

10 Great Russian Short Stories

THE MANTLE by Nikolai Gogol

In a certain Russian ministerial department—

But it is perhaps better that I do not mention which department it was. There are in the whole of Russia no persons more sensitive than Government officials. Each of them believes if he is annoyed in any way, that the whole official class is insulted in his person.

Recently an Isprawnik (country magistrate) — I do not know of which town — is said to have drawn up a report with the object of showing that, ignoring Government orders, people were speaking of Isprawniks in terms of contempt. In order to prove his assertions, he forwarded with his report a bulky work of fiction, in which on about every tenth page an Isprawnik appeared generally in a drunken condition.

In order therefore to avoid any unpleasantness, I will not definitely indicate the department in which the scene of my story is laid, and will rather say “in a certain chancellery.”

Well, in a certain chancellery there was a certain man who, as I cannot deny, was not of an attractive appearance. He was short, had a face marked with

smallpox, was rather bald in front, and his forehead and cheeks were deeply lined with furrows — to say nothing of other physical imperfections. Such was the outer aspect of our hero, as produced by the St Petersburg climate.

As regards his official rank — for with us Russians the official rank must always be given — he was what is usually known as a permanent titular councillor, one of those unfortunate beings who, as is well known, are made a butt of by various authors who have the bad habit of attacking people who cannot defend themselves.

Our hero's family name was Bashmatchkin; his baptismal name Akaki Akakievitch. Perhaps the reader may think this name somewhat strange and far-fetched, but he can be assured that it is not so, and that circumstances so arranged it that it was quite impossible to give him any other name.

This happened in the following way. Akaki Akakievitch was born, if I am not mistaken, on the night of the 23rd of March. His deceased mother, the wife of an official and a very good woman, immediately made proper arrangements for his baptism. When the time came, she was lying on the bed before the door. At her right hand stood the godfather, Ivan Ivanovitch Jeroshkin, a very important person, who was registrar of the senate; at her left, the godmother Anna Semenovna Byelobrushkova, the wife of a police

inspector, a woman of rare virtues.

Three names were suggested to the mother from which to choose one for the child — Mokuja, Sossuja, or Khozdazat.

“No,” she said, “I don't like such names.”

In order to meet her wishes, the church calendar was opened in another place, and the names Triphiliy, Dula, and Varakhasiy were found.

“This is a punishment from heaven,” said the mother. “What sort of names are these! I never heard the like! If it had been Varadat or Varukh, but Triphiliy and Varakhasiy!”

They looked again in the calendar and found Pavsikakhiy and Vakhtisiy.

“Now I see,” said the mother, “this is plainly fate. If there is no help for it, then he had better take his father's name, which was Akaki.”

So the child was called Akaki Akakievitch. It was baptised, although it wept and cried and made all kinds of grimaces, as though it had a presentiment that it would one day be a titular councillor.

We have related all this so conscientiously that the reader himself might be convinced that it was impossible for the little Akaki to receive any other name. When and how he entered the chancellery and who appointed him, no one could remember. However many of his superiors might come and go, he was always seen in the same spot, in the same attitude, busy

with the same work, and bearing the same title; so that people began to believe he had come into the world just as he was, with his bald forehead and official uniform.

In the chancellery where he worked, no kind of notice was taken of him. Even the office attendants did not rise from their seats when he entered, nor look at him; they took no more notice than if a fly had flown through the room. His superiors treated him in a coldly despotic manner. The assistant of the head of the department, when he pushed a pile of papers under his nose, did not even say "Please copy those," or "There is something interesting for you," or make any other polite remark such as well-educated officials are in the habit of doing. But Akaki took the documents, without worrying himself whether they had the right to hand them over to him or not, and straightway set to work to copy them.

His young colleagues made him the butt of their ridicule and their elegant wit, so far as officials can be said to possess any wit. They did not scruple to relate in his presence various tales of their own invention regarding his manner of life and his landlady, who was seventy years old. They declared that she beat him, and inquired of him when he would lead her to the marriage altar. Sometimes they let a shower of scraps of paper fall on his head, and told him they were snowflakes.

But Akaki Akakievitch made no answer to all these attacks; he seemed oblivious of their presence.

His work was not affected in the slightest degree; during all these interruptions he did not make a single error in copying. Only when the horse-play grew intolerable, when he was held by the arm and prevented writing, he would say "Do leave me alone! Why do you always want to disturb me at work?" There was something peculiarly pathetic in these words and the way in which he uttered them.

One day it happened that when a young clerk, who had been recently appointed to the chancellery, prompted by the example of the others, was playing him some trick, he suddenly seemed arrested by something in the tone of Akaki's voice, and from that moment regarded the old official with quite different eyes. He felt as though some supernatural power drew him away from the colleagues whose acquaintance he had made here, and whom he had hitherto regarded as well-educated, respectable men, and alienated him from them. Long afterwards, when surrounded by gay companions, he would see the figure of the poor little councillor and hear the words "Do leave me alone! Why will you always disturb me at work?" Along with these words, he also heard others: "Am I not your brother?" On such occasions the young man would hide his face in his hands, and think how little humane feeling after all was to be found in men's hearts; how much coarseness and cruelty was to be found even in the educated and those who were everywhere regarded

as good and honourable men.

Never was there an official who did his work so zealously as Akaki Akakievitch. "Zealously," do I say? He worked with a passionate love of his task. While he copied official documents, a world of varied beauty rose before his eyes. His delight in copying was legible in his face. To form certain letters afforded him special satisfaction, and when he came to them he was quite another man; he began to smile, his eyes sparkled, and he pursed up his lips, so that those who knew him could see by his face which letters he was working at.

Had he been rewarded according to his zeal, he would perhaps — to his own astonishment — have been raised to the rank of civic councillor. However, he was not destined, as his colleagues expressed it, to wear a cross at his buttonhole, but only to get hæmorrhoids by leading a too sedentary life.

For the rest, I must mention that on one occasion he attracted a certain amount of attention. A director, who was a kindly man and wished to reward him for his long service, ordered that he should be entrusted with a task more important than the documents which he usually had to copy. This consisted in preparing a report for a court, altering the headings of various documents, and here and there changing the first personal pronoun into the third.

Akaki undertook the work; but it confused and exhausted him to such a degree that the sweat ran from

his forehead and he at last exclaimed: "No! Please give me again something to copy." From that time he was allowed to continue copying to his life's end.

Outside this copying nothing appeared to exist for him. He did not even think of his clothes. His uniform, which was originally green, had acquired a reddish tint. The collar was so narrow and so tight that his neck, although of average length, stretched far out of it, and appeared extraordinarily long, just like those of the cats with movable heads, which are carried about on trays and sold to the peasants in Russian villages.

Something was always sticking to his clothes — a piece of thread, a fragment of straw which had been flying about, etc. Moreover he seemed to have a special predilection for passing under windows just when something not very clean was being thrown out of them, and therefore he constantly carried about on his hat pieces of orange-peel and such refuse. He never took any notice of what was going on in the streets, in contrast to his colleagues who were always watching people closely and whom nothing delighted more than to see someone walking along on the opposite pavement with a rent in his trousers.

But Akaki Akakievitch saw nothing but the clean, regular lines of his copies before him; and only when he collided suddenly with a horse's nose, which blew its breath noisily in his face, did the good man observe that he was not sitting at his writing-table among his neat

duplicates, but walking in the middle of the street.

When he arrived home, he sat down at once to supper, ate his cabbage-soup hurriedly, and then, without taking any notice how it tasted, a slice of beef with garlic, together with the flies and any other trifles which happened to be lying on it. As soon as his hunger was satisfied, he set himself to write, and began to copy the documents which he had brought home with him. If he happened to have no official documents to copy, he copied for his own satisfaction political letters, not for their more or less grand style but because they were directed to some high personage.

When the grey St Petersburg sky is darkened by the veil of night, and the whole of officialdom has finished its dinner according to its gastronomical inclinations or the depth of its purse — when all recover themselves from the perpetual scratching of bureaucratic pens, and all the cares and business with which men so often needlessly burden themselves, they devote the evening to recreation. One goes to the theatre; another roams about the streets, inspecting toilettes; another whispers flattering words to some young girl who has risen like a star in his modest official circle. Here and there one visits a colleague in his third or fourth story flat, consisting of two rooms with an entrance-hall and kitchen, fitted with some pretentious articles of furniture purchased by many abstinences.

In short, at this time every official betakes himself to some form of recreation — playing whist, drinking tea, and eating cheap pastry or smoking tobacco in long pipes. Some relate scandals about great people, for in whatever situation of life the Russian may be, he always likes to hear about the aristocracy; others recount well-worn but popular anecdotes, as for example that of the commandant to whom it was reported that a rogue had cut off the horse's tail on the monument of Peter the Great.

But even at this time of rest and recreation, Akaki Akakievitch remained faithful to his habits. No one could say that he had ever seen him in any evening social circle. After he had written as much as he wanted, he went to bed, and thought of the joys of the coming day, and the fine copies which God would give him to do.

So flowed on the peaceful existence of a man who was quite content with his post and his income of four hundred roubles a year. He might perhaps have reached an extreme old age if one of those unfortunate events had not befallen him, which not only happen to titular but to actual privy, court, and other councillors, and also to persons who never give advice nor receive it.

In St Petersburg all those who draw a salary of four hundred roubles or thereabouts have a terrible enemy in our northern cold, although some assert that it

is very good for the health. About nine o'clock in the morning, when the clerks of the various departments betake themselves to their offices, the cold nips their noses so vigorously that most of them are quite bewildered. If at this time even high officials so suffer from the severity of the cold in their own persons that the tears come into their eyes, what must be the sufferings of the titular councillors, whose means do not allow of their protecting themselves against the rigour of winter? When they have put on their light cloaks, they must hurry through five or six streets as rapidly as possible, and then in the porter's lodge warm themselves and wait till their frozen official faculties have thawed.

For some time Akaki had been feeling on his back and shoulders very sharp twinges of pain, although he ran as fast as possible from his dwelling to the office. After well considering the matter, he came to the conclusion that these were due to the imperfections of his cloak. In his room he examined it carefully, and discovered that in two or three places it had become so thin as to be quite transparent, and that the lining was much torn.

This cloak had been for a long time the standing object of jests on the part of Akaki's merciless colleagues. They had even robbed it of the noble name of "cloak," and called it a cowl. It certainly presented a remarkable appearance. Every year the collar had

grown smaller, for every year the poor titular councillor had taken a piece of it away in order to repair some other part of the cloak; and these repairs did not look as if they had been done by the skilled hand of a tailor. They had been executed in a very clumsy way and looked remarkably ugly.

After Akaki Akakievitch had ended his melancholy examination, he said to himself that he must certainly take his cloak to Petrovitch the tailor, who lived high up in a dark den on the fourth floor.

With his squinting eyes and pock-marked face, Petrovitch certainly did not look as if he had the honour to make frock-coats and trousers for high officials — that is to say, when he was sober, and not absorbed in more pleasant diversions.

I might dispense here with dwelling on this tailor; but since it is the custom to portray the physiognomy of every separate personage in a tale, I must give a better or worse description of Petrovitch. Formerly when he was a simple serf in his master's house, he was merely called Gregor. When he became free, he thought he ought to adorn himself with a new name, and dubbed himself Petrovitch; at the same time he began to drink lustily, not only on the high festivals but on all those which are marked with a cross in the calendar. By thus solemnly celebrating the days consecrated by the Church, he considered that he was remaining faithful to the traditions of his childhood; and when he quarrelled

with his wife, he shouted that she was an earthly minded creature and a German. Of this lady we have nothing more to relate than that she was the wife of Petrovitch, and that she did not wear a kerchief but a cap on her head. For the rest, she was not pretty; only the soldiers looked at her as they passed, then they twirled their moustaches and walked on, laughing.

Akaki Akakievitch accordingly betook himself to the tailor's attic. He reached it by a dark, dirty, damp staircase, from which, as in all the inhabited houses of the poorer class in St Petersburg, exhaled an effluvia of spirits vexatious to nose and eyes alike. As the titular councillor climbed these slippery stairs, he calculated what sum Petrovitch could reasonably ask for repairing his cloak, and determined only to give him a rouble.

The door of the tailor's flat stood open in order to provide an outlet for the clouds of smoke which rolled from the kitchen, where Petrovitch's wife was just then cooking fish. Akaki, his eyes smarting, passed through the kitchen without her seeing him, and entered the room where the tailor sat on a large, roughly made, wooden table, his legs crossed like those of a Turkish pasha, and, as is the custom of tailors, with bare feet. What first arrested attention, when one approached him, was his thumb nail, which was a little misshapen but as hard and strong as the shell of a tortoise. Round his neck were hung several skeins of thread, and on his knees lay a tattered coat. For some minutes he had been

trying in vain to thread his needle. He was first of all angry with the gathering darkness, then with the thread.

“Why the deuce won't you go in, you worthless scoundrel!” he exclaimed.

Akaki saw at once that he had come at an inopportune moment. He wished he had found Petrovitch at a more favourable time, when he was enjoying himself — when, as his wife expressed it, he was having a substantial ration of brandy. At such times the tailor was extraordinarily ready to meet his customer's proposals with bows and gratitude to boot. Sometimes indeed his wife interfered in the transaction, and declared that he was drunk and promised to do the work at much too low a price; but if the customer paid a trifle more, the matter was settled.

Unfortunately for the titular councillor, Petrovitch had just now not yet touched the brandy flask. At such moments he was hard, obstinate, and ready to demand an exorbitant price.

Akaki foresaw this danger, and would gladly have turned back again, but it was already too late. The tailor's single eye — for he was one-eyed — had already noticed him, and Akaki Akakievitch murmured involuntarily “Good day, Petrovitch.”

“Welcome, sir,” answered the tailor, and fastened his glance on the titular councillor's hand to see what he had in it.

“I come just — merely — in order — I want—”

We must here remark that the modest titular councillor was in the habit of expressing his thoughts only by prepositions, adverbs, or particles, which never yielded a distinct meaning. If the matter of which he spoke was a difficult one, he could never finish the sentence he had begun. So that when transacting business, he generally entangled himself in the formula "Yes — it is indeed true that—" Then he would remain standing and forget what he wished to say, or believe that he had said it.

"What do you want, sir?" asked Petrovitch, scrutinising him from top to toe with a searching look, and contemplating his collar, sleeves, coat, buttons — in short his whole uniform, although he knew them all very well, having made them himself. That is the way of tailors whenever they meet an acquaintance.

Then Akaki answered, stammering as usual, "I want — Petrovitch — this cloak — you see — it is still quite good, only a little dusty — and therefore it looks a little old. It is, however, still quite new, only that it is worn a little — there in the back and here in the shoulder — and there are three quite little splits. You see it is hardly worth talking about; it can be thoroughly repaired in a few minutes."

