VARIOUS

THE CONTINENTAL CLASSICS, VOLUME XVIII., MYSTERY TALES

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RUSSIAN MYSTERY STORIES

ALEXANDER SERGEIEVITCH PUSHKIN

THE QUEEN OF SPADES

Horse Guards. The long winter night passed away imperceptibly, and it was five o'clock in the morning before the company sat down to supper. Those who had won ate with a good appetite; the others sat staring absently at their empty plates. When the champagne appeared, however, the conversation became more animated, and all took a part in it.

"And how did you fare, Souirin?" asked the host.

"Oh, I lost, as usual. I must confess that I am unlucky. I play mirandole, I always keep cool, I never allow anything to put me out, and yet I always lose!"

"And you did not once allow yourself to be tempted to back the red? Your firmness astonishes me."

"But what do you think of Hermann?" said one of the guests, pointing to a young engineer. "He has never had a card in his hand in his life, he has never in his life laid a wager; and yet he sits here till five o'clock in the morning watching our play."

"Play interests me very much," said Hermann, "but I am not in the position to sacrifice the necessary in the hope of winning the superfluous."

"Hermann is a German; he is economical—that is all!" observed Tomsky. "But if there is one person that I cannot understand, it is my grandmother, the Countess Anna Fedorovna!"

"How so?" inquired the guests.

"I cannot understand," continued Tomsky, "how it is that my grandmother does not punt."

"Then you do not know the reason why?"

"No, really; I haven't the faintest idea. But let me tell you the story. You must know that about sixty years ago my grandmother went to Paris, where she created quite a sensation. People used to run after her to catch a glimpse of the 'Muscovite Venus.' Richelieu made love to her, and my grandmother maintains that he almost blew out his brains in consequence of her cruelty. At that time ladies used to play at faro. On one occasion at the Court, she lost a very considerable sum to the Duke of Orleans. On returning home, my grandmother removed the patches from her face, took off her hoops, informed my grandfather of her loss at the gaming-table, and ordered him to pay the money. My deceased grandfather, as far as I remember, was a sort of house-steward to my grandmother. He dreaded her like fire; but, on hearing of such a heavy loss, he almost went out of his mind. He calculated the various sums she had lost, and pointed out to her that in six months she had spent half a million of francs; that neither their Moscow nor Saratoff estates were in Paris; and, finally, refused point-blank to pay the debt. My grandmother gave him a box on the ear and slept by herself as a sign of her displeasure. The next day she sent for her husband, hoping that this domestic punishment had produced an effect upon him, but she found him inflexible. For the first time in her life she entered into reasonings and explanations with him, thinking to be able to convince him by pointing out to him that there are debts and debts, and that there is a great difference between a prince and

a coachmaker.

"But it was all in vain, my grandfather still remained obdurate. But the matter did not rest there. My grandmother did not know what to do. She had shortly before become acquainted with a very remarkable man. You have heard of Count St. Germain, about whom so many marvelous stories are told. You know that he represented himself as the Wandering Jew, as the discoverer of the elixir of life, of the philosopher's stone, and so forth. Some laughed at him as a charlatan; but Casnova, in his memoirs, says that he was a spy. But be that as it may, St. Germain, in spite of the mystery surrounding him, was a very fascinating person, and was much sought after in the best circles of society. Even to this day my grandmother retains an affectionate recollection of him, and becomes quite angry if anyone speaks disrespectfully of him. My grandmother knew that St. Germain had large sums of money at his disposal.

"She resolved to have recourse to him, and she wrote a letter to him asking him to come to her without delay. The queer old man immediately waited upon her, and found her overwhelmed with grief. She described to him in the blackest colors the barbarity of her husband, and ended by declaring that her whole hope depended upon his friendship and amiability.

"St. Germain reflected.

"'I could advance you the sum you want,' said he, 'but I know that you would not rest easy until you had paid me back, and I should not like to bring fresh troubles upon you. But there is

another way of getting out of your difficulty: you can win back your money.'

"'But, my dear Count,' replied my grandmother, 'I tell you that I haven't any money left!'

"'Money is not necessary,' replied St. Germain, 'be pleased to listen to me.'

"Then he revealed to her a secret, for which each of us would give a good deal."

The young officers listened with increased attention. Tomsky lit his pipe, puffed away for a moment, and then continued:

"That same evening my grandmother went to Versailles to the *jeu de la reine*. The Duke of Orleans kept the bank; my grandmother excused herself in an offhanded manner for not having yet paid her debt by inventing some little story, and then began to play against him. She chose three cards and played them one after the other; all three won sonika,[1] and my grandmother recovered every farthing that she lost."

"Mere chance!" said one of the guests.

"A tale!" observed Hermann.

"Perhaps they were marked cards!" said a third.

"I do not think so," replied Tomsky, gravely.

"What!" said Naroumoff, "you have a grandmother who knows how to hit upon three lucky cards in succession, and you have never yet succeeded in getting the secret of it out of her?"

"That's the deuce of it!" replied Tomsky, "she had four sons,

[1] Said of a card when it wins or loses in the quickest possible time.

one of whom was my father; all four were determined gamblers, and yet not to one of them did she ever reveal her secret, although it would not have been a bad thing either for them or for me. But this is what I heard from my uncle, Count Ivan Hitch, and he assured me, on his honor, that it was true. The late Chaplitsky—the same who died in poverty after having squandered millions—once lost, in his youth, about three hundred thousand roubles—to Zoritch, if I remember rightly. He was in despair. My grandmother, who was always very severe upon the extravagance of young men, took pity, however, upon Chaplitsky. She gave him three cards telling him to play them one after the other, at the same time exacting from him a solemn promise that he would never play at cards again as long as he lived. Chaplitsky then went to his victorious opponent, and they began a fresh game. On the first card he staked fifty thousand roubles, and won sonika; he doubled the stake, and won again; till at last, by pursuing the same tactics, he won back more than he had lost."

"But it is time to go to bed, it is a quarter to six already." And, indeed, it was already beginning to dawn; the young men emptied their glasses and then took leave of each other.

II

The old Countess A– was seated in her dressing-room in front of her looking-glass. Three waiting maids stood around her. One held a small pot of rouge, another a box of hairpins, and the third

a tall cap with bright red ribbons. The Countess had no longer the slightest pretensions to beauty, but she still preserved the habits of her youth, dressed in strict accordance with the fashion of seventy years before, and made as long and as careful a toilette as she would have done sixty years previously. Near the window, at an embroidery frame, sat a young lady, her ward.

"Good-morning, grandmamma," said a young officer, entering the room. "*Bonjour*, Mademoiselle Lise. Grandmamma, I want to ask you something."

"What is it, Paul?"

"I want you to let me introduce one of my friends to you, and to allow me to bring him to the ball on Friday."

"Bring him direct to the ball and introduce him to me there. Were you at B–'s yesterday?"

"Yes; everything went off very pleasantly, and dancing was kept up until five o'clock. How charming Eletskaia was!"

"But, my dear, what is there charming about her? Isn't she like her grandmother, the Princess Daria Petrovna? By the way, she must be very old, the Princess Daria Petrovna?"

"How do you mean, old?" cried Tomsky, thoughtlessly, "she died seven years ago."

The young lady raised her head, and made a sign to the young officer.

He then remembered that the old Countess was never to be informed of the death of her contemporaries, and he bit his lips. But the old Countess heard the news with the greatest

indifference.

"Dead!" said she, "and I did not know it. We were appointed maids of honor at the same time, and when we were presented to the Empress—"

And the Countess for the hundredth time related to her grandson one of her anecdotes.

"Come, Paul," said she, when she had finished her story, "help me to get up. Lizanka,[2] where is my snuffbox?"

And the Countess with her three maids went behind a screen to finish her toilette. Tomsky was left alone with the young lady.

"Who is the gentleman you wish to introduce to the Countess?" asked Lizaveta Ivanovna in a whisper.

"Naroumoff. Do you know him?"

"No. Is he a soldier or a civilian?"

"A soldier."

"Is he in the Engineers?"

"No, in the Cavalry. What made you think that he was in the Engineers?"

The young lady smiled, but made no reply.

"Paul," cried the Countess from behind the screen, "send me some new novel, only pray don't let it be one of the present day style."

"What do you mean, grandmother?"

"That is, a novel, in which the hero strangles neither his father nor his mother, and in which there are no drowned bodies. I have

[2] Diminutive of Lizaveta (Elizabeth).

a great horror of drowned persons."

"There are no such novels nowadays. Would you like a Russian one?"

"Are there any Russian novels? Send me one, my dear, pray send me one!"

"Good-by, grandmother. I am in a hurry…. Good-by, Lizaveta Ivanovna.

What made you think that Naroumoff was in the Engineers?"

And Tomsky left the boudoir.

Lizaveta Ivanovna was left alone. She laid aside her work, and began to look out of the window. A few moments afterwards, at a corner house on the other side of the street, a young officer appeared. A deep flush covered her cheeks; she took up her work again, and bent her head down over the frame. At the same moment the Countess returned, completely dressed.

"Order the carriage, Lizaveta," said she, "we will go out for a drive."

Lizaveta rose from the frame, and began to arrange her work.

"What is the matter with you, my child, are you deaf?" cried the Countess. "Order the carriage to be got ready at once."

"I will do so this moment," replied the young lady, hastening into the anteroom.

A servant entered and gave the Countess some books from Prince Paul Alexandrovitch.

"Tell him that I am much obliged to him," said the Countess.

"Lizaveta! Lizaveta! where are you running to?"

"I am going to dress."

"There is plenty of time, my dear. Sit down here. Open the first volume and read to me aloud."

Her companion took the book and read a few lines.

"Louder," said the Countess. "What is the matter with you, my child? Have you lost your voice? Wait—Give me that footstool —a little nearer—that will do!"

Lizaveta read two more pages. The Countess yawned.

"Put the book down," said she, "what a lot of nonsense! Send it back to Prince Paul with my thanks…. But where is the carriage?"

"The carriage is ready," said Lizaveta, looking out into the street.

"How is it that you are not dressed?" said the Countess. "I must always wait for you. It is intolerable, my dear!"

Liza hastened to her room. She had not been there two minutes before the Countess began to ring with all her might. The three waiting-maids came running in at one door, and the valet at another.

"How is it that you cannot hear me when I ring for you?" said the Countess. "Tell Lizaveta Ivanovna that I am waiting for her."

Lizaveta returned with her hat and cloak on.

"At last you are here!" said the Countess. "But why such an elaborate toilette? Whom do you intend to captivate? What sort of weather is it? It seems rather windy."

"No, your Ladyship, it is very calm," replied the valet.

"You never think of what you are talking about. Open the window. So it is; windy and bitterly cold. Unharness the horses, Lizaveta, we won't go out—there was no need to deck yourself like that."

"What a life is mine!" thought Lizaveta Ivanovna.

And, in truth, Lizaveta Ivanovna was a very unfortunate creature. "The bread of the stranger is bitter," says Dante, "and his staircase hard to climb." But who can know what the bitterness of dependence is so well as the poor companion of an old lady of quality? The Countess A– had by no means a bad heart, but she was capricious, like a woman who had been spoiled by the world, as well as being avaricious and egotistical, like all old people, who have seen their best days, and whose thoughts are with the past, and not the present. She participated in all the vanities of the great world, went to balls, where she sat in a corner, painted and dressed in old-fashioned style, like a deformed but indispensable ornament of the ballroom; all the guests on entering approached her and made a profound bow, as if in accordance with a set ceremony, but after that nobody took any further notice of her. She received the whole town at her house, and observed the strictest etiquette, although she could no longer recognize the faces of people. Her numerous domestics, growing fat and old in her antechamber and servants' hall, did just as they liked, and vied with each other in robbing the aged Countess in the most bare-faced manner. Lizaveta Ivanovna was the martyr of the household. She made tea, and was reproached

with using too much sugar; she read novels aloud to the Countess, and the faults of the author were visited upon her head; she accompanied the Countess in her walks, and was held answerable for the weather or the state of the pavement. A salary was attached to the post, but she very rarely received it, although she was expected to dress like everybody else, that is to say, like very few indeed. In society she played the most pitiable role. Everybody knew her, and nobody paid her any attention. At balls she danced only when a partner was wanted, and ladies would only take hold of her arm when it was necessary to lead her out of the room to attend to their dresses. She was very self-conscious, and felt her position keenly, and she looked about her with impatience for a deliverer to come to her rescue; but the young men, calculating in their giddiness, honored her with but very little attention, although Lizaveta Ivanovna was a hundred times prettier than the bare-faced, cold-hearted marriageable girls around whom they hovered. Many a time did she quietly slink away from the glittering, but wearisome, drawing-room, to go and cry in her own poor little room, in which stood a screen, a chest of drawers, a looking-glass, and a painted bedstead, and where a tallow candle burnt feebly in a copper candle-stick.

One morning—this was about two days after the evening party described at the beginning of this story, and a week previous to the scene at which we have just assisted—Lizaveta Ivanovna was seated near the window at her embroidery frame, when, happening to look out into the street, she caught sight of a young

Engineer officer, standing motionless with his eyes fixed upon her window. She lowered her head, and went on again with her work. About five minutes afterwards she looked out again—the young officer was still standing in the same place. Not being in the habit of coquetting with passing officers, she did not continue to gaze out into the street, but went on sewing for a couple of hours, without raising her head. Dinner was announced. She rose up and began to put her embroidery away, but glancing casually out of the window, she perceived the officer again. This seemed to her very strange. After dinner she went to the window with a certain feeling of uneasiness, but the officer was no longer there—and she thought no more about him.

A couple of days afterwards, just as she was stepping into the carriage with the Countess, she saw him again. He was standing close behind the door, with his face half-concealed by his fur collar, but his dark eyes sparkled beneath his cap. Lizaveta felt alarmed, though she knew not why, and she trembled as she seated herself in the carriage.

On returning home, she hastened to the window—the officer was standing in his accustomed place, with his eyes fixed upon her. She drew back, a prey to curiosity, and agitated by a feeling which was quite new to her.

From that time forward not a day passed without the young officer making his appearance under the window at the customary hour, and between him and her there was established a sort of mute acquaintance. Sitting in her place at work, she

used to feel his approach, and, raising her head, she would look at him longer and longer each day. The young man seemed to be very grateful to her; she saw with the sharp eye of youth, how a sudden flush covered his pale cheeks each time that their glances met. After about a week she commenced to smile at him….

When Tomsky asked permission of his grandmother, the Countess, to present one of his friends to her, the young girl's heart beat violently. But hearing that Naroumoff was not an Engineer, she regretted that by her thoughtless question, she had betrayed her secret to the volatile Tomsky.

Hermann was the son of a German who had become a naturalized Russian, and from whom he had inherited a small capital. Being firmly convinced of the necessity of preserving his independence, Hermann did not touch his private income, but lived on his pay, without allowing himself the slightest luxury. Moreover, he was reserved and ambitious, and his companions rarely had an opportunity of making merry at the expense of his extreme parsimony. He had strong passions and an ardent imagination, but his firmness of disposition preserved him from the ordinary errors of young men. Thus, though a gamester at heart, he never touched a card, for he considered his position did not allow him—as he said—"to risk the necessary in the hope of winning the superfluous," yet he would sit for nights together at the card table and follow with feverish anxiety the different turns of the game.

The story of the three cards had produced a powerful

impression upon his imagination, and all night long he could think of nothing else. "If," he thought to himself the following evening, as he walked along the streets of St. Petersburg, "if the old Countess would not reveal her secret to me! If she would only tell me the names of the three winning cards. Why should I not try my fortune? I must get introduced to her and win her favor—become her lover…. But all that will take time, and she is eighty-seven years old. She might be dead in a week, in a couple of days even. But the story itself? Can it really be true? No! Economy, temperance, and industry; those are my three winning cards; by means of them I shall be able to double my capital—increase it sevenfold, and procure for myself ease and independence."

Musing in this manner, he walked on until he found himself in one of the principal streets of St. Petersburg, in front of a house of antiquated architecture. The street was blocked with equipages; carriages one after the other drew up in front of the brilliantly illuminated doorway. At one moment there stepped out onto the pavement the well-shaped little foot of some young beauty, at another the heavy boot of a cavalry officer, and then the silk stockings and shoes of a member of the diplomatic world. Fur and cloaks passed in rapid succession before the gigantic porter at the entrance. Hermann stopped. "Whose house is this?" he asked of the watchman at the corner.

"The Countess A–'s," replied the watchman.

