of rudeness. He is the cleverer of the two and grasps a situation more quickly. But he does not like to talk. He is a silent, uncommunicative rascal. He wears a shabby gray or blue coat.

BOBCHINSKY AND DOBCHINSKY. — Short little fellows, strikingly like each other. Both have small paunches, and talk rapidly, with emphatic gestures of their hands, features and bodies. Dobchinsky is slightly the taller and more subdued in manner. Bobchinsky is freer, easier and livelier. They are both exceedingly inquisitive.

LIAPKIN-TIAPKIN. — He has read four or five books and so is a bit of a freethinker. He is always seeing a hidden meaning in things and therefore puts weight into every word he utters. The actor should preserve an expression of importance throughout. He speaks in a bass voice, with a prolonged rattle and wheeze in his throat, like an old-fashioned clock, which buzzes before it strikes.

ZEMLIANIKA. — Very fat, slow and awkward; but for all that a sly, cunning scoundrel. He is very obliging and officious.

SHPEKIN. — Guileless to the point of simplemindedness. The other characters require no special explanation, as their originals can be met almost anywhere.

The actors should pay especial attention to the last scene. The last word uttered must strike all at once, suddenly, like an electric shock. The whole group should change its position at the same instant. The ladies must all burst into a simultaneous cry of astonishment, as if with one throat. The neglect of these directions may ruin the whole effect.

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ACT I

A Room in the Governor's House.

SCENE I

Anton Antonovich, the Governor, Artemy Filippovich, the Superintendent of Charities, Luka Lukich, the Inspector of Schools, Ammos Fiodorovich, the Judge, Stepan Ilyich, Christian Ivanovich, the Doctor, and two Police Sergeants.

GOVERNOR. I have called you together, gentlemen, to tell you an unpleasant piece of news. An Inspector-General is coming.

AMMOS FIOD. What, an Inspector-General?

ARTEMY FIL. What, an Inspector-General?

GOVERNOR. Yes, an Inspector from St. Petersburg, incognito. And with secret instructions, too.

AMMOS. A pretty how-do-you-do!

ARTEMY. As if we hadn't enough trouble without an Inspector!

LUKA LUKICH. Good Lord! With secret instructions!

GOVERNOR. I had a sort of presentiment of it. Last night I kept dreaming of two rats — regular monsters! Upon my word, I never saw the likes of them — black and supernaturally big. They came in, sniffed, and then went away. — Here's a letter I'll read to you — from Andrey Ivanovich. You know him, Artemy Filippovich. Listen to what he writes: "My dear friend, godfather and benefactor — [He mumbles, glancing rapidly down the page.] — and to let you know" — Ah, that's it — "I hasten to let you know, among other things, that an

official has arrived here with instructions to inspect the whole government, and your district especially. [Raises his finger significantly.] I have learned of his being here from highly trustworthy sources, though he pretends to be a private person. So, as you have your little peccadilloes, you know, like everybody else — you are a sensible man, and you don't let the good things that come your way slip by — " [Stopping] H'm, that's his junk — "I advise you to take precautions, as he may arrive any hour, if he hasn't already, and is not staying somewhere incognito. — Yesterday — " The rest are family matters. "Sister Anna Krillovna is here visiting us with her husband. Ivan Krillovich has grown very fat and is always playing the fiddle" — et cetera, et cetera. So there you have the situation we are confronted with, gentlemen.

AMMOS. An extraordinary situation, most extraordinary! Something behind it, I am sure.

LUKA. But why, Anton Antonovich? What for? Why should we have an Inspector?

GOVERNOR. It's fate, I suppose. [Sighs.] Till now, thank goodness, they have been nosing about in other towns. Now our turn has come.

AMMOS. My opinion is, Anton Antonovich, that the cause is a deep one and rather political in character. It means this, that Russia — yes — that Russia intends to go to war, and the Government has secretly commissioned an official to find out if there is any treasonable activity anywhere.

GOVERNOR. The wise man has hit on the very thing. Treason in this little country town! As if it were on the frontier! Why, you might gallop three years away from here and reach nowhere.

AMMOS. No, you don't catch on — you don't — The Government is shrewd. It makes no difference that our town is so remote. The Government is on the look-out all the same —

GOVERNOR [cutting him short]. On the look-out, or not on the look-out, anyhow, gentlemen, I have given you warning. I have made some arrangements

for myself, and I advise you to do the same. You especially, Artemy Filippovich. This official, no doubt, will want first of all to inspect your department. So you had better see to it that everything is in order, that the night-caps are clean, and the patients don't go about as they usually do, looking as grimy as blacksmiths.

ARTEMY. Oh, that's a small matter. We can get night-caps easily enough.

GOVERNOR. And over each bed you might hang up a placard stating in Latin or some other language — that's your end of it, Christian Ivanovich — the name of the disease, when the patient fell ill, the day of the week and the month. And I don't like your invalids to be smoking such strong tobacco. It makes you sneeze when you come in. It would be better, too, if there weren't so many of them. If there are a large number, it will instantly be ascribed to bad supervision or incompetent medical treatment.

ARTEMY. Oh, as to treatment, Christian Ivanovich and I have worked out our own system. Our rule is: the nearer to nature the better. We use no expensive medicines. A man is a simple affair. If he dies, he'd die anyway. If he gets well, he'd get well anyway. Besides, the doctor would have a hard time making the patients understand him. He doesn't know a word of Russian.

The Doctor gives forth a sound intermediate between M and A.

GOVERNOR. And you, Ammos Fiodorovich, had better look to the courthouse. The attendants have turned the entrance hall where the petitioners usually wait into a poultry yard, and the geese and goslings go poking their beaks between people's legs. Of course, setting up housekeeping is commendable, and there is no reason why a porter shouldn't do it. Only, you see, the courthouse is not exactly the place for it. I had meant to tell you so before, but somehow it escaped my memory.

AMMOS. Well, I'll have them all taken into the kitchen to-day. Will you come and dine with me?

GOVERNOR. Then, too, it isn't right to have the courtroom littered up with all sorts of rubbish — to have a hunting-crop lying right among the papers on your

desk. You're fond of sport, I know, still it's better to have the crop removed for the present. When the Inspector is gone, you may put it back again. As for your assessor, he's an educated man, to be sure, but he reeks of spirits, as if he had just emerged from a distillery. That's not right either. I had meant to tell you so long ago, but something or other drove the thing out of my mind. If his odor is really a congenital defect, as he says, then there are ways of remedying it. You might advise him to eat onion or garlic, or something of the sort. Christian Ivanovich can help him out with some of his nostrums.

The Doctor makes the same sound as before.

AMMOS. No, there's no cure for it. He says his nurse struck him when he was a child, and ever since he has smelt of vodka.

GOVERNOR. Well, I just wanted to call your attention to it. As regards the internal administration and what Andrey Ivanovich in his letter calls "little peccadilloes," I have nothing to say. Why, of course, there isn't a man living who hasn't some sins to answer for. That's the way God made the world, and the Voltairean freethinkers can talk against it all they like, it won't do any good.

AMMOS. What do you mean by sins? Anton Antonovich? There are sins and sins. I tell everyone plainly that I take bribes. I make no bones about it. But what kind of bribes? White greyhound puppies. That's quite a different matter.

GOVERNOR. H'm. Bribes are bribes, whether puppies or anything else.

AMMOS. Oh, no, Anton Antonovich. But if one has a fur overcoat worth five hundred rubles, and one's wife a shawl —

GOVERNOR. [testily]. And supposing greyhound puppies are the only bribes you take? You're an atheist, you never go to church, while I at least am a firm believer and go to church every Sunday. You — oh, I know you. When you begin to talk about the Creation it makes my flesh creep.

AMMOS. Well, it's a conclusion I've reasoned out with my own brain.

GOVERNOR. Too much brain is sometimes worse than none at all. — However, I merely mentioned the courthouse. I dare say nobody will ever look at it. It's an enviable place. God Almighty Himself seems to watch over it. But you, Luka Lukich, as inspector of schools, ought to have an eye on the teachers. They are very learned gentlemen, no doubt, with a college education, but they have funny habits — inseparable from the profession, I know. One of them, for instance, the man with the fat face — I forget his name — is sure, the moment he takes his chair, to screw up his face like this. [Imitates him.] And then he has a trick of sticking his hand under his necktie and smoothing down his beard. It doesn't matter, of course, if he makes a face at the pupils; perhaps it's even necessary. I'm no judge of that. But you yourself will admit that if he does it to a visitor, it may turn out very badly. The Inspector, or anyone else, might take it as meant for himself, and then the deuce knows what might come of it.

LUKA. But what can I do? I have told him about it time and again. Only the other day when the marshal of the nobility came into the class-room, he made such a face at him as I had never in my life seen before. I dare say it was with the best intentions; But I get reprimanded for permitting radical ideas to be instilled in the minds of the young.

GOVERNOR. And then I must call your attention to the history teacher. He has a lot of learning in his head and a store of facts. That's evident. But he lectures with such ardor that he quite forgets himself. Once I listened to him. As long as he was talking about the Assyrians and Babylonians, it was not so bad. But when he reached Alexander of Macedon, I can't describe what came over him. Upon my word, I thought a fire had broken out. He jumped down from the platform, picked up a chair and dashed it to the floor. Alexander of Macedon was a hero, it is true. But that's no reason for breaking chairs. The state must bear the cost.

LUKA. Yes, he is a hot one. I have spoken to him about it several times. He only says: "As you please, but in the cause of learning I will even sacrifice my life."

GOVERNOR. Yes, it's a mysterious law of fate. Your clever man is either a drunkard, or he makes such grimaces that you feel like running away.

LUKA. Ah, Heaven save us from being in the educational department! One's afraid of everything. Everybody meddles and wants to show that he is as clever

as you.

GOVERNOR. Oh, that’s nothing. But this cursed incognito! All of a sudden he’ll look in: “Ah, so you’re here, my dear fellows! And who’s the judge here?” says he. “Liapkin-Tiapkin.” “Bring Liapkin-Tiapkin here. — And who is the Superintendent of Charities?” “Zemlianika.” — ”Bring Zemlianika here!” — That’s what’s bad.

SCENE II

Enter Ivan Kuzmich, the Postmaster.

POSTMASTER. Tell me, gentlemen, who’s coming? What chinovnik?

GOVERNOR. What, haven’t you heard?

POSTMASTER. Bobchinsky told me. He was at the postoffice just now.

GOVERNOR. Well, what do you think of it?

POSTMASTER. What do I think of it? Why, there’ll be a war with the Turks.

AMMOS. Exactly. Just what I thought.

GOVERNOR [sarcastically]. Yes, you’ve both hit in the air precisely.

POSTMASTER. It’s war with the Turks for sure, all fomented by the French.

GOVERNOR. Nonsense! War with the Turks indeed. It’s we who are going to get it, not the Turks. You may count on that. Here’s a letter to prove it.

POSTMASTER. In that case, then, we won’t go to war with the Turks.

GOVERNOR. Well, how do you feel about it, Ivan Kuzmich?

POSTMASTER. How do I feel? How do YOU feel about it, Anton Antonovich?

GOVERNOR. I? Well, I'm not afraid, but I just feel a little — you know — The merchants and townspeople bother me. I seem to be unpopular with them. But the Lord knows if I've taken from some I've done it without a trace of ill-feeling. I even suspect — [Takes him by the arm and walks aside with him.] — I even suspect that I may have been denounced. Or why would they send an Inspector to us? Look here, Ivan Kuzmich, don't you think you could — ahem! — just open a little every letter that passes through your office and read it — for the common benefit of us all, you know — to see if it contains any kind of information against me, or is only ordinary correspondence. If it is all right, you can seal it up again, or simply deliver the letter opened.

POSTMASTER. Oh, I know. You needn't teach me that. I do it not so much as a precaution as out of curiosity. I just itch to know what's doing in the world. And it's very interesting reading, I tell you. Some letters are fascinating — parts of them written grand — more edifying than the Moscow Gazette.

GOVERNOR. Tell me, then, have you read anything about any official from St. Petersburg?

POSTMASTER. No, nothing about a St. Petersburg official, but plenty about Kostroma and Saratov ones. A pity you don't read the letters. There are some very fine passages in them. For instance, not long ago a lieutenant writes to a friend describing a ball very wittily. — Splendid! "Dear friend," he says, "I live in the regions of the Empyrean, lots of girls, bands playing, flags flying." He's put a lot of feeling into his description, a whole lot. I've kept the letter on purpose. Would you like to read it?

GOVERNOR. No, this is no time for such things. But please, Ivan Kuzmich, do me the favor, if ever you chance upon a complaint or denunciation, don't hesitate a moment, hold it back.

POSTMASTER. I will, with the greatest pleasure.

AMMOS. You had better be careful. You may get yourself into trouble.

POSTMASTER. Goodness me!

GOVERNOR. Never mind, never mind. Of course, it would be different if you published it broadcast. But it’s a private affair, just between us.

AMMOS. Yes, it’s a bad business — I really came here to make you a present of a puppy, sister to the dog you know about. I suppose you have heard that Cheptovich and Varkhovinsky have started a suit. So now I live in clover. I hunt hares first on the one’s estate, then on the other’s.

GOVERNOR. I don’t care about your hares now, my good friend. That cursed incognito is on my brain. Any moment the door may open and in walk —

SCENE III

Enter Bobchinsky and Dobchinsky, out of breath.

BOBCHINSKY. What an extraordinary occurrence!

DOBCHINSKY. An unexpected piece of news!

ALL. What is it? What is it?

DOBCHINSKY. Something quite unforeseen. We were about to enter the inn —

BOBCHINSKY [interrupting]. Yes, Piotr Ivanovich and I were entering the inn —

DOBCHINSKY [interrupting]. Please, Piotr Ivanovich, let me tell.

BOBCHINSKY. No, please, let me — let me. You can't. You haven't got the style for it.

DOBCHINSKY. Oh, but you'll get mixed up and won't remember everything.

BOBCHINSKY. Yes, I will, upon my word, I will. PLEASE don't interrupt! Do let me tell the news — don't interrupt! Pray, oblige me, gentlemen, and tell Dobchinsky not to interrupt.

GOVERNOR. Speak, for Heaven's sake! What is it? My heart is in my mouth! Sit down, gentlemen, take seats. Piotr Ivanovich, here's a chair for you. [All seat themselves around Bobchinsky and Dobchinsky.] Well, now, what is it? What is it?

BOBCHINSKY. Permit me, permit me. I'll tell it all just as it happened. As soon as I had the pleasure of taking leave of you after you were good enough to be bothered with the letter which you had received, sir, I ran out — now, please don't keep interrupting, Dobchinsky. I know all about it, all, I tell you. — So I ran out to see Korobkin. But not finding Korobkin at home, I went off to Rastakovsky, and not seeing him, I went to Ivan Kuzmich to tell him of the news you'd got. Going on from there I met Dobchinsky —

DOBCHINSKY [interjecting]. At the stall where they sell pies —

BOBCHINSKY. At the stall where they sell pies. Well, I met Dobchinsky and I said to him: "Have you heard the news that came to Anton Antonovich in a letter which is absolutely reliable?" But Piotr Ivanovich had already heard of it from your housekeeper, Avdotya, who, I don't know why, had been sent to Filipp Antonovich Pachechuyev —

DOBCHINSKY [interrupting]. To get a little keg for French brandy.

BOBCHINSKY. Yes, to get a little keg for French brandy. So then I went with Dobchinsky to Pachechuyev's. — Will you stop, Piotr Ivanovich? Please don't interrupt. — So off we went to Pachechuyev's, and on the way Dobchinsky said: "Let's go to the inn," he said. "I haven't eaten a thing since morning. My

stomach is growling.” Yes, sir, his stomach was growling. “They’ve just got in a supply of fresh salmon at the inn,” he said. “Let’s take a bite.” We had hardly entered the inn when we saw a young man —

DOBCHINSKY [Interrupting]. Of rather good appearance and dressed in ordinary citizen’s clothes.

BOBCHINSKY. Yes, of rather good appearance and dressed in citizen’s clothes — walking up and down the room. There was something out of the usual about his face, you know, something deep — and a manner about him — and here [raises his hand to his forehead and turns it around several times] full, full of everything. I had a sort of feeling, and I said to Dobchinsky, “Something’s up. This is no ordinary matter.” Yes, and Dobchinsky beckoned to the landlord, Vlas, the innkeeper, you know, — three weeks ago his wife presented him with a baby — a bouncer — he’ll grow up just like his father and keep a tavern. — Well, we beckoned to Vlas, and Dobchinsky asked him on the quiet, “Who,” he asked, “is that young man?” “That young man,” Vlas replied, “that young man” — Oh, don’t interrupt, Piotr Ivanovich, please don’t interrupt. You can’t tell the story. Upon my word, you can’t. You lisp and one tooth in your mouth makes you whistle. I know what I’m saying. “That young man,” he said, “is an official.” — Yes, sir. — ”On his way from St. Petersburg. And his name,” he said, “is Ivan Aleksandrovich Khlestakov, and he’s going,” he said “to the government of Saratov,” he said. “And he acts so queerly. It’s the second week he’s been here and he’s never left the house; and he won’t pay a penny, takes everything on account.” When Vlas told me that, a light dawned on me from above, and I said to Piotr Ivanovich, “Hey!” —

DOBCHINSKY. No, Piotr Ivanovich, I said “HEY!”

BOBCHINSKY. Well first YOU said it, then I did. “Hey!” said both of us, “And why does he stick here if he’s going to Saratov?” — Yes, sir, that’s he, the official.

GOVERNOR. Who? What official?

BOBCHINSKY. Why, the official who you were notified was coming, the

Inspector.

GOVERNOR [terrified]. Great God! What's that you're saying. It can't be he.

DOBCHINSKY. It is, though. Why, he doesn't pay his bills and he doesn't leave. Who else can it be? And his postchaise is ordered for Saratov.

BOBCHINSKY. It's he, it's he, it's he — why, he's so alert, he scrutinized everything. He saw that Dobchinsky and I were eating salmon — chiefly on account of Dobchinsky's stomach — and he looked at our plates so hard that I was frightened to death.

GOVERNOR. The Lord have mercy on us sinners! In what room is he staying?

DOBCHINSKY. Room number 5 near the stairway.

BOBCHINSKY. In the same room that the officers quarreled in when they passed through here last year.

GOVERNOR. How long has he been here?

DOBCHINSKY. Two weeks. He came on St. Vasili's day.

GOVERNOR. Two weeks! [Aside.] Holy Fathers and saints preserve me! In those two weeks I have flogged the wife of a non-commissioned officer, the prisoners were not given their rations, the streets are dirty as a pothouse — a scandal, a disgrace! [Clutches his head with both hands.]

ARTEMY. What do you think, Anton Antonovich, hadn't we better go in state to the inn?

AMMOS. No, no. First send the chief magistrate, then the clergy, then the merchants. That's what it says in the book. The Acts of John the Freemason.

GOVERNOR. No, no, leave it to me. I have been in difficult situations before now. They have passed off all right, and I was even rewarded with thanks. Maybe the Lord will help us out this time, too. [Turns to Bobchinsky.] You say he's a young man?

BOBCHINSKY. Yes, about twenty-three or four at the most.

GOVERNOR. So much the better. It's easier to pump things out of a young man. It's tough if you've got a hardened old devil to deal with. But a young man is all on the surface. You, gentlemen, had better see to your end of things while I go unofficially, by myself, or with Dobchinsky here, as though for a walk, to see that the visitors that come to town are properly accommodated. Here, Svistunov. [To one of the Sergeants.]

SVISTUNOV. Sir.

GOVERNOR. Go instantly to the Police Captain — or, no, I'll want you. Tell somebody to send him here as quickly as possibly and then come back.

Svistunov hurries off.

ARTEMY. Let's go, let's go, Ammos Fiodorovich. We may really get into trouble.

AMMOS. What have you got to be afraid of? Put clean nightcaps on the patients and the thing's done.

ARTEMY. Nightcaps! Nonsense! The patients were ordered to have oatmeal soup. Instead of that there's such a smell of cabbage in all the corridors that you've got to hold your nose.

AMMOS. Well, my mind's at ease. Who's going to visit the court? Supposing he does look at the papers, he'll wish he had left them alone. I have been on the bench fifteen years, and when I take a look into a report, I despair. King Solomon in all his wisdom could not tell what is true and what is not true in it.

The Judge, the Superintendent of Charities, the School Inspector, and Postmaster go out and bump up against the Sergeant in the doorway as the latter returns.

SCENE IV

The Governor, Bobchinsky, Dobchinsky, and Sergeant Svistunov.

GOVERNOR. Well, is the cab ready?

SVISTUNOV. Yes, sir.

GOVERNOR. Go out on the street — or, no, stop — go and bring — why, where are the others? Why are you alone? Didn't I give orders for Prokhorov to be here? Where is Prokhorov?

SVISTUNOV. Prokhorov is in somebody's house and can't go on duty just now.

GOVERNOR. Why so?

SVISTUNOV. Well, they brought him back this morning dead drunk. They poured two buckets of water over him, but he hasn't sobered up yet.

GOVERNOR [clutching his head with both hands]. For Heaven's sake! Go out on duty quick — or, no, run up to my room, do you hear? And fetch my sword and my new hat. Now, Piotr Ivanovich, [to Dobchinsky] come.

BOBCHINSKY. And me — me, too. Let me come, too, Anton Antonovich.

GOVERNOR. No, no, Bobchinsky, it won't do. Besides there is not enough room in the cab.

BOBCHINSKY. Oh, that doesn't matter. I'll follow the cab on foot — on foot. I just want to peep through a crack — so — to see that manner of his — how he

acts.

GOVERNOR [turning to the Sergeant and taking his sword]. Be off and get the policemen together. Let them each take a — there, see how scratched my sword is. It's that dog of a merchant, Abdulin. He sees the Governor's sword is old and doesn't provide a new one. Oh, the sharpers! I'll bet they've got their petitions against me ready in their coat-tail pockets. — Let each take a street in his hand — I don't mean a street — a broom — and sweep the street leading to the inn, and sweep it clean, and — do you hear? And see here, I know you, I know your tricks. You insinuate yourselves into the inn and walk off with silver spoons in your boots. Just you look out. I keep my ears pricked. What have you been up to with the merchant, Chorniayev, eh? He gave you two yards of cloth for your uniform and you stole the whole piece. Take care. You're only a Sergeant. Don't graft higher than your rank. Off with you.

SCENE V

Enter the Police Captain.

GOVERNOR. Hello, Stepan Ilyich, where the dickens have you been keeping yourself? What do you mean by acting that way?

CAPTAIN. Why, I was just outside the gate.

GOVERNOR. Well, listen, Stepan Ilyich. An official has come from St. Petersburg. What have you done about it?

CAPTAIN. What you told me to. I sent Sergeant Pugovichyn with policemen to clean the street.

GOVERNOR. Where is Derzhimorda?

CAPTAIN. He has gone off on the fire engine.

GOVERNOR. And Prokhorov is drunk?

CAPTAIN. Yes.

GOVERNOR. How could you allow him to get drunk?

CAPTAIN. God knows. Yesterday there was a fight outside the town. He went to restore order and was brought back drunk.

GOVERNOR. Well, then, this is what you are to do. — Sergeant Pugovichyn — he is tall. So he is to stand on duty on the bridge for appearance' sake. Then the old fence near the bootmaker's must be pulled down at once and a post stuck up with a whisp of straw so as to look like grading. The more debris there is the more it will show the governor's activity. — Good God, though, I forgot that about forty cart-loads of rubbish have been dumped against that fence. What a vile, filthy town this is! A monument, or even only a fence, is erected, and instantly they bring a lot of dirt together, from the devil knows where, and dump it there. [Heaves a sigh.] And if the functionary that has come here asks any of the officials whether they are satisfied, they are to say, "Perfectly satisfied, your Honor"; and if anybody is not satisfied, I'll give him something to be dissatisfied about afterwards. — Ah, I'm a sinner, a terrible sinner. [Takes the hat-box, instead of his hat.] Heaven only grant that I may soon get this matter over and done with; then I'll donate a candle such as has never been offered before. I'll levy a hundred pounds of wax from every damned merchant. Oh my, oh my! Come, let's go, Piotr Ivanovich. [Tries to put the hat-box on his head instead of his hat.]

CAPTAIN. Anton Antonovich, that's the hat-box, not your hat.

GOVERNOR [throwing the box down]. If it's the hat-box, it's the hat-box, the deuce take it! — And if he asks why the church at the hospital for which the money was appropriated five years ago has not been built, don't let them forget to say that the building was begun but was destroyed by fire. I sent in a report about it, you know. Some blamed fool might forget and let out that the building was never even begun. And tell Derzhimorda not to be so free with his fists. Guilty or innocent, he makes them all see stars in the cause of public order. — Come on, come on, Dobchinsky. [Goes out and returns.] And don't let the

soldiers appear on the streets with nothing on. That rotten garrison wear their coats directly over their undershirts.

All go out.

SCENE VI

Anna Andreyevna and Marya Antonovna rush in on the stage.

ANNA. Where are they? Where are they? Oh, my God! [opening the door.] Husband! Antosha! Anton! [hurriedly, to Marya.] It's all your fault. Dawdling! Dawdling! — "I want a pin — I want a scarf." [Runs to the window and calls.] Anton, where are you going? Where are you going? What! He has come? The Inspector? He has a moustache? What kind of a moustache?

GOVERNOR [from without]. Wait, dear. Later.

ANNA. Wait? I don't want to wait. The idea, wait! I only want one word. Is he a colonel or what? Eh? [Disgusted.] There, he's gone! You'll pay for it! It's all your fault — you, with your "Mamma, dear, wait a moment, I'll just pin my scarf. I'll come directly." Yes, directly! Now we have missed the news. It's all your confounded coquettishness. You heard the Postmaster was here and so you must prink and prim yourself in front of the mirror — look on this side and that side and all around. You imagine he's smitten with you. But I can tell you he makes a face at you the moment you turn your back.

MARYA. It can't be helped, mamma. We'll know everything in a couple of hours anyway.

