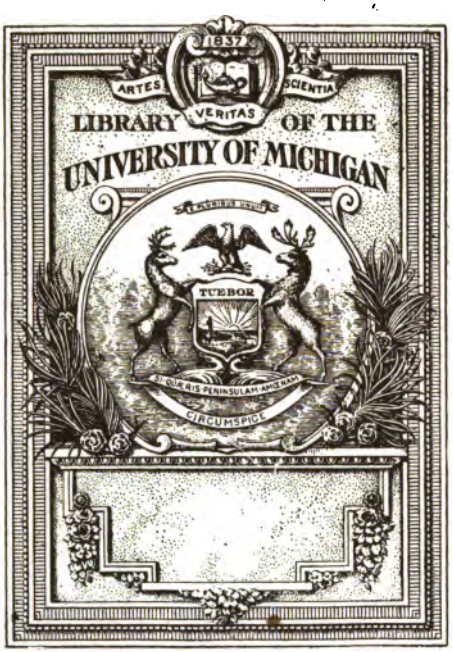
Evenings in Little Russia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EVENINGS IN LITTLE RUSSIA

BY

NIKOLAI GOGOL

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY

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EVENINGS IN LITTLE RUSSIA

CONTENTS.

FOREWORD

NIKOLAI VASILIEVITCH GOGOL was born at the beginning of the Nineteenth century, about 1808 or 1809, in the very heart of the Cossack country, in the village of Pultava. He was of Cossack blood, his grandfather having been connected with the ancient Zaporovian League, which was made up for the most part of outlaws and brigands. The grandfather played an important part in the boy's life. Having reached old age, and being unfit for active service, his mind dwelt freely upon the exploits of his youth, and he became a past master in the art of story telling. The boy never tired of listening to his grandsire. With frequent repetition, as may readily be imagined, the stories became less fact than fiction; folk lore became engrafted upon them—mysterious adventures not easily explainable. Defeat came of the devil's aid; victory of armies of angels. So by easy stages the transition is traceable to the realm

of folk lore and fairy tale, and all the wild imaginings which make the rhymes of Russia unusual and fascinating. Scarcely half a century had passed since the days of the Polish wars, when Ukraine was a battle ground for opposing forces and every free Cossack, a gentleman of the road. Folk lore and fairy tales were current coin of conversation, and the old man never tired of telling them to the boy.

Russian literature is particularly rich in myths. The Greek built his myths out of the natural beauty of the land in which he lived; the Russian built his to console himself for the lack of that same beauty. Wonderful and altogether untranslatable are the folk songs sung today by Slavic fishermen upon the great rivers which are the highways of Russia—songs which for immemorial ages have been the treasured possessions of the Aryan race, and which were born upon the slopes of the Himalayas. This is the source from which Gogol drew the material for his "Evenings in Little Russia." They are memories of his childhood, of his grandfather's stirring manhood, and that free Cossack country which he loved.

These stories were written in his buoyant youth, in his happiest moods, before melancholy dimmed the brightness of his mind; and they are counted today among the gems of literature. In the original, the style is worthy of notice: sparkling, unconstrained and elegant, with a certain air of *bon homie* that wins the heart. He was the first great writer of Russian prose, and the cause of the realistic tendency of modern Russian literature. Dostoyevski's manner of writing is directly traceable to Gogol; his prose is studied as a model of excellence in the schools of his native land, and his witticisms have become household words.

Gogol was not always a writer. Before turning his hand to literature he tried various vocations. He was in turn actor, lecturer in the University of St. Petersburg, and clerk in a government office. That he was destined to be an author is made plain by the fact that in the drudgery of a Russian bureau he could find material for a comedy. "The Inspector General," which found favor with the public and brought him to the notice of the Czar, was based on his experiences while in the employ of the govern-

ment. In fact, the Czar was so pleased with it that he provided Gogol with money to gratify his desire for travel. This comedy has been compared with those of Molièré—wrongly, perhaps, because it lacks the master's lightness of touch; the wit is bitter—harsh—and we feel that beneath the jesting surface lie unfathomed depths of gloom and sadness.

Gogol fell ill, in 1836, of a nervous disease, suffered from mental depression; the mania for travel took possession of him anew. He became feverish, restless; indeed, the *wanderlust* of the nomadic East was in his blood. Thereafter his visits to Russia were brief. He tarried a while in Spain, then journeyed to Rome. There he fell in with a Russian artist, Ivanoff, who had lived for twenty years in a monastery, working upon a sacred picture in honor of Our Lord. From this meeting dates the religious fanaticism of Gogol, which in time became a form of madness. Before his mind became wholly clouded he worked upon the book which he hoped would make him immortal, the subject and plan having been given to him by Pushkin years before. He called it a poem, and divided it into three parts, or songs.

The first section was published in 1842; the second he burned in a moment of frenzy; the fate of the third is unknown.

"Dead Souls," as it was called, was sketched upon a gigantic plan, proposing nothing less than the symbolizing of all Russia, together with its varying social conditions. It is a hideously logical portrayal of life—or is it the intensified vision of a madman's brain? In Russia, it brought down upon him a storm of criticism when the people penetrated to the meaning beneath the jesting surface. The censure and unfriendly feeling reacted upon the writer's sensitive organization, and increased his mental malady. He tried to reinstate himself in popular favor by pledging a happier conclusion when he should finish the poem, but illness and the madness of melancholy came upon him, and the Russian of the "Homeric laugh" was unable to carry out his promise.

Once more the wanderer's impulse came upon him. He felt that he must "set out for the ways beyond." This time his fancy led him to Jerusalem, whose religious atmosphere helped to increase his malady. From Jerusalem he wan-

dered back to Russia, which place he reached ill and penniless, having given away all his possessions to the poor. He did not live long after his return, but died in Moscow, some say in 1853, others in 1856; and there he is buried. His death, of which little notice was taken, is said to have been hastened by fasting and penance, inflicted in moments of frenzy. He died old, at the age of 42 or 43, for he had outlived his popularity. The Czar had long ceased to remember the genial wit who had helped him to forget the cares of state, and was now lavishing his attention upon other favorites. The populace, too, remembered him, not for his fascinating "Evenings," his clever play, or his prose epic, "Taras Bulba," but for that bitter poem, "Dead Souls;" and his grave was unhonored and forgot. Posterity, however, has been kinder to Gogol than were his contemporaries, and today he is numbered among the wits and humorists of the world.

Gogol's characteristics as a writer are those of his race—gloom and subtility. The foreign influences that helped to mold him were the scepticism of France and the paralyzing pessimism of the Orient, whose power was great in Little

Russia in his day. Through him Orientalism crept into Russian literature—something of the luxuriousness of the South, love of light and color—so that we might say that Ukraine is to Russia what Provence is to France.

Sad has been the fate of the brilliant children of Russian Letters and Music—Lermontof, Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoyevski, Tschaikowski—they come across our field of vision, dazzling us for a moment, and then—are gone! They may be likened to the rivers of their native country—those mysterious rivers which steal out of the mists of the North and then slip away again into the shining silence of the South.

E. W. U.
W. H. C.

PREFACE

"WHAT sort of a book is this: Evenings in a Village Near Dikanka? And sent into the world by a keeper of bees!*

"Heaven knows that enough geese have been plucked to make pens, and enough rags have been ground up into paper! And people of all kinds and conditions have daubed their fingers in ink, and here comes along a keeper of bees to stick his in the mess! Truly there will soon be more paper than articles to envelope in it."

My heart anticipated these remarks a month before I published these stories. I wish to say right here that when we farmers stick our noses out into the great world—hey! grandfather! And

*Roudiy Panko, Keeper of Bees, is the pseudonym under which Gogol published these stories. In the original the title reads: "Evenings in a Village Near Dikanka"—which I have replaced by "Evenings in Little Russia."

it's just the same when we enter the drawing room of a noble and the guests crowd around and laugh at our expense. (Not only the tall footman, but the most insignificant time-server, the good-for-nothing who hangs about the stables, takes a hand in the game.) All begin to beat time with their feet and cry out:

"Where are you going? What are you going to do here? Get out, peasant, get out! Ah! I will tell you—but what's the use of telling you? I should have less trouble in going twice a year to Mirgorod (where for five years I have not been to see the rural clerk or the worthy pope) than in showing my head in the great world; for, once there, one is always grieved to be elsewhere, and it is better to pursue the even tenor of one's way.

Among us, dear readers, I have no intention of offending you (perhaps you are even now offended that a keeper of bees should address you so familiarly). Among us, in the country, this is what happens year out, year in: As soon as work in the fields is ended the peasant crouches by his stove the whole winter long; and as for us, we hide our bees in a dark cave. When there

is no longer a bird to be seen in the sky nor a pear on the tree, you are sure to see at the end of the street a little house brightly lighted, whence the noise of laughter and singing may be heard afar; the sharp notes of the *balalaika** ring out, and occasionally the violin rises above the murmur of voices.

These are our *vetchneritsy*.†. They resemble your dancing parties somewhat, yet one could not call them exactly the same. When you go to a dance it is for the sole purpose of exercising your arms and legs; while with us a crowd of young girls gather to work at the spindle and distaff. In the beginning they seem completely absorbed in their work; the wheels keep up a buzzing noise, and not a girl raises her eyes from her work, but just as soon as the *parabki*‡ enter the cottage, a violinist at their head, then there is noise and dancing to deafen you.

But the best of it is when they crowd together in a compact group to play guessing games, or ~~to see who can tell the most impossible story~~.

bad translation

*Balalaika—a three-stringed guitar.
†Vetchneritsy—evenings, soirees.
‡Parabki—plural of Parabok, meaning a gallant, as used here.

Zounds! What do they not tell? What old fables do they not bring to light? But nowhere, I think, did they ever relate such marvelous things as at the "evenings" of Roudiy Panko,* keeper of bees.

Why did they call me Roudiy Panko? I can't tell you. My hair is rather gray than red, but with us country people a nickname clings forever. As soon as evening came they hastened from all directions to the cottage of the keeper of bees, where they took their places around the table, and then all you had to do was to listen.

And I must tell you that the invited guests were not the first comers; they were not simple peasants of the country either; any one of them would have done honor to a far more exalted host than the keeper of bees.

For example, do you know the sacristan of the Church of Dikanka, Foma Grigorievitch? Sh! There was a genius for you! How he could tell a story! You will find a sample of his work in "this" book. He did not wear the canvas cassock usual with village sacristans; and if you

*Roudiy Panko—a man with red hair.

chanced to enter his house of a week day, he always received you in a fine cloth suit the color of potatoes, for which he paid 6 *rubles* a yard in Pultava. No one in our village can say that his boots smelled of tar. Everyone knew that he greased them with fat which many a peasant would be glad to have in his soup. No one can say that he blew his nose upon the skirt of his coat, as is the habit of many of his profession. He always drew from his breast pocket a handkerchief, embroidered all around the edge in red thread, and after having used it, he folded it carefully in a dozen tiny squares and put it back in his pocket.

The second guest—well, he was so learned that he could have filled the office of judge at a moment's notice. When he raised his finger and began to tell a story, looking at his finger the while, the story was so eloquently told that it was good enough to print on the instant. Sometimes his hearers were dumbfounded; they couldn't understand him. Where did he find such words?

In regard to this habit, Foma Grigorievitch told a story. He said that a young man who had

been studying at the house of a sacristan, returned to his father such a fine Latin scholar that he had forgotten his own language. He made every word end in *us*. One day he went with his father to the field, where he saw a rake, and thereupon said: "What do you call that in your language?" Then, accidentally, he stepped upon the teeth of the rake; the father did not have time to answer before the handle struck our Latinist in the face. "Confound that rake!" he exclaimed, rubbing his bruised face. You see he remembered the name, the rascal!

This incident is not quite in the manner of the great stylist. Without saying a word he would arise, spread out his legs, bend his head forward and put one hand into the back pocket of his *caftan*,* which was the color of green peas, whence he produced a round polished snuff box, tapped with his fingers upon the painted face of some Turkish general, and then seized a huge pinch of snuff mixed with powdered lovage, his elbow sharply bent the while; with one long breath he took up the snuff, distaining the aid of his thumb, and all this without uttering a word.

*Caftan—long cloak, like garment or vest.

It was only when he began to fumble in his second pocket and drew out his blue cotton handkerchief that he murmured softly:

"Throwing pearls before swine!"

"A storm is about to burst!" I thought, noticing the fingers* of Foma Grigorievitch. Happily just at that instant a hot pasty was brought upon the table. All fell to, with a will. The hand of Foma Grigorievitch stretched out toward the pasty, and of course everyone praised the cooking.

We had another story teller, too, but he (I ought not speak of him at night time) told such frightful stories that our hair stood straight on end. I didn't like to put them in this book; they might frighten people till they would fear the keeper of bees as if he were an imp.

I intend, if I am permitted to live until another year, to publish another book about the spirits and the wonders of good old times. Among these stories you may perhaps find those which the keeper of bees told to his own little children. If you care to read me and listen to me,

*The thumb bent beneath the index finger is a sign of insult.

I might easily (if it were not for my indolence) gather together enough stories to fill ten volumes.

I see that I have forgotten what I intended to say: when you come to visit me, gentlemen, take the broad road which leads to Dikanka. I placed the name upon the title page to enable you to find our hamlet easily. Of Dikanka, of course, you have heard. You know that the houses are a good deal finer than the cottage of any keeper of bees. As for the public garden, nothing can compare with it; you will not find its equal in St. Petersburg.

Once in Dikanka, say to the first dirty little boy, minding his geese, you meet:

"Where is the home of Roudiy Panko, keeper of bees?"

"Down there," he will answer, pointing in the direction; and if you wish, he will lead you to the door.

Only I beg you not to cross your hands behind your back and play the proud, because, with us, the roads are not so smooth as in front of your palaces.

But once you are our guest we will serve you

melons such as you never ate in all your life. As to honey, I swear to you that you will find none better anywhere. When they bring a comb of it into the room, it exhales a perfume quite impossible to describe; and the honey is as pure as a tear, or those glittering gems encased in gold which beautiful women dangle from their ears.

And what cakes you shall eat! What cakes, if you only knew! And sugar that is sugar! And the butter! it melts upon your lips!

Oh! what good things there are to eat in this world of ours! When one begins to eat, there is never a place to quit; it is pleasure indescribable! For instance, last year—here, here, I am talking too much! But come, come quickly! and you shall eat and eat till you will talk of it to every one you meet.

KEEPER OF BEES, ROUDIY PANKO.

THE FAIR OF SOROTCHINETZ

THE FAIR OF SOROTCHINETZ

CHAPTER I.

AH, the delight and splendor of a summer's day in Little Russia! With what languid warmth the hours are weighted when mid-day bursts silent and burning, and the blue ocean, infinite, limitless, stretched like a shining dome above the earth, seems to sleep, drowned in voluptuousness, while embracing and folding within its ethereal depths the well-belovèd. Not a cloud in the sky; not a voice in the plains. Life has vanished. Only, far above, in the blue vastness of the heavens, trills a sky-lark; and its voice of gold, floating downward through the spaces of air, reaches the amorous earth.

Occasionally the cry of a mew or the sonorous voice of a quail is heard in the steppe. Indolent, indifferent, moving their branches aimlessly, stand the timid oaks. The dazzling flood of solar

light sets on fire picturesquely great masses of trees, while enveloping others in shadows black as night, across which the great winds sweep, making the leaves glitter like yellow gold; the emerald, the topaz, the sapphire of airy insects stream across gardens embroidered and shaded with slender sunflowers. Ricks gray with hay and sheaves of golden wheat stretch out across the plain until they are lost to sight in the distance. The branches of cherry, plum, apple and pear trees bend beneath their burden of fruit. The sky is reflected in the river as in a mirror framed in green—with what voluptuousness and languor does summer begin in Little Russia!

With this same splendor glowed a warm August day in the year eighteen hundred—eighteen hundred—yes, it was some thirty years ago when a stretch of road of some ten versts in length leading to the village of Sorotchinetz was noisy with people hasting to the fair from the surrounding country and the most distant hamlets. From early morning there had been an uninterrupted procession of *Tchoumaks,** their carts laden with salt and fish. Mountains of

*Tchoumaks—peasants.

pottery packed in hay moved slowly as if displeased with their gloomy prison. Occasionally, here and there, a bright colored earthen vessel or a soup tureen peered out conceitedly from the top of an overloaded cart, and aroused tender recollections in the hearts of those given to the pleasures of the table. The passers-by regarded enviously the stately-looking potter who owned all this wealth and who, with dignified step, was walking behind his merchandise, carefully covering its gayety and coquetry with humble hay.

