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FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

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# THE INSULTED AND INJURED

*Translated from  
the Russian by*  
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WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD  
MELBOURNE :: LONDON :: TORONTO

23

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

LAST year, on the evening of March 22, I had a very strange adventure. All that day I had been walking about the town trying to find a lodging. My old one was very damp, and I had begun to have an ominous cough. Ever since the autumn I had been meaning to move, but I had hung on till the spring. I had not been able to find anything decent all day. In the first place I wanted a separate tenement, not a room in other people's lodgings; secondly, though I could do with one room, it must be a large one, and, of course, it had at the same time to be as cheap as possible. I have observed that in a confined space even thought is cramped. When I was brooding over a future novel I liked to walk up and down the room. By the way, I always like better brooding over my works and dreaming how they should be written than actually writing them. And this really is not from laziness. Why is it?

I had been feeling unwell all day, and towards sunset I felt really very ill. Something like a fever set in. Moreover, I had been all day long on my legs and was tired. Towards evening, just before it got dark, I was walking along the Voznesensky Prospect. I love the March sun in Petersburg, especially at sunset, in clear frosty weather, of course. The whole street suddenly glitters, bathed in brilliant light. All the houses seem suddenly, as it were, to sparkle. Their grey, yellow, and dirty-green hues for an instant lose all their gloominess, it is as though there were a sudden clearness in one's soul, as though one were startled, or as though someone had nudged one with his elbow. There is a new outlook, a new train of thought. . . . It is wonderful what one ray of sunshine can do for the soul of man!

But the ray of sunshine had died away; the frost grew sharper, and began to nip one's nose: the twilight deepened; gas flared from the shops. As I reached Müller's, the confectioner's, I suddenly stood stock-still and began staring at that side of the street, as though I had a presentiment that something extraordinary was just going to happen to me; and at that very instant I saw, on the opposite side of the street, the old man with

his dog. I remember quite well that I felt an unpleasant sensation clutch at my heart, and I could not myself have told what that sensation was.

• I am not a mystic. I scarcely believe in presentiments and divinings, yet I have, as probably most people have, had some rather inexplicable experiences in my life. For example, this old man: why was it that at that meeting with him I had at once a presentiment that that same evening something not quite ordinary would happen to me? I was ill, however, and sensations in illness are almost always deceptive.

The old man, stooping and tapping the pavement with his stick, drew near the confectioner's, with his slow, feeble step, moving his legs as though they were sticks, and seeming not to bend them. I had never in my life come across such a strange, grotesque figure, and, whenever I had met him at Müller's before, he had always made a painful impression on me. His tall figure, his bent back, his death-like face with the stamp of eighty years upon it, his old greatcoat torn at the seams, the battered round hat, at least twenty years old, which covered his head—bald but for one lock of hair not grey but yellowish-white—all his movements, which seemed performed, as it were, aimlessly, as though worked by springs—no one who met him for the first time could help being struck by all this. It really was strange to see an old man who had so outlived the natural span alone, with no one to look after him, especially as he looked like a madman who had escaped from his keepers. I was struck, too, by his extraordinary emaciation; he seemed scarcely to have any body, it was as though there were nothing but skin over his bones. His large lustreless eyes, set as it were in blue rims, always stared straight before him, never looking to one side, and never seeing anything—of that I feel certain; though he looked at you, he walked straight at you as though there were an empty space before him. I noticed this several times. He had begun to make his appearance at Müller's only lately, he was always accompanied by his dog, and no one knew where he came from. Not one of the customers at Müller's could make up his mind to address him, nor did he accost any of them.

“And why does he drag himself to Müller's, what is there for him to do there?” I wondered, standing still on the opposite side of the street and gazing fixedly at him. A sort of irritable vexation, the result of illness and fatigue, surged up within me. “What is he thinking about?” I went on wondering. “What is there in his head? But does he still think of anything at all?”

His face is so dead that it expresses nothing at all. And where could he have picked up that disgusting dog, which never leaves him, as though it were an inseparable part of him, and which is so like him?"

