

Turgenev Ivan Sergeevich

# The Diary of a Superfluous Man, and Other Stories



**Turgenev Sergeevich Ivan**  
**The Diary of a Superfluous**  
**Man, and Other Stories**

*[http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio\\_book/?art=23151027](http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23151027)*

*The Diary of a Superfluous Man, and Other Stories:*

# Содержание

PREFACE	4
THE DIARY OF A SUPERFLUOUS MAN	10
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	74

# Iván Turgéniéff

## The Diary of a Superfluous Man, and Other Stories

### PREFACE

"In 'The Diary of a Superfluous Man,'" says one well-known Russian critic, "we have to deal with the end of the pathological process upon the body of Russian society. In Turgéniéff's productions which followed it we have to deal with a crisis in Russian life, with the growth of a new order of things. Apart from the fundamental profundity of its tendency, the 'Diary' is extremely noteworthy for its artistic workmanship. In spite of a certain monotony of tone in its exposition, it produces a very strong impression by its abundance of poetical beauties, which are perfectly suited to the melancholy mood of the whole story... In creating his 'Superfluous Man' the author, evidently, aimed at making as powerful an impression as possible, and therefore employed the most brilliant pigments in depicting Tchulkatúrin. He attained his object. Russian society started back in horror at this portrait of itself, which was somewhat distorted yet a good likeness, and in its strong excitement vigorously repelled all community with the sickly figure of Tchulkatúrin. This horror

showed that the time was ripe in Russian society for a different order of things, that it was tired of inertness and was seeking a wider field of activity in which it might freely develop its real forces."

Another critic, comparing the "Diary" with "Hamlet of Shshtchígrý County," says that what the latter expressed with a convulsive laugh Tchulkatúrin gave vent to in sickly, complaining shrieks, both productions being a bitter confession of moral impotence, of mental insolvency. "There is one passage in the 'Diary,'" he says, "which – especially if one comes upon it after perusing all that precedes it – it is impossible to read without a strong nervous shock, if not without tears – a passage which always has the same identical effect; and it contains the key to the comprehension of Turgénieff's relations toward Nature. It is the end of the 'Diary.' This passage is noteworthy. The predominant characteristic of Turgénieff's talent is here revealed in a particularly brilliant manner: a profound impregnation with Nature, – an impregnation which reached the point almost of fusion with it. The breath of spring blows upon the reader, there is a scent of the upturned soil, – and nowhere else, possibly save in that chapter of Tolstóy's 'Youth,' which describes the removal of the double windows, and the reader is suddenly enveloped in the keen, fresh air of spring, is there anything which can be compared with this passage."

Still another critic says: "The ironical analysis of the moral feebleness of the Russian intellectual class, which constitutes the

ruling motive of 'Hamlet of Shshtchígyr County,' is converted into sickly complaint in 'The Diary of a Superfluous Man,' one of the most original and best-sustained of Turgéniéff's stories, and one which is most profoundly imbued with feeling.

"Turgéniéff's story 'Three Portraits,'" said the most famous of Russian critics, Byelínsky, "possesses, in addition to the cleverness and vividness of its presentation, all the fascination, not of a novel, but rather of a reminiscence of the *good* old times. A fitting motto for it would be: 'Deeds of days gone by.'"

All the critics admit that the type of Vasíly Lutchínoff had existed, and one says: "I attribute special importance to Turgéniéff's Vasíly Lutchínoff because, in this character, the old type of Don Juan, of Lovelace, and so forth, assumed our own Russian, original form for the first time." This type (equally rapacious with that presented by the hero of "The Bully," which was written about the same time) is supposed to have prevailed in the eighteenth century, especially in the epoch of Katherine II. Although Turgéniéff never wrote historical novels, this story, in company with passages from others of his works, is regarded as coming, practically, under the head of historical records faithful to the epochs dealt with by the author.

"The story 'Three Meetings,'" says one critic, "belongs entirely in the category of 'art for art's sake.' There can be no question here of any guiding idea. To speak figuratively, it is a fragrant flower, whose perfume one inhales with delight, but which presents no other essential qualities. Its whole point lies in its

workmanship, and in paraphrase it loses its entire charm."

"This story," writes another critic, "may serve, in our opinion, as a curious monument of the ineptness of narrations in the first person. Turgéniéff, who is such a complete master of the form of personal narration, was bound to exhibit also the weak side of it in its entirety. This has strutted forth in his 'Three Meetings' with such pride, independence, and, in a measure, with so much coquetry, that it has swallowed up its subject-matter. There are several brilliant pages in the story, but its fantastic, showy matter seems to be directed solely to the end of illuminating the person of the narrator in the most advantageous manner."

In discussing "The Memoirs of a Sportsman," a leading critic of the present day says:... "Another peculiarity which immediately won for him [Turgéniéff] fame and sympathy among the public, is his entirely new manner of depicting figures from peasant life. Before the advent of Turgéniéff the populace, even in the hands of Púshkin, even in those of Gógol, appeared either in the capacity of an operatic chorus, or in the quality of peasants of the ballet, or as an accessory, comic figure. Turgéniéff was the first to look into the soul of the common people and demonstrate that that soul was exactly like the soul of the cultivated man, only with its own peculiar turn to conceptions and feelings. By thus bringing the peasant close to us, by exhibiting him in this form, as a being one with us in blood, with whom, therefore, one can sympathise instead of regarding him merely as a rare spectacle, Turgéniéff deservedly earned the

reputation of a champion of emancipation... Two other tales are closely allied to 'The Memoirs of a Sportsman,' although they do not form a part of that collection: 'Mumú' and 'The Inn.'... One of them, 'Mumú,' is, perhaps, the most eloquent denunciation of serfdom which ever proceeded from Turgénieff's pen. It is the only one of his productions in which the central figure of the pig-headed<sup>1</sup> landed-proprietress is delineated with vivid and unconcealed hatred. But in this case also, the chief merit of the story does not lie in this arraignment, – in which are probably reflected the author's childish reminiscences,<sup>2</sup> – but in its warm, compassionate sympathy for the lot of the poor dumb man, whose whole life was concentrated in love for a creature equally ill-treated by Fate – for the little dog he had reared. In 'The Inn,' also, serfdom is set forth in an extreme and hateful light. But here again the chief gist of the author's idea does not lie in that direction... It is evident that here Turgénieff has touched on the theme to which Dostoiévsky was so fond of reverting. That theme is – the accidental sin of a good and honest man, the crime of a pure mind atoned for by voluntary renunciation, and the reconciling power of repentance, humility and prayer. Evil remains unpunished in Turgénieff's story... And yet the story produces a shattering moral effect, thanks to the humble

---

<sup>1</sup> The word used is, literally, "self-fool." It was invented by Ostróvsky, in one of his most famous comedies. – Translator.

<sup>2</sup> Some authorities assert positively that the incident narrated occurred in the Turgénieff household, and that Gerásim's mistress was the author's own mother. – Translator.

grandeur of Akím's figure, and its combination of meekness and criminality. Mean as Naúm is in his triumph, repulsive as is landed-proprietress Elizavéta Prókhorovna with her cowardly and hypocritical greed, the story leaves on the reader a soothing impression."

*I. F. H.*

# THE DIARY OF A SUPERFLUOUS MAN (1850)

[Pg 2]

[Pg 3]

*Hamlet of Ovétchi-Vódy,*<sup>3</sup>

*March 20, 18.*

The doctor has just left me. At last I have obtained a categorical answer! Dodge as he might, he could not help saying what he thought, at last. Yes, I shall die soon, very soon. The streams are opening, and I shall float away, probably with the last snows ... whither? God knows! To the sea also. Well, all right! If I must die, then 't is better to die in the spring. But is it not ridiculous to begin one's diary perhaps a fortnight before one's death? Where 's the harm? And in what way are fourteen days less than fourteen years, fourteen centuries? In the presence of eternity, they say, everything is of no account – yes; but, in that case, eternity also is of no account. I am falling into speculation, I think: that is a bad sign – am not I beginning to turn coward? – It will be better if I narrate something. It is raw and windy out of doors, – I am forbidden to go out. But what shall I narrate?

---

<sup>3</sup> Sheep's-Waters or Springs. – Translator.

A well-bred man does not talk about his maladies; composing a novel, or something of that sort, is not in my line; reflections about exalted themes are beyond my powers; descriptions of life round about me do not even interest me; and to do nothing is tiresome; to read – is idleness. Eh! I will narrate to myself the story of my own life. A capital idea! When death is approaching it is proper, and can offend no one. I begin.

I was born thirty years ago, the son of a fairly wealthy landed proprietor. My father was a passionate gambler; my mother was a lady with character ... a very virtuous lady. Only, I have never known a woman whose virtue afforded less satisfaction. She succumbed under the burden of her merits, and tortured everybody, beginning with herself. During the whole fifty years of her life, she never once rested, never folded her hands; she was eternally bustling and fussing about, like an ant – and without any result whatever, which cannot be said of the ant. An implacable worm gnawed her day and night. Only once did I behold her perfectly quiet, – namely, on the first day after her death, in her coffin. As I gazed at her, it really seemed to me that her face expressed mild surprise; the half-open lips, the sunken cheeks, and the gently-motionless eyes seemed to breathe forth the words: "How good it is not to stir!" Yes, 't is good, 't is good to part at last from the fatiguing consciousness of life, from the importunate and uneasy sense of existence! But that is not the point.

I grew up badly, and not cheerfully. Both my father and

my mother loved me; but that did not make things any the easier for me. My father had no power whatever in his own house, and no importance, in his quality of a man given over to a shameful and ruinous vice. He admitted his fall, and, without having the strength to renounce his favourite passion, he endeavoured, at least, by his constantly affectionate and discreet mien, by his submissive humility, to win the indulgence of his exemplary wife. My mamma, in fact, bore her misfortune with that magnificent and ostentatious long-suffering of virtue which contains so much of self-satisfied pride. She never reproached my father for anything, she silently surrendered to him her last penny, and paid his debts; he lauded her to her face and behind her back, but was not fond of staying at home, and petted me on the sly, as though he were himself afraid of contaminating me by his presence. But his ruffled features exhaled such kindness at those times, the feverish smirk on his lips was replaced by such a touching smile, his brown eyes, surrounded by fine wrinkles, beamed with so much love, that I involuntarily pressed my cheek to his cheek, moist and warm with tears. I wiped away those tears with my handkerchief, and they flowed again, without effort, like the water in an overfilled glass. I set to crying myself, and he soothed me, patted my back with his hand, kissed me all over my face with his quivering lips. Even now, more than twenty years after his death, when I recall my poor father, dumb sobs rise in my throat, and my heart beats – beats as hotly and bitterly, it languishes with as much sorrowful compassion, as though it still

had a long time to beat and as though there were anything to feel compassion about!

My mother, on the contrary, always treated me in one way, affectionately, but coldly. Such mothers, moral and just, are frequently to be met with in children's books. She loved me, but I did not love her. Yes! I shunned my virtuous mother, and passionately loved my vicious father.

But enough for to-day. I have made a beginning, and there is no cause for me to feel anxious about the end, whatever it may be. My malady will attend to that.