Far behind the others another cart was slowly moving, drawn by weary oxen, and filled with sacks of hemp, linen and other articles suitable for household use. Behind came the proprietor, wearing a white. shirt, which was spotlessly clean, and a pair of dirty breeches. With listless hand he was wiping away the sweat which ran from his face like rain, and dropped from the ends of his mustache, which was already whitened by that pitiless Powderer, who for thousands of summers has come without summons, taking possession alike of the beautiful and the ugly, and sprinkling them all perforce. By his side, tied to the cart, walked a mare whose

timid aspect betrayed her advanced age. Many, especially the young, touched their caps when they passed the peasant. However, it was neither his gray mustache nor his dignified walk which won him these salutations.

Upon the cart was his daughter, a pretty, round-faced girl with black arching brows surmounting clear brown eyes, with smiling rosy lips, her head adorned with red and blue ribbons, which, together with her long braids, a bouquet of field flowers and a handsome crown, made the most ravishing of pictures.

Everything seemed to interest her; everything was strange and new to her, and her pretty eyes kept looking from one object to another. How could she help being interested, going to the fair for the first time? A girl of eighteen, and at the fair for the first time!

But not one of the passers-by could fail to understand the trouble she had in persuading her father to take her with him. Not that he was personally unwilling, but he had to consider her none-too-good-natured stepmother, who led him around as easily as he was leading the old mare which they were going to sell in reward

for her service. The noisy stepmother—but we have forgotten that she, too, was seated upon the top of a cart resplendent in a green cloth jacket, quilted in red, a skirt plaid like a checker board and a bonnet of printed calico, which gave a certain air of importance to her red face, which wore such a repellant look that every one hastened to turn his glance toward the happier one of the young girl.

Before the eyes of our travelers Psiol* was beginning to be visible. They were conscious of its freshness afar, because the heat had been great and wearying. Through the clear, green foliage of poplars and beeches, carelessly scattered about the prairie, appeared patches of cold light; and the beautiful river uncovered the splendor of its argent breast, beside which floated richly the green foliage of trees. Whimsical as a pretty woman at the witching hour, when, before her mirror, jealous of her regal air, her splendid shoulders and marble throat, shaded by the heavy weight of blonde hair, she scornfully throws aside her jewels to replace them by others, and knows no end to her caprices, just so the

*Psiol, name of a river.

river each year changes its course, seeking fresh channels and embracing new and unknown territory. Rows of mills raised upon their heavy wheels huge sheets of water, which they cast off again with force, breaking them into heavy rain and filling the neighborhood with noise and humid dust.

The cart with the travelers whom we know was moving toward the bridge, and the river in all its majestic beauty lay before them like a mighty mirror. The sky, the green and blue forests, the people, the carts laden with pottery, the mills, all turned upside down and floated and walked without falling into the splendid blue depths.

At this magnificent spectacle our beauty became thoughtful and quite forgot to crack between her teeth the sunflower seeds she had been nibbling since her departure, when suddenly the words, "Ah! the pretty girl!" struck her ears.

She turned her head and saw, upon the bridge, a crowd of young men, one of whom, better dressed than the others, wearing a white

*svitka** and cap of gray Astracan, his hands upon his hips, was boldly looking at the passers-by. The girl could not help noticing his face, sun-browned, but expressing sympathy, and his burning glances which seemed to penetrate her thoughts. She lowered her eyes at the idea that perhaps the exclamation referred to her.

"A rich girl!" continued the young man of the white *svitka*, without turning his eyes from her face. "I'd give everything I possess to embrace her. But surely that's the evil one behind her!"

Loud laughter followed this remark. But the gorgeously adorned companion of the husband, who was pursuing his way calmly, did not enjoy the compliment. Her red cheeks grew purple, and a flood of choice epithets rolled out upon the heads of the gay youths.

"May you choke, you good-for-nothing! May mud fall upon the head of your father! May he break his neck upon the ice! And in the next world, may the devil singe his beard!"

"Listen to the insults," said the young man, widening his eyes as if stupefied at such an unexpected explosion of compliments. "I'd

*Svitka is a word of Ukraine, meaning *caftan*.

think the tongue of that aged sorceress would burn to utter such words!"

"Aged!" exclaimed the mature beauty. "Impudence! Go wash your black face! I didn't know your mother, but I'm sure she didn't amount to much; your father wasn't anybody, either. Aged! Just because your nose is still wet with milk."

At this moment the wagon left the bridge and the last words were lost in the air.

But the young man was not satisfied. Without reflecting, he seized a piece of mud and threw it. He aimed better than he knew; the new bonnet of printed calico was quite covered with mud, and the laughter of his merry companions began with fresh force.

The corpulent coquette trembled with anger, but the wagon was now so far away that she turned her vengeance upon her innocent stepdaughter and slow husband, who, long accustomed to such incidents, preserved an obstinate silence and listened with the greatest possible indifference to the angry attack of the furious wife. Despite this silence, her indefatigable tongue did not pause in its mad career till they

entered the outskirts of the town and came to the house of their old friend and comrade, the Cossack Tsyboulia. The greeting between friends who had not met for some time made her forget, for the moment, the disagreeable occurrence, and compelled our travelers to talk of the fair and to rest from their long journey.

Chapter II.

PERHAPS you have chanced to listen to a distant cataract when the troubled country round about was shaken with din and uproar and your ears were filled with a chaos of noises, strange and indistinct, like the passing of a whirlwind. Are you not conscious of an analogous sensation when caught in the whirlwind of a village fair, where the serried ranks of people form a sinuous monster, crying, shrieking, roaring? Uproar, oaths, bellowing, bleating, all mingle in discordant hurly-burly. The cattle, the hay, the zingari, the pottery, the women, the loaves of spiced bread, the bonnets, all shine confusedly and seem to form groups, or stretch out into long lines before your eyes. Voices of differing tones rest one upon the other, and not a word can be seized and saved from the deluge. Not a sentence is uttered distinctly; throughout the fair you can hear the clapping of hands with which merchants celebrate the conclusion of their bargains. A wagon

breaks; iron rattles; planks are thrown noisily upon the ground, and the tired head cannot find a place to rest.

For some time our peasant and his black-browed daughter had been mingling in the crowd. He went up to one wagon, hailed another, compared prices, while his thoughts were busy with the ten sacks of wheat and the old mare which he had brought along to sell. You could see from the expression of the daughter's face that it was nothing short of irksome to her to examine the various wagons of hay and wheat. She would have liked to go down there, where, beneath the tents, red ribbons, earrings, crosses of tin and leather, and pieces of gold for neck-chains, were coquettishly arranged.

However, the scene before her did not lack interest. She was amused to see a gayly dressed gypsy and a peasant shake hands until they cried with pain; a drunken Jew offering drink to a woman; further away two fishermen quarreling and throwing fish at each other's heads; still further away a Muscovite with one hand caressing his beard and with the other——

But just then she felt some one pluck her by

the embroidered sleeve of her chemise. She turned and found herself face to face with the *parabok** of the white *svitka* and eager eyes. She trembled from head to foot, her heart began to beat as she had never felt it beat before, for either joy or grief, a sensation at once strange and delicious; she was unable to take account of what was happening.

"Don't be afraid, little one! Don't be afraid," he said softly, taking her hand. "I will not hurt you."

"It is possible that you will not hurt me," thought the girl, "only it is strange. It may be the evil one. I am perfectly sure that it is not right—yet, I haven't the heart to take my hand away."

The peasant turned about, intending to say something to his daughter, but the word "wheat" was to be heard on all sides. This magic word made him straightway draw near to two traders, who were talking in loud voices, and, his attention being fixed upon them, nothing could disturb him.

Now, this is the conversation that followed:

*Parabok—singular of parabki.

Chapter III.

"THEN you think, comrade, that our wheat isn't going well?" said one whose exterior betokened a merchant of small means from some neighboring market town.

The person to whom this remark was addressed wore a much-mended blue *svitka* and had a swelling on his forehead.

"It isn't a question of thinking! You may put a rope about my neck and dangle me from one of those trees like a Christmas sausage from the middle of a room, if we sell a single bushel of wheat."

"What are you talking about, comrade? There isn't a bushel of wheat put up for sale that is better than ours."

"Say whatever you want to," thought the father of our beauty, who had not lost a word of the conversation; "you can't keep me from having ten sacks in reserve."

"But there's just where the devil takes a hand,

and you can no more depend upon it than upon a hungry Muscovite," continued significantly the man with the swollen forehead.

"What devil?" questioned the man in the duck trousers.

"Haven't you heard what they are saying?" went on the man with the swollen forehead, looking at the others out of the corners of his dull eyes.

"Mn?"

"Mn! The constable. May he never again wet his mustache in plum brandy! The constable has given us such an unlucky place at the fair that we couldn't sell a grain of wheat if we should work ourselves to death. Do you see that old ruined shed down there—'way down there by the mountain?" (Here the curiosity of our beauty's father got the better of him and he became all ears.) "It's in that shed that the devils hold their frolics, and not a single fair has ended without an accident. Just yesterday the clerk passed by, and in the window was a hog's snout, grunting so frightfully that he shivered from head to foot. Every one expects to see the red *svitka* appear again."

"What do you mean by the red *svitka?*"

At this moment, the hair of our attentive listener stood straight on end. He looked behind him with terror and saw—his daughter and the *parabok* calmly embracing and talking of love, in complete forgetfulness of all the *svitkas* in the world.

This sight dissipated his terror and brought him back to his accustomed state of mind.

"Eh! eh! comrade, you get to the embraces pretty quickly! As for me, it was only on the fourth day after our marriage that I embraced Khirria."

The young man understood at once that the father of his sweetheart was not particularly ill-tempered; and he began to cast about for a plan to get his help.

"As for you, my good man, you probably do not recognize me; but I knew you at once."

"It's very possible that you recognized me."

"If you wish, I will tell you your name and business. Your name is Solopi Tcherevik.' '

"That's it, Solopi Tcherevik."

"Now look at me; perhaps you can recognize me."

"No, no; I don't know you; you understand I say it without any offense. In my long life I've seen so many different snouts that only the mind of the evil one could remember them all——"

"It's too bad that you do not remember the son of Holopoupenko."

"Then you are the son of Okhrimo?"

"If I'm not, who is?"

Upon this the two friends recognized each other and the embracing began. However, our son, Holopoupenko, without losing any time, tried to cut short this demonstration.

"Well, well! Solopi, as you see, your daughter and I love each other enough to pass all eternity together."

"Ah, ah! Paraska," said Tcherevik, looking at his daughter and smiling, "perhaps, in fact—in order that—as they say—together—in order that you feed in the same field? Well, well, put it there, son-in-law! Come on, and we'll celebrate the contract!"

And the three soon found themselves in a drinking room, beneath the Jew's tent, in the

midst of bottles of every conceivable size and shape.

"The smart fellow! I'm proud of you!" exclaimed Tcherevik, a trifle tipsy, watching his new son-in-law swallow glass after glass of brandy without flinching, and at last breaking the empty glass upon the table.

"What do you say, Paraska? Look at the fine husband I've chosen for you! Look, look! How bravely he drinks!"

Reeling somewhat, but quite happy, he led his daughter toward their wagon, while our *parabok* betook himself to the shops kept by merchants from Godiatch and Mirgorod, celebrated cities of the province of Poltava, in order to choose, according to the custom, one of the most beautiful wooden pipes decorated with leather, likewise a red flowered foulard and an Astracan cap, as wedding gifts for the father-in-law and the others.

Chapter IV.

"HOW now! Wife! I've found a husband for the girl."

"You've hit upon a fine time to waste in looking for a husband! Fool! fool! Will you never mend your ways? When did you ever see or hear of people in their senses running after husbands at a time like this? Better for you to have busied yourself with selling our wheat. The husband you've found must be of great account. Probably the most miserable of all ragamuffins."

"What a mistake; if you could just see the young man! His *svitka* alone cost more than your green jacket and red boots; and the way he drinks his brandy! May the devil take me, and you, too, if in all my life I have ever seen a *parabok* swallow a pint of brandy without moving an eyebrow!"

"That's just it, a drunken vagabond; just what I expected. I'll bet it's the same villain who attacked us upon the bridge. What a pity

I couldn't lay my hands on him! I'd have arranged it for you!"

"And what difference would it make if it should be the same one, Khivria? Why is he a villain?"

"Why should he be a villain? Oh, brainless head! Do you know what you are saying? Why should he be a villain? Where were your eyes when we were passing the mill, right before him, under his very nose, brown with tobacco, and some one insulted your wife? But that made no difference to you!"

"It makes no difference because I know of nothing to reproach him with. I call him a fine fellow if only because he covered your face for a moment."

"Just what I told you! You never let me say a word. What do you mean by this? You've wasted all your time in drinking, of course, because you have sold nothing."

Our Tcherevik hastened to admit that he had said too much, and hid his head in his hands, suspecting that his irascible companion would not delay planting her conjugal claws in his hair.

"The marriage is all off, I suppose," he

thought while trying to slip away from his wife who was coming toward him; "a fine fellow, and thrown over for nothing! Merciful Father, why did you punish sinners with such a plague? Evils were already numerous enough in the world when you created women!"

Chapter V.

THE young man of the white *svitka* was seated near his wagon, distraitly watching the crowd which was buzzing noisily about him. The sun was sinking toward the horizon after having shone upon morning and midday. The day was fading in the beauty and glory of purple. The white tops of the tents glowed with dazzling brightness beneath a rose-colored light that was scarcely perceptible. The vessels piled upon the tables of the drinking rooms were touched with fire; bottles and glasses were transformed into so many tongues of flame. Mountains of watermelons and citrons seemed molded of gold and bronzed leather. Conversations were becoming noticeably rare and subdued. The weary tongues of merchants, peasants and zingari were growing idle or slow. Here and there fires were being lighted, and the appetizing odor of *galouschki** was diffused through the quiet streets.

"What are you thinking of so sadly, Hirtzko?"

*Galouschki—a dish very popular all through Russia.

said a tall and sun-burned zingari, slapping our young man upon the back. "Come, are you going to let me have those oxen for twenty?"

"You have no mind for anything but oxen; always oxen. Your race think only of gold; to coin it or steal it from honest people."

"Fi, fi! You are really caught this time! or is this vexation because of your engagement?"

"No, that's not my nature; I keep my word; when I say anything I mean it, but that old brigand of a Tcherevik hasn't conscience for a *kopec;* he said 'yes, yes,' and now he takes it back. And yet you can't be angry with him; he's a blockhead, no more, no less, and this is one of the tricks of that old witch of his, whom my friends and I decorated on the bridge. A-h! if I were Czar, or a nobleman, even, I'd hang all the imbeciles who are led around by their wives——"

"Will you let me have the oxen for twenty, if we can make Tcherevik give you Paraska?"

Hirtzko looked at him in astonishment. The sun-burned features of the zingari were at once expressive of evil and cunning, servility and pride; yet a glance was sufficient to understand

that in this strange being dwelt ability, but the ability that on this earth finds one recompense: the gibbet. A mouth quite disappeared between his nose and chin, which latter was sharply pointed and enlivened by a wicked smile; his eyes were small, but sharp as fire; his face was furrowed by the lightning of projects and schemes unceasingly changed. All this seemed to demand a costume as individual and peculiar as the one which, in fact, he wore. A dark brown *caftan* which looked as if the least touch would cause it to fall to dust; long, black, bushy hair falling over his shoulders; pieces of coarse leather fastened to his bare, sun-burned feet; these articles of apparel looked as if soldered to him, so much a part of him they seemed.

"Not for twenty, but for fifteen, you shall have them, if you keep your word," replied the young man without turning his penetrating glance from the other's face.

"For fifteen—that's a bargain! Don't forget,— fifteen. There are five *rubles* earnest. But if you don't keep to your word!"

"Then the earnest is yours."

"Agreed. Put it there!"

Chapter VI.

"THIS way, Aphanasi Ivanovitch. There's a fence. Unfasten the gate, but don't be afraid. That simpleton of mine went off with his comrade to watch the wagons, fearing lest the Muscovites steal something."

In this manner the ill tempered companion of Tcherevik encouraged the *popovitch,** who, after crouching timidly by the fence, climbed up on top and remained standing there, hesitating, like a tall and terrible phantom. After having searched with his eyes for a comfortable place to alight, he ended by falling clumsily among the tall weeds.

"You aren't hurt, are you? You haven't—God forbid—broken your neck?" murmured Khivria, quite anxiously.

"Silence! not at all, not at all, my dearest Khavronia Nikiforovna," said the *popovitch,* in a soft, plaintive voice, while staggering to his feet; "only a few scratches from the nettles,

*Popovitch—son of a Pope, *vitch* meaning "son of."

those viperine plants, as the late protopope said."

"Come in. There's no one here. And here I've been saying to myself that you had been kept away by a boil or the colic. I never see you any more. What's the cause of it? I've heard that the pope, your father, has received a great many gifts lately."