That wretched dog looked as though it, too, were eighty; yes, it certainly must have been so. To begin with, it looked older than dogs ever are, and secondly, it struck me, for some reason, the very first time I saw it, that it could not be a dog like all others; that it was an exceptional dog; that there must be something fantastic about it, something uncanny; that it might be a sort of Mephistopheles in dog-form, and that its fate was in some mysterious unknown way bound up with the fate of its master. Looking at it you would have allowed at once that twenty years must have elapsed since its last meal. It was as thin as a skeleton, or, which is much the same, as its master. Almost all its hair had fallen off, and its tail hung down between its legs as bare as a stick. Its head and long ears drooped sullenly forward. I never in my life met such a repulsive dog. When they both walked down the street, the master in front and the dog at his heels, its nose touched the skirt of his coat as though glued to it. And their gait and their whole appearance seemed almost to cry aloud at every step: "We are old, old. Oh Lord, how old we are!" I remember too that it occurred to me once that the old man and the dog had somehow stepped out of some page of Hoffmann illustrated by Gavarni and were parading this world by way of walking advertisements of the edition.

I crossed the road and followed the old man into the confectioner's.

In the shop the old man behaved in a very strange way, and Müller, standing at his counter, had begun of late to make a grimace of annoyance at the entrance of the unbidden guest. In the first place, the strange visitor never asked for anything. Every time he went straight to a corner by the stove and sat down in a chair there. If the seat by the stove were occupied, after standing for some time in bewildered perplexity before the gentleman who had taken his place, he walked away, seeming puzzled, to the other corner by the window. There he fixed on a chair, deliberately seated himself in it, took off his hat, put it on the floor beside him, laid his stick by his hat, and then, sinking back into the chair, he would remain without moving for three or four hours. He never took up a newspaper, never uttered a single word, a single sound, and simply sat there, staring straight before him with wide-open eyes, but with such a blank, lifeless

look in them that one might well bet he saw and heard nothing of what was going on around him. The dog, after turning round two or three times in the same place, lay down sullenly at his feet with its nose between his boots, heaving deep sighs, and, stretched out full length on the floor, it too stayed without moving the whole evening as though it had died for the time. One might imagine that these two creatures lay dead all day somewhere, and only at sunset came to life again, simply to visit Müller's shop to perform some mysterious, secret duty. After sitting for three or four hours, the old man would at last get up, take up his hat and set off somewhere homewards. The dog too got up, and, with drooping tail and hanging head as before, followed him mechanically with the same slow step. The habitual visitors at the shop began at last to avoid the old man in every way and would not even sit beside him, as though he gave them a feeling of repulsion. He noticed nothing of this.

The customers of this confectioner's shop were mostly Germans. They gathered there from all parts of the Voznesensky Prospect, mostly heads of shops of various sorts, carpenters, bakers, painters, hatters, saddlers, all patriarchal people in the German sense of the word. Altogether the patriarchal tradition was kept up at Müller's. Often the master of the shop joined some customer of his acquaintance and sat beside him at the table, when a certain amount of punch would be consumed. The dogs and small children of the household would sometimes come out to see the customers too, and the latter used to fondle both the children and the dogs. They all knew one another and all had a respect for one another. And while the guests were absorbed in the perusal of the German newspapers, through the door leading to the shopkeeper's rooms came the tinkling of "Mein lieber Augustin", on a cracked piano played by the eldest daughter, a little German miss with flaxen curls, very much like a white mouse. The waltz was welcomed with pleasure. I used to go to Müller's at the beginning of every month to read the Russian magazines which were taken there.

