



• A BEDSIDE CLASSIC • A BEDSIDE CLASSIC • A BEDSIDE CLASSIC • A BEDSIDE CLASSIC •

ANNA KARENINA

(Volume 2)

by Leo Tolstoy

Translated by C. Garnett



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PART FIVE

CHAPTER 1

Princess Shtcherbatskaya considered that it was out of the question for the wedding to take place before Lent, just five weeks off, since not half the trousseau could possibly be ready by that time. But she could not but agree with Levin that to fix it for after Lent would be putting it off too late, as an old aunt of Prince Shtcherbatsky's was seriously ill and might die, and then the mourning would delay the wedding still longer. And therefore, deciding to divide the trousseau into two parts—a larger and smaller trousseau—the princess consented to have the wedding before Lent. She determined that she would get the smaller part of the trousseau all ready now, and the larger part should be made later, and she was much vexed with Levin because he was incapable of giving her a serious answer to the question whether he agreed to this arrangement or not. The arrangement was the more suitable as, immediately after the wedding, the young people were to go to the country, where the more important part of the trousseau would not be wanted.

Levin still continued in the same delirious condition in which it seemed to him that he and his happiness constituted the chief and sole aim of all existence, and that he need not now think or care about anything, that everything was being done and would be done for him by others. He had not even plans and aims for the future, he left its arrangement to others, knowing that everything would be delightful. His brother Sergey Ivanovitch, Stepan Arkadyevitch, and the princess

guided him in doing what he had to do. All he did was to agree entirely with everything suggested to him. His brother raised money for him, the princess advised him to leave Moscow after the wedding. Stepan Arkadyevitch advised him to go abroad. He agreed to everything. "Do what you choose, if it amuses you. I'm happy, and my happiness can be no greater and no less for anything you do," he thought. When he told Kitty of Stepan Arkadyevitch's advice that they should go abroad, he was much surprised that she did not agree to this, and had some definite requirements of her own in regard to their future. She knew Levin had work he loved in the country. She did not, as he saw, understand this work, she did not even care to understand it. But that did not prevent her from regarding it as a matter of great importance. And then she knew their home would be in the country, and she wanted to go, not abroad where she was not going to live, but to the place where their home would be. This definitely expressed purpose astonished Levin. But since he did not care either way, he immediately asked Stepan Arkadyevitch, as though it were his duty, to go down to the country and to arrange everything there to the best of his ability with the taste of which he had so much.

"But I say," Stepan Arkadyevitch said to him one day after he had come back from the country, where he had got everything ready for the young people's arrival, "have you a certificate of having been at confession?"

"No. But what of it?"

"You can't be married without it."

"*Aie, aie, aie!*" cried Levin. "Why, I believe it's nine years since I've taken the sacrament! I never thought of it."

"You're a pretty fellow!" said Stepan Arkadyevitch laughing, "and you call me a Nihilist! But this won't do, you know. You must take the sacrament."

"When? There are four days left now."

Stepan Arkadyevitch arranged this also, and Levin had to go to confession. To Levin, as to any unbeliever who respects the beliefs of others, it was exceedingly disagreeable to be present at and take part in church ceremonies. At this moment, in his present softened state of feeling, sensitive to everything, this inevitable act of hypocrisy was not merely painful to Levin, it seemed to him utterly impossible. Now, in the heyday of his highest glory, his fullest flower, he would have to be a liar or a scoffer. He felt incapable of being either. But though he repeatedly plied Stepan Arkadyevitch with questions as to the possibility of obtaining a certificate without actually communicating, Stepan Arkadyevitch maintained that it was out of the question.

"Besides, what is it to you—two days? And he's an awfully nice clever old fellow. He'll pull the tooth out for you so gently, you won't notice it."

Standing at the first litany, Levin attempted to revive in himself his youthful recollections of the intense religious emotion he had passed through between the ages of sixteen and seventeen.

But he was at once convinced that it was utterly impossible to him. He attempted to look at it all as an empty custom, having no sort of meaning, like the custom of paying calls. But he felt that he could not do that either. Levin found himself, like the majority of his contemporaries, in the vaguest position in regard to religion. Believe he could not, and at the same time he had no firm conviction that it was all wrong. And consequently, not being able to believe in the significance of what he was doing nor to regard it with indifference as an empty formality, during the whole period of preparing for the sacrament he was conscious of a feeling of discomfort and shame at doing what he did not himself understand, and what, as an inner voice told him, was therefore false and

wrong.

During the service he would first listen to the prayers, trying to attach some meaning to them not discordant with his own views; then feeling that he could not understand and must condemn them, he tried not to listen to them, but to attend to the thoughts, observations, and memories which floated through his brain with extreme vividness during this idle time of standing in church.

He had stood through the litany, the evening service and the midnight service, and the next day he got up earlier than usual, and without having tea went at eight o'clock in the morning to the church for the morning service and the confession.