ANNA. In a couple of hours! Thank you! A nice answer. Why don't you say, in a month. We'll know still more in a month. [She leans out of the window.] Here, Avdotya! I say! Have you heard whether anybody has come, Avdotya? — No, you goose, you didn't — He waved his hands? Well, what of it? Let him wave his hands. But you should have asked him anyhow. You couldn't find out, of course, with your head full of nonsense and lovers. Eh, what? They left in a hurry? Well, you should have run after the carriage. Off with you, off with you at

once, do you hear? Run and ask everybody where they are. Be sure and find out who the newcomer is and what he is like, do you hear? Peep through a crack and find everything out — what sort of eyes he has, whether they are black or blue, and be back here instantly, this minute, do you hear? Quick, quick, quick!

She keeps on calling and they both stand at the window until the curtain drops.

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ACT II

A small room in the inn, bed, table, travelling bag, empty bottle, boots, clothes brush, etc.

SCENE I

OSIP [lying on his master's bed]. The devil take it! I'm so hungry. There's a racket in my belly, as if a whole regiment were blowing trumpets. We'll never reach home. I'd like to know what we are going to do. Two months already since we left St. Pete. He's gone through all his cash, the precious buck, so now he sticks here with his tail between his legs and takes it easy. We'd have had enough and more than enough to pay for the fare, but no he must exhibit himself in every town. [Imitates him.] "Osip, get me the best room to be had and order the best dinner they serve. I can't stand bad food. I must have the best." It would be all right for a somebody, but for a common copying clerk! Goes and gets acquainted with the other travellers, plays cards, and plays himself out of his last penny. Oh, I'm sick of this life. It's better in our village, really. There isn't so much going on, but then there is less to bother about. You get yourself a wife and lie on the stove all the time and eat pie. Of course, if you wanted to tell the truth, there's no denying it that there's nothing like living in St. Pete. All you want is money. And then you can live smart and classy — theeadres, dogs to dance for you, everything, and everybody talks so genteel, pretty near like in high society. If you go to the Schukin bazaar, the shopkeepers cry, "Gentlemen," at you. You sit with the officials in the ferry boat. If you want company, you go into a shop. A sport there will tell you about life in the barracks and explain the meaning of every star in the sky, so that you see them all as if you held them in your hand. Then an old officer's wife will gossip, or a pretty chambermaid will dart a look at you — ta, ta, ta! [Smirks and wags his head.] And what deucedly civil manners they have, too. You never hear no impolite language. They always say "Mister" to you. If you are tired of walking, why you take a cab and sit in it like a lord. And if you don't feel like paying, then you don't. Every house has an open-work gate and you can slip through and the devil himself won't catch you. There's one bad thing, though; sometimes you get first class eats and sometimes you're so starved you nearly drop — like now. It's all his fault. What can you do

with him? His dad sends him money to keep him going, but the devil a lot it does. He goes off on a spree, rides in cabs, gets me to buy a theeadre ticket for him every day, and in a week look at him — sends me to the old clo'es man to sell his new dress coat. Sometimes he gets rid of everything down to his last shirt and is left with nothing except his coat and overcoat. Upon my word, it's the truth. And such fine cloth, too. English, you know. One dress coat costs him a hundred and fifty rubles and he sells it to the old clo'es man for twenty. No use saying nothing about his pants. They go for a song. And why? Because he doesn't tend to his business. Instead of sticking to his job, he gads about on the Prospect and plays cards. Ah, if the old gentleman only knew it! He wouldn't care that you are an official. He'd lift up your little shirtie and would lay it on so that you'd go about rubbing yourself for a week. If you have a job, stick to it. Here's the innkeeper says he won't let you have anything to eat unless you pay your back bills. Well, and suppose we don't pay. [Sighing.] Oh, good God! If only I could get cabbage soup. I think I could eat up the whole world now. There's a knock at the door. I suppose it's him. [Rises from the bed hastily.]

SCENE II

Osip and Khlestakov.

KHLESTAKOV. Here! [Hands him his cap and cane.] What, been warming the bed again!

OSIP. Why should I have been warming the bed? Have I never seen a bed before?

KHLESTAKOV. You're lying. The bed's all tumbled up.

OSIP. What do I want a bed for? Don't I know what a bed is like? I have legs and can use them to stand on. I don't need your bed.

KHLESTAKOV [walking up and down the room]. Go see if there isn't some tobacco in the pouch.

OSIP. What tobacco? You emptied it out four days ago.

KHLESTAKOV [pacing the room and twisting his lips. Finally he says in a loud resolute voice]. Listen — a — Osip.

OSIP. Yes, sir?

KHLESTAKOV [In a voice just as loud, but not quite so resolute]. Go down there.

OSIP. Where?

KHLESTAKOV [in a voice not at all resolute, nor loud, but almost in entreaty]. Down to the restaurant — tell them — to send up dinner.

OSIP. No, I won't.

KHLESTAKOV. How dare you, you fool!

OSIP. It won't do any good, anyhow. The landlord said he won't let you have anything more to eat.

KHLESTAKOV. How dare he! What nonsense is this?

OSIP. He'll go to the Governor, too, he says. It's two weeks now since you've paid him, he says. You and your master are cheats, he says, and your master is a blackleg besides, he says. We know the breed. We've seen swindlers like him before.

KHLESTAKOV. And you're delighted, I suppose, to repeat all this to me, you donkey.

OSIP. "Every Tom, Dick and Harry comes and lives here," he says, "and runs up debts so that you can't even put him out. I'm not going to fool about it," he says, "I'm going straight to the Governor and have him arrested and put in jail."

KHLESTAKOV. That’ll do now, you fool. Go down at once and tell him to have dinner sent up. The coarse brute! The idea!

OSIP. Hadn’t I better call the landlord here?

KHLESTAKOV. What do I want the landlord for? Go and tell him yourself.

OSIP. But really, master —

KHLESTAKOV. Well, go, the deuce take you. Call the landlord.

Osip goes out.

SCENE III

KHLESTAKOV [alone]. I am so ravenously hungry. I took a little stroll thinking I could walk off my appetite. But, hang it, it clings. If I hadn’t dissipated so in Penza I’d have had enough money to get home with. The infantry captain did me up all right. Wonderful the way the scoundrel cut the cards! It didn’t take more than a quarter of an hour for him to clean me out of my last penny. And yet I would give anything to have another set-to with him. Only I never will have the chance. — What a rotten town this is! You can’t get anything on credit in the grocery shops here. It’s deucedly mean, it is. [He whistles, first an air from Robert le Diable, then a popular song, then a blend of the two.] No one’s coming.

SCENE IV

Khlestakov, Osip, and a Servant.

SERVANT. The landlord sent me up to ask what you want.

KHLESTAKOV. Ah, how do you do, brother! How are you? How are you?

SERVANT. All right, thank you.

KHLESTAKOV. And how are you getting on in the inn? Is business good?

SERVANT. Yes, business is all right, thank you.

KHLESTAKOV. Many guests?

SERVANT. Plenty.

KHLESTAKOV. See here, good friend. They haven't sent me dinner yet. Please hurry them up! See that I get it as soon as possible. I have some business to attend to immediately after dinner.

SERVANT. The landlord said he won't let you have anything any more. He was all for going to the Governor to-day and making a complaint against you.

KHLESTAKOV. What's there to complain about? Judge for yourself, friend. Why, I've got to eat. If I go on like this I'll turn into a skeleton. I'm hungry, I'm not joking.

SERVANT. Yes, sir, that's what he said. "I won't let him have no dinner," he said, "till he pays for what he has already had." That was his answer.

KHLESTAKOV. Try to persuade him.

SERVANT. But what shall I tell him?

KHLESTAKOV. Explain that it's a serious matter, I've got to eat. As for the money, of course — He thinks that because a muzhik like him can go without food a whole day others can too. The idea!

SERVANT. Well, all right. I'll tell him.

The Servant and Osip go out.

SCENE V

Khlestakov alone.

KHLESTAKOV. A bad business if he refuses to let me have anything. I'm so hungry. I've never been so hungry in my life. Shall I try to raise something on my clothes? Shall I sell my trousers? No, I'd rather starve than come home without a St. Petersburg suit. It's a shame Joachim wouldn't let me have a carriage on hire. It would have been great to ride home in a carriage, drive up under the porte-cochere of one of the neighbors with lamps lighted and Osip behind in livery. Imagine the stir it would have created. "Who is it? What's that?" Then my footman walks in [draws himself up and imitates] and announces: "Ivan Aleksandrovich Khlestakov of St. Petersburg. Will you receive him?" Those country lubbers don't even know what it means to "receive." If any lout of a country squire pays them a visit, he stalks straight into the drawing-room like a bear. Then you step up to one of their pretty girls and say: "Dee-lighted, madam." [Rubs his hands and bows.] Phew! [Spits.] I feel positively sick, I'm so hungry.

SCENE VI

Khlestakov, Osip, and later the Servant.

KHLESTAKOV. Well?

OSIP. They're bringing dinner.

KHLESTAKOV [claps his hands and wriggles in his chair]. Dinner, dinner, dinner!

SERVANT [with plates and napkin]. This is the last time the landlord will let you have dinner.

KHLESTAKOV. The landlord, the landlord! I spit on your landlord. What have you got there?

SERVANT. Soup and roast beef.

KHLESTAKOV. What! Only two courses?

SERVANT. That’s all.

KHLESTAKOV. Nonsense! I won’t take it. What does he mean by that? Ask him. It’s not enough.

SERVANT. The landlord says it’s too much.

KHLESTAKOV. Why is there no sauce?

SERVANT. There is none.

KHLESTAKOV. Why not? I saw them preparing a whole lot when I passed through the kitchen. And in the dining-room this morning two short little men were eating salmon and lots of other things.

SERVANT. Well, you see, there is some and there isn’t.

KHLESTAKOV. Why “isn’t”?

SERVANT. Because there isn’t any.

KHLESTAKOV. What, no salmon, no fish, no cutlets?

SERVANT. Only for the better kind of folk.

KHLESTAKOV. You're a fool.

SERVANT. Yes, sir.

KHLESTAKOV. You measly suckling pig. Why can they eat and I not? Why the devil can't I eat, too? Am I not a guest the same as they?

SERVANT. No, not the same. That's plain.

KHLESTAKOV. How so?

SERVANT. That's easy. THEY pay, that's it.

KHLESTAKOV. I'm not going to argue with you, simpleton! [Ladles out the soup and begins to eat.] What, you call that soup? Simply hot water poured into a cup. No taste to it at all. It only stinks. I don't want it. Bring me some other soup.

SERVANT. All right. I'll take it away. The boss said if you didn't want it, you needn't take it.

KHLESTAKOV [putting his hand over the dishes]. Well, well, leave it alone, you fool. You may be used to treat other people this way, but I'm not that sort. I advise you not to try it on me. My God! What soup! [Goes on eating.] I don't think anybody in the world tasted such soup. Feathers floating on the top instead of butter. [Cuts the piece of chicken in the soup.] Oh, oh, oh! What a bird! — Give me the roast beef. There's a little soup left, Osip. Take it. [Cuts the meat.] What sort of roast beef is this? This isn't roast beef.

SERVANT. What else is it?

KHLESTAKOV. The devil knows, but it isn't roast beef. It's roast iron, not roast beef. [Eats.] Scoundrels! Crooks! The stuff they give you to eat! It makes your jaws ache to chew one piece of it. [Picks his teeth with his fingers.] Villains! It's as tough as the bark of a tree. I can't pull it out no matter how hard I try. Such

meat is enough to ruin one’s teeth. Crooks! [Wipes his mouth with the napkin.] Is there nothing else?

SERVANT. No.

KHLESTAKOV. Scoundrels! Blackguards! They might have given some decent pastry, or something, the lazy good-for-nothings! Fleecing their guests! That’s all they’re good for.

[The Servant takes the dishes and carries them out accompanied by Osip.]

SCENE VII

Khlestakov alone.

KHLESTAKOV. It’s just as if I had eaten nothing at all, upon my word. It has only whetted my appetite. If I only had some change to send to the market and buy some bread.

OSIP [entering]. The Governor has come, I don’t know what for. He’s inquiring about you.

KHLESTAKOV [in alarm]. There now! That inn-keeper has gone and made a complaint against me. Suppose he really claps me into jail? Well! If he does it in a gentlemanly way, I may — No, no, I won’t. The officers and the people are all out on the street and I set the fashion for them and the merchant’s daughter and I flirted. No, I won’t. And pray, who is he? How dare he, actually? What does he take me for? A tradesman? I’ll tell him straight out, “How dare you? How — ”

[The door knob turns and Khlestakov goes pale and shrinks back.]

SCENE VIII

Khlestakov, the Governor, and Dobchinsky.

The Governor advances a few steps and stops. They stare at each other a few moments wide-eyed and frightened.

GOVERNOR [recovering himself a little and saluting military fashion]. I have come to present my compliments, sir.

KHLESTAKOV [bows]. How do you do, sir?

GOVERNOR. Excuse my intruding.

KHLESTAKOV. Pray don’t mention it.

GOVERNOR. It’s my duty as chief magistrate of this town to see that visitors and persons of rank should suffer no inconveniences.

KHLESTAKOV [a little halting at first, but toward the end in a loud, firm voice]. Well — what was — to be — done? It’s not — my fault. I’m — really going to pay. They will send me money from home. [Bobchinsky peeps in at the door.] He’s most to blame. He gives me beef as hard as a board and the soup — the devil knows what he put into it. I ought to have pitched it out of the window. He starves me the whole day. His tea is so peculiar — it smells of fish, not tea. So why should I — The idea!

GOVERNOR [scared]. Excuse me! I assure you, it’s not my fault. I always have good beef in the market here. The Kholmogory merchants bring it, and they are sober, well-behaved people. I’m sure I don’t know where he gets his bad meat from. But if anything is wrong, may I suggest that you allow me to take you to another place?

KHLESTAKOV. No, I thank you. I don’t care to leave. I know what the other place is — the jail. What right have you, I should like to know — how dare you? — Why, I’m in the government service at St. Petersburg. [Puts on a bold front.] I — I — I —

GOVERNOR [aside]. My God, how angry he is. He has found out everything. Those damned merchants have told him everything.

KHLESTAKOV [with bravado]. I won't go even if you come here with your whole force. I'll go straight to the minister. [Bangs his fist on the table.] What do you mean? What do you mean?

GOVERNOR [drawing himself up stiffly and shaking all over]. Have pity on me. Don't ruin me. I have a wife and little children. Don't bring misfortune on a man.

KHLESTAKOV. No, I won't go. What's that got to do with me? Must I go to jail because you have a wife and little children? Great! [Bobchinsky looks in at the door and disappears in terror.] No, much obliged to you. I will not go.

GOVERNOR [trembling]. It was my inexperience. I swear to you, it was nothing but my inexperience and insufficient means. Judge for yourself. The salary I get is not enough for tea and sugar. And if I have taken bribes, they were mere trifles — something for the table, or a coat or two. As for the officer's widow to whom they say I gave a beating, she's in business now, and it's a slander, it's a slander that I beat her. Those scoundrels here invented the lie. They are ready to murder me. That's the kind of people they are.

KHLESTAKOV. Well. I've nothing to do with them. [Reflecting.] I don't see, though, why you should talk to me about your scoundrels or officer's widow. An officer's widow is quite a different matter. — But don't you dare to beat me. You can't do it to me — no, sir, you can't. The idea! Look at him! I'll pay, I'll pay the money. Just now I'm out of cash. That's why I stay here — because I haven't a single kopek.

GOVERNOR [aside]. Oh, he's a shrewd one. So that's what he's aiming at? He's raised such a cloud of dust you can't tell what direction he's going. Who can guess what he wants? One doesn't know where to begin. But I will try. Come what may, I'll try — hit or miss. [Aloud.] H'm, if you really are in want of money, I'm ready to serve you. It is my duty to assist strangers in town.

KHLESTAKOV. Lend me some, lend me some. Then I'll settle up immediately with the landlord. I only want two hundred rubles. Even less would do.

GOVERNOR. There's just two hundred rubles. [Giving him the money.] Don't bother to count it.

KHLESTAKOV [taking it]. Very much obliged to you. I'll send it back to you as soon as I get home. I just suddenly found myself without — H'm — I see you are a gentleman. Now it's all different.

GOVERNOR [aside]. Well, thank the Lord, he's taken the money. Now I suppose things will move along smoothly. I slipped four hundred instead of two into his hand.

KHLESTAKOV. Ho, Osip! [Osip enters.] Tell the servant to come. [To the Governor and Dobchinsky.] Please be seated. [To Dobchinsky.] Please take a seat, I beg of you.

GOVERNOR. Don't trouble. We can stand.

KHLESTAKOV. But, please, please be seated. I now see perfectly how open-hearted and generous you are. I confess I thought you had come to put me in — [To Dobchinsky.] Do take a chair.

The Governor and Dobchinsky sit down. Bobchinsky looks in at the door and listens.

GOVERNOR [aside]. I must be bolder. He wants us to pretend he is incognito. Very well, we will talk nonsense, too. We'll pretend we haven't the least idea who he is. [Aloud.] I was going about in the performance of my duty with Piotr Ivanovich Dobchinsky here — he's a landed proprietor here — and we came to the inn to see whether the guests are properly accommodated — because I'm not like other governors, who don't care about anything. No, apart from my duty, out of pure Christian philanthropy, I wish every mortal to be decently treated. And as if to reward me for my pains, chance has afforded me this pleasant acquaintance.

KHLESTAKOV. I, too, am delighted. Without your aid, I confess, I should have had to stay here a long time. I didn't know how in the world to pay my bill.

GOVERNOR [aside]. Oh, yes, fib on. — Didn't know how to pay his bill! May I ask where your Honor is going?

KHLESTAKOV. I'm going to my own village in the Government of Saratov.

GOVERNOR [aside, with an ironical expression on his face]. The Government of Saratov! H'm, h'm! And doesn't even blush! One must be on the qui vive with this fellow. [Aloud.] You have undertaken a great task. They say travelling is disagreeable because of the delay in getting horses but, on the other hand, it is a diversion. You are travelling for your own amusement, I suppose?

KHLESTAKOV. No, my father wants me. He's angry because so far I haven't made headway in the St. Petersburg service. He thinks they stick the Vladimir in your buttonhole the minute you get there. I'd like him to knock about in the government offices for a while.

GOVERNOR [aside]. How he fabricates! Dragging in his old father, too. [Aloud.] And may I ask whether you are going there to stay for long?

KHLESTAKOV. I really don't know. You see, my father is stubborn and stupid — an old dotard as hard as a block of wood. I'll tell him straight out, "Do what you will, I can't live away from St. Petersburg." Really, why should I waste my life among peasants? Our times make different demands on us. My soul craves enlightenment.

GOVERNOR [aside]. He can spin yarns all right. Lie after lie and never trips. And such an ugly insignificant-looking creature, too. Why, it seems to me I could crush him with my finger nails. But wait, I'll make you talk. I'll make you tell me things. [Aloud.] You were quite right in your observation, that one can do nothing in a dreary out-of-the-way place. Take this town, for instance. You lie awake nights, you work hard for your country, you don't spare yourself, and the reward? You don't know when it's coming. [He looks round the room.] This room seems rather damp.

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, it’s a dirty room. And the bugs! I’ve never experienced anything like them. They bite like dogs.

GOVERNOR. You don’t say! An illustrious guest like you to be subjected to such annoyance at the hands of — whom? Of vile bugs which should never have been born. And I dare say, it’s dark here, too.

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, very gloomy. The landlord has introduced the custom of not providing candles. Sometimes I want to do something — read a bit, or, if the fancy strikes me, write something. — I can’t. It’s a dark room, yes, very dark.

GOVERNOR. I wonder if I might be bold enough to ask you — but, no, I’m unworthy.

KHLESTAKOV. What is it?

GOVERNOR. No, no, I’m unworthy. I’m unworthy.

KHLESTAKOV. But what is it?

GOVERNOR. If I might be bold enough — I have a fine room for you at home, light and cosy. But no, I feel it is too great an honor. Don’t be offended. Upon my word, I made the offer out of the simplicity of my heart.

KHLESTAKOV. On the contrary, I accept your invitation with pleasure. I should feel much more comfortable in a private house than in this disreputable tavern.

GOVERNOR. I’m only too delighted. How glad my wife will be. It’s my character, you know. I’ve always been hospitable from my very childhood, especially when my guest is a distinguished person. Don’t think I say this out of flattery. No, I haven’t that vice. I only speak from the fullness of my heart.

KHLESTAKOV. I’m greatly obliged to you. I myself hate double-faced people. I

like your candor and kind-heartedness exceedingly. And I am free to say, I ask for nothing else than devotion and esteem — esteem and devotion.

SCENE IX

The above and the Servant, accompanied by Osip. Bobchinsky peeps in at the door.

SERVANT. Did your Honor wish anything?

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, let me have the bill.

SERVANT. I gave you the second one a little while ago.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, I can’t remember your stupid accounts. Tell me what the whole comes to.

SERVANT. You were pleased to order dinner the first day. The second day you only took salmon. And then you took everything on credit.

KHLESTAKOV. Fool! [Starts to count it all up now.] How much is it altogether?

GOVERNOR. Please don’t trouble yourself. He can wait. [To the Servant.] Get out of here. The money will be sent to you.

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, that’s so, of course. [He puts the money in his pocket.]

The Servant goes out. Bobchinsky peeps in at the door.

SCENE X

The Governor, Khlestakov and Dobchinsky.

GOVERNOR. Would you care to inspect a few institutions in our town now — the philanthropic institutions, for instance, and others?

KHLESTAKOV. But what is there to see?

GOVERNOR. Well, you'll see how they're run — the order in which we keep them.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, with the greatest pleasure. I'm ready.

Bobchinsky puts his head in at the door.

GOVERNOR. And then, if you wish, we can go from there and inspect the district school and see our method of education.

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, yes, if you please.

GOVERNOR. Afterwards, if you should like to visit our town jails and prisons, you will see how our criminals are kept.

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, yes, but why go to prison? We had better go to see the philanthropic institutions.

GOVERNOR. As you please. Do you wish to ride in your own carriage, or with me in the cab?

KHLESTAKOV. I'd rather take the cab with you.

GOVERNOR [to Dobchinsky]. Now there'll be no room for you, Piotr Ivanovich.

DOBCHINSKY. It doesn't matter. I'll walk.

GOVERNOR [aside, to Dobchinsky]. Listen. Run as fast as you can and take

two notes, one to Zemlianika at the hospital, the other to my wife. [To Khlestakov.] May I take the liberty of asking you to permit me to write a line to my wife to tell her to make ready to receive our honored guest?

KHLESTAKOV. Why go to so much trouble? However, there is the ink. I don't know whether there is any paper. Would the bill do?

GOVERNOR. Yes, that'll do. [Writes, talking to himself at the same time.] We'll see how things will go after lunch and several stout-bellied bottles. We have some Russian Madeira, not much to look at, but it will knock an elephant off its legs. If I only knew what he is and how much I have to be [on] my guard.

He finishes writing and gives the notes to Dobchinsky. As the latter walks across the stage, the door suddenly falls in, and Bobchinsky tumbles in with it to the floor. All exclaim in surprise. Bobchinsky rises.

KHLESTAKOV. Have you hurt yourself?

BOBCHINSKY. Oh, it's nothing — nothing at all — only a little bruise on my nose. I'll run in to Dr. Hübner's. He has a sort of plaster. It'll soon pass away.

GOVERNOR [making an angry gesture at Bobchinsky. To Khlestakov]. Oh, it's nothing. Now, if you please, sir, we'll go. I'll tell your servant to carry your luggage over. [Calls Osip.] Here, my good fellow, take all your master's things to my house, the Governor's. Anyone will tell you where it is. By your leave, sir. [Makes way for Khlestakov and follows him; then turns and says reprovingly to Bobchinsky.] Couldn't you find some other place to fall in? Sprawling out here like a lobster!

Goes out. After him Bobchinsky. Curtain falls.

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ACT III

SCENE: The same as in Act I.

SCENE I

Anna Andreyevna and Marya Antonovna standing at the window in the same positions as at the end of Act I.

ANNA. There now! We've been waiting a whole hour. All on account of your silly prinking. You were completely dressed, but no, you have to keep on dawdling. — Provoking! Not a soul to be seen, as though on purpose, as though the whole world were dead.

MARYA. Now really, mamma, we shall know all about it in a minute or two. Avdotya must come back soon. [Looks out of the window and exclaims.] Oh, mamma, someone is coming — there down the street!

ANNA. Where? Just your imagination again! — Why, yes, someone is coming. I wonder who it is. A short man in a frock coat. Who can it be? Eh? The suspense is awful! Who can it be, I wonder.

MARYA. Dobchinsky, mamma.

ANNA. Dobchinsky! Your imagination again! It's not Dobchinsky at all. [Waves her handkerchief.] Ho, you! Come here! Quick!

MARYA. It is Dobchinsky, mamma.

ANNA. Of course, you've got to contradict. I tell you, it's not Dobchinsky.

MARYA. Well, well, mamma? Isn't it Dobchinsky?

ANNA. Yes, it is, I see now. Why do you argue about it? [Calls through the window.] Hurry up, quick! You're so slow. Well, where are they? What? Speak from where you are. It's all the same. What? He is very strict? Eh? And how about my husband? [Moves away a little from the window, exasperated.] He is so stupid. He won't say a word until he is in the room.

SCENE II

Enter Dobchinsky.

ANNA. Now tell me, aren't you ashamed? You were the only one I relied on to act decently. They all ran away and you after them, and till now I haven't been able to find out a thing. Aren't you ashamed? I stood godmother to your Vanichka and Lizanko, and this is the way you treat me.

DOBCHINSKY. Godmother, upon my word, I ran so fast to pay my respects to you that I'm all out of breath. How do you do, Marya Antonovna?

MARYA. Good afternoon, Piotr Ivanovich.

ANNA. Well, tell me all about it. What is happening at the inn?

DOBCHINSKY. I have a note for you from Anton Antonovich.

ANNA. But who is he? A general?

DOBCHINSKY. No, not a general, but every bit as good as a general, I tell you. Such culture! Such dignified manners!

ANNA. Ah! So he is the same as the one my husband got a letter about.

DOBCHINSKY. Exactly. It was Piotr Ivanovich and I who first discovered him.

ANNA. Tell me, tell me all about it.