"Nothing, almost nothing, Khavronia Nikiforovna; during all Lent my father has received only fifteen sacks of wheat, four of millet, a hundred or so loaves of bread, and the chickens, all told, wouldn't pass fifty. As for the eggs, part of them were spoiled; but the dearest gift of all I expect from yourself, Khavronia Nikiforovna," continued the *popovitch*, drawing near, looking at her tenderly the while.

"Just look here, Aphanasi Ivanovitch," she said, placing upon the table some plates of *vareniki*,* *galouchelikit* and *toutchenitchki*.‡

"Ah! this was cooked by the hands of the

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*Vareniki—a dish composed of cheese.

†Galoucheliki—a preparation of macaroni.

‡Toutchenitchki—peas ground into meal, then made into a paste and fried.

most skillful of all the daughters of Eve," said the *popovitch,* cutting the *toutchenitchki,* and, at the same time, reaching with his other hand for the dish of *vareniki.* "Yet, Khavronia Nikiforovna, my heart is hungry for other things, far sweeter than *pamponchetcheliki** or *galoucheliki.*"

"I really don't know what else I could offer you, Aphanasi Ivanovitch," replied the corpulent coquette, feiging ignorance.

"Your love, my incomparable Khavronia Nikiforovna," murmured the *popovitch,* holding the *vareniki* with one hand, while with the other he reached toward her waist.

"Heaven only knows what you are thinking of, Aphanasi Ivanovitch!" said Khivria, bashfully, lowering her eyes; "perhaps you're going to try to embrace me!"

"As to that, I'll tell you, so far as I am concerned, in the days when I was at the seminary, I remember just as well as if it were today——"

Just at this moment the barking of dogs was heard in the court and knocks sounded at the

*Pamponchetcheliki—a peculiar but popular Russian dish.

door. Khivria rushed out precipitously and came back quite pale.

"Aphanasi Ivanovitch, we are caught in a trap! A crowd of people are knocking at the door and I recognize our comrade's voice."

The *vareniki* stuck fast in the throat of the *popovitch*—his eyes fairly started from their sockets as if he had suddenly found himself face to face with the dead come back to life.

"Quick! climb up there," whispered Khivria, frightened, pointing to some boards resting upon two rafters just below the ceiling, where was piled a quantity of household articles.

Danger gave strength to our hero. Collecting his scattered senses, he jumped upon the part of the stove which served as a bed, and from there lifted himself upon the boards, while Khivria went with all haste to the door, where the knocks were becoming more frequent and impatient.

Chapter VII.

A STRANGE occurrence took place at the fair.

The report got abroad that somewhere among the merchandise the red *svitka* was to make its appearance.

The old woman who sold *boubliki** thought she saw Satan in the hog that had been rooting beneath the wagons as if in search of something.

The report spread rapidly to all corners of the encampment; and each one would have held it a crime not to give credence to the story, although the seller of *boubliki,* whose movable sales-room was attached to the tent of the wine-seller, had spent the entire day in prayer. To this report were added stories, increasing from

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*Boubliki, pieces of bread baked in the shape of crowns.

mouth to mouth, of the wonder seen by the clerk in the ruined shed, so that when night came, each one drew close to his neighbor. Tranquility vanished, fear kept them from closing their eyes in sleep; and they who naturally were none of the bravest and who had been able to procure shelter for the night, betook themselves to it speedily.

Among the latter must be numbered Tcherevik, his companions and his daughter; and they, reinforced by some comrades who had prayed shelter of them, caused the disturbance which so greatly frightened Khivria.

Tcherevik was already a trifle tipsy. This showed from the fact that he was obliged to make a circle of the court twice before he could find his own door. His guests were in pretty good spirits, and without more ceremony entered the room with the master. The wife of our Tcherevik was on pins and needles when she saw them looking into all the corners.

"Well, mother," called out Tcherevik on entering, "is it the fever that makes you tremble so?"

"Yes, I don't feel very well," replied Khi-

vria, throwing an unquiet glance toward the platform of boards.

"Come, wife, go fetch my bottle from the wagon. We will empty it with these good friends; the confounded women have frightened us so I'm almost ashamed to confess it. For, to be plain, brothers, it was foolish of us to run here," he continued, emptying his earthen pitcher at little swallows. "I'll wager anything the women were just playing a game on us. And suppose it was the devil, what's the devil to us? Smash his face! Just let him dare to stand before me; I'll snap my fingers in his face."

"Then why are you so pale?" said one of the strangers, who posed for brave and towered above the others by a head.

"I? Confound you, you're dreaming."

The guests could not suppress a smile of satisfaction at the words of the bully.

"It is the red *svitka* that has so terrified the people," spoke up another.

The bottle made a tour of the table and helped to increase the gayety of the comrades. Our Tcherevik, whom the red *svitka* had not ceased

to worry, unable to give his curiosity a moment's rest, and drew near to one of the guests.

"Friend, I beg you, tell me the story. I've asked time and again, and have never been able to find out the tale of this cursed *svitka.*"

"Well, friend, these things are best not told at night, but to please you and my friends here, who have an air of interest, here it is—Listen."

He scratched his shoulder, wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his *caftan* and began.

"Once, the reason I don't know, anyway; once a devil was chased out of hell."

"How," interrupted Tcherevik, "is it possible that a devil can be chased out of hell?"

"How do I know? They chased him, and that's all there is about it. Perhaps he was intending to do some good deed and they showed him the door. Then this poor devil was bored to death. What could he do? In despair he began to drink. He dwelt in that ruined shed you have seen near the mountain, where no honest man should pass without protecting himself with the sign of the cross. And this devil was a man dissolute enough to give points to a *parabok.* From

morning till evening he did not move from the drinking room."

At this point Tcherevik gravely interrupted the story teller again.

"What are you saying, friend? How could the devil enter a wine room? Thanks be to God, they are all provided with cloven feet and horns upon their heads."

"Of course! but this one wore gloves and mittens; therefore, it was impossible to recognize him. He drank and drank and drank. At last he drank up all that he possessed. The owner would give him no more credit; he must put an end to his carousing. Then the devil was obliged to pawn his red *svitka* to the Jew who kept the wine room at the fair of Sorotchinetz. He gave it to him and said: 'Guard it well, Jew; one year from today I will call for it.' And he disappeared as if he had fallen into the water. The Jew examined the *svitka* carefully. The cloth was of a quality whose equal could not be found in Mirgorod. The red glowed like flame; after looking at it, it seemed impossible to turn one's eyes away.

"The Jew grew weary of awaiting the expira-

tion of the time. He scratched his ear, thought awhile, and then sold the garment to a traveler for five pieces of gold. But one evening a stranger entered his shop.

" 'Well, Jew, give back my *svitka.*'

"The Jew did not recognize him at first, and when he did, feigned not having seen him.

" 'What *svitka?* I haven't any *svitka.*'

"The other went away. However, toward evening, when the Jew, having closed his shop and counted his money, had thrown a cloth over his head in order to pray to his God, according to the custom of his people, a rustling noise was heard. The Jew looked up. In each window was the snout of a hog——"

As he was uttering these words an indistinct noise was heard like the grunting of a hog. They all grew pale. Drops of sweat stood out on their faces.

"What?" said Tcherevik, terrified.

"Nothing," replied his comrade, trembling from head to foot.

"Nothing!" echoed another of the group.

"It is you who were saying——?"

"I?"

"What? What about——?"

"Heaven knows the cause of all this agitation. There's no reason for it."

They all began to peer timidly over their shoulders and into the corners. Khivria was more dead than alive.

"You're only a pack of women!" she said in a loud voice. "And you call yourselves Cossacks and men! You ought to tend the distaff."

"Some one perhaps is—God forgive me!—Just the creaking of a chair has been enough to make a fool of all of you."

This sally shamed our heroes and obliged them to take courage. The guest emptied his glass and went on with his story:

"The Jew fainted from fright; but the hogs, upon their long legs, which resembled stilts, went through the windows, recalled him speedily to his senses, and by dint of blows bade him jump as high as the ceiling. Then the Jew fell at their feet and confessed all. But the difficulty was to find the *svitka*. Stolen from the traveler by a gypsy, it had been sold again to a merchant. The merchant brought it with him to the fair of

Sorotchinetz, but no one would buy any of his goods.

"The merchant was amazed, but understood at last that it was all because of the red *svitka.* Without reflecting, he threw it into the fire. 'It does not burn; this accursed garment does not burn! Sh!—ah!—it is a gift of the devil.'

"The merchant then tucked it into the wagon of a peasant who had come to sell butter. 'It must be evil hands that gave me that *svitka!*' said he. He seized the hatchet and cut it into pieces. But, behold, the pieces crawled together and the *svitka* was whole again.

"Making the sign of the cross, he tried a second blow with the hatchet, scattered the pieces to the right and to the left, and hastened away. Since then, every year at fair time, the devil, with the snout of a hog, travels over the entire camping ground, grunting and searching for the pieces of his *svitka.* They say that he lacks only the left sleeve. Now, when people pass the place, they make the sign of the cross; and you know for some ten years or more they left off holding the fair here, when an evil genius suggested to the constable of——"

The rest of the sentence remained upon the lips of the speaker; the window was shivered into a thousand pieces and through the broken glass appeared the head of a hog, with frightful rolling eyes, which seemed to say: "What are you doing here, good people?"

Chapter VIII.

THE company were paralyzed with terror. Tcherevik, with mouth wide open, was fairly turned to stone. His eyes stood out like missiles. His hands, with wide-spread fingers, were motionless in the air. The bully of the tall figure, possessed by fear which he could not control, jumped up and hit his head against the boards which were suspended from the rafters. The boards spread apart, and the *popovitch,* with a terrible noise, fell to the floor.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried one of the guests in the desperation of fear, falling down upon a bench, where he sat and waved his arms and legs in the air.

"Help! help!" cried another, covering himself with his *touloupe.**

Tcherevik, aroused from his stupefaction by this fresh uproar, crawled tremblingly on all fours to his wife's skirt. The bully of the tall figure crept into the stove, despite the narrow

*Touloupe, sheep skin.

opening, and closed the door after him; then Tcherevik, seizing an iron pot, clapped it on his head and rushed away like a madman, scarcely touching the earth in his flight. Weariness at length compelled him to slacken his pace. His heart was beating like a millstone. He was covered from head to foot with sweat. Quite exhausted, he was on the point of fainting, when he heard behind him the quick footsteps of a pursuer. Breath failed him.

"The devil! the devil!" he screamed, beside himself, summoning all his strength; and a moment later he fell breathless to the ground.

"The devil! the devil!" screamed some one behind; and for a short time he was conscious of something falling upon him. Then unconsciousness took possession of him again, and like "the terrible lodger in the narrow bier," he remained silent and motionless in the middle of the highway.

Chapter IX.

GETTING up in the middle of the night: "Did you hear?" said a man who had been sleeping in the street. "Some one quite near us called the devil."

"I don't care," growled a gypsy, who was sleeping by his side; "perhaps he was speaking to his parents."

"But he called sharply, as if some one were trying to murder him!"

"Well, what doesn't a man say in his sleep?"

"Have it your way, but I'm going to see about it. Strike a light."

The other, grumbling and finding fault, staggered to his feet, and, after two attempts, struck a light, which threw his figure into relief like a flash of lightning, and after having blown the spark to a good-sized flame, took his *kaganetz** and marched off.

"Stop! there's something on the ground; throw your light this way."

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*Kaganetz, a rough lantern used in Ukraine.

By this time others had joined them.

"What is it, Vlas?"

"I should say it's two men, one on top of the other. Which is the devil?"

"Who is the first one?"

"Why, it's a woman."

"Ah, then she's the evil one."

A burst of laughter aroused the whole street.

"Look, my friends," said another, picking up the iron vessel, half of which only remained upon the head of Tcherevik, "what a fine cap this honest man wears."

The noise and increasing laughter at last recalled our two friends to life. Solopi and his wife were still under the influence of their fright, and with staring eyes were looking timidly at the sunburned faces of the gypsies. By the trembling light of the lantern they resembled a band of hideous gnomes, enveloped in the gloomy subterranean twilight of an endless night.

Chapter X.

THE fresh air of the morning was blowing over awakened Sorotchinetz. Puffs of smoke arose from the chimneys to greet the rising sun. The fair grew animated again. Sheep began to bleat, horses to neigh, and the quacking of geese and the shouts of merchants could be heard throughout the grounds; the stories of the red *svitka* which had struck terror to all hearts during the mysterious hours of darkness were quite forgotten with the coming of the day.

After yawning and stretching, Solopi Tcherevik opened his eyes in the shed where he had been sleeping on the straw beside his partner, in the midst of the cattle and sacks of meal and wheat. He did not seem greatly disposed to rouse himself from his reverie when he heard a voice which was as familiar to him as the refuge of his idleness, the blessed bed of his cottage, or the wine shop of a friend some ten paces from his home.

"Get up! get up!" screamed his tender spouse, pulling him forcible by the arm.

In reply Tcherevik inflated his cheeks and with his fingers simulated the beating of a drum.

"Idiot!" she exclaimed, dodging the hand, which failed to reach her face.

Tcherevik got up, rubbed his eyes and looked about.

"May the evil one take me, my dove, if your mouth didn't make me think of the drum upon which I found myself forced to play the reveille like a haughty Muscovite——"

"Enough, enough! Make haste to sell that mare. It's enough to set every one laughing at us. To come to the fair and not sell a handful of sawdust!"

"What are you saying, woman?" interrupted Solopi; "it's now they are going to laugh at us."

"Hasten, hasten; they will laugh enough without that."

"Well, I know I haven't washed my face," went on Tcherevik, yawning and scratching his back to save time.

"That's just like you; your inclinations always

come at the wrong time. Here, wash your face."

And she seized a small bundle which she quickly threw down in horror. It was the red sleeve of a *svitka!*

"Make haste and attend to your business," she said, summoning her courage when she saw that her husband's knees were knocking together in fear and that his teeth were chattering.

"Now, I'll find a buyer," he murmured, untying the mare and leading her out. "It wasn't without meaning that when I was preparing for this confounded fair I felt a weight as of a devil upon my shoulders. And the cattle twice, of their own will, turned back toward the house! Without counting the fact—and I remember it very well—that we set out for the fair on Monday; that's the cause of all the trouble. And this devil who won't give us any rest! What does he mean by wearing a *svitka* with only one sleeve? He never leaves honest people in peace. Now if, for example, I was a devil (may God forbid!), do you suppose I'd be parading around at night in search of a good-for-nothing rag?"

Here the monologue of our Tcherevik was in-

terrupted by a stern, harsh voice. The gypsy of the tall figure stood before him.

"What have you got to sell, my good fellow?"

Tcherevik was silent. He examined the speaker from top to toe with a tranquil air, without pausing or dropping the bridle.

"Leather straps?" asked the gypsy, looking at the bridle.

"Yes, straps, if a mare resembles straps."

"But, my good fellow, have you fed her on straw?"

"Straw!" And Tcherevik pulled sharply at the bridle to convince the caluminator of his error; but with extraordinary swiftness his hand flew up and hit his chin. He looked, and what did he see? In his hand was the bridle, and attached to it—(his hair stood straight on end)—a bit of the red sleeve of a *svitka!*

He began to stutter, moving his arms wildly and making the sign of the cross; then he fled from this unexpected present and more rapidly than a young man was lost to sight in the crowd.

Chapter XI.

"STOP him! stop him!" screamed several young people, at some little distance away, in one of the narrow streets. Suddenly Tcherevik felt himself seized by vigorous hands.

"Pinion him! He's the one who stole that honest man's horse."

"Heaven bless you, but what do you want to tie me for?"

"Just listen to that question! Why did you steal the horse?"

"Are you mad? When did you ever hear of a man stealing from himself?"

"We know all about that old dodge! Why were you running as if Satan, himself, were after you?"

"Any one would run if a piece of the devil's garment——"

"Ah, my fine jail-bird, just tell that to someone else. The constable will teach you to frighten people with your tricks."

"Arrest him! Arrest him!" This cry resounded from the other end of the street.

"There he is! There he is!"

And before the eyes of our Tcherevik appeared his companion, in the most pitiful condition, his hands tied behind his back.

"What miracles happen now-a-days!" said one. "You should just hear him talk, the wretch! A glance at his face is enough to know he is a thief; and when they asked him why he was running like a madman, he said: 'I was just putting my hand into my pocket for a pinch of snuff, when I pulled out, instead of my snuff box, a bit of that diabolical *svitka* which shone like flame—and then I ran——'"

"Ha! ha! they are two birds of the same feather; tie them together."

Chapter XII.

"YOU don't suppose you really have stolen something, do you?" asked Tcherevik, stretched out upon a bed of straw beside his partner.

"What you you mean? And you, have you stolen something? May my arms and legs be withered if I ever stole anything except cream *vareniki* from my mother, and then I was only ten years old.

"Then, comrade, what's the cause of this calamity? They accuse you of having stolen, too, but what did I ever do to be lied about like this? Stole my own mare!"

