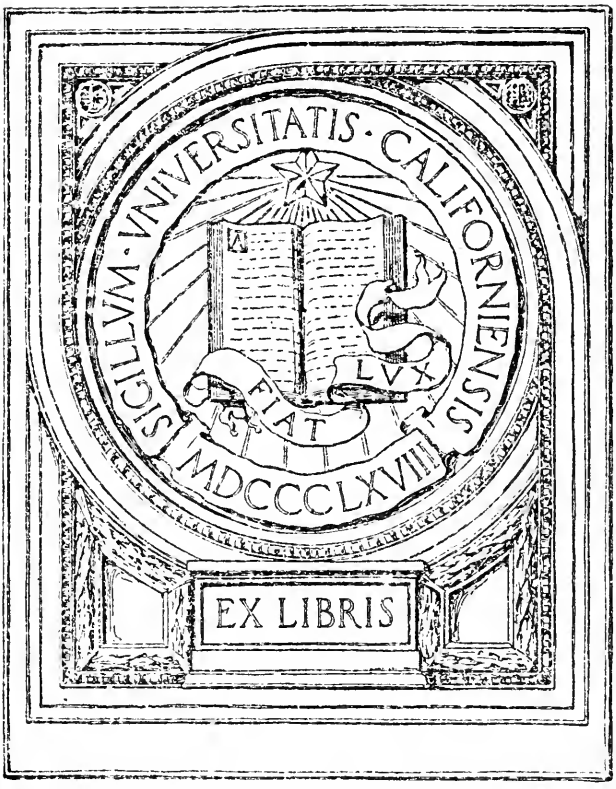
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TALES OF THE REVOLUTION

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CHAPTER I

At the twilight hour, when the stairs of the lodging-house from roof to basement were steeped in a dense, black fog, and the windows on each landing resembled blurred spots in the gloom, somebody rang a bell at one of the doors. Behind this greasy door with its ragged covering of oilcloth the crazy old bell made an angry sound that lasted for a long time, and then subsided in a faint buzz, as that of a fly caught in a spider's net ; a long-drawn lament for its miserable lot.

Nobody answered the bell. The ringer stood there, rigid and erect as a post. His figure showed in blacker relief against the general gloom. So motionless did he remain, that a lean cat, slinking downstairs, never heeded him as it passed. There was something sinister about him ; kindly, joyous, open-hearted men are not wont to stand thus.

On the stairs it was cold and silent, while in the dreary dusk rancid vapours arose, the evil stench that pervades a huge lodging-house crammed from cellar to attic with dirty, sickly, hungry, besotted human beings. As one ascended the stairs, the fog became denser, and, in the weird black figure on the landing it was as though it had taken human shape.

From the street came distant sounds of clattering droshkies and jingling tramway-bells, while in the courtyard far below harsh, angry voices could be heard. Yet up here all was deadly still. Suddenly the house-door banged, and the noise re-echoed throughout the building. Footsteps could be heard. Some one was coming upstairs at a great rate, hurrying round each landing, and taking two stairs at a time. As the steps reached the last landing and a figure was about to dash past the dim window the man outside the door suddenly moved towards it.

"Who's there?" cried the newcomer in a tone that betrayed more than mere astonishment.

"Is there a room to let, here? Perhaps you may know?" asked the man at the door, sharply and decisively.

"Oh! a room? I really can't say. . . . Yes, I believe there is. You'd better ring."

"I have done so already."

"Ah! but here we have a special way of ringing; like this, do you see?"

He caught hold of the bell and tugged at it with all his might. No faint tinklings now, but an absolute scream which suddenly ceased. It was as if a tin pot full of peas as it were tumbling down the stairs had bumped against the wall. Then there was a rustling sound, and through a gap in the opening door a streak of yellow light revealed the grey head of an old woman.

"Maximova, here's some one inquiring about your room," explained the newcomer, a gaunt, lanky student. Entering first, he went along the passage where the air was musty and damp as that of the

dirty ante-room of some bathing establishment. Without listening to what the old woman said, he pushed past boxes and curtains behind which something stirred and, reaching his room, disappeared. Not until he had put off his things and stood there in his peasant's red smock, loose at the neck and beltless, did he remember the new lodger, and asked the old woman as she brought him a bubbling samovar :

" Well, Maximova, did you get rid of your room ? "

" Yes, I've let it, thank God, Sergei Ivanovitch ; let it for twelve roubles. I think he'll be a quiet lodger."

" Why's that ? "

The old woman looked at him with her white, almost sightless eyes, and, pursing her shrivelled lips, said, " I've lived in this world for sixty-five years, Sergei Ivanovitch, and have seen all sorts of people. I've become blind through looking at them all," she added bitterly, with a piteous gesture.

The student unconsciously glanced at her eyes and was about to speak, yet somehow could not. When she had gone, he knocked at the adjoining door and called out :

" I say, neighbour, won't you have some tea ? "

" With pleasure," replied the shrill voice.

" Then just come over here, please."

Seating himself at the table, the student filled two glasses with pale-coloured tea, got the sugar, and turned towards the door.

A thin, fair young man of medium height entered. His appearance created the singular impression that he was continually trying to add to his height by jerking his head backwards.

"Nicolai Sheviriof," he said in a hard, clear tone.

"Aladief," replied the other, as he smiled and shook hands with his guest. It was done quite as a peasant would do it, with a certain uncouth exaggeration of friendliness. Indeed, he looked like some simple farm hand, some carpenter from Pskof or Novgorod, with his bent yet sturdy back, drooping shoulders, lanky arms, broad hands, and long nose, his features suggesting the profile of an ikon with thin beard and hair cropped round his head.

In a good-natured deep voice, he welcomed the other.

"That's right. Sit down, and we'll have some tea and a chat."

Sheviriof did so quickly and resolutely, but his demeanour remained stiff and distant.

His grey metallic eyes had a cold impenetrable look in them. Nor did he show a trace of that shy curiosity which overcomes even the most free-and-easy persons when first they meet an utter stranger. So that Aladief, as he looked at him, thought that this Sheviriof would never under any circumstances prove false either to himself or to the certain something hidden deep within his soul.

"The fellow interests me," he thought.

"Well, and so you've just arrived, eh?" he asked.

"Yes; only got here to-day from Helsingfors."

"And where's your luggage?"

"Haven't got any; only just a bolster, a rug, and a few books."

At these last words Aladief surveyed his guest with special curiosity and good will.

"And, if I may be allowed to ask, what is your employment?"

"Certainly, you may ask. I am a workman in an iron-foundry. I came here to get work as the place where I was shut up shop."

"That means that you're out of work?"

"Yes," replied Sheviriof, and in his voice there was a certain strange quality of tone.

"Just at the moment lots of men are out of work," said Aladief, sympathetically; "times are a bit hard for you, I am afraid."

"Times are always hard," replied Sheviriof, in a callous way. "But soon those will be having a hard time of it who are now at their ease," he added, threateningly.

Aladief looked curiously at him.

"Hullo! Hullo!" he thought, "there's something wrong about this fellow. I must get to the bottom of it. A rum sort of customer, to judge by his face."

Sheviriof noticed the singular expression in the shrewd peasant eyes of his host, who, glancing furtively at him, looked down at his glass.

"No doubt you're a student? Perhaps you write as well, eh?" he asked, quickly.

Aladief blushed slightly.

"What makes you think so? I mean—think that I write?"

Sheviriof smiled suddenly, and the smile was far more kindly than his self-conscious mien would have led one to expect.

"Easy enough to guess that," he explained. "On the walls you've got portraits of poets; there are heaps of books on the shelves; manuscripts on the

table, and sheets of paper, torn and crumpled, under the table. So that's how I knew."

Aladief laughed outright, yet all the same he scanned the other more closely, after the manner of a yokel who meant to be very cunning.

"Yes, yes, of course," he said. "Anyhow, I can see that you notice things pretty closely."

Sheviriof was silent.

Aladief lit a big cigarette, watching his guest attentively through the smoke of it.

Sitting bolt upright, Sheviriof kept continually twiddling his thumbs. In his outward appearance there was something quite different from the thousand faces one meets daily. It was this difference that Aladief's little plebeian eyes had instantly detected; a suggestion of something strangely determined and deliberate. He had even remarked the contrast between the stony immobility of Sheviriof's whole body and the almost imperceptible yet singularly rapid twitching of his thumbs; and, the more he noticed this, the keener became his suspicions, while a sense of unconscious sympathy and instinctive awe for this stranger grew deeper within him.

He screwed up his eyes, as if on account of the tobacco-smoke, and said with seeming indifference, yet with covert intention:

"The gift of observation is a rare one."

Sheviriof did not immediately reply; his thumbs merely twitched quicker than before. It seemed as if he did not want to answer, yet after a short pause, he suddenly jerked his head backwards, stared coldly at Aladief, and as his lip curled slightly said:

"I see what you mean."

"Eh? What?" asked Aladief, with involuntary confusion.

"You're trying to find out if I'm a detective. I'm not, so don't be alarmed. Why should I be? I never forced you to tell me things and it wasn't of my own accord that I came to you."

"Whatever makes you imagine that?" exclaimed Aladief hotly, as he flushed up.

Sheviriof smiled again. When he smiled, there was no doubt that his countenance became completely changed. Its expression grew gentle, almost tender.

"Well, why shouldn't I? It's plain enough. But, if I had been a detective, I should have known at once by your questions that you had some grounds for being afraid."

Aladief looked at him for a minute in utter amazement, then stroking his neck, he smiled, and made a deprecating gesture.

"Ah! well, perhaps you're right. It was my fault, no doubt. You know how things are just now. But I haven't got anything to hide."

"I spoke of being *afraid*, but you speak of *hiding*. So that you *have* got something."

Sheviriof smiled.

Aladief opened his eyes wide and reflected.

"Yes," he drawled. "But still, you won't mind my saying that you would make a splendid detective. One of the psychological sort, you know."

"Very likely," replied Sheviriof gravely, though it was plain that he did not relish the remark. "And what sort of things do you write?" he asked, evidently attempting to give a turn to the talk.

Aladief reddened as if he had been caught in the act.

" Well, you see, I'm only a beginner, as yet. Two of my stories are already in print. Not bad, for a start. They were well reviewed, too."

He added these last words without looking up, and with apparent nonchalance, yet involuntarily his voice plainly betrayed a certain pride and pleasure.

" Yes, I know. I've read them. At first I didn't recollect, but now I remember your name. You write tales about peasant life. Yes, I remember them."

For a while host and guest remained silent. Sheviriof stared at his glass, and then the fingers of the hand resting on his knee twitched almost imperceptibly. Aladief was evidently excited. He longed to ask Sheviriof how he liked the tales. He felt thoroughly convinced that what he wrote was not for the educated public, but merely for workmen and peasant-folk. Once or twice his lips moved as if he were about to speak, yet somehow he could not bring himself to do so. Then he lighted a cigarette, blinked his eyes and watched the flaming match intently. Then, before he began to smoke, he asked with a show of indifference :

" Well, and how did you like my stuff ? "

" Oh ! all right enough," replied Sheviriof. " Most convincing, I thought. Spicy, too."

Aladief blushed, and vainly strove to suppress a bright, childlike smile.

" Only you're apt to idealize your characters too much," added Sheviriof.

" How do you mean ? " asked the other, eagerly.

" If I am not mistaken, you start with the theory that, given sane intelligence and clear judgment, there

is no such thing as a bad man. Only external conditions, outside influences that must be removed, are what hinder men from being good. I cannot believe that. Man is perverse by nature. On the contrary, I think that it is just unfavourable conditions which help some, but only a few, to become good men."

Aladief was indignant. This was his pet theory, the sum and substance of all his past and future literary work. He believed in it implicitly, and asked for no proof, just as some peasant believes in God.

"What's that you say?" he exclaimed.

"That is my opinion," replied Sheviriof in a tone of inflexible conviction, "I am a working man, and I know."

The touch of suppressed bitterness in his voice grieved Aladief, who said:

"Perhaps you've had a rough time of it in the past, and that has embittered you. It's impossible that you should believe that, as you say you do. It looks as if, excuse my saying so, as if you were a man-hater."

"I'm not afraid of the word," replied the other coldly. "In fact, I do hate mankind, but what you think comes from bitterness, *I* think comes from experience, or the ability to see the truth which human beings obstinately endeavour to hide from their sight."

"And, in your opinion, what is this truth?"

"That which must be suppressed, so that one man may be enabled to live at the expense of another, the truth being that all human desires are but the instincts of a wild beast."

"How can you say such a thing! All!" exclaimed Aladief, indignantly. "What about love, and self-sacrifice, and compassion?"

"I don't believe in them. They merely form a cloak to cover the hideous nakedness and to check the rapacious instincts that make every life impossible. They are but a product of human ideas; they were never inherent in human nature. If love (of course I don't mean the sexual sort) and compassion and self-sacrifice were really instinctive in us, like the robber-instinct, we should by now have in place of Capital a Christian Republic. Those who were well-fed could never bear to see others starve and die; there would be no masters and no servants, for all would make mutual sacrifices, and all men would be equal. But we've not got that."

Aladief rose in great excitement and strode heavily up and down the room as if he were walking over furrows newly cut by the plough.

"In mankind there are two principles, the godlike and the devilish, to use the terms employed by our mystics. Progress is simply a conflict between these two principles, and not, as you——"

"What I say is this, that if these two principles in their essential form were existent in human nature in equal proportions, life could not be as horrible as it is now. But there is nothing of the sort. The fight for existence has invented these catchwords, just as it has invented such words as locomotives, telephones, or medicine."

"Good. Let us admit that. Consequently, man is capable of influencing the spiritual part of him. Why, then, can you not believe in the ultimate

triumph of these principles over the robber-instinct? Ideals are slow to penetrate life, yet their influence is sure, and when they have triumphed, and have made the rights of all men equal——"

"They'll never do that," replied Sheviriof coldly. "In equal proportion with such progress the complexities of life will increase. The fight for existence is an eternal law which will not cease until life itself ceases."

"Then, you don't believe that there may be better forms or systems of life?"

"New, yes; but better, no."

"Why do you think that?"

"Man is not happy or unhappy because of the good or the evil that befalls him, but because of his inborn capacity for pleasure or for pain. If a man of the period of the Stone Age could have viewed our actual world in a dream, it would have seemed to him as an earthly paradise. We are now experiencing that which was his dream, and yet are just as unhappy, if not more so, than he. I don't believe in any Age of Gold."

"Look here," said Aladief, shivering involuntarily, "such unbelief as yours is devilish. Excuse me, but I can't imagine that you really think so."

"Sorry for that," replied Sheviriof, with a chilly smile.

"Well, I never! How shocking!"

"I never said that it was pleasant."

Aladief was silent, and surveyed his guest with genuine compassion. He now knew how to account for that cold clear glance and that deadly calm. In this man's soul all was barren and dark, though

possibly intense disgust and implacable revenge lurked there also.

Sheviriof's fingers twitched more rapidly; then suddenly he rose.

"Au revoir," he said. "I am tired after my journey, and I don't often talk so much."

Aladief pensively grasped his hand. As Sheviriof opened the door, he said hastily:

"I say, are you really a working man?"

Sheviriof smiled. "Why should it surprise you? Of course, I am."

Then he went out, shutting the door firmly behind him.

For a long time Aladief walked up and down his room, smoking, and mentally prolonging the discussion. Now that his opponent was silent, his own arguments appeared to him incontrovertible. By degrees he fell into a dreamy state, and a vision, hazy yet radiant, of life in the future rose up before him; a panorama of fields and forests and hamlets, grey, sad, and poverty-stricken. Aladief wished to write something powerful, and to express at a stroke that which for him was at once a torment and a joy. Yet the sense of his own impotence robbed his soul of its wings.

"Shall I ever do it?"

He sighed deeply and then, with a certain humility which seemed to ease his heart, he thought:

"Well, no matter; if not I, then another. I will do my part."

For awhile he stood gazing abstractedly at a portrait of Tolstoy that with keen, searching glance looked down at him from the wall.

Then he placed cigarettes and a lamp upon the writing-table which was covered with newspapers, stretched his limbs and sat down.

There he remained, almost till morning, writing incessantly.

With great fervour he told how peasants for their convictions were condemned to die; a simple narrative with no waste of words, nor any attempt to extol the heroism of those who faced their doom calmly, collectedly, as if they knew something that from others was concealed. The cigarette-smoke slowly floated in dense clouds above the lamp, and was lost in the gloom. In the house all was silent, and the black night peered in through the window-panes. One could scarcely believe that such deadly darkness was only an illusion, and that somewhere, behind the houses and the roofs, in the broad streets thousands of brilliant lights blazed where crowds of hurrying, chattering mortals surged and swayed, where restaurants stood open, where naked shoulders gleamed in the dance, and lovely voices echoed in the theatres, as human beings talked, and made love, or strove to live, and to get all they could from life.

On the other side of the wall, motionless, upon a hard bed, lay Sheviriof, his cold, wide-opened eyes gazing steadily at the gloom.

CHAPTER II

The sole window in Sheviriof's room looked on to a wall, beyond which a thin strip of grey sky, barred by grimy chimney-pots, could be seen. The room had a strange look. Its bare walls gave it a cold, almost a glaring, appearance. There was not a speck of dust on the floor, nor a single book lying on the table, and, if Sheviriof had not been in this room himself, who, foolishly enough, was not seated at the window or near the table, but in front of the closed door leading to the next room, one would never have thought that anybody lived in it.

There, motionless and bolt upright, drumming on his knees with his fingers, he sat with his back to the door on the only chair in the room. His eyes had a vacant expression in them, as if he were mechanically examining his bedstead, but as at every sound he moved slightly, almost imperceptibly, one could see that he was listening intently to all that was going on in the house. First of all, he heard Aladief drinking tea, and afterwards going out. Then he listened to remoter sounds that gave him faint signs of the grey life around him.

Behind the door against which he was sitting lived, as he had already discovered, a sempstress, young, simple, and somewhat deaf.

This he had guessed by the sound of her fresh voice, the gentle click of the sewing-machine, the motherly way in which the old landlady grumbled to her about something or other, and the perpetual query in a timid, pathetic tone, " What ? "

Further along the corridor, behind the curtain, two old persons were rummaging about in a heap of rags like worms in carrion, whispering to each other meanwhile. On one occasion the landlady, a gaunt old woman with sad, lustreless eyes, came in to see Sheviriof. When he gave her the rent, she looked at the money for a long while and touched it with her skinny fingers.

" I've gone blind," she said in a sad, calm tone. Afterwards Sheviriof could hear how she was showing the money to the little sempstress, who, speaking in a loud, clear voice, like all deaf persons, who do not think that they are heard, replied :

" It's quite right, quite right, Maximova ! "

Thus, for almost three hours, Sheviriof sat in that position, without moving once ; only his fingers twitched faster and faster. Attentively and gravely he sought for some reason to catch all these colourless sounds, that without words told how poor and wretched human life can be.

Then he quickly rose, dressed, and went out.

CHAPTER III

Shevirioff stood in the factory-yard and looked through the huge window at the machinery room where everything buzzed and whirred, while the window-panes rattled also. The adjacent windows probably let in a good deal of light, but, looking in from the courtyard with its lofty dome of shining sky, all inside appeared to be immersed in perpetual gloom. One could see how chains slid up and down in ghostly fashion, fly-wheels, impetuous yet apparently noiseless, whirred to and fro, and countless leathern straps darted into the darkness. Everything was revolving, whirling, twisting at a tremendous rate, yet in all this commotion human beings were scarcely visible. Now and again among these black, gleaming, metal monsters some human face, with eyes like those of a corpse, appeared and then instantly vanished in the turbulent dusk, where the dull roar of machinery, awful in its monotony, seemed ever to increase, and the dusty window-panes made everything look dull grey and colourless in tone, as in the canvas of some gigantic kinematograph.

Close to the window, against this background, a little machine of exquisitely delicate proportions swiftly revolved. It was made of steel and iron, and fine splinters of gold fell from its sharp little

teeth into a brass basin. Above it rocked a bent human back, as large grimy hands moved to and fro. The rocking was rhythmic and monotonous; one noticed how such motion became blended with that of the little machine.

It was just on this marvellous little thing that Sheviriof's observant eyes were fixed. Behind exactly such a lathe as this he had once stood in bygone days, full of hopes that could never be realized. Five long years, every day from morn till night, had he stood there, well or ill, sad or glad, in love, or tormented by anxious thoughts.

Anyone who could have looked into Sheviriof's eyes at this moment would have been amazed at their strange expression. They were not cold and clear now, but showed a certain tenderness, though a flash of implacable hatred was there, as well. His lips meanwhile were quivering. Did he smile? Or was he muttering to himself?

For a long time he stood thus, and then turned sharply on his heel, as at the word of command, and walked firmly away.

"Where is the office?" he asked of the first workman that he met.

"Over there; the second door," replied the man, and he stopped. "Do you want to put your name down? They're not engaging anybody," he added half-sympathetically, yet still with a touch of malice, as he smiled, revealing behind thin bluish lips large hungry teeth, white as a negro's.

Sheviriof looked him full in the face, as if to say, "I knew that already." Opening the office door, he walked in. About ten men were waiting inside,

seated under the two long whitewashed windows. Against this white background, one could only see black shadows, and a bluish ray of light gleamed on some bald head among them, as on a human skull. Devoid of eyes or expression, the shadows turned to Sheviriof, and then resumed their wonted attitude of waiting. He remained standing at the door.

There was a long silence. At last the inner door opened, and a fat, short-necked man hurried into the office. "Nikoforof, where's the punishment-list?" he asked in a consequential tone. The clerk threw down his pen and began searching among a pile of blue books. Simultaneously the dark shadows that at the manager's entrance had risen, all crowded round him, and shabby jackets, ragged caps, muddy boots, haggard faces with hungry eyes, and lank, sinewy arms, came into the light.

"If you please, sir," cried several hoarse voices in unison.

The fat man, evidently irritated, rudely snatched the book from the clerk's hand, and turned towards them.

"There you are again," he shouted. "Can't you see what's on the notice-board outside, eh?"

"If you will allow me to explain," said an old man, advancing, as he tried to soothe the manager.

"What is there to explain? There's no work, and there's an end of it, so that's soon settled, eh, what?"

For a moment all were silent, as if astounded, and then the old man began, with tears in his trembling voice, "Yes, we knew that, sir, and, of course, if there's no work it can't be helped, but we can't stand it any longer; we are starving. If we could only speak

to the engineer, Mr. Pustovoitof. . . . You promised us last time that you would see if . . ." His shining, hungry eyes were fixed on the master, timidly, imploringly.

"No," shouted the other angrily, cutting him short.

"Feodor Karlevitch," pleaded the old man, as if he had heard nothing.

"I have told you a hundred times"—with a strongly marked German accent, till now not so noticeable—"that the engineer has nothing whatever to do with it!"

"But the gentleman——"

"He is not in the factory at present," retorted the German, turning aside.

"How can that be, for the gentleman's carriage is standing at the door," exclaimed one of the little crowd of men.

The manager glared at the speaker, with fury in his face.

"Is it! Then let it stand then! All the better for you!" he added mockingly, as he again moved towards the door.

"Feodor Karlevitch," cried the old man hastily, with a movement as if to pursue him. The German for a moment surveyed the old fellow's bald pate.

"You of all people," he said slowly and with malice, "need not come here. What sort of a workman are you?"

"Feodor Karlevitch," exclaimed the other in despair, "do have pity! I am not . . . I have always behaved myself properly."

"That's an old story," replied the manager coolly.

"You have simply grown old, my boy. It's time you had a rest. You had better not come here any more. It's no use."

He grasped the handle of the door.

"Oh, for pity's sake, do, for I am still . . ."

But the door closed with a bang, and the old man's words rebounded from the yellow, mocking wall. With a despairing gesture he turned round, as if to say, "Well, well, what's to become of me now?"

Suddenly all the men clapped their caps on their heads and began to go out. But they did not separate, and like a little flock of sheep, crowded round the entrance. Very likely many of them had no place to which they could go, so they aimlessly and in hopeless confusion stood looking at their feet. One of them tried to light a cigarette, while the others watched him. Being broken, it would not light.

"Don't stand in the draught like that," said one of his comrades.

"Oh, blast the thing!" cried the smoker, as he flung the cigarette against the wall, and stood there as if he did not know what he should do next.

"Look here, what is going to happen to us all? For three days I have had nothing to eat," muttered a pale youth, smiling unconsciously, as though he expected applause for some excellent joke.

"And you won't get anything to eat on the fourth, either," rejoined the would-be smoker.

At this moment a stout, fair gentleman with an upturned bushy moustache came jauntily out of another entrance. At his appearance a thrill passed

through the little group of workmen. They advanced nervously and then suddenly stood still. Only the old man pulled off his cap, displaying his dirty bald head.

A slight shadow crossed the composed features of the engineer. He seemed as if about to say something, but only shrugged his shoulders, and with a reproachful, upward glance, exclaimed angrily, " Stepan, come along ! Where the devil are you ? "

The fat coachman, with a watch at his waist, drove up to the entrance. The engineer promptly jumped into the carriage and sat down on the leathern cushions, and the carriage soon disappeared beyond the main entrance of the factory. The workmen swiftly separated.

Sheviriof was the last to go. He thrust his hands in his pockets, stretched himself, flung his head in the air and walked quickly down the street. In this limpid autumn light the large town seemed more chilly and dirty than usual. The long, straight, damp streets were lost in opal mist, and far away in the distance, where houses, lamps, men, and horses were all blended in the blue dusk, the slender gilded spire of the Admiralty gleamed fantastic in the gloom.

CHAPTER IV

In the tavern where Sheviriof got his midday meal, there was great noise and commotion. There was a stale smell of tobacco, sweat and cooking, and the atmosphere was so dense that human beings were lost in it as in some mist from a marsh. Sheviriof sat behind a window, before which human legs ran hither and thither without ceasing, and with elbows propped on the greasy tablecloth, he stared vacantly across at the other rooms, where, like shadows in the smoke, men were playing billiards on a rickety old table. He could hear the click of the balls, and oaths and laughter. At an adjoining table sat a merry group of cobblers' apprentices. One of them, a lean, devil-may-care sort of lad, with a ring in his ear, was providing the others with amusement by chaffing a simpleton of the peasant type, who was staring at him with round, foolish eyes. The former was lying to him with infinite zest, being at times hardly able to contain himself for merriment, when he would slap his knee, and exclaim to his audience delightedly :

" My word, what a fool he is, little brother ! I am telling him all sorts of lies, and he swallows everything ! "

The little peasant smiled sheepishly, making a

faint gesture of protest, but the lad with the earring began again in solemn tone:

"Ah, but when I was living at Pensa . . ." The little peasant craned forward and stared again at the narrator. The door creaked continually, letting in with the mist a succession of new customers, whose curses one could hear while they were still on the threshold. The atmosphere at each moment grew more dense, and the noise, the stench, the smoke, and the wrangling, cursing human beings all served to produce a sort of hideous, fetid nightmare.

A man now seated himself at Sheviriof's table. He was dark and lean, with a long throat, and his features seemed almost distorted. He was evidently in a state of dreadful excitement. First he propped his head on his hands, then he glanced round, or twisted about in his chair, searching for something in all his pockets, which apparently he could not find. At times he glanced at Sheviriof and appeared anxious to address him, yet hesitated to do so. Sheviriof had noticed this, and his cold glance was not encouraging. At last, after a particularly brilliant sally on the part of the youth of the earring, the long-necked man pointed smilingly to the lad, and said to Sheviriof:

"I expect he is another of 'em out of work."

"Yes," replied Sheviriof curtly.

The long-necked man, as if he had waited for this opening, turned resolutely to Sheviriof and said:

"You're one of us, mate, aren't you? A workman, eh?"

"Yes," replied Sheviriof in the same tone.

The other's body quivered as he continued :

" I say, I've only been here three days, and I'd like to ask you if you could tell me where I could get work. I am a locksmith by trade."

His eyes looked imploringly at the other, while his features wore the same distorted expression.

For a time Sheviriof remained silent.

" I don't know," he replied. " I am out of work myself. There's no work to be got. Nothing doing. There are tens of thousands out of work in this place."

The expression on the man's face changed to one of utter despair. He leaned back in his chair with mouth half-open, and flung out his arms with a helpless gesture.

" Why did you come here ? " asked Sheviriof suddenly, almost angrily. " Had you no notion that we were all starving here ? You had better have stopped where you were."

The man repeated his gesture of despair.

" I couldn't. They had got me on the black list."

" Why was that ? " asked Sheviriof dryly.

" Because of the strike. I was on the committee. At the time they didn't dare to touch us, but when things got a bit quiet, they determined to clear us out, and out we had to go."

" Where did you work ? "

" In the mines. I went as a locksmith."

" You were on the committee ? Then why didn't the other members try to get you off ? "

Sheviriof spoke in a harsh voice, yet all the while he was listening attentively to the latest lie of the boy with the earring.

"How could they possibly get me off?" said the other in amazement. "They fetched up three companies of soldiers and the machine-gun. That settled it."

"Did it never occur to you that it must end like that?"

"Well, of course, at the time I knew that it would."

"Then why did you have anything to do with it?"

"Why? Well, you see, the others put me on the committee."

"You might have refused," replied Sheviriof.

"How could I? All the others held out, and I had to do what they did."

"But when the machine-gun came, they all caved in."

"Ah, but that's different! To die like that is not so easy for chaps who have got wives and children."

"You're not married, are you?"

The locksmith started and looked down. Then rubbing his forehead, he muttered:

"I've got a mother." Then he was silent and looked away, being apparently interested in what the facetious youth with the earring was saying.

"And then the engineer wanted to give me his daughter as my wife; but I said, 'No, thank you.'"

"What for?" asked the little peasant sympathetically, though with some sign of disbelief.

"Because, my boy, I am a workman and a man of the people, and she an aristocrat. Of course I liked her well enough; in fact, I liked her very much, but I didn't seem to want her given to me like that.

When we said good-bye, she brought me some champagne herself, and said, 'I esteem you most highly, Jelisar Ivanitch, and I shall always remember you.' Yes, and she gave me a gold ring, too, she did."

"Well?" said the peasant, edging up to him.

"Well, I've got the ring still. I pawned it for five roubles. Just at present I am broke, but later on I shall get it out and wear it. One ought to, don't you know, as it's a keepsake." Then, turning to his audience, he continued, "I say, boys, when I was working at Pensa, in that English factory, Morris Brothers was the name of the firm, I say we did have a good old time! No punishments, full pay when on the sick list, and furnished houses built of stone for all the workmen. A regular little Paradise, I tell you. The old Englishman himself, always so polite, shaking hands with everybody like a pal. Not like it is with us, I must say. A workman there had a decent life, and . . ."

"Stop talking all that rot!" The peasant grew suddenly furious, and waved his hand. "He goes on jawing about he doesn't know what, while I, like a fool, sit and listen to him."

"By God, it's the truth!" affirmed the lad with conviction.

"Humbug! That's a bit too thick," cried the peasant, growing more and more enraged. He got up and went to the corner, where he began to roll a cigarette, muttering to himself.

The locksmith quickly bent over to Sheviriof and whispered:

"It's six months since I left home. Perhaps the old girl has died of want by this time!" His grimy

face became convulsed. "If one cannot count on getting work here, what else is there left but the bridge and the river?" He leaned his elbows on the table and buried his fingers in his matted hair.

"Nonsense!"

"What else, then?" The locksmith raised his head for a moment. "Starvation, eh?"

Sheviriof smiled bitterly.

"They say that death by drowning is the most terrible. To die of starvation is pleasanter perhaps, and if you drown yourself, what does that prove? It is but one man less that's starving, and that's all the better for *them*."

"Well, what can I do?"

"Look for work, if you can't do something better," replied Sheviriof.

"I have been looking for it for six months. Nobody will employ me because I am a so-called 'politician.' I sleep anywhere, and have sometimes been without food for three days. If I should get any work now, I don't believe I should have the strength for it. The day before yesterday I went out begging; I have got as low as that. A lady passed me in the street, and I asked her for money."

"Did she give you anything?"

"No. She said she had no small change."

Sheviriof drummed on the table with his fingers.

Losing hope, the locksmith watched this nervous movement intently, while round them all was noise and laughter and swearing. The youth with the earring had gone across to the billiard-room, where his merry voice could be heard. In front of the window as before, legs rushed past. It gave one the impression

that it was always the same people going by, and that they walked up and down outside on purpose; going past and coming back, standing at the corner for a moment and then running past once more.

"Well, did you gain anything by the whole business?" asked Sheviriof.

"Of course I did!" cried the locksmith. His grimy face lost its hopeless expression as by magic; his eyes gleamed, and his head became erect. "We had to work, you see, with a mountain gang, and they are of all people the most dense. One can hardly expect anything else. All day long, from five o'clock in the morning till eight at night, under the earth. Then scuttle home to eat and sleep, and at four o'clock goes the whistle again. Mud, damp chills, and always explosions. In our mine there were two. The first time eighteen men were killed, and the second time two hundred and eighty-two. A regular convict's life! Send one of those fellows to Siberia, and he would say that it was a hundred times better. So you see, all the people there knew nothing and cared for nothing. Only the fellows in our billet were an intelligent lot of men, and everything was properly organized. In fact, at the beginning we were the only ones that worked the whole thing, and it was by no means easy to do. Spies everywhere. The slightest offence was immediately reported to the engineer: 'Ivanof, Petrof, or another, can't be trusted.' And then within twenty-four hours they would fire you out. All agitation was fearfully difficult, and at last we managed to set things moving in our billet."

The locksmith smiled proudly. "We had to fight

for everything; for Labour representatives, and the right to hold meetings; we settled the housing question; we improved the infirmary, and had the old doctor kicked out. He *was* a brute! We overhauled the library and rearranged it on our own lines."

"Were many of you shot down?" asked Sheviriof carelessly.

"No; at that time things were all right. Soldiers were there, but they did not dare to let them shoot us. They were afraid then; but later, of course . . ." The locksmith made a despairing gesture, and the look of enthusiasm vanished slowly from his gaunt visage. "The Black Hundred* joined us. Then there was a split, and the management as soon as it saw that everything was going smash, seized its chance, and then came all the trouble. Our representatives left the committee and were replaced by members of the Black Hundred and officials, our committee men were shoved into prison, and our library broken up."

"And you fellows calmly looked on?"

"Most of us on the committee were already in prison."

"I don't mean the committee, but the workmen themselves; the fellows whom you had been trying to influence?"

"Well, I told you just now they placed machine-guns opposite the mine."

"Oh, yes, yes, machine-guns," Sheviriof repeated absently.

* The Black Hundred were members of a Trades Union of real Russian people.

The locksmith's features became again convulsed as he continued:

"Ah! What they did, God only knows. Every sort of thing! Flogging, shooting, rape. . . . Members of the committee suffered most of anybody. I didn't come off so badly myself, as I was one of the first to be arrested. But the others had a very rough time of it. A Cossack tied our librarian to his saddle and galloped off with him to the town. His arms were pinioned, so that if he lagged behind they became twisted, and he fell in the dirt and was dragged along. But behind him rode another Cossack, who ran his lance into him to make him get up. What devils! Eh? Many people wept when they saw him like that."

"Oh, they wept, did they!" replied Sheviriof in a tone of scathing contempt. His features were calm and expressionless as usual, but he drummed harder than ever on the table with his fingers. The locksmith evidently understood, for his eyes flashed.

"Yes, they wept, and they'll weep again, but in these tears there is blood."

Sheviriof smiled coldly. "Your tears of blood are not much good," he said with scorn.

"Perhaps not, but there will be a day of vengeance," replied the locksmith.

"When? When you are all dead of starvation?"

The locksmith stared at him aghast, but Sheviriof did not flinch. Then, looking down and resting his head on his hands, the locksmith replied stubbornly, "What of that? Is *my* life of the slightest value in comparison?"

"No, it is of no value whatever," said Sheviriof,

cutting him short and rising from the table. The locksmith, who had buried his face in his hands, looked up suddenly as if to say something, but refrained.

"What price monkeys?" cried some one at an adjoining table, as he burst into a silly, drunken laugh. For a time Sheviriof stood there reflecting. His lips moved, though he said nothing. Then he smiled grimly and walked out with head erect. The grimy locksmith had not moved.

CHAPTER V

BENEATH its dome of cold, grey sky, the broad, straight thoroughfare stretched far away into the blue distance. As far as the eye could see it appeared to be one dark, motley crowd of human beings, hurrying hither and thither, hustling each other, and divided into two parts by the endless stream of vehicles and the tramway lines, while never for a moment appearing either to increase or to decrease.

The houses looked splendid with their large, shining windows, and the lamp-posts of the electric tramways were almost elegant in their effect. Here, even the air and the light of heaven seemed clearer and purer. It was easier to breathe than in the open, and one's blood coursed swifter through the veins.