DOBCHINSKY. It’s all right now, thank the Lord. At first he received Anton Antonovich rather roughly. He was angry and said the inn was not run properly, and he wouldn’t come to the Governor’s house and he didn’t want to go to jail on account of him. But then when he found out that Anton Antonovich was not to blame and they got to talking more intimately, he changed right away, and, thank Heaven, everything went well. They’ve gone now to inspect the philanthropic institutions. I confess that Anton Antonovich had already begun to suspect that a secret denunciation had been lodged against him. I myself was trembling a little, too.

ANNA. What have you to be afraid of? You’re not an official.

DOBCHINSKY. Well, you see, when a Grand Mogul speaks, you feel afraid.

ANNA. That’s all rubbish. Tell me, what is he like personally? Is he young or old?

DOBCHINSKY. Young — a young man of about twenty-three. But he talks as if he were older. “If you will allow me,” he says, “I will go there and there.” [Waves his hands.] He does it all with such distinction. “I like,” he says, “to read and write, but I am prevented because my room is rather dark.”

ANNA. And what sort of a looking man is he, dark or fair?

DOBCHINSKY. Neither. I should say rather chestnut. And his eyes dart about like little animals. They make you nervous.

ANNA. Let me see what my husband writes. [Reads.] “I hasten to let you know, dear, that my position was extremely uncomfortable, but relying on the mercy of God, two pickles extra and a half portion of caviar, one ruble and twenty-five kopeks.” [Stops.] I don’t understand. What have pickles and caviar got to do with it?

DOBCHINSKY. Oh, Anton Antonovich hurriedly wrote on a piece of scrap paper. There's a kind of bill on it.

ANNA. Oh, yes, I see. [Goes on reading.] "But relying on the mercy of God, I believe all will turn out well in the end. Get a room ready quickly for the distinguished guest — the one with the gold wall paper. Don't bother to get any extras for dinner because we'll have something at the hospital with Artemy Filippovich. Order a little more wine, and tell Abdulin to send the best, or I'll wreck his whole cellar. I kiss your hand, my dearest, and remain yours, Anton Skvoznik-Dmukhanovsky." Oh my! I must hurry. Hello, who's there? Mishka?

DOBCHINSKY [Runs to the door and calls.] Mishka! Mishka! Mishka! [Mishka enters.]

ANNA. Listen! Run over to Abdulin — wait, I'll give you a note. [She sits down at the table and writes, talking all the while.] Give this to Sidor, the coachman, and tell him to take it to Abdulin and bring back the wine. And get to work at once and make the gold room ready for a guest. Do it nicely. Put a bed in it, a wash basin and pitcher and everything else.

DOBCHINSKY. Well, I'm going now, Anna Andreyevna, to see how he does the inspecting.

ANNA. Go on, I'm not keeping you.

SCENE III

Anna Andreyevna and Marya Antonovna.

ANNA. Now, Mashenka, we must attend to our toilet. He's a metropolitan swell and God forbid that he should make fun of us. You put on your blue dress with the little flounces. It's the most becoming.

MARYA. The idea, mamma! The blue dress! I can't bear it. Liapkin-Tiapkin's wife wears blue and so does Zemlianika's daughter. I'd rather wear my flowered

dress.

ANNA. Your flowered dress! Of course, just to be contrary. You'll look lots better in blue because I'm going to wear my dun-colored dress. I love dun-color.

MARYA. Oh, mamma, it isn't a bit becoming to you.

ANNA. What, dun-color isn't becoming to me?

MARYA. No, not a bit. I'm positive it isn't. One's eyes must be quite dark to go with dun-color.

ANNA. That's nice! And aren't my eyes dark? They are as dark as can be. What nonsense you talk! How can they be anything but dark when I always draw the queen of clubs.

MARYA. Why, mamma, you are more like the queen of hearts.

ANNA. Nonsense! Perfect nonsense! I never was a queen of hearts. [She goes out hurriedly with Marya and speaks behind the scenes.] The ideas she gets into her head! Queen of hearts! Heavens! What do you think of that?

As they go out, a door opens through which Mishka sweeps dirt on to the stage. Osip enters from another door with a valise on his head.

SCENE IV

Mishka and Osip.

OSIP. Where is this to go?

MISHKA. In here, in here.

OSIP. Wait, let me fetch breath first. Lord! What a wretched life! On an empty

stomach any load seems heavy.

MISHKA. Say, uncle, will the general be here soon?

OSIP. What general?

MISHKA. Your master.

OSIP. My master? What sort of a general is he?

MISHKA. Isn’t he a general?

OSIP. Yes, he’s a general, only the other way round.

MISHKA. Is that higher or lower than a real general?

OSIP. Higher.

MISHKA. Gee whiz! That’s why they are raising such a racket about him here.

OSIP. Look here, young man, I see you’re a smart fellow. Get me something to eat, won’t you?

MISHKA. There isn’t anything ready yet for the likes of you. You won’t eat plain food. When your master takes his meal, they’ll let you have the same as he gets.

OSIP. But have you got any plain stuff?

MISHKA. We have cabbage soup, porridge and pie.

OSIP. That’s all right. We’ll eat cabbage soup, porridge and pie, we’ll eat everything. Come, help me with the valise. Is there another way to go out there?

MISHKA. Yes.

They both carry the valise into the next room.

SCENE V

The Sergeants open both folding doors. Khlestakov enters followed by the Governor, then the Superintendent of Charities, the Inspector of Schools, Dobchinsky and Bobchinsky with a plaster on his nose. The Governor points to a piece of paper lying on the floor, and the Sergeants rush to pick it up, pushing each other in their haste.

KHLESTAKOV. Excellent institutions. I like the way you show strangers everything in your town. In other towns they didn't show me a thing.

GOVERNOR. In other towns, I venture to observe, the authorities and officials look out for themselves more. Here, I may say, we have no other thought than to win the Government's esteem through good order, vigilance, and efficiency.

KHLESTAKOV. The lunch was excellent. I've positively overeaten. Do you set such a fine table every day?

GOVERNOR. In honor of so agreeable a guest we do.

KHLESTAKOV. I like to eat well. That's what a man lives for — to pluck the flowers of pleasure. What was that fish called?

ARTEMY [running up to him]. Labardan.

KHLESTAKOV. It was delicious. Where was it we had our lunch? In the hospital, wasn't it?

ARTEMY. Precisely, in the hospital.

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, yes, I remember. There were beds there. The patients must have gotten well. There don't seem to have been many of them.

ARTEMY. About ten are left. The rest recovered. The place is so well run, there is such perfect order. It may seem incredible to you, but ever since I've taken over the management, they all recover like flies. No sooner does a patient enter the hospital than he feels better. And we obtain this result not so much by medicaments as by honesty and orderliness.

GOVERNOR. In this connection may I venture to call your attention to what a brain-racking job the office of Governor is. There are so many matters he has to give his mind to just in connection with keeping the town clean and repairs and alterations. In a word, it is enough to upset the most competent person. But, thank God, all goes well. Another governor, of course, would look out for his own advantage. But believe me, even nights in bed I keep thinking: "Oh, God, how could I manage things in such a way that the government would observe my devotion to duty and be satisfied?" Whether the government will reward me or not, that of course, lies with them. At least I'll have a clear conscience. When the whole town is in order, the streets swept clean, the prisoners well kept, and few drunkards — what more do I want? Upon my word, I don't even crave honors. Honors, of course, are alluring; but as against the happiness which comes from doing one's duty, they are nothing but dross and vanity.

ARTEMY [aside]. Oh, the do-nothing, the scoundrel! How he holds forth! I wish the Lord had blessed me with such a gift!

KHLESTAKOV. That's so. I admit I sometimes like to philosophize, too. Sometimes it's prose, and sometimes it comes out poetry.

BOBCHINSKY [to Dobchinsky]. How true, how true it all is, Piotr Ivanovich. His remarks are great. It's evident that he is an educated man.

KHLESTAKOV. Would you tell me, please, if you have any amusements here, any circles where one could have a game of cards?

GOVERNOR [aside]. Ahem! I know what you are aiming at, my boy. [Aloud.] God forbid! Why, no one here has even heard of such a thing as card-playing circles. I myself have never touched a card. I don't know how to play. I can never look at cards with indifference, and if I happen to see a king of diamonds or some such thing, I am so disgusted I have to spit out. Once I made a house of cards for the children, and then I dreamt of those confounded things the whole night. Heavens! How can people waste their precious time over cards!

LUKA LUKICH [aside]. But he faroed me out of a hundred rubles yesterday, the rascal.

GOVERNOR. I'd rather employ my time for the benefit of the state.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, well, that's rather going too far. It all depends upon the point of view. If, for instance, you pass when you have to treble stakes, then of course — No, don't say that a game of cards isn't very tempting sometimes.

SCENE VI

The above, Anna Andreyevna and Marya Antonovna.

GOVERNOR. Permit me to introduce my family, my wife and daughter.

KHLESTAKOV [bowing]. I am happy, madam, to have the pleasure of meeting you.

ANNA. Our pleasure in meeting so distinguished a person is still greater.

KHLESTAKOV [showing off]. Excuse me, madam, on the contrary, my pleasure is the greater.

ANNA. Impossible. You condescend to say it to compliment me. Won't you please sit down?

KHLESTAKOV. Just to stand near you is bliss. But if you insist, I will sit down. I am so, so happy to be at your side at last.

ANNA. I beg your pardon, but I dare not take all the nice things you say to myself. I suppose you must have found travelling very unpleasant after living in the capital.

KHLESTAKOV. Extremely unpleasant. I am accustomed, comprenez-vous, to life in the fashionable world, and suddenly to find myself on the road, in dirty inns with dark rooms and rude people — I confess that if it were not for this chance which — [giving Anna a look and showing off] compensated me for everything —

ANNA. It must really have been extremely unpleasant for you.

KHLESTAKOV. At this moment, however, I find it exceedingly pleasant, madam.

ANNA. Oh, I cannot believe it. You do me much honor. I don't deserve it.

KHLESTAKOV. Why don't you deserve it? You do deserve it, madam.

ANNA. I live in a village.

KHLESTAKOV. Well, after all, a village too has something. It has its hills and brooks. Of course it's not to be compared with St. Petersburg. Ah, St. Petersburg! What a life, to be sure! Maybe you think I am only a copying clerk. No, I am on a friendly footing with the chief of our department. He slaps me on the back. "Come, brother," he says, "and have dinner with me." I just drop in the office for a couple of minutes to say this is to be done so, and that is to be done that way. There's a rat of a clerk there for copying letters who does nothing but scribble all the time — tr, tr — They even wanted to make me a college assessor, but I think to myself, "What do I want it for?" And the doorkeeper flies after me on the stairs with the shoe brush. "Allow me to shine your boots for you, Ivan Aleksandrovich," he says. [To the Governor.] Why are you standing, gentleman? Please sit down.

{GOVERNOR. Our rank is such that we can very

Together { well stand. {ARTEMY. We don’t mind standing.

{LUKA. Please don’t trouble.

KHLESTAKOV. Please sit down without the rank. [The Governor and the rest sit down.] I don’t like ceremony. On the contrary, I always like to slip by unobserved. But it’s impossible to conceal oneself, impossible. I no sooner show myself in a place than they say, “There goes Ivan Aleksandrovich!” Once I was even taken for the commander-in-chief. The soldiers rushed out of the guard-house and saluted. Afterwards an officer, an intimate acquaintance of mine, said to me: “Why, old chap, we completely mistook you for the commander-in-chief.”

ANNA. Well, I declare!

KHLESTAKOV. I know pretty actresses. I’ve written a number of vaudevilles, you know. I frequently meet literary men. I am on an intimate footing with Pushkin. I often say to him: “Well, Pushkin, old boy, how goes it?” “So, so, partner,” he’d reply, “as usual.” He’s a great original.

ANNA. So you write too? How thrilling it must be to be an author! You write for the papers also, I suppose?

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, for the papers, too. I am the author of a lot of works — The Marriage of Figaro, Robert le Diable, Norma. I don’t even remember all the names. I did it just by chance. I hadn’t meant to write, but a theatrical manager said, “Won’t you please write something for me?” I thought to myself: “All right, why not?” So I did it all in one evening, surprised everybody. I am extraordinarily light of thought. All that has appeared under the name of Baron Brambeus was written by me, and the The Frigate of Hope and The Moscow Telegraph.

ANNA. What! So you are Brambeus?

KHLESTAKOV. Why, yes. And I revise and whip all their articles into shape. Smirdin gives me forty thousand for it.

ANNA. I suppose, then, that Yury Miroslavsky is yours too.

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, it’s mine.

ANNA. I guessed at once.

MARYA. But, mamma, it says that it’s by Zagoskin.

ANNA. There! I knew you’d be contradicting even here.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, yes, it’s so. That was by Zagoskin. But there is another Yury Miroslavsky which was written by me.

ANNA. That’s right. I read yours. It’s charming.

KHLESTAKOV. I admit I live by literature. I have the first house in St. Petersburg. It is well known as the house of Ivan Aleksandrovich. [Addressing the company in general.] If any of you should come to St. Petersburg, do please call to see me. I give balls, too, you know.

ANNA. I can guess the taste and magnificence of those balls.

KHLESTAKOV. Immense! For instance, watermelon will be served costing seven hundred rubles. The soup comes in the tureen straight from Paris by steamer. When the lid is raised, the aroma of the steam is like nothing else in the world. And we have formed a circle for playing whist — the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the French, the English and the German Ambassadors and myself. We play so hard we kill ourselves over the cards. There’s nothing like it. After it’s over I’m so tired I run home up the stairs to the fourth floor and tell the cook,

“Here, Marushka, take my coat” — What am I talking about? — I forgot that I live on the first floor. One flight up costs me — My foyer before I rise in the morning is an interesting spectacle indeed — counts and princes jostling each other and humming like bees. All you hear is buzz, buzz, buzz. Sometimes the Minister — [The Governor and the rest rise in awe from their chairs.] Even my mail comes addressed “Your Excellency.” And once I even had charge of a department. A strange thing happened. The head of the department went off, disappeared, no one knew where. Of course there was a lot of talk about how the place would be filled, who would fill it, and all that sort of thing. There were ever so many generals hungry for the position, and they tried, but they couldn’t cope with it. It’s too hard. Just on the surface it looks easy enough; but when you come to examine it closely, it’s the devil of a job. When they saw they couldn’t manage, they came to me. In an instant the streets were packed full with couriers, nothing but couriers and couriers — thirty-five thousand of them, imagine! Pray, picture the situation to yourself! “Ivan Aleksandrovich, do come and take the directorship of the department.” I admit I was a little embarrassed. I came out in my dressing-gown. I wanted to decline, but I thought it might reach the Czar’s ears, and, besides, my official record — ”Very well, gentlemen,” I said, “I’ll accept the position, I’ll accept. So be it. But mind,” I said, “na-na-na, LOOK SHARP is the word with me, LOOK SHARP!” And so it was. When I went through the offices of my department, it was a regular earthquake, Everyone trembled and shook like a leaf. [The Governor and the rest tremble with fright. Khlestakov works himself up more and more as he speaks.] Oh, I don’t like to joke. I got all of them thoroughly scared, I tell you. Even the Imperial Council is afraid of me. And really, that’s the sort I am. I don’t spare anybody. I tell them all, “I know myself, I know myself.” I am everywhere, everywhere. I go to Court daily. Tomorrow they are going to make me a field-marsh —

He slips and almost falls, but is respectfully held up by the officials.

GOVERNOR [walks up to him trembling from top to toe and speaking with a great effort]. Your Ex-ex-ex- KHLESTAKOV [curtly]. What is it?

GOVERNOR. Your Ex-ex-ex- KHLESTAKOV [as before]. I can’t make out a thing, it’s all nonsense.

GOVERNOR. Your Ex-ex — Your ‘lency — Your Excellency, wouldn’t you like to rest a bit? Here’s a room and everything you may need.

KHLESTAKOV. Nonsense — rest! However, I’m ready for a rest. Your lunch was fine, gentlemen. I am satisfied, I am satisfied. [Declaiming.] Labardan! Labardan!

He goes into the next room followed by the Governor.

SCENE VII

The same without Khlestakov and the Governor.

BOBCHINSKY [to Dobchinsky]. There’s a man for you, Piotr Ivanovich. That’s what I call a man. I’ve never in my life been in the presence of so important a personage. I almost died of fright. What do you think is his rank, Piotr Ivanovich?

DOBCHINSKY. I think he’s almost a general.

BOBCHINSKY. And I think a general isn’t worth the sole of his boots. But if he is a general, then he must be the generalissimo himself. Did you hear how he bullies the Imperial Council? Come, let’s hurry off to Ammos Fiodorovich and Korobkin and tell them about it. Good-by, Anna Andreyevna.

DOBCHINSKY. Good afternoon, godmother.

Both go out.

ARTEMY. It makes your heart sink and you don’t know why. We haven’t even our uniforms on. Suppose after he wakes up from his nap he goes and sends a report about us to St. Petersburg. [He goes out sunk in thought, with the School Inspector, both saying.] Good-by, madam.

SCENE VIII

Anna Andreyevna and Marya Antonovna.

ANNA. Oh, how charming he is!

MARYA. A perfect dear!

ANNA. Such refined manners. You can recognize the big city article at once. How he carries himself, and all that sort of thing! Exquisite! I'm just crazy for young men like him. I am in ecstasies — beside myself. He liked me very much though. I noticed he kept looking at me all the time.

MARYA. Oh, mamma, he looked at me.

ANNA. No more nonsense please. It's out of place now.

MARYA. But really, mamma, he did look at me.

ANNA. There you go! For God's sake, don't argue. You mustn't. That's enough. What would he be looking at you for? Please tell me, why would he be looking at you?

MARYA. It's true, mamma. He kept looking at me. He looked at me when he began to speak about literature and he looked at me afterwards, when he told about how he played whist with the ambassadors.

ANNA. Well, maybe he looked at you once or twice and might have said to himself, "Oh, well, I'll give her a look."

SCENE IX

The same and the Governor.

GOVERNOR. Sh-sh!

ANNA. What is it?

GOVERNOR. I wish I hadn’t given him so much to drink. Suppose even half of what he said is true? [Sunk in thought.] How can it not be true? A man in his cups is always on the surface. What’s in his heart is on his tongue. Of course he fibbed a little. No talking is possible without some lying. He plays cards with the ministers and he visits the Court. Upon my word the more you think the less you know what’s going on in your head. I’m as dizzy as if I were standing in a belfry, or if I were going to be hanged, the devil take it!

ANNA. And I didn’t feel the least bit afraid. I simply saw a high-toned, cultured man of the world, and his rank and titles didn’t make me feel a bit queer.

GOVERNOR. Oh, well, you women. To say women and enough’s said. Everything is froth and bubble to you. All of a sudden you blab out words that don’t make the least sense. The worst you’d get would be a flogging; but it means ruination to the husband. — Say, my dear, you are as familiar with him as if he were another Bobchinsky.

ANNA. Leave that to us. Don’t bother about that. [Glancing at Marya.] We know a thing or two in that line.

GOVERNOR [to himself]. Oh, what’s the good of talking to you! Confound it all! I can’t get over my fright yet. [Opens the door and calls.] Mishka, tell the sergeants, Svistunov and Derzhimorda, to come here. They are near the gate. [After a pause of silence.] The world has turned into a queer place. If at least the people were visible so you could see them; but they are such a skinny, thin race. How in the world could you tell what he is? After all you can tell a military man; but when he wears a frock-coat, it’s like a fly with clipped wings. He kept it up a long time in the inn, got off a lot of allegories and ambiguities so that you couldn’t make out head or tail. Now he’s shown himself up at last. — Spouted even more than necessary. It’s evident that he’s a young man.

SCENE X

The same and Osip. All rush to meet Osip, beckoning to him.

ANNA. Come here, my good man.

GOVERNOR. Hush! Tell me, tell me, is he asleep?

OSIP. No, not yet. He’s stretching himself a little.

ANNA. What’s your name?

OSIP. Osip, madam.

GOVERNOR [to his wife and daughter]. That’ll do, that’ll do. [To Osip.] Well, friend, did they give you a good meal?

OSIP. Yes, sir, very good. Thank you kindly.

ANNA. Your master has lots of counts and princes visiting him, hasn’t he?

OSIP [aside]. What shall I say? Seeing as they’ve given me such good feed now, I s’pose they’ll do even better later. [Aloud.] Yes, counts do visit him.

MARYA. Osip, darling, isn’t your master just grand?

ANNA. Osip, please tell me, how is he —

GOVERNOR. Do stop now. You just interfere with your silly talk. Well, friend, how —

ANNA. What is your master’s rank?

OSIP. The usual rank.

GOVERNOR. For God’s sake, your stupid questions keep a person from getting down to business. Tell me, friend, what sort of a man is your master? Is he strict? Does he rag and bully a fellow — you know what I mean — does he or doesn’t he?

OSIP. Yes, he likes things to be just so. He insists on things being just so.

GOVERNOR. I like your face. You must be a fine man, friend. What — ?

ANNA. Listen, Osip, does your master wear uniform in St. Petersburg?

GOVERNOR. Enough of your tattle now, really. This is a serious matter, a matter of life and death. (To Osip.) Yes, friend, I like you very much. It’s rather chilly now and when a man’s travelling an extra glass of tea or so is rather welcome. So here’s a couple of rubles for some tea.

OSIP [taking the money.] Thank you, much obliged to you, sir. God grant you health and long life. You’ve helped a poor man.

GOVERNOR. That’s all right. I’m glad to do it. Now, friend —

ANNA. Listen, Osip, what kind of eyes does your master like most?

MARYA. Osip, darling, what a dear nose your master has!

GOVERNOR. Stop now, let me speak. [To Osip.] Tell me, what does your master care for most? I mean, when he travels what does he like?

OSIP. As for sights, he likes whatever happens to come along. But what he likes most of all is to be received well and entertained well.

GOVERNOR. Entertained well?

OSIP. Yes, for instance, I'm nothing but a serf and yet he sees to it that I should be treated well, too. S'help me God! Say we'd stop at some place and he'd ask, "Well, Osip, have they treated you well?" "No, badly, your Excellency." "Ah," he'd say, "Osip, he's not a good host. Remind me when we get home." "Oh, well," thinks I to myself [with a wave of his hand]. "I am a simple person. God be with them."

GOVERNOR. Very good. You talk sense. I've given you something for tea. Here's something for buns, too.

OSIP. You are too kind, your Excellency. [Puts the money in his pocket.] I'll sure drink your health, sir.

ANNA. Come to me, Osip, and I'll give you some, too.

MARYA. Osip, darling, kiss your master for me.

Khlestakov is heard to give a short cough in the next room.

GOVERNOR. Hush! [Rises on tip-toe. The rest of the conversation in the scene is carried on in an undertone.] Don't make a noise, for heaven's sake! Go, it's enough.

ANNA. Come, Mashenka, I'll tell you something I noticed about our guest that I can't tell you unless we are alone together. [They go out.]

GOVERNOR. Let them talk away. If you went and listened to them, you'd want to stop up your ears. [To Osip.] Well, friend —

SCENE XI

The same, Derzhimorda and Svistunov.

GOVERNOR. Sh — sh! Bandy-legged bears — thumping their boots on the

floor! Bump, bump as if a thousand pounds were being unloaded from a wagon. Where in the devil have you been knocking about?

DERZHIMORDA. I had your order —

GOVERNOR. Hush! [Puts his hand over Derzhimorda's mouth.] Like a bull bellowing. [Mocking him.] "I had your order — " Makes a noise like an empty barrel. [To Osip.] Go, friend, and get everything ready for your master. And you two, you stand on the steps and don't you dare budge from the spot. And don't let any strangers enter the house, especially the merchants. If you let a single one in, I'll — The instant you see anybody with a petition, or even without a petition and he looks as if he wanted to present a petition against me, take him by the scruff of the neck, give him a good kick, [shows with his foot] and throw him out. Do you hear? Hush — hush!

He goes out on tiptoe, preceded by the Sergeants.

CURTAIN

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ACT IV

SCENE: Same as in Act III.

SCENE I

Enter cautiously, almost on tiptoe, Ammos Fiodorovich, Artemy Filippovich, the Postmaster, Luka Lukich, Dobchinsky and Bobchinsky in full dress-uniform.

AMMOS. For God’s sake, gentlemen, quick, form your line, and let’s have more order. Why, man alive, he goes to Court and rages at the Imperial Council. Draw up in military line, strictly in military line. You, Piotr Ivanovich, take your place there, and you, Piotr Ivanovich, stand here. [Both the Piotr Ivanoviches run on tiptoe to the places indicated.]

ARTEMY. Do as you please, Ammos Fiodorovich, I think we ought to try.

AMMOS. Try what?

ARTEMY. It’s clear what.

AMMOS. Grease?

ARTEMY. Exactly, grease.

AMMOS. It’s risky, the deuce take it. He’ll fly into a rage at us. He’s a government official, you know. Perhaps it should be given to him in the form of a gift from the nobility for some sort of memorial?

POSTMASTER. Or, perhaps, tell him some money has been sent here by post and we don’t know for whom?

ARTEMY. You had better look out that he doesn't send you by post a good long ways off. Look here, things of such a nature are not done this way in a well-ordered state. What's the use of a whole regiment here? We must present ourselves to him one at a time, and do — what ought to be done, you know — so that eyes do not see and ears do not hear. That's the way things are done in a well-ordered society. You begin it, Ammos Fiodorovich, you be the first.

AMMOS. You had better go first. The distinguished guest has eaten in your institution.

ARTEMY. Then Luka Lukich, as the enlightener of youth, should go first.

LUKA. I can't, I can't, gentlemen. I confess I am so educated that the moment an official a single degree higher than myself speaks to me, my heart stands still and I get as tongue-tied as though my tongue were caught in the mud. No, gentlemen, excuse me. Please let me off.

ARTEMY. It's you who have got to do it, Ammos Fiodorovich. There's no one else. Why, every word you utter seems to be issuing from Cicero's mouth.

AMMOS. What are you talking about! Cicero! The idea! Just because a man sometimes waxes enthusiastic over house dogs or hunting hounds.

ALL [pressing him]. No, not over dogs, but the Tower of Babel, too. Don't forsake us, Ammos Fiodorovich, help us. Be our Saviour!

AMMOS. Let go of me, gentlemen.

