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THE TWO FRIENDS

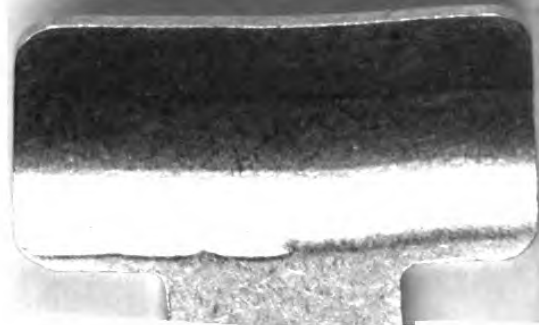
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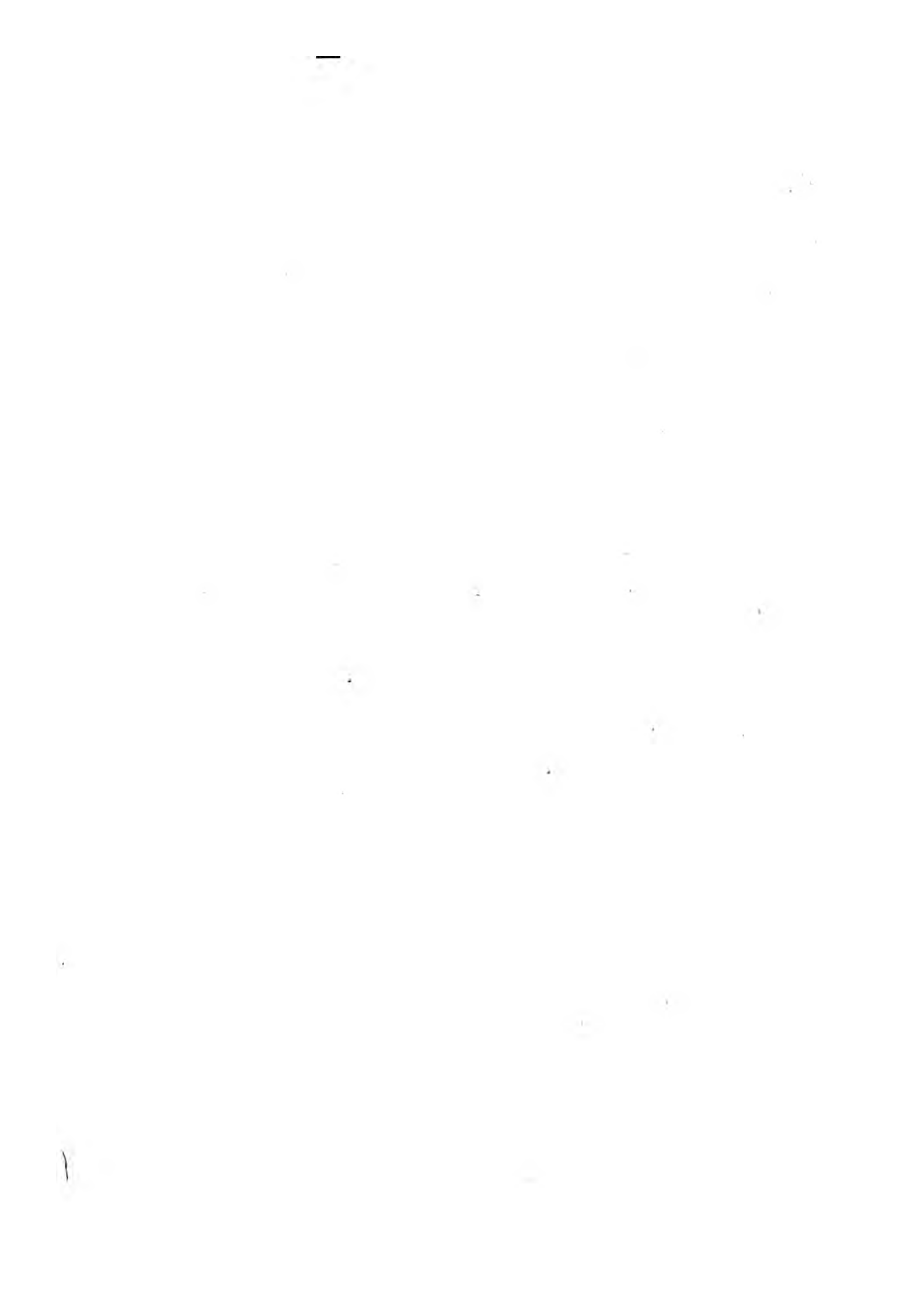