Petrovitch took the unfortunate cloak, spread it on the table, contemplated it in silence, and shook his head. Then he stretched his hand towards the window-sill for his snuff-box, a round one with the

portrait of a general on the lid. I do not know whose portrait it was, for it had been accidentally injured, and the ingenious tailor had gummed a piece of paper over it.

After Petrovitch had taken a pinch of snuff, he examined the cloak again, held it to the light, and once more shook his head. Then he examined the lining, took a second pinch of snuff, and at last exclaimed, "No! that is a wretched rag! It is beyond repair!"

At these words Akaki's courage fell.

"What!" he cried in the querulous tone of a child. "Can this hole really not be repaired? Look! Petrovitch; there are only two rents, and you have enough pieces of cloth to mend them with."

"Yes, I have enough pieces of cloth; but how should I sew them on? The stuff is quite worn out; it won't bear another stitch."

"Well, can't you strengthen it with another piece of cloth?"

"No, it won't bear anything more; cloth after all is only cloth, and in its present condition a gust of wind might blow the wretched mantle into tatters."

"But if you could only make it last a little longer, do you see — really—"

"No!" answered Petrovitch decidedly. "There is nothing more to be done with it; it is completely worn out. It would be better if you made yourself foot bandages out of it for the winter; they are warmer than

stockings. It was the Germans who invented stockings for their own profit." Petrovitch never lost an opportunity of having a hit at the Germans. "You must certainly buy a new cloak," he added.

"A new cloak?" exclaimed Akaki Akakievitch, and it grew dark before his eyes. The tailor's work-room seemed to go round with him, and the only object he could clearly distinguish was the paper-patched general's portrait on the tailor's snuff-box. "A new cloak!" he murmured, as though half asleep. "But I have no money."

"Yes, a new cloak," repeated Petrovitch with cruel calmness.

"Well, even if I did decide on it — how much—"

"You mean how much would it cost?"

"Yes."

"About a hundred and fifty roubles," answered the tailor, pursing his lips. This diabolical tailor took a special pleasure in embarrassing his customers and watching the expression of their faces with his squinting single eye.

"A hundred and fifty roubles for a cloak!" exclaimed Akaki Akakievitch in a tone which sounded like an outcry — possibly the first he had uttered since his birth.

"Yes," replied Petrovitch. "And then the marten-fur collar and silk lining for the hood would make it up to two hundred roubles."

“Petrovitch, I adjure you!” said Akaki Akakievitch in an imploring tone, no longer hearing nor wishing to hear the tailor's words, “try to make this cloak last me a little longer.”

“No, it would be a useless waste of time and work.”

After this answer, Akaki departed, feeling quite crushed; while Petrovitch, with his lips firmly pursed up, feeling pleased with himself for his firmness and brave defence of the art of tailoring, remained sitting on the table.

Meanwhile Akaki wandered about the streets like a somnambulist, at random and without an object. “What a terrible business!” he said to himself. “Really, I could never have believed that it would come to that. No,” he continued after a short pause, “I could not have guessed that it would come to that. Now I find myself in a completely unexpected situation — in a difficulty that—”

As he thus continued his monologue, instead of approaching his dwelling, he went, without noticing it, in quite a wrong direction. A chimney-sweep brushed against him and blackened his back as he passed by. From a house where building was going on, a bucket of plaster of Paris was emptied on his head. But he saw and heard nothing. Only when he collided with a sentry, who, after he had planted his halberd beside him, was shaking out some snuff from his snuff-box

with a bony hand, was he startled out of his reverie.

“What do you want?” the rough guardian of civic order exclaimed. “Can't you walk on the pavement properly?”

This sudden address at last completely roused Akaki from his torpid condition. He collected his thoughts, considered his situation clearly, and began to take counsel with himself seriously and frankly, as with a friend to whom one entrusts the most intimate secrets.

“No!” he said at last. “To-day I will get nothing from Petrovitch — to-day he is in a bad humour — perhaps his wife has beaten him — I will look him up again next Sunday. On Saturday evenings he gets intoxicated; then the next day he wants a pick-me-up — his wife gives him no money — I squeeze a ten-kopeck piece into his hand; then he will be more reasonable and we can discuss the cloak further.”

Encouraged by these reflections, Akaki waited patiently till Sunday. On that day, having seen Petrovitch's wife leave the house, he betook himself to the tailor's and found him, as he had expected, in a very depressed state as the result of his Saturday's dissipation. But hardly had Akaki let a word fall about the mantle than the diabolical tailor awoke from his torpor and exclaimed, “No, nothing can be done; you must certainly buy a new cloak.”

The titular councillor pressed a ten-kopeck piece into his hand.

“Thanks, my dear friend,” said Petrovitch; “that will get me a pick-me-up, and I will drink your health with it. But as for your old mantle, what is the use of talking about it? It isn't worth a farthing. Let me only get to work; I will make you a splendid one, I promise!”

But poor Akaki Akakievitch still importuned the tailor to repair his old one.

“No, and again no,” answered Petrovitch. “It is quite impossible. Trust me; I won't take you in. I will even put silver hooks and eyes on the collar, as is now the fashion.”

This time Akaki saw that he must follow the tailor's advice, and again all his courage sank. He must have a new mantle made. But how should he pay for it? He certainly expected a Christmas bonus at the office; but that money had been allotted beforehand. He must buy a pair of trousers, and pay his shoemaker for repairing two pairs of boots, and buy some fresh linen. Even if, by an unexpected stroke of good luck, the director raised the usual bonus from forty to fifty roubles, what was such a small amount in comparison with the immense sum which Petrovitch demanded? A mere drop of water in the sea.

At any rate, he might expect that Petrovitch, if he were in a good humour, would lower the price of the cloak to eighty roubles; but where were these eighty roubles to be found? Perhaps he might succeed if he left

no stone unturned, in raising half the sum; but he saw no means of procuring the other half. As regards the first half, he had been in the habit, as often as he received a rouble, of placing a kopeck in a money-box. At the end of each half-year he changed these copper coins for silver. He had been doing this for some time, and his savings just now amounted to forty roubles. Thus he already had half the required sum. But the other half!

Akaki made long calculations, and at last determined that he must, at least for a whole year, reduce some of his daily expenses. He would have to give up his tea in the evening, and copy his documents in his landlady's room, in order to economise the fuel in his own. He also resolved to avoid rough pavements as much as possible, in order to spare his shoes; and finally to give out less washing to the laundress.

At first he found these deprivations rather trying; but gradually he got accustomed to them, and at last took to going to bed without any supper at all. Although his body suffered from this abstinence, his spirit derived all the richer nutriment from perpetually thinking about his new cloak. From that time it seemed as though his nature had completed itself; as though he had married and possessed a companion on his life journey. This companion was the thought of his new cloak, properly wadded and lined.

From that time he became more lively, and his

character grew stronger, like that of a man who has set a goal before himself which he will reach at all costs. All that was indecisive and vague in his gait and gestures had disappeared. A new fire began to gleam in his eyes, and in his bold dreams he sometimes even proposed to himself the question whether he should not have a marten-fur collar made for his coat.

These and similar thoughts sometimes caused him to be absent-minded. As he was copying his documents one day he suddenly noticed that he had made a slip. "Ugh!" he exclaimed, and crossed himself.

At least once a month he went to Petrovitch to discuss the precious cloak with him, and to settle many important questions, e.g. where and at what price he should buy the cloth, and what colour he should choose.

Each of these visits gave rise to new discussions, but he always returned home in a happier mood, feeling that at last the day must come when all the materials would have been bought and the cloak would be lying ready to put on.

This great event happened sooner than he had hoped. The director gave him a bonus, not of forty or fifty, but of five-and-sixty roubles. Had the worthy official noticed that Akaki needed a new mantle, or was the exceptional amount of the gift only due to chance?

However that might be, Akaki was now richer by twenty roubles. Such an access of wealth necessarily

hastened his important undertaking. After two or three more months of enduring hunger, he had collected his eighty roubles. His heart, generally so quiet, began to beat violently; he hastened to Petrovitch, who accompanied him to a draper's shop. There, without hesitating, they bought a very fine piece of cloth. For more than half a year they had discussed the matter incessantly, and gone round the shops inquiring prices. Petrovitch examined the cloth, and said they would not find anything better. For the lining they chose a piece of such firm and thickly woven linen that the tailor declared it was better than silk; it also had a splendid gloss on it. They did not buy marten fur, for it was too dear, but chose the best catskin in the shop, which was a very good imitation of the former.

It took Petrovitch quite fourteen days to make the mantle, for he put an extra number of stitches into it. He charged twelve roubles for his work, and said he could not ask less; it was all sewn with silk, and the tailor smoothed the sutures with his teeth.

At last the day came — I cannot name it certainly, but it assuredly was the most solemn in Akaki's life — when the tailor brought the cloak. He brought it early in the morning, before the titular councillor started for his office. He could not have come at a more suitable moment, for the cold had again begun to be very severe.

Petrovitch entered the room with the dignified

mien of an important tailor. His face wore a peculiarly serious expression, such as Akaki had never seen on it. He was fully conscious of his dignity, and of the gulf which separates the tailor who only repairs old clothes from the artist who makes new ones.

The cloak had been brought wrapped up in a large, new, freshly washed handkerchief, which the tailor carefully opened, folded, and placed in his pocket. Then he proudly took the cloak in both hands and laid it on Akaki Akakievitch's shoulders. He pulled it straight behind to see how it hung majestically in its whole length. Finally he wished to see the effect it made when unbuttoned. Akaki, however, wished to try the sleeves, which fitted wonderfully well. In brief, the cloak was irreproachable, and its fit and cut left nothing to be desired.

While the tailor was contemplating his work, he did not forget to say that the only reason he had charged so little for making it, was that he had only a low rent to pay and had known Akaki Akakievitch for a long time; he declared that any tailor who lived on the Nevski Prospect would have charged at least five-and-sixty roubles for making up such a cloak.

The titular councillor did not let himself be involved in a discussion on the subject. He thanked him, paid him, and then sallied forth on his way to the office.

Petrovitch went out with him, and remained

standing in the street to watch Akaki as long as possible wearing the mantle; then he hurried through a cross-alley and came into the main street again to catch another glimpse of him.

Akaki went on his way in high spirits. Every moment he was acutely conscious of having a new cloak on, and smiled with sheer self-complacency. His head was filled with only two ideas: first that the cloak was warm, and secondly that it was beautiful. Without noticing anything on the road, he marched straight to the chancellery, took off his treasure in the hall, and solemnly entrusted it to the porter's care.

I do not know how the report spread in the office that Akaki's old cloak had ceased to exist. All his colleagues hastened to see his splendid new one, and then began to congratulate him so warmly that he at first had to smile with self-satisfaction, but finally began to feel embarrassed.

But how great was his surprise when his cruel colleagues remarked that he should formally "handsel" his cloak by giving them a feast! Poor Akaki was so disconcerted and taken aback, that he did not know what to answer nor how to excuse himself. He stammered out, blushing, that the cloak was not so new as it appeared; it was really second-hand.

One of his superiors, who probably wished to show that he was not too proud of his rank and title, and did not disdain social intercourse with his

subordinates, broke in and said, "Gentlemen! Instead of Akaki Akakievitch, I will invite you to a little meal. Come to tea with me this evening. To-day happens to be my birthday."

All the others thanked him for his kind proposal, and joyfully accepted his invitation. Akaki at first wished to decline, but was told that to do so would be grossly impolite and unpardonable, so he reconciled himself to the inevitable. Moreover, he felt a certain satisfaction at the thought that the occasion would give him a new opportunity of displaying his cloak in the streets. This whole day for him was like a festival day. In the cheerfullest possible mood he returned home, took off his cloak, and hung it up on the wall after once more examining the cloth and the lining. Then he took out his old one in order to compare it with Petrovitch's masterpiece. His looks passed from one to the other, and he thought to himself, smiling, "What a difference!"

He ate his supper cheerfully, and after he had finished, did not sit down as usual to copy documents. No; he lay down, like a Sybarite, on the sofa and waited. When the time came, he made his toilette, took his cloak, and went out.

I cannot say where was the house of the superior official who so graciously invited his subordinates to tea. My memory begins to grow weak, and the innumerable streets and houses of St Petersburg go

round so confusedly in my head that I have difficulty in finding my way about them. So much, however, is certain: that the honourable official lived in a very fine quarter of the city, and therefore very far from Akaki Akakievitch's dwelling.

At first the titular councillor traversed several badly lit streets which seemed quite empty; but the nearer he approached his superior's house, the more brilliant and lively the streets became. He met many people, among whom were elegantly dressed ladies, and men with beaverskin collars. The peasants' sledges, with their wooden seats and brass studs, became rarer; while now every moment appeared skilled coachmen with velvet caps, driving lacquered sleighs covered with bearskins, and fine carriages.

At last he reached the house whither he had been invited. His host lived in a first-rate style; a lamp hung before his door, and he occupied the whole of the second story. As Akaki entered the vestibule, he saw a long row of galoshes; on a table a samovar was smoking and hissing; many cloaks, some of them adorned with velvet and fur collars, hung on the wall. In the adjoining room he heard a confused noise, which assumed a more decided character when a servant opened the door and came out bearing a tray full of empty cups, a milk-jug, and a basket of biscuits. Evidently the guests had been there some time and had already drunk their first cup of tea.

After hanging his cloak on a peg, Akaki approached the room in which his colleagues, smoking long pipes, were sitting round the card-table and making a good deal of noise. He entered the room, but remained standing by the door, not knowing what to do; but his colleagues greeted him with loud applause, and all hastened into the vestibule to take another look at his cloak. This excitement quite robbed the good titular councillor of his composure; but in his simplicity of heart he rejoiced at the praises which were lavished on his precious cloak. Soon afterwards his colleagues left him to himself and resumed their whist parties.

Akaki felt much embarrassed, and did not know what to do with his feet and hands. Finally he sat down by the players; looked now at their faces and now at the cards; then he yawned and remembered that it was long past his usual bedtime. He made an attempt to go, but they held him back and told him that he could not do so without drinking a glass of champagne on what was for him such a memorable day.

Soon supper was brought. It consisted of cold veal, cakes, and pastry of various kinds, accompanied by several bottles of champagne. Akaki was obliged to drink two glasses of it, and found everything round him take on a more cheerful aspect. But he could not forget that it was already midnight and that he ought to have been in bed long ago. From fear of being kept back again, he slipped furtively into the vestibule, where he

was pained to find his cloak lying on the ground. He carefully shook it, brushed it, put it on, and went out.

The street-lamps were still alight. Some of the small ale-houses frequented by servants and the lower classes were still open, and some had just been shut; but by the beams of light which shone through the chinks of the doors, it was easy to see that there were still people inside, probably male and female domestics, who were quite indifferent to their employers' interests.