Footsteps and coughing are heard in Khlestakov's room. All hurry to the door, crowding and jostling in their struggle to get out. Some are uncomfortably squeezed, and half-suppressed cries are heard.

BOBCHINSKY'S VOICE. Oh, Piotr Ivanovich, you stepped on my foot.

ARTEMY. Look out, gentlemen, look out. Give me a chance to atone for my

sins. You are squeezing me to death.

Exclamations of “Oh! Oh!” Finally they all push through the door, and the stage is left empty.

SCENE II

Enter Khlestakov, looking sleepy.

KHLESTAKOV [alone]. I seem to have had a fine snooze. Where did they get those mattresses and feather beds from? I even perspired. After the meal yesterday they must have slipped something into me that knocked me out. I still feel a pounding in my head. I see I can have a good time here. I like hospitality, and I must say I like it all the more if people entertain me out of a pure heart and not from interested motives. The Governor’s daughter is not a bad one at all, and the mother is also a woman you can still — I don’t know, but I do like this sort of life.

SCENE III

Khlestakov and the Judge.

JUDGE [comes in and stops. Talking to himself]. Oh, God, bring me safely out of this! How my knees are knocking together! [Drawing himself up and holding the sword in his hand. Aloud.] I have the honor to present myself — Judge of the District Court here, College Assessor Liapkin-Tiapkin.

KHLESTAKOV. Please be seated. So you are the Judge here?

JUDGE. I was elected by the nobility in 1816 and I have served ever since.

KHLESTAKOV. Does it pay to be a judge?

JUDGE. After serving three terms I was decorated with the Vladimir of the third

class with the approval of the government. [Aside.] I have the money in my hand and my hand is on fire.

KHLESTAKOV. I like the Vladimir. Anna of the third class is not so nice.

JUDGE [slightly extending his balled fist. Aside]. Good God! I don't know where I'm sitting. I feel as though I were on burning coals.

KHLESTAKOV. What have you got in your hand there?

AMMOS [getting all mixed up and dropping the bills on the floor]. Nothing.

KHLESTAKOV. How so, nothing? I see money has dropped out of it.

AMMOS [shaking all over]. Oh no, oh no, not at all! [Aside.] Oh, Lord! Now I'm under arrest and they've brought a wagon to take me.

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, it IS money. [Picking it up.]

AMMOS [aside]. It's all over with me. I'm lost! I'm lost!

KHLESTAKOV. I tell you what — lend it to me.

AMMOS [eagerly]. Why, of course, of course — with the greatest pleasure. [Aside.] Bolder! Bolder! Holy Virgin, stand by me!

KHLESTAKOV. I've run out of cash on the road, what with one thing and another, you know. I'll let you have it back as soon as I get to the village.

AMMOS. Please don't mention it! It is a great honor to have you take it. I'll try to deserve it — by putting forth the best of my feeble powers, by my zeal and ardor for the government. [Rises from the chair and draws himself up straight with his hands hanging at his sides.] I will not venture to disturb you longer with my presence. You don't care to give any orders?

KHLESTAKOV. What orders?

JUDGE. I mean, would you like to give orders for the district court here?

KHLESTAKOV. What for? I have nothing to do with the court now. No, nothing. Thank you very much.

AMMOS [bowing and leaving. Aside.]. Now the town is ours.

KHLESTAKOV. The Judge is a fine fellow.

SCENE IV

Khlestakov and the Postmaster.

POSTMASTER [in uniform, sword in hand. Drawing himself up]. I have the honor to present myself — Postmaster, Court Councilor Shpekin.

KHLESTAKOV. I'm glad to meet you. I like pleasant company very much. Take a seat. Do you live here all the time?

POSTMASTER. Yes, sir. Quite so.

KHLESTAKOV. I like this little town. Of course, there aren't many people. It's not very lively. But what of it? It isn't the capital. Isn't that so — it isn't the capital?

POSTMASTER. Quite so, quite so.

KHLESTAKOV. It's only in the capital that you find bon-ton and not a lot of provincial lubbers. What is your opinion? Isn't that so?

POSTMASTER. Quite so. [Aside.] He isn’t a bit proud. He inquires about everything.

KHLESTAKOV. And yet you’ll admit that one can live happily in a little town.

POSTMASTER. Quite so.

KHLESTAKOV. In my opinion what you want is this — you want people to respect you and to love you sincerely. Isn’t that so?

POSTMASTER. Exactly.

KHLESTAKOV. I’m glad you agree with me. Of course, they call me queer. But that’s the kind of character I am. [Looking him in the face and talking to himself.] I think I’ll ask this postmaster for a loan. [Aloud.] A strange accident happened to me and I ran out of cash on the road. Can you lend me three hundred rubles?

POSTMASTER. Of course. I shall esteem it a piece of great good fortune. I am ready to serve you with all my heart.

KHLESTAKOV. Thank you very much. I must say, I hate like the devil to deny myself on the road. And why should I? Isn’t that so?

POSTMASTER. Quite so. [Rises, draws himself up, with his sword in his hand.] I’ll not venture to disturb you any more. Would you care to make any remarks about the post office administration?

KHLESTAKOV. No, nothing.

The Postmaster bows and goes out.

KHLESTAKOV [lighting a cigar]. It seems to me the Postmaster is a fine fellow, too. He’s certainly obliging. I like people like that.

SCENE V

Khlestakov and Luka Lukich, who is practically pushed in on the stage. A voice behind him is heard saying nearly aloud, “Don’t be chickenhearted.”

LUKA [drawing himself up, trembling, with his hand on his sword]. I have the honor to present myself — School Inspector, Titular Councilor Khlopov.

KHLESTAKOV. I’m glad to see you. Take a seat, take a seat. Will you have a cigar? [Offers him a cigar.]

LUKA [to himself, hesitating]. There now! That’s something I hadn’t anticipated. To take or not to take?

KHLESTAKOV. Take it, take it. It’s a pretty good cigar. Of course not what you get in St. Petersburg. There I used to smoke twenty-five cent cigars. You feel like kissing yourself after having smoked one of them. Here, light it. [Hands him a candle.]

Luka Lukich tries to light the cigar shaking all over.

KHLESTAKOV. Not that end, the other.

LUKA [drops the cigar from fright, spits and shakes his hands. Aside]. Confound it! My damned timidity has ruined me!

KHLESTAKOV. I see you are not a lover of cigars. I confess smoking is my weakness — smoking and the fair sex. Not for the life of me can I remain indifferent to the fair sex. How about you? Which do you like more, brunettes or blondes?

Luka Lukich remains silent, at a complete loss what to say.

KHLESTAKOV. Tell me frankly, brunettes or blondes?

LUKA. I don’t dare to know.

KHLESTAKOV. No, no, don’t evade. I’m bound to know your taste.

LUKA. I venture to report to you — [Aside.] I don’t know what I’m saying.

KHLESTAKOV. Ah, you don’t want to say. I suppose some little brunette or other has cast a spell over you. Confess, she has, hasn’t she?

Luka Lukich remains silent.

KHLESTAKOV. Ah, you’re blushing. You see. Why don’t you speak?

LUKA. I’m scared, your Hon — High — Ex — [Aside.] Done for! My confounded tongue has undone me!

KHLESTAKOV. You’re scared? There IS something awe-inspiring in my eyes, isn’t there? At least I know not a single woman can resist them. Isn’t that so?

LUKA. Exactly.

KHLESTAKOV. A strange thing happened to me on the road. I ran entirely out of cash. Can you lend me three hundred rubles?

LUKA [clutching his pockets. Aside]. A fine business if I haven’t got the money! I have! I have! [Takes out the bills and gives them to him, trembling.]

KHLESTAKOV. Thank you very much.

LUKA [drawing himself up, with his hand on his sword]. I will not venture to disturb you with my presence any longer.

KHLESTAKOV. Good-by.

LUKA [dashes out almost at a run, saying aside.] Well, thank the Lord! Maybe he won’t inspect the schools.

SCENE VI

Khlestakov and Artemy Filippovich.

ARTEMY [enters and draws himself up, his hand on his sword]. I have the honor to present myself — Superintendent of Charities, Court Councilor Zemlianika.

KHLESTAKOV. Howdeedo? Please sit down.

ARTEMY. I had the honor of receiving you and personally conducting you through the philanthropic institutions committed to my care.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, yes, I remember. You treated me to a dandy lunch.

ARTEMY. I am glad to do all I can in behalf of my country.

KHLESTAKOV. I admit, my weakness is a good cuisine. — Tell me, please, won’t you — it seems to me you were a little shorter yesterday, weren’t you?

ARTEMY. Quite possible. [After a pause.] I may say I spare myself no pains and perform the duties of my office with the utmost zeal. [Draws his chair closer and speaks in a lowered tone.] There’s the postmaster, for example, he does absolutely nothing. Everything is in a fearful state of neglect. The mail is held up. Investigate for yourself, if you please, and you will see. The Judge, too, the man who was here just now, does nothing but hunt hares, and he keeps his dogs in the court rooms, and his conduct, if I must confess — and for the benefit of the fatherland, I must confess, though he is my relative and friend — his conduct is in the highest degree reprehensible. There is a squire here by the name of Dobchinsky, whom you were pleased to see. Well, the moment Dobchinsky leaves the house, the Judge is there with Dobchinsky’s wife. I can swear to it.

You just take a look at the children. Not one of them resembles Dobchinsky. All of them, even the little girl, are the very image of the Judge.

KHLESTAKOV. You don’t say so. I never imagined it.

ARTEMY. Then take the School Inspector here. I don’t know how the government could have entrusted him with such an office. He’s worse than a Jacobin freethinker, and he instils such pernicious ideas into the minds of the young that I can hardly describe it. Hadn’t I better put it all down on paper, if you so order?

KHLESTAKOV. Very well, why not? I should like it very much. I like to kill the weary hours reading something amusing, you know. What is your name? I keep forgetting.

ARTEMY. Zemlianika.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, yes, Zemlianika. Tell me, Mr. Zemlianika, have you any children?

ARTEMY. Of course. Five. Two are already grown up.

KHLESTAKOV. You don’t say! Grown up! And how are they — how are they — a — a?

ARTEMY. You mean that you deign to ask what their names are?

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, yes, what are their names?

ARTEMY. Nikolay, Ivan, Yelizaveta, Marya and Perepetuya.

KHLESTAKOV. Good.

ARTEMY. I don’t venture to disturb you any longer with my presence and rob

you of your time dedicated to the performance of your sacred duties — -[Bows and makes to go.]

KHLESTAKOV [escorting him]. Not at all. What you told me is all very funny. Call again, please. I like that sort of thing very much. [Turns back and reopens the door, calling.] I say, there! What is your — — I keep forgetting. What is your first name and your patronymic?

ARTEMY. Artemy Filippovich.

KHLESTAKOV. Do me a favor, Artemy Filippovich. A curious accident happened to me on the road. I've run entirely out of cash. Have you four hundred rubles to lend me?

ARTEMY. I have.

KHLESTAKOV. That comes in pat. Thank you very much.

SCENE VII

Khlestakov, Bobchinsky, and Dobchinsky.

BOBCHINSKY. I have the honor to present myself — a resident of this town, Piotr, son of Ivan Bobchinsky.

DOBCHINSKY. I am Piotr, son of Ivan Dobchinsky, a squire.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, yes, I've met you before. I believe you fell? How's your nose?

BOBCHINSKY. It's all right. Please don't trouble. It's dried up, dried up completely.

KHLESTAKOV. That's nice. I'm glad it's dried up. [Suddenly and abruptly.]

Have you any money?

DOBCHINSKY. Money? How's that — money?

KHLESTAKOV. A thousand rubles to lend me.

BOBCHINSKY. Not so much as that, honest to God I haven't. Have you, Piotr Ivanovich?

DOBCHINSKY. I haven't got it with me, because my money — I beg to inform you — is deposited in the State Savings Bank.

KHLESTAKOV. Well, if you haven't a thousand, then a hundred.

BOBCHINSKY [fumbling in his pockets]. Have you a hundred rubles, Piotr Ivanovich? All I have is forty.

DOBCHINSKY [examining his pocket-book]. I have only twenty-five.

BOBCHINSKY. Look harder, Piotr Ivanovich. I know you have a hole in your pocket, and the money must have dropped down into it somehow.

DOBCHINSKY. No, honestly, there isn't any in the hole either.

KHLESTAKOV. Well, never mind. I merely mentioned the matter. Sixty-five will do. [Takes the money.]

DOBCHINSKY. May I venture to ask a favor of you concerning a very delicate matter?

KHLESTAKOV. What is it?

DOBCHINSKY. It's a matter of an extremely delicate nature. My oldest son — I beg to inform you — was born before I was married.

KHLESTAKOV. Indeed?

DOBCHINSKY. That is, only in a sort of way. He is really my son, just as if he had been born in wedlock. I made up everything afterwards, set everything right, as it should be, with the bonds of matrimony, you know. Now, I venture to inform you, I should like to have him altogether — that is, I should like him to be altogether my legitimate son and be called Dobchinsky the same as I.

KHLESTAKOV. That's all right. Let him be called Dobchinsky. That's possible.

DOBCHINSKY. I shouldn't have troubled you; but it's a pity, he is such a talented youngster. He gives the greatest promise. He can recite different poems by heart; and whenever he gets hold of a penknife, he makes little carriages as skilfully as a conjurer. Here's Piotr Ivanovich. He knows. Am I not right?

BOBCHINSKY. Yes, the lad is very talented.

KHLESTAKOV. All right, all right. I'll try to do it for you. I'll speak to — I hope — it'll be done, it'll all be done. Yes, yes. [Turning to Bobchinsky.] Have you anything you'd like to say to me?

BOBCHINSKY. Why, of course. I have a most humble request to make.

KHLESTAKOV. What is it?

BOBCHINSKY. I beg your Highness or your Excellency most worshipfully, when you get back to St. Petersburg, please tell all the high personages there, the senators and the admirals, that Piotr Ivanovich Bobchinsky lives in this town. Say this: "Piotr Ivanovich lives there."

KHLESTAKOV. Very well.

BOBCHINSKY. And if you should happen to speak to the Czar, then tell him,

too: “Your Majesty,” tell him, “Your Majesty, Piotr Ivanovich Bobchinsky lives in this town.”

KHLESTAKOV. Very well.

BOBCHINSKY. Pardon me for having troubled you with my presence.

KHLESTAKOV. Not at all, not at all. It was my pleasure. [Sees them to the door.]

SCENE VIII

KHLESTAKOV [alone]. My, there are a lot of officials here. They seem to be taking me for a government functionary. To be sure, I threw dust in their eyes yesterday. What a bunch of fools! I’ll write all about it to Triapichkin in St. Petersburg. He’ll write them up in the papers. Let him give them a nice walloping. — Ho, Osip, give me paper and ink.

OSIP [looking in at the door]. D’rectly.

KHLESTAKOV. Anybody gets caught in Triapichkin’s tongue had better look out. For the sake of a witticism he wouldn’t spare his own father. They are good people though, these officials. It’s a nice trait of theirs to lend me money. I’ll just see how much it all mounts up to. Here’s three hundred from the Judge and three hundred from the Postmaster — six hundred, seven hundred, eight hundred — What a greasy bill! — Eight hundred, nine hundred. — Oho! Rolls up to more than a thousand! Now, if I get you, captain, now! We’ll see who’ll do whom!

SCENE IX

Khlestakov and Osip entering with paper and ink.

KHLESTAKOV. Now, you simpleton, you see how they receive and treat me. [Begins to write.]

OSIP. Yes, thank God! But do you know what, Ivan Aleksandrovich?

KHLESTAKOV. What?

OSIP. Leave this place. Upon my word, it's time.

KHLESTAKOV [writing]. What nonsense! Why?

OSIP. Just so. God be with them. You've had a good time here for two days. It's enough. What's the use of having anything more to do with them? Spit on them. You don't know what may happen. Somebody else may turn up. Upon my word, Ivan Aleksandrovich. And the horses here are fine. We'll gallop away like a breeze.

KHLESTAKOV [writing]. No, I'd like to stay a little longer. Let's go tomorrow.

OSIP. Why tomorrow? Let's go now, Ivan Aleksandrovich, now, 'pon my word. To be sure, it's a great honor and all that. But really we'd better go as quick as we can. You see, they've taken you for somebody else, honest. And your dad will be angry because you dilly-dallied so long. We'd gallop off so smartly. They'd give us first-class horses here.

KHLESTAKOV [writing]. All right. But first take this letter to the postoffice, and, if you like, order post horses at the same time. Tell the postilions that they should drive like couriers and sing songs, and I'll give them a ruble each. [Continues to write.] I wager Triapichkin will die laughing.

OSIP. I'll send the letter off by the man here. I'd rather be packing in the meanwhile so as to lose no time.

KHLESTAKOV. All right. Bring me a candle.

OSIP [outside the door, where he is heard speaking]. Say, partner, go to the post office and mail a letter, and tell the postmaster to frank it. And have a coach sent round at once, the very best courier coach; and tell them the master doesn't pay

fare. He travels at the expense of the government. And make them hurry, or else the master will be angry. Wait, the letter isn't ready yet.

KHLESTAKOV. I wonder where he lives now, on Pochtamtskaya or Grokhovaya Street. He likes to move often, too, to get out of paying rent. I'll make a guess and send it to Pochtamtskaya Street. [Folds the letter and addresses it.]

Osip brings the candle. Khlestakov seals the letter with sealing wax. At that moment Derzhimorda's voice is heard saying: "Where are you going, whiskers? You've been told that nobody is allowed to come in."

KHLESTAKOV [giving the letter to Osip]. There, have it mailed.

MERCHANT'S VOICE. Let us in, brother. You have no right to keep us out. We have come on business.

DERZHIMORDA'S VOICE. Get out of here, get out of here! He doesn't receive anybody. He's asleep.

The disturbance outside grows louder.

KHLESTAKOV. What's the matter there, Osip? See what the noise is about.

OSIP [looking through the window]. There are some merchants there who want to come in, and the sergeant won't let them. They are waving papers. I suppose they want to see you.

KHLESTAKOV [going to the window]. What is it, friends?

MERCHANT'S VOICE. We appeal for your protection. Give orders, your Lordship, that our petitions be received.

KHLESTAKOV. Let them in, let them in. Osip, tell them to come in.

Osip goes out.

KHLESTAKOV [takes the petitions through the window, unfolds one of them and reads]. “To his most honorable, illustrious financial Excellency, from the merchant Abdulin....” The devil knows what this is! There’s no such title.

SCENE X

Khlestakov and Merchants, with a basket of wine and sugar loaves.

KHLESTAKOV. What is it, friends?

MERCHANTS. We beseech your favor.

KHLESTAKOV. What do you want?

MERCHANTS. Don’t ruin us, your Worship. We suffer insult and wrong wholly without cause.

KHLESTAKOV. From whom?

A MERCHANT. Why, from our governor here. Such a governor there never was yet in the world, your Worship. No words can describe the injuries he inflicts upon us. He has taken the bread out of our mouths by quartering soldiers on us, so that you might as well put your neck in a noose. He doesn’t treat you as you deserve. He catches hold of your beard and says, “Oh, you Tartar!” Upon my word, if we had shown him any disrespect, but we obey all the laws and regulations. We don’t mind giving him what his wife and daughter need for their clothes, but no, that’s not enough. So help me God! He comes to our shop and takes whatever his eyes fall on. He sees a piece of cloth and says, “Oh, my friends, that’s a fine piece of goods. Take it to my house.” So we take it to his house. It will be almost forty yards.

KHLESTAKOV. Is it possible? My, what a swindler!

MERCHANTS. So help us God! No one remembers a governor like him. When you see him coming you hide everything in the shop. It isn't only that he wants a few delicacies and fineries. He takes every bit of trash, too — prunes that have been in the barrel seven years and that even the boy in my shop would not eat, and he grabs a fist full. His name day is St. Anthony's, and you'd think there's nothing else left in the world to bring him and that he doesn't want any more. But no, you must give him more. He says St. Onufry's is also his name day. What's to be done? You have to take things to him on St. Onufry's day, too.

KHLESTAKOV. Why, he's a plain robber.

MERCHANTS. Yes, indeed! And try to contradict him, and he'll fill your house with a whole regiment of soldiers. And if you say anything, he orders the doors closed. "I won't inflict corporal punishment on you," he says, "or put you in the rack. That's forbidden by law," he says. "But I'll make you swallow salt herring, my good man."

KHLESTAKOV. What a swindler! For such things a man can be sent to Siberia.

MERCHANTS. It doesn't matter where you are pleased to send him. Only the farthest away from here the better. Father, don't scorn to accept our bread and salt. We pay our respects to you with sugar and a basket of wine.

KHLESTAKOV. No, no. Don't think of it. I don't take bribes. Oh, if, for example, you would offer me a loan of three hundred rubles, that's quite different. I am willing to take a loan.

MERCHANTS. If you please, father. [They take out money.] But what is three hundred? Better take five hundred. Only help us.

KHLESTAKOV. Very well. About a loan I won't say a word. I'll take it.

MERCHANTS [proffering him the money on a silver tray]. Do please take the

tray, too.

KHLESTAKOV. Very well. I can take the tray, too.

MERCHANTS [bowing]. Then take the sugar at the same time.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, no. I take no bribes.

OSIP. Why don't you take the sugar, your Highness? Take it. Everything will come in handy on the road. Give here the sugar and that case. Give them here. It'll all be of use. What have you got there — a string? Give it here. A string will be handy on the road, too, if the coach or something else should break — for tying it up.

MERCHANTS. Do us this great favor, your illustrious Highness. Why, if you don't help us in our appeal to you, then we simply don't know how we are to exist. We might as well put our necks in a noose.

KHLESTAKOV. Positively, positively. I shall exert my efforts in your behalf.

[The Merchants leave. A woman's voice is heard saying:]

"Don't you dare not to let me in. I'll make a complaint against you to him himself. Don't push me that way. It hurts."

KHLESTAKOV. Who is there? [Goes to the window.] What is it, mother?

[Two women's voices are heard:] "We beseech your grace, father. Give orders, your Lordship, for us to be heard."

KHLESTAKOV. Let her in.

SCENE XI

Khlestakov, the Locksmith’s Wife, and the non-commissioned Officer’s Widow.

LOCK.’S WIFE [kneeling]. I beseech your grace.

WIDOW. I beseech your grace.

KHLESTAKOV. Who are you?

WIDOW. Ivanova, widow of a non-commissioned officer.

LOCK.’S WIFE. Fevronya Petrova Poshliopkina, the wife of a locksmith, a burgess of this town. My father —

KHLESTAKOV. Stop! One at a time. What do you want?

LOCK.’S WIFE. I beg for your grace. I beseech your aid against the governor. May God send all evil upon him. May neither he nor his children nor his uncles nor his aunts ever prosper in any of their undertakings.

KHLESTAKOV. What’s the matter?

LOCK.’S WIFE. He ordered my husband to shave his forehead as a soldier, and our turn hadn’t come, and it is against the law, my husband being a married man.

KHLESTAKOV. How could he do it, then?

LOCK.’S WIFE. He did it, he did it, the blackguard! May God smite him both in this world and the next. If he has an aunt, may all harm descend upon her. And if his father is living, may the rascal perish, may he choke to death. Such a cheat! The son of the tailor should have been levied. And he is a drunkard, too. But his parents gave the governor a rich present, so he fastened on the son of the tradeswoman, Panteleyeva. And Panteleyeva also sent his wife three pieces of linen. So then he comes to me. “What do you want your husband for?” he says. “He isn’t any good to you any more.” It’s for me to know whether he is any good

or not. That’s my business. The old cheat! “He’s a thief,” he says. “Although he hasn’t stolen anything, that doesn’t matter. He is going to steal. And he’ll be recruited next year anyway.” How can I do without a husband? I am not a strong woman. The skunk! May none of his kith and kin ever see the light of God. And if he has a mother-in-law, may she, too, —

KHLESTAKOV. All right, all right. Well, and you?

[Addressing the Widow and leading the Locksmith’s Wife to the door.]

LOCK.’S WIFE [leaving]. Don’t forget, father. Be kind and gracious to me.

WIDOW. I have come to complain against the Governor, father.

KHLESTAKOV. What is it? What for? Be brief.

WIDOW. He flogged me, father.

KHLESTAKOV. How so?

WIDOW. By mistake, my father. Our women got into a squabble in the market, and when the police came, it was all over, and they took me and reported me — I couldn’t sit down for two days.

KHLESTAKOV. But what’s to be done now?

WIDOW. There’s nothing to be done, of course. But if you please, order him to pay a fine for the mistake. I can’t undo my luck. But the money would be very useful to me now.

KHLESTAKOV. All right, all right. Go now, go. I’ll see to it. [Hands with petitions are thrust through the window.] Who else is out there? [Goes to the window.] No, no. I don’t want to, I don’t want to. [Leaves the window.] I’m sick of it, the devil take it! Don’t let them in, Osip.

OSIP [calling through the window]. Go away, go away! He has no time. Come tomorrow.

The door opens and a figure appears in a shag cloak, with unshaven beard, swollen lip, and a bandage over his cheek. Behind him appear a whole line of others.

OSIP. Go away, go away! What are you crowding in here for?

He puts his hands against the stomach of the first one, and goes out through the door, pushing him and banging the door behind.

SCENE XII

Khlestakov and Marya Antonovna.

MARYA. Oh!

KHLESTAKOV. What frightened you so, mademoiselle?

MARYA. I wasn’t frightened.

KHLESTAKOV [showing off]. Please, miss. It’s a great pleasure to me that you took me for a man who — May I venture to ask you where you were going?

MARYA. I really wasn’t going anywhere.

KHLESTAKOV. But why weren’t you going anywhere?

MARYA. I was wondering whether mamma was here.

KHLESTAKOV. No. I’d like to know why you weren’t going anywhere.

MARYA. I should have been in your way. You were occupied with important matters.

KHLESTAKOV [showing off]. Your eyes are better than important matters. You cannot possibly disturb me. No, indeed, by no means. On the contrary, you afford me great pleasure.

MARYA. You speak like a man from the capital.

KHLESTAKOV. For such a beautiful lady as you. May I give myself the pleasure of offering you a chair? But no, you should have, not a chair, but a throne.

MARYA. I really don't know — I really must go [She sits down.]