With head erect, Sheviriof strode along, his hands plunged in his pockets. Immediately in front of him, trotted a corpulent gentleman. He wore a hat turned up at the side, and displayed a pink double neck, which looked like a soft furrow of flesh. He walked firmly yet jauntily, swinging his stick in his gloved hand. This head on its short pink neck kept turning carelessly in all directions, glancing with special pleasure at the ladies it passed. One could see that its owner had just dined, and being in a

good humour was enjoying the fresh air and the agreeable spectacle of pretty faces. For a long while Sheviriof had not noticed him, but the rosy neck being immediately in front of him, his stern glance rested at last thereon. As he watched it a dull and grievous thought came into his mind, impelling him to follow the fat neck. When a group of ladies barred his way, Sheviriof turned rapidly aside, and in so doing, pushed against an officer. But, without hearing the latter's furious exclamation, "Block-head," he persistently followed the neck. The strange sinister look in his eyes became more intense, and spoke of a power that was fierce and pitiless. If the fat man with the rosy neck could have turned round, and could have understood the meaning of this ruthless glance, he would have dashed into the crowd, and with distorted features shrieked aloud for help. If one could have translated into words the thoughts that surged in Sheviriof's burning brain, they would have been as follows, "Go your ways, go! But mark this, that when I meet any prosperous, well-fed man, I say to myself, 'He is well-fed, prosperous, and living his life, only because I allow him to do so. For me, the miserable arguments in favour of each man's sacred right to live, no longer exist.' I am the lord of thy life. No one may know the hour nor the day when the limit of my patience shall be reached, and I shall bring to justice all of you who for so long have crushed the life out of us, who have robbed us of sunshine and beauty and love, who have condemned us to a joyless life of eternal slavery. Perhaps then I shall refuse my permission for you to live and to enjoy. I stretch

out my hand, and from your pink skull, blood and brains will spurt forth and splash upon the pavement. I alone am the judge and the executioner. The life of every man is in my power, and I can fling it into the dust and dirt as soon as ever I will. Mark this and tell it to the whole world! I have spoken."

In a sudden frenzy of rage, Sheviriof for a moment saw nothing but the pink human neck shining in the twilight, and felt nothing but the cold handle of his revolver, which he grasped convulsively in his pocket while the corpulent gentleman walked on in front, swinging his stick, and the pink furrow of flesh quivered naïvely above the stiff white collar.

Sheviriof suddenly stepped forward and jerked his head in the air, as if he were giving vent to a mad shriek of fury and revenge. Then he stood still, smiled a strange smile, and wheeling sharply round, walked back. The plump little gentleman pursued his way as before, ogling the pretty women, and swinging his stick until he was soon lost in the noisy crowd.

Sheviriof crossed the street and was nearly run over by one of the tramways, though he did not notice the danger himself. Then he went along deserted by-streets leading to his own empty room, like some weird spirit emerging from the gloom to which it again returns.

CHAPTER VI

As he reached the threshold he could already hear hysterical cries, and in going along the dark passage he noticed that the door of a room was open in which he had heard children crying that morning.

Although he walked past quickly, he was able to see beds, boxes, and piles of ragged clothing lying about thereon. Two little half-naked children sat side by side on the edge of the bed, with dangling legs and frightened faces. A little girl of seven cowered near the table, while a tall, gaunt woman thrust her fingers through her tangled hair.

"Whatever are we going to do? Didn't you think of that, you fool, you wretch!" she screamed in despair.

Sheviriof hurried past, and on reaching his room, threw off his cloak and sat down on his bed listening attentively. The woman went on screaming and her cries rang out through the whole building as those of one who was drowning.

"Where are we to go with the children? Walk about the streets, begging? Or shall I sell myself so that your children may have bread? Why can't you speak? What are you thinking about? Where are we to go?"

Her voice became shriller and shriller; the dreadful wheezing tone of it suggested consumption.

"What stuff you talk! So you're a revolutionary! You're going to protest, are you? What right have you to protest when they only kept you on out of pity? Who do you suppose you are? Better men than you have had to live and bear it. Why couldn't *you* bear it? You ought to remember that you've got five hungry mouths at home! Proud, indeed! Beggars can't afford to be proud. Its bread, not pride, we want, you fool, you, you idiot, you wretch!" Here she was seized by a furious fit of coughing which ended in a dismal groan as that of some dog that is being crushed to death.

"Mashenka, you should fear God," murmured a voice in broken accents. "I couldn't do anything else. After all, I'm a man and not a dog."

The woman burst into shrill laughter.

"A fine sort of man *you* are! You're just a dog, and if you brought puppies into the world, at least hold your tongue and bear it. If you were a man we shouldn't have to herd together in this hole and get a meal once in three days. I shouldn't have to run about barefoot and wash other peoples' rags. A man indeed! You look like one! Damn you and your manliness! For eighteen months we have been starving till I begged them to give you the job, kneeling to them in tears, like a beggar. Trying to rescue Russia, indeed, when you're starving! Look at the patriot, the hero! My God! I curse the day that ever I set eyes on you. Wretch!"

"Mashenka, do fear God!" came the despairing rejoinder. "How could I have acted otherwise? They all went and they all hoped. I never thought. . . ."

"Well, you *ought* to have thought! Yes, *ought* to have thought! Perhaps the others haven't a lot of hungry mouths to feed. What right have you to risk things for other people? Did you ask *us*? Did you ask your children if they were willing to starve for your Russia? Did you ask them, I say?"

"I couldn't know. I was hoping to make life better for you all."

"Better, indeed!" screamed the woman, hysterically. "What right had you to dream of having a better life when you couldn't possibly have a worse one, when in the village we were almost begging from door to door; when I got consumption . . ."

Then she coughed as if her chest would burst in pieces.

"Look!" she gasped, "I'm dying!"

"Oh, Mashenka!" exclaimed her husband, and in that feeble voice there was so much grief, remorse and love that even Sheviriof's impassive countenance was contracted spasmodically.

"You and your Mashenka!" screamed the woman bitterly, "fine sort of Mashenka I look now! More like a corpse, do you hear? A corpse!"

"Mummy dear," cried a childish voice suddenly, "don't talk like that, mummy!"

"Oh, don't cry like that, for God's sake!" exclaimed the husband. "Why, you see I couldn't . . . Well, I couldn't . . . When they said to me . . . said to my face 'You brute! You donkey. . . .' Oh, do stop crying, for God's sake, stop! I'll . . . I'll hang myself, that I will. . . ."

"Aha! Hang yourself?" said the woman. And her tone was calm and fearfully distinct. "Hang

yourself, will you? And what's going to happen to *us?* You'll hang yourself, and these children are to die of starvation, eh? Livotchka may walk the streets, eh? All right, hang yourself! Go on! But mark you, while the rope is round your neck, I'll curse you!"

Sheviriof now heard a strange, dull thud, as if some one's head had struck the wall.

"Stop, stop!" cried the woman, rushing forward. "Don't don't, Liosha!"

There was a sound of struggling and of a chair overturned. Then came the mad, dull bumping of a human skull against the wall and screams and gurglings.

"Liosha, Lioshenka, don't, don't!" yelled the woman.

And then one could hear another sound, as if the head were being dashed against something soft. Probably she had thrust her hand between her husband's head and the wall to check the blows. All at once the children began to cry. First one voice, that of the elder girl probably, and then those of the two little boys, who with dangling legs were seated on the bed.

"Liosha, Lioshenka! don't, don't!" muttered the woman as if in delirium. "Forgive me! . . . Oh don't! It's all right! It's all right! Of course, you couldn't do anything else. They insulted you. Oh, Lioshenka, stop! stop!" She burst into hysterical wailing. Then all was still, and only a pitiful sound of sobbing could be heard, which ceased as twilight fell.

In the passage, behind the curtain, more fitful

whisperings were heard, and from time to time Sheviriof could hear snatches of the talk.

"Wouldn't obey, wasn't that it?"

"Insulted his chief. . . ."

"The overseer called him a blockhead, didn't he?"

"Men won't knock under nowadays, eh?"

"Fancy insulting the chief! So good to him, too! I never!"

Sheviriof drummed with his fingers on his knees. The door-bell rang loudly and the whispering ceased. Nobody answered the door and the bell rang again. More whisperings behind the curtain and scufflings, as if the old people were reluctant to move. The bell rang a third time and a sound of shuffling feet was heard along the passage.

"Why can't anybody open the door? Are you all asleep?" asked Aladief as he entered. Striding along the passage, he opened the door of his room and called out cheerily:

"Maximova, my samovar, please."

It seemed strange, this jovial voice, amid such grim, oppressive silence. No answer. Then Aladief called out:

"Ivan Fedosyeitch, is Maximova out?"

A servile voice from behind the curtain replied:

"Maximova has gone out for a little while, Sergei Ivanovitch, she is gone with Olga Ivanovna to church."

"Oh, I see," said Aladief. "Well, perhaps *you* could bring me the samovar?"

"Directly," replied the old fellow, as he shuffled along to the kitchen. Aladief began to hum a tune. Then he yawned and knocked at Sheviriof's door.

"Neighbour, are you in?" he called out. No answer.

Aladief waited some time, yawned again loudly, and rustled the papers in his hand. All was silent. In the kitchen the gurgling of the samovar could be heard, and there was a smell of crackling firewood.

The old woman had also crept out into the passage and glanced timidly in the direction of the teacher's room. From that room a strange feeling of depression and despair seemed to proceed, pervading the whole house. Perhaps Aladief felt something of it too, for he became restless and uneasy, and sighed at intervals.

There was something in the air that depressed every one. The old woman crept into the kitchen, rattled the china, and then brought the tea-things into Aladief's room.

"Why should you trouble, Maria Fedosyevna?" said Aladief pleasantly.

"Why not, Sergei Ivanovitch? I am always willing to oblige you, and besides how could you do it for yourself?" replied the old woman, in a sing-song voice. She stood at the door of the room and glanced at Aladief insinuatingly.

"What's the matter?" asked Aladief, yawning. He saw that she wanted to tell him something. Coming forward, she said in a whisper:

"Our teacher has been dismissed." She said this timidly, yet at the same time with a certain satisfaction.

"You don't say so! What for?" he asked sympathetically.

She came closer.

"He was rude to his superior. The head master

called him hard names, and instead of being humble, he insulted him."

"Oh, what a pity," replied Aladief in a vexed tone, "what will they do, now? They have absolutely nothing."

"You're right, Sergei Ivanovitch, nothing at all."

She nodded complacently.

"Maximova was telling me yesterday that they owed her two months' rent," said Aladief.

"They haven't paid any rent. No rent. . . ."

"It's a bad business!" sighed Aladief. "They'll be utterly ruined."

"Oh yes, they'll be ruined, sure enough, Sergei Ivanovitch. They'll be ruined. How can they be anything else? He ought to have had sense enough to hold his tongue, and perhaps they would have overlooked it. But then, it was God's will! Giving himself such airs as if he was a gentleman! So stuck-up! That's why he was kicked out. He ought to have knuckled under."

"How could he knuckle under when they insulted him to his face like that?" said Aladief irritably, while it was evident that something was passing through his mind.

"Oh, little father, humble folk like that, how can they afford to be offended? They must just bear it. It would have been all right if he hadn't . . ."

"Ah, but there are some things one can't stand!"

"Humble folk, little father, have to stand anything. When I was young I was parlourmaid at Count Araksin's. You've heard of Count Araksin, haven't you?"

"To the devil with him!"

The old woman started backwards; she was almost offended.

"Dear, dear, the devil, you said! Why the Count himself is in the Senate house! The houses he owns in Moscow and Piter * come to more than two. . . ."

"There, then, go on! What next?"

"Well, a bracelet belonging to one of the elder ladies had disappeared, and they suspected me. The Count flew into a passion—he had a shocking temper—and hit me three times in the face. Knocked out two of my teeth. Anybody else would have gone to law about it, but I put up with it. What do you think, Sergei Ivanovitch, it was the Count's brother who took the bracelet! He was hard up, and so he took the bracelet, that's what he did. But when it all came out, the Count himself gave me a hundred roubles, . . ." the old woman almost choked with delight, and her wrinkled visage was wreathed in smiles. "Now, if I hadn't borne that, I shouldn't have got anything from the Count. I had no witnesses except Ivan Fedosyeitch, who was the footman there, and he could never have given evidence against the Count."

"Why not?" asked Aladief angrily.

"Oh, sir, how could he go against the Count?"

"Why, didn't you tell me you were betrothed to him?"

"Ah well, betrothed!" the old woman seemed astonished, "yes, so I was, but to go against aristocrats like that! That would never have done! He was nobody. So I thought I'd better bear it, and I was right."

* A slang name for Petersburg.

"Shame!" cried Aladief as he spat in a fury and turned away.

The old woman stared at him sheepishly, and there were tears in her wizened eyes. At that moment the old man, pushing sideways through the doorway, brought in the samovar. When he had placed it on the table, he looked round anxiously for his wife and plucked her by the sleeve, and the old couple went shuffling down the passage and began whispering together behind the curtain as before.

Aladief poured out tea for himself, and was just about to drink it when the door-bell rang.

"Is Aladief at home?" asked a man's voice bluntly.

"Yes, sir, he is at home," replied the old man, who had opened the door. A sound of noisy footsteps ensued, followed by a knocking at Aladief's door.

"Come in!" cried the latter.

A little dark man entered with a face like a hawk, and wearing round spectacles which gave him a fearsome appearance.

"Ah," drawled Aladief, and his voice showed that he was not over-pleased at the visit."

"Good day!"

"Good day! Will you have some tea?"

"Tea be damned," replied the visitor angrily.

He carefully removed his overcoat and took out something that was thickly wrapped up in paper and tied up with string.

"What's that for?" asked Aladief sharply.

The little man laid the parcel carefully on the table and placed books all round it so that it should not fall on the floor. Aladief watched him uneasily.

"You'll soon see. They almost collared me. I only just managed to get away. Where the devil is one to stow a thing like this? I brought it to you, do you see? And this one, too."

Thrusting his hand into his pocket, he pulled out another parcel which he also laid on the table.

"To-morrow I'll come and fetch them."

Aladief was silent.

"It seems to displease you," said the manikin with a touch of contempt, "but you could really do me this little favour, now that you're quite safe where you are."

Aladief rose, and paced up and down the room, evidently much concerned.

"Of course you're one of the go-gently sort; an idealist, almost a Tolstoyan!" sneered the hawk-faced man, who showed continual nervous restlessness.

"It's no use your trying to offend me, Victor," replied Aladief gloomily. "Of course I'll look after this till to-morrow, but you understand . . ."

"Ah, you'll look after it! That's the main point," said the other quickly. "As for the rest, that's your affair; there's no need for us to quarrel."

"Yet we shall have to come to some understanding," replied Aladief firmly, his face crimson and his eyes flashing.

"What's the good?" asked the other, with a show of indifference.

"Because," said Aladief angrily, "because we've been friends for so many years, and now . . ."

"Oh, don't, please! What's the good of harping on such trivialities?"

Again Aladief flushed up and breathed hard.

"Perhaps for you they are trivialities, though I don't believe it. However, brag about it if you like, I don't care! But for me they are *not* trivialities, and I am determined to make you understand me."

"Oh, well," replied the other, blinking his eyes nervously, "it never troubled me—but if you particularly wish it . . ."

"Yes, I particularly wish it."

The other shrugged his shoulders and sat down with an air of resignation. This was not lost on Aladief who, controlling himself, proceeded in a calmer tone.

"First of all, I didn't leave you because I was afraid, and that you know perfectly well, Victor, so for once do be straightforward."

"No one ever supposed you did," replied the other carelessly.

"So that my only reason for leaving you was that I have wholly and entirely changed my views, not indeed as to the idea, but as to certain tactical methods employed. As I understand it . . ."

"Oh, good gracious me!" exclaimed Victor, jumping up, "spare me all that, please! We all know what you understand. *We* know! *Your* idea is that freedom cannot be brought about by force, but that the people must be educated, and so on."

The words fell from his lips so rapidly it seemed as if they had been imprisoned behind them for ever so long, and were now suddenly set free. He himself rushed about the room, his hawk-like face with its goggles turned in all directions, and his hands, with their claw-like fingers, gesticulating wildly.

Aladief stood in the middle of the room, unable to

utter a word in reply. To him it was inconceivable that he could not be understood, and above all that this man who had lived with him, loved him and believed in him for so long, should not understand him. Yet every moment he felt more and more convinced that an impassable barrier had arisen between them, making all words of no avail. How strange it seemed that these two, formerly such bosom friends, were now, as it were, speaking in a strange language merely because Aladief had become convinced that a murder must always be a murder, no matter in whose name it is committed. Only love, only that endless patience which in the course of centuries leads human beings step by step nearer to each other can free history from the bondage of oppression and ruthless might. Compared with such titanic influence, the influence of centuries, what could a little piece of metal and dynamite achieve which hurled by the hand of some malcontent, splashes blood on a couple of inches of earth and rouses legions of rebellious and revengeful spirits? Aladief sighed heavily, and clenched his strong hands.

"Ah, well! It can't be helped! I see that we shall never understand each other," he said gloomily, as he sat down at the table, leaning his head on his hands.

"Of course we shan't understand each other," was the furious rejoinder, "and it's quite useless to waste words about it."

Aladief did not answer. For a moment the little man stood still as if irresolute, then in his former bustling fashion he blurted out:

"At any rate this stuff can stop here with you till to-morrow?"

"Oh, my God, what does that matter!" replied Aladief, "I don't care. Whether it's here or there, what does it matter?"

"All right! That'll do splendidly. So good-bye till to-morrow. I'll call to-morrow." The little man caught up his hat and thrust out a lean hand. Aladief slowly held out his, but the other did not grasp it. The round spectacles appeared to be reflecting. Then all in a minute he fairly flung Aladief's hand aside and said:

"Perhaps I shan't come myself, and some one else may. The password is 'Ivan Ivanovitch.'"

"Good," replied Aladief without looking up.

"So good-bye." Thrusting his hat on his head, the little man rushed towards the door. For a moment he stopped there.

"It's a great pity," he said in an altered tone of voice, and behind those gleaming spectacles his keen little eyes were moist. Yet he instantly recovered himself, nodded his head and disappeared. Aladief sat at the table, silent and depressed.

CHAPTER VII

Dusk was falling as Maximova and Olienka the sempstress came back from church. They brought with them a faint odour of incense, and in their eyes there was still a look of dreamy devotion.

Olienka did not even take off her shawl, but made it just slip from her shoulders as she sat down at the table, letting her pale thin hands fall in her lap.

Maximova also appeared to be lost in thought. She suddenly sighed as if awakening from a dream, and began to fold up her heavy Turkish wrap of bright colours. As usual her face looked hard and careworn. She glanced at Olienka and muttered, as if to herself:

"We must make ourselves look a bit smart."

"What?" cried the girl, starting backwards, as she turned her bright eyes towards Maximova and blushed.

"We must make ourselves look a bit smart, I said," replied the old woman, raising her voice; "Vasili Stepanovitch promised to come here to-night about seven. You had better make yourself look nice, eh?"

"Coming this evening?" exclaimed Olienka in a helpless voice, turning deadly pale, as if her whole vitality, quitting her body, had become centred in her two bashful eyes.

"Why not? If not this evening, then it will be to-morrow. It won't interfere with what's got to be, and one doesn't often get such a chance. Lots of girls in the town like you would be glad of it. Such a rich sweetheart as that!"

Olienka's arms quivered to the very tips of her fingers as she turned to the other with tearful pleading eyes.

"Maximova, best wait till to-morrow. My head aches, Maximova!"

There was such a note of horror and distress in that youthful voice, that Sheviriof, seated behind the door in his dark room, turned his head and began to listen more attentively.

"Oh, my poor dear one," sobbed Maximova, "what will you do? I know . . ." she was going to say, "what is in store for you," but she stopped short, and merely said, "you'll do nothing."

"Maximova," said Olienka in a trembling voice, holding her hands as if in prayer, "I would rather go to work——"

"Work indeed!" exclaimed Maximova irritably; "what are you good for? Richer girls than you go on the streets, but you're so silly and so stupid. As if you would be ruined by a trifle like that! You'd better listen to me. When I am dead, or when I'm quite blind, what'll become of *you* I should like to know?"

"I shall go into a convent, Maximova. I should love to be a nun! It's so nice in a convent, so quiet."

Maximova sighed. "You silly thing! Why they wouldn't have you in a convent! To go there means

money or else rough work, and what work can *you* do? What's the use of talking?" she continued, with a gesture of impatience; "you'd better go with Vasili Stepanovitch. At least you'd be your own mistress and able to support me into the bargain. They say that Vasili Stepanovitch has got about seven thousand in the bank."

"He is a horrible man, Maximova!" murmured Olienka, "so coarse! Just like some low peasant."

"And I suppose you expect some fine gentleman, eh? No, fine gentlemen are not for the likes of us, Olienka. Be thankful to get an honest man."

"He has not read anything, Maximova. I asked him if he liked Tchekov, and he said, 'In our business we've no time for such rubbish.'" And Olienka imitated his gruff bass voice, though her large eyes were full of shining tears.

"He is quite right, too!" cried Maximova angrily; "not read anything indeed! Where's the good of reading? He is a business man, not a simpleton like you."

"Oh Maximova, you don't understand or you wouldn't talk like that. The one best thing in the world is to be got from books. Take Tchekov, for instance. When you read him, he simply makes you cry. Oh, he is wonderful!"

Olienka held her hands to her cheeks and shook her head.

"Go along, you and your books!" The old woman was angry now; "Very likely he *is* wonderful, but he is not for *us*. Look here, every day I get more blind. Yesterday when clearing the table, I broke a glass. In a month's time I shall probably have to

go to the poor-house. I used to see like you do, once. I was always sewing; and now see what sewing has done for me, and I wasn't like *you* are, for when you earn five roubles and manage to get two out of it, you are thankful! Not a rag to your back, and you talk about books! Books, if you please! What on earth are you thinking about?"

Old Maria now crept into the room.

"It's worse than death, Maximova; he is a peasant, and would probably beat me!" exclaimed Olienka in a despairing tone.

"Come, why should he do that?" asked Maximova.

"And if he did, what's a beating?" mumbled Maria, at the door, "you must just bear it, Olga Ivanovna."

"What?" cried Olienka in alarm.

"You must just bear it, I tell you," repeated the old woman. "Perhaps he'll beat you once or twice and then leave off. They're all like that; submission is what they want. So if he beats you, just take it quietly. He'll soon stop it, it's nothing much."

Olienka stared at her in horror, as if some hideous monster had crept in from the passage and was coming towards her. She caught up her dress and bent forward across the table, but Maria had already forgotten her, and had turned to Maximova as her wizened eyes sparkled maliciously:

"Our teacher's been dismissed!"

"What!" cried Maximova, "dismissed did you say? For what reason?"

"Because he insulted his superiors. The chief dropped on to him, and then he sauced him back. So he got the kick-out. It's awful to see how mad Maria

Petrovna is about it," said the old hag in a hurried whisper, as she kept looking round at the door.

Maximova looked at her in amazement.

"Why they owe me three months' rent! This very day she promised to pay me at least a part of what she owes me. What's going to happen?" she faltered.

"They'll never pay anything now. How should they? Why, they'll all have to starve."

"They don't suppose I'm going to keep them here for nothing, do they? I've nothing to eat myself."

After a few moments' reflection, she suddenly turned on her heel and went quickly out of the room. Olienka, who had hardly understood anything that had been said, looked scared at her departure, and the old woman slunk timidly into the passage and disappeared behind the curtain. In the teacher's room all was still. The children were huddled together in a corner, and the teacher and his wife were sitting together at the window, their heads silhouetted against the waning light.

"Maria Petrovna!" called Maximova from the doorway in a quiet, firm tone, being conscious of her power.

The teacher and his wife quickly turned their heads.

"The rent that you promised to give me to-day, can I have it?

The two dark forms moved simultaneously and were silent.

"Very well," said the old woman, still with deadly calm, "you'll have to clear out, as I told you. To-morrow I shall let the room. The three months' rent you owe me must be left for your honesty to settle.

It's my own fault for being such a fool as to trust you, but I don't care to go on doing so any longer, thank you ! "

The teacher's wife did not move, but he hurriedly got up and went to the door, almost pushing Maximova into the passage.

" Look here, I was going to ask you if it wouldn't be possible just to— I'll try and get another place. I've had several things offered to me, so, if you could . . . you know . . ."

Maximova sighed and made a gesture of refusal.

" I can't, sir ! " replied Maximova, stepping back and flinging up her hands. " If it only rested with *me !* But the *Dvornik* is always worrying me. I shall be turned out myself. I had been counting on your rent, and now you tell me this ! "

" Maximova," began the teacher in a hurried whisper, as he glanced back at the door, " you see, I have lost my situation, and now I had to get some of my pay in advance because the children wanted shoes, and my wife had to have things. You know how cold it's been, and she has been coughing, so I haven't got a single kopeck left. Nobody else would take us in, and they always want the rent in advance. But you know us. Just put yourself in my position ! For God's sake, think what it means ! "

" No, I can't ! A shirt comes first, before a coat. I'm very sorry for you, but I can do nothing. You had a job that you ought to have held on to with your teeth, and it's your fault if you've lost it."

" Yes, yes, I know it's my fault, but not the children—they're not to blame."

"The children are *your* children, and because of that you ought to have put up with it."

"But listen to me a moment, Maximova . . ."

"Where's the good of listening?" she retorted, becoming insolent. "What's the good of humbling yourself to me? I can't help you. You should have talked like that to them."

Suddenly in the doorway a haggard female form appeared, with dishevelled hair.

"Liosha, leave her alone!" she exclaimed hysterically, "as if people like that had a spark of pity! Curse the lot of them! They're not worth your little finger, so don't lower yourself!"

"What are you cursing about?" began Maximova, "perhaps we have more pity than the likes of you!"

"You've got pity? Why, you're birds of prey, not human beings. A man is hard hit and you preach sermons to him! Insult him first, and then kick him into the street! Don't condescend to explain matters! Clear out of this, the whole lot of you!" she shouted.

"What do you mean by 'out of this'?" asked Maximova, raising her voice; "I needn't leave my own house . . ."

"Get out with you!" shrieked the other, stretching out her gaunt arm with a gesture that was almost tragic. "What do you want? Do you want us to go? Don't be alarmed; we're going—going to-morrow! But at present just you clear out!"

"Mashenka, don't!" whispered her husband in confusion.

"Get out, get out, curse you! You've worried me to death."

Seizing her hair with both hands, she rushed back into the room and her husband hurriedly followed her.

Then there was a sound of whispering and of a woman's excited talk, which, however was unintelligible.

Maximova remained silent for a moment and then as if she were to blame, withdrew.

Aladief standing at the door of his room, called her.

"Maximova, could you come here a moment?"

As the old woman, looking utterly perplexed, entered, he said with a slight show of hesitation:

"Can't you possibly wait a little while? You see in what a position they are, don't you?"

"My God! I can do nothing," was the answer, "it's not that I want to be nasty. The *dvornik* has only given me till the day after to-morrow; and if I don't pay then, he'll turn me out. I was counting on their money."

"But still, perhaps you could? . . ."

"I expect you think that I am quite heartless? I am an old woman and I shan't live long."

"No," said Sergei Ivanovitch.

"When she screamed at me like that, it was like stabbing me with a knife. But what can I do? Here have I been waiting for three months, and I went down on my knees to the *dvornik*. Those who are actually starving, live on nothing but pity, but poor folk like myself, can't always afford to pity others; there comes a time when they have to pity themselves. It's not I that am hard; it's life itself."

Aladief looked at the old woman in amazement. Opposed to hers, his attitude seemed so feeble.

"Yes, Sergei Ivanovitch," she continued, "for poor devils like us, it's more difficult to have pity than for other folk. A rich man, if he gives away a kopeck, its a pleasure to him; but if *I* give away a kopeck, it means a mouthful less for myself, and for the sake of this mouthful, I shall soon be quite blind, and never be able to see the sun again. And if people don't have pity upon me then, I shall just die in the street like some old dog. What's the good of talking about being hardhearted; one has got to understand things first."

The old woman sighed. Aladief stood and listened, his long arms hanging helplessly at his sides.

"Look here, Maximova," he began nervously, "suppose I pay you a month's rent, how would that be?"

"Well—yes, oh yes, that might do. I am not such a monster after all. I'll manage to get along somehow—might pawn something, perhaps. But they've nothing to pawn, I'm afraid."

"I'll find something for you, Maximova," murmured Aladief.

The old woman looked hard at him:

"*You* will? You haven't got it."

"But I can manage to find the money—borrow it from a friend. Don't worry about it any more to-day, and meanwhile I'll go and see about it. It's close by. Yes; so let them have tea and lights. See, here's some tea, sugar, and rolls; take mine while I run across."

Without a word Maximova took the tea and sugar and went out, shaking her grizzled head.

Aladief stood there for a time to collect his thoughts.

He had an impression that he had managed things rather clumsily, but what chiefly concerned him was how to find the money as soon as possible. Seizing his cloak and hat, he rushed downstairs, taking three steps at a bound.

CHAPTER VIII

About seven o'clock, Vasili the tradesman arrived. He stamped about a long while in the passage with his new goloshes, carefully wiped his red face, and as he entered the room his boots creaked slightly. Maximova had already got the samovar ready, and on a plate she had placed a herring and some vodka. Olienka was sitting at the table, straight and slender as a blade of grass. She turned her large, melancholy eyes towards the door.

"Look, Olienka, who is coming to pay us a visit!" said Maximova in an affectedly coaxing voice, as if speaking to a child. The tradesman in his long varnished boots came in as gingerly as if he had been walking on ice.

"Good evening," he said, as he offered them his big hot hand with its stiff fingers. Without looking up, Olienka silently gave him her pale, slender one.

Her breath came quicker and her cheeks glowed.

"That's right! While you two have a chat, I'll just go and make the tea," said Maximova in the same forced voice. Then she went out, closing the door behind her. Olienka remained seated, her hand resting on the tray; her figure with its delicate outlines might have been wrought in marble. The tradesman sat opposite to her, massive and ponderous

as some huge sack of flour. Till now he had only seen Olienka in church, or when she came for a moment to his shop. He now regarded her attentively, as if taking stock of a possible purchase. Olienka was conscious of his glances at her bosom, her feet and her arms; her pale cheeks glowed for very shame and fear. Refined and graceful as she was, it seemed difficult to believe that her frail body could be made to minister to bestial appetites. The tradesman's eyes moistened, and his whole body seemed to become suddenly inflated.

"What's your favourite employment?" he asked in a thin voice which could hardly emerge from his bloated throat. "I didn't disturb you, I hope."

"What?" exclaimed Olienka in a startled tone, raising her plaintive eyes.

"Well I never, if she isn't stone deaf!" thought the tradesman. "Well, all the better! She is a fine girl."

Once more he scrutinized her physical charms, noticing her soft, slender limbs which were plainly visible beneath her thin dress.

"I was asking you what was your favourite amusement."

"Amusement? I have none," timidly replied Olienka.

The fat man chuckled.

"You don't say so! Pretty young ladies are fond of amusements, I'm sure. You must excuse me, but I can on no account believe that so charming a young lady as yourself, sits working all day long and spoiling her eyes. Your eyes were certainly never made for that."

Olienka again looked at him with her large bright eyes, and it suddenly came into her simple mind that he was sympathizing with her. She felt convinced that he was really a good, decent fellow.

"I'm fond of books," she said with a smile, "I love reading."

"Oh, books! What is there in books? When we get to know each other a little better, then you must let me take you to the theatre. That will be more interesting than poring over books."

Olienka suddenly became more animated, and she blushed slightly.

"Oh, no! How can you say that? Some books are so beautiful; Tchekov's for instance. Whenever I read anything by Tchekov I always cry. Everybody in his books is so poor, so much to be pitied."

The tradesman listened; his head with its low brow and muddy eyes, was bent sideways.

"All of them aren't really so unhappy," he observed in a honeyed voice; "there are happy ones too. Of course, if they've nothing to eat. . . . But take a man like myself, for instance . . ." he pushed his chair closer to Olienka, eyed her bosom, and seemed ready to speak at greater length. His whole mien became more familiar, but Olienka began in her simple, dreamy way:

"Oh no! Human beings are all unhappy. Even those who think they're happy, aren't really so. I should love to be a Sister of Mercy, and help all those who are in trouble; or a nun . . ."

"Come now, why should you want to be a nun?" interposed the tradesman, with an odious leer, "aren't there men enough to go round?"

Olienka failed to catch his meaning. She had never in her life lent an ear to such suggestive talk; thus she understood nothing.

"Oh, to be a nun would be beautiful!" she exclaimed dreamily. "I once stayed for a fortnight with my aunt at Voronesh, in the convent. My aunt is a nun; she is very old. She hasn't spoken for fourteen years. Such a saint she is! It was so beautiful there! The church was so quiet with all the candles burning, and the lovely singing! One hardly knew if one was on earth or in heaven! The convent is on a mountain, and from the terrace you can look down on the river and the fields beyond, for ever so far. You can hear the geese cackling in the meadows, and the swallows twittering all round. I was there in springtime, when the apple-trees were in blossom, and it was all so beautiful that I sometimes longed to be a bird, so that I could soar above the mountain-tops, away, away!"

Her voice trembled with emotion, and with her wrapt expression and quivering lips, she seemed like some white vestal.

He listened to her, his blubber lips parted, and his head with its fat, red neck aslant like a bull's.

"H'm!" said he, "that's all very fine I dare say, but in the world a pretty girl can get all sorts of amusement without going to a convent for it." He sniggered as he said this, and leered amorously at Olienka. But the leer was lost upon her. Her gaze was fixed in imagination upon spacious meadows, broad rivers, and white convent-walls domed by the vast blue sky. Maximova now came in with the samovar.

Unbuttoned in demeanour, and perspiring freely, the tradesman felt as if anointed with oil.

"I love to see girls with a slender waist like yours, Olga Ivanovna! I can't think how you women manage it. It's just as if you could span it with your fingers, but lower down, pardon the liberty, it's so round . . ." The last words came to him suddenly, for he had meant to say something else, so that his face flushed and he caught his breath. In fact he had stretched out his hand involuntarily, but on seeing Maximova enter, he drew it back. Then he mopped his perspiring forehead.

With Maximova he then drank vodka and ate some of the herring, facetiously observing that all girls began by dreaming of convents, but if they got married and their husbands were old or impotent, they soon killed them off.

"Yes, that's true," replied the old woman, bustling about, "but they could never say that of you, Vasili Stepanovitch, you're still going strong."

The tradesman burst out laughing, and fixed his lustful gaze upon Olienka.

"Yes, I can safely say that's true! My late lamented certainly had nothing to complain of. 'Oh, you bull!' she used to say to me, and get quite cross," and he laughed again while staring at Olienka.

Her pale little face grew paler and more disconsolate beneath his ruttish glance; and his fat, triumphant, bestial laugh was horrible to hear.

When the tradesman had gone, and Maximova, a little tipsy now, had shown him out, Olienka broke down and sobbed. For a long time she wept, her blonde head hung forward and her soft shoulders

shook, while little locks of her dishevelled hair resembled shining feathers in the wind.

The air was heavy with the odour of herrings, wet leather and sweat, and the girl's form seemed strangely small and fragile.

CHAPTER IX

Aladief had come home, and was writing at his table when Olienka entered his room. It was full of tobacco-smoke. She came there in her usual quiet, timid way, shook hands, and sat down at the table, so that her face remained in shadow and only her hands were in the lamplight.

"Well, what is it, Olga Ivanovna?" he asked kindly.

Olienka was silent.

"Did you read my books? And did you like them?" he asked again.

"Yes," she replied faintly.

"That's good," said Aladief. "Look, I have got another nice story for you here. The heroine is like you, sweet and gentle, and she goes into a convent, as you want to do."

Olienka shuddered, as if with cold.

"I'm not going into a convent," she faltered.

Aladief noticed how her lips quivered.

"Thank goodness!" he said gaily, "and why not?"

Olienka looked down as she answered in a whisper, "I am going to be married."

"Married? This is a surprise! To whom?" he asked, as the expression of his face changed.

"To Vasili Stepanovitch, who has a shop in our house."

"Oh, to *him!*" exclaimed Aladief, with a look of pity and disgust. Recovering himself, however, he said with an effort to be cheery:

"Oh, that's good news! I must congratulate you."

Olienka was silent. Her fingers moved slightly, and she looked at the floor. As Aladief watched her, he pictured to himself that bestial-looking shopkeeper beside this delicate, frail little woman. Pity, disgust, and jealousy all took possession of his soul.

Olienka apparently wished to speak, but could not. Aladief felt strangely moved.

"What were you going to say?" he asked.

Again her lips quivered, and she suddenly rose to go.

"Where are you going? Sit down, do!" said Aladief, getting up also. But still Olienka remained speechless, clasping her soft little hands.

"Sit down again," he repeated, conscious that the right words failed him.

"No, I must go."

"Then, good-bye! How extraordinary you are lately!" he exclaimed. Again she looked at him with her large mournful eyes, and then suddenly went to the door.

"Then you won't take the books?" he asked mechanically.

Olienka stopped.

