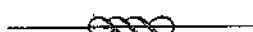
The Death of Ivan Ilyich

AND OTHER STORIES



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"My love? My love began to wane from that day on. When, as often happened with her, she would lapse into thought, with a smile on her face, I would at once recall the colonel on the square, and it somehow became awkward and unpleasant for me, and I began to see her more rarely. And so love dwindled away. There you see what sort of things can happen and how they can change and redirect a man's whole life. And you say. . . ." he concluded.

1903

The Forged Coupon

PART ONE

I

FYODOR MIKHAILOVICH SMOKOVNIKOV, chairman of the tax board, a man of incorruptible honesty, and proud of it, and a gloomy liberal, and not only a freethinker but one who hated every manifestation of religiosity, which he considered a leftover of superstition, came back from the board in the worst of moods. The governor had written him the stupidest of notes, from which it could be inferred that Fyodor Mikhailovich had acted dishonestly. Fyodor Mikhailovich had become very angry and had at once written a pert and stinging reply.

At home it seemed to Fyodor Mikhailovich that everything was being done against him.

It was five minutes to five. He thought dinner would be served at once, but dinner was not ready yet. Fyodor Mikhailovich slammed the door and went to his room. Someone knocked on the door. "Who the devil is that," he thought and shouted:

"Who's there?"

A fifteen-year-old boy, in the fifth class at school, Fyodor Mikhailovich's son, came in.

"What brings you here?"

"Today's the first."

"What? Money?"

The custom was that on the first of each month the father gave his son an allowance of three roubles for entertainment. Fyodor Mikhailovich frowned, took out his wallet, rummaged in it, and pulled out a coupon[1] worth two and a half roubles, then took out his change purse and counted out another fifty kopecks. His son was silent and did not take it.

"Papa, please advance me some."

"What?"

"I wouldn't be asking, but I borrowed on my word of honor, I promised. As an honest man, I can't . . . I need another three roubles, really, I wouldn't ask . . . or not that I wouldn't ask, but just . . . please, papa."

"You've been told . . ."

"Yes, papa, but just this once . . ."

"You get a three-rouble allowance and it's not enough. At your age I didn't get even fifty kopecks."

"All my friends get more now. Petrov and Ivanitsky get fifty roubles."

"And I tell you that if you behave like this you'll turn into a swindler. I have spoken."

"So you've spoken. You never enter into my situation, I'll have to become a scoundrel. It's all very well for you."

"Get out, scapegrace! Out!"

Fyodor Mikhailovich jumped up and rushed at his son.

"Out! Your kind want whipping!"

His son was frightened and angry, but more angry than frightened, and, bowing his head, he walked with quick steps to the door. Fyodor Mikhailovich had no intention of beating him, but he was glad of his wrath and went on shouting abusive words for a long time at his son's back.

When the maid came and said that dinner was ready, Fyodor Mikhailovich stood up.

"At last," he said. "I don't even want to eat any more."

And, scowling, he went to dinner.

At the table his wife started talking with him, but he barked so angrily and curtly in reply that she fell silent. His son also did not raise his eyes from his plate and kept silent. They ate in silence and in silence got up and went their separate ways.

After dinner the student went to his room, took the coupon and change from his pocket and flung them on the table, then took off his uniform and put on a jacket. First the student picked up a tattered Latin grammar, then he put the hook on the door, swept the money from the table into the drawer with his hand, took cigarette papers from the drawer, rolled a cigarette, and began to smoke.

He sat over his grammar and notebooks for some two hours, not understanding a thing, then got up and began to pace the room, stamping his heels, recalling all that had gone on between him and his father. All his father's abusive words, his angry face especially, came back to him as if he had just heard and seen him. "Scapegrace. You want whipping." And the more he remembered, the angrier he became with his father. He remembered his father saying, "I see what will become of you—a swindler. Be it known to you." "And so I'll become a swindler. It's all very well for him. He's forgotten what it's like to be young. Well, what crime have I committed? I simply went to the theater, had no money, and borrowed from Petya Grushetsky. What's so bad about that? Another father would feel sorry, ask questions, but this one only abuses me and thinks of himself. When there's something he hasn't got, there's shouting all over the house, but I'm a swindler. No, he may be my father, but I don't like him. I don't know about anybody else, but I don't like him."

A maid knocked on his door. She brought him a note.

"Answer expected without fail."

The note read:

> For the third time now I ask you to return the six roubles you borrowed from me, but you try to get out of it. Honest people do not act that way. I ask you to send the money immediately with the bearer. I need it badly myself. Can't you get hold of it somewhere?
>
> Your (depending on whether you pay it back or not) disdainful or respectful comrade,
>
> *Grushetsky.*

"Think of that. What a swine. He can't wait. I'll try once more."

Mitya went to his mother. This was his last hope. His mother was kind and could not say no, and she probably would have helped him, but that day she was upset by the illness of her younger son, the two-year-old Petya. She became angry with Mitya for coming and making noise and refused him at once.

He muttered something under his breath and started out the door. She felt sorry for her son and called him back.

"Wait, Mitya," she said. "I don't have it now, but I'll get it by tomorrow."

But Mitya was still seething with rage against his father.

"What's tomorrow to me, when I need it today? Be it known to you that I'm going to a schoolmate."

And he left, slamming the door.

"There's nothing else to do. He'll let me know where to pawn my watch," he thought, feeling for his watch in his pocket.

Mitya took the coupon and change from the drawer, put his coat on, and went to see Makhin.

II

MAKHIN WAS a student with a mustache. He played cards, knew women, and always had money. He lived with his aunt. Mitya knew that Makhin was a bad sort, but when he was with him, he involuntarily submitted to him. Makhin was at home and was getting ready to go to the theater: his dirty little room smelled of scented soap and cologne.

"That, brother, is the last resort," Makhin said, when Mitya told him of his trouble, showed the coupon and the fifty kopecks, and said he needed nine roubles. "You can pawn your watch, but you can also do better," said Makhin, winking his eye.

"How's that?"

"Very simple." Makhin took the coupon. "Put a one in front of the 2.50 and it'll be 12.50."

"But are there any like that?"

"Why not, on thousand-rouble notes. I cashed one like that."

"Can it be?"

"Well, shall I go ahead?" said Makhin, taking a pen and smoothing the coupon out with one finger of his left hand.

"But it's not right."

"What nonsense."

"True," thought Mitya, and again he recalled his father's abusive term: swindler. "So I'll be a swindler." He looked into Makhin's face. Makhin looked at him, smiling calmly.

"Shall I go ahead?"

"Yes."

Makhin carefully traced a one.

"Well, now let's go to the shop. Here at the corner: photography accessories. I happen to need a frame, for this person here."

He took out a photograph of a big-eyed girl with an enormous head of hair and a magnificent bust.

"Isn't she a sweetheart, eh?"

"Yes, yes. But how . . ."

"Very simple. Come on."

Makhin got dressed, and they left together.

III

AT THE FRONT DOOR to the photography shop a little bell rang. The students went in, looking around the empty shop, its shelves laden with photography accessories, and with display cases on the counters. From the rear door a homely woman with a kind face came out and, standing behind the counter, asked them what they wanted.

"A pretty little frame, madam."

"At what price?" the lady asked, her hands in half-gloves, their joints swollen, moving quickly and deftly over frames of different designs. "These are fifty kopecks, and these are a bit more. And here's a very sweet one, a new design, for a rouble twenty."

"Well, give me that one. But couldn't you come down a little? Make it a rouble."

"We don't bargain," the lady said with dignity.

"Well, have it your way," said Makhin, placing the coupon on the display case. "Give us the frame and the change, and be quick about it. We'll be late for the theater."

"There's still time," the lady said, and she began to scrutinize the coupon with her nearsighted eyes.

"It'll go nicely in this frame, eh?" said Makhin, turning to Mitya.

"Don't you have some other money?" asked the saleswoman.

"The trouble is that I don't. My father gave it to me, it's got to be broken."

"You don't have a rouble twenty?"

"I've got fifty kopecks. What, are you afraid we're cheating you with forged money?"

"No, never mind."

"Give it back, then. We'll get it changed."

"So how much do I owe you?"

"Oh, it should be eleven and something."

The saleswoman clicked her abacus, opened the cash box, took out a ten-rouble bill and, fishing around in the change, came up with six twenty-kopeck and two five-kopeck pieces.

"Can I trouble you to wrap it?" asked Makhin, taking the money unhurriedly.

"Just a moment."

The saleswoman wrapped the frame and tied it with string.

Mitya breathed again only when the little bell at the front door rang behind him and they were outside.

"Here's ten roubles for you, and let me keep the rest. I'll pay it back."

And Makhin went to the theater, while Mitya went to Grushetsky and settled accounts with him.

IV

An hour after the students left, the owner of the shop came home and began to count the receipts.

"Ah, you lopsided fool! What a fool you are!" he shouted at his wife, seeing the coupon and noticing the forgery at once. "And what are you taking coupons for?"

"But, Zhenya, you yourself took some in front of me, and precisely twelve-rouble ones," said his wife, embarrassed, upset, and ready to cry. "I don't understand how they fooled me," she said, "they're students. A handsome young man, seemed so *comme il faut*."

"*Comme il faut* fool," her husband went on scolding while he counted the money. "If I take a coupon, it's that I know and can see what's written on it. But you, I bet you just stared at the students' mugs in your old age."

That his wife could not bear and she became angry herself.

"A real man! You only judge others, but when you gamble away fifty-four roubles at cards, it's nothing."

"I'm another matter."

"I don't want to talk to you," his wife said and went to her room and started remembering how her family had opposed her marriage, considering her husband much beneath her socially, and how she alone had insisted on the marriage; she remembered her dead child and her husband's indifference to that loss, and she hated her husband so much that she thought how good it would be if he died. But, having thought that, she became frightened of her own feelings and hastened to get dressed and leave. When her husband came home, his wife was not there. Without waiting for him, she had dressed and gone alone to visit an acquaintance, a French teacher, who had invited them to a soirée that evening.

V

The French teacher, a Russian Pole, gave a formal tea party with sweet pastry, and then they sat down to several tables of vint.[2] The wife of the dealer in photography accessories sat with the host, an officer, and a deaf old lady in a wig, the widow of the owner of a music shop, a great enthusiast and skillful player of cards. The wife of the dealer in photographic accessories kept getting lucky cards. She twice bid a grand slam. Next to her was a little plate with grapes and a pear, and she was in merry spirits.

"Why doesn't Evgeny Mikhailovich come?" asked the hostess from another table. "We wrote him down as a fifth."

"He probably got carried away with the accounts," said Evgeny Mikhailovich's wife. "Today we have to pay up for food and firewood."

And, recalling the scene with her husband, she frowned, and her hands in their half-gloves trembled with anger against him.

"Well, speak of the devil," said the host, addressing the entering Evgeny Mikhailovich. "Why so late?"

"Oh, various things," Evgeny Mikhailovich replied in a merry voice, rubbing his hands. And, to his wife's surprise, he went over to her and said:

"You know, I passed off that coupon."

"Really?"

"Yes, on a muzhik for firewood."

And Evgeny Mikhailovich told them all in great indignation—with his wife adding details to the story—how some shameless students had cheated his wife.

"Well, sirs, now to business," he said, sitting down at the table when his turn came and shuffling the cards.

VI

INDEED, Evgeny Mikhailovich had passed off the coupon on the peasant Ivan Mironov for firewood.

Ivan Mironov's business consisted in buying a cord of firewood from the wood depot, taking it around the city, and dividing it into five parts, which he sold for the price of a quarter cord at the wood yard. On that unlucky day for Ivan Mironov he had taken a load early in the morning and, having quickly sold it, had taken another load and hoped to sell it, but had driven around until evening looking for buyers but not finding any. He kept running into experienced city-dwellers, who knew the usual tricks of muzhiks who sold firewood and did not believe that he, as he assured them, had brought the wood from the country. He was hungry, chilled through in his worn sheepskin jacket and tattered smock; it went down to twenty degrees of frost towards evening; his nag, which he did not spare because he intended to sell it for slaughter, refused to budge. So Ivan Mironov was even ready to sell the wood at a loss when he met Evgeny Mikhailovich, who had gone out to buy tobacco and was on his way home.

"Take it, master, I'll sell it cheap. My nag refuses to budge."

"Where are you from?"

"The country. It's my own wood, good and dry."

"We know all that. Well, what's your price?"

Ivan Mironov told him, then lowered it, and finally let it go for cost.

"Just for you, master, because it's nearby," he said.

Evgeny Mikhailovich did not bargain much, glad at the thought of passing off the coupon. Pulling at the shafts himself, Ivan Mironov somehow managed to bring the wood into the yard and unloaded it in the

shed. The yard porter was not there. Ivan Mironov hesitated at first to take the coupon, but Evgeny Mikhailovich was so persuasive and seemed like such an imposing gentleman that he agreed to take it.