*March 21.*

The weather is wonderful to-day. It is warm and bright; the sun is playing gaily on the slushy snow; everything is glittering, smoking, dripping; the sparrows are screaming like mad creatures around the dark, sweating hedges; the damp air irritates my chest sweetly but frightfully. The spring, the spring is coming! I am sitting by the window, and looking out across the little river to the fields. O Nature! Nature! I love thee so, but I came forth from thy womb unfitted even for life. Yonder is a male sparrow hopping about with outspread wings; he is screaming – and every sound of his voice, every ruffled feather on his tiny body breathes forth health and strength.

What is to be concluded from that? Nothing. He is healthy and has a right to scream and ruffle up his feathers; but I am ill and must die – that is all. It is not worth while to say any more about that. And tearful appeals to nature are comically absurd.

Let us return to my story.

I grew up, as I have already said, badly and not cheerfully. I had no brothers or sisters. I was educated at home. And, indeed, what would my mother have had to occupy her if I had been sent off to boarding-school or to a government institute? That's what children are for – to keep their parents from being bored. We lived chiefly in the country, and sometimes went to Moscow. I had governors and teachers, as is the custom. A cadaverous and tearful German, Riechmann, has remained particularly memorable to me, – a remarkably melancholy being, crippled by fate, who was fruitlessly consumed by an anguished longing for his native land. My man-nurse, Vasíly, nicknamed "The Goose," would sit, unshaved, in his everlasting old coat of blue frieze, beside the stove in the frightfully stifling atmosphere of the close anteroom, impregnated through and through with the sour odour of old kvas, – would sit and play cards with the coachman, Potáp, who had just got a new sheepskin coat, white as snow, and invincible tarred boots, – while Riechmann would be singing on the other side of the partition:

"Herz, mein Herz, warum so traurig?  
Was bekümmert dich so sehr?  
'S ist ja schön im fremden Lande —  
Herz, mein Herz, was willst du mehr?"

After my father's death, we definitively removed to Moscow. I was then twelve years of age. My father died during the night

of a stroke of apoplexy. I shall never forget that night. I was sleeping soundly, as all children are in the habit of sleeping; but I remember, that even athwart my slumber I thought I heard a heavy, laboured breathing. Suddenly I felt some one seize me by the shoulder and shake me. I open my eyes: in front of me stands my man-nurse. – "What 's the matter?" – "Come along, come along, Alexyéi Mikhaílitch is dying..." I fly out of the bed like a mad creature, and into the bedroom. I look: my father is lying with his head thrown back, all red in the face, and rattling in his throat most painfully. The servants, with frightened faces, throng the doors; in the anteroom some one inquires in a hoarse voice: "Has the doctor been sent for?" In the courtyard, a horse is being led out of the stable, the gate is creaking, a tallow candle is burning in the room on the floor; mamma is there also, overwhelmed, but without losing either her decorum or the consciousness of her own dignity. I flung myself on my father's breast, embraced him, and stammered out: "Papa, papa!" ... He lay motionless and puckered up his eyes in a strange sort of way. I looked him in the face – unbearable horror stopped my breath; I squeaked with terror, like a roughly-grasped bird. They dragged me from him and carried me away. Only the night before, as though with a foreboding of his approaching death, he had caressed me so fervently and so sadly.

They brought a dishevelled and sleepy doctor, with a strong smell of lovage vodka. My father died under his lancet, and on the following day, thoroughly stupefied with grief, I stood

with a candle in my hand in front of the table on which lay the corpse, and listened unheeding to the thick-voiced intoning of the chanter, occasionally broken by the feeble voice of the priest; tears kept streaming down my cheeks, over my lips, and my collar and my cuffs; I was consumed with tears, I stared fixedly at the motionless face of my father, as though I were expecting him to do something; and my mother, meanwhile, slowly made reverences to the floor, slowly raised herself and, as she crossed herself, pressed her fingers strongly to her brow, her shoulders, and her body. There was not a single thought in my head; I had grown heavy all over, but I felt that something dreadful was taking place with me... It was then that Death looked into my face, and made a note of me.

We removed our residence to Moscow, after the death of my father, for a very simple reason: all our estate was sold under the hammer for debt, – positively everything, with the exception of one wretched little hamlet, the very one in which I am now finishing my magnificent existence. I confess that, in spite of the fact that I was young at the time, I grieved over the sale of our nest; that is to say, in reality, I grieved over our park only. With that park are bound up my sole bright memories. There, on one tranquil spring evening, I buried my best friend, an old dog with a bob tail and crooked paws – Trixie; there, hiding myself in the tall grass, I used to eat stolen apples, red, sweet Nóvgorod apples; there, in conclusion, I for the first time beheld through the bushes of ripe raspberries, Klaudia the maid, who, despite her snub nose,

and her habit of laughing in her kerchief, aroused in me such a tender passion that in her presence I hardly breathed, felt like swooning, and was stricken dumb. But one day, on the Bright Sunday,<sup>4</sup> when her turn came to kiss my lordly hand, I all but flung myself down and kissed her patched goatskin shoes. Great heavens! Can it be twenty years since all that happened? It does not seem so very long since I used to ride my shaggy, chestnut horse along the old wattled hedge of our park, and, rising in my stirrups, pluck the double-faced leaves of the poplars. While a man is living he is not conscious of his own life; like a sound, it becomes intelligible to him a little while afterward.

Oh, my park! Oh, my overgrown paths along the little pond! Oh, unhappy little spot beneath the decrepit dam, where I used to catch minnows and gudgeons! And you, ye lofty birch-trees, with long, pendulous branches, from behind which, from the country road, the melancholy song of the peasant used to be wafted, unevenly broken by the jolts of the rough cart – I send you my last farewells!.. As I part with life I stretch out my hands to you alone. I should like once more to inhale the bitter freshness of the wormwood, the sweet scent of the reaped buckwheat in the fields of my natal spot; I should like once more to hear from afar the modest jangling of the cracked bell on our parish church; once more to lie in the cool shadow beneath the oak-bush on the slope of the familiar ravine; once more to follow with my eyes the moving trace of the wind, as it flew like a dark streak over

---

<sup>4</sup> Easter. – Translator.

the golden grass of our meadow...

Ekh, to what end is all this? But I cannot go on to-day. Until to-morrow.

*March 22.*

To-day it is cold and overcast again. Such weather is far more suitable. It is in accord with my work. Yesterday quite unseasonably evoked in me a multitude of unnecessary feelings and memories. That will not be repeated. Emotional effusions are like liquorice-root: when you take your first suck at it, it does n't seem bad, but it leaves a very bad taste in your mouth afterward. I will simply and quietly narrate the story of my life.

So then, we went to live in Moscow...

But it just occurs to me: is it really worth while to tell the story of my life?

No, decidedly it is not worth while... My life is in no way different from the lives of a mass of other people. The parental home, the university, service in inferior positions, retirement, a small circle of acquaintances, downright poverty, modest pleasures, humble occupations, moderate desires – tell me, for mercy's sake, who does not know all that? And I, in particular, shall not tell the story of my life, because I am writing for my own pleasure; and if my past presents even to me nothing very cheerful, nor even very sorrowful, that means that there really can be nothing in it worthy of attention. I had better try to analyse my own character to myself.

What sort of a man am I?.. Some one may remark to me that

no one asks about that. – Agreed. But, you see, I am dying, – God is my witness, I am dying, – and really before death the desire to know what sort of a fellow I have been is pardonable, I think.

After having thoroughly pondered this important question, and having, moreover, no need to express myself bitterly on my own score, as do people who are strongly convinced of their merits, I must confess one thing: I have been an utterly superfluous man in this world, or, if you like to put it that way, an utterly useless bird. And I intend to prove that to-morrow, because to-day I am coughing like an aged sheep, and my nurse, Teréntievna, will give me no peace. "Lie down, dear little father mine," she says, "and drink your tea." ... I know why she worries me: she wants some tea herself! Well! All right! Why not permit the poor old woman to extract, at the finish, all possible profit from her master?.. The time for that has not yet gone by.

*March 23.*

Winter again. The snow is falling in large flakes.

Superfluous, superfluous... That 's a capital word I have devised. The more deeply I penetrate into myself, the more attentively I scrutinise the whole of my own past life, the more convinced do I become of the strict justice of that expression. Superfluous – precisely that. That word is not appropriate to other people... People are bad, good, clever, stupid, agreeable, and disagreeable; but superfluous... no. That is to say, understand me: the universe could dispense with these people also ... of course; but uselessness is not their chief

quality, is not their distinguishing characteristic, and when you are speaking of them, the word "superfluous" is not the first one that comes to your tongue. But I ... of me nothing else could possibly be said: superfluous – that is all. Nature had not, evidently, calculated on my appearance, and in consequence of this, she treated me like an unexpected and unbidden guest. Not without cause did one wag, a great lover of Swedish whist, say of me, that my mother had discarded.<sup>5</sup> I speak of myself now calmly, without any gall... 'T is a thing of the past! During the whole course of my life I have constantly found my place occupied, possibly because I sought my place in the wrong direction. I was suspicious, bashful, irritable, like all invalids; moreover, probably owing to superfluous vanity, – or by reason of the deficient organisation of my person, – between my feelings and my thoughts and the expression of those feelings and thoughts there existed some senseless, incomprehensible and insuperable barrier; and when I made up my mind to overcome that impediment by force, to break down that barrier, my movements, the expression of my face, my entire being assumed the aspect of anguished tension: I not only seemed, but I actually became unnatural and affected. I was conscious of it myself and made haste to retire again into myself. Then a frightful tumult arose within me. I analysed myself to the last shred; I compared myself with other people; I recalled the smallest glances, the smiles, the words of the people before whom I would have liked

---

<sup>5</sup> A decidedly vulgar pun in the original. – Translator.

to expand; I interpreted everything from its bad side, and laughed maliciously over my pretensions "to be like the rest of the world," – and suddenly, in the midst of my laughter, I sadly relaxed utterly, fell into foolish dejection, and then began the same thing all over again; in a word, I ran round like a squirrel in a wheel. Whole days passed in this torturing, fruitless toil. Come now, tell me, pray, to whom and for what is such a man of use? Why did this happen with me, what was the cause of this minute fidgeting over myself – who knows? Who can say?

I remember, one day I was driving out of Moscow in the diligence. The road was good, but the postilion had hitched an extra trace-horse to the four-span. This unhappy, fifth, wholly unnecessary horse, fastened in rough fashion to the fore-end of a thick, short rope, which ruthlessly saws its haunches, rubs its tail, makes it run in the most unnatural manner, and imparts to its whole body the shape of a comma, always arouses my profound compassion. I remarked to the postilion that, apparently, the fifth horse might be dispensed with on that occasion... He remained silent awhile, shook the back of his neck, lashed the horse half a score of times in succession with his whip across its gaunt back and under its puffed-out belly – and said, not without a grin: "Well, you see, it has stuck itself on, that 's a fact! What the devil 's the use?"

And I, also, have stuck myself on... But the station is not far off, I think.