"I shan't want them any more," she faltered, as she opened the door, but on the threshold she again stood still, meditating. He saw her shoulders heave, yet he said nothing, and she went out. Aladief knew

that her going was final, when she might have stayed with him always. He stood there in his room with an aching heart. He could see that the girl in her dire distress had come to him for help, and he slowly began to comprehend the words that she had expected him to utter.

There was a sharp knock at the door.

"Come in!" said Aladief cordially, for he thought that Olienka had come back. The door opened and Sheviriof entered.

"Can I speak to you?" he asked in a cold, almost an official voice.

"Oh, it's you!" said Aladief in a tone of welcome; "why, of course. Do sit down."

"I only came in just for a moment, to have a word with you," said the other, taking the same seat that Olienka had just left.

"Will you have a cigarette?"

"I don't smoke. Tell me, have you been giving Maximova money for the teacher?" He asked the question quickly, as if a matter of great importance depended upon it.

Aladief became confused and turned red.

"Yes, I did; that's to say, for the moment—until they get a bit straight."

Sheviriof looked hard at him.

"Do you intend to help all poor hungry folk—all?" he asked.

"No," replied Aladief in astonishment. "I really have never thought about it. I simply helped because there was the opportunity."

"Quite so, but where's the good? There are heaps of people like that."

"Well, one mustn't think about that. One must help when one can, and there's an end of it. Thank God if we can!"

"Good! And do you know why that girl came to see you?" continued Sheviriof, as if he were the priest in a confessional. Aladief flushed once more. The strange tone and the strange questions annoyed him.

"I don't know," he said.

"She came to you because she is in love with you. Because her soul is pure, and it is you that have awakened it. Now in her extremity she comes to you in quest of that moral rectitude that you have taught her to love; yet what were you able to tell her? Nothing! you, the dreamer, the idealist! I ask you to conceive what inhuman torture you have provided for her! Are you not afraid that when she has wedded that brutal lump of flesh, she will curse you all for having hoodwinked her with your golden dreams of a happy life? I tell you it's horrible; yes, it is horrible when one digs up corpses to show them their own corruption. I say it is horrible to make of the human soul something pure and costly, only in order that its tortures may be more refined, and its griefs more acute."

"You are wrong," murmured Aladief, replying to the statement, "because she is in love with you."

"No, I'm sure of it. All day long I have been sitting in my dark room. I can hear everything there. It is true."

Aladief was silent and looked downwards.

"You are always dreaming of the future happiness of mankind," continued Sheviriof, as he rose, "but

do you know, have you any clear conception through what a stream of blood you must wade towards this future? You are deceiving people. You let them dream of something they will never experience. You let them live and become food for swine, these swine that grunt and squeal with delight that their victim is so tender and beautiful, so super-sensitive to all the sufferings it must undergo. Can't you understand that all your fantastic dreams of the future, even though they should some day be realized, would never outweigh the ocean filled with the tears of all such hapless maidens, and downtrodden, starving folk?"

"What do you mean?" stammered out Aladief.

After a pause Sheviriof said:

"Come this way"; and he went out of the room, Aladief following him as if hypnotized. The whole house seemed wrapped in slumber. Sheviriof opened the door of his room and beckoned to Aladief to come in.

"Hark!" he whispered.

At first Aladief heard nothing but the sound of his own beating heart. In the darkness he could see nothing. Then he heard a faint sound of weeping.

"It is Olienka!" he thought, but then he could distinguish a dual sound as of two voices, then three, then a dozen—a thousand voices, joined in one common lament.

"What is that?" he asked in amazement.

But Sheviriof did not reply.

"Come out!" he said roughly, as he grasped the other's hand, and they went back into the lighted room. Releasing Aladief's hand, Sheviriof looked him full in the face.

"Did you hear that?" he said. "I can't bear to listen to it. What are you going to give to *these* people instead of your golden future which you promise them? You prophets of the coming race! Curse you all!"

Amazed and indignant, Aladief exclaimed:

"And who are you, if you please? You that ask like this, what will *you* give?"

He clenched his powerful hands.

"*I?*" asked Sheviriof, almost mockingly.

"Yes, *you!* What right have you to speak in this way to me?"

"*I* shall give nothing. It may be that I shall remind others only of what they have forgotten. Yes; but that won't suffice!"

"What do you mean? What's that you say?" Aladief felt suddenly alarmed.

Sheviriof smiled, as if astonished at the simplicity of such a question, and he slowly moved to the door.

"Stop!" cried Aladief. "Where are you going?"

Sheviriof looked round, nodded, and went out.

"Look here! I say! you must be simply mad!" cried Aladief in a fury. He thought he could hear Sheviriof's laugh as the door closed. For a moment he remained standing there, his heart beating violently, and his head throbbing. He flung himself on his bed and buried his face in the pillow.

In the darkness the vision of a fair face with large, questioning, tearful eyes, rose up before him. Then something black and monstrous approached, that with bestial laughter destroyed his joyous, radiant dream.

CHAPTER X

It was night, and in the house all was silent as the tomb. Through Sheviriof's open window the light beyond showed faint and grey. Suddenly he trembled violently and opened his eyes. Immediately opposite him, at the foot of the bed, stood a female form. It was that of the wife that he had once loved and who had passed over to that place from which, as he believed, there was no return.

"Lisa!" he cried, "whence do you come? What grieves you?"

With its face buried in its hands, the figure seemed to sway slightly. Suddenly Sheviriof knew why it had come.

It was because his wife foresaw all that was to happen, and, moved by a love that is stronger than death, she desired on this last night of his life to mourn for him.

"Lisa, do not weep!" he cried in a tone of entreaty, though he felt that words were useless, and that she could never answer. He held out his hands to her, but with its face still covered, the phantom retreated and slowly vanished. But for a time he seemed to see the dark blouse, the same in which he last saw her alive; those slender fingers, and her hair done in the old charming way.

Leaping out of bed, he rushed to the door and touched it, as though unable to believe his own senses.

"An apparition!" he thought; "I must be ill. Perhaps I'm going mad! What if all my thoughts and aspirations are but the product of a diseased brain?"

Then he walked firmly yet silently across the room and lay down. Yet, after a while, he suddenly started up, and held his breath. Down below somewhere, yet not in the house itself, he could hear cautious steps. Some one seemed to be coming upstairs.

The steps came nearer and nearer, and the sound was that of heavy boots on the stone staircase. Sheviriof sat up in bed and listened. Some one stood before the door, and appeared to be listening also. There was a long silence, and at last Sheviriof thought that it was only the blood beating in his temples.

"It's only my imagination," he said to himself, as he lay back on the pillow with a sense of relief. But at the same moment, with eyes wide opened, and just as if he had been hurled out of bed, he suddenly stood barefoot on the cold flooring of his room. A faint sound, as of clanking iron, could be heard. They were trying to open the house-door. Like a ghost, he hurriedly put on his clothes, and as he was fastening up his boots he heard another noise. Motionless he listened again, and then began to dress in even greater haste. He could hear several people cautiously ascending the stairs.

"They are coming!"

For a moment he stood there irresolute, then having put on his hat and cloak, he opened the door and

looked out into the passage. An idea flashed like lightning through his brain. He recollected that the window of the kitchen, in which he had recently gone to get water, was close to the fireproof wall of the adjoining house. It was not a double window. He crept along the passage like a cat, and stopped for a moment at the corner of it where the two old people slept. He could hear them snoring feebly behind the curtain; then he noiselessly opened the kitchen door. In the kitchen it was quite light. On the hearth he noticed the gleam of crockery; a cold samovar on the table seemed as if it were asleep. The cat jumped off the stove on to the floor, and purring, with tail erect, ran away. There was an odour of charcoal and of sour cabbage soup. Sheviriof went to the window and looked out. Through the dim, dusty panes he could hardly see anything except a strip of luminous cloud, and a grey, perpendicular wall. He looked round once more and gently opened the window. The stone pavement lay far beneath him, white and gleaming. Again he turned his head and listened intently. At that moment the bell rang; a living warning that seemed to disturb the slumber and the silence of the whole world. Carefully and dexterously Sheviriof clambered on to the leads outside the window, glanced at the awful abyss, and jumped off. As by a miracle he alighted, dazed and trembling, on the roof below, and, crawling down its slanting sides, he disappeared. The sky looked coldly down on this vast forest of chimneys, while beyond them, at the horizon's edge, there was a glimpse of the sea, its dark blue colour slowly paling in the light of the coming day.

CHAPTER XI

At the shrill sound of the bell, which seemed to be ringing in his room, Aladief awoke with a start. Instinctively he put out his hand for a cigarette, yet at the same moment he felt a pang at his heart, and as he groped for the matches, he sat up and listened anxiously. He could hear Maximova moving about in her room, as she yawned while putting on her gown, bumping against something, and shuffling along the passage.

"Who's there?" she asked in a sleepy, suspicious voice. "A telegram *? For whom is the telegram?"

Perhaps she received a reply, but in so low a voice that Aladief could not hear what was said.

"There they are!" he said to himself, as a whirlwind of fears and presentiments rushed through his brain. The little parcel and the papers which the hawk-faced manikin had left in his possession suddenly rose up before his eyes and assumed hideous dimensions.

He almost shouted out to Maximova not to open the door, and, leaping out of bed, he rushed into the passage. But there, clear and inevitable, came the grating sound of the bolt being withdrawn, and the

*"A telegram" is the usual reply to a landlord's enquiry when the Russian police raid a house at midnight.

dull beat of many human feet in heavy iron-heeled boots. In a moment the whole world seemed to have been roused, and shrill whistles and cries broke the silence. Clad in his shirt, Aladief, looking gaunt and haggard, rushed wildly about the room. Everything in it could now be clearly discerned. A moment before it had appeared to be plunged in darkness, but now in the grey light of dawn he could see the table with his unfinished work upon it, his cigarettes, the boots under the bed, and the pictures on the walls. All looked exactly as usual, neat and cosy and nice.

"But whom do you want to see?" asked Maximova's trembling voice.

The answer to her question could not be heard. Then the old woman uttered a shriek, and clasped her hands in despair.

Immediately afterwards the tramp of heavy footsteps could be heard along the passage. Without reflecting why or wherefore, Aladief rushed to the door and noiselessly turned the key. Then he seized the parcel lying on the table, which seemed as heavy as a thousand hundredweight, held it for a moment in his hand, and rushed to the window.

"It will explode! No matter!" he thought, as he stood at the half-opened window through which came a breath of soft, fresh morning air. "No matter! Later on, one can deny all knowledge of it."

In feverish confusion he thrust the packet through the open window, and for a moment it hung four storeys high above the pavement below. He was about to unclasp his fingers when another thought

darted through his brain; a thought so desperate, so horrible, that he moaned like some wounded animal.

"What am I doing? The papers, the addresses! They'd find them all in the yard, down below! Burn them? There's no time! Then, am I to perish in order to save others? But I told them what I thought! I begged them to leave me alone. . . . What right have they now to count upon me?"

The whole household was roused by this time. Somewhere children began crying; there were exclamations of astonishment, and groans. Next door, in Sheviriof's room, loud, angry voices could be heard as the furniture was being noisily moved about.

"Must have cleared out. . . .Perhaps he's run across to a neighbour, sir. . . . A student? For God's sake, keep that gun out of my way! You're surely not going to shoot us all!"

Suddenly some one knocked at Aladief's door. The knocking was so resolute and so courteous that he could almost imagine who it was on the other side of the bolted door: a polite officer of the police, smooth-mannered, with pitiless, transparent eyes. Then, moving noiselessly from the window, he placed the bomb on the table, picked it up again and very nearly dropped it. Then he thrust it under the mattress.

There was another knock at the door.

"Be so good as to open the door for a moment," said an unknown voice. The tone of it was flattering, and yet uncanny. Aladief did not answer. His inborn, lifelong hatred of such people utterly overcame him, and without waiting to reflect upon the consequences of his act, he knelt down in front of

the black stove door, and with feverish haste began to tear up the papers. The little iron door creaked plaintively on its hinges, and the noise of the rustling papers seemed to echo through the house.

"Open the door at once, or we'll break it down!" cried a stern, angry voice.

There were evidently others outside the door now, and suddenly a violent battery began against it.

"I shall be too late!" he thought in an agony. He pictured to himself the fate of all those upon which the destruction of these papers depended. Should their lives be forfeited, or his? In a moment the whole gigantic work which meant the implicit surrender of hundreds of young pure souls flashed across his mind, and a crowd of familiar faces seemed turned towards him with hope shining in their eyes. He felt that the part he played himself was but small and insignificant. "What matter?" said a voice within him, a warm voice full of tears and ecstasy; "be it so! Better that I, not they. . . ."

There was now a crowd outside the door, as if not human beings, but a horde of wild beasts were about to burst it open.

"Open the door at once! Surrender!" cried several voices.

Suddenly wild rage seemed to overcome Aladief. He longed to shout them down, to sing, to whistle, and to hurl at them the maddest and most obscene insults. How a heavy revolver got into his hand he could not tell. Perhaps he had seized it at the same time as the papers on the table.

"Surrender! Come on, let's smash the door down!"

"Smash away, and be damned to you!" he roared, as he looked round at the door while tearing the papers to shreds.

Then all at once the door gave way with a crash. There was a broad cleft in its white surface. Splinters of wood flew here and there, and the key fell jingling to the floor. There was a murmur of voices, and a dark form preceded by a shining gun-barrel thrust itself through the aperture. Aladief fired. There was a yellow flash, followed by a piercing cry as someone fell backwards with a heavy thud.

"Seize him, seize him! He has got a revolver!" they shouted.

Crouching down, Aladief fired through the hole in the door again and again. He knew nothing and felt nothing more now, save wild elemental hatred; hatred that was inhuman, such as that with which one crushes a poisonous reptile under foot or slays a foe. Then came a volley of shots through the gap, striking the stove door that jingled, while a picture fell from a nail amid clouds of white dust. Aladief sprang aside, crouching close to the wall, and by degrees reached the door. To him it seemed as if the shots hit him full in the face, but, leaping to the door, he fired twice, almost touching his victims with the barrel of his revolver. There was a deafening shriek, and the firing ceased.

"Aha!" screamed Aladief, in delirious delight. With every fibre of his being he longed to go on shooting and killing for ever.

"Stop, let's get at him through the other room!" cried several voices.

With all his might Aladief thrust the heavy chest of

drawers in front of the shattered door. Then he rushed back to the stove and set fire to the pile of torn-up papers. There was a cheerful blaze, as the flames playfully darted out into the room now wrecked by bullets. With his back to the wall Aladief surveyed the scene. His cosy little room presented a strangely sad appearance. A lamp lay on the floor in a pool of petroleum; riddled by a bullet, the picture of Tolstoy hung sideways; in every corner white fragments of plaster were scattered about, and delicate wreaths of blue smoke floated out through one of the broken window-panes.

Aladief believed that he had gone mad, and that all this could not really have happened. Only yesterday, in fact only a few hours ago, he had been sitting at this table, writing, surrounded by his books and pictures and papers. Unspeakable anguish overwhelmed him; and, as he gazed at his belongings, he tore his hair. All his future life, with its interests and its love of work and of human beings, with its promise of joyous days, passed swiftly before his eyes; the life that should have been his, but would never be.

"Death!" said a voice within him, a voice of despair.

"Yet why? What had happened? A stupid accident, that's all." He had just time for this reflection.

Heavy blows now fell like hail upon the door that led into the adjoining room, and something heavy was dragged along the passage. More shots were fired, and plaster fell from the ceiling, while splinters of wood struck Aladief in his face which was soon covered with blood.

"Aha!" he thought with strange and deadly calmness, "if that's their game" . . . .

With a muffled cry he leapt like a cat towards the bed, and felt beneath the mattress for the bomb. Then a voice which sounded as if it were close to his ear, shouted "Fire!"

Aladief never heard the shots. There was a brilliant flash; the whole room seemed to fly aloft, and Aladief fell flat on his back on the floor. Then there was silence; a moment of awful suspense. Pale-faced gendarmes, with rifles in their hands, peered into the room. The blue smoke still floated out in delicate coils through the broken window-pane, behind which the radiant dawn arose. Aladief lay there in the middle of his room, his face turned upwards, his arms flung out, and his long legs drawn up. Blue and dabbled with blood, his nose pointed to the ceiling, while from his head something dark flowed gently over the floor.

CHAPTER XII

With upturned coat-collar, and hands thrust deep in his pockets, Sheviriof walked along the street. At every corner men were selling newspapers, while shouting out as if to praise their wares.

"Tragedy in the Mochovaia! Terrible shooting affray with anarchists!"

Sheviriof bought a paper, and as he sat in the Yekaterinensky Park, he read a full report, to the sound of children's voices playing all round him.

"It appears that the anarchist who escaped by the window and who passed as the peasant Nikolai Yegorof Sheviriof is, according to police information, no other than the university student, Leonid Nikolaievitch Tokariof, for whom the authorities have long been searching. He had been condemned to death, but while being conveyed to prison he managed to escape. Prompt measures have been taken to secure his re-arrest."

Sheviriof's face betrayed not the slightest emotion. Only at the passage where the reporter described with much exaggeration of phrase, the finding of Aladief's body, his eyes flashed, which might have been from pity, or from insensate fury. Then he got up, and with a careless glance at the scuffling children, left the park.

The strain on his nerves was extraordinary, and he felt irresistibly impelled to go "back there." He clearly saw that there was every chance of his being recognized and captured by the police. Amid the crowds of people who carelessly hurried past him, he already felt that invisible hands were slowly, inevitably encircling him with a ring of death. It was evident that he could neither get away from the town nor wander about the streets. He was hungry; and he shivered with cold like a lost dog. But it was just this feeling of being hunted like some animal which roused in him defiance and scorn.

"What do I care?" he thought, as with head erect and expressionless eyes, he walked on towards that place to which some inconceivable force engendered by wrath, pity, and despair was drawing him.

While yet at a distance he could see an excited crowd outside the well-known house, and the dark forms of two mounted policemen towering above the heads of the others.

Sheviriof mixed with the crowd which thronged either side of the door and also completely blocked the opposite pavement. He wanted to hear what people were saying. Most of them were silently waiting and striving to get a glimpse of the courtyard where the black figures of the military police and other officials in grey cloaks were assembled.

In the roadway there was a Red Cross Ambulance, and this red symbol of suffering proclaimed without words that an awful tragedy had been enacted.

A house-painter, whose cap was splashed with green and white paint, was holding forth to a small group of

people. They all crowded round him with flushed, eager faces

"You see, they wanted to arrest a chap, but, of course, he cleared out pretty quick. They searched the house, and then this other fellow who had nothing to do with it, fired and killed two men, besides shooting a policeman in the stomach. All the lodgers turned out and then they started firing."

"Yes, but what had the other fellow to do with it?" asked a fat man sharply.

Aware that he was the hero of the situation, the house-painter turned round, eager to impart further news:

"The other fellow had nothing to do with it, that's to say, they found the bomb in his room."

"Found a bomb, and he had nothing to do with it! What nonsense you're talking, lad!"

"Not nonsense at all! As I told you, it wasn't he they wanted. The police knew nothing about him, as it turned out."

"Oh I say, how shocking!" exclaimed a showily-dressed lady.

"Yes, isn't it?" replied the painter sympathetically.

Her tinted eyes shone with curiosity, and her soft cheeks grew pale.

"So that he was really killed by mistake?"

"Yes, that's what they have now found out." The speaker threw out his hands and smiled, as if this fact pleased him immensely.

"Oh, but it's simply horrible!" cried the lady, looking round for approval.

"Ah, well, they found a bomb in his room, you know," remarked a young officer, as he smiled faintly

at the fair lady, "and it all helps to clear them out."

The lady glanced swiftly at the speaker, and in her dark eyes the expression was one either of coquetry or of protest. "Yes, but still it's most shocking," she said.

Sheviriof listened in silence, yet he coldly scrutinized the faces of those about him. And the more he looked, the tighter grew his lips, and the more his fingers trembled as he buried them in his coat-pockets.

"Good thing, too, that they did shoot him! It will be a lesson to the others. A pretty fashion, indeed, throwing bombs about!"

"Good gracious, what an awful thing!" said someone close to Sheviriof's shoulder.

He turned sharply round and perceived a girl, who, with youthful eyes, looked disdainfully upon the crowd.

"It's better so," cried a student who was with her.

"What do you mean?"

"Would it have been better if they had hanged him?" replied the student bitterly, as he looked down. Sheviriof eyed him closely, but the student, when he noticed this, recovered himself, and, touching the girl's arm, said:

"Let's go, Marusia. What is there to stop for?"

"They're bringing it out! They're bringing it out!" was now the general cry, as the crowd swayed to and fro, surging round the doorway. At first only the bare heads of two policemen could be seen, and then the plumed hat of a gendarme. They were carrying something that was unrecognizable, but, beneath a sheet, one just caught a glimpse of long chestnut-

coloured hair stirred slightly by the breeze and a small part of a broad, bony brow.

"And what of Love, and Self-sacrifice, and Compassion?" Those words, spoken by Aladief in his excited bass voice, seemed to ring in Sheviriof's ear, and for a moment his features became contracted.

The onlookers hid the corpse from view, and one could only see the green top of the ambulance-waggon as it lurched sideways and slowly moved away, its pathetic red cross bobbing up and down among the crowd. Gradually the latter dispersed.

Only a little group remained. The painter's apprentice continued to gossip and gesticulate as before; the street became empty, the droshkys rolled past, and pedestrians, vaguely curious, still stared at the doorway as they went by.

Sheviriof sighed, and thrusting his hands in his pockets walked firmly along the street. His gloomy thoughts seemed to shut him off from the outer world. Yet his practised ear detected the peculiar sound of steps that followed in his rear. Already, in the crowd outside the house, he had noticed furtive glances from cunning, pitiless eyes that for a time were fixed on him, and then were hidden behind some bystander's back. He looked round once or twice, but could perceive nothing except the same monotonous, eager faces of passers-by. Yet that strange sense of being followed grew stronger, and his heart beat faster as he walked on. At the end of the street lay the broad river with its blue waves, where smoke from the steamships floated in clouds, and the shrieking of distant whistles rang out incessantly. On the other side of

the river, houses, gardens, and factory chimneys lay shrouded in mist.

After a moment's reflection, Sheviriof turned in the direction of the bridge, and at the same time glanced casually round. Two startled eyes met his. They were those of a man with a very fair moustache, who wore a stand-up collar and a bowler hat, and who almost trod on his heels. In a moment their glances expressed a mutual understanding, but Sheviriof walked on as if nothing had happened, and then, quickening his steps, the man in the bowler hat passed him. All this happened so quickly that Sheviriof first believed that he was mistaken, but his heart kept beating as if to warn him. Suddenly he saw a policeman in front of him, who was composedly using his white glove as a handkerchief.

The man in the bowler hat walked quietly on and passed the policeman without slackening his steps. Apparently he had some business of importance. But the policeman in amazement let his arm drop and looked round. Instantly, and with much precision, as if he had fully expected this, Sheviriof turned on his heel, and screened by a little group of approaching bricklayers, again headed for the quay. In the distance lay the public gardens and the road leading to the desolate Champ de Mars. With lightning-like accuracy he had divined the distance, yet he saw that he could never reach the gardens. The quay, again, was bare and exposed as a desert.

"Well, what's to be done?" he thought, "there's not much choice."

He stopped half-heartedly by the landing-stage of the Finland Steamship Company, just as one of the

boats by an ear-piercing whistle announced its departure.

Mechanically he staggered towards the swaying gangway, and in a moment was on board the steamer among a crowd of persons all trying to find seats on the yellow benches. Then he looked round. At some considerable distance, near the entrance to the landing-stage, he saw three persons who seemed completely detached from the rest of the world. They were a detective, a policeman, and a horse-soldier, evidently in consultation as they looked towards the steamer; and their movements showed that they were in doubt as to what to do. Instinctively Sheviriof guessed the reason for their behaviour. Uncertain whether they could catch the boat or not, they first ran forward and then ran back again, but just as the policeman had resolved to pursue Sheviriof, the steamer, with a loud sound of hissing, moved slowly away from the quay. Then the soldier hastily rode off, while the detective and the policeman hurried away in different directions.

"They have gone to telephone to their chief," thought Sheviriof, as if some one had told him this. Then once more, with the speed and accuracy of a machine, having measured the distance at a glance, he leapt down from the deck. Some of the passengers shouted in amazement, but he managed to alight on the landing-stage, though he slipped and nearly fell into the water. Recovering his balance, he ran back towards the public gardens. Soon, however, he strove to moderate his pace, and commenced walking, but even then he did not pass unnoticed. Many people looked round at him in astonishment. Some fearful force seemed driving him forwards. He wanted to

look round, but had not the courage to do so. It seemed as if he were already captured, as if dozens of hands were stretched out on every side to seize him.

A high fence, trees, yellow leaves, and a flower-bed, ladies, officers, and children all flashed past him as in a dream. Without turning aside into the gardens, Sheviriof, now almost running, reached the steep little footbridge across the Fontanka. He had a dim vision of barges and peasants with long poles moving hither and thither against a misty background of houses and boulevards; and now, no longer able to resist a mad impulse, he began to run down the further incline of the bridge.

The policeman on duty, a ruddy-faced, thick-set fellow with a grey moustache, shouted out something to him, but Sheviriof disappeared behind a droshky, perceived the face of an astonished woman wearing a strangely light-blue hat, and, dodging two other droshkies, dashed down an empty street. He heard shouting behind him, but would not look round, and ran on, hardly knowing what he did till he reached the first door that stood open. He entered a courtyard, with steep walls round it like those of a shaft, and almost collided with a nurse and two children wearing bright-blue sun-bonnets.

"Why are you running like a madman? You very nearly knocked the children down!" cried the nurse.

But without replying, Sheviriof ran through another doorway into a second courtyard. He fancied that he heard the nurse call out:

"He ran through that doorway—that one!"

Dozens of windows and doors flashed before his eyes and again people with strange faces stopped to stare at him.

It all looked barren as a desert; everything seemed to repulse him as a foe. He stopped and looked round. Framed by the dark doorway he could clearly see, as in a picture the crowd of his pursuers in the first courtyard. In front ran the fat policeman in a black cloak which kept flapping against his knees. Sheviriof fancied that he saw him aim at him with his revolver as he ran. It was a momentary vision, and the next minute he spied another doorway at the side, which led to a third courtyard and through this he rushed, gasping, as a sharp pain stabbed his chest.

A strange man advanced towards him with outstretched arms, blocking his passage.

As he looked away over Sheviriof's shoulder, his face had the expression of a beast of prey.

"Stop! do you hear me? Stop!" he said, almost merrily.

"Let me pass!" cried Sheviriof hoarsely, "what business is it of yours?"

"No, no, stop, I say! Help!" he roared, seizing Sheviriof.

"Stop him!" came the cry from those behind.

For a second Sheviriof had a glimpse of an unknown face with a black moustache and wrathful eyes. Then he struck it with his fist in a frenzy of despair.

"Ah!" gasped the man, as he toppled over like a sack of flour.

"Hi! hi! stop him!" The cries rang through the air, mingled with the shrill sound of police-whistles.

But Sheviriof dashed round the corner, and observed an opening in the wall which led to the street, whence he could see the passers-by.

CHAPTER XIII

The place seemed as gruesome as a huge churchyard ; there was a smell of damp clay and rubble, and in a corner where Sheviriof hid himself there was a peculiar odour as of the dust of centuries.

Sheviriof, after evading his pursuers, had taken refuge here by crossing a timber yard and climbing a fence. He feared that in this empty house they would be sure to look for him, yet he had not strength to flee elsewhere, so he stayed where he was. For a long while he could hardly breathe as he gripped his revolver, ready to shoot the first person who showed himself in the battered doorway. He could still hear shouts and the clatter of feet on the dilapidated marble staircase. His breath came in gasps, and his eyes flashed like those of a hunted wolf. But the minutes and the hours passed, yet all was silent, and only now and again was he aware of noises that reached him from the street. He could not think. He hardly understood what was going on around him. He only waited instinctively for the darkness, shutting his eyes every now and then, while his whole body trembled from exhaustion. If he closed his eyes, he saw rows of streets with faces that gazed at him, and hands that were held out to seize him.

Twice they had fired at him, yet this had hardly

made any impression on his memory. It might even have been imaginary. On the other hand, the more horrible impression haunted him that in this frightful life-and-death struggle all those whom he had met were his enemies. Not one had attempted to hide him, or to detain his pursuers, or even to make way for him. If there was one face that did not show cruel eagerness, or one hand that did not attempt to seize him, they were those of some careless, inquisitive folk who found it amusing to watch a man being hunted to death. It was just the recollection of this that burned and rankled within his soul with far greater poignancy than the memory of the faces of his pursuers, who seemed to him no more than a pack of trained bloodhounds.

Sheviriof never reflected how near death was, and how slight was the prospect of rescue. He only thought whether he would be able to carry out his great scheme, the scheme which with so much hate and love he had nurtured. He recollected how a smart officer had drawn his sword, intending to strike him. And he remembered how a portly old gentleman had held out his walking-stick in order to stop him. He recalled many similar incidents, as his whole frame shook with fury and disdain.

Escape there was none. That he knew. He knew that he was at the end of his tether, whereas all these people would calmly go on living, and would leisurely wait until they should read in the papers an account of his death.

The time passed. Gradually the convulsive beating of his heart grew less. His breathing became more regular, and his clenched fingers relaxed. His over-

wrought nerves after such fearful tension gave way, like cords that had snapped. He suddenly became calm. It was the intense deadly calm of a man who has got the noose round his neck, and which no power either human or divine can save. He felt absolutely callous and indifferent. If at this moment his pursuers had joyfully rushed in to seize him, he probably would not have offered the slightest resistance.

Faint and strengthless, a white mist seemed to envelop him as a shroud, separating him from the outer world.

In his ears there was a sound as of distant bells, and he felt but one desire: to close his eyes and to sink down into the darkness and the silence.

"I dare not sleep," he said to himself. But ever denser became the mist about his brain, and for awhile he lost consciousness. Asleep with wide-opened eyes, now and again he started up, remembering all that had occurred, as he looked round and trembled. Then he sank down, and dozed once more, conscious that the damp clay chilled his very bones. Immediately opposite him he could see on the battered wall the broken remains of a dainty rose. This tormented him extremely. Sometimes he saw plainly that it was just a piece of broken stucco that had once been moulded in the shape of a flower. Then, as the mist enveloped it, it began to grow and assume hideous proportions, becoming longer or broader, or changed to a cruel human face.

At last he must have really fallen asleep, for when he opened his eyes the deep blue dusk was all round him, veiling the shattered walls and peering through

the doors of the deserted rooms. Silent shadows moved hither and thither, as if the ghosts of former occupants had revisited the place where once they had known love, and joy, and suffering, before inexorable death had borne them hence.

As if by a fearful blow, Sheviriof suddenly awoke. Something extraordinary had happened, he did not know what, and for a moment he could not imagine where he was, nor what had come to him. He seemed to have beheld some horrible vision.

"What was it? What did I see?" he asked himself, "let me think! Let me think!"

An iron curtain seemed to shut off his brain. Behind it there was a glimmering light. Voices and the dim outline of faces could be recognized, but memory failed to do its work, and his torture was supreme. . . .

Pale and horror-struck, Sheviriof tottered to his feet, leaning against the wall with both hands for support.

"I'm going mad," he thought, "I can't bear it any longer!"

Then in a strange voice he said aloud:

"What if this is the end?"

At that moment a noise which resounded through the empty house brought him to his senses. Instinctively he clutched his revolver, which had fallen on the floor.

The touch of the cold steel had a sobering effect. Shuddering he drew himself up to his full height and became hard, cold, impassive as ever.

"I must go! The gallows, insanity, or life! It all comes to the same thing, sooner or later. . . ."

He looked round wearily, thrust the revolver in his pocket and groped his way down the stairs. He had already got to the door and could see the light of a street lamp when he suddenly stopped and pulled out his revolver. At the exit there was a long black figure which barred the way. In the gloom its hands appeared to be clasping its breast, as its pale face with dishevelled hair was turned towards him.

"Who's there?" cried Sheviriof, and then immediately burst out laughing. It was a beam from which tufts of tow were hanging. By his disordered fancy and the darkness this had become transformed into a majestic image of woe. He approached it and kicked it aside scornfully, as he went out into the courtyard.

There were piles of bricks, wood, and cement, which had the appearance of graves. The yard gate was open, and beyond it the dim white street-pavement could be seen.

Sheviriof crossed the yard and looked out cautiously. Across the street, only a few feet away, three figures stood motionless. They were policemen, all armed with rifles. Sheviriof leapt backwards and hid behind the wall. The men had noticed nothing. They were talking in a low tone, yet Sheviriof could hear the following words:

"What's the good of making men into cripples for no reason? . . . Yes, you're right. . . ."

Sheviriof's heart beat faster, yet his brain was as active as ever. He noiselessly crept back and, climbing the fence, he alighted in the same timber-yard which he had previously crossed. Beyond the open gate lay the broad, bright street, and he could

see the silhouettes of passers-by and hear the clatter of horses' hoofs, while, opposite, the yellow lights of a shop were burning.

"If I can but get as far as the Prospekt, I shall be lost in the crowd. When I've reached the Finland railway station, I'll follow the railway lines to the frontier.* We'll see who gets the best of it!" he said to himself defiantly, as if addressing an invisible enemy.

Then he resolutely walked out.

The light and noise and bustle of the streets bewildered him. He walked a little distance, and then suddenly rushed back again. In various places, in gateways and at street crossings there were the same black figures with rifles and glittering bayonets.

"They are all round me!" he thought, with the callousness of despair.

To remain unnoticed in the brightly lighted streets was inconceivable. The game was up; and yet in his mad obstinacy he would not surrender. Well aware that he must be seen, he dashed across the street and ran towards the square as policemen from all sides hurried in pursuit.

* The frontier of Finland can be reached from Petrograd in a few hours on foot.

CHAPTER XIV

The sky showed dark above the huge city despite its myriads of lights, and though brilliant lamps were burning at every corner, the streets looked like gloomy passages in comparison to the vast theatre which glowed within, as if on fire. The shouts of coachmen could be heard on every side, and out of the darkness crowds of people emerged like a stream, thronging the brilliantly lighted entrances. Into this black mass of humanity Sheviriof plunged, and disappeared. His pursuers were at his heels, and he was hemmed in on every side. Though again he had managed to elude them, it was only the last phase of this senseless, brutal game. It was just at the entrance of the theatre that the cordon of police was completed. Jostled by the shouting gendarmes, the crowd of theatre-goers swayed sideways in confusion, knowing nothing of what was taking place; and only certain students who understood the situation, strove to increase the panic and thus enable the pitiable fugitive to escape.

"Get into the theatre!"

At the sound of this youthful voice, Sheviriof instinctively obeyed, and squeezed his way through the doors of the huge theatre. Some one pushed him along towards the entrance to the grand tier. An

official in a red and gold uniform attempted to stop him, but recoiled at the sight of those strange, wild eyes, and was pushed aside by a crowd of unknown persons. Sheviriof managed to run down a narrow passage, and passing cloakrooms, attendants in red livery and smartly-dressed ladies, he leapt into an unoccupied box upholstered in red velvet with gilt chairs. Almost bereft of his senses, he bolted the door, placed a couch against it, and sank down exhausted. This was the end. Excited voices in the passage could be heard shouting:

"To the gallery! I saw him! To the gallery!"

Somebody tried to open the door of the box, but at the same moment the lights went out and the curtain rose noiselessly, showing a green, sunlit garden, and people in it wearing fantastic dresses of red, blue and gold. What then happened was swift and terrible as a whirlwind. At first Sheviriof saw nothing but a sea of heads in blurred rows, and he was hardly conscious of being in a theatre or of witnessing a performance on the stage. He glared about him wildly, like a wolf at bay. All that he had gone through that day, the flight, the pursuit, the deadly peril of it, and the inevitable death that now was near—all this had nothing in common with yonder sea of heads, naked shoulders, fantastic decorations, and brilliant light.

Maddening was the thought that all this that was going on in the theatre had nothing whatever to do with his own tremendous misery. It was as if his woes did not exist. The curtain rose, the conductor waved his bâton, and the soprano in powdered wig and hooped petticoat extended her arms and began

to sing in sweet, soft tones. He would soon be discovered, seized and hanged at dawn, while here, in this theatre after a short interruption, all would go on as smoothly as before. The music would recommence, the smiling audience would again watch the performance with interest, and listen to the singer's fascinating voice, as the white, bare shoulders of women quivered with emotion, and the house broke forth in thunders of applause.

For one brief moment something gigantic seemed to surge up within his burning brain, and burst. Then, his hair all tousled and matted, his face bruised and mud-stained, and his eyes like red-hot coals, he leant over the box, and, without taking aim, fired straight at the sea of calm, unconscious spectators. A hideous scream was the reply. The singer's voice ceased abruptly on a high note, as members of the audience leapt to their feet amid the universal uproar. Sheviriof could see thousands of horror-struck faces turned to his, and with incredible glee fired again, taking aim this time at the densest part of the crowd. The shots rang out in rapid succession. From the smooth barrel of his revolver they flashed like lightning across the heads and distorted limbs of the panic-stricken spectators. Hysterical shrieks were heard above the universal clamour. One fat gentleman crouched down, whimpering shrilly like some animal. At the exits there was a wild scrimmage. Lace and velvet were torn in shreds; ladies in their smart dresses were knocked down; and blows were delivered wildly which fell on backs and faces and necks. Yet above all this din, rang out incessantly the shots from Sheviriof's revolver, as with cold-blooded, brutal joy

it revenged the insults, the sufferings, and the ruined lives of which he knew so much.