Going into the servants' quarters by the back door, Ivan Mironov crossed himself, wiped the icicles from his beard, and, raising the skirt of his kaftan, took out a leather purse and from it eight roubles and fifty kopecks and handed over the change, then wrapped the coupon in paper and put it in the purse.

Having thanked the gentleman properly, Ivan Mironov, urging on his frost-covered nag, condemned to death and barely moving its legs, not with the whip but with its handle, drove the empty sled to the tavern.

In the tavern, Ivan Mironov asked for eight kopecks' worth of vodka and tea, and, warmed up and even sweaty, in the merriest mood, conversed with a yard porter who was sitting at his table. He got to talking with him, told him all his circumstances. He told him he was from the village of Vassilievskoe, eight miles away, that he lived apart from his father and brothers, with his wife and two boys, the elder of whom only went to school but was not of any help yet. He told him that he was staying in somebody's apartment and would go to the horse fair tomorrow and sell his nag, and find, and maybe even buy, another horse. He told him that he had now saved up one rouble short of twenty-five, and that half his money was in a coupon. He took out the coupon and showed it to the yard porter. The yard porter was illiterate, but said he did exchange such money for tenants, that it was good money, but sometimes it was forged, and therefore his advice was to exchange it here at the counter, to be on the safe side. Ivan Mironov gave the coupon to the waiter and told him to bring the change, but the waiter did not bring the change, instead the bald-headed, glossy-faced tavernkeeper came with the coupon in his plump hand.

"Your money's no good," he said, pointing to the coupon, but not giving it back.

"It's good money, a gentleman gave it to me."

"Even so it's no good, it's forged."

"If it's forged, give it here."

"No, brother, your kind need a lesson. You forged it with some swindlers."

"Give me the money, what right have you got?"

"Sidor, call the police!" the barman turned to the waiter.

Ivan Mironov was tipsy. When tipsy, he could be rowdy. He seized the tavernkeeper by the collar and shouted:

"Give it back, I'll go to the gentleman. I know where he is."

The tavernkeeper tore free of Ivan Mironov, and his shirt made a ripping sound.

"Ah, so that's how you are. Hold him."

The waiter seized Ivan Mironov, and just then a police officer appeared. Having listened to the whole matter as an authority, he decided it at once:

"To the police station."

The officer put the coupon in his wallet and took Ivan Mironov, along with his horse, to the police station.

VII

IVAN MIRONOV SPENT the night in the police station with drunks and thieves. Only towards noon was he summoned to the police chief. The police chief questioned him and sent him with an officer to the dealer in photography accessories. Ivan Mironov remembered the street and house.

When the officer called out the gentleman and presented him with the coupon and with Ivan Mironov, who insisted that this same gentleman had given him the coupon, Evgeny Mikhailovich made an astonished and then stern face.

"You're clearly out of your mind. This is the first I've seen of him."

"Master, that's a sin, we'll all die," said Ivan Mironov.

"What's to be done with him? You're dreaming, surely. You sold it to somebody else," said Evgeny Mikhailovich. "Wait a minute, though. I'll go and ask my wife if she bought firewood yesterday."

Evgeny Mikhailovich went out and at once summoned the yard porter, a handsome, extraordinarily strong and deft fellow, the merry young fop Vassily, and told him that if he was asked where the last batch of firewood came from, he should say from the wood depot, and that no wood was bought from muzhiks.

"Because there's this muzhik who is testifying that I gave him a

forged coupon. A muddle-headed muzhik, says God knows what, but you're a man of sense. So tell them we buy firewood only at the depot. And I've long been meaning to give you this so you can buy yourself a jacket," Evgeny Mikhailovich added, giving the porter five roubles.

Vassily took the money, his eyes flashed at the note, then at Evgeny Mikhailovich's face, he shook his mop of hair and smiled slightly.

"It's a known fact, they're muddle-headed folk. Uneducated. Please don't worry, sir. I know what to say."

No matter how much and how tearfully Ivan Mironov begged Evgeny Mikhailovich to recognize the coupon as his, and with the yard porter to confirm his words, both Evgeny Mikhailovich and the porter stood firm: they never bought firewood from carts. And the police officer took Ivan Mironov, accused of forging the coupon, back to the station.

Only on the advice of a drunken scrivener who was locked up with him did Ivan Mironov, having given the police chief a fiver, get out of jail, without the coupon and with seven roubles instead of the twenty-five he had had the day before. Of those seven roubles, Ivan Mironov drank up three and, with a bruised face, dead drunk, went home to his wife.

His wife was in the last days of pregnancy and feeling ill. She began to scold her husband, he shoved her aside, she started beating him. He, without responding, lay belly-down on the plank bed and sobbed loudly.

Only the next morning did his wife understand what it was all about, and, believing her husband, she spent a long time cursing the robber gentleman who had cheated her Ivan. And Ivan, sobering up, remembered what an artisan with whom he had been drinking the day before had told him and decided to go to an attorneyer to lodge a complaint.

VIII

THE LAWYER TOOK the case, not because of the money he might earn, but because he believed Ivan and was indignant that a muzhik had been so shamelessly deceived.

Both sides appeared in court, and the yard porter Vassily was the witness. The same thing was repeated in court. Ivan Mironov mentioned God and the fact that we will all die. Evgeny Mikhailovich, though suf-

fering from the awareness of the vileness and riskiness of what he was doing, could not change his testimony now and with an externally calm air went on denying everything.

The yard porter Vassily got another ten roubles and with a smile calmly maintained that he had never set eyes on Ivan Mironov. And when he was taken to swear an oath, though cowering inwardly, outwardly he calmly repeated the words of the oath after the old priest who had been called in, swearing upon the Cross and the Holy Gospel that he would tell the whole truth.

The affair ended with the judge rejecting Ivan Mironov's suit and sentencing him to pay five roubles in court costs, which Evgeny Mikhailovich magnanimously forgave him. In dismissing Ivan Mironov, the judge admonished him, saying that henceforth he should be more careful about bringing charges against respectable people and should be grateful that he had been forgiven the court costs and not pursued for slander, for which he could have spent three months in prison.

"I humbly thank you," said Ivan Mironov and, shaking his head and sighing, he left his cell.

All this seemed to have ended well for Evgeny Mikhailovich and the yard porter Vassily. But it only seemed so. Things happened which no one saw but which were more important than all that people did see.

It was the third year now since Vassily had left his village and gone to live in the city. With each year he sent his father less and less, and he did not invite his wife, having no need of her. Here in the city he had as many such wives as he wanted, and better than that slut of his. With each year Vassily forgot village rules more and more and acquired city ways. There everything was crude, gray, poor, muddled; here everything was refined, nice, clean, rich, everything was in order. And he was becoming more and more convinced that village folk lived without sense, like beasts in the forest, while here there were real people. He read books by good writers, novels, went to performances at People's House.[3] In the village you could not even dream of anything like that. In the village the old folk say: Live with your lawful wife, work hard, do not eat more than you need, do not show off; but here intelligent, educated people—meaning, who know the real rules—live for their own good pleasure. And all goes well. Before the affair of the coupon, Vassily had never believed that the masters have no law regarding how to live. It had always seemed to him that he did not know that law, but there was a law. But this latest affair with the coupon and, above all, his false oath, from which, despite his fear, nothing bad came, but, on the contrary, there came another ten roubles, convinced him completely that there were no laws and one should live for one's own good pleasure. So he lived, and so he went on living. At first he profited only on purchases for the tenants, but that was too little for all his expenses, and, wherever he could, he began to pilfer money and valuables from the tenants' apartments, and stole a purse from Evgeny Mikhailovich. Evgeny Mikhailovich caught him, but, instead of taking him to court, dismissed him.

Vassily did not want to go home, and he went on living in Moscow with his sweetheart, looking for a job. A low-paying job was found as a shopkeeper's yard porter. Vassily took it, but the very next month was caught stealing sacks. The owner did not lodge a complaint, but gave Vassily a beating and threw him out. After that occurrence no job could be found, his money went, then his clothes went, and in the end all he had left was one torn jacket, a pair of trousers, and worn-out boots. His sweetheart left him. But Vassily did not lose his cheerful, merry disposition and, waiting till spring, went home on foot.

IX

Pyotr Nikolaevich Sventitsky, a short, stocky man in dark spectacles (he had failing eyes and was threatened with total blindness), got up, as usual, before dawn and, after drinking a glass of tea, put on a short lambskin coat and made the rounds of his estate.

Pyotr Nikolaevich had been a customs official and had saved up eighteen thousand roubles on the job. Some twelve years ago he had resigned, not entirely of his own will, and had bought a little estate from a young landowner who had squandered his fortune. Pyotr Nikolaevich had married while still in the service. His wife was a poor orphan of old noble stock, a large, plump, beautiful woman, who did not give him any children. Pyotr Nikolaevich was a solid and persistent man in all his doings. Knowing nothing of farming (he was the son of a minor Polish nobleman), he took it up so well that in ten years the ruined thousand-acre estate became exemplary. All his constructions, from the house, to

the barn, to the canopy over the fire pump, were solid, well-built, roofed with sheet iron, and painted regularly. In the toolshed, carts, wooden and metal plows, a harrow stood in order. The harness was oiled. The horses, almost all from his own stud, were not very big, of a grayish color, well-fed, sturdy, all alike. The threshing machine operated in a covered threshing barn, fodder was stored in a special shed, dung wash was collected in a stone-lined pit. The cows were also from his own stock, not large, but milky. The pigs were English. There was a henhouse with a breed of especially good layers. The fruit trees were whitewashed and regularly renewed. Everything everywhere was well managed, solid, clean, correct. Pyotr Nikolaich rejoiced over his management and took pride in having achieved it all not by oppressing his peasants, but, on the contrary, by being strictly fair towards them. Even among the nobility he held moderate views, sooner liberal than conservative, and before advocates of serfdom always defended the people. Be good to them and they will be good to you. True, he was not lenient towards the blunders and mistakes of workers, and sometimes gave them a push himself, demanding work from them, but then, too, their lodgings and food were of the best, their wages were always paid punctually, and on feast days he gave them vodka.

Stepping cautiously over the melting snow—it was the end of February—Pyotr Nikolaich headed past the workhorse stable to the cottage where the farmhands lived. It was still dark, and even darker because of the fog, but he could see light in the windows of the farmhands' cottage. They were getting up. He intended to hurry them: the plan was to take a sledge and six and go to the grove for the rest of the firewood.

"What's this?" he thought, seeing the door to the stable open.

"Hey, who's there?"

No one answered. Pyotr Nikolaich went into the stable.

"Hey, who's there?"

No one answered. It was dark, soft underfoot, and smelled of dung. To the right of the door was the stall of two young gray horses. Pyotr Nikolaich reached out—it was empty. He felt with his foot. Maybe he was lying down? His foot encountered nothing. "Where have they taken him?" Pyotr Nikolaich went back outside and shouted loudly:

"Hey, Stepan!"

Stepan was the senior farmhand. He was just coming out of the cottage.

"Ho-ho!" Stepan responded cheerfully. "Is that you, Pyotr Nikolaich? The lads are coming right now."

"Why's the stable open?"

"The stable? I wouldn't know. Hey, Proshka, give me a lantern."

Proshka came running with a lantern. They went into the stable. Stepan understood at once.

"It was thieves, Pyotr Nikolaich. The lock's broken."

"Are you kidding?"

"They took 'em, the robbers. Mashka's gone, Hawk's gone. No, Hawk's here. Pepper's gone. Prettyboy's gone."

Three horses were missing. Pyotr Nikolaich said nothing.

He frowned and breathed deeply.

"Oh, let me get my hands on them! Who was on watch?"

"Petka. Petka slept through it."

Pyotr Nikolaich informed the police, the district chief, the local authorities, sent his own people around. The horses were not found.

"Filthy folk!" said Pyotr Nikolaich. "To do that! Wasn't I good to them? Just you wait. Robbers, you're all robbers. Now I'll deal differently with you."

X

THE HORSES, the three grays, were already disposed of. One, Mashka, was sold to some gypsies for eighteen roubles; another, Pepper, was traded to a muzhik thirty miles away, and Prettyboy got overdriven and was slaughtered. The hide was sold for three roubles. The whole affair was directed by Ivan Mironov. He had worked for Pyotr Nikolaich and knew the layout of things at Pyotr Nikolaich's and decided to get his money back. He set it up.