Superfluous... I promised to prove the justice of my opinion,

and I will fulfil my promise. I do not consider it necessary to mention a thousand details, daily occurrences and incidents, which, moreover, in the eyes of every thoughtful man might serve as incontrovertible proofs in my favour – that is to say, in favour of my view; it is better for me to begin directly with one decidedly important event, after which, probably, no doubt will remain as to the accuracy of the word superfluous. I repeat: I have no intention of entering into details, but I cannot pass over in silence one decidedly curious and noteworthy circumstance, – namely, the strange manner in which my friends treated me (I also had friends) every time I chanced to meet them, or even dropped in to see them. They seemed to grow uneasy; as they came to meet me they either smiled in a not entirely natural manner, looked not at my eyes, not at my feet, as some people do, but chiefly at my cheeks, hastily ejaculated: "Ah! how do you do, Tchulkatúrin!" (Fate had favoured me with that name<sup>6</sup>) or, "Ah! so here 's Tchulkatúrin!" immediately stepped aside, went apart, and even remained for some time thereafter motionless, as though they were trying to recall something. I noticed all this, because I am not deficient in penetration and the gift of observation; on the whole, I am not stupid; decidedly amusing thoughts sometimes come into my head even, not at all ordinary thoughts; but, as I am a superfluous man with a dumbness inside me, I dread to express my thought, the more so, as I know beforehand that I shall express it very badly. It even seems strange

---

<sup>6</sup> Derived from *tchulók*, stocking. – Translator.

to me, sometimes, that people can talk, and so simply, so freely... "What a calamity!!" you think. I am bound to say that my tongue pretty often itched, in spite of my dumbness; and I actually did utter words in my youth, but in riper years I succeeded in restraining myself almost every time. I would say to myself in an undertone: "See here, now, 't will be better for me to hold my tongue awhile," and I quieted down. We are all experts at holding our tongues; our women in particular have that capacity: one exalted young Russian lady maintains silence so vigorously that such a spectacle is capable of producing a slight shiver and cold perspiration even in a man who has been forewarned. But that is not the point, and it is not for me to criticise other people. I will proceed to the promised story.

Several years ago, thanks to a concurrence of trivial but, for me, very important circumstances, I chanced to pass six months in the county town of O\*\*\*. This town is built entirely on a declivity. It has about eight hundred inhabitants, remarkably poor; the wretched little houses are outrageously bad; in the main street, under the guise of a pavement, formidable slabs of unhewn limestone crop out whitely here and there, in consequence of which, even the peasant-carts drive around it; in the very centre of an astonishingly untidy square rises a tiny yellowish structure with dark holes, and in the holes sit men in large caps with visors, and pretend to be engaged in trade; there, also, rears itself aloft a remarkably tall, striped pole, and beside the pole, by way of order, at the command of the authorities, a load of yellow hay is

kept, and one governmental hen stalks about. In a word, in the town of O\*\*\* existence is excellent.

During the early days of my sojourn in that town I nearly went out of my mind with ennui. I must say of myself that, although I am a superfluous man, of course, yet it is not of my own will; I am sickly myself, but I cannot endure anything sickly... I would have no objections to happiness, I have even tried to approach it from the right and from the left... And, therefore, it is not surprising that I can also feel bored, like any other mortal. I found myself in the town of O\*\*\* on business connected with the Government service...

Teréntievna is absolutely determined to kill me. Here is a specimen of our conversation:

*Teréntievna.* O-okh, dear little father! why do you keep writing? It is n't healthy for you to write.

*I.* But I 'm bored, Teréntievna.

*She.* But do drink some tea and lie down.

*I.* But I don't feel sleepy.

*She.* Akh, dear little father! Why do you say that? The Lord be with you! Lie down now, lie down: it 's better for you.

*I.* I shall die anyway, Teréntievna.

*She.* The Lord forbid and have mercy!.. Well, now, do you order me to make tea?

*I.* I shall not survive this week, Teréntievna.

*She.* Ii-i, dear little father! Why do you say that?.. So I 'll go and prepare the samovár.

Oh, decrepit, yellow, toothless creature! Is it possible that to you I am not a man!

*March 24. A hard frost.*

On the very day of my arrival in the town of O\*\*\*, the above-mentioned governmental business caused me to call on a certain Ozhógin, Kiríll Matvyéevitch, one of the chief officials of the county; but I made acquaintance with him, or, as the saying is, got intimate with him, two weeks later. His house was situated on the principal street, and was distinguished from all the rest by its size, its painted roof, and two lions on the gate, belonging to that race of lions which bear a remarkable likeness to the unsuccessful dogs whose birthplace is Moscow. It is possible to deduce from these lions alone that Ozhógin was an opulent man. And, in fact, he owned four hundred souls of serfs;<sup>7</sup> he received at his house the best society of the town of O\*\*\*, and bore the reputation of being a hospitable man. The chief of police came to him, in a broad carrot-hued drozhky drawn by a pair of horses – a remarkably large man, who seemed to have been carved out of shop-worn material. Other officials visited him also: the pettifogger, a yellowish and rather malicious creature; the waggish surveyor, of German extraction, with a Tatár face; the officer of Ways of Communication, a tender soul, a singer, but a scandal-monger; a former county Marshal of Nobility, a gentleman with dyed hair, and rumpled cuffs,

---

<sup>7</sup> Meaning male serfs. The women and children were not reckoned. – Translator.

trousers with straps, and that extremely noble expression of countenance which is so characteristic of people who have been under trial by the courts. He was visited also by two landed proprietors, inseparable friends, both no longer young, and even threadbare with age, the younger of whom was constantly squelching the elder, and shutting his mouth with one and the same reproach: "Come, that will do, Sergyéi Sergyéitch! What do you know about it? For you write the word *próbka* [cork] with the letter *b*... Yes, gentlemen," – he was wont to continue, with all the heat of conviction, addressing those present: – "Sergyéi Sergyéitch writes not *próbka*, but *bróbka*." And all present laughed, although, probably, not one of them was particularly distinguished for his skill in orthography; and the unhappy Sergyéi Sergyéitch held his peace, and bowed his head with a pacific smile. But I am forgetting that my days are numbered, and am entering into too great detail. So then, without further circumlocution: Ozhógin was married and had a daughter, Elizavéta Kirílovna, and I fell in love with that daughter.

Ozhógin himself was a commonplace man, neither good nor bad; his wife was beginning to look a good deal like an aged hen; but their daughter did not take after her parents. She was very comely, of vivacious and gentle disposition. Her bright grey eyes gazed good-naturedly, and in a straightforward manner from beneath childishly-arched brows; she smiled almost constantly, and laughed also quite frequently. Her fresh voice had a very

pleasant ring; she moved easily, swiftly, and blushed gaily. She did not dress very elegantly; extremely simple gowns suited her best.

As a rule, I have never made acquaintance quickly, and if I have felt at ease with a person on first meeting, – which, however, has almost never been the case, – I confess that that has spoken strongly in favour of the new acquaintance. I have not known how to behave to women at all, and in their presence I either frowned and assumed a fierce expression, or displayed my teeth in a grin in the stupidest way, and twisted my tongue about in my mouth with embarrassment. With Elizavéta Kirílovna, on the contrary, I felt myself at home from the very first moment. This is how it came about. One day I arrive at Ozhógin's before dinner, and ask: "Is he at home?" I am told: "Yes, and he is dressing; please come into the hall."<sup>8</sup> I go into the hall; I see a young girl in a white gown standing by the window, with her back toward me, and holding a cage in her hands. I curl up a little, according to my habit; but, nevertheless, I cough out of propriety. The young girl turns round quickly, so quickly that her curls strike her in the face, catches sight of me, bows, and with a smile shows me a little box, half-filled with seed.

"Will you excuse me?"

Of course, as is customary in such circumstances, I first bent my head, and, at the same time, crooked and straightened

---

<sup>8</sup> The large music-room, also used for dancing, as a play-room for the children in winter, and so forth, in Russian houses. – Translator.

my knees (as though some one had hit me from behind in the back of my legs, which, as everybody knows, serves as a token of excellent breeding and agreeable ease of manner), and then smiled, raised my hand, and waved it twice cautiously and gently in the air. The girl immediately turned away from me, took from the cage a small board, and began to scrape it violently with a knife, and suddenly, without changing her attitude, gave utterance to the following words:

"This is papa's bull-finch... Do you like bull-finches?"

"I prefer canary-birds," – I replied, not without a certain effort.

"And I am fond of canary-birds also; but just look at him, see how pretty he is. See, he is not afraid." – What surprised me was that I was not afraid. – "Come closer. His name is Pópka."

I went up, and bent over.

"He 's very charming, is n't he?"

She turned her face toward me; but we were standing so close to each other that she was obliged to throw her head back a little, in order to look at me with her bright eyes. I gazed at her: the whole of her rosy young face was smiling in so friendly a manner that I smiled also, and almost laughed aloud with pleasure. The door opened; Mr. Ozhógin entered. I immediately went to him, and began to talk with him in a very unembarrassed way; I do not know myself how I came to stay to dinner; I sat out the whole evening, and on the following day, Ozhógin's lackey, a long, purblind fellow, was already smiling at me, as a friend of the house, as he pulled off my overcoat.

To find a refuge, to weave for myself even a temporary nest, to know the joy of daily relations and habits, – that was a happiness which I, a superfluous man, without domestic memories, had not experienced up to that time. If there were anything about me suggestive of a flower, and if that comparison were not so threadbare, I would decide to say that, from that hour, I began to blossom out in spirit. Everything in me and round about me underwent such an instantaneous change! My whole life was illuminated by love, – literally my whole life, down to the smallest details, – like a dark, deserted chamber into which a candle has been brought. I lay down to sleep and I rose up, dressed myself, breakfasted, and smoked my pipe in a way different from my habit; I even skipped as I walked, – really I did, as though wings had suddenly sprouted on my shoulders. I remember that I was not in doubt even for a minute, as to the feeling with which Elizavéta Kiríllovna had inspired me; and from the very first day, I fell in love with her passionately, and from the very first day, too, I knew that I was in love. I saw her every day for the space of three weeks. Those three weeks were the happiest time of my life; but the remembrance of them is painful to me. I cannot think of them alone: that which followed them involuntarily rises up before me, and venomous grief slowly grips the heart which had just grown soft.

When a man is feeling very well, his brain, as every one knows, acts very little. A calm and joyous feeling, a feeling of satisfaction, permeates his whole being; he is swallowed up in

it; the consciousness of individuality vanishes in him – he is in a state of bliss, as badly educated poets say. But when, at last, that "spell" passes off, a man sometimes feels vexed and regretful that, in the midst of happiness, he was so unobservant of himself that he did not redouble his thoughts, his reflections, and his memories, that he did not prolong his enjoyment ... as though a "blissful" man had any time, and as though it were worth while to reflect about his own emotions! The happy man is like a fly in the sunshine. That is why, when I recall those three weeks, I find it almost impossible to retain in my mind an accurate, definite impression, the more so, as in the whole course of that time, nothing of particular note took place between us... Those twenty days present themselves to me as something warm, young, and fragrant, as a sort of bright streak in my dim and grey-hued life. My memory suddenly becomes implacably faithful and clear, only dating from the moment when the blows of Fate descended upon me, speaking again in the words of those same ill-bred writers.