Akaki Akakievitch turned homewards in a cheerful mood. Suddenly he found himself in a long street where it was very quiet by day and still more so at night. The surroundings were very dismal. Only here and there hung a lamp which threatened to go out for want of oil; there were long rows of wooden houses with wooden fences, but no sign of a living soul. Only the snow in the street glimmered faintly in the dim light of the half-extinguished lanterns, and the little houses looked melancholy in the darkness.

Akaki went on till the street opened into an enormous square, on the other side of which the houses were scarcely visible, and which looked like a terrible desert. At a great distance — God knows where! — glimmered the light in a sentry-box, which seemed to stand at the end of the world. At the same moment Akaki's cheerful mood vanished. He went in the direction of the light with a vague sense of depression,

as though some mischief threatened him. On the way he kept looking round him with alarm. The huge, melancholy expanse looked to him like a sea. "No," he thought to himself, "I had better not look at it"; and he continued his way with his eyes fixed on the ground. When he raised them again he suddenly saw just in front of him several men with long moustaches, whose faces he could not distinguish. Everything grew dark before his eyes, and his heart seemed to be constricted.

"That is my cloak!" shouted one of the men, and seized him by the collar. Akaki tried to call for help. Another man pressed a great bony fist on his mouth, and said to him, "Just try to scream again!" At the same moment the unhappy titular councillor felt the cloak snatched away from him, and simultaneously received a kick which stretched him senseless in the snow. A few minutes later he came to himself and stood up; but there was no longer anyone in sight. Robbed of his cloak, and feeling frozen to the marrow, he began to shout with all his might; but his voice did not reach the end of the huge square. Continuing to shout, he ran with the rage of despair to the sentinel in the sentry-box, who, leaning on his halberd, asked him why the deuce he was making such a hellish noise and running so violently.

When Akaki reached the sentinel, he accused him of being drunk because he did not see that passers-by were robbed a short distance from his sentry-box.

“I saw you quite well,” answered the sentinel, “in the middle of the square with two men; I thought you were friends. It is no good getting so excited. Go to-morrow to the police inspector; he will take up the matter, have the thieves searched for, and make an examination.”

Akaki saw there was nothing to be done but to go home. He reached his dwelling in a state of dreadful disorder, his hair hanging wildly over his forehead, and his clothes covered with snow. When his old landlady heard him knocking violently at the door, she sprang up and hastened thither, only half-dressed; but at the sight of Akaki started back in alarm. When he told her what had happened, she clasped her hands together and said, “You should not go to the police inspector, but to the municipal Superintendent of the district. The inspector will put you off with fine words, and do nothing; but I have known the Superintendent for a long time. My former cook, Anna, is now in his service, and I often see him pass by under our windows. He goes to church on all the festival-days, and one sees at once by his looks that he is an honest man.”

After hearing this eloquent recommendation, Akaki retired sadly to his room. Those who can picture to themselves such a situation will understand what sort of a night he passed. As early as possible the next morning he went to the Superintendent's house. The servants told him that he was still asleep. At ten o'clock

he returned, only to receive the same reply. At twelve o'clock the Superintendent had gone out.

About dinner-time the titular councillor called again, but the clerks asked him in a severe tone what was his business with their superior. Then for the first time in his life Akaki displayed an energetic character. He declared that it was absolutely necessary for him to speak with the Superintendent on an official matter, and that anyone who ventured to put difficulties in his way would have to pay dearly for it.

This left them without reply. One of the clerks departed, in order to deliver his message. When Akaki was admitted to the Superintendent's presence, the latter's way of receiving his story was somewhat singular. Instead of confining himself to the principal matter — the theft, he asked the titular councillor how he came to be out so late, and whether he had not been in suspicious company.

Taken aback by such a question, Akaki did not know what to answer, and went away without knowing whether any steps would be taken in the matter or not.

The whole day he had not been in his office — a perfectly new event in his life. The next day he appeared there again with a pale face and restless aspect, in his old cloak, which looked more wretched than ever. When his colleagues heard of his misfortune, some were cruel enough to laugh; most of them, however, felt a sincere sympathy with him, and started

a subscription for his benefit; but this praiseworthy undertaking had only a very insignificant result, because these same officials had been lately called upon to contribute to two other subscriptions — in the first case to purchase a portrait of their director, and in the second to buy a work which a friend of his had published.

One of them, who felt sincerely sorry for Akaki, gave him some good advice for want of something better. He told him it was a waste of time to go again to the Superintendent, because even in case that this official succeeded in recovering the cloak, the police would keep it till the titular councillor had indisputably proved that he was the real owner of it. Akaki's friend suggested to him to go to a certain important personage, who because of his connection with the authorities could expedite the matter.

In his bewilderment, Akaki resolved to follow this advice. It was not known what position this personage occupied, nor how high it really was; the only facts known were that he had only recently been placed in it, and that there must be still higher personages than himself, as he was leaving no stone unturned in order to get promotion. When he entered his private room, he made his subordinates wait for him on the stairs below, and no one had direct access to him. If anyone called with a request to see him, the secretary of the board informed the Government

secretary, who in his turn passed it on to a higher official, and the latter informed the important personage himself.

That is the way business is carried on in our Holy Russia. In the endeavour to resemble the higher officials, everyone imitates the manners of his superiors. Not long ago a titular councillor, who was appointed to the headship of a little office, immediately placed over the door of one of his two tiny rooms the inscription "Council-chamber." Outside it were placed servants with red collars and lace-work on their coats, in order to announce petitioners, and to conduct them into the chamber which was hardly large enough to contain a chair.

But let us return to the important personage in question. His way of carrying things on was dignified and imposing, but a trifle complicated. His system might be summed up in a single word—"severity." This word he would repeat in a sonorous tone three times in succession, and the last time turn a piercing look on the person with whom he happened to be speaking. He might have spared himself the trouble of displaying so much disciplinary energy; the ten officials who were under his command feared him quite sufficiently without it. As soon as they were aware of his approach, they would lay down their pens, and hasten to station themselves in a respectful attitude as he passed by. In converse with his subordinates, he preserved a stiff,

unbending attitude, and generally confined himself to such expressions as “What do you want? Do you know with whom you are speaking? Do you consider who is in front of you?”

For the rest, he was a good-natured man, friendly and amiable with his acquaintances. But the title of “District-Superintendent” had turned his head. Since the time when it had been bestowed upon him, he lived for a great part of the day in a kind of dizzy self-intoxication. Among his equals, however, he recovered his equilibrium, and then showed his real amiability in more than one direction; but as soon as he found himself in the society of anyone of less rank than himself, he entrenched himself in a severe taciturnity. This situation was all the more painful for him as he was quite aware that he might have passed his time more agreeably.

All who watched him at such moments perceived clearly that he longed to take part in an interesting conversation, but that the fear of displaying some unguarded courtesy, of appearing too confidential, and thereby doing a deadly injury to his dignity, held him back. In order to avoid such a risk, he maintained an unnatural reserve, and only spoke from time to time in monosyllables. He had driven this habit to such a pitch that people called him “The Tedious,” and the title was well deserved.

Such was the person to whose aid Akaki wished

to appeal. The moment at which he came seemed expressly calculated to flatter the Superintendent's vanity, and accordingly to help forward the titular councillor's cause.

The high personage was seated in his office, talking cheerfully with an old friend whom he had not seen for several years, when he was told that a gentleman named Akakievitch begged for the honour of an interview.

“Who is the man?” asked the Superintendent in a contemptuous tone.

“An official,” answered the servant.

“He must wait. I have no time to receive him now.”

The high personage lied; there was nothing in the way of his granting the desired audience. His friend and himself had already quite exhausted various topics of conversation. Many long, embarrassing pauses had occurred, during which they had lightly tapped each other on the shoulder, saying, “So it was, you see.”

“Yes, Stepan.”

But the Superintendent refused to receive the petitioner, in order to show his friend, who had quitted the public service and lived in the country, his own importance, and how officials must wait in the vestibule till he chose to receive them.

At last, after they had discussed various other subjects with other intervals of silence, during which

the two friends leaned back in their chairs and blew cigarette smoke in the air, the Superintendent seemed suddenly to remember that someone had sought an interview with him. He called the secretary, who stood with a roll of papers in his hand at the door, and told him to admit the petitioner.

When he saw Akaki approaching with his humble expression, wearing his shabby old uniform, he turned round suddenly towards him and said "What do you want?" in a severe voice, accompanied by a vibrating intonation which at the time of receiving his promotion he had practised before the looking-glass for eight days.

The modest Akaki was quite taken aback by his harsh manner; however, he made an effort to recover his composure, and to relate how his cloak had been stolen, but did not do so without encumbering his narrative with a mass of superfluous detail. He added that he had applied to His Excellence in the hope that through his making a representation to the police inspector, or some other high personage, the cloak might be traced.

The Superintendent found Akaki's method of procedure somewhat unofficial. "Ah, sir," he said, "don't you know what steps you ought to take in such a case? Don't you know the proper procedure? You should have handed in your petition at the chancellery. This in due course would have passed through the hands of the chief clerk and director of the bureau. It

would then have been brought before my secretary, who would have made a communication to you.”

“Allow me,” replied Akaki, making a strenuous effort to preserve the remnants of his presence of mind, for he felt that the perspiration stood on his forehead, “allow me to remark to Your Excellence that I ventured to trouble you personally in this matter because secretaries — secretaries are a hopeless kind of people.”

“What! How! Is it possible?” exclaimed the Superintendent. “How could you say such a thing? Where have you got your ideas from? It is disgraceful to see young people so rebellious towards their superiors.” In his official zeal the Superintendent overlooked the fact that the titular councillor was well on in the fifties, and that the word “young” could only apply to him conditionally, i.e. in comparison with a man of seventy. “Do you also know,” he continued, “with whom you are speaking? Do you consider before whom you are standing? Do you consider, I ask you, do you consider?” As he spoke, he stamped his foot, and his voice grew deeper.

Akaki was quite upset — nay, thoroughly frightened; he trembled and shook and could hardly remain standing upright. Unless one of the office servants had hurried to help him, he would have fallen to the ground. As it was, he was dragged out almost unconscious.

But the Superintendent was quite delighted at the effect he had produced. It exceeded all his expectations, and filled with satisfaction at the fact that his words made such an impression on a middle-aged man that he lost consciousness, he cast a side-glance at his friend to see what effect the scene had produced on him. His self-satisfaction was further increased when he observed that his friend also was moved, and looked at him half-timidly.

Akaki had no idea how he got down the stairs and crossed the street, for he felt more dead than alive. In his whole life he had never been so scolded by a superior official, let alone one whom he had never seen before.

He wandered in the storm which raged without taking the least care of himself, nor sheltering himself on the side-walk against its fury. The wind, which blew from all sides and out of all the narrow streets, caused him to contract inflammation of the throat. When he reached home he was unable to speak a word, and went straight to bed.

Such was the result of the Superintendent's lecture.

The next day Akaki had a violent fever. Thanks to the St Petersburg climate, his illness developed with terrible rapidity. When the doctor came, he saw that the case was already hopeless; he felt his pulse and ordered him some poultices, merely in order that he should not

die without some medical help, and declared at once that he had only two days to live. After giving this opinion, he said to Akaki's landlady, "There is no time to be lost; order a pine coffin, for an oak one would be too expensive for this poor man."

Whether the titular councillor heard these words, whether they excited him and made him lament his tragic lot, no one ever knew, for he was delirious all the time. Strange pictures passed incessantly through his weakened brain. At one time he saw Petrovitch the tailor and asked him to make a cloak with nooses attached for the thieves who persecuted him in bed, and begged his old landlady to chase away the robbers who were hidden under his coverlet. At another time he seemed to be listening to the Superintendent's severe reprimand, and asking his forgiveness. Then he uttered such strange and confused remarks that the old woman crossed herself in alarm. She had never heard anything of the kind in her life, and these ravings astonished her all the more because the expression "Your Excellency" constantly occurred in them. Later on he murmured wild disconnected words, from which it could only be gathered that his thoughts were continually revolving round a cloak.

At last Akaki breathed his last. Neither his room nor his cupboard were officially sealed up, for the simple reason that he had no heir and left nothing behind him but a bundle of goose-quills, a notebook of

white paper, three pairs of socks, some trouser buttons, and his old coat.

Into whose possession did these relics pass? Heaven only knows! The writer of this narrative has never inquired.

Akaki was wrapped in his shroud, and laid to rest in the churchyard. The great city of St Petersburg continued its life as though he had never existed. Thus disappeared a human creature who had never possessed a patron or friend, who had never elicited real hearty sympathy from anyone, nor even aroused the curiosity of the naturalists, though they are most eager to subject a rare insect to microscopic examination.

Without a complaint he had borne the scorn and contempt of his colleagues; he had proceeded on his quiet way to the grave without anything extraordinary happening to him — only towards the end of his life he had been joyfully excited by the possession of a new cloak, and had then been overthrown by misfortune.

Some days after his conversation with the Superintendent, his superior in the chancellery, where no one knew what had become of him, sent an official to his house to demand his presence. The official returned with the news that no one would see the titular councillor any more.

“Why?” asked all the clerks.

“Because he was buried four days ago.”

In such a manner did Akaki's colleagues hear of

his death.

The next day his place was occupied by an official of robust fibre, a man who did not trouble to make so many fair transcripts of state documents.

....

It seems as though Akaki's story ended here, and that there was nothing more to be said of him; but the modest titular councillor was destined to attract more notice after his death than during his life, and our tale now assumes a somewhat ghostly complexion.

One day there spread in St Petersburg the report that near the Katinka Bridge there appeared every night a spectre in a uniform like that of the chancellery officials; that he was searching for a stolen cloak, and stripped all passers-by of their cloaks without any regard for rank or title. It mattered not whether they were lined with wadding, mink, cat, otter, bear, or beaverskin; he took all he could get hold of. One of the titular councillor's former colleagues had seen the ghost, and quite clearly recognised Akaki. He ran as hard as he could and managed to escape, but had seen him shaking his fist in the distance. Everywhere it was reported that councillors, and not only titular councillors but also state-councillors, had caught serious colds in their honourable backs on account of these raids.

The police adopted all possible measures in order to get this ghost dead or alive into their power, and to

inflict an exemplary punishment on him; but all their attempts were vain.

One evening, however, a sentinel succeeded in getting hold of the malefactor just as he was trying to rob a musician of his cloak. The sentinel summoned with all the force of his lungs two of his comrades, to whom he entrusted the prisoner while he sought for his snuff-box in order to bring some life again into his half-frozen nose. Probably his snuff was so strong that even a ghost could not stand it. Scarcely had the sentinel thrust a grain or two up his nostrils than the prisoner began to sneeze so violently that a kind of mist rose before the eyes of the sentinels. While the three were rubbing their eyes, the prisoner disappeared. Since that day, all the sentries were so afraid of the ghost that they did not even venture to arrest the living but shouted to them from afar "Go on! Go on!"

Meanwhile the ghost extended his depredations to the other side of the Katinka Bridge, and spread dismay and alarm in the whole of the quarter.