After his bad luck with the forged coupon, Ivan Mironov went drinking for a long time and would have drunk up everything, if his wife had not hidden the yokes, his clothes, and whatever else he might have drunk up. During his drunkenness, Ivan Mironov thought ceaselessly not only about his offender, but about all the masters, great and small, who only

live by fleecing our kind. Once Ivan Mironov was drinking with some muzhiks from near Podolsk. And the muzhiks, driving along, drunk, told him how they had stolen a horse from a muzhik. Ivan Mironov began to scold the horse thieves for doing harm to a muzhik. "It's a sin," he said, "a muzhik's horse is like a brother to him, and you deprived him of it. If you're going to steal, steal from the masters. Those dogs deserve it." They talked more and longer, and the Podolsk muzhiks said it was tricky to steal horses from the masters. You've got to know the ins and outs, and it's impossible without one of their own people. Then Ivan Mironov remembered Sventitsky and that he had lived on his estate as a farmhand, remembered that in the final reckoning Sventitsky had withheld a rouble fifty from him for a broken pintle, and remembered the little gray horses he used to work with.

Ivan Mironov went to Sventitsky as if to be hired, but only in order to spy out and learn everything. And having learned everything—that there was no watchman, that the horses were kept in stalls in the stable—he hooked up with the thieves and carried out the whole thing.

Having divided the profits with the Podolsk muzhiks, Ivan Mironov came home with five roubles. At home there was nothing to do: he had no horse. And from then on Ivan Mironov began keeping company with horse thieves and gypsies.

XI

Pyotr Nikolaich Sventitsky tried as hard as he could to find the thief. The thing could not have been done without one of his own people. And therefore he began to suspect his people, and, inquiring among his farmhands if anyone had not spent the night at home, learned that Proshka Nikolaev had not. He was a young lad who had just come back from military service, a handsome, adroit lad, whom Pyotr Nikolaich employed as a driver in place of a coachman. The district police chief was Pyotr Nikolaich's friend, and he knew the local constable, and the marshal of nobility, and the head of the zemstvo,[4] and the prosecutor. These persons all came to his name-day parties and were acquainted with his tasty liqueurs and pickled mushrooms of various sorts. They all felt sorry for him and tried to help him.

"See, and you defend the muzhiks," said the district police chief. "It was true what I said, that they're worse than beasts. Without the knout and the stick you can't do anything with them. So you say it's Proshka, who drives around as your coachman?"

"Yes, him."

"Bring him here."

Proshka was summoned and they started questioning him:

"Where were you?"

Proshka tossed his hair and flashed his eyes.

"At home."

"How do you mean, at home? All the farmhands testify that you weren't."

"As you will."

"My will has nothing to do with it. Where were you?"

"At home."

"Well, all right. Officer, take him to jail."

"As you will."

And so Proshka did not tell where he had been, and he did not tell because he had spent the night with his girlfriend Parasha and had promised not to give her away, and did not. There was no evidence. And so Proshka was released. But Pyotr Nikolaich was sure it had been done by him, and he hated him. Once Pyotr Nikolaich, using Proshka as a driver, sent him to the posting station. Proshka, as he always did, bought two measures of oats at the inn yard. One and a half went for feed, one half he drank up. Pyotr Nikolaich found it out and lodged a complaint with the justice of the peace. The justice of the peace sentenced Proshka to three months in jail. Proshka had great self-esteem. He considered himself above other people and was proud of himself. Jail humiliated him. It was impossible for him to be proud before people, and all at once his spirits fell.

Proshka came home from jail embittered not so much against Pyotr Nikolaich as against the whole world.

After jail, as everybody said, Proshka let himself go, became lazy, started drinking, and was soon caught stealing clothes from a town woman and landed in jail again.

The only thing Pyotr Nikolaich learned about his horses was that the hide of a gray gelding had been found, which Pyotr Nikolaich recog-

nized as Prettyboy's hide. And the fact that the thieves went unpunished vexed Pyotr Nikolaich still more. He was now unable to see or speak of muzhiks without anger, and he tried to put the squeeze on them wherever he could.

XII

ALTHOUGH EVGENY MIKHAILOVICH stopped thinking about the coupon once he had disposed of it, his wife, Marya Vassilievna, was unable to forgive either herself for falling for the deception, or her husband for the cruel words he had said to her, or, above all, the two scoundrelly boys who had so skillfully deceived her.

From the very day she was deceived, she began keeping an eye on all the students. She met Makhin once, but did not recognize him, because, on seeing her, he made such a mug that it completely altered his looks. But when she came face-to-face with Mitya Smokovnikov on the sidewalk two weeks after the event, she recognized him at once. She let him pass, turned, and followed after him. Having reached his apartment and learned whose son he was, she went to school the next day and in the front hall met the catechism teacher, Mikhail Vvedensky. He asked what she wanted. She said she wished to see the director.

"The director's not here, he's unwell. Maybe I can do something, or give him a message?"

Marya Vassilievna decided to tell the catechism teacher everything.

The catechism teacher Vvedensky was a widower, an academician, and a man of great self-esteem. A year ago he had met Smokovnikov's father socially and, confronting him in a conversation about faith, in which Smokovnikov had beaten him on all points and held him up to mockery, had decided to pay special attention to the son and, finding in him the same indifference to religion as in his unbelieving father, had begun to persecute him and had even failed him in an examination.

Having learned of young Smokovnikov's act from Marya Vassilievna, Vvedensky could not help feeling satisfaction, finding in this occasion a confirmation of his assumptions about the immorality of people deprived of the Church's guidance, and decided to use the occasion, as he tried to persuade himself, to demonstrate the danger that threatens all those who

fall away from the Church—but in the depths of his soul it was to take revenge on the proud and self-assured atheist.

"Yes, that's very sad, very sad," Father Mikhail Vvedensky said, stroking the smooth side of his pectoral cross with his hand. "I'm very glad that you have entrusted the matter to me; as a servant of the Church, I shall be at pains not to let the young man go without admonition, but shall also be at pains if possible to soften the edification."

"Yes, I shall do as befits my station in life," Father Mikhail said to himself, completely forgetting the father's hostility towards him, and thinking that he had in mind only the young man's own good and salvation.

The next day in catechism class, Father Mikhail told the students the whole episode of the forged coupon and said that a student had done it.

"A bad, shameful act," he said, "but to deny it is still worse. If, which I don't believe, it was done by one of you, it would be better for him to confess than to conceal it."

As he said that, Father Mikhail looked fixedly at Mitya Smokovnikov. The boys, following his gaze, also turned to look at Smokovnikov. Mitya turned red, sweated, finally burst into tears, and ran out of the room.

Mitya's mother, on learning of it, coaxed the whole truth from her son and went running to the photography accessories shop. She gave the owner's wife twelve roubles and fifty kopecks, and persuaded her to conceal the student's name. She told her son to deny everything and by no means confess to his father.

And indeed, when Fyodor Mikhailovich learned about what had happened at school, and when his son, summoned, denied everything, he went to the director and, having recounted the whole affair, said that the behavior of the catechism teacher was in the highest degree reprehensible, and he would not leave it at that. The director summoned the priest, and a heated conversation took place between him and Fyodor Mikhailovich.

"The foolish woman mistook my son's identity, then took back her testimony herself, and you found nothing better to do than to slander an honest, truthful boy."

"I didn't slander him, and I will not allow you to talk to me like that. You forget my office."

"I spit on your office."

"Your wrong notions," the catechism teacher said, his chin trembling, making his sparse little beard shake, "are known to the whole town."

"Gentlemen . . . Father . . ." the director attempted to calm the arguing men. But it was impossible to calm them.

"By the duty of my office, I must concern myself with religious and moral upbringing."

"Enough pretending. As if I don't know that you don't believe in a blessed thing."

"I consider it unworthy of me to speak with such a gentleman as you," said Father Mikhail, insulted by Smokovnikov's last words, especially since he knew they were true. He had gone through the entire course of divinity school and therefore had long ceased to believe in what he confessed and professed, but believed only that people should force themselves to believe what he forced himself to believe.

Smokovnikov was not so much indignant at the catechism teacher's action as he found it a good illustration of the clerical influence that was beginning to manifest itself among us, and he told everybody about this occurrence.

Father Vvedensky, however, seeing the manifestation of established nihilism and atheism not only in the younger, but in the older generation, became more and more convinced of the necessity of combating it. The more he condemned the disbelief of Smokovnikov and his like, the more convinced he became of the firmness and stability of his faith, and the less need he felt to test it or to accord it with his life. His faith, recognized by all the world around him, was for him the main instrument for combating its adversaries.

These thoughts, called up in him by his confrontation with Smokovnikov, along with the unpleasantnesses in the school caused by that confrontation—more precisely, the reprimand, the reproach he received from his superior—forced him to make a decision that had been beckoning to him for a long time, ever since his wife's death: to become a monk and choose the same career as that followed by some of his classmates in divinity school, one of whom was already a bishop and another an archimandrite waiting to fill the vacancy of a bishop.

At the end of the academic year Vvedensky left the school, was tonsured a monk under the name of Misaïl, and very soon obtained the post of rector of a seminary in a town in the Volga region.

XIII

MEANWHILE THE YARD PORTER Vassily was heading south along the high road.

During the day he walked, and at night a local constable would lead him to his next quarters. Everywhere he was given bread, and sometimes he was given a place at the supper table. In one village of Orel province where he spent the night, he was told that a merchant had rented an orchard from a landowner and was now looking for some stalwart watchmen. Vassily was sick of begging, but he did not want to go home, and so he went to the merchant fruit-grower and got hired as a watchman for five roubles a month.

Life in a hut, especially once the early apples began to ripen and the overseers from the landowner's threshing floor brought huge bundles of fresh straw straight from the thresher, was very pleasing for Vassily. You lie all day on fresh, fragrant straw, next to heaps of fallen spring and winter apples, still more fragrant than the straw, watching out that children do not sneak in somewhere to take apples, whistling away and singing songs. At singing songs Vassily was a master. And he had a good voice. Women and girls came from the village for apples. Vassily would banter with them, would exchange more or fewer apples, depending on how much he liked the girl, for eggs or a few kopecks—and then would lie there again. The only thing to do was have breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

The shirt on Vassily was a pink cotton one, and all torn at that, his feet were bare, but his body was strong, healthy, and when the pot of kasha was taken from the fire, Vassily ate enough for three, so that the old watchman only marveled at him. At night Vassily did not sleep, but either whistled or shouted, and, like a cat, he could see far into the darkness. Once some big lads from the village got into the orchard to shake down apples. Vassily crept up and fell on them; they tried to fight, but he scattered them all, and took one to the hut and turned him over to the owner.

Vassily's first hut was far away in the orchard, but the second, once the early apples were over, was forty paces from the manor house. And in this hut it was even merrier for Vassily. All day Vassily saw how gentlemen and young ladies played, went for rides, strolled, and in the evening and at night played the pianoforte, the violin, sang, danced. He

saw how young ladies and students sat on the windowsills and caressed each other and then went by themselves to stroll in the dark linden alleys, where moonlight broke through only in stripes and spots. He saw how servants ran about with food and drink and how cooks, laundresses, clerks, gardeners, coachmen—all worked only so that the masters could eat, drink, and make merry. Young people occasionally came to his hut, and he would choose and offer them the best, ripest, and reddest apples, and the young ladies would take crunching bites at once, and praise them, and say something—he knew it was about him—in French, and get him to sing.

And Vassily admired that life, remembering his Moscow life, and the thought that it was all a matter of money sank more and more deeply into his head.

And Vassily began to think more and more about what to do in order to get hold of a great deal of money all at once. He began to recall how he had profited from things before, and decided that it should not be done that way, that he should not, as before, just grab something that was lying around, but should think ahead, find things out, and do it neatly, so that there are no loose ends. By the Nativity of the Mother of God,[5] the last winter apples were picked. The owner made a good profit and paid and thanked all the watchmen, including Vassily.

Vassily got dressed—the young master had given him a jacket and a hat—and did not go home—the thought of coarse, peasant life quite sickened him—but went back to town with some drunken soldiers who had kept watch on the orchard with him. In town he decided to go by night, break into and rob the shop where he used to live, the owner of which had beaten him and thrown him out without any pay. He knew all the ins and outs and where the money was, left a soldier on watch, and himself broke a window onto the yard, climbed in, and took all the money. The thing was done artfully, and no traces were found. The money amounted to three hundred and seventy roubles. Vassily gave a hundred roubles to his comrade, and with the rest went to another town and caroused there with some men and women he knew.

XIV

Meanwhile, Ivan Mironov had become a deft, bold, and successful horse thief. Afimya, his wife, who formerly had scolded him for his bad dealings, as she put it, was now pleased and felt proud of her husband, in that he had a fleece-lined coat and she herself had a shawl and a new fur coat.

In the village and the countryside around everybody knew that not a single horse theft was brought off without him, but people were afraid to give evidence against him, and whenever there was a suspicion, he came out clean and right. His last theft had been from a night pasture in Kolotovka. When he could, Ivan Mironov sorted out who he stole from and liked best to steal from landowners and merchants. But from landowners and merchants it was also more difficult. And therefore, when there was nothing forthcoming from landowners and merchants, he also stole from peasants. So he laid hands on whatever horses were found in the night pasture at Kolotovka. He did not do it himself, but put the adroit young fellow Gerasim up to it. The muzhiks found the horses missing only at dawn and went rushing to look for them along the roads. The horses were standing in a ravine, in a state forest. Ivan Mironov intended to keep them there until the next night, and then make off by night thirty miles away to an innkeeper he knew. Ivan Mironov visited Gerasim in the forest, brought him some pie and vodka, and went home along a forest path, where he hoped to meet no one. As ill luck would have it, he ran into the soldier on watch.