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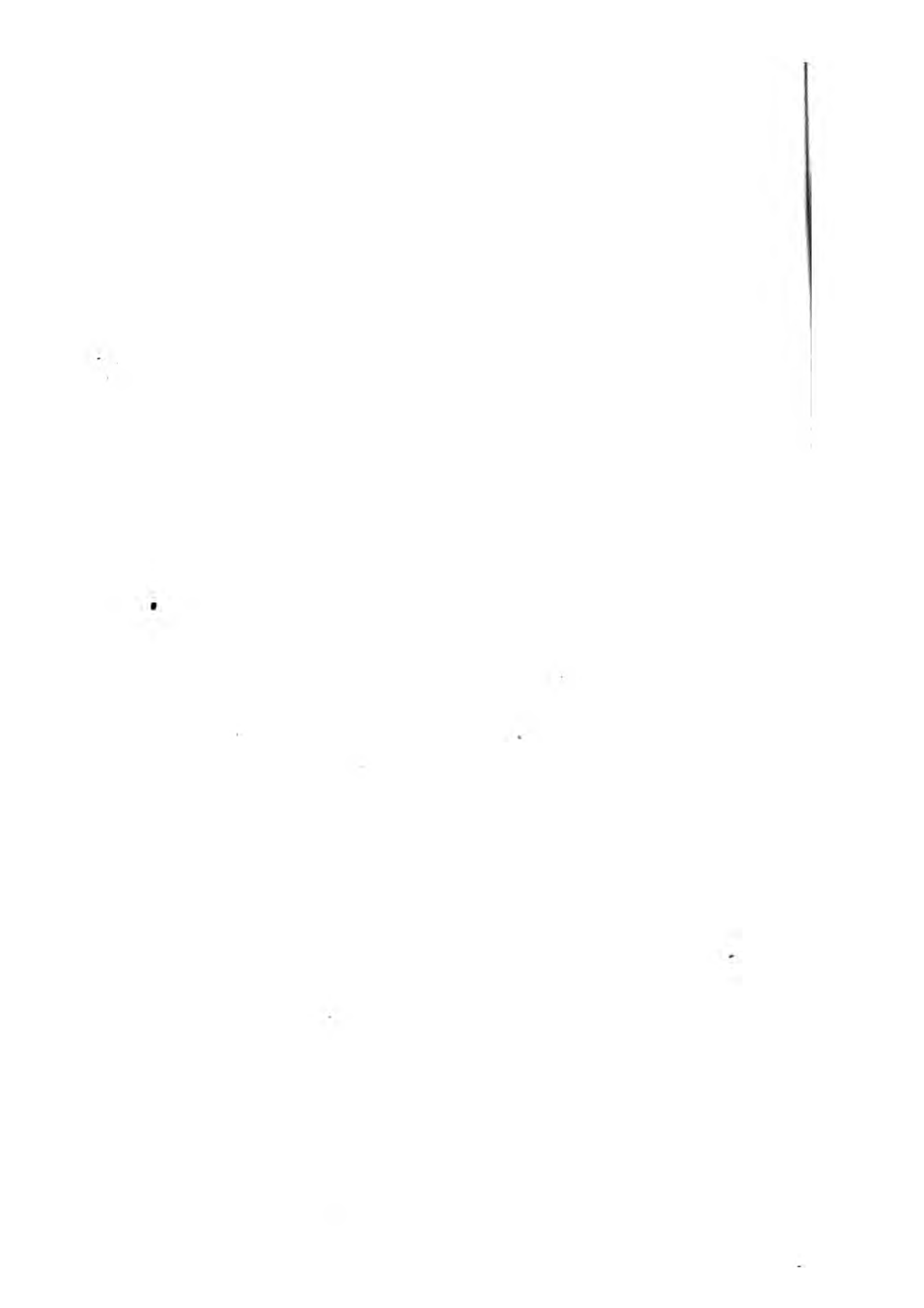
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THE TWO FRIENDS