Hermann started. The strange story of the three cards again presented itself to his imagination. He began walking up and

down before the house, thinking of its owner and her strange secret. Returning late to his modest lodging, he could not go to sleep for a long time, and when at last he did doze off, he could dream of nothing but cards, green tables, piles of banknotes, and heaps of ducats. He played one card after the other, winning uninterruptedly, and then he gathered up the gold and filled his pockets with the notes. When he woke up late the next morning, he sighed over the loss of his imaginary wealth, and then sallying out into the town, he found himself once more in front of the Countess's residence. Some unknown power seemed to have attracted him thither. He stopped and looked up at the windows. At one of these he saw a head with luxuriant black hair, which was bent down, probably over some book or an embroidery frame. The head was raised. Hermann saw a fresh complexion, and a pair of dark eyes. That moment decided his fate.

III

Lizaveta Ivanovna had scarcely taken off her hat and cloak, when the Countess sent for her, and again ordered her to get the carriage ready. The vehicle drew up before the door, and they prepared to take their seats. Just at the moment when two footmen were assisting the old lady to enter the carriage, Lizaveta saw her Engineer standing close beside the wheel; he grasped her hand; alarm caused her to lose her presence of mind, and the young man disappeared—but not before he had left a letter

between her fingers. She concealed it in her glove, and during the whole of the drive she neither saw nor heard anything. It was the custom of the Countess, when out for an airing in her carriage, to be constantly asking such questions as "Who was that person that met us just now? What is the name of this bridge? What is written on that sign-board?" On this occasion, however, Lizaveta returned such vague and absurd answers, that the Countess became angry with her.

"What is the matter with you, my dear?" she exclaimed. "Have you taken leave of your senses, or what is it? Do you not hear me or understand what I say? Heaven be thanked, I am still in my right mind and speak plainly enough!"

Lizaveta Ivanovna did not hear her. On returning home she ran to her room, and drew the letter out of her glove: it was not sealed. Lizaveta read it. The letter contained a declaration of love; it was tender, respectful, and copied word for word from a German novel. But Lizaveta did not know anything of the German language, and she was quite delighted.

For all that, the letter caused her to feel exceedingly uneasy. For the first time in her life she was entering into secret and confidential relations with a young man. His boldness alarmed her. She reproached herself for her imprudent behavior, and knew not what to do. Should she cease to sit at the window, and, by assuming an appearance of indifference towards him, put a check upon the young officer's desire for further acquaintance with her? Should she send his letter back to him, or should she

answer him in a cold and decided manner? There was nobody to whom she could turn in her perplexity, for she had neither female friend nor adviser. At length she resolved to reply to him.

She sat down at her little writing table, took pen and paper, and began to think. Several times she began her letter and then tore it up; the way she had expressed herself seemed to her either too inviting or too cold and decisive. At last she succeeded in writing a few lines with which she felt satisfied.

"I am convinced," she wrote, "that your intentions are honorable, and that you do not wish to offend me by any imprudent behavior, but our acquaintance must not begin in such a manner. I return you your letter, and I hope that I shall never have any cause to complain of this undeserved slight."

The next day, as soon as Hermann made his appearance, Lizaveta rose from her embroidery, went into the drawing-room, opened the ventilator, and threw the letter into the street, trusting that the young officer would have the perception to pick it up.

Hermann hastened forward, picked it up, and then repaired to a confectioner's shop. Breaking the seal of the envelope, he found inside it his own letter and Lizaveta's reply. He had expected this, and he returned home, his mind deeply occupied with his intrigue.

Three days afterwards a bright-eyed young girl from a milliner's establishment brought Lizaveta a letter. Lizaveta opened it with great uneasiness, fearing that it was a demand for money, when, suddenly, she recognized Hermann's handwriting.

"You have made a mistake, my dear," said she. "This letter is not for me."

"Oh, yes, it is for you," replied the girl, smiling very knowingly.

"Have the goodness to read it."

Lizaveta glanced at the letter. Hermann requested an interview.

"It cannot be," she cried, alarmed at the audacious request and the manner in which it was made. "This letter is certainly not for me," and she tore it into fragments.

"If the letter was not for you, why have you torn it up?" said the girl. "I should have given it back to the person who sent it."

"Be good enough, my dear," said Lizaveta, disconcerted by this remark, "not to bring me any more letters for the future, and tell the person who sent you that he ought to be ashamed."

But Hermann was not the man to be thus put off. Every day Lizaveta received from him a letter, sent now in this way, now in that. They were no longer translated from the German. Hermann wrote them under the inspiration of passion, and spoke in his own language, and they bore full testimony to the inflexibility of his desire, and the disordered condition of his uncontrollable imagination. Lizaveta no longer thought of sending them back to him; she became intoxicated with them, and began to reply to them, and little by little her answers became longer and more affectionate. At last she threw out of the window to him the following letter:

"This evening there is going to be a ball at the Embassy. The Countess will be there. We shall remain until two o'clock. You have now an opportunity of seeing me alone. As soon as the Countess is gone, the servants will very probably go out, and there will be nobody left but the Swiss, but he usually goes to sleep in his lodge. Come about half-past eleven. Walk straight upstairs. If you meet anybody in the anteroom, ask if the Countess is at home. You will be told 'No,' in which case there will be nothing left for you to do but to go away again. But it is most probable that you will meet nobody. The maidservants will all be together in one room. On leaving the anteroom, turn to the left, and walk straight on until you reach the Countess's bedroom. In the bedroom, behind a screen, you will find two doors: the one on the right leads to a cabinet, which the Countess never enters; the one on the left leads to a corridor, at the end of which is a little winding staircase; this leads to my room."

Hermann trembled like a tiger as he waited for the appointed time to arrive. At ten o'clock in the evening he was already in front of the Countess's house. The weather was terrible; the wind blew with great violence, the sleety snow fell in large flakes, the lamps emitted a feeble light, the streets were deserted; from time to time a sledge drawn by a sorry-looking hack, passed by on the lookout for a belated passenger. Hermann was enveloped in a thick overcoat, and felt neither wind nor snow.

At last the Countess's carriage drew up. Hermann saw two footmen carry out in their arms the bent form of the old lady,

wrapped in sable fur, and immediately behind her, clad in a warm mantle, and with her head ornamented with a wreath of fresh flowers, followed Lizaveta. The door was closed. The carriage rolled heavily away through the yielding snow. The porter shut the street door, the windows became dark.

Hermann began walking up and down near the deserted house; at length he stopped under a lamp, and glanced at his watch: it was twenty minutes past eleven. He remained standing under the lamp, his eyes fixed upon the watch impatiently waiting for the remaining minutes to pass. At half-past eleven precisely Hermann ascended the steps of the house and made his way into the brightly-illuminated vestibule. The porter was not there. Hermann hastily ascended the staircase, opened the door of the anteroom, and saw a footman sitting asleep in an antique chair by the side of a lamp. With a light, firm step Hermann passed by him. The drawing-room and dining-room were in darkness, but a feeble reflection penetrated thither from the lamp in the anteroom.

Hermann reached the Countess's bedroom. Before a shrine, which was full of old images, a golden lamp was burning. Faded stuffed chairs and divans with soft cushions stood in melancholy symmetry around the room, the walls of which were hung with china silk. On one side of the room hung two portraits painted in Paris by Madame Lebrun. One of these represented a stout, red-faced man of about forty years of age, in a bright green uniform, and with a star upon his breast; the other—a beautiful

young woman, with an aquiline nose, forehead curls, and a rose in her powdered hair. In the corner stood porcelain shepherds and shepherdesses, dining-room clocks from the workshop of the celebrated Lefroy, bandboxes, roulettes, fans, and the various playthings for the amusement of ladies that were in vogue at the end of the last century, when Montgolfier's balloons and Niesber's magnetism were the rage. Hermann stepped behind the screen. At the back of it stood a little iron bedstead; on the right was the door which led to the cabinet; on the left, the other which led to the corridor. He opened the latter, and saw the little winding staircase which led to the room of the poor companion. But he retraced his steps and entered the dark cabinet.

The time passed slowly. All was still. The clock in the drawing-room struck twelve, the strokes echoed through the room one after the other, and everything was quiet again. Hermann stood leaning against the cold stove. He was calm, his heart beat regularly, like that of a man resolved upon a dangerous but inevitable undertaking. One o'clock in the morning struck; then two, and he heard the distant noise of carriage-wheels. An involuntary agitation took possession of him. The carriage drew near and stopped. He heard the sound of the carriage steps being let down. All was bustle within the house. The servants were running hither and thither, there was a confusion of voices, and the rooms were lit up. Three antiquated chambermaids entered the bedroom, and they were shortly afterwards followed by the Countess, who, more dead than alive, sank into a Voltaire

armchair. Hermann peeped through a chink. Lizaveta Ivanovna passed close by him, and he heard her hurried steps as she hastened up the little spiral staircase. For a moment his heart was assailed by something like a pricking of conscience, but the emotion was only transitory, and his heart became petrified as before.

The Countess began to undress before her looking-glass. Her rose-bedecked cap was taken off, and then her powdered wig was removed from off her white and closely cut hair. Hairpins fell in showers around her. Her yellow satin dress, brocaded with silver, fell down at her swollen feet.

Hermann was a witness of the repugnant mysteries of her toilette; at last the Countess was in her night-cap and dressing-gown, and in this costume, more suitable to her age, she appeared less hideous and deformed.

Like all old people, in general, the Countess suffered from sleeplessness. Having undressed, she seated herself at the window in a Voltaire armchair, and dismissed her maids. The candles were taken away, and once more the room was left with only one lamp burning in it. The Countess sat there looking quite yellow, mumbling with her flaccid lips and swaying to and fro. Her dull eyes expressed complete vacancy of mind, and, looking at her, one would have thought that the rocking of her body was not a voluntary action of her own, but was produced by the action of some concealed galvanic mechanism.

Suddenly the death-like face assumed an inexplicable

expression. The lips ceased to tremble, the eyes became animated: before the Countess stood an unknown man.

"Do not be alarmed, for Heaven's sake, do not be alarmed!" said he in a low but distinct voice. "I have no intention of doing you any harm; I have only come to ask a favor of you."

The old woman looked at him in silence, as if she had not heard what he had said. Hermann thought that she was deaf, and, bending down towards her ear, he repeated what he had said. The aged Countess remained silent as before.

"You can insure the happiness of my life," continued Hermann, "and it will cost you nothing. I know that you can name three cards in order—"

Hermann stopped. The Countess appeared now to understand what he wanted; she seemed as if seeking for words to reply.

"It was a joke," she replied at last. "I assure you it was only a joke."

"There is no joking about the matter," replied Hermann, angrily.

"Remember Chaplitsky, whom you helped to win."

The Countess became visibly uneasy. Her features expressed strong emotion, but they quickly resumed their former immobility.

"Can you not name me these three winning cards?" continued Hermann.

The Countess remained silent; Hermann continued:

"For whom are you preserving your secret? For your

grandsons? They are rich enough without it, they do not know the worth of money. Your cards would be of no use to a spendthrift. He who cannot preserve his paternal inheritance will die in want, even though he had a demon at his service. I am not a man of that sort. I know the value of money. Your three cards will not be thrown away upon me. Come!"

He paused and tremblingly awaited her reply. The Countess remained silent. Hermann fell upon his knees.

"If your heart has ever known the feeling of love," said he, "if you remember its rapture, if you have ever smiled at the cry of your new-born child, if any human feeling has ever entered into your breast, I entreat you by the feelings of a wife, a lover, a mother, by all that is most sacred in life, not to reject my prayer. Reveal to me your secret. Of what use is it to you? May be it is connected with some terrible sin, with the loss of eternal salvation, with some bargain with the devil. Reflect, you are old, you have not long to live—I am ready to take your sins upon my soul. Only reveal to me your secret. Remember that the happiness of a man is in your hands, that not only I, but my children and my grandchildren, will bless your memory and reverence you as a saint."

The old Countess answered not a word.

Hermann rose to his feet.

"You old hag!" he exclaimed, grinding his teeth, "then I will make you answer!" With these words he drew a pistol from his pocket. At the sight of the pistol, the Countess for the second

time exhibited strong emotions. She shook her head, and raised her hands as if to protect herself from the shot. Then she fell backwards, and remained motionless.

"Come, an end to this childish nonsense!" said Hermann, taking hold of her hand. "I ask you for the last time: will you tell me the names of your three cards, or will you not?"

The Countess made no reply. Hermann perceived that she was dead!

IV

Lizaveta Ivanovna was sitting in her room, still in her ball dress, lost in deep thought. On returning home, she had hastily dismissed the chambermaid, who very reluctantly came forward to assist her, saying that she would undress herself, and with a trembling heart had gone up to her own room, expecting to find Hermann there, but yet hoping not to find him. At the first glance he was not there, and she thanked her fate for having prevented him keeping the appointment. She sat down without undressing, and began to call to mind all the circumstances which in a short time had carried her so far. It was not three weeks since the time when she had first seen the young officer from the window—and yet she was already in correspondence with him, and he had succeeded in inducing her to grant him a nocturnal interview. She knew his name only through his having written it at the bottom of some of his letters; she had never spoken to him, had never heard

his voice, and had never heard him spoken of until that evening. But, strange to say, that very evening at the ball, Tomsky, being piqued with the young Princess Pauline N–, who, contrary to her usual custom, did not flirt with him, wished to revenge himself by assuming an air of indifference: he therefore engaged Lizaveta Ivanovna, and danced an endless mazurka with her. During the whole of the time he kept teasing her about her partiality for Engineer officers, he assured her that he knew far more than she imagined, and some of his jests were so happily aimed, that Lizaveta thought several times that her secret was known to him.

"From whom have you learned all this?" she asked, smiling.

"From a friend of a person very well known to you," replied Tomsky, "from a very distinguished man."

"And whom is this distinguished man?"

"His name is Hermann." Lizaveta made no reply, but her hands and feet lost all sense of feeling.

"This Hermann," continued Tomsky, "is a man of romantic personality. He has the profile of a Napoleon, and the soul of a Mephistopheles. I believe that he has at least three crimes upon his conscience. How pale you have become!"

"I have a headache. But what did this Hermann, or whatever his name is, tell you?"

"Hermann is very dissatisfied with his friend. He says that in his place he would act very differently. I even think that Hermann himself has designs upon you; at least, he listens very attentively to all that his friend has to say about you."

"And where has he seen me?"

"In church, perhaps; or on the parade. God alone knows where. It may have been in your room, while you were asleep, for there is nothing that he—"

Three ladies approaching him with the question: "oubli ou regret?" interrupted the conversation, which had become so tantalizingly interesting to Lizaveta.

The lady chosen by Tomsky was the Princess Pauline herself. She succeeded in effecting a reconciliation with him during the numerous turns of the dance, after which he conducted her to her chair. On returning to his place, Tomsky thought no more either of Hermann or Lizaveta. She longed to renew the interrupted conversation, but the mazurka came to an end, and shortly afterwards the old Countess took her departure.

Tomsky's words were nothing more than the customary small talk of the dance, but they sank deep into the soul of the young dreamer. The portrait, sketched by Tomsky, coincided with the picture she had formed within her own mind, and, thanks to the latest romances, the ordinary countenance of her admirer became invested with attributes capable of alarming her and fascinating her imagination at the same time. She was now sitting with her bare arms crossed, and with her head, still adorned with flowers, sunk upon her uncovered bosom. Suddenly the door opened and Hermann entered. She shuddered.

"Where were you?" she asked in a terrified whisper.

"In the old Countess's bedroom," replied Hermann. "I have

just left her. The Countess is dead."

"My God! What do you say?"

"And I am afraid," added Hermann, "that I am the cause of her death."

Lizaveta looked at him, and Tomsky's words found an echo in her soul: "This man has at least three crimes upon his conscience!" Hermann sat down by the window near her, and related all that had happened.

Lizaveta listened to him in terror. So all those passionate letters, those ardent desires, this bold, obstinate pursuit—all this was not love! Money—that was what his soul yearned for! She could not satisfy his desire and make him happy. The poor girl had been nothing but the blind tool of a robber, of the murderer of her aged benefactress! She wept bitter tears of agonized repentance. Hermann gazed at her in silence; his heart, too, was a prey to violent emotion, but neither the tears of the poor girl, nor the wonderful charm of her beauty, enhanced by her grief, could produce any impression upon his hardened soul. He felt no pricking of conscience at the thought of the dead old woman. One thing only grieved him: the irreparable loss of the secret from which he had expected to obtain great wealth.

"You are a monster!" said Lizaveta at last.

"I did not wish for her death," replied Hermann, "my pistol was not loaded." Both remained silent. The day began to dawn. Lizaveta extinguished her candle, a pale light illumined her room. She wiped her tear-stained eyes, and raised them towards

Hermann. He was sitting near the window, with his arms crossed, and with a fierce frown upon his forehead. In this attitude he bore a striking resemblance to the portrait of Napoleon. This resemblance struck Lizaveta even.

