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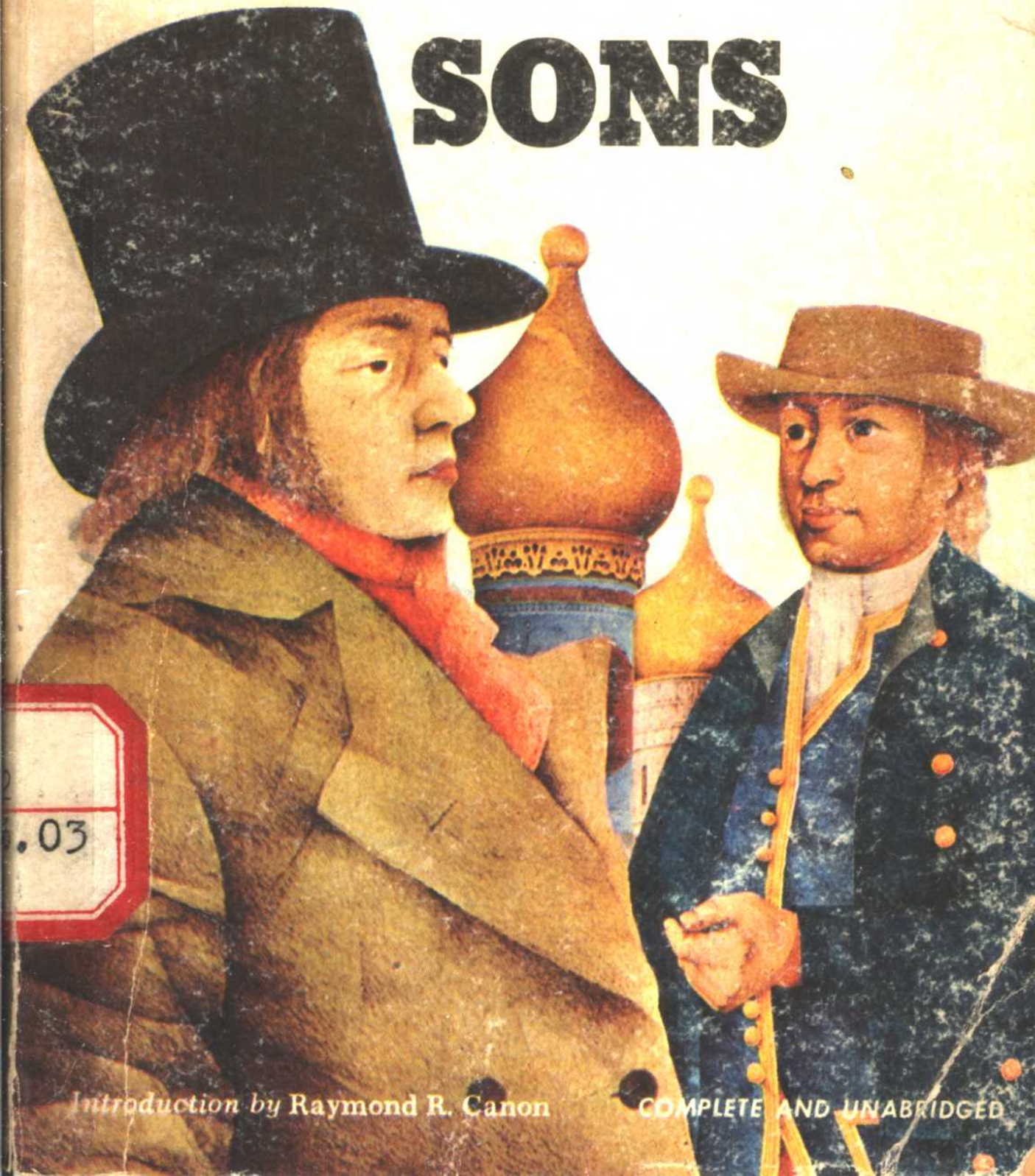
Ivan Turgenev

FATHERS AND SONS



Introduction by Raymond R. Canon

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

FATHERS AND SONS

IVAN TURGENEV

Translated by Constance Garnett

AIRMONT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.
22 EAST 60TH STREET · NEW YORK 10022

An Airmont Classic

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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THE DOMINION OF CANADA
BY THE RYERSON PRESS, TORONTO