BY

IVAN TOURGENIEFF

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NOEL EVANS

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“ One unlooked-for development of the hundred years between 2000 and 2100 was the way in which Basic English became in that short time the common language for use between nations. . . . By 2020 almost everyone was able to make use of Basic for talking and writing.”—H. G. Wells.

Put into Basic from *The Shape of Things to Come*.



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TO THE READER



Basic English, into which this story has been put, is a form of English designed for international use. History and natural causes have made English the most talked language of the earth. But English is a language of a quarter of a million words and at school, time and attention are limited. So two questions have naturally been troubling the teachers: "How small a number of these English words will give the learner a second language?" and "How simple is it possible to make the teaching of them?" From Basic comes the comforting answer, "850 words are enough for all the purposes of everyday existence, and the Basic system is so simple that a quick learner will be talking freely in a month."

In the selection of Basic Readers, we have taken most of our examples from great writers, firstly because the quality of their work is not open to question, and secondly because, for those who are using Basic as a starting-point for a wider knowledge of English (and there will be a number of such learners), the Basic parallel

may be used as a bridge to the writers themselves.

The first Russian material to be given a Basic form (1934) was Tolstoi's *Stories for the Young*. Tourgenieff was not writing for the young or for schools, but Mr. Evans has taken "The Two Friends" because there is general agreement about the delicate observation and quiet humour in this account of the attempts made by Pyotr Vassilyitch to get his friend Boris Andreyitch married.

It will be seen from the list of Basic works printed at the end that there is a good selection of reading material for persons of all tastes. For those interested in learning Russian with the help of this story in its Russian form, there is now *The Basis and Essentials of Russian* by Charles Duff and A. Krougliakoff (The Orthological Institute, 5/-); and for learners in the U.S.S.R. there is the Russian form of *Basic Step by Step* by Ivy Litvinoff (1935), with a number of Basic books printed in Moscow for school use.

C. K. OGDEN.

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Cambridge, England.

THE TWO FRIENDS

One spring day in 184—, a young man of 26, named Boris Andreyitch Vyazovnin, came back to his house and family property in the middle of Russia. He had given up his position in the Government a short time before 'for family reasons' and he had the idea that he might go and take care of his land. A good idea, it is true, but Boris Andreyitch had taken it up, as young men frequently do, without any desire to do so. Every year his income had become smaller and his debts greater. He saw that it was not possible for him to go on being in the government and living in Petersburg—in other words, that it was not possible to go on with his present existence. So, though not specially interested, he made the decision that he would give one or two years to putting right those conditions which had made him give up his position and go back to his country property.

His property was in a bad condition. No care had been taken of his fields and gardens and his house was almost falling down, so he put in a new head man and gave less money to his house servants. He had two or three rooms put in order for his use and he gave directions for the roof to be put right where the rain came through. He did not, however, do anything very important or make anything better, for the very good reason that it is necessary to be certain what one's desires are before doing so.

He made a start at learning something about farming and, as one says, 'to go into things.' It is necessary to say, however, that 'he went into things' slowly and without much interest. A country existence, being new to him, seemed uninteresting, and frequently he had no idea what to do with his time. There was quite a number of persons living in that part, but he had not made friends with any of them, not because he kept away from them, but because, simply by chance, he had not come across them. But at last he did have a meeting with the man living nearest him, whose name was Pyotr Vassilyitch Krupitsyn.

He had once been in the army—a horseman—but gave it up before he had got very far.

An argument had been going on, for how long no one was able to say, between his land workers and those of Vyazovnin, about seven acres of grass land. Sometimes there were fights about it. Dry grass would be moved in a strange way from place to place, all sorts of unpleasing things went on, and would have done so for years longer, if Krupitsyn, hearing by chance that Boris Andreyitch was a quiet sort of person, had not himself gone to him to have a talk about the question.

The meeting had a very happy outcome. In the first place the trouble was put an end to for ever, the two being equally pleased by the agreement, and in the second place the two men were pleased with one another. They had frequent meetings and by the winter were such good friends that one was never seen without the other.

But they did not have much in common. Vyazovnin's family had been very well-off, though he himself was not ; he had had a good education and been at the University;

he had a knowledge of more than one language and got much pleasure from reading. He was, in fact, a man of learning and good taste. Krupitsyn, on the other hand, was bad at French, never took up a book if it was not necessary, and was a man of little education.