"Partner, it was written that bad luck should befall us."

"Alas, for us, poor orphans."

And they both began to sob noisily.

"What's the trouble, Solopi?" said Hirtzko, entering at that moment. "Who arrested you?"

"Ah! Holopoupenko! Holopoupenko!" said Solopi gladly, "there he is, comrade, there he

is; the one I told you about. May I never draw another breath if I didn't see him empty a bottle as big as my head, and without so much as raising an eyebrow."

"Then why didn't you keep your word to such a fine *parabok*?

"As you see," continued Tcherevik, addressing Hirtzko, "God has punished me for my wrong. Forgive me, my good fellow. For you I would do anything; but what can you expect when the devil is loose in the village?"

"I don't hold any ill-will to you, Solopi; I'll untie you, if you want me to."

He signalled to some young people who were guarding the prisoners, and they hastened to free them.

"Now, in return, do your duty; marry us and let the people dance till their legs will ache for a year."

"Right, right! I agree," said Solopi, clapping his hands, "and I already feel as happy as if the Muscovites had stolen my wife. We'll have no more talk about it; today you shall marry, and that's the end of it."

"Remember, Solopi, in just an hour I shall

be at your house; there are people there now waiting to buy your mare and your wheat."

"Have they found the mare?"

"They found her."

Tcherevik was speechless with joy and followed Hirtzko with his eyes as he moved away.

"Well, Hirtzko, did the joke work well?" asked the gypsy of the tall figure; "are the oxen mine?"

"Yours! yours!"

Chapter XIII.

HER pretty little chin resting on her hand, Paraska sat alone in the cottage, thinking. Dreams in great number were flitting about her blonde head. Now and then a smile curled her red lips, and joyful emotion caused her to lift her sombre brows. At other times an expression of annoyance lowered them toward her brown eyes.

"What will happen if what he said does not come to pass?" she murmured, an expression of doubt upon her face. "What will become of me if I don't marry?

"Yes—no—it can't be. My step-mother does everything that comes into her head. Why should'nt I do the same? I can be obstinate, too. How handsome he is! How his black eyes shine! How he says 'My Parasiou!*' He is so handsome in his white *svitka*. He ought to have a finer girdle; of course I could embroider him one when we get to keeping house—I can't think

*Parasiou—diminutive of Paraska.

without joy," she went on, drawing from her bosom a little mirror of folded red paper, which she had bought at the fair, and looking at herself with delight, "I can't think without joy of the day when I shall meet him again.

"I wouldn't salute her for anything in the world. No, you've beaten your step-daughter too many times! The sand will grow green and the oak tree bend like the willow before I bow to you. Ah!—yes—I forgot—I want to try on the bonnet,* even my step-mother's, to see how I look."

She lifted the mirror, bent her head and walked timidly across the chamber, as if she feared falling, seeing beneath her feet, instead of the firm ground, the board platform from which the *popovitch* had dropped, together with the shelves of pottery.

"What a baby I am," she said, laughing; "I'm afraid to take a step!"

She began to keep time with one foot, and as she walked along the more rapid became the rhythm. At last her left hand rested upon her

*Bonnet, worn by married women only.

hip and she began to dance, making the leather of her shoes sound sharply, still holding before her face the mirror and humming her favorite song:

"Little green plant,
Go to sleep quick;
And you, my black-browed love,
Come near to me.
Little green plant,
Sleep soundly, too;
And you, my black-browed love,
Come, quick, to me."

At this instant Tcherevik stuck his head in the door and, seeing his daughter, paused. For some time he smilingly watched this unexpected girlish caprice. But when he heard the well-known air of the song, he placed his hands upon his hips and danced proudly into the room, his cares being quite forgotten.

A loud laugh from his partner made them both tremble.

"Hasten! hasten! your betrothed has come. Bravo! the father and daughter are celebrating the marriage alone!"

At these words Paraska became redder than

the ribbons that held her hair, and the forgetful father remembered why he had come.

"Well, daughter, be quick! Khivria, delighted because I have sold the mare, has gone," he said, looking timidly around, "to buy a skirt and some knick-nacks. We must get through before she comes back."

Scarcely has Paraska crossed the threshold of the cottage when she found herself in the arms of the young man of the white *svitka,* who, with a crowd, was waiting in the street.

"God bless you!" said Tcherevik, joining their hands, "live, united like the flowers of a crown."

Just then there was a disturbance in the crowd.

"I'll die before I'll let it happen!" screamed the wife of Solopi, whom the crowd, with shouts of laughter, were holding back.

"Don't be angry! don't be angry, wife," said Tcherevik, calmly, when he saw that a couple of stout gypsies had hold of her arms. "What's done is done; I never like to break my word."

"No, no! it shall not be!" shrieked Khivria; but no one paid any attention to her. Numberless couples surrounded the newly married pair

and formed about them an impenetrable hedge of dancers.

A strange and unutterable feeling would have taken possession of the spectator had he seen how a single stroke of the fiddle-bow was enough to establish peace and unity in this crowd of people of sentiments the most diverse. Men whose sombre faces seemed never to have been lighted up by a smile, kept time with feet and shoulders. Everyone gave himself over to the spirit of the moment, every one danced. But stranger than all was the sight of the old women, whose ancient faces expressed the indifference of the dead, and who kept bustling about in the midst of laughing, radiant youth.

Indifferent, without any show of joy, without a spark of sympathy, those whom wine impelled just as a mechanic makes his automaton to imitate gestures of life, nodded softly their tipsy heads and danced in the midst of the joyous crowd without so much as a glance at the young people.

Then the noise and the laughter and the singing became more subdued. The sound of the violin grew faint and then died away altogether.

You could hear in the distance the noise of moving feet, like the sound of the distant sea. At last all was silent and deserted.

* * * * * * *

So joy, fickle, heartless guest, runs away, and vainly does a single voice try to express happiness. Its own echo suggests sadness and solitude, and at last silence overpowers it.

So the frolicsome friends of restless, unbridled youth disappear one by one, and leave their old comrade alone.

Weariness takes possession of him, and sadness; and happiness he cannot find.

AN EVENING IN MAY

AN EVENING IN MAY

CHAPTER I.

HANNA.

THE sound of singing rolled like a sonorous river through the streets of the village of X———. It was the hour when, weary with work and the cares of the day, young men and maidens met in noisy groups beneath the splendor of the limpid evening, giving utterance to their happiness in songs that are always touched with melancholy; and the mysterious evening, too, was enveloping the bright day in melancholy, drowning everything in vague distance.

It was already the hour of twilight and the singing had not ceased. His guitar in his hand, the young Cossack, Levko, son of the headman, slipped away from the rest of the singers.

Upon his head was an Astracan cap. He walked along the street making the strings of

the instrument resound beneath his fingers, the while keeping time with his body. Suddenly he stopped before the door of a cottage surrounded by cherry trees. Whose is the cottage? Whose the door? After a short silence he began to play and sing:

"The sun is low and the night draws near,
Come near to me, my own true love."

"But without doubt my beauty of the clear eyes is soundly sleeping," says the Cossack, approaching the window, his song being finished.

"Haliou!* Haliou! Are you sleeping, or unwilling to come to me? You fear, perhaps, lest some one see us, or perhaps you do not wish to expose your little white face to the cold. Don't be afraid; I am alone. The evening is warm, and even if some one should chance upon us, I would cover you with my *svitka;* I would wrap you in my girdle; I would make a screen of my hands so that no one should see you. Even if it were cold, still might you come. I would press you the more closely to my heart; I would warm you with my kisses, and I would spread

*Haliou — diminutive of Hanna; also a term of endearment.

my cap over your little white feet. My soul, my love, my pride! Show yourself, if only for an instant. At least, pass your little white hand through the window. But you are not sleeping, haughty maiden," he continued, raising his voice and speaking in a tone which betrayed anger at her refusal. "You are pleased to make fun of me; good-by!"

Saying this, he turned his back upon the cottage, pulled his cap over one ear and walked proudly away, strumming his guitar.

Just at this moment the wooden latch of the door was lifted, the door opened, with a grating noise, and a young girl in her seventeenth springtime crossed the threshold, her figure enveloped in the gray twilight. She looked timidly around. In the semi-obscurity her clear eyes shone sympathetically, the red coral of her necklace gleamed, and the blush that rose to her cheeks did not escape the eagle eyes of the young man.

"How impatient you are," she said to him in a low voice. "See, you are angry. Why did you choose such an hour? The street is full of people coming and going. I tremble from——"

"No, no! Don't tremble, my sensitive one. Keep close to me," said the young man, clasping her in his arms, after having thrown his guitar, which was hung by a strap, over his shoulder, and seating himself beside her in the door of the cottage. "You know how I dislike being away from you a single hour."

"Do you know what I'm thinking of?" interrupted the girl turning toward him her dream-filled eyes; "something tells me that in the future we shall not see each other often. They are evil, the people hereabout; all the young girls look at you jealously, and the young men—and I know that my mother, for some time, has looked at me sharply. I confess that I was really happier among strangers."

A sorrowful expression passed over his face at these words.

"Scarcely two months have you been in your native country and you are tired of it! Perhaps you are tired of me, too!"

"No, no, not you," she said, with a smile. "I love you, my black-browed Cossack. I love you for your tawny eyes, and when you turn them upon me, something in the depths of my soul

seems to smile. When you walk down the streets, when you sing or play upon your guitar, I love to listen to you."

"Oh! my Halia,*" exclaimed the young man, embracing her and pressing her passionately to his breast.

"Come, come, Levko, that will do; rather tell me if you have spoken to your father."

"What?" he said, as if awakening from a dream, "that we wish to marry? I have told him." But the "I have told him" sounded sadly on his lips.

"Well?"

"What can I do? He played deaf just as he always does. He understands nothing, and scolds me into the bargain and accuses me of running after every one. But don't worry, my Halia; I pledge you the word of a Cossack that I'll have my own way yet."

"But you have only to say the word, Levko, and it will be as you wish. I know from my own experience; sometimes I think I will not yield to you, but at your first word, I do whatever you wish in spite of myself. Look, look," she con-

*Halia—diminutive of Hanna.

tinued, resting her head on the young man's shoulder and raising her eyes to the warm, blue sky of Ukraine, which was veiled by the cherry bushes surrounding them; "look how far, far away we can see the little stars, one, two, three, four, five—are they not God's angels who have opened the windows of their luminous dwelling and are looking down at us? Is it not they who watch this little earth of ours? Ah! if poor mortals only had the wings of birds, it is there they would fly, high, high——. It is frightful to think that not one of our oak trees can touch the sky. They say, however, that somewhere, in some far away land, there is one of these trees whose top reaches heaven, and that it is by means of this tree that God descends to the earth the night preceding Easter."

"No, Halia, God has a long ladder which reaches from earth to heaven. During the night preceding holy Easter the archangels place it in position, and when God puts His foot upon the first rung of the ladder, all the evil spirits rush precipitously away and fall into the burning pit in a mass. That is why at Easter time there is not a single evil spirit on the face of the earth."

"How softly the water moves; as if it were rocking a child to sleep," continued Hanna, pointing to the pond surrounded by black thickets of maples and weeping willows which were bathing their plaintive branches in the water.

The pond, like a weak old man, held in its cold embrace the distant sky, covering with kisses the burning stars which were shedding their pale light in the somber air, as if they divined the coming of the splendid Queen of Night. Near the forest, upon the hill, an old wooden house was sleeping, its shutters carefully closed; moss and wilding weeds covered the roof. Apple trees spread their branches before the windows; the forest enveloping it with shadows gave to the house a dismal and repellant air; a little wood of walnut trees began at the foot of the hill and reached to the edge of the pond.

"I remember as if through a mist of dreams," said Hanna, "that a long, long time ago, when I was still a little girl and lived with my mother, they told me something horrible about this house; you ought to remember the story, Levko; tell it to me."

"Forget the story, my beauty; what do women

and old people not tell? It would worry you uselessly; you would be frightened and unable to sleep tonight."

"Tell me, tell me, my dear, my black-browed *Parabok;*" she said, resting her face against the young man's cheek and slipping her arm around him; "if you don't, it is because you love another. I will not be frightened; I will sleep just as usual. But if you do not tell me the story, I shall not sleep at all. Tell me, Levko."

"They are right who say that a spirit of mischief dwells in young girls, making them inquire into everything. Well, have it your way; listen:

"Once upon a time, my little love, there lived in this house a *sotnik.** Now this *sotnik* had a daughter, a pretty child, as white as snow—white as your own little face. This *sotnik* thought to marry again. 'Will you love me just as before, Father, when you have taken another wife?' 'Yes, my daughter, I will press you closer still to my heart; yes, my daughter, I will give you golden earrings and a far finer necklace.' And the *sotnik* brought home his young wife.

*Sotnik, one who commands a company of 100 Cossacks. The word *sotnik* is exactly equivalent to the Latin derivative *centurion.*

"She was beautiful, this young wife; pink and white was this young wife. But she cast upon the girl a look so fierce that the latter involuntarily uttered a cry; and the whole day long, not once did the cruel stepmother speak to her. Night came and the *sotnik* and his wife sought their chamber. The daughter felt downcast and began to weep. Then she raised her head: a hideous black cat had stealthily crept into the room and reached her side; its fur glowed like fire, and its claws of iron sounded sharply when they touched the floor. Frightened, she jumped upon a bench; the cat followed her, and suddenly it leaped at her neck and tried to strangle her. She seized it with force and threw it upon the floor; again the terrible animal sprang toward her. Filled with rage, she seized a sword that was hanging against the wall and struck wildly with it. The blow severed one of the cat's paws, and the animal, howling with pain, disappeared in the darkness. All the next day the young wife kept to her room. On the third day she left it, but with one hand bandaged. The poor girl understood that her stepmother was a sorceress and that the sword blow had cut off her hand.

"On the fourth day the *sotnik* ordered his daughter to scrub the cottage like a simple peasant maid, and no longer to appear in the room of the mistress. This was cruel for the poor girl, but what could she do? She resigned herself to obey her father's orders. On the fifth day the *sotnik* drove his daughter away from home, not even giving her a morsel of bread for the journey. Then only did she burst into tears, covering her white face with her hands. 'You have ruined me, Father, me, your own daughter,' she cried, 'and the sorceress will destroy your soul. May God forgive you! As for me, I have nothing more to do in this world.'

"Down there, can you see plainly?" (here Levko turned toward Hanna and pointed with his finger to the house); "look on this side, below the house, the highest hill by the pond; it was from that hill that the young girl jumped into the water and gave up this world of ours."

"And the sorceress?" interrupted Hanna, anxiously, looking at the young man, her eyes filled with tears.

"The sorceress? The old women say that since then all who have been drowned leave the

pond when the nights are bright, and go to the garden of the *sotnik* to warm themselves in the light of the moon. And the maiden leads the funeral train. One night she saw her stepmother beside the pond; she fell upon her and dragged her beneath the water; but the sorceress played a last trick upon her. At the bottom of the pond she transformed herself into one of the drowned, and thus was enabled to escape the blows of the water reeds which they were ready to inflict upon her. And there are many other stories which the women tell. For example, they say that each night the young girl reviews the company of the drowned, scanning sharply the face of each, in order to recognize the one who is her stepmother. But as yet her efforts have been vain; and whomsoever she meets she compels to aid her in the search, threatening death in case of refusal.

"So, now, my Halia, you know the story. The present owner of the house intends to turn it into a distillery; with that idea in mind, he sent a distiller here—But I hear voices; our friends are coming back from the dance. Good night, Halia! Rest in peace, and don't think of these old wives' tales."

After saying this, he clasped her tightly in his arms and went away.

"Good night, Levko," said Hanna, without turning her dream-filled eyes from the sombre forest.

The great yellow moon, like a ball of fire, was rising majestically above the horizon; a tiny edge was still hidden from sight; but the broad landscape was bathed in a serene glow. The pond burst into numberless sparkles of light; the shadows of the trees were beginning to be sharply outlined upon the somber verdure.

"Good night, Hanna!" and the words which sounded behind her were accompanied by a kiss.

"Here you are back again," she said, turning around, but seeing a stranger before her, she started back.

"Good night, Hanna!" The words rang out again, and again some one kissed her cheek.

"Who can it be?" she exclaimed in anger.

"Good night, dear Hanna!" and kisses rained upon her from all sides.

"There's a legion of them!" exclaimed Hanna, extricating herself from the crowd of young people who were trying to embrace her. "Haven't

you had enough of this? Soon it will be unsafe to show ourselves in the street."

After saying this the door closed quickly, and the grating of the lock was plainly audible.

Chapter II.

THE HEADMAN.