KHLESTAKOV. What a beautiful scarf that is.

MARYA. You are making fun of me. You're only ridiculing the provincials.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, mademoiselle, how I long to be your scarf, so that I might embrace your lily neck.

MARYA. I haven't the least idea what you are talking about — scarf! — Peculiar weather today, isn't it?

KHLESTAKOV. Your lips, mademoiselle, are better than any weather.

MARYA. You are just saying that — I should like to ask you — I'd rather you would write some verses in my album for a souvenir. You must know very many.

KHLESTAKOV. Anything you desire, mademoiselle. Ask! What verses will you have?

MARYA. Any at all. Pretty, new verses.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, what are verses! I know a lot of them.

MARYA. Well, tell me. What verses will you write for me?

KHLESTAKOV. What's the use? I know them anyway.

MARYA. I love them so.

KHLESTAKOV. I have lots of them — of every sort. If you like, for example, I'll give you this: "Oh, thou, mortal man, who in thy anguish murmurest against God — " and others. I can't remember them now. Besides, it's all bosh. I'd rather offer you my love instead, which ever since your first glance — [Moves his chair nearer.]

MARYA. Love? I don't understand love. I never knew what love is. [Moves her chair away.]

KHLESTAKOV. Why do you move your chair away? It is better for us to sit near each other.

MARYA [moving away]. Why near? It's all the same if it's far away.

KHLESTAKOV [moving nearer]. Why far? It's all the same if it's near.

MARYA [moving away]. But what for?

KHLESTAKOV [moving nearer]. It only seems near to you. Imagine it's far. How happy I would be, mademoiselle, if I could clasp you in my embrace.

MARYA [looking through the window]. What is that? It looked as if something had flown by. Was it a magpie or some other bird?

KHLESTAKOV [kisses her shoulder and looks through the window]. It’s a magpie.

MARYA [rises indignantly]. No, that’s too much — Such rudeness, such impertinence.

KHLESTAKOV [holding her back]. Forgive me, mademoiselle. I did it only out of love — only out of love, nothing else.

MARYA. You take me for a silly provincial wench. [Struggles to go away.]

KHLESTAKOV [still holding her back]. It’s out of love, really — out of love. It was just a little fun. Marya Antonovna, don’t be angry. I’m ready to beg your forgiveness on my knees. [Falls on his knees.] Forgive me, do forgive me! You see, I am on my knees.

SCENE XIII

The same and Anna Andreyevna.

ANNA [seeing Khlestakov on his knees]. Oh, what a situation!

KHLESTAKOV [rising]. Oh, the devil!

ANNA [to Marya]. What does this mean? What does this behavior mean?

MARYA. I, mother —

ANNA. Go away from here. Do you hear? And don’t you dare to show your face to me. [Marya goes out in tears.] Excuse me. I must say I’m greatly astonished.

KHLESTAKOV [aside]. She’s very appetizing, too. She’s not bad-looking, either. [Flings himself on his knees.] Madam, you see I am burning with love.

ANNA. What! You on your knees? Please get up, please get up. This floor isn't very clean.

KHLESTAKOV. No, I must be on my knees before you. I must. Pronounce the verdict. Is it life or death?

ANNA. But please — I don't quite understand the significance of your words. If I am not mistaken, you are making a proposal for my daughter.

KHLESTAKOV. No, I am in love with you. My life hangs by a thread. If you don't crown my steadfast love, then I am not fit to exist in this world. With a burning flame in my bosom, I pray for your hand.

ANNA. But please remember I am in a certain way — married.

KHLESTAKOV. That's nothing. Love knows no distinction. It was Karamzin who said: "The laws condemn." We will fly in the shadow of a brook. Your hand! I pray for your hand!

SCENE XIV

The same and Marya Antonovna.

MARYA [running in suddenly]. Mamma, papa says you should — [seeing Khlestakov on his knees, exclaims:] Oh, what a situation!

ANNA. Well, what do you want? Why did you come in here? What for? What sort of flightiness is this? Breaks in like a cat leaping out of smoke. Well, what have you found so wonderful? What's gotten into your head again? Really, she behaves like a child of three. She doesn't act a bit like a girl of eighteen, not a bit. I don't know when you'll get more sense into your head, when you'll behave like a decent, well-bred girl, when you'll know what good manners are and a proper demeanor.

MARYA [through her tears]. Mamma, I really didn't know —

ANNA. There’s always a breeze blowing through your head. You act like Liapkin-Tiapkin’s daughter. Why should you imitate them? You shouldn’t imitate them. You have other examples to follow. You have your mother before you. She’s the example to follow.

KHLESTAKOV [seizing Marya’s hand]. Anna Andreyevna, don’t oppose our happiness. Give your blessing to our constant love.

ANNA [in surprise]. So it’s in her you are —

KHLESTAKOV. Decide — life or death?

ANNA. Well, there, you fool, you see? Our guest is pleased to go down on his knees for such trash as you. You, running in suddenly as if you were out of your mind. Really, it would be just what you deserve, if I refused. You are not worthy of such happiness.

MARYA. I won’t do it again, mamma, really I won’t.

SCENE XV

The same and the Governor in precipitate haste.

GOVERNOR. Your Excellency, don’t ruin me, don’t ruin me.

KHLESTAKOV. What’s the matter?

GOVERNOR. The merchants have complained to your Excellency. I assure you on my honor that not one half of what they said is so. They themselves are cheats. They give short measure and short weight. The officer’s widow lied to you when she said I flogged her. She lied, upon my word, she lied. She flogged herself.

KHLESTAKOV. The devil take the officer’s widow. What do I care about the officer’s widow.

GOVERNOR. Don’t believe them, don’t believe them. They are rank liars; a mere child wouldn’t believe them. They are known all over town as liars. And as for cheating, I venture to inform you that there are no swindlers like them in the whole of creation.

ANNA. Do you know what honor Ivan Aleksandrovich is bestowing upon us? He is asking for our daughter’s hand.

GOVERNOR. What are you talking about? Mother has lost her wits. Please do not be angry, your Excellency. She has a touch of insanity. Her mother was like that, too.

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, I am really asking for your daughter’s hand. I am in love with her.

GOVERNOR. I cannot believe it, your Excellency.

ANNA. But when you are told!

KHLESTAKOV. I am not joking. I could go crazy, I am so in love.

GOVERNOR. I daren’t believe it. I am unworthy of such an honor.

KHLESTAKOV. If you don’t consent to give me your daughter Marya Antonovna’s hand, then I am ready to do the devil knows what.

GOVERNOR. I cannot believe it. You deign to joke, your Excellency.

ANNA. My, what a blockhead! Really! When you are told over and over again!

GOVERNOR. I can’t believe it.

KHLESTAKOV. Give her to me, give her to me! I am a desperate man and I may do anything. If I shoot myself, you will have a law-suit on your hands.

GOVERNOR. Oh, my God! I am not guilty either in thought or in action. Please do not be angry. Be pleased to act as your mercy wills. Really, my head is in such a state I don't know what is happening. I have turned into a worse fool than I've ever been in my life.

ANNA. Well, give your blessing.

Khlestakov goes up to Marya Antonovna.

GOVERNOR. May God bless you, but I am not guilty. [Khlestakov kisses Marya. The Governor looks at them.] What the devil! It's really so. [Rubs his eyes.] They are kissing. Oh, heavens! They are kissing. Actually to be our son-in-law! [Cries out, jumping with glee.] Ho, Anton! Ho, Anton! Ho, Governor! So that's the turn events have taken!

SCENE XVI

The same and Osip.

OSIP. The horses are ready.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh! All right. I'll come presently.

GOVERNOR. What's that? Are you leaving?

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, I'm going.

GOVERNOR. Then when — that is — I thought you were pleased to hint at a wedding.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh — for one minute only — for one day — to my uncle, a rich old man. I'll be back tomorrow.

GOVERNOR. We would not venture, of course, to hold you back, and we hope for your safe return.

KHLESTAKOV. Of course, of course, I'll come back at once. Good-by, my dear — no, I simply can't express my feelings. Good-by, my heart. [Kisses Marya's hand.]

GOVERNOR. Don't you need something for the road? It seems to me you were pleased to be short of cash.

KHLESTAKOV, Oh, no, what for? [After a little thought.] However, if you like.

GOVERNOR. How much will you have?

KHLESTAKOV. You gave me two hundred then, that is, not two hundred, but four hundred — I don't want to take advantage of your mistake — you might let me have the same now so that it should be an even eight hundred.

GOVERNOR. Very well. [Takes the money out of his pocket-book.] The notes happen to be brand-new, too, as though on purpose.

KHLESTAKOV. Oh, yes. [Takes the bills and looks at them.] That's good. They say new money means good luck.

GOVERNOR. Quite right.

KHLESTAKOV. Good-by, Anton Antonovich. I am very much obliged to you for your hospitality. I admit with all my heart that I have never got such a good reception anywhere. Good-by, Anna Andreyevna. Good-by, my sweet-heart, Marya Antonovna.

All go out.

Behind the Scenes.

KHLESTAKOV. Good-by, angel of my soul, Marya Antonovna.

GOVERNOR. What's that? You are going in a plain mail-coach?

KHLESTAKOV. Yes, I'm used to it. I get a headache from a carriage with springs.

POSTILION. Ho!

GOVERNOR. Take a rug for the seat at least. If you say so, I'll tell them to bring a rug.

KHLESTAKOV. No, what for? It's not necessary. However, let them bring a rug if you please.

GOVERNOR. Ho, Avdotya. Go to the store-room and bring the very best rug from there, the Persian rug with the blue ground. Quick!

POSTILION. Ho!

GOVERNOR. When do you say we are to expect you back?

KHLESTAKOV. Tomorrow, or the day after.

OSIP. Is this the rug? Give it here. Put it there. Now put some hay on this side.

POSTILION. Ho!

OSIP. Here, on this side. More. All right. That will be fine. [Beats the rug down

with his hand.] Now take the seat, your Excellency.

KHLESTAKOV. Good-by, Anton Antonovich.

GOVERNOR. Good-by, your Excellency.

ANNA } MARYA} Good-by, Ivan Aleksandrovich.

KHLESTAKOV. Good-by, mother.

POSTILION. Get up, my boys!

The bell rings and the curtain drops.

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ACT V

SCENE: Same as in Act IV.

SCENE I

Governor, Anna Andreyevna, and Marya Antonovna.

GOVERNOR. Well, Anna Andreyevna, eh? Did you ever imagine such a thing? Such a rich prize? I'll be — . Well, confess frankly, it never occurred to you even in your dreams, did it? From just a simple governor's wife suddenly — whew! — I'll be hanged! — to marry into the family of such a big gun.

ANNA. Not at all. I knew it long ago. It seems wonderful to you because you are so plain. You never saw decent people.

GOVERNOR. I'm a decent person myself, mother. But, really, think, Anna Andreyevna, what gay birds we have turned into now, you and I. Eh, Anna Andreyevna? High fliers, by Jove! Wait now, I'll give those fellows who were so eager to present their petitions and denunciations a peppering. Ho, who's there? [Enter a Sergeant.] Is it you, Ivan Karpovich? Call those merchants here, brother, won't you? I'll give it to them, the scoundrels! To make such complaints against me! The damned pack of Jews! Wait, my dear fellows. I used to dose you down to your ears. Now I'll dose you down to your beards. Make a list of all who came to protest against me, especially the mean petty scribblers who cooked the petitions up for them, and announce to all that they should know what honor the Heavens have bestowed upon the Governor, namely this: that he is marrying his daughter, not to a plain ordinary man, but to one the like of whom has never yet been in the world, who can do everything, everything, everything, everything! Proclaim it to all so that everybody should know. Shout it aloud to the whole world. Ring the bell, the devil take it! It is a triumph, and we will make it a triumph. [The Sergeant goes out.] So that's the way, Anna Andreyevna, eh? What shall we do now? Where shall we live? Here or in St. Pete?

ANNA. In St. Petersburg, of course. How could we remain here?

GOVERNOR. Well, if St. Pete, then St. Pete. But it would be good here, too. I suppose the governorship could then go to the devil, eh, Anna Andreyevna?

ANNA. Of course. What's a governorship?

GOVERNOR. Don't you think, Anna Andreyevna, I can rise to a high rank now, he being hand in glove with all the ministers, and visiting the court? In time I can be promoted to a generalship. What do you think, Anna Andreyevna? Can I become a general?

ANNA. I should say so. Of course you can.

GOVERNOR. Ah, the devil take it, it's nice to be a general. They hang a ribbon across your shoulders. What ribbon is better, the red St. Anne or the blue St. Andrew?

ANNA. The blue St. Andrew, of course.

GOVERNOR. What! My, you're aiming high. The red one is good, too. Why does one want to be a general? Because when you go travelling, there are always couriers and aides on ahead with "Horses"! And at the stations they refuse to give the horses to others. They all wait, all those councilors, captains, governors, and you don't take the slightest notice of them. You dine somewhere with the governor-general. And the town-governor — I'll keep him waiting at the door. Ha, ha, ha! [He bursts into a roar of laughter, shaking all over.] That's what's so alluring, confound it!

ANNA. You always like such coarse things. You must remember that our life will have to be completely changed, that your acquaintances will not be a dog-lover of a judge, with whom you go hunting hares, or a Zemlianika. On the contrary, your acquaintances will be people of the most refined type, counts, and society aristocrats. Only really I am afraid of you. You sometimes use words that one never hears in good society.

GOVERNOR. What of it? A word doesn't hurt.

ANNA. It's all right when you are a town-governor, but there the life is entirely different.

GOVERNOR. Yes, they say there are two kinds of fish there, the sea-eel and the smelt, and before you start to eat them, the saliva flows in your mouth.

ANNA. That's all he thinks about — fish. I shall insist upon our house being the first in the capital and my room having so much amber in it that when you come in you have to shut your eyes. [She shuts her eyes and sniffs.] Oh, how good!

SCENE II

The same and the Merchants.

GOVERNOR. Ah, how do you do, my fine fellows?

MERCHANTS [bowing]. We wish you health, father.

GOVERNOR. Well, my dearly beloved friends, how are you? How are your goods selling? So you complained against me, did you, you tea tanks, you scurvy hucksters? Complain, against me? You crooks, you pirates, you. Did you gain a lot by it, eh? Aha, you thought you'd land me in prison? May seven devils and one she-devil take you! Do you know that —

ANNA. Good heavens, Antosha, what words you use!

GOVERNOR [irritated]. Oh, it isn't a matter of words now. Do you know that the very official to whom you complained is going to marry my daughter? Well, what do you say to that? Now I'll make you smart. You cheat the people, you make a contract with the government, and you do the government out of a hundred thousand, supplying it with rotten cloth; and when you give fifteen yards away gratis, you expect a reward besides. If they knew, they would send you to — And you strut about sticking out your paunches with a great air of

importance: “I’m a merchant, don’t touch me.” “We,” you say, “are as good as the nobility.” Yes, the nobility, you monkey-faces. The nobleman is educated. If he gets flogged in school, it is for a purpose, to learn something useful. And you — start out in life learning trickery. Your master beats you for not being able to cheat. When you are still little boys and don’t know the Lord’s Prayer, you already give short measure and short weight. And when your bellies swell and your pockets fill up, then you assume an air of importance. Whew! What marvels! Because you guzzle sixteen samovars full a day, that’s why you put on an air of importance. I spit on your heads and on your importance.

MERCHANTS [bowing]. We are guilty, Anton Antonovich.

GOVERNOR. Complaining, eh? And who helped you with that grafting when you built a bridge and charged twenty thousand for wood when there wasn’t even a hundred rubles’ worth used? I did. You goat beards. Have you forgotten? If I had informed on you, I could have despatched you to Siberia. What do you say to that?

A MERCHANT. I’m guilty before God, Anton Antonovich. The evil spirit tempted me. We will never complain against you again. Ask whatever satisfaction you want, only don’t be angry.

GOVERNOR. Don’t be angry! Now you are crawling at my feet. Why? Because I am on top now. But if the balance dipped the least bit your way, then you would trample me in the very dirt — you scoundrels! And you would crush me under a beam besides.

MERCHANTS [prostrating themselves]. Don’t ruin us, Anton Antonovich.

GOVERNOR. Don’t ruin us! Now you say, don’t ruin us! And what did you say before? I could give you — [shrugging his shoulders and throwing up his hands.] Well, God forgive you. Enough. I don’t harbor malice for long. Only look out now. Be on your guard. My daughter is going to marry, not an ordinary nobleman. Let your congratulations be — you understand? Don’t try to get away with a dried sturgeon or a loaf of sugar. Well, leave now, in God’s name.

Merchants leave.

SCENE III

The same, Ammos Fiodorovich, Artemy Filippovich, then Rastakovsky.

AMMOS [in the doorway]. Are we to believe the report, Anton Antonovich? A most extraordinary piece of good fortune has befallen you, hasn't it?

ARTEMY. I have the honor to congratulate you on your unusual good fortune. I was glad from the bottom of my heart when I heard it. [Kisses Anna's hand.] Anna Andreyevna! [Kissing Marya's hand.] Marya Antonovna!

Rastakovsky enters.

RASTAKOVSKY. I congratulate you, Anton Antonovich. May God give you and the new couple long life and may He grant you numerous progeny — grand-children and great-grand-children. Anna Andreyevna! [Kissing her hand.] Marya Antonovna! [Kissing her hand.]

SCENE IV

The same, Korobkin and his Wife, Liuliukov.

KOROBKIN. I have the honor to congratulate you, Anton Antonovich, and you, Anna Andreyevna [kissing her hand] and you Marya Antonovna [kissing her hand].

KOROBKIN'S WIFE. I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart, Anna Andreyevna, on your new stroke of good fortune.

LIULIUKOV. I have the honor to congratulate you, Anna Andreyevna. [Kisses her hand and turns to the audience, smacks his lips, putting on a bold front.] Marya Antonovna, I have the honor to congratulate you. [Kisses her hand and

turns to the audience in the same way.]

SCENE V

A number of Guests enter. They kiss Anna's hand saying: "Anna Andreyevna," then Marya's hand, saying "Marya Antonovna."

Bobchinsky and Dobchinsky enter jostling each other.

BOBCHINSKY. I have the honor to congratulate you.

DOBCHINSKY. Anton Antonovich, I have the honor to congratulate you.

BOBCHINSKY. On the happy event.

DOBCHINSKY. Anna Andreyevna!

BOBCHINSKY. Anna Andreyevna!

They bend over her hand at the same time and bump foreheads.

DOBCHINSKY. Marya Antonovna! [Kisses her hand.] I have the honor to congratulate you. You will enjoy the greatest happiness. You will wear garments of gold and eat the most delicate soups, and you will pass your time most entertainingly.

BOBCHINSKY [breaking in]. God give you all sorts of riches and of money and a wee tiny little son, like this. [Shows the size with his hands.] So that he can sit on the palm of your hand. The little fellow will be crying all the time, "Wow, wow, wow."

SCENE VI

More Guests enter and kiss the ladies' hands, among them Luka Lukich and his

wife.

LUKA LUKICH. I have the honor.

LUKA'S WIFE [running ahead]. Congratulate you, Anna Andreyevna. [They kiss.] Really, I was so glad to hear of it. They tell me, "Anna Andreyevna has betrothed her daughter." "Oh, my God," I think to myself. It made me so glad that I said to my husband, "Listen, Lukanchik, that's a great piece of fortune for Anna Andreyevna." "Well," think I to myself, "thank God!" And I say to him, "I'm so delighted that I'm consumed with impatience to tell it to Anna Andreyevna herself." "Oh, my God," think I to myself, "it's just as Anna Andreyevna expected. She always did expect a good match for her daughter. And now what luck! It happened just exactly as she wanted it to happen." Really, it made me so glad that I couldn't say a word. I cried and cried. I simply screamed, so that Luka Lukich said to me, "What are you crying so for, Nastenka?" "Lukanchik," I said, "I don't know myself. The tears just keep flowing like a stream."

GOVERNOR. Please sit down, ladies and gentlemen. Ho, Mishka, bring some more chairs in.

The Guests seat themselves.

SCENE VII

The same, the Police Captain and Sergeants.

CAPTAIN. I have the honor to congratulate you, your Honor, and to wish you long years of prosperity.

GOVERNOR. Thank you, thank you! Please sit down, gentlemen.

The Guests seat themselves.

AMMOS. But please tell us, Anton Antonovich, how did it all come about, and

how did it all — ahem! — go?

GOVERNOR. It went in a most extraordinary way. He condescended to make the proposal in his own person.

ANNA. In the most respectful and most delicate manner. He spoke beautifully. He said: “Anna Andreyevna, I have only a feeling of respect for your worth.” And such a handsome, cultured man! His manners so genteel! “Believe me, Anna Andreyevna,” he says, “life is not worth a penny to me. It is only because I respect your rare qualities.”

MARYA. Oh, mamma, it was to me he said that.

ANNA. Shut up! You don’t know anything. And don’t meddle in other people’s affairs. “Anna Andreyevna,” he says, “I am enraptured.” That was the flattering way he poured out his soul. And when I was going to say, “We cannot possibly hope for such an honor,” he suddenly went down on his knees, and so aristocratically! “Anna Andreyevna,” he says, “don’t make me the most miserable of men. Consent to respond to my feelings, or else I’ll put an end to my life.”

MARYA. Really, mamma, it was to me he said that.

ANNA. Yes, of course — to you, too. I don’t deny it.

GOVERNOR. He even frightened us. He said he would put a bullet through his brains. “I’ll shoot myself, I’ll shoot myself,” he said.

MANY GUESTS. Well, for the Lord’s sake!

AMMOS. How remarkable!

LUKA. It must have been fate that so ordained.

ARTEMY. Not fate, my dear friend. Fate is a turkey-hen. It was the Governor's services that brought him this piece of fortune. [Aside.] Good luck always does crawl into the mouths of swine like him.

AMMOS. If you like, Anton Antonovich, I'll sell you the dog we were bargaining about.

GOVERNOR. I don't care about dogs now.

AMMOS. Well, if you don't want it, then we'll agree on some other dog.

KOROBKIN'S WIFE. Oh, Anna Andreyevna, how happy I am over your good fortune. You can't imagine how happy I am.

KOROBKIN. But where, may I ask, is the distinguished guest now? I heard he had gone away for some reason or other.

GOVERNOR. Yes, he's gone off for a day on a highly important matter.

ANNA. To his uncle — to ask his blessing.

GOVERNOR. To ask his blessing. But tomorrow — [He sneezes, and all burst into one exclamation of well-wishes.] Thank you very much. But tomorrow he'll be back. [He sneezes, and is congratulated again. Above the other voices are heard those of the following.]

{CAPTAIN. I wish you health, your Honor.

{BOBCHINSKY. A hundred years and a sack of ducats.

{DOBCHINSKY. May God increase it to a thousand.

{ARTEMY. May you go to hell!

{KOROBKIN’S WIFE. The devil take you!

GOVERNOR. I’m very much obliged to you. I wish you the same.

ANNA. We intend to live in St. Petersburg now. I must say, the atmosphere here is too village-like. I must say, it’s extremely unpleasant. My husband, too — he’ll be made a general there.

GOVERNOR. Yes, confound it, gentlemen, I admit I should very much like to be a general.

LUKA. May God grant that you get a generalship.

RASTAKOVSKY. From man it is impossible, but from God everything is possible.

AMMOS. High merits, high honors.

ARTEMY. Reward according to service.

AMMOS [aside]. The things he’ll do when he becomes a general. A generalship suits him as a saddle suits a cow. It’s a far cry to his generalship. There are better men than you, and they haven’t been made generals yet.

ARTEMY [aside]. The devil take it — he’s aiming for a generalship. Well, maybe he will become a general after all. He’s got the air of importance, the devil take him! [Addressing the Governor.] Don’t forget us then, Anton Antonovich.

AMMOS. And if anything happens — for instance, some difficulty in our affairs — don’t refuse us your protection.

KOROBKIN. Next year I am going to take my son to the capital to put him in government service. So do me the kindness to give me your protection. Be a

father to the orphan.

GOVERNOR. I am ready for my part — ready to exert my efforts on your behalf.

ANNA. Antosha, you are always ready with your promises. In the first place, you won't have time to think of such things. And how can you — how is it possible for you, to burden yourself with such promises?

GOVERNOR. Why not, my dear? It's possible occasionally.

ANNA. Of course it's possible. But you can't give protection to every small potato.

KOROBKIN'S WIFE. Do you hear the way she speaks of us?

GUEST. She's always been that way. I know her. Seat her at table and she'll put her feet on it.

SCENE VIII

The same and the Postmaster, who rushes in with an unsealed letter in his hand.

POSTMASTER. A most astonishing thing, ladies and gentlemen! The official whom we took to be an inspector-general is not an inspector-general.

ALL. How so? Not an inspector-general?

POSTMASTER. No, not a bit of it. I found it out from the letter.

GOVERNOR. What are you talking about? What are you talking about? What letter?

POSTMASTER. His own letter. They bring a letter to the postoffice, I glance at

the address and I see Pochtamtskaya Street. I was struck dumb. “Well,” I think to myself, “I suppose he found something wrong in the postoffice department and is informing the government.” So I unsealed it.

GOVERNOR. How could you?

POSTMASTER. I don’t know myself. A supernatural power moved me. I had already summoned a courier to send it off by express; but I was overcome by a greater curiosity than I have ever felt in my life. “I can’t, I can’t,” I hear a voice telling me. “I can’t.” But it pulled me and pulled me. In one ear I heard, “Don’t open the letter. You will die like a chicken,” and in the other it was just as if the devil were whispering, “Open it, open it.” And when I cracked the sealing wax, I felt as if I were on fire; and when I opened the letter, I froze, upon my word, I froze. And my hands trembled, and everything whirled around me.

GOVERNOR. But how did you dare to open it? The letter of so powerful a personage?

POSTMASTER. But that’s just the point — he’s neither powerful nor a personage.

GOVERNOR. Then what is he in your opinion?

POSTMASTER. He’s neither one thing nor another. The devil knows what he is.

GOVERNOR [furiously]. How neither one thing nor another? How do you dare to call him neither one thing nor another? And the devil knows what besides? I’ll put you under arrest.

POSTMASTER. Who — you?

GOVERNOR. Yes, I.

POSTMASTER. You haven’t the power.

