

Two Hussars

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1856

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Early in the nineteenth century, when there were as yet no railways or macadamized roads, no gaslight, no stearine candles, no low couches with sprung cushions, no unvarnished furniture, no disillusioned youths with eye glasses, no liberalizing women philosophers, nor any charming *dames aux camelias* of whom there are so many in our times, in those naïve days, when leaving Moscow for Petersburg in a coach or carriage provided with a kitchenful of home-made provisions one traveled for eight days along a soft, dusty or muddy road and believed in chopped cutlets, sledge-bells, and plain rolls; when in the long autumn evenings the tallow candles, around which family groups of twenty or thirty people gathered, had to be snuffed; when ball-rooms were illuminated by candelabra with wax or spermaceti candles, when furniture was arranged symmetrically, when our fathers were still young and proved it not only by the absence of wrinkles and grey hair but by fighting duels for the sake of a woman and rushing from the opposite corner of a room to pick up a bit of handkerchief purposely or accidentally dropped; when our mothers wore short-waisted dresses and enormous sleeves and decided family affairs by drawing lots, when the charming *dames aux camelias* hid from the light of day — in those naïve days of Masonic lodges, Martinists, and Tugenbunds, the days of Miloradoviches and Davydovs and Pushkins — a meeting of landed proprietors was held in the Government town of K-, and the nobility elections were being concluded.

I

“Well, never mind, the saloon will do,” said a young officer in a fur cloak and hussar’s cap, who had just got out of a post-sledge and was entering the best hotel in the town of K-.

“The assembly, your Excellency, is enormous,” said the boots, who had already managed to learn from the orderly that the hussar’s name was Count Turbin, and therefore addressed him as “your Excellency.”

“The proprietress of Afremovo with her daughters has said she is leaving this evening, so No. 11 will be at your disposal as soon as they go,” continued the boots, stepping softly before the count along the passage and continually looking round.

In the general saloon at a little table under the dingy full-length portrait of the Emperor Alexander the First, several men, probably belonging to the local nobility, sat drinking champagne, while at another side of the room sat some travelers – tradesmen in blue, fur-lined cloaks.

Entering the room and calling in Blucher, a gigantic grey mastiff he had brought with him, the count threw off his cloak, the collar of which was still covered with hoar-frost, called for vodka, sat down at the table in his blue-satin Cossack jacket, and entered into conversation with the gentlemen there.

The handsome open countenance of the newcomer immediately predisposed them in his favour and they offered him a glass of champagne. The count first drank a glass of vodka and then ordered another bottle of champagne to treat his new acquaintances. The sledge-driver came in to ask for a tip.

“Sashka!” shouted the count. “Give him something!”

The driver went out with Sashka but came back again with the money in his hand.

“Look here, y’r ‘xcellence, haven’t I done my very best for y’r honour? Didn’t you promise me half a ruble, and he’s only given me a quarter!”

“Give him a ruble, Sashka.”

Sashka cast down his eyes and looked at the driver’s feet.

“He’s had enough!” he said, in a bass voice. “And besides, I have no more money.”

The count drew from his pocket-book the two five-ruble notes which were all it contained and gave one of them to the driver, who kissed his hand and went off.

“I’ve run it pretty close!” said the count. “These are my last five rubles.”

“Real hussar fashion, Count,” said one of the nobles who from his moustache, voice, and a certain energetic freedom about his legs, was evidently a retired cavalryman. “Are you staying here some time, Count?”

“I must get some money. I shouldn’t have stayed here at all but for that. And there are no rooms to be had, devil take them, in this accursed pub.”

“Permit me, Count,” said the cavalryman. “Will you not join me? My room in No. 7 ... If you do not mind just for the night. And then you’ll stay a couple of days with us? It happens that the *Marechal de la Noblesse* is giving a ball tonight. You would make him very happy by going.”

“Yes, Count, do stay,” said another, a handsome young man. “You have surely no reason to hurry away! You know this only comes once in three years — the elections, I mean. You should at least have a look at our young ladies, Count!”

“Sashka, get my clean linen ready. I am going to the bath,” said the count, rising, “and from there perhaps I may look in at the Marshal’s.”

Then, having called the waiter and whispered something to him to which the latter replied with a smile, “That can all be arranged,” he went out.

“So I’ll order my trunk to be taken to your room, old fellow,” shouted the count from the passage.

“Please do, I shall be most happy,” replied the cavalryman, running to the door. “No. 7 — don’t forget.”

When the count’s footsteps could no longer be heard the cavalryman returned to his place and sitting close to one of the group — a government official — and looking him straight in the face with smiling eyes, said: “It is the very man, you know!”

“No!”

“I tell you it is! It is the very same duellist hussar — the famous Turbin. He knew me — I bet you anything he knew me. Why, he and I went on the spree for three weeks without a break when I was at Lebedyani for remounts. There was one thing he and I did together... He’s a fine fellow, eh?”

“A splendid fellow. And so pleasant in his manner! Doesn’t show a grain of — what d’you call it?” answered the handsome young man. “How quickly we became intimate... He’s not more than twenty-five, is he?”

“Oh no, that’s what he looks but he is more than that. One has to get to know him, you know. Who abducted Migunova? He. It was he who killed Sablin. It was he who dropped Matnev out of the window by his legs. It was he who won three hundred thousand rubles from Prince Nestorov. He is a regular dare-devil, you know: a gambler, a duellist, a seducer, but a jewel of an hussar — a real jewel. The rumors that are afloat about us are nothing to the reality — if anyone knew what a true hussar is! Ah yes, those were times!”

And the cavalryman told his interlocutor of such a spree with the count in Lebedyani as not only never had, but never even could have, taken place.

It could not have done so, first because he had never seen the count till that day and had left the army two years before the count entered it; and secondly because the cavalryman had never really served in the cavalry at all but had for four years been the humblest of cadets in the Belevski regiment and retired as soon as ever he became ensign. But ten years ago he had inherited some money and had really been in Lebedyani where he squandered seven hundred rubles with some officers who were there buying remounts. He had even gone so far as to have an uhlan uniform made with orange facings, meaning to enter an uhlan regiment. This desire to enter the cavalry, and the three weeks spent with the remount officers at Lebedyani, remained the brightest and happiest memories of his life, so he transformed the desire first into a reality and then into a reminiscence and came to believe firmly in his past as a cavalry officer — all of which did not prevent his being, as to gentleness and honesty, a most worthy man.

“Yes, those who have never served in the cavalry will never understand us fellows.”

He sat astride a chair and thrusting out his lower jaw began to speak in a bass voice. “You ride at the head of your squadron, not a horse but the devil incarnate prancing about under you, and you just sit in devil-may-care style. The squadron commander rides up to review: ‘Lieutenant,’

he says. 'We can't get on without you — please lead the squadron to parade.' 'All right,' you say, and there you are: you turn round, shout to your moustached fellows.... Ah, devil take it, those were times!"

The count returned from the bath-house very red and with wet hair, and went straight to No. 7, where the cavalryman was already sitting in his dressing-gown smoking a pipe and considering with pleasure, and not without some apprehension, the happiness that had befallen him of sharing a room with the celebrated Turbin. "Now suppose," he thought, "that he suddenly takes me, strips me naked, drives me to the town gates, and sets me in the snow, or ... tars me, or simply ... But no," he consoled himself, "He wouldn't do that to a comrade."

"Sashka, feed Blucher!" shouted the count.

Sashka, who had taken a tumbler of vodka to refresh himself after the journey and was decidedly tipsy, came in.

"What, already! You've been drinking, you rascal! ... Feed Blucher!"

"He won't starve anyway: see how sleek he is!" answered Sashka, stroking the dog.

"Silence! Be off and feed him!"

"You want the dog to be fed, but when a man drinks a glass you reproach him."

"Hey! I'll thrash you!" shouted the count in a voice that made the window-panes rattle and even frightened the cavalryman a bit.

"You should ask if Sashka has had a bite today! Yes, beat me if you think more of a dog than of a man," muttered Sashka.

But here he received such a terrible blow in the face from the count's fist that he fell, knocked his head against the partition, and clutching his nose fled from the room and fell on a settee in the passage.

"He's knocked my teeth out," grunted Sashka, wiping his bleeding nose with one hand while with the other he scratched the back of Blucher, who was licking himself. "He's knocked my teeth out, Bluchy, but still he's my count and I'd go through fire for him — I would! Because he — is my count. Do you understand, Bluchy? Want your dinner, eh?"

After lying still for a while he rose, fed the dog and then, almost sobered, went in to wait on his count and to offer him some tea.

"I shall really feel hurt," the cavalryman was saying meekly, as he stood before the count who was lying on the other's bed with his legs up against the partition. "You see I also am an old army man and, if I may say so, a comrade. Why should you borrow from anyone else when I shall be delighted to lend you a couple of hundred rubles? I haven't got them just now — only a hundred rubles — but I'll get the rest today. You would really hurt my feelings, Count."

"Thank you, old man," said the count, instantly discerning what kind of relations had to be established between them, and slapping the cavalryman on the shoulder. "Thanks! Well then, we'll go to the ball if it must be so. But what are we to do now? Tell me what you have in your town. What pretty girls? What men fit for a spree? What gaming?"

The cavalryman explained that there would be an abundance of pretty creatures at the ball, that Kolkov, who had been re-elected captain of police, was the best hand at a spree, only he lacked the true hussar go — otherwise he was a good sort of chap, that the Ilyushin gipsy chorus had been singing in the town since the elections began, Streshka leading, and that everybody meant to go to hear them after leaving the marshal's that evening.

"And there's a devilish lot of card-playing too," he went on. Lukhnov plays. He has money and is staying here to break his journey, and Ilyin, an uhlan cornet who has room No. 8, has lost a

lot. They have already begun in his room. They play every evening. And what a fine fellow that Ilyin is! I tell you, Count, he's not mean — he'll let his last shirt go."

"Well then, let us go to his room. Let's see what sort of people they are," said the count.

"Yes do — pray do. They'll be devilish glad."

II

The uhlan cornet, Ilyin, had not long been awake. The evening before he had sat down to cards at eight o'clock and had lost pretty steadily for fifteen hours on end — till eleven in the morning. He had lost a considerable sum but did not know exactly how much, because he had about three thousand rubles of his own, and fifteen thousand of Crown money which had long since got mixed up with his own, and he feared to count lest his fears that some of the Crown money was already gone should be confirmed. It was nearly noon when he fell asleep and he had slept that heavy dreamless sleep which only very young men sleep after a heavy loss. Waking at six o'clock (just when Count Turbin arrived at the hotel), and seeing the floor all around strewn with cards and bits of chalk, and the chalk-marked tables in the middle of the room, he recalled with horror last night's play, and the last card — a knave on which he lost five hundred rubles; but not yet quite convinced of the reality of all this, he drew his money from under the pillow and began to count it. He recognized some notes which had passed from hand to hand several times with "corners" and "transports" and he recalled the whole course of the game. He had none of his own three thousand rubles left, and some two thousand five hundred of the government money was also gone.

Ilyin had been playing for four nights running.

He had come from Moscow where the crown money had been entrusted to him and at K- had been detained by the superintendent of the post-house on the pretext that there were no horses, but really because the superintendent had an agreement with the hotel-keeper to detain all travellers for a day. The uhlan, a bright young lad who had just received three thousand rubles from his parents in Moscow for his equipment on entering his regiment, was glad to spend a few days in the town of K- during the elections and hoped to enjoy himself thoroughly. He knew one of the landed gentry there who had a family, and he was thinking of looking them up and flirting with the daughters, when the cavalryman turned up to make his acquaintance. Without any evil intention the cavalryman introduced him that same evening, in the general saloon or common room of the hotel, to his acquaintances, Lukhnov and other gamblers. And ever since then the uhlan had been playing cards, not asking at the post-station for horses, much less going to visit his acquaintance the landed proprietor, and not even leaving his room for four days on end.

Having dressed and drunk tea he went to the window. He felt that he would like to go for a stroll to get rid of the recollections that haunted him, and he put on his cloak and went out into the street. The sun was already hidden behind the white houses with the red roofs and it was getting dusk. It was warm for winter. Large wet snowflakes were falling slowly into the muddy street. Suddenly at the thought that he had slept all through the day now ending, a feeling of intolerable sadness overcame him.

"This day, now past, can never be recovered," he thought.

"I have ruined my youth!" he suddenly said to himself, not because he really thought he had ruined his youth — he did not even think about it — but because the phrase happened to occur to him.

“And what am I to do now?” thought he. “Borrow from someone and go away?” A lady passed him along the pavement. “There’s a stupid woman,” thought he for some reason. “There’s no one to borrow from ... I have ruined my youth!” He came to the bazaar. A tradesman in a fox-fur cloak stood at the door of his shop touting for customers. “If I had not withdrawn that eight I should have recovered my losses.” An old beggar-woman followed him whimpering. “There’s no one to borrow from.” A man drove past in a bearskin cloak; a policeman was standing at his post. “What unusual thing could I do? Fire at them? No, it’s dull ... I have ruined my youth! ... Ah, if only I could drive in a troyka: Gee-up, beauties! ... I’ll go back. Lukhnov will come soon, and we’ll play.”