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE COLONIAL PRESS INC., CLINTON, MASSACHUSETTS

FATHERS AND SONS

IVAN TURGENEV

Introduction

Writers are often a restless breed. There are many instances of them leaving their birthplace and finding inspiration far from their native land. Ibsen wrote his best works thousands of miles from Norway. Voltaire spent little of his creative life in Paris, and Goethe started to produce most of his outstanding works only after he had left Frankfort, and its surroundings, and settled in Weimar. This wanderlust afflicted Russian writers no less than their Western European cousins, and so it is not surprising to learn that Turgenev was so attracted by the life he found in Western Europe that during the latter half of his life, when he was at his zenith as a novelist, he lived in France and Germany, and made only a short visit to Russia each year. This rather unique arrangement was undoubtedly due in part to his attachment to Mme. Viardot, but at least part of his predisposition for the other side of Europe can be traced to his boyhood. It was then that he was first taught French and German, and, in fact, was forced to learn most of his Russian from the servants. Such an arrangement is not surprising when one considers the important role that French had played in the lives of Slavic aristocrats for several centuries. However, this early command of the two

languages made it possible for Turgenev to feel as much at home in Western Europe as in Russia. It helped, in addition, to make him much more aware of the differences between the two parts of Europe—an awareness that exists in much of his work. And finally, his knowledge of French contributed greatly to the development of friendship with certain well-known French authors—friendships which were to mean a great deal to him during the latter part of his life.

Ivan Turgenev was born in 1818 of a noble family. His father died when Ivan was quite young, and so his deepest memories are those of his mother—an opinionated and malicious woman who mistreated both her two sons and the peasants on their estate with equal cruelty. Turgenev felt very close to nature as a boy and used to pass many hours "de savoureuses heures" in the fields when his mind overflowed with feelings he could not put into words. In 1827, the family moved to Moscow from the country, mainly, it seems, for the sake of the children's education. The schools which Ivan attended did not seem to do a great deal to advance this education, and it was at home, under the guidance of tutors, that he prepared for university entrance.

Although he was accepted at the university in Moscow, is was in Berlin that he continued his studies and came into contact with the more heady ideas of the West. This is not to say that he led a sheltered life in Moscow, for early in his career he joined a secret society devoted to Slavophilism—a doctrine which concerned itself with the question of the future of Russia. Was it to follow the industrial revolution of the West and bring about the political reforms introduced as a result of the French Revolution? Or was the mission of Russia one which required orthodoxy in both political and religious thinking? It was the leader of this secret society, Stankevich, who impressed Turgenev so much that he followed him to Berlin in 1838, and to Italy the following year.

Stankevich's sudden death in 1840 left a void in Turgenev's life, and he turned his attentions to Bakunin, an

anarchist whose name will certainly be familiar to any student of Communism. This *volte-face* was rather surprising in view of the fact that Bakunin represented the exact opposite of Stankevich's views, but Turgenev does not seem to have let it bother him. A closer look at what the two men stood for would lead one to believe that sooner or later Turgenev would have come around to Bakunin's camp, anyway, for the latter, in spite of his atheism and radicalism, was an admirer of the Western, as opposed to the Russian way of life.

Like many another writer, Turgenev started his literary career in the field of poetry. His first poems, at the age of twenty-five, brought him considerable fame. But like many another budding poet, he turned his back on poetry to take up headier work—in this case, the drama. After several relatively good plays, he decided that prose fiction was his forte and spent the rest of his life in this field. From 1852 on, a series of first-rate novels and short stories flowed from his pen, all of which created for him a fine reputation, not only in Russia but in other countries as well.

Fathers and Sons, which appeared in 1862, is generally conceded to be his masterpiece. Its gestation period was a stormy one. Turgenev's first thought had been to write a novel with a tragic hero—a novel that would revolve around the death of this hero. A simple enough theme, for, as Turgenev himself pointed out, death was inevitable, and so what could be more tragic? But as the novel took shape, Turgenev began to be torn by doubts. He was advised by friends not to publish it, and not a few suggested that the story's best resting place would be the fireplace. However, he persevered, and the novel appeared finally in the monthly "Russian Herold."

The initial reaction was generally favorable. Dostoyevsky wrote Turgenev a complimentary letter, to which the author replied, "It is as if you had penetrated into my very soul and felt what I did not even think it necessary to put into words." Dostoyevsky's verdict calmed Turgenev's troubled

mind and he hoped that others would see what Dostoyevsky had found in it. "Now, I am no longer worried about my novel," he stated. "It has done what I intended it to do, and I have nothing to worry about."