As I went in I saw that the old man was already sitting by the window, while the dog was lying as always, stretched out at his feet. I sat down in a corner without speaking, and inwardly asked myself why had I come here when there was really nothing for me to do here, when I was ill and it would have been better to make haste home to have tea and go to bed. Could I have come here simply to gaze at this old man? I was annoyed. "What have I to do with him?" I thought, recalling that

strange, painful sensation with which I had looked at him just before in the street. And what were all these dull Germans to me? What was the meaning of this fantastic mood? What was the meaning of this cheap agitation over trifles which I had noticed in myself of late, which hindered me from living and taking a clear view of life? One penetrating reviewer had already remarked on it in his indignant criticism of my last novel. But though I hesitated, and deplored it, yet I remained where I was, and meantime I was more and more overcome by illness, and I was reluctant to leave the warm room. I took up a Frankfort paper, read a couple of lines and dropped into a doze. The Germans did not interfere with me. They read and smoked, and only once in half an hour or so communicated some piece of Frankfort news to one another abruptly in an undertone, or some jest or epigram of the renowned German wit, Saphir, after which they would plunge into their reading again with redoubled pride in their nationality.

I dozed for half an hour and was waked by a violent shiver. It was certainly necessary to go home.

But meanwhile a drama in dumb show which was being enacted in the room stopped me again. I have said already that as soon as the old man sat down in his chair he would fix his eye on something and not remove it the whole evening. It had been my fate in the past to be exposed to that meaningless, persistent, unseeing stare. It was a very unpleasant, in fact unbearable, sensation, and I usually changed my seat as soon as I could. At this moment the old man's victim was a small, round, very neat little German, with a stiffly starched stand-up collar and an unusually red face, a new visitor to the shop, a merchant from Riga, called, as I learned afterwards, Adam Ivanitch Schultz. He was an intimate friend of Müller's, but as yet knew nothing of the old man or many of the customers. Sipping his punch and reading with relish the *Dorfbarbier*, he suddenly raised his eyes and observed the old man's immovable stare fixed upon him. It disconcerted him. Adam Ivanitch was a very touchy and sensitive man, like all "superior" Germans. It seemed to him strange and insulting that he should be stared at so unceremoniously. With stifled indignation he turned his eyes away from the tactless guest, muttered something to himself, and took refuge behind the newspaper. But within five minutes he could not resist peeping out suspiciously from behind the paper; still the same persistent stare, still the same meaningless scrutiny. That time, too, Adam Ivanitch said nothing. But when the same

thing was repeated a third time he flared up and felt it incumbent upon himself to defend his dignity and not to degrade, in the eyes of so gentlemanly a company, the prestige of the fair town of Riga, of which he probably felt himself to be the representative. With an impatient gesture he flung the paper on the table, rapping it vigorously with the stick to which the paper was fastened, and blazing with personal dignity, and crimson with punch and *amour propre*, in his turn he fastened his little bloodshot eyes on the offensive old man. It looked as though the two of them, the German and his assailant, were trying to overpower each other by the magnetic force of their stares, and were waiting to see which would be the first to be put out of countenance and drop his eyes. The rap of the stick and the eccentric position of Adam Ivanitch drew the attention of all the customers. All laid aside what they were doing, and with grave and speechless curiosity watched the two opponents. The scene was becoming very comical, but the magnetism of the little red-faced gentleman's defiant eyes was entirely thrown away. The old man went on staring straight at the infuriated Schultz, and absolutely failed to observe that he was the object of general curiosity; he was as unperturbed as though he were not on earth but in the moon. Adam Ivanitch's patience broke down at last, and he exploded.

"Why do you stare at me so intently?" he shouted in German, in a sharp, piercing voice and with a menacing air.

But his adversary continued silent as though he did not understand and did not even hear the question. Adam Ivanitch made up his mind to speak to him in Russian.

"I am asking you what for you at me are so studiously staring?" he shouted with redoubled fury. "I am to the court well known, and you known not!" he added, leaping up from his chair.

But the old man did not turn a hair. A murmur of indignation was heard among the Germans. Müller himself, attracted by the uproar, came into the room. When he found out what was the matter he imagined that the old man was deaf, and bent down to his ear.

"Master Schultz asked you studiously not to stare at him," he said as loud as he could, looking intently at the incomprehensible visitor.