HAVE you seen the nights of Little Russia?* No, No; you have not seen the nights of Little Russia. Behold! From the middle of the heaven the moon looks down; the vast dome stretches out and seems more measureless even than by day; it seems to breathe, to glow with life. The whole earth is bathed in silver light; the air, wonderfully pure, is fresh, and, at the same time, it is weighted with languor, and gradually becomes a veritable ocean of perfumes. Divine night! Enchanting night! Motionless and pensive the forests stand filled with darkness, throwing huge black shadows upon the landscape. Silent and motionless are the ponds; night and cold are gloomily imprisoned within the somber green walls of gardens. A row of fruit trees pensively extend their roots into the cold water; at times the leaves murmur as if in a tremor of anger, when the

*This description is one of the most famous passages in all Russian literature.

wind, gay libertine of the night, steals upon them and surprises a kiss.

The earth sleeps, but above, high up in the heaven, all is life, splendid, triumphant; and to the soul come Titanic dreams; visions, silver bright, rise harmoniously from its depths. Divine night! Enchanting night! Suddenly everything becomes animated: the forests, the ponds, the steppe. The majestic song of the nightingale of Little Russia bursts upon the silence and the moon pauses in her journey across the heaven to listen.

Upon the hill the village sleeps as if enchanted. The outlines of the cottages gleam sharply white in the moonlight; more sharply stand out their low, black walls against the night. The singers have ended their songs, and all is silence. Honest people have long been asleep. However, here and there some narrow window rattles. Or within an occasional doorway a belated family are taking their evening meal.

"But the *Hopak** isn't danced this way. No, no, this isn't right; what did my friend say?

*Hopak—National dance of Ukraine.

Come on! hop tra la la, hop tra la la, hop, hop, hop."

Thus talked to himself, a peasant of ripe age, somewhat tipsy, while traversing the street.

"Has he lost his senses? thinks he's a young man; an old bear like him dancing in the street for the amusement of the children!" exclaimed an old woman who passed, carrying an armful of straw. "Get home, it's time you were abed."

"I'm going," said the peasant, stopping; "I'm going. The headman can't boss me. What does he take me for? Because he ordered cold water thrown upon some people who were frozen, he thinks he can put on airs. Headman! headman! why, I'm my own headman. May the devil take me if I'm not my own headman. Everybody knows I am, everybody!" he continued, approaching the first cottage he came to and stopping at the window, where he groped about with his fingers in search of the catch.

"Woman, open! woman, quick! Some one is speaking to you. Open! It is time for the Cossack to sleep."

"Where are you going, Kalenik? Haven't you made a mistake in the door?" cried out from

the middle of the street some young girls returning from their dancing. "We'll show you your cottage."

"All right, my dears."

"His dears! do you hear?" exclaimed one of them. "How amiable he is, this Kalenik! He deserves to be shown the way home. No, no; dance first."

"Dance! And you, you little mischief," said Kalenik, in a sweetly plaintive voice, shaking his finger at them; and laughing and beating time upon his legs he went on: "Won't you let me kiss you? I will kiss you all, all——"

And staggering, he set out in pursuit of them. The young girls began to scream and ran away, falling headlong, one over the other; but presently they took courage, seeing he was not firm upon his feet, and they crossed to the other side of the street.

"There's your house," they called to him, pointing to a house somewhat larger than the others, which belonged to the headman of the village.

Kalenik obediently followed the given direc-

tion, while beginning again to heap imprecations upon the headman.

But who is this headman who has provoked expressions so little flattering? Oh, this headman is an important personage. Before Kalenik reaches the end of his journey we shall undoubtedly have time to introduce him.

All the men of the village touch their caps when they meet him, and the young girls save for him their most gracious greetings. Who would not like to be the headman? He has free entry into every cottage, and the most unruly peasant stands humbly with uncovered head while the fat fingers of the headman fumble in his tobacco pouch. At the meeting of the *mir*,* although his power is limited by the majority, he never fails to take the upper hand and carry things his own way. Serious, with scowling brows, the headman is greedy of his words.

A long time ago, yes, a very long time ago, when the great Czarina Catherine—of blessed memory—made her journey to the Crimea, he was chosen to escort her. For two whole days this honor was his, and he was even shown the

*Mir, assembly of the heads of families of a village.

unusual distinction of sitting in the seat of the imperial coachman. Since that time the headman has learned to bow his head with an important and absorbed air, caressing his long mustachios the while, and casting falcon-like glances about. And since then, whatever the subject of conversation, he is sure to find means to bring it back to the time he conducted the Czarina and had a seat upon the imperial carriage.

Sometimes the headman likes to play deaf, especially when he hears that to which he would not willingly listen. The headman is not fond of fashionable attire; he wears invariably a black *svitka* of home weave, encircled by a colored girdle of wool; and no one ever saw him wear anything else except when he accompanied the Czarina to the Crimea, when he put on the *caftan* of a Cossack. And there is small likelihood that any one in the village remembers that time. As for the *caftan,* he has it still, in his trunk, under lock and key.

The headman is old, but a kinswoman lives with him, who keeps the house, scrubs the floor, whitewashes the cottage and weaves the linen for his shirts. Some say in the village that she

isn't his kinswoman; but we have seen already that the headman has enemies who would gladly scatter slanderous tales.

However, a certain weight is given to these stories by the fact that the kinswoman cannot conceal her displeasure when the headman enters the field where harvest women are busy at their hay-making, or the house of a Cossack who has a handsome daughter.

The headman is blind in one eye, but the remaining eye is as sharp as that of a ferret, and he can see a pretty village girl at a great distance; however, he never fixes his eye upon a pretty girl without being assured that his kinswoman is out of sight and hearing.

We have now said almost all there is to say on the subject of the headman, and tipsy Kalenik is not yet half way home. For a long time he continued to heap upon the headman the chosen epithets which could be born only under his tipsy tongue.

Chapter III.

AN UNEXPECTED RIVAL—THE CONSPIRACY.

"NO, friends, no; I do not wish it. Enough nonsense! Everything must have an end. They think of us now only too much as rattle-brained fellows! Let's go to bed!"

Thus spoke Levko to his companions who were trying to entice him into fresh escapades.

"Farewell, fellows. Good night." And he walked away rapidly.

"My Hanna, is she sleeping?" he thought, approaching the cottage which we know beneath the cherry trees.

The silence was suddenly broken by the sound of words exchanged in low voices. Levko listened. The white of a chemise* was visible through the trees.

"What can that mean?" he thought; and slipping up, he concealed himself behind the trunk of a tree.

*Chemise. The chemise is worn by the men of Ukraine in the manner of a blouse.

By the light of the moon the face of a girl was plainly visible.

"It's Hanna! But who is that man whose face I cannot see?"

In vain did he strain his eyes. Shadow enveloped the unknown from head to foot. The shoulders alone were visible, while the least movement on the part of Levko would have exposed his position as eavesdropper. Leaning noiselessly against the tree, he determined to await developments. The girl pronounced his name distinctly:

"Levko?"

"Levko is only a youngster," said the harsh voice of the tall man. "If I ever catch him here I'll box his ears."

"I'd like to see the rascal who thinks he can box my ears," said Levko to himself; and he bent his head forward in order not to lose a word; but the unknown continued to speak in a voice so low that it was impossible for him to hear.

"You are not ashamed, then!" exclaimed Hanna, after her interlocutor was silent. "You lie, you deceive me, you do not love me; I know that you never loved me!"

"I understand," went on the man of the tall figure; "Levko has told you a lot of trash that has turned your head."

This time it seemed to the young man that the voice was not altogether unknown to him; that he had heard it somewhere.

"I'll take care of your Levko," continued the stranger. "He thinks I don't know all his tricks. I'll teach him the color of my fists."

On hearing these words, Levko could no longer restrain his anger. Rushing out from his hiding place, he raised his arm to administer a blow that would fell the stranger, but at that moment a ray of moonlight fell upon the face of the man of the tall figure, and Levko was as if petrified—his father stood before him.

A backward motion of the head and a soft whistle alone expressed his stupefaction. The rustling of a dress gave evidence of the fact that Hanna had disappeared.

"Good by, Hanna!" called a young man coming up suddenly and opening his arms as if to follow her, when, horror of horrors, he found confronting him the fierce mustachios of the headman.

"Good night, Hanna!" called out other young men, clasping the headman about the neck.

"The devil take you all!" howled the headman, struggling to free himself and stamping his feet in rage. "What Hanna do you take me for? Go take your father's places on the gallows, you sons of the evil one! You are like flies about the honey. I'll find Hannas for you!"

"The headman! It is the headman!" exclaimed the young men, dispersing quickly in all directions.

"Look at my father!" said Levko, who had slowly regained his senses and was following with his eyes the headman who was walking away cursing his luck. "What a rascal he is! And I couldn't understand why he played deaf when I spoke of my love! You just wait, old fellow, and I'll teach you to run after other peoples' sweethearts.

"Ha, ha, ha! boys," called Levko, signalling to his friends who had come back. "Come quickly; I told you a little while ago to go to bed, but since I have reflected I am ready to keep up the jollification the rest of the night."

"All right," answered one who was tall and

broad of shoulders and passed for the leader of the band. "I lose my appetite when I don't have a night out once in a while. I feel as if I had lost something; my cup, my pipe. In a word, I am no longer a Cossack."

"Are you ready to play a trick on the headman?"

"Yes, the headman. What's he got in his head? He not only treats us as slaves, but thinks all our girls belong to him. There probably isn't a single pretty girl in the village whom he hasn't pursued."

"True, true!" cried the others with one voice.

"We are not of the same blood that he is. Thanks be to God we are free Cossacks. Comrades, let us show him that we are still free Cossacks!"

"We'll show him!" exclaimed the young men, "and if we settle our indebtedness with the headman, we mustn't forget the clerk."

"The clerk shall not be forgotten. I've a song against the headman ready for the occasion. On the way I'll teach it to you," said Levko, fingering the strings of his guitar. "Let each one disguise himself as best he can."

"Hold your head erect, my Cossack," said one robust scamp, hitting his feet together and keeping time with his hands. "What fun! What liberty! When you begin to have a revel, it seems like the good old times. It is good for your free heart, and your soul is as if in paradise. Heigho, companions! Let's be merry!"

The crowd rushed noisily down the street, and honest old women, aroused from their slumber, opened their windows, the while making the sign of the cross with sleepy hands, and murmuring: "It's only the *parabki* out for a lark."

CHAPTER IV.

THE PARABKI ENJOY THEMSELVES.

A LIGHT is still burning in one house at the end of the street. It is the headman's dwelling. The headman has long since finished his supper, and without doubt would be sleeping soundly now, if it had not been for a friend, the distiller, who had been sent to oversee the distillery by the *Pomiestchik*,* who owned a small track of land among the free Cossacks.

Just beneath the *ikons*† in the place of honor, was seated the friend, a short man with little, laughing eyes in which shone the pleasure he felt in smoking his short pipe, spitting every instant and knocking off the ashes from the top. The cloud of smoke which was spreading around his head enveloped him in a grayish mist. One might have likened him to the large chimney flue of a distillery which, becoming

*Pomiestchik—Lord of the manor. Small landowner.
†Ikons—little statues of the Gods.

weary of its watch upon the roof, had taken it into its head to run away and find a comfortable seat at the headman's table. Beneath his nose stood out short, bristling mustachios which could be seen only occasionally, and then indistinctly through the smoke, so that they resembled a mouse which the distiller had caught and was holding in his mouth to the detriment of the monopoly of the household cat.

The headman, as master of the house, was dressed simply, in a shirt and a pair of duck trousers. His eagle eye, like a setting sun, was beginning to droop and grow dull. At the end of the table one of the tithing men of the village, who helped to compose the guard of the headman, was smoking his pipe. In deference to his superior, he wore the *svitka.*

"Do you intend to go about your distillery right away?" said the headman, addressing the distiller and making the sign of the cross in front of his yawning mouth.

"God helping me, I hope to have it in working order by Autumn. By Pakrov, I'll bet our headman will be walking zigzag in the streets.

To be truthful, he will describe the German cross with his feet."

At these words the eyes of the distiller disappeared completely and gave place to horizontal wrinkles which extended from ear to ear; his huge body was shaken with laughter, and his good-natured lips, for a moment, gave up their grasp upon the pipe.

"God grant it may be so," said the headman, whose face expressed something that suggested a smile. "To-day there are few distilleries hereabouts, but in olden times when I accompanied the Czarina upon the journey to Pereiaslav, now Bezborodko——"

"At the time you are speaking of, comrade! Then from Krementchoug to Romen there were scarcely two distilleries to be seen, while, on the other hand to-day——Have you heard what the confounded Germans have invented? Soon, it appears, they will no longer distil with wood like honest Christians, but with an invention of the devil—steam!"

While pronouncing these words, the distiller fixed his eyes upon his hands, which were resting on the table.

"With steam? Well, that's something I can't understand!"

"What imbeciles these Germans are!" said the headman. "They ought to be flogged, the dogs! Who ever heard of boiling anything with steam? Why, you couldn't put a spoonful of soup in your mouth without burning yourself, just as a pig does with hot milk."

"And you," interrupted the kinswoman from her seat upon the stove, "are you going to live here all the time without your wife?"

"Eh! what do I need her for? It would make a difference if she was good for anything."

"Isn't she pretty?" questioned the headman, fixing him with his eye.

"Pretty? Homely as they make them; her face is a mass of wrinkles; looks like an empty purse."

And the rough bass voice of the distiller was raised in another laugh.

Suddenly a noise was heard at the door; it opened and a peasant entered without removing his cap, and stood quite still in the center of the room, as if absorbed in his own reflections. It was our acquaintance, Kalenik.

"Here I am at home," he said, sitting down upon a bench near the door, without paying the slightest attention to the people present. "Some imp has stretched the road out; I walked and walked and walked till I thought my legs would break. Wife, find my *touloupe* and spread it over me. How my legs ache! Give it to me; there it is under the *ikons*. Take care, don't overturn my tobacco; or better, don't touch it! Don't touch it! You may be drunk to-day; let it alone; I'll find it myself."

Kalenik made an effort to get up, but an irresistible force held him to the bench.

"*He* doesn't take any liberties!" said the headman. "Here he is in another man's house, giving orders as if he were at home! Put him out, quick!"

"Leave him, brother," said the distiller, grasping his hand. "He's a precious man for us; the more there are like him the more our distillery will prosper."

However, it was not because of goodness of heart that he expressed himself thus; the distiller was superstitious; he believed it a bad omen to drive away a new comer.

"And how will it be when old age comes?" groaned Kalenik, stretching himself out upon the bench. "I could get along some way, if I were drunk. I! But I'm not drunk; no, no, not I. Why should I lie? I'm ready to swear it before the headman, himself. But what do I care for the headman? May he break his neck, the dog! May a cart run over the one-eyed devil! Just because he threw cold water on some people who were freezing."

"Ha! ha! ha! Let a hog into the house, and straightway he puts his snout upon the table," said the headman in wrath. But just then a stone came through the window, shattering it into bits, and fell at the headman's feet. The headman jumped back.

"If I knew," he said, picking up the stone, "what escaped jail-bird threw that, I'd teach him a thing or two. What a piece of knavery!" he continued, the while examining the projectile with a disheartened look. "May this stone stop his breath."

"Hold on! hold on, brother! God keep you," interrupted the distiller, growing pale; "God

keep you in this world and the next from accomplishing such a wish!"

"Oh, you're going to stand up for him, too, are you? I hope he'll break his neck!"

"Far from you be such a thought. You probably never heard what happened to my deceased mother-in-law. Yes, to my mother-in-law. One evening, a trifle later than now, they were supping: deceased mother-in-law, deceased father-in-law, a servant and a half dozen children. My mother-in-law had turned the *galouschki* from a huge kettle into a plate to cool. This being done, we were all very hungry and unwilling to wait and began to eat at once. Suddenly there came—heaven only knows from whence—a man and asked a place at table. Who can refuse a hungry man? They gave him a dish, but he swallowed *galouschki* just as a cow does hay. Before the others had emptied their first plates he was back for a second one, and the bottom of his plate was as clean as the floor of a church. My mother-in-law filled it again. She thought that now, having appeased his hunger, he would proceed more slowly. Not at all, not at all. He ate faster than ever. 'May the *galous-*

chki strangle you,' thought my mother-in-law. Then, all of a sudden, he swallowed a mouthful the wrong way, and fell down upon the floor. They left the table and rushed to him. Life was extinct! He had died of strangulation."

"But he didn't steal it, the glutton!" exclaimed the headman.

"Stolen or not, after that evening my mother-in-law couldn't rest. Just as soon as the night came, the dead man stood before her; he seated himself, horse-back fashion, upon the chimney, holding the *galouschki* between his teeth. During the day all went well; not a trace of him; but just as soon as the darkness came—look at the roof; he bestrides the chimney, the wretch!"

"And the *galouschki* between his teeth?"

"The *galouschki* between his teeth."