In addition, the two friends were very different physically : Vyazovnin was quite tall, thin, with light-coloured hair like an Englishman. He kept himself, specially his hands, very clean ; his dress was in very good taste and he gave much attention to his neck bands—in fact, he had clearly been living in Petersburg ! Krupitsyn, on the other hand, had black hair and was dark-skinned, short and bent, and he went about in winter and summer in a brown overcoat like a bag, with the pockets pulled out of position. “ It is a good colour,” Pyotr would say “ because one is unable to see how dirty it is.” This was true though the cloth itself was very dirty.

Vyazovnin took a pleasure in delicate food and was given to talking with interest about good meals and the important part played by taste. Krupitsyn would take anything solid which was

given to him. If thick soup with grain was offered to him he would take the soup with pleasure—and the grain in addition ; if he was offered German clear soup he would take it with the same pleasure, and if there was any grain he would put it into the soup and it would seem all right to him.

His love for iced Russian soup was “ as great as his love for his father ” as he said. But French wines, specially the red ones, he had no taste for at all, and he said they were like acid. In fact Krupitsyn took things as they came ; but Vyazovnin, on the other hand had clean pocket-linen twice every day.

In fact the two friends were very unlike, but there was a certain quality they had in common ; they were straight-forward, pleasing young men. Krupitsyn had this quality from birth ; Vyazovnin got it later. In addition they had no interest in anything special. Krupitsyn was six or eight years older than Vyazovnin.

Every day was much the same. Generally, about 10 in the morning, Boris Andreyitch would still be seated with a book and a cup of tea by the window, combed and washed, with his

good-looking dressing coat unbuttoned and a shirt as white as snow. Opening the door, Pyotr Vassilyitch would come in, dressed as generally was with very little care. His small property was less than half a mile from Vyazovno (as Boris Andreyitch's property was named), but Pyotr Vassilyitch frequently came to Boris Andreyitch's for the night.

“ Ah, good morning,” they would say together. “ Did you have a good sleep?”

Then Fedyushka, a boy fifteen years old, dressed like a Cossack, whose very hair, as upright as the feathers of a bird in spring, seemed to be sleeping, would give Pyotr his dressing coat of Bokhara cloth; and Pyotr, after clearing his throat, would put it round him and make a start on his tea and his pipe.

Then there would be talk, slow talk stopping and starting again, talk of the weather, of the day before, of the work, of the fields, of the price of grain; talk of those living near them, the landowners and their families.

It seemed to Pyotr Vassilyitch when he first became a friend of Boris Andreyitch that it was right for him—and he was pleased to have the chance—to put

questions to his friend about what went on in Petersburg, about learning and good taste and about very important things generally.

He was interested and frequently surprised by Boris Andreyitch's answers; they kept his attention but at the same time made him tired, so that all talks of this sort were quickly ended; and Boris Andreyitch himself gave no sign of desiring to go on with them again. It would come about after a time, but not frequently, that Pyotr Vassilyitch would say something to Boris Andreyitch about what sort of thing the electric telephone was, for example. And after giving his attention to Boris Andreyitch's not very clear answer, he would be quiet for a short time and then say :

“ Yes, it's very strange,” and he would put no more questions about this sort of thing to Vyazovnin for a long time after.

Most of their talks were like this. . . . Pyotr Vassilyitch, after pulling at his pipe and blowing the smoke through his nose, would put some question :

“ Who is this new girl you have got? I saw her on the back steps, Boris Andreyitch.”

Boris Andreyitch, in his turn, would put his cigarette to his lips and then after smoking it for a minute, take a small amount of cold tea, with thick milk, and say :

“ What new girl?”

And Pyotr Vassilyitch, with his head bent and turned a little to one side so as to see into the square in front of the house where a dog had given a boy without shoes a bite in the leg, would make answer :

“ The one with white hair—not bad-looking.”

“ Ah!” Boris Andreyitch would say after a minute, “ that is the new girl who does the washing.”

“ Where does she come from?” Pyotr Vassilyitch would put the question as if he was surprised.

“ From Moscow, she has been learning there.” And nothing more would be said for a time.

“ What number of washing girls have you got, Boris Andreyitch?” says Pyotr Vassilyitch, looking with attention at the tobacco which was burning with a dry noise at the base of his pipe, and blowing on it.

“ Three.”

“ Three ! And I have only one, and there is almost nothing for that one to do. But its no news to you that we don't have very much washing.”

“ H'm,” says Boris Andreyitch, and then they would say nothing for a time.