But he did. The initial calm was replaced by a full-fledged hurricane. Up until that time Turgenev had been considered almost universally as a fine writer. Although he expected critics to take their usual pot shots at him, he felt secure as an author. It came as a real shock to him, therefore, to encounter widespread accusations that he had, in his book, expressed a personal hatred of the younger generation. In fact, very few people who saw themselves portrayed in the book had anything good to say about it. They latched on to the word "nihilist" as used by Turgenev in the novel, and never bothered to examine its true meaning. From that moment on, they went about blaming all the ills of the nation on nihilism in much the same manner as some people today see communist plots behind every disorder. It must have been extremely confusing to such a dedicated writer as Turgenev to be labeled both a revolutionary and a reactionary. Years later, he expressed his regret at ever having used the word in the novel, but defended it even then as being the exact and appropriate word for the facts he wished to describe.

It must not be thought, however, that Turgenev is as detached from his novel as it might appear. It is highly unlikely that he failed to share the dislike of Bazarov for the nobility. But Turgenev disliked them not as people but for their weaknesses and inability to cope with the world in which they lived. And let us not forget that Turgenev as a novelist was above all a realist. He did not wish to depict life as idyllic or show it in all its sordidness and injustice, but to portray it as it really was, with all its inherent good and evil, its beauty and ugliness. Turgenev may have disliked the nobility, but he knew them well, and he tempered his dislike with sympathy. He is such a craftsman that the reader finds himself sharing the sentiments of the author.

Even the minor events come out crystal clear. The description of Bazarov's illness was so authentic that it gave Chekhov, a physician as well as a writer, the feeling of having caught the infection from him.

In spite of Bazarov's rather clean-cut likes and dislikes, he remains somewhat of an enigma to many people. It may be some consolation to these that Turgenev himself confessed that he could not really explain how he had come to create him. He had no picture in his mind before he started to write, and the character of Bazarov that emerged simply flowed from his pen. He is undoubtedly the most real of all the characters, more international than Russian, and capable of being liked for what he is in spite of his imperfections. In fact, Turgenev himself could not understand why anyone would be offended by being compared to Bazarov. And yet Bazarov was precisely the person upon whom the critics centered their attacks. It took them at least fifteen years before they got around to a more laudatory approach.

The critics' attacks brought Turgenev to the point of swearing never to write again. Fortunately for the literary world, he changed his mind and we have as a result additional fine writing. In *Virgin Soil,* which was also, by the way, attacked by the critics, he returned to handle many of the beliefs that had been brought up in *Fathers and Sons.* The former also shows the same prophetic vision, but it is in *Fathers and Sons* that we can easily detect some of the earliest rumblings of the great revolution that was to shake Russia the following century. Turgenev, however, is too great an author to confine himself to one level of social conflict. There are many questions posed in this book, and a careful reading of it makes one realize how prophetic the story is. An important by-product of this reading is an increased admiration of the author.

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FATHERS AND SONS

1

"Well, Piotr, not in sight yet?" was the question asked on May the 20th, 1859, by a gentleman of a little over forty, in a dusty coat and checked trousers, who came out without his hat on to the low steps of the posting station at S——. He was addressing his servant, a chubby young fellow, with whitish down on his chin, and little, lack-lustre eyes.

The servant, in whom everything—the turquoise ring in his ear, the streaky hair plastered with grease, and the civility of his movements—indicated a man of the new, improved generation, glanced with an air of indulgence along the road, and made answer:

"No, sir; not in sight."

"Not in sight?" repeated his master.

"No, sir," responded the man a second time.

His master sighed, and sat down on a little bench. We will introduce him to the reader while he sits, his feet tucked under him, gazing thoughtfully round.

His name was Nikolai Petrovitch Kirsanov. He had twelve miles from the posting station, a fine property of two hundred souls, or, as he expressed it—since he had arranged the division of his land with the peasants, and started a "farm"—of nearly five thousand acres. His father, a general in the army, who served in 1812, a coarse, half-educated, but not ill-natured man, a typical Russian, had been in harness all his life, first in command of a brigade, and then of a division, and lived constantly in the provinces, where, by virtue of his rank, he played a fairly important part. Nikolai Petrovitch was born in the south of Russia like his elder brother, Pavel, of whom more hereafter. He was educated at home till he was fourteen, surrounded by cheap tutors, free-and-easy but toadying adjutants, and all the usual regimental and staff set. His mother, one of the Kolyazin family, as a girl called Agathe, but as a general's wife Agathokleya Kuzminishna Kirsanov, was one of those military ladies who take their full share of the duties and dignities of office. She wore gorgeous caps and rustling silk