There was no one in the church but a beggar soldier, two old women, and the church officials. A young deacon, whose long back showed in two distinct halves through his thin undercassock, met him, and at once going to a little table at the wall read the exhortation. During the reading, especially at the frequent and rapid repetition of the same words, "Lord, have mercy on us!" which resounded with an echo, Levin felt that thought was shut and sealed up, and that it must not be touched or stirred now or confusion would be the result; and so standing behind the deacon he went on thinking of his own affairs, neither listening nor examining what was said. "It's wonderful what expression there is in her hand," he thought, remembering how they had been sitting the day before at a corner table. They had nothing to talk about, as was almost always the case at this time, and laying her hand on the table she kept opening and shutting it, and laughed herself as she watched her action. He remembered how he had kissed it and then had examined the lines on the pink palm. "Have mercy on us again!" thought Levin, crossing himself, bowing, and looking at the supple spring of the deacon's back bowing before him. "She took my hand then and

examined the lines 'You've got a splendid hand,' she said." And he looked at his own hand and the short hand of the deacon. "Yes, now it will soon be over," he thought. "No, it seems to be beginning again," he thought, listening to the prayers. "No, it's just ending: there he is bowing down to the ground. That's always at the end."

The deacon's hand in a plush cuff accepted a three-rouble note unobtrusively, and the deacon said he would put it down in the register, and his new boots creaking jauntily over the flagstones of the empty church, he went to the altar. A moment later he peeped out thence and beckoned to Levin. Thought, till then locked up, began to stir in Levin's head, but he made haste to drive it away. "It will come right somehow," he thought, and went towards the altar-rails. He went up the steps, and turning to the right saw the priest. The priest, a little old man with a scanty grizzled beard and weary, good-natured eyes, was standing at the altar-rails, turning over the pages of a missal. With a slight bow to Levin he began immediately reading prayers in the official voice. When he had finished them he bowed down to the ground and turned, facing Levin.

"Christ is present here unseen, receiving your confession," he said, pointing to the crucifix. "Do you believe in all the doctrines of the Holy Apostolic Church?" the priest went on, turning his eyes away from Levin's face and folding his hands under his stole.

"I have doubted, I doubt everything," said Levin in a voice that jarred on himself, and he ceased speaking.

The priest waited a few seconds to see if he would not say more, and closing his eyes he said quickly, with a broad, Vladimirsky accent:

"Doubt is natural to the weakness of mankind, but we must pray that God in His mercy will strengthen us. What are your special sins?" he added, without the

slightest interval, as though anxious not to waste time.

"My chief sin is doubt. I have doubts of everything, and for the most part I am in doubt."

"Doubt is natural to the weakness of mankind," the priest repeated the same words. "What do you doubt about principally?"

"I doubt of everything. I sometimes even have doubts of the existence of God," Levin could not help saying, and he was horrified at the impropriety of what he was saying. But Levin's words did not, it seemed, make much impression on the priest.

"What sort of doubt can there be of the existence of God?" he said hurriedly, with a just perceptible smile.

Levin did not speak.

"What doubt can you have of the Creator when you behold His creation?" the priest went on in the rapid customary jargon. "Who has decked the heavenly firmament with its lights? Who has clothed the earth in its beauty? How explain it without the Creator?" he said, looking inquiringly at Levin.

Levin felt that it would be improper to enter upon a metaphysical discussion with the priest, and so he said in reply merely what was a direct answer to the question.

"I don't know," he said.

"You don't know! Then how can you doubt that God created all?" the priest said, with good-humored perplexity.

"I don't understand it at all," said Levin, blushing, and feeling that his words were stupid, and that they could not be anything but stupid in such a position.

"Pray to God and beseech Him. Even the holy fathers had doubts, and prayed to God to strengthen their faith. The devil has great power, and we must resist him. Pray to God, beseech Him. Pray to God," he repeated hurriedly.

The priest paused for some time, as though meditating.

"You're about, I hear, to marry the daughter of my parishioner and son in the spirit, Prince Shtcherbatsky?" he resumed, with a smile. "An excellent young lady."

"Yes," answered Levin, blushing for the priest. "What does he want to ask me about this at confession for?" he thought.

And, as though answering his thought, the priest said to him:

"You are about to enter into holy matrimony, and God may bless you with offspring. Well, what sort of bringing-up can you give your babes if you do not overcome the temptation of the devil, enticing you to infidelity?" he said, with gentle reproachfulness. "If you love your child as a good father, you will not desire only wealth, luxury, honor for your infant; you will be anxious for his salvation, his spiritual enlightenment with the light of truth. Eh? What answer will you make him when the innocent babe asks you: 'Papa! who made all that enchants me in this world—the earth, the waters, the sun, the flowers, the grass?' Can you say to him: 'I don't know'? You cannot but know, since the Lord God in His infinite mercy has revealed it to us. Or your child will ask you: 'What awaits me in the life beyond the tomb?' What will you say to him when you know nothing? How will you answer him? Will you leave him to the allurements of the world and the devil? That's not right," he said, and he stopped, putting his head on one side and looking at Levin with his kindly, gentle eyes.