He returned to the hotel and again counted his money. No, he had made no mistake the first time: there were still two thousand five hundred rubles of Crown money missing. I’ll stake twenty-five rubles, than make a ‘corner’ ... seven-fold it, fifteen-fold thirty, sixty ... three thousand rubles. Then I’ll buy the horse-collars and be off. He won’t let me, the rascal! I have ruined my youth!”

That is what was going on in the uhlan’s head when Lukhnov actually entered the room.

“Have you been up long, Michael Vasilich?” asked Lukhnov, slowly removing the gold spectacles from his skinny nose and carefully wiping them with a red silk handkerchief.

“No, I’ve only just got up — I slept uncommonly well.”

“Some hussar or other has arrived. He has put up with Zavalshovski — had you heard?”

“No, I hadn’t. But how is it no one else is here yet?”

“They must have gone to Pryakhin’s. They’ll be here directly.”

And sure enough a little later there came into the room a garrison officer who always accompanied Lukhnov, a Greek merchant with an enormous brown hooked nose and sunken black eyes, and a fat puffy landowner, the proprietor of a distillery, who played whole nights, always staking “simples” of half a ruble each. Everybody wished to begin playing as soon as possible, but the principal gamblers, especially Lukhnov who was telling about a robbery in Moscow in an exceedingly calm manner, did not refer to the subject.

“Just fancy,” he said, “a city like Moscow, the historic capital, a metropolis, and men dressed up as devils go about there with crooks, frighten stupid people, and rob the passers-by — and that’s the end of it! What are the police about? That’s the question.”

The uhlan listened attentively to the story about the robbers, but when a pause came he rose and quietly ordered cards to be brought. The fat landowner was the first to speak out.

“Well, gentlemen, why lose precious time? If we mean business let’s begin.”

“Yes, you walked off with a pile of half-rubles last night so you like it,” said the Greek.

“I think we might start,” said the garrison officer.

Ilyin looked at Lukhnov. Lukhnov looking him in the eye quietly continued his story about robbers dressed up like devils with claws.

“Will you keep the bank?” asked the uhlan.

“Isn’t it too early?”

“Belov!” shouted the uhlan, blushing for some unknown reason, “bring me some dinner — I haven’t had anything to eat yet, gentlemen — and a bottle of champagne and some cards.”

At this moment the count and Zavalshovski entered the room. It turned out that Turbin and Ilyin belonged to the same division. They took to one another at once, clinked glasses, drank champagne together, and were on intimate terms in five minutes. The count seemed to like Ilyin very much; he looked smilingly at him and teased him about his youth.

“There’s an uhlan of the right sort!” he said. “What moustaches! Dear me, what moustaches!”

Even what little down there was on Ilyin's lip was quite white.

"I suppose you are going to play?" said the count. "Well, I wish you luck, Ilyin! I should think you are a master at it," he added with a smile.

"Yes, they mean to start," said Lukhnov, tearing open a bundle of a dozen packs of cards, "and you'll joint in too, Count, won't you?"

"No, not today. I should clear you all out if I did. When I begin 'cornering' in earnest the bank begins to crack! But I have nothing to play with — I was cleaned out at a station near Volochok. I met some infantry fellow there with rings on his fingers — a sharper I should think — and he plucked me clean."

"Why, did you stay at that station long?" asked Ilyin.

"I sat there for twenty-two hours. I shan't forget that accursed station! And the superintendent won't forget me either ..."

"How's that?"

"I drive up, you know; out rushes the superintendent looking a regular brigand. 'No horses!' says he. Now I must tell you that it's my rule, if there are no horses I don't take off my fur cloak but go into the superintendent's own room — not into the public room but into his private room — and I have all the doors and windows opened on the ground that it's smoky. Well, that's just what I did there. You remember what frosts we had last month? About twenty degrees! [Footnote: Reaumur = thirteen below zero Fahrenheit.] The superintendent began to argue; I punched his head. There was an old woman there, and girls and other women; they kicked up a row, snatched up their pots and pans, and were rushing off to the village... I went to the door and said, 'Let me have horses and I'll be off. If not, no one shall go out: I'll freeze you all.'"

"That's an infernally good plan!" said the puffy squire, rolling with laughter. "It's the way they freeze out cockroaches ..."

"But I didn't watch carefully enough and the superintendent got away with the women. Only one old woman remained in pawn on the top of the stove; she kept sneezing and saying prayers. Afterwards we began negotiating: the superintendent came and from a distance began persuading me to let the old woman go, but I set Blucher at him a bit. Blucher's splendid at tackling superintendents! But still the rascal didn't let me have horses until the next morning. Meanwhile that infantry fellow came along. I joined him in another room, and we began to play. You have seen Blucher? ... Blucher! ... " and he gave a whistle.

Blucher rushed in, and the players condescendingly paid some attention to him though it was evident that they wished to attend to quite other matters.

"But why don't you play, gentlemen? Please don't let me prevent you. I am a chatterbox, you see," said Turbin. "Play is play whether one likes it or not."

III

Lukhnov drew two candles nearer to him, took out a large brown pocket-book full of paper money, and slowly, as if performing some rite, opened it on the table, took out two one-hundred rubles notes and placed them under the cards.

“Two hundred for the bank, the same as yesterday,” said he, adjusting his spectacles and opening a pack of cards.

“Very well,” said Ilyin, continuing his conversation with Turbin without looking at Lukhnov.

The game started. Lukhnov dealt the cards with machine-like precision, stopping now and then and deliberately jotting something down, or looking sternly over his spectacles and saying in low tones, “Pass up!” The fat landowner spoke louder than anyone else, audibly deliberating with himself and wetting his plump fingers when he turned down the corner of a card. The garrison officer silently and neatly noted the amount of his stake on his card and bent down small corners under the table. The Greek sat beside the banker, watching the game attentively with his sunken black eyes, and seemed to be waiting for something. Zavalshovski, standing by the table, would suddenly begin to fidget all over, take a red or blue bank-note [Footnote: Five-ruble notes were blue and ten-ruble notes red.] out of his trouser pocket, lay a card on it, slap it with his palm, and say, “Little seven, pull me through!” Then he would bite his moustache, shift from foot to foot, and keep fidgeting till his card was dealt. Ilyin sat eating veal and pickled cucumbers, which were placed beside him on the horse hair sofa, and hastily wiping his hands on his coat laid down one card after another. Turbin, who at first was sitting on the sofa, quickly saw how matters stood. Lukhnov did not look at or speak to Ilyin, only now and then his spectacles would turn for a moment towards the latter’s hand, but most of Ilyin’s cards lost.

“There now, I’d like to beat that card,” said Lukhnov of a card the fat landowner, who was staking half-rubles, had put down.

“You beat Ilyin’s, never mind me!” remarked the squire.

And indeed Ilyin’s cards lost more often than any of the others. He would tear up the losing card nervously under the table and choose another with trembling fingers. Turbin rose from the sofa and asked the Greek to let him sit by the banker. The Greek moved to another place; the count took his chair and began watching Lukhnov’s hands attentively, not taking his eyes off them.

“Ilyin!” he suddenly said in his usual voice, which quiet unintentionally drowned all the others. “Why do you keep to a routine? You don’t know how to play.”

“It’s all the same how one plays.”

“But you’re sure to lose that way. Let me play for you.”

“No, please excuse me. I always do it myself. Play for yourself if you like.”

“I said I should not play for myself, but I should like to play for you. I am vexed that you are losing.”

“I suppose it’s my fate.”

The count was silent, but leaning on his elbows he again gazed intently at the banker’s hands.

“Abominable!” he suddenly said in a loud, long-drawn tone.

Lukhnov glanced at him.

“Abominable, quite abominable!” he repeated still louder, looking straight into Lukhnov’s eyes.

The game continued.

“It is not right!” Turbin remarked again, just as Lukhnov beat a heavily backed card of Ilyin’s.

“What is it you don’t like, Count?” inquired the banker with polite indifference.

“This! — that you let Ilyin win his simples and beat his corners. That’s what’s bad.”

Lukhnov made a slight movement with his brows and shoulders, expressing the advisability of submitting to fate in everything, and continued to play.

“Blucher!” shouted the count, rising and whistling to the dog. “At him!” he added quickly.

Blucher, bumping his back against the sofa as he leapt from under it and nearly upsetting the garrison officer, ran to his master and growled, looking around at everyone and moving his tail as if asking, “Who is misbehaving here, eh?”

Lukhnov put down his cards and moved his chair to one side.

“One can’t play like that,” he said. “I hate dogs. What kind of a game is it when you bring a whole pack of hounds in here?”

“Especially a dog like that. I believe they are called ‘leeches,’” chimed in the garrison officer.

“Well, are we going to play or not, Michael Vasilich?” said Lukhnov to their host.

“Please don’t interfere with us, Count,” said Ilyin, turning to Turbin.

“Come here a minute,” said Turbin, taking Ilyin’s arm and going behind the partition with him.

The count’s words, spoken in his usual tone, were distinctly audible from there. His voice always carried across three rooms.

“Are you daft, eh? Don’t you see that that gentleman in spectacles is a sharper of the first water?”

“Come now, enough! What are you saying?”

“No enough about it! Stop playing, I tell you. It’s nothing to me. Another time I’d pluck you myself, but somehow I’m sorry to see you fleeced. And maybe you have Crown money too?”

“No ... why do you imagine such things?”

“Ah, my lad, I’ve been that way myself so I know all those sharpeners’ tricks. I tell you the one in spectacles is a sharper. Stop playing! I ask you as a comrade.”

“Well then, I’ll only finish this one deal.”

“I know what ‘one deal’ means. Well, we’ll see.”

They went back. In that one deal Ilyin put down so many cards and so many of them were beaten that he lost a large amount.

Turbin put his hands in the middle of the table “Now stop it! Come along.”

“No, I can’t. Leave me alone, do!” said Ilyin, irritably shuffling some bent cards without looking at Turbin.

“Well, go to the devil! Go on losing for certain, if that pleases you. It’s time for me to be off. Let’s go to the Marshal’s, Savalshevski.”

They went out. All remained silent and Lukhnov dealt no more cards until the sound of their steps and of Blucher’s claws on the passage floor had died away.

“What a devil of a fellow!” said the landowner, laughing.

“Well, he won’t interfere now,” remarked the garrison officer hastily, and still in a whisper. And the play continued.

IV

The band, composed of some of the marshal's serfs standing in the pantry — which had been cleared out for the occasion — with their coat- sleeves turned up already, had at a given signal struck up the old polonaise, "Alexander, 'Lizabeth," and under the bright soft light of the wax-candles a Governor-general of Catherine's days, with a star on his breast, arm-in-arm with the marshal's skinny wife, and the rest of the local grandees with their partners, had begun slowly gliding over the parquet floor of the large dancing-room in various combinations and variations, when Zavalshevski entered, wearing stockings and pumps and a blue swallow-tail coat with an immense and padded collar, and exhaling a strong smell of the frangipane with which the facings of his coat, his handkerchief, and his moustaches, were abundantly sprinkled. The handsome hussar who came with him wore tight-fitting light-blue riding-breeches and a gold-embroidered scarlet on which a Vladimir cross and an 1812 medal were fastened. The count was not tall but remarkably well built. His clear blue and exceedingly brilliant eyes, and thick, closely curling, dark-brown hair, gave a remarkable character to his beauty. His arrival at the ball was expected, for the handsome young man who had seen him at the hotel had already prepared the Marshal for it. Various impressions had been produced by the news, for the most part not altogether pleasant.

"It's not unlikely that this youngster will hold us up to ridicule," was the opinion of the men and of the older women. "What if he should run away with me?" was more or less in the minds of the younger ladies, married or unmarried.

As soon as the polonaise was over and the couples after bowing to one another had separated — the women into one group and the men into another — Zavalshevski, proud and happy, introduced the count to their hostess.

The marshal's wife, feeling an inner trepidation lest this hussar should treat her in some scandalous manner before everybody, turned away haughtily and contemptuously as she said, "Very pleased, I hope you will dance," and then gave him a distrustful look that said, "Now, if you offend a woman it will show me that you are a perfect villain." The count however soon conquered her prejudices by his amiability, attentive manner, and handsome gay appearance, so that five minutes later the expression on the face of the Marshal's wife told the company: "I know how to manage such gentlemen. He immediately understood with whom he had to deal, and now he'll be charming to me for the rest of the evening." Moreover at that moment the governor of the town, who had known the count's father, came up to him and very affably took him aside for a talk, which still further calmed the provincial public and raised the count in its estimation. After that Zavalshevski introduced the count to his sister, a plump young widow whose large black eyes had not left the count from the moment he entered. The count asked her to dance the waltz the band had just commenced, and the general prejudice was finally dispersed by the masterly way in which he danced.

"What a splendid dancer!" said a fat landed proprietress, watching his legs in their blue riding-breeches as they flitted across the room, and mentally counting "one, two, three — one, two, three — splendid!"

“There he goes — jig, jig, jig,” said another, a visitor in the town whom local society did not consider genteel. “How does he manage not to entangle his spurs? Wonderfully clever!”