The old man looked mechanically at Müller; his face, which had till then been so immovable, showed traces of disturbing thought, of a sort of uneasy agitation. He was flustered, bent

down, sighing and gasping, to pick up his hat, snatched it up together with his stick, got up from his chair, and with the piteous smile of a beggar turned out of a seat that he has taken by mistake, he prepared to go out of the room. In the meek and submissive haste of the poor decrepit old man there was so much to provoke compassion, so much to wring the heart, that the whole company, from Adam Ivanitch downward, took a different view of the position at once. It was evident that the old man, far from being capable of insulting anyone, realised that he might be turned out from anywhere like a beggar.

Müller was a kind-hearted and compassionate man.

"No, no," he said, patting him on the shoulder encouragingly, "sit still. *Aber* Herr Schultz asking you particularly not to look upon him. He is well known at the court."

But the poor old man did not understand this either; he was more flustered than ever. He stooped to pick up his handkerchief, a ragged old blue one that had dropped out of his hat, and began to call his dog, which lay motionless on the floor and seemed to be sound asleep with its nose on its paws.

"Azorka, Azorka," he mumbled in a quavering, aged voice. "Azorka!"

Azorka did not stir.

"Azorka, Azorka," the old man repeated anxiously, and he poked the dog with his stick. But it remained in the same position.

The stick dropped from his hands. He stooped, knelt down, and in both hands lifted Azorka's head. The poor dog was dead. Unnoticed it had died at its master's feet from old age, and perhaps from hunger too. The old man looked at it for a minute as though struck, as though he did not understand that Azorka was dead; then bent down gently to his old servant and friend and pressed his pale cheek to the dead face of the dog. A minute of silence passed. We were all touched. At last the poor fellow got up. He was very pale and trembled as though he were in a fever.

"You can have it stuffed," said the sympathetic Müller, anxious to comfort him in any way (by "stuffed" he meant stuffed). "You can have it well stuffed, Fyodor Karlitch Krüger stuffs beautifully; Fyodor Karlitch Krüger is a master at stuffing," repeated Müller, picking up the stick from the ground and handing it to the old man.

"Yes, I can excellently stuff," Herr Krüger himself modestly asserted, coming to the front.



He was a tall, lanky and virtuous German, with tangled red hair, and spectacles on his hooked nose.

"Fyodor Karlitch Krüger has a great talent to make all sorts magnificent stuffing," added Müller, growing enthusiastic over his own idea.

"Yes, I have a great talent to make all sorts magnificent stuffing," Herr Krüger repeated again. "And I will for nothing to stuff you your dog," he added in an access of magnanimous self-sacrifice.

"No, I will you pay for to stuff it!" Adam Ivanitch Schultz cried frantically, turning twice as red as before, glowing with magnanimity in his turn and feeling himself the innocent cause of the misfortune.

The old man listened to all this evidently without understanding it, trembling all over as before.

"Vait! Drink one glass of goot cognac!" cried Müller, seeing that the enigmatical guest was making efforts to get away.

They brought him the brandy. The old man mechanically took the glass, but his hand trembled, and before he raised it to his lips he spilt half, and put it back on the tray without taking a drop of it. Then with a strange, utterly inappropriate smile he went out of the shop with rapid, uneven steps, leaving Azorka on the floor. Everyone stood in bewilderment; exclamations were heard.

"*Schwernoth! Was für eine Geschichte?*" said the Germans, looking round-eyed at one another.

But I rushed after the old man. A few steps from the shop, through a gate on the right, there is an alley, dark and narrow, shut in by huge houses. Something told me that the old man must have turned in there. A second house was being built here on the right hand, and was surrounded with scaffolding. The fence round the house came almost into the middle of the alley, and planks had been laid down to walk round the fence. In a dark corner made by the fence and the house I found the old man. He was sitting on the edge of the wooden pavement and held his head propped in both hands, with his elbows on his knees. I sat down beside him.

"Listen," said I, hardly knowing how to begin. "Don't grieve over Azorka. Come along, I'll take you home. Don't worry. I'll go for a cab at once. Where do you live?"

The old man did not answer. I could not decide what to do. There were no passers-by in the alley. Suddenly he began clutching me by the arm.

"Stiffling!" he said, in a husky, hardly audible voice, "Stiffling!"