Levin made no answer this time, not because he did not want to enter upon a discussion with the priest, but because, so far, no one had ever asked him such questions, and when his babes did ask him those questions, it would be time enough to think about answering them.

"You are entering upon a time of life," pursued the priest, "when you must choose your path and keep to

it. Pray to God that He may in His mercy aid you and have mercy on you!" he concluded. "Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, in the abundance and riches of His lovingkindness, forgives this child..." and, finishing the prayer of absolution, the priest blessed him and dismissed him.

On getting home that day, Levin had a delightful sense of relief at the awkward position being over and having been got through without his having to tell a lie. Apart from this, there remained a vague memory that what the kind, nice old fellow had said had not been at all so stupid as he had fancied at first, and that there was something in it that must be cleared up.

"Of course, not now," thought Levin, "but some day later on." Levin felt more than ever now that there was something not clear and not clean in his soul, and that, in regard to religion, he was in the same position which he perceived so clearly and disliked in others, and for which he blamed his friend Sviazhsky.

Levin spent that evening with his betrothed at Dolly's, and was in very high spirits. To explain to Stepan Arkadyevitch the state of excitement in which he found himself, he said that he was happy like a dog being trained to jump through a hoop, who, having at last caught the idea, and done what was required of him, whines and wags its tail, and jumps up to the table and the windows in its delight.

CHAPTER 2

On the day of the wedding, according to the Russian custom (the princess and Darya Alexandrovna insisted on strictly keeping all the customs), Levin did not see his betrothed, and dined at his hotel with three bachelor friends, casually brought together at his

rooms. These were Sergey Ivanovitch, Katavasov, a university friend, now professor of natural science, whom Levin had met in the street and insisted on taking home with him, and Tchirikov, his best man, a Moscow conciliation-board judge, Levin's companion in his bear-hunts. The dinner was a very merry one: Sergey Ivanovitch was in his happiest mood, and was much amused by Katavasov's originality. Katavasov, feeling his originality was appreciated and understood, made the most of it. Tchirikov always gave a lively and good-humored support to conversation of any sort.

"See, now," said Katavasov, drawling his words from a habit acquired in the lecture-room, "what a capable fellow was our friend Konstantin Dmitrievitch. I'm not speaking of present company, for he's absent. At the time he left the university he was fond of science, took an interest in humanity; now one-half of his abilities is devoted to deceiving himself, and the other to justifying the deceit."

"A more determined enemy of matrimony than you I never saw," said Sergey Ivanovitch.

"Oh, no, I'm not an enemy of matrimony. I'm in favor of division of labor. People who can do nothing else ought to rear people while the rest work for their happiness and enlightenment. That's how I look at it. To muddle up two trades is the error of the amateur; I'm not one of their number."

"How happy I shall be when I hear that you're in love!" said Levin. "Please invite me to the wedding."

"I'm in love now."

"Yes, with a cuttlefish! You know," Levin turned to his brother, "Mihail Semyonovitch is writing a work on the digestive organs of the..."

"Now, make a muddle of it! It doesn't matter what about. And the fact is, I certainly do love cuttlefish."

"But that's no hindrance to your loving your wife."

"The cuttlefish is no hindrance. The wife is the hindrance."

"Why so?"

"Oh, you'll see! You care about farming, hunting,—well, you'd better look out!"

"Arhip was here today; he said there were a lot of elks in Prudno, and two bears," said Tchirikov.

"Well, you must go and get them without me."

"Ah, that's the truth," said Sergey Ivanovitch. "And you may say good-bye to bear-hunting for the future—your wife won't allow it!"

Levin smiled. The picture of his wife not letting him go was so pleasant that he was ready to renounce the delights of looking upon bears forever.

"Still, it's a pity they should get those two bears without you. Do you remember last time at Hapilovo? That was a delightful hunt!" said Tchirikov.

Levin had not the heart to disillusion him of the notion that there could be something delightful apart from her, and so said nothing.

"There's some sense in this custom of saying good-bye to bachelor life," said Sergey Ivanovitch. "However happy you may be, you must regret your freedom."

"And confess there is a feeling that you want to jump out of the window, like Gogol's bridegroom?"

"Of course there is, but it isn't confessed," said Katavasov, and he broke into loud laughter.

"Oh, well, the window's open. Let's start off this instant to Tver! There's a big she-bear; one can go right up to the lair. Seriously, let's go by the five o'clock! And here let them do what they like," said Tchirikov, smiling.

"Well, now, on my honor," said Levin, smiling, "I can't find in my heart that feeling of regret for my freedom."

"Yes, there's such a chaos in your heart just now that you can't find anything there," said Katavasov. "Wait a bit, when you set it to rights a little, you'll find it!"

"No; if so, I should have felt a little, apart from my