"Strange, brother, strange; I heard something similar myself about my deceased——"

But the headman stopped short in his story. Some one rattled the window and the beat of dancing feet could be heard outside upon the ground. Then the soft strumming of a guitar and the murmured notes of a song came to their

ears. The guitar was struck sharply, and voices began to sing:

"Our headman is one-eyed and gray,
Old, and a fool to boot;
A despot and an old roué—
He smiles on all the pretty girls,
And treads on the toes of the *parabki!*
We ought to put you in a box,
Pull out your mustache and beat you good,
And snatch you baldheaded once for all,
Once for all!"

"A pretty song, brother!" said the distiller, cocking his head on one side, and turning toward the headman a look of astonishment at such audacity, "very pretty, only it doesn't speak of the headman in quite proper terms."

He rested his hands upon the table, a look of tender sympathy in his eyes, and prepared to listen to the rest of the song, for beneath the window resounded cries of "Again! Again! More, more!"

Meanwhile a close observer would have realized that it was not stupefaction that held the headman in his chair.

Thus, an old experienced tom-cat sometimes lets a little mouse frisk about his tail, while preparing a plan to cut off retreat.

The solitary eye of the headman was still fixed upon the window while his hand, after having signalled to the tithing man, had grasped the wooden door latch. Suddenly in the street shouting was heard.

The distiller, who, to other characteristics, added an overweening curiosity, jammed some tobacco into his pipe and rushed out of doors, but the frolicsome youths had already disappeared.

"No, you'll not get away this time," shouted the headman, who was pulling along by the arm an individual enveloped in a black *touloupe*, made with the wool side in.

Profiting by this incident, the distiller hastened to get a glimpse of the countenance of the mischief-maker, but he stepped back affrighted at the sight of the long beard and painted face.

"No! you'll not get away this time!" declared the headman, dragging along the prisoner, who made as little resistance as if he were entering his own house.

"Korpo, open the prison door," said the headman, "we'll shut him in the dark room, and then we'll go and wake up the clerk; we'll get the tith-

ing men together; we'll make a clean sweep of the guilty ones and settle their cases to-day."

The tithing man jingled the padlock awhile, and then opened the prison door.

Just then the prisoner, profiting by the darkness of the vestibule, freed himself with remarkable agility.

"Halt!" roared the headman, grabbing him by the collar.

"Let me alone! It's I!" piped up a shrill treble voice.

"All to no purpose, boy! All to no purpose! No use in crying like a woman," and he pushed him into the dark room with such force that the poor prisoner fell groaning to the floor.

The headman, accompanied by the tithing man, left the house and betook themselves to the dwelling of the clerk; while, bringing up the rear, smoking like a steamboat, came the distiller. They were walking along in this manner, each quite absorbed in his own thoughts, when suddenly, on turning the corner of a narrow street, they all gave vent to a cry of surprise at the sight that met their eyes. A similar cry answered them. The headman, winking his one eye nervously,

perceived that the clerk and two tithing men were confronting him.

"I was just going to see you, master clerk."

"And I was on my way to see your honor."

"Strange things are happening, master clerk!"

"Strange, indeed, master headman!"

"Eh! What is——"

"The young men have let themselves loose to-night. They are running the streets, turning everything upside down; and they are singing of your Honor in words that—it makes me blush to repeat. Even a Muscovite would hesitate to roll them under his impure tongue!"

This speech was delivered hurriedly by the lean clerk, who was arrayed in a pair of broad-falls and a wine-colored waistcoat from which his long neck advanced and retreated turtle-like.

"However, the leader didn't escape me. He's singing his little song right now in the room made for malefactors. I tried to find out who he is, but his face is as black as the devil's when he forges nails for the damned."

"How was he dressed, master clerk?"

"In a black *touloupe,* made wool side in—the dog, master headman!"

"Are you telling the truth, master clerk? The one whom you think you have arrested is at the present time shut in my prison."

"No, master headman; it's you who are mistaken—I intend no offense."

While talking, they had been directing their steps toward the headman's house.

"Bring a light; we'll see about this."

The light was brought. They opened the door and the headman gave vent to an exclamation of amazement at sight of his kinswoman.

"Tell me," she said, "have you lost the few brains you used to have? Did you have a grain of sense in your noddle when you pushed me into that room? Wonder I didn't hit my head against the iron bench. Didn't I say to you, 'It's I! It's I!' which didn't have the slightest effect upon you, you good-for-nothing bear; but you seized me with your great claws and threw me in. May the evil one take your soul!"

She uttered the last words from behind the street door.

"Yes, now I see very clearly that it is you," said the headman, coming to himself.

"What do you say, master clerk; are they not a set of blackguards?"

"A veritable set of blackguards, master headman!"

"Is it not time to teach these villains to attend to their own affairs?"

"High time, master headman."

"These idiots who have dared to put their—the mischief! I thought I heard my kinswoman's cries in the street. These idiots have taken it into their heads that I am their equal; they mistake me for a simple Cossack."

A slight cough and a glance cast stealthily around gave the impression that now the headman was getting ready to say something important.

"In the year one thousand—(these confounded dates I can never recall, anyway, the year isn't important)—an order was given to the superintendent of police, Ledatchy, to choose from the Cossacks the one who was intelligent above all others. Oh!" (this "Oh" was uttered by the headman while raising his finger mysteriously) "the most intelligent to accompany the Czarina. I then——"

"Of course—of course—every one knows that you merited the favor of the Czarina. Now confess that I am right and that you had told a little white lie in saying that you had arrested a villain in a black *touloupe,* made wool side in."

"As for the imp in the black *touloupe,* I'll put him in chains and beat him soundly. They must understand what is meant by authority. Whence does the headman get his authority if not from the Czar? Afterwards we'll see to the others. I haven't forgotten how these same imps turned the pigs into my kitchen garden and destroyed my cabbages and cucumbers. I haven't forgotten how they refused to thresh my wheat; I haven't forgotten—but let them sweat awhile; first, I'll find out who this wretch in the black *touloupe* is. Now, all we've got to do is to see your prisoner." And the little band again left the house.

"This is certainly a fine how-d'ye-do," said the distiller, whose cheeks, during this interview, were constantly covered with smoke, like a place of siege, and whose lips, abandoning, temporarily, the short pipe, gave out a volume of fire; "it wouldn't be a bad idea to keep a man like that

within shot of the distillery, or to suspend him from a tree like a censor."

This seemed rather fine wit to the distiller, who, without waiting for a sign from the others, hastened to pay his tribute of laughter.

At this moment they reached a little house which had almost fallen into ruin. The curiosity of our little band increased. They hastened to the door. The clerk took out the key and tried to put it in the lock, but it was the key to his trunk. Their impatience redoubled. Plunging his hand into his pocket again, he began to search for the key.

"Here it is; the key!" he exclaimed, drawing the right one from the depths of the large pocket with which his trousers were provided.

At these words the hearts of our heroes seemed to be combined into one enormous heart which beat so loudly that not even the noise of the lock could drown its tumult. The door opened —the headman became white as linen; the distiller shivered from top to toe, and felt that his hair was lifting him toward heaven. Terror was legible in the face of the clerk. The tithing men were as if nailed to their places, and quite unable

to close their gaping mouths; the kinswoman again stood before them. She, too, none the less stupefied, at last summoned courage to approach them.

"Stop!" howled the savage voice of the headman, and he shut the door upon her. "My friends, it is Satan himself!" he continued. "Bring fire, quick; fire! I'll not hesitate because this is the treasury! Burn it! Burn it!"

The kinswoman, hearing the cruel sentence, shrieked in terror behind the door.

"What are you doing, brothers?" said the distiller. "Soul of my body; your hair is white as snow and you haven't sense enough to know that witches can't be destroyed by ordinary fire? The fire from my pipe, alone, could roast the evil one. You just wait; I'm going to settle this."

Then he placed a coal from his pipe upon the straw and bent down to blow it to a flame. Despair gave courage to the poor kinswoman, and she put all her strength into imploring mercy and in reasoning with them.

"Wait, friends; stop a bit! What's the good of uselessly burdening yourself with a crime?"

"Perhaps it isn't Satan," said the clerk. "If

she—that is the person who is within—consents to make the sign of the cross, it will be positive proof that she is not an instrument of the devil."

This idea met with approval.

"Get thee behind me, Satan,"* said the clerk, applying his mouth to the keyhole; "if you do not move from your place, we will open the door."

The door was opened.

"Make the sign of the cross," said the headman, looking around for a place of refuge, in case of danger.

The kinswoman obeyed.

"Heaven have mercy upon us; it's really my kinswoman!"

"Mother, what infernal power dragged you here, into this infernal prison?"

And the old woman, sobbing, told how the young men had seized her in the street, and despite her resistance, pushed her through the window of the cell, fastening the shutters behind her.

The clerk, after examining the window, declared her statement to be true.

"This is a fine state of affairs, you one-eyed

*The *vade retro* used in exorcising evil spirits.

imp," she screamed, darting toward the headman, who managed to keep out of reach, and looked at her the while steadfastly with his remaining eye. "I know what you had in your mind; you were very glad of an excuse to be rid of me, so you'd be free to chase after the girls without any one to remind you how an old, gray-haired man looks playing the gallant! I know all about it; get out, get out! I'm long suffering, but beware of the end!'"

Saying this, she shook her fist in his face, then walked rapidly away, leaving the headman as if turned to stone.

"No, I was right in the first place; the evil spirit dwells within her," he thought in anger, scratching his neck.

"We've got him," exclaimed the tithing men who came up just then.

"What?" demanded the headman.

"The devil in the black *touloupe*."

"Bring him here!" hallooed the headman, grasping for the prisoner's hands.

"Are you mad? That's drunken Kalenik!"

"Not at all; we captured him ourselves, master headman," answered the tithing men. "Those

impish boys surrounded us in the streets and began to dance and pull at our coats—may they be condemned!"

"And how did they substitute this witch?"

"Heaven knows!"

"By my honor, and the honor of the *mir*, which I represent, I command you to seize at once all who are about the streets and bring them to me for punishment."

"Master headman," begged some of them, bending as low as his feet, "you would spare us if you had seen their faces! May God punish us if ever in our lives, since the day we were baptised, we have seen such fearful faces! An accident befalls easily, master headman! A person can be so frightened that he can never recover."

"I'll cure you all of these frights! What! You refuse to obey? You stand in with them, do you? You rebel, do you? What does this mean; I say, what does it mean? You help in the disorder? I'll make my report to the superintendent of police at once. I'll make it—courage—get away from here as fast as your legs can carry you. In order that you——"

All had disappeared.

Chapter V.

THE DROWNED MAIDEN.

WITHOUT being in the least disturbed or worried about those who had been sent in pursuit of him, the one who was responsible for all of this trouble was slowly taking his way toward the old house by the pond. It seems quite useless to say that it was Levko. His black *touloupe* was unfastened; his cap was in his hand, and sweat was dripping from his forehead.

Gloomy and majestic the forests presented their shadowy blackness to the moon, while motionless the pond gave forth a breath of freshness to the weary walker. There was calmness everywhere. In the depths of a thicket a nightingale trilled its song. Drowsiness irresistibly weighed down the Cossack's eyelids. His tired limbs relaxed and his head fell forward.

"No, I might go to sleep," he said jumping up and rubbing his eyes.

He looked about. The beauty of the night grew still more fairy-like. A strange delicious light was superadded to the splendor of the moon. Never before had he seen such a spectacle. Silver mist fell all about him. The perfume of flowering fruit trees and blossoming night plants filled the air. Dazed, he looked at the sleeping waters of the pond. The old manorhouse, turned upside down in this magic mirror, looked serene and majestic. Instead of being barred with somber shutters, the doors and windows stood wide open; and through them could be seen the gilded interior.

And behold, he seemed to see a window open.

A white arm appeared first, soon followed by a charming little head with clear, sweet eyes shining through a mass of dull, gold hair.

She rests her elbows upon the window sill; and he sees—she gently shakes her head; she moves her hands; she smiles—his heart beats rapidly—the water trembles and she closes the window.

He gently moved away from the pond, the while carefully observing the house; the gloomy

shutters were open; the window glass sparkled in the moonlight.

"Now this is all the faith you can place in peoples' stories," he thought. "The house is quite new; the colors are as bright as if they were painted yesterday. It is inhabited." And silently he drew nearer to it. But within the house all was calm.

The dazzling song of the nightingale rang out sonorously; and when it seemed to die away in passionate languor and abandon, he could hear a cricket brushing through the grass, or the chuck of a marsh bird striking its polished beak against the mirror-like surface of the water. Peace and joy took possession of his heart.

He tuned his guitar and then sang to its accompaniment:

"O moon, little moon,
And you, too, pale dawn,
Throw your light down there
Where my dear one sleeps."

The window opened and the same fair face whose likeness he had seen reflected in the pond looked out, listening attentively to his singing. "What a wonderful face! How lovely!"

Levko trembled.

"Sing to me, my young Cossack!" she said, inclining her head to one side, her long lashes completely hiding her eyes.

"What song shall I sing, my radiant one?"

Tears filled her eyes and flowed softly down over her cheeks.

"*Parabok,*" she said; and there was something inexpressibly touching in the tones of her voice. "*Parabok,* find my stepmother for me. I will refuse you nothing; I will reward you generously, generously. I have silken broidered cuffs; I have coral necklaces. I will give you a girdle studded with gems. I have gold—*Parabok,* find my stepmother for me. She is a sorceress; because of her I can find no rest upon the earth. She tortures me. She forces me to work like a simple *moujitchka.** Look at my face; she has changed the color of my cheeks by her wicked witchery. Look at my white neck; the blue marks were made by her iron claws and can never be effaced, never, never. Look at my white feet; they have walked and walked, but

*Moujitchka—peasant maid.

not upon carpets; upon the burning sand, upon the wet ground, upon stones have they walked! And my eyes; look at my eyes! They are dimmed with tears. Find her, *Parabok;* find my stepmother!"

Her voice which, during this recital had grown shrill, now fell away to silence. Tears dropped upon her pale face; and a feeling of sorrow and pity oppressed the heart of the young man.

"I am ready to do anything for you, my beauty; but how, where, shall I find her?"

"Look, look," she said quickly; "she is there; she is passing along the bank with my maidens; she is warming herself in the light of the moon —but she is malicious and cunning. She has transformed herself into one of the drowned maidens; but I know, I feel that she is there. She oppresses me; stifles me; because of her I cannot swim freely and lightly as a bird. I plunge and fall to the bottom like lead. Find her, *Parabok!*"

Levko looked toward the bank. In the silver mist floated maidens light as shadows, clad in white chemises, reminding him of a prairie

strewn with lilies of the valley. Collars of gold sparkled on their necks; but they were pale; their bodies were formed of diaphanous mist, and were penetrated by the silver light that fell from the silent moon.

In their dancing they drew near to him, and he could hear their voices.

"Come on, let's play crow. Let's play crow!" they murmured like the rushes on the shore, in the calm of evening when caressed by the ethereal wings of the wind.

"Who'll be the crow?"

They drew lots, and a young girl stepped forth from the circle. Levko looked at her. Her face, her garments were not unlike the others. But it was evident that she played her part badly. The rest darted away to escape the attacks of the rapacious enemy.

"No, I don't like to be the crow," said the young girl, exhausted. "I can't bear to carry off the poor little chickens.',

"You aren't the sorceress," thought Levko.

"Who will be the crow?"

The maidens formed their circle anew in order to draw lots.

"I'll be the crow," said one stepping forth.

Levko looked at her sharply. Swiftly and eagerly she pursued the band of maidens, darting to left and right to seize her victim. Then Levko noticed that her body was not as transparent as the bodies of the others. Within he could see something black. Suddenly a cry was heard. The crow had seized one of the drowned maidens, and Levko thought he saw her claws while her face shone with cruel joy.

"The sorceress!" he exclaimed, pointing toward her and turning toward the house.

The young girls laughed joyously, and the maidens dragged from their midst the one who played the crow.

"How can I repay you, *Parabok?* I know it is not gold you wish. You love Hanna; but your cruel father keeps you from marrying her. Henceforth, he shall not stand in your way. Take this note and give it to him."

She stretched her little white hand toward him; her face shone with marvelous beauty. With an indefinable shiver and anxious beating of the heart, Levko took the note and—awoke.

Chapter VI.

THE WAKING.

"WAS I dreaming?" said Levko to himself, getting up. "Yet it was all so vivid; so real. Strange! Strange!" he repeated, looking around.

The moon which was shining directly above his head indicated midnight. Silence reigned supreme. Cold and dampness arose from the pond upon whose bank the old house stood sadly, its shutters firmly closed. Moss and wilding weeds bore witness to its long abandonment. He stretched out his hand, which had been cramped during his sleep, and a cry of surprise escaped him when he saw that it held a note.

"Oh, if I could only read!" he thought, turning it upside down. Just then he heard a noise behind him.

"Courage! Grab him! Why are you afraid? We are three and he is alone, and not a devil, either."