"How shall I get you out of the house?" said she at last. "I thought of conducting you down the secret staircase."

"I will go alone," he answered.

Lizaveta arose, took from her drawer a key, handed it to Hermann, and gave him the necessary instructions. Hermann pressed her cold, inert hand, kissed her bowed head, and left the room.

He descended the winding staircase, and once more entered the Countess's bedroom. The dead old lady sat as if petrified, her face expressed profound tranquillity. Hermann stopped before her, and gazed long and earnestly at her, as if he wished to convince himself of the terrible reality. At last he entered the cabinet, felt behind the tapestry for the door, and then began to descend the dark staircase, filled with strange emotions. "Down this very staircase," thought he, "perhaps coming from the very same room, and at this very same hour sixty years ago, there may have glided, in an embroidered coat, with his hair dressed *a l'oiseau royal*, and pressing to his heart his three-cornered hat, some young gallant who has long been mouldering in the grave, but the heart of his aged mistress has only today ceased to beat."

At the bottom of the staircase Hermann found a door, which he opened with a key, and then traversed a corridor which

conducted him into the street.

V

Three days after the fatal night, at nine o'clock in the morning, Hermann repaired to the Convent of –, where the last honors were to be paid to the mortal remains of the old Countess. Although feeling no remorse, he could not altogether stifle the voice of conscience, which said to him: "You are the murderer of the old woman!" In spite of his entertaining very little religious belief, he was exceedingly superstitious; and believing that the dead Countess might exercise an evil influence on his life, he resolved to be present at her obsequies in order to implore her pardon.

The church was full. It was with difficulty that Hermann made his way through the crowd of people. The coffin was placed upon a rich catafalque beneath a velvet baldachin. The deceased Countess lay within it, with her hands crossed upon her breast, with a lace cap upon her head, and dressed in a white satin robe. Around the catafalque stood the members of her household; the servants in black caftans, with armorial ribbons upon their shoulders and candles in their hands; the relatives—children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—in deep mourning.

Nobody wept, tears would have been an affectation. The Countess was so old that her death could have surprised nobody, and her relatives had long looked upon her as being out of

the world. A famous preacher delivered the funeral sermon. In simple and touching words he described the peaceful passing away of the righteous, who had passed long years in calm preparation for a Christian end. "The angel of death found her," said the orator, "engaged in pious meditation and waiting for the midnight bridegroom."

The service concluded amidst profound silence. The relatives went forward first to take a farewell of the corpse. Then followed the numerous guests, who had come to render the last homage to her who for so many years had been a participator in their frivolous amusements. After these followed the members of the Countess's household. The last of these an old woman of the same age as the deceased. Two young women led her forward by the hand. She had not strength enough to bow down to the ground—she merely shed a few tears, and kissed the cold hand of the mistress.

Herman now resolved to approach the coffin. He knelt down upon the cold stones, and remained in that position for some minutes; at last he arose as pale as the deceased Countess herself; he ascended the steps of the catafalque and bent over the corpse…. At that moment it seemed to him that the dead woman darted a mocking look at him and winked with one eye. Hermann started back, took a false step, and fell to the ground. Several persons hurried forward and raised him up. At the same moment Lizaveta Ivanovna was borne fainting into the porch of the church. This episode disturbed for some minutes

the solemnity of the gloomy ceremony. Among the congregation arose a deep murmur, and a tall, thin chamberlain, a near relative of the deceased, whispered in the ear of an Englishman, who was standing near him, that the young officer was a natural son of the Countess, to which the Englishman coldly replied "Oh!"

During the whole of that day Hermann was strangely excited. Repairing to an out of the way restaurant to dine, he drank a great deal of wine, contrary to his usual custom, in the hope of deadening his inward agitation. But the wine only served to excite his imagination still more. On returning home he threw himself upon his bed without undressing, and fell into a deep sleep.

When he woke up it was already night, and the moon was shining into the room. He looked at his watch: it was a quarter to three. Sleep had left him; he sat down upon his bed, and thought of the funeral of the old Countess.

At that moment somebody in the street looked in at his window and immediately passed on again. Hermann paid no attention to this incident. A few moments afterwards he heard the door of his anteroom open. Hermann thought that it was his orderly, drunk as usual, returning from some nocturnal expedition, but presently he heard footsteps that were unknown to him: somebody was walking softly over the floor in slippers. The door opened, and a woman dressed in white entered the room. Hermann mistook her for his old nurse, and wondered what could bring her there at that hour of the night. But the white woman glided rapidly across the room and stood before him—

and Hermann thought he recognized the Countess.

"I have come to you against my wish," she said in a firm voice, "but I have been ordered to grant your request. Three, seven, ace, will win for you if played in succession, but only on these conditions: that you do not play more than one card in twenty-four-hours, and that you never play again during the rest of your life. I forgive you my death, on condition that you marry my companion, Lizaveta Ivanovna."

With these words she turned round very quietly, walked with a shuffling gait towards the door, and disappeared. Hermann heard the street door open and shut, and again he saw someone look in at him through the window.

For a long time Hermann could not recover himself. He then rose up and entered the next room. His orderly was lying asleep upon the floor, and he had much difficulty in waking him. The orderly was drunk as usual, and no information could be obtained from him. The street door was locked. Hermann returned to his room, lit his candle, and wrote down all the details of his vision.

VI

Two fixed ideas can no more exist together in the moral world than two bodies can occupy one and the same physical world. "Three, seven, ace" soon drove out of Hermann's mind the thought of the dead Countess. "Three, seven, ace" were perpetually running through his head, and continually being

repeated by his lips. If he saw a young girl, he would say: "How slender she is; quite like the three of hearts." If anybody asked "What is the time?" he would reply: "Five minutes to seven." Every stout man that he saw reminded him of the ace. "Three, seven, ace" haunted him in his sleep, and assumed all possible shapes. The threes bloomed before him in the forms of magnificent flowers, the sevens were represented by Gothic portals, and the aces became transformed into gigantic spiders. One thought alone occupied his whole mind—to make a profitable use of the secret which he had purchased so dearly. He thought of applying for a furlough so as to travel abroad. He wanted to go to Paris and tempt fortune in some gambling houses that abounded there. Chance spared him all this trouble.

There was in Moscow a society of rich gamesters, presided over by the celebrated Chekalinsky, who had passed all his life at the card table, and had amassed millions, accepting bills of exchange for his winnings, and paying his losses in ready money. His long experience secured for him the confidence of his companions, and his open house, his famous cook, and his agreeable and fascinating manners, gained for him the respect of the public. He came to St. Petersburg. The young men of the capital flocked to his rooms, forgetting balls for cards, and preferring the emotions of faro to the seductions of flirting. Naroumoff conducted Hermann to Chekalinsky's residence.

They passed through a suite of rooms, filled with attentive domestics. The place was crowded. Generals and Privy

Counsellors were playing at whist, young men were lolling carelessly upon the velvet-covered sofas, eating ices and smoking pipes. In the drawing-room, at the head of a long table, around which were assembled about a score of players, sat the master of the house keeping the bank. He was a man of about sixty years of age, of a very dignified appearance; his head was covered with silvery white hair; his full, florid countenance expressed good-nature, and his eyes twinkled with a perpetual smile. Naroumoff introduced Hermann to him. Chekalinsky shook him by the hand in a friendly manner, requested him not to stand on ceremony, and then went on dealing.

The game occupied some time. On the table lay more than thirty cards. Chekalinsky paused after each throw, in order to give the players time to arrange their cards and note down their losses, listened politely to their requests, and more politely still, straightened the corners of cards that some player's hand had chanced to bend. At last the game was finished. Chekalinsky shuffled the cards, and prepared to deal again.

"Will you allow me to take a card?" said Hermann, stretching out his hand from behind a stout gentleman who was punting.

Chekalinsky smiled and bowed silently, as a sign of acquiescence. Naroumoff laughingly congratulated Hermann on his abjuration of that abstention from cards which he had practised for so long a period, and wished him a lucky beginning.

"Stake!" said Hermann, writing some figures with chalk on the back of his card.

"How much?" asked the banker, contracting the muscles of his eyes, "excuse me, I cannot see quite clearly."

"Forty-seven thousand roubles," replied Hermann. At these words every head in the room turned suddenly round, and all eyes were fixed upon Hermann.

"He has taken leave of his senses!" thought Naroumoff.

"Allow me to inform you," said Chekalinsky, with his eternal smile, "that you are playing very high; nobody here has ever staked more than two hundred and seventy-five roubles at once."

"Very well," replied Hermann, "but do you accept my card or not?"

Chekalinsky bowed in token of consent.

"I only wish to observe," said he, "that although I have the greatest confidence in my friends, I can only play against ready money. For my own part I am quite convinced that your word is sufficient, but for the sake of the order of the game, and to facilitate the reckoning up, I must ask you to put the money on your card."

Hermann drew from his pocket a bank-note, and handed it to Chekalinsky, who, after examining it in a cursory manner, placed it on Hermann's card.

He began to deal. On the right a nine turned up, and on the left a three.

"I have won!" said Hermann, showing his card.

A murmur of astonishment arose among the players. Chekalinsky frowned, but the smile quickly returned to his face.

"Do you wish me to settle with you?" he said to Hermann.

"If you please," replied the latter.

Chekalinsky drew from his pocket a number of banknotes and paid at once. Hermann took up his money and left the table. Naroumoff could not recover from his astonishment. Hermann drank a glass of lemonade and returned home.

The next evening he again repaired to Chekalinsky's. The host was dealing. Hermann walked up to the table; the punters immediately made room for him. Chekalinsky greeted him with a gracious bow.

Hermann waited for the next deal, took a card and placed upon it his forty-seven thousand roubles, together with his winnings of the previous evening.

Chekalinsky began to deal. A knave turned up on the right, a seven on the left.

Hermann showed his seven.

There was a general exclamation. Chekalinsky was evidently ill at ease, but he counted out the ninety-four thousand roubles and handed them over to Hermann, who pocketed them in the coolest manner possible, and immediately left the house.

The next evening Hermann appeared again at the table. Everyone was expecting him. The generals and privy counsellors left their whist in order to watch such extraordinary play. The young officers quitted their sofas, and even the servants crowded into the room. All pressed round Hermann. The other players left off punting, impatient to see how it would end. Hermann stood

at the table, and prepared to play alone against the pale, but still smiling Chekalinsky. Each opened a pack of cards. Chekalinsky shuffled. Hermann took a card and covered it with a pile of bank-notes. It was like a duel. Deep silence reigned around.

Chekalinsky began to deal, his hands trembled. On the right a queen turned up, and on the left an ace.

"Ace has won!" cried Hermann, showing his card.

"Your queen has lost," said Chekalinsky, politely.

Hermann started; instead of an ace, there lay before him the queen of spades! He could not believe his eyes, nor could he understand how he had made such a mistake.

At that moment it seemed to him that the queen of spades smiled ironically, and winked her eye at him. He was struck by her remarkable resemblance….

"The old Countess!" he exclaimed, seized with terror. Chekalinsky gathered up his winnings. For some time Hermann remained perfectly motionless. When at last he left the table, there was a general commotion in the room.

"Splendidly punted!" said the players. Chekalinsky shuffled the cards afresh, and the game went on as usual.

* * * * *

Hermann went out of his mind, and is now confined in room number seventeen of the Oboukhoff Hospital. He never answers any questions, but he constantly mutters with unusual rapidity:

"Three, seven, ace! Three, seven, queen!"

Lizaveta Ivanovna has married a very amiable young man, a son of the former steward of the old Countess. He is in the service of the State somewhere, and is in receipt of a good income. Lizaveta is also supporting a poor relative.

Tomsky has been promoted to the rank of captain, and has become the husband of the Princess Pauline.

VERA JELIHOVSKY

THE GENERAL'S WILL

I

It happened in winter, just before the holidays. Ivan Feodorovitch Lobnitchenko, the lawyer, whose office is in one of the main streets of St. Petersburg, was called hurriedly to witness the last will and testament of one at the point of death. The sick man was not strictly a client of Ivan Feodorovitch; under other circumstances, he might have refused to make this late call, after a day's heavy toil … but the dying man was an aristocrat and a millionaire, and such as he meet no refusals, whether in life, or, much more, at the moment of death.

Lobnitchenko, taking a secretary and everything necessary, with a sigh scratched himself behind the ear, and thrusting aside the thought of the delightful evening at cards that awaited him, set out to go to the sick man.

General Iuri Pavlovitch Nasimoff was far gone. Even the most compassionate doctors did not give him many days to live, when he finally decided to destroy the will which he had made long ago, not in St. Petersburg, but in the provincial city where he had

played the Tsar for so many years. The general had come to the capital for a time, and had lain down—to rise no more.

This was the opinion of the physicians, and of most of those about him; the sick man himself was unwilling to admit it. He was a stalwart-hearted and until recently a stalwart-bodied old man, tall, striking, with an energetic face, and a piercing, masterful glance, hard to forget, even if you saw him only once.

He was lying on the sofa, in a richly furnished hotel suite, consisting of three of the best rooms. He received the lawyer gayly enough. He himself explained the circumstances to him, though every now and then compelled to stop by a paroxysm of pain, with difficulty repressing the groans which almost escaped him, in spite of all his efforts. During these heavy moments, Ivan Feodorovitch raised his eyes buried in fat to the sick man's face, and his plump little features were convulsed in sympathy with the sufferer's pain. As soon as the courageous old man, fighting hard with the paroxysms of pain, had got the better of them, taking his hands from his contorted face, and drawing a painful breath, he began anew to explain his will. Lobnitchenko dropped his eyes again and became all attention.

The general explained in detail to the lawyer. He had been married twice, and had three children, a son and a daughter from his first marriage, who had long ago reached adultship, and a nine-year-old daughter from his second marriage. His second wife and daughter he expected every day; they were abroad, but would soon return. His elder daughter would also probably come.

The lawyer was not acquainted with Nazimoff's family; indeed he had never before seen the general, though, like all Russia, he knew of him by repute. But judging from the tone of contempt or of pity with which he spoke of his second wife or her daughter, the lawyer guessed at once that the general's home life was not happy. The further explanations of the sick man convinced him of this. A new will was to be drawn up, directly contrary to the will signed six years before, which bequeathed to his second wife, Olga Vseslavovna, unlimited authority over their little daughter, and her husband's entire property. In the first will he had left nearly everything, with the exception of the family estate, which he did not feel justified in taking from his son, to his second wife and her daughter. Now he wished to restore to his elder children the rights which he had deprived them of, and especially to his eldest daughter, Anna Iurievna Borissova, who was not even mentioned in the first will. In the new will, with the exception of the seventh part, the widow's share, he divided the whole of his land and capital between his children equally; and he further appointed a strict guardianship over the property of his little daughter, Olga Iurievna.

The will was duly arranged, drawn up and witnessed, and after the three witnesses had signed it, it was left, by the general's wish, in his own keeping.

"I will send it to you to take care of," he said to the lawyer. "It will be safer in your hands than here, in my temporary quarters. But first I wish to read it to my wife, and … to my eldest daughter

… if she arrives in time."

The lawyer and the priest, who was one of the witnesses, were already preparing to take leave of the general, when voices and steps were heard in the corridor; a footman's head appeared through the door, calling the doctor hurriedly forth. It appeared that the general's lady had arrived suddenly, without letting anyone know by telegram that she was coming.

The doctor hastily slipped out of the room; he feared the result of emotion on the sick man, and wished to warn the general's wife of his grave danger, but the sick man noticed the move, and it was impossible to guard him against disturbance.

"What is going on there?" he asked. "What are you mumbling about, Edouard Vicentevitch? Tell me what is the matter? Is it my daughter?"

"Your excellency, I beg of you to take care of yourself!" the doctor was beginning, evidently quite familiar with the general's family affairs, and therefore dreading the meeting of husband and wife. "It is not Anna Iurievna…."

"Aha!" the sick man interrupted him; "she has come? Very well. Let her come in. Only the little one … I don't wish her to come … to-day."

Suffering was visible in his eyes, this time not bodily suffering.

The door opened, with the rustling of a silk dress. A tall, well-developed, and decidedly handsome woman appeared on the threshold. She glanced at the pain-stricken face, which smiled contemptuously toward her. In a moment she was beside the

general, kneeling beside him on the carpet, bending close to him, and pressing his hand, as she repeated in a despairing whisper:

"Oh, Georges! Georges! Is it really you, my poor friend?"

It would be hard to define the expression of rapidly changing emotions which passed over the sick man's face, which made his breast heave, and his great heart quiver and tremble painfully. Displeasure and pity, sympathy and contempt, anger and grief, all were expressed in the short, sharp, bitter laugh, and the few words which escaped his lips when he saw his little daughter timidly following her mother into his room.