"Let's go to your home," I cried, getting up and forcibly lifting him up. "You'll have some tea and go to bed. . . . I'll get a cab. I'll call a doctor. . . . I know a doctor. . . ."

I don't know what else I said to him. He tried to get up, but fell back again on the ground and began muttering again in the same hoarse choking voice I bent down more closely and listened.

"In Vassilyevsky Island," the old man gasped. "The sixth street. The six . . . th stre . . . et . . ."

He sank into silence.

"You live in Vassilyevsky Island? But you've come wrong then. That would be to the left, and you've come to the right. I'll take you directly . . ."

The old man did not stir. I took his hand; the hand dropped as though it were dead. I looked into his face, touched him—he was dead.

I felt as though it had all happened in a dream.

This incident caused me a great deal of trouble, in the course of which my fever passed off of itself. The old man's lodging was discovered. He did not, however, live in Vassilyevsky Island, but only a couple of paces from the spot where he died, in Klugen's Buildings, in the fifth storey right under the roof, in a separate flat, consisting of a tiny entry and a large low-pitched room, with three slits by way of windows. He had lived very poorly. His furniture consisted of a table, two chairs, and a very very old sofa as hard as a stone, with hair sticking out of it in all directions; and even these things turned out to be the landlord's. The stove had evidently not been heated for a long while, and no candles were found either. I seriously think now that the old man went to Müller's simply to sit in a lighted room and get warm. On the table stood an empty earthenware mug, and a stale crust of bread lay beside it. No money was found, not a farthing. There was not even a change of linen in which to bury him; someone gave his own shirt for the purpose. It was clear that he could not have lived like that, quite isolated, and no doubt someone must have visited him from time to time. In the table drawer they found his passport. The dead man turned out to be of foreign birth, though a Russian subject. His name was Jeremy Smith, and he was a mechanical engineer, seventy-eight years old. There were two books lying on the table, a short geography and the New Testament in the Russian translation,

pencil-marked in the margin and scored by the finger-nail. These books I took for myself. The landlord and the other tenants were questioned—they all knew scarcely anything about him. There were numbers of tenants in the building, almost all artisans or German women who let lodgings with board and attendance. The superintendent of the block, a superior man, was also unable to say much about the former tenant, except that the lodging was let at six roubles a month, that the deceased had lived in it for four months, but had not paid a farthing for the last two, so that he would have had to turn him out. The question was asked whether anyone used to come to see him, but no one could give a satisfactory answer about this. It was a big block, lots of people would be coming to such a Noah's Ark, there was no remembering all of them. The porter, who had been employed for five years in the flats and probably could have given some information, had gone home to his native village on a visit a fortnight before, leaving in his place his nephew, a young fellow who did not yet know half the tenants by sight. I don't know for certain how all these inquiries ended at last, but finally the old man was buried. In the course of those days, though I had many things to look after, I had been to Vassilyevsky Island, to Sixth Street, and laughed at myself when I arrived there. What could I see in Sixth Street but an ordinary row of houses? But why, I wondered, did the old man talk of Sixth Street and Vassilyevsky Island when he was dying? Was he delirious?

I looked at Smith's deserted lodging, and I liked it. I took it for myself. The chief point about it was that it was large, though very low-pitched, so much so that at first I thought I should knock my head against the ceiling. But I soon got used to it. Nothing better could be found for six roubles a month. The independence of it tempted me. All I still had to do was to arrange for some sort of service, for I could not live entirely without a servant. The porter undertook meanwhile to come in once a day to do what was absolutely necessary. And who knows, thought I, perhaps someone will come to inquire for the old man! But five days passed after his death, and no one had yet come.

## CHAPTER II

At that time, just a year ago, I was still working on the staff of some papers, wrote articles, and was firmly convinced that I should succeed one day in writing something good on a larger

scale. I was sitting over a long novel at that time, but it had all ended in my being here in the hospital, and I believe I am soon going to die. And since I am going to die, why, one might ask, write reminiscences?