But now we must return to the Superintendent, who is the real origin of our fantastic yet so veracious story. First of all we must do him the justice to state that after Akaki's departure he felt a certain sympathy for him. He was by no means without a sense of justice — no, he possessed various good qualities, but his infatuation about his title hindered him from showing his good side. When his friend left him, his thoughts

began to occupy themselves with the unfortunate titular councillor, and from that moment onwards he saw him constantly in his mind's eye, crushed by the severe reproof which had been administered to him. This image so haunted him that at last one day he ordered one of his officials to find out what had become of Akaki, and whether anything could be done for him.

When the messenger returned with the news that the poor man had died soon after that interview, the Superintendent felt a pang in his conscience, and remained the whole day absorbed in melancholy brooding.

In order to banish his unpleasant sensations, he went in the evening to a friend's house, where he hoped to find pleasant society and what was the chief thing, some other officials of his own rank, so that he would not be obliged to feel bored. And in fact he did succeed in throwing off his melancholy thoughts there; he unbent and became lively, took an active part in the conversation, and passed a very pleasant evening. At supper he drank two glasses of champagne, which, as everyone knows, is an effective means of heightening one's cheerfulness.

As he sat in his sledge, wrapped in his mantle, on his way home, his mind was full of pleasant reveries. He thought of the society in which he had passed such a cheerful evening, and of all the excellent jokes with which he had made them laugh. He repeated some of

them to himself half-aloud, and laughed at them again.

From time to time, however, he was disturbed in this cheerful mood by violent gusts of wind, which from some corner or other blew a quantity of snowflakes into his face, lifted the folds of his cloak, and made it belly like a sail, so that he had to exert all his strength to hold it firmly on his shoulders. Suddenly he felt a powerful hand seize him by the collar. He turned round, perceived a short man in an old, shabby uniform, and recognised with terror Akaki's face, which wore a deathly pallor and emaciation.

The titular councillor opened his mouth, from which issued a kind of corpse-like odour, and with inexpressible fright the Superintendent heard him say, "At last I have you — by the collar! I need your cloak. You did not trouble about me when I was in distress; you thought it necessary to reprimand me. Now give me your cloak."

The high dignitary nearly choked. In his office, and especially in the presence of his subordinates, he was a man of imposing manners. He only needed to fix his eye on one of them and they all seemed impressed by his pompous bearing. But, as is the case with many such officials, all this was only outward show; at this moment he felt so upset that he seriously feared for his health. Taking off his cloak with a feverish, trembling hand, he handed it to Akaki, and called to his coachman, "Drive home quickly."

When the coachman heard this voice, which did not sound as it usually did, and had often been accompanied by blows of a whip, he bent his head cautiously and drove on apace.

Soon afterwards the Superintendent found himself at home. Cloakless, he retired to his room with a pale face and wild looks, and had such a bad night that on the following morning his daughter exclaimed "Father, are you ill?" But he said nothing of what he had seen, though a very deep impression had been made on him. From that day onwards he no longer addressed to his subordinates in a violent tone the words, "Do you know with whom you are speaking? Do you know who is standing before you?" Or if it ever did happen that he spoke to them in a domineering tone, it was not till he had first listened to what they had to say.

Strangely enough, from that time the spectre never appeared again. Probably it was the Superintendent's cloak which he had been seeking so earnestly; now he had it and did not want anything more. Various persons, however, asserted that this formidable ghost was still to be seen in other parts of the city. A sentinel went so far as to say that he had seen him with his own eyes glide like a furtive shadow behind a house. But this sentinel was of such a nervous disposition that he had been chaffed about his timidity more than once. Since he did not venture to seize the

flitting shadow, he stole after it in the darkness; but the shadow turned round and shouted at him “What do you want?” shaking an enormous fist, such as no man had ever possessed.

“I want nothing,” answered the sentry, quickly retiring.

This shadow, however, was taller than the ghost of the titular councillor, and had an enormous moustache. He went with great strides towards the Obuchoff Bridge, and disappeared in the darkness.

MUMU

by Ivan Turgenev

From "Torrents of Spring." Translated by Constance Garnett.

In one of the outlying streets of Moscow, in a gray house with white columns and a balcony, warped all askew, there was once living a lady, a widow, surrounded by a numerous household of serfs. Her sons were in the government service at Petersburg; her daughters were married; she went out very little, and in solitude lived through the last years of her miserly and dreary old age. Her day, a joyless and gloomy day, had long been over; but the evening of her life was blacker than night.

Of all her servants, the most remarkable personage was the porter, Gerasim, a man full twelve inches over the normal height, of heroic build, and deaf and dumb from his birth. The lady, his owner, had brought him up from the village where he lived alone in a little hut, apart from his brothers, and was reckoned about the most punctual of her peasants in the payment of the seignorial dues. Endowed with extraordinary strength, he did the work of four men; work flew apace under his hands, and it was a pleasant sight to see him when he was ploughing, while, with his huge palms pressing hard upon the plough, he seemed alone, unaided by his poor horse, to cleave the yielding bosom

of the earth, or when, about St. Peter's Day, he plied his scythe with a furious energy that might have mown a young birch copse up by the roots, or swiftly and untiringly wielded a flail over two yards long; while the hard oblong muscles of his shoulders rose and fell like a lever. His perpetual silence lent a solemn dignity to his unwearying labor. He was a splendid peasant, and, except for his affliction, any girl would have been glad to marry him... But now they had taken Gerasim to Moscow, bought him boots, had him made a full-skirted coat for summer, a sheepskin for winter, put into his hand a broom and a spade, and appointed him porter.

At first he intensely disliked his new mode of life. From his childhood he had been used to field labor, to village life. Shut off by his affliction from the society of men, he had grown up, dumb and mighty, as a tree grows on a fruitful soil. When he was transported to the town, he could not understand what was being done with him; he was miserable and stupefied, with the stupefaction of some strong young bull, taken straight from the meadow, where the rich grass stood up to his belly, taken and put in the truck of a railway train, and there, while smoke and sparks and gusts of steam puff out upon the sturdy beast, he is whirled onwards, whirled along with loud roar and whistle, whither — God knows! What Gerasim had to do in his new duties seemed a mere trifle to him after his hard toil as a

peasant; in half an hour all his work was done, and he would once more stand stock-still in the middle of the courtyard, staring open-mouthed at all the passers-by, as though trying to wrest from them the explanation of his perplexing position; or he would suddenly go off into some corner, and flinging a long way off the broom or the spade, throw himself on his face on the ground, and lie for hours together without stirring, like a caged beast. But man gets used to anything, and Gerasim got used at last to living in town. He had little work to do; his whole duty consisted in keeping the courtyard clean, bringing in a barrel of water twice a day, splitting and dragging in wood for the kitchen and the house, keeping out strangers, and watching at night. And it must be said he did his duty zealously. In his courtyard there was never a shaving lying about, never a speck of dust; if sometimes, in the muddy season, the wretched nag, put under his charge for fetching water, got stuck in the road, he would simply give it a shove with his shoulder, and set not only the cart but the horse itself moving. If he set to chopping wood, the axe fairly rang like glass, and chips and chunks flew in all directions. And as for strangers, after he had one night caught two thieves and knocked their heads together — knocked them so that there was not the slightest need to take them to the police-station afterwards — every one in the neighborhood began to feel a great respect for him; even those who came in the daytime, by no means

robbers, but simply unknown persons, at the sight of the terrible porter, waved and shouted to him as though he could hear their shouts. With all the rest of the servants, Gerasim was on terms hardly friendly — they were afraid of him — but familiar; he regarded them as his fellows. They explained themselves to him by signs, and he understood them, and exactly carried out all orders, but knew his own rights too, and soon no one dared to take his seat at the table. Gerasim was altogether of a strict and serious temper, he liked order in everything; even the cocks did not dare to fight in his presence, or woe betide them! Directly he caught sight of them, he would seize them by the legs, swing them ten times round in the air like a wheel, and throw them in different directions. There were geese, too, kept in the yard; but the goose, as is well known, is a dignified and reasonable bird: Gerasim felt a respect for them, looked after them, and fed them; he was himself not unlike a gander of the steppes. He was assigned a little garret over the kitchen; he arranged it himself to his own liking, made a bedstead in it of oak boards on four stumps of wood for legs — a truly Titanic bedstead; one might have put a ton or two on it — it would not have bent under the load; under the bed was a solid chest; in a corner stood a little table of the same strong kind, and near the table a three-legged stool, so solid and squat that Gerasim himself would sometimes pick it up and drop it again with a smile of delight. The

garret was locked up by means of a padlock that looked like a kalatch or basket-shaped loaf, only black; the key of this padlock Gerasim always carried about him in his girdle. He did not like people to come to his garret.

So passed a year, at the end of which a little incident befell Gerasim.

The old lady, in whose service he lived as porter, adhered in everything to the ancient ways, and kept a large number of servants. In her house were not only laundresses, sempstresses, carpenters, tailors and tailoresses, there was even a harness-maker — he was reckoned as a veterinary surgeon, too, — and a doctor for the servants; there was a household doctor for the mistress; there was, lastly, a shoemaker, by name Kapiton Klimov, a sad drunkard. Klimov regarded himself as an injured creature, whose merits were unappreciated, a cultivated man from Petersburg, who ought not to be living in Moscow without occupation — in the wilds, so to speak; and if he drank, as he himself expressed it emphatically, with a blow on his chest, it was sorrow drove him to it. So one day his mistress had a conversation about him with her head steward, Gavriila, a man whom, judging solely from his little yellow eyes and nose like a duck's beak, fate itself, it seemed, had marked out as a person in authority. The lady expressed her regret at the corruption of the morals of Kapiton, who had, only the evening before, been picked up somewhere in the

street.

“Now, Gavrila,” she observed, all of a sudden, “now, if we were to marry him, what do you think, perhaps he would be steadier?”

“Why not marry him, indeed, 'm? He could be married, 'm,” answered

Gavrila, “and it would be a very good thing, to be sure, 'm.”

“Yes; only who is to marry him?”

“Ay, 'm. But that's at your pleasure, 'm. He may, any way, so to say, be wanted for something; he can't be turned adrift altogether.”

“I fancy he likes Tatiana.”

Gavrila was on the point of making some reply, but he shut his lips tightly.

“Yes!... let him marry Tatiana,” the lady decided, taking a pinch of snuff complacently, “Do you hear?”

“Yes, 'm,” Gavrila articulated, and he withdrew.

Returning to his own room (it was in a little lodge, and was almost filled up with metal-bound trunks), Gavrila first sent his wife away, and then sat down at the window and pondered. His mistress's unexpected arrangement had clearly put him in a difficulty. At last he got up and sent to call Kapiton. Kapiton made his appearance... But before reporting their conversation to the reader, we consider it not out of place to relate in few words who was this Tatiana, whom it was to be Kapiton's lot to marry, and why the

great lady's order had disturbed the steward.

Tatiana, one of the laundresses referred to above (as a trained and skilful laundress she was in charge of the fine linen only), was a woman of twenty-eight, thin, fair-haired, with moles on her left cheek. Moles on the left cheek are regarded as of evil omen in Russia — a token of unhappy life... Tatiana could not boast of her good luck. From her earliest youth she had been badly treated; she had done the work of two, and had never known affection; she had been poorly clothed and had received the smallest wages. Relations she had practically none; an uncle she had once had, a butler, left behind in the country as useless, and other uncles of hers were peasants — that was all. At one time she had passed for a beauty, but her good looks were very soon over. In disposition, she was very meek, or, rather, scared; towards herself, she felt perfect indifference; of others, she stood in mortal dread; she thought of nothing but how to get her work done in good time, never talked to any one, and trembled at the very name of her mistress, though the latter scarcely knew her by sight. When Gerasim was brought from the country, she was ready to die with fear on seeing his huge figure, tried all she could to avoid meeting him, even dropped her eyelids when sometimes she chanced to run past him, hurrying from the house to the laundry. Gerasim at first paid no special attention to her, then he used to smile when she came his way, then he began even to

stare admiringly at her, and at last he never took his eyes off her. She took his fancy, whether by the mild expression of her face or the timidity of her movements, who can tell? So one day she was stealing across the yard, with a starched dressing-jacket of her mistress's carefully poised on her outspread fingers... some one suddenly grasped her vigorously by the elbow; she turned round and fairly screamed; behind her stood Gerasim. With a foolish smile, making inarticulate caressing grunts, he held out to her a gingerbread cock with gold tinsel on his tail and wings. She was about to refuse it, but he thrust it forcibly into her hand, shook his head, walked away, and turning round, once more grunted something very affectionately to her.

From that day forward he gave her no peace; wherever she went, he was on the spot at once, coming to meet her, smiling, grunting, waving his hands; all at once he would pull a ribbon out of the bosom of his smock and put it in her hand, or would sweep the dust out of her way. The poor girl simply did not know how to behave or what to do. Soon the whole household knew of the dumb porter's wiles; jeers, jokes, sly hints, were showered upon Tatiana. At Gerasim, however, it was not every one who would dare to scoff; he did not like jokes; indeed, in his presence, she, too, was left in peace. Whether she liked it or not, the girl found herself to be under his protection. Like all deaf-mutes, he was

very suspicious, and very readily perceived when they were laughing at him or at her. One day, at dinner, the wardrobe-keeper, Tatiana's superior, fell to nagging, as it is called, at her, and brought the poor thing to such a state that she did not know where to look, and was almost crying with vexation. Gerasim got up all of a sudden, stretched out his gigantic hand, laid it on the wardrobe-maid's head, and looked into her face with such grim ferocity that her head positively flopped upon the table. Every one was still. Gerasim took up his spoon again and went on with his cabbage-soup. "Look at him, the dumb devil, the wood-demon!" they all muttered in undertones, while the wardrobe-maid got up and went out into the maid's room. Another time, noticing that Kapiton — the same Kapiton who was the subject of the conversation reported above — was gossiping somewhat too attentively with Tatiana, Gerasim beckoned him to him, led him into the cartshed, and taking up a shaft that was standing in a corner by one end, lightly, but most significantly, menaced him with it. Since then no one addressed a word to Tatiana. And all this cost him nothing. It is true the wardrobe-maid, as soon as she reached the maids' room, promptly fell into a fainting fit, and behaved altogether so skilfully that Gerasim's rough action reached his mistress's knowledge the same day. But the capricious old lady only laughed, and several times, to the great offence of the wardrobe-maid, forced her to

repeat “how he bent your head down with his heavy hand,” and next day she sent Gerasim a rouble. She looked on him with favor as a strong and faithful watchman. Gerasim stood in considerable awe of her, but, all the same, he had hopes of her favor, and was preparing to go to her with a petition for leave to marry Tatiana. He was only waiting for a new coat, promised him by the steward, to present a proper appearance before his mistress, when this same mistress suddenly took it into her head to marry Tatiana to Kapiton.