"Do not teach her to lie!" and he nodded toward the child, and turned toward the wall, with an expression of pain and pity on his face. The lawyer and the priest hastened to take their leave and disappear.

"Ah! Sinners! sinners!" muttered the latter, as he descended the stairs.

"Things are not in good shape between them?" asked Lobnitchenko. "They don't get on well together?"

"How should they be in good shape, when he came here to get a divorce?" whispered the priest, shaping his fur cap. "But God decided otherwise. Even without a divorce, he will be separated forever from his wife!"

"I don't believe he is so very far gone. He is a stalwart old man.

Perhaps he will pull through," went on the man of law.

"God's hand is over all," answered the priest, shrugging his shoulders. And so they went their different ways.

II

"Olga!" cried the sick man, without turning round, and feeling near him the swift movement of his wife, he pushed her away with an impatient movement of his hand, and added, "Not you! my daughter Olga!"

"Olga! Go, my child, papa is calling you," cried the general's wife in a soft voice, in French, to the little girl, who was standing undecidedly in the center of the room.

"Can you not drop your foreign phrases?" angrily interrupted the general. "This is not a drawing-room! You might drop it, from a sense of decency."

His voice became shrill, and made the child shudder and begin to cry.

She went to him timidly.

The general looked at her with an expression of pain. He drew her toward him with his left hand, raising the right to bless her.

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!" he whispered, making the sign of the cross over her. "God guard you from evil, from every bad influence…. Be kind … honest … most of all, be honest! Never tell lies. God guard you from falsehood, from lying, even more than from sorrow!"

Tears filled the dying man's eyes. Little Olga shuddered from head to foot; she feared her father, and at the same time was so sorry for him. But pity got the upper hand. She clung to him,

wetting him with her tears. Her father raised his hand, wishing to make the sign of the cross once more over the little head which lay on his breast, but could not complete the gesture. His hand fell heavily, his face was once more contorted with pain; he turned to those who stood near him, evidently avoiding meeting his wife's eyes, and whispered:

"Take her away. It is enough. Christ be with her!" And for a moment he collected strength to place his hand on the child's head.

The doctor took the little girl by the hand, but her mother moved quickly toward her.

"Kiss him! Kiss papa's hand!" she whispered, "bid him good-by!"

The general's wife sobbed, and covered her face with her handkerchief, with the grand gesture of a stage queen. The sick man did not see this. At the sound of her voice he frowned and closed his eyes tight, evidently trying not to listen. The doctor led the little girl away to another room and gave her to her governess.

When he came back to the sick man the general, lying on the sofa, still in the same position, and without looking at his wife who stood beside his pillow, said to her:

"I expect my poor daughter Anna, who has suffered so much injustice through you…. I have asked her to forgive me. I shall pray her to be a mother to her little sister…. I have appointed her the child's guardian. She is good and honest … she will teach the child no evil. And this will be best for you also. You are provided

for. You will find out from the new will. You could not have had any profit from being her guardian. If Anna does not consent to take little Olga to live with her, and to educate her with her own children, as I have asked her, Olga will be sent to a school. You will prefer liberty to your daughter; it will be pleasanter for you. Is it not so?"

Contempt and bitter irony were perceptible in his voice. His wife did not utter a syllable. She remained so quiet that it might have been thought she did not even hear him, but for the convulsive movement of her lips, and of the fingers of her tightly clasped hands.

The doctor once more made a movement to withdraw discreetly, but the general's voice stopped him. "Edouard Vicentevitch? Is he here?"

"I am here, your excellency," answered the doctor, bending over the sick man. "Would not your excellency prefer to be carried to the bed? It will be more comfortable lying down."

"More comfortable to die?" sharply interrupted the general. "Why do you drivel? You know I detest beds and blankets. Drop it! Here, take this," and he gave him a sheet of crested paper folded in four, which was lying beside him. "Read it, please. Aloud! so that she may know."

He turned his eyes toward his wife. The doctor unwillingly began his unpleasant task. He was a man of fine feeling, and although he had no very high opinion of the general's wife, still she was a woman. And a beautiful woman. He would have

preferred that she should learn from someone else how many of the pleasures of life were slipping away from her, in virtue of the new will. But there was nothing for it but to do as he was ordered. It was always hard to oppose Iuri Pavlovitch; now it was quite impossible.

Olga Vseslavovna listened to the reading of the will with complete composure. She sat motionless, leaning back in an armchair, with downcast eyes, and only showing her emotion when her husband was no longer able to stifle a groan. Then she turned toward him her pale, beautiful face, with evident signs of heartfelt sympathy, and was even rising to come to his assistance. The sick man impatiently refused her services, significantly turning his eyes toward the doctor, who was reading his last will and testament, as though he would say: "Listen! Listen! It concerns you."

It did concern her, without a doubt. General Nazimoff's wife learned that, instead of an income of a hundred thousand a year, which she had had a right to expect, she could count only on a sum sufficient to keep her from poverty; what in her opinion was a mere pittance.

The doctor finished reading, coughing to hide his confusion, and slowly folded the document.

"You have heard?" asked the general, in a faint, convulsive voice.

"I have heard, my friend," quietly answered his wife.

"You have nothing to say?"

"What can I say? You have a right to dispose of what belongs to you…. But … still I…."

"Still you what?" sharply asked her husband.

"Still, I hope, my friend, that this is not your last will…."

General Nazimoff turned, and even made an effort to raise himself on his elbow.

"God willing, you will recover. Perhaps you will decide more than once to make other dispositions of your property," calmly continued his wife.

The sick man fell back on the pillows.

"You are mistaken. Even if I do not die, you will not be able to deceive me again. This is my last will!" he replied convulsively.

And with trembling hand he gave the doctor a bunch of keys.

"There is the dispatch box. Please open it, and put the will in."

The doctor obeyed his wish, without looking at Olga Vseslavovna. She, on her part, did not look at him. Shrugging her shoulders at her husband's last words, she remained motionless, noticing nothing except his sufferings. His sufferings, it seemed, tortured her.

Meanwhile the dying man followed the doctor with anxious eyes, and as soon as the latter closed the large traveling dispatch box he stretched out his hand to him for the keys.

"So long as I am alive, I will keep them!" he murmured, putting the bunch of keys away in his pocket. "And when I am dead, I intrust them to you, Edouard Vicentevitch. Take care of them, as a last service to me!" And he turned his face once more

to the wall.

"And now, leave me alone! The pain is less. Perhaps I shall go to sleep. Leave me!"

"My friend! Permit me to remain near you," the general's wife began, bending tenderly over her husband.

"Go!" he cried sharply. "Leave me in peace, I tell you!"

She rose, trembling. The doctor hastily offered her his arm. She left the room, leaning heavily on him, and once more covering her face with her handkerchief, in tragic style.

"Be calm, your excellency!" whispered the doctor sympathetically, only half conscious of what he was saying.

"These rooms have been prepared for you. You also need to rest, after such a long journey."

"Oh, I am not thinking about myself. I am so sorry for him. Poor, poor, senseless creature. How much I have suffered at his hands. He was always so suspicious, so hard to get on with. And whims and fantasies without end. You know, doctor, I have sometimes even thought he was not in full possession of his faculties."

"Hm!" murmured the doctor, coughing in confusion.

"Take this strange change of his will, for instance," the general's wife continued, not waiting for a clearer expression of sympathy. "Take his manner toward me. And for what reason?"

"Yes, it is very sad," murmured the doctor.

"Tell me, doctor, does he expect his son and daughter?"

"Only his daughter, Anna Iurievna. She promised to come,

with her oldest children. A telegram came yesterday. We have been expecting her all day."

"What is the cause of this sudden tenderness? They have not seen each other for ten years. Does he expect her husband, too? His son-in-law, the pedagogue?" contemptuously asked the general's wife.

"No! How could he come? He could not leave his service. And his son, too, Peter Iurevitch, he cannot come at once. He is on duty, in Transcaspia. It is a long way."

"Yes, it is a long way!" assented the general's wife, evidently busy with other thoughts. "But tell me, Edouard Vicentevitch, this new will, has it been written long?"

"It was drawn up only to-day. The draft was prepared last week, but the general kept putting it off. But when his pains began this morning…."

"Is it the end? Is it dangerous?" interrupted Olga Vseslavovna.

"Very—a very bad sign. When they began, Iuri Pavlovitch sent at once for the lawyer. He was still here when you arrived."

"Yes. And the old will, which he made before, has been destroyed?"

"I do not know for certain. But I think not. Oh, no, I forgot. The general was going to send a telegram."

"Yes? to send a telegram?"

The general's wife shrugged her shoulders, sadly shook her head, and added:

"He is so changeable! so changeable! But I think it is all the

same.

According to law, only the last will is valid?"

"Yes, without doubt; the last."

The general's wife bowed her head.

"What hurts me most," she whispered, with a bitter smile, bending close to the young doctor, and leaning heavily on his arm, "what hurts me most, is not the money. I am not avaricious. But why should he take my child away from me? Why should he pass over her own mother, and intrust her to her half-sister? A woman whom I do not know, who has not distinguished herself by any services or good actions, so far as I know. I shall not submit. I shall contest the will. The law must support the right of the mother. What do you think, doctor?"

The doctor hastily assented, though, to tell the truth, he was not thinking of anything at the moment, except the strange manner in which the general's wife, while talking, pressed close to her companion.

At that moment a bell rang, and the general's loud voice was heard:

"Doctor! Edouard Vicentevitch!"

"Coming!" answered the doctor.

And leaving Olga Vseslavovna at the threshold of her room, he ran quickly to the sick man.

"A vigorous voice—for a dying man! He shouts as he used to at the manoeuvers!" thought the general's wife.

And her handsome face at once grew dark with the hate

which stole over it. This was only a passing expression, however; it rapidly gave place to sorrow, when she saw the manservant coming from the sick man.

"What is the matter with your master, Yakov? Is he worse?"

"No, madam. God has been gracious. He told me to push the box nearer him, and ordered Edouard Vicentevitch to open it. He wants to send some telegram or other."

"Thank God, he is not worse. Yakov, I am going to send a telegram to the station myself, in a few minutes, by my coachman. You can give him the general's telegram, too."

"Very well, madam."

"And another thing. I shall not go to bed. If there is any change in your master's condition, Yakov, come and knock at my door at once. I beg of you, tell me the very moment anything happens. Here is something for you, Yakov;—you have grown thin, waiting upon your master!"

"I thank you most humbly, your excellency. We must not grudge our exertions," the man answered, putting a note of considerable value in his pocket.

III

Contrary to expectation, the night passed quietly enough. Emotion and weariness claimed their own; Olga Vseslavovna, in spite of all her efforts, fell into a sleep toward morning; and when she awoke, she started in dismay, noticing that the sun had

already climbed high in the sky, and was pouring into her room.

Her maid, a deft Viennese, who had remained with this accommodating mistress for five years, quieted her by telling her that the master was better, that he was still asleep, not having slept for the greater part of the night.

"The doctor and Yakov were busy with him most of the night," she explained. "They were sorting all sorts of papers; some of them they tied up, writing something on them; others they tore up, or threw into the fire. The grate is full of ashes. Yakov told me."

"And there were no more telegrams?"

"No, madam, there were no more. Yakov and our Friedrich would have let me know at once; I was there in the anteroom; they both kept coming through on errands."

"But there were no more telegrams, except the two that were sent last night."

Olga Vseslavovna dressed, breakfasted, and went to her husband. But at the threshold of his room she was stopped by the direction of the sick man to admit no one without special permission except the doctor, or his eldest daughter, if she should come.

"Tell Edouard Vicentevitch to come out to me," ordered the general's wife. The doctor was called, and in great confusion confirmed the general's orders.

"But perhaps he did not think that such an order could apply to me?" she said, astonished.

The doctor apologized, but had to admit that it was she who was intended, and that his excellency had sent word to her excellency that she should not give herself the trouble of visiting him.

"He is out of his mind," declared the general's wife quietly, but with conviction, shrugging her shoulders. "Why should he hate me so—for all my love to him, an old man, who might have been my father?"

And Olga Vseslavovna once more took refuge in her pocket handkerchief, this time, instead of tears, giving vent to sobs of vexation. The doctor, always shy in the presence of women, stood with hanging head and downcast eyes, as though he were to blame.

"What is it they are saying about you burning papers all night?" Olga Vseslavovna asked, in a weak voice.

"Oh, not nearly all night. Iuri Pavlovitch remembered that he ought to destroy some old letters and papers. There were some to be put in order. There, in the box, there is a packet addressed to your excellency. I was told to write the address."

"Indeed! Could I not see it?"

"Oh no, on no account. They are all locked up in the box along with the last will. And the general has the keys."

A bitter smile of humiliation played about the young woman's lips.

"So the new will has not been burned yet?" she asked.

And to the startled negative of the doctor, who repeated that

"it was lying on the top of the papers in the box," she added:

"Well, it will be burned yet. Do not fear. Especially if God in His mercy prolongs my husband's life. You see, he has always had a mysterious passion for writing new documents, powers of attorney, deeds of gift, wills, whatever comes into his mind. He writes new ones, and burns the old ones. But what can you do? We must submit to each new fancy. We cannot contradict a sick man."

Olga Vseslavovna went back to her room. She only left her bedroom for a few minutes that day, to hear the final word of the lights of the medical profession, who had come together for a general consultation in the afternoon; all the rest of the day she shut herself up. The conclusions of the physicians, though they differed completely in detail, were similar in the main, and far from comforting; the life and continued suffering of the sick man could not last more than a few days.

In the evening a telegram came from Anna Iurievna; she informed her father that she would be with him on the following day, at five in the afternoon.

"Shall I be able to hold out? Shall I last so long?" sighed the sick man, all day long. And the more he was disturbed in mind, the more threatening were his attacks of pain. He passed a bad night. Toward morning a violent attack, much worse than any that had gone before, almost carried him away. He could hardly breathe, owing to the sharp suffering. Hot baths for his hands and steam inhalations no longer had any beneficial effect, though

they had alleviated his pain hitherto.

The doctor, the Sister of Mercy, and the servant wore themselves out. But still, as before, his wife alone was not admitted to him. She raged with anger, trying, and not without success, to convince everyone that she was going mad with despair. Little Olga had been taken away on the previous day by a friend of the general's, to stay there "during this terrible time." That night Madame Nazimoff did not go to bed at all; and, as befitted a devoted wife, did not quit her husband's door. When the violent attack just before dawn quieted down, she made an attempt to go in to him; but no sooner did the sick man see her at the head of his couch, on which he had at last been persuaded to lie, than strong displeasure was expressed in his face, and, no longer able to speak, he made an angry motion of his hand toward her, and groaned heavily. The Sister of Mercy with great firmness asked the general's wife not to trouble the sick man with her presence.

"And I am to put up with this. I am to submit to all this?" thought Olga Vseslavovna, writhing with wrath. "To endure all this from him, and after his death to suffer beggary? No, a thousand times no! Better death than penury and such insults." And she fell into gloomy thought.

That gesture of displeasure at the sight of his wife was the last conscious act of Iuri Pavlovitch Nazimoff. At eight in the morning he lost consciousness, in the midst of violent suffering, which lasted until the end. By the early afternoon he was no more.

During the last hour of his agony his wife knelt beside his couch without let or hindrance, and wept inconsolably. The formidable aristocrat and millionaire was dead.

Everything went on along the usual lines. The customary stir and unceremonious bustle, instead of cautious whispering, rose around the dead body, in preparation for a fashionable funeral. No near relatives were present except his wife, and she was confined to her room, half-fainting, half-hysterical. All responsibility fell on the humble doctor, and he busied himself indefatigably, conscientiously, in the sweat of his brow, making every effort to omit nothing. But, as always happens, he omitted the most important thing of all. The early twilight was already descending on St. Petersburg, shrouded in chilly mist, when Edouard Vicentevitch Polesski struck his brow in despair; he had suddenly remembered the keys and the box, committed to his care by the dying man. At that moment, the body, dressed in full uniform, with all his regalia, was lying in the great, darkened room on a table, covered with brocade, awaiting the coffin and the customary wreaths. The doctor rushed into the empty bedroom. Everything in it was already in order; the bed stood there, without mattress or pillows. There was nothing on the dressing table, either.

Where were the keys? Where was the box? The box was standing as before, untouched, locked. His heart at once felt lighter. But the keys? No doubt the police would come in a few minutes. It was astonishing that they had not come already. They

would seal everything. Everything must be in order. Where was Yakov? Probably he had taken them. Or … the general's wife?