The count’s artistic dancing eclipsed the three best dancers of the province: the tall fair-haired adjutant of the governor, noted for the rapidity with which he danced and for holding his partner very close to him; the cavalryman, famous for the graceful swaying motion with which he waltzed and for the frequent but light tapping of his heels; and a civilian, of whom everybody said that though he was not very intellectual he was a first-rate dancer and the soul of every ball. In fact, from its very commencement this civilian would ask all the ladies in turn to dance, in the order in which they were sitting, and never stopped for a moment except occasionally to wipe the perspiration from his weary but cheerful face with a very wet cambric handkerchief. The count eclipsed them all and danced with the three principal ladies: the tall one, rich, handsome, stupid; the one of middle height, thin and not very pretty but splendidly dressed; and the little one, who was plain but very clever. He danced with others too — with all the pretty ones, and there were many of these — but it was Zavalshovski’s sister, the little widow, who pleased him best. With her he danced a quadrille, and *ecossaise*, and a mazurka. When they were sitting down during the quadrille he began paying her many compliments; comparing her to Venus and Diana, to a rose, and to some other flower. But all these compliments only made the widow bend her white neck, lower her eyes and look at her white muslin dress, or pass her fan from hand to hand. But when she said “Don’t, you’re only joking, Count,” and other words to that effect, there was a note of such naïve simplicity and amusing silliness in her slightly guttural voice that looking at her it really seemed that this was not a woman but a flower, and not a rose, but some gorgeous scentless rosy-white wild flower that had grown all alone out of a snowdrift in some very remote land.

This combination of naivete and unconventionality with her fresh beauty created such a peculiar impression on the count that several times during the intervals of conversation, when gazing silently into her eyes or at the beautiful outline of her neck and arms, the desire to seize her in his arms and cover her with kisses assailed him with such force that he had to make a serious effort to resist it. The widow noticed with pleasure the effect she was producing, yet something in the count’s behaviour began to frighten and excite her, though the young hussar, despite his insinuating amiability, was respectful to a degree that in our days would be considered cloying. He ran to fetch almond-milk for her, picked up her handkerchief, snatched a chair from the hands of a scrofulous young squire who danced attendance on her to hand it her more quickly, and so forth.

When he noticed that the society attentions of the day had little effect on the lady he tried to amuse her by telling her funny stories and assured her that he was ready to stand on his head, to crow like a cock, to jump out of the window or plunge into the water through a hole in the ice, if she ordered him to do so. This proved quite a success. The widow brightened up and burst into peals of laughter, showing her lovely white teeth, and was quite satisfied with her cavalier. The count liked her more and more every minute, so that by the end of the quadrille he was seriously in love with her.

When, after the quadrille, her eighteen-year-old adorer of long standing came up to the widow (he was the same scrofulous young man from whom Turbin had snatched the chair — a son of the richest local landed proprietor and not yet in government service) she received him with extreme coolness and did not show one-tenth of the confusion she had experienced with the count.

“Well, you are a fine fellow!” she said, looking all the time at Turbin’s back and unconsciously considering how many yards of gold cord it had taken to embroider his whole jacket. “You are a good one! You promised to call and fetch me for a drive and bring me some comfits.”

“I did come, Anna Fedorovna, but you had already gone, and I left some of the very best comfits for you,” said the young man, who — despite his tallness — spoke in a very high-pitched voice.

“You always find excuses! ... I don’t want your bon-bons. Please don’t imagine — ”

“I see, Anna Fedorovna, that you have changed towards me and I know why. But it’s not right,” he added, evidently unable to finish his speech because a strong inward agitation caused his lips to quiver in a very strange and rapid manner.

Anna Fedorovna did not listen to him but continued to follow Turbin with her eyes.

The master of the house, the stout, toothless, stately old marshal, came up to the count, took him by the arm, and invited him into the study for a smoke and a drink. As soon as Turbin left the room Anna Fedorovna felt that there was absolutely nothing to do there and went out into the dressing-room arm-in-arm with a friend of hers, a bony, elderly, maiden lady.

“Well, is he nice?” asked the maiden lady.

“Only he bothers so!” Anna Fedorovna replied walking up to the mirror and looking at herself.

Her face brightened, her eyes laughed, she even blushed, and suddenly imitating the ballet-dancers she had seen during the elections, she twirled round on one foot, then laughed her guttural but pleasant laugh and even bent her knees and gave a jump.

“Just fancy, what a man! He actually asked me for a keepsake,” she said to her friend, “but he will get no-o-o-thing.” She sang the last word and held up one finger in her kid glove which reached to her elbow.

In the study, where the marshal had taken Turbin, stood bottles of different sorts of vodka, liqueurs, champagne, and *zakuska* [snacks]. The nobility, walking about or sitting in a cloud of tobacco smoke, were talking about the elections.

“When the whole worshipful society of our nobility has honoured him by their choice,” said the newly elected Captain of Police who had already imbibed freely, “he should on no account transgress in the face of the whole society — he ought never ... ”

The count’s entrance interrupted the conversation. Everybody wished to be introduced to him, and the Captain of Police especially kept pressing the count’s hand between his own for a long time and repeatedly asked him not to refuse to accompany him to the new restaurant where he was going to treat the gentlemen after the ball, and where the gipsies were going to sing. The count promised to come without fail, and drank some glasses of champagne with him.

“But why are you not dancing, gentlemen?” said the count, as he was about to leave the room.

“We are not dancers,” replied the Captain of Police, laughing. “Wine is more in our line, Count... And besides, I have seen all those young ladies grow up, Count! But I can walk through an *ecossaise* now and then, Count ... I can do it, Count.”

“Then come and walk through one now,” said Turbin. “It will brighten us up before going to hear the gipsies.”

“Very well, gentlemen! Let’s come and gratify our host.”

And three or four of the noblemen who had been drinking in the study since the commencement of the ball, put on gloves of black kid or knitted silk and with red faces were just about to follow the count into the ball-room when they were stopped by the scrofulous young man who, pale and hardly able to restrain his tears, accosted Turbin.

“You think that because you are a count you can jostle people about as if you were in the market-place,” he said, breathing with difficulty, “but that is impolite ... ”

And again, do what he would, his quivering lips checked the flow of his words.

“What?” cried Turbin, suddenly frowning. “What? ... You brat!” he cried, seizing him by the arms and squeezing them so that the blood rushed to the young man’s head not so much from vexation as from fear. “What? Do you want to fight? I am at your service!”

Hardly had Turbin released the arms he had been squeezing so hard than two nobles caught hold of them and dragged the young man towards the back door.

“What! Are you out of your mind? You must be tipsy! Suppose we were to tell your papa! What’s the matter with you?” they said to him.

“No, I’m not tipsy, but he jostles one and does not apologize. He’s a swine, that’s what he is!” squealed the young man, now quite in tears.

But they did not listen to him and someone took him home.

On the other side the Captain of Police and Zavalshovski were exhorting Turbin: “Never mind him, Count, he’s only a child. He still gets whipped, he’s only sixteen... What can have happened to him? What bee has stung him? And his father such a respectable man — and our candidate.”

“Well, let him go to the devil if he does not wish ... ”

And the count returned to the ball-room and danced the *ecossaise* with the pretty widow as gaily as before, laughed with all his heart as he watched the steps performed by the gentlemen who had come with him out of the study, and burst into peals of laughter than rang across the room when the Captain of Police slipped and measured his full length in the midst of the dancers.

V

While the count was in the study Anna Fedorovna had approached her brother, and supposing that she ought to pretend to be very little interested in the count, began by asking: "Who is that hussar who was dancing with me? Can you tell me, brother?"

The cavalryman explained to his sister as well as he could what a great man the hussar was and told her at the same time that the count was only stopping in the town because his money had been stolen on the way, and that he himself had lent him a hundred rubles, but that that was not enough, so that perhaps "sister" would lend another couple of hundred. Only Zavalshovski asked her on no account to mention the matter to anyone — especially not to the count. Anna Fedorovna promised to send her brother the money that very day and to keep the affair secret, but somehow during the *ecossaise* she felt a great longing in herself to offer the count as much money as he wanted. She took a long time making up her mind, and blushed, but at last with a great effort broached the subject as follows.

"My brother tells me that a misfortune befell you on the road, Count, and that you have no money by you. If you need any, won't you take it from me? I should be so glad."

But having said this, Anna Fedorovna suddenly felt frightened of something and blushed. All gaiety instantly left the count's face.

"Your brother is a fool!" he said abruptly. "You know when a man insults another man they fight; but when a woman insults a man, what does he do then — do you know?"

Poor Anna Fedorovna's neck and ears grew red with confusion. She lowered her eyes and said nothing.

"He kisses the woman in public," said the count in a low voice, leaning towards her ear. "Allow me at least to kiss your little hand," he added in a whisper after a prolonged silence, taking pity on his partner's confusion.

"But not now!" said Anna Fedorovna, with a deep sigh.

"When then? I am leaving early tomorrow and you owe it me."

"Well then it's impossible," said Anna Fedorovna with a smile.

"Only allow me a chance to meet you tonight to kiss your hand. I shall not fail to find an opportunity."

"How can you find it?"

"That is not your business. In order to see you everything is possible... It's agreed?"

"Agreed."

The *ecossaise* ended. After that they danced a mazurka and the count was quite wonderful: catching handkerchiefs, kneeling on one knee, striking his spurs together in a quite special Warsaw manner, so that all the old people left their game of boston and flocked into the ball-room to see, and the cavalryman, their best dancer, confessed himself eclipsed. Then they had supper after which they danced the "Grandfather," and the ball began to break up. The count never took his eyes off the little widow. It was not pretence when he said he was ready to jump through a hole in the ice for her sake. Whether it was whim, or love, or obstinacy, all his mental powers that

evening were concentrated on the one desire — to meet and love her. As soon as he noticed that Anna Fedorovna was taking leave of her hostess he ran out to the footmen's room, and thence — without his fur cloak — into the courtyard to the place where the carriages stood.

“Anna Fedorovna Zaytseva's carriage!” he shouted.

A high four-seated closed carriage with lamps burning moved from its place and approached the porch.

“Stop!” he called to the coachman and plunging knee-deep into the snow ran to the carriage.

“What do you want?” said the coachman.

“I want to get into the carriage,” replied the count, opening the door and trying to get in while the carriage was moving. “Stop, I tell you, you fool!”

“Stop, Vaska!” shouted the coachman to the postilion and pulled up the horses. “What are you getting into other people's carriages for? This carriage belongs to my mistress, to Anna Fedorovna, and not to your honour.”

“Shut up, you blockhead! Here's a ruble for you; get down and close the door,” said the count. But as the coachman did not stir he lifted the steps himself and, lowering the window, managed somehow to close the door. In the carriage, as in all old carriages, especially in those in which yellow galloon is used, there was a musty odour something like the smell of decayed and burnt bristles. The count's legs were wet with snow up to the knees and felt very cold in his thin boots and riding-breeches; in fact the winter cold penetrated his whole body. The coachman grumbled on the box and seemed to be preparing to get down. But the count neither heard nor felt anything. His face was aflame and his heart beat fast. In his nervous tension he seized the yellow window strap and leant out of the side window, and all his being merged into one feeling of expectation.

This expectancy did not last long. Someone called from the porch: “Zaytseva's carriage!” The coachman shook the reins, the body of the carriage swayed on its high springs, and the illuminated windows of the house ran one after another past the carriage windows.

“Mind, fellow,” said the count to the coachman, putting his head out of the front window, “if you tell the footman I'm here, I'll thrash you, but hold your tongue and you shall have another ten rubles.”

Hardly had he time to close the window before the body of the carriage shook more violently and then stopped. He pressed close into the corner, held his breath, and even shut his eyes, so terrified was he lest anything should balk his passionate expectation. The door opened, the carriage steps fell noisily one after the other, he heard the rustle of a woman's dress, a smell of frangipane perfume filled the musty carriage, quick little feet ran up the carriage steps, and Anna Fedorovna, brushing the count's leg with the skirt of her cloak which had come open, sank silently onto the seat behind him breathing heavily.

Whether she saw him or not no one could tell, not even Anna Fedorovna herself, but when he took her hand and said, “Well, now I will kiss your little hand,” she showed very little fear, gave no reply, but yielded her arm to him, which he covered much higher than the top of her glove with kisses. The carriage started.

“Say something! Art thou angry?” he said.

She silently pressed into her corner, but suddenly something caused her to burst into tears and of her own accord she let her head fall on his breast.

VI

The newly elected Captain of Police and his guests the cavalryman and other nobles had long been listening to the gypsies and drinking in the new restaurant when the count, wearing a blue cloth cloak lined with bearskin which had belonged to Anna Fedorovna's late husband, joined them.

"Sure, your excellency, we have been awaiting you impatiently!" said a dark cross-eyed gipsy, showing his white teeth, as he met the count at the very entrance and rushed to help him off with his cloak. "We have not seen you since the fair at Lebedyani ... Steshka is quite pining away for you."

Steshka, a young, graceful little gipsy with a brick-red glow on her brown face and deep, sparkling black eyes shaded by long lashes, also ran out to meet him.

"Ah, little Count! Dearest! Jewel! This is a joy!" she murmured between her teeth, smiling merrily.

Ilyushka himself ran out to greet him, pretending to be very glad to see him. The old women, matrons, and maids jumped from their places and surrounded the guest, some claiming him as a fellow godfather, some as brother by baptism.