I cannot help continually recalling all this bitter last year of my life. I want to write it all down, and if I had not found this occupation I believe I should have died of misery. All these impressions of the past excite me sometimes to the pitch of anguish, of agony. They will grow more soothing, more harmonious as I write them. They will be less like delirium, like a nightmare. So I imagine. The mere mechanical exercise of writing counts for something. It will soothe me, cool me, arouse anew in me my old literary habits, will turn my memories and sick dreams into work, into occupation. . . . Yes, it is a good idea. Moreover, it will be something to leave my attendant, if he only pastes up the window with my manuscript, when he puts in the double frames for the winter.

But I have begun my story, I don't know why, in the middle. If it is all to be written, I must begin from the beginning. Well, let us begin at the beginning, though my autobiography won't be a long one.

I was not born here but far away in a remote province. It must be assumed that my parents were good people, but I was left an orphan as a child, and I was brought up in the house of Nikolay Sergeyitch Ichmenyev, a small landowner of the neighbourhood, who took me in out of pity. He had only one child, a daughter Natasha, a child three years younger than I. We grew up together like brother and sister. Oh, my dear childhood! How stupid to grieve and regret it at five-and-twenty, and to recall it alone with enthusiasm and gratitude! In those days there was such bright sunshine in the sky, so unlike the sun of Petersburg, and our little hearts beat so blithely and gaily. Then there were fields and woods all round us, not piles of dead stones as now. How wonderful were the garden and park in Vassilyevskoe, where Nikolay Sergeyitch was steward. Natasha and I used to go for walks in that garden, and beyond the garden was a great damp forest, where both of us were once lost. Happy, golden days! The first foretaste of life was mysterious and alluring, and it was so sweet to get glimpses of it. In those days behind every bush, behind every tree, someone still seemed to be living, mysterious, unseen by us; fairyland was mingled with reality; and when at times the mists of evening were thick in the deep hollows and caught in grey, winding wisps about the bushes

that clung to the stony ribs of our great ravine, Natasha and I, holding each other's hands, peeped from the edge into the depths below with timid curiosity, expecting every moment that someone would come forth to call to us out of the mist at the bottom of the ravine; and that our nurse's fairy tales would turn out to be solid established truth. Once, long afterwards, I happened to remind Natasha how a copy of *Readings for Children* was got for us; how we ran off at once to the pond in the garden where was our favourite green seat under the old maple, and there settled ourselves and began reading "Alphonso and Dalinda"—a fairy-story. I cannot to this day remember the story without a strange thrill at my heart, and when a year ago I reminded Natasha of the first lines: "Alphonso, the hero of my story, was born in Portugal; Don Ramrio his father," and so on, I almost shed tears. This must have seemed very stupid, and that was probably why Natasha smiled queerly at my enthusiasm at the time. But she checked herself at once (I remember that), and began recalling the old days to comfort me. One thing led to another, and she was moved herself. That was a delightful evening. We went over everything, and how I had been sent away to school in the district town—heavens, how she had cried then!—and our last parting when I left Vassilyevskoe for ever. I was leaving the boarding-school then and was going to Petersburg to prepare for the university. I was seventeen at that time and she was fifteen. Natasha says I was such an awkward, gawky creature then, and that one couldn't look at me without laughing. At the moment of farewell I drew her aside to tell her something terribly important, but my tongue suddenly failed me and clove to the roof of my mouth. She remembers that I was in great agitation. Of course our talk came to nothing. I did not know what to say, and perhaps she would not have understood me. I only wept bitterly and so went away without saying anything. We saw each other again long afterwards in Petersburg; that was two years ago. Old Nikolay Sergeyitch had come to Petersburg about his lawsuit, and I had only just begun my literary career.