"Out for mushrooms, eh?" said the soldier.

"There aren't any today," replied Ivan Mironov, pointing to the basket he had taken along just in case.

"Yes, it's not a mushroom summer," said the soldier, "maybe there'll be some during the fast,"[6] and he walked on.

The soldier realized that something was wrong here. Ivan Mironov had no business walking about in the state forest early in the morning. The soldier went back and began searching through the forest. Nearby the ravine he heard the snort of horses and went quietly to the place where the sound came from. There was trampled earth and horse dung in the ravine. Further on, Gerasim sat eating something, and two horses stood tethered to a tree.

The soldier ran to the village and fetched the headman, the village constable, and two witnesses. From three sides they approached the place where Gerasim was and seized him. Geraska made no denials and at once drunkenly admitted everything. He told them how Ivan Mironov had got him drunk and put him up to it, and how he had promised to come to the forest that night for the horses. The muzhiks left the horses and Gerasim in the forest and set up an ambush, waiting for Ivan Mironov. When dusk came, a whistle was heard. Gerasim responded. As soon as Ivan Mironov started down the hill, they fell on him and took him to the village. The next morning a crowd gathered in front of the headman's cottage.

Ivan Mironov was brought out and questioned. Stepan Pelageyushkin, a tall, stoop-shouldered man with an eagle's nose and a gloomy expression on his face, was the first to ask questions. Stepan was a lone muzhik, who had gone through military service. He had just separated from his father and was beginning to manage on his own when his horse was stolen. After working for a year in the mines, Stepan again bought two horses. Both were stolen.

"Speak, where are my horses?" Stepan began, glancing gloomily now at the ground, now into Ivan's face, and turning pale with anger.

Ivan Mironov said he knew nothing. Then Stepan hit him in the face and smashed his nose, which began to bleed.

"Speak or I'll kill you!"

Ivan Mironov was silent, his head bent. Stepan struck him with his long arm once, twice. Ivan kept silent, only tossing his head now this way, now that.

"Everybody beat him!" cried the headman.

And everybody began to beat him. Ivan Mironov silently fell down and cried out:

"Barbarians, devils, beat me to death! I'm not afraid of you!"

Then Stepan seized a stone from a ready pile and smashed Ivan Mironov's head.

XV

IVAN MIRONOV'S KILLERS WERE TRIED. Among the killers was Stepan Pelageyushkin. He was charged more severely than the others, because everyone testified that he had smashed Ivan Mironov's head with a stone.

Stepan did not conceal anything at the trial, explaining that when his last pair of horses were stolen he had reported it to the police, and traces could have been found through the gypsies, but the police had refused to see him and had made no search at all.

"What were we to do with such a man? He was ruining us."

"Then why was it you who beat him and not the others?" asked the prosecutor.

"Not true, we all beat him, the whole village decided to kill him. I just finished him off. Why torture a man uselessly?"

The judges were struck by the perfectly calm expression with which Stepan told about his act, and how they had beaten Ivan Mironov, and how he had finished him off.

Stepan actually saw nothing terrible in this killing. In the service he happened to have executed a soldier, and, as then, so in the killing of Ivan Mironov he saw nothing terrible. Killed is killed. Today him, tomorrow me.

Stepan was given a light sentence, one year in prison. His peasant clothes were taken off and put away under a number in the storehouse, and he was dressed in a prisoner's smock and overshoes.

Stepan had never had any respect for the authorities, but now he was fully convinced that all the authorities, all the masters, everybody except the tsar, who alone was just and pitied the people, all were robbers who sucked the people's blood. The accounts of men he met in prison, who had been sent to exile or hard labor, confirmed such a view. One had been sent to hard labor because he had exposed the authorities for thievery, another because he had struck a superior when he began to confiscate peasant property for no reason, a third because he had forged banknotes. The masters, the merchants got away with whatever they did, but the poor muzhik, for anything at all, was sent to jail to feed lice.

His wife visited him in jail. Without him her life was wretched enough, but then their house burned down and, being utterly destitute, she went begging with the children. His wife's misery embittered Stepan still more. In jail he was angry with everyone and once nearly killed the mess cook with an axe, for which he was given another year. During that year he learned that his wife had died and he no longer had a home . . .

When Stepan had served his term, he was summoned to the storehouse, the clothes in which he had come were taken from the shelf and given to him.

"Where will I go now?" he said, while dressing, to the quartermaster-sergeant.

"Home, surely."

"I've got no home. Means I'll have to take to the highway. Rob people."

"If you rob people, you'll end up with us again."

"Well, that's as it may be."

And Stepan left. He headed for home anyway. He had nowhere else to go.

Before he reached home, he stopped for the night at an inn he knew with a pot-house.

The inn was kept by a fat tradesman from Vladimir. He knew Stepan. And he knew that he had landed in jail by ill luck. And he let Stepan stay the night with him.

This rich tradesman had won away the wife of a neighboring muzhik, and she lived with him as a worker and wife.

Stepan knew the whole affair—how the tradesman had offended the muzhik, how this nasty wench had left her husband and had now grown fat and sat sweating over her tea and also treated Stepan to tea out of charity. There were no other travelers. Stepan was left to spend the night in the kitchen. Matriona put everything away and went to her bedroom. Stepan lay on the stove[7] but could not sleep and kept tossing and crackling the splinters of wood that were drying on the stove. He could not get out of his head the tradesman's fat belly, protruding from under the belt of his much-laundered and faded cotton shirt. The idea kept going through his head of slashing that belly with a knife and letting the fat out. And the same for the wench. First he would say to himself: "Well, devil take them, I'm leaving tomorrow," then he would remember Ivan Mironov and again think of the tradesman's belly and Matriona's white, sweaty throat. If it's kill, then it's both. The cock crowed for the second time. If it's do it, then it's now, or else dawn will come. He had spotted the knife that evening, and the axe. He slipped down from the stove, took the axe and the knife, and left the kitchen. Just as he left, he heard the latch click outside a door. The tradesman came through the door. He did not do it the way he wanted. The knife did not come into it, but he swung the axe and split his skull. The tradesman fell against the doorpost and then to the ground.

Stepan went into the bedroom. Matriona jumped up and stood by the bed in nothing but her nightshirt. Stepan killed her in the same way with the axe.

Then he lit a candle, took the money from the desk, and left.

XVI

IN A DISTRICT TOWN, in his own house, set apart from other buildings, lived an old man, a former official, a drunkard, with two daughters and a son-in-law. The married daughter also drank and led a bad life, while the older one, the widow Marya Semyonovna, a wrinkled, thin, fifty-year-old woman, supported them all by herself: she had a pension of two hundred and fifty roubles. This money fed the entire family. Marya Semyonovna was the only one who did any work in the house. She looked after her weak, drunken old father and her sister's child, and cooked and did the laundry. And, as always happens, everything that needed doing was piled on her, and the other three abused her, and the brother-in-law even beat her when he was drunk. She endured it all silently and with meekness, and, also as always happens, the more she had to do, the more she managed to do. She helped the poor as well, going without herself, giving away her clothes, and also helped to look after the sick.

Once a lame, crippled village tailor was working at Marya Semyonovna's. He was altering a jacket for the old man and putting broadcloth on Marya Semyonovna's lambskin coat—for going to the market in winter.

The lame tailor was an intelligent and observant man, who in his line of work had seen many different people and, as a result of his lameness, was always sitting down and was therefore inclined to think. Having spent a week at Marya Semyonovna's, he could not marvel enough at her life. Once she came to him in the kitchen, where he did his sewing, to wash some towels, and fell to talking with him about his life, how his brother had mistreated him, and how he had separated from him.

"I thought it would be better, but it's all the same—want."

"It's better not to change anything, but just live the way you live," said Marya Semyonovna.

"Yes, and then again I marvel at you, Marya Semyonovna, seeing how you go bustling every which way for people, all on your own. And there's little kindness from them that I can see."

Marya Semyonovna said nothing.

"Must be you got it from books, that there'll be a reward for it in the next world."

"Of that we know nothing," said Marya Semyonovna, "only it's better to live this way."

"And is that in the books?"

"It's in the books, too," she said, and she read him the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospels.[8] The tailor fell to thinking. And when he got paid and went home, he kept thinking about what he had seen at Marya Semyonovna's and what she had said and read to him.

XVII

Pyotr Nikolaich had changed towards the people, and the people had changed towards him. Before the year was out, they had cut down twenty-seven oaks and burned an uninsured threshing barn and threshing floor. Pyotr Nikolaich decided that it was impossible to get along with the local people.

At that same time, the Liventsovs were looking for a steward for their estates, and the marshal of nobility recommended Pyotr Nikolaich as the best farmer in the district. The Liventsovs' estates, enormous as they were, did not produce any income, and the peasants availed themselves of everything. Pyotr Nikolaich undertook to restore it all to order and, putting his own estate up for rent, moved with his wife to a distant Volga province.

Pyotr Nikolaich had always liked order and lawfulness, and now it was all the more impossible for him to allow these wild, crude people, against the law, to appropriate what did not belong to them. He was glad of the chance to teach them a lesson and sternly set to work. He had one peasant sent to jail for stealing wood, another he beat with his own hands for not making way and taking off his hat. Of some pastures which had come into dispute and which the peasants considered theirs, Pyotr Nikolaich made it known to the peasants that if any cattle were let into them, he would arrest them.

Spring came, and the peasants, as they had done in previous years, let their cattle into the landowner's pastures. Pyotr Nikolaich gathered all the farmhands and told them to round up the cattle in the master's barnyard. The muzhiks were at the plowing, and therefore the farmhands, in spite of the women's shouting, rounded up the cattle. When they returned from work, the muzhiks, gathering together, went to the master's yard to demand the cattle. Pyotr Nikolaich came out to them with a gun on his shoulder (he had just finished making the rounds) and informed them that he would give back the cattle not otherwise than on a payment of fifty kopecks for each cow and ten for each sheep. The muzhiks started shouting that the pastures were theirs, that their fathers and grandfathers had owned them, and that no one had the right to take other people's cattle.

"Give us back the cattle, or it'll go badly," said one old man, stepping towards Pyotr Nikolaich.

"What will go badly?" shouted Pyotr Nikolaich, all pale, moving towards the old man.

"Give them back for fear of sin. Sneak thief."

"What?" cried Pyotr Nikolaich, and he struck the old man in the face.

"You don't dare fight. Lads, take the cattle by force."

The crowd moved closer. Pyotr Nikolaich wanted to leave, but they would not let him. He began to push his way through. His gun went off and killed one of the peasants. There was a violent scuffle. Pyotr Nikolaich was trampled. And five minutes later his mutilated body was thrown into a ravine.

The killers were tried by court-martial, and two were sentenced to be hanged.

XVIII

In the village the tailor came from, five rich peasants leased from a landowner, for one thousand one hundred roubles, three hundred acres of land, arable, rich, black as tar, and let it out to muzhiks, some for six roubles an acre, some for five. None went for less than four. So it made a good profit. The leaseholders themselves took fifteen acres each, and this land they got free. One of these muzhik associates died, and they invited the lame tailor to come and join them.

When the leaseholders began to divide up the land, the tailor did not drink vodka with them, and when the talk turned to who should get how much land, the tailor said the assessment ought to be the same for all, that the leaseholders ought not to take more than they paid.

"How's that?"

"We're not heathens. It's all very well for the masters, but we're peasants.[9] We must do it God's way. That's the law of Christ."

"And where is this law?"

"In the book, in the Gospels. Come on Sunday, I'll read it and we can talk."

And on Sunday, not all, but three of them came to the tailor, and he started reading to them.

He read five chapters from Matthew, and they began to talk. They all listened, but only Ivan Chuyev took it to heart. He took it so much to heart that he began to live in God's way in all things. And his family, too, began to live that way. He refused the extra land and took only his share.

And people began coming to the tailor and to Ivan, and began to understand, and understood, and gave up smoking, drinking, and using foul language, and began helping each other. And they stopped going to church and brought their icons to the priest. And there were seventeen such families. Sixty-five souls in all. And the priest became frightened and informed the bishop. The bishop pondered what to do, and decided to send the archimandrite Misaïl, the former high school catechism teacher, to the village.

XIX

THE BISHOP SAT Misaïl down with him and began talking about what new things had appeared in his diocese.

"It's all from spiritual weakness and ignorance. You're a learned man. I put my hopes in you. Go, call the people together, and explain to them."

"If Your Grace gives me his blessing, I will try my best," said Father Misaïl. He was glad to be entrusted with it. He rejoiced at every situation where he could show that he believed. And in converting others, he persuaded himself most strongly that he believed.