Turbin kissed all the young gipsy girls on their lips; the old women and the men kissed him on his shoulder or hand. The noblemen were also glad of their visitor's arrival, especially as the carousal, having reached its zenith, was beginning to flag, and everyone was beginning to feel satiated. The wine having lost its stimulating effect on the nerves merely weighed on the stomach. Each one had already let off his store of swagger, and they were getting tired of one another; the songs had all been sung and had got mixed in everyone's head, leaving a noisy, dissolute impression behind. No matter what strange or dashing thing anyone did, it began to occur to everyone that there was nothing agreeable or funny in it. The Captain of Police who lay in a shocking state on the floor at the feet of an old woman, began wriggling his legs and shouting: "Champagne ... The Count's come! ... Champagne! ... He's come ... now then, champagne! ... I'll have a champagne bath and bathe in it! Noble gentlemen! ... I love the society of our brave old nobility ... Steshka, sing 'The Pathway'."

The cavalryman was also rather tipsy, but in another way. He sat on a sofa in the corner very close to a tall handsome gipsy girl, Lyubasha; and feeling his eyes misty with drink he kept blinking and shaking his head and, repeating the same words over and over again in a whisper, besought the gipsy to fly with him somewhere. Lyubasha, smiling and listening as if what he said were very amusing and yet rather sad, glanced occasionally at her husband — the cross-eyed Sashka who was standing behind the chair opposite her — and in reply to the cavalryman's declarations of love, stooped and whispering in his ear asked him to buy her some scent and ribbons on the quiet so that the others should not notice.

"Hurrah!" cried the cavalryman when the count entered.

The handsome young man was pacing up and down the room with laboriously steady steps and a careworn expression on his face, warbling an air from *Il Seraglio*.

An elderly paterfamilias, who had been tempted by the persistent entreaties of the nobles to come and hear the gipsies, as they said that without him the thing would be worthless and it would be better not to go at all, was lying on a sofa where he had sunk as soon as he arrived, and no one was taking any notice of him. Some official or other who was also there had taken off his swallow-tail coat and was sitting up on the table, feet and all, ruffling his hair, and thereby showing that he was very much on the spree. As soon as the count entered, this official unbuttoned the collar of his shirt and got still farther onto the table. In general, on Turbin's arrival the carousal revived.

The gipsy girls, who had been wandering about the room, again gathered and sat down in a circle. The count took Steshka, the leading singer, on his knee, and ordered more champagne.

Ilyushka came and stood in front of Steshka with his guitar, and the "dance" commenced — that is, the gipsy songs, "When you go along the Street," "O Hussars!," "Do you hear, do you know?," and so on in a definite order. Steshka sang admirably. The flexible sonorous contralto that flowed from her very chest, her smiles while singing, her laughing passionate eyes, and her foot that moved involuntarily in measure with the song, her wild shriek at the commencement of the chorus — all touched some powerful but rarely-reached chord. It was evident that she lived only in the song she was singing. Ilyushka accompanied her on the guitar — his back, legs, smile, and whole being expressing sympathy with the song — and eagerly watching her, raised and lowered his head as attentive and engrossed as though he heard the song for the first time. Then the last melodious note he suddenly drew himself up and, as if feeling himself superior to everyone in the world, proudly and resolutely threw up his guitar with his foot, twirled it about, stamped, tossed back his hair, and looked round at the choir with a frown. His whole body from neck to heels began dancing in every muscle — and twenty energetic, powerful voices each trying to chime in more strongly and more strangely than the rest, rang through the air. The old women bobbed up and down on their chairs waving their handkerchiefs, showing their teeth, can vying with one another in their harmonious and measured shouts. The basses with strained necks and heads bent to one side boomed while standing behind the chairs.

When Steska took a high note Ilyushka brought his guitar closer to her as if wishing to help her, and the handsome young man screamed with rapture, saying that now they were beginning the *bemols*.

When a dance was struck up and Dunyasha, advancing with quivering shoulders and bosom, twirled round in front of the count and glided onwards, Turbin leapt up, threw off his jacket, and in his red shirt stepped jauntily with her in precise and measured step, accomplishing such things with his legs that the gipsies smiled with approval and glanced at one another.

The Captain of Police sat down like a Turk, beat his breast with his fist and cried "Vivat!" and then, having caught hold of the count's leg, began to tell him that of two thousand rubles he now had only five hundred left, but that he could do anything he liked if only the count would allow it. The elderly paterfamilias awoke and wished to go away but was not allowed to do so. The handsome young man began persuading a gipsy to waltz with him. The cavalryman, wishing to show off his intimacy with the count, rose and embraced Turbin. "Ah, my dear fellow," he said, "why didst thou leave us, eh?" The count was silent, evidently thinking of something else. "Where did you go to? Ah, you rogue of a count, I know where you went to!"

For some reason this familiarity displeased Turbin. Without a smile he looked silently into the cavalryman's face and suddenly launched at him such a terrible and rude abuse that the cavalryman was pained and for a while could not make up his mind whether to take the offence

as a joke or seriously. At last he decided to take it as a joke, smiled, and went back to his gipsy, assuring her that he would certainly marry her after Easter. They sang another song and another, danced again, and “hailed the guests,” and everyone continued to imagine that he was enjoying it. There was no end to the champagne. The count drank a great deal. His eyes seemed to grow moist, but he was not unsteady. He danced even better than before, spoke firmly, even joined in the chorus extremely well, and chimed in when Steshka sang “Friendship’s Tender Emotions.” In the midst of a dance the landlord came in to ask the guests to return to their homes as it was getting on for three in the morning.

The count seized the landlord by the scruff of his neck and ordered him to dance the Russian dance. The landlord refused. The count snatched up a bottle of champagne and having stood the landlord on his head and had him held in that position, amidst general laughter, slowly emptied the bottle over him.

It was beginning to dawn. Everyone looked pale and exhausted except the count.

“Well, I must be starting for Moscow,” said he, suddenly rising. “Come along, all of you! Come and see me off ... and we’ll have some tea together.”

All agreed except the paterfamilias (who was left behind asleep), and crowding into the three large sledges that stood at the door, they all drove off to the hote.

VII

“Get horses ready!” cried the count as he entered the saloon of his hotel, followed by the guests and gypsies. “Sashka! — not gipsy Sashka but my Sashka — tell the superintendent I’ll thrash him if he gives me bad horses. And get us some tea. Zavalshevski, look after the tea: I’m going to have a look at Ilyin and see how he’s getting on ... “ added Turbin and went along the passage towards the uhlan’s room.

Ilyin had just finished playing and having lost his last kopek was lying face downwards on the sofa, pulling one hair after another from its torn horsehair cover, putting them in his mouth, biting them in two and spitting them out again.

Two tallow candles, one of which had burnt down to the paper in the socket, stood on the card-strewn table and feebly wrestled with the morning light that crept in through the window. There were no ideas in Ilyin’s head: a dense mist of gambling passion shrouded all his faculties; he did not even feel penitent. He made one attempt to think of what he should do now: how being penniless he could get away, how he could repay the fifteen thousand rubles of Crown money, what his regimental commander would say, what his mother and his comrades would say, and he felt such terror and disgust with himself that wishing to forget himself he rose and began pacing up and down the room trying to step only where the floor-boards joined, and began, once more, vividly to recall every slightest detail of the course of play. He vividly imagined how he had begun to win back his money, how he withdrew a nine and placed the king of spades over two thousand rubles. A queen was dealt to the right, an ace to the left, then the king of diamonds to the right and all was lost; but if, say, a six had been dealt to the right and the king of diamonds to the left, he would have won everything back, would have played once more double or quits, would have won fifteen thousand rubles, and would then have bought himself an ambler from his regimental commander and another pair of horses besides, and a phaeton. Well, and what then? Well, it would have been a splendid, splendid thing!

And he lay down on the sofa again and began chewing the horse-hair.

“Why are they singing in No. 7?” thought he. “There must be a spree on at Turbin’s. Shall I go in and have a good drink?”

At this moment the count entered.

“Well, old fellow, cleaned out, are you? Eh?” cried he.

“I’ll pretend to be asleep,” thought Ilyin, “or else I shall have to speak to him, and I want to sleep.”

Turbin, however, came up and stroked his head.

“Well, my dear friend, cleaned out — lost everything? Tell me.”

Ilyin gave no answer.

The count pulled his arm.

“I have lost. But what is that to you?” muttered Ilyin in a sleepy, indifferent, discontented voice, without changing his position.

“Everything?”

“Well — yes. What of it? Everything. What is it to you?”

“Listen. Tell me the truth as to a comrade,” said the count, inclined to tenderness by the influence of the wine he had drunk and continuing to stroke Ilyin’s hair. “I have really taken a liking to you. Tell me the truth. If you have lost Crown money I’ll get you out of your scrape: it will soon be too late... Had you Crown money?”

Ilyin jumped up from the sofa.

“Well then, if you wish me to tell you, don’t speak to me, because ... please don’t speak to me... To shoot myself is the only thing!” said Ilyin, with real despair, and his head fell on his hands and he burst into tears, though but a moment before he had been calmly thinking about amblers.

“What pretty girlishness! Where’s the man who has not done the like? It’s not such a calamity; perhaps we can mend it. Wait for me here.”

The count left the room.

“Where is Squire Lukhnov’s room?” he asked the boots.

The boots offered to show him the way. In spite of the valet’s remark that his master had only just returned and was undressing, the count went in. Lukhnov was sitting at a table in his dressing-gown counting several packets of paper money that lay before him. A bottle of Rhine wine, of which he was very fond, stood on the table. After winning he permitted himself that pleasure. Lukhnov looked coldly and sternly through his spectacles at the count as though not recognizing him.

“You don’t recognize me, I think?” said the count, resolutely stepping up to the table.

“Lukhnov made a gesture of recognition, and said, “What is it you want?”

“I should like to play with you,” said Turbin, sitting down on the sofa.

“Now?”

“Yes.”

“Another time with pleasure, Count! But now I am tired and am going to bed. Won’t you have a glass of wine? It is famous wine.”

“But I want to play a little — now.”

“I don’t intend to play any more tonight. Perhaps some of the other gentlemen will, but I won’t. You must please excuse me, Count.”

“Then you won’t?”

“Lukhnov shrugged his shoulders to express his regret at his inability to comply with the count’s desire.

“Not on any account?”

The same shrug.

“But I particularly request it... Well, will you play?”

Silence.

“Will you play?” the count asked again. “Mind!”

The same silence and a rapid glance over the spectacles at the count’s face which was beginning to frown.

“Will you play?” shouted the count very loud, striking the table with his hand so that the bottle toppled over and the wine was spilt. “You know you did not win fairly... Will you play? I ask you for the third time.”

“I said I would not. This is really strange, Count! And it is not at all proper to come and hold a knife to a man’s throat,” remarked Lukhnov, not raising his eyes. A momentary silence followed during which the count’s face grew paler and paler. Suddenly a terrible blow on the head stupefied

Lukhnov. He fell on the sofa trying to seize the money and uttered such a piercingly despairing cry as no one could have expected from so calm and imposing a person. Turbin gathered up what money lay on the table, pushed aside the servant who ran in to his master's assistance, and left the room with rapid strides.

"If you want satisfaction I am at your service! I shall be in my room for another half-hour," said the count, returning to Lukhnov's door.

"Thief! Robber! I'll have the law on you ..." was all that was audible from the room.

Ilyin, who had paid no attention to the count's promise to help him, still lay as before on the sofa in his room choking with tears of despair. Consciousness of what had really happened, which the count's caresses and sympathy had evoked from behind the strange tangle of feelings, thoughts, and memories filling his soul, did not leave him. His youth, rich with hope, his honour, the respect of society, his dreams of love and friendship — all were utterly lost. The source of his tears began to run dry, a too passive feeling of hopelessness overcame him more and more, and thoughts of suicide, no longer arousing revulsion or horror, claimed his attention with increasing frequency. Just then the count's firm footsteps were heard.

In Turbin's face traces of anger could still be seen, his hands shook a little, but his eyes beamed with kindly merriment and self-satisfaction.

"Here you are, it's won back!" he said, throwing several bundles of paper money on the table. "See if it's all there and then make haste and come into the saloon. I am just leaving," he added, as though not noticing the joy and gratitude and extreme agitation on Ilyin's face, and whistling a gipsy song he left the room.

VIII

Sashka, with a sash tied round his waist, announced that the horses were ready but insisted that the count's cloak, which, he said, with its fur collar was worth three hundred rubles, should be recovered, and the shabby blue one returned to the rascal who had changed it for the count's at the Marshal's; but Turbin told him there was no need to look for the cloak, and went to his room to change his clothes.

The cavalryman kept hiccoughing as he sat silent beside his gipsy girl. The Captain of Police called for vodka and invited everyone to come at once and have breakfast with him, promising that his wife would certainly dance with the gipsies. The handsome young man was profoundly explaining to Ilyushka that there is more soulfulness in pianoforte music and that it is not possible to play *bemols* on a guitar. The official sat in a corner sadly drinking his tea and in the daylight seemed ashamed of his debauchery. The gipsies were disputing among themselves in their own tongue as to "hailing the guests" again, which Steshka opposed, saying that the *baroray* (in gipsy language, count or prince or, more literally, "great gentleman") would be angry. In general the last embers of the debauch were dying down in everyone.

"Well, one farewell song, and then off home!" said the count, entering the parlour in travelling dress, fresh, merry, and handsomer than ever.