Yes, those three weeks... However, they did not precisely leave no images behind in me. Sometimes, when I happen to think long of that time, certain memories suddenly float forth from the gloom of the past – as the stars unexpectedly start forth in the evening sky to meet attentively-riveted eyes. Especially memorable to me is one stroll in a grove outside the town. There were four of us: old Madame Ozhógin, Liza, I, and a certain Bizmyónkoff, a petty official of the town of O\*\*\*, a

fair-haired, good-natured, and meek young man. I shall have occasion to allude to him again. Mr. Ozhógin remained at home: his head ached, in consequence of his having slept too long. The day was splendid, warm, and calm. I must remark that gardens of entertainment and public amusement are not to the taste of the Russian. In governmental towns, in the so-called Public Gardens, you will never encounter a living soul at any season of the year; possibly some old woman will seat herself, grunting, on a green bench baked through and through by the sun, in the neighbourhood of a sickly tree, and that only when there is no dirty little shop close to the gate. But if there is a sparse little birch-grove in the vicinity of the town, the merchants, and sometimes the officials, will gladly go thither on Sundays and feast-days, with their samovár, patties, water-melons, and set out all those good gifts on the dusty grass, right by the side of the road, seat themselves around, and eat and drink tea in the sweat of their brows until the very evening. Precisely that sort of small grove existed then two versts distant from the town of O\*\*\*. We went thither after dinner, drank tea in due form, and then all four of us set off for a stroll through the grove. Bizmyónkoff gave his arm to old Madame Ozhógin; I gave mine to Liza. The day was already inclining toward evening. I was then in the very ardour of first love (not more than a fortnight had elapsed since we had become acquainted), in that condition of passionate and attentive adoration, when your whole soul innocently and involuntarily follows every motion of the beloved being; when you cannot

satiate yourself with its presence, or hear enough of its voice; when you smile and look like a convalescent child, and any man of a little experience must see at the first glance, a hundred paces off, what is going on in you.

Up to that day, I had not once chanced to be arm in arm with Liza. I walked by her side, treading softly on the green grass. A light breeze seemed to be fluttering around us, between the white boles of the birch-trees, now and then blowing the ribbon of her hat in my face. With an importunate gaze I watched her, until, at last, she turned gaily to me, and we smiled at each other. The birds chirped approvingly overhead, the blue sky peered caressingly through the fine foliage. My head reeled with excess of pleasure. I hasten to remark that Liza was not in the least in love with me. She liked me; in general, she was not shy of any one, but I was not fated to disturb her childish tranquillity. She walked arm in arm with me, as with a brother. She was seventeen years old at the time... And yet, that same evening, in my presence, there began in her that quiet, inward fermentation, which precedes the conversion of a child into a woman... I was witness to that change of the whole being, that innocent perplexity, that tremulous pensiveness; I was the first to note that sudden softness of glance, that ringing uncertainty of voice – and, oh, stupid fool! oh, superfluous man! for a whole week I was not ashamed to assume that I, I was the cause of that change!

This is the way it happened.

We strolled for quite a long time, until evening, and chatted

very little. I held my peace, like all inexperienced lovers, and she, in all probability, had nothing to say to me; but she seemed to be meditating about something, and shook her head in a queer sort of way, pensively nibbling at a leaf which she had plucked. Sometimes she began to stride forward in such a decided way . . . and then suddenly halted, waited for me and gazed about her with eyebrows elevated and an absent-minded smile. On the preceding evening, we had read together "The Prisoner of the Caucasus."<sup>9</sup> With what eagerness had she listened to me, with her face propped on both hands, and her bosom resting against the table! I tried to talk about our reading of the evening before; she blushed, asked me whether I had given the bull-finch any hemp-seed before we started, began to sing loudly some song, then suddenly ceased. The grove ended on one side in a rather steep and lofty cliff; below flowed a small, meandering river, and beyond it, further than the eye could see, stretched endless meadows, now swelling slightly like waves, now spreading out like a table-cloth, here and there intersected with ravines. Liza and I were the first to emerge on the edge of the grove; Bizmyónkoff remained behind with the old lady. We came out, halted, and both of us involuntarily narrowed our eyes: directly opposite us, in the midst of the red-hot mist, the sun was setting, huge and crimson. Half the sky was aglow and flaming; the red rays beat aslant across the meadows, casting a scarlet reflection even on the shady side of the ravine, and lay like fiery lead upon the river, where it was

---

<sup>9</sup> By M. Y. Lérmontoff.

not hidden under overhanging bushes, and seemed to be reposing in the lap of the ravine and the grove. We stood there drenched in the blazing radiance. It is beyond my power to impart all the passionate solemnity of that picture. They say that the colour red appeared to one blind man like the sound of a trumpet; I do not know to what degree that comparison is just; but, actually, there was something challenging in that flaming gold of the evening air, in the crimson glow of sky and earth. I cried out with rapture, and immediately turned to Liza. She was gazing straight at the sun. I remember, the glare of the sunset was reflected in her eyes in tiny, flaming spots. She was startled, profoundly moved. She made no answer to my exclamation, did not stir for a long time, and hung her head... I stretched out my hand to her; she turned away from me, and suddenly burst into tears. I gazed at her with secret, almost joyful surprise... Bizmyónkoff's voice rang out a couple of paces from us. Liza hastily wiped her eyes, and with a wavering smile looked at me. The old lady emerged from the grove, leaning on the arm of her fair-haired escort; both of them, in their turn, admired the view. The old lady asked Liza some question, and I remember that I involuntarily shivered when, in reply, her daughter's broken voice, like cracked glass, resounded in reply. In the meanwhile, the sun had set, the glow was beginning to die out. We retraced our steps. I again gave Liza my arm. It was still light in the grove, and I could clearly discern her features. She was embarrassed, and did not raise her eyes. The flush which had spread all over her face did not

disappear; she seemed still to be standing in the rays of the setting sun... Her arm barely touched mine. For a long time I could not start a conversation, so violently was my heart beating. We caught glimpses of the carriage far away, through the trees; the coachman was driving to meet us at a foot-pace over the friable sand of the road.

"Lizavéta Kirílovna," – I said at last, – "why did you weep?"

"I don't know," – she answered after a brief pause, looking at me with her gentle eyes, still wet with tears, – their glance seemed to me to have undergone a change, – and again fell silent.

"I see that you love nature..." I went on. – That was not in the least what I had meant to say, and my tongue hardly stammered out the last phrase to the end. She shook her head. I could not utter a word more... I was waiting for something ... not a confession – no, indeed! I was waiting for a confiding glance, a question... But Liza stared at the ground and held her peace. I repeated once more, in an undertone: "Why?" and received no reply. She was embarrassed, almost ashamed, I saw that.

A quarter of an hour later, we were all seated in the carriage and driving toward the town. The horses advanced at a brisk trot; we dashed swiftly through the moist, darkening air. I suddenly began to talk, incessantly addressing myself now to Bizmyónkoff, now to Madame Ozhógin. I did not look at Liza, but I could not avoid perceiving that from the corner of the carriage her gaze never once rested on me. At home she recovered with a start, but would not read with me, and soon

went off to bed. The break – that break of which I have spoken – had been effected in her. She had ceased to be a little girl; she was already beginning to expect ... like myself ... something or other. She did not have to wait long.

But that night I returned to my lodgings in a state of utter enchantment. The confused something, which was not exactly a foreboding, nor yet exactly a suspicion, that had arisen within me vanished: I ascribed the sudden constraint in Liza's behaviour toward me to maidenly modesty, to timidity... Had not I read a thousand times in many compositions, that the first appearance of love agitates and alarms a young girl? I felt myself very happy, and already began to construct various plans in my own mind...

If any one had then whispered in my ear: "Thou liest, my dear fellow! that 's not in store for thee at all, my lad! thou art doomed to die alone in a miserable little house, to the intolerable grumbling of an old peasant-woman, who can hardly wait for thy death, in order that she may sell thy boots for a song..."

Yes, one involuntarily says, with the Russian philosopher: "How is one to know what he does not know?" – Until to-morrow.

*March 25. A white winter day.*

I have read over what I wrote yesterday, and came near tearing up the whole note-book. It seems to me that my style of narrative is too protracted and too mawkish. However, as my remaining memories of that period present nothing cheerful, save the joy of that peculiar nature which Lérmontoff had in view when he

said that it is a cheerful and a painful thing to touch the ulcers of ancient wounds, then why should not I observe myself? But I must not impose upon kindness. Therefore I will continue without mawkishness.

For the space of a whole week, after that stroll outside the town, my position did not improve in the least, although the change in Liza became more perceptible every day. As I have already stated, I interpreted this change in the most favourable possible light for myself... The misfortune of solitary and timid men – those who are timid through self-love – consists precisely in this – that they, having eyes, and even keeping them staring wide open, see nothing, or see it in a false light, as though through coloured glasses. And their own thoughts and observations hinder them at every step.

In the beginning of our acquaintance Liza had treated me trustingly and frankly, like a child; perhaps, even, in her liking for me there was something of simple, childish affection... But when that strange, almost sudden crisis took place in her, after a short perplexity, she felt herself embarrassed in my presence, she turned away from me involuntarily, and at the same time grew sad and pensive... She was expecting ... what? She herself did not know ... but I ... I, as I have already said, rejoiced at that crisis... As God is my witness, I almost swooned with rapture, as the saying is. However, I am willing to admit that any one else in my place might have been deceived also... Who is devoid of self-love? It is unnecessary to say that all this became clear to

me only after a time, when I was compelled to fold my injured wings, which were not any too strong at best.

The misunderstanding which arose between Liza and me lasted for a whole week, – and there is nothing surprising about that: it has been my lot to be a witness of misunderstandings which have lasted for years and years. And who was it that said that only the true is real? A lie is as tenacious of life as is the truth, if not more so. It is a fact, I remember, that even during that week I had a pang now and then ... but a lonely man like myself, I will say once more, is as incapable of understanding what is going on within him as he is of comprehending what is going on before his eyes. Yes, and more than that: is love a natural feeling? Is it natural to a man to love? Love is a malady; and for a malady the law is not written. Suppose my heart did contract unpleasantly within me at times; but, then, everything in me was turned upside down. How is a man to know under such circumstances what is right and what is wrong, what is the cause, what is the significance of every separate sensation?

But, be that as it may, all these misunderstandings, forebodings, and hopes were resolved in the following manner.

One day, – it was in the morning, about eleven o'clock, – before I had contrived to set my foot in Mr. Ozhógin's anteroom, an unfamiliar, ringing voice resounded in the hall, the door flew open, and, accompanied by the master of the house, there appeared on the threshold a tall, stately man of five-and-twenty, who hastily threw on his military cloak, which was lying on the

bench, took an affectionate leave of Kiríll Matvyéevitch, touched his cap negligently as he passed me – and vanished, clinking his spurs.

"Who is that?" – I asked Ozhógin.

"Prince N\*\*\*," – replied the latter, with a troubled face; – "he has been sent from Petersburg to receive the recruits. But where are those servants?" – he went on with vexation: – "there was no one to put on his cloak."

We entered the hall.

"Has he been here long?" – I inquired.