Thus spake the headman to his companions,

and Levko felt himself seized by hands that trembled with fear.

"Take off that mask, my friend; you have frightened people long enough," said the headman, grabbing him by the collar and starting back amazed, when he fixed his eye upon him.

"Levko, my son!" he went on, casting a look of surprise around and letting his arms fall limply by his side. "It's you, you dog! And I was saying: 'Who is the wretch, the devil of the black *touloupe* who plays these pranks?' And here it is you! May your father choke when he swallows his next spoonful of soup! You are the one who finds amusement in turning the town upside down and in writing songs! Ha! ha! ha! Levko! What's got into you? Your back itches, doesn't it? Tie him!"

"Wait, father; I was told to deliver this note to you," said Levko.

"Notes won't make any difference, my jailbird. Tie him!"

"Wait, master headman," interrupted the clerk, unfolding the paper; "it is the writing of the superintendent of police."

"The superintendent of police?"

"The superintendent of police?" repeated mechanically the tithing men.

"From the superintendent of police; strange! I can't understand it," thought Levko.

"Read, read," said the headman, "what can he have to say—the superintendent of police?"

"Listen," said the distiller, grasping his pipe between his teeth and striking a match.

The clerk cleared his throat and read:

To the headman, Yevtoukh Mokogouenko:

It has come to our knowledge that you, old imbecile, instead of sending in the back taxes and watching carefully over the order of the village, lose your head and commit all sorts of follies.

"But—pardon me; I don't understand."

The clerk began to read again.

To the headman, Yevtoukh Mokogouenko:

It has come to our knowledge that you, old imbe——

"Enough! enough! It is useless!" exclaimed the headman. "Although I heard nothing of it, I know very well that all that is only the preamble. Read on."

Therefore, I command you to see that your son, Levko, marries a young girl of your village, called Hanna Petrytchenko; likewise, I command you to repair the bridges along the highway; and if, on my

arrival, this order has not been executed, it is you whom I shall blame.

(Signed)

KOZMA DERKATCH-DRICHPONOUSKI,
Supt. of Police

"There! just hear," said the headman, his mouth wide open. "Hear, hear! all these orders —and the headman must answer for them. Now see that you obey me; obey me without a word! If you don't, then look out! As for you," he continued, addressing Levko, "although it's very strange that the affair got to his ears—I'll marry you. Only you shall have a taste of the knout first; you know the one that hangs on the wall by the *ikons*. You shall have a flogging to-morrow. Where did you get this note?"

Levko, despite his surprise at the turn affairs had taken, had the good sense to conceal the real origin of the note.

"Yesterday evening I went to the village, where I met the superintendent of police just as he was getting out of his carriage. When he learned that I lived in the village, he gave me this note and told me to tell my father that he would dine with him on his return."

"He told you that?"

"He told me that."

"Do you hear?" said the headman with great dignity addressing his companions. "The superintendent in person will visit us; that is to say, he will dine with me! Oh!" and the headman raised his index finger and inclined his head to one side as if he were listening to the superintendent of police.

"Consider—the superintendent will come to my house! What do you think of it, master clerk? And you, friend? That's no small honor, is it? Just as far back as I can remember, such a thing never happened before.

"Well, there are headman and headman," declared he, strutting with pride; his mouth contracted, and sometimes like a sad, harsh laugh, more resembling the growling of distant thunder, came from his lips.

"What do you think, master clerk, in honor of such a guest ought not each household to contribute something—a pullet, linen, something —hey?"

"Of course, of course; master headman."

"And when will the wedding be?" asked Levko.

"The wedding? I'll give you a wedding! In honor of a guest of such importance, the pope shall marry you tomorrow. Get out, you imp! The superintendent shall see what is meant by obedience! And now, children, it's high time to go to bed. Go home, every one of you; the happenings of this night recall to me the time when I"—

At these words, the headman gave the significant glance we know so well.

"Come on. The headman is going to tell how he escorted the Czarina," said Levko, and he gayly hastened away to the house beneath the cherry trees,

"May God give you the Kingdom of Heaven, sweet maiden," he thought. "May happiness smile upon you in the other world among the holy angels! I will tell no one the miraculous intervention of this night. To you, alone, Halia, I will tell it. You, alone, will give faith to my story, and pray for the repose of the drowned maiden."

He approached the cottage. The window was open. The moonlight inundated the room, and shone full upon the sleeping Hanna. Her head

was resting on her hand; her cheeks were softly red; her lips moved, murmuring the name of Levko.

"Sleep on, my beauty! Dream of all that is best in the world; but all your dreams cannot equal our waking."

And after having made the sign of the cross in the warm night air, he closed the window and went noiselessly away.

In a short time the village was peacefully sleeping, while the marvelous moon was still floating on her way through that immense desert, the splendid sky of Ukraine.

The same majesty and solemnity brooded over the steppe, and the night, the divine night, was melting away in splendor. The earth was no less lovely beneath the flood of silver light, but there was no one to admire it.

Everything was plunged in sleep. At rare intervals the silence was broken by the barking of dogs, and for a long time the drunken Kalenik wandered through the empty streets searching for his home.

MID-SUMMER EVENING

MID-SUMMER EVENING

A TRUE STORY

TOLD BY THE SACRISTAN OF THE CHURCH OF X—

FOMA Grigorievitch had a peculiarity; he didn't like to tell the same story twice. If, occasionally, by dint of much beseeching, he decided to repeat a story, you may be sure that he added something new, or transformed it in such a way that the stories bore no resemblance to each other.

One day, one of these men (whom we simple people hardly know how to designate: are they writers or scribblers? but any way they resemble the buffoons at the fair, who beg, grab and filch material, here and there and everywhere, in order later to deal it out in a small folio)—now one of these men learned the following story from Foma Grigorievitch, who afterward forgot it himself:

But behold there had just arrived from Pultava a young fellow whose *caftan* was the color of new peas, and whom I have told you of before; perhaps you, too, have heard his story; he brought with him a little book and showed it to us, opening it at random.

Foma Grigorievitch hastened to get his glasses, then, remembering that he had forgotten to fasten them with a bit of string and wax, he passed the book on to me. I being able to read tolerably well and having as yet no need of glasses, began in a loud voice. Scarcely had I read two pages when Foma plucked me by the arm.

"Wait a minute! What are you reading about?"

I confess I was amazed by the question. "What am I reading, Foma Grigorievitch? Why, your own story, of course; your very words."

"Who told you that those were my words?"

"There can't be any doubt of it; it is printed here. *Told by the sacristan of X———*"

"Smash his face, the man who printed that! He lies, the Muscovite! Do you suppose I would

have told a story in that way? I must have had a spider in my head. Listen—I'll tell it to you just as it is."

We drew near to the table, and he began:

"My grandfather (God rest his soul! May he eat—in the other world—only good white bread and honey cakes)—my grandfather knew how to tell a story. He was not like those talkers of to-day who try to impose upon you and drag out their stories beneath an oily tongue, so that you want to grab your cap and run away. My old mother was living then; and well do I remember how in the long winter evenings the frost crackled on the walls and the narrow windows of our cottage; she was sitting at her spinning, with one hand drawing out the long thread, with the other, giving an occasional touch to the cradle, and humming a song which sounds in my ears to this day. The room was lighted by a rude lantern which trembled constantly, once in a while sending up a bright light, as if fear impelled it; the spinning wheel kept up its buzzing noise; and we children gathered together in a little group, listened to grandfather

who, because of his great age, had not left his place upon the stove* for five years, or more.

"Wonderful as were his stories of the olden time about the invasion of the Zaporogues, the Poles, the heroic deeds of Podkova, of Sagaidatchmy†, none interested us like the legends that made us shiver from head to foot, and our hair stand straight upright. Sometimes, such fear took possession of us that when evening came, we saw a demon in the simplest article of furniture. When I was obliged to leave the house after dark I kept thinking to myself: 'I hope a ghost will not sleep in my bed while I'm gone.' And may I die if I didn't mistake my *svitka* which was hanging at the head of the bed for a shriveled imp! But what was especially remarkable in grandfather's stories was that never in his whole life had he told a lie, and whatever he related had really happened.

"It is one of these extraordinary stories that I am going to tell you now. I know that

*The stove used in Russian cottages is very large, and a part of its surface is sufficiently cool to be used as a bed.

†Leader of the Zaporogues.

there are many thinkers, public writers, who know how to read profane literature, but who are quite at sea if you put into their hands a simple breviary* and ask them to read it. They make fun of everything you tell them. Just let me tell you how widespread unbelief is! Would you believe (God and the Holy Virgin deny me if I speak an untruth!) that one day I was talking of sorcerers before some people, and there was a wretch present who didn't believe in them!

"Yes, I speak the truth when I say that I have met several of those unbelievers in my lifetime, who would rather lie than take a pinch of snuff. They, of course, are not afraid of sorcerers, but just let arise before them—I tremble to say what—any way, it's foolish to talk of such people.

"'A long time ago, more than a hundred years ago,' said my deceased grandfather, 'no one could have recognized this village of ours; the most poverty-stricken of hamlets! A handful of white-washed cottages badly protected from

*Religious books, and all books of devotion, breviaries, etc., are written in old Slavic characters.

the cold were scattered over the fields. There were neither hedges nor sheds to offer our cattle a sufficient protection against the winter; and it was the wealthy who lived in these dwellings, too; the poor! a hole in the ground, that was their dwelling!

"'Only by the smoke could you discern the habitation of a human being. You ask me why, this state of things existed? It was not altogether because of poverty, because in those days all were free Cossacks, and accustomed to appropriating the property of strangers whenever they found it, but because in those unsettled times it was useless to build better dwellings. Then every vigorous man was a "gentleman of the road." Tartars, Poles, Lithuanians, preyed upon one another. No one could even predict what would happen next!

"'Then there came often to this hamlet a man, or rather a devil in the guise of a man. Where did he come from? Why did he come? No one knows. He caroused, he got drunk; then he disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him, and no one heard of him. Suddenly he appeared again, as if he had fallen from the

heaven, and frequented the village streets, no trace of which can be found to-day. He gathered together the Cossacks whom he had met upon his way, and then there was laughter and singing; he scattered money and brandy about like water! He laid siege to the young girls with presents: ribbons, ear-rings, golden necklaces, what not! But I must admit that the girls hesitated to accept his presents. Who knows? perhaps they came from the hand of the evil one.

"'In these days my grandfather's aunt kept a wine shop where Basavriouk drank, and she said that not for anything in the world would she accept the slightest present from him. And yet, how could you help accepting when Basavriouk drew together his thick brows and shot out such a glance from beneath, that you would gladly have been a thousand miles away; but if a woman permitted herself to be tempted and took a present, that very night some creature from the nether world, with horns upon his head, came to visit her, and tried to strangle her if there chanced to be a golden necklace about her neck, or to bite her finger if adorned with a ring, or pull her hair, if tied with a ribbon.

" 'In this village there was a church dedicated to St. Pantelei. The priest, Father Athanasius —of blessed memory—noting that Basavriouk never came to church Easter Sunday, chided him and imposed penance.

" ' "Listen," growled Basavriouk, in response, "attend to your own affairs instead of other people's, or I'll sprinkle you with boiling water."

" 'What would you do with such a wretch? Father Athanasius contented himself by declaring that any one who had anything to do with Basavriouk should be considered an enemy of the church and all human kind.

" 'Now in this same village, at the house of a Cossack named Korje, there lived a domestic called Orphan Peter, who remembered neither his father nor his mother. To be sure the church warden had said that they died of the plague the year following Peter's birth, but my great-aunt discredited the story, and by dint of much prying into other people's affairs, found parents for Peter on all sides, although Peter, himself, had as little interest in the matter as in last year's bird nests.

" 'She declared that Peter's father was still

living among the Zaporogues, that he had been taken prisoner by the Turks and escaped only by means of a miracle. But what mattered Peter's parents? The question was of small consequence to the young girls. They only said that if a young fellow wore a new *caftan,* a crimson sash about his hips, and on his head an Astracan cap with a blue velvet top, and carried a pipe gay with arabesques, and a Turkish scimiter, he could outdo all the men of the village; but it was Peter's misfortune to be poor and to own only a gray *caftan* as full of holes as a Jew's pocket of pence. And yet poverty is not an irreparable misfortune. But Peter was in love with a Cossack maiden. My great-aunt said—(and you know—begging your pardon—that it would be easier for a woman to embrace Satan, himself, than to admit that another woman is beautiful)—my great-aunt said that the cheeks of this Cossack maiden were the color of the scarlet poppy, when, wet with the morning dew, it spreads wide its petals and coquettes with the sun; she likened the long lashes which shaded the limpid eyes to the silk thread which the young girls buy of traveling Muscovites,

and use to fasten their crosses and other ornaments. Her mouth, which the young men could never look at without longing, seemed made to echo the song of the nightingale. Her hair, black as the plumage of the crow and soft as linen (in those days young girls did not confine their hair in braids; it floated over their shoulders unconfined, and was entwined with scarlet ribbons), her hair fell in ringlets over her gold-broidered *kountouche,** and may I never sing a single alleluja if I didn't want to embrace her myself, despite the white hairs that are creeping into the old forest that covers my head, and my wife who never lets me out of her sight.

" 'Now, when a young man and maiden live side by side, you know what happens. Often in the dawn they discovered the print of the little red shoes of Pidarca in the place where she had been talking with Peter. However, Korje would have had no suspicion of the state of affairs had it not fallen out that one day (probably the evil spirit impelled him), Peter, losing his head planted a resounding kiss on the red lips of the

*Kountouche—a sort of braided mantel lined with fur. This garment is not worn in Ukraine to-day.

young girl, and very likely that same evil spirit (may the dog see the holy cross in a dream!) impelled the father to open the door that very instant. Korje, amazed, his mouth wide open, leaned against the door for support. That unfortunate kiss seemed to bewilder him; it echoed in his ears with the resonance of thunder.

" 'Then, coming to his senses, he took down from the wall a knout which had belonged to his grandfather and began to belabor the back of poor Peter, when, on a sudden, Ivos, the little brother of Pidarca, came running into the room, clasped his father by the leg and began to cry: "Father! Father! Don't strike Peter!" What could he do? A father's heart is not made of stone. After having placed the knout in its old position against the wall, Korje gently lead Peter to the door:

" ' "If you ever show yourself in my house again, or even under my windows, you will run the risk of losing your fine black mustache," he said.

" 'And the force that accompanied these words put Peter out of doors without his so much as touching the threshold. Thus ended the kissing.

" 'Sorrow took possession of our turtle doves. About this time they began to say in the village that a certain Pole was calling frequently at the house of Korje. He was embroidered from head to foot with gold, mustached, with saber, spurs, and pockets that jingled like the box in which our sacristan takes up the contribution of a Sunday. We all know why a man visits the house of a father who has a handsome, black-browed daughter.

" 'Well, at length a day came when Pidarca, in tears, took her little brother, Ivos, in her arms and said to him:

" ' "Ivos, my love! Ivos, my sweet one! fly to Peter like an arrow and tell him what is going on; tell him that I will always love his brown eyes, his white face, but that destiny has forbidden him to me. I have moistened more than one handkerchief with my burning tears, grief lies heavy on my heart, and my own father has become my enemy; he commands me to marry a Pole whom I cannot love. Tell him that even now preparations are going on for my wedding, only there will be no music; the sacristans shall

sing, instead of *kobza** and fife. I will not dance with my betrothed. They will take me away and my chamber will be gloomy! gloomy! Its walls will be of white wood, and instead of a chimney, a cross will rise above my head."

" 'Terrified, unable to move, Peter listened to the innocent child repeating the words of Pidarca.

" ' "And I, unfortunate wretch, who thought to go away to the Crimea or Turkey and come back to you rich, my beauty! Fate, alas! decides otherwise. Some evil eye has played a trick upon us. Well! I, too, will have a wedding, but there will be no sacristan present. The black crow shall croak above me; the vast field shall be my dwelling; the gray clouds my roof. The eagle with his beak shall make caverns of my eyes, and the rain and the wind shall bleach the bones of the Cossack! What am I saying? Of whom am I complaining? God has wished it, so let it be!"

" 'And straightway he betook himself to the wine shop.

" 'My great-aunt was surprised to see Peter

*Kobza—a mandolin of eight strings common in Ukraine.

in her shop, especially at the hour when it was customary to go to mass. She opened her eyes wide when he asked for brandy. All to no purpose did the unhappy boy try to drown his grief. The brandy had the same effect upon his tongue as the pricking of nettles and tasted more bitter than absinthe! He dashed the glass to the ground.

"'"Don't worry, Cossack," growled a bass voice behind him.

"'Peter looked around: it was Basavriouk. What a face! hair like a mane! and eyes, the eyes of a beast!

"'"I know what you want," he said, "see here!" And with a diabolical sigh he jingled gold in his pendant purse. Peter trembled.