The gipsies again formed their circle and were just ready to begin when Ilyin entered with a packet of paper money in his hand and took the count aside.

"I had only fifteen thousand rubles of Crown money and you have given me sixteen thousand three hundred," he said, "so this is yours."

"That's a good thing. Give it here!"

Ilyin gave him the money and, looking timidly at the count, opened his lips to say something, but only blushed till tears came into his eyes and seizing the count's hand began to press it.

"you be off! ... Ilyushka! Here's some money for you, but you must accompany me out of the town with songs!" and he threw onto the guitar the thirteen hundred rubles Ilyin had brought him. But the count quite forgot to repay the hundred rubles he had borrowed of the cavalryman the day before.

It was already ten o'clock in the morning. The sun had risen above the roofs of the houses. People were moving about in the streets. The tradesmen had long since opened their shops. Noblemen and officials were driving through the streets and ladies were shopping in the bazaar, when the whole gipsy band, with the Captain of Police, the cavalryman, the handsome young man, Ilyin, and the count in the blue bearskin cloak came out into the hotel porch.

It was a sunny day and a thaw had set in. The large post-sledges, each drawn by three horses with their tails tied up tight, drove up to the porch splashing through the mud and the whole lively party took their places. The count, Ilyin, Steshka, and Ilyushka, with Sashka the count's orderly, got into the first sledge. Blucher was beside himself and wagged his tail, barking at the shaft-horse. The other gentlemen got into the two other sledges with the rest of the gipsy men and women. The troykas got abreast as they left the hotel and the gipsies struck up in chorus. The

troykas with their songs and bells — forcing every vehicle they met right onto the pavements — dashed through the whole town right to the town gates.

The tradesmen and passers-by who did not know them, and especially those who did, were not a little astonished when they saw the noblemen driving through the streets in broad daylight with gipsy girls and tipsy gipsy men, singing.

When they had passed the town gates the troykas stopped and everyone began bidding the count farewell.

Ilyin, who had drunk a good deal at the leave-taking and had himself been driving the sledge all the way, suddenly became very sad, begged the count to stay another day, and, when he found that this was not possible, rushed quite unexpectedly at his new friend, kissed him, and promised with tears to try to exchange into the hussar regiment the count was serving in as soon as he got back. The count was particularly gay; he tumbled the cavalryman, who had become very familiar in the morning, into a snowdrift, set Blucher at the Captain of Police, took Steshka in his arms and wished to carry her off to Moscow, and finally jumped into his sledge and made Blucher, who wanted to stand up in the middle, sit down by his side. Sashka jumped on the box after having again asked the cavalryman to recover the count's cloak from *them* and to send it on. The count cried, "Go!" took off his cap, waved it over his head, and whistled to the horses like a post-boy. The troykas drove off in their different directions.

A monotonous snow-covered plain stretched far in front with a dirty yellowish road winding through it. The bright sunshine — playfully sparkling on the thawing snow which was coated with a transparent crust of ice — was pleasantly warm to one's face and back. Steam rose thickly from the sweating horses. The bell tinkled merrily. A peasant, with a loaded sledge that kept gliding to the side of the road, got hurriedly out of the way, jerking his rope reins and plashing with his wet bast shoes as he ran along the thawing road. A fat red-faced peasant woman, with a baby wrapped in the bosom of her sheepskin cloak, sat in another laden sledge, urging on a thin-tailed, jaded white horse with the ends of the reins. The count suddenly thought of Anna Fedorovna.

"Turn back!" he shouted.

The driver did not at once understand.

"Turn back! Back to town! Be quick!"

The troyka passed the town gates once more, and drove briskly up to the wooden porch of Anna Fedorovna's house. The count ran quickly up the steps, passed through the vestibule and the drawing-room, and having found the widow still asleep, took her in his arms, lifted her out of bed, kissed her sleepy eyes, and ran quickly back. Anna Fedorovna, only half awake, licked her lips and asked, "What has happened?" The count jumped into his sledge, shouted to the driver, and with no further delay and without even a thought of Lukhnov, or the widow, or Steshka, but only of what awaited him in Moscow, left the town of K— forever.

IX

More than twenty years had gone by. Much water had flowed away, many people had died, many been born, many had grown up or grown old; still more ideas had been born and had died, much that was old and beautiful and much that was old and bad had perished; much that was beautiful and new had grown up and still more that was immature, monstrous, and new, had come into God's world.

Count Fedor Turbin had been killed long ago in a duel by some foreigner he had horse-whipped in the street. His son, physically as like him as one drop of water to another, was a handsome young man already twenty- three years old and serving in the Horse Guards. But morally the young Turbin did not in the least resemble his father. There was not a shade of the impetuous, passionate, and, to speak frankly, depraved propensities of the past age. Together with his intelligence, culture, and the gifted nature he had inherited a love of propriety and the comforts of life; a practical way of looking at men and affairs, reasonableness, and prudence were his distinguishing characteristics. The young count had got on well in the service and at twenty-three was already a lieutenant. At the commencement of the war he made up his mind that he would be more likely to secure promotion if he exchanged into the active army, and so he entered an hussar regiment as captain and was soon in command of a squadron.

In May 1848 [Footnote: Tolstoy seems here to antedate Russians intervention in the Hungarian insurrection. The Russian army did not enter Hungary till May 1849 and the war lasted till the end of September of that year.] the S- hussar regiment was marching to the campaign through the province of K- and the very squadron young Count Turbin commanded had to spend the night in the village of Morozovka, Anna Fedorovna's estate.

Ann Fedorovna was still living but was already so far from young that she did not even consider herself young, which means a good deal for a woman. She had grown very fat, which is said to make a woman look younger, but deep soft wrinkles were apparent on her white plumpness. She never went to town now, it was an effort for her even to get into her carriage, but she was still just as kind-hearted and as silly as ever (now that her beauty no longer biases one, the truth may be told). With her lived her twenty-three-year-old daughter Lisa, a Russian country belle, and her brother — our acquaintance the cavalryman — who had good-naturedly squandered the whole of his small fortune and had found a home for his old age with Anna Fedorovna. His hair was quite grey and his upper lip had fallen in, but the moustache above it was still carefully blackened. His back was bent, and not only his forehead and cheeks but even his nose and neck were wrinkled, yet in the movements of his feeble crooked legs the manner of a cavalryman was still perceptible.

The family and household sat in the small drawing-room of the old house, with an open door leading out onto the verandah, and open windows overlooking the ancient star-shaped garden with its lime trees. Grey-haired Anna Fedorovna, wearing a lilac jacket, sat on the sofa laying out cards on a round mahogany table. Her old brother in his clean white trousers and a blue coat had settled himself by the window and was plaiting a cord out of white cotton with the aid of a wooden fork — a pastime his niece had taught him and which he liked very much, as he

could no longer do anything and his eyes were too weak for newspaper reading, his favourite occupation. Pimochka, Anna Fedorovna's ward, sat by him learning a lesson — Lisa helping her and at the same time making a goat's-wool stocking for her uncle with wooden knitting needles. The last rays of the setting sun, as usual at that hour, shone through the lime-tree avenue and threw slanting gleams on the farthest window and the what-not standing near it. It was so quiet in the garden and the room that one could hear the swift flutter of a swallow's wings outside the window and Anna Fedorovna's soft sigh or the old man's slight groan as he crossed his legs.

"How do they go? Show me, Lisa! I always forget," said Anna Fedorovna, at a standstill in laying out her cards for patience.

Without stopping her work Lisa went to her mother and glanced at the cards.

"Ah, you've muddled them all, mamma dear!" she said, rearranging them. "That's the way they should go. And what you are trying your fortune about will still come true," she added, withdrawing a card so that it was not noticed.

"Ah yes, you always deceive me and say it has come out."

"No, really, it means ... you'll succeed. It has come out."

"All right, all right, you sly puss! But isn't it time we had tea?"

"I have ordered the samovar to be lit. I'll see to it at once. Do you want to have it here? ... Be quick and finish your lesson Pimochka, and let's have a run."

And Lisa went to the door.

"Lisa, Lizzie!" said her uncle, looking intently at his fork. "I think I've dropped a stitch again — pick it up for me, there's a dear."

"Directly, directly. But I must give out a loaf of sugar to be broken up."

And really, three minutes later she ran back, went to her uncle and pinched his ear.

"That's for dropping your stitches!" she said, laughing, and you haven't done your task!"

"Well, well, never mind, never mind. Put it right — there's a little knot or something."

Lisa took the fork, drew a pin out of her tippet — which thereupon the breeze coming in at the door blew slightly open — and managing somehow to pick up the stitch with the pin pulled two loops through, and returned the fork to her uncle.

"Now give me a kiss for it," she said, holding out her rosy cheek to him and pinning up her tippet. "You shall have rum with your tea today. It's Friday, you know."

And she again went into the tea-room.

"Come here and look, uncle, the hussars are coming!" she called from there in her clear voice.

Anna Fedorovna came with her brother into the tea-room, the windows of which overlooked the village, to see the hussars. Very little was visible from the windows — only a crowd moving in a cloud of dust.

"It's a pity we have so little room, sister, and that the wing is not yet finished," said the old man to Anna Fedorovna. "We might have invited the officers. Hussar officers are such splendid, gay young fellows, you know. It would have been good to see something of them."

"Why of course, I should have been only too glad, brother; but you know yourself we have no room. There's my bedroom, Lisa's room, the drawing-room, and this room of yours, and that's all. Really now, where could we put them? The village elder's hut has been cleaned up for them: Michael Matveev says its quite clean now."

"And we could have chosen a bridegroom for you from among them, Lizzie — a fine hussar!"

"I don't want an hussar; I'd rather have an uhlan. Weren't you in the uhlands, uncle? ... I don't want to have anything to do with these hussars. They are all said to be desperate fellows." And Lisa blushed a little but again laughed her musical laugh.

"Here comes Ustyushka running; we must ask her what she has seen," she added.

Anna Fedorovna told her to call Ustyushka.

"It's not in you to keep to your work, you must needs run off to see the soldiers," said Anna Fedorovna. "Well, where have the officers put up?"

"In Eromkin's house, mistress. There are two of them, such handsome ones. One's a count, they say!"

"And what's his name?"

"Dazarov or Turbinov.... I'm sorry – I've forgotten."

"What a fool; can't so much as tell us anything. You might at least have found out the name."

"Well, I'll run back."

"Yes, I know you're first-rate at that sort of thing... No, let Daniel go. Tell him to go and ask whether the officers want anything, brother. One ought to show them some politeness after all. Say the mistress sent to inquire."

The old people again sat down in the tea-room and Lisa went to the servants' room to put into a box the sugar that had been broken up. Ustyushka was there telling about the hussars.

"Darling miss, what a handsome man that count is!" she said. "A regular cherubim with black eyebrows. There now, if you had a bridegroom like that you would be a couple of the right sort."

The other maids smiled approvingly; the old nurse sighed as she sat knitting at a window and even whispered a prayer, drawing in her breath.

"So you liked the hussars very much?" said Lisa. "And you're a good one at telling what you've seen. Go, please, and bring some of the cranberry juice, Ustyushka, to give the hussars something sour to drink."

And Lisa, laughing, went out with the sugar basin in her hands.

"I should really like to have seen what that hussar is like," she thought, "brown or fair? And he would have been glad to make our acquaintance I should think... And if he goes away he'll never know that I was here and thought about him. And how many such have already passed me by? Who sees me here except uncle and Ustyushka? Whichever way I do my hair, whatever sleeves I put on, no one looks at me with pleasure," she thought with a sigh as she looked at her plump white arm. "I suppose he is tall, with large eyes, and certainly small black moustaches... Here am I, more than twenty-two, and no one has fallen in love with me except pock-marked Ivan Ipatich, and four years ago I was even prettier... And so my girlhood has passed without gladdening anyone. Oh, poor, poor country lass that I am!"

Her mother's voice, calling her to pour out tea, roused the country lass from this momentary meditation. She lifted her head with a start and went into the tea-room.

The best results are often obtained accidentally, and the more one tries the worse things turn out. In the country, people rarely try to educate their children and therefore unwittingly usually give them an excellent education. This was particularly so in Lisa's case. Anna Fedorovna, with her limited intellect and careless temperament, gave Lisa no education – did not teach her music or that very useful French language – but having accidentally borne a healthy pretty child by her deceased husband she gave her little daughter over to a wet-nurse and a dry-nurse, fed her, dressed her in cotton prints and goat-skin shoes, sent her out to walk and gather mushrooms and wild berries, engaged a student from the seminary to teach her reading, writing, and arithmetic,

and when sixteen years had passed she casually found in Lisa a friend, an ever-kind-hearted, ever-cheerful soul, and an active housekeeper. Anna Fedorovna, being kind-hearted, always had some children to bring up — either serf children or foundlings. Lisa began looking after them when she was ten years old: teaching them, dressing them, taking them to church, and checking them when they played too many pranks. Later on the decrepit kindly uncle, who had to be tended like a child, appeared on the scene. Then the servants and peasants came to the young lady with various requests and with their ailments, which latter she treated with elderberry, peppermint, and camphorated spirits. Then there was the household management which all fell on her shoulders of itself. Then an unsatisfied longing for love awoke and found its outlet only in Nature and religion. And Lisa accidentally grew into an active, good-natured, cheerful, self-reliant, pure, and deeply religious woman. It is true that she suffered a little from vanity when she saw neighbours standing by her in church wearing fashionable bonnets brought from K-, and sometimes she was vexed to tears by her old mother's whims and grumbling. She had dreams of love, too, in most absurd and sometimes crude forms, but these were dispersed by her useful activity which had grown into a necessity, and at the age of twenty-two there was not one spot or sting of remorse in the clear calm soul of the physically and morally beautifully developed maiden. Lisa was of medium height, plump rather than thin; her eyes were hazel, not large, and had slight shadows on the lower lids; and she had a long light-brown plait of hair. She walked with big steps and with a slight sway — a “duck's waddle” as the saying is. Her face, when she was occupied and not agitated by anything in particular, seemed to say to everyone who looked into it: “It is a joy to live in the world when one has someone to love and a clear conscience.” Even in moments of vexation, perplexity, alarm, or sorrow, in spite of herself there shone — through the tear in her eye, her frowning left eyebrow, and her compressed lips — a kind straightforward spirit unspoil by the intellect; it shone in the dimples of her cheeks, in the corners of her mouth, and in her beaming eyes accustomed to smile and to rejoice in life.