dresses; in church she was the first to advance to the cross; she talked a great deal in a loud voice, let her children kiss her hand in the morning, and gave them her blessing at night—in fact, she got everything out of life she could. Nikolai Petrovitch, as a general's son—though so far from being distinguished by courage that he even deserved to be called "a funk"—was intended, like his brother Pavel, to enter the army; but he broke his leg on the very day when the news of his commission came, and, after being two months in bed, retained a slight limp to the end of his day. His father gave him up as a bad job, and let him go into the civil service. He took him to Petersburg directly he was eighteen, and placed him in the university. His brother happened about the same time to be made an officer in the Guards. The young men started living together in one set of rooms, under the remote supervision of a cousin on their mother's side, Ilya Kolyazin, an official of high rank. Their father returned to his division and his wife, and only rarely sent his sons large sheets of grey paper, scrawled over in a bold clerkly hand. At the bottom of these sheets stood in letters, enclosed carefully in scroll-work, the words, "Piotr Kirsanov, General-Major." In 1835 Nikolai Petrovitch left the university, a graduate, and in the same year General Kirsanov was put on the retired list after an unsuccessful review, and came to Petersburg with his wife to live. He was about to take a house in the Tavrichesky Gardens, and had joined the English club, but he died suddenly of an apoplectic fit. Agathokleya Kuzminishna soon followed him; she could not accustom herself to a dull life in the capital; she was consumed by the ennui of existence away from the regiment. Meanwhile Nikolai Petrovitch had already, in his parents' lifetime and to their no slight chagrin, had time to fall in love with the daughter of his landlord, a petty official, Prepolovensky. She was pretty, and, as it is called, an "advanced" girl; she used to read the serious articles in the "Science" column of the journals. He married her directly the term of mourning was over; and leaving the civil service in which his father had by favour procured him a post, was perfectly blissful with his Masha, first in a country villa near the Lyesny Institute, afterwards in town in a pretty little flat with a clean staircase and a draughty drawing-room, and then in the country, where he settled finally, and where in a short time a son, Arkady, was born to him. The young couple lived very happily and peacefully; they

were scarcely ever apart; they read together, sang and played duets together on the piano; she tended her flowers and looked after the poultry-yard; he sometimes went hunting, and busied himself with the estate, while Arkady grew and grew in the same happy and peaceful way. Ten years passed like a dream. In 1847 Kirsanov's wife died. He almost succumbed to this blow; in a few weeks his hair was grey; he was getting ready to go abroad, if possible to distract his mind . . . but then came the year 1848. He returned unwillingly to the country, and, after a rather prolonged period of inactivity, began to take an interest in improvements in the management of his land. In 1855 he brought his son to the university; he spent three winters with him in Petersburg, hardly going out anywhere, and trying to make acquaintance with Arkady's young companions. The last winter he had not been able to go, and here we have seen him in the May of 1859, already quite grey, stoutish, and rather bent, waiting for his son, who had just taken his degree, as once he had taken it himself.

The servant, from a feeling of propriety, and perhaps, too, not anxious to remain under the master's eye, had gone to the gate, and was smoking a pipe. Nikolai Petrovitch bent his head, and began staring at the crumbling steps; a big mottled fowl walked sedately towards him, treading firmly with its great yellow legs; a muddy cat gave him an unfriendly look, twisting herself coyly round the railing. The sun was scorching; from the half-dark passage of the posting station came an odour of hot rye-bread. Nikolai Petrovitch fell to dreaming. "My son . . . a graduate . . . Arkasha . . ." were the ideas that continually came round again and again in his head; he tried to think of something else, and again the same thoughts returned. He remembered his dead wife. . . . "She did not live to see it!" he murmured sadly. A plump, dark-blue pigeon flew into the road, and hurriedly went to drink in a puddle near the well. Nikolai Petrovitch began looking at it, but his ear had already caught the sound of approaching wheels.

"It sounds as if they're coming, sir," announced the servant, popping in from the gateway.

Nikolai Petrovitch jumped up, and bent his eyes on the road. A carriage appeared with three posting-horses harnessed abreast; in the carriage he caught a glimpse of the blue band of a student's cap, the familiar outline of a dear face.

"Arkasha! Arkasha!" cried Kirsanov, and he ran waving his hands. . . . A few instants later, his lips were pressed to the beardless, dusty, surburnt cheek of the youthful graduate.