Polesski rushed to look for the manservant, but could not find him. There was so much to do; he had gone to buy something, to order something. "Oh Lord! And the announcement?" he suddenly remembered. It must be written at once, and sent to the newspapers. He must ask the general's wife, however, what words he should use. However much he might wish to avoid her, still she was now the most important person. And he could ask at the same time whether she had seen the keys.

The doctor went to the rooms of the general's wife. She was lying down, suffering severely, but she came out to him. "What words was he to use? It was all the same to her. 'With deep regret,' 'with heartfelt sorrow,' what did she care? The keys? What keys? No! she had not seen any keys, and did not know where they were. But why should he be disturbed about them? The servants were trustworthy; nothing would go astray."

"Yes, but we must have them ready for the police. They will come in a few minutes, to seal up the dead man's papers!"

"To seal up the papers? Why?"

"That is the law. So that everything should be intact, until after the last will and testament of the deceased has been read, according to his wishes."

General Nazimoff's wife paled perceptibly. She knew nothing of such an obstacle, and had not expected it. The doctor was too busy to notice her pallor.

"Very well; I shall write the announcement at once, and send it to the newspapers. I suppose 'Novoe Vremya' and 'Novosti' will be enough?"

"Do as you think best. Write it here, in my room. Here is everything you require; pens, paper. Write, and then read it to me. I shall be back in a moment. I want to put a bandage round my head. It aches so. Wait for me here." And the general's wife went from the sitting-room to her bedroom.

"Rita!" she whispered to her faithful maid, who was hurriedly sewing a mourning gown of crape for her. "Do not let the doctor go till I return. Do you understand? Do what you please, but do not let him go." The general's wife slipped from the bedroom into the passage through a small side door, and disappeared.

The two rooms between hers and the chamber where the dead man lay were quite empty and nearly dark; there were no candles in them. From the chamber came the feeble glimmer of the tiny lamps burning before the icons.[Sacred images.] The tapers were not lit yet, as the deacon had not yet arrived. He was to come at the same time as the priest and the coffin. For the moment there was no one near the dead man; in the anteroom sat the Sister of Mercy.

"You wish to pray?" she asked the general's wife.

"Yes, I shall pray there, in his room."

She slipped past the dead body without looking at it, to the room that had been the general's bedroom, and closed the door behind her. She was afraid to lock it, and after all, was it

necessary? It would only take a moment. There it is, the box! She knows it of old! And she knows its key of old, too; it is not so long since her husband had no secrets from her.

The key was quickly slipped into the lock, and the lid rose quickly. The paper? That new, detestable paper, which might deprive her of everything. Ah! there it is!

To close the lid quickly, and turn the key in the lock; to hide the keys somewhere; here, between the seat and the back of the sofa, on which he lay. That's it!

A sigh of relief from fear escaped the beautiful lips of the handsome woman, lips which were pale through those terrible days. She could feel secure at last!

She must look at the document, the proof of his cruelty, his injustice, his stupidity! She must make sure that there was no mistake! Olga Vseslavovna went up to the window, and taking advantage of the last ray of the gray day, unfolded the will.

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!" she read.

Yes, that is it, the will.

"How he pronounced those same words, when he was blessing little Olga," she remembered. "Blessing her! And his hand did not tremble, when he signed this. To deprive her, to deprive them both, of everything, all on account of those hated people? But now—it should never be! On no account! Your down-at-the-heel pedagogue shall not strut about in peacock's feathers! Olga and I … require the money more!"

And the general's wife was tempted to snap her fingers in triumph in the direction of the dead man.

Suddenly, quite close to the door, the sound of steps was heard. Good heavens! And she held the big sheet of crested paper in her hand!

Where could she put it? She had no time to think of folding it up.

There! they are coming in already! Who can it be?

And the will lay on the floor, the general's wife kneeling on it, as on a prayer carpet, in an attitude of prayer, her clasped hands on the window sill, her wet eyes fixed on a faintly twinkling star, as though calling heaven to witness her inconsolable grief and bereavement.

It was only the Sister of Mercy.

"Madam, the people have come, bringing the coffin; and I think the police have also come."

"Yes, in a moment. Tell them I am coming immediately."

The Sister of Mercy went out.

"See how she loved her husband. And why was he so unjust to her at the last?" she involuntarily reproached the dead general.

Meanwhile the general's wife had risen hastily, folded the will as best she could, in four, in eight folds, and crushing it together in her hand, went quietly from the room, which now filled her with dread.

She was so confused that she did not even think of looking for her pocket; she simply held her packet tight, and let her hand

hang down, hiding it in the folds of her wide dressing-gown. There seemed to be so many people in the room which a moment before was empty, that she felt cowed. Her heart beat pitilessly, and the blood throbbed so violently in her temples that she could not understand what was said to her. They were asking her if they might place the body in the coffin, which had already been placed beside it. Her silence was taken as consent. The skilful undertakers easily lifted the already rigid body.

Olga Vseslavovna stood at the head of the dead general. Among the crowd of undertakers and servants, she suddenly saw coming toward her, with outstretched hand, and with tears of compassion in her eyes, the Princess Ryadski, the same aristocratic kinswoman who had already taken little Olga to stay with her.

"I must shake hands with her! And that horrible packet is in my hand! Where shall I put it? How can I hide it?" Before her eyes gleamed the brilliantly lighted, ashen forehead of the dead man, helplessly bent backward and sideways, as the whole body was suspended in the hands of the undertakers, over its last abode.

A saving thought!

The general's wife bent gently over the dead body. She gently supported the head of the corpse, gently laid it on the satin cushion, straightened the frills which surrounded the hard pillow, and, unperceived, left under it the twisted roll of paper.

"It will be safer there!" The thought flashed through her mind.

"He wanted to keep his will himself; well, keep it to eternity, now! What more can you ask?"

And it even seemed ludicrous to her. She could hardly restrain a smile of triumph, changing it into a sad smile of grief, in reply to her kinswoman's condolences. The coffin was already lying in state on the bier; it was covered with brocade and flowers. The princess, as kinswoman of the late general, bent low, and first laid on the dead body the wreath she had brought with her.

"The poor sufferer has entered into rest," she whispered, shaking her head. "Will the funeral service be soon? Where will it be? Where is Olga Vseslavovna?"

"She will be here in a moment," the Sister of Mercy whispered, deeply affected; "she has gone to fix herself. They will begin the funeral service in a few minutes, and she is all in disorder. She is in great grief. Will you not take a seat?"

"What? Sit down? Thank you," loftily replied the princess. And she went toward a dignified personage who was entering, adorned with many orders and an aristocratic beard.

The general's wife soon came to herself. "Rita! I must wash and dress as quickly as possible. Ah! pray forgive me, doctor! They called me away to my husband. They were placing him in the coffin." She sighed deeply. "What is this? Oh, yes, the announcement of his death. Very good. Send it, please. But I must dress at once. The funeral service will begin immediately."

"Doctor! Is the doctor here?" an anxious voice sounded in the corridor.

"I am coming! What is it?"

"Please come quick, Edouard Vicentevitch!" Yakov called him. "The lady is very ill downstairs; Anna Iurievna, the general's daughter! I was out to order the flowers; I come back, and see the lady lying in a faint in the entrance. She had just arrived, and asked; and they answered her that he was dead, without the slightest preparation! And she could not bear it, and fainted."

Yakov said all this as they went.

"Actress!" angrily thought Olga Vseslavovna. And immediately she added mentally, "Well, she may stand on her head now, it is all the same to me!"

IV

Whether it was all the same to her or not, the deep despair of the daughter, who had not been in time to bid her father farewell, had not been in time to receive his blessing, after many years of anger, which had borne heavily on the head of the blameless young woman, was so evidently sincere, and produced such a deep impression on everyone, that her stepmother also was moved.

Anna Iurievna resembled her father, as much as a young, graceful, pretty woman can resemble an elderly man with strongly-marked features and athletic frame, such as was General Nazimoff. But in spite of the delicacy of her form, and the gentleness of her eyes, her glance sometimes flashed fire in a

manner very like the flashing eyes of her father, and in her strong will, firm character, and inflexible adherence to what she believed to be necessary and right, Anna was exactly like her father.

For nearly ten years his daughter had obediently borne his anger; from the day of her marriage to the man she loved, whom evil-minded people had succeeded in calumniating in the general's mind. Though writing incessantly to him, begging him to pardon her, to understand that he had made a mistake, that her husband was a man of honor, and that she would be fully and perfectly happy, but for the burden of her father's wrath, and of the separation from him, she had never until the last few weeks received a reply from him. But quite recently something mysterious had happened. Not only had her father written to her that he wished to see her and her children in St. Petersburg, whither he was just setting out, but a few days later he had written again, a long, tender letter, in which he had asked her forgiveness. Without giving any explanations, he said that he had received indubitable proofs of the innocence and chivalrous honor of her husband; that he felt himself deeply guilty toward him, and was miserable on account of the injustice he had committed. In the following letters, praying his daughter to hasten her coming, because he was dangerously ill, and the doctors thought could not last long, he filled her with astonishment by expressing his intention to make a new will, and his determination to separate his youngest daughter "from such a mother," and by his prayers

to her and her husband not to refuse to take upon themselves little Olga's education.

"What had happened? How could that light-minded woman have so deeply wounded my father?" Anna asked in bewilderment.

"If she was merely light-minded!" her husband answered, shrugging his shoulders. "But she is so malicious, so crafty, and so daring that anything may be expected from her."

"But in that case there would be an open scandal. We would know something for certain. Nowadays they even relate such stories in the newspapers, and my father is so well known, so noteworthy!"

"That is just why they don't write about him!" answered Borisoff, her husband, smiling. He himself flatly refused to go to St. Petersburg. With horror he remembered the first year of his marriage, before he had succeeded in obtaining a transfer to another city, and was compelled to meet the woman he detested; compelled also to meet his father-in-law, a wise and honorable old man, who had fallen so completely into the toils of this crafty woman. Anna Iurievna knew that her husband despised her stepmother; that he detested her as the cause of all the grief which they had had to endure through her, and most of all, on account of the injustice she was guilty of toward her brother, the general's son.

For six years Borisoff had lived with young Peter Nazimoff, as his tutor and teacher, and loved him sincerely. The boy had

already reached the highest class at school, when his sister, two years older than he, finished her schooling, and returned to her father's house, about the time of the general's second marriage. What the young tutor tried not to notice and to endure, for love of his pupil, in the first year of the general's second marriage, became intolerable when the general's daughter returned home, and to all the burden of his difficult position was added the knowledge of their mutual love. He proceeded frankly, and the whole matter was soon settled. But the young man had never uttered a syllable as to the cause of Madame Nazimoff's hatred for him. For the sake of his father-in-law's peace of mind, he sincerely hoped that he would never know. Anna was convinced that the whole cause of her step-mother's hostility was her prejudice against what was in her opinion a *mesalliance*. In part she was right, but the chief reason of this hostility remained forever a secret to her. Unfortunately, it was not equally a secret to her father.

Of late years he had gradually been losing faith in his second wife's character. It went so far that the general felt much more at ease when she was away. Before the last illness of Iuri Pavlovitch, which, to tell the truth, was almost his first, Olga Vseslavovna had gone abroad with her daughter, intending to travel for a year; but she had hardly been gone two months when the general unexpectedly determined to go to St. Petersburg to seek a divorce, to see his elder daughter, and change his will. Perhaps he would never have determined on such decisive measures had

not something wholly unexpected taken place.

Borisoff was quite mistaken in thinking that he had so carefully destroyed all the letters which the general's young wife had written to him, before his marriage to Anna, that no material evidence of Olga Vseslavovna's early design of treachery remained. Even before she married the general, she had had a confidential servant, who carried out many commissions for the beautiful young woman, whose fame had gone abroad through the three districts along the Volga, the arena of her early triumphs. Later, the young lady found a new favorite in foreign lands—the same Rita who was still with her. Martha, the Russian confidential servant, heartily detested the German girl, and such strife arose between them that not only the general's wife, but even the general himself, was deprived of peace and tranquillity. Martha was no fool; Olga Vseslavovna had to be careful with her; she did take care, but she herself did not know to what an extent she was in the woman's power. Foreseeing a black day of ingratitude, Martha, with wonderful forethought, had put on one side one or two letters from each series of her mistress' secret correspondence, which always passed through her hands. Perhaps she would not have made such a bad use of them but for her mistress' last, intolerable insult. Prizing in her servants, next to swift obedience, a knowledge of languages, her mistress did not make use of her when travelling abroad; but hitherto she had taken both servants with her. But on her last journey she was so heartily tired of Martha, and her perpetual tears and quarrels,

that she determined to get on without her, the more so that her daughter's governess was also traveling with her. Her company was growing too numerous.

There was no limit to Martha's wrath when she learned that she was going to be left behind. Her effrontery was so great that she advised her mistress "for her own sake" not to put such an affront upon her, since she would not submit to it without seeking revenge. But her mistress never dreamed of what Martha was planning, and what a risk she ran.

Hardly had the general's wife departed when Martha asked the general to let her leave, saying she would find work elsewhere. The general saw no way of keeping her; and he did not even wish to do so, thinking her only a quarrelsome, ill-tempered woman. The confidential servant left the house, and even the city. And immediately her revenge and torture of the general began, cutting straight at the root of his happiness, his health, even his life. He began to receive, almost daily, letters from different parts of Russia, for Martha had plenty of friends and chums. With measureless cruelty Martha began by sending the less important documents, still signed with her mistress' maiden name; then two or three letters from the series of the most recent times, and finally there came a whole packet of those sent by the general's wife to the tutor, in the first year of her marriage with the general, before Borisoff had met Anna.

The crafty Martha, knowing perfectly the whole state of affairs to which these letters referred, often copied out their

contents, and kept the letters themselves concealed, saying to herself, "God knows what may turn up, some day!

"If they are no use, I can burn them. But they may be useful. It is always a good thing to keep our masters in our power," argued the sagacious woman, and she was not mistaken in her calculations, although these letters served not for her profit, but only for a sanguinary revenge.

These notes and letters, which finally opened his eyes to the true character of his wife, and his own crying injustice to his elder children, were now lying in the general's dispatch box, in a neatly tied packet, directed in the doctor's handwriting to "Her Excellency Olga Vseslavovna Nazimoff."

As soon as she received her father's first letter Anna began to get ready to go to St. Petersburg, but unfortunately she was kept back by the sickness, first of one child, then of another. But for his last telegrams, she would not have started even now, because she did not realize the dangerous character of his illness. But now, finding that she had come too late, the unhappy woman could not forgive herself.

Everyone was grieved to see her bitter sorrow, after the funeral service for her father. Princess Ryadski burst into tears, as she looked at her; and all the acquaintances and relations of the general were far more disturbed by her despair than by the general's death. Olga Vseslavovna was secretly scandalized at such lack of self-control, but outwardly she seemed greatly touched and troubled by the situation of her poor stepdaughter.

But she did not venture to express her sympathy too openly in the presence of others, remembering the words of "the crazy creature" when she had come to herself after her fainting fit, and her stepmother had hurried up to embrace her.

"Leave me!" Anna had cried, when she saw her. "I cannot bear to see you! You killed my father!"

It was well that there were only servants in the ante-room. But the general's wife did not wish to risk another such scene, now that so many people were present. And besides she was extremely disturbed; the friends who had come to the funeral service had brought flowers; and the half-crazy princess, with the aid of two other ladies, had taken a fancy to decorate the coffin, and especially the head, with them. It is impossible to describe what Olga Vseslavovna suffered, as she watched all those hands moving about among the folds of the muslin, the frills, the covering, almost under the satin cushion even; a little more and she would have fainted in earnest.

She had always boasted that she had strong nerves, and this was quite true; nevertheless, during these days, their strength was evidently giving way, as she could not get to sleep for a long time that night, and heaven only knows what fancies passed through her mind. It was almost morning before Olga Vseslavovna got to sleep, and even then it was not for long.

She dreamed that she was descending endless stairs and dark corridors, with a heavy, shapeless burden on her shoulders. A bright, constantly-changing flame flickered before her; now red,

now yellow, now green, it flitted before her from side to side. She knew that if she could reach it, the burden would fall from her. But the light seemed to be taunting her, now appearing, now disappearing, and suddenly going out altogether. And she found herself in the darkness, in a damp cellar, seemingly empty, but filled with something's invisible presence. What was it? She did not know. But this pervading something frightened her terribly, smothered her, pressing on her from all sides, depriving her of air. She was choking! Terror seized her at the thought that it … was Death! Must she die? Was it possible? But that brightly shining light had just promised her life, gayety, brilliance! She must hurry to overtake it. And she tried to run. But her feet would not obey her; she could not move.