The morning would go by in this way till it was time for the middle-day meal. This Pyotr Vassilyitch took great pleasure in, and he said that 12 was the very time when a man was in most need of food. In fact, he took his food at that time in such a good humour and so readily that it would have made even a German happy to see him ! Such a desire did Pyotr Vassilyitch have for his food ! Boris Andreyitch took much less—a delicately cooked bit of young fowl, or two eggs and butter and some English dressing, in a special pot, for which he had given much money and which seemed disgusting to him though he said he would not take anything without it.

If the weather was good the two friends gave their attention, between one meal and another, to the work on the farm, or went walking or took a look at the young horses being trained. Sometimes they went

to Pyotr Vassilyitch's property and sometimes they went inside the house. This little house was very small and old and much more like that of a land worker than of a landowner. The dry grass roof was so old that it had become green and was full of birds; the wood walls were no longer at right angles—in fact, Pyotr Vassilyitch's house was poor outside and poor inside.

But that did not make him unhappy. Being an unmarried man and not interested in details like this, small comforts seemed unimportant to him, and a small place where he was able to take cover from the cold and the bad weather was enough for him. His housekeeper, named Makedonia, was a woman of about 45, of great industry and even upright—but she had unhappy hands. The plates were smashed; she made holes in the linen; the food was uncooked or burned. Pyotr Vassilyitch gave her the name Caligula.

Having a natural tendency to be kind to his friends, Pyotr Vassilyitch was pleased to have them in his house and to give them food and drink, though he had not much money. He did his best when Boris Andreyitch came to see him, but because of Makedonia they frequently did

not have more than an old bit of dry fish and a glass of vodka, though she made very great attempts to do things well. Pyotr Vassilyitch would say truly that it was very good *against* the stomach.

After going for a walk the friends would go back to Boris Andrevitch's house and quietly have their second meal. Pyotr Vassilyitch took as much pleasure in this as if it was his first meal that day and he would then go away to some quiet place and have a sleep for two or three hours while Boris Andreyitch would be reading papers from other countries.

At nightfall the two friends would see one another again—so great was the attraction they had for one another. Their amusements were playing cards, or talking as in the morning. Sometimes Pyotr Vassilyitch would take a *guitar*¹ from the wall and give a song in a high pleasing voice. Music gave Pyotr Vassilyitch much pleasure ; much more than it gave his friend, though Boris Andreyitch was unable to say the name, Beethoven, without getting worked up, and though he was frequently talking of ordering a piano from Moscow.

¹ A music instrument with six cords played with the fingers.

When he was sad or unhappy Pyotr Vassilyitch, with great feeling and somewhat through his nose, would give a song which had to do with the time when he was in the army.

Sometimes Boris Andreyitch would take the second part in the song, but his voice was unpleasing and at times he got the wrong notes. The two friends said goodnight to one another at about 10, or earlier, and the day after they would go through the same programme.

One day, seated as he generally was, a little on one side and facing Boris Andreyitch, Pyotr Vassilyitch said in a quiet voice, looking straight at him

“ There is one thing I am surprised at, Boris Andreyitch.”

“ What is that?”

“ It is this. You are young, you have brains, you have had a good education. Why are you living in the country?”

Boris Andreyitch gave his friend a look of surprise.

“ Why? Clearly, Pyotr Vassilyitch,” he said at last “ that but for my conditions. . . that I am forced to do so by my conditions Pyotr Vassilyitch.”

“ Conditions? There is nothing wrong with your conditions so far. With your property you are in a good enough position. Why don't you go into the army? If I was in your place I would go into the Uhlans.”

“ The Uhlans? Why into the Uhlans?”

“ Oh, it seems to me it would be best for you to go into the Uhlans.”

“ But you were in the Hussars weren't you?”

“ I? Yes, certainly I was in the Hussars,” Pyotr Vassilyitch said, quickly. “ And what men they were! They have no equals anywhere on earth! They were gold. The men I took orders from! And my friends! What men they were! But you, I am not certain it seems to me that your place is in the Uhlans. You are light-skinned and you are delicately made, like all the Uhlans.”

“ But, Pyotr Vassilyitch, you are not taking into account the fact that by the army rules I would have to make a start in the lowest position. Being as old as I am, that would be hard. In fact I have an idea they wouldn't let me.”

“ That is true,” said Pyotr Vassilyitch looking down. “ Well, then you will have

to get married," he said, suddenly lifting his head.