"'"Ha! ha! ha! how it glitters!" he sneered, pouring a rain of gold from one hand to another. "Ha! ha! ha! how it rings! Yet, for a heap of the playthings, I only ask a slight service of you."

"'"Give them to me, devil; I am ready to serve!" They shook hands in pledge of agreement.

"'"Listen, Peter; you must be present at the

time agreed upon. Tomorrow is Mid-summer day; tomorrow night, alone, of all the year, the fern flowers. Do not let the occasion pass. I will meet you in the Bear's Ditch."

"'I do not believe that chickens await the farmer who brings them grain with more impatience than Peter awaited Basavriouk's coming. He kept watching for the shadows of the trees to grow long upon the grass; for the setting sun to take on the splendor of purple, and every moment his anxiety increased. How long the time seemed!

"'At last, he saw that the sun had disappeared; the sky was no longer red, except in one place, and there, too, the light was fading. Freshness arose from the fields; the darkness was falling fast around him; at last night came! at last!

"'His heart swelling with emotion as if about to burst, Peter traversed the forest and entered the ravine called "The Bear's Ditch." Basavriouk was awaiting him. The darkness was as great as if they were in the bowels of the earth. Arm in arm the two companions floundered in swampy places, tearing their clothing on the nu-

merous thorn bushes and stumbling at every step. At last they reached a level place. Peter looked about. Never before had he ventured into this place. Basavriouk paused too.

"'"You see before you, do you not, three hillocks? In a moment they will be covered with a thousand different flowers. Let nothing induce you to pluck one of them! But just as soon as the fern flowers, snatch the blossom and do not look behind, whatever happens."

"'Peter would gladly have asked information, but Basavriouk had disappeared. Peter then moved toward the three hillocks upon which he saw no trace of flowers. Weeds and wild growing things covered their dark surfaces. Suddenly the evening star appeared in heaven, and before him spread a garden of flowers such as he had never seen before. And among the myriad blossoms, there was the modest fern flower. Peter, his hands upon his hips, stood hesitating.

"'"But, after all," he said, "what is there so astonishing about it? A dozen times a day I find this plant! What is there so strange about it? This imp, did he intend to make sport of me?"

"'All at once he saw a tiny blossom blush and tremble, as if animated with life. That was strange, surely! The flower trembled, swelled and glowed like a firebrand. A spark arose from it; a slight rustling noise was heard, and before his eyes the bud burst into bloom, spreading out leaves like flame, and throwing a glow of light over the other flowers.

"'"Now is the time!" said Peter, stretching out his hand; but at the same time he saw hundreds of hairy arms straining for the flower, and heard a noise like the sound of running feet. He closed his eyes, pulled the stalk toward him, and the flower rested in his hands. Then, silence fell about him again; upon a broken tree trunk he saw Basavriouk sitting, white as the dead. His motionless eyes were fixed upon something which he, alone, seemed able to see. His lips were parted, but no sound escaped them. Dead silence reigned. Ah———hideous sight!

"'Suddenly a hissing noise was heard which froze the blood in Peter's veins; it seemed to him that the weeds began to whisper; and flowers to talk in shrill voices which suggested the tinkling of silver bells. From the agitated trees

which murmured threateningly fell insults thick as seeds in autumn. The face of Basavriouk became animated and his eyes darted fire.

" ' "Here you are at last, witch!" he grumbled between his teeth. "Look, Peter, the beauty is going to appear to you. Do whatever she says; if you do not, you are lost."

" 'Then with his gnarled stick he separated the bushes, and behold—the tiny dwelling of the witch! Basavriouk knocked and the walls trembled; a huge black dog, barking furiously, ran to meet Basavriouk and his companion, when, transforming itself into a cat, it jumped toward them.

" ' "Don't be angry; don't be angry, old woman," said Basavriouk with an oath that would make honest people cover their ears.

" 'Then, in place of the cat, an old woman stood before them, her face wrinkled like a dried apple, and her body almost bent double with age.

" ' "A great beauty!" thought Peter, shivering.

" 'The witch snatched the flower from his hands and bent over, pouring some sort of liquid upon it, muttering to herself the while. Sparks

of fire flew from her mouth, and her lips were covered with foam.

"'"Throw it away," she said to Peter, giving him the flower.

"'Peter obeyed, and—wondrous sight! The flower did not fall to the ground immediately, but for a long time they saw it, a tiny ball of fire floating in the midst of the obscurity of night. Then, very gently, it began to descend and fell, so far away that it looked like a tiny star no larger than a crimson poppy.

"'"There!" said the old woman in a harsh, heavy voice; while Basavriouk, giving Peter a spade, said:

"'"Dig there, Peter. There you will find more gold than you and Korje ever saw in your dreams."

"'Peter seized the spade, pressed it with his foot and turned over a piece of sod, once, twice, thrice—he struck something hard. The spade rang sharply, and he could dig no further. Then he began to distinguish a small casket strapped with iron. He bent down to lift it out, but at his touch it sank deeper into the earth; and the harder he tried to unearth it, the further it sank

from sight. Behind him he could hear laughter which resembled the hiss of a serpent.

"'"No, you shall not have gold until you have shed human blood," said the witch, leading to him a little child of some six years of age; and she signaled to Peter that he must cut off its head.

"'The young man was petrified with horror. Not only must he cut off the head of a human being, but of an innocent child, to boot.

"'Furious he snatched away the cloth that covered the child, and what did he see? The poor, little fellow was standing with bowed head, his hands clasped upon his breast! Beside himself, Peter drew a knife and started toward the witch; now he raised his hand—

"'"And where is your promise to the maiden?" said Basavriouk in a voice of thunder.

"'The witch stamped her foot. Blue flame issued from the earth, the ground beneath their feet became as transparent as crystal, and everything that was within it became visible to their eyes. Gold and precious stones were heaped in kettles just below them. The eyes of Peter flamed with desire and his head became con-

fused. Not knowing what he did, he seized his knife and innocent blood spurted upon his face. Fiendish laughter resounded on all sides. Bands of hideous monsters appeared before him. The witch, burying her claws in the headless body, drank the blood like a wolf.

"'Peter became dizzy; then summoning his remaining strength, he ran with all his might; to his eyes everything turned crimson. The trees, drenched in blood, groaned and glowed like fire; the burning heavens trembled. Scarlet spots quivered like lightning before his eyes. At length, his strength exhausted, he entered his own cottage and fell to the floor like grain when cut by the mower. A sleep like death fell upon him. Two entire days and nights he slept; awaking on the third day, he began meditatively to examine the corners of the room; but all to no purpose did he try to collect his thoughts. His memory was as the purse of a miser from which no one can drag a *kopec*. Moving slightly, he heard something jingle at his feet. He looked and saw two sacks filled with gold. Then, only, did he vaguely remember that he had sought a treasure, and that he had

been afraid all alone in the forest. But at what price, how had he procured this treasure? That, he could not recall.

"'When Korje saw the sacks of gold his heart softened; and it was nothing but Peter here, and Peter there.

"' "Look at the young scamp! Don't I love him? Isn't he just like my own son?"

"'And the old man talked to him and sang his praises till the younger man was touched to tears.

"'About this time Pidarca told him that the traveling gypsies had stolen Ivos; but this awoke no recollection in Peter, so completely was his mind confused. There was no time to lose. Short notice was given to the Pope and preparations for the wedding began. They baked *chichkas;** they embroidered towels; they brought kegs of brandy from the cave; they seated the newly wedded couple at the table; the bread was cut; guitars, cymbals, fifes, sounded.

"'The weddings of to-day cannot be com-

*Chichkas—little rolls of bread made expressly for weddings.

pared with the weddings of the olden time. In the first place, young girls, their flowing hair richly adorned with red, blue and yellow ribbons and glittering passamentaries, wearing blouses of the finest cloth completely covered with silk embroidery and tiny silver flowers, their feet encased in fur-trimmed shoes of red leather, glided gracefully as peacocks, or swept through the rooms like a storm wind. Then there were others who wore the *korablik*,* the high crown of which was made of gold brocade, from which protruded—where it opened at the back of the neck—two pieces of the finest black sheep's wool, and who marched in line, one behind the other. There were women who wore the *kountouche*, made of the best blue silk and lavishly trimmed in crimson, who advanced in stately procession, their hands upon their hips, keeping time to the measure of the *hopak;* young men wearing the Cossack cap, their hips clasped by gorgeous girdles, danced around the maidens, talking nonsense the while. Even old Korje, when he saw the dancers, could not refrain from taking part. A guitar in his hands, puffing furiously at his

*Korablik—the old-time head dress of Ukraine.

pipe, and singing at the same time, a drinking cup upon his head, he darted into the crowd, keeping time with the music and accompanied by the shouts of the revelers.

" 'What cannot one think of when the head is heated with wine! Some disguised themselves and put on masks. Some were quite beyond recognition. A-h! they were not like the weddings of to-day! What do they do now-a-days? They limit themselves to imitating the Muscovites. No, no; in the olden time one disguised himself as a Jew, another as an imp, and at first they embraced each other, then they pulled each other's hair. And at last, they laughed enough to split their sides. Some dressed like Turks, some like Tartars, and the splendor—it would dazzle your eyes; and when they began to play tricks, the house was turned upside down.*

" 'An amusing thing happened to my aunt who was present at this wedding. Enveloped in a huge Tartar robe, a wine cup in her hand, she was doing the honors to the guests, when, behold, a mischievous fellow poured brandy over her

*The literal Russian expression is: You would have to carry the saints out of the house.

back and another struck his tinder-box and set the garment on fire. My unfortunate aunt, frightened quite out of her senses, began to disrobe before the room full of revelers! Shrieks of laughter followed; in fact, no one ever remembered of such a joyous wedding.

"'So Pidarca and Peter began to live like lords of the manor. They had an abundance of everything; everything sparkled with gold. However, honest people shook their heads suspiciously. There is no great wealth without the aid of the devil, they agreed, for where could Orphan Peter find such wealth? Why did Basavriouk disappear the very day that Peter became rich?

"'It is possible that people like to invent stories! But the fact remains that a month after marriage, none of his former friends could have recognized Peter. Why and how had he changed so quickly? Heaven only knows! All day long he remained sitting in one place, without exchanging a single word with any one, absorbed in his own reflections, as if he were trying to remember something.

"'When Pidarca succeeded in making him

talk, he seemed for the time to forget his troubles and became animated, gay, even; but if any chance word suggested his gold—

"'"Wait! wait! I have forgotten," he exclaimed. And again he relapsed into his dream, again he sought to recall to his mind—

"'Occasionally when he had remained a long time in one place, it seemed that light was breaking in upon his brain. And then everything became as confused as before. He remembered very well going to the wine shop; they brought him brandy; it burned his throat; it disgusted him; some one came up and slapped him on the shoulder. Then darkness fell upon his mind. Sweat dropped from his forehead, and he leaned back in his chair exhausted.

"'What did not Pidarca do? But nothing helped Peter.

"'Thus the summer passed. The Cossacks had reaped and stored away their harvests. Many of them had gone away on hunting excursions. Flocks of wild ducks still visited our marshes in those days, but now they have disappeared for the most part. The steppe was already glowing with the crimson of autumn. Here and there,

like the caps of Cossacks, stood mills in the distant fields. On the highway was seen the constant coming and going of wagons laden with wood and brush. The ground grew harder daily, and in places it froze. Occasionally snow sifted down and the branches of the trees were powdered with frost. Now, when the days were bright, the bullfinch, with his red breast resembling an elegant Polish dandy, could be seen promenading on the snow-dusted hills, picking up kernels of grain, and the children spun their wooden tops, while their fathers, after having sat for a long time huddled together by the stoves, appeared at intervals in their doorways to fling a good round oath at the cold, or went to look at the grain in the barns.

"'At last the snow began to melt. The pike, with his tail, had broken the ice; but Peter remained the same and grew morose as time went on. He was seated in the middle of his cottage as if nailed to the floor, his sacks of gold at his feet; he had become hideous to look upon; his hair and beard were long and uncombed, and he thought only of one thing: to remember! He

became angry, beside himself, at his inability to think.

"'Often with a wild look he would jump to his feet, wave his arms in the air, while his motionless eyes seemed to see something that he wished to reach. His lips moved as to utter forgotten words. Then rage took possession of him; he bit his nails, tore out handfuls of hair, until, exhausted, he fell down in a sort of stupor. Then he began all over again to try to remember; then anger, then exhaustion—

"'Whence came this curse? Life was no longer tolerable to Pidarca. She was afraid at first to remain alone with her husband; at length, little by little, she became accustomed to her misfortune, but no one would have recognized the Pidarca of former days. The roses had vanished from her cheeks, the smile from her lips; she became weary, emaciated and tears dimmed her eyes.

"'One day some one who pitied her advised her to seek out the sorceress who lived in the Bear's Ditch, and who was famous for curing the ills of the flesh. Pidarca made up her mind to follow the advice. She betook herself to the

place indicated and succeeded in persuading the old woman to follow her to the village.

"'Again it was Mid-summer eve. Peter was stretched out upon a bench and did not see the new arrival; after a little he began to rise and examine her. Suddenly he trembled from head to foot, as if he were before the headman's block; his hair stood straight on end, and he burst into such laughter that Pidarca was terrified.

"'"I remember, I remember!" he shouted in horrible joy, brandishing a hatchet which he threw at the old woman with all his strength. The hatchet buried itself in the oaken door frame. The old woman disappeared, and a little child, in a white chemise stood in the middle of the room.

"'"Ivos!" called Pidarca, hastening toward him. But the phantom covered itself from head to foot with blood and filled the cottage with crimson light! Frightened, Pidarca left the house, then, coming to her senses, she turned to go back to aid her brother. Her efforts were vain. The door had closed behind her and she could not open it.

"'Neighbors hastened to the house; they began to knock and finally succeeded in forcing in the door; but not a soul did they see! The cottage was full of smoke, and in the middle of the room where Peter had been, there was only a heap of ashes. They rushed to the sacks of gold, but found only pieces of broken pottery. With eyes and ears wide open, not daring to move so much as a hair of their mustaches, the Cossacks stood as if nailed to the floor. Great was the horror that overwhelmed them!

"'What happened afterward, I do not well remember. Pidarca, having made a vow to go on a pilgrimage, gathered together all the money that came from her father and a few days later left the village. Where did she go? No one knew. The old women of the village thought she had gone where Peter was.

"'But a Cossack who had just arrived from Kiew said that he saw in a laura a pilgrim so emaciated that she was a living skeleton, and who prayed from morn till night; in the description which he gave, the people of the village recognized Pidarca. He said, in addition, that no one had ever heard her speak a single word;

that she came on foot carrying an image of the Holy Virgin which was so covered with precious stones that it dazzled the eyes of the beholder.

"'Now the day that the devil dragged Peter away with him, Basavriouk came back; but every one ran when he came near them. They knew him now; he was none other than Satan himself in the disguise of a man for the purpose of unearthing treasures; but since treasures may not be kept by impure hands, he seduced men.

"'The same year every one abandoned his cottage and went to live in a larger village. But not even there were they free of the accursed Basavriouk. The aunt of my deceased grandfather said that he was particularly angry at her because she had abandoned his wine shop on the highway, and he sought to revenge himself in many ways.

"'One day the old men of the village gathered together in the wine shop and were talking, seated around a table upon which was served—to tell the truth—a sheep roasted whole. They spoke of Basavriouk. They related marvelous stories. Suddenly they thought they saw—(this would be strange for one man alone, but *all*

together!) — the sheep lift its head, its eyes become animated!

"'They recognized on the instant the head and face of Basavriouk. My great aunt expected every moment to hear it ask for brandy. The old men grabbed their caps and ran away.

"'Another time the church warden, himself, who liked to chat with a glass in his hand, had hardly looked into his cup a second time when the glass arose and bowed to him.

"'"Devil take you!" and he made the sign of the cross. About the same time something equally strange happened to his wife; she had just begun to knead bread in a small tub, when the tub jumped two or three times.

"'"Stop! Stop!" she cried.

"'But just like a man who places his two hands upon his hips, that tub danced all over the cottage!

"'Laugh at it, laugh at it, if you want to! But our grandparents were a long way from laughing; and in spite of the fact that Father Athanasius traversed the streets of the village, sprinkling them with holy water, my great aunt said that often, when night came, something

knocked upon the roof or scratched against the walls of her dwelling.

"Now, where our village stands, all is peaceful, but my father can remember when no one dared pass the ruined wine shop; for a long time the evil spirits held it in their power. From the chimney, black smoke escaped and arose so high in the air that when you tried to look at it your cap fell off; and the devil (I ought not even call his name) sobbed so plaintively in his retreat that the crows, frightened, flew away from the neighboring forest of oak trees and stretched out in a long black line across the heavens, uttering savage cries!"

THE END.