"Try your best, I suffer very much for my flock," said the bishop, unhurriedly receiving into his plump white hands the glass of tea his attendant offered him.

"Why just one preserve? Bring another," he turned to the attendant. "It pains me very, very much," he continued his speech to Misaïl.

Misaïl was glad to declare himself. But, being a man of modest means, he asked for money for the expenses of the trip, and, fearing the opposition of the coarse people, he also asked for an order from the governor that, in case of need, the local police could come to his assistance.

The bishop arranged everything for him, and Misaïl, having packed, with the help of his attendant and a kitchen maid, a cellaret and some provisions it was necessary to lay up in setting out for a remote place, went off to his appointed destination. In setting out on this special mission, Misaïl experienced the pleasant feeling of a consciousness of his own importance and with that the cessation of any doubts about his faith, and, on the contrary, a perfect certainty of its truth.

His thoughts were directed not at the essence of faith—that was taken for an axiom—but at a refutation of objections made in relation to its external form.

XX

THE VILLAGE PRIEST and his wife received Misaïl with great honor and the day after his arrival assembled the people in the church. Misaïl, in a new silk cassock, with a pectoral cross and his hair combed long, came out to the ambo; next to him stood the priest, a little further away the deacons, the choir, and by the side doors policemen. The sectarians also came—in greasy, coarse sheepskin jackets.

After the prayer service, Misaïl delivered a sermon, admonishing those who had fallen away to return to the bosom of the Mother Church, threatening them with the torments of hell and promising full forgiveness to those who repented.

The sectarians said nothing. When asked questions, they answered.

To the question of why they had fallen away, they answered that in church wooden and manmade gods were worshipped, and in the Scriptures not only was that not shown, but in the prophecies[10] the opposite was shown. When Misaïl asked Chuyev if it was true that they called the

holy icons "boards," Chuyev answered: "Go turn over any icon you like, you'll see for yourself." When asked why they did not recognize the priesthood, they answered that the Scriptures said: "Freely ye have received, freely give,"[11] but priests only hand out their blessings for money. To all Misaïl's attempts to support himself by Holy Scripture, the tailor and Ivan calmly but firmly retorted by themselves pointing to the Scriptures, of which they had firm knowledge. Misaïl became angry and threatened them with the secular authorities. To this the sectarians said that it was said: "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."[12]

It came to nothing, and all would have gone well, but the next day at the liturgy Misaïl delivered a sermon about the perniciousness of seducers and that they deserved every punishment, and among the people leaving church talk arose about the godless fellows needing to be taught a lesson, so that they would not confuse people. And that day, while Misaïl was snacking on smoked salmon and whitefish with the provost and an inspector come from town, in the village a scuffle took place. The Orthodox crowded by Chuyev's cottage and waited for them to come out in order to give them a beating. There were twenty sectarians, men and women. Misaïl's sermon and now this gathering of the Orthodox and their menacing talk aroused an angry feeling in the sectarians which had not been there before. Evening was coming, it was time for the women to milk the cows, and the Orthodox still stood and waited, and when a young lad came out, they beat him and drove him back into the cottage. They talked over what to do and could not agree.

The tailor said they must bear it and not defend themselves. Chuyev, however, said that if they bore it like that, they would all be beaten and, seizing an iron poker, he went outside. The Orthodox fell upon at him.

"Well, then, by the law of Moses,"[13] he cried and began beating the Orthodox and knocked out one man's eye. The rest slipped out of the cottage and went home.

Chuyev was tried for seduction and blasphemy and sentenced to exile.[14]

Father Misaïl, however, was given a reward and made an archimandrite.

XXI

TWO YEARS EARLIER, a beautiful, healthy girl of the eastern type, a Miss Turchaninov, had come from the Don army territory[15] to study in Petersburg. In Petersburg this girl had met the student Tyurin, the son of a zemstvo official in Simbirsk province, and had fallen in love with him, but this love was not an ordinary woman's love, with the wish to become his wife and the mother of his children, but a comradely love, nourished primarily by the same indignation and hatred not only for the existing system, but also for the people who represented it, and the consciousness of her intellectual, educational, and moral superiority to them.

She was a capable student and remembered lectures and passed examinations easily, and, besides that, devoured the newest books in enormous quantities. She was convinced that her calling was not in bearing and bringing up children—she even looked upon such a calling with squeamishness and scorn—but in destroying the existing system, which fettered the best forces of the people, and pointing out to the people that new path of life which for her was pointed out by the new European writers. Full-bodied, white-skinned, red-cheeked, beautiful, with shining black eyes and a big black braid, she aroused feelings in men that she could not and did not wish to share—so absorbed she was in her agitational, oratorical activity. But all the same it pleased her that she aroused these feelings, and therefore, though she did not dress up, she did not neglect her appearance. It pleased her that she was admired, and that she could show in reality how she scorned that which other women valued so highly. In her views of the means of struggle with the existing order she went further than the majority of her comrades and her friend Tyurin and allowed that all means are good and can be made use of in the struggle, including murder. And yet this same revolutionary, Katya Turchaninov, was in the depths of her soul a very kind and self-denying woman, always ready to put another person's profit, pleasure, well-being before her own profit, pleasure, and well-being, and always sincerely glad of the opportunity to do something nice—for a child, an old man, an animal.

Miss Turchaninov spent the summer in a provincial town on the Volga with a friend of hers, a village schoolteacher. Tyurin, too, lived in that district, at his father's. The three of them, together with the district doctor, saw each other frequently, exchanged books, argued, became indignant. The estate of the Tyurins was next to the estate of the

Liventsovs, where Pyotr Nikolaich came as a steward. As soon as Pyotr Nikolaich came and began to put things in order, the young Tyurin, seeing an independent spirit in the Liventsovs' peasants and the firm intention of defending their rights, became interested in them and went frequently to the village and talked with the peasants, developing among them the theory of socialism in general and of the nationalization of the land in particular.

When the killing of Pyotr Nikolaich took place and the court arrived,[16] the circle of revolutionaries in the town had a strong pretext for being indignant at the trial and boldly voiced it. The fact that Tyurin went to the village and talked with the peasants came out at the trial. A search was made at Tyurin's, several revolutionary pamphlets were found, and the student was arrested and taken to Petersburg.

Miss Turchaninov followed him and went to prison to visit him, but they would not let her in on an ordinary day, but only on the day for general visits, when she looked at him through two gratings. This meeting increased her indignation still more. What drove her indignation to the utmost limit was her exchange with a handsome gendarme officer, who was obviously ready for leniency in case she accepted his propositions. This drove her to the last degree of indignation and anger at all persons in authority. She went to the police chief to complain. The police chief said the same thing as the gendarme, that they could do nothing, that there was an order for it from a minister. She sent a report to the minister, asking for a meeting; she was refused. Then she resolved upon a desperate act and bought a revolver.

XXII

THE MINISTER WAS RECEIVING at his usual hour. The minister went through three petitioners, received a governor, and then went up to a beautiful, dark-eyed young woman in black, who was standing with a paper in her left hand. A tenderly lustful little light lit up in the minister's eyes at the sight of the beautiful petitioner, but, remembering his position, the minister made a serious face.

"What can I do for you?" he said, going up to her.

Without replying, she quickly pulled a revolver from under her cape, aimed it at the minister's chest, fired, but missed.

The minister went to seize her hand; she backed away and fired a second time. The minister fled. They seized her. She was trembling and could not speak. And suddenly she burst into hysterical laughter. The minister was not even wounded.

It was Miss Turchaninov. She was put in preliminary detention. The minister, having received congratulations and condolences from very highly placed persons and even from the sovereign himself, appointed a commission to investigate the conspiracy of which this attempt had been the result.

There was, of course, no conspiracy; but members of the secret and the overt police diligently took up the search for all the threads of the non-existent conspiracy and conscientiously earned their salaries and keep: got up early in the morning, in the dark; carried out search after search; copied papers and books; read diaries, private letters, and made summaries of them on beautiful paper, in beautiful handwriting; and interrogated Miss Turchaninov many times and set up confrontations, wishing to wheedle out of her the names of her accomplices.

The minister was a kind man at heart and felt very sorry for this robust, beautiful Cossack woman, but he said to himself that upon him lay heavy state obligations, which he fulfilled, however hard it was for him. And when his former colleague, a gentleman-in-waiting, an acquaintance of the Tyurins, met him at a court ball and began to solicit for Tyurin and Miss Turchaninov, the minister shrugged his shoulders, wrinkling the red sash on his white waistcoat, and said:

"*Je ne demanderais pas mieux que de lâcher cette pauvre fillette, mais vous savez—le devoir.*"*

And meanwhile Miss Turchaninov sat in preliminary detention and sometimes calmly exchanged knocks with her neighbors or read the books she was given, and sometimes suddenly lapsed into despair and rage, threw herself against the walls, shrieked and roared with laughter.

XXIII

ONCE MARYA SEMYONOVNA GOT her pension from the treasury and on her way home met a teacher she knew.

* I would ask nothing better than to let that poor little girl go, but you know—duty.

"So, Marya Semyonovna, did you get something from the coffers?" he called out to her from the other side of the street.

"I did," replied Marya Semyonovna, "just enough to plug the holes."

"Well, it's a lot of money, it'll plug the holes and then some," said the teacher and, with a good-bye, he went on.

"Good-bye," said Marya Semyonovna and, looking at the teacher, she ran straight into a tall man with very long arms and a stern face.

Nearing home, she was surprised to see this long-armed man again. Seeing her go into the house, he stood there for a while, turned, and left.

Marya Semyonovna felt eerie at first, then sad. But once she was in the house, and had given little treats to the old man, and the scrofulous little nephew Fedya, and had patted the joyfully squealing Tresorka, she felt good again, and, handing the money over to her father, she got down to work, which for her was never lacking.

The man she had run into was Stepan.

From the inn, where he had killed the innkeeper, Stepan went to town. And, surprisingly enough, the memory of killing the innkeeper not only was not unpleasant to him, but he recalled it several times a day. It pleased him to think that he could do it so cleanly and deftly, that no one would find out and keep him from doing it further on and to others. Sitting in a tavern over tea and vodka, he kept looking at people from the same angle: how he could kill them. He went to spend the night with a fellow countryman, a carter. The carter was not at home. He said he would wait and sat talking with his wife. Then, when she turned to the stove, it came into his head to kill her. He was surprised, shook his head at himself, then took the knife from his boot top and, having thrown her down, cut her throat. The children began to scream, he killed them as well, and, without spending the night, left town. Outside town, in a village, he went to an inn and there had a good sleep.

The next day he went back to the district town and in the street heard the conversation between Marya Semyonovna and the teacher. Her look frightened him, but all the same he decided to get into her house and take the money she had received. That night he broke the lock and went into the bedroom. The first to hear him was the younger, married daughter. She cried out. Stepan immediately put the knife to her. The son-in-law woke up and grappled with him. He seized Stepan by the throat and struggled with him for a long time, but Stepan was stronger. And, having finished off the son-in-law, Stepan, excited, agitated by the struggle, went behind the partition. Behind the partition Marya Semyonovna was in bed and, sitting up, looked at Stepan with frightened, meek eyes, crossing herself. Her look again frightened Stepan. He lowered his eyes.

"Where's the money?" he said, not raising his eyes.

She was silent.

"Where's the money?" said Stepan, showing her the knife.

"What are you doing? Can it be?" she said.

"It can all right."

Stepan went up to her, preparing to seize her by the hands so that she would not hinder him, but she did not raise her hands, did not resist, and only pressed them to her breast and sighed deeply and repeated:

"Oh, it's a great sin. What are you doing? Take pity on yourself. You destroy other people's souls, but your own most of all . . . Ohh!" she cried out.

Stepan could not stand her voice and look any more and slashed her throat with the knife. "Enough of your talk." She sank back on the pillows and wheezed, blood flowing onto her pillow. He turned away and went around the rooms collecting things. Having picked up what he wanted, Stepan lit a cigarette, sat for a while, cleaned off his clothes, and left. He thought he would get away with this murder as he had with the previous ones, but before he reached his night's lodgings, he suddenly felt such weariness that he could not move a limb. He lay down in a ditch and went on lying in it for the rest of the night, the whole day, and the following night.

PART TWO

I

LYING IN THE DITCH, Stepan constantly saw before him the meek, thin, frightened face of Marya Semyonovna and heard her voice: "Can it be?"—she said in her peculiar, her lisping, pitiful voice. And Stepan would again live through all he had done to her. And he became fright-

ened, and closed his eyes and wagged his hairy head, so as to shake these thoughts and memories out of it. And he would free himself of memories for a moment, but in their place there appeared to him first one, then another black one, and after that other came yet another black one with red eyes, and they pulled faces and all said one thing: "You finished her off—finish yourself off, too, or we won't give you any peace." And he would open his eyes and see her again and hear her voice, and feel pity for her and loathing and fear for himself. And he would close his eyes again, and again—the black ones.