The reader will now readily understand the perturbation of mind that overtook the steward Gavrila after his conversation with his mistress. “My lady,” he thought, as he sat at the window, “favors Gerasim, to be sure”—(Gavrila was well aware of this, and that was why he himself looked on him with an indulgent eye)—“still he is a speechless creature. I could not, indeed, put it before the mistress that Gerasim's courting Tatiana. But, after all, it's true enough; he's a queer sort of husband. But on the other hand, that devil, God forgive me, has only got to find out they're marrying Tatiana to Kapiton, he'll smash up everything in the house, 'pon my soul! There's no reasoning with him; why, he's such a devil, God forgive my sins, there's no getting over him nohow... 'pon my soul!”

Kapiton's entrance broke the thread of Gavrila's reflections. The dissipated shoemaker came in, his hands behind him, and lounging carelessly against a

projecting angle of the wall, near the door, crossed his right foot in front of his left, and tossed his head, as much as to say, "What do you want?"

Gavrila looked at Kapiton, and drummed with his fingers on the window-frame. Kapiton merely screwed up his leaden eyes a little, but he did not look down; he even grinned slightly, and passed his hand over his whitish locks which were sticking up in all directions. "Well, here I am. What is it?"

"You're a pretty fellow," said Gavrila, and paused. "A pretty fellow you are, there's no denying!"

Kapiton only twitched his little shoulders. "Are you any better, pray?" he thought to himself.

"Just look at yourself, now, look at yourself," Gavrila went on reproachfully; "now, whatever do you look like?"

Kapiton serenely surveyed his shabby, tattered coat and his patched trousers, and with special attention stared at his burst boots, especially the one on the tiptoe of which his right foot so gracefully poised, and he fixed his eyes again on the steward.

"Well?"

"Well?" repeated Gavrila. "Well? And then you say well? You look like Old Nick himself, God forgive my saying so, that's what you look like."

Kapiton blinked rapidly.

"Go on abusing me, go on, if you like, Gavrila Andreitch," he thought to himself again.

“Here you've been drunk again,” Gavrila began, “drunk again, haven't you? Eh? Come, answer me!”

“Owing to the weakness of my health, I have exposed myself to spirituous beverages, certainly,” replied Kapiton.

“Owing to the weakness of your health!... They let you off too easy, that's what it is; and you've been apprenticed in Petersburg... Much you learned in your apprenticeship! You simply eat your bread in idleness.”

“In that matter, Gavrila Andreitch, there is One to judge me, the Lord God Himself, and no one else. He also knows what manner of man I be in this world, and whether I eat my bread in idleness. And as concerning your contention regarding drunkenness, in that matter, too, I am not to blame, but rather a friend; he led me into temptation, but was diplomatic and got away, while I...”

“While you were left like a goose, in the street. Ah, you're a dissolute fellow! But that's not the point,” the steward went on, “I've something to tell you. Our lady...” here he paused a minute, “it's our lady's pleasure that you should be married. Do you hear? She imagines you may be steadier when you're married. Do you understand?”

“To be sure I do.”

“Well, then. For my part I think it would be better to give you a good hiding. But there — it's her business. Well? are you agreeable?”

Kapiton grinned.

“Matrimony is an excellent thing for any one, Gavril Andreitch; and, as far as I am concerned, I shall be quite agreeable.”

“Very well, then,” replied Gavril, while he reflected to himself: “There's no denying the man expresses himself very properly. Only there's one thing,” he pursued aloud: “the wife our lady's picked out for you is an unlucky choice.”

“Why, who is she, permit me to inquire?”

“Tatiana.”

“Tatiana?”

And Kapiton opened his eyes, and moved a little away from the wall.

“Well, what are you in such a taking for?... Isn't she to your taste, hey?”

“Not to my taste, do you say, Gavril Andreitch? She's right enough, a hard-working steady girl... But you know very well yourself, Gavril Andreitch, why that fellow, that wild man of the woods, that monster of the steppes, he's after her, you know...”

“I know, mate, I know all about it,” the butler cut him short in a tone of annoyance: “but there, you see...”

“But upon my soul, Gavril Andreitch! why, he'll kill me, by God, he will, he'll crush me like some fly; why, he's got a fist — why, you kindly look yourself what a fist he's got; why, he's simply got a fist like

Minin Pozharsky's. You see he's deaf, he beats and does not hear how he's beating! He swings his great fists, as if he's asleep. And there's no possibility of pacifying him; and for why? Why, because, as you know yourself, Gavril Andreitch, he's deaf, and what's more, has no more wit than the heel of my foot. Why, he's a sort of beast, a heathen idol, Gavril Andreitch, and worse... a block of wood; what have I done that I should have to suffer from him now? Sure it is, it's all over me now; I've knocked about, I've had enough to put up with, I've been battered like an earthenware pot, but still I'm a man, after all, and not a worthless pot."

"I know, I know, don't go talking away..."

"Lord, my God!" the shoemaker continued warmly, "when is the end? when, O Lord! A poor wretch I am, a poor wretch whose sufferings are endless! What a life, what a life mine's been come to think of it! In my young days, I was beaten by a German I was 'prentice to; in the prime of life beaten by my own countrymen, and last of all, in ripe years, see what I have been brought to..."

"Ugh, you flabby soul!" said Gavril Andreitch. "Why do you make so many words about it?"

"Why, do you say, Gavril Andreitch? It's not a beating I'm afraid of, Gavril Andreitch. A gentleman may chastise me in private, but give me a civil word before folks, and I'm a man still; but see now, whom I've to do with..."

“Come, get along,” Gavrila interposed impatiently. Kapiton turned away and staggered off.

“But, if it were not for him,” the steward shouted after him, “you would consent for your part?”

“I signify my acquiescence,” retorted Kapiton as he disappeared.

His fine language did not desert him, even in the most trying positions.

The steward walked several times up and down the room.

“Well, call Tatiana now,” he said at last.

A few instants later, Tatiana had come up almost noiselessly, and was standing in the doorway.

“What are your orders, Gavrila Andreitch?” she said in a soft voice.

The steward looked at her intently.

“Well, Taniusha,” he said, “would you like to be married? Our lady has chosen a husband for you?”

“Yes, Gavrila Andreitch. And whom has she deigned to name as a husband for me?” she added falteringly.

“Kapiton, the shoemaker.”

“Yes, sir.”

“He's a feather-brained fellow, that's certain. But it's just for that the mistress reckons upon you.”

“Yes, sir.”

“There's one difficulty... you know the deaf man, Gerasim, he's courting you, you see. How did you come

to bewitch such a bear? But you see, he'll kill you, very like, he's such a bear..."

"He'll kill me, Gavrila Andreitch, he'll kill me, and no mistake."

"Kill you... Well we shall see about that. What do you mean by saying he'll kill you? Has he any right to kill you? tell me yourself."

"I don't know, Gavrila Andreitch, about his having any right or not."

"What a woman! why, you've made him no promise, I suppose..."

"What are you pleased to ask of me?"

The steward was silent for a little, thinking, "You're a meek soul! Well, that's right," he said aloud; "we'll have another talk with you later, now you can go, Taniusha; I see you're not unruly, certainly."

Tatiana turned, steadied herself a little against the doorpost, and went away.

"And, perhaps, our lady will forget all about this wedding by to-morrow," thought the steward; "and here am I worrying myself for nothing! As for that insolent fellow, we must tie him down if it comes to that, we must let the police know... Ustinya Fyedorovna!" he shouted in a loud voice to his wife, "heat the samovar, my good soul..." All that day Tatiana hardly went out of the laundry. At first she had started crying, then she wiped away her tears, and set to work as before. Kapiton stayed till late at night at the gin-shop with a

friend of his, a man of gloomy appearance, to whom he related in detail how he used to live in Petersburg with a gentleman, who would have been all right, except he was a bit too strict, and he had a slight weakness besides, he was too fond of drink; and, as to the fair sex, he didn't stick at anything. His gloomy companion merely said yes; but when Kapiton announced at last that, in a certain event, he would have to lay hands on himself to-morrow, his gloomy companion remarked that it was bedtime. And they parted in surly silence.

Meanwhile, the steward's anticipations were not fulfilled. The old lady was so much taken up with the idea of Kapiton's wedding, that even in the night she talked of nothing else to one of her companions, who was kept in her house solely to entertain her in case of sleeplessness, and, like a night cabman, slept in the day. When Gavriila came to her after morning tea with his report, her first question was: "And how about our wedding — is it getting on all right?" He replied, of course, that it was getting on first-rate, and that Kapiton would appear before her to pay his reverence to her that day. The old lady was not quite well; she did not give much time to business. The steward went back to his own room, and called a council. The matter certainly called for serious consideration. Tatiana would make no difficulty, of course; but Kapiton had declared in the hearing of all that he had but one head to lose, not two or three... Gerasim turned rapid sullen looks on every

one, would not budge from the steps of the maids' quarters, and seemed to guess that some mischief was being hatched against him. They met together. Among them was an old sideboard waiter, nicknamed Uncle Tail, to whom every one looked respectfully for counsel, though all they got out of him was, "Here's a pretty pass! to be sure, to be sure, to be sure!" As a preliminary measure of security, to provide against contingencies, they locked Kapiton up in the lumber-room where the filter was kept; then considered the question with the gravest deliberation. It would, to be sure, be easy to have recourse to force. But Heaven save us! There would be an uproar, the mistress would be put out — it would be awful! What should they do? They thought and thought, and at last thought out a solution. It had many a time been observed that Gerasim could not bear drunkards... As he sat at the gates, he would always turn away with disgust when some one passed by intoxicated, with unsteady steps and his cap on one side of his ear. They resolved that Tatiana should be instructed to pretend to be tipsy, and should pass by Gerasim staggering and reeling about. The poor girl refused for a long while to agree to this, but they persuaded her at last; she saw, too, that it was the only possible way of getting rid of her adorer. She went out. Kapiton was released from the lumber-room; for, after all, he had an interest in the affair. Gerasim was sitting on the curbstone at the gates, scraping the

ground with a spade... From behind every corner, from behind every window-blind, the others were watching him... The trick succeeded beyond all expectations. On seeing Tatiana, at first, he nodded as usual, making caressing, inarticulate sounds; then he looked carefully at her, dropped his spade, jumped up, went up to her, brought his face close to her face... In her fright she staggered more than ever, and shut her eyes... He took her by the arm, whirled her right across the yard, and going into the room where the council had been sitting, pushed her straight at Kapiton. Tatiana fairly swooned away... Gerasim stood, looked at her, waved his hand, laughed, and went off, stepping heavily, to his garret... For the next twenty-four hours he did not come out of it. The postilion Antipka said afterwards that he saw Gerasim through a crack in the wall, sitting on his bedstead, his face in his hand. From time to time he uttered soft regular sounds; he was wailing a dirge, that is, swaying backwards and forwards with his eyes shut, and shaking his head as drivers or bargemen do when they chant their melancholy songs. Antipka could not bear it, and he came away from the crack. When Gerasim came out of the garret next day, no particular change could be observed in him. He only seemed, as it were, more morose, and took not the slightest notice of Tatiana or Kapiton. The same evening, they both had to appear before their mistress with geese under their arms, and in a week's time they were married. Even on

the day of the wedding Gerasim showed no change of any sort in his behavior. Only, he came back from the river without water, he had somehow broken the barrel on the road; and at night, in the stable, he washed and rubbed down his horse so vigorously, it swayed like a blade of grass in the wind, and staggered from one leg to the other under his fists of iron.

All this had taken place in the spring. Another year passed by, during which Kapiton became a hopeless drunkard, and as being absolutely of no use for anything, was sent away with the store wagons to a distant village with his wife. On the day of his departure, he put a very good face on it at first, and declared that he would always be at home, send him where they would, even to the other end of the world; but later on he lost heart, began grumbling that he was being taken to uneducated people, and collapsed so completely at last that he could not even put his own hat on. Some charitable soul stuck it on his forehead, set the peak straight in front, and thrust it on with a slap from above. When everything was quite ready, and the peasants already held the reins in their hands, and were only waiting for the words "With God's blessing!" to start, Gerasim came out of his garret, went up to Tatiana, and gave her as a parting present a red cotton handkerchief he had bought for her a year ago. Tatiana, who had up to that instant borne all the revolting details of her life with great indifference, could not control

herself upon that; she burst into tears, and as she took her seat in the cart, she kissed Gerasim three times like a good Christian. He meant to accompany her as far as the town-barrier, and did walk beside her cart for a while, but he stopped suddenly at the Crimean ford, waved his hand, and walked away along the riverside.

It was getting towards evening. He walked slowly, watching the water. All of a sudden he fancied something was floundering in the mud close to the bank. He stooped over, and saw a little white-and-black puppy, who, in spite of all its efforts, could not get out of the water; it was struggling, slipping back, and trembling all over its thin wet little body. Gerasim looked at the unlucky little dog, picked it up with one hand, put it into the bosom of his coat, and hurried with long steps homewards. He went into his garret, put the rescued puppy on his bed, covered it with his thick overcoat, ran first to the stable for straw, and then to the kitchen for a cup of milk. Carefully folding back the overcoat, and spreading out the straw, he set the milk on the bedstead. The poor little puppy was not more than three weeks old, its eyes were just open — one eye still seemed rather larger than the other; it did not know how to lap out of a cup, and did nothing but shiver and blink. Gerasim took hold of its head softly with two fingers, and dipped its little nose into the milk. The pup suddenly began lapping greedily, sniffing, shaking itself, and choking. Gerasim watched and watched it,

and all at once he laughed outright... All night long he was waiting on it, keeping it covered, and rubbing it dry. He fell asleep himself at last, and slept quietly and happily by its side.

No mother could have looked after her baby as Gerasim looked after his little nursling. At first she — for the pup turned out to be a bitch — was very weak, feeble, and ugly, but by degrees she grew stronger and improved in looks, and, thanks to the unflagging care of her preserver, in eight months' time she was transformed into a very pretty dog of the spaniel breed, with long ears, a bushy spiral tail, and large, expressive eyes. She was devotedly attached to Gerasim, and was never a yard from his side; she always followed him about wagging her tail. He had even given her a name — the dumb know that their inarticulate noises call the attention of others. He called her Mumu. All the servants in the house liked her, and called her Mumu, too. She was very intelligent, she was friendly with every one, but was only fond of Gerasim. Gerasim, on his side, loved her passionately, and he did not like it when other people stroked her; whether he was afraid for her, or jealous — God knows! She used to wake him in the morning, pulling at his coat; she used to take the reins in her mouth, and bring him up the old horse that carried the water, with whom she was on very friendly terms. With a face of great importance, she used to go with him to the river; she used to watch his

brooms and spades, and never allowed any one to go into his garret. He cut a little hole in his door on purpose for her, and she seemed to feel that only in Gerasim's garret she was completely mistress and at home; and directly she went in, she used to jump with a satisfied air upon the bed. At night she did not sleep at all, but she never barked without sufficient cause, like some stupid house-dog, who, sitting on its hind-legs, blinking, with its nose in the air, barks simply from dullness, at the stars, usually three times in succession. No! Mumu's delicate little voice was never raised without good reason; either some stranger was passing close to the fence, or there was some suspicious sound or rustle somewhere... In fact, she was an excellent watch-dog. It is true that there was another dog in the yard, a tawny old dog with brown spots, called Wolf, but he was never, even at night, let off the chain; and, indeed, he was so decrepit that he did not even wish for freedom. He used to lie curled up in his kennel, and only rarely uttered a sleepy, almost noiseless bark, which broke off at once, as though he were himself aware of its uselessness. Mumu never went into the mistress's house; and when Gerasim carried wood into the rooms, she always stayed behind, impatiently waiting for him at the steps, pricking up her ears and turning her head to right and to left at the slightest creak of the door...