"They say he came yesterday evening. I offered him a room in my house, but he declined it. However, he seems to be a very nice young fellow."

"Did he stay long with you?"

"About an hour. He asked me to introduce him to Olympiáda Nikítichna."

"And did you introduce him?"

"Certainly."

"And did he make acquaintance with Lizavéta Kiríllovna?.."

"Yes, he made her acquaintance, of course."

I said nothing for a while.

"Has he come to remain long, do you know?"

"Yes, I think he will be obliged to stay here more than a fortnight."

And Kiríll Matvyéevitch ran off to dress.

I paced up and down the hall several times. I do not remember

that Prince N\*\*\*'s arrival produced any special impression on me at the time, except that unpleasant sensation which usually takes possession of us at the appearance of a new face in our domestic circle. Perhaps that feeling was mingled with something in the nature of envy of the timid and obscure Moscow man for the brilliant officer from Petersburg. – "The Prince," – I thought, – "is a dandy of the capital; he will look down on us." ... I had not seen him for more than a minute, but I had managed to note that he was handsome, alert, and easy-mannered.

After pacing the hall for a while, I came to a halt, at last, in front of a mirror, pulled from my pocket a tiny comb, imparted to my hair a picturesque disorder and, as sometimes happens, suddenly became engrossed in the contemplation of my own visage. I remember that my attention was concentrated with particular solicitude on my nose; the rather flabby and undefined outline of that feature was affording me no special gratification – when, all of a sudden, in the dark depths of the inclined glass, which reflected almost the entire room, the door opened, and the graceful figure of Liza made its appearance. I do not know why I did not stir and kept the same expression on my face. Liza craned her head forward, gazed attentively at me and, elevating her eyebrows, biting her lips, and holding her breath, like a person who is delighted that he has not been seen, cautiously retreated, and softly drew the door to after her. The door creaked faintly. Liza shuddered, and stood stock-still on the spot... I did not move... Again she pulled at the door-handle, and disappeared.

There was no possibility of doubt: the expression of Liza's face at the sight of my person denoted nothing except a desire to beat a successful retreat, to avoid an unpleasant meeting; the swift gleam of pleasure which I succeeded in detecting in her eyes, when she thought that she really had succeeded in escaping unperceived, – all that said but too clearly: that young girl was not in love with me. For a long, long time I could not withdraw my gaze from the motionless, dumb door, which again presented itself as a white spot in the depths of the mirror; I tried to smile at my own upright figure – hung my head, returned home, and flung myself on the divan. I felt remarkably heavy at heart, so heavy that I could not weep ... and what was there to weep about?.. "Can it be?" – I kept reiterating incessantly, as I lay, like a dead man, on my back, and with my hands folded on my breast: – "Can it be?" ... How do you like that "Can it be?"

*March 26. A thaw.*

When, on the following day, after long hesitation and inward quailing, I entered the familiar drawing-room of the Ozhógins', I was no longer the same man whom they had known for the space of three weeks. All my former habits, from which I had begun to wean myself under the influence of an emotion which was new to me, had suddenly made their appearance again, and taken entire possession of me like the owners returning to their house.

People like myself are generally guided not so much by positive facts, as by their own impressions; I, who, no longer ago than the previous evening, had been dreaming of "the raptures

of mutual love," to-day cherished not the slightest doubt as to my own "unhappiness," and was in utter despair, although I myself was not able to discover any reasonable pretext for my despair. I could not be jealous of Prince N\*\*\*, and whatever merits he might possess, his mere arrival was not sufficient instantly to extirpate Liza's inclination for me... But stay! – did that inclination exist? I recalled the past. "And the stroll in the forest?" I asked myself. "And the expression of her face in the mirror?" – "But," I went on, – "the stroll in the forest, apparently... Phew, good heavens! What an insignificant being I am!" I exclaimed aloud, at last. This is a specimen of the half-expressed, half-thought ideas which, returning a thousand times, revolved in a monotonous whirlwind in my head. I repeat, – I returned to the Ozhógins' the same mistrustful, suspicious, constrained person that I had been from my childhood...

I found the whole family in the drawing-room; Bizmyónkoff was sitting there also, in one corner. All appeared to be in high spirits: Ozhógin, in particular, was fairly beaming, and his first words were to communicate to me that Prince N\*\*\* had spent the whole of the preceding evening with them. – "Well," I said to myself, "now I understand why you are in such good humour." I must confess that the Prince's second call puzzled me. I had not expected that. Generally speaking, people like me expect everything in the world except that which ought to happen in the ordinary run of things. I sulked and assumed the aspect of a wounded, but magnanimous man; I wanted to punish Liza for

her ungraciousness; from which, moreover, it must be concluded, that, nevertheless, I was not yet in utter despair. They say, in some cases when you are really beloved, it is even advantageous to torture the adored object; but in my position, it was unutterably stupid. Liza, in the most innocent manner, paid no attention whatever to me. Only old Madame Ozhógin noticed my solemn taciturnity, and anxiously inquired after my health. Of course I answered her with a bitter smile that "I was perfectly well, thank God." Ozhógin continued to dilate on the subject of his visitor; but, observing that I answered him reluctantly, he addressed himself chiefly to Bizmyónkoff, who was listening to him with great attention, when a footman entered and announced Prince N\*\*\*. The master of the house instantly sprang to his feet, and rushed forth to welcome him! Liza, on whom I immediately darted an eagle glance, blushed with pleasure, and fidgeted about on her chair. The Prince entered, perfumed, gay, amiable...

As I am not composing a novel for the indulgent reader, but simply writing for my own pleasure, there is no necessity for my having recourse to the customary devices of the literary gentlemen. So I will say at once, without further procrastination, that Liza, from the very first day, fell passionately in love with the Prince, and the Prince fell in love with her – partly for the lack of anything to do, but also partly because Liza really was a very charming creature. There was nothing remarkable in the fact that they fell in love with each other. He, in all probability, had not in the least expected to find such a pearl in such a wretched shell (I

am speaking of the God-forsaken town of O\*\*\*), and she, up to that time, had never beheld, even in her dreams, anything in the least like this brilliant, clever, fascinating aristocrat.

After the preliminary greetings, Ozhógin introduced me to the Prince, who treated me very politely. As a rule, he was polite to every one, and despite the incommensurable distance which existed between him and our obscure rural circle, he understood not only how to avoid embarrassing any one, but even to have the appearance of being our equal, and of only happening to live in St. Petersburg.

That first evening... Oh, that first evening! In the happy days of our childhood, our teachers used to narrate to us and hold up to us as an example of manly fortitude the young Lacedæmonian who, having stolen a fox and hidden it under his cloak, never once uttered a sound, but permitted the animal to devour all his entrails, and thus preferred death to dishonour... I can find no better expression of my unutterable sufferings in the course of that evening, when, for the first time, I beheld the Prince by Liza's side. My persistent, constrained smile, my anguished attention, my stupid taciturnity, my painful and vain longing to depart, all this, in all probability, was extremely noticeable in its way. Not one fox alone was ravaging my vitals – jealousy, envy, the consciousness of my own insignificance, and impotent rage were rending me. I could not but admit that the Prince was really a very amiable young man... I devoured him with my eyes; I really believe that I forgot to wink as I gazed at him. He did

not chat with Liza exclusively, but, of course, he talked for her alone. I must have bored him extremely... He probably soon divined that he had to do with a discarded lover, but, out of compassion for me, and also from a profound sense of my perfect harmlessness, he treated me with extraordinary gentleness. You can imagine how that hurt me!

I remember that, in the course of the evening, I tried to efface my fault; I (do not laugh at me, whoever you may be under whose eyes these lines may chance to fall, especially as this was my final dream) ... I suddenly took it into my head, God is my witness, among the varied torments, that Liza was trying to punish me for my arrogant coldness at the beginning of my visit; that she was angry with me, and was flirting with the Prince merely out of vexation at me. I seized a convenient opportunity, and approaching her with a meek but caressing smile, I murmured: "Enough, forgive me ... however, I do not ask it because I am afraid" – and without awaiting her answer, I suddenly imparted to my face an unusually vivacious and easy expression, gave a wry laugh, threw my hand up over my head in the direction of the ceiling (I remember that I was trying to adjust my neckcloth), and was even on the point of wheeling round on one foot, as much as to say: "All is over, I 'm in fine spirits, let every one be in fine spirits!" but I did not wheel round, nevertheless, because I was afraid of falling, owing to an unnatural stiffness in my knees... Liza did not understand me in the least, looked into my face with surprise, smiled hurriedly, as though desirous of getting rid of me

as promptly as possible, and again approached the Prince. Blind and deaf as I was, I could not but inwardly admit that she was not at all angry nor vexed with me at that moment; she simply was not thinking about me. The blow was decisive, my last hopes crumbled to ruin with a crash – as a block of ice penetrated with the spring sun suddenly crumbles into tiny fragments. I had received a blow on the head at the first assault, and, like the Prussians at Jena, in one day I lost everything. No, she was not angry with me!..

Alas! on the contrary! She herself – I could see that – was being undermined, as with a billow. Like a young sapling, which has already half deserted the bank, she bent eagerly forward over the flood, ready to surrender to it both the first blossoming of her spring, and her whole life. Any one to whose lot it has fallen to be a witness to such an infatuation has lived through bitter moments, if he himself loved and was not beloved. I shall forever remember the devouring attention, the tender gaiety, the innocent self-forgetfulness, the glance, half-childish and already womanly, the happy smile which blossomed forth, as it were, and never left the half-parted lips and the blushing cheeks... Everything of which Liza had had a dim foreboding during our stroll in the grove had now come to pass – and she, surrendering herself wholly to love, had, at the same time, grown quiet and sparkling like young wine which has ceased to ferment, because its time has come...

I had the patience to sit out that first evening, and the evenings

which followed ... all, to the very end! I could cherish no hope whatsoever. Liza and the Prince grew more and more attached to each other with every day that passed... But I positively lost all sense of my own dignity, and could not tear myself away from the spectacle of my unhappiness. I remember that one day I made an effort not to go, gave myself my word of honour in the morning that I would remain at home, – and at eight o'clock in the evening (I usually went out at seven), I jumped up like a lunatic, put on my hat, and ran, panting, to Kiríll Matvyéevitch's.