Then the door of the box was broken open. Sheviriof was seized and flung to the ground. When he had been overpowered and was driven into a corner of the passage by the policemen who covered him with their revolvers, he still stared, and his eyes glowed with triumph. A fat gentleman was being carried along whose coat-tails, drenched in blood, trailed along the carpet. A lady in a low-necked dress of pale blue, whose wax-like face had fallen forward on her bosom, was supported by the attendants. In the tresses of her tumbled auburn hair a white lily drooped on its broken stalk.

Sheviriof looked away from the black revolver-barrels pointed at his breast. He did not heed the furious faces of his captors, but his eyes were riveted on the broken lily, and on the soft bosom all dabbled with blood. They shouted at him, they shook him by the shoulder, but his eyes remained cold and hard, having a fixed, far-off look in them, as if he saw something that others were powerless to see.

THE BLOOD-STAIN

THE BLOOD-STAIN

CHAPTER I

During all those days Anisimof had hardly slept at all; yet somehow he felt healthier and more energetic than ever. He had also grown younger, as he bustled about at the railway-station, a gaunt, ill-proportioned figure, with a nose of truly depressing length.

It had all happened so vehemently, so suddenly, yet the whole time he had felt braced and gladdened, as though he were being borne along by some clear, inrushing tide that had for ever swept away all traces of the old, dull, joyless life.

The railway-station, usually so silent and dreary, was now all stir and commotion. The platform and its approaches were perpetually thronged with people; a black surging mass. It looked like a huge ant-hill above which the sound of confused, excited murmurings vibrated in the clear, cold air. Trains kept arriving in rapid succession from the east; trains with big bright-coloured carriages that hardly stopped, but hurried onwards, soon to be lost in the white mists above the horizon. Each train as it passed through the station was hailed by the mob with loud hurrahs. Caps were wildly waved, and the shouting

seemed to produce a sense of youthful gaiety and exuberance. Each one strove to shout as loudly as he possibly could, glancing round at his neighbour with childish glee; and long after the train had disappeared behind the wood occasional cheering that grew gradually fainter could be heard.

"Ah . . . ah! . . ."

The engines bore red flags that fluttered in the wind, and from the windows of all the carriages strange faces peered; trustful, friendly faces, mostly those of young men who waved their caps and their hands ere they all disappeared in one direction. That there were so many of these young fellows, that train followed train so quickly, and that rifles and revolvers seemed so utterly out of place beside black overcoats and caps roused in all hearts a youthful, joyous sense of their right and of their might.

Anisimof met each train, and duly dispatched it, as his long nose, red with cold, stuck out beneath his cap in sign of welcome. He watched the faces that went past, and his heart was full of a great new joy.

What would happen next he could not tell, yet vaguely there rose up before him the vision of a future bright and glad and free; in fact it seemed perfectly natural that his former lonely life of drudgery, with all its humiliations, drunkenness and boredom, should now have an end.

If no trains came in, he lounged about the station, mixing with the crowd and thrusting his long nose into this or that group of disputants, as he put a word in, here or there.

All knew him; all called him "Our station-master

and comrade," being always glad to have a chat with him as with an old acquaintance or a good friend.

Sometimes Anisimof went into his room at the station to be alone and to collect his thoughts. Here he stood for a long time, as with a dreamy smile he murmured to himself the same phrase :

" Alas, such is life ! "

Forgetful of his intention to rest and reflect, he again went out of doors, where the sky showed bright and clear, and the snow sounded crisp beneath his feet, and where merry folk were moving about, shouting and laughing continually. From every train two or three persons alighted and brought news to Anisimof, or asked him questions of extraordinary importance. Anisimof was glad when he could give them good answers. He often shook hands with them, as with gladness in his eyes he said to them :

" Go ahead, comrades ! God be with you ! "

His long nose grew redder, and his little eyes became moist. Nodding to his friends, he ran swiftly forward towards the locomotive. There was a shrill whistle, and all those dear comrades were borne far away to where something horrible, and at the same time joyful, was going forward. Once more their departure was greeted with volleys of cheering, thunderous and long drawn-out, that almost seemed to shake the earth.

Towards evening Anisimof recognized on one of the trains a familiar face. The fat engine-driver whose features were bloated and puckered, jumped off his engine and they shook each other heartily by the hand. At the strange appearance of the driver, who carried a rifle and whose pockets were weighed down

by heavy cartridges, Anisimof could not help smiling, as he said hastily :

" I say, what goings-on to be sure, Karl Vulfovitch ! Isn't it splendid, this universal rising ! "

" Aha ! " replied the engine-driver, pale, but smiling, " we shall see something before long." He did not speak Russian quite correctly, and this little defect which usually amused Anisimof, touched him now.

" I've just heard that the soldiers are confined to barracks, as they are afraid they might side with us," said Anisimof, as a broad smile overspread his face.

" Oho ! " replied the other, " we expected that."

Then he grasped Anisimof's hand once more, and ran forward to jump on to his engine, while Anisimof ran beside him, colliding with people coming in the other direction.

" I wish I could come with you," he said, " but if I'm not here, everything is at sixes and sevens."

" I thought you did not want to leave your family," said the engine-driver, as he ran.

" My family doesn't worry me," replied Anisimof cheerily, " I sent my wife and children into the country, to my father-in-law's. I can see about them later on ; this is not the time for that sort of thing. Well, good luck and God-speed ! "

For a long while he stood watching the departing train, and smiled wistfully.

" How strange it all seems ! " he thought. " Three days ago I would never have believed such a thing. I thought that life would go on just in the same old way ; one day the same as the next ; always the same damned misery and worry."

Faintly the ghost of his old, grey, tedious life rose up before him, and vanished. Glancing round, he shook his head and mingled with the crowd, listening to their remarks.

In the third-class waiting-room, full of blue smoke and hot as a bathroom, there was a ceaseless babel of voices. By the buffet stood Akim, the pointsman.

"Well, what do you think about it all?" he said, as he puffed clouds of bad tobacco, "my boy, if the people once start, and get really roused, why then, then, my friend, aha! . . ."

It was bright and cosy in this warm atmosphere, where everybody talked excitedly amid dense clouds of blue smoke. Dark shadows passed the windows; there was a murmur of voices, and the door creaked continually as people came in or went out.

CHAPTER II

THAT same day, when it was dusk, and the distant snow-covered copse looked grey, at full speed, without lamps, and snorting and whistling, an engine, like some black bird of ill-omen, came rushing into the station from Moscow. The brake shrieked horribly as with a grating sound on the frozen rails, the locomotive stopped for a moment at the platform. Some one jumped from the tender, and shouted out in tones of despair :

" Comrades, all is lost ! Bologoie is captured ! They have barricaded the railway, and a train full of troops is coming."

The engine rushed on, as it lurched past the points, leaving behind it a white trail of smoke and steam. The momentary silence was broken by a single frenzied cry :

" Comrades, first . . . our . . . our train will get there first ! Look out ! "

There was ominous commotion in the station. Crowds of people on hearing the cry came rushing from all sides, and Anisimof was surrounded by a ring of pale, frightened faces. Here and there despairing voices could be heard amid the strange hush. It was as if something terrible were passing over the station.

With feet planted firmly apart, Anisimof stood rooted to the spot when the evil tidings had been brought to him by the engine as it dashed past.

That which he had heard and which yet he had not clearly understood was so unexpected, so awful, that he became utterly dumbfounded.

"What's that? What's that?" he mechanically asked those near him. But no one replied. Abject terror looked out from all those shining eyes with their large round pupils.

In another minute, as it seemed to him, it needed only a second cry for the whole crowd to rush away, shrieking and howling. At that moment a student, short and boyish-looking, was hoisted aloft by the crowd. He waved his cap and shouted out in a high, piercing voice:

"Comrades, that can't be true! It's a trick, a police trick, comrades!"

And for a moment the pressure was relieved. The crisis had passed. Yet all suddenly felt convinced that the news was true; a horrible fact that could never be denied. But the sense of panic had given way to one of fury and of desperate resolve. Recovering himself, Anisimof removed his cap and wiped his brow, as he said to a telegraph clerk standing near him:

"Well, what of that? As yet that proves nothing at all. Very likely they'll get through all right. We'll do our bit, and see what happens."

The tall, sandy-haired clerk made some reply which Anisimof failed to hear.

Now on all sides there was again great commotion as the crowd proceeded to construct barricades, and

in various places black, shapeless masses suddenly appeared. Furniture was dragged from the railway station; two men hurried along with a huge snow-covered sleeper, passing Anisimof and knocking against everything; in another direction one could hear the crash of broken glass.

Hardly knowing why, Anisimof suddenly felt that it was his task to control all this haphazard energy on the part of the mob, which had really no knowledge how to go to work. He knew the exact position of every sleeper, and with what care and labour the whole machinery of the station had been brought into smooth working order. Thus, no one was better aware than he how in a few moments it could be converted into a shapeless heap of ruins. He felt vaguely wrathful with some remote, indefinable force. Running along the platform, he waved his red cap to one of the students who, looking out of a carriage window, shouted to the others:

"Comrades, this way! Let's use the carriages, they are the best."

"Nonsense!" cried Anisimof, "the carriages must be placed across the rails. All the lines must be barricaded except the main line. Akim! Akim! Fetch the crane."

He jumped from the platform and, crossing the rails, ran towards a long, green railway carriage which stood in a siding. He was followed by a throng of eager helpers, who surrounded the huge red, blue, and green carriages which moved slowly as if of their own accord above this human ant-hill. Toppling over, they suddenly fell with a crash, as chains rattled, and there was a sound of breaking glass. The earth

seemed to groan each time as the mob shouted "Hurrah!"

With dripping brow and matted hair, Anisimof rushed hither and thither, directing and encouraging the others. Like a red beacon, his cap was everywhere in evidence.

At this moment he never gave a thought to the danger that was at hand, nor to what would happen when these barricades had been erected. Of the future he appeared to be absolutely unconscious. The present was so vital, so stirring, that it utterly absorbed him.

Busily engaged in getting a huge Pullman car into position, Anisimof just missed the arrival of a train. At the sound of cheering, he looked round and saw the big, snorting locomotive with its long row of carriages, from which the dark figures of armed men alighted. The whole station was inundated by a vast surging crowd. And in this crowd Anisimof for the first time saw spots of blood on the white bandages. At this blood he looked with strange, painful curiosity; for the first time he felt uneasy and distressed. At the thought of his wife and children he grew cold and faint.

"I say, station-master," cried a big fellow, pushing through the crowd, "we must barricade this line, too, my friend, so that the barrier's complete. Otherwise we shall have to carry the wounded across an exposed place to the railway station."

"Will there be wounded?" His brain reeled at the very thought. "Ah! yes, yes," he replied, recovering himself. "Of course, that's necessary. I'll see about it at once." He nodded and ran towards the engine.

"Ah! well," he thought, "there's no help for it. Some of them'll get shot. It must be so. Some lives will have to be sacrificed. Perhaps they won't kill anybody, but only wound. Anyhow, as long as I live, I shall feel that I did my duty."

The thought braced his nerves and made him feel strangely determined. His friend the engine-driver saw him from his locomotive.

"We didn't get through to Moscow," he said, and there was fear in his voice. "What can be going on? Our train was fired at by troops."

"Never mind, that's nothing, my boy!" replied Anisimof cheerily. "He is a bit afraid, too!" he thought, and this in a way consoled him. "Drive your engine right into those carriages," he added, "and then we shall block the line."

The huge engine having been uncoupled, dashed forward, hissing, into the piled-up carriages, and, rebounding, fell over on its side in a cloud of steam. When Anisimof saw this and beheld the straight, well-kept line transformed into a huge mass of wreckage, his heart glowed with pride.

"Wait a bit," he said, thinking aloud, "they won't get very far."

"Have you got a rifle?" asked the engine-driver.

"No; I have not the least idea how to shoot!" replied Anisimof, smiling. "You'll have to do the fighting. I shall have other things to look after."

"Oh, we'll see about that," replied the engine-driver grimly.

"It's coming! it's coming!" cried voices in the distance, as watchers on the roof of the station and on the pump hastily clambered down.

"They're most welcome!" muttered the telegraph clerk furiously, as he ran forward to the barricade, dragging his rifle with him. The crowd swayed backwards and forwards, and in sections took up its position behind the barricade. Suddenly there was dead silence. In the twilight, a train without lights could be seen approaching slowly through the copse. In the distance it looked quite small, and its appearance was strange and terrible.

"Here they come!" said the engine-driver, as he crouched down behind a heap of coal and wood.

Anisimof was mastered by an extraordinary feeling of curiosity. He smiled without knowing why, and climbed up the slippery side of one of the carriages, and clutching its cold metal edges for support, he leant forward on the look out. The black train crept slowly nearer, moving even more noiselessly as it approached. At times it seemed as if it stopped; in fact, it may actually have done this. It appeared to be feeling its way. In the station all was silent, as if no one was there. Yet when Anisimof looked round he could see dark figures silently crouching behind the barricade, the trees, the hedge, and under the railway carriages.

The train, looking strangely black as it drew out into the open, now stopped. It was just as silent yonder. One might have thought that the train and the station were two wild beasts stealthily gazing at each other. The dusk quickly grew deeper. Slowly the minutes passed, minutes of suspense that seemed an eternity. The senseless thought even passed through Anisimof's brain that the train was empty and had been left there in the plain. But

just then each side of it was thronged with figures barely discernible in the dusk. Then these figures formed into long dark lines, and slowly like waves approached. Anisimof felt strangely thrilled. Never before in his life had he seen great masses of men marching like this in deliberate regular fashion to fight a battle that would bring death and suffering to so many. He had but a very hazy notion of war, yet he felt somehow that the horror of it was now at hand. War was a thing apart, so he imagined, to be waged in a special place and not in the midst of everyday folk. Then again, those who fought in such battles were incapable of feeling terror and sorrow as keenly as workmen or officials, or students, women, and children. Of course he knew that this was not really the case; yet, to fight in this out-of-the-way dead-alive railway station, with its fences and garden, little black platform, sleepers, bells, and other humdrum ordinary things—to have a battle here, with guns and blood and wounded and dead, seemed not only horrible but senseless.

"God help us! Has it come to that!" was the vague thought that crossed his mind.

But the dark lines came nearer and nearer, till it was plain that they were lines of living men. One could see how quickly and stubbornly hundreds of feet rose and fell. It was this perpetual movement, and the grim silence of those hiding behind the barricade, that made one feel that something inconceivably horrible would in a moment take place. At the mere thought of it one became stunned.

The soldiers advanced. The awful silence became

more and more excruciating, till at last one's sole wish was that " it " might soon begin.

" Impossible ! Nothing will happen," thought Anisimof. Bending down to the engine-driver, who crouched at his feet, he whispered, for fear that others should hear him :

" I believe if we were to negotiate . . ."

The engine-driver looked up at him with his pale, puffy face. Apparently he understood nothing. His round eyes had a wild look in them. Then Anisimof glanced at a hook-nosed man standing next to him, who seemed as if he were hypnotized. All at once he began to tremble all over.

Then, to the right of Anisimof, a shot rang out, and as if in response to a signal, from all the fences and improvised barriers of wreckage, little flickering tongues of flame darted out, followed by a continuous rattling which echoed through the frosty air.

Anisimof plainly saw how the grey rows of men fell back in disorder, as if buffeted by the wind. He saw how some figures collapsed ; and he could hear a distant cry. And yet he had an impression that nothing had really happened. But the next minute the whole grey mass of soldiery appeared to have a fiery pattern worked upon it, as the dull rattle of musketry broke the silence of the white fields.

With a loud explosion something struck a railway carriage, and there was an agonizing shriek. The hook-nosed man fired close to Anisimof's ear, almost deafening him. The latter turned again to look at the engine-driver. He was still in a crouching position, but evidently there was something wrong with him. His rifle lay on the snow. His face was

strangely pale, and his eyes, though immense, seemed to be staring at nothing. He waved both arms feebly and then fell backwards. When he lay prostrate on the snow the waving movement ceased, and his huge, fat body stiffened like that of some frozen beast.

Again the hook-nosed man fired with deafening effect.

Anisimof glanced at him, and then gently clambered down.

He was trembling all over, and smiled foolishly. The lifeless engine-driver stared at him with round, glassy eyes. This was death. Now for the first time Anisimof comprehended that the horrible thing which he had deemed impossible, had really happened.

"They've killed him!" he thought. "My God, what's the meaning of it all?"

This engine-driver had a wife and four children. Anisimof knew them all. Every day he used to pass through the station and greet him. Now he lay there like a log. Dead.

Anisimof slowly went back again, being careful not to look at the corpse. He vainly strove to analyse his feelings. Was it horror he felt, or fury, or disgust? He remembered how last year, just such soldiers, Russian subjects, all of them had gone through this very station on their way to the front. He had felt so genuinely sorry for them. It grieved him to see them dragged away to some distant unknown spot, and he longed to do them some little kindness, or at least to help them in one way or another.

There was a smell of gunpowder everywhere. The black figures behind the railway carriages were

behaving very strangely now; running back and falling down, and then rising and clambering on to the roofs of the carriages, while others rolled down and lay writhing on the rails. Then earth and sky seemed rent asunder with the force of some fearful explosion. From where Anisimof stood he could see a fiery star that suddenly flashed and disappeared; and then came a deafening clap of thunder immediately overhead which seemed to shake every bone in his body, while something invisible struck the barricade with terrific force, setting fire to this, and whirling snow and splinters in all directions. Shrieks and groans ensued, as the mob broke up in wild disorder.

The fight lasted for about a quarter of an hour, but to Anisimof it all seemed to end in a moment. He saw how black figures on the top of the barricade appeared, and watched them shoot straight at him; he heard some one who lay beside him groaning in the snow; he saw groups of men retreating along the line and the fence, and apparently firing with cool determination at the soldiers; he saw the trampled, muddy snow covered with bodies that writhed like worms; and then unexpectedly he saw soldiers rush forward from the back of the station as the mob fled wildly in all directions. The guns suddenly ceased, and beyond shrieks and the sound of an occasional shot, silence ensued.

The grey soldiers ran out from the station across the open country, and caught up with the dark figures sinking in the snow. Their business with them was brief; and then they ran on, leaving behind something black, and crumpled up like a knot.

It was so horrible that Anisimof's blood ran cold;

and in sheer terror he ran with all his might along the line. Near the pump a tall soldier rushed after him, wearing a long grey mantle, and carrying a rifle. The soldier had a smooth, boyish face. Having caught Anisimof, he grasped his rifle in both hands and made a furious thrust at him with the bayonet. Anisimof leapt aside like a cat, and for a moment they danced about, as each glared at the other. Then the soldier raised his rifle, and pointed it at Anisimof's stomach.

"Oh, stop, stop!" cried Anisimof, shutting his eyes, and holding out his hands feebly. Through his closed eyelids he could just see a flash and heard a deafening report. The soldier had missed him; he was just conscious of that. Then some one rushed up from behind, and struck him violently on the head, so that sparks danced before his eyes, and having seized him by the sleeve, fell down with him in the snow.

"Hands off!" shouted Anisimof furiously, as he ground his teeth, and with his elbow struck at this strange face with all his might. He could hear how the soft nose cracked with the force of the blow, and could see wild eyes staring into his.

CHAPTER III

NIGHT's dark face looked vaguely through the windows of the station, which were shattered by bullets. Here all was now still, but even in this stillness one seemed to hear shrieks, and shots, and groans. On the line there was a blazing pile of carriages, and the smoke rose slowly in dense columns, above which myriads of red sparks flickered. All objects cast irregular shadows on the snow, and the stiff corpses, ranged side by side in front of the station, seemed to stir slightly. Everywhere soldiers could be seen moving about in the ruddy light of the fire. They formed groups, and then dispersed. Others stooped down to the ground as their dark shadows moved behind them on the flame-lit snow, while their bayonets gleamed like red needles. Officers were standing on the platform, smoking cigarettes, and conversing in a low voice.

The room into which they had locked Anisimof was cold and bare. Lit only by fitful gleams from the burning wreckage, it had a strange, fantastic appearance. The chairs that he had known so long, looked now like gravestones; the lamp which had been struck by a bullet dangled from the ceiling like a large dead bat. Shadows of soldiers and officers passed silently across the lighted wall, dwindling and disappearing in the corners.

At first it seemed impossible for Anisimof to realize what had happened to him. His breath came quickly; he kept opening and shutting his eyes, trembling in every limb, not knowing where he was, nor the reason for his present plight. The whole right side of his head ached and throbbed. He kept shaking it, as if to get rid of the pain; but it was useless. This side of his face felt like stone. Before they seized him, he resisted violently, hitting out, and biting like a wild beast. The soldiers caught hold of his hair, his beard, and his hands; and still he managed to shake them off, feeling all the while that it needed but one last supreme effort to save himself from their clutches. But when they had overpowered him, he suddenly became conscious that all resistance was futile, and that it was best to go quietly.

"Come on, you swine!" said one of the soldiers furiously, as, wiping away blood from his face, he struck him a violent blow under the chin. Anisimof's teeth rattled as his head was jerked backwards, but he only looked round, and said nothing.

"You'll not get away, now!" exclaimed the soldier in triumph.

"Off you go! Quick march!" cried another, hitting him on the shoulder. Thus, with blows from their fists and the butt-ends of their rifles, the soldiers drove him along to the platform, where he was placed beside two other men, both bruised, bleeding, and in tatters, who were surrounded by soldiers.

A tall, powerfully-built officer with a large fair moustache came forward, and five others were standing near.

"If you please, sir," said a soldier, as he stepped out of the ranks, "these are the prisoners whom we caught carrying fire-arms."

"Aha, is that so?" drawled the officer. The tone of his high-pitched voice showed that he was secretly pleased.

"Anatol Petrovitch!" he called out loudly.

From the group of officers a stout man with a small black moustache advanced. As he came nearer, Anisimof looked him full in the face. Close as he was to the light of the fire, one side of his face was illumined by the glare, while the other remained in gloom. With a sense of horror that he could not explain, Anisimof steadily regarded this half face with its one glittering eye. It seemed to him that these were not simply men, soldiers and officers, such as he had seen all his life, but weird, hideous beings which had nothing human about them whatever.

"Allow me to introduce these gentlemen, the revolutionaries," said the big officer, with the same touch of malice in his voice.

Then, abruptly changing his tone, he inquired imperiously "Who are you?"

Anisimof looked at the man next to him who was thus questioned, and saw that it was the hook-nosed, semi-hypnotized fellow who had stood beside him at the barricade and had fired on the troops.

"We captured him with a rifle in his hand, sir," said a soldier.

"Aha! He shall be shot," said the colonel drily.

Anisimof understood the words, but failed to grasp their awful meaning.

Apparently the hook-nosed man did not do so

either ; he showed no emotion, nor gave the slightest evidence of fear. Two sullen-faced soldiers gripped his arms and led him away. He turned round once, as if he wished to say something, but was silent and remained standing a few paces away.

" Who are you ? " asked the big officer again.

The question was meant for Anisimof, but another man answered it, a sickly-looking little fellow in a torn overcoat and cap.

" I am at the Kostiukof factory—a turner . . . Fedulief," he stammered, as he stepped forward. He was trembling all over, and his lower jaw quivered strangely.

" He fired on us, too, sir," said the soldier.

Once more the colonel uttered the same brief incomprehensible words.

A curious, dull thought came into Anisimof's mind. He slowly turned pale and nervously stepped backwards as if to squeeze himself in between the soldiers. But some one from behind instantly caught hold of his arm.

" You ! Who are you ? " asked the big officer who had noticed this movement.

Anisimof was silent, striving to shake off the hands that held him.

" Now then, now then ! " was the officer's peremptory exclamation.

" Why, that's the station-master," said the fat lieutenant, as he looked at Anisimof with his one glittering eye.

" Yes, I am the station-master," replied Anisimof quickly, still fascinated by it.

" Oho ! Very pleased to make your acquaintance,"

sneered the colonel, stroking his moustache. "So you are the station-master? Indeed! It might be as well if we had a little chat together by and by. May I venture to inquire what your name is?"

"Anisimof," was the answer.

"Oh, thank you! I am extremely obliged," said the colonel. Then addressing a soldier:

"Under arrest till to-morrow morning, early."

"If you please, sir, what about me?" asked the turner faintly.

"About you, my good friend? You are to be shot," replied the colonel, evidently enjoying the effects of his words.

"Oh, if you please, sir," exclaimed the turner in an agonized voice. At this cry a momentary thrill passed through the ranks of the soldiery, and Anisimof was aware of laboured breathing close to his ear.

"Silence!" cried the lieutenant sharply.

"Take him away!" said the colonel, pointing towards the open steppe.

With the same intense curiosity with which Anisimof as a child had watched chickens being killed, he now scrutinized the turner's horror-stricken features in the fitful light of the fire. He expected the man to make a dash forward and endeavour to escape, but he stood there silently, his lower jaw quivering more and more. Anisimof could not take his eyes off this jaw, and all the others gazed at it also. Every movement seemed to increase the general horror of the situation.

"And who are you?" shouted the hook-nosed man from a distance. "You dog, you lump of carrion .... murdering your countrymen, you scoundrel and son of a whore!"

"What! Hold your tongue!" exclaimed the colonel grasping his revolver and taking two paces towards him.

"Hold your tongue yourself! Why should I be silent when I am going to my death, you blockhead!" roared the prisoner. "It's you that ought to have a bullet through you, Judas and cursed dog! Do you think that I am afraid of you? Here, fire away! Shoot me yourself, you putrid beast!"

Anisimof uttered a faint cry and covered his eyes with his hands. There was a loud double report, a cry, and then a general hurrying to and fro. The dark figures of the soldiers shut out the view from Anisimof, who was roughly seized and dragged away.

Now in this dim cold room the whole scene passed again before his eyes, and he knew that in a few hours, when the day broke he would be shot.

CHAPTER IV

"To-morrow I shall be shot," thought Anisimof, as with shining eyes he gazed at the gloom. This was no clear thought, for it was impossible to imagine that in a few brief hours, human beings that he had never seen would come to kill him, a living, suffering human being also, as though he were a mangy dog. Anisimof only felt a dull heavy pressure on his brain such as the sight of an awful apparition might cause to one who had no faith in supernatural things. Anisimof at first felt inclined to shrug his shoulders at so absurd an idea, but then his face in the darkness became distorted in a wild, sickly grimace. He wrapped his torn overcoat closer round him, and walked up and down the room with short, irregular steps. His tall gaunt figure moving noiselessly, and carefully avoiding contact with the furniture, resembled a phantom. Such caution, strangely enough, was not the result of fear. It was in order that no one should disturb his meditations. He had the impression that if he could now calmly and thoroughly revolve in his mind the actual situation, everything would be altered; he would then get to understand it all, and the whole matter would be simply and easily solved. Thus he kept thinking, thinking, thinking. Sometimes the thought that should save him from death seemed to

float through his brain, and he wildly strove to bring it to the surface, and to clothe it in words.

At last it grew clearer and more definite, so that his brain became brighter and his eyes lost their agonized look. For a moment he stood still to seize the thought. Yet the words that he found were these, " To-morrow I shall be shot." Suddenly all became chaos once more, as the thought vanished, and cold sweat broke out upon his brow. Then he pictured to himself a well-known place behind the station where a pile of old disused sleepers lay buried in the pure white snow. The sleepers had been removed; Anisimof knew that by his orders they had been dragged to the barricade. Yet to his fancy the place appeared to be unchanged; the little fence and the pile of frosted sleepers, and beyond, in the distance, the broad, white steppe from which the station looked like a red toy house, and where the pretty little trains with white plumes of smoke ran along endless lines of steel—all these things were in the picture. And it was here, on the snow, with his head on the sleepers, that he, Anisimof, would lie, not merely dead, but "shot." His head and his chest would be pierced with bullets, but his livid arms would become stiff, and his knees protrude sharply from the snow. It would be cold, and his frozen body would be hard as wood, with glazed, bulging eyes, and his mouth choked with red snow and ice. But he would feel and see nothing more; he would not even see his own corpse.

" That's what is so horrible, the most horrible thing of all ! " thought Anisimof, as he groaned and then sobbed pitifully. All was silent. No sound could be heard except the crackling of the burning wood outside.

Anisimof walked faster and faster up and down the room, striving to recollect. At first he could not tell what it was that he wanted to recollect, and then suddenly his thoughts reverted to his life which was now about to end. Before him passed a long procession of days, years, events, deeds, moods, and cares. Born in poverty, it was in poverty that his childhood was spent. He remembered how surprised he had always been to hear others speak of their childhood as of a bright joyous time. He had been a sickly boy, ill-shod and out-at-elbows, a typical postman's son, upon whom the misery and ill-health of his parents had set their pallid seal. He had learnt little, and it was not easy for him to learn at all, his main lesson being taught to him by the sordid existence of his parents. He was soon obliged to earn his own living; at fifteen he entered the service of the railway, and for twenty-five years occupied various posts which meant much monotonous, hard work. When, after some years, he was lucky enough to be able to vegetate in a little desolate country station, he got married. He married for love a plain, rather stupid girl, who had had just such a past as his own. Yet about this love of his there was something terrible, since even in his happiest moments he could never forget how insignificant and ill-favoured his wife was. But the desire at all costs to have some human being with whom he was in close sympathy succeeded in deadening this impression to such a degree, that it only survived as a vague yearning for the beauty and the romance of love. His wife aged quickly, and lost even that slight charm which the freshness of youth had given her. Children succeeded each other with

foolish frequency, and his wife soon became an elderly, odious scold, whose features perpetually wore the mask of care and envy. The children as they grew up were weak and unhealthy. The fresh, wholesome air of the steppe and the bright sunshine could not counteract the noxious influence of centuries of sloth and semi-starvation. Such children were no joy to the spirit, but only caused grief, and care, and bitterness.

With other folk the Anisimofs associated little, for, in their poverty, this only resulted in humiliation and expense. Anisimof drank heavily, and when in a maudlin state, would bewail his misfortunes. Thus his dreary life went on, until the sudden flame of universal indignation and revolt revealed everything to him as by a lightning-flash that felled him to earth. All at once he stopped. He no longer felt loath to die.

" Rather than live such a life I would die ! There's nothing dreadful about death. It is necessary, absolutely necessary ; a natural escape from it all ; from such a cursed life as mine ! " he thought.

Reflecting thus, he grew more composed, and his grey, worn features assumed the same calm determined expression which was their's when he fought at the barricade. Yet within his soul he felt a dull, gnawing pain that would not let him rest.

" What's the matter ? " he said to himself, " I have made up my mind ; I mustn't think about that. If I do, all the old horror comes back. It's best not to think."

But the pain did not cease. Like a gnawing mouse, it grew bolder and bolder ; it touched his heart.

" Yes," he thought. " I am not sorry to go. I'd rather die than live such a life. But why do I say ' such a life ? ' Is there no other ? Why was I doomed to live such a life ? Besides it isn't true. I *am* sorry to lose my life, be it what it may. Why should I be killed, because all my life long I have known nothing but suffering and misery ? It's that, that which . . . ." he murmured, as he suddenly stood still. Then he rushed to the window, and, seizing the woodwork, shook it violently, cutting his hands with the broken glass. The burning wreckage outside was smouldering now, and gave but little light. Yet in his room it was so dark that outside all seemed bright as day.

" What are you making that noise for ? " shouted a soldier, as, carrying his rifle, he hurried to the window. Clutching the window-frame, Anisimof remained motionless. The soldier also stood still. Then, recovering himself, Anisimof again shook the window as he shrieked :

" Let me out ! "

" I can't do that ! " roared the soldier in the same unnatural tone.

" You're a liar ! Let me out ! Fetch the colonel."

" What do you want with the colonel ? Keep back ! "

Both were surprised to hear themselves shrieking like this at one another, and for a moment there was silence, as if something new and strange were about to take place. Then steps could be heard, and the sound of voices. In reply to this sound, Anisimof deliberately broke the window-sash, shattering a couple of panes. Stepping forward, the soldier in the same deliberate

fashion, struck Anisimof full in the chest with the butt-end of his rifle. Dazed and choking, Anisimof, like a drowning man, threw up his arms and fell backwards to the floor.

"What's the matter, Yefimof?" asked some one outside.

"It's the prisoner; he wanted to climb out of the window," replied the soldier. Several dark heads looked in through the windows of the silent room. For awhile they remained motionless, and then disappeared as the same voice said angrily:

"If there's any more of his nonsense, put a bullet through his head. That's quite simple."

Then the sound of voices ceased.

Anisimof rose, glanced in horror at the window, and quickly stepped aside. These last words, "that's quite simple," stunned him. He admitted that it was really "quite simple." However much he might shriek and struggle, however dreadful death might be; notwithstanding the fact that he, Anisimof, as the possessor of his life, had a right to it—all this did not count in the least. Suddenly the thought came back to him, "I shall be shot! No matter what I do, whether I beseech them to pardon me, or crouch down in terror like that workman, I shall still be led out to yonder pile of sleepers, and the soldiers will calmly take aim as if I didn't see anything, and were not half dead of fright."

He felt his lower jaw quivering more and more, and he made violent efforts to check this, shrugging his shoulders and flinging his arms about.

The light of dawn now came through the window, grey as that of some autumn morning. All objects

in the room gradually became visible, and a faint light touched the walls, the floor, and his pale hands. For a moment he thought that all had passed, and was merely a dream, but then with awful swiftness he became conscious that it was all horribly real, and the thought that "it" would soon take place, again haunted him. He felt forced to think of something, no matter what. He remembered the dead engine-driver, and then thought of others who had tumbled down from the barricade, writhing in the blood-stained snow. Then he thought of the turner, and of of the hook-nosed man, and seemed to hear the two shots which were followed by a faint cry. Then he suddenly saw the piles of sleepers with the frost on them and a pair of angular knees, *his* knees, protruding from the snow.

"Why should all this be?" The thought seemed ridiculous. In fact, he laughed, a low, hysterical laugh. It sounded weird in the grey silence of approaching dawn.

"No, it's best not to think," he said to himself.

He felt cold now, and hungry. Then for the first time he thought of his wife and children and wondered that he had not done so before.

"I must write to my wife," he thought. An inkstand stood on the table. The ink in it had a slight coating of ice. Anisimof breathed carefully on it, broke the ice with a pen, and carried the inkstand to the window. He found it difficult to write, and twice the pen slipped from his frozen fingers, which roused in him deep self-pity.

At first he felt that he must make great haste as he might be disturbed and had much to write. Some-

times he glanced sharply out of the window, where, with his back to it, leaning on his rifle, stood the tall soldier. Already the faint dawn-light was falling on his grey coat.

"Dear Sascha," wrote Anisimof, tracing each letter with difficulty, although it was now quite light. He knew not how to continue. What should he say?

"Lord! Lord! why must I suffer all this?" he exclaimed, as, thrusting his hands through his hair, he burst into tears. For a long time he wept, gazing through the windows at the grey expanse of sky. Then at last he continued:

"Farewell, Shurotchka! How will you live without me. I know not if they will ever give you this letter. I will beg them to do so. Farewell! Do not weep, Shurotchka, it can't be helped. Don't forget me, and tell the children to think of me sometimes. I cannot write more. Once more, farewell."

A vague mist seemed to envelop his brain, so that for a moment he almost lost consciousness.

Soldiers now approached the window and their rifles rattled as the guard was being changed. The new sentry marched past the window twice, casting a furtive glance each time at Anisimof, who shrank back in a corner of the room, hiding the letter in his breast pocket.

Then he lay down on the sofa, with his face to the wall and clasped the little piece of paper close to his heart. He felt as if this letter were a link with life, with all that might happen to-morrow, and the day after, and the future, when he would not be there; a link with wife and children, and with those with

whom his whole life had been spent, and from whom death was now to divide him.

And as he pressed the letter to his heart, he gently wept bitter tears that none could see. So, with his face bathed in tears, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER V

At eight o'clock that morning he was shot.

The terrors of his last hours of life were strangely reflected in his dreams. He dreamt that he was crawling along a horribly narrow subterranean passage. It became increasingly narrow, so that crawling was now and then difficult. Yet he felt that he must go on; knowing that it was impossible to stop. The earth behind him kept falling, falling, and formed a dense wall. He could hardly breathe, yet he longed to scream, and then, at a short distance, he perceived a grey flat head with small greenish eyes that never moved, and behind it a long slippery body, on which fell a faint subterranean light.

"A rattlesnake!" shrieked some one close to his ear. His hair stood on end, as, horror-struck, he recoiled. Yet behind him lay the impenetrable wall. With all his might he threw himself against it, struggling vainly with his hands and feet to force a passage through it, and closing his eyes. Yet all the while he could hear a strange hissing sound, and through his eyelids he could see that the flattened head with its greenish eyes, was moving now, and gliding slowly towards him. In a frenzy of despair he suddenly woke.