So passed another year. Gerasim went on

performing his duties as house-porter, and was very well content with his lot, when suddenly an unexpected incident occurred... One fine summer day the old lady was walking up and down the drawing-room with her dependants. She was in high spirits; she laughed and made jokes. Her servile companions laughed and joked too, but they did not feel particularly mirthful; the household did not much like it, when their mistress was in a lively mood, for, to begin with, she expected from every one prompt and complete participation in her merriment, and was furious if any one showed a face that did not beam with delight; and secondly, these outbursts never lasted long with her, and were usually followed by a sour and gloomy mood. That day she had got up in a lucky hour; at cards she took the four knaves, which means the fulfilment of one's wishes (she used to try her fortune on the cards every morning), and her tea struck her as particularly delicious, for which her maid was rewarded by words of praise, and by twopence in money. With a sweet smile on her wrinkled lips, the lady walked about the drawing-room and went up to the window. A flower-garden had been laid out before the window, and in the very middle bed, under a rosebush, lay Mumu busily gnawing a bone. The lady caught sight of her.

“Mercy on us!” she cried suddenly; “what dog is that?”

The companion, addressed by the old lady, hesitated, poor thing, in that wretched state of uneasiness which is common in any person in a dependent position who doesn't know very well what significance to give to the exclamation of a superior.

"I d... d... don't know," she faltered; "I fancy it's the dumb man's dog."

"Mercy!" the lady cut her short; "but it's a charming little dog! order it to be brought in. Has he had it long? How is it I've never seen it before?... Order it to be brought in."

The companion flew at once into the hall.

"Boy, boy!" she shouted; "bring Mumu in at once! She's in the flower-garden."

"Her name's Mumu then," observed the lady; "a very nice name."

"Oh, very, indeed!" chimed in the companion. "Make haste, Stepan!"

Stepan, a sturdy-built young fellow, whose duties were those of a footman, rushed headlong into the flower-garden, and tried to capture Mumu, but she cleverly slipped from his fingers, and with her tail in the air, fled full speed to Gerasim, who was at that instant in the kitchen, knocking out and cleaning a barrel, turning it upside down in his hands like a child's drum. Stepan ran after her, and tried to catch her just at her master's feet; but the sensible dog would not let a stranger touch her, and with a bound, she got away.

Gerasim looked on with a smile at all this ado; at last, Stepan got up, much amazed, and hurriedly explained to him by signs that the mistress wanted the dog brought in to her. Gerasim was a little astonished; he called Mumu, however, picked her up, and handed her over to Stepan. Stepan carried her into the drawing-room, and put her down on the parquette floor. The old lady began calling the dog to her in a coaxing voice. Mumu, who had never in her life been in such magnificent apartments, was very much frightened, and made a rush for the door, but, being driven back by the obsequious Stepan, she began trembling, and huddled close up against the wall.

“Mumu, Mumu, come to me, come to your mistress,” said the lady; “come, silly thing... don't be afraid.”

“Come, Mumu, come to the mistress,” repeated the companions. “Come along!”

But Mumu looked round her uneasily, and did not stir.

“Bring her something to eat,” said the old lady. “How stupid she is! she won't come to her mistress. What's she afraid of?”

“She's not used to your honor yet,” ventured one of the companions in a timid and conciliatory voice.

Stepan brought in a saucer of milk, and set it down before Mumu, but Mumu would not even sniff at the milk, and still shivered, and looked round as before.

“Ah, what a silly you are!” said the lady, and going up to her, she stooped down, and was about to stroke her, but Mumu turned her head abruptly, and showed her teeth. The lady hurriedly drew back her hand...

A momentary silence followed. Mumu gave a faint whine, as though she would complain and apologize... The old lady moved back, scowling. The dog's sudden movement had frightened her.

“Ah!” shrieked all the companions at once, “she's not bitten you, has she? Heaven forbid! (Mumu had never bitten any one in her life.) Ah! ah!”

“Take her away,” said the old lady in a changed voice. “Wretched little dog! What a spiteful creature!”

And, turning round deliberately, she went towards her boudoir. Her companions looked timidly at one another, and were about to follow her, but she stopped, stared coldly at them, and said, “What's that for, pray? I've not called you,” and went out.

The companions waved their hands to Stepan in despair. He picked up Mumu, and flung her promptly outside the door, just at Gerasim's feet, and half an hour later a profound stillness led in the house, and the old lady sat on her sofa looking blacker than a thundercloud.

What trifles, if you think of it, will sometimes disturb any one!

Till evening the lady was out of humor; she did

not talk to any one, did not play cards, and passed a bad night. She fancied the eau-de-Cologne they gave her was not the same as she usually had, and that her pillow smelt of soap, and she made the wardrobe-maid smell all the bed linen — in fact she was very upset and cross altogether. Next morning she ordered Gavril to be summoned an hour earlier than usual.

“Tell me, please,” she began, directly the latter, not without some inward trepidation, crossed the threshold of her boudoir, “what dog was that barking all night in our yard? It wouldn't let me sleep!”

“A dog, 'm... what dog, 'm... may be, the dumb man's dog, 'm,” he brought out in a rather unsteady voice.

“I don't know whether it was the dumb man's or whose, but it wouldn't let me sleep. And I wonder what we have such a lot of dogs for! I wish to know. We have a yard dog, haven't we?”

“Oh yes, 'm, we have, 'm. Wolf, 'm.”

“Well, why more? what do we want more dogs for? It's simply introducing disorder. There's no one in control in the house — that's what it is. And what does the dumb man want with a dog? Who gave him leave to keep dogs in my yard? Yesterday I went to the window, and there it was lying in the flower-garden; it had dragged in nastiness it was gnawing, and my roses are planted there...”

The lady ceased.

“Let her be gone from to-day... do you hear?”

“Yes, 'm.”

“To-day. Now go. I will send for you later for the report.”

Gavrila went away.

As he went through the drawing-room, the steward, by way of maintaining order, moved a bell from one table to another; he stealthily blew his duck-like nose in the hall, and went into the outer-hall. In the outer-hall, on a locker, was Stepan asleep in the attitude of a slain warrior in a battalion picture, his bare legs thrust out below the coat which served him for a blanket. The steward gave him a shove, and whispered some instructions to him, to which Stepan responded with something between a yawn and a laugh. The steward went away, and Stepan got up, put on his coat and his boots, went out and stood on the steps. Five minutes had not passed before Gerasim made his appearance with a huge bundle of hewn logs on his back, accompanied by the inseparable Mumu. (The lady had given orders that her bedroom and boudoir should be heated at times even in the summer.) Gerasim turned sideways before the door, shoved it open with his shoulder, and staggered into the house with his load. Mumu, as usual, stayed behind to wait for him. Then Stepan, seizing his chance, suddenly pounced on her, like a kite on a chicken, held her down to the ground, gathered her up in his arms, and without even putting

on his cap, ran out of the yard with her, got into the first fly he met, and galloped off to a market-place. There he soon found a purchaser, to whom he sold her for a shilling, on condition that he would keep her for at least a week tied up; then he returned at once. But before he got home, he got off the fly, and going right round the yard, jumped over the fence into the yard from a back street. He was afraid to go in at the gate for fear of meeting Gerasim.

His anxiety was unnecessary, however; Gerasim was no longer in the yard. On coming out of the house he had at once missed Mumu. He never remembered her failing to wait for his return, and began running up and down, looking for her, and calling her in his own way... He rushed up to his garret, up to the hay-loft, ran out into the street, this way and that... She was lost! He turned to the other serfs, with the most despairing signs, questioned them about her, pointing to her height from the ground, describing her with his hands... Some of them really did not know what had become of Mumu, and merely shook their heads; others did know, and smiled to him for all response; while the steward assumed an important air, and began scolding the coachmen. Then Gerasim ran right away out of the yard.

It was dark by the time he came back. From his worn-out look, his unsteady walk, and his dusty clothes, it might be surmised that he had been running

over half Moscow. He stood still opposite the windows of the mistress's house, took a searching look at the steps where a group of house-serfs were crowded together, turned away, and uttered once more his inarticulate "Mumu." Mumu did not answer. He went away. Every one looked after him, but no one smiled or said a word, and the inquisitive postilion Antipka reported next morning in the kitchen that the dumb man had been groaning all night.

All the next day Gerasim did not show himself, so that they were obliged to send the coachman Potap for water instead of him, at which the coachman Potap was anything but pleased. The lady asked Gavrilá if her orders had been carried out. Gavrilá replied that they had. The next morning Gerasim came out of his garret, and went about his work. He came in to his dinner, ate it, and went out again, without a greeting to any one. His face, which had always been lifeless, as with all deaf-mutes, seemed now to be turned to stone. After dinner he went out of the yard again, but not for long; he came back, and went straight up to the hay-loft. Night came on, a clear moonlight night. Gerasim lay breathing heavily, and incessantly turning from side to side. Suddenly he felt something pull at the skirt of his coat. He started, but did not raise his head, and even shut his eyes tighter. But again there was a pull, stronger than before; he jumped up before him, with an end of string round her neck, was Mumu, twisting and

turning. A prolonged cry of delight broke from his speechless breast; he caught up Mumu, and hugged her tight in his arms, she licked his nose and eyes, and beard and moustache, all in one instant... He stood a little, thought a minute, crept cautiously down from the hay-loft, looked round, and having satisfied himself that no one could see him, made his way successfully to his garret. Gerasim had guessed before that his dog had not got lost by her own doing, that she must have been taken away by the mistress's orders; the servants had explained to him by signs that his Mumu had snapped at her, and he determined to take his own measures. First he fed Mumu with a bit of bread, fondled her, and put her to bed, then he fell to meditating, and spent the whole night long in meditating how he could best conceal her. At last he decided to leave her all day in the garret, and only to come in now and then to see her, and to take her out at night. The hole in the door he stopped up effectually with his old overcoat, and almost before it was light he was already in the yard, as though nothing had happened, even — innocent guile! — the same expression of melancholy on his face. It did not even occur to the poor deaf man that Mumu would betray herself by her whining; in reality, everyone in the house was soon aware that the dumb man's dog had come back, and was locked up in his garret, but from sympathy with him and with her, and partly, perhaps, from dread of him, they did not let him know that they

had found out his secret. The steward scratched his head, and gave a despairing wave of his head, as much as to say, "Well, well, God have mercy on him! If only it doesn't come to the mistress's ears!"

But the dumb man had never shown such energy as on that day; he cleaned and scraped the whole courtyard, pulled up every single weed with his own hand, tugged up every stake in the fence of the flower-garden, to satisfy himself that they were strong enough, and unaided drove them in again; in fact, he toiled and labored so that even the old lady noticed his zeal. Twice in the course of the day Gerasim went stealthily in to see his prisoner; when night came on, he lay down to sleep with her in the garret, not in the hay-loft, and only at two o'clock in the night he went out to take her a turn in the fresh air.

After walking about the courtyard a good while with her, he was just turning back, when suddenly a rustle was heard behind the fence on the side of the back street. Mumu pricked up her ears, growled — went up to the fence, sniffed, and gave vent to a loud shrill bark. Some drunkard had thought fit to take refuge under the fence for the night. At that very time the old lady had just fallen asleep after a prolonged fit of "nervous agitation"; these fits of agitation always overtook her after too hearty a supper. The sudden bark waked her up: her heart palpitated, and she felt faint. "Girls, girls!" she moaned. "Girls!" The terrified maids

ran into her bedroom. “Oh, oh, I am dying!” she said, flinging her arms about in her agitation. “Again, that dog, again!... Oh, send for the doctor. They mean to be the death of me... The dog, the dog again! Oh!” And she let her head fall back, which always signified a swoon. They rushed for the doctor, that is, for the household physician, Hariton. This doctor, whose whole qualification consisted in wearing soft-soled boots, knew how to feel the pulse delicately. He used to sleep fourteen hours out of the twenty-four, but the rest of the time he was always sighing, and continually dosing the old lady with cherrybay drops. This doctor ran up at once, fumigated the room with burnt feathers, and when the old lady opened her eyes, promptly offered her a wineglass of the hallowed drops on a silver tray. The old lady took them, but began again at once in a tearful voice complaining of the dog, of Gavrila, and of her fate, declaring that she was a poor old woman, and that every one had forsaken her, no one pitied her, every one wished her dead. Meanwhile the luckless Mumu had gone on barking, while Gerasim tried in vain to call her away, from the fence. “There... there... again,” groaned the old lady, and once more she turned up the whites of her eyes. The doctor whispered to a maid, she rushed into the outer hall, and shook Stepan, he ran to wake Gavrila, Gavrila in a fury ordered the whole household to get up.

Gerasim turned round, saw lights and shadows

moving in the windows, and with an instinct of coming trouble in his heart, put Mumu under his arm, ran into his garret, and locked himself in. A few minutes later five men were banging at his door, but feeling the resistance of the bolt, they stopped. Gavrila ran up in a fearful state of mind, and ordered them all to wait there and watch till morning. Then he flew off himself to the maids' quarter, and through an old companion, Liubov Liubimovna, with whose assistance he used to steal tea, sugar, and other groceries and to falsify the accounts, sent word to the mistress that the dog had unhappily run back from somewhere, but that to-morrow she should be killed, and would the mistress be so gracious as not to be angry and to overlook it. The old lady would probably not have been so soon appeased, but the doctor had in his haste given her fully forty drops instead of twelve. The strong dose of narcotic acted; in a quarter of an hour the old lady was in a sound and peaceful sleep; while Gerasim was lying with a white face on his bed, holding Mumu's mouth tightly shut.

Next morning the lady woke up rather late. Gavrila was waiting till she should be awake, to give the order for a final assault on Gerasim's stronghold, while he prepared himself to face a fearful storm. But the storm did not come off. The old lady lay in bed and sent for the eldest of her dependent companions.

“Liubov Liubimovna,” she began in a subdued weak voice — she was fond of playing the part of an

oppressed and forsaken victim; needless to say, every one in the house was made extremely uncomfortable at such times—"Liubov Liubimovna, you see my position; go, my love, to Gavrila Andreitch, and talk to him a little. Can he really prize some wretched cur above the repose — the very life — of his mistress? I could not bear to think so," she added, with an expression of deep feeling. "Go, my love; be so good as to go to Gavrila Andreitch for me."