GOVERNOR. Do you know that he’s going to marry my daughter? That I myself am going to be a high official and will have the power to exile to Siberia?

POSTMASTER. Oh, Anton Antonovich, Siberia! Siberia is far away. I’d rather read the letter to you. Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to read the letter.

ALL. Do read it.

POSTMASTER [reads]. “I hasten to inform you, my dear friend, what wonderful things have happened to me. On the way here an infantry captain did me out of my last penny, so that the innkeeper here wanted to send me to jail, when suddenly, thanks to my St. Petersburg appearance and dress, the whole town took me for a governor-general. Now I am staying at the governor’s home. I am having a grand time and I am flirting desperately with his wife and daughter. I only haven’t decided whom to begin with. I think with the mother first, because she seems ready to accept all terms. You remember how hard up we were taking our meals wherever we could without paying for them, and how once the pastry cook grabbed me by the collar for having charged pies that I ate to the king of England? Now it is quite different. They lend me all the money I want. They are an awful lot of originals. You would split your sides laughing at them. I know you write for the papers. Put them in your literature. In the first place the Governor is as stupid as an old horse — ”

GOVERNOR. Impossible! That can’t be in the letter.

POSTMASTER [showing the letter]. Read for yourself.

GOVERNOR [reads]. “As an old horse.” Impossible! You put it in yourself.

POSTMASTER. How could I?

ARTEMY. Go on reading.

LUKA. Go on reading.

POSTMASTER [continuing to read]. “The Governor is as stupid as an old horse — ”

GOVERNOR. Oh, the devil! He’s got to read it again. As if it weren’t there anyway.

POSTMASTER [continuing to read]. H’m, h’m — ”an old horse. The Postmaster is a good man, too.” [Stops reading.] Well, here he’s saying something improper about me, too.

GOVERNOR. Go on — read the rest.

POSTMASTER. What for?

GOVERNOR. The deuce take it! Once we have begun to read it, we must read it all.

ARTEMY. If you will allow me, I will read it. [Puts on his eye-glasses and reads.] “The Postmaster is just like the porter Mikheyev in our office, and the scoundrel must drink just as hard.”

POSTMASTER [to the audience]. A bad boy! He ought to be given a licking. That’s all.

ARTEMY [continues to read]. “The Superintendent of Char-i-i — ” [Stammers.]

KOROBKIN. Why did you stop?

ARTEMY. The handwriting isn’t clear. Besides, it’s evident that he’s a blackguard.

KOROBKIN. Give it to me. I believe my eyesight is better.

ARTEMY [refusing to give up the letter]. No. This part can be omitted. After

that it’s legible.

KOROBKIN. Let me have it please. I’ll see for myself.

ARTEMY. I can read it myself. I tell you that after this part it’s all legible.

POSTMASTER. No, read it all. Everything so far could be read.

ALL. Give him the letter, Artemy Filippovich, give it to him. [To Korobkin.] You read it.

ARTEMY. Very well. [Gives up the letter.] Here it is. [Covers a part of it with his finger.] Read from here on. [All press him.]

POSTMASTER. Read it all, nonsense, read it all.

KOROBKIN [reading]. “The Superintendent of Charities, Zemlianika, is a regular pig in a cap.”

ARTEMY [to the audience]. Not a bit witty. A pig in a cap! Have you ever seen a pig wear a cap?

KOROBKIN [continues reading]. “The School Inspector reeks of onions.”

LUKA [to the audience]. Upon my word, I never put an onion to my mouth.

AMMOS [aside]. Thank God, there’s nothing about me in it.

KOROBKIN [continues reading]. “The Judge — ”

AMMOS. There! [Aloud.] Ladies and gentlemen, I think the letter is far too long. To the devil with it! Why should we go on reading such trash?

LUKA. No.

POSTMASTER. No, go on.

ARTEMY. Go on reading.

KOROBKIN. “The Judge, Liapkin-Tiapkin, is extremely mauvais ton.” [He stops.] That must be a French word.

AMMOS. The devil knows what it means. It wouldn’t be so bad if all it means is “cheat.” But it may mean something worse.

KOROBKIN [continues reading]. “However, the people are hospitable and kindhearted. Farewell, my dear Triapichkin. I want to follow your example and take up literature. It’s tiresome to live this way, old boy. One wants food for the mind, after all. I see I must engage in something lofty. Address me: Village of Podkatilovka in the Government of Saratov.” [Turns the letter and reads the address.] “Mr. Ivan Vasilyevich Triapichkin, St. Petersburg, Pochtamtskaya Street, House Number 97, Courtyard, third floor, right.”

A LADY. What an unexpected rebuke!

GOVERNOR. He has cut my throat and cut it for good. I’m done for, completely done for. I see nothing. All I see are pigs’ snouts instead of faces, and nothing more. Catch him, catch him! [Waves his hand.]

POSTMASTER. Catch him! How? As if on purpose, I told the overseer to give him the best coach and three. The devil prompted me to give the order.

KOROBKIN’S WIFE. Here’s a pretty mess.

AMMOS. Confound it, he borrowed three hundred rubles from me.

ARTEMY. He borrowed three hundred from me, too.

POSTMASTER [sighing]. And from me, too.

BOBCHINSKY. And sixty-five from me and Piotr Ivanovich.

AMMOS [throwing up his hands in perplexity]. How's that, gentlemen? Really, how could we have been so off our guard?

GOVERNOR [beating his forehead]. How could I, how could I, old fool? I've grown childish, stupid mule. I have been in the service thirty years. Not one merchant, not one contractor has been able to impose on me. I have over-reached one swindler after another. I have caught crooks and sharpers that were ready to rob the whole world. I have fooled three governor-generals. As for governor-generals, [with a wave of his hand] it is not even worth talking about them.

ANNA. But how is it possible, Antosha? He's engaged to Mashenka.

GOVERNOR [in a rage]. Engaged! Rats! Fiddlesticks! So much for your engagement! Thrusts her engagement at me now! [In a frenzy.] Here, look at me! Look at me, the whole world, the whole of Christendom. See what a fool the governor was made of. Out upon him, the fool, the old scoundrel! [Shakes his fist at himself.] Oh, you fat-nose! To take an icicle, a rag for a personage of rank! Now his coach bells are jingling all along the road. He is publishing the story to the whole world. Not only will you be made a laughing-stock of, but some scribbler, some ink-splasher will put you into a comedy. There's the horrid sting. He won't spare either rank or station. And everybody will grin and clap his hands. What are you laughing at? You are laughing at yourself, oh you! [Stamps his feet.] I would give it to all those ink-splashers! You scribblers, damned liberals, devil's brood! I would tie you all up in a bundle, I would grind you into meal, and give it to the devil. [Shakes his fist and stamps his heel on the floor. After a brief silence.] I can't come to myself. It's really true, whom the gods want to punish they first make mad. In what did that nincompoop resemble an inspector-general? In nothing, not even half the little finger of an inspector-general. And all of a sudden everybody is going about saying, "Inspector-general, inspector-general." Who was the first to say it? Tell me.

ARTEMY [throwing up his hands]. I couldn’t tell how it happened if I had to die for it. It is just as if a mist had clouded our brains. The devil has confounded us.

AMMOS. Who was the first to say it? These two here, this noble pair. [Pointing to Dobchinsky and Bobchinsky.]

BOBCHINSKY. So help me God, not I. I didn’t even think of it.

DOBCHINSKY. I didn’t say a thing, not a thing.

ARTEMY. Of course you did.

LUKA. Certainly. You came running here from the inn like madmen. “He’s come, he’s come. He doesn’t pay.” Found a rare bird!

GOVERNOR. Of course it was you. Town gossips, damned liars!

ARTEMY. The devil take you with your inspector-general and your tattle.

GOVERNOR. You run about the city, bother everybody, confounded chatterboxes. You spread gossip, you short-tailed magpies, you!

AMMOS. Damned bunglers!

LUKA. Simpletons.

ARTEMY. Pot-bellied mushrooms!

All crowd around them.

BOBCHINSKY. Upon my word, it wasn’t I. It was Piotr Ivanovich.

DOBCHINSKY. No, Piotr Ivanovich, you were the first.

BOBCHINSKY. No, no. You were the first.

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LAST SCENE

The same and a Gendarme.

GENDARME. An official from St. Petersburg sent by imperial order has arrived, and wants to see you all at once. He is stopping at the inn.

All are struck as by a thunderbolt. A cry of amazement bursts from the ladies simultaneously. The whole group suddenly shifts positions and remains standing as if petrified.

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SILENT SCENE

The Governor stands in the center rigid as a post, with outstretched hands and head thrown backward. On his right are his wife and daughter straining toward him. Back of them the Postmaster, turned toward the audience, metamorphosed into a question mark. Next to him, at the edge of the group, three lady guests leaning on each other, with a most satirical expression on their faces directed straight at the Governor's family. To the left of the Governor is Zemlianika, his head to one side as if listening. Behind him is the Judge with outspread hands almost crouching on the ground and pursing his lips as if to whistle or say: "A nice pickle we're in!" Next to him is Korobkin, turned toward the audience, with eyes screwed up and making a venomous gesture at the Governor. Next to him, at the edge of the group, are Dobchinsky and Bobchinsky, gesticulating at each other, open-mouthed and wide-eyed. The other guests remain standing stiff. The whole group retain the same position of rigidity for almost a minute and a half. The curtain falls.

CURTAIN

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The Criticism



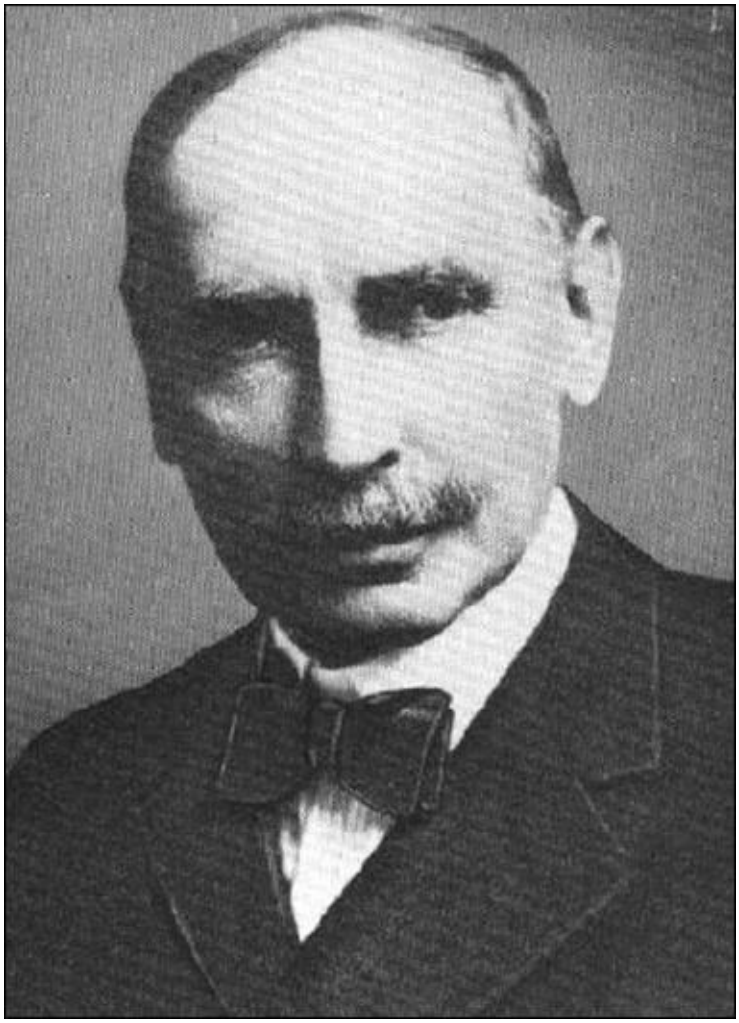
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GOGOL by Ivan Panin



Ivan Nikolayevitsh Panin (1855–1942) was a Russian emigrant to the United States, who achieved fame for claiming to have discovered numeric patterns in the text of the Hebrew and Greek Bible and for his published work based on his subsequent research. This essay was taken from Panin's critical work *Lectures on Russian Literature*, first published in 1889, which explores the art of Gogol's writing.

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Ivan Panin

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GOGOL.

1. With the departure of the eighteenth century there also disappeared from Russia that dazzling glitter which for well-nigh half a century had blinded the eyes of Europe. Catherine was now dead, Potyomkin was dead, Suvorof was living an exile in a village, and Panin was idle on his estates. And now stripped of its coat of whitewash, autocracy stood bare in all its blackness. Instead of mother-Catherine, Paul was now ruling, and right fatherly he ruled! Such terror was inspired by this emperor, that at the sight of their father-Tsar his subjects at last began to scamper in all directions like a troop of mice at the sight of a cat. For half a decade Russia was thus held in terror, until the rule of the maniac could no longer be endured. At last Panin originates, Pahlen organizes, and Benigsen executes a plan, the accomplishment of which finds Paul on the morrow lying in state with a purple face, and the marks of the shawl which strangled him carefully hid by a high collar. “His Majesty died of apoplexy,” the populace is told. Alexander the Benign comes upon the throne, greeted, indeed, by his subjects, in the ecstasy of the delivery, like an angel, but cursed by them as a demon ere the five-and-twenty years of his rule have passed. The Holy Alliance, Shishkof and Arakcheyef were more than even Russians could endure, and formidable protest is at last made by the armed force of the Decembrists. The protest fails; five bodies swinging from the gallows, and a hundred exiles buried in Siberia alive, leave a monument of such failure terrible in its ghastliness even for Russian history. The iron hand of Nicholas now rests on the country, and for thirty years the autocrat can proudly say that now order reigns in Russia. Order? Yes; but it is the order and quiet of the graveyard, the peace of death.

2. But not all is quiet. Defeated on the field of arms, the spirit of protest seeks and at last finds a battle-field where neither the trampling hoofs of horses nor the shot of cannon can avail. The spirit of man intrenches itself behind ideas, behind letters, and here it proves impregnable even against the autocracy of a Nicholas. Defeated on the field of war, the spirit of man protests in literature. The times call for the voice, and the voice is soon heard. This voice is the voice of Nicolai Gogol.

3. Gogol is the protester, the merciless critic of the weakness of autocracy. I have placed Pushkin, the greatest of Russia’s singers, as among the least of its writers, because he hath no purpose. I place Gogol far above Pushkin, because

Gogol is the first master of Russian literature in whom purpose is not only visible, but is also shown. Gogol's art protests not unconsciously; but the man Gogol uses the artist Gogol as a means for giving voice to the protest against what his noble soul rebels.

4. For, O my friends, I cannot emphasize it too strongly that our gifts — whether they consist in wealth, or in the ability to sing, to paint, to build, or to count — are not given unto us to be used for our pleasure merely, or as means of our advancement, whether social or intellectual. But they are given unto us that we may use them for helping those who need help. Talk not therefore of art for its own sake; that art needs no purpose, but is an end unto itself. Such talk is only a convenient way of evading the Heaven-imposed responsibility of *using for others* those gifts with which a merciful power hath endowed their undeserving possessors. Art, therefore, to be truly worthy, must have a purpose, and, execution being equal, that art is highest, which hath the highest purpose; that art lowest, which hath the lowest purpose.

5. But it was not given to Gogol to announce the loftiest message, the message of peace, of love, of submission, the message of Tolstoy; the times of Gogol were not ripe for this; the times of Gogol called for indignation, for protest, and Gogol is the indignant protester.

6. Hitherto, whatever force has been exerted towards protesting against the misrule of Russia by autocracy has come from the South. Stenka Rasin, Pugatchef, came not from the North but from the South. And the most formidable division of the Decembrist conspirators of 1825 was that of Pestel and Muraviof, with their headquarters in the South. And even the policy of terrorizing the autocracy by assassination, which was adopted in our own day by the most formidable opponents of the government, by the revolutionists miscalled Nihilists, also originated in the South, — with Ossinsky and his comrades in Kief. Gogol, the protester in literature, was likewise a Southerner. And it will be worth while to cast a glance at this country and see what therein is to make it thus a hot-bed of protest.

7. Beyond the waterfalls of the Dnieper there extends a to the eye boundless land of prairie which for ages has been the rendezvous of all manner of wild, lawless, but sturdy folk. Of this land Gogol himself has given a description glowingly beautiful as only the love of a Little Russian for the Steppe could give. Taras Bulba had just started out with his two sons to join the camp of the Cossaks.

"Meanwhile the steppe had already received them all into its green embrace, and the high grass surrounding them hid them, and the black Cossaks' caps alone now gleamed between its stalks.

“‘Aye, aye, fellows, what is the matter; why so quiet?’ said at last Bulba, waking up from his revery. ‘One would think you were a crowd of Tartars. Well, well, to the Evil One with your thoughts! Just take your pipes between your teeth, and let us have a smoke, and give our horses the spurs. Then we will fly that even a bird could not catch us!’

“And the Cossaks, leaning over their horses, were lost in the grass. Now even their black caps could no longer be seen; only a track of trampled-down grass traced their swift flight.

“The sun had long been looking forth on the cleared heavens, and poured over the whole steppe its refreshing warmth-breathing light. Whatever was dim and sleepy in the Cossaks’ souls suddenly fled; their hearts began to beat faster, like birds’.

“The farther they went, the more beautiful the steppe grew. In those days the vast expanse which now forms New Russia, to the very shores of the Black Sea, was green, virgin desert. The plough had never passed along the immeasurable waves of the wild plants. Horses alone, whom they hid, were trampling them down. Nothing in Nature could be more beautiful. The whole surface of the land presented a greenish-golden ocean, on which were sparkling millions of all manner of flowers. Through the thin high stalks of the grass were reaching forth the light-blue, dark-blue, and lilac-colored flowers; the yellow broom-plant jumped out above, with its pyramid-like top. The white clover, with its parasol-shaped little caps, shone gayly on the surface. A halm of wheat, brought hither God knows whence, was playing the lonely dandy. By the thin roots of the grasses were gliding the prairie-chicks, stretching out their necks. The air was filled with a thousand different whistles of birds. In the sky floated immovably hawks, their wings spread wide, their eyes steadily fixed on the grass. The cry of a cloud of wild geese moving on the side was heard on a lake, Heaven knows how far off. With measured beating of its wings there rose from the grass a gull, and bathed luxuriously in the blue waves of the atmosphere. Now she is lost in the height, now she gleams as a dark point; there, she has turned on her wings, and has sparkled in the sun!… The Devil take ye, ye steppes, how beautiful you are!”

8. If the height of the mount, swelling as it does the breast of the mountaineer, makes his spirit free by filling his lungs to their very roots, how much more must the steppe liberate the spirit of man by giving the eye an ever-fleeing circle to behold whithersoever it turn! How much more free than the mountaineer must the son of the steppe feel, for whom distance hath no terror, since go he never so far, he beholds the same sky, the same horizon, the same grass, and his cheek is fanned by the same breeze! To jump upon his faithful steed, to prick her sides

with the spur, to be off in the twinkling of an eye with the swiftness of the wind, at the least discontent, is therefore as natural to the Russian of the South as it is for the Russian of the North to endure patiently in his place of birth whatever Fortune hath in store for him. The Cossak has therefore for ages been on land what the sailor is on sea, — light-hearted, jolly when with comrades, melancholy when alone; but whether with his mates or alone, of a spirit indomitably free. And Gogol was a Cossak. Southern Russia had not as yet produced a single great voice, because Southern Russia, New Russia, had as yet no aristocracy. Gogol is thus the only great Russian writer who sprang not from an autocracy whitewashed with Western culture, but from the genuine Russian people. It is this which makes Gogol the most characteristic of Russian writers.

9. Gogol was born in the province of Poltava, in 1810. His grandfather was an honored member of the government of the Cossak Republic, which at that time formed almost a state within the state. It was he that entertained his grandson with the stories of the life of the Cossaks, their adventures, their wars, as well as with the tales of devils, of apparitions, of which that country is full, and which form the principal amusement of the people during their long winter evenings.

10. We shall see later that the essential characteristic of Gogol's art was his wonderful power as a teller of a story. This came to him directly from the grandfather through the father. But the father was already a man of a certain degree of culture. He was fond of reading, subscribed to the magazines, loved to entertain, and more than once had even private theatricals at his house.

11. The boy grew up at home till he was twelve years old. But at that age he was sent away to school at Nyezhin, with results questionable enough. The only signs of promise he showed were a strong memory and an honest but intense dislike of those studies which are only useful when forgotten. The problem as to the necessity of making children familiar with Timbuctoo, Popocatepetl, parallelopipeds, and relative dative and absolute ablative, the boy settled for himself in clear-headed boyish fashion. He hated mathematics, he hated the ancient languages. Accordingly, though he stayed three years under the professor of Latin, all he could learn was the first paragraph of a Latin Reader which begins with the instructive sentence: Universus mundus in duas distribuitur partes; from which circumstance poor Gogol was ever after known among his mates under the name of Universus Mundus. Teachers and scholars therefore scorned poor Universus Mundus; but the boy faithfully kept a book under his desk during recitations, and read most diligently, leaving Universus Mundus to run its own course.

12. But if the boy did not lead his fellow-pupils in familiarity with Popocatepetl and parallelopiped, he did lead them in intellectual energy and

practical life; a voracious reader, a passionate student of Zhukofsky and Pushkin, he founded not only a college review, which he filled mostly with his own contributions, but also a college theatre, which furnished entertainment not only to the boys themselves, but even to the citizens of the town. Nor did the boy rest until he saw his efforts towards founding a college library crowned with success.

13. This public spirit, which became in time all-absorbing to him, thus showed itself even in his boyhood. It was not long before the purpose of his life which hitherto manifested itself unconsciously now became the conscious part of his existence; and when in 1828 the boy left the Nyezhin Gymnasium, he was already filled with conscious desire to serve God with all his soul and man with all his heart. But as the body on its entrance into life must go through a baptism of water, so the soul on its entrance into life must go through a baptism of fire, and the fire to poor Gogol was scorching enough. Deeply religious towards God, nobly enthusiastic towards men, the boy in his simplicity, innocence, and trustfulness found himself repelled by an unsympathetic and hampered by a misunderstanding world, which instead of encouraging the sympathy-hungry youth, was only too ready to laugh to scorn with its superior wisdom the dreams of the visionary. The home, the province, now becomes too narrow for the rapidly unfolding soul. To St. Petersburg he must go, the capital of talent, of aspiration, of hope, where are published the magazines so eagerly devoured in the days gone by, — to the capital, where dwell Zhukofsky and Pushkin. There his talents shall be recognized, and an appreciating world shall receive the new-comer with open arms. The arms of the world do indeed open on his arrival at St. Petersburg, but it is the cold embrace of want, of friendlessness. In St. Petersburg begins for him a struggle for existence which well-nigh ruins him forever. Bread is not easily earned. Congenial society does not readily seek him out, and the sympathetic appreciation his starving soul craves is still as far as ever. Inevitable disappointment of hero-worship also quickly comes. When he calls at the door of the idolized Pushkin late in the morrow, he is told by the valet that the great man is deigning to be asleep at this late hour. “Ah, your master has been composing some heavenly song all night!” “Not at all; he has been playing cards till seven in the morning!” And to complete his doom, his tender susceptible heart begins to flutter with right serious ado at the sight of a dame of high social position who hardly deigns to cast even a glance at the moneyless, ill-clad, clumsy, rustic lad, — sorrows enough for a soul far better equipped for battle with Fortune than this poor Cossak lad. Total ruin is now dangerously nigh. And here Gogol becomes high-handed. He must be off, away from this suffocation of disappointment and despair. He must seek new fields; if Fortune is not to be found in St. Petersburg, then it shall be sought beyond St. Petersburg; and if not

in Russia, then out of Russia. Not him shall sportive Fortune flee; not him, the youth of merit, the youth of promise. In the days of yore he had charmed the good folk of Nyezhin by his acting from the stage the part of an old woman. Wherefore not conquer Fortune as an old woman, if she favor not the young man? In a foreign land he might yet find his goal as an actor, and he decides to exile himself. Of moneys there are indeed none. Fortunately his mother, now already a widow, sends him some moneys wherewith to pay off their pledged estate. But the dutiful son keeps the moneys, advises his mother to take in return his share of his father's estate, and departs for the promised land. He goes to Germany, to Lubeck, to conquer Fortune as an actor.

14. Conquer Fortune he indeed did. For in less than a month he found himself back in St. Petersburg, now a sober, a wiser man. The period of stress, of storm, was at an end, and henceforth letters were chosen as his life-long occupation. Bread, indeed, has to be earned by all manner of makeshifts, — now by serving as a scribe in some dreary government hall, now by reading off mechanically to university students what officially passes as lectures; but the life of his soul, whatever his body might busy itself with, was henceforth given unto letters.

15. Henceforth, in order to make his life most fruitful unto men, which is his constant purpose, he is to write. But write what? Gogol gazes into his heart, and there finds the memories of the steppe, of the valiant Cossaks, their prowess and their freedom. His soul is filled at the sight of these with a tenderness and beauty which give him no rest until he pours them out over the pages of his book, and "Taras Bulba" is covered with a glory well-nigh unattained in any language since the days of Homer. For "Taras Bulba," though only one of several stories in "Evenings on a Farm," is among them what the star Sirius is in the already glorious heavens of a November midnight. As a thing of beauty, of simple grandeur, of wild strength, of heroic nobility, as a song, in short, I do not hesitate to affirm that it finds its like only in the Iliad. It is an epic song, and a song not of an individual soul but of a whole nation. Written down it was indeed by the hands of Gogol, but composed it was by the whole of Little Russia. As the whole of heroic Greece sings in the wrath of Achilles, so the whole of Cossakdom, which in its robust truth and manly simplicity is not unlike heroic Greece, sings in "Taras Bulba."

16. The poem is introduced as follows: —

"'Just turn round, sonny! Well, I declare if you are not ridiculous! What kind of a rig have you on? Why, you look like priests! Are they all dressed thus in the academy?'

"With these words old Bulba met his two sons who came home from the Kief seminary to their father. His sons had just got down from their horses. They were

two sturdy fellows, still looking out from under their brows just like fresh seminary graduates. Their strong, healthy faces were covered with the first down, as yet untouched by a razor. They were much embarrassed at such reception by their father, and they stood motionless, with eyes fixed on the ground.