Before him stood a tall, gaunt officer in a grey cloak, who said:

"Get up, if you please, Mr. A . . . nisimof."

Anisimof, leaning on his elbow, stared hard at the officer, and then he hastily rose.

"Is it time?" he asked hurriedly.

The officer laughed evilly:

"Er—yes!"

With even greater haste, Anisimof searched everywhere for his cap. It was not on the sofa nor yet on the table. He looked about anxiously for it, feeling strangely vexed at keeping others waiting. His hands were trembling and his eyes glanced restlessly in all directions.

"Now then, how much longer are you going to be?" asked the officer rudely.

"In a moment. I can't find my cap."

"That doesn't matter; go without it," said the officer impatiently.

"No, it certainly doesn't matter," faltered Anisimof, with a swift look at the other.

There was a short pause, and the officer's lips suddenly quivered. Anisimof noticed a strange enigmatic expression on his face, which, however, instantly vanished.

"Now then!" he cried roughly, as with a movement of his head he pointed to the door. Without looking at the officer, Anisimof made a convulsive forward movement. When he reached the platform, where a group of officers and men silently regarded him, Anisimof staggered, and his features became convulsed. His face was grey and haggard, his eyes were sunken and his hair had a wild appearance.

The same officer who had come to wake him said something, and twelve men advanced, and took up

their position immediately behind Anisimof. Smiling awkwardly, Anisimof looked round and stammered out :

" If you please, sir . . ."

The officer slowly turned round :

" What is it ? "

" Perhaps . . ." faltered Anisimof, still smiling feebly, " perhaps I might send a letter . . ."

One of the other officers, a fat man with a black moustache said, frowning :

" What, now ? Well, really, how can you ? "

" It's already written. . . ."

" Oh, I see. Well, what about it ? "

" Would it not be possible to send it to the address ? "

" To send it ? All right. Ivanoff, take the letter," said the fat officer, flushing.

A pock-marked, fair-haired soldier stepped out of the ranks. Anisimof thrust his hand into his breast pocket, and drew out the soiled and crumpled letter.

" Thank you very much," he said in a faint voice.

As they led him away, he gazed mournfully at the piece of paper, which the soldier carefully tucked into the cuff of his overcoat. Anisimof was taken to the little churchyard which was half a verst from the station. It was dreary and silent here. The graves shone white, and the black slanting crosses were set in sharp relief by the glittering snow. Mournful and motionless, two birch-trees stood there with delicate frosted boughs.

The way was not long. Anisimof walked with the soldiers submissively, as if some mightier power had

gripped his elbow and were leading him along. He looked about him on every side, striving to notice everything. A strange thought came to him that what was now happening had nothing dreadful about it. He had only to be courageous, and take note of every little thing, and then nothing would affright or hurt him, but the end would be simple and easy.

"They'll shoot, and I shall be dead, and that's all. What is there terrible about that?"

Yet it worried him that he could not see and take note of everything. Each little detail; the tawny, fox-coloured boots of the soldier who marched in front of him; the blue sky above the snowy horizon; a black spot on the white field; sparrows which flew up from the road and perched on a trembling bough; the white morning light; the scrunching of the snow under his feet;—of all these things he was keenly conscious, yet what he saw made no impression, for all within his brain was void. With bowed head he gazed at his feet and traced the footprints in the snow made by the officer's goloshes. He gazed at each one intently, as if everything depended upon that.

Not until they made him stand by himself, did he raise his head. Around him all was cold and solitary. To such cold and solitude the grey row of soldiers and officers, with their rifles pointed at him, added nothing. Anisimof watched the soldiers. They were all looking at him along the barrels of their rifles. He was suddenly conscious of nothing but this row of frightened eyes. Everything else vanished. In that one short second between the word of command and the firing, Anisimof thought with amazing clearness:

"They need not have killed me, and I need not have died. They're all horrified at having to shoot me, and yet I am going to be shot. That's because I can't speak the right word to convince them how terrible and how pitiful it all is."

A thousand words like fiery meteors flashed through his brain, as he made a superhuman effort to speak, staggering forwards with wide-opened mouth. Then he saw a faint flash, but no longer heard the report that followed, though he felt his hands and face strike the hard snow. Then he knew that all was over, and that the inevitable had happened.

The rattle of musketry echoed across the steppe. The slender birches quivered; a crow, perched on one of the distant grave-mounds, flapped its black wings, and flew further off, where it hovered above the snow.

The soldiers lowered arms, pulled the bluish lips apart and gazed at the corpse. While the left foot continued to twitch slightly, there was perfect silence. Blood quickly soaked into the snow, making a red, shapeless patch. The soldiers' hands were bedabbled with it, as they dragged the body to a ditch and buried it there.

On the blood-stain they threw snow, but the blood soon soaked through. During that long winter the snowflakes covered it, but when the thaw came in spring-time, the brown spot reappeared, till, as the snow melted beneath the bright April sunshine, it vanished, and became part of the mellow, fecund earth.

MORNING SHADOWS

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CHAPTER I

It was spring. Pasha Afanasief, a sixth-form boy, who had been exempted through illness from going up for his exam, and Lisa Tchumakova, a girl student stood beside the little fence that divided two gardens. Lisa was leaning against the fence; in her grey, somewhat prominent eyes there was the childishly earnest and yet maidenly expression, which they always had when it was a question of anything important in her life.

As she listened, she glanced downwards at a book which she was holding in her hand. Pasha Afanasief, leaning forward against the fence, as it was difficult for him to stand upright, said in a high, excited voice:

"But if they don't let you go, we'll find a way to make them, somehow. I'll get you some teaching or copying to do. You shan't suffer, whatever happens. It may be a bit hard at first; that's only what one expects. Without bother of some sort, nothing can be done; in fact there's a certain charm about it, I think. After all, what's the good of sticking here? Think what a life it is, there! Such stir and move-

ment ! Everybody alive ! After work, a students' meeting, and after the meeting to go to a theatre or to the library ! When I think that for twenty years I have stuck in this beastly hole, I feel as if . . ."

Pasha Afanasief pulled out a rusty nail from the fence and flung it into the grass petulantly.

In the distance, beyond the green bushes and trees of the garden, one could hear Vasilisa, the maid calling :

" If you please, miss, lunch is ready. A—u ! "

In this unexpected woodland cry, " A—u ! " there was something so full of the joy of life, that Lisa and the youth exchanged glances and smiled.

" I'm coming ! " cried Lisa so loud that her voice echoed across the garden. Then as she moved away from the fence, she looked grave again, and said in a low voice :

" I daresay they won't let me, but I mean to go." Then, after a pause she added, " I have made up my mind."

Pasha Afanasief snapped his fingers gleefully.

" I say, that's capital, Lisotchka ! " he cried. " You won't regret it, Lisa my dear ! And as for them, they'll be furious at first, and then they'll give in, while the whole of life will lie before you. What a life we shall lead ! How we shall work ! The time is ripe for working. We'll form our own special clique and look about us for men of action," he added.

" Neither of us really knows what joy it is to plunge into life's crowd, and to know that others, as strong and eager, march bravely onward with you, uld er to shoulder . . ."

Clenching his fists, he threw back his head, proudly.

The light fell on his face, his dark eyes gleamed with enthusiasm, making his ill-health, as judged by his features, more apparent.

Lisa watched him attentively; then she sighed and fingered the long plait of her hair.

"So that's settled, eh?" asked Pasha Afanasief, as he laughingly held out his hand to her across the fence.

Lisa smiled back at his pleasant, kindly face, and gave him her pretty little hand which he grasped cordially, as tears came into his eyes.

"Oh, my dearest Lisotchka," he said affectionately.

"If you please, miss," cried Vasilisa close by.

Lisa nodded to her companion and ran quickly down the path.

"Oh Lisa!" he cried, tapping his forehead.

Lisa looked round and stood still.

"I quite forgot to tell you. You'll have a fellow-traveller, Dora Barshavskaia. She is going to the Women's College, too. She is from the High School at Poltava."

"Is she a Jew girl?" asked Lisa from a distance.

"A Jew girl! You mean a Jewess?" Pasha Afanasief was annoyed. "I'm ashamed of you, Lisa! Upon my word I am. I thought you knew better."

"Well, I didn't think," she said calmly, "simply, I——"

"I'll introduce you to her to-day, on the boulevard, shall I?" asked Pasha Afanasief. "She is a very good and highly cultivated girl."

"Yes, do introduce me," Lisa nodded and went on.

Pasha Afanasief watched her wistfully, as he still

clung with his thin hands to the fence, swaying slightly as he did so. Then he gazed upwards to the patches of bright blue sky which were visible through the trembling leaves, and then went home across the grass, where red and white daisies and other wild flowers grew in profusion.

The table was laid in the veranda. Pavel Ivanovitch and Olga Petrovna had already taken their places. Vasilisa was handing round a white tureen containing cold green cabbage soup, the countless little coins of her necklace jingling loudly, as her large bosom rose and fell. Seriosha, the little schoolboy, ran out to meet his sister.

"I'm coming, I'm coming directly!" she called out, as she suddenly dodged past him, and ran across the lawn, her yellow shoes twinkling in the sunshine.

Seriosha, with a shriek of delight, darted in pursuit. The little lapdog on the veranda, barked in astonishment, and then with curly tail erect, ran after them both.

Pavel Ivanovitch solemnly laid down the paper, took off his spectacles and smiled good-naturedly.

Olga Petrovna spilt some of the soup and laughed.

"How full of fun she is! And engaged to be married, too!" she said tenderly.

Swift as an arrow, Lisa ran round the big flowerbed, and as the lapdog got in the way of her dress, she fell with both hands on the yellow gravel. The book with all its fluttering leaves tumbled on to the grass.

"Aha!" cried Seriosha, catching hold of her long plait, "I've caught you!"

"I fell down of my own accord," replied Lisa, as

she rose, picked up the book and went quietly towards the veranda.

The little dog fawned round her feet and stood up repeatedly on its hind legs, while Seriosha shook his round, closely-cropped head defiantly :

" Oh, yes ! you fell down ! I should have caught you anyhow."

Lisa sat down at the table and mechanically took up her spoon, being lost in thought. The others watched her as something good to look upon, with her beautiful suggestion of vitality and youthful grace. The tinkle of spoons could be heard as they touched the plates ; the little dog sneezed under the table, and the sun scattered gold on Lisa's hair. All was homely, peaceful, and bright.

CHAPTER II

In the evening, Ensign Savinof came, Lisa's fiancé, with his tightly-fitting riding-breeches, glossy boots, and jingling spurs.

The air was very still, and in the light of the setting sun all was bathed in a trembling, golden haze. Seriosha took his cap and went with his fishing-rod to the river, Heaven knows why, as he had never caught anything yet. Lisa, after twisting up her hair into a thick coil, said :

" Nikolai Nikolaievitch, let's go to the boulevard."

The ensign's spurs clinked gleefully as he hastened to fetch her cloak. On the boulevard they met Pasha Afanasief. He was walking with a delicate-looking girl. She had a singularly large head, coarse black hair, and Jewish, almond-shaped eyes, and she tripped along beside her companion.

" Oh, there you are, Lisa ! " said Pasha Afasanief.

Then, after a pause, he turned to the ensign, whom, in common with all soldiers, he did not like, believing him to be a stupid, empty-headed person.

" Good evening, Mr. Savinof."

" Good evening ! " was the pleasant rejoinder.

Then, addressing himself to Lisa and the little Jewess, Pasha Afanasief said :

" Now let me introduce you to each other. This is

Dora Moiseievna Barshavskaia, and this is Lisa Tchumakova, about whom I've already told you."

Lisa held out her hand, which Dora shook hurriedly.

"I am very pleased to make your acquaintance. Pasha has told me a lot about you."

At the end of the boulevard was the Military Casino, and in the gardens a band was playing. The metallic tones of the wind instruments floated out upon the air in successive waves of sound, which were mournful or merry in turns. The girls walked first, followed by the two young men.

"Trum-ta-ta! Trum-ta-ta-tam!" hummed the ensign gaily.

"I can't stand military music!" said Pasha Afanasief, with a grimace. He didn't say this because the sound of the brass was disagreeable to him, but because the ensign seemed to him such a dull, depressing kind of person.

"Really!" replied the other, good-naturedly, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes," grumbled Pasha Afanasief, "the sound is boring enough, but your bandmaster seems to pick out the silliest tunes possible. Heaven knows where he gets them! And yet there's plenty of good music to be had. Besides, from the way they play, you can hear that they don't care twopence for the music; that they are playing just to amuse the people, and they certainly succeed."

"But surely," said the ensign, "it's rather nice to hear a pretty tune like that on such a lovely evening?"

Pasha looked scornfully at him and bit his lip.

"Now that's a very pretty bit," said Savinof, as

he listened with evident pleasure, "that's from *The Geisha*," he explained, beating time with his fingers.

"H'm," was Pasha Afanasief's dubious rejoinder.

Lisa glanced round sharply at her fiancé.

"Well," said Pasha Afanasief, after a short pause, "we shall all be going away in the autumn."

"Yes," replied Dora dryly.

"Where are you going?" asked the ensign in surprise.

"Petersburg," replied Pasha Afanasief, and for a moment he felt sorry for the ensign.

"And Lisavieta Pavlovna's going, too, is she?" asked the ensign, with a slight tremor in his voice.

"Yes, we're all going," said Pasha Afanasief.

Savinof was silent.

"Have you decided what courses you are going to take?" asked Dora.

"We are going in for the medical," replied Pasha Afanasief excitedly.

"Yes, the medical," said Lisa gravely.

"It seems to me, one couldn't possibly choose anything else," continued Pasha. "As things are now, what are the educational classes worth? Rubbish. They don't allow you to learn what you like; and to have the A B C drummed into you—no thank you! But medicine is another matter. To work with a doctor and to have a share in what he does, that's not so easily done. How splendid, too, if one is able to save even one person from death or suffering. Perhaps some patient is given up as hopeless, then all at once . . . that's the way to look at it!"

His large kind eyes grew moist with emotion.

"Yes, and besides that, it's the best way to get at the people," remarked Dora. "And it's easier, too, for a doctor to do propaganda work."

The music stopped on a high note, brayed forth by a brass instrument, and now silence ensued. The stars gleamed faintly above the town, and on the boulevard it was now so dark that faces were no longer discernible. Under the great linden trees at the end of it one could just see glimmering cigarettes, and officers' white tunics.

"For that matter," continued Pasha Afanasief, as if replying to his own thoughts, "any sort of work, so long as it's work. Let each of us do his duty; good will result from it some day. It's not work that's the most important thing, but that each should live his real, true life, in which there is conflict and victory! Oh, when I think that in two or three months I shall be ever so far away from all these colourless, bloated, drowsy people, with their petty interests, my very heart seems to burn within me!"

The ensign muttered something under his breath.

"What did you say?" asked Lisa sharply.

Savinof did not speak.

"The main thing is to learn, learn, learn," said Dora, as she shook her head energetically. "In that lies power; in that lies everything. We need educated, cultured people. We've had enough of amateurs."

"Certainly," said Pasha. "One must know everything, in order to be able to understand all the beauty and joy of life."

"And widen our outlook," remarked Savinof suddenly, with strange emphasis.

All the others ceased speaking, and the silence became almost painful. Lisa looked at him, but saw hardly anything but his white tunic, and Pasha Afanasief gave vent to a hostile chuckle.

"It's time to go home," he said.

Dora yawned. "Ye-es."

They all accompanied Dora to her house door, and then walked on together. On the way Pasha Afanasief asked Savinof if he had read Nietzsche and Marx, who said that he had, but in a tone so undecided that Pasha Afanasief maliciously inquired if he could call to mind any passage from these authors.

"No, I really can't at the moment," he said confusedly. "I can't recollect anything. But, you see, we have so little time to ourselves."

Lisa listened attentively to what they said, and it seemed quite strange to her that only a short time before she could have thought of marrying the ensign.

Now she felt determined that under no circumstances would she do this; yet without knowing why, the thought made her feel sad.

On reaching home, Pasha Afanasief said good-bye, and Savinof walked with Lisa a few steps further to the gate of her house. They could hear Pasha Afanasief clattering up the wooden stairs and rattling at the bolt.

"Au revoir, Nikolai Nikolaievitch," said Lisa, giving him her hand. The ensign took it, but immediately let it fall.

"Lisavieta Pavlovna," he began suddenly in a trembling voice, which, coming from such a big, tall man, was strangely touching; "so it's true then, that you're going away?"

Lisa suddenly remembered how Pasha Afanasief had laughingly assured her that as soon as she told Savinof of her intended departure, he would produce a cannon from his pocket and shoot himself.

"Yes, I'm going away," she replied in a dry, almost hostile tone. She had never spoken to anybody like this before. The ensign remained silent for a time. A feeling that all was hopeless oppressed him.

"Oh, you are really going," he asked; "but why?"

"To study, of course." Lisa shrugged her soft shoulders, and looked severe.

"Is that absolutely necessary?"

Lisa did not answer. It seemed to her more and more extraordinary that she should ever have thought of marrying such a dull-witted, narrow-minded man.

"Well, it's time I was at home," she said coolly; "good-bye."

"But what about me, Lisavieta Pavlovna? What am I to . . . A bullet through my head?" stammered the ensign, hardly knowing what he said.

"Shot out of a cannon, I suppose?" asked Lisa gravely.

"N-no. . . . Why out of a cannon?" Savinof seemed puzzled.

"Well, good-bye!" Lisa held out her hand.

Savinof wanted to say something more, but refrained. For a moment he stood still, and then walked slowly down the street, his spurs continually getting in his way. In the darkness, somewhere behind the fence, the night watchman could be heard knocking drearily.

CHAPTER III

FOUR months later, Lisa and Dora travelled to Petersburg. Pasha Afanasief had already gone there, and he was to meet them at the railway station. They travelled third class. Autumn had come, and the days were grey, but hazy and calm. On the day of this journey it rained without ceasing; everything was dripping wet: the carriages, the sleepers, the station-master. The little streams and pools that flew past, were all dimpled by the heavy raindrops.

Dora sat in her corner of the carriage reading, while Lisa stood on the covered platform at the end of the train, and with her large, questioning eyes looked back at the grey horizon. She still seemed to see her native town that she had left behind her, her father and mother, Seriosha, the little puppy, the old house, and all that she loved. They all seemed to be just beyond the horizon; indeed, if she stood on tiptoe, she felt sure that she could see them.

"Tra-ta-ta; tra-ta-ta," rattled the train rhythmically, as with iron brutality it plunged forward.

"Tra-ra-rach," groaned a big iron bridge which spanned a yellow river. Lisa looked down at the boats and the barges, which had the appearance of little toys. Ranged one behind the other, they were laden with dripping timber, as grey little men punted

them forwards with long poles. There was something melancholy about this yellow river, where in places by the shore stood slender pines and birch-trees. To Lisa it all seemed weird and cold and strange.

"What are they doing down there?" she thought.

Incomprehensible and, therefore, terrible to her seemed the work of these little men with their long poles; the river with its vague currents; the denizens of these dreary yellow shores with their solitary pine-trees and birches.

As dusk was falling, Lisa sighed and went back to the railway carriage, where the lighted lamps set huge shadows in motion. She sat down beside Dora.

"Where are we going?" was what she would like to have asked with her whole heart and soul, but instead of that, she said languidly:

"Pasha will meet us, won't he?"

"Of course he will," replied Dora. For a long while she had ceased reading, and felt thoroughly depressed by her surroundings in this big, uncomfortable railway-carriage, full of dirty, ill-tempered-looking persons who were crunching dried sunflower seeds (*siemiatchki*), talking boisterously, playing the concertina, and quarrelling. In this moment that unknown life of her dreams, full of conflict and triumph, seemed unattainable, in fact impossible. She was glad that Lisa had come, and looked out at her from her dark corner with shining eyes.

"Lisotchka," she said gently. She took Lisa's soft, warm hand in hers. Lisa looked at her affectionately, and suddenly put her arms round Dora and clasped her closely.

"Well, have a look first and then come over here

for a chat," cried somebody behind the wooden partition.

"Quee!" wailed the doleful concertina.

A tall, gaunt workman in a woollen jacket and a long red smock, which hung over his trousers, came stumbling out of the adjoining compartment, and sat down opposite Lisa.

"Where are you going, may I ask, miss?" he said after a pause. There was a smell of vodka.

"To Petersburg," replied Lisa.

Another man, probably a soldier, with a coarse, red moustache, and features marked by smallpox, began looking over the partition.

"Oh, indeed!" said the workman, as he gazed with dull, drunken persistence at Lisa's face and bosom.

She felt afraid. The soldier laughed and suddenly looked over again.

"What are you staring at?" asked the workman, and the thick tone of his voice and slight rocking motion of his body, showed that he was very drunk.

"Lisa!" cried Dora in alarm, "lets go out on the platform for a little while."

"What! don't you want to talk to me?" cried the workman angrily.

"Why not?" replied Lisa hastily.

"Well, I wanted to ask you why you were going to Petersburg?"

"We are going to study," said Lisa.

Again the soldier laughed.

"Study!" repeated the workman, "and not . . . ?" The soldier snorted like a horse and bumped his face delightfully against the partition. Dora began to

cry, and Lisa kept her eyes fixed attentively on the workman.

"I'll punch your head for you in a minute," exclaimed an old peasant from the other side of the carriage suddenly. "I'll teach you to insult people like that, you blockhead!"

The workman turned to him with a drunken leer. "That's all right. The devil can take her for all I care!" And with another obscene expression or two, he got up and went away.

"What a gang!" said the old peasant, who also got up.

After that there was silence, and as evening came on, the air in the railway carriage became more foul.

Dora lay back in her seat, being afraid to move, and Lisa went out to the platform again, from which nothing could now be seen, and which was damp and cold. There, in a nervous and depressed state, she remained for nearly two hours. She thought again of how, two days ago, they had accompanied her to the station, and how Seriosha and her mother had wept, because at home it would be so lonely without her. Then at the station she remembered how Kavinof had suddenly appeared in a long grey cloak, drenched with the rain, and how pale and distressed he looked.

"Lisavieta Pavlovna," he said in a trembling voice, "I wanted to speak to you."

Lisa felt disinclined for this. All that could be said had already been discussed a hundred times. At first she had felt sorry for the ensign, but now she had begun to be annoyed with him; not because he bored her, but because all the others laughed at

him; and she felt ashamed at having very nearly become his wife.

"He is trying his best to stop you," Pasha had said; "poor chap, he is very much cut up, and yet he looks like a turkey that has had its tail feathers pulled out."

Yet still she walked along the platform with him, which owing to the rain was quite empty.

"Be quick, be quick!" said Dora.

"In a moment," replied Lisa firmly.

"I shan't detain Lisavieta very long," added the ensign sadly. He sighed heavily and looked down at his varnished boots all splashed with mud.

"Well, what is it you want to say to me?" asked Lisa.

"I . . . then all is over between us, is it?"

From the tone of his voice it was plain that he knew that well enough. Lisa was silent. The first bell rang. Again he sighed.

"Lisavieta," he hastily murmured, "I daresay I am rather ridiculous and not a man of any particular . . . but I don't wish to stop you . . . You'll never find a man more devoted to you than I am. You know that. I can't think why you want to go away when we were all so happy together here. Of course I'm not worthy of you, but I would willingly follow you on foot if I could, but be sure that . . . Forgive me, Lisavieta Pavlovna, if I . . ."

Suddenly his lips quivered, and the expression of his face became pitiably childish as he abruptly ceased speaking. Then with great energy he proceeded to carry her luggage, as he shouted to the porter, and as the train moved out of the station, he waved his cap for a long while.

"He is not really half bad," was Dora's opinion of Savinof; "only he is such a frightful bore."

As Lisa looked out of the dark window-pane, she thought how it would have been if, when the workman insulted her, the door had opened, and Savinof had come in. She had a sudden longing to see him and to walk through the garden, nestling against his arm, out of harm's way and leading her old simple, peaceful life. She wept silently, and large tears rolled down her childish face.

CHAPTER IV

In one of the wards of the Army Medical Hospital it was bright, for through the open window the soft spring air rushed in. Pasha Afanasief sat at the window overlooking the garden, where there were more green hedges than trees, and where each tree had a label attached to it with its name in Russian and Latin. On his knees lay a book, and so thin and transparent were the hands that held it that they were painful to behold.

Lisa, Dora, and a student named Andreief sat silently beside him. They had no heart to talk about anything, because one of the doctors had just told them in the passage that Afanasief would die within the week. His continual over-exertion and the change of climate had hastened the inevitable end.

"The fellow's burnt himself out, more's the pity," said the doctor.

Nevertheless, though it exhausted him, Pasha talked without ceasing; and they let him talk, for they knew that it could make no difference.

"When I had read that," said Pasha in a faint voice, catching his breath every now and then, "it was as if a window had been opened in my room, and that sunshine was all around me. This grey, dull, joyless view of life, it devours the soul, and now at

last . . . A splendid fellow ! What a note of triumph ! This book here," and he tapped it with his thin fingers ; " this is no simple story to attract girls, but a symbol of the deepest importance."

They knew what novel it was of which he spoke. It was one which had pleased them all, but it was distressing to them to hear this enthusiastic praise of it from one who was so near his death.

" Oh, that there were more such brave, appealing voices ! " exclaimed Pasha dreamily. " One must go on rousing, go on calling, and telling everybody that there is no such thing as life without work that is mighty and sustained ! The main thing is, that our own petty interests must disappear, when the whole world lies before us, in which to work for the universal good. My dear Lisotchka," he continued, " I'm so glad that I was able to drag you out of our swamp—glad for you, and glad for myself ! It is no slight gain to have rescued anyone, and especially such a sweet dear girl as yourself. And it was I who did it, wasn't it ? Well, not altogether, for books had a good deal to do with it, too " ; and he tapped the book again, " but still . . ."

For awhile he was silent, and then with evident difficulty continued :

" Now, Lisotchka, when I am dead, for such a thing is possible, isn't it ? I leave you to carry on my work. You *are* my work, and so in your kind, good self I shall live on. Yes, Lisotchka, so it is. What melancholy thoughts, to be sure ! Don't you remember how you were going to marry the ensign who wanted to put a cannon-ball through his head ? " He laughed merrily.

"Yes, I remember, Pasha," replied Lisa sadly.

"Ah, well, good luck to him! Do you know that at last I felt quite sorry for him, for really it was not his fault that fate and his fellows had made him just a fool. I daresay that he suffered a good deal, too. Ah, well!"

Then, as a sad look came into his eyes, he added:

"Anyhow, the main thing has been accomplished, and whatever happens, it now rests with you, my dear Lisotchka."

As they got up to go, he turned to Andreief and said:

"I say, old boy, will you take all the literature * at my place to Bogdanof? There is some important stuff among it. Well, good-bye, my dear friends!"

As they reached the door, Pasha suddenly called out:

"Lisotchka, Lisa!"

She ran back to him, while the other two remained in the passage.

"Lisotchka," he murmured, as if afraid of being overheard, "the spring is here, and perhaps with us at home the snow is melting. . . . Lisotchka, the doctor said that if I had always lived in the south, I might very likely have recovered"; and into his dark eyes the tears rose and quivered on their lashes.

* The usual term for illegal political writings.

CHAPTER V

It was on a grey, warm day that they buried Pasha. In the grave there was yellowish, muddy water, and on the paths there were puddles of half-melted snow; while the soft clay made walking so difficult that the coffin swayed, and was jolted as it was borne to the grave.

"Keep step, gentleman, please! Keep step!" cried one of the bearers, a student, as a corner of the coffin kept cutting his shoulder, and which knocked off his cap. Mould rattled at first on the coffin-lid, and then splashed gently into the yellowish water. The students, both young men and girls, all stood silently on a mound, a black patch against the white desolate ground.

"Larionof, a speech! Say something!" cried some one. But Larionof was too bashful.

A very young and handsome student, with a look on his face of enthusiasm, if not of very great intelligence, suddenly came forward, and, waving his cap above his curly head, exclaimed:

"Fate gives nothing without demanding a sacrifice like this, in return."

He ceased abruptly, his face hot and flushed, and there was general silence, while crows hovered above the melting snow. The whole scene was intensely sad.

" Well, let us go," said Dora to Lisa.

With her tear-stained eyes, which expressed both affection and perplexity, Lisa glanced at the grave, and whispered :

" Yes, let us go."

At the entrance to the cemetery, they took the tram through the long streets towards Dora's home. All the male passengers stared at the handsome, buxom Lisa, though, as usual, she never noticed this ; but Dora did, and it annoyed her. When they got out of the tram and walked along the street to Dora's lodging, she sighed and said :

" Well, now he is buried " ; and shuddering as if with cold, she added, " How simple it all is ! How fearfully simple ! "

At this, tears rolled again down Lisa's cheeks. " Poor dear Pasha ! " she murmured.

" Are you coming in ? " said Dora, as they stood in the gloomy doorway.

" I don't know ; perhaps I will," sighed Lisa.

They crossed the little courtyard and climbed up the evil-smelling stairs to the fourth floor. Dora's room was small and badly lighted, with a few pieces of shabby furniture in it. The damp walls and the chilly atmosphere convinced one that sunlight never entered there. Lisa sat down on the bed, while Dora stood near the table and gazed vaguely out of the window. During the last few days they had been so excited and so busy ; there had been so many sad conversations, so much hurrying hither and thither, so much chanting, incense-burning, lighting of tapers and weeping, that it now seemed strange and almost disagreeable to go back to this sudden

silence; to sit down and have one's meals; to go to bed; or to do any ordinary daily work as before. Both girls felt intensely depressed.

"To-morrow is anatomy," said Lisa languidly, endeavouring to talk of something else. Dora was silent.

"Exams will soon be over," continued Lisa, trying to get away from her intolerable grief. "I had a letter from home yesterday."

"Oh, indeed!" said Dora mechanically.

"Yes, mother writes that the spring is come in all its glory, the days are warm and beautiful."

Lisa stopped and sighed. She wanted to say she was longing for home, for the green grass, the warmth, and the peaceful life. Everything here was wearisome to her, but feeling vaguely shy of Dora, she did not dare to do so. Suddenly Dora ran towards her, and clasping her hands exclaimed:

"Oh, Lisa, Lisotchka, how boring, how dreadful it all is! It's so different from what . . . from what . . . ."

Tears at once rose to Lisa's eyes. She felt such intense pity for Dora; and with a touch of maternal tenderness she put her arms round the other's slim waist and drew her closer to her.

"Never mind, Dorotchka, my dear one!" she said, kissing her hair and her cheek.

"Shall I bring you the samovar?" asked the landlady in a surly voice from behind the door.

Dora started back and Lisa replied, "yes, bring it in."

The fat, dirty landlady from the provinces, who hated the female students, because they led a better

life than she did, though she had to put up with them as lodgers for fifteen roubles, brought in a rusty tea-urn with a crooked stand.

"Do you want white bread, too?" she asked grumpily, without looking at anybody.

"No," replied Dora quickly. Both Lisa and Dora were somewhat afraid of the woman, though they never liked to admit this. In her presence they were ill at ease, and if they met her in the passage, they tried to slip past her unnoticed.

The landlady scrutinized the room, evidently anxious to find fault with something, and then grabbed the washing-basin in which there was a little dirty water, and bounced out of the room, banging the door.

For a long time Lisa and Dora sat in silence. Lisa's grief for Pasha's death was blended with a dull feeling of despair and perplexity. To her it seemed utterly inconceivable that he had gone out of her life, and that everything in it must go on just as before. Dora began to move gently about the room. She made tea and seemed lost in her thoughts. The tea-urn made a droning, mournful noise, and again Lisa wept silently.

An hour later, the students Larionof and Andreief came in. The former, a fat, short-sighted youth, at once began to talk about Pasha Afanasief.

"In my opinion, he was a most remarkable, wonderful fellow," he said, in a tone of mournful enthusiasm. "In him there was a certain extraordinary force, and it is impossible to believe that that force can so soon die out. One thing, in fact the main thing, was, that he had the faculty of influencing others. It almost looks to me as if our work would now cease."

"No, it won't cease," said Andreief, shaking his head.

"Perhaps not."

"After all, Afanasief had no practical qualities."

"That's true enough," replied Larionof. "But he knew how to vitalize everything. He had such a way with him; he was such a wonderful personality. Now he is gone, we . . ."

"Oh, you're just a feeble fellow, and that's all about it," interrupted Andreief rudely, as he bit the end of his moustache.

"Very likely," replied Larionof, "but the fact is, that latterly I have felt so disheartened about everything. After reading something stirring, or after hearing Afanasief speak, one used to feel enthusiastic, as if one were moved to do great things. Then afterwards, other thoughts come and one seems to lose heart. During my first year, and even in the second, things were different. Everything interested one. One attended lectures, or shouted at meetings, or pored over books, and everything was so jolly. . . ."

"Why not?" jeered Andreief.

"Why not, indeed? But after a time I began to think, 'I am learning all this. Good! But it's not a question of learning only. My whole life is not going to be given up to science. The point is this: what am I doing all this for?' And to that question I could find no answer."

"What do you mean?" asked Dora, looking up.

"Well, just that. I could find no answer."

"It's strange that you should say that," began Dora. "A year ago or less than that, I came here

feeling so full of enthusiasm, and the important thing is, that what I expected to find, I found; papers, newspapers, scientific lectures, meetings—everything of which I had heard and read. Now, after six months, I feel that everything seems empty. It all wearies me. In fact, so loathsome is it to me, that very soon I believe I shall envy Pasha Afanasief."

She said no more, and there was silence. Behind the wall the sound of voices suddenly became audible, and the clatter of crockery.

"I sometimes think," she went on, "how, two years ago, I was teaching in a school, and how squalid and insufferably dull it all seemed to me then. The village was so grey, the peasants drunken, the children stupid. My own life appeared just as grey and stupid. And now I sometimes think that it was all rather nice! The village, and the little wood full of birch-trees where every day I used to walk, and the children, especially one, such a dear boy he was! Then again, at times I think that perhaps I made a mistake and that I ought to go back and begin the old life over again. Yet, no; that would only be tedious, and not so much tedious, perhaps, as galling. For how could I possibly vegetate there for the rest of my life?"

Lisa from her corner sighed deeply.

"Well," said Andreief, still gnawing the end of his moustache, "who was it persuaded you to come here at all? And what was it that you wanted?"

"Wanted? Why, to see life!" replied Dora.

"Life!" exclaimed Andreief, "what is life? Tell me that, pray! Give me a cigarette, Larionof."

"Well, that's plain enough," drawled Dora.

"Then do define it, please. In what does this life

consist? In attending classes and lectures? In studying science or politics? Is that it?"

"Certainly, it does, to some extent."

"Well, you've got all that. What else do you want?"

"That I don't know. I only feel that the most important thing of all is just what I haven't got."

"I'll tell you what you want," said Andreief, in a tone of decision.

"Aha! That will be most interesting," sneered Dora, and in her dark eyes there was a wicked gleam. It annoyed her to think that Andreief believed that he knew more than she did.

"Love, and self-respect—that's what you want."

"How do you make that out?" asked Dora, in the same tone.

"The life for which you are fitted always seems to you a miserable one, and you long to get away from it and be something else, something more than you really are."

"That's very funny, upon my word!" exclaimed Dora, incensed.

"Not funny in the least," observed Larionof, "for, after all, it's no more than the truth."

"How can it be anything else?" said Andreief, as he shrugged his shoulders. "You are such good Jesuits, always ready to grovel to some apostle or other, be he working-man, schoolmaster, or peasant. But if, one fine morning, Fate should compel you to cart stones or clay about, or drum the alphabet into the nivelling infants, then you grow melancholy and are ashamed to meet an acquaintance! Why is this? Because you've no pride, no *amour propre*, no self-

respect. You won't see that other people's lives can only be interesting or significant in so far as they are related to your own."

"What do you mean?" cried Larinof angrily.

"Look here, I'm a peasant," shouted Andreief, clenching his fists. "All my life I've had to work for my living, and have been used to consider that I myself am all in all to myself. It is all the same to me what position I occupy with regard to other men, so long as I am satisfied and happy. But you others, you don't know what you want nor yet of what you are capable. If you happen to be one of a band of conspirators it's only because others are in it, too, and if you try to see life, it's only because you've been told that life is good. Now, if I want to become a conspirator, I do so simply and solely because it pleases me, personally, and nobody else. Thus, without the least ado, I should die, or cause some one else to die and never turn a hair! That's a fact!"

"How simple it all sounds!" said Dora mockingly.

"And I suppose you'd like it to be complicated, eh?" asked Andreief, in a cutting tone. "You've got Christianity, patriotism, humanity, idealism, Marxism, all at your finger-ends. Very pretty, no doubt, but what about your own selves? Where's your own free, individual life?"

"Wait a moment," broke in Larinof.

"What is there to wait for?" cried the other, tossing back his head. "But I think we've reached the turning-point now. In ten or twenty years' time you will be looked upon as monstrous cripples. One will never be able to understand how such invertebrate, cowardly creatures ever existed."