Liubov Liubimovna went to Gavrila's room. What conversation passed between them is not known, but a short time after, a whole crowd of people was moving across the yard in the direction of Gerasim's garret. Gavrila walked in front, holding his cap on with his hand, though there was no wind. The footmen and cooks were close behind him; Uncle Tail was looking out of a window, giving instructions, that is to say, simply waving his hands. At the rear there was a crowd of small boys skipping and hopping along; half of them were outsiders who had run up. On the narrow staircase leading to the garret sat one guard; at the door were standing two more with sticks. They began to mount the stairs, which they entirely blocked up. Gavrila went up to the door, knocked with his fist, shouting, "Open the door!"

A stifled bark was audible, but there was no answer.

"Open the door, I tell you," he repeated.

“But, Gavrila Andreitch,” Stepan observed from below, “he's deaf, you know — he doesn't hear.”

They all laughed.

“What are we to do?” Gavrila rejoined from above.

“Why, there's a hole there in the door,” answered Stepan, “so you shake the stick in there.”

Gavrila bent down.

“He's stuffed it up with a coat or something.”

“Well, you just push the coat in.”

At this moment a smothered bark was heard again.

“See, see — she speaks for herself,” was remarked in the crowd, and again they laughed.

Gavrila scratched his ear.

“No, mate,” he responded at last, “you can poke the coat in yourself, if you like.”

“All right, let me.”

And Stepan scrambled up, took the stick, pushed in the coat, and began waving the stick about in the opening, saying, “Come out, come out!” as he did so. He was still waving the stick, when suddenly the door of the garret was flung open; all the crowd flew pell-mell down the stairs instantly, Gavrila first of all. Uncle Tail locked the window.

“Come, come, come,” shouted Gavrila from the yard, “mind what you're about.”

Gerasim stood without stirring in his doorway.

The crowd gathered at the foot of the stairs. Gerasim, with his arms akimbo, looked down at all these poor creatures in German coats; in his red peasant's shirt he looked like a giant before them. Gavrilá took a step forward.

“Mind, mate,” said he, “don't be insolent.”

And he began to explain to him by signs that the mistress insists on having his dog; that he must hand it over at once, or it would be the worse for him.

Gerasim looked at him, pointed to the dog, made a motion with his hand round his neck, as though he were pulling a noose tight, and glanced with a face of inquiry at the steward.

“Yes, yes,” the latter assented, nodding; “yes, just so.”

Gerasim dropped his eyes, then all of a sudden roused himself and pointed to Mumu, who was all the while standing beside him, innocently wagging her tail and pricking up her ears inquisitively. Then he repeated the strangling action round his neck and significantly struck himself on the breast, as though announcing he would take upon himself the task of killing Mumu.

“But you'll deceive us,” Gavrilá waved back in response.

Gerasim looked at him, smiled scornfully, struck himself again on the breast, and slammed to the door.

They all looked at one another in silence.

“What does that mean?” Gavrilá began. “He's

locked himself in.”

“Let him be, Gavril Andreitch,” Stepan advised; “he'll do it if he's promised. He's like that, you know... If he makes a promise, it's a certain thing. He's not like us others in that. The truth's the truth with him. Yes, indeed.”

“Yes,” they all repeated, nodding their heads, “yes — that's so — yes.”

Uncle Tail opened his window, and he too said, “Yes.”

“Well, may be, we shall see,” responded Gavril; “any way, we won't take off the guard. Here you, Eroshka!” he added, addressing a poor fellow in a yellow nankeen coat, who considered himself to be a gardener, “what have you to do? Take a stick and sit here, and if anything happens, run to me at once!”

Eroshka took a stick, and sat down on the bottom stair. The crowd dispersed, all except a few inquisitive small boys, while Gavril went home and sent word through Liubov Liubimovna to the mistress that everything had been done, while he sent a postilion for a policeman in case of need. The old lady tied a knot in her handkerchief, sprinkled some eau-de-Cologne on it, sniffed at it, and rubbed her temples with it, drank some tea, and, being still under the influence of the cherrybay drops, fell asleep again.

An hour after all this hubbub the garret door opened, and Gerasim showed himself. He had on his

best coat; he was leading Mumu by a string. Eroshka moved aside and let him pass. Gerasim went to the gates. All the small boys in the yard stared at him in silence. He did not even turn round; he only put his cap on in the street. Gavriila sent the same Eroshka to follow him and keep watch on him as a spy. Eroshka, seeing from a distance that he had gone into a cookshop with his dog, waited for him to come out again.

Gerasim was well known at the cookshop, and his signs were understood. He asked for cabbage soup with meat in it, and sat down with his arms on the table. Mumu stood beside his chair, looking calmly at him with her intelligent eyes. Her coat was glossy; one could see she had just been combed down. They brought Gerasim the soup. He crumbled some bread into it, cut the meat up small, and put the plate on the ground. Mumu began eating in her usual refined way, her little muzzle daintily held so as scarcely to touch her food. Gerasim gazed a long while at her; two big tears suddenly rolled from his eyes; one fell on the dog's brow, the other into the soup. He shaded his face with his hand. Mumu ate up half the plateful, and came away from it, licking her lips. Gerasim got up, paid for the soup, and went out, followed by the rather perplexed glances of the waiter. Eroshka, seeing Gerasim, hid round a corner, and letting him get in front, followed him again.

Gerasim walked without haste, still holding

Mumu by a string. When he got to the corner of the street, he stood still as though reflecting, and suddenly set off with rapid steps to the Crimean Ford. On the way he went into the yard of a house, where a lodge was being built, and carried away two bricks under his arm. At the Crimean Ford, he turned along the bank, went to a place where there were two little rowing-boats fastened to stakes (he had noticed them there before), and jumped into one of them with Mumu. A lame old man came out of a shed in the corner of a kitchen-garden and shouted after him; but Gerasim only nodded, and began rowing so vigorously, though against stream, that in an instant he had darted two hundred yards way. The old man stood for a while, scratched his back first with the left and then with the right hand, and went back hobbling to the shed.

Gerasim rowed on and on. Moscow was soon left behind. Meadows stretched each side of the bank, market gardens, fields, and copses; peasants' huts began to make their appearance. There was the fragrance of the country. He threw down his oars, bent his head down to Mumu, who was sitting facing him on a dry cross seat — the bottom of the boat was full of water — and stayed motionless, his mighty hands clasped upon her back, while the boat was gradually carried back by the current towards the town. At last Gerasim drew himself up hurriedly, with a sort of sick anger in his face, he tied up the bricks he had taken with string,

made a running noose, put it round Mumu's neck, lifted her up over the river, and for the last time looked at her... She watched him confidently and without any fear, faintly wagging her tail. He turned away, frowned, and wrung his hands... Gerasim heard nothing, neither the quick shrill whine of Mumu as she fell, nor the heavy splash of the water; for him the noisiest day was soundless and silent as even the stillest night is not silent to us. When he opened his eyes again, little wavelets were hurrying over the river, chasing one another; as before they broke against the boat's side, and only far away behind wide circles moved widening to the bank.

Directly Gerasim had vanished from Eroshka's sight, the latter returned home and reported what he had seen.

“Well, then,” observed Stepan, “he'll drown her. Now we can feel easy about it. If he once promises a thing...”

No one saw Gerasim during the day. He did not have dinner at home.

Evening came on; they were all gathered together to supper, except him.

“What a strange creature that Gerasim is!” piped a fat laundrymaid; “fancy, upsetting himself like that over a dog... Upon my word!”

“But Gerasim has been here,” Stepan cried all at once, scraping up his porridge with a spoon.

“How? when?”

“Why, a couple of hours ago. Yes, indeed! I ran against him at the gate; he was going out again from here; he was coming out of the yard. I tried to ask him about his dog, but he wasn't in the best of humors, I could see. Well, he gave me a shove; I suppose he only meant to put me out of his way, as if he'd say, 'Let me go, do!' but he fetched me such a crack on my neck, so seriously, that — oh! oh!” And Stepan, who could not help laughing, shrugged up and rubbed the back of his head. “Yes,” he added; “he has got a fist; it's something like a fist, there's no denying that!”

They all laughed at Stepan, and after supper they separated to go to bed.

Meanwhile, at that very time, a gigantic figure with a bag on his shoulders and a stick in his hand, was eagerly and persistently stepping out along the T—high-road. It was Gerasim. He was hurrying on without looking round; hurrying homewards, to his own village, to his own country. After drowning poor Mumu, he had run back to his garret, hurriedly packed a few things together in an old horsecloth, tied it up in a bundle, tossed it on his shoulder, and so was ready. He had noticed the road carefully when he was brought to Moscow; the village his mistress had taken him from lay only about twenty miles off the high-road. He walked along it with a sort of invincible purpose, a desperate and at the same time joyous determination.

He walked, his shoulders thrown back and his chest expanded; his eyes were fixed greedily straight before him. He hastened as though his old mother were waiting for him at home, as though she were calling him to her after long wanderings in strange parts, among strangers. The summer night, that was just drawing in, was still and warm; on one side, where the sun had set, the horizon was still light and faintly flushed with the last glow of the vanished day; on the other side a blue-gray twilight had already risen up. The night was coming up from that quarter. Quails were in hundreds around; corncrakes were calling to one another in the thickets... Gerasim could not hear them; he could not hear the delicate night-whispering of the trees, by which his strong legs carried him, but he smelt the familiar scent of the ripening rye, which was wafted from the dark fields; he felt the wind, flying to meet him — the wind from home — beat caressingly upon his face, and play with his hair and his beard. He saw before him the whitening road homewards, straight as an arrow. He saw in the sky stars innumerable, lighting up his way, and stepped out, strong and bold as a lion, so that when the rising sun shed its moist rosy light upon the still fresh and unwearied traveller, already thirty miles lay between him and Moscow.

In a couple of days he was at home, in his little hut, to the great astonishment of the soldier's wife who had been put in there. After praying before the holy

pictures, he set off at once to the village elder. The village elder was at first surprised; but the hay-cutting had just begun; Gerasim was a first-rate mower, and they put a scythe into his hand on the spot, and he went to mow in his old way, mowing so that the peasants were fairly astounded as they watched his wide sweeping strokes and the heaps he raked together...

In Moscow the day after Gerasim's flight they missed him. They went to his garret, rummaged about in it, and spoke to Gavrila. He came, looked, shrugged his shoulders, and decided that the dumb man had either run away or had drowned himself with his stupid dog. They gave information to the police, and informed the lady. The old lady was furious, burst into tears, gave orders that he was to be found whatever happened, declared she had never ordered the dog to be destroyed, and, in fact, gave Gavrila such a rating that he could do nothing all day but shake his head and murmur, "Well!" until Uncle Tail checked him at last, sympathetically echoing "We-ell!" At last the news came from the country of Gerasim's being there. The old lady was somewhat pacified; at first she issued a mandate for him to be brought back without delay to Moscow; afterwards, however, she declared that such an ungrateful creature was absolutely of no use to her. Soon after this she died herself; and her heirs had no thought to spare for Gerasim; they let their mother's other servants redeem their freedom on payment of an

annual rent.

And Gerasim is living still, a lonely man in his lonely hut; he is strong and healthy as before, and does the work of four men as before, and as before is serious and steady. But his neighbors have observed that ever since his return from Moscow he has quite given up the society of women; he will not even look at them, and does not keep even a single dog.

“It's his good luck, though,” the peasants reason, “that he can get on without female folk; and as for a dog — what need has he of a dog? you wouldn't get a thief to go into his yard for any money!” Such is the fame of the dumb man's Titanic strength.

FIRST LOVE

by Ivan Turgenev

THE guests had long since departed. The clock struck half-past twelve. There remained in the room only the host, Sergyéi Nikoláevitch, and Vladímir Petróvitch.

The host rang and ordered the remains of the supper to be removed. — “So then, the matter is settled,”—he said, ensconcing himself more deeply in his arm-chair, and lighting a cigar — “each of us is to narrate the history of his first love. ’Tis your turn, Sergyéi Nikoláevitch.”

Sergyéi Nikoláevitch, a rather corpulent man, with a plump, fair-skinned face, first looked at the host, then raised his eyes to the ceiling. — “I had no first love,”—he began at last — “I began straight off with the second.”

“How was that?”

“Very simply. I was eighteen years of age when, for the first time, I dangled after a very charming young lady; but I courted her as though it were no new thing to me: exactly as I courted others afterward. To tell the truth, I fell in love, for the first and last time, at the age of six, with my nurse;—but that is a very long time ago. The details of our relations have been erased from my memory; but even if I remembered them, who would be interested in them?”

“Then what are we to do?”—began the host. —
“There was nothing very startling about my first love either; I never fell in love with any one before Anna Ivánovna, now my wife; and everything ran as though on oil with us; our fathers made up the match, we very promptly fell in love with each other, and entered the bonds of matrimony without delay. My story can be told in two words. I must confess, gentlemen, that in raising the question of first love, I set my hopes on you, I will not say old, but yet no longer young bachelors. Will not you divert us with something, Vladímir Petróvitch?”

“My first love belongs, as a matter of fact, not altogether to the ordinary category,”—replied, with a slight hesitation, Vladímir Petróvitch, a man of forty, whose black hair was sprinkled with grey.

“Ah!”—said the host and Sergyéi Nikoláevitch in one breath. — “So much the better... Tell us.”

“As you like... or no: I will not narrate; I am no great hand at telling a story; it turns out dry and short, or long-drawn-out and artificial. But if you will permit me, I will write down all that I remember in a note-book, and will read it aloud to you.”

At first the friends would not consent, but Vladímir Petróvitch insisted on having his own way. A fortnight later they came together again, and Vladímir Sergyéitch kept his promise.

This is what his note-book contained.

I

I was sixteen years old at the time. The affair took place in the summer of 1833.

I was living in Moscow, in my parents' house. They had hired a villa near the Kalúga barrier, opposite the Neskúтчny Park.¹ —I was preparing for the university, but was working very little and was not in a hurry.

No one restricted my freedom. I had done whatever I pleased ever since I had parted with my last French governor, who was utterly unable to reconcile himself to the thought that he had fallen “like a bomb” (*comme une bombe*) into Russia, and with a stubborn expression on his face, wallowed in bed for whole days at a time. My father treated me in an indifferently-affectionate way; my mother paid hardly any attention to me, although she had no children except me: other cares engrossed her. My father, still a young man and very handsome, had married her from calculation; she was ten years older than he. My mother

¹ The finest of the public parks in Moscow, situated near the famous Sparrow Hills, is called “Neskúтчny”—“Not Tiresome,” generally rendered “Sans Souci.” It contains an imperial residence, the Alexander Palace, used as an official summer home by the Governor-General of Moscow. — Translator.

led a melancholy life: she was incessantly in a state of agitation, jealousy, and wrath — but not in the presence of my father; she was very much afraid of him, and he maintained a stern, cold, and distant manner... I have never seen a man more exquisitely calm, self-confident, and self-controlled.