X

The air was still hot though the sun was setting when the squadron entered Morozovka. In front of them along the dusty village street trotted a brindled cow separated from its herd, looking around and now and then stopping and lowing, but never suspecting that all she had to do was to turn aside. The peasants — old men, women, and children — the servants from the manor-house, crowded on both sides of the street and eagerly watched the hussars as the latter rode through a thick cloud of dust, curbing their horses which occasionally stamped and snorted. On the right of the squadron were two officers who sat their fine black horses carelessly. One was Count Turbin, the commander, the other a very young man recently promoted from cadet, whose name was Polozov.

An hussar in a white linen jacket came out of the best of the huts, raised his cap, and went up to the officers.

“Where are the quarters assigned us?”

“For your Excellency?” answered the quartermaster-sergeant, with a start of his whole body. “The village elder’s hut has been cleaned out. I wanted to get quarters at the manor-house, but they say there is no room there. The proprietress is such a vixen.”

“All right!” said the count, dismounting and stretching his legs as he reached the village elder’s hut. “And has my phaeton arrived?”

“It has deigned to arrive, your Excellency!” answered the quartermaster-sergeant, pointing with his cap to the leather body of a carriage visible through the gateway and rushing forward to the entrance of the hut, which was thronged with members of the peasant family collected to look at the officer. He even pushed one old woman over as he briskly opened the door of the freshly cleaned hut and stepped aside to let the count pass.

The hut was fairly large and roomy but not very clean. The German valet, dressed like a gentleman, stood inside sorting the linen in a portmanteau after having set up an iron bedstead and made the bed.

“Faugh, what filthy lodgings!” said the count with vexation. “Couldn’t you have found anything better at some gentleman’s house, Dyadenko?”

“If your Excellency desires it I will try at the manor-house,” answered the quartermaster-sergeant, “but it isn’t up to much — doesn’t look much better than a hut.”

“Never mind now. Go away.”

And the count lay down on the bed and threw his arms behind his head.

“Johann!” he called to his valet. “You’ve made a lump in the middle again! How is it you can’t make a bed properly?”

Johann came up to put it right.

“No, never mind now. But where is my dressing-gown?” said the count in a dissatisfied tone.

The valet handed him the dressing-gown. Before putting it on the count examined the front.

"I thought so, that spot is not cleaned off. Could anyone be a worse servant than you?" he added, pulling the dressing-gown out of the valet's hands and putting it on. "Tell me, do you do it on purpose? ... Is the tea ready?"

"I have not had time," said Johann.

"Fool!"

After that the count took up the French novel placed ready for him and read for some time in silence: Johann went out into the passage to prepare the samovar. The count was obviously in a bad temper, probably caused by fatigue, a dusty face, tight clothing, and an empty stomach.

"Johann!" he cried again, "bring me the account for those ten rubles. What did you buy in the town?"

He looked over the account handed him, and made some dissatisfied remarks about the dear-ness of the things purchased.

"Serve rum with my tea."

"I didn't buy any rum," said Johann.

"That's good! ... How many times have I told you to have rum?"

"I hadn't enough money."

"Then why didn't Polozov buy some? You should have got some from his man."

"Cornet Polozov? I don't know. He bought the tea and the sugar."

"Idiot! ... Get out! ... You are the only man who knows how to make me lose my patience... You know that on a march I always have rum with my tea."

"Here are two letters for you from the staff," said the valet.

The count opened his letters and began reading them without rising. The cornet, having quartered the squadron, came in with a merry face.

"Well, how is it, Turbin? It seems very nice here. But I must confess I'm tired. It was hot."

"Very nice! ... A filthy stinking hut, and thanks to your lordship no rum; your blockhead didn't buy any, nor did this one. You might at least have mentioned it."

And he continued to read his letter. When he had finished he rolled it into a ball and threw it on the floor.

In the passage the cornet was meanwhile saying to his orderly in a whisper: "Why didn't you buy any rum? You had money enough, you know."

"But why should we buy everything? As it is I pay for everything, while his German does nothing but smoke his pipe."

It was evident that the count's second letter was not unpleasant, for he smiled as he read it.

"Who is it from?" asked Polozov, returning to the room and beginning to arrange a sleeping-place for himself on some boards by the oven.

"From Mina," answered the count gaily, handing him the letter, "Do you want to see it? What a delightful woman she is! ... Really she's much better than our young ladies... Just see how much feeling and wit there is in that letter. Only one thing is bad — she's asking for money."

"Yes, that's bad," said the cornet.

"It's true I promised her some, but then this campaign came on, and besides... However if I remain in command of the squadron another three months I'll send her some. It's worth it, really; such a charming creature, eh?" said he, watching the expression on Polozov's face as he read the letter.

"Dreadfully ungrammatical, but very nice, and it seems as if she really loves you," said the cornet.

“H’m ... I should think so! It’s only women of that kind who love sincerely when once they do love.”

“And who was the other letter from?” asked the cornet, handing back the one he had read.

“Oh, that ... there’s a man, a nasty beast who won from me at cards, and he’s reminding me of it for the third time... I can’t let him have it at present... A stupid letter!” said the count, evidently vexed at the recollection.

After this both officers were silent for a while. The cornet, who was evidently under the count’s influence, glanced now and then at the handsome though clouded countenance of Turbin – who was looking fixedly through the window – and drank his tea in silence, not venturing to start a conversation.

“But d’you know, it may turn out capitally,” said the count, suddenly turning to Polozov with a shake of his head. “Supposing we get promotions by seniority this year and take part in an action besides, I may get ahead of my own captains in the Guards.”

The conversation was still on the same topic and they were drinking their second tumblers of tea when old Daniel entered and delivered Anna Fedorovna’s message.

“And I was also to inquire if you are not Count Fedor Ivanych Turbin’s son?” added Daniel on his own account, having learnt the count’s name and remembering the deceased count’s sojourn in the town of K-. “Our mistress, Anna Fedorovna, was very well acquainted with him.”

“He was my father. And tell your mistress I am very much obliged to her. We want nothing but say we told you to ask whether we could not have a cleaner room somewhere – in the manor-house or anywhere.”

“Now, why did you do that?” asked Polozov when Daniel had gone. “What does it matter? Just for one night – what does it matter? And they will be inconveniencing themselves.”

“What an idea! I think we’ve had our share of smoky huts! ... It’s easy to see you’re not a practical man. Why not seize the opportunity when we can, and live like human beings for at least one night? And on the contrary they will be very pleased to have us... The worst of it is, if this lady really knew my father ... “ continued the count with a smile which displayed his glistening white teeth. “I always have to feel ashamed of my departed papa. There is always some scandalous story or other, or some debt he has left. That’s why I hate meeting these acquaintances of my father’s. However, that was the way in those days,” he added, growing serious.

“Did I ever tell you,” said Polozov, “I once met an uhlan brigade- commander, Ilyin? He was very anxious to meet you. He is awfully fond of your father.”

“That Ilyin is an awful good-for-nothing, I believe. But the worst of it is that these good people, who assure me that they knew my father in order to make my acquaintance, while pretending to be very pleasant, relate such tales about my father as make me ashamed to listen. It is true – I don’t deceive myself, but look at things dispassionately – that he had too ardent a nature and sometimes did things that were not nice. However, that was the way in those times. In our days he might have turned out a very successful man, for to do him justice he had extraordinary capacities.”

A quarter of an hour later the servant came back with a request from the proprietress that they would be so good as to spend the night at her house.

XI

Having heard that the hussar officer was the son of Count Fedor Turbin, Anna Fedorovna was all in a flutter.

“Oh, dear me! The darling boy! ... Daniel, run quickly and say your mistress asks them to her house!” she began, jumping up and hurrying with quick steps to the servants’ room. “Lizzie! Ustyushka! ... Your room must be got ready, Lisa, you can move into your uncle’s room. And you, brother, you won’t mind sleeping in the drawing-room, will you? It’s only for one night.”

“I don’t mind, sister. I can sleep on the floor.”

“He must be handsome if he’s like his father. Only to have a look at him, the darling... You must have a good look at him, Lisa! The father *was* handsome... Where are you taking that table to? Leave it here,” said Anna Fedorovna, bustling about. “Bring two beds — take one from the foreman’s — and get the crystal candlestick, the one my brother gave me on my birthday — it’s on the what-not — and put a stearine candle in it.”

At last everything was ready. In spite of her mother’s interference Lisa arranged the room for the two officers her own way. She took out clean bed-clothes scented with mignonette, made the beds, had candles and a bottle of water placed on a small table near by, fumigated the servants’ room with scented paper, and moved her own little bed into her uncle’s room. Anna Fedorovna quieted down a little, settled in her own place, and even took up the cards again, but instead of laying them out she leaned her plump elbow on the table and grew thoughtful.

“Ah, time, time, how it flies!” she whispered to herself. “Is it so long ago? It is as if I could see him now. Ah, he was a madcap!...” and tears came into her eyes. “And now there’s Lizzie ... but still, she’s not what I was at her age — she’s a nice girl but she’s not like that ...”

“Lisa, you should put on your *mousseline-de-laine* dress for the evening.”

“Why, mother, you are not going to ask them in to see us? Better not,” said Lisa, unable to master her excitement at the thought of meeting the officers. “Better not, mamma!”

And really her desire to see them was less strong than her fear of the agitating joy she imagined awaited her.

“Maybe they themselves will wish to make our acquaintance, Lizzie!” said Anna Fedorovna, stroking her head and thinking, “No, her hair is not what mine was at her age... Oh, Lizzie, how I should like you to ...” And she really did very earnestly desire something for her daughter. But she could not imagine a marriage with the count, and she could not desire for her daughter relations such as she had had with the father; but still she did desire something very much. She may have longed to relive in the soul of her daughter what she had experienced with him who was dead.

The old cavalryman was also somewhat excited by the arrival of the count. He locked himself into his room and emerged a quarter of an hour later in a Hungarian jacket and pale-blue trousers, and entered the room prepared for the visitors with the bashfully pleased expression of a girl who puts on a ball-dress for the first time in her life.

“I’ll have a look at the hussars of today, sister! The late count was indeed a true hussar. “I’ll see, I’ll see!”

The officers had already reached the room assigned to them through the back entrance.

“There, you see! Isn’t this better than that hut with the cockroaches?” said the count, lying down as he was, in his dusty boots, on the bed that had been prepared for him.

“Of course it’s better; but still, to be indebted to the proprietress ...”

“Oh, what nonsense! One must be practical in all things. They’re awfully pleased, I’m sure ... Eh, you there!” he cried. “Ask for something to hang over this window, or it will be draughty in the night.”

At this moment the old man came in to make the officers’ acquaintance. Of course, though he did it with a slight blush, he did not omit to say that he and the old count had been comrades, that he had enjoyed the count’s favour, and he even added that he had more than once been under obligations to the deceased. What obligations he referred to, whether it was the count’s omission to repay the hundred rubles he had borrowed, or his throwing him into a snow-heap, or swearing at him, the old man quite omitted to explain. The young count was very polite to the old cavalryman and thanked him for the night’s lodging.

“You must excuse us if it is not luxurious, Count,” (he very nearly said “your Excellency,” so unaccustomed had he become to conversing with important persons), “my sister’s house is so small. But we’ll hang something up there directly and it will be all right,” added the old man, and on the plea of seeing about a curtain, but mainly because he was in a hurry to give an account of the officers, he bowed and left the room.

The pretty Ustyushka came in with her mistress’s shawl to cover the window, and besides, the mistress had told her to ask if the gentlemen would not like some tea.

The pleasant surrounds seemed to have a good influence on the count’s spirits. He smiled merrily, joked with Ustyushka in such a way that she even called him a scamp, asked whether her young lady was pretty, and in answer to her question whether they would have any tea he said she might bring them some tea, but the chief thing was that, their own supper not being ready yet, perhaps they might have some vodka and something to eat, and some sherry if there was any.

The uncle was in raptures over the young count’s politeness and praised the new generation of officers to the skies, saying that the present men were incomparable superior to the former generation.