"But won't you be so good as to reveal to us this your art of self-love, telling us in what it consists?" asked Dora sarcastically.

"In what it consists? In loving oneself for just what one is; as a human being of flesh, and blood, and spirit. One's own existence, one's body, one's pleasures, one's own personality, and one's own personal conception of life, not some falsely coloured one; there you have it, in a nutshell!"

Andreief got up suddenly and seized his cap.

"Well, good-bye. It's time to go home. It is nearly twelve o'clock."

"No, but first explain . . ."

"I've nothing to explain. You must be a damned fool if you don't understand that yourself. It can never be drummed into you."

The students had gone, and in the room there was silence. Yet one could hear voices behind the wall.

"What a philosophy!" scoffed Dora. "It means that we have to go back to man's primeval state."

Lisa sighed, and again she was tortured by thoughts of Pasha Afanasief.

CHAPTER VI

SPRING had come and Lisa went home on a visit. But Pasha Afanasief was not there. As, on the evening of her arrival she went into the garden and stood by the fence, silent grief overcame her. It was as if in this place she could hear Pasha speaking in his old impulsive way.

Dora was absent, too. She had stayed in Petersburg, where, in order to earn some money, she had accepted a situation in a furniture warehouse for the summer. They were all delighted to see Lisa when she arrived, especially Ensign Savinof. Breathless and with shining eyes, he hastened to her house that same evening, saying nothing, but never taking his eyes off Lisa for a moment. She was pleased to see him, but as usual, her manner towards him was reserved and somewhat grave.

After supper they all went out walking. Lisa, tired as she was, yet felt vaguely happy.

It almost depressed her to walk through the old familiar streets and to pass the houses, churches, and gardens that she knew so well. The night was moonless, and after the white spring nights in Petersburg, it seemed to Lisa dark as in a vault.

She walked in front with Savinof, and her father and mother followed.

"I'm sure you will catch cold, Pavel Ivanovitch," said Olga Ivanovna.

Lisa listened to this well-known speech, and awaited the equally well-known answer to it. It seemed to add to her pleasure.

"Why should I catch cold? I really don't know what you mean!" said Pavel Ivanovitch snappishly.

The air was heavy, and with every breath the joy of living seemed sweeter and more alluring.

"Oh, how beautiful, how wonderfully beautiful it all is!" exclaimed Lisa.

"A magical night," echoed Savinof in a slightly nasal voice. To Lisa this seemed the most fitting description.

With the morrow began a series of peaceful sunny days, all of them happy and tranquil. It was only when Lisa thought of Petersburg and remembered that the summer would soon vanish, that she felt any touch of sadness.

One sultry evening in July they went out in a boat together, he rowing while she steered. Myriads of stars shone above them, and in the garden the glow-worms lit their tiny lamps.

"Oh, Lisavieta!" exclaimed the young officer, "if you only knew how I longed for you while you were away. Hundreds of times I said to myself 'I'll shoot myself, and there's an end of it.' And then I thought, 'Summer is coming, and Lisavieta will return, but I shan't be there nor see her any more.' So I didn't shoot myself."

"So you didn't shoot yourself," repeated Lisa, laughing merrily.

"Oh, what a magical night!" exclaimed Savinof in

the same nasal tone, while his eyes were riveted upon Lisa's graceful form. They moored the boat by an island and walked towards the wood, leaning closely against each other. Under the trees it was quite dark, and there was a delicious odour of leaves and dewy grass. When they reached an open space between the trees, they stopped and gazed upwards at the canopy of starlit sky.

A strange, burning force seemed to draw them together. Lisa's hand trembled as she almost nestled against the young man's shoulder. His muscular limbs were all aglow, and at one moment he very nearly seized her soft quivering form and crushed it to his breast. But this he dared not do, and knelt in the grass as he pressed his lips to her hand.

"Let us go!" exclaimed Lisa in confusion. "Let us go!" she repeated, with something of her usual peremptoriness. The ensign rose and submissively gave her his hand as they walked on. All the way home they were silent, feeling afraid to look at each other. On reaching home, Lisa carefully surveyed herself in the mirror, and then lazily undressed. The ensign buried his head in his pillow, as the words, "What a magical night!" rang through his brain.

CHAPTER VII

ABOUT three days after this Lisa received a letter from her friend, Dora.

"Dearest Lisotchka," it ran, "you can't imagine how horribly bored I am! This wretched office-work knocks all the life out of one. There's nobody in town, where it is frightfully hot and dull. Larionof is away, so I am now quite, quite alone. At any rate, he used to come and see me sometimes, and that made it a trifle less dull. I can imagine what fun you're having! Is your ensign still running after you? Of course, on moonlight nights he takes you out in a boat, or you wander through the dark alleys of your own romantic garden. I can imagine how delightful that must be! Only, marriage — for heaven's sake keep clear of that! However, that's your affair, after all; not mine. Don't be offended, but you have quite a liking for provincial joys. That is one of the things which Pasha Afanasief noticed. Perhaps that sort of life would really suit you best. You'll marry your ensign, have a dozen children, be ever so happy, and live ever so long! *Au revoir!*

"Your affectionate

"DORA."

"P.S. Lisotchka, forgive me! How disagreeable I

am ! I have just read over the letter, and I see what unkind things I have said. Never mind. I shall send it, just the same, so that you can see what a horrid person I am. Everything is so boring, so nauseous ! I am so miserable that I feel sure that you won't be angry with your poor Dora."

Lisa carefully read this letter through twice, and looking very grave, went out into the garden, where the sun shone and sparrows twittered.

She walked slowly down the path until she came to the place where last year she had looked over the fence into the Afanasief's garden. Here, by this fence, now grey and dilapidated, she stood lost in her thoughts. Shafts of sunlight fell across her path and touched her grey dress, while green leaves whispered overhead.

Somewhere in space she seemed to hear Pasha Afanasief's words, and her eyes were filled with tears so that the fence and the leaves and the grass and the blue heaven became blurred and indistinct.

In the evening Savinof arrived as usual. He may have had some inkling of her mood, for his handsome, good-natured face had a shy expression. Lisa's manner was cool and constrained. When they were alone together, he said :

" Lisavieta Pavlovna, what's the matter with you ? "

Lisa looked at him coldly.

" The matter with me ? Nothing," she replied.

He looked up sadly :

" But I can see that you . . ."

Without speaking, Lisa suddenly produced Dora's letter and handed it to him.

"What is this?" he asked in surprise. She made no answer, but went into the garden. The ensign did not move, but watched her depart, and then unfolding the letter, he read it through. He grew so red and breathed so heavily that at first it seemed as if he were going to tear the letter to shreds, and rush away in a fury. But his blind adoration for Lisa was such that he kept his feelings under control. He looked about him in amazement, and having carefully folded up the letter, followed Lisa, who was standing at the gate watching a herd of goats that were passing along the road in a cloud of dust.

"Lisavieta Pavlovna!" he murmured.

Lisa turned round, and her eyes met his. The ensign looked down and said sadly:

"I don't understand."

"You don't understand?" she repeated as her face assumed a strangely hard expression. "I don't understand either. Leave me, pray leave me!" she suddenly exclaimed hysterically, and then rushed towards the house.

All night long Savinof paced up and down his room and at last, going to his overcoat hanging on a peg, was about to draw his revolver from one of the pockets, yet instead of doing so he bent forward and muttered:

"Lisa, Lisa, Lisotchka!"

CHAPTER VIII

In the middle of February the thaw set in. There was an odour of melting snow and the dark, humid sky and the rattling sound of wheels on the pavement were signs that spring was at hand.

Lisa and a student named Korenief, a tall, dark-haired young man with brilliant eyes and a hooked nose, were walking along towards his rooms. He had flung his student's cloak over his shoulder, and his cap he wore at the back of his head. His powerful voice could be heard above the rattling of wheels and the splashing of water as it dripped from the roofs of houses.

"I don't understand you, Lisa," said Korenief, and his eyes sparkled. "If you love me, and I know that you do love me, why should either of us hide it? What sense is there in concealment? One must get from life all that life can give. I don't like cowardice, half-measures, indecision."

Lisa looked down and felt a strange tremor in her limbs. Her ear which Korenief could see, a pretty little ear, became red as a budding rose.

In Korenief's room she did not remove her wraps until the landlady had brought in the samovar, when the latter scrutinized her closely. As she stood at the

table she seemed to have brought a sense of freshness and pleasant coolness into the room.

Korenief was evidently excited; his eyes were aflame. He was strikingly handsome, and all his movements were imperious and bold.

"Do take your things off, Lisa," he said as he shut the door and then approached her. Lisa glanced quickly at him and the unconscious, half-childish fear of him that she had felt ever since she had known him, was evident in her pale face which wore its usual grave expression.

"Come, take your things off," he repeated, as with trembling fingers he began to unbutton her jacket.

"I can do it myself," she murmured.

She took off her hat and sat down at the table.

"Now then, what do you mean? Off with those things!" he persisted.

She stood up obediently and fumbled at the buttons of her jacket. Korenief helped her.

Suddenly he embraced her, flung her jacket on to the floor and lifted her off her feet. Then, turning round, so that her plaited hair lightly touched his cheek, he carried her to his bed.

Lisa felt dizzy with fear and despair, as if in dream she were falling over a precipice. She made a faint effort to free herself, as she tossed about on the bolster. Then, suddenly, she became quite still and shut her eyes. Everything in the room seemed to be whirling round in one wild, burning spasm of pleasure and pain.

Gently, without looking at Korenief, she got up, a pitiful yet charming figure, with her grey, crumpled

dress and tousled hair. Korenief was panting; his eyes glittered, and his nostrils were quivering. A strange warm odour seemed to envelop them; a kind of voluptuous haze floated through the room.

It was late when Lisa left. The passage was dark, and she tried to creep out noiselessly to avoid being seen. But a streak of light fell from the landlady's room, and this haggard female appeared in the doorway.

"Please shut the front door," she said, in a harsh, grating voice which, to Lisa's ear, conveyed insolence and contempt.

She stood still on the stairs, leaning on the banisters for support. As the door closed behind her she felt that she was utterly alone in the world, miserable and covered with shame.

CHAPTER IX

Almost every day Larionof and Andreief came to see Dora and Lisa, who now shared one room. Whole evenings were spent in discussing the one and only subject.

"I see what it is now," exclaimed Larionof, gesticulating wildly, "this is a time of fighting for fighting's sake! That's all it is! Formerly, one looked upon it as a duty, or as a grievous necessity, do you see? But now one gets enjoyment from the actual fighting itself; a purely animal, selfish enjoyment. That is what it amounts to!"

"Exactly!" assented Andreief.

"Yes, that's it. Only in this way it's easy to see that everyone will become a beast!"

"No, my friend, that's not quite correct," laughed Andreief, "for what you called a beast and what I called a beast might not be the same animal."

Seated on a corner of the bed, Lisa listened to their talk, and thought of Korenief, who had occasionally visited her while Dora was away. She was more afraid of him now than ever. That which he did with her caused her shame and disgust, yet she dared not resist, but felt that she must meekly submit.

As she now listened to Andreief, she pictured Korenief to herself as one of those very beasts to

which he alluded, and she shuddered to think that anyone might get to know of her disgrace.

Dora was also silent and self-absorbed. She hardly paid any heed to these discussions. All her thoughts were set on what she was writing at night-time—literary work that she had kept a secret even from Lisa. At last it seemed to her that she had found that of which she stood in need. There were nights when she got up from the table, quivering with excitement, and when, so as not to wake Lisa, she would softly pace the room, feeling that she was now about to achieve fame.

But on a certain cold, grey day, in a cold, bare room at a publisher's, a manuscript was handed back to her with chilling indifference. She went homewards, and as she crossed a large bridge she looked down at the water with dull, mournful eyes. All at once her whole being seemed to have become cold and empty, and she ceased to have any desire to live.

Just then two of her fellow-students approached. One was tall and handsome, and the other small and roguish as a kitten. They stopped, and as they laughingly looked about them, they chatted about a recent students' meeting.

"Ah! If you had heard how Totchnikof spoke!"

They gave some disjointed account of his speech and then raved about his personal appearance.

"I can't abide fair men," said the little student, "but about him there is something quite extraordinary."

At this her tall companion laughed as she threw back her head. To Dora they were tedious and uninteresting, so she left them and went on, thinking to herself, "How little they want from life! How

dull they are, how commonplace! Gracious me! why death is preferable to that! Not that I have any talent. In fact I have nothing. At meetings I never open my mouth and study bores me; I am an everyday sort of person, an absolute cipher. But no, this cannot be. It would be better not to live."

On reaching home her mood became one of hopeless depression, nor could Lisa succeed in making her utter a word.

"Dorotchka, dear, what is the matter?" she asked. "Nothing is wrong I hope."

For some reason or other Dora was hurt by this remark. Not long after, Dora came one night to Lisa's bed, barefoot, and sat down at the edge of her bed.

"Lisa," she murmured excitedly, "I tell you I can't go on like this! One hope I had of getting above the crowd. I don't know what I'm going to do now, nor what I really want. There's no prospect before me of anything. Everything is dull and grey. Oh! what a life this is! If you only knew what I went through this summer in that horrible counting-house, where everybody looked upon me as nobody. All the clerks despised me."

"Oh, Dorotchka, Dorotchka, that's all over now."

"What's all over?" cried Dora, "I'm not a child to be driven to despair by a chance failure! No, I feel there's something lacking in my composition. There's something that gives other people the capacity to live. Perhaps I am not quite such a fool as to be consoled by some toy or other. I could live if I were at the top, right above everybody else; if I could feel that I was great. But just to study with thousands

of others and then go to some out-of-the-way, God-forsaken hole and look after a lot of idiots for the rest of my life, dying as I had lived, unknown and ignored—don't you see how ghastly it all is? Think of it! That represents my whole life. I'd rather die!"

So saying, she stretched out her white arms in a passionate gesture. This last idea, so she thought, would place her in a new and imposing light as far as Lisa was concerned.

Just at this moment she believed that there was nothing more beautiful and important than suicide.

"I'd rather die!" she repeated, as she knitted her brows and listened attentively to the sound of her own voice.

"I have thought so, too," she said.

Then Dora got up and said, "Come, let's go out."

Lisa nodded again and threw back the counterpane. Now for the first time Dora noticed the graceful outline of her neck and shoulders, and her delicately modelled limbs.

They walked for a long way through the vacant streets of the city, past silent houses with black, blind windows. Dark figures came towards them, and vanished like shadows. Dora talked in an undertone about the futility of life, and of her resolve to die. When they reached the quay, the sky behind the grey-blue outline of the fortress, changed to a delicate rose, and this hue was reflected in the water. The dawn had come. They sat on a chilly stone bench and for a long while gazed silently at the river still shrouded in morning haze.

CHAPTER X

From this day forward the life which the two girls led together became changed and uneasy. No sooner were they alone than Dora began her talk of suicide, yet from the mere thought of really taking her own life she shrank in horror, fascinating as it was. Lisa gazed at her, spell-bound, while Dora took a positive delight in tormenting her with all such schemes for self-destruction. On one occasion when talk of this kind had become absolutely insufferable, Dora went so far as to fix the day of her death. It was on this day that Lisa went to Korenief.

"You must wait till I come back," she said earnestly to Dora. "I have to go out."

Dora shot a jealous glance at her face which had grown suddenly red, but she said nothing. She had an impression that Lisa was afraid and was going to avoid her.

Korenief was at home, and when he saw Lisa, he joyfully sprang forward to meet her.

"Oh, Lisa," he exclaimed, "I certainly never expected this!"

Lisa entered without speaking, and sat down at the table without removing her jacket. Korenief endeavoured to make her do this, and as the tight jacket was drawn from her pretty shoulders, his

shining eyes and dilated nostrils showed that he was sensibly affected. Lisa was about to go back to the table, but Korenief caught her up in his arms, sat down on the bed and placed her on his knees. Lisa sat there in a half-unconscious state, as if she were going to faint, making no resistance.

"What does this mean?" asked Korenief. "Whom have we the honour of thanking for this?"

"I shall soon die," said Lisa suddenly, and for a moment there was a pleading look in her usually placid eyes.

"Oho! I like that!" laughed Korenief. "Yes, yes, I like that!" he repeated as he crushed her soft form, trembling with excitement. Lisa opened her mournful eyes, and gazed at him without uttering a word. Suddenly he flung her down on the bed and kissed her neck and the rough grey dress which covered her bosom. Lisa made no resistance, but surrendered as meekly as before. Then she got up and looked earnestly into his eyes as if she hoped to find something there.

"Now then, suppose we have some tea," said Korenief somewhat flushed and elated.

"I must go back," said Lisa in a low voice.

"Why?"

"Because . . . I must," she replied sadly, as she shyly took hold of his hand.

Korenief shrugged his shoulders.

"You're a funny girl! Well, as you like!" he said.

Lisa let go his hand and looked down at the floor. Then she put on her things.

"Thank you for coming to see me," said Korenief

finding nothing else to say. Lisa sighed and closed the door. Korenief heard how the landlady muttered in the passage :

" She's no good ! And calls herself a lady-student, if you please ! "

CHAPTER XI

It was already dusk as Lisa walked through the streets, and the lamps had been lighted. She walked quickly, bending forward somewhat and looking down at the wet pavement. Some one overtook her; and a little white puppy ran almost under her feet, which caused her to start aside.

In front of her walked a grammar-school boy in a grey cloak and a large cap. He was followed by a merry, little white puppy which came blundering along in an irresponsible manner, tumbling continually against its master's feet, much to its own surprise.

Lisa felt a strange warmth at her heart, and her eyes filled with tears. Memories came back to her all in a moment, of Seriosha and the little dog at home, so that her sense of solitude was gradually dispelled by one of tenderness and joy. She turned aside, and, without knowing why, walked behind the schoolboy and his little white puppy. For a long time they walked in this way, and she quite forgot that she had to go home, as with her muff tightly pressed against her bosom, she never took her eyes off the little grey cloak and the large cap that surmounted two red, projecting ears. Sometimes the schoolboy looked

round as if unable to understand why this tall young woman should persistently follow him. She gave him a shy smile, and then, turning round, in order to assert his authority, he called out :

" Farsik, come here ! You're not to run about like that. Look where you're going ! "

Farsik pricked up his ears in great concern and wagged his tail violently. Lisa laughed gently.

" Back to my home ! " sang a voice of gladness within her.

Suddenly the schoolboy went in at a gate, glancing round once more at Lisa. When he saw that she had stopped, he called out, sharply :

" Farsik, come here ! "

The white puppy sprang forward to join his master, and the grey iron gate was firmly closed behind them.

All at once Lisa was left alone. The genial sense of happiness vanished as quickly as it came. The street was muddy and the lamps burned yellow. People passed along, reflected in the wet pavement ; in the dusk their faces seemed to be missing. Lisa stood still for a while before she turned back, her ankles almost giving way from fatigue. Seriosha, her home, her father, all rose up before her and then faded away. Only the hopeless consciousness remained that she could never return to her home, and that the Lisa who had lived a peaceful happy life in that old house with Seriosha and the little dog, had ceased to exist and would never exist again. The sensation as if suddenly she were sinking in turbid, greenish water which roared in her ears, made all seem dark before her eyes.

With both hands she pressed her muff to her forehead and stood still.

"The end!" said a voice, cold and decisive, within her soul. Her whole being had become void and dead.

CHAPTER XII

When Lisa got home, Dora was lying on the bed with her face buried in the pillows.

"Ah, it's you!" she said feebly, as she opened the door. "How you frightened me!"

Lisa mechanically took off her things and lighted the lamp. On the table she noticed a sheet of paper on which Dora had written something, and also a black, hateful-looking revolver. Approaching the table, Dora said:

"Look what I've written!"

Leaning one elbow on the table, Lisa read as follows:

"We do not wish to accuse anyone of our deaths. We die because life is not worth living."

"I think that's sufficient, isn't it?" said Dora in a tone that had something of an author's vanity about it, though personally she thought that the effect produced by her piece of paper would be simply foolish. Lisa said nothing, but remained in the same uncomfortable position, propped on one elbow, her plait hanging over her shoulder, and falling in a coil on the table. She had a sudden wish to seize the pen and write something else, something that filled her breast and clutched at her heart. She only got up slowly and sighed. Then she handled the revolver for a moment and laid it down again.

" Yes, that will do quite well, I think. It's all the same to me," she said faintly.

Silence ensued, which for Dora was most painful.

" How stupid it all seems ! " she thought.

After a while she said :

" We shall have to lock the door."

Lisa gently walked to the door and locked it. Again there was an oppressive silence, as Lisa stood near the door and Dora by the table. Something intolerably dreadful and senseless seemed to pervade the whole room. To Dora it seemed that the lamp was going out.

" Where are you ? " she gasped, as if a bullet had lodged itself in her throat. Lisa opened her melancholy eyes, but did not answer.

" Come now, we have got to put an end to it all," murmured Dora hoarsely, as her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

" Yes," replied Lisa in a faint voice.

Dora put out her hand in hesitating fashion and took hold of the revolver, trembling in every limb.

All sounds seemed deadened and remote, and a veil of mist had shrouded everything about her.

Just as she had placed the barrel of the revolver to her temple, chilled by the touch of the cold metal, she thought to herself, as a spasm crossed her features :

" Suppose she doesn't shoot herself, and makes a fool of me ? "

A mad feeling of jealousy possessed her.

" Ah well ! it doesn't matter."

Her fingers were closing convulsively on the trigger, when, as if through a wall, she heard Lisa's voice. Instantly she lowered the revolver. She felt an

unutterably blissful sense of relief, and such intense weakness that she almost sank into a chair.

"I'll do it first," said Lisa in a voice full of pity and tenderness.

Dora was silent, and stared at her with wild eyes. Her teeth chattered.

"But you must do it afterwards," added Lisa firmly.

Approaching the table, she took the revolver from Dora's limp fingers and placed it calmly and carefully against her left breast, pressing her soft body slightly towards it. Dora could see, in the shadow, her large earnest eyes, and the whole thing appeared to her nothing more than a bad joke. But in the next moment Lisa's face assumed an expression of intense horror and despair. There was a deafening report, and a sharp sound of broken glass. Lisa staggered, and, though she clutched at the table with one hand, she fell on the floor at full length, her eyes starting from her head. A glass containing cold tea had been upset, and a chair was overturned. Dora uttered a piercing cry as she clasped her head with both hands:

"Oh—Lisa!"

Her brain felt as if it would burst, and, as all seemed whirling before her eyes, she rushed to the door and scrabbled hysterically at it, shrieking for help. Violent blows from without made the door creak and gradually give way. In the passage the sound of many excited voices could be heard.

CHAPTER XIII

Although it was fairly light out of doors, the street lamps were burning, and their golden flames looked strangely beautiful in the blue summer dusk.

Throughout the empty house, intense silence reigned. Only in the dining-room, the lamp was burning above the white table, and the clock was ticking as if for its own amusement, and not for anyone's benefit. All the blinds were drawn to shut out, as it were, the coming gloom.

Wrapped in a warm shawl, Dora was lying in her little bedroom, thinking deeply. A year had passed since Lisa's death, and twice the grass had grown above her grave. For Dora, this year had seemed like a long black streak. Sorrow, sickness, and shame had harassed her. Her features were pinched and thin, her eyes had a morbid gleam in them; while her body had become shrunken, her head appeared unnaturally big. In her soul there was the same old unrest. The consciousness of her own insignificance had irresistibly urged her to try and accomplish something heroic and splendid.

And so in this last year everywhere in Russia she had been exposed to continual peril; and now at last she found herself in a weird, lonely house, where an anarchist plot of vast dimensions had been

hatched and matured. Thoughts of what would happen on the morrow horrified her; yet she knew that she would carry out the plan. The fact that a responsible and dangerous share in this plot had been assigned to her, filled her with secret enthusiasm. The huge deed itself and the political importance of such a conspiracy, made no appeal to her whatever. All that she saw before her eyes was her own self, though her heart nearly stopped beating; her own superb features ringed with a halo of gore. Thus she lay on her bed, meditating, and in the darkness her eyes gleamed.

The sound of something falling in the adjoining house reminded her of the sad circumstances surrounding Lisa's death, and she thought again of her own cowardice in not being able to die in the same swift, beautiful way as Lisa died.

Suddenly the front-door bell rang. At first gently, and then loudly. Dora rose hurriedly and opened the door. She was confronted by Andreief, wearing a cloak and a slouched cap.

"Oh, it's you!" whispered Dora in a low voice, "where are the others?"

Andreief cautiously shut the door and took off his cloak and cap before he answered:

"They will be here about nine o'clock. You will have to give Nesnamof something to eat. He will stay the night here."

"I've got everything ready," replied Dora.

They went into the dining-room and Dora sat on the sofa, holding the shawl tightly round her as if she were shivering with cold. Andreief brought in a parcel from the passage, and opening a bureau placed it carefully in one of the drawers.

" Be very careful of this," he said gravely.

They were silent. Andreief walked up and down the room, and Dora followed him with her eyes. She felt as if a heavy weight hung above the house that seemed to crush her heart and her brain.

" Everything is ready, then, is it ? " she asked, just for something to say.

Probably Andreief guessed this, for he did not reply.

" Who is Nesnamof ? " was Dora's next question.

Andreief stepped in front of her, and ceased twirling his moustache as he smiled.

" That's what I can't tell you. Yet it doesn't matter. He is a first-rate fellow, one of the real sort ; that's the main thing. Well, I can tell you this much ; he is a student."

After a pause, he continued, " I don't know how it's all going to end, but if they come to grief it will be a very bad job. We shan't be able to get such men again in a hurry. In any other country they might have done something big, whereas here they may be sacrificed as if they were nothing."

" How do you know, ' As if they were nothing ' ? "

" Why, do you think I would exchange you for some old official monkey ? "

Dora laughed.

" You talk as if you were taking no risk yourself," she said, unconsciously flattering him somewhat. Andreief waved his hand deprecatingly.

" No ; what am I doing ? My part only means penal servitude, whereas yours means the gallows, straight away. It's an awful pity. I know the other two so well and I am so fond of them both.

But if I were in their place, I think I should feel happier."

"Then why didn't you undertake it yourself?"

"We can't all do that at the same time," laughed Andreief, "I dare say that my turn will come."

"Then you know Nesnamof, do you?"

"Yes, I have known him for a long while. . . . A powerful, complex personality. . . . Korenief, too, he is a born fighter. He only went into this thing with us because nowadays there's no loftier or more desperate cause than that of the revolutionist's. Alone, in the fight for freedom, when all human strength is strained to the uttermost, either to break the fetters or to perish in the attempt—only then is it possible to play for a high stake. Korenief is essentially brutal; but Nesnamof is only embittered; he is really wonderfully kind and good-hearted. All true anarchists must of necessity be kind and good-hearted. The huge mass of evil, brutality, and injustice that for most of us is merely a melancholy fact, is for them an insufferable horror. Nesnamof's soul is pure and holy. It's sad to think that he must perish."

Andreief made another gesture of despair, and continued to pace the room. The monotonous ticking of the clock was again audible. Dora sat there, leaning forward, and vaguely conscious that she, too, had a temperament that was individual and rare, which pleased her vastly.

"Now, this is our plan, Dora Moiseivna," said Andreief, "don't forget. You have got to stand at the corner, so that we can see you from the railway station as well as from the street. When the train

arrives, and the prince alights, the old nurse will come forward on the steps of the railway station and make a sign with her hand to the droshky driver. At this moment you must fan yourself with your pocket-handkerchief, as though you were hot; and this signal will be passed on to the café. Directly the prince gets into his carriage, you must repeat the signal. After the second signal, Nesnamof and Korenief will come towards you. That's all."

"Yes, yes, I know. Do you think that one could forget?" cried Dora.

"I don't think anything," replied Andreief calmly. "But it's my duty to see to every detail. The main thing is to keep cool."

Dora nodded. She would certainly not show any agitation, she thought.

Silence ensued; and then the bell rang again.

"Ah! here they are!" said Andreief as he went to open the door. The latch clicked, and two other men entered. Raising her head, Dora gazed at them with shining eyes. Korenief came in, looking tall and handsome, and alert as ever. Nesnamof was about the same height as he, but more lithe and graceful. He was fair, with large eyes, and reminded Dora painfully of Pasha Afanasief.

They both shook hands with her.

"You will give us some tea, won't you, little comrade?" said Korenief playfully.

The whole place seemed permeated with his virile personality. To Dora there was something cool and refreshing about him; an aroma as that of ice.

"Yes, of course," replied Dora, trying to match his jovial manner. She went into the kitchen, where she

was a long time getting the samovar to boil, for she clumsily let the lid fall, or spilt the charcoal. In the dining-room she could hear Korenief's talk and laughter, as he was excitedly discussing ways and means to trick the detectives.

When she came back, he was seated astride a chair, and saying :

" What I like is our old midwife. She is a marvel ! If the world were to come to an end, she would be just as cool and collected as at a birth. Do you know that, these last two days, I feel more alive than ever. It's only a pity that soon everything must end."

" Wait and see what happens ! " was Andreief's gloomy rejoinder.

" No, my brother ! " laughed Korenief, showing his white teeth, " he and I have only got one day more, and then—Phew—" and he whistled.

Nesnamof drummed with his slender fingers on the table as if in time to a tune that he only could hear. Korenief's jovial voice and that expressive whistle of his sent a shiver through Dora's frame. Her knees shook, and, seized with a sudden faintness, she sat down on the edge of the sofa. Korenief's words sounded faint, as if he were speaking in a mist.

" The worst of it is, that there are so few people to do the work. They all undertake the job, but when it comes to the scratch—well, it all ends in smoke."

Dora recovered herself. She had always had the impression that this big, handsome student secretly despised her, and when he was present she was specially careful to appear self-possessed. She smiled,

and with a swift shy glance at Nesnamof, she rose.

"Will you have lemon with your tea?" she asked.

"Er . . . what? Yes, please," replied Nesnamof mechanically.

No one took the tea except Korenief, and they all remained silent. It was this very silence which made each one feel that the fateful day was now at hand.

"Well, we must be going," said Korenief as he got up. "Till to-morrow!"

They all rose.

"Dora Moisievna will show you where everything is," said Andreief in an impressive tone to Nesnamof.

"All right. Good-bye!" replied the latter.

For a moment they paused, seemingly confused, and not knowing what else they had to do.

"Yes," murmured Andreief, "perhaps we shall never see each other again.

"Good-bye, my dear fellow!" said Nesnamof affectionately.

At the sound of his sad voice and the sight of Andreief's tearful eyes, Dora felt intense pity for them all, and for herself. She could not repress her tears. They touched her trembling lips. Korenief grasped Nesnamof's hand and smiled, saying nothing. To this, Nesnamof replied by a smile no less mournful.

Then Korenief and Andreief went out, and Dora closed the door behind them, listening for a long while to their retreating steps.

When she came back, Nesnamof was standing at the window. He had pulled the blind slightly to one side, and was looking out at the street. It was yet night, and the streets were strangely deserted; but

the sky was already touched with the light of the coming dawn, and the last star trembled in the blue spaces overhead.

"It is already day; what short nights you have here," said Nesnamof smiling, as he heard Dora coming back.

"Yes," replied Dora confusedly, as she began to clear away the tea-things. She was in a strange frame of mind, for now she was, for the first time, conscious that her decision was irrevocable. Besides that, she felt a vague girlish diffidence, and also a certain pride and pleasure in being the companion, on this last evening, of one whose name next day would resound throughout all Russia, and cause the stony hearts of the oppressors to quake with fear.

Slowly yet steadily the dawn approached, as the roseate light touched Nesnamof's pallid features and blonde hair. He sighed deeply, and as he moved away from the window, he said to Dora with a faint smile:

"Perhaps this is the last sunrise that I shall see! There's only one thing that I am sorry for; you know I am really most terribly sentimental; I love the sunlight, the sky, and spring-time, and autumn; the green grass; all the peace and joy that nature gives. I really don't want to kill anybody. I don't want to die."

"Then why do you undertake this?" asked Dora nervously, feeling again proudly conscious that her question was making history.

"I don't quite know how to explain that," replied Nesnamof. "Most probably it is because I love life myself so much that it grieves me to see how others spoil it."

He stood there before Dora, tall, slim, almost radiant, as he smiled continually; yet again Dora felt that sense of horror at her heart, and for very dread was dumb. Hardly able to hold back her tears, she hurriedly gave him her hand, and said without looking up:

"God grant that it may all end well!"

"No matter if it doesn't," replied Nesnamof. "If not the first time, then it will be the second time. It's all the same. All those who have brought the people into this appalling state I count as my personal enemies; and if I succeed in escaping with my life this time, I shall go and kill somebody else. It doesn't matter."

Dora glanced up at his bright, sad eyes. Something looked out from them so pure and unspeakably noble, that it touched her soul, and made her own personality seem wonderfully mean and worthless. Yet the consciousness of this did not annoy her; it roused her sympathy; and again the tears rose to her eyes.

"Have you any paper and ink?" asked Nesnamof. "I should like to write to my mother. I may not have an opportunity later on."

Dora could not speak; she only nodded. She brought him writing materials, and for awhile stood there as if she wished to say something. Yet the words would not come, and she went back to her room. There she lay for a long while, wrapped in her large shawl, listening to Nesnamof as he moved, or rustled the paper; and her little lonely heart seemed breaking with pity, with grief, and for the first time, with love. She longed to get up and go to

him and caress him, weep for him, and with her embraces shield him from the horror that was at hand. But she lay there motionless, sobbing gently, fearful lest he should hear her tears.

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CHAPTER XIV

A MIST hung above the city, and the air was full of dust. The Prospekt and its adjoining street were crowded with carriages and other vehicles which were all so much alike that it seemed as if they were intentionally going up and down in the same place. The pavements were thronged, and short blue shadows from the houses fell across the street. It was so hot that to breathe seemed a positive effort.

Dora, as she stood there, found it most trying. Her sleepless night and recent indisposition, besides all the terrible suspense, had unnerved her and sapped her strength. She stood at the corner of the street in a little patch of sultry shade, eagerly watching the railway station.

Outside its broad entrance, in the fierce sunlight, stood porters in white aprons, and people were continually passing in and out. Droshkies dashed up to the entrance, and then slowly drove away.

The large round face of the clock towered above all, looking down sternly and intently upon all that was happening in the square.

To Dora, it was as if she had spent her whole life standing there, looking at this clock, at the porters' white aprons gleaming in the sunshine, and at the broad stone steps. The railway station, an old build-

ing that had long been to her a familiar object, seemed aloof from all else in the world, and had a grim, sinister appearance. Even if she had wished to do so, she could not take her aching anxious eyes off it. In her heart there was the same unrest. The weather was hot, yet she kept shivering, and her knees trembled. She felt that this agitation would be noticed by all. People came and went, and thousands of faces that she did not know flashed past her vision. "If it's such a terrible thing, who forces me to do it?" were the words that suddenly rang in her ear. She very nearly shrugged her shoulders and resolved to turn round smiling, and walk away. Again she asked herself: "Am I really so terribly frightened?" With this thought of her own pitiable cowardice, the pale image of Nesnamof rose up before her, and for a moment brought her certain relief.

Her nervous tremor ceased; she stood more firmly on her feet, and the strained look in her eyes became less intense.

A tall man, with delicate features and curly hair, walked past her, in a long peasant's coat and jack-boots. Dora glanced at him for a moment, and like hundreds of other passers-by he had almost disappeared when she suddenly felt that she knew his face. It was Korenief. He looked calm, almost jovial, in fact; yet his face wore a strange, stony expression. He had walked past her quickly without stopping, and amid the noise of the traffic, without looking at her, but as if talking to himself, he had said:

"Look out! Soon! . . ."

Dora never heard that last word, but she divined

it. He had vanished in the crowd, but still she heard those swift words of warning.

Close behind him walked a fat gentleman wearing a tall hat. He was clean-shaven, and his face appeared to be of the official type. Dora noticed him as he passed, but to her he was a total stranger. The time passed. A veritable eternity it seemed to Dora. "Oh, God, if only they would make haste!" she thought, and again her anxious eyes were fixed on the railway station.

"What are you stopping here for?" cried a young red-haired *dvornik*, who, not far from Dora, was turning a tap in the public roadway. "Drive on at once, you damned fool!"

A droshky-driver clumsily drove on in evident alarm. Yet Dora managed to recognize Larionof. She knew him by his weak eyes and stubbly beard, which in no way matched the strange blue, driver's coat.

She felt a thrill of sympathy. "What's he doing? He mustn't stop there!" she thought in terrible alarm.

She remembered Korenief's bitter remark, "They all want to undertake the job, but when it comes to the scratch . . ."

At the time she had been indignant with him for saying that, but now, in this moment, she was obsessed by the awful certainty that she was going to lose her nerve, forget something, and do everything all wrong, bringing ruin to herself and to the others. This conviction remained fixed in her mind, heightening her confusion and alarm. She was now in a cold sweat, as she strove to recall to her memory all the

details of her task. Yet each time she seemed to have forgotten something, the most important thing of all.