2

"Let me shake myself first, daddy," said Arkady, in a voice tired from travelling, but boyish and clear as a bell, as he gaily responded to his father's caresses; "I am covering you with dust."

"Never mind, never mind," repeated Nikolai Petrovitch, smiling tenderly, and twice he struck the collar of his son's cloak and his own great-coat with his hand. "Let me have a look at you; let me have a look at you," he added, moving back from him, but immediately he went with hurried steps towards the yard of the station, calling, "This way, this way; and horses at once."

Nikolai Petrovitch seemed far more excited than his son; he seemed a little confused, a little timid. Arkady stopped him.

"Daddy," he said, "let me introduce you to my great friend, Bazarov, about whom I have so often written to you. He has been so good as to promise to stay with us."

Nikolai Petrovitch went back quickly, and going up to a tall man in a long, loose, rough coat with tassels, who had only just got out of the carriage, he warmly pressed the ungloved red hand, which the latter did not at once hold out to him.

"I am heartily glad," he began, "and very grateful for your kind intention of visiting us. . . . Let me know your name, and your father's."

"Yevgeny Vassilyev," answered Bazarov, in a lazy but manly voice; and turning back the collar of his rough coat, he showed Nikolai Petrovitch his whole face. It was long and lean, with a broad forehead, a nose flat at the base and sharper at the end, large greenish eyes, and drooping whiskers of a sandy colour; it was lighted up by a tranquil smile, and showed self-confidence and intelligence.

"I hope, dear Yevgeny Vassilyitch, you won't be dull with us," continued Nikolai Petrovitch.

Bazarov's thin lips moved just perceptibly, though he made no reply, but merely took off his cap. His long, thick hair did not hide the prominent bumps on his head.

"Then, Arkady," Nikolai Petrovitch began again, turning to his son, "shall the horses be put to at once, or would you like to rest?"

"We will rest at home, daddy; tell them to harness the horses."

"At once, at once," his father assented. "Hey, Piotr, do you hear? Get things ready, my good boy; look sharp."

Piotr, who as a modernised servant had not kissed the young master's hand, but only bowed to him from a distance, again vanished through the gateway.

"I came here with the carriage, but there are three horses for your coach too," said Nikolai Petrovitch fussily, while Arkady drank some water from an iron dipper brought him by the woman in charge of the station, and Bazarov began smoking a pipe and went up to the driver, who was taking out the horses; "there are only two seats in the carriage, and I don't know how your friend . . ."

"He will go in the coach," interposed Arkady in an undertone. "You must not stand on ceremony with him, please. He's a splendid fellow, so simple—you will see."

Nikolai Petrovitch's coachman brought the horses round.

"Come, hurry up, bushy beard!" said Bazarov, addressing the driver.

"Do you hear, Mityuha," put in another driver, standing by with his hands thrust behind him into the opening of his sheepskin coat, "what the gentleman called you? It's bushy beard you are too."

Mityuha only gave a jog to his hat and pulled the reins off the heated shaft-horse.

"Look sharp, look sharp, lads, lend a hand," cried Nikolai Petrovitch; "there'll be something to drink our health with!"

In a few minutes the horses were harnessed; the father and son were installed in the carriage; Piotr climbed up on to the box; Bazarov jumped into the coach, and nestled his head down into the leather cushion; and both the vehicles rolled away.

3

"So here you are, a graduate at last, and come home again," said Nikolai Petrovitch, touching Arkady now on the shoulder, now on the knee. "At last!"

"And how is uncle, quite well?" asked Arkady who, in spite of the genuine, almost childish delight filling his heart, wanted as soon as possible to turn the conversation from the emotional into a commonplace channel.

"Quite well. He was thinking of coming with me to meet you, but for some reason or other he gave up the idea."

"And how long have you been waiting for me?" inquired Arkady.

"Oh, about five hours."

"Dear old dad!"

Arkady turned round quickly to his father, and gave him a sounding kiss on the cheek. Nikolai Petrovitch gave vent to a low chuckle.

"I have got such a capital horse for you!" he began. "You will see. And your room has been fresh papered."

"And is there a room for Bazarov?"

"We will find one for him too."

"Please, dad, make much of him. I can't tell you how I prize his friendship."

"Have you made friends with him lately?"

"Yes, quite lately."

"Ah, that's how it is I did not see him last winter. What does he study?"

"His chief subject is natural science. But he knows everything. Next year he wants to take his doctor's degree."