Anna Fedorovna did not agree – no one could be superior to Count Fedor Ivanych Turbin – and at last she grew seriously angry and drily remarked, “The one who has last stroked you, brother, is always the best... Of course people are cleverer nowadays, but Count Fedor Ivanych danced the *ecossaise* in such a way and was so amiable that everybody lost their heads about him, though he paid attention to no one but me. So you see, there were good people in the old days too.”

Here came the news of the demand for vodka, light refreshments, and sherry.

“There now, brother, you never do the right thing; you should have ordered supper,” began Anna Fedorovna. “Lisa, see to it, dear!”

Lisa ran to the larder to get some pickled mushrooms and fresh butter, and the cook was ordered to make rissoles.

“But how about sherry? Have you any left, brother?”

“No, sister, I never had any.”

“How’s that? Why, what is it you take with your tea?”

“That’s rum, Anna Fedorovna.”

“Isn’t it all the same? Give me some of that — it’s all the same. But wouldn’t it after all be best to ask them in here, brother? You know all about it — I don’t think they would take offence.”

The cavalryman declared he would warrant that the count was too good-natured to refuse and that he would certainly fetch them. Anna Fedorovna went and put on a silk dress and a new cap for some reason, but Lisa was so busy that she had no time to change her pink gingham dress with the wide sleeves. Besides, she was terribly excited; she felt as if something wonderful was awaiting her and as if a low black cloud hung over her soul. It seemed to her that this handsome hussar count must be a perfectly new, incomprehensible, but beautiful being. His character, his habits, his speech must all be so unusual, so different from anything she had ever met. All he thinks or says must be wise and right; all he does must be honourable; his whole appearance must be beautiful. She never doubted that. Had he asked not merely for refreshments and sherry but for a bath of sage-brandy and perfume, she would not have been surprised and would not have blamed him but would have been firmly convinced that it was right and necessary.

The count at once agreed when the cavalryman informed them of his sister’s wish. He brushed his hair, put on his uniform, and took his cigar-case.

“Come along,” he said to Polozov.

“Really it would be better not to go,” answered the cornet. “Ils feront des frais pour nous recevoir.” [Footnote: They will be putting themselves to expense on our account.]

“Nonsense, they will be only too happy! Besides, I have made some inquiries: there is a pretty daughter... Come along!” said the count, speaking in French.

“Je vous en prie, messieurs!” [Footnote: If you please, gentlemen.] said the cavalryman, merely to make the officers feel that he also knew French and had understood what they had said.

XII

Lisa, afraid to look at the officers, blushed and cast down her eyes and pretended to be busy filling the teapot when they entered the room. Anna Fedorovna on the contrary jumped up hurriedly, bowed, and not taking her eyes off the count, began talking to him — now saying how unusually like his father he was, now introducing her daughter to him, now offering him tea, jam, or home-made sweetmeats. No one paid any attention to the cornet because of his modest appearance, and he was very glad of it, for he was, as far as propriety allowed, gazing at Lisa and minutely examining her beauty which evidently took him by surprise. The uncle, listening to his sister's conversation with the count, awaited, with the words ready on his lips, an opportunity to narrate his cavalry reminiscences. During tea the count lit a cigar and Lisa found it difficult to prevent herself from coughing. He was very talkative and amiable, at first slipping his stories into the intervals of Anna Fedorovna's ever-flowing speech, but at last monopolizing the conversation. One thing struck his hearers as strange; in his stories he often used words not considered improper in the society he belonged to, but which here sounded rather too bold and somewhat frightened Anna Fedorovna and made Lisa blush to her ears, but the count did not notice it and remained calmly natural and amiable.

Lisa silently filled the tumblers, which she did not give into the visitors' hands but placed on the table near them, not having quite recovered from her excitement, and she listened eagerly to the count's remarks. His stories, which were not very deep, and the hesitation in his speech gradually calmed her. She did not hear from him the very clever things she had expected, nor did she see that elegance in everything which she had vaguely expected to find in him. At the third glass of tea, after her bashful eyes had once met his and he had not looked down but had continued to look at her too quietly and with a slight smile, she even felt rather inimically disposed towards him and soon found that not only was there nothing especial about him but that he was in no wise different from other people she had met, that there was no need to be afraid of him though his nails were long and clean, and there was not even any special beauty in him. Lisa suddenly relinquished her dream, not without some inward pain, and grew calmer, and only the gaze of the taciturn cornet which she felt fixed upon her, disquieted her.

“Perhaps it's not this one, but that one!” she thought.

XIII

After tea the old lady asked the visitors into the drawing-room and again sat down in her old place.

“But wouldn’t you like to rest, Count?” she asked, and after receiving an answer in the negative continued, “What can I do to entertain our dear guests? Do you play cards, Count? There now, brother, you should arrange something; arrange a set — ”

“But you yourself play *preference*,” answered the cavalryman. “Why not all play? Will you play, Count? And you too?”

The officers expressed their readiness to do whatever their kind hosts desired.

Lisa brought her old pack of cards which she used for divining when her mother’s swollen face would get well, whether her uncle would return the same day when he went to town, whether a neighbour would call today, and so on. These cards, though she had used them for a couple of months, were cleaner than those Anna Fedorovna used to tell fortunes.

“But perhaps you won’t play for small stakes?” inquired the uncle. “Anna Fedorovna and I play for half-kopeks... And even so she wins all our money.”

“Oh, any stakes you like — I shall be delighted,” replied the count.

“Well then, one-kopek ‘assignats’ just for once, in honour of our dear visitors! Let them beat me, an old woman!” said Anna Fedorovna, settling down in her armchair and arranging her mantilla. “And perhaps I’ll win a ruble or so from them,” thought she, having developed a slight passion for cards in her old age.

“If you like, I’ll teach you to play with ‘tables’ and *misere*,” said the count. “It is capital.”

Everyone liked the new Petersburg way. The uncle was even sure he knew it; it was just the same as “boston” used to be, only he had forgotten it a bit. But Anna Fedorovna could not understand it at all and failed to understand it for so long that at last, with a smile and nod of approval, she felt herself obliged to assert that now she understood it and that all was quite clear to her. There was not a little laughter during the game when Anna Fedorovna, holding ace and king blank, declared *misere* and was left with six tricks. She even became confused and began to smile shyly and hurriedly explain that she had not got quite used to the new way. But they scored against her all the same, especially as the count, being used to playing a careful game for high stakes, was cautious, skillfully played through his opponents’ hands, and refused to understand the shoves the cornet gave him under the table with his foot or the mistakes the latter made when they were partners.

Lisa brought more sweets, three kinds of jam, and some specially prepared apples that had been kept since last season and stood behind her mother’s back watching the game and occasionally looking at the officers and especially at the count’s white hands with their rosy well-kept nails which threw the cards and took up the tricks in so practised, assured, and elegant a manner.

Again Anna Fedorovna, rather irritably outbidding the others, declared seven tricks, made only four, and was fined accordingly, and having very clumsily noted down, on her brother’s demand, the points she had lost, became quite confused and fluttered.

“Never mind, mamma, you’ll win it back!” smilingly remarked Lisa, wishing to help her mother out of the ridiculous situation. “Let uncle make a forfeit, and then he’ll be caught.”

“If you would only help me, Lisa dear!” said Anna Fedorovna, with a frightened glance at her daughter. “I don’t know how this is ...”

“But I don’t know this way either,” Lisa answered, mentally reckoning up her mother’s losses. “You will lose a lot that way, mamma! There will be nothing left for Pimochka’s new dress,” she added in just.

“Yes, this way one may easily lose ten silver rubles,” said the cornet looking at Lisa and anxious to enter into conversation with her.

“Aren’t we playing for assignats?” said Anna Fedorovna, looking round at them all.

“I don’t know how we are playing, but I can’t reckon in assignats,” said the count. “What is it? I mean, what are assignats?”

“Why nowadays nobody counts in assignats any longer,” remarked the uncle, who had played very cautiously and had been winning.

The old lady ordered some sparkling home-made wine to be brought, drank two glasses, became very red, and seemed to resign herself to any fate. A lock of her grey hair escaped from under her cap and she did not even put it right. No doubt it seemed to her as if she had lost millions and it was all up with her. The cornet touched the count with his foot more and more often. The count scored down the old lady’s losses. At last the game ended, and in spite of Anna Fedorovna’s attempts to add to her score by pretending to make mistakes in adding it up, in spite of her horror at the amount of her losses, it turned out at last that she had lost 920 points. “That’s nine assignats?” she asked several times and did not comprehend the full extent of her loss until her brother told her, to her horror, that she had lost more than thirty-two assignats and that she must certainly pay.

The count did not even add up his winnings but rose immediately the game was over, went over to the window at which Lisa was arranging the

- zakushka* and turning pickled mushrooms out of a jar onto a plate for

supper, and there quite quietly and simply did what the cornet had all that evening so longed, but failed, to do — entered into conversation with her about the weather.

Meanwhile the cornet was in a very unpleasant position. In the absence of the count, and more especially of Lisa, who had been keeping her in good humour, Anna Fedorovna became frankly angry.

“Really, it’s too bad that we should win from you like this,” said Polozov in order to say something. “It is a real shame!”

“Well, of course, if you go and invent some kind of ‘tables’ and ‘*miseres*’ and I don’t know how to play them... Well then, how much does it come to in assignats?” she asked.

“Thirty-two rubles, thirty-two and a quarter,” repeated the cavalryman, who under the influence of his success was in a playful mood. “Hand over the money, sister; pay up!”

“I’ll pay it all, but you won’t catch me again. No! ... I shall not win this back as long as I live.”

And Anna Fedorovna went off to her room, hurriedly swaying from side to side, and came back bringing nine assignats. It was only on the old man’s insistent demand that she eventually paid the whole amount.

Polozov was seized with fear lest Anna Fedorovna should scold him if he spoke to her. He silently and quietly left her and joined the count and Lisa who were talking at the open window.

On the table spread for supper stood two tallow candles. Now and then the soft fresh breath of the May night caused the flames to flicker. Outside the window, which opened onto the garden, it was also light but it was a quite different light. The moon, which was almost full and already losing its golden tinge, floated above the tops of the tall lindens and more and more lit up the thin white clouds which veiled it at intervals. Frogs were croaking loudly by the pond, the surface of which, silvered in one place by the moon, was visible through the avenue. Some little birds fluttered slightly or lightly hopped from bough to bough in a sweet-scented lilac-bush whose dewy branches occasionally swayed gently close to the window.

“What wonderful weather!” the count said as he approached Lisa and sat down on the low window-sill. “I suppose you walk a good deal?”

“Yes,” said Lisa, not feeling the least shyness in speaking with the count. “In the morning about seven o’clock I look after what has to be attended to on the estate and take my mother’s ward, Pimochka, with me for a walk.”

“It is pleasant to live in the country!” said the count, putting his eye-glass to his eye and looking now at the garden, now at Lisa. “And don’t you ever go out at night, by moonlight?”

“No. But two years ago uncle and I used to walk every moonlight night. He was troubled with a strange complaint — insomnia. When there was a full moon he could not fall asleep. His little room — that one — looks straight out into the garden, the window is low but the moon shines straight into it.”

“That’s strange: I thought that was your room,” said the count.

“No. I only sleep there tonight. You have my room.”

“Is it possible? Dear me, I shall never forgive myself for having disturbed you in such a way!” said the count, letting the monocle fall from his eye in proof of the sincerity of his feelings. “If I had known that I was troubling you ... ”

“It’s no trouble! On the contrary I am very glad: uncle’s is such a charming room, so bright, and the window is so low. I shall sit there till I fall asleep, or else I shall climb out into the garden and walk about a bit before going to bed.”

“What a splendid girl!” thought the count, replacing his eyeglass and looking at her and trying to touch her foot with his own while pretending to seat himself more comfortably on the window-sill. “And how cleverly she has let me know that I may see her in the garden at the window if I like!” Lisa even lost much of her charm in his eyes — the conquest seemed too easy.

“And how delightful it must be,” he said, looking thoughtfully at the dark avenue of trees, “to spend a night like this in the garden with a beloved one.”

Lisa was embarrassed by these words and by the repeated, seemingly accidental touch of his foot. Anxious to hide her confusion she said without thinking, “Yes, it is nice to walk in the moonlight.” She was beginning to feel rather uncomfortable. She had tied up the jar out of which she had taken the mushrooms and was going away from the window, when the cornet joined them and she felt a wish to see what kind of man he was.

“What a lovely night!” he said.

“Why, they talk of nothing but the weather,” thought Lisa.

“What a wonderful view!” continued the cornet. “But I suppose you are tired of it,” he added, having a curious propensity to say rather unpleasant things to people he liked very much.

“Why do you think so? The same kind of food or the same dress one may get tired of, but not of a beautiful garden if one is fond of walking — especially when the moon is still higher. From uncle’s window the whole pond can be seen. I shall look at it tonight.”

“But I don’t think you have any nightingales?” said the count, much dissatisfied that the cornet had come and prevented his ascertaining more definitely the terms of the rendezvous.

“No, but there always were until last year when some sportsman caught one, and this year one began to sing beautifully only last week but the police-officer came here and his carriage-bells frightened it away. Two years ago uncle and I used to sit in the covered alley and listen to them for two hours or more at a time.”

“What is this chatterbox telling you?” said her uncle, coming up to them. “Won’t you come and have something to eat?”