"When the old nurse Trude comes out on the steps, then . . . Trude! What a funny name . . . that doesn't matter. Yes, when she comes out and hails a droshky, then I have got to . . . I've got to . . . let me see, what is it? . . ."

Everything was topsy-turvy in her fevered brain; and just as she had utterly lost the thread, her eyes met those of a person who was staring hard at her. A man of the middle class walked past. While yet at some distance he had been watching her without her knowing it. Now that their eyes had met, he turned away and crossed the street.

"A detective! I'm caught!" flashed through Dora's brain. She strove with all her might to prevent her teeth from chattering. "Nonsense! Why should that be? They'd have arrested me long before. . . ."

One thought followed another at random, and she moved restlessly from side to side.

Just at that moment, Nurse Trude, in her plain black dress, came out on to the broad stone steps of the station and hailed the nearest droshky. Something seemed to snap in Dora's brain, and everything became blurred and misty before her eyes.

"Now for it!" she thought feebly. With unnatural energy, and conscious all the while that she was doing the wrong thing, Dora whipped out her handkerchief, waving it like a white flag in the sun.

She could just see a black closed carriage driving slowly away from the station entrance. At that

moment, the fat, clean-shaven man in the tall hat suddenly appeared at Dora's side, and said sharply :

" What are you doing here ? "

Dora hastily turned round, white as a sheet, with her eyes starting from their sockets. Not knowing why, yet aware that her act was senseless and fatal, she drew a revolver from her pocket, and, pushing it against something soft, pulled the trigger.

In the noise of the traffic only a slight report was audible. The fat, clean-shaven man started backwards, and as his tall hat tumbled off, he fell forwards under the hoofs of a droshky horse, which with much clatter and noise slipped down sideways on the pavement. Everything before Dora's eyes became confused, she only saw how the black tall hat was rolling about under the feet of the crowd, and heard vague shouts in all directions.

" All's lost ! " The words burned in her brain, as, pushing through the crowd, she rushed madly round the corner, stumbling over a hose-pipe that lay across the pavement. Then she had a sensation of being seized and struck on the head by some heavy weapon. She closed her eyes and fell forward on the hard granite.

" This is the end ! " cried an inward voice, echoing through the whole world as it seemed to her. Then she fainted.

Recovering consciousness, she felt herself being hustled into a droshky, jammed in between two gendarmes, with yellow braid on their uniforms and fury in their faces. Her brain was in a whirl ; she suffered intolerable pain from wounds on her head ; and warm blood streamed over her face and lips.

Her eyes were fixed on Larionof's mad face in the middle of the road. His horse's bridle had been seized by dozens of hands, while others clutched at his blue coat, and he meanwhile was tugging madly at the reins and beating the wretched animal. This reared, and, showing its teeth, kicked out wildly on all sides.

"Stop him! Don't let him go!" was the general cry, which seemed to be taken up not merely by human beings, but by the walls of the houses, the noise of the traffic, and the dazzling light.

When the droshky with Dora, who had fainted a second time, passed the railway station, there were pompous, portly gentlemen in uniform and imposing cloaks, standing on the broad steps, while behind them the big nurse in her black dress leaned calmly against a pillar, with scorn in her eyes.

PASHA TUMANOF

PASHA TUMANOF

CHAPTER I

In the dingy passage, outside the closed yellow door of the police-inspector's office, there stood a soldier with his back to the wardrobe. His face was pock-marked, and his uniform, in places, torn.

He looked thoroughly docile and stupid, yet his features could assume a stern expression if a stranger approached the office.

As it happened, a stranger had actually attempted to enter the office, yet not between the hours of twelve and three, which were those when visitors were admitted. He was a youth wearing the usual grammar-school cloak and cap. He was of medium height, and his face with its broad brow, if not handsome, was yet somewhat pleasing; and on his cheeks and upper lip a slight down could be seen. The young man was flushed, and evidently in a state of great excitement. He hurried in, as though some one were pursuing him, and hastily removed his cap.

"Is this the inspector's office?" he asked loudly, as if repeating words that he had learned by heart.

"Yes, it is," replied the soldier, who looked none

too pleased at being disturbed in his occupation of leaning against the wardrobe.

"What does the fellow want?" he thought; "he knows it's from twelve to three. 'Tis merely worrying people."

"Is this the way in?" asked the youth in the same loud voice, as he approached the closed door.

"Yes, but no one is admitted at this time," said the soldier, standing in front of the door.

"Oh, but I must see the inspector!"

"Please call between twelve and three," was the soldier's curt rejoinder, as he wiped his nose with the back of his hand.

"I must see him at once."

"My orders are to admit no one."

At this unlooked-for hindrance, which thus interfered with the serious business that he had in hand, the young man appeared to be greatly distressed. This callous, dirty soldier seemed to him to have so little in common with the grave subject of his visit, that he felt inclined to walk out of the building. On reaching the entrance, however, he stopped, and turning very red, he blurted out:

"I want to give myself up! I have killed some one."

"Who is it?" asked the soldier stupidly.

The youth was silent and stared at the soldier, who, with his goggle eyes and foolish grin, returned the stare.

"This way!" said the latter at last, shaking his head doubtfully, as he pushed open the door and stood aside.

For some reason or other, the young man put on his cap, and then, swiftly removing it, walked in.

The soldier stared.

CHAPTER II

In the large bright room, with portraits of the Tsar and the Tsarina hanging on its walls, there were four persons: the Chief Inspector of Police, an important-looking personage with a heavy moustache, and rings on his fingers; his fat assistant, bull-necked and purple-faced; a lean, consumptive sergeant, whose uniform hung on his puny figure as if on a peg. The fourth person wore undress uniform, with bright buttons. He had a long red beard, and blue spectacles on his big, blotchy nose. He stood at a table near the window, looking through various documents, while listening to all that the inspector was saying.

The latter sat facing the door, leaning both elbows on the green table. Laughing and gesticulating, he was telling the others about a young Jewess, the daughter of a watchmaker, who had been arrested in a recent raid on prostitutes. Despite her father's deposition that she was under age, and only a child, she had been found to be pregnant.

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Only a child, indeed!" laughed the inspector, as his body in its bright uniform rocked from side to side.

The sergeant stood in front of them, looking as stiff as a post. He laughed, too, though his feeble

state made standing irksome. He scowled at the robust, jovial inspector, partly from jealousy; yet, of course, he dared not interrupt all this idle gossip on behalf of an important document requiring immediate attention, and which for some minutes he had been waiting.

Though he could not bear the inspector because he was so insolent and so boastful, the secretary enjoyed listening to his stories, because that day he had heard on good authority that the chief's dismissal was imminent. In the office it was already discussed as an absolute fact, though the inspector himself apparently knew nothing whatever about it.

"If you knew what I know," thought the secretary spitefully, "you would not laugh like that."

As the schoolboy entered, they all looked at him, and the inspector stopped speaking. The lad stood in the middle of the room and hastily fumbled in his pocket for something that he found it difficult to pull out.

The sergeant thought it was his duty to question the young fellow, and the secretary had the same impression also. So they both said simultaneously:

"What do you want?"

The boy, however, did not answer, but looked at them in bewilderment, as he still fumbled at his pocket, and crumbs fell from it on to the floor. He was flushed and breathless; his face wore a helpless, piteous expression.

Holding his head sideways like a woodpecker, the sergeant peered at the boy's pocket, and was about to ask something. But at that moment, having at last turned his pocket inside out, the lad produced

a small, shining revolver which he handed to the inspector. The latter involuntarily stretched out his hand and took the weapon.

"I have shot the head master," said the boy suddenly.

"What did you say?" asked the inspector, raising his eyebrows.

"Whom?" cried the fat assistant, looking obviously shocked.

"The head master, Vladimir Stepanovitch," repeated the boy hoarsely.

"Vosnesenski?" exclaimed the inspector.

"Yes," faltered the lad.

Then they instantly began to bustle about. The inspector in buckling on his sword twisted the belt. The sergeant ran out to call a droshky, while the terrified assistant searched everywhere for his cap. As they thus ran hither and thither in their excitement, they entirely forgot the cause of it all. It was not until he was going out that the inspector thought of questioning the young fellow.

"Who are you?" he asked sharply.

The boy did not answer. Evidently he was unconscious of what was taking place as he stood fidgeting with his cap.

The sergeant sprang forward and shouted in his ear:

"Who are you?"

"Pavel Tumanof, in the Upper Fifth," replied the boy, addressing himself to the sergeant, which somewhat confused the latter, who by a gesture implied that the answer should have been given to his chief.

"We must drive there at once," said the inspector

hastily. "Shocking thing, to be sure! Are you coming, too?" he asked the assistant.

"Yes, yes!" cried the latter breathlessly, as he seized his cap.

"Victor Alexandrovitch," said the sergeant, as he stepped forward obsequiously. "What are we to do with him?" He indicated the boy by a nod.

"Ah! yes, to be sure! He must be detained here until I come back."

"What about the revolver?"

"Ah! yes, the *corpus delicti!* Lock it up. You are coming with us, and Andrei Semionovitch will keep an eye on him. Do you hear, Andrei Semionovitch?" said the inspector in the doorway.

"Very good, sir," grunted the secretary, without moving.

The sergeant nodded to him and hurried after the inspector. A moment later, two droshkys rattled past the window, conveying the police authorities to the scene of the crime.

CHAPTER III

In the office the secretary remained seated at his table, while the schoolboy, with his jacket-pocket turned inside out, still stood in the centre of the room. Reporters and policemen looked in through the open door. They had already got wind of the affair, and eyed the schoolboy curiously.

The secretary began to feel uncomfortable. Crossing the room on tiptoe he closed the door, and by a gesture bade the inquisitive begone. Resuming his seat, he muttered:

"Sit down. Don't stand there like that!"

The boy walked mechanically towards the wall and sat down on a chair. He went on fidgeting nervously with his cap.

The secretary quietly resumed his seat. He felt sorry for the boy, and could hardly believe that he had a murderer in front of him. He affected not to notice him, and busied himself with his papers, while glancing furtively from time to time at the delinquent, who remained motionless.

Pasha Tumanof sat close to the window in an uncomfortable, stiff attitude. His lips were tightly shut, and he was breathing hard through his nose. He continued gazing at one particular spot on the floor where the crumbs had fallen, and he longed to

pick them up. He could not bear to see them strewn about on the yellow, polished floor, as, in a way, they reminded him of what had occurred.

But this was only his fancy. What really tortured him was the longing to undo that which had been done, to get rid of the awful, mad deed of the morning, which, like a sharp wedge, had been driven into his life. But a certain deadly numbness overcame him. He could not explain how "it" had really all happened, nor why he was now sitting in this big, empty room with a bearded man in blue spectacles, who was fumbling over papers. Sometimes he felt that he had only to get up and walk out, and then the whole thing would end, and prove to be merely a silly joke. Yet that idea soon vanished in a maze of fantastic shapes, broken words, and blood-red stains, moving, waving, and floating before his mental vision, till all became a crimson mist in which hideous, yet familiar faces danced and gibbered.

Pasha Tumanof shuddered involuntarily, and again for a moment he saw the big, bright windows, and the outline of a bearded head. Again he heard the rustling papers. His was a state that bordered on delirium, while in all this chaos he felt that there was something which he must do, something most important; in fact, decisive. What this was he could not make out, but it worried him so much that the crumbs on the floor were of no interest now. By an effort he suddenly became aware of what the "something" was.

It was the pocket turned inside out. He laid his cap on a chair and carefully put the pocket into its place again. In so doing he could still feel a few

crumbs. They were those of the piece of cake which they had given him when leaving home that morning.

All at once he felt utterly miserable, and he began to cry; gently at first, then gradually louder.

The secretary was alarmed. He jumped up, laid down his pen, filled a glass with water and brought it to Pasha, who, however, did not drink any, but continued sobbing, while trembling as if in a fever.

"Come! Come! That will do! Don't be silly. Here, have some water!" growled the secretary. Then, in a gentler tone, as if prompted by some inward voice, he said, "Poor boy!" and patted Pasha on the head. At this touch of sympathy the lad's grief became more violent. He sobbed hysterically. He felt as if in the whole world no one but the secretary pitied him. He pressed his head against the secretary's waistcoat, and his nose came into painful contact with one of the metal buttons on it. Thus he wept, while the secretary looked about him, helpless and bewildered.

CHAPTER IV

On the previous evening Pasha Tumanof had been lying on an old sofa which served as his bed. He had crushed the pillow under his head in such a way that he felt hot and uncomfortable, and, as he lay there, he watched how the shaded lamp threw a soft, even light on the table. All his books and exercise-books were brightly illumined; the cover of the ink-pot shone, while, somewhat nearer to him an arm-chair cast a black shadow, the rest of the room being immersed in gloom.

Pasha Tumanof lay there, moody and inert, although he knew that every hour was precious. He was in despair, for he felt convinced that all his efforts to recapture in two or three days what he had wasted in seven years, were futile; and now he felt powerless to work.

Why he had wasted so much he could not tell. It was partly through laziness, and partly circumstances were to blame; circumstances over which he had no control. The main reason, however, was that life, real, active life with all its interests, had taken hold of him. This life was far removed from the deadly calm of the grammar-school.

When Pasha had finally grasped the real facts of the case, and had convinced himself that delusion

was no longer possible, he relapsed into a state of despair, almost of apathy. He got up from the table without closing his books, and lay down on the couch, feeling utterly miserable. Besides pity for himself, he felt a dull hatred for those persons to whom he ascribed all his misfortune. He hated the head master and the classical master.

In this he was wrong. His unhappiness was certainly not due to these two government officials; nor could their relative merits and defects, as teachers and officials, be made responsible for this. It was due to the unnatural circumstance that a youth of twenty, thirsting to know all the meaning of life, should be forced to pore over tedious, lifeless books, and to this end should have to sacrifice all for which each young man is wont to strive. Nevertheless, Pasha Tumanof looked upon the head master and Alexandrovitch, the Latin master, as the cause of all his ill luck, which next day would certainly increase. This sense of rage which gnawed at his kind, soft heart, grew more acute until it became a positive obsession. He breathed with difficulty; the atmosphere of his fury seemed to choke him. Even the light of the lamp appeared to grow dim, and to acquire a certain glamour. Pasha knew that he ought to shake off this morbid depression, but obstinate despair proved stronger than his will, and he lay there motionless, a prey to moral and physical torture.

Suddenly the door was gently opened, and from an adjoining room, where Pasha's sisters were sitting, and a maid was laying the cloth, came a sound of merry laughter, as plates clattered, and knives and forks rattled. Anna Ivanovna, Pasha's mother,

entered—the widow of a Colonel. She had a pension, with an additional allowance for the education of her children. She was a delicate-looking lady with a soft voice and an inexhaustible supply of feminine tenderness. She looked careworn and prematurely aged. She came into the room gently, touched Pasha's forehead with her soft, warm hand, and sat down at the table.

"We are going to have supper . . . Are you tired?"

The usual sad, apprehensive look in her eyes, and the fact of her sitting down when asking him to come to supper, told Pasha what she really wanted. He said nothing, but merely nodded in reply.

Anna Ivanovna turned over the leaves of a book, as, glancing downwards, she thought sadly how callous children were, and how incapable of understanding all the troubles of their parents.

If Pasha could but realize all her grief and anxiety on his account, she felt sure that he would at once set to work and become a thoroughly able fellow.

Pasha, as he glanced at her, was thinking almost the same thing; how cruel his mother was, how impossible it was for her to understand the tedium and the difficulty of his school work, and that he, Pasha, in spite of it all, was a kind, good lad, although he didn't manage to pass his exam. He wanted to tell his mother how miserable he was; how those hateful masters were to blame for all his bad luck, and that neither she nor anybody else would be a bit the worse if, instead of five marks, they only gave him two, or possibly three. Yet Pasha felt that his mother, kind as she was, could not understand him, and would not believe that his teachers had a spite against him.

Therefore, towards her, too, he felt vague indignation, and remained obstinately silent, staring at the lamp.

At last Anna Ivanovna sighed sadly and rose.

"Well, come to supper," she said.

Pasha knew that she would not go like that, and that he would have to tell a lie, after all.

"How are you getting on, Pasha?" she asked timidly. "Do you think that you will pass?"

Such was his irritation at this, that he longed to shout out, "For goodness' sake, leave me alone! How on earth do I know?"

But when he saw her large, kind eyes with their expression of tenderness and anxiety, he suddenly felt such intense sympathy for her, that he got up, and, putting his arm round her waist, said hurriedly:

"Yes, yes, I shall pass all right! Let's go to supper, mother, darling." And he leaned affectionately against her.

Anna Ivanovna sighed again, and for a time felt reassured.

At supper Pasha became excited, laughing and joking a good deal with his sisters. But, afterwards, in his room, when he had undressed himself and had put out the lamp, as he lay in bed, the thoughts that distressed him returned and his former fury increased. He could not sleep, and stared at the darkness with jaded eyes full of hatred for all the world and of pity for himself. When at last he fell asleep he dreamed of trees and sunlight, of familiar faces and all kinds of bright, joyous things.

CHAPTER V

NEXT morning Pasha Tumanof rose very early, and at the thought that he had to go up for his examination that day, he turned cold, while something seemed to clutch at his heart. He was a long while dressing himself. First he hurried, then he dawdled, and at last went into the dining-room. The shining, polished floor looked cold; on the table with its spotless cloth in which one still could see the folds, stood the bright, hissing samovar. His sisters were asleep still, but Anna Ivanovna was already seated by the tea-urn and she smiled at Pasha in a shy, anxious way. Pasha smiled too, though he could not look her in the face.

"It's late, isn't it, Pasha?" said his mother.

He made a grimace.

"Just half-past eight," he said.

"But, by the time you get there . . ." replied the mother, as she put down the teapot.

These simple words which he was accustomed to hear every day, on this occasion annoyed him intensely.

"Can't you see I'm hurrying?" he said, rudely, "give me some tea, do."

His mother looked at him anxiously.

"Here it is, dear. I feel so . . ."

Pasha felt sorry that he had pained his mother by this rough speech. He wanted to apologize, yet his ill-temper prevented him. He got up with an injured air, and taking a book from one of the shelves, he put on his cap. Seated behind the samovar, Anna Ivanovna waited to see if he would come as usual to get her kiss and her blessing.

Pasha saw that she did this, but his ill-humour got the upper hand, and he went out without bidding his mother good-bye.

He hurried along the street, where luggage vans thundered past, while at his heart he felt examination-fright, and pity for the mother whose feelings he had hurt.

The nearer he approached the grammar-school, the slower he walked, and at last he stopped on a bridge and watched an old man with his trousers turned up to the knees, who stood in the water fishing.

He wore a crumpled cap, and his long, brown boots were placed on the smooth sand beside a tin box containing lob-worms, and a little pail for the fish.

The old fellow noticed Pasha and smiled at him repeatedly as if he were an old acquaintance. At last he waved his cap and asked :

" Are you going up for your exam ? "

It took Pasha some time to collect his thoughts before he could answer.

After a pause he said " Yes."

The old man nodded.

" In Latin, I expect ? My boy, perhaps you know him, Vasili Kostrof, he is going up too, to-day."

Pasha Tumanof saluted and went on. At that moment the old man drew out of the water a silvery

roach, then, blinking his eyes in the sun, he once more threw his line. The captured fish wriggled about in the little pail, splashing the sand with shining drops of water.

As he walked along, Pasha Tumanof thought that Vasili Kostrof, like himself, would certainly never pass. He knew Kostrof, a lean, lanky, fifth-form boy, slow at his work, and always ill dressed, who, with his friend, Anatol Daknevsky, was always playing billiards, though this was against the rules.

They were both experts at the game and almost entirely got their living by it. Daknevsky would certainly never pass; and this in a way consoled him.

On reaching the grammar-school, he walked along the wide, clean corridor to the fifth-form classroom, where he at once spied Kostrof and Daknevsky, who were talking near the window.

Pasha went up to them.

"I'll give him twenty," Kostrof was saying in his deep, bass voice. When he saw Tumanof, he held out his hand and asked cheerfully:

"Are you in a funk?" and he laughed good-humouredly.

But Pasha was not in a good humour. Kostrof, with his exasperating indifference and his eternal talk of billiards, seemed most repulsive to him. Instead of replying to Kostrof, he turned to Daknevsky and asked the same question:

"Are you in a funk, then?"

Daknevsky stared.

"No, why should I be?" he replied carelessly, and went on talking to Kostrof. "You see, Maslof

mayn't play as well as you do, but he is damnably persistent, and he'll catch you up at last. You oughtn't to give him twenty."

"Oh, but I shall!" replied Kostrof confidently, as he looked across Daknevsky at Tumanof and smiled at something. His smile was good-tempered but slightly ironical.

"There's nothing to be frightened about. If we are ploughed, we are ploughed, worse luck!"

Daknevsky watched Pasha attentively.

"What's the use of being nervous?" he said, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously.

But Vasili made a deprecating gesture as he said:

"Don't! Everybody isn't like you!"

A weakly person with a grey beard, good-natured and commonplace-looking, hastened towards them. It was the beadle.

"All gentlemen for the examination!" he cried, and then disappeared.

"Now then, gentlemen, this way!" said Kostrof, as he got up and stretched himself.

They lounged along the corridor, and entered the large lecture-room at the other end, where the examination was to be held.

Again Pasha felt terribly nervous and his knees shook. He drank some water at a side table and thought how flat and tasteless it was.

"Now then, gentlemen, be quick, please!" cried the beadle, as he suddenly reappeared to collect the candidates. His head shook slightly, as he rubbed his bony fingers.

At this moment, from a door at the other end of the corridor, the examiners approached, having left the

conference-room. Against the bright window they appeared like two sombre shadows with flying coat-tails. Pasha had hardly found a seat in the lecture-room, when these dignitaries entered and took up their positions at the large table, covered with a red cloth edged with gold.

CHAPTER VI

THE examination commenced.

It was one of the usual stereotyped sort, beloved by the authorities, the senselessness of which they admitted, yet which they could not discontinue.

Masters who were well acquainted with the extent of their pupils' abilities, summoned them in turn to a table, and at haphazard asked them a few easy questions, written on slips of paper, which each pupil had to draw. It was according to the way they answered these question that marks were given, and not according to the opinion that each master had long formed of the capacities of each pupil under his care.

As one by one the pupils were being called up, Pasha Tumanof kept his eyes fixed on the examiners. Sometimes he felt that he must read over one or two passages which he had not thoroughly mastered; but when he turned over the leaves nervously to find the place, a thousand other passages appeared with which he was totally unfamiliar, and he closed the book in despair. He grew hot and cold by turns; yet in another minute he had opened the book again to find another half-forgotten passage.

At last one of the examiners called out:

"Kostrof Vasili!" and after awhile repeated the summons.

From behind Pasha, Kostrof suddenly stepped forward and approached the table. Pasha Tumanof was by this time in a cold perspiration. It would be his turn next.

"Pavel Tumanof!" called the head master.

"Tumanof Pavel!" repeated the other examiner.

"Pasha rose mechanically, dropped his book, tried to pick it up, stumbled, and then without his book walked slowly towards the table. On the way he bumped against Kostrof who was returning to his seat. The latter was very red, but smiled at Pasha as he passed. He had evidently been solemnly ploughed.

For the next few minutes Pasha was conscious of having to answer certain questions and that the answers which he gave were nonsensical. He gave up all hope, feeling as if he could not breathe, while endeavouring to prevent his knees from knocking together. Only at the end was he able to collect his thoughts and to one question he replied quite correctly:

"Ablativus Absolutus."

"So that's all that you are able to tell us, is it?" observed the examiner coldly, as Pasha saw him award him only five marks. His heart sank and he very nearly shouted out:

"How dare you?"

The examiner looked at the head master who nodded, and then, as he glanced at Pasha over his spectacles, shook his head slightly.

"You can go," said the examiner; then, without looking at Pasha, he called out:

"Polonski Mitrofan!"

Pasha's fury threatened to stifle him. He turned on his heel mechanically and left the lecture-room, endeavouring to avoid the glances of his fellow students. In the corridor he saw Kostrof and Daknevsky who had already put on their caps. Kostrof stopped him.

"Well, how did you get on?" he asked with a kindly expression in his dark eyes.

Pasha tried to speak, but his jaw trembled violently, and he could only wave his hand.

"Ah, yes!" said Vasili Kostrof.

Pasha went on.

"I say, Tumanof!" called Kostrof after him.

Pasha stopped.

"If you see my old father who is fishing by the bridge, don't let him think . . . you know what I mean!"

Kostrof waved his hand much as Pasha had done, but in a droll way, and he laughed. Daknevsky laughed also.

"Well, and what are you going to do?" asked Pasha.

"Console ourselves with a game of billiards!" laughed Kostrof as they went away.

Pasha fetched his cap which was hanging up, and then he suddenly recollected that he had left his book behind in the lecture-room, but with an impatient gesture, as if nothing mattered, he went out into the street.

CHAPTER VII

Bright sunlight, the noise of the traffic, the shrill sound of voices and of twittering sparrows bewildered him at first, and then exhilarated him. Yet only for a moment; again despair and fury possessed him, and in his own eyes he felt utterly worthless and insignificant. With downcast mien he walked in the shade, fearful that others from his face would see that he had been "ploughed."

On reaching the bridge he at once observed old Kostrof sitting beside the river pulling on his big jack-boots. Thus, lifting one foot in the air and looking towards the bridge, he spied Pasha, and gave him a friendly nod.

Pasha stopped, and, as if to give vent to his ill-humour, maliciously called out "Vasili hasn't passed!"

The old fellow let his foot sink in the sand, and after a moment's reflection, burst out laughing. His large toothless mouth became distorted.

Pasha watched him in amazement.

"Didn't I say so?" exclaimed Kostrof, at once pleased and annoyed. "I said to him, 'It's that billiard-playing of yours will do it.' So he hasn't passed, eh?" he asked eagerly.

"Not a doubt about it," replied Pasha, as he came down from the bridge to the shore. He looked

into the little pail. Five roach were flapping about in it, and a big perch with red fins.

"They won't bite to-day," explained Kostrof. "So he has really been ploughed?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Has he really?" said the old man, as he drew on his other boot. "And what about you?" he asked.

Pasha turned scarlet.

"You, too? H'm. . . ."

Kostrof stood up, and taking his pail and rod:

"Where are you going? Are you coming my way?"

Pasha ought to have gone straight on, but for some reason he could not leave Kostrof. Here was a grown-up person who made light of an important event which distressed and infuriated everybody else. It was a relief; his heart felt lighter.

"I'll go with you," he said.

"All right! Come along!" said the old man, as, taking off his cap, he looked down the river glittering in the sun. Stroking his bald head, he put on his cap again, and repeated:

"Come along!"

Their way lay beside the river. In the fine, wet sand were little spiral shells and fragments of mussels with seaweed sticking to them. Here and there they passed old boats with black sterns embedded in the shore. A steamer was going down stream, and the snow-white smoke from its funnel rose up as a pillar in the sunlight. The air was warm, and very still. Tiny waves lapped against the clean, bright sand. In Kostrof's pail from time to time a fish wriggled.

As Pasha gazed down the stream, life seemed

utterly dreary; even the sunlight had lost its charm. Kostrof took a different view of things, as, shading his eyes with his hand, he watched the steamer, and kicked pebbles into the water. He watched the bright waves breaking over a sandbank, and at last sighed for sheer pleasure, exclaiming:

"How delightful!"

Pasha was silent. Kostrof looked at him pityingly.

"I say, it's delightful here, eh?" he repeated. "See! there's a swallow! What is there to look so gloomy about?"

Pasha felt furious again. It was if the old man were laughing at him. He remained obstinately mute. Kostrof sighed and smiled.

"What does it matter if you haven't passed your exam? Blow the whole thing, say I!"

Pasha gave him an angry look.

"What's the good of being so upset?" asked the old man, kindly.

"I am not upset," growled Pasha.

"Oh, you aren't? I thought you were. When I say, 'blow the whole thing,' I really mean it. After all, what is it? You haven't passed your exam. My boy Vasili hasn't either. What does it matter? I'm sure that my boy doesn't care! Did you see him?"

"He has gone to play billiards," said Pasha.

Kostrof looked pleased.

"There! You see! And why does he do that? Because he doesn't care a hang."

"How can one feel like that?" asked Pasha, looking down in confusion.

"How? Easily enough. Of course, to get a

diploma and an appointment later on, an exam like that is useful. But that's not the point."

"Well, but what is?"

"Do you think my boy couldn't pass out of the grammar-school all right? Of course he could! And out of a hundred other schools if he liked. And so could you. I've got a friend, a little fellow like myself, and hump-backed into the bargain. We go out fishing together. He has told me all about your grammar-school and your university. His name is Svinkof. Well, this Svinkof, he is a crammer, and he tells me that the biggest blockheads are the best at learning. He is about right, too. One doesn't want much sense to grind away at Latin conjugations, mathematics, and history. To stick at it, that's all that is wanted; to stick at it, and nothing else. Besides, such things are of no use to one, except to get a good appointment of some sort later on. One person happens to want such an appointment, and so he fags away till he gets it; another prefers a river, and beautiful air like this. What need has he to cram himself with facts and figures? Is he any the worse because he doesn't? That's how I look at it, see?"

With half-closed eyes, Kostrof surveyed the river, and then he stopped.

"Here we part," he said, "I must go up this street."

Pasha shook hands with him, saying nothing.

"Well, young man, don't worry yourself too much about it. It's certainly not pleasant to be ploughed, but you yourself are none the worse for that, really. That's how I look at it. Vasili has got his billiards, I

have got the river and the fishes, and you have got something else, too. If cramming isn't our line, that doesn't make us any worse than others. We are all God's children; each one gets his portion. Well, good-bye! Hullo! there's another swallow!"

Kostrof waved his cap gaily, and plodded on in the direction of several dirty little wooden huts which lay scattered along the shore.

Left alone, Pasha Tumanof gazed for a long while at the water, thinking about all that Kostrof had said. Even though he may not have fathomed the deep meaning which the old fisherman had put into his blunt words, he yet felt lighter of heart. The heaven above seemed suddenly more spacious, the waves splashed merrily on the smooth sand, the sunlight seemed more radiant, and everywhere he could hear new, joyous, living sounds, of which till now he had had no perception.

Loud voices echoed across the water, where men in barges were shouting cheerily or quarrelling; a small steamboat whistled wildly; a wave rushed up the strand and then coyly retreated; swallows darted twittering through the blue air, sailing aloft to lands afar.

Pasha Tumanof gazed at all, large-eyed, and could hardly believe that for merely getting five marks, he had reproached himself so bitterly. He had not passed his examination. But what of that? Personally it made no difference to him; he could see and hear and feel just as before. His love for his mother and sisters was exactly the same; and, even if he hated the head master and the others, what the deuce did it matter? Why should healthy, jolly Pasha Tumanof worry himself? They were not worth it.

CHAPTER VIII

This mood, however, did not last long, but gave place to a disagreeable consciousness that he would have to tell his mother what had happened. It was unpleasant certainly, but not so dreadful after all. Word for word he would repeat to her all that Kostrof, that splendid old philosopher, had said. He would tell her how lightly he had received the news of the failure of his son Vasili, and that of Daknevsky, his friend. Those were real kindred spirits! He must make friends with them, great friends. Yet, as Pasha approached his home, he became more and more uneasy.

When he got inside the gate, his heart sank and his knees trembled just as they had done during the examination. His sisters were in the garden. Sina, the elder, was busy making jam, and Lydia, the younger, was reading, and munching an apple.

"Here's Pasha!" she said, on seeing her brother, as she laid her book down and approached him with a look of smiling curiosity. Sina also came forward, with a spoonful of jam. Both seemed bright and happy; yet Pasha knew that they would look sad and vexed if he told them the truth.

"What? How quick you've been! Did you pass?" they asked hurriedly.

All Kostrof's fine words floated vaguely through Pasha's mind, as he blurted out :

" Of course I have ! Where is mother ? "

" Oh, you nice boy ! You shall have a spoonful of jam for that ! " said Sina.

Lydia danced about, clapping her hands.

Pasha pretended to be pleased, and to share their glee, as he licked the spoon, never noticing what jam it was.

" Where is mother ? " he asked again.

" She is gone to church, but she will be back directly. What sort of exam was it ? " asked Lydia.

" Oh, awfully easy ! I must go and fetch my book," said Pasha. He forgot that there was no book to fetch.

" You're so pleased that you don't know what you're doing ! " said Sina, laughing.

Pasha blushed, and appeared confused.

" Well, I never ! I must have forgotten it. I'll go and have a wash. I'm rather tired."

" Oho ! the Sixth Form Boy ! " cried Lydia merrily.

Pasha smiled a somewhat ghastly smile as he hurried away. It was clear to him now that he could never quote Kostrof's speech to his mother. He wondered how he could ever have been impressed by such silly talk. Kostrof, that old drunkard, in his brown jack-boots, and those billiard-playing louts Vasili and Daknevsky ! Much good they were ! Of course, to people of that sort it didn't matter a bit if they got a diploma, or not. But for him, Pasha Tumanof, it mattered a great deal.

His room was dark and in disorder. The bed was

not made, and books lay here and there on the floor. As he stood in the middle of the room, he thought what a foolish position he was now in through the lie which he had just told to his sisters. Life was hardly worth living now.

Schemes of all sorts suggested themselves, one more fantastic than another; yet these all vanished when they reached a certain point; that is, when he thought of his mother. As far as the disagreeable consequences of his failure were concerned, he could have become reconciled to these. It was the thought that he would have to tell his mother, and read in her face unutterable reproach and despair. It was this which terrified him.

Pasha knew that it was not on a diploma that his happiness depended, but on his straightforward dealings with the one person nearest and dearest to him in the whole world—his mother; it was in his love and care for her, so that she might rejoice in possessing a son who was a stay and comfort to her.

But, like all the rest, she believed that it was his duty to win excellent credentials for himself, and, with such credentials, the right to earn more money.

Thus instead of comforting her son, she would only weep, which, more than anything else, would serve to torment him; and Pasha Tumanof, who could have borne the mocking reproaches of all, utterly lost heart at the thought of his mother's tears, since she stood nearer to him than anyone else in the world.

Hence the conviction arose that it was impossible to live any longer. Had he been possessed of a strong character, he would have killed himself there and then. But he was afraid; less afraid of death

than of coming to any final decision. Thus he refused to believe that all was at an end, although it was equally clear to him that after being at school for two years without getting his remove, he would now be obliged to leave. Suddenly he conceived the idea of going to the head master and of imploring him to grant him his remove.

"Perhaps I have been lazy," he said to himself, "but after all, the question of my remove concerns no one but myself, my mother, Sina, and Lydia. For them it is a matter of the utmost importance. Consequently, any man of average intelligence must see it in that light and do what I ask."

To Pasha this seemed perfectly clear and logical, and he determined to go to the head master before his mother returned. It would not do, however, to go past his sisters until she came back, or they would at once guess the truth; so he determined to get out through the window and climb over the fence. On reaching the street, he could hear Lydia's voice in the yard.

"Mother, Pasha's come back. He has passed, all right."

Then he knew that all was at an end, and that there could be no going back. Stunned for a moment, he afterwards felt braver and more determined. He crept softly along the side of the fence, bending down, though it was far higher than his head.

CHAPTER IX

When Pasha got back to the school the examination of his form was over, and another was in progress. The head master was fully occupied, as Pasha could see on looking through the glass door of the lecture-room. There stood the red table at which the examiners were still seated. The classical master who had given Pasha his five marks was not present. Probably he was in the masters' room, thought Pasha; and he resolved to see him first, if possible.

With beating heart he accordingly went to the masters' room, and asked the writing master, who was passing, if he would tell his colleague Alexandrovitch to come outside.

"What do you want with him?" asked the writing master as, without waiting for an answer, he flung the door open, and called out:

"Alexandrovitch!"

Through the open door Pasha could see the two long windows, the corner of a table and clouds of blue tobacco-smoke in which figures moved like shadows. Alexandrovitch's little wooden figure with his pointed beard and long, sleek hair, emerged from the mist. On reaching the door he looked about him. "Here's somebody who wants to see you," said the writing master, as he went away.

Alexandrovitch looked at Pasha with his cold, hard eyes, and came out into the corridor.

"What do you want?" he asked, holding his hands behind his coat-tails.

"Alexander Ivanovitch, you gave me only five marks, and this is my second year in the class, so I shall have to leave."

Pasha stammered out this, while attempting to cover his confusion by smiling. The master looked away, and the expression in his eyes was dull and callous while Pasha was speaking. Then in deliberate tones he replied, rocking to and fro on his heels as he made each syllable tell.

"You are no longer a child, and must be aware to what laziness leads. The last exam should have taught you that much. I gave you the marks that you deserved. My colleagues are of the same opinion as myself. You ought to have been more industrious."

Alexandrovitch looked Pasha in the face, and turned towards the door.

"Alexander Ivanovitch!" cried Pasha.

"No! no! That will do!" said the other curtly, as he closed the door.

Pasha ground his teeth with rage. He longed to rush at the master, yet stood at the window, dazed and irresolute, staring at the street.