My position was extremely awkward; I maintained obdurate silence, and sometimes for days at a stretch never uttered a sound. I have never been distinguished for eloquence, as I have already said; but now every bit of sense I had seemed to fly away in the presence of the Prince, and I remained as poor as a church mouse. Moreover, in private, I forced my unhappy brain to toil to such a degree, slowly pondering over everything I had marked or noted in the course of the preceding day, that when I returned to the Ozhógins', I hardly had enough strength left to continue my observations. They spared me as they would a sick man, I saw that. Every morning I reached a fresh, definitive decision, which had chiefly been hatched out during a sleepless night. Now I prepared to have an explanation with Liza, to give her some friendly advice ... but when I happened to be alone with her, my tongue suddenly ceased to act, as though it had congealed, and we both painfully awaited the appearance of a third person; then, again, I wanted to flee, for good and all, leaving behind

me, for the object of my affections of course, a letter filled with reproaches; and one day I set about that letter, but the sense of justice had not yet quite vanished from within me; I understood that I had no right to upbraid any one for anything, and flung my note into the fire; again I suddenly offered the whole of myself as a sacrifice, in magnanimous fashion, and gave Liza my blessing, wishing her happiness in her love, and smiled in a gentle and friendly way on the Prince from a corner. But the hard-hearted lovers not only did not thank me for my sacrifice, they did not even perceive it, and evidently stood in no need either of my blessings or of my smiles... Then, with vexation, I suddenly passed over into the diametrically opposite frame of mind. I promised myself, as I swathed myself in my cloak, Spanish fashion, to cut the lucky rival's throat from round a corner, and with the joy of a wild beast, I pictured to myself Liza's despair... But, in the first place, in the town of O\*\*\* there were very few such corners, and, in the second place, a board fence, a street-lantern, a policeman in the distance... No! at such a corner as that it would be more seemly to peddle rings of bread than to shed human blood. I must confess that, among other means of deliverance, – as I very indefinitely expressed it when holding a conference with myself, – I thought of appealing straight to Mr. Ozhógin ... of directing the attention of that nobleman to the dangerous position of his daughter, to the sad consequences of her frivolity... I even began to talk with him one day on the very ticklish subject, but framed my speech so

craftily and obscurely, that he listened and listened to me, and suddenly, as though awaking from sleep, swiftly rubbed the palm of his hand all over his face, not sparing even his nose, snorted, and walked away from me.

It is needless to say that, on adopting that decision, I assured myself that I was acting from the most disinterested motives, that I was desirous of the universal welfare, that I was fulfilling the duty of a friend of the family... But I venture to think that even if Kiríll Matvyéevitch had not cut short my effusions, I should still have lacked the courage to finish my monologue. I sometimes undertook, with the pompousness of an ancient sage, to weigh the Prince's merits; I sometimes comforted myself with the hope that it was merely a passing fancy, that Liza would come to her senses, that her love was not genuine love... Oh, no! In a word, I do not know of a thought over which I did not brood at that time. One remedy alone, I frankly confess, never entered my head; namely, it never once occurred to me to commit suicide. Why that did not occur to me, I do not know... Perhaps even then I had a foreboding that I had not long to live in any case.

It is easy to understand that, under such untoward conditions, my conduct, my behaviour toward other people, was more characterised by unnaturalness and constraint than ever. Even old lady Ozhógin – that dull-witted being – began to shun me, and at times did not know from which side to approach me. Bizmyónkoff, always courteous and ready to be of service, avoided me. It also seemed to me then that in him I had a fellow-

sufferer, that he also loved Liza. But he never replied to my hints, and, in general, talked to me with reluctance. The Prince behaved in a very friendly manner to him; I may say that the Prince respected him. Neither Bizmyónkoff nor I interfered with the Prince and Liza; but he did not shun them as I did, he did not look like a wolf nor like a victim – and gladly joined them whenever they wished it. He did not distinguish himself particularly by jocularities on such occasions, it is true; but even in times past there had been a quiet element in his mirth.

In this manner about two weeks passed. The Prince was not only good-looking and clever: he played on the piano, sang, drew very respectably, and knew how to narrate well. His anecdotes, drawn from the highest circles of society in the capital, always produced a strong impression on the hearers, which was all the more powerful because he himself did not seem to attribute any particular importance to them...

The consequence of this guile, if you choose to call it so, on the Prince's part was, that in the course of his brief sojourn in the town of O\*\*\* he absolutely bewitched the whole of society there. It is always very easy for a man from the highest circles to bewitch us steppe-dwellers. The Prince's frequent calls on the Ozhógins (he spent his evenings at their house), as a matter of course, aroused the envy of the other nobles and officials; but the Prince, being a man of the world and clever, did not neglect a single one of them, called on all of them, said at least one pleasant word to all the dames and young ladies, permitted himself to be stuffed

with laboriously-heavy viands and treated to vile wines with magnificent appellations; in a word, behaved himself admirably, cautiously, and cleverly. Prince N\*\*\* was, altogether, a man of cheerful disposition, sociable, amiable by inclination, and as a matter of calculation also: how was it possible for him to be otherwise than a complete success in every way?

From the time of his arrival, every one in the house had thought that the time flew by with remarkable swiftness; everything went splendidly; old Ozhógin, although he pretended not to notice anything, was, in all probability, secretly rubbing his hands at the thought of having such a son-in-law. The Prince himself was conducting the whole affair very quietly and decorously, when, all of a sudden, an unforeseen event ...

Until to-morrow. To-day I am weary. These reminiscences chafe me, even on the brink of the grave. Teréntievna thought to-day that my nose had grown even more pointed; and that 's a bad sign, they say.

*March 27. The thaw continues.*

Matters were in the above-described condition: the Prince and Liza loved each other, the elder Ozhógins were waiting to see what would happen; Bizmyónkoff was present also – nothing else could be said of him; I was flopping like a fish on the ice, and keeping watch to the best of my ability, – I remember that at that time I appointed to myself the task of at least not allowing Liza to perish in the snare of the seducer, and in consequence thereof, I had begun to pay particular attention to

the maid-servants and the fatal "back" entrance – although, on the other hand, I sometimes dreamed for whole nights together about the touching magnanimity with which, in the course of time, I would extend my hand to the deluded victim and say to her: "The wily man has betrayed thee; but I am thy faithful friend... let us forget the past and be happy!" – when, suddenly, a joyful piece of news was disseminated throughout the town: the Marshal of Nobility for the county intended to give a large ball in honour of the respected visitor, at his own estate Gornostáevka, also called Gubnyakóva. All the hierarchies and powers of the town of O\*\*\* received invitations, beginning with the chief of police and ending with the apothecary, a remarkably pimple-faced German, with cruel pretensions to the ability to speak Russian purely, in consequence of which, he was constantly using violent expressions with absolute inappropriateness, as, for instance: "Devil take me, I feel a dashing fine fellow to-day."<sup>10</sup>... Terrible preparations began, as was fitting. One cosmetic-shop sold sixteen dark-blue jars of pomade, with the inscription, "à la jesmin" with the Russian character denoting the hard pronunciation after the *n*. The young ladies supplied themselves with stiff gowns, torturingly tight at the waist-line, and with promontories on the stomach; the mammas erected on their own heads formidable decorations, under the pretext that they were caps; the bustling fathers lay without their hind legs, as the saying

---

<sup>10</sup> The pronunciation is also indicated as being faulty. – Translator.

is.<sup>11</sup>...

The longed-for day arrived at last. I was among those invited. The distance from the town to Gornostáevka was reckoned at nine versts. Kiríla Matvyéevitch offered me a seat in his carriage; but I declined... Thus do chastised children, desirous of revenging themselves well on their parents, refuse their favourite viands at table. Moreover, I felt that my presence would embarrass Liza. Bizmyónkoff took my place. The Prince drove out in his own calash, I in a miserable drozhky, which I had hired at an exorbitant price for this festive occasion.

I will not describe the ball. Everything about it was as usual: musicians with remarkably false horns in the gallery; flustered landed proprietors with antiquated families; lilac ice-cream, slimy orgeat; men in patched boots and knitted cotton gloves; provincial lions with convulsively-distorted faces; and so forth, and so forth. And all this little world circled round its sun – round the Prince. Lost in the throng, unnoticed even by the maidens of eight-and-forty with pimples on their brows and blue flowers on their temples, I kept incessantly gazing now at the Prince, now at Liza. She was very charmingly dressed and very pretty that evening. They only danced together twice (he danced the mazurka<sup>12</sup> with her, 't is true!), but, at all events, so it seemed to

---

<sup>11</sup> Ran themselves off their legs. – Translator.

<sup>12</sup> The mazurka, which is still a great favourite in Russia, greatly resembles the cotillon in everything except the steps, which are vivacious. Both the cotillon and the mazurka are danced – one before, the other after supper – at Court balls and other dances. – Translator.

*me*, there existed between them a certain mysterious, unbroken communication. Even when he was not looking at her, was not talking to her, he seemed constantly to be addressing her, and her alone; he was handsome and brilliant, and charming with others – for her alone. She was evidently conscious that she was the queen of the ball – and beloved; her face simultaneously beamed with childish joy and innocent pride, and then suddenly was lighted up with a different, a more profound feeling. She exhaled an atmosphere of happiness. I observed all this... It was not the first time I had had occasion to watch them... At first this greatly pained me, then it seemed to touch me, and at last it enraged me. I suddenly felt myself remarkably malicious and, I remember, I rejoiced wonderfully over this new sensation, and even conceived a certain respect for myself. "Let 's show them that we have n't perished yet!" I said to myself. When the first sounds summoning to the mazurka thundered out, I calmly glanced around, coldly, and with much ease of manner, approached a long-faced young lady with a red and shining nose, an awkwardly gaping mouth, which looked as though it had been unhooked, and a sinewy neck, which reminded one of the handle of a bass-viol, – approached her, and curtly clicking my heels together, invited her for the dance. She wore a pink gown, which seemed to have faded recently and not quite completely; above her head quivered some sort of a faded melancholy fly on a very thick brass spring; and, altogether, the young woman was impregnated through and through, if one may so express one's self, with a sort of sour

boredom and antiquated ill-success. From the very beginning of the evening, she had not stirred from her seat; no one had thought of asking her to dance. One sixteen-year-old youth, in default of any other partner, had been on the point of appealing to this young woman, and had already taken one step in her direction, but had bethought himself, taken one look, and briskly concealed himself in the crowd. You can imagine with what joyful surprise she accepted my proposal!

I solemnly led her the whole length of the hall, found two chairs, and seated myself with her in the circle of the mazurka, the tenth pair, almost opposite the Prince, to whom, of course, the first place had been conceded. The Prince, as I have already said, was dancing with Liza. Neither my partner nor I were incommoded with invitations; consequently, we had plenty of time for conversation. Truth to tell, my lady was not distinguished by ability to utter words in coherent speech: she employed her mouth more for the execution of a strange downward smile, hitherto unbeheld by me; at the same time, she rolled her eyes upward, as though some invisible force were stretching her face; but I had no need of her eloquence. Fortunately, I felt vicious, and my partner did not inspire me with timidity. I set to criticising everything and everybody in the world, laying special stress on whipper-snappers from the capital, and Petersburg fops, and waxed so angry, at last, that my lady gradually ceased to smile, and instead of rolling her eyes upward, she suddenly began – with amazement, it must have been – to look cross-eyed, and in such

a queer way, to boot, as though she had perceived, for the first time, that she had a nose on her face; and my next neighbour, one of those lions of whom I have spoken above, more than once scanned me with a glance, even turned to me with the expression of an actor on the stage who has waked up in an unknown land, as much as to say: "Art thou still at it?" However, while I sang like a nightingale, as the saying is, I still continued to watch the Prince and Liza. They were constantly invited; but I suffered less when both of them were dancing; and even when they were sitting side by side and chatting with each other, and smiling with that gentle smile which refuses to leave the face of happy lovers, – even then I was not so greatly pained; but when Liza was fluttering through the hall with some gallant dandy, and the Prince, with her blue gauze scarf on his knees, thoughtfully followed her with his eyes, as though admiring his conquest, – then, oh, then I experienced unbearable tortures, and in my vexation I emitted such malicious remarks, that the pupils of my partner's eyes reclined completely from both sides, on her nose!