Towards evening of the second day he got up and went to a pot-house. He barely dragged himself to the pot-house and started drinking. But no matter how much he drank, he could not get drunk. He sat silently at the table and drank glass after glass. A local constable came into the pot-house.

"Where from?" the constable asked him.

"I'm the one who put the knife to them all at Dobrotvorov's last night."

He was bound and, after being kept for a day at police headquarters, was sent to the provincial capital. The prison warden, recognizing him as his former rowdy inmate and now a great evildoer, received him sternly.

"Watch out, don't try any mischief," the warden rasped, frowning and thrusting out his lower jaw. "If I notice anything, I'll flog you to death. You won't escape me."

"What's escaping to me," said Stepan, lowering his eyes. "I gave myself up."

"No backtalk with me. And when your superior is talking, look him in the eye," the warden shouted and hit him in the jaw with his fist.

At that moment Stepan was picturing her again and hearing her voice. He did not hear what the warden said to him.

"Wha—?" he asked, coming to his senses when he felt the blow to his face.

"Well, well—off with you, there's no point pretending."

The warden expected violence, communications with other inmates, attempts to escape. But there was none of it. Whenever the guard or the warden himself looked through the peephole in his door, Stepan was sitting on the straw-stuffed sack, his head propped in his hands, whispering something. At the investigator's interrogations, he was also not like the other inmates: he was absentminded, did not listen to the questions;

when he did understand them, he was so truthful that the investigator, who was used to struggling with the accused by cleverness and cunning, here experienced a feeling similar to that of coming to the top of a stairway in the darkness and lifting your foot onto a step that is not there. Stepan recounted all his murders, frowning and fixing his eyes on a single point, in the most simple, businesslike tone, trying to remember all the details: "He came out barefoot," Stepan recounted his first murder, "stood in the doorway, so I clobbered him once, he began to wheeze, then I got straight to work on the woman . . ." and so on. During the prosecutor's rounds of the prison cells Stepan was asked if he had any complaints or needed anything. He replied that he did not need anything and that no one mistreated him. The prosecutor, having gone a few steps down the stinking corridor, stopped and asked the warden accompanying him how this inmate was behaving himself.

"I keep marveling at him," said the warden, pleased that Stepan had praised his treatment. "It's the second month he's with us, his behavior is exemplary. My only fear is that he may be plotting something. He's a courageous man and immensely strong."

II

During his first month in prison, Stepan had been constantly tormented by the same thing: he saw the gray walls of his cell, heard the prison sounds—the noise of the common cell below, the steps of the sentry in the corridor, the striking of the clock—and at the same time saw her, with her meek look, which had already vanquished him when he met her in the street, and her thin, wrinkled neck, which he had cut, and heard her touching, pitiful, lisping voice: "You destroy other people's souls and your own. Can it be?" Then the voice would die away and those three would appear—the black ones. And they appeared all the same, whether his eyes were open or shut. When his eyes were shut, they appeared more clearly. When Stepan opened his eyes, they became confused with the doors, the walls, and gradually vanished, but then emerged again and came from three sides, pulling faces and repeating: "Finish it, finish it. Make a noose, set a fire." And here Stepan would start shaking all over, and he would begin to recite the prayers he knew—the Hail Mary, the Our Father—and at first that seemed to help. As he

recited the prayers, he would begin to remember his life: he remembered his father, his mother, his dog Volchok, his grandfather on the stove, the benches he rode on with the other children; then he remembered the village girls with their songs, then the horses, how they got stolen, how the horse thief got caught, how he finished him off with a stone. Remembered his first jail, how he came out, and remembered the fat innkeeper, the carter's wife, the children, and then again remembered her. And he felt hot, and freeing his shoulders from the robe, he jumped up from the bunk and, like a beast, began pacing with rapid steps up and down the short cell, turning quickly at the damp, sweaty walls. And again he recited prayers, but the prayers no longer helped.

On one of the long autumn evenings, when the wind whistled and droned in the chimneys, after rushing about his cell, he sat down on his cot and felt that he could not struggle any more, that the black ones had overpowered him, and he submitted to them. He had long been eyeing the air vent of the stove. If thin ropes or narrow strips of cloth were fastened to it, they would not slip off. But it had to be arranged intelligently. And he got down to work and spent two days preparing strips of cloth from the sack he slept on (when the guard came in, he covered the cot with his robe). He tied the strips together and made double knots so that they would not come apart, but would bear his body. While he was preparing it all, he did not suffer. When it was all prepared, he made a noose, put it around his neck, climbed onto the bed, and hanged himself. But just as his tongue began to protrude, the strips came apart and he fell. The guard heard the noise and came in. A medic was called, and he was taken to the hospital. The next day he recovered completely and was taken from the hospital and placed not in an individual, but in a common cell.

In the common cell he lived among twenty people as if he were alone, saw no one, spoke with no one, and suffered in the same way. It was especially hard for him when they all slept, while he did not sleep, but saw her as before, heard her voice, then the black ones appeared again with their frightening eyes and taunted him.

Again, as before, he recited prayers, and, as before, they did not help.

Once, when, after his prayers, she appeared to him again, he began to pray to her, to her dear soul, so that she would release him, forgive him. And when he collapsed on his crumpled sack towards morning, he fell fast asleep, and in his sleep she, with her thin, wrinkled, slashed neck, came to him.

"So, will you forgive me?"

She looked at him with her meek eyes and said nothing.

"Will you?"

And he asked her three times like that. But she still said nothing. And he woke up. After that it became easier for him, and it was as if he recovered his senses, looked around himself, and for the first time began to make friends and speak with his cell mates.

III

In the same cell with Stepan was Vassily, who had again been caught thieving and been sentenced to exile, and Chuyev, also sentenced to deportation. Vassily either sang songs all the time with his beautiful voice or told his cell mates about his adventures. Chuyev either worked, sewing some clothing or shirts, or read the Gospels and the Psalter.

To Stepan's question why he had been exiled, Chuyev explained that he had been exiled because of his true Christian faith, because the deceitful priests could not stand the sight of those who lived by the Gospels and who denounced them. When Stepan asked Chuyev what made up the Gospel law, Chuyev explained to him that the Gospel law was not to pray to manmade gods, but to worship in spirit and in truth. And he told him how they had learned this true faith from the crippled tailor while dividing up the land.

"Well, and what do you get for bad deeds?" asked Stepan.

"It's all said here."

And Chuyev read to him:

" 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye

gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" And the King shall answer and say unto them, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." Then shall they also answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" Then shall he answer them, saying, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal' " (Matthew 25:31–46).

Vassily, who came out and sat on the floor facing Chuyev and listened to the reading, nodded his handsome head approvingly.

"Right," he said resolutely, "go, you cursed, into everlasting punishment, you didn't feed anybody, but stuffed yourselves. Serves them right. Give it here, I'll read from it," he added, wishing to show off his reading.

"Well, and won't there be any forgiveness?" asked Stepan, who had been listening to the reading silently, hanging his shaggy head.

"Hold on, keep still," Chuyev said to Vassily, who kept mumbling about the rich not feeding the stranger or visiting the prisoner. "Hold on, I said," Chuyev repeated, leafing through the Gospels. Finding what he was looking for, Chuyev spread the pages with his big, strong hand, gone white in jail.

" 'And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him'—meaning with Christ," Chuyev began, " 'to be put to death. And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

" 'Then said Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do . . ." And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God." And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, "If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself." And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." But the other answering rebuked him, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." And he said unto Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise" ' " (Luke 23:32–43).

Stepan said nothing and sat deep in thought, as if listening, but he no longer heard anything of what Chuyev read further.

"So that's what makes up the true faith," he thought. "Only those will be saved who gave food and drink to the poor, visited the prisoners, and those who didn't will go to hell. Yet the robber only repented on the cross, and all the same he went to paradise." He saw no contradiction here, but, on the contrary, the one confirmed the other: that the merciful will go to paradise and the unmerciful to hell, meant that everybody should be merciful, and that Christ forgave the robber meant that Christ, too, was merciful. All this was completely new to Stepan; he only wondered why it had been hidden from him up to then. And he spent all his free time with Chuyev, asking and listening. And, listening, he understood. The general meaning was revealed to him of the whole teaching about men being brothers and having to love and pity one another, and then it would be good for them all. And when he listened, he took in, as something forgotten and familiar, everything that confirmed the general meaning of this teaching, and let pass by whatever did not confirm it, ascribing it to his own incomprehension.

And from then on Stepan became a different person.

IV

Stepan Pelageyushkin had been peaceable even before, but of late he had astounded the warden and the guards and the inmates by the

change that had taken place in him. Without orders, out of turn, he performed all the hardest work, even including the cleaning of the latrine buckets. But, in spite of his submissiveness, his fellows respected and feared him, knowing his firmness and great physical strength, especially after an incident with two tramps who attacked him, but whom he fought off, breaking the arm of one. These tramps had started gambling with a young and rich inmate, and had taken everything he had from him. Stepan interceded for him and took from them the money they had won. The tramps began to abuse him, then to beat him, but he overcame them both. When the warden inquired into the cause of the quarrel, the tramps declared that Pelageyushkin had started beating them. Stepan did not try to justify himself and submissively accepted the penalty, which consisted of three days in the punishment cell and being moved to solitary confinement.

Solitary confinement was hard for him, in that it separated him from Chuyev and the Gospels, and, besides that, he was afraid that his visions of her and of the black ones would come back. But there were no visions. His whole soul was filled with new, joyful content. He would have been glad of his solitude, if he could read and had had the Gospels. They would have given him the Gospels, but he could not read.

As a boy he had begun to learn the letters of the old alphabet—*az, buki, vedi*[17]—but out of slow-wittedness he never went further than the alphabet and could not understand the making of syllables and so remained illiterate. But now he decided to learn to read and asked a guard to bring him the Gospels. The guard brought the book, and he got down to work. The letters he recognized, but he could not join anything together. However much he struggled to understand how letters join together into words, nothing came of it. He did not sleep nights, kept thinking, did not want to eat, and the louse of anguish attacked him so fiercely that he could not scrape it off.

"What, you still haven't got there?" the guard asked him once.

"No."

"Do you know the Our Father?"

"Yes."

"Well, read it then. Here it is," and the guard showed him the Our Father in the Gospels.

Stepan started reading the Our Father, comparing the familiar letters with the familiar sounds. And suddenly the mystery of joining letters together was revealed to him, and he started to read. This was a great joy. And from then on he started reading, and the meaning that gradually emerged from the words he put together with such effort acquired still greater significance.

Now solitude no longer burdened, but gladdened Stepan. He was all filled with his work, and was not glad when, in order to free the cell for newly arrived political prisoners, he was sent back to the common cell.

V

Now it was not just Chuyev, but Stepan who often read the Gospels in the cell, and while some of the inmates sang obscene songs, others listened to his reading and his talking about what he had read. Two always listened to him silently and attentively: the murderer-hangman Makhorkin, sentenced to hard labor, and Vassily, who had been caught thieving and, while awaiting trial, was kept in the same cell. Makhorkin had performed his duties twice during the time he was kept in prison, both times away, because no one could be found to carry out the sentence of the judges. The peasants who had killed Pyotr Nikolaich were court-martialed and two of them were sentenced to death by hanging.

Now Makhorkin was summoned to Penza to perform his duties. Previously, on such occasions, he would at once write—he was quite literate—a note to the governor explaining that he was being dispatched to perform his duties in Penza, and therefore asked the chief of the province to allocate him the money for food and daily expenses; but now, to the astonishment of the prison superintendent, he announced that he would not go and would no longer perform the duties of a hangman.

"Forgotten the lash?" shouted the prison superintendent.

"Well, if it's the lash, it's the lash, but there's no law that says kill."

"What's that? Did you get it from Pelageyushkin? Found ourselves a jailhouse prophet! Just you wait!"

VI

Meanwhile Makhin, the student at whose prompting the coupon was forged, had finished high school and his university studies in the faculty

of law. Thanks to his success with women, with the former mistress of an elderly deputy minister, he was appointed an examining magistrate while quite young. He was a dishonest man in his debts, a seducer of women, a gambler, but he was a clever, shrewd man, with an excellent memory, and well able to conduct a case.

He was examining magistrate in the district where Stepan Pelageyushkin was tried. From the very first interrogation, Stepan astonished him by his simple, truthful, and calm answers. Makhin felt unconsciously that this man who stood before him in chains and with a shaved head, who had been brought in guarded and would be led back to be locked up by two soldiers, that this man was totally free, and morally stood inaccessibly higher than himself. And therefore, while interrogating him, he ceaselessly encouraged and prodded himself, so as not to get thrown off and confused. What struck him was that Stepan spoke of his deeds as of something long past, performed not by himself, but by some other person.