After supper, during which the count by praising the food and by his appetite has somewhat dispelled the hostess’s ill humour, the officers said good-night and went into their room. The count shook hands with the uncle and to Anna Fedorovna’s surprise shook her hand also without kissing it, and even shook Lisa’s, looking straight into her eyes the while and slightly smiling his pleasant smile. This look again abashed the girl.

“He is very good-looking,” she thought, “but he thinks too much of himself.”

XIV

“I say, aren’t you ashamed of yourself?” said Polozov when they were in their room. “I purposely tried to lose and kept touching you under the table. Aren’t you ashamed? The old lady was quite upset, you know.”

The count laughed very heartily.

“She was awfully funny, that old lady... How offended she was! ... ”

And he again began laughing so merrily that even Johann, who stood in front of him, cast down his eyes and turned away with a slight smile.

“And with the son of a friend of the family! Ha-ha-ha! ... “ the count continued to laugh.

“No, really it was too bad. I was quite sorry for her,” said the cornet.

“What nonsense! How young you still are! Why, did you wish me to lose? Why should one lose? I used to lose before I knew how to play! Ten rubles may come in useful, my dear fellow. You must look at life practically or you’ll always be left in the lurch.”

Polozov was silenced; besides, he wished to be quiet and to think about Lisa, who seemed to him an unusually pure and beautiful creature. He undressed and lay down in the soft clean bed prepared for him.

“What nonsense all this military honour and glory is!” he thought, looking at the window curtained by the shawl through which the white moonbeams stole in. “It would be happiness to live in a quiet nook with a dear, wise, simple-hearted wife — yes, that is true and lasting happiness!”

But for some reason he did not communicate these reflections to his friend and did not even refer to the country lass, though he was convinced that the count too was thinking of her.

“Why don’t you undress?” he asked the count who was walking up and down the room.

“I don’t feel sleepy yet, somehow. You can put out the candle if you like. I shall lie down as I am.”

And he continued to pace up and down.

“Don’t feel sleepy yet somehow,” repeated Polozov, who after this last evening felt more dissatisfied than ever with the count’s influence over him and was inclined to rebel against it. “I can imagine,” he thought, addressing himself mentally to Turbin, “what is now passing through that well-brushed head of yours! I saw how you admired her. But you are not capable of understanding such a simple honest creature: you want a Mina and a colonel’s epaulettes... I really must ask him how he liked her.”

And Polozov turned towards him — but changed his mind. He felt he would not be able to hold his own with the count, if the latter’s opinion of Lisa were what he supposed it to be, and that he would even be unable to avoid agreeing with him, so accustomed was he to bow to the count’s influence, which he felt more and more every day to be oppressive and unjust.

“Where are you going?” he asked, when the count put on his cap and went to the door.

“I’m going to see if things are all right in the stables.”

“Strange!” thought the cornet, but put out the candle and turned over on his other side, trying to drive away the absurdly jealous and hostile thoughts that crowded into his head concerning his former friend.

Anna Fedorovna meanwhile, having as usual kissed her brother, daughter, and ward and made the sign of the cross over each of them, had also retired to her room. It was long since the old lady had experienced so many strong impressions in one day and she could not even pray quietly: she could not rid herself of the sad and vivid memories of the deceased count and of the young dandy who had plundered her so unmercifully. However, she undressed as usual, drank half a tumbler of *kvas* that stood ready for her on a little table by her bed, and lay down. Her favourite cat crept softly into the room. Anna Fedorovna called her up and began to stroke her and listen to her purring but could not fall asleep.

“It’s the cat that keeps me awake,” she thought and drove her away. The cat fell softly on the floor and gently moving her bushy tail leapt onto the stove. And now the maid, who always slept in Anna Fedorovna’s room, came and spread the piece of felt that served her for a mattress, put out the candle, and lit the lamp before the icon. At last the maid began to snore, but still sleep would not come to soothe Anna Fedorovna’s excited imagination. When she closed her eyes the hussar’s face appeared to her, and she seemed to see it in the room in various guises when she opened her eyes and by the dim light of the lamp looked at the chest of drawers, the table, or a white dress that was hanging up. Now she felt very hot on the feather bed, now her watch ticked unbearably on the little table, and the maid snored unendurably through her nose. She woke her up and told her not to snore. Again thoughts of her daughter, of the old count and the young one, and of the

- preference*, became curiously mixed in her head. Now she saw herself

waltzing with the old count, saw her own round white shoulders, felt someone’s kisses on them, and then saw her daughter in the arms of the young count. Ustyushka again began to snore.

“No, people are not the same nowadays. The other one was ready to leap into the fire for me — and not without cause. But this one is sleeping like a fool, no fear, glad to have won — no love-making about him... How the other one said on his knees, ‘What do you wish me to do? I’ll kill myself on the spot, or do anything you like!’ And he would have killed himself had I told him to.”

Suddenly she heard a patter of bare feet in the passage and Lisa, with a shawl thrown over, ran in pale and trembling and almost fell onto her mother’s bed.

After saying good-night to her mother that evening Lisa had gone alone to the room her uncle generally slept in. She put on a white dressing-jacket and covered her long thick plait with a kerchief, extinguished the candle, opened the window, and sat down on a chair, drawing her feet up and fixing her pensive eyes on the pond now all glittering in the silvery light.

All her accustomed occupations and interests suddenly appeared to her in a new light: her capricious old mother, uncritical love for whom had become part of her soul; her decrepit but amiable old uncle; the domestic and village serfs who worshipped their young mistress; the milch cows and the calves, and all this Nature which had died and been renewed so many times and amid which she had grown up loving and beloved — all this that had given such light and pleasant tranquillity to her soul suddenly seemed unsatisfactory; it seemed dull and unnecessary. It was

as if someone had said to her: "Little fool, little fool, for twenty years you have been trifling, serving someone without knowing why, and without knowing what life and happiness are!" As she gazed into the depths of the moonlit, motionless garden she thought this more intensely, far more intensely, than ever before. And what caused these thoughts? Not any sudden love for the count as one might have supposed. On the contrary, she did not like him. She could have been interested in the cornet more easily, but he was plain, poor fellow, and silent. She kept involuntarily forgetting him and recalling the image of the count with anger and annoyance. "No, that's not it," she said to herself. Her ideal had been so beautiful. It was an ideal that could have been loved on such a night amid this nature without impairing its beauty — an ideal never abridged to fit it to some coarse reality.

Formerly, solitude and the absence of anyone who might have attracted her attention had caused the power of love, which Providence has given impartially to each of us, to rest intact and tranquil in her bosom, and now she had lived too long in the melancholy happiness of feeling within her the presence of this something, and of now and again opening the secret chalice of her heart to contemplate its riches, to be able to lavish its contents thoughtlessly on anyone. God grant she may enjoy to her grave this chary bliss! Who knows whether it be not the best and strongest, and whether it is not the only true and possible happiness?

"O Lord my God," she thought, "can it be that I have lost my youth and happiness in vain and that it will never be ... never be? Can that be true?" And she looked into the depths of the sky lit up by the moon and covered by light fleecy clouds that, veiling the stars, crept nearer to the moon. "If that highest white cloudlet touches the moon it will be a sign that it is true," thought she. The mist-like smoky strip ran across the bottom half of the bright disk and little by little the light on the grass, on the tops of the limes, and on the pond, grew dimmer and the black shadows of the trees grew less distinct. As if to harmonize with the gloomy shadows that spread over the world outside, a light wind ran through the leaves and brought to the window the odour of dewy leaves, of moist earth, and of blooming lilacs.

"But it is not true," she consoled herself. "There now, if the nightingale sings tonight it will be a sign that what I'm thinking is all nonsense, and that I need not despair," thought she. And she sat a long while in silence waiting for something, while again all became bright and full of life and again and again the cloudlets ran across the moon making everything dim. She was beginning to fall asleep as she sat by the window, when the quivering trills of a nightingale came ringing from below across the pond and awoke her. The country maiden opened her eyes. And once more her soul was renewed with fresh joy by its mysterious union with Nature which spread out so calmly and brightly before her. She leant on both arms. A sweet, languid sensation of sadness oppressed her heart, and tears of pure wide-spreading love, thirsting to be satisfied — good comforting tears — filled her eyes. She folded her arms on the window-sill and laid her head on them. Her favourite prayer rose to her mind and she fell asleep with her eyes still moist.

The touch of someone's hand aroused her. She awoke. But the touch was light and pleasant. The hand pressed hers more closely. Suddenly she became alive to reality, screamed, jumped up, and trying to persuade herself that she had not recognized the count who was standing under the window bathed in the moonlight, she ran out of the room...

XV

And it really was the count. When he heard the girl's cry and a husky sound from the watchman behind the fence, who had been roused by that cry, he rushed headlong across the wet dewy grass into the depths of the garden feeling like a detected thief. "Fool that I am!" he repeated unconsciously, "I frightened her. I ought to have aroused her gently by speaking to her. Awkward brute that I am!" He stopped and listened: the watchman came into the garden through the gateway, dragging his stick along the sandy path. It was necessary to hide and the count went down by the pond. The frogs made him start as they plumped from beneath his feet into the water. Though his boots were wet through, he squatted down and began to recall all that he had done: how he had climbed the fence, looked for her window, and at last espied a white shadow; how, listening to the faintest rustle, he had several times approached the window and gone back again; how at one moment he felt sure she was waiting, vexed at his tardiness, and the next, that it was impossible she should so readily agreed to a rendezvous; how at last, persuading himself that it was only the bashfulness of a country-bred girl that made her pretend to be asleep, he went up resolutely and distinctly saw how she sat but then for some reason ran away again and only after severely taunting himself for cowardice boldly drew near to her and touched her hand.

The watchman again made a husky sound and the gate creaked as he left the garden. The girl's window was slammed to and a shutter fastened from inside. This was very provoking. The count would have given a good deal for a chance to begin all over again; he would not have acted so stupidly now... "And she is a wonderful girl — so fresh — quite charming! And I have let her slip through my fingers... Awkward fool that I am!" He did not want to sleep now and went at random, with the firm tread of one who has been crossed, along the covered lime-tree avenue.

And here the night brought to him all its peaceful gifts of soothing sadness and the need of love. The straight pale beams of the moon threw spots of light through the thick foliage of the limes onto the clay path, where a few blades of grass grew or a dead branch lay here and there. The light falling on one side of a bent bough made it seem as if covered with white moss. The silvered leaves whispered now and then. There were no lights in the house and all was silent; the voice of the nightingale alone seemed to fill the bright, still, limitless space. "O God, what a night! What a wonderful night!" thought the count, inhaling the fragrant freshness of the garden. "Yet I feel a kind of regret — as if I were discontented with myself and with others, discontented with life generally. A splendid, sweet girl! Perhaps she was really hurt..." Here his dreams became mixed: he imagined himself in this garden with the country-bred girl in various extraordinary situations. Then the role of the girl was taken by his beloved Mina. "Eh, what a fool I was! I ought simply to have caught her round the waist and kissed her." And regretting that he had not done so, the count returned to his room.

The cornet was still awake. He at once turned in his bed and faced the count.

"Not asleep yet?" asked the count.

"No."

"Shall I tell you what has happened?"

“Well?”

“No, I’d better not, or ... all right, I’ll tell you — draw in your legs.”

And the count, having mentally abandoned the intrigue that had miscarried, sat down on his comrade’s bed with an animated smile.

“Would you believe it, that young lady gave me a rendezvous!”

“What are you saying?” cried Polozov, jumping out of bed.

“No, but listen.”

“But how? When? It’s impossible!”

“Why, while you were adding up after we had played *preference*, she told me she would be at the window in the night and that one could get in at the window. There, you see what it is to be practical! While you were calculating with the old woman, I arranged that little matter. Why, you heard her say in your presence that she would sit by the window tonight and look at the pond.”

“Yes, but she didn’t mean anything of the kind.”

“Well, that’s just what I can’t make out: did she say it intentionally or not? Maybe she didn’t really wish to agree so suddenly, but it looked very like it. It turned out horribly. I quiet played the fool,” he added, smiling contemptuously at himself.

“What do you mean? Where have you been?”

The count, omitting his manifold irresolute approaches, related everything as it had happened.

“I spoiled it myself: I ought to have been bolder. She screamed and ran from the window.”

“So she screamed and ran away,” said the cornet, smiling uneasily in answer to the count’s smile, which for such a long time had had so strong an influence over him.

“Yes, but it’s time to go to sleep.”

The cornet again turned his back to the door and lay silent for about ten minutes. Heaven knows what went on in his soul, but when he turned again, his face bore an expression of suffering and resolve.

“Count Turbin!” he said abruptly.

“Are you delirious?” quietly replied the count. “What is it, Cornet Polozov?”

“Count Turbin, you are a scoundrel!” cried Polozov and again jumped out of bed.

XVI

The squadron left next day. The two officers did not see their hosts again and did not bid them farewell. Neither did they speak to one another. They intended to fight a duel at the first halting-place. But Captain Schulz, a good comrade and splendid horseman, beloved by everyone in the regiment and chosen by the count to act as his second, managed to settle the affair so well that not only did they not fight but no one in the regiment knew anything about the matter, and Turbin and Polozov, though no longer on the old friendly footing, still continued to speak in familiar terms to one another and to meet at dinners and card-parties.

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Leo Tolstoy
Two Hussars
1856

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