The beadle now came along; the same little fussy man who had summoned the candidates to attend the examination.

"So you haven't passed, Tumanof?" he asked.

"No," replied Pasha in a low voice.

The man shook his head and sighed.

"How sad for your mother! What shall you do now?" he asked sympathetically.

"I shall go and see the head master," replied Pasha.

"That's hardly any good. Anyhow, you might try. Ah! here he comes!" he added in a whisper, buttoning up his uniform.

The masters in a group were now leaving the lecture-room, and again they appeared like blue silhouettes with long flapping coat-tails against the bright window.

Leading the way and holding the class-list in his hand, came the head master, Vladimir Stepanovitch Vosnesyenski, a tall, powerfully built man, with a long beard, and blue spectacles.

On seeing Pasha he went up to him, and said, without looking at him:

"You will have to leave the school."

He was quite a good-natured man, but a man of routine, a pedant above all things. Pasha Tumanof knew very well that he would have to leave, yet the head master's cold, decisive words seemed to freeze his very soul.

"Vladimir Stepanovitch!" exclaimed Pasha.

But the head master pretended not to hear him, and continued:

"We can give you your Fifth Form certificate, but of course you won't get your remove. You ought to have worked."

"I will work," whimpered Pasha, like a little boy.

"It is too late, now," said the head master calmly. In his day he had dismissed many scholars.

"You should have thought of the consequences. The certificate . . ."

"Please, sir . . . my mother," murmured Pasha.

"You'll get the certificate in the office," said the head master, as he frowned and passed on.

Pasha hurried after him.

When he saw the head master, it had been his intention to tell him as briefly as possible exactly how matters stood, and to endeavour to convince him. He thought that he would have to deal with his heart; but the approach to this was barred by various conventional views and inflexible rules concerning the duties of a pedagogue. So the words that Pasha wanted to say never crossed his lips, and, with tears in his eyes, he could only just murmur:

"Please, sir . . ."

Despite his long scholastic career the head master had kept his kindly heart, and he was really sorry for the young fellow. But, as he had not the least idea of relaxing or in any way modifying, the hard-and-fast rule, he sought by this compromise of giving the certificate, to extricate himself from a somewhat embarrassing position. Affecting not to hear, he hurriedly entered the masters' room.

Pasha was left alone in the corridor, grinding his teeth with rage. To avoid another encounter with the beadle, whose futile sympathy would only increase his fury, he hurried along the passage, and seizing his cap and cloak, walked out into the street determined to revenge himself upon these persons who had thus ignored his entreaties and his tears.

CHAPTER X

At the corner of the main street there was a large shop for the sale of weapons and firearms. Displayed in its two wide windows were rows of guns and rifles of every sort, while, symmetrically arranged on shelves covered with green baize, one could see pistols, revolvers, hunting-knives, and boxes of cartridges. Interspersed with these were stuffed birds and wild animals that showed their fierce, gleaming teeth to passers-by.

After school hours the schoolboys always stood round the windows of this shop in crowds, fascinated by the sight of these fearsome weapons, and dreaming of terrific encounters with the grim beasts on which till then they had never set eyes.

Pasha Tumanof often stopped to gaze at the contents of this shop. The firearms specially attracted him. There was a double-barrelled pistol which he longed to possess; indeed, he had been saving up his money to buy it. It was marked at twenty-five roubles, yet he had at present only got twelve. Every time that he passed the shop he anxiously looked in to discover if it were sold; nor did he feel easy until he had seen it lying in its usual place.

On leaving the school, Pasha walked straight to the shop and gazed in.

There lay his favourite pistol. In spite of his gloomy mood, it was a pleasure to him to look at its smooth, straight barrel and delicate trigger. Yet directly he was aware of this pleasurable interest he felt ashamed of it. At a time like this, what was a pistol to him ?

" I shall never be able to buy it now," he thought.

His heart sank. Recovering himself, however, he frowned, and then pushing the door open entered the shop. Only the salesman and the young woman at the cash-desk were in it. Pasha knew the salesman quite well by sight, as he had often noticed him in the shop window when he was polishing the firearms with chamois leather; but he had never seen the cashier before. To hide his nervousness, he approached the counter with an exaggerated air of easy self-possession. The shopman looked at him gravely and, as Pasha thought, suspiciously over the rims of his spectacles.

" What is it you wish for ? " he asked.

Pasha suddenly thought that being a grammar-school boy, no firearms could be sold to him. He turned very pale.

" I want a pistol," he said nervously.

Without speaking the shopman opened several drawers. At that moment Pasha formed a calm and deliberate resolve. He felt that he would have to kill not only the head master, but also the classical master; so that, instead of a pistol, it would be better to buy a revolver. " Besides, it might hang fire," thought Pasha quite calmly and collectively; " then I should look such a fool." So he hastily corrected himself by saying :

"No, I should like to see a revolver, please."

The shopman placed the case of pistols aside and opened another, containing revolvers.

"At about what price?" he asked.

"About ten roubles," replied Pasha, who was somewhat puzzled, having never bought firearms before. The shopman placed three or four revolvers before him on the counter. Pasha took up one of them and examined it with the air of a connoisseur. He shuddered, and then took up another.

"I suppose there's no flaw in them?" he asked.

"We only sell first-class goods," was the off-hand rejoinder.

"And how . . . I mean . . . it carries well?" asked Pasha, with childish curiosity. He wished that the shopman would be more talkative.

"We guarantee it to kill at sixty paces," said the shopman dryly.

If he had seen Pasha's face as he said this, he must obviously have guessed that something was wrong. But he was an old hand at selling firearms. More than once, after selling a revolver, he had read paragraphs in the papers next day about suicides or horrible murders. He was thoroughly used to all this and invariably praised his death-dealing wares. When he sold a revolver, it never occurred to him that it might be used by some miserable suicide or desperate criminal. What he thought of was the percentage he would get by such a sale. He was quite a good, kind-hearted man and an excellent father, devoted to his wife and children. Just for this reason he was more interested in the sale of the revolver than in the person to whom he sold it. Of Pasha's agitation he saw nothing whatever.

"I'll have this one," said Pasha with quivering lips.

The shopman bowed and replaced the other revolvers in their case.

"Shall I wrap it up for you, sir?" he said.

"Er . . . yes . . . no . . ." stammered Pasha.

"As you like, sir. Shall you want any cartridges?"

"Yes, yes, of course."

Pasha had not thought of these till then.

"Would you like me to load it? Or will you take a box of cartridges?"

"Yes, load it, please," replied Pasha, suddenly aware that he did not know how to do so himself.

The shopman shook out some of the pretty yellow cartridges on to the counter, and having adroitly loaded the revolver he handed it to Pasha.

"Is there anything else that you require?"

Pasha shook his head.

"That will be ten roubles, twelve kopecks," said the man, pointing to the cash-desk.

Pasha thrust the revolver in his pocket and went to the desk.

The anæmic girl in charge took the money, and returned thirty-eight kopecks to him, watching him closely as he went out. She was quite young, and, therefore, kinder and more impressionable than the salesman. When Pasha had gone, she said:

"What a strange-looking boy that was! I believe he's going to shoot himself."

"Who knows?" said the shopman carelessly. "What is the time, Maria Alexandrovna?"

"Just one o'clock," replied the cashier, as she glanced at her little watch.

"I'm worried about my boy Nicholas," said the shopman. "He's got scarlet fever, or something of the kind. I wish it was three o'clock! My son may be dead for all I know! It's a horrible thing to have to stop here like this!"

He went to the counter and put away the things that he had shown Pasha.

"They ought not to be allowed to buy revolvers," said the girl. She was still thinking of Pasha. "I am certain that he'll do himself some harm. What a face he had, to be sure! To sell such things to people like that ought to be forbidden."

"There are no rules of that sort," replied the shopman dryly. He was thinking of his sick boy.

CHAPTER XI

"WHERE is the head master?" asked Pasha on reaching the entrance-hall of the school.

"He's at home. Just got back from the exam. Probably in his study," replied the old pock-pitted janitor, yawning. He was an ex-soldier.

"Go and tell him that I want to see him, Ivanitch."

"But very likely he is busy," said the man.

"Never mind. It's most important."

"I don't know . . . You should ask one of the school servants."

Pasha started back.

"No, no. I must see him in private. I've something to ask him."

"You didn't pass, eh?" asked the janitor, who was used to such requests.

"Well, no!"

"All right! I'll tell him," mumbled the old fellow, as he tramped along to the head master's private residence. Pasha remained in the hall. He was trembling violently, yet, curiously enough, he had quite forgotten the revolver. His one wish was to make a final appeal to the head master, feeling yet certain that such appeal would not be granted.

The soldier returned.

"Will you come this way to the study?" he said.

Pasha took off his cap and goloshes, and walked into the dark hall of the head master's house, from which a door led to the study. Pasha knew the study well. It was scantily furnished. The two large windows looked on to the street; on the writing-table there was a bronze letter-weight, the model of a wild boar, and papers with blue covers and white labels.

Vladimir Stepanovitch Vosnesjenski sat sideways at the table with his back to the door. His head was on one side, and he was writing something, while on the edge of the table lay a half-smoked cigarette.

As Pasha entered, the head master looked round, and his face grew dark. He was sorry for the boy, it is true, but at the same time he could not understand Pasha's inability to see what to every one else was perfectly clear, viz., that he was powerless to go against the rules and give him his remove. So, kind-hearted though he was, he now felt annoyed with this Pavel Tumanof, whom he thought a lazy fellow who might have worked if he had chosen.

"What have you got to say to me?" he asked sharply, without looking at Pasha.

"If you please, sir . . . well, I have come to ask you to give me my remove," said Pasha.

"I can't do that!" replied the head master, shrugging his shoulders.

"I mean to work," said Pasha plaintively. The tears were in his eyes, and he thought to himself, "All the better if I can cry a bit." Nevertheless, he strove to restrain those tears.

"Oh, good gracious!" exclaimed the head master. He really pitied the lad, yet the expression on his face was severe and bored.

"Vladimir Stepanovitch, if I don't pass my grammar-school exams I shan't be able to go to the university."

"Of course not." Involuntarily the head master smiled.

"I'm making a dreadful muddle of it!" thought Pasha to himself.

The head master took a couple of whiffs at his cigarette, inhaled the smoke, raised his eyebrows, and then carefully replaced the cigarette at the edge of the table.

"Look here, Tumanof," he said sternly, "I know very well that your failure to pass will place you, and especially your relations, in a most unpleasant position. I have nothing against you so far as I am concerned, nor has any one of my colleagues. But you have your duties to perform just as we have ours, and it was your duty to work. That is what you have not done, and for that reason you have been dismissed from the school. It is not we, personally, who dismiss you, for we are only officials; and if we were not here, others would have to dismiss you. As regards myself, I am sorry for you; and if it depended on me I should have given you your remove, even without testing your abilities. But it is our duty only to pass those boys who by study have proved themselves to be proficient, and those who know nothing we are obliged to dismiss, and if we omitted to do so, we should ourselves incur punishment. Thus, we have dismissed you; and you have no right to complain, or question our decision. In short, I can do nothing. I have made it quite clear, have I not?"

The head master looked at Pasha through his spectacles.

"For God's sake, Vladimir Stepanovitch!" exclaimed Pasha, feeling as if his whole being were falling into an abyss. The head master turned round angrily.

"What's the good of coming to me like this? I cannot do it! Do you understand? I cannot do it!"

"But what am I to do?" asked Pasha mechanically.

If the head master had sympathized with him in his trouble, or had given him advice of some sort, Pasha Tumanof would probably have gone home; but this worthy official never reflected that his most important task was to make his pupils happy. All that he thought of was to discharge his duties as a head master, and to provide pupils who obtained the requisite number of marks with diplomas. From this it must not be assumed that he was harsh and unfeeling. The real reason was, that the educational system did not aim at making pupils good and happy men, but at enabling them to fight for the best positions in the world. As, however, Pasha could know nothing of all this, and did not see that the head master's words were the outcome of an abstract theory, and not dictated by personal malice, it was impossible for him to feel anything but blind hatred for the head master, which was only increased by the tone of officialdom which the latter had assumed.

Pasha now recollected that he had got the revolver. Everything seemed quite clear and simple, and the climax absolutely inevitable. He thrust his hand

into his pocket, as with flashing eyes he said threateningly :

" Now then, give me my remove, Vladimir Stepanovitch, or else . . ."

The head master stared at him in amazement, and turning pale, he rose slowly and edged away from the table.

" What . . . what are you going to do ? . . ."

Only then was Pasha aware that he had the revolver in his hand. On the head master's face there was a look of abject terror.

A sudden fit of mad merriment seized Pasha, as with a hideous laugh he pointed the revolver straight at the master's eyes.

" My God ! My God ! " shrieked the latter, as he held up his hands to protect himself from the barrel of the revolver. Then by a violent effort he managed to pass Pasha and rushed towards the door, shouting :

" Oh, God ! Oh, God ! Help ! Help ! "

It was this shrieking that roused Pasha to a frenzy which distressed and yet exhilarated him. To himself, now, he seemed horrible and monstrous, and in the full enjoyment of this new sensation, he followed his victim and fired at him in the doorway, hitting him twice in the back. Through the smoke, which to him appeared horribly dense, he could see the master stagger backwards against the wall, throw up his arms, and fall full length at Pasha's feet. His spectacles tumbled off, and his kindly eyes stared hideously at the ceiling.

But now Pasha saw and heard nothing. Intoxicated, as it were, by a gust of hysterical fury, he rushed out into the passage towards the room of the assistant

masters. The door was open. When Pasha appeared they all looked round, instantly aware that something terrible had happened.

Pasha perceived how they all fled before him, and in the height of his mad frenzy he now imagined himself to be a giant. He looked about him till he detected Alexandrovitch, and then fired. He hardly heard the report, but saw through the smoke how the master fell under the table. Then he turned sharply round, and dashed headlong down the stairs, ten steps at a time, as it seemed to him. When he ran out through the entrance-hall, he caught a glimpse of the janitor's white face, as the man sprang aside in alarm.

He had no recollection of how he leaped into the droshky and subsequently reached the office of the Police Inspector. He did not recover himself until the secretary said to him :

" Poor boy ! "

THE DOCTOR

THE DOCTOR

CHAPTER I

ACCOMPANIED by a taciturn policeman, the Doctor went through empty streets where the wet pavement reflected his long figure as in a dim, broken glass. Behind the walls bare boughs were tossing in the wind that howled round iron roofs and dashed icy raindrops like splinters in the face. When for a short while its fury abated and there was silence, a sound of distant firing could be distinctly heard; rifle-shots, singly, and then again in rapid succession. Southwards, behind the dark shadow of the cathedral there was a faint glow which lit up the low hanging clouds, making them look like huge dun-coloured reptiles.

"Whereabouts are they shooting?" asked the Doctor, thrusting his hands up his sleeves and looking down at his feet.

"That I don't know," replied the policeman, but from the tone of his voice the Doctor perceived that he knew and would not say.

"Is it on the outskirts of the town?" persisted the Doctor, clenching his teeth with rage.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the man in the same tone. "We really must go faster, sir."

"What a damned idiot!" thought the Doctor, quickening his pace.

Again the wind blew in gusts; and again, when there was a lull, the same distant sound of firing was audible.

"But who shot the Chief Constable?" asked the Doctor, as he listened anxiously to the firing.

"One of those Jews, probably," replied the policeman in the same callous tone.

"With what?"

"With a revolver. He shot and wounded him."

"Why?"

"That I don't know."

This curt, monotonous reply made all further questioning futile. The Doctor literally felt as if his fury would choke him. He was convinced that the Police Superintendent had been wounded by one of a Jewish gang, a secret Self-Defence Society, upon which the Cossacks had been ordered to fire. He pictured to himself a disorderly band of terrified men, powerless and badly armed, who were being gradually massacred with pitiless precision. So revolting to him was the scene, and so clearly did he seem to see it, that he longed to stop suddenly and say to the policeman roughly:

"Well, let him die like a dog! A dog deserves a dog's death!"

But he managed to control himself.

"I have no right to behave like that," he thought. "I am a doctor, not a judge." Although this reason seemed irrefutable, he furthermore reflected, "Besides, one can't hit a man that's down."

The policeman walked close behind him, and to be

followed by this black, monotonous figure became at last intolerable.

"I think they might have sent me horses," he said at last. His voice trembled, and he was amazed at having made such a foolish protest.

"The horses are all engaged. In the town they are looking everywhere for doctors. I hoped to be able to fetch you in a droshky, sir, but there's not a damned one to be got. We must go a bit quicker, sir!"

CHAPTER II

SEVERAL policemen and two mounted Cossacks were stationed in front of the Chief Constable's house. The horses tossed their heads, and their tails were blown sideways by the wind. With their rifles slung across their saddles, the Cossacks sat there motionless, each looking as if he were not a living man but an inanimate part of the horse. As the Doctor approached, the policeman silently made way for him. A sergeant in a grey cloak saluted and asked:

"What about the doctor? Have you got one?"

"Yes, I've got one," was the policeman's triumphant answer, as he ran forward and opened the door.

"This way, if you please, sir!"

The hall was in darkness, but from a side-room a streak of light fell across the floor. A fat inspector came out of this room, in which other policemen and a smart-looking young officer could be seen.

"Well, have you got a doctor?" asked the police-sergeant.

"Yes," replied the sergeant in the grey cloak.

The Doctor said nothing, but frowned as one who, perplexed and helpless, had been suddenly involved in an unpleasant business and who saw no way out of it. For a long while he fidgeted with his muffler before taking off his overcoat and goloshes. Then

he removed his glasses, which he proceeded to polish with his handkerchief with unnecessary slowness and deliberation.

Just at this moment he recollected how in his student-days he was once obliged to enter a house where shortly before he had received his *congé*, owing to some misunderstanding or other. How ashamed he felt! To walk almost caused him physical pain. Such were his sensations now. He coughed nervously, raised his eyebrows, looked over the rims of his glasses, and awkwardly entered the lighted room.

"Where is the patient?" he asked irritably, without looking at anyone. Indeed he strove to avoid the expectant glances directed towards him. He only saw that the officer of gendarmes was the same one who shortly before had searched his own house.

"This way, doctor! This way, please," said the Inspector hoarsely.

A graceful woman hurried forward, her feet becoming entangled in the folds of her dress. She had large black eyes that looked the larger for being tear-stained. Such was her beauty that the Doctor involuntarily looked at her in admiration and surprise.

"Platon Mikhailovitch, where is the doctor?" she asked in a voice choked with emotion.

"Here is the doctor, Emma Vasilievna! Calm yourself! It will be all right now, and we shall manage to set him on his feet," said the Inspector in that kindly, familiar tone which stalwart men often adopt when speaking to beautiful women.

Seizing the doctor by both hands, she looked him full in the face with wide-opened eyes and said:

"For God's sake, doctor, help me! This way,

quick! He's in such a shocking state. They've wounded him in the stomach. Oh, do come!"

Then she began to sob, covering her face with her soft, pink hands.

"Emma Vasilievna, don't distress yourself like that! There's no need for it!" cried the burly Inspector, with a deprecative gesture.

"Pray be calm, madam," added the Doctor gently, being softened, now, by pity. Yet, as he spoke, he glanced at her hands and remembered what some one had told him that very day—told him how they had ripped up pregnant Jewesses and stuffed them with feathers from their bedding. . . .

"Why did you not send for some other medical man?" he asked in an undertone, without looking up.

Her eyes flashed in surprise. "My God, who else is there that we could have summoned? You are the only Russian doctor in the whole town. I could not have sent for a Jew. They are all so bitterly hostile to him! Oh, Doctor!"

The Inspector came nearer, and the Doctor understood why he moved. He looked round angrily, blinking his little eyes. "Very well, then; where is the patient?"

"Here, here, Doctor!" exclaimed the lady, as she caught up her gown and hurriedly offered to lead the way.

"Perhaps you will want help," suggested the Inspector.

"I want nobody," replied the Doctor sharply, glad of an opportunity to be rude. He quickly followed the lady through two dark rooms, presumably the dining-room and the *salon*, for the Doctor fancied

he could see a white table on which a tea-urn still stood, pictures, a grand piano, dark, yet gleaming in the dusk, and large mirrors. They walked alternately on polished flooring and soft carpets. Everywhere there was the strange, indefinable aroma of wealth and luxury which the Doctor found intolerably oppressive. He could now hear a sound that was familiar to him, the laboured, stertorous breathing of a dying man, and this impressed upon him the fact that he had a duty to perform

It was he who now walked first and entered the sick-room. It smelt strongly of sal-ammoniac and iodoform. A Red Cross Sister of Mercy was standing beside the bed, and on the blood-stained mattress, at full length, with his chest curiously thrust out, lay the Chief Constable. His blue trousers were unbuttoned and had been drawn down, disclosing his naked stomach, which heaved convulsively.

The Doctor looked sternly at his patient and said: "Bring a light, please, Sister!"

But the lady herself rushed to the table and brought the lamp. When the light fell on her it gave her eyes a lurid brilliance as she looked first at her prostrate husband and then at the Doctor's face like a terrified child.

The Doctor bent down. "Oh, it's there! I see," he muttered to himself.

Just below the ribs there was a little dark red hole. With two fingers he cautiously pressed the edges of the wound, when the body became at once convulsed, and a wild, hideous scream came from somewhere at the back of the Doctor's elbow. Lamp in hand, the lady became so terribly agitated that instinctively

the Doctor put out his hands to prevent her from falling. "She's going to faint," he thought.

"My dear lady," he said, "don't give way like this. I think you had better retire. You cannot do anything here." Thus persuading her, he at the same time took hold of her arm.

She stared at him, wild-eyed. "No, no! It's nothing, nothing! Oh, be quick, Doctor; for God's sake, be quick!"

But the Doctor firmly led her away, and she obediently left the room.

In the *salon* the maid lit a lamp, and in the soft light the polished surface of the furniture and the gilt frames of the pictures were dimly discernible. Almost forcibly the Doctor led the lady to a couch. The Inspector's round, red face peered in at the door.

"Don't come back, if you please. Stay here. The Sister of Mercy will be quite sufficient, and I am going to send for an assistant-surgeon at once. It is too much for you; so please stay here."

"We have already sent for the assistant-surgeon," said the Inspector in the doorway.

She listened, still gazing at the Doctor with her dark, shining eyes. It was as if there was something that she did not understand. Directly the Doctor moved, with cat-like swiftness she caught at his hand.

"Doctor, tell me, for God's sake, tell me the truth! There's no danger, is there? He's not going to die?" she faltered.

The Doctor felt more and more how terribly she was suffering, and his pity for her increased.

"Ah, well," he thought, as if replying to his own

indefinite emotions, "every one for himself! This outrage is just as horrible as any other. Of course to her he is the dearest thing in the whole world, and he loves life as much as anybody else. It's my business to help all; not to look upon some patients as guilty, and upon others as innocent."

"Be calm, madam," he said kindly. "Please God, all will go well. The wound is certainly serious, but you have sent for me in good time. Yes; it is lucky that you did so," he added with emphasis.

Although the uncertainty was as great as ever, since he had done nothing so far, the wife's dark eyes grew softer. They no longer glittered feverishly but expressed heartfelt gratitude. She sank down, strengthless, on the couch.

"Thank you, doctor," she murmured. Her voice had a caressing quality. "Go back. I won't disturb you any more. But if . . . if . . . you'll call me, won't you, Doctor?"

Against his will the Doctor glanced once more at this enchanting vision of shimmering lace, raven black hair, roseate limbs, and rustling silk. "How beautiful she is!" he thought. "And she's the wife, the bedfellow of that brute! Strange, isn't it? But that's just how things are in this world!"

On entering the bedroom the Doctor closed the door. "Sister," he said to the Red Cross nurse seated beside the bed, "will you send for the assistant-surgeon, and to my house for my instruments? They'll know what I want. Or, perhaps I had better write a note."

"Very well, sir," replied the nurse, rising, "but that has been done already, I believe."

"And see to it," added the Doctor, "that no one comes in here. The patient requires rest. Do not admit his wife."

When left alone with the patient the Doctor carefully placed the lamp on a little table near the bed and sat down beside it. The Chief Constable still lay there without moving. His face with its heavy moustache, his hands with rings on the fingers, his legs in big varnished top-boots, were all equally motionless. Only the red, bare stomach heaved convulsively.

The Doctor knew what had to be done and what could be done. A single glance had sufficed to assure him that so robust a patient, despite the gravity of the wound, would recover if no complications set in, and if aid were given in time, so that, not unnaturally, he felt impatient. He took the patient's hand to feel his pulse. A powerful hand once, maybe, covered with reddish hair, but now as pliable as india-rubber. The heavy breathing suddenly ceased. The Doctor looked intently at the patient and perceived that he was recovering consciousness.

"Well, how do you feel?" he asked.

The Chief Constable did not reply. As before, his stomach rose and fell, and his eyes through their half-closed lids had a dull, lifeless expression.

The Doctor began to think that he must have been mistaken, when just at that moment the moustache quivered and a strange voice, coming as it were from depths within the patient's body, said gently and distinctly, "It hurts me . . . Doctor. . . . I am dying. . . . Where is Emma . . . my wife?"

"I have sent your wife away. It is too much for

her. You won't die. There's not the least fear of that. You'll be all right," said the Doctor in the calm tone of assurance that he always adopted when addressing patients.

" It hurts me ! " repeated the Chief Constable in a fainter voice, and he sighed.

" Never mind ! We shall soon put that right. You must have a little patience," replied the Doctor in the same soothing tone. But his patient had become unconscious again, and it was distressing to hear his laboured breathing beneath his tawny moustache.

The Doctor looked at the clock, sighed, and then rose. The wound had been washed by the Sister of Mercy, and for the moment nothing could be done. He became more and more uneasy as he sat there in this heated atmosphere, a prey to vague, gloomy thoughts. He went to the window and, opening the small one, looked down at the street. The fresh air as it came in and touched his forehead was reviving. The street was empty and silent. Then, as he, listening, looked out again the distant sound of firing came to him on the wind.

. . . Bang ! . . . Bang bang ! . . . Bang !

" My God ! When on earth will it stop ? " he muttered.

As if in reply, he heard the hoarse gurgling of the patient in the room behind him. " This fellow," thought he, " what a beautiful, charming wife he's got ! He's strong and healthy, and surrounded with comfort of every kind. His children, too, are healthy, happy children, no doubt. But instead of being content with such good fortune, instead of enjoying his life and prizing the joy that was his, he must

needs do such atrocious things! For him such hideous deeds are utterly unnecessary and uncalled for. He must know what misery they cause. And yet, in spite of it all . . ."

The wind howled more furiously; and again from the bed came the sound of laboured breathing.

The Doctor listened anxiously. He fancied that he could hear a scream as he looked right and left through the small window opening on to the street. Immediately opposite he could read on a large white signboard the words *Fish Depot.* Suddenly he recollected how some six or seven months ago he had been summoned to attend a tradesman who was suffering from a slight paralytic stroke. The fat fellow lay on the sofa like a sow that had just been slaughtered. His face was blue as that of a corpse; he was gasping for breath; and every now and then his limbs twitched convulsively. At the time the Doctor did everything that was possible, sitting up all night with the patient, and eventually effecting a cure. Now, it was this very same tradesman, Voskoboynikof by name, who three days ago had collected a horde of drunken wretches who could hardly be called men, and, after treating them all to vodka, had distributed red flags among them. His fat, red face shone with excitement as he spluttered out a lot of senseless words that had now resulted in all these bestial outrages and inhuman massacres.

"There it is!" thought the Doctor. "If I hadn't cured him when I did, dozens and dozens of poor wretches might now be alive! Why did I ever do it?"

He left the window, perplexed and confused, as if

trying vainly to recollect something. Going to the bedside, he scrutinized the pale, motionless face of his patient. At times, if the breathing grew more laboured, broad white teeth became visible beneath the reddish moustache; and then the whole countenance assumed a cunning expression as that of a wild beast. A wave of fury and disgust came over the Doctor as he watched.

"I must control myself," he thought. "I have no right to let myself be influenced by personal feelings. It stands to reason that I could not possibly go away and leave a dying man. Yet why not! Why shouldn't I leave him to die? No, no! Impossible!" The note of assurance rang false, emphatic though it was. "Damn it all!" he thought angrily. "What does it mean? Why doesn't somebody come?" Then he perceived that he really only desired "somebody" to come in order to counteract his own personal aversion, and to enable him to overcome it.

For some reason or other he felt drawn to look out of the window again. Gazing into the darkness, he seemed to see once more a hideous sight that he had witnessed a day or two ago. The corpse of a young man had been brought into the hospital. The face was so horribly mutilated that identification seemed impossible. It was one huge grisly clot of blood and mire, with tufts on it of soft, fair hair. Then he remembered a girl student, a little Jewess whom he used to meet almost every morning when on his way to the hospital. She was a bright, graceful girl, and her neat brown dress, black apron, high boots, and glossy hair gave her a charming appearance. For the jaded physician it was refreshing to encounter

this sweet embodiment of youth, as sweet to him as the first bright vision of spring. She, too, had been murdered. Her body was the second that he had seen on that fateful day. In a certain street, not far from a smoking house of which the door and windows had been battered in, amid the dirt and wreckage on the roadway, he had observed a strange white object. Having outraged her, the pillagers had stripped her stark naked and flung her out of the window, where, as the Doctor afterwards learnt, she had dragged herself along through the dirt on one leg. Her little breasts had been cut by the sharp stones. Her dishevelled hair was stiff and caked with mud. One white leg, broken and useless, lay bent beneath her on the stones.

Tears for the first time now rose to his eyes, wetting the rims of his glasses. Suddenly this awful picture, as in some hideous dream, gave place to that of Voskoboynikof's bloated, shapeless visage with its bloodshot, goggling eyes and gaping mouth ringed by a horde of ruffians, maddened by vodka and lust.

"No, they are not human beings!" he said aloud, composed now, and in a tone of conviction.

The face of the murdered girl had disappeared.

Once more he left the window and went back towards the patient's bedside, but as soon as he got to the middle of the room he turned sharply on his heel, and, without looking at the patient, waved his hand deprecatingly and went out.

"I cannot!" he said sorrowfully.

CHAPTER III

In the *salon* he collided with the Sister of Mercy, and stood aside to let her pass. He was then in a strange, half-unconscious condition, and later on had no recollection of what at that moment was passing through his mind. The Sister stopped and said reassuringly, as she looked up in his face:

"They have sent again, sir, to Timopheief and to the hospital."

The Doctor looked at her brow pensively, where little fluffy hairs were peeping out from under her white cap. Then he said:

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"Perhaps you want water or something? Shall I get some water?" she asked.

"Yes, yes, water! Of course," shouted the Doctor furiously, amazed at such an outburst on his part. For an instant he saw the look of astonishment on the Sister of Mercy's face. She was evidently offended. He wanted to speak, to offer some explanation of his conduct, but he could only wave his hand feebly as he went out. Through all the rooms he walked, conscious that the Chief Constable's wife was watching him in amazement and distress, though as she rose from the couch he did not see her. On reaching the ante-room he began to put on his overcoat with

trembling hands. She followed him thither as with outstretched arms she exclaimed anxiously:

"Where are you going, Doctor? What is the matter?"

Behind her, his hands awkwardly extended, stood the Inspector, while above his head the face of the young officer could be seen. Then the Doctor, who had already put on his coat and goloshes, turned back, hat in hand, and went into the dining-room. He was very pale, and with his eyes fixed on the floor he said: "I cannot. . . . You had better call in some one else. . . ."

Her dark eyes grew wide with fear as she clasped her hands. "Doctor, what is the matter with you? Who is there that I can call in? As I have already told you, we've sent everywhere. You are the only one. . . . What does it mean? Are you not well yourself?"

The Doctor uttered a stifled cry, for the words in answer momentarily failed him. "Ugh! . . . Not at all! I am well . . . I am perfectly well!" he exclaimed testily, trembling all over.

A death-like pallor overspread her features. She gazed at him in mute amazement. Her silence and her glassy stare told him that she had understood.

"What does this mean, Doctor?" began the young officer in a hectoring tone. But she held him back.

"You won't save my husband because he . . ." Her lips quivered. Her voice was almost inaudible.

"Yes!" This was the curt reply that the Doctor had intended to give. But the little word stuck in his throat. He merely shrugged his shoulders, and his fingers twitched.

"Look here, sir, what . . ." cried the Inspector angrily. Then, for some reason or other, he stopped, and looked about him in confusion.

There was a brief silence. The lady gazed despairingly at the Doctor, who kept his eyes stubbornly fixed on one of the little feet of the table.

"Doctor!" she pleaded at last in a voice full of anguish.

He quickly looked up, but made no reply. Within him at that moment a painful, secret conflict was in progress. It seemed so utterly criminal and unjust to leave a dying man like this and to refuse to help her in her despair; to go away, and before going to condemn to death a helpless, suffering fellow-creature.

At this awful juncture he strove to find some outlet, some way of escape. But there was none. At one moment it seemed that the simplest way for him would be to go back and give help and consolation. Then, in another instant, clear, obvious as justice itself, his duty appeared to be exactly the reverse. He ought to go. To which prompting should he yield?

"Doctor!" she murmured in the same supplicating tone, as she came close to him and held out her arms.

Quite apart from and outside this train of thought, he suddenly reflected that he was getting warm in his thick overcoat, and might catch cold if he went out into the street. Then, it seemed to him as if he had already taken off his coat, and was at the bedside looking at that face with its tawny moustache and large white teeth.

"No; it's impossible!" he thought; and again

before his mental vision there floated the hideous picture of the young man's battered head and of the girl-student's naked limb. In his ears rang those words spoken by that man he knew: "They ripped them up and then stuffed them with feathers from the bedding." A paroxysm of wrath again assailed him and he cried hoarsely: "No, I cannot!"

Waving her aside, he went to the door, when she suddenly shrieked, and he stopped.

"You dare not go! It's your duty to stop and save my husband! I will denounce you! You shall suffer for this! Platon Mikhailovitch!"

The Inspector and the young officer with two policemen advanced, all ready at a word from the lady in her silks and laces, to seize him. Standing in front of him, her slender hands clenched and her eyes round and flashing, she leaned forward.

"You dare not!" she hissed. "Do you know, I will compel you by force to remain . . .!"

"Ivanof!" cried the Inspector, turning very red.

"Aha! Ivanof, indeed!" replied the Doctor in a strange, deliberate tone, as he relinquished his hold of the door-handle and faced her.

"You mean to threaten me, do you? Very well. If I act in this way it is because I have good reasons for doing so. I am obliged to stop, am I? Who says that, pray? Let me tell you that I am obliged to do nothing that disgusts me. Your husband is a brute, and if he is suffering—well, it's a pity he can't be made to suffer more. Why should I save him? Why should I save the life of a man who—Do you know what you are saying? You ought to be ashamed of yourself! How can you possibly plead for such a

man? Ah! No, no! Let him die! Let him die like a dog! I won't move a finger to help him. Arrest me, if you like! We will soon see about that!"

His thin little voice rose almost to a scream, and his small myopic eyes twinkled defiantly. In this moment he tasted the sweetness of revenge. The vent for all his pent-up grief and impotent fury had been found. His features were contorted by a sardonic smile of which he was himself unconscious. In his anger he saw nothing of what was going on.

The lady in her laces tottered helplessly and almost fell. Her face became ghastly white and all traces of its beauty disappeared. Her lips quivered, as in mute despair she held out limp, supplicating hands.

"Doctor! Doctor!"

He stopped short in his tirade and looked at her in amazement, as if he had quite forgotten her presence.

"I . . . I know, Doctor . . ." she stammered, "but . . . Doctor . . . did he himself . . . actually . . .?"

"Ah! yet if he didn't, that is no justification," he muttered.

"I know! I know! But now, Doctor, now he'll die!"

"Yes, but . . ." began the Doctor, growing angry again.

She cut him short, as she caught hold of his coat-sleeve. "Ah! Doctor, I love him, and I can't live without him. See how much I suffer, too! Oh Doctor, in the name of all the Saints! Have you no pity? . . . Our children . . ." Suddenly she fell on her knees.

"Emma Vasilievna! What are you doing?"

cried the Inspector and the officer, rushing forward. But she thrust them aside.

So strange and unlooked for was this attitude of hers that for a moment the Doctor staggered backwards. She crawled towards him on her knees as her rustling silk skirts trailed along the floor; and at the sight of this frail woman in her anguish the Doctor felt a sharp pang at his heart.

"Doctor! Doctor! For God's sake, stop!"

He was trembling in every limb, and for the space of a second he felt that he could not resist. But just then the Inspector seized his arm roughly, and in another access of fury he shook himself free and rushed to the door.

She seized his sleeve, shrieking, but, loosing her hold, fell down in a swoon on the floor, a rigid mass of rose-pink silk and tangled hair. They lifted her up, yet not before the Doctor, as he flung open the door, had caught a glimpse of her lying there, prone. They rushed after him, and the Inspector called out the soldiers. He could hear the tramp of their feet on the stairs below. Trembling, aghast, he clutched the banisters and fled, while rings of fire danced before his eyes.

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