### CHAPTER III

NIKOLAY SERGEYITCH came of a good family, which had long sunk into decay. But he was left at his parents' death with a fair estate with a hundred and fifty serfs on it. At twenty he

went into the Hussars. All went well; but after six years in the army he happened one unlucky evening to lose all his property at cards. He did not sleep all night. The next evening he appeared at the card-table and staked his horse—his last possession. His card was a winning one, and it was followed by a second and a third, and within half an hour he had won back one of his villages, the hamlet Ichmenyevka, which had numbered fifty souls at the last census. He sent in his papers and retired from the service next day. He had lost a hundred serfs for ever. Two months later he received his discharge with the rank of lieutenant, and went home to his village. He never in his life spoke of his loss at cards, and in spite of his well-known good nature he would certainly have quarrelled with anyone who alluded to it. In the country he applied himself industriously to looking after his land, and at thirty-five he married a poor girl of good family, Anna Andreyevna Shumilov, who was absolutely without dowry, though she had received an education in a high-class school kept by a French *émigrée*, called Mon-Reveche, a privilege upon which Anna Andreyevna prided herself all her life, although no one was ever able to discover exactly of what that education had consisted. Nikolay Sergeyitch was an excellent farmer. The neighbouring landowners learned to manage their estates from him. A few years had passed when suddenly a landowner, Prince Pyotr Alexandrovitch Valkovsky, came from Petersburg to the neighbouring estate, Vassilyevskoe, the village of which had a population of nine hundred serfs. His arrival made a great stir in the whole neighbourhood. The prince was still young, though not in his first youth. He was of good rank in the service; had important connexions and a fortune; was a handsome man and a widower, a fact of particular interest to all the girls and ladies in the neighbourhood. People talked of the brilliant reception given him by the governor, to whom he was in some way related; of how he had turned the heads of all the ladies by his gallantries, and so on, and so on. In short, he was one of those brilliant representatives of aristocratic Petersburg society who rarely make their appearance in the provinces, but produce an extraordinary sensation when they do. The prince, however, was by no means of the politest, especially to people who could be of no use to him, and whom he considered ever so little his inferiors. He did not think fit to make the acquaintance of his neighbours in the country, and at once made many enemies by neglecting to do so. And so everyone was extremely surprised when the fancy suddenly took him to call on Nikolay Sergeyitch.

It is true that the latter was one of his nearest neighbours. The prince made a great impression on the Ichmenyev household. He fascinated them both at once; Anna Andreyevna was particularly enthusiastic about him. In a short time he was on intimate terms with them, went there every day and invited them to his house. He used to tell them stories, make jokes, play on their wretched piano and sing. The Ichmenyevs were never tired of wondering how so good and charming a man could be called a proud, stuck-up, cold egoist, as all the neighbours with one voice declared him to be. One must suppose that the prince really liked Nikolay Sergeyitch, who was a simple-hearted, straightforward, disinterested and generous man. But all was soon explained. The prince had come to Vassilyevskoe especially to get rid of his steward, a prodigal German, who was a conceited man and an expert agriculturist, endowed with venerable grey hair, spectacles, and a hooked nose; yet in spite of these advantages, he robbed the prince without shame or measure, and, what was worse, tormented several peasants to death. At last Ivan Karlovitch was caught in his misdeeds and exposed, was deeply offended, talked a great deal about German honesty, but, in spite of all this, was dismissed and even with some ignominy. The prince needed a steward and his choice fell on Nikolay Sergeyitch, who was an excellent manager and a man of whose honesty there could be no possible doubt. The prince seemed particularly anxious that Nikolay Sergeyitch should of his own accord propose to take the post. But this did not come off, and one fine morning the prince made the proposition himself, in the form of a very friendly and humble request. Nikolay Sergeyitch at first refused; but the liberal salary attracted Anna Andreyevna, and the redoubled cordiality of the prince overcame any hesitation he still felt. The prince attained his aim. One may presume that he was skilful in judging character. During his brief acquaintance with Ichmenyev he soon perceived the kind of man he had to deal with, and realised that he must be won in a warm and friendly way, that his heart must be conquered, and that, without that, money would do little with him. Valkovsky needed a steward whom he could trust blindly for ever, that he might never need to visit Vassilyevskoe again, and this was just what he was reckoning on. The fascination he exercised over Nikolay Sergeyitch was so strong that the latter genuinely believed in his friendship. Nikolay Sergeyitch was one of those very simple-hearted and naïvely romantic men who are, whatever people may say against them, so charming among us

in Russia, and who are devoted with their whole soul to anyone to whom (God knows why) they take a fancy, and at times carry their devotion to a comical pitch.