"And you had no pity for them?" asked Makhin.

"No. I didn't understand then."

"Well, and now?"

Stepan smiled sadly.

"Now you could burn me at the stake, but I wouldn't do it."

"Why's that?"

"Because I understood that all men are brothers."

"Well, and am I your brother, too?"

"What else?"

"How is it I'm your brother, and I send you to hard labor?"

"From not understanding."

"You mean I don't understand?"

"You don't, since you judge me."

"Well, let's continue. Where did you go then? . . ."

Makhin was struck most of all by what he learned about Pelageyushkin's influence on the hangman Makhorkin, who, at the risk of being punished, had refused to perform his duties.

VII

At a soirée at the Eropkins', where there were two rich, eligible young ladies whom Makhin was courting at the same time, after singing romances, which the very musical Makhin was especially good at—he sang duets excellently and played the accompaniment—he told very precisely and in detail—he had an excellent memory—and with perfect indifference, about the strange criminal who had converted the hangman. Makhin could remember and recount it all so well, because he was always perfectly indifferent to the people he dealt with. He did not enter and was unable to enter the inner state of other people, and therefore could remember so well everything that went on with people, what they did and said. But Pelageyushkin interested him. He did not enter Stepan's soul, but he involuntarily asked himself what was in his soul, and, finding no answer, but feeling that this was something interesting, he told about the whole case at the soirée: the seduction of the hangman, and the warden's stories of how strangely Pelageyushkin behaved himself, and how he read the Gospels, and what a strong influence he had on his fellow inmates.

Everyone became interested in Makhin's story, but most of all the youngest—Liza Eropkin, an eighteen-year-old girl just out of boarding school and just recovering from the darkness and narrowness of the false conditions in which she had grown up, and, like someone emerging from the water, passionately breathing in the fresh air of life. She started asking Makhin about the details and about how and why such a change had taken place in Pelageyushkin, and Makhin told her what he had heard from Stepan about his last murder, and how the meekness, submissiveness, and fearlessness of death of this very good woman, whom he had murdered last, had vanquished him, had opened his eyes, and how the reading of the Gospels had then finished the task.

For a long time that night Liza Eropkin could not fall asleep. For several months already a struggle had been going on in her between social life, to which her sister was drawing her, and her attraction to Makhin, combined with the desire to reform him. And now the latter prevailed. She had heard about the murdered woman before. But now, after this terrible death and Makhin's account in Pelageyushkin's words, she had learned the story of Marya Semyonovna in detail and was struck by all she had learned about her.

Liza passionately wished to become such a Marya Semyonovna. She was rich and feared that Makhin was courting her for the sake of money. And she decided to give away her property and told this to Makhin.

Makhin was glad of the chance to show his disinterestedness and told

Liza that he did not love her for the sake of money, and he himself was touched by this, as it seemed to him, magnanimous decision. On Liza's side, meanwhile, a struggle began with her mother (the property was her father's), who would not allow her to give her property away. And Makhin supported Liza. And the more he did so, the more he understood the totally different world of spiritual aspiration, foreign to him until then, which he saw in Liza.

VIII

Everything became quiet in the cell. Stepan lay in his place on the bunk and was not yet asleep. Vassily went up to him and, pulling him by the leg, winked at him to get up and come over to him. Stepan slipped off the bunk and went over to Vassily.

"Well, brother," said Vassily, "take the trouble now to help me."

"Help you in what?"

"You see, I want to escape."

And Vassily revealed to Stepan that he had prepared everything for an escape.

"Tomorrow I'll stir them all up," he pointed to the men lying down. "They'll tell on me. I'll be transferred upstairs, and there I already know what to do. Only you must unscrew the lock on the mortuary door for me."

"That's possible. Where will you go?"

"Wherever my feet take me. Is there any lack of bad people?"

"That's so, brother, only it's not for us to judge them."

"Well, I'm no murderer. I never murdered a single soul—and what's thieving? What's so wrong with it? Don't they rob our kind?"

"That's their business. They'll answer for it."

"Why should I look them in the teeth? So I rob a church. What's the harm in that? Now I want to do it so that it's not some little shops, but I grab a whole treasure chest and give it away. Give it away to good people."

Just then one of the inmates sat up on his bunk and started listening. Stepan and Vassily parted.

The next day Vassily did as he wanted. He started complaining about

the bread being soggy, incited all the inmates to call the warden and lodge a complaint. The warden came, yelled at them all, and, learning that the instigator of the whole thing was Vassily, ordered him to be put separately in solitary confinement on the upper floor.

That was just what Vassily wanted.

IX

Vassily knew that upstairs cell he was put in. He knew the floor of it, and as soon as he got there, he started taking the floor up. When it was possible to wriggle through, he took apart the laths and jumped to the lower floor, into the mortuary. On that day one dead man lay on a table in the mortuary. In that same mortuary they stored the sacks for making straw mattresses. Vassily knew that and was counting on that cell. The lock on the door had been unscrewed and put back. Vassily went out the door and down to the latrine being built at the end of the corridor. In this latrine there was a hole all the way through from the third floor to the basement. Having felt for the door, Vassily went back to the mortuary, took the sheet off the ice-cold dead man (he touched his hand as he took it off), then took some sacks, tied them together so as to make a rope, and took this rope of sacks to the latrine; there he tied the rope to a crossbeam and began to climb down it. The rope did not reach to the floor. Whether it was a lot or a little too short he did not know, but there was nothing to do, he hung from the end and jumped. His feet were hurt, but he could walk. There were two windows in the basement. He could wriggle through them, but they were fitted with iron grates. These had to be broken out. With what? Vassily started rummaging around. There were broken boards lying about the basement. He found one with a sharp end and began to pry out the bricks that held the grate. He worked for a long time. The cocks had crowed twice, but the grate still held. Finally one side came loose. Vassily put the board underneath and leaned on it, the grate came out whole, but a brick fell and made a noise. The sentry might have heard it. Vassily froze. All was quiet. He climbed through the window. Climbed out. His escape had to be over the wall. In the corner of the yard there was an outbuilding. He had to climb onto the outbuilding and from it over the wall. He should have taken that board with him.

Without it he could not climb up. Vassily went back. He returned with the board and froze, listening for where the sentry was. The sentry, as he had calculated, was pacing along the other side of the square yard. Vassily went up to the outbuilding, leaned the board against it, climbed. The board slipped and fell. Vassily was wearing socks. He took off the socks to have a better grip with his feet, put the board in place again, climbed up it, and seized the gutter with his hand. "Dear God, don't tear off, stay put." He clung to the gutter, and now his knee is on the roof. The sentry is coming. Vassily lies down, freezes. The sentry does not see him and walks away again. Vassily jumps up. The sheet iron crackles under his feet. Another step, two, here is the wall. It is easy to reach the top of the wall with his hand. One hand, the other, he stretches out all the way, and now he is on top of the wall. If only he does not break anything jumping down. Vassily shifts his position, hangs down, holding on with his hands, stretches out, lets one hand go, the other—Lord bless us!—he is on the ground. And the ground is soft. His feet are unhurt, and he runs off.

On the outskirts Malanya opens the door, and he gets in under the warm patchwork quilt impregnated with the smell of sweat.

X

BIG, BEAUTIFUL, always calm, childless, full-bodied, like a barren cow, Pyotr Nikolaich's wife saw from the window how her husband was killed and dragged somewhere into the fields. The feeling of horror that Natalya Ivanovna (that was the name of Pyotr Nikolaich's widow) experienced at the sight of this slaughter was, as always happens, so strong that it stifled all other feelings in her. But when the whole crowd disappeared beyond the garden fence, and the hubbub of voices died down, and barefoot Malanya, the wench who did chores for them, with her eyes popping out, came running with the news, as if it was something joyful, that Pyotr Nikolaich had been killed and thrown into the ravine, another feeling began to emerge from behind the first feeling of horror: a feeling of the joy of liberation from the despot with his eyes hidden behind dark glasses, eyes which for nineteen years had kept her in slavery. She was horrified at this feeling and did not admit it to herself, still less tell anyone about it. When the mangled, yellow, hairy body was being washed and dressed and put in the coffin, she was horrified, wept and sobbed. When the investigator of high crimes came and questioned her as a witness, she saw there in the investigator's quarters two peasants in chains, recognized as the chief culprits. One was an old man with a long, curly, flaxen beard and a calm, stern, and handsome face; the other was of a gypsy type, not yet old, with shining black eyes and curly, disheveled hair. She told what she knew, recognized these people as the ones who had been first to seize Pyotr Nikolaich by the arms, and though the gypsy-like muzhik, his eyes shining and wandering under his moving eyebrows, said reproachfully, "It's a sin, mistress! Oh, we'll all die one day," even so she did not feel the least bit sorry for them. On the contrary, during the investigation a feeling of hostility arose in her and a wish to take revenge on her husband's killers.

But when the case, transferred to court-martial, was decided a month later, eight men being sentenced to hard labor and two, the white-bearded old man and the black gypsy, as they called him, to hanging, it gave her an unpleasant feeling. But, under the influence of court solemnity, this unpleasant doubt soon passed. If the higher authorities owned that it must be so, that meant it was right.

The execution was to be performed in the village. And, returning from the liturgy on Sunday, Malanya, in a new dress and new shoes, reported to her mistress that the gallows was being set up and a hangman from Moscow was expected by Wednesday and that the families were howling incessantly for the whole village to hear.

Natalya Ivanovna did not leave her house, so as not to see the gallows or the people, and had only one wish: that what had to be done should be over quickly. She thought only of herself, and not of the condemned and their families.

XI

ON TUESDAY her acquaintance, the local constable, came calling, and Natalya Ivanovna treated him to vodka and pickled mushrooms of her own making. The constable, having drunk the vodka and eaten a bit, informed her that there would be no execution the next day.

"What? Why's that?"

"An amazing story. They couldn't find a hangman. There was one in Moscow, but he, as my son tells me, read himself up on the Gospels and says: 'I cannot kill.' Got himself sentenced to hard labor for murder, and now suddenly he can't kill according to the law. They told him he'd be whipped. 'Whip me,' he says, 'I just can't do it.' "

Natalya Ivanovna suddenly blushed and even broke into a sweat from her thoughts.

"But can't they be pardoned now?"

"How can they be pardoned, if they've been sentenced by the court? The tsar alone can pardon them."

"How will the tsar find out?"

"They have the right to ask for a pardon."

"But they're being punished on account of me," said the stupid Natalya Ivanovna. "And I forgive them."

The constable laughed.

"Ask, then."

"Can I?"

"Of course you can."

"Is there still enough time?"

"You can send a telegram."

"To the tsar?"

"Yes, even to the tsar."

The news that the hangman had refused and was prepared to suffer rather than kill had suddenly overturned Natalya Ivanovna's soul, and that feeling of compassion and horror, which had asked several times to be let out, broke through and took possession of her.

"Dearest Filipp Vassilievich, write a telegram for me. I want to ask the tsar to pardon them."

The constable shook his head.

"What if we get in trouble for it?"

"I'll be the one to answer. I won't tell on you."

"Such a kind woman," thought the policeman, "a good woman. If mine were like that, it would be paradise, and not what it is now."

And the policeman wrote a telegram to the tsar: "To His Imperial Majesty the Sovereign Emperor. A faithful subject of Your Imperial Majesty, the widow of the collegiate assessor Pyotr Nikolaevich Sventitsky, murdered by his peasants, falling at the sacred feet" (this place in the telegram was especially pleasing to the constable who composed it) "of Your Imperial Majesty, beseeches you to pardon the peasants so-and-so, of such-and-such province, district, department, village, who have been sentenced to death."

The telegram was sent by the constable himself, and in Natalya Ivanovna's soul all was well, joyful. It seemed to her that if she, the murdered man's widow, could forgive and ask for pardon, the tsar could not but grant it.

XII

Liza Eropkin lived in a ceaselessly rapturous state. The further she went along the path of Christian life that had been revealed to her, the more certain she was that it was the true path and the more joyful her soul became.

She had two immediate goals now: the first was to convert Makhin, or, rather, as she put it inwardly, to bring him back to himself, to his kind, beautiful nature. She loved him, and the light of her love revealed to her the divine in his soul, common to all people, though she saw in this principle of life, common to all people, a kindness, a tenderness, a loftiness proper to him alone. Her other goal was to stop being rich. She wanted to free herself from her property, first in order to test Makhin, and then for herself, for her own soul—according to the word of the Gospels. At first she began giving it away, but was stopped by her father and, still more than by her father, by the mass of petitions, personal or in writing, that came pouring in. Then she decided to address an elder known for his holy life and ask him to take her money and do with it as he found necessary. Learning of this, her father became angry and in a heated conversation with her called her mad, psychopathic, and said he would take measures to protect her, as a mad person, from her own self.

Her father's irate, vexed tone communicated itself to her, and before she knew it, she burst into angry tears and said all sorts of rude things to him, calling him a despot and even a money-lover.