"What strange ideas you have got to-day, Pyotr Vassilyitch," said Boris Andreyitch.

"Why strange? What is the use of living like this? What are you waiting for? You are wasting your time. I don't see what good it will do you not to get married."

"But it is not a question of doing me good," Boris Andreyitch was starting.

"No," said Pyotr Vassilyitch, stopping him, and getting suddenly worked up, "I have no idea why young men have such a fear of getting married these days! I don't see it at all! Give no attention to the fact that I am not married, Boris Andreyitch. Possibly I had a desire to be and made an offer, but was put out of the house," said Pyotr Vassilyitch, making clear how it was done with a good-humoured motion of the hand. "But with your property how is it that you are unmarried?"

Boris Andreyitch was looking straight at Pyotr Vassilyitch.

"Do you get any amusement from being unmarried," Pyotr Vassilyitch went on.

“What pleasure! Truly the young men to-day are surprising” and Pyotr Vassilyitch angrily gave his pipe a blow against the side of the seat before breathing violently down the end of it.

“But who has said that I am not going to get married, Pyotr Vassilyitch?” Boris Andreyitch said slowly.

Pyotr Vassilyitch was so surprised at Boris Andreyitch’s words that he kept quite quiet, with his fingers in his soft brown tobacco-bag.

“Yes,” Boris Andreyitch went on “I am ready to be married. Get the right woman for me and I will be married.”

“Truly?”

“Truly.”

“No, I say do you give me your word?”

“What a man you are, Pyotr Vassilyitch! Truly, I am not saying this for amusement,” said Boris Andreyitch putting some tobacco in his pipe.

“Take care, Boris Andreyitch, a woman will be got for you.”

“All right,” said Boris Andreyitch, “but what is your true reason for desiring to see me married?”

“ Because, as I said to you before, you have no idea how to do nothing.”

Boris Andreyitch gave a smile and said :
“ On the other hand, it seems to me that I am an expert at it.”

“ You don't see my point,” said Pyotr Vassilyitch, and the discussion was changed.

Two days later Pyotr Vassilyitch came to his friend's house, not in the old overcoat which he generally had on, but dressed as if for a great event in a coat as black as the wing of a black-bird, cut square, with a high middle, very small buttons and long arms. The hair on Pyotr Vassilyitch's chin was almost black with wax, and the hair on his head was waved in front, looking like two long horns, and bright with hair-oil. A great silk neck-band was fixed tightly round his neck, and this gave a stiff serious look to the top part of him and an air of self-respect.

“ What is the reason for this?” said Boris Andreyitch.

“ The reason for this,” said Pyotr Vassilyitch, dropping into a seat with more care than he normally took, “ is that you are to give orders for the carriage ; we are going out.”

“ Where to?”

“ To see the woman !”

“ What woman?”

“ Why ? Have you no memory of what we were talking about only three days back?”

Boris Andreyitch gave a laugh, feeling self-conscious.

“ But, Pyotr Vassilyitch, that was only in sport.”

“ In sport ? How was it, then, that you gave your word at the time that you were serious ? No, Boris Andreyitch, you will have to keep your word, I have taken steps now.”

Boris Andreyitch became even more self-conscious.

“ What steps have you taken?”

“ Have no fear about that. All I did was to say to a certain person living near us, a very pleasing young woman, that we were coming to see her to-day.”

“ Who is she?”

“ You will see. Come, first you will have to get dressed and give orders for the horses to be made ready.”

Boris Andreyitch, looking round him uncertainly, said: “ But, Pyotr Vassilyitch, why this desire to go ? Take a look at the weather.”

“ There is nothing wrong with the weather ; it is like this everyday.”

“ Is it far to go?”

“ About ten miles.”

Boris Andreyitch was quiet for a time, and then said : “ Well, let us have our meal first at any rate.”

“ Certainly if that is your desire. Now this is what we will do. You go and get dressed and I will get everything ready while you are away. A small glass of vodka, a little caviar, and we will be given a meal at this young woman’s house.”

“ Did you say young?” said Boris Andreyitch, turning round on his way to the door.

“ There, you will see,” said Pyotr Vassilyitch, shaking his head.

Boris Andreyitch went out, shutting the door after him. Pyotr Vassilyitch, being by himself, gave orders for the meal and the carriage to be got ready. Boris Andreyitch took quite a long time dressing