In the meantime, the mazurka was drawing to a close... They began to execute the figure known as "la confidente." In this figure the lady seats herself in the centre of the circle, chooses another lady for her confidante and whispers in her ear the name of the gentleman with whom she wishes to dance; the cavalier leads up to her the dancers, one by one, and the confidante refuses them until, at last, the happy man who has already been designated makes his appearance. Liza sat in the centre of the

circle, and chose the daughter of the hostess, one of those young girls of whom it is said that they are "God bless them."<sup>13</sup> The Prince began to search for the chosen man. In vain did he present about half a score of young men (the hostess' daughter refused them all, with a pleasant smile), and, at last, had recourse to me. Something unusual took place in me at that moment: I seemed to wink with my whole body, and tried to decline; nevertheless, I rose and went. The Prince conducted me to Liza... She did not even glance at me; the hostess' daughter shook her head in negation, the Prince turned toward me, and, prompted probably by the goose-like expression of my face, made me a profound bow. This mocking reverence, this refusal, presented to me by my triumphant rival, his negligent smile, Liza's indifferent inattention, – all this provoked an explosion on my part. I stepped up to the Prince and whispered in a frenzied rage: "I think you are permitting yourself to jeer at me?"

The Prince stared at me with scornful surprise, again took me by the hand, and with the air of leading me back to my seat, replied coldly: "I?"

"Yes, you, you!" – I went on in a whisper, obeying him, nevertheless; that is to say, following him to my seat; – "you! But I do not intend to allow any frivolous Petersburg upstart ..."

The Prince smiled calmly, almost patronisingly, gripped my hand hard, whispered: "I understand you; but this is not the proper place; we will talk it over," turned away from me,

---

<sup>13</sup> Utterly insignificant. – Translator.

approached Bizmyónkoff and led him to Liza. The pale little petty official proved to be the chosen cavalier. Liza rose to meet him.

As I sat beside my partner with the melancholy fly on her head, I felt myself almost a hero. My heart thumped violently within me, my bosom swelled nobly under my starched shirt-front, my breath came fast and deep – and all of a sudden, I stared at the adjacent lion in so magnificent a manner, that he involuntarily wiggled the leg which was turned toward me. Having rid myself of this man, I ran my eyes over the circle of dancers... It seemed to me that two or three gentlemen were gazing at me not without amazement; but, on the whole, my conversation with the Prince had not been noticed... My rival was already seated on his chair, perfectly composed, and with his former smile on his face. Bizmyónkoff led Liza to her place. She gave him a friendly nod and immediately turned to the Prince, as it seemed to me, with a certain anxiety; but he laughed in response, waved his hand gracefully, and must have said something very agreeable to her, for she flushed all over with pleasure, dropped her eyes, and then riveted them on him once more with affectionate reproach.

The heroic frame of mind which had suddenly developed in me did not disappear until the end of the mazurka; but I made no more jests, and did not criticise, and merely cast a severe and gloomy glance from time to time at my lady, who was, evidently, beginning to be afraid of me, and was reduced to

a state of complete stammering and winked incessantly, when I led her to the natural stronghold of her mother, a very fat woman with a red head-dress. Having handed over the frightened young girl as behooved me, I walked off to the window, clasped my hands, and waited to see what would happen. I waited a good while. The Prince was constantly surrounded by the host, – precisely that, surrounded, as England is surrounded by the sea, – not to mention the other members of the county Marshal of the Nobility's family, and the other guests; and, moreover, he could not, without arousing universal surprise, approach such an insignificant man as I, and enter into conversation with him. This insignificance of mine, I remember, was even a source of delight to me then. "Fiddlesticks!" I thought, as I watched him turning courteously now to one, now to another respected personage who sought the honour of being noticed by him, if only for "the twinkling of an eye," as the poets say: – "Fiddlesticks, my dear fellow!.. Thou wilt come to me by and by – for I have insulted thee."

At last the Prince, having cleverly got rid of the crowd of his adorers, strode past me, darted a glance, not exactly at the window, nor yet exactly at my hair, was on the point of turning away, and suddenly came to a halt, as though he had just remembered something.

"Akh, yes!" – he said, addressing me with a smile; – "by the way, I have a little matter of business with you."

Two landed proprietors, the most persistent of all, who were

obstinately following up the Prince, probably thought that the "little matter of business" was connected with the service, and respectfully retreated. The Prince put his arm in mine, and led me to one side. My heart thumped in my breast.

"You," – he began, drawing out the word *you*, and staring at my chin with a contemptuous expression which, strange to say, was infinitely becoming to his fresh, handsome face, – "you said something insolent to me, I believe."

"I said what I thought," – I retorted, raising my voice.

"Ssssh ... speak more quietly," – he remarked: – "well-bred men do not shout. Perhaps you would like to fight with me?"

"That is your affair," – I replied, drawing myself up.

"I shall be compelled to call you out," – he said carelessly, – "if you do not withdraw your expressions..."

"I have no intention of withdrawing anything," – I retorted proudly.

"Really?" – he remarked, not without a sneering smile. – "In that case," – he went on, after a brief pause, – "I shall have the honour to send my second to you to-morrow."

"Very well, sir," – I said in the most indifferent tone I could muster.

The Prince bowed slightly.

"I cannot forbid you to think me a frivolous man," – he added, arrogantly narrowing his eyes; – "but it is impossible that the Princes N\*\*\* should be upstarts. Farewell for the present, Mr... Mr. Shtukatúrin."

He quickly turned his back on me, and again approached his host, who had already begun to grow agitated.

"Mr. Shtukatúrin"!.. My name is Tchulkatúrin... I could find no reply to make to this last insult of his, and only stared after him in a violent rage. – "Farewell until to-morrow," I whispered, setting my teeth, and immediately hunted up an officer of my acquaintance, Captain Koloberdyáeff of the uhlands, a desperate carouser and a splendid fellow, narrated to him in a few words my quarrel with the Prince, and asked him to be my second. He, of course, immediately consented, and I wended my way homeward.

I could not get to sleep all night – from agitation, not from pusillanimity. I am no coward. I even thought very little indeed about the impending possibility of losing my life, that highest good on earth, according to the Germans. I thought of Liza only, of my dead hopes, of what I ought to do. "Ought I to try to kill the Prince?" I asked myself, and, of course, wanted to kill him, – not out of vengeance, but out of a desire for Liza's good. "But she will not survive that blow," I went on. "No, it will be better to let him kill me!"

I confess that it was also pleasant to me to think that I, an obscure man from the country, had forced so important a personage to fight a duel with me.

Dawn found me engrossed in these cogitations; and later in the morning, Koloberdyáeff presented himself.

"Well," – he asked me, noisily entering my bedroom, – "and

where 's the Prince's second?"

"Why, good gracious!" – I replied with vexation, – "it 's only seven o'clock in the morning now; I presume the Prince is still fast asleep."

"In that case," – returned the irrepressible cavalry-captain, – "order them to give me some tea. I have a headache from last night's doings... I have n't even been undressed. However," – he added with a yawn, – "I rarely do undress anyway."

Tea was served to him. He drank six glasses with rum, smoked four pipes, told me that on the preceding day he had bought for a song a horse which the coachmen had given up as a bad job, and intended to break it in by tying up one of its forelegs, – and fell asleep, without undressing, on the couch, with his pipe still in his mouth. I rose, and put my papers in order. One note of invitation from Liza, the only note I had received from her, I was on the point of putting in my breast, but changed my mind, and tossed it into a box. Koloberdyáeff was snoring faintly, with his head hanging down from the leather cushions... I remember that I surveyed for a long time his dishevelled, dashing, care-free and kindly face. At ten o'clock my servant announced the arrival of Bizmyónkoff. The Prince had selected him for his second.

Together we roused the soundly-sleeping captain. He rose, stared at us with eyes owlishly stupid from sleep, and in a hoarse voice asked for vodka; – he recovered himself, and after having exchanged salutes with Bizmyónkoff, went out with him into the next room for consultation. The conference of the seconds did

not last long. A quarter of an hour later they both came to me in my bedroom; Koloberdyáeff announced to me that "we shall fight to-day, at three o'clock, with pistols." I silently bowed my head, in token of assent. Bizmyónkoff immediately took leave of us, and drove away. He was somewhat pale and inwardly agitated, like a man who is not accustomed to that sort of performance, but was very polite and cold. I seemed, somehow, to feel ashamed in his presence, and I did not dare to look him in the eye.

Koloberdyáeff began to talk about his horse again. This conversation was very much to my taste. I was afraid he might mention Liza. But my good captain was no scandal-monger, and, more than that, he despised all women, calling them, God knows why, "salad." At two o'clock we lunched, and at three were already on the field of action – in that same birch-grove where I had once strolled with Liza, a couple of paces from that cliff.

We were the first to arrive. But the Prince and Bizmyónkoff did not make us wait long for them. The Prince was, without exaggeration, as fresh as a rose; his brown eyes gazed out with extreme affability from beneath the visor of his military cap. He was smoking a straw cigar, and on catching sight of Koloberdyáeff he shook hands with him in a cordial manner. He even bowed very charmingly to me. I, on the contrary, felt conscious that I was pale, and my hands, to my intense vexation, were trembling slightly;... my throat was dry... Never, up to that time, had I fought a duel. "O God!" I thought; "if only that sneering gentleman does not take my agitation for timidity!" I

inwardly consigned my nerves to all the fiends; but on glancing, at last, straight at the Prince's face, and catching on his lips an almost imperceptible smile, I suddenly became inflated with wrath, and immediately recovered my equanimity.

In the meantime, our seconds had arranged the barrier, had paced off the distance, and loaded the pistols. Koloberdyáeff did most of the active part; Bizmyónkoff chiefly watched him. It was a magnificent day – quite equal to the day of the never-to-be-forgotten stroll. The dense azure of the sky again peeped through the gilded green of the leaves. Their rustling seemed to excite me. The Prince continued to smoke his cigar, as he leaned his shoulder against the trunk of a linden...

"Be so good as to take your places, gentlemen; all is ready," – said Koloberdyáeff at last, handing us the pistols.

The Prince retreated a few paces, halted, and turning his head back over his shoulder, asked me: "And do you still refuse to withdraw your words?"... I tried to answer him; but my voice failed me, and I contented myself with a disdainful motion of the hand. The Prince laughed again, and took his place. We began to approach each other. I raised my pistol, and was on the point of taking aim at the breast of my enemy, – at that moment he really was my enemy, – but suddenly elevated the barrel, as though some one had jogged my elbow, and fired. The Prince staggered, raised his left hand to his left temple – a thin stream of blood trickled down his cheek from beneath his white wash-leather glove. Bizmyónkoff flew to him.

"It is nothing," – he said, taking off his cap, which had been perforated; – "if it did not enter my head, that means it is only a scratch."

He calmly pulled a batiste handkerchief from his pocket, and laid it on his curls, which were wet with blood. I looked at him as though petrified, and did not stir from the spot.

"Please go to the barrier!" – remarked Koloberdyáeff to me with severity.