"Heaven! Heaven!" she cried, "but what is it? Whence has such a disaster come? What is holding me? Let me go, or I shall be smothered in this stench, under this intolerable burden!"

Suddenly Iuri Pavlovitch walked past her. She immediately recognized him, and joyfully caught at his cloak. "Iuri! Forgive me! Help me!" she cried.

Her husband stopped, looked sadly at her, and answered: "I would gladly help you, but you yourself hinder me. Let me go; I must fulfill your directions."

At that moment she awoke. She was bathed in a cold perspiration, and clutched wildly at the coverlet with both hands. There was no one near her, but she clearly felt someone's presence, and was convinced that she had really seen her husband

a moment before. In her ears resounded his words: "I must fulfill your directions!" Directions? What directions?

She sprang up, and began to feel about over the carpet with her bare feet, looking for her slippers. A terrible thought had come into her mind. She felt that she must settle it at once. She must take the will, take it away from there! burn it! destroy it! She feverishly drew on her dressing gown, and threw a shawl over her shoulders.

"Rita! Get up quick! Quick! Come!"

The frightened maid rose, still half asleep, and rubbed her eyes, understanding nothing. Her mistress' ice-cold hands clutched her, and dragged her somewhere.

"Ach lieber Gott … Gott in Himmel!" she muttered. "What has happened? What do you want?"

"Hush! Come quick!" And Olga Vseslavovna, with a candle in her trembling hand, went forward, dragging the trembling Rita with her. She opened the door of her bedroom, and went out. All the doors were open *en suite*, and straight in front of her, in the center of the fourth, shone the coffin of her husband, covered with cloth of gold and lit up by the tall tapers standing round the bier.

"What does it mean?" whispered the general's wife. "Why have they opened all the doors?"

"I do not know … they were all closed last night," murmured the maid in reply, her teeth chattering with fear. She longed to ask her mistress whither they were going, and what for? She wanted

to stop, and not enter the funeral chamber; but she was afraid to speak.

They passed quickly through the rooms; at the door of the last the general's wife set her candle down on a chair, and halted for a moment. The loud snoring of the reader startled them both.

"It is the deacon!" whispered the general's wife reassuringly. Rita had hardly strength to nod assent. All the same, the healthy snoring of a living man comforted her. Without moving from where she stood, the maid tremblingly drew her woolen shawl closer about her, trying to see the sofa on which the deacon lay.

Knitting her brows, and biting her lips till they were sore, Olga Vseslavovna went forward determinedly to the bier. She thrust both hands under the flowers on the pillow. The frill was untouched. The satin of the cushion was there, but where was …? Her heart, that had been beating like a hammer, suddenly stopped and stood still. There was not a trace of the will!

"Perhaps I have forgotten. Perhaps it was on the other side," thought Olga Vseslavovna, and went round to the left side of the coffin.

No! It was not there, either! Where was it? Who could have taken it? Suddenly her heart failed her utterly, and she clutched at the edge of the coffin to keep herself from falling. It seemed to her that under the stiff, pallid, rigidly clasped hands of the dead general something gleamed white through the transparent muslin of the covering, something like a piece of paper.

"Nonsense! Self-suggestion! It is impossible! Hallucination!"

The thought flashed through her tortured brain. She forced herself to be calm, and to look again.

Yes! She had not been mistaken. The white corner of a folded paper appeared clearly against the general's dark uniform. At the same moment a cold draught coming from somewhere set the tapers flickering. Shadows danced around the room, over the bier, across the dead man's face; and in the quick change of light and shadow it seemed to her that the rigid features became more living, that a mournful smile formed itself on the closed lips, that the tightly-shut eyelids quivered. A wild cry rang through the whole room. With a desperate shriek: "His eyes! He is looking at me!" the general's wife staggered forward and fell fainting to the floor, beside her husband's bier.

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The deacon sprang from his sofa with a cry, and an answering cry came from the lips of the shivering Rita, as she fled from the room. Servants rushed in, rubbing their eyes, still half-asleep, questioning each other, running this way and that. The deacon, spurred by a feeling of guilt, was determined to conceal the fact that he was sleeping. "It was the lady!" he said. "She came in to pray; she told me to stop reading while she prayed. She knelt down. Then she prayed for a long time, and suddenly … suddenly she cried out, and fainted. Grief, brothers! It is terrible! To lose such a husband!" and he set them to work with restoratives,

himself rubbing the fallen woman's chilly hands.

The general's wife opened her eyes after a few minutes.

Looking wildly round in bewilderment, she seemed to be wondering where she was and how she had come there. Suddenly she remembered.

"The will! In his hands! Take it!" she cried, and fainted again. By this time the whole household was awake. Anna Iurievna had come in, full of astonishment at the sudden disturbance, but with the same feeling of deep quiet and peace still filling her heart and giving her features an expression of joy and calm. She heard the cry of the general's wife, and the words were recorded in her mind, though she did not at first give them any meaning.

She set herself, with all the tenderness of a good woman, to minister to the other's need, sending her own maid for sal volatile, chafing the fainting woman's hands, and giving orders that a bed should be prepared for her in another room, further away from the bier. As she spoke, quietly, gravely, with authority, the turmoil gradually subsided. The frightened servants recovered themselves, and moved about with the orderly obedience they ordinarily showed; and the deacon, above all anxious to cover his negligence, began intoning the liturgy, lending an atmosphere of solemnity to the whole room.

The servants, returning to announce that the bedroom was ready, were ordered by Anna Iurievna to lift the fainting woman with all care and gentleness, and she herself went with them to see the general's wife safely bestowed in her room, and

waited while the doctor did all in his power to make her more comfortable. Olga Vseslavovna did not at once recover consciousness. She seemed to pass from a faint into an uneasy slumber, which, however, gradually became more quiet.

Only then, as she was leaving the room, did Anna Iurievna bethink her of the strange words that had fallen on her ears: "The will! In his hands! Take it!" And repeating them questioningly to herself, she walked slowly back toward the room in which lay her father's body.

But she was even more occupied with her own thoughts. She no longer felt in her heart the bitter resentment toward Olga Vseslavovna that had filled it yesterday. She was conscious of a feeling of sorrow for the helpless woman, of compassion for her empty, shallow life, the fruit of an empty, shallow heart. And she was wondering why such empty, joyless lives should exist in a world where there was such deep happiness and joy.

She came over to her father's coffin, close to which the deacon was still droning out his liturgy, and stood beside the dead body, looking down at the strong, quiet face, and vividly recalling her dream of the night before. Her eyes rested on the many stars and medals on his breast, and on his hands, quietly clasped in death. Then suddenly, and quite mechanically, Olga Vseslavovna's cry, as she returned to consciousness, came back into her mind:

"The will! In his hands! Take it!" And bending down, she noted for the first time something white beneath the muslin canopy. As she scrutinized it wonderingly, she was conscious of

an humble, apologetic voice murmuring something at her elbow:

"Forgive me, Anna Iurievna. I humbly beg you, forgive me! It was I … in the night … the flowers fell …. I was putting them back … fixing the head of your sainted papa …. It was under his head, the paper … I thought he wanted to keep it …. I put it in his hands, to be safe! … Forgive me, Anna Iurievna, if I have done any harm."

It was the deacon, still oppressed by a feeling of guilt. Anna. Iurievna turned to him, and then turned back again, to her father's body, to the white object shining under the muslin canopy. And once more Olga Vseslavovna's words came into her mind:

"The will! In his hands! Take it!"

Gently raising the canopy, she softly drew the paper from beneath the general's clasped hands, and unfolded it. She read no more than the opening words, but she had read enough to realize that it was, indeed, her father's will.

FEODOR MIKHAILOVITCH DOSTOYEVSKY

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT[3]

One sultry evening early in July a young man emerged from the small furnished lodging he occupied in a large five-storied house in the Pereoulok S–, and turned slowly, with an air of indecision, toward the K–bridge. He was fortunate enough not to meet his landlady on the stairs. She occupied the floor beneath him, and her kitchen, with its usually open door, was entered from the staircase. Thus, whenever the young man went out, he found himself obliged to pass under the enemy's fire, which always produced a morbid terror, humiliating him and making

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[3] (At the risk of shocking the reader, it has been decided that the real permanent detective stories of the world were ill represented without Dostoyevsky's terrible tale of what might be called "self-detection." If to sensitive readers the story seems so real as to be hideous, it is well to recall that Dostoyevsky in 1849 under-went the agony of sentence to death as a revolutionist. Although the sentence was commuted to hard labor in Siberia, and although six years later he was freed and again took up his writing, his mind never rose from beneath the weight of horror and hopelessness that hangs over offenders against the Great White Czar. Dostoyevsky, sentenced as a criminal, herded with criminals, really *became* a criminal in literary imagination. Add to this a minute observation, a marvelous memory, ardent political convictions—and we can understand why the story here, with others of his, is taken as a scientific text by criminologists.—EDITOR.)

him knit his brows. He owed her some money and felt afraid of encountering her.

It was not that he had been terrified or crushed by misfortune, but that for some time past he had fallen into a state of nervous depression akin to hypochondria. He had withdrawn from society and shut himself up, till he was ready to shun, not merely his landlady, but every human face. Poverty had once weighed him down, though, of late, he had lost his sensitiveness on that score. He had given up all his daily occupations. In his heart of hearts he laughed scornfully at his landlady and the extremities to which she might proceed. Still, to be waylaid on the stairs, to have to listen to all her jargon, hear her demands, threats, and complaints, and have to make excuses and subterfuges in return —no, he preferred to steal down without attracting notice. On this occasion, however, when he had gained the street, he felt surprised himself at this dread of meeting the woman to whom he was in debt.

"Why should I be alarmed by these trifles when I am contemplating such a desperate deed?" thought he, and he gave a strange smile. "Ah, well, man holds the remedy in his own hands, and lets everything go its own way, simply through cowardice— that is an axiom. I should like to know what people fear most: —whatever is contrary to their usual habits, I imagine. But I am talking too much. I talk and so I do nothing, though I might just as well say, I do nothing and so I talk. I have acquired this habit of chattering during the last month, while I have been lying for days

together in a corner, feeding my mind on trifles. Come, why am I taking this walk now? Am I capable of *that*? Can *that* really be serious? Not in the least. These are mere chimeras, idle fancies that flit across my brain!"

The heat in the streets was stifling. The crowd, the sight of lime, bricks, scaffolding, and the peculiar odor so familiar to the nostrils of the inhabitant of St. Petersburg who has no means of escaping to the country for the summer, all contributed to irritate the young man's already excited nerves. The reeking fumes of the dram shops, so numerous in this part of the city, and the tipsy men to be seen at every point, although it was no holiday, completed the repulsive character of the scene. Our hero's refined features betrayed, for a moment, an expression of bitter disgust. We may observe casually that he was not destitute of personal attractions; he was above middle height, with a slender and well-proportioned figure, and he had dark auburn hair and fine dark eyes. In a little while he sank into a deep reverie, or rather into a sort of mental torpor. He walked on without noticing, or trying to notice, his surroundings. Occasionally he muttered a few words to himself; as if, as he himself had just perceived, this had become his habit. At this moment it dawned upon him that his ideas were becoming confused and that he was very feeble; he had eaten nothing worth mentioning for the last two days.

His dress was so miserable that anyone else might have scrupled to go out in such rags during the daytime. This quarter

of the city, indeed, was not particular as to dress. In the neighborhood of the Cyennaza or Haymarket, in those streets in the heart of St. Petersburg, occupied by the artisan classes, no vagaries in costume call forth the least surprise. Besides the young man's fierce disdain had reached such a pitch, that, notwithstanding his extreme sensitiveness, he felt no shame at exhibiting his tattered garments in the street. He would have felt differently had he come across anyone he knew, any of the old friends whom he usually avoided. Yet he stopped short on hearing the attention of passers-by directed to him by the thick voice of a tipsy man shouting: "Eh, look at the German hatter!" The exclamation came from an individual who, for some unknown reason, was being jolted away in a great wagon. The young man snatched off his hat and began to examine it. It was a high-crowned hat that had been originally bought at Zimmermann's, but had become worn and rusty, was covered with dents and stains, slit and short of a brim, a frightful object in short. Yet its owner, far from feeling his vanity wounded, was suffering rather from anxiety than humiliation.

"I suspected this," muttered he, uneasily, "I foresaw it. That's the worst of it! Some wretched trifle like this might spoil it all. Yes, this hat is certainly too remarkable; it looks so ridiculous. I must get a cap to suit my rags; any old thing would be better than this horror. Hats like these are not worn; this one would be noticeable a *verst*[4] off; it would be remembered; people would

[4] 1,000 yards.

think of it again some time after, and it might furnish a clew. I must attract as little attention as possible just now. Trifles become important, everything hinges on them."

He had not far to go; he knew the exact distance between his lodging and present destination—just seven hundred and thirty paces. He had counted them when his plan only floated through his brain like a vague dream. At that time, he himself would not have believed it capable of realization; he merely dallied in fancy with a chimera which was both terrible and seductive. But a month had elapsed, and he had already begun to view it in a different light. Although he reproached himself throughout his soliloquies with irresolution and a want of energy, he had accustomed himself, little by little, and, indeed, in spite of himself, to consider the realization of his dream a possibility, though he doubted his own resolution. He was but just now rehearsing his enterprise, and his agitation was increasing at every step.

His heart sank, and his limbs trembled nervously, as he came to an immense pile of building facing the canal on one side and the street on the other. This block was divided into a host of small tenements, tenanted by all sorts of trades. People were swarming in and out through the two doors. There were three or four *dvorniks*[5] belonging to the house, but the young man, to his great satisfaction, came across none of them, and, escaping notice as he entered, mounted at once the stairs on the right hand.

[5] Janitors.

He had already made acquaintance with this dark and narrow staircase, and its obscurity was grateful to him; it was gloomy enough to hide him from prying eyes. "If I feel so timid now, what will it be when I come to put my plan into execution?" thought he, as he reached the fourth floor. Here he found the passage blocked; some military porters were removing the furniture from a tenement recently occupied, as the young man knew, by a German official and his family. "Thanks to the departure of this German, for some time to come there will be no one on this landing but the old woman. It is as well to know this, at any rate," thought he to himself, as he rang the old woman's bell. It gave a faint sound, as if it were made of tin instead of copper. In houses of this sort, the smaller lodgings generally have such bells.

He had forgotten this; the peculiar tinkling sound seemed to recall something to his memory, for he gave a shiver—his nerves were very weak. In another moment the door was opened part way, and the occupant of the rooms stood examining her visitor through the opening with evident suspicion, her small eyes glimmering through the darkness like luminous points. But when she saw the people on the landing, she seemed reassured, and flung the door open. The young man entered a gloomy ante-chamber, divided by a partition, behind which was a small kitchen. The old woman stood silently in front of him, eying him keenly. She was a thin little creature of sixty, with a small sharp nose, and eyes sparkling with malice. Her head was uncovered, and her grizzled locks shone with grease. A strip of flannel was

wound round her long thin neck, and, in spite of the heat, she wore a shabby yellow fur tippet on her shoulders. She coughed incessantly. The young man was probably eying her strangely, for the look of mistrust suddenly reappeared on her face.

"The Student Raskolnikoff. I called on you a month ago," said the visitor, hurriedly, with a slight bow. He had suddenly remembered that he must make himself more agreeable.

"I remember, *batuchka*, I remember it well," returned the old woman, still fixing her eyes on him suspiciously.

"Well, then, look here. I have come again on a similar errand," continued Raskolnikoff, somewhat surprised and uneasy at being received with so much distrust. "After all, this may be her usual manner, though I did not notice it before," thought he, unpleasantly impressed.

The old woman remained silent a while, and seemed to reflect. Then, pointing to the door of the inner room, she drew back for her visitor to pass, and said, "Come in, *batuchka.*"[6]

The small room into which the young man was ushered was papered with yellow; there were geraniums and muslin curtains in the windows, and the setting sun shed a flood of light on the interior. "The sun will shine on it just the same *then*!" said Raskolnikoff all at once to himself, as he glanced rapidly round to take in the various objects and engrave them on his memory. The room, however, contained nothing remarkable. The yellow wood furniture was all very old. A couch with a shelving back, opposite

[6] little father

which stood an oval table, a toilet-table with a pier glass attached, chairs lining the walls, and two or three poor prints representing German girls with birds in their hands, completed the inventory. A lamp was burning in one corner in front of a small image. The floor and furniture were clean and well polished. "Elizabeth attends to that," thought the young man. It would have been difficult to find a speck of dust on anything. "It is only in the houses of these dreadful old widows that such order is to be seen," continued Raskolnikoff to himself, looking with curiosity at the chintz curtain overhanging the door which led into a second small room, in which he had never set foot; it contained the old woman's bed and chest of drawers. The apartment consisted of these two rooms.