I shall never forget the first weeks I spent at the villa. The weather was magnificent; we had left town the ninth of May, on St. Nicholas's day. I rambled, — sometimes in the garden of our villa, sometimes in Neskútchny Park, sometimes beyond the city barriers; I took with me some book or other, — a course of Kaidánoff, — but rarely opened it, and chiefly recited aloud poems, of which I knew a great many by heart. The blood was fermenting in me, and my heart was aching — so sweetly and absurdly; I was always waiting for something, shrinking at something, and wondering at everything, and was all ready for anything at a moment's notice. My fancy was beginning to play, and hovered swiftly ever around the selfsame image, as martins hover round a belfry at sunset. But even athwart my tears and athwart the melancholy, inspired now by a melodious verse, now by the beauty of the evening, there peered forth, like grass in springtime, the joyous sensation of young, bubbling life.

I had a saddle-horse; I was in the habit of saddling it myself, and when I rode off alone as far as possible, in some direction, launching out at a gallop

and fancying myself a knight at a tourney — how blithely the wind whistled in my ears! — Or, turning my face skyward, I welcomed its beaming light and azure into my open soul.

I remember, at that time, the image of woman, the phantom of woman's love, almost never entered my mind in clearly-defined outlines; but in everything I thought, in everything I felt, there lay hidden the half-conscious, shamefaced presentiment of something new, inexpressibly sweet, feminine...

This presentiment, this expectation permeated my whole being; I breathed it, it coursed through my veins in every drop of blood... it was fated to be speedily realised.

Our villa consisted of a wooden manor-house with columns, and two tiny outlying wings; in the wing to the left a tiny factory of cheap wall-papers was installed... More than once I went thither to watch how half a score of gaunt, dishevelled young fellows in dirty smocks and with tipsy faces were incessantly galloping about at the wooden levers which jammed down the square blocks of the press, and in that manner, by the weight of their puny bodies, printed the motley-hued patterns of the wall-papers. The wing on the right stood empty and was for rent. One day — three weeks after the ninth of May — the shutters on the windows of this wing were opened, and women's faces made their appearance in them; some family or other had moved

into it. I remember how, that same day at dinner, my mother inquired of the butler who our new neighbours were, and on hearing the name of Princess Zasyékin, said at first, not without some respect — “Ah! a Princess”... and then she added — “She must be some poor person!”

“They came in three hired carriages, ma’am,”—remarked the butler, as he respectfully presented a dish. “They have no carriage of their own, ma’am, and their furniture is of the very plainest sort.”

“Yes,”—returned my mother, — “and nevertheless, it is better so.”

My father shot a cold glance at her; she subsided into silence.

As a matter of fact, Princess Zasyékin could not be a wealthy woman: the wing she had hired was so old and tiny and low-roofed that people in the least well-to-do would not have been willing to inhabit it. — However, I let this go in at one ear and out at the other. The princely title had little effect on me: I had recently been reading Schiller’s “The Brigands.”

II

I had a habit of prowling about our garden every evening, gun in hand, and standing guard against the crows. — I had long cherished a hatred for those wary, rapacious and crafty birds. On the day of which I have

been speaking, I went into the garden as usual, and, after having fruitlessly made the round of all the alleys (the crows recognised me from afar, and merely cawed spasmodically at a distance), I accidentally approached the low fence which separated *our* territory from the narrow strip of garden extending behind the right-hand wing and appertaining to it. I was walking along with drooping head. Suddenly I heard voices: I glanced over the fence — and was petrified... A strange spectacle presented itself to me.

A few paces distant from me, on a grass-plot between green raspberry-bushes, stood a tall, graceful young girl, in a striped, pink frock and with a white kerchief on her head; around her pressed four young men, and she was tapping them in turn on the brow with those small grey flowers, the name of which I do not know, but which are familiar to children; these little flowers form tiny sacs, and burst with a pop when they are struck against anything hard. The young men offered their foreheads to her so willingly, and in the girl's movements (I saw her form in profile) there was something so bewitching, caressing, mocking, and charming, that I almost cried aloud in wonder and pleasure; and I believe I would have given everything in the world if those lovely little fingers had only consented to tap me on the brow. My gun slid down on the grass, I forgot everything, I devoured with my eyes that slender waist, and the neck and the beautiful arms,

and the slightly ruffled fair hair, the intelligent eyes and those lashes, and the delicate cheek beneath them...

“Young man, hey there, young man!”—suddenly spoke up a voice near me — “Is it permissible to stare like that at strange young ladies?”

I trembled all over, I was stupefied... Beside me, on the other side of the fence, stood a man with closely-clipped black hair, gazing ironically at me. At that same moment, the young girl turned toward me... I beheld huge grey eyes in a mobile, animated face — and this whole face suddenly began to quiver, and to laugh, and the white teeth gleamed from it, the brows elevated themselves in an amusing way... I flushed, picked up my gun from the ground, and, pursued by ringing but not malicious laughter, I ran to my own room, flung myself on the bed, and covered my face with my hands. My heart was fairly leaping within me; I felt very much ashamed and very merry: I experienced an unprecedented emotion.

After I had rested awhile, I brushed my hair, made myself neat and went down-stairs to tea. The image of the young girl floated in front of me; my heart had ceased to leap, but ached in an agreeable sort of way.

“What ails thee?”—my father suddenly asked me — “hast thou killed a crow?”

I was on the point of telling him all, but refrained and only smiled to myself. As I was preparing for bed, I

whirled round thrice on one foot, I know not why, pomaded my hair, got into bed and slept all night like a dead man. Toward morning I awoke for a moment, raised my head, cast a glance of rapture around me — and fell asleep again.

III

“How am I to get acquainted with them?” was my first thought, as soon as I awoke in the morning. I went out into the garden before tea, but did not approach too close to the fence, and saw no one. After tea I walked several times up and down the street in front of the villa, and cast a distant glance at the windows... I thought I descried *her* face behind the curtains, and retreated with all possible despatch. “But I must get acquainted,”—I thought, as I walked with irregular strides up and down the sandy stretch which extends in front of the Neskútchny Park... “but how? that is the question.” I recalled the most trifling incidents of the meeting on the previous evening; for some reason, her manner of laughing at me presented itself to me with particular clearness... But while I was fretting thus and constructing various plans, Fate was already providing for me.

During my absence, my mother had received a letter from her new neighbour on grey paper sealed with brown wax, such as is used only on postal notices,

and on the corks of cheap wine. In this letter, written in illiterate language, and with a slovenly chirography, the Princess requested my mother to grant her her protection: my mother, according to the Princess's words, was well acquainted with the prominent people on whom the fortune of herself and her children depended, as she had some extremely important law-suits: "I apeal tyou,"—she wrote, — "as a knoble woman to a knoble woman, and moarover, it is agriable to me to makeus of this oportunity." In conclusion, she asked permission of my mother to call upon her. I found my mother in an unpleasant frame of mind: my father was not at home, and she had no one with whom to take counsel. It was impossible not to reply to a "knoble woman," and to a Princess into the bargain; but how to reply perplexed my mother. It seemed to her ill-judged to write a note in French, and my mother was not strong in Russian orthography herself — and was aware of the fact — and did not wish to compromise herself. She was delighted at my arrival, and immediately ordered me to go to the Princess and explain to her verbally that my mother was always ready, to the extent of her ability, to be of service to Her Radiance,² and begged that she would call upon

² Princes, princesses, counts, and countesses have the title of *Siyátelstvo* (*siyám* —to shine, to be radiant); generally translated "Illustrious Highness" or "Serenity."—Translator.

her about one o'clock.

This unexpectedly swift fulfilment of my secret wishes both delighted and frightened me; but I did not betray the emotion which held possession of me, and preliminarily betook myself to my room for the purpose of donning a new neckcloth and coat; at home I went about in a round-jacket and turn-over collars, although I detested them greatly.

IV

In the cramped and dirty anteroom of the wing, which I entered with an involuntary trembling of my whole body, I was received by a grey-haired old serving-man with a face the hue of dark copper, pig-like, surly little eyes, and such deep wrinkles on his forehead as I had never seen before in my life. He was carrying on a platter the gnawed spinal bone of a herring, and, pushing to with his foot the door which led into the adjoining room, he said abruptly — “What do you want?”

“Is Princess Zasyékin at home?”—I inquired.

“Vonifáty!”—screamed a quavering female voice on the other side of the door.

The servant silently turned his back on me, thereby displaying the badly-worn rear of his livery with its solitary, rusted, armoured button, and went away, leaving the platter on the floor.

“Hast thou been to the police-station?”—went on that same feminine voice. The servant muttered something in reply. — “Hey?... Some one has come?”—was the next thing audible... “The young gentleman from next door? — Well, ask him in.”

“Please come into the drawing-room, sir,”—said the servant, making his appearance again before me, and picking up the platter from the floor. I adjusted my attire and entered the “drawing-room.”

I found myself in a tiny and not altogether clean room, with shabby furniture which seemed to have been hastily set in place. At the window, in an easy-chair with a broken arm, sat a woman of fifty, with uncovered hair³ and plain-featured, clad in an old green gown, and with a variegated worsted kerchief round her neck. Her small black eyes fairly bored into me.

I went up to her and made my bow.

“I have the honour of speaking to Princess Zasyékin?”

“I am Princess Zasyékin: and you are the son of Mr. B—?”

“Yes, madam. I have come to you with a message

³ The custom still prevails in Russia, to a great extent, for all elderly women to wear caps. In the peasant class it is considered as extremely indecorous to go “simple-haired,” as the expression runs—Translator.

from my mother.”

“Pray be seated. Vonifáty! where are my keys? Hast thou seen them?”

I communicated to Madame Zasyékin my mother’s answer to her note. She listened to me, tapping the window-pane with her thick, red fingers, and when I had finished she riveted her eyes on me once more.

“Very good; I shall certainly go,”—said she at last. — “But how young you are still! How old are you, allow me to ask?”

“Sixteen,”—I replied with involuntary hesitation.

The Princess pulled out of her pocket some dirty, written documents, raised them up to her very nose and began to sort them over.

“‘Tis a good age,”—she suddenly articulated, turning and fidgeting in her chair. — “And please do not stand on ceremony. We are plain folks.”

“Too plain,”—I thought, with involuntary disgust taking in with a glance the whole of her homely figure.

At that moment, the other door of the drawing-room was swiftly thrown wide open, and on the threshold appeared the young girl whom I had seen in the garden the evening before. She raised her hand and a smile flitted across her face.

“And here is my daughter,”—said the Princess, pointing at her with her elbow. — “Zínotchka, the son of our neighbour, Mr. B—. What is your name, permit

me to inquire?"

"Vladimir,"—I replied, rising and lisping with agitation.

"And your patronymic?"

"Petróvitch."

"Yes! I once had an acquaintance, a chief of police, whose name was Vladimir Petróvitch also. Vonifáty! don't hunt for the keys; the keys are in my pocket."

The young girl continued to gaze at me with the same smile as before, slightly puckering up her eyes and bending her head a little on one side.

"I have already seen M'sieu Voldemar,"—she began. (The silvery tone of her voice coursed through me like a sweet chill.)—"Will you permit me to call you so?"

"Pray do, madam,"—I lisped.

"Where was that?"—asked the Princess.

The young Princess did not answer her mother.

"Are you busy now?"—she said, without taking her eyes off me.

"Not in the least, madam."

"Then will you help me to wind some wool? Come hither, to me."

She nodded her head at me and left the drawing-room. I followed her.

In the room which we entered the furniture was a little better and was arranged with great taste. — But at

that moment I was almost unable to notice anything; I moved as though in a dream and felt a sort of intense sensation of well-being verging on stupidity throughout my frame.

The young Princess sat down, produced a knot of red wool, and pointing me to a chair opposite her, she carefully unbound the skein and placed it on my hands. She did all this in silence, with a sort of diverting deliberation, and with the same brilliant and crafty smile on her slightly parted lips. She began to wind the wool upon a card doubled together, and suddenly illumined me with such a clear, swift glance, that I involuntarily dropped my eyes. When her eyes, which were generally half closed, opened to their full extent her face underwent a complete change; it was as though light had inundated it.

“What did you think of me yesterday, M’sieu Voldemar?”—she asked, after a brief pause. — “You certainly must have condemned me?”

“I... Princess... I thought nothing... how can I...” I replied, in confusion.

“Listen,”—she returned. — “You do not know me yet; I want people always to speak the truth to me. You are sixteen, I heard, and I am twenty-one; you see that I am a great deal older than you, and therefore you must always speak the truth to me... and obey me,”—she added. — “Look at me; why don’t you look at me?”

I became still more confused; but I raised my eyes to hers, nevertheless. She smiled, only not in her former manner, but with a different, an approving smile. — “Look at me,”—she said, caressingly lowering her voice — “I don’t like that... Your face pleases me; I foresee that we shall be friends. And do you like me?”—she added slyly.

“Princess...” I was beginning...

“In the first place, call me Zinaída Alexándrovna; and in the second place, — what sort of a habit is it for children” —(she corrected herself)—“for young men — not to say straight out what they feel? You do like me, don’t you?”

Although it was very pleasant to me to have her talk so frankly to me, still I was somewhat nettled. I wanted to show her that she was not dealing with a small boy, and, assuming as easy and serious a mien as I could, I said — “Of course I like you very much, Zinaída Alexándrovna; I have no desire to conceal the fact.”

She shook her head, pausing at intervals. — “Have you a governor?”—she suddenly inquired.

“No, I have not had a governor this long time past.”

I lied: a month had not yet elapsed since I had parted with my Frenchman.

“Oh, yes, I see: you are quite grown up.”

She slapped me lightly on the fingers. — “Hold

your hands straight!”—And she busied herself diligently with winding her ball.

I took advantage of the fact that she did not raise her eyes, and set to scrutinising her, first by stealth, then more and more boldly. Her face seemed to me even more charming than on the day before: everything about it was so delicate, intelligent and lovely. She was sitting with her back to the window, which was hung with a white shade; a ray of sunlight making its way through that shade inundated with a flood of light her fluffy golden hair, her innocent neck, sloping shoulders, and calm, tender bosom. — I gazed at her — and how near and dear she became to me! It seemed to me both that I had known her for a long time and that I had known nothing and had not lived before she came... She wore a rather dark, already shabby gown, with an apron; I believe I would willingly have caressed every fold of that gown and of that apron. The tips of her shoes peeped out from under her gown; I would have bowed down to those little boots... “And here I sit, in front of her,”—I thought. — “I have become acquainted with her... what happiness, my God!” I came near bouncing out of my chair with rapture, but I merely dangled my feet to and fro a little, like a child who is enjoying dainties.

I felt as much at my ease as a fish does in water, and I would have liked never to leave that room again as long as I lived.