Many years passed. Prince Valkovsky's estate flourished. The relations between the owner of Vassilyevskoe and his steward continued without the slightest friction on either side, and did not extend beyond a purely business correspondence. Though the prince did not interfere with Nikolay Sergeyitch's management, he sometimes gave him advice which astonished the latter by its extraordinary astuteness and practical ability. It was evident that he did not care to waste money, and was clever at getting it indeed. Five years after his visit to Vassilyevskoe the prince sent Nikolay Sergeyitch an authorisation to purchase another splendid estate in the same province with a population of four hundred serfs. Nikolay Sergeyitch was delighted. The prince's successes, the news of his advancement, his promotion, were as dear to his heart as if they had been those of his own brother. But his delight reached a climax when the prince on one occasion showed the extraordinary trust he put in him. This is how it happened. . . . But here I find it necessary to mention some details of the life of this Prince Valkovsky, who is in a way a leading figure in my story.

## CHAPTER IV

I HAVE mentioned already that he was a widower. He had married in his early youth, and married for money. From his parents in Moscow, who were completely ruined, he received hardly anything. Vassilyevskoe was mortgaged over and over again. It was encumbered with enormous debts. At twenty-two the prince, who was forced at that time to take service in a government department in Moscow, had not a farthing, and made his entrance into life as the "beggar offspring of an ancient line". His marriage to the elderly daughter of a tax contractor saved him.

The contractor, of course, cheated him over the dowry, but anyway he was able with his wife's money to buy back his estate, and to get on to his feet again. The contractor's daughter, who had fallen to the prince's lot, was scarcely able to write, could not put two words together, was ugly, and had only one great virtue: she was good-natured and submissive. The prince took the utmost advantage of this quality in her. After the first year



of marriage he left his wife, who had meanwhile borne him a son, at Moscow, in charge of her father, the contractor, and went off to serve in another province, where, through the interest of a powerful relation in Petersburg, he obtained a prominent post. His soul thirsted for distinction, advancement, a career, and realising that he could not live with his wife either in Petersburg or Moscow, he resolved to begin his career in the provinces until something better turned up. It is said that even in the first year of his marriage he wore his wife out by his brutal behaviour. This rumour always revolted Nikolay Sergeyitch, and he hotly defended the prince, declaring that he was incapable of a mean action. But seven years later his wife died, and the bereaved husband immediately returned to Petersburg. In Petersburg he actually caused some little sensation. With his fortune, his good looks and his youth, his many brilliant qualities, his wit, his taste, and his unfailing gaiety he appeared in Petersburg not as a toady and fortune-hunter, but as a man in a fairly independent position. It is said that there really was something fascinating about him; something dominating and powerful. He was extremely attractive to women, and an intrigue with a society beauty gave him a scandalous renown. He scattered money without stint in spite of his natural economy, which almost amounted to niggardliness; he lost money at cards when suitable, and could lose large sums without turning a hair. But he had not come to Petersburg for the sake of amusement. He was bent on making his career and finally establishing his position. He attained this object. Count Nainsky, his distinguished relative, who would have taken no notice of him if he had come as an ordinary applicant, was so struck by his success in society that he found it suitable and possible to show him particular attention, and even condescended to take his seven-year-old son to be brought up in his house. To this period belongs the prince's visit to Vassilyevskoe and his acquaintance with Nikolay Sergeyitch. Attaining at last, through the influence of the count, a prominent post in one of the most important foreign embassies, he went abroad. Later, rumours of his doings were rather vague. People talked of some unpleasant adventure that had befallen him abroad, but no one could explain exactly what it was. All that was known was that he succeeded in buying an estate of four hundred serfs, as I have mentioned already. It was many years later that he returned from abroad; he was of high rank in the service and at once received a very prominent post in Petersburg. Rumours reached Ichmenyevka that he was about to make a