"What is it you want?" asked the mistress of the house dryly; she had followed her visitor in, and planted herself in front of him to examine him more closely.

"I have come to pawn something, that is all!" With this he drew from his pocket a flat old silver watch. A globe was engraved inside the lid, and the chain was of steel.

"But you have not repaid the sum I lent you before. It was due two days ago."

"I will pay you the interest for another month; have a little patience."

"I may have patience or I may sell your pledge at once, *batuchka*, just whichever I like."

"What will you give me on this watch, Alena Ivanovna?"

"That is a wretched thing, *batuchka*, worth a mere nothing. Last time I lent you two small notes on your ring, when I could have bought a new one at the jeweler's for a ruble and a half."

"Give me four rubles, and I will redeem it; it belonged to my father.

I expect some money soon."

"A ruble and a half! and I shall take the interest in advance."

"A ruble and a half!" protested the young man.

"Please yourself whether you take it or not." So saying, the old woman tendered back the watch. Her visitor took it and was about to depart in vexation, when he reflected that this money lender was his last resource—and, besides, he had another object in coming.

"Come, fork out!" said he in a rough tone.

The old woman fumbled in her pockets for her keys, and passed on into the adjoining room. The young man, left standing there alone, pricked up his ears and began to make various inductions. He heard this female usurer open her drawer. "It must be the top one," was his conclusion. "I know now that she carries her keys in her right pocket—they are all hung on a steel ring—one of them is three times as large as the rest, and has the wards toothed; that cannot be the key of her drawer—then she must have some strong box or safe. It is curious that the keys of strong boxes should be generally like that—but, after all, how ignoble!"

The old woman reappeared. "See here, *batuchka*: if I take a ten-kopeck piece a month on each ruble, I ought to receive

fifteen kopecks on a ruble and a half, the interest being payable in advance. Then, as you ask me to wait another month for the repayment of the two rubles I have already lent you, you owe me twenty kopecks more, which makes a total of five and thirty. What, therefore, I have to advance upon your watch is one ruble fifteen kopecks. Here it is."

"What! Is one ruble fifteen kopecks all you mean to give me now?"

"That is all that is due to you."

The young man took the money without further discussion. He looked at the old woman and was in no haste to depart. He seemed anxious to say or do something more, but without knowing exactly what. "Perhaps I may be bringing you some other article soon, Alena Ivanovna, a very pretty cigar case—a silver one—when I get it back from the friend to whom I have lent it." These words were uttered with much embarrassment.

"Well, we can talk about it then, *batuchka*."

"Good-by. You are always alone—is your sister never with you?" asked he with as indifferent an air as he could assume, as he entered the anteroom.

"What have you to do with my sister, *batuchka*?"

"Nothing. I had no reason for asking. You will—well, good-by, Alena Ivanovna."

Raskolnikoff made his exit in a perturbed state of mind. As he went downstairs, he stopped from time to time, as if overcome by violent emotion. When he had at length emerged upon the street,

he exclaimed to himself: "How loathsome it all is! Can I, can I ever?—no, it is absurd, preposterous!" added he mentally. "How could such a horrible idea ever enter my head? Could I ever be capable of such infamy? It is odious, ignoble, repulsive! And yet for a whole month–"

Words and exclamations, however, could not give full vent to his agitation. The loathing sense of disgust which had begun to oppress him on his way to the old woman's house had now become so intense that he longed to find some way of escape from the torture. He reeled along the pavement like a tipsy man, taking no notice of those who passed, but bumping against them. On looking round he saw a dram shop near at hand; steps led down from the footpath to the basement, and Raskolnikoff saw two drunkards coming out at that moment, leaning heavily on each other and exchanging abusive language. The young man barely paused before he descended the steps. He had never before entered such a place, but he felt dizzy and was also suffering from intense thirst. He had a craving for some beer, partly because he attributed his weakness to an empty stomach. Seating himself in a dark and dirty corner, in front of a filthy little table, he called for some beer, and eagerly drank off a glass.

He felt instantly relieved, and his brain began to clear: "How absurd I have been!" said he to himself, "there was really nothing to make me uneasy! It was simply physical! A glass of beer and a mouthful of biscuit were all that was necessary to restore my strength of mind and make my thoughts clear and resolution

fixed. How paltry all this is!"

The next morning Raskolnikoff awoke late, after disturbed and unrefreshing slumbers. He felt very cross and glanced angrily round his room. It was a tiny place, not more than six feet in length, and its dirty buff paper hung in shreds, giving it a most miserable aspect; besides which, the ceiling was so low that a tall man would have felt in danger of bumping his head. The furniture was quite in harmony with the room, consisting of three old rickety chairs, a painted table in one corner, on which lay books and papers thick with dust (showing how long it was since they had been touched), and, finally, a large and very ugly sofa with ragged covers. This sofa, which filled nearly half the room, served Raskolnikoff as a bed. He often lay down on it in his clothes, without any sheets, covering himself with his old student's coat, and using instead of a pillow a little cushion, which he raised by keeping under it all his clean or dirty linen. Before the sofa stood a small table.

Raskolnikoff's misanthropy did not take offense at the dirty state of his den. Human faces had grown so distasteful to him, that the very sight of the servant whose business it was to clean the rooms produced a feeling of exasperation.

To such a condition may monomaniacs come by continually brooding over one idea. For the last fortnight, the landlady had ceased to supply her lodger with provisions, and he had not yet thought of demanding an explanation. Nastasia, who had to cook and clean for the whole house, was not sorry to see the lodger

in this state of mind, as it diminished her labors: she had quite given up tidying and dusting his room; the utmost she did was to come and sweep it once a week. She it was who was arousing him at this moment.

"Come, get up, why are you sleeping so late?" she exclaimed. "It is nine o'clock. I have brought up some tea, will you take a cup? How pale you look!"

Raskolnikoff opened his eyes, shook himself, and recognized Nastasia. "Has the landlady sent me this tea?" asked he, making a painful effort to sit up.

"Not much chance of that!" And the servant placed before him her own teapot, in which there was still some tea left, and laid two small lumps of brownish sugar on the table.

"Here, Nastasia, take this, please," said Raskolnikoff, fumbling in his pocket and drawing out a handful of small change (for he had again lain down in his clothes), "and fetch me a white roll. Go to the pork shop as well, and buy me a bit of cheap sausage."

"I will bring you the roll in a minute, but had you not better take some *shtchi*[7] instead of the sausage? We make it here, and it is capital. I kept some for you last night, but it was so late before you came in! You will find it very good." She went to fetch the *shtchi*, and, when Raskolnikoff had begun to eat, she seated herself on the sofa beside him and commenced to chatter, like a true country girl as she was. "Prascovia Paulovna means to

[7] Cabbage soup.

report you to the police," said she.

The young man's brow clouded. "To the police? Why?"

"Because you don't pay and won't go. That's why."

"The deuce!" growled he between his teeth, "that is the finishing stroke; it comes at a most unfortunate juncture. She is a fool," added he aloud. "I shall go and talk to her to-morrow."

"She is, of course, just as much of a fool as I am; but why do you, who are so intelligent, lie here doing nothing? How is it you never seem to have money for anything now? You used to give lessons, I hear; how is it you do nothing now?"

"I am engaged on something," returned Raskolnikoff dryly and half reluctantly.

"On what?"

"Some work—"

"What sort of work?"

"Thinking," replied he gravely, after a short silence.

Nastasia was convulsed. She was of a merry disposition, but her laughter was always noiseless, an internal convulsion which made her actually writhe with pain. "And does your thinking bring you any money?" asked she, as soon as she could manage to speak.

"Well! I can't give lessons when I have no boots to go out in? Besides, I despise them."

"Take care lest you suffer for it."

"There is so little to be made by giving lessons! What can one do with a few kopecks?" said he in an irritable tone, rather to

himself than the servant.

"So you wish to make your fortune at one stroke?"

He looked at her rather strangely, and was silent for a moment. "Yes, my fortune," rejoined he impressively.

"Hush! you frighten me, you look terrible. Shall I go and fetch you a roll?"

"Just as you like."

Later in the day, Raskolnikoff went out and wandered about the streets. At last he sat down under a tree to rest, and fell into a reverie. His limbs felt disjointed, and his mind was in darkness and confusion. He placed his elbows on his knees and held his head with his hands.

"God! Am I to stand beating in her skull with a hatchet or something, wade in warm blood, break open the lock and rob and tremble, blood flowing all around, and hide myself, with the hatchet? O God! is this indeed possible, and must it be?" He trembled like a leaf as he said this.

"What am I thinking of?" he cried in some astonishment. "I know well I could not endure that with which I have been torturing myself. I saw that clearly yesterday when I tried to rehearse it. Perfectly plain. Then what am I questioning? Did I not say yesterday as I went up the stairs how disgusting and mean and low it all was, and did not I run away in terror?"

He stood up and looked all round, wondering how he got there, and moved off toward the T– bridge. He was pale and his eyes were hot, and feebleness was in all his members, but he seemed to

breathe easier. He felt that he had thrown off the old time which had been so oppressive; and in its place had come peace and light. "Lord!" he prayed, "show me my way, that I may renounce these horrid thoughts of mine!"

Going across the bridge, he quietly gazed on the Neva, and the clear red sunset. He did not feel himself tired now, notwithstanding his weakness, and the load which had lain upon his heart seemed to be gone. Liberty! Liberty! he was free from those enchantments and all their vile instigations. In later times when he recalled this period of his existence, and all that happened to him in those days, minute by minute and point by point, he recollected how each circumstance, although in the main not very unusual, constantly appeared to his mind as an evidence of the predetermination of his fate, so superstitious was he. Especially he could never understand why he, weary and harassed as he was, could not have returned home by the shortest route, instead of across the Haymarket, which was quite out of the way. Certainly, a dozen times before, he had reached his lodgings by most circuitous routes, and never known through which streets he had come. But why (he always asked) should such a really fateful meeting have taken place in the market (through which there was no need to go), and happen, too, at exactly such a time and at a moment of his life when his mind was in the state it was, and the event, in these circumstances, could only produce the most definite and decided effect upon his fate? Surely he was the instrument of some purpose!

It was about nine o'clock as he stood in the Haymarket. All the dealers had closed their establishments or cleared away their goods and gone home. About this place, with its tattered population, its dirty and nauseous courtyards and numerous alleys, Raskolnikoff dearly loved to roam in his aimless wanderings. He attracted no notice there. At the corner of K– Lane were a dealer and his wife, who were engaged in packing up their wares, consisting of tapes, handkerchiefs, cotton, &c., preparatory to going home. They were lingering over their work, and conversing with an acquaintance. This was Elizabeth Ivanovna, or simple Elizabeth, as all called her, the younger sister of the old woman, Alena Ivanovna, to whose rooms Raskolnikoff went the day before for the purpose of pawning his watch to make his *rehearsal*. He knew all about this Elizabeth, as she knew also a little about him. She was a tall, awkward woman, about thirty-five years of age, timid and quiet, indeed almost an idiot, and was a regular slave to her sister, working for her day and night, trembling before her and enduring even blows. She was evidently hesitating about something, as she stood there with a bundle under her arm, and her friends were pressing some subject rather warmly. When Raskolnikoff recognized her he seemed struck with the greatest astonishment, although there was nothing strange about such a meeting.

"You ought to decide yourself, Elizabeth Ivanovna," said the man.

"Come to-morrow at seven o'clock."

"To-morrow?" said Elizabeth slowly, as if undecided.

"She is frightened of Alena Ivanovna," cried the wife, a brisk little woman. "You are like a little child, Elizabeth Ivanovna, and she's not your own sister, but a stepsister. She has too much her own way."

"You say nothing to Alena Ivanovna," interrupted the man, "and come without asking, that's the way to do it, and your sister can manage herself."

"When shall I come?"

"At seven o'clock, to-morrow."

"Very well, I will come," said Elizabeth, slowly and reluctantly. She then quitted them.

Raskolnikoff also went away, and stayed to hear no more. His original amazement had changed gradually into a feeling of actual terror; a chill ran down his back. He had learned unexpectedly and positively, that, at seven o'clock the next evening, Elizabeth, the old woman's sister, the only person living with her, would not be at home, and that, therefore, the old woman, at seven o'clock to-morrow, *would be there alone*. It needed but a few steps to reach his room. He went along like one sentenced to death, with his reason clogged and numbed. He felt that now all liberty of action and free will were gone, and everything was irrevocably decided. A more convenient occasion than was thus unexpectedly offered to him now would never arise, and he might never learn again, beforehand, that, at a certain time on a certain day, she, on whom he was to make the

attempt, would be entirely alone.

Raskolnikoff learned subsequently what induced the man and his wife to invite Elizabeth to call on them. It was a very simple matter. A foreign family, finding themselves in straitened circumstances, were desirous of parting with various things, consisting for the most part in articles of female attire. They were anxious, therefore, to meet with a dealer in cast-off clothes, and this was one of Elizabeth's callings. She had a large connection, because she was very honest and always stuck to her price: there was no higgling to be done with her. She was a woman of few words and very shy and reserved. But Raskolnikoff was very superstitious, and traces of this remained in him long after. In all the events of this period of his life he was ever ready to detect something mysterious, and attribute every circumstance to the presence of some particular influence upon his destiny.

The previous winter, a fellow student, Pokoreff by name, on leaving for Charkoff, had happened to communicate to him in conversation the address of Alena Ivanovna, in case he should ever require to pawn anything. For a long time he did not use it, as he was giving lessons, and managed somehow to get along, but six weeks before this time he had recollected the address. He had two things fit to pawn—an old silver watch, formerly his father's; and a small gold ring with three red stones, a souvenir from his sister on leaving home. He decided on getting rid of the latter, and went to the old woman's. At the first glance, and knowing nothing whatever of her personally, she inspired him

with an unaccountable loathing. He took her two notes, and on leaving went into a poor *traktir*, or restaurant, and ordered some tea. He sat down musing, and strange thoughts flitted across his mind and became hatched in his brain. Close by, at another table, were seated a student, whom he did not knew, and a young officer. They had been playing billiards, and were now drinking tea. Suddenly Raskolnikoff heard the student give the officer the address of Alena Ivanovna, the widow of a professor, as one who lent money on pledges. This alone struck Raskolnikoff as very peculiar. They were talking of the same person he had just been to see. No doubt it was pure chance, but, at the moment he was struggling against an impression he could not overcome, this stranger's words came and gave extra force to it. The student went on talking, and began to give his companion some account of Alena Ivanovna.

"She is well known," he said, "and always good for money. She is as rich as a Jew, and can advance five thousand rubles at a moment's notice; yet she will take in pledge objects worth as little as a ruble. She is quite a providence to many of our fellows—but such an old hag! I tell you what I would do. I would kill that damnable old hag, and take all she is possessed of, without any qualm of conscience," exclaimed the student excitedly. The officer laughed, but Raskolnikoff shuddered. The words just uttered so strongly echoed his own thoughts. "Let me put a serious question to you," resumed the student, more and more excited. "I have hitherto been joking, but now listen to this.

On the one side here is a silly, flint-hearted, evil-minded, sulky old woman, necessary to no one—on the contrary, pernicious to all—and who does not know herself why she lives."

"Well?" said the officer.

"Hear me further. On the other hand, young fresh strength droops and is lost for want of sustenance; this is the case with thousands everywhere! A hundred, a thousand good deeds and enterprises could be carried out and upheld with the money this old woman has bequeathed to a monastery. A dozen families might be saved from hunger, want, ruin, crime, and misery, and all with her money! Kill her, I say, take it from her, and dedicate it to the service of humanity and the general good! What is your opinion? Shall not one little crime be effaced and atoned for by a thousand good deeds? For one useless life a thousand lives saved from decay and death. One death, and a hundred beings restored to existence! There's a calculation for you. What in proportion is the life of this miserable old woman? No more than the life of a flea, a beetle, nay, not even that, for she is pernicious. She preys on other lives. She lately bit Elizabeth's finger, in a fit of passion, and nearly bit it off!"

"Certainly she does not deserve to live," observed the officer, "but nature–"

"Ah, my friend, nature has to be governed and guided, or we should be drowned in prejudices. Without it there would never be one great man. They say 'duty is conscience.' Now I have nothing to say against duty and conscience, but let us see, how do we

understand them? Let me put another question to you. Listen."

"Stop a minute, I will give you one."

"Well?"

"After all you have said and declaimed, tell me—are you going to kill the old woman *yourself*, or not?"

"Of course not. I only pointed out the inequality of things. As for the deed–"

"Well, if you won't, it's my opinion that it would not be just to do so! Come, let's have another game!"