I obeyed.

"Shall the duel go on?" – he added, addressing Bizmyónkoff.

Bizmyónkoff made him no reply; but the Prince, without removing the handkerchief from the wound, nor even giving himself the satisfaction of teasing me at the barrier, replied with a smile: "The duel is ended," and fired into the air. I nearly wept with vexation and rage. That man, by his magnanimity, had definitively trampled me in the mud, had cut my throat. I wanted to protest, I wanted to demand that he should fire at me; but he stepped up to me, and offering me his hand, "Everything is forgotten between us, is it not?" – he said, in a cordial voice.

I cast a glance at his pale face, at that blood-stained handkerchief, and utterly losing my head, blushing with shame, and annihilated, I pressed his hand...

"Gentlemen!" – he added, addressing the seconds: – "I hope that all this will remain a secret?"

"Of course!" – exclaimed Koloberdyáeff, – "but, Prince, allow me..."

And he himself bound up his head.

The Prince, as he departed, bowed to me once more; but Bizmyónkoff did not even bestow a glance on me. Slain, – morally slain, – I returned home with Koloberdyáeff.

"But what ails you?" – the captain asked me. "Calm yourself, the wound is not dangerous. He can dance to-morrow, if he likes. Or are you sorry that you did not kill him? In that case, you 're wrong; he 's a splendid fellow."

"Why did he spare me?!" – I muttered at last.

"Oho! so that 's it!" – calmly retorted the captain... "Okh, these romancers will be the death of me!"

I positively refuse to describe my tortures in the course of the evening which followed this unlucky duel. My pride suffered inexpressibly. It was not my conscience which tormented me; the consciousness of my stupidity annihilated me. "I myself have dealt myself the last, the final blow!" I kept repeating as I paced my room with long strides... "The Prince wounded by me and forgiving me ... yes, Liza is his now. Nothing can save her now, nor hold her back on the brink of perdition." I was very well aware that our duel could not remain a secret, in spite of the Prince's words; in any case, it could not remain a secret to Liza. "The Prince is not so stupid" – I whispered in a frenzy – "as not to take advantage of it."... And, nevertheless, I was mistaken: the whole town heard about the duel and its actual cause, – on the very next day, of course; but it was not the Prince who had babbled – on the contrary; when he had presented himself

to Liza with a bandaged head and an excuse which had been prepared in advance, she already knew everything... Whether Bizmyónkoff had betrayed me, or whether the news had reached her by other roads, I cannot say. And, after all, is it possible to conceal anything in a small town? You can imagine how Liza took it, how the whole Ozhógin family took it! As for me, I suddenly became the object of universal indignation, of loathing, a monster, a crazily jealous man, and a cannibal. My few acquaintances renounced me, as they would have renounced a leper. The town authorities appealed to the Prince with a proposition to chastise me in a stern and exemplary manner; only the persistent and importunate entreaties of the Prince himself warded off the calamity which menaced my head. This man was fated to annihilate me in every way. By his magnanimity he had shut me up as though with my coffin-lid. It is needless to say that the Ozhógins' house was immediately closed to me. Kiríla Matvyéevitch even returned to me a plain pencil, which I had left at his residence. In reality, he was precisely the last man who should have been incensed with me. My "crazy" jealousy, as they called it in the town, had defined, elucidated, so to speak, the relations between Liza and the Prince. The old Ozhógins themselves and the other residents began to look upon him almost in the light of a betrothed husband. In reality, that could not have been quite agreeable to him; but he liked Liza very much; and moreover, at that time he had not, as yet, attained his object... With all the tact of a clever man of the world, he accommodated

himself to his new position, immediately entered into the spirit of his new part, as the saying is...

But I!.. I then gave up in despair, so far as I myself was concerned, and so far as my future was concerned. When sufferings reach such a pitch that they make our whole inward being crack and creak like an overloaded cart, they ought to cease being ridiculous... But no! laughter not only accompanies tears to the end, to exhaustion, to the point where it is impossible to shed any more of them, – not at all! it still rings and resounds at a point where the tongue grows dumb and lamentation itself dies away... And then, in the first place, as I have no intention of appearing absurd even to myself, and in the second place, as I am frightfully tired, I shall defer the continuation and, God willing, the conclusion of my story until to-morrow...

*March 29. A light frost; last night there was a thaw.*

Yesterday I was unable to go on with my diary; like Póprishstchin, I lay most of the time in bed, and chatted with Teréntievna. There 's a woman for you! Sixty years ago she lost her first betrothed from the plague, she has outlived all her children, she herself is unpardonably old, she drinks tea to her heart's content, she is well-fed, warmly clad; but what do you think she talked to me about yesterday? I had ordered that the cape of an old livery-coat should be given to another utterly denuded old woman for a waistcoat (she wears a breast-piece in the shape of a waistcoat)... The cape was pretty thoroughly eaten by moths, so why should not she have it? "Well, it strikes me that

I'm your nurse... O-okh, my dear little father, 't is a sin for you to do that... And have n't I been tending you?" ... and so forth. The merciless old woman fairly wore me out with her reproaches... But let us return to the story.

So, then, I suffered like a dog which has had the hind part of its body run over by a wheel. Only then, – only after my expulsion from the Ozhógins' house, – did I become definitively aware how much pleasure a man may derive from the contemplation of his own unhappiness. Oh, men! ye are, in reality, a pitiful race!.. Well, but that is in the nature of a philosophical remark... I passed my days in utter solitude, and only in the most roundabout and even base ways was I able to find out what was going on in the Ozhógin family, what the Prince was doing. My servant struck up an acquaintance with the great-aunt of the wife of his coachman. This acquaintance afforded me some alleviation, and my servant speedily was able, from my hints and gifts, to divine what it behooved him to talk about with his master, when he was pulling off the latter's boots at night. Sometimes I chanced to meet in the street some member of the Ozhógin family, Bizmyónkoff, or the Prince... With the Prince and Bizmyónkoff I exchanged bows, but I did not enter into conversation. I saw Liza thrice in all: once with her mamma, in a milliner's shop, once in an open calash with her father, her mother, and the Prince; once in church. Of course, I did not venture to approach her, and only gazed at her from afar. In the shop she was anxious but cheerful... She was ordering something for herself, and busily trying on ribbons. Her

mother was gazing at her, with hands clasped on her stomach, her nose elevated, and indulging in that stupid and affectionate smile which is permissible only to fond mothers. Liza was in the calash with the Prince... I shall never forget that meeting! The old Ozhógins were sitting on the back seat of the calash, the Prince and Liza in front. She was paler than usual; two pink streaks were barely discernible on her cheeks. She was half-turned toward the Prince; supporting herself on her outstretched right hand (she was holding her parasol in her left), and wearily bending her head, she was gazing straight into his face with her expressive eyes. At that moment she was surrendering herself utterly to him, trusting him irrevocably. I did not have a chance to get a good look at his face, – the calash dashed past too swiftly, – but it seemed to me that he also was deeply moved.

The third time I saw her was in church. Not more than ten days had elapsed since the day when I had encountered her in the calash with the Prince, not more than three weeks since my duel. The business on account of which the Prince had come to O\*\*\* had long been finished; but he still deferred his departure; he reported in Petersburg that he was ill. In the city, people were expecting every day a formal proposal on his part to Kiríla Matvyévitch. I myself was only waiting for this last blow, in order to retire forever. The town of O\*\*\* had grown loathsome to me. I could not sit still at home, and from morning till night I dragged myself about the suburbs. One grey, wet day, as I was returning from a stroll which had been cut short by the rain,

I stepped into the church. The evening service was only just beginning, there were very few people present; I looked about me, and suddenly, near a window, I descried a familiar profile. At first I did not recognise it; that pale face, that extinct glance, those sunken cheeks – could it be the same Liza whom I had seen two weeks before? Enveloped in a cloak, with no hat on her head, illuminated from one side by a cold ray of light, which fell through the broad window of white glass, she was staring immovably at the ikonostásis, and, apparently, making a violent effort to pray, striving to escape from some sort of dejected rigidity. A fat, red-cheeked page with yellow cartridge-cases on his breast<sup>14</sup> was standing behind her, with his hands clasped behind his back, and staring with sleepy surprise at his mistress. I shuddered all over; I started to go to her, but stopped short. A torturing foreboding gripped my breast. Liza never stirred until the very end of vespers. All the congregation departed, a chanter began to sweep out the church, and still she did not stir from her place. The page approached her, and touched her gown; she glanced round, passed her hand over her face, and went away. I escorted her, at a distance, to her house, then returned home.

"She is ruined!" I exclaimed, as I entered my room.

Being a man, I do not know to this day what was the nature of my sensations then. I remember that, folding my arms, I flung myself on the divan, and riveted my eyes on the floor; but I did not know why, only, in the midst of my grief, I seemed to be

---

<sup>14</sup> The page is called a kazák, and dressed accordingly. – Translator.

pleased at something... I would not have admitted that on any account, if I were not writing for myself... I really had been tortured by painful, terrible forebodings ... and, who knows, perhaps I should have been disconcerted if they had not been fulfilled. "Such is the human heart!" some middle-aged Russian teacher would exclaim at this point, in an expressive voice, raising on high his thick forefinger adorned with a carnelian ring. But what care we for the opinion of a Russian teacher with an expressive voice, and a carnelian ring on his finger?

Be that as it may, my forebodings had turned out to be correct. The news suddenly spread through the town that the Prince had taken his departure, in consequence, nominally, of an order from Petersburg; that he had gone away without having made any proposal of marriage either to Kiríla Matvyéevitch or to his spouse, and that Liza would continue to mourn his perfidy to the end of her days. The Prince's departure had been entirely unexpected, because, as late as the evening before, his coachman, according to the assertions of my servant, had not in the least suspected his master's intention. This news threw me into a fever. I immediately dressed myself, was on the point of running to the Ozhógins'; but after thinking the matter over, I concluded that it would be decorous to wait until the following day. However, I lost nothing by remaining at home. That evening there ran in to see me a certain Pandopipópulo, a Greek on his travels, who had accidentally got stranded in O\*\*\*, a gossip of the first magnitude, who, more than any one else, had seethed

with indignation against me for my duel with the Prince. He did not even give my servant time to announce him, but fairly forced his way into my room, shook me vigorously by the hand, made a thousand excuses for his conduct, called me a model of magnanimity and fearlessness, depicted the Prince in the blackest colours, did not spare the old Ozhógins, whom Fate had, in his opinion, justly punished; he gave a hit at Liza also in passing, and ran off, after kissing me on the shoulder. Among other things, I learned from him that the Prince, *en vrai grand seigneur*, on the eve of his departure, had replied coldly to a delicate hint from Kiríla Matvyéevitch, that he had not intended to deceive any one and was not thinking of marrying; had risen, and made his bow, and that was the last they had seen of him...

On the following day, I betook myself to the Ozhógins'. The blear-eyed footman, at my appearance, sprang from the bench in the anteroom with lightning-like swiftness; I ordered him to announce me. The lackey hastened off, and immediately returned: "Please enter," said he; "I am ordered to invite you in." I entered Kiríla Matvyéevitch's study... Until to-morrow.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.