"Ah! he's in the medical faculty," observed Nikolai Petrovitch, and he was silent for a little. "Piotr," he went on, stretching out his hand, "aren't those our peasants driving along?"

Piotr looked where his master was pointing. Some carts harnessed with unbridled horses were moving rapidly along a narrow by-road. In each cart there were one or two peasants in sheepskin coats, unbuttoned.

"Yes, sir," replied Piotr.

"Where are they going,—to the town?"

"To the town, I suppose. To the gin-shop," he added contemptuously, turning slightly towards the coachman, as though he would appeal to him. But the latter did not stir a muscle; he was a man of the old stamp, and did not share the modern views of the younger generation.

"I have had a lot of bother with the peasants this year," pursued Nikolai Petrovitch, turning to his son. "They won't pay their rent. What is one to do?"

"But do you like your hired labourers?"

"Yes," said Nikolai Petrovitch between his teeth. "They are being set against me, that's the mischief; and they don't do their best. They spoil the tools. But they have tilled the land pretty fairly. When things have settled down a bit, it will be all right. Do you take an interest in farming now?"

"You've no shade; that's a pity," remarked Arkady, without answering the last question.

"I have had a great awning put up on the north side over the balcony," observed Nikolai Petrovitch; "now we can have dinner even in the open air."

"It'll be rather too like a summer villa. . . . Still, that's all nonsense. What air though here! How delicious it smells! Really I fancy there's nowhere such fragrance in the world as in the meadows here! And the sky, too."

Arkady suddenly stopped short, cast a stealthy look behind him, and said no more.

"Of course," observed Nikolai Petrovitch, "you were born here, and so everything is bound to strike you in a special——"

"Come, dad, that makes no difference where a man is born."

"Still——"

"No; it makes absolutely no difference."

Nikolai Petrovitch gave a sidelong glance at his son, and the carriage went on half-a-mile further before the conversation was renewed between them.

"I don't recollect whether I wrote to you," began Nikolai Petrovitch, "your old nurse, Yegorovna, is dead."

"Really? Poor thing! Is Prokofitch still living?"

"Yes, and not a bit changed. As grumbling as ever. In fact, you won't find many changes in Maryino."

"Have you still the same bailiff?"

"Well, to be sure, there is a change there. I decided not to keep about me any freed serfs, who have been house servants, or, at least, not to intrust them with duties of any responsibility." (Arkady glanced towards Piotr.) *"Il est*

libre, en effet," observed Nikolai Petrovitch in an undertone; "but, you see, he's only a valet. Now I have a bailiff, a townsman; he seems a practical fellow. I pay him two hundred and fifty rubles a year. But," added Nikolai Petrovitch, rubbing his forehead and eyebrows with his hand, which was always an indication with him of inward embarrassment, "I told you just now that you would not find changes at Maryino. . . . That's not quite correct. I think it my duty to prepare you, though . . ."

He hesitated for an instant, and then went on in French.

"A severe moralist would regard my openness as improper; but, in the first place, it can't be concealed, and secondly, you are aware I have always had peculiar ideas as regards the relation of father and son. Though, of course, you would be right in blaming me. At my age . . . In short . . . that . . . that girl, about whom you have probably heard already . . ."

"Fenitchka?" asked Arkady easily.

Nikolai Petrovitch blushed. "Don't mention her name aloud, please. . . . Well . . . she is living with me now. I have installed her in the house . . . there were two little rooms there. But that can all be changed?"

"Goodness, daddy, what for?"

"Your friend is going to stay with us . . . it would be awkward . . ."

"Please, don't be uneasy on Bazarov's account. He's above all that."

"Well, but you, too," added Nikolai Petrovitch. "The little lodge is so horrid—that's the worst of it."

"Goodness, dad," interposed Arkady, "it's as if you were apologising; I wonder you're not ashamed."

"Of course, I ought to be ashamed," answered Nikolai Petrovitch, flushing more and more.

"Nonsense, dad, nonsense; please don't!" Arkady smiled affectionately. "What a thing to apologise for!" he thought to himself, and his heart was filled with a feeling of condescending tenderness for his kind, soft-hearted father, mixed with a sense of secret superiority. "Please stop," he repeated once more, instinctively revelling in a consciousness of his own advanced and emancipated condition.

Nikolai Petrovitch glanced at him from under the fingers of the hand with which he was still rubbing his forehead, and there was a pang in his heart. . . . But at once he blamed himself for it.