"'Stand still, stand still; just let me get a good look at you,' he continued, as he turned them about. 'What long jackets you have on! What a jacket! Who ever heard of such jackets before! Just let one of you take a run, and see whether he would not tumble over, entangled in his coat-tails.'

"'Don't laugh, father, don't laugh,' said at last the eldest.

"'See how touchy he is! And why, pray, shall not I laugh?'

"'Because! For even if you are my father, but if you laugh, by God, I will thrash you!'

"'Well, well, well, did you ever! Is this the kind of a son you are? How? Your father?' said Taras Bulba, stepping back in surprise.

"'Yes, even if you are my father. An insult I will stand from none.'

"'How then do you wish to fight me? Boxing?'

"'I don't care; any way.'

"'Well then, let us box,' said Bulba, rolling up his sleeves. 'I would like to see what sort of a boxer you are.'

"And father and son, instead of greeting each other after the long separation, began to give each other blows, now in the sides, now in the ribs, now in the breast, now stepping back and looking about, now coming forward again.

"'Just see, good people, the old fool has become crazy,' said the pale, thin, good mother, who was standing on the threshold and had not been able to embrace her darling boys. 'The children come home after an absence of over a year, and he gets it into his head, God knows what, to box with them.'

"'Yes, he fights finely,' said Bulba, stopping. 'Good, by God!' he continued, catching a little breath. 'So, yes, he will make a fine Cossak, even without preliminary trial. Well, welcome, sonny; come kiss me.' And father and son began to kiss each other. 'Good, my son. Thrash everybody as you have given it to me. Don't let him go! But I must insist, yours is a ridiculous rig. What rope is this, dangling down there!'"

17. Bulba is so pleased with his boys that he decides to take them the very next day to the syetch, the republic of the Cossaks, and there initiate them in the wild, glorious service. The mother's grief at the unexpected loss of her boys, as well as the parting itself, is thus described by Gogol: —

"Night had just enclosed the sky in its embrace; but Bulba always retired early. He spread himself out on the mat and covered himself with the sheep-skin;

for the night air was quite fresh, and Bulba, moreover, was fonder of warmth when at home. He soon began to snore, and it was not long before the entire household did the like. Whatever lay in the various corners of the court began to snore and to whiz. Before everybody else fell asleep the watchman; for in honor of the return of the young Cossaks he had drunk more than the rest.

"The poor mother alone was awake. She nestled herself close to the heads of her dear boys, who were lying side by side. She combed their young, carelessly bunched-up locks, and moistened them with her tears. She gazed upon them with all her eyes, with all her feelings; she was transformed into nothing but sight, and yet she could not look enough at them. She had fed them from her own breast. She had raised them, had fondled them, and now she sees them again only for a moment! 'My boys, my darling boys, what is to become of ye, what is in store for ye?' she spake, and the tears halted on her wrinkles, which had changed her once handsome face. In truth, she was to be pitied, as every woman of that rough age was to be pitied. Only a moment had she lived in love, only in the first fever of passion, in the first fever of youth, and already her rough charmer had forsaken her for the sword, for his companions, for the wild excitement of war. During the year she saw her husband perhaps two — three times, and then again for some years there was not even a trace of him. And when they did come together, when they did live together, what sort of life was hers! She suffered insult, even blows. She received her fondlings as a kind of alms; she felt herself a strange creature in this assemblage of wifeless knights, to whom the loose life of the Cossaks had given a coloring sombre enough. Youth flashed by her joylessly, and her beautiful fresh cheeks and fingers had withered away without kisses, and were covered with premature wrinkles. All her love, all her tenderness, whatever was soft and passionate in woman, was merged in her into the one feeling of a mother. With heat, with passion, with tears, like a gull of the steppe, she was circling about her babes. Her boys, her darling boys, are to be taken from her, — taken from her never to be seen again. Who knows, perhaps at the very first battle the Tartar shall cut off their heads, and she shall not know where their castaway bodies are lying to be pecked in pieces by the bird of prey, while for every drop of their blood she would have given up her whole life. Groaning, she looked into their eyes, when almighty sleep began to close them, and she thought to herself, 'Perhaps Bulba will change his mind when he wakes, and put off the departure for a day or two; perhaps he has decided to go off so soon because he had taken a little too much.'

"The moon had for some time been shining from the high heavens upon the whole court, its sleeping folk, the thick clump of willows and the high wild oats in which was drowned the fence surrounding the court. Still she was sitting at

the head-side of her darling boys, not taking her eyes off them for a moment, and not even thinking of sleep. The horses, already feeling the morrow, had all lain down in the grass, and ceased feeding. The upper leaves of the willows began to whisper, and little by little a whispering wave descended along them to the very bottom. But she was still sitting up till daybreak, not at all tired, but inwardly wishing that the night might last only longer. From the steppe came up the loud neighing of a colt; red bars gleamed brightly along the sky.…

"When the mother saw that at last her sons also were now seated on their horses, she rushed to the youngest, in whose features there seemed to be more of a certain tenderness, seized his spur, clung to his saddle, and with despair in her eyes, she held fast to him. Two robust Cossaks took gently hold of her and carried her into the house. But when they rode out beyond the gates, with the lightness of a wild stag, incompatible with her years, she ran out beyond the gates, and with incomprehensible strength she stopped the horse and embraced one of her sons with a kind of crazy, feelingless feverishness. Again she was carried off.

"The young Cossaks rode in silence, and held back their tears in fear of their father, who, however, was for his part not wholly at ease, though he tried not to betray himself. The sky was gray; the green was sparkling with a glare; the birds were singing as if in discord. The Cossaks, after riding some distance, looked back. Their farm-house seemed to have gone down into the ground. Above ground were seen only the two chimneys of their modest house, and the tops of the trees, along whose branches they had been leaping like squirrels [in their childhood.] There still was stretched before them that prairie which held for them the whole history of their life, from the years when they made somersaults on its thick grass, to the years when they would await there the black-browed Cossak dame as she was tripping swiftly along with her fresh light step. Now they see only the pole over the well, and the cart-wheel, tied to its top, alone sticks out on the sky. And now the plain they had just passed seems a distant mount, hiding everything behind it.… Farewell, childhood, and play, and all, and all!…"

18. I had hoped at first to be able to give you a few passages from this noblest of epic poems which might give you some idea of its wild, thrilling beauty: the jolly life at the syetch; the sudden transformation of the frolicking, dancing, gambling crowd into a well-disciplined army of fierce warriors, which strikes terrors into the hearts of the Poles. I hoped to be able to give you Gogol's own account of the slaying of Andrei, his youngest son, by Bulba himself, because, bewitched by a pair of fair eyes, he became traitor to the Cossaks. I wished to quote to you the stoic death, under the very eyes of his father, of Ostap, the

oldest son, torn as he is alive to pieces, not a sound escaping his lips, but at the very last moment, disheartened at the sea of hostile faces about him, crying only, “Father, seest thou all this?” I wished to quote to you Bulba’s own terrible death, nailed alive to a tree, which is set on fire under him; the old hero, still intent on the salvation of his little band, while the smoke envelops him, cries, as he beholds the movement of the enemy, “To the shore, comrades, to the shore! Take the path to the left!” But I found I should have to quote to you the entire book; for there is not a single page of this poem from which beauty does not shine forth with dazzling radiance. Homer often nods in the Iliad, but in “Taras Bulba” Gogol never nods. And as the painter of old on being asked to remove the curtain that the picture might be seen replied, “The curtain *is* the picture,” so can I only say to you, “Read ‘Taras Bulba,’ and it shall be its own commentary unto you!”

19. With “Taras Bulba,” Gogol had reached the height as a singer. On this road there was no longer any progress for his soul, and to remain a cheerful, right-glad singer in the midst of the sorrowing, overburdened country was impossible to a man of Gogol’s earnestness. For his first and last end was to serve his country. ‘Tis well, if he could serve it by letters, equally well, if he could serve it by his simple life. Gogol, therefore, now decided to devote the rest of his days to the unveiling of the ills to which the Russian Colossus was subject, in the hope that the sight of the ugly cancer would help its removal. Thus he became the conscious protester, the critic of autocracy; and he became such because his gifts were best fitted for such labor. For coupled with his unsurpassed gift of story-telling was another distinct trait of the Cossak in him, — the ability of seeing good-humoredly the frailties of man; and his humor, undefiled by the scorn of the cynic, proved a most powerful weapon in his hands. Ridicule has ever proved a terror to corruption. But in the hands of Gogol this ridicule became a weapon all the more powerful because it took the shape of impersonal humor where the indignation of the author was kept out of sight, so that even stern Nicolas himself, the indirect source of the very corruption satirized in “The Revisor,” could laugh, while a listener to the play, until the tears ran down his cheeks and his sides ached. The corruption of provincial officials, which is the natural sore following all autocratic blood-poisoning, found merciless treatment at the hands of Gogol in his comedy “The Revisor.” Its plot is briefly as follows: —

20. The mayor of a small city receives suddenly the news that a revisor, a secret examiner, is on the way from the capital to investigate his administration. Quickly he assembles all the worthies of the town, the director of schools, of prisons, of hospitals, all of whom have but too guilty consciences, and they all

decide on measures of escape from his wrath. They march in file to the hotel where the supposed Revisor lodges. There for some days had been dwelling a young penniless good-for-nothing whom the officials mistake for the dreaded Revisor. The young man is surprised, but soon accepts the situation, and plays his part admirably. Presents and bribes are sent him from all sides; he borrows money right and left, makes love to the mayor's wife as well as to his daughter, and finally engages to marry the — daughter. The mayor is happy and honored as never before, and relying upon the protection of the Revisor outrages the community now more than ever. At last the pseudo-revisor departs with all the gifts and loans, and in a few days the real Revisor actually arrives, to the astonishment and dismay of the officials, who till now had felt secure in their misdeeds.

21. "The Revisor" is indeed a great comedy, the equal of Griboyedof's "Misfortune from Brains." As a comedy it is therefore the inferior of none, — neither of Terence, nor of Molière. But as a work of art it cannot rank as high as "Taras Bulba," because no comedy can ever be as great a thing of beauty as an epic poem. What rouses laughter cannot rank as high as what rouses tender emotion. Moreover, with the passing away of the generation familiar with the corruption it satirizes, the comedy often becomes unintelligible save to scholars. Hence the utter valuelessness to us of to-day of the comedies of Aristophanes as works of wit. Their only value to-day is as fragmentary records of Greek manners. The comedy is thus writ not for all times, but only for *a* time; while "Taras Bulba," though generations come and generations go, will ever appeal unto men as a thing of imperishable beauty. But while "The Revisor" is below "Taras Bulba" as a work of art, it is far above it as a work of purpose, and has accordingly accomplished a greater result. For "Taras Bulba" can only give pleasure, though it be read for thousands of years after "The Revisor" has been forgotten. It will indeed give a noble pleasure, at which the soul need not blush, still it is only a pleasure. But "The Revisor" has helped to abolish corruption, has fought the Evil One, has therefore done work which, transient though it be, *must* be done to bring about the one result which alone is permanent, — the kingdom of heaven upon earth; the kingdom of truth, the kingdom of love, the kingdom of worship. And whatever helps towards the establishment of that on earth must be of a higher rank than what only gives pleasure unto the soul.

22. The success of "The Revisor" spurred the young Gogol on to further effort, and he now resolved to give utterance to protest against another crying wrong of Russian life, which in its consequences was far more disastrous to the country than official corruption. Gogol now undertook to lay bare the ills of serfdom. His soul had long since been searching for its activity a field as wide as

life itself. With Gogol, as with all lofty souls before they find their truest self, aspiration ever soared above execution. Now, however, the time had arrived when his gifts could execute whatever his soul conceived; and his mighty spirit at last found fitting expression in “Dead Souls.” Accordingly “Dead Souls” is not so much a story, a story of an event or of a passion, as a panorama of the whole country. In his search for Dead Souls, Tchichikof has to travel through the length and breadth of the land; through village and through town, through sunshine and through storm, by day and by night, through the paved imperial post-road as well as through the forsaken cross-lane. This enables Gogol to place before the reader not only the governor of the province, the judge, and the rich landowner, the possessor of hundreds of souls, but also the poverty-stricken, well-nigh ruined landowner; not only the splendor of the city, but also the squalor of the hamlet; not only the luxury of an invited guest, but also the niggardliness of the hotel-boarder. “Dead Souls” is thus a painting in literature, — what Kaulbach’s “Era of the Reformation” is in history. And the originality of the execution lies in the arrangement which presents Russia in a view unseen as yet even by Pushkin, who knew his country but too well. Gogol may be said to have discovered Russia for the Russian, as Haxthausen discovered it for the West, and as De Tocqueville discovered America for the Americans. “Great God!” exclaimed Pushkin, on reading “Dead Souls,” “I had no idea Russia was such a dark country!” And this is the characteristic of this among the greatest of paintings of Russian life, — the faithful gloom which overhangs the horizon. In spite of its humor, the impression left on the mind by “Dead Souls” is that of the sky during an equinoctial storm; and on closing the book, in spite of your laughter, you feel as if you had just returned from a funeral. The work is conceived in humor, designed to rouse laughter, but it is laughter which shines through tears. It is the laughter of a soul which can no longer weep outwardly, but inwardly. It is the same laughter which Lessing indulged in when his wife and child were snatched from him both at once. For six long weary years he had battled with poverty, disappointment, and despair, to reach at last in joy the goal of his life; he weds at last his beloved dame, and lo, the close of the first year of his paradise finds mother and babe lying side by side — lifeless. Lessing laughs. He writes to a friend: “The poor little fellow hath early discovered the sorrows of this earth, so he quickly hied himself hence, and lest he be lonely, took his mother along.” There is laughter here, indeed, but the soul here laughs with a bleeding, torn, agonized heart. It is the same laughter which was roused among the disciples of Christ when they heard their Master utter the grim joke, “Verily, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” Such laughter is Gogol’s in “Dead Souls.” Gogol

had now learned to comprehend the words of his friend Ivanof, — ”Christ never laughed.”

23. I dwell on this phase of Gogol’s laughter, because Gogol in his “Dead Souls” unconsciously recognized that behind everything laughable there is at bottom not a comedy but a tragedy; that at bottom it is the cold head only which laughs, and not the warm heart. Think, and thou shalt laugh; feel, and thou shalt weep. Judgment laughs, sympathy weeps. Sin, wickedness, O my friends, is not a thing to laugh at, but a thing to weep at; and your English humorists have not yet learned, when they must laugh at vice and sin, to laugh at it with a heart full of woe. Swift is steeped in vinegar; Fielding’s humor is oiled and sugar-coated; Dickens can never laugh unless with convulsive explosion; Thackeray sneers, and George Eliot is almost malicious with her humor; and the only man in English literature who is sick at heart while he laughs is not even counted among the humorists, — Carlyle. In English literature the laughter of Cervantes in Don Quixote is unknown; but the humor of Cervantes is nearest that of Gogol. Gogol’s laughter is the laughter of a man who so loves his fellow-men that their weakness is his pain; and the warmest corner in all Russia for the very men Gogol satirizes would doubtless have been found in his own heart. It is this spirit in which “Dead Souls” is writ which makes “Dead Souls” a model for all humorous writing.

24. I can give you, however, no nobler example of this laughter through tears by Gogol than the following closing passage from his “Memoirs of a Maniac.” You remember that during his stay at St. Petersburg, Gogol fell in love with a woman far above his social rank. In this piece of only twenty pages Gogol paints the mental condition of an humble office-scribe, who, falling in hopeless love with the daughter of his chief, loses his poor mind. After various adventures he at last imagines himself King Ferdinand of Spain, is locked up in an asylum, and is beaten whenever he speaks of himself as the king. And this is the last entry in the poor maniac’s diary: —

“No, I no longer can endure it. God, what are they doing to me! They pour cold water on my head! They neither mind me, nor do they see me, nor do they hear me. What have I done to them? What do they wish of poor me? What can I give them? I have nothing. I have no more strength. I no longer can endure all their torment; my head is afire, and all around me is in a whirl. Save me! Take me! Give me a span of horses swift as the wind! Get up, driver; ring, little bell; off ye horses, and carry me off from this world! Away, away, that I see nothing more, — nothing. Ha! there is the sky vaulting before me; a star sparkles in the distance; there rushes the forest with its dark trees, and the moon. A gray fog spreads under my feet; a string resounds in the fog; on one side is the sea, on the

other Italy; now Russian huts are already in sight. Is this my home which rises blue in the distance? Is it my mother sitting at the window? Dear mother, save your poor boy; drop a tearlet on his sick head. See how they torment him; press your poor orphan to your breast! There is no place for him on this wide earth! He is chased! Dear mother, have pity on your sick babe!… By the way, do you know, the Emperor of Algeria has a wart under his very nose!”

25. With the completion of the first part of “Dead Souls,” Gogol had reached the height as a protester. He had now exhausted this side of his life, — the side which was the essence of his being, the side which made him the individual person as distinct from the rest of men. After the first part of “Dead Souls” his message unto men was a thing of the past. Henceforth, whatever he could do, could only be a repetition of his former burning words, and hence only a weaker utterance. This is precisely what happens to most men of letters when they persist in speech after naught is left them to say. You need only be reminded of Bryant in this country, who had exhausted all the music of his soul in his younger days, and of Tennyson in England, who as shadowy Lord Tennyson can only ignobly borrow of marrowy Alfred Tennyson. But Gogol was too conscientious an artist to allow himself to become prey of such literary sin. If produce he must, it shall be no repetition of his former self, but in a still higher field than mere protest. Accordingly, he attempted in his second part of “Dead Souls” to paint an ideal Russia, just as in the first part he had painted the real Russia. Here, however, he undertook what was above his genius: the skylark is indeed a noble bird, but is unfit for the flight of the eagle. Who was by nature only a protester could not by sheer force of will be transformed into the idealizing constructor. And of this, Gogol himself soon became aware. To the very end he was discontented with his second part, and finally, before his death, gave it over to the flames.

26. The heavenly spark which gleamed within him could not, however, be put out. Letters proper he at last indeed forsook, but he now became profoundly religious; he gave up all his possessions to the poor, and when he needed moneys wherewith to make a pilgrimage to what was to him a veritably Holy Land, he had to publish some of his intimate correspondence.

27. This work proved the bitterness of the rest of his days. It roused a clamor against the poor author altogether out of proportion to the slight merit of the work. Gogol was denounced on all sides as a renegade; the relentless accuser of autocracy in “The Revisor” could not be forgiven for the spirit of Christian humility and resignation to the will of God which breathed from these letters. It was in the forties. Those were the days when a Hegelian wave went over Russian minds. God had been philosophized away to make place for the

Absolute, and even school-boys came home to announce the astounding news that there was no longer any God. Who was not a doubter, a disbeliever, was unhesitatingly declared an imbecile; and Gogol's correspondence, breathing as it does the spirit of the deepest godfulness, came upon his friends like a note of discord at a concert. His friends declared him insane, and all manner of advice offered, which could not fail to make him truly insane. The already melancholy Gogol now became lonely, dejected, and sought consolation now more than ever in fasting and prayer. Poor Gogol had not yet learned that complete salvation is found not in praying, but in doing. While his ills therefore increased his devotion, his devotion likewise in turn increased his ills; his body became emaciated, his mind was wrecked, and early in 1852 he was found one morning starved to death, prostrated before the holy images, in front of which he had spent his last days.

28. Next to Tolstoy, Gogol is perhaps the most lovable figure in Russian literature. I say lovable, because he was at bottom a hapless man, — a man who had fed on his own mighty heart. There is a Carlylesqueness about his woe that makes his life immeasurably pitiful. Pushkin's sorrow one finds it difficult to lament deeply, since it was mostly of his own making; but Gogol's was the sorrowful lot of all heaven-aspiring souls who have not yet attained the last, safest haven of rest in God, — that haven from which the soul no longer cries in agony of spirit, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" but rather, "Father, thou knowest wherefore all this is; thy will be done!" His soul in its loneliness and restlessness knew nor sympathy nor appreciation of what was to him *his* deepest life; and this the loving soul ever craves most hungeringly. When the great soul had departed, gone irrevocably, men readily enough recognized that the light of Israel had gone out; but the recognition came too late, the love came when it could no longer heal his wounded spirit.

29. My friends, "Taras Bulba" will thrill your soul with inexpressible beauty. Gogol's "Revisor" will amuse you. His "Dead Souls" will instruct you; but his life, if you study it faithfully, should prove his greatest work unto you, for it should stir you, — stir you to tenderness, stir you to sympathy, stir you to compassion for those sufferers, the like of Gogol, who are never wanting, in whatever age, in whatever clime, in whatever walk of life. Would to God, my friends, you could carry away from Gogol's life with you this lesson: In your very midst, perhaps this very day, there doubtless walks among you some mighty spirit, some hungry soul. Seek him out, find him out, that not of ye at least shall be said those immeasurably sorrowful words which could be said of the countless friends of Gogol, — they came with their sympathy — too late!

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Extract from 'ESSAYS ON RUSSIAN NOVELISTS' by William Lyon Phelps



This essay on Gogol's life and work was taken from Phelps' famous collection of essays on Russian writers, first published in 1911. Phelps was an American critic, whose scholarly works explored many areas of world literature.

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Dr William Lyon Phelps, 1922

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GOGOL

NIKOLAI VASSILIEVICH GOGOL was born at Sorotchinetz, in Little Russia, in March, 1809. The year in which he appeared on the planet proved to be the literary *annus mirabilis* of the century; for in that same twelvemonth were born Charles Darwin, Alfred Tennyson, Abraham Lincoln, Poe, Gladstone, and Holmes. His father was a lover of literature, who wrote dramatic pieces for his own amusement, and who spent his time on the old family estates, not in managing the farms, but in wandering about the fields, and beholding the fowls of the air. The boy inherited much from his father; but, unlike Turgenev, he had the best of all private tutors, a good mother, of whom his biographer says, Elle demeure toujours sa plus intime amie.*

* For the facts in Gogol's life, I have relied chiefly on the doctor's thesis by Raina Tyrneva, Aix, 1901.

At the age of twelve, Nikolai was sent away to the high school at Nezhin, a town near Kiev. There he remained from 1821 to 1828. He was an unpromising student, having no enthusiasm for his lessons, and showing no distinction either in scholarship or deportment. Fortunately, however, the school had a little theatre of its own, and Gogol, who hated mathematics, and cared little for the study of modern languages, here found an outlet for all his mental energy. He soon became the acknowledged leader of the school in matters dramatic, and unconsciously prepared himself for his future career. Like Schiller, he wrote a tragedy, and called it *The Robbers.*

I think it is probable that Gogol's hatred for the school curriculum inspired a passage in *Taras Bulba,* though here he ostensibly described the pedagogy of the fifteenth century.

"The style of education in that age differed widely from the manner of life. These scholastic, grammatical, rhetorical, and logical subtleties were decidedly out of consonance with the times, never had any connection with and never were encountered in actual life. Those who studied them could not apply their knowledge to anything whatever, not even the least scholastic of them. The learned men of those days were even more incapable than the rest, because farther removed from all experience."*

* Translated by Isabel Hapgood.

In December, 1828, Gogol took up his residence in St. Petersburg, bringing with him some manuscripts that he had written while at school. He had the temerity to publish one, which was so brutally ridiculed by the critics, that the

young genius, in despair, burned all the unsold copies--an unwitting prophecy of a later and more lamentable conflagration. Then he vainly tried various means of subsistence. Suddenly he decided to seek his fortune in America, but he was both homesick and seasick before the ship emerged from the Baltic, and from Lübeck he fled incontinently back to Petersburg. Then he tried to become an actor, but lacked the necessary strength of voice. For a short time he held a minor official position, and a little later was professor of history, an occupation he did not enjoy, saying after his resignation, “Now I am a free Cossack again.” Meanwhile his pen was steadily busy, and his sketches of farm life in the Ukraine attracted considerable attention among literary circles in the capital.

Gogol suffered from nostalgia all the time he lived at St. Petersburg; he did not care for that form of society, and the people, he said, did not seem like real Russians. He was thoroughly homesick for his beloved Ukraine; and it is significant that his short stories of life in Little Russia, truthfully depicting the country customs, were written far off in a strange and uncongenial environment.

In 1831 he had the good fortune to meet the poet Pushkin, and a few months later in the same year he was presented to Madame Smirnova; these friends gave him the entrée to the literary salons, and the young author, lonesome as he was, found the intellectual stimulation he needed. It was Pushkin who suggested to him the subjects for two of his most famous works, *Revizor* and *Dead Souls.* Another friend, Jukovski, exercised a powerful influence, and gave invaluable aid at several crises of his career. Jukovski had translated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey;* his enthusiasm for Hellenic poetry was contagious; and under this inspiration Gogol proceeded to write the most Homeric romance in Russian literature, Ê*Taras Bulba.* This story gave the first indubitable proof of its author’s genius, and to-day in the world’s fiction it holds an unassailable place in the front rank. The book is so short that it can be read through in less than two hours; but it gives the same impression of vastness and immensity as the huge volumes of Sienkiewicz.

Gogol followed this amazingly powerful romance by two other works, which seem to have all the marks of immortality--the comedy *Revizor,* and a long, unfinished novel, *Dead Souls.* This latter book is the first of the great realistic novels of Russia, of which *Fathers and Children*, *Crime and Punishment,* and *Anna Karenina* are such splendid examples.

From 1836 until his death in 1852, Gogol lived mainly abroad, and spent much time in travel. His favourite place of residence was Rome, to which city he repeatedly returned with increasing affection. In 1848 he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, for Gogol never departed from the pious Christian faith taught him by his mother; in fact, toward the end of his life, he became an ascetic and a

mystic. The last years were shadowed by illness and--a common thing among Russian writers--by intense nervous depression. He died at Moscow, 21 February 1852. His last words were the old saying, “And I shall laugh with a bitter laugh.” These words were placed on his tomb.

Most Russian novels are steeped in pessimism, and their authors were men of sorrows. Gogol, however, has the double distinction of being the only great comic writer in the language, and in particular of being the author of the only Russian drama known all over the world, and still acted everywhere on the Continent. Although plays do not come within the scope of this book, a word or two should be said about this great comedy; for *Revizor* exhibits clearly the double nature of the author,--his genius for moral satire and his genius for pure fun. From the moral point of view, it is a terrible indictment against the most corrupt bureaucracy of modern times, from the comic point of view, it is an uproarious farce.