Raskolnikoff was in the greatest agitation. Still, there was nothing extraordinary in this conversation; it was not the first time he had heard, only in other forms and on other topics, such ideas from the lips of the young and hot-headed. But why should he, of all men, happen to overhear such a conversation and such ideas, when the very same thoughts were being engendered in himself?—and why precisely *then*, immediately on his becoming possessed of them and on leaving the old woman? Strange, indeed, did this coincidence appear to him. This idle conversation was destined to have a fearful influence on his destiny, extending to the most trifling incident and causing him to feel sure he was the instrument of a fixed purpose.

* * * * *

On his return from the market, he flung himself upon his couch and sat motionless for a whole hour. It became dark, he

had no light, but sat on. He could never afterwards recollect his thoughts at the time. At last he felt cold, and a shiver ran through him. He recognized with delight that he was sitting on his couch and could lie down, and soon he fell into a deep, heavy sleep. He slept much longer than usual, and his slumbers were undisturbed by dreams. Nastasia, who came to his room the next morning at ten o'clock, had great difficulty in awakening him. The servant brought him some bread and, the same as the day before, what was left of her tea.

"Not up yet!" exclaimed she indignantly. "How can you sleep so long?"

Raskolnikoff raised himself with an effort; his head ached; he got upon his feet, took a few steps, and then dropped down again upon the couch.

"What, again!" cried Nastasia, "but you must be ill then?" He did not answer. "Would you like some tea?"

"By and by," he muttered painfully, after which he closed his eyes and turned his face to the wall. Nastasia, standing over him, remained watching him for a while.

"After all, he's perhaps ill," said she, before withdrawing.

At two o'clock she returned with some soup. Raskolnikoff was still lying on the couch. He had not touched the tea. The servant became angry and shook the lodger violently. "Whatever makes you sleep thus?" scolded she, eying him contemptuously.

He sat up, but answered not a word, and remained with his eyes fixed on the floor.

"Are you ill, or are you not?" asked Nastasia. This second question met with no more answer than the first. "You should go out," continued she, after a pause, "the fresh air would do you good. You'll eat something, will you not?"

"By and by," answered he feebly. "Go away!" and he motioned her off. She remained a moment longer, watching him with an air of pity, and then left the room.

After a few minutes he raised his eyes, gave a long look at the tea and soup, and then began to eat. He swallowed three or four spoonfuls without the least appetite—almost mechanically. His head felt better. When he had finished his light repast, he again lay down on the couch, but he could not sleep and remained motionless, flat on his stomach, his face buried in the pillow. His reverie kept conjuring up strange scenes. At one time he was in Africa, in Egypt, on some oasis, where palms were dotted about. The caravans were at rest, the camels lay quietly, and the travelers were eating their evening meal. They drank water direct from the stream which ran murmuring close by. How refreshing was the marvelously blue water, and how beautifully clear it looked as it ran over many-colored stones and mingled with the golden spangles of the sandy bottom! All at once he clearly heard the hour chiming. He shuddered, raised his head, looked at the window to calculate the time. He came to himself immediately and jumped up, and, going on tiptoe, silently opened the door and stood listening on the landing. His heart beat violently. But not a sound came from the staircase. It seemed as though the house

was wrapped in sleep. He could not understand how he had been able to sleep away the time as he had done, while nothing was prepared for the enterprise. And yet it was, perhaps, six o'clock that had just struck.

Then, he became excited as he felt what there was to be done, and he endeavored with all his might to keep his thoughts from wandering and concentrate his mind on his task. All the time his heart thumped and beat until he could hardly draw breath. In the first place it was necessary to make a loop and fasten to his coat. He went to his pillow and took from among the linen he kept there an old and dirty shirt and tore part of it into strips. He then fastened a couple of these together, and, taking off his coat—a stout cotton summer one—began to sew the loop inside, under the left arm. His hands shook violently, but he accomplished his task satisfactorily, and when he again put on his coat nothing was visible. Needle and thread had been procured long ago, and lay on the table in a piece of paper. The loop was provided for a hatchet. It would never have done to have appeared in the streets carrying a hatchet, and if he placed it under the coat, it would have been necessary to hold it with his hands; but with the loop all he had to do was to put the iron in it and it would hang of itself under the coat, and with his hands in his pockets he could keep it from shaking, and no one could suspect that he was carrying anything. He had thought over all this about a fortnight before.

Having finished his task, Raskolnikoff inserted his finger in a small crevice in the floor under his couch, and brought out

the *pledge* with which he had been careful to provide himself. This pledge was, however, only a sham—a thin smooth piece of wood about the size and thickness of a silver cigarette case, which he had found in a yard adjoining a carpenter's shop, and a thin piece of iron of about the same size, which he had picked up in the street. He fastened the two together firmly with thread, then proceeded to wrap them up neatly in a piece of clean white paper, and tie the parcel in such a manner that it would be difficult to undo it again. This was all done in order to occupy the attention of the old woman and to seize a favorable opportunity when she would be busy with the knot. The piece of iron was simply added for weight, in order that she might not immediately detect the fraud. He had just finished, and had put the packet in his pocket, when in the court below resounded the cry:

"Six o'clock struck long ago!"

"Long ago! Good heavens!"

He ran to the door, listened, seized his hat, and went down the stairs cautiously and stealthily as a cat. He still had the most important thing to do—to steal the hatchet out of the kitchen. That a hatchet was the best instrument, he had long since decided. He had an old garden knife, but on a knife—especially on his own strength—he could not rely; he finally fixed on the hatchet. A peculiarity was to be noticed in all these resolutions of his; the more definitely they were settled, the more absurd and horrible they immediately appeared to his eyes, and never, for a moment, did he feel sure of the execution of his project. But even

if every question had been settled, every doubt cleared away, every difficulty overcome, he would probably have renounced his design on the instant, as something absurd, monstrous, and impossible. But there were still a host of matters to arrange, of problems to solve. As to procuring the hatchet, this trifle did not trouble Raskolnikoff in the least, for nothing was easier. As a matter of fact Nastasia was scarcely ever at home, especially of an evening. She was constantly out gossiping with friends or tradespeople, and that was the reason of her mistress's constant complaints. When the time came, all he would have to do would be to quietly enter the kitchen and take the hatchet, and then to replace it an hour afterwards when all was over. But perhaps this would not be as easy as he fancied. "Suppose," said the young man to himself, "that when, in an hour's time, I come to replace the hatchet, Nastasia should have come in. Now, in that case, I could naturally not enter the kitchen until she had gone out again. But supposing during this time she notices the absence of the hatchet, she will grumble, perhaps kick up a shindy, and that will serve to denounce me, or at least might do so!"

Before he had got to the bottom of the staircase, a trifling circumstance came and upset all his plans. On reaching his landlady's landing, he found the kitchen door wide open, as usual, and he peeped in, in order to make sure that, in the absence of Nastasia, her mistress was not there, and that the doors of the other rooms were closed. But great was his annoyance to find Nastasia there herself, engaged in hanging clothes on a

line. Perceiving the young man, she stopped and turned to him inquiringly. He averted his eyes and went away without remark. But the affair was done for. There was no hatchet, he was frustrated entirely. He felt crushed, nay, humiliated, but a feeling of brutal vindictiveness at his disappointment soon ensued, and he continued down the stairs, smiling maliciously to himself. He stood hesitating at the gate. To walk about the streets or to go back were equally repugnant. "To think that I have missed such a splendid opportunity!" he murmured as he stood aimlessly at the entrance, leaning near the open door of the porter's lodge. Suddenly he started—something in the dark room attracted his eye. He looked quietly around. No one was near. He descended the two steps on tiptoe, and called for the porter. There was no reply, and he rushed headlong to the hatchet (it was a hatchet), secured it where it lay among some wood, and hurriedly fastened it to the loop as he made his way out into the street. No one saw him! "There's more of the devil in this than my design," he said smiling to himself. The occurrence gave him fresh courage.

He went away quietly in order not to excite any suspicion, and walked along the street with his eyes studiously fixed on the ground, avoiding the faces of the passers-by. Suddenly he recollected his hat. "Good heavens! the day before yesterday I had money, and not to have thought of that! I could so easily have bought a cap!" and he began cursing himself. Glancing casually in a shop, he saw it was ten minutes past seven. He had yet a long way to go, as he was making a circuit, not wishing to walk

direct to the house. He kept off, as much as he was able, all thought of his mission, and on the way reflected upon possible improvements of the public grounds, upon the desirability of fountains, and why people lived where there were neither parks nor fountains, but only mud, lime, and bricks, emitting horrid exhalations and every conceivable foulness. This reminded him of his own walks about the Cyennaza, and he came to himself.

"How true it is that persons being led to execution interest themselves in anything that strikes them on the way!" was the thought that came into his head, but it passed away like lightning to be succeeded by some other. "Here we are—there is the gate." It struck half-past seven as he stood near the house.

To his delight, he passed in without observation. As if on purpose, at the very same moment a load of hay was going in, and it completely screened him. On the other side of the load, a dispute or brawl was evidently taking place, and he gained the old woman's staircase in a second. Recovering his breath and pressing his hand to his beating heart, he commenced the ascent, though first feeling for the hatchet and arranging it. Every minute he stopped to listen. The stairs were quite deserted, and every door was closed. No one met him. On the second floor, indeed, the door of an empty lodging was wide open; some painters were working there, but they did not look up. He stopped a moment to think, and then continued the ascent: "No doubt it would be better if they were not there, but fortunately there are two more floors above them." At last he reached the fourth floor,

and Alena Ivanovna's door; the lodging facing it was unoccupied. The lodging on the third floor, just beneath the old woman's, was also apparently empty. The card that used to be on the door had gone; the lodgers had, no doubt, moved. Raskolnikoff was stifling. He stood hesitating a moment: "Had I not better go away?" But without answering the question, he waited and listened. Not a sound issued from the old woman's apartments. The staircase was filled with the same silence. After listening for a long time, the young man cast a last glance around, and again felt his hatchet. "Do I not look too pale?" thought he. "Do I not appear too agitated? She is mistrustful. I should do well to wait a little, to give my emotion time to calm down."

But instead of becoming quieter, his heart throbbed more violently. He could stand it no longer, and, raising his hand toward the bell rope, he pulled it toward him. After waiting half a minute, he rang again—this time a little louder. No answer. To ring like a deaf man would have been useless, stupid even. The old woman was certainly at home; but, suspicious by nature, she was likely to be so all the more then, as she happened to be alone. Raskolnikoff knew something of Alena Ivanovna's habits. He therefore placed his ear to the door. Had the circumstances amid which he was placed strangely developed his power of hearing, which, in general, is difficult to admit, or was the sound really easily perceptible? Anyhow, he suddenly became aware that a hand was being cautiously placed on the lock, and that a dress rustled against the door. Some one inside was going through

exactly the same movements as he on the landing. Some one, standing up against the lock, was listening while trying to hide her presence, and had probably her ear also against the door.

In order to avoid all idea of mystery, the young man purposely moved about rather noisily, and muttered something half aloud; then he rang a third time, but gently and coolly, without allowing the bell to betray the least sign of impatience. Raskolnikoff never forgot this moment of his life. When, in after days, he thought over it, he could never understand how he had been able to display such cunning, especially at a time when emotion was now and again depriving him of the free use of his intellectual and physical faculties. After a short while he heard the bolt withdrawn.

The door, as before, was opened a little, and again the two eyes, with mistrustful glance, peeped out of the dark. Then Raskolnikoff lost his presence of mind and made a serious mistake. Fearing that the old woman would take alarm at finding they were alone, and knowing that his appearance would not reassure her, he took hold of the door and pulled it toward him in order to prevent her shutting it again if she should be thus minded. Seeing this, she held on to the lock, so that he almost drew her together with the door on to the staircase. She recovered herself, and stood to prevent his entrance, speechless with fright.

"Good evening, Alena Ivanovna," he commenced, trying to speak with unconcern, but his voice did not obey him, and he faltered and trembled, "Good evening, I have brought you

something, but we had better go into the light." He pushed past her and entered the room uninvited. The old woman followed and found her tongue.

"What is it you want? Who are you?" she commenced.

"Pardon me, Alena Ivanovna, your old acquaintance Raskolnikoff. I have brought a pledge, as I promised the other day," and he held out the packet to her.

The old woman was about to examine it, when she raised her eyes and looked straight into those of the visitor who had entered so unceremoniously. She examined him attentively, distrustfully, for a minute. Raskolnikoff fancied there was a gleam of mockery in her look as if she guessed all. He felt he was changing color, and that if she kept her glance upon him much longer without saying a word he would be obliged to run away.

"Why are you looking at me thus?" he said at last in anger. "Will you take it or not? or shall I take it elsewhere? I have no time to waste." He did not intend to say this, but the words came out. The tone seemed to quiet her suspicions.

"Why were you so impatient, *batuchka*? What is it?" she asked, glancing at the pledge.

"The silver cigarette case of which I spoke the other day."

She held out her hand. "But why are you so pale, why do your hands shake? What is the matter with you, *batuchka*?"

"Fever," replied he abruptly. "You would be pale too if you had nothing to eat." He could hardly speak the words and felt his strength falling. But there was some plausibility in his reply; and

the old woman took the pledge.

"What is it?" she asked once more, weighing it in her hand and looking straight at her visitor.

"Cigarette case, silver, look at it."

"It doesn't feel as though it were silver. Oh! what a dreadful knot!"

She began to untie the packet and turned to the light (all the windows were closed in spite of the heat). Her back was turned toward Raskolnikoff, and for a few seconds she paid no further attention to him. He opened his coat, freed the hatchet from the loop, but did not yet take it from its hiding place; he held it with his right hand beneath the garment. His limbs were weak, each moment they grew more numbed and stiff. He feared his fingers would relax their hold of the hatchet. Then his head turned giddy.

"What is this you bring me?" cried Alena Ivanovna, turning to him in a rage.

There was not a moment to lose now. He pulled out the hatchet, raised it with both hands, and let it descend without force, almost mechanically, on the old woman's head. But directly he had struck the blow his strength returned. According to her usual habit, Alena Ivanovna was bareheaded. Her scanty gray locks, greasy with oil, were gathered in one thin plait, which was fixed to the back of her neck by means of a piece of horn comb. The hatchet struck her just on the sinciput, and this was partly owing to her small stature. She scarcely uttered a faint cry and collapsed at once all in a heap on the floor; she was dead.

The murderer laid his hatchet down and at once began to search the corpse, taking the greatest precaution not to get stained with the blood; he remembered seeing Alena Ivanovna, on the occasion of his last visit, take her keys from the right-hand pocket of her dress. He was in full possession of his intellect; he felt neither giddy nor dazed, but his hands continued to shake. Later on, he recollected that he had been very prudent, very attentive, that he had taken every care not to soil himself. It did not take him long to find the keys; the same as the other day, they were all together on a steel ring. Having secured them, Raskolnikoff at once passed into the bedroom. It was a very small apartment; on one side was a large glass case full of holy images, on the other a great bed looking very clean with its quilted-silk patchwork coverlet. The third wall was occupied by a chest of drawers. Strange to say, the young man had no sooner attempted to open them, he had no sooner commenced to try the keys, than a kind of shudder ran through his frame. Again the idea came to him to give up his task and go away, but this weakness only lasted a second: it was now too late to draw back.

He was even smiling at having for a moment entertained such a thought, when he was suddenly seized with a terrible anxiety: suppose the old woman were still alive, suppose she recovered consciousness. Leaving at once the keys and the drawers, he hastened to the corpse, seized the hatchet, and prepared to strike another blow at his victim, but he found there was no necessity to do so. Alena Ivanovna was dead beyond all doubt.

Leaning over her again to examine her closer, Raskolnikoff saw that the skull was shattered. He was about to touch her with his fingers, but drew back, as it was quite unnecessary. There was a pool of blood upon the floor. Suddenly noticing a bit of cord round the old woman's neck, the young man gave it a tug, but the gory stuff was strong, and did not break. The murderer then tried to remove it by drawing it down the body. But this second attempt was no more successful than the first, the cord encountered some obstacle and became fixed. Burning with impatience, Raskolnikoff brandished the hatchet, ready to strike the corpse and sever the confounded string at the same blow. However, he could not make up his mind to proceed with such brutality. At last, after trying for two minutes, and staining his hands with blood, he succeeded in severing the cord with the blade of the hatchet without further disfiguring the dead body. As he had imagined, there was a purse suspended to the old woman's neck. Besides this there was also a small enameled medal and two crosses, one of cypress wood, the other of brass. The greasy purse, a little chamois-leather bag, was as full as it could hold. Raskolnikoff thrust it in his pocket without examining the contents. He then threw the crosses on his victim's breast, and hastily returned to the bedroom, taking the hatchet with him.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.