She asked her father to forgive her. He said he was not angry, but she saw that he was offended and in his soul did not forgive her. She did not want to tell Makhin about it. Her sister, who was jealous of her over

Makhin, withdrew from her completely. She had no one to share her feelings with, no one to confess to.

"I must confess to God," she said to herself, and as it was the Great Lent,[18] she decided to fast and pray and tell everything to a priest at confession and ask his advice about how she should act in the future.

Not far from town there was a monastery in which an elder lived who was famous for his life, his teachings and prophecies, and for the healings ascribed to him.

The elder received a letter from the old Eropkin warning him of his daughter's coming and of her abnormal, agitated state, and expressing confidence that the elder would guide her onto the right path—of the golden mean, of a good Christian life, without violating existing conditions.

Weary from receiving, the elder received Liza and calmly began to admonish her about moderation, submission to existing conditions and to parents. Liza was silent, kept blushing, broke into a sweat, but when he finished, she, with tears brimming her eyes, began to speak, timidly at first, about Christ saying, "Leave thy father and mother, and follow me,"[19] then, growing more and more animated, she spoke out the whole notion of how she understood Christianity. The elder smiled at first and objected with the usual admonitions, but then fell silent and began to sigh, only repeating: "Oh, Lord."

"Well, all right, come tomorrow to confess," he said and blessed her with his wrinkled hand.

The next day he heard her confession and dismissed her, bluntly refusing to take upon himself the management of her fortune.

The purity, the total surrender to the will of God, and the ardor of this girl struck the elder. He had long wanted to renounce the world, but the monastery demanded his activity from him. His activity provided income for the monastery. And he consented, though with a vague sense of all the falsity of his position. He was made into a saint, a miracle worker, but he was a weak man carried away by success. And this girl's opening of her soul to him opened his own soul as well. And he saw how far he was from what he wanted to be, from what he was drawn to in his heart.

Soon after Liza's visit, he shut himself away and came to church only after three weeks, served the liturgy, and after the liturgy delivered a sermon in which he denounced himself and accused the world of sin and called it to repentance.

He delivered sermons every two weeks. And more and more people gathered to hear his sermons. And his fame as a preacher spread more and more. There was something special, bold, sincere in his sermons. And that was why he affected people so strongly.

XIII

MEANWHILE VASSILY DID everything as he had wanted. At night, with some cronies, he broke into the house of the rich Krasnopuzov. He knew how stingy and depraved the man was, and got into his desk and made off with some thirty thousand in cash. And Vassily did as he had wanted. He even stopped drinking, and gave money to poor brides. He got them married, paid off debts, and disappeared. His only concern was to distribute the money well. He gave some to the police, too. And they did not go looking for him.

His heart was joyful. And when he was finally taken, he laughed during the trial and boasted that with the fatbelly the money lay stagnant, he didn't even know how much there was, but I got it moving and helped good people with it.

And his defense was so cheerful and kind that the jury almost acquitted him. He was sentenced to exile.

He thanked them and told them beforehand that he would escape.

XIV

MRS. SVENTITSKY'S TELEGRAM to the tsar did not produce any effect. In the appeals commission, they first decided not even to report it to the tsar, but then, when at the sovereign's lunch the talk got on to the Sventitsky case, the director lunching with the sovereign made mention of the telegram from the murdered man's wife.

"*C'est très gentil de sa part,*"* said one of the ladies in the tsar's family.

* That's very nice of her.

The sovereign merely sighed, shrugged his epauletted shoulders, and said: "Law"—and held out a glass, into which the court lackey poured sparkling Moselle wine. Everyone made as if they were surprised at the wisdom of the word uttered by the sovereign. And there was no more talk of the telegram. And the two muzhiks—the old one and the young one—were hanged with the help of a Tartar hangman invited from Kazan, a cruel murderer and bestialist.

The old woman wanted to dress the body of her old man in a white shirt, white leg cloths, and new burial shoes, but they did not allow her to, and both men were buried in a single pit outside the cemetery pale.

"PRINCESS SOFYA VLADIMIROVNA MENTIONED to me that he was a wonderful preacher," the old empress, the sovereign's mother, once told her son. *"Faites-le venir. Il peut prêcher à la cathédrale."**

"No, better with us," said the sovereign, and he ordered the elder Isidor to be invited.

The entire generalship assembled in the palace church. A new, extraordinary preacher was an event.

A little old man came out, gray-haired, skinny, and looked around at them all: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," and began.

At first it went well, but the longer it lasted, the worse it became. *"Il devenait de plus en plus agressif,"*† as the empress said afterwards. He thundered against everybody. He spoke of execution. And ascribed the necessity of execution to bad government. How can people be killed in a Christian country?

Everyone exchanged glances, and everyone was concerned only with the impropriety and unpleasantness of it all for the sovereign, but no one said anything. When Isidor said, "Amen," the metropolitan went up to him and invited him to his office.

After conversations with the metropolitan and the ober-procurator,[20] the old man was at once sent back to the monastery—not to his own, but to one in Suzdal, where the superior and commandant was Father Misaïl.

* Have him come. He can preach in the cathedral.
† He became more and more aggressive.

XV

EVERYONE MADE it look as if there had been nothing unpleasant in Isidor's sermon, and no one mentioned it. And it seemed to the tsar that the elder's words had left no trace in him, but twice during the day he recalled the execution of the peasants, for whose pardon Mrs. Sventitsky's telegram had pleaded. In the afternoon there was a review, then a promenade, then a reception of ministers, then dinner, and theater in the evening. As usual, the tsar fell asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow. In the night he was awakened by a frightful dream: gallows stood in a field, corpses swung from them, and the corpses stuck their tongues out, and the tongues protruded further and further. And someone cried: "It's your work, your work." The tsar woke up in a sweat and began to think. For the first time he began to think about the responsibility that lay upon him, and all the old man's words came back to him . . .

But he saw the man in himself only from a distance, and could not yield to simple human demands, owing to the demands that press upon a tsar from all sides; to acknowledge human demands as more obligatory than the demands of a tsar was beyond his strength.

XVI

HAVING FINISHED his second term in jail, Proshka, that cocky, vain young fop, came out a totally destroyed man. When he was sober, he sat and did nothing, and however much his father scolded him, he ate, did not work, and, moreover, kept an eye out for things he could smuggle to the pot-house for drink. He sat, coughed, hawked, and spat. The doctor he went to listened to his chest and shook his head.

"What you need, brother, is what you haven't got."

"Sure enough, that's always needed."

"Drink milk, don't smoke."

"It's Lent, and anyway there's no cow."

Once in the spring he did not sleep all night, suffered anguish, wanted to drink. There was nothing to snatch at home. He put his hat on and left. He went down the street to where the clergy lived. At the beadle's a harrow stood leaning against the wattle fence. Proshka went over, hoisted

the harrow on his back, and carried it to Petrovna's tavern. "Maybe she'll give me a little bottle." He had no time to get away before the beadle came out on the porch. It was full daylight—he saw Proshka carrying off the harrow.

"Hey, what are you doing?"

People came out, seized Proshka, put him in the lockup. The justice of the peace sentenced him to eleven months in prison.

It was fall. Proshka was transferred to the hospital. He coughed and racked his whole chest. And he could no longer get warm. Those who were stronger did not shiver yet. But Proshka shivered day and night. The warden was on a drive to save firewood and did not heat the hospital until November. Proshka suffered painfully in his body, but worst of all in his soul. He was disgusted by everything and hated everyone: the beadle, and the warden, because he did not heat the place, and the guard, and his neighbor on the cot with his red, swollen lip. He also came to hate the new convict who was brought to them. This convict was Stepan. He had contracted erysipelas on his head and was transferred to the hospital and put next to Proshka. At first Proshka hated him, but then he came to love him so much that he only waited for when he could talk with him. Only after talking with him would the anguish quiet down in Proshka's heart.

Stepan always told everyone about his last murder and how it had affected him.

"It's not only that she didn't scream or anything," he said, "but just—here, stab me. Pity yourself, she said, not me."

"Well, sure, it's awful to kill a person. I once undertook to butcher a sheep and wasn't glad I did. But I never killed anybody, and what did those villains destroy me for? I never did anybody harm . . ."

"Then it will all be counted to your credit."

"Where's that?"

"How do you mean, where? What about God?"

"Never set eyes on him. I'm not a believer, brother. I think—you die, the grass grows over you. That's all."

"How can you think that way? I killed a lot of people, and she, the dear heart, only helped everybody. And what, you think it'll be the same for her and me? No, hold on a minute . . ."

"So you think you die and your soul is left?"

"What else. It's a sure thing."

Dying was hard for Proshka, he was suffocating. But in his last hour it suddenly became easy. He called for Stepan.

"So, farewell, brother. It's clear my death has come. And here I was afraid, but now it's all right. I'd only like it to be soon."

And Proshka died in the hospital.

XVII

MEANWHILE Evgeny Mikhailovich's affairs were going from bad to worse. The shop was mortgaged. Trade fell off. Another shop opened in town, yet the interest had to be paid. It was necessary to borrow on interest again. And it ended with the shop and all its stock being put up for sale. Evgeny Mikhailovich and his wife rushed all over and nowhere could get hold of the four hundred roubles that were needed to save the business.

A small hope rested on the merchant Krasnopuzov, whose mistress was acquainted with Evgeny Mikhailovich's wife. But by now the whole town was informed that Krasnopuzov had been robbed of an enormous sum of money. Half a million, the story went.

"And who stole it?" said Evgeny Mikhailovich's wife. "Vassily, our former yard porter. They say he's throwing the money around now and has bought off the police."

"He was a scoundrel," said Evgeny Mikhailovich. "He agreed so easily to perjury then. I never thought he would."

"They say he came to us here. The cook said it was him. She says he got fourteen poor brides married off."

"Well, they're making it up."

Just then some strange elderly man in a twill jacket came into the shop.

"What do you want?"

"A letter for you."

"From whom?"

"It says inside."

"What, no need for an answer? Wait a minute."

"I can't."

And the strange man, having handed over the envelope, hurriedly left.

"That's odd!"

Evgeny Mikhailovich tore open the fat envelope and could not believe his eyes: hundred-rouble bills. Four of them. What was this? And there was an illiterate letter to Evgeny Mikhailovich: "According to the Gospels it says, do good for evil. You did me much evil with the coupon, and I did mighty wrong to that muzhik, and yet I pity you. Here, take four big ones and remember your yard porter Vassily."

"No, it's amazing," said Evgeny Mikhailovich, both to his wife and to himself. And whenever he remembered it or spoke of it to his wife, tears came to his eyes and his soul was joyful.

XVIII

FOURTEEN CLERGYMEN WERE KEPT in the Suzdal prison, all chiefly for deviating from Orthodoxy. Isidor, too, had been sent there. Father Misaïl had received Isidor according to instructions and, without talking with him, had ordered him put in a separate cell as a serious criminal. In the third week of Isidor's stay in prison, Father Misaïl made the rounds of the prisoners. Going into Isidor's cell he asked if he needed anything.

"I need many things, but I cannot say it in front of people. Give me a chance to talk with you alone."

They looked at each other, and Misaïl realized that he had nothing to fear. He ordered Isidor brought to his cell and, when they were alone, he said:

"Well, speak."

Isidor fell on his knees.

"Brother!" said Isidor. "What are you doing? Have pity on yourself. There's no villain worse than you, you've profaned all that's holy . . ."

A MONTH LATER Misaïl handed in documents for the release, on grounds of repentance, not only of Isidor but of seven others, and asked to be retired to a monastery.

XIX

TEN YEARS PASSED.

Mitya Smokovnikov had finished his studies in technical school and was an engineer with a big salary in the gold mines of Siberia. He had to travel over his sector. The director suggested that he take the convict Stepan Pelageyushkin.

"A convict? Isn't that dangerous?"

"With him it's not. He's a holy man. Ask anyone you like."

"What did he do?"

The director smiled.

"He killed six people, but he's a holy man. I'll vouch for him."

And so Mitya Smokovnikov received Stepan, a bald, thin, sunburnt man, and traveled with him.

On the road, Stepan looked after Smokovnikov like one of his own children, as he attended to everyone wherever he could, and told him his whole story. And then how, and why, and by what he lived now.

And, astonishing thing! Mitya Smokovnikov, who up to then had lived only by drink, food, cards, wine, and women, fell to thinking about life for the first time. And these thoughts did not abandon him, but turned his soul around more and more. He was offered a post where there were great profits to be made. He refused and decided to use what he had, buy an estate, marry, and serve people as he could.

XX

AND SO HE DID. But before that he went to see his father, with whom his relations had become unpleasant on account of the new family his father had started. Now, however, he resolved to become closer with his father. And so he did. And his father was astonished, laughed at him, but then stopped attacking him and recalled many, many occasions when he had been to blame before him.

CA. 1880, 1902–04