The origin of the play is as follows: while travelling in Russia one day, Pushkin stopped at Nizhni-Novgorod. Here he was mistaken for a state functionary on tour among the provinces for purposes of government inspection. This amused the poet so keenly that he narrated all the circumstances to Gogol and suggested that the latter make a play with this experience as the basis of the plot. Gogol not only acted on the suggestion, but instead of a mere farce, he produced a comedy of manners. Toward the end of his life he wrote: “In *Revizor* I tried to gather in one heap all that was bad in Russia, as I then understood it; I wished to turn it all into ridicule. The real impression produced was that of fear. Through the laughter that I have never laughed more loudly, the spectator feels my bitterness and sorrow.” The drama was finished on the 4 December 1835, and of course the immediate difficulty was the censorship. How would it be possible for such a satire either to be printed or acted in Russia? Gogol’s friend, Madame Smirnova, carried the manuscript to the Czar, Nikolas I. It was read to him; he roared with laughter, and immediately ordered that it be acted. We may note also that he became a warm friend of Gogol, and sent sums of money to him, saying nobly, “Don’t let him know the source of these gifts; for then he might feel obliged to write from the official point of view.”

The first performance was on the 19 April 1836. The Czar attended in person, and applauded vigorously. The success was immediate, and it has never quitted the stage. Gogol wrote to a friend: “On the opening night I felt uncomfortable from the very first as I sat in the theatre. Anxiety for the approval of the audience did not trouble me. There was only one critic in the house--myself--that I feared. I heard clamorous objections within me which drowned all else. However, the public, as a whole, was satisfied. Half of the audience praised the

play, the other half condemned it, but not on artistic grounds."

Revizor is one of the best-constructed comedies in any language; for not only has it a unified and well-ordered plot, but it does not stop with the final fall of the curtain. Most plays by attempting to finish up the story with smooth edges, leave an impression of artificiality and unreality, for life is not done up in such neat parcels. The greatest dramas do not solve problems for us, they supply us with questions. In *Revizor,* at the last dumb scene, after all the mirth, the real trouble is about to begin; and the spectators depart, not merely with the delightful memory of an evening's entertainment, but with their imagination aflame. Furthermore, *Revizor* has that combination of the intensely local element with the universal, so characteristic of works of genius. Its avowed attempt was to satirise local and temporal abuses; but it is impossible to imagine any state of society in the near future where the play will not seem real. If Gogol had done nothing but write the best comedy in the Russian language, he would have his place in literature secure.*

* The first production of *Revizor* in America (in English) was given by the students of Yale University, 20 April, 1908. For all I know to the contrary, it was the first English production in the world. It was immensely successful, caused subsequent performances elsewhere, both amateur and professional, and attracted attention in Russia, where a journal gave an illustrated account of the Yale representation.

One must never forget in reading Gogol that he was a man of the South--*homme du Midi.* In all countries of the world, there is a marked difference between the Northern and the Southern temperament. The southern sun seems to make human nature more mellow. Southerners are more warm-hearted, more emotional, more hospitable, and much more free in the expression of their feelings. In the United States, every one knows the contrast between the New Englander and the man from the Gulf; in Europe, the difference between the Norman and the Gascon has always been apparent--how clear it is in the works of Flaubert and of Rostand! Likewise how interesting is the comparison between the Prussian and the Bavarian; we may have a wholesome respect for Berlin, but we love Munich, in some respects the most attractive town on earth. The parallel holds good in Russia, where the Little Russians, the men of the Ukraine, have ever shown characteristics that separate them from the people of the North. The fiery passion, the boundless aspiration of the Cossack, animates the stories of Gogol with a veritable flame.

His first book, *Evenings on a Farm near the Dikanka (Veillées de l'Ukraine),* appeared early in the thirties, and, with all its crudity and excrescences, was a literary sunrise. It attracted immediate and wide-spread attention, and the wits of

Petersburg knew that Russia had an original novelist. The work is a collection of short stories or sketches, introduced with a rollicking humorous preface, in which the author announces himself as Rudii Panko, raiser of bees. Into this book the exile in the city of the North poured out all his love for the country and the village customs of his own Little Russia. He gives us great pictures of Nature, and little pictures of social life. He describes with the utmost detail a country fair at the place of his birth, Sorotchinetz. His descriptions of the simple folk, the beasts, and the bargainings seem as true as those in *Madame Bovary*--the difference is in the attitude of the author toward his work. Gogol has nothing of the aloofness, nothing of the scorn of Flaubert; he himself loves the revelry and the superstitions he pictures, loves above all the people. Superstition plays a prominent role in these sketches; the unseen world of ghosts and apparitions has an enormous influence on the daily life of the peasants. The love of fun is everywhere in evidence; these people cannot live without practical jokes, violent dances, and horse-play. Shadowy forms of amorous couples move silent in the warm summer night, and the stillness is broken by silver laughter. Far away, in his room at St. Petersburg, shut in by the long winter darkness, the homesick man dreamed of the vast landscape he loved, in the warm embrace of the sky at noon, or asleep in the pale moonlight. The first sentence of the book is a cry of longing. “What ecstasy; what splendour has a summer day in Little Russia!” Pushkin used to say that the Northern summer was a caricature of the Southern winter.

The *Evenings on a Farm* indicates the possession of great power rather than consummate skill in the use of it. Full of charm as it is, it cannot by any stretch of language be called a masterpiece. Two years later, however, Gogol produced one of the great prose romances of the world, *Taras Bulba.* He had intended to write a history of Little Russia and a history of the Middle Ages, in eight or nine volumes. In order to gather material, he read annals diligently, and collected folk-lore, national songs, and local traditions. Fortunately out of this welter of matter emerged not a big history, but a short novel. Short as it is, it has been called an epical poem in the manner of Homer, and a dramatisation of history in the manner of Shakespeare. Both remarks are just, though the influence of Homer is the more evident; in the descriptive passages, the style is deliberately Homeric, as it is in the romances of Sienkiewicz, which owe so much to this little book by Gogol. It is astonishing that so small a work can show such colossal force. Force is its prime quality--physical, mental, religious. In this story the old Cossacks, centuries dead, have a genuine resurrection of the body. They appear before us in all their amazing vitality, their love of fighting, of eating and drinking, their intense patriotism, and their blazing devotion to their

religious faith. Never was a book more plainly inspired by passion for race and native land. It is one tremendous shout of joy. These Cossacks are the veritable children of the steppes, and their vast passions, their Homeric laughter, their absolute recklessness in battle, are simply an expression of the boundless range of the mighty landscape.

“The further they penetrated the steppe, the more beautiful it became. Then all the South, all that region which now constitutes New Russia, even to the Black Sea, was a green, virgin wilderness. No plough had ever passed over the immeasurable waves of wild growth; the horses alone, hiding themselves in it as in a forest, trod it down. Nothing in nature could be finer. The whole surface of the earth presented itself as a green-gold ocean, upon which were sprinkled millions of different flowers. Through the tall, slender stems of the grass peeped light-blue, dark-blue, and lilac star-thistles; the yellow broom thrust up its pyramidal head; the parasol-shaped white flower of the false flax shimmered on high. A wheat-ear, brought God knows whence, was filling out to ripening. About their slender roots ran partridges with out-stretched necks. The air was filled with the notes of a thousand different birds. In the sky, immovable, hung the hawks, their wings outspread, and their eyes fixed intently on the grass. The cries of a cloud of wild ducks, moving up from one side, were echoed from God knows what distant lake. From the grass arose, with measured sweep, a gull, and bathed luxuriously in blue waves of air. And now she has vanished on high, and appears only as a black dot: now she has turned her wings, and shines in the sunlight. Deuce take you, steppes, how beautiful you are!”*

* Translated by Isabel Hapgood.

The whole book is dominated by the gigantic figure of old Taras Bulba, who loves food and drink, but who would rather fight than eat. Like so many Russian novels, it begins at the beginning, not at the second or third chapter. The two sons of Taras, wild cubs of the wild old wolf, return from school, and are welcomed by their loving father, not with kisses and affectionate greeting, but with a joyous fist combat, while the anxious mother looks on with tears of dismayed surprise. After the sublime rage of fighting, which proves to the old man’s satisfaction that his sons are really worthy of him, comes the sublime joy of brandy, and a prodigious feast, which only the stomachs of fifteenth century Cossacks could survive. Then despite the anguish of the mother--there was no place for the happiness of women in Cossack life--comes the crushing announcement that on the morrow all three males will away to the wars, from which not one of them will return. One of the most poignant scenes that Gogol has written is the picture of the mother, watching the whole night long by her sleeping sons--who pass the few hours after the long separation and before the

eternal parting, in deep, unconscious slumber.

The various noisy parliaments and bloody combats are pictured by a pen alive with the subject; of the two sons, one is murdered by his father for preferring the love of a Capulet to the success of the Montagues; the other, Ostap, is taken prisoner, and tortured to death. Taras, in disguise, watches the appalling sufferings of his son; just before his death, Ostap, who had not uttered a word during the prolonged and awful agony, cries out to the hostile sky, like the bitter cry *My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* "Father! where are you? do you hear all?" and to the amazement of the boy and his torturers, comes, like a voice from heaven, the shout, "I hear!"

Fearful is the vengeance that Taras Bulba takes on the enemy; fearful is his own death, lashed to a tree, and burned alive by his foes. He dies, merrily roaring defiant taunts at his tormentors. And Gogol himself closes his hero's eyes with the question, "Can any fire, flames, or power be found on earth, which are capable of overpowering Russian strength?"

In its particular class of fiction, *Taras Bulba* has no equal except the Polish trilogy of Sienkiewicz; and Gogol produces the same effect in a small fraction of the space required by the other. This is of course Romanticism rampant, which is one reason why it has not been highly appreciated by the French critics. And it is indeed as contrary to the spirit of Russian fiction as it is to the French spirit of restraint. It stands alone in Russian literature, apart from the regular stream, unique and unapproachable, not so much one of the great Russian novels as a soul-thrilling poem, commemorating the immortal Cossack heart.

Gogol followed up the *Evenings on a Farm near the Dikanka* with two other volumes of stories and sketches, of which the immortal *Taras Bulba* was included in one. These other tales show an astonishing advance in power of conception and mastery of style. I do not share the general enthusiasm for the narrative of the comically grotesque quarrel between the two Ivans: but the three stories, *Old-fashioned Farmers, The Portrait,* and *The Cloak,* show to a high degree that mingling of Fantasy with Reality that is so characteristic of this author. The obsolete old pair of lovers in *Old-fashioned Farmers* is one of the most charming and winsome things that Gogol wrote at this period: it came straight from the depths of his immeasurable tenderness. It appealed to that Pity which, as every one has noticed, is a fundamental attribute of the national Russian character. In *The Portrait,* which is partly written in the minute manner of Balzac, and partly with the imaginative fantastic horror of Poe and Hoffmann, we have the two sides of Gogol's nature clearly reflected. Into this strange story he has also indicated two of the great guiding principles of his life: his intense democratic sympathies, and his devotion to the highest ideals in Art. When the

young painter forsakes poverty and sincerity for wealth and popularity, he steadily degenerates as an artist and eventually loses his soul. The ending of the story, with the disappearance of the portrait, is remarkably clever. The brief tale called *The Cloak* or *The Overcoat* has great significance in the history of Russian fiction, for all Russian novelists have been more or less influenced by it. Its realism is so obviously and emphatically realistic that it becomes exaggeration, but this does not lessen its tremendous power: then suddenly at the very end, it leaves the ground, even the air, and soars away into the ether of Romance.

Although these stories were translated into English by Miss Hapgood over twenty years ago, they have never had any vogue among English-speaking people, and indeed they have produced very little impression anywhere outside of Russia. This is a misfortune for the world, for Gogol was assuredly one of the great literary geniuses of the nineteenth century, and he richly repays attentive reading. In Russia he has been appreciated, immensely respected and admired, from the day that he published his first book; but his lack of reputation abroad is indicated by the remark of Mr. Baring in 1910, “the work of Gogol may be said to be totally unknown in England.” This statement is altogether too sweeping, but it counts as evidence.

Despite Gogol’s undoubted claim to be regarded as the founder of Russian fiction, it is worth remembering that of the three works on which rests his international fame, two cannot possibly be called germinal. The drama *Revizor* is the best comedy in the Russian language; but, partly for that very reason, it produced no school. The romance *Taras Bulba* has no successful follower in Russian literature, and brought forth no fruit anywhere for fifty years, until the appearance of the powerful fiction-chronicles by Sienkiewicz. It has all the fiery ardour of a young genius; its very exaggeration, its delight in bloody battle, show a certain immaturity; it breathes indeed the spirit of youth. With the exception of *The Cloak,* Gogol had by 1840 written little to indicate the direction that the best part of Russian literature was to take. It was not until the publication of *Dead Souls* that Russia had a genuine realistic novel. This book is broad enough in scope and content to serve as the foundation of Russian fiction, and to sustain the wonderful work of Turgenev, Tolstoi, and Dostoevski. All the subsequent great novels in Russia point back to *Dead Souls.*

No two books could possibly show a greater contrast than *Taras Bulba* and *Dead Souls.* One reveals an extraordinary power of condensation: the other an infinite expansion. One deals with heroes and mighty exploits; the other with positively commonplace individuals and the most trivial events. One is the revival of the glorious past; the other a reflection of the sordid present. One is painted with the most brilliant hues of Romanticism, and glows with the essence

of the Romantic spirit--Aspiration; the other looks at life through an achromatic lens, and is a catalogue of Realities. To a certain extent, the difference is the difference between the bubbling energy of youth and the steady energy of middle age. For, although Gogol was still young in years when he composed *Dead Souls,* the decade that separated the two works was for the author a constant progress in disillusion. In the sixth chapter of the latter book, Gogol has himself revealed the sad transformation that had taken place in his own mind, and that made his genius express itself in so different a manner:--

"Once, long ago, in the years of my youth, in those beautiful years that rolled so swiftly, I was full of joy, charmed when I arrived for the first time in an unknown place; it might be a farm, a poor little district town, a large village, a small settlement: my eager, childish eyes always found there many interesting objects. Every building, everything that showed an individual touch, enchanted my mind, and left a vivid impression. . . . To-day I travel through all the obscure villages with profound indifference, and I gaze coldly at their sad and wretched appearance: my eyes linger over no object, nothing grotesque makes me smile: that which formerly made me burst out in a roar of spontaneous laughter, and filled my soul with cheerful animation, now passes before my eyes as though I saw it not, and my mouth, cold and rigid, finds no longer a word to say at the very spectacle which formerly possessed the secret of filling my heart with ecstasy. O my youth! O my fine simplicity!"

Gogol spent the last fifteen years of his life writing this book, and he left it unfinished. Pushkin gave him the subject, as he had for *Revizor.* One day, when the two men were alone together, Pushkin told him, merely as a brief anecdote, of an unscrupulous promoter, who went about buying up the names of dead serfs, thus enabling their owners to escape payment of the taxes which were still in force after the last registration. The names were made over to the new owner, with all legal formalities, so that he apparently possessed a large fortune, measured in slaves; these names the promoter transferred to a remote district, with the intention of obtaining a big cash loan from some bank, giving his fictitious property as security; but he was quickly caught, and his audacious scheme came to nothing. The story stuck in Gogol's mind, and he conceived the idea of a vast novel, in which the travels of the collector of dead souls should serve as a panorama of the Russian people. Both Gogol and Pushkin thought of Ê*Don Quixote,* the spirit of which is evident enough in this book. Not long after their interview, Gogol wrote to Pushkin: "I have begun to write *Dead Souls.* The subject expands into a very long novel, and I think it will be amusing, but now I am only at the third chapter. . . . I wish to show, at least from one point of view, all Russia." Gogol declared that he did not write a single line of these early

chapters without thinking how Pushkin would judge it, at what he would laugh, at what he would applaud., When he read aloud from the manuscript, Pushkin, who had listened with growing seriousness, cried, “God! what a sad country is Russia!” and later be added, “Gogol invents nothing; it is the simple truth, the terrible truth.”

The first part of his work, containing the first eleven chapters, or “songs,” was published in May 1842. For the rest of his life, largely spent abroad, Gogol worked fitfully at the continuation of his masterpiece. Ill health, nervous depression, and morbid asceticism preyed upon his mind; in 1845 he burned all that he had written of the second volume. But he soon began to rewrite it, though he made slow and painful progress, having too much of improductivé slave either to complete it or to be satisfied with it. At Moscow, a short time before his death, in a night of wakeful misery, he burned a whole mass of his manuscripts. Among them was unfortunately the larger portion of the rewritten second part of Dead Souls. Various reasons have been assigned as the cause of the destruction of his book--some have said, it was religious remorse for having written the novel at all; others, rage at adverse criticism; others, his own despair at not having reached ideal perfection. But it seems probable that its burning was simply a mistake. Looking among his papers, a short time after the conflagration, he cried out, “My God! what have I done! that isn’t what I meant to burn!” But whatever the reason, the precious manuscript was forever lost; and the second part of the work remains sadly incomplete, partly written up from rough notes left by the author, Partly supplied by another hand.

Dead Souls is surely a masterpiece, but a masterpiece of life rather than of art. Even apart from its unfinished shape, it is characterised by that formlessness so distinctive of the great Russian novelists the sole exception being Turgenev. The story is so full of disgressions, of remarks in mock apology addressed to the reader, of comparisons of the Russian people with other nations, of general disquisitions on realism, of glowing soliloquies in various moods, that the whole thing is a kind of colossal note-book. Gogol poured into it all his observations, reflections, and comments on life. It is not only a picture of Russia, it is a spiritual autobiography. It is without form, but not void. Gogol called his work a poem; and he could not have found a less happy name. Despite lyrical interludes, it is as far removed from the nature and form of Poetry as it is from Drama. It is a succession of pictures of life, given with the utmost detail, having no connection with each other, and absolutely no crescendo, no movement, no approach to a climax. The only thread that holds the work together is the person of the travelling promoter, Chichikov, whose visits to various communities give the author the opportunity he desired. After one has grasped the plan of the book,

the purpose of Chichikov's mission, which one can do in two minutes, one may read the chapters in any haphazard order. Fortunately they are all interesting in their photographic reality.

The whole thing is conceived in the spirit of humour, and its author must be ranked among the great humorists of all time. There is an absurdity about the mission of the chief character, which gives rise to all sorts of ludicrous situations. It takes time for each serf-owner to comprehend Chichikov's object, and he is naturally regarded with suspicion. In one community it is whispered that he is Napoleon, escaped from St. Helena, and travelling in disguise. An old woman with whom he deals has an avaricious cunning worthy of a Norman peasant. The dialogue between the two is a masterly commentary on the root of all evil. But although all Russia is reflected in a comic mirror, which by its very distortion emphasises the defects of each character, Gogol was not primarily trying to write a funny book. The various scenes at dinner parties and at the country inns are laughable; but Gogol's laughter, like that of most great humorists, is a compound of irony, satire, pathos, tenderness, and moral indignation. The general wretchedness of the serfs, the indifference of their owners to their condition, the pettiness and utter meanness of village gossip, the ridiculous affectations of small-town society, the universal ignorance, stupidity, and dulness--all these are remorselessly revealed in the various bargains made by the hero. And what a hero! A man neither utterly bad nor very good; shrewd rather than intelligent; limited in every way. He is a Russian, but a universal type. No one can travel far in America without meeting scores of Chichikovs: indeed, he is an accurate portrait of the American promoter, of the successful commercial traveller, whose success depends entirely not on the real value and usefulness of his stock-in-trade, but on his knowledge of human nature and the persuasive power of his tongue. Chichikov is all things to all men.

Not content with the constant interpolation of side remarks and comments, queries of a politely ironical nature to the reader, in the regular approved fashion of English novels, Gogol added after the tenth chapter a defiant epilogue, in which he explained his reasons for dealing with fact rather than with fancy, of ordinary people rather than with heroes, of commonplace events rather than with melodrama; and then suddenly he tried to jar the reader out of his self-satisfaction, like Balzac in *Pére Goriot.*

"Pleased with yourselves more than ever, you will smile slowly, and then say with grave deliberation: 'It is true that in some of our provinces one meets very strange people, people absolutely ridiculous, and sometimes scoundrels too!'

"Ah, but who among you, serious readers, I address myself to those who have the humility of the true Christian, who among you, being alone, in the silence of

the evening, at the time when one communes with oneself, will look into the depths of his soul to ask in all sincerity this question? ‘Might there not be in me something of Chichikov?’“

This whole epilogue is a programme--the programme of the self-conscious founder of Russian Realism. It came from a man who had deliberately turned his back on Romanticism, even on the romanticism of his friend and teacher, Pushkin, and who had decided to venture all alone on a new and untried path in Russian literature. He fully realised the difficulties of his task, and the opposition he was bound to encounter. He asks and answers the two familiar questions invariably put to the native realist. The first is, “I have enough trouble in my own life: I see enough misery and stupidity in the world: what is the use of reading about it in novels?” The second is, “Why should a man who loves his country uncover her nakedness?”

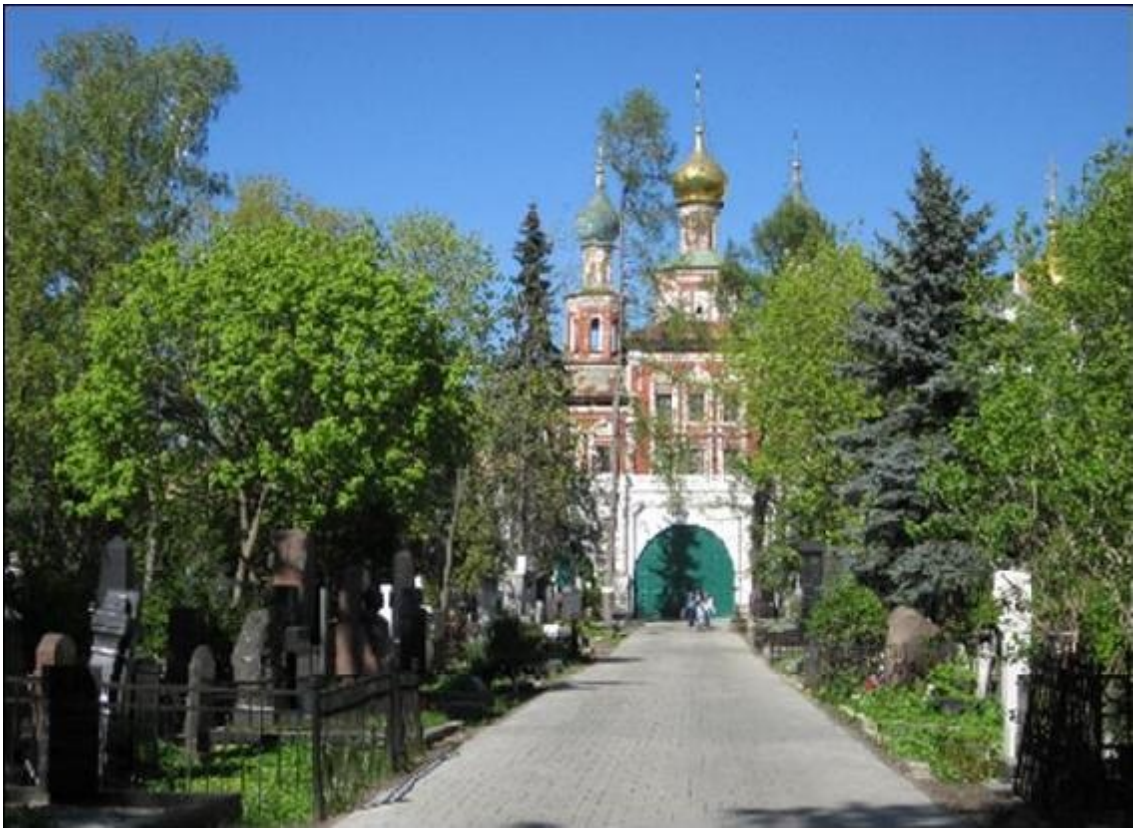
Gogol’s realism differs in two important aspects from the realism of the French school, whether represented by Balzac, Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant, or Zola. He had all the French love of veracity, and could have honestly said with the author of *Une Vie* that he painted *‘humble vérité.* But there are two ground qualities in his realistic method absent in the four Frenchmen: humour and moral force. Gogol could not repress the fun that is so essential an element in human life, any more than he could stop the beating of his heart; he saw men and women with the eyes of a natural born humorist, to whom the utter absurdity of humanity and human relations was enormously salient. And he could not help preaching, because he had boundless sympathy with the weakness and suffering of his fellow-creatures, and because he believed with all the tremendous force of his character in the Christian religion. His main endeavour was to sharpen the sight of his readers, whether they looked without or within; for not even the greatest physician can remedy an evil, unless he knows what the evil is.

Gogol is the great pioneer in Russian fiction. He had the essential temperament of all great pioneers, whether their goal is material or spiritual. He had vital energy, resolute courage, clear vision, and an abiding faith that he was travelling in the right direction. Such a man will have followers even greater than he, and he rightly shares in their glory. He was surpassed by Turgenev, Dostoevski, and Tolstoi, but had he lived, he would have rejoiced in their superior art, just as every great teacher delights in being outstripped by his pupils. He is the real leader of the giant three, and they made of his lonely path a magnificent highway for human thought. They all used him freely: Tolstoi could hardly have written *The Cossacks* without the inspiration of Gogol, Turgenev must have taken the most beautiful chapter in Ê*Virgin Soil* directly from *Old-fashioned Farmers*, and Dostoevski’s first book, *Poor Folk*, is in many places

almost a slavish imitation of *The Cloak*--and he freely acknowledged the debt in the course of his story. The uncompromising attitude toward fidelity in Art which Gogol emphasised in *The Portrait* set the standard for every Russian writer who has attained prominence since his day. No one can read Chekhov and Andreev without being conscious of the hovering spirit of the first master of Russian fiction. He could truthfully have adapted the words of Joseph Hall:--

I first adventure: follow me who list,
And be the second Russian Realist.

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Novodevichy Cemetery, Moscow — Gogol's final resting place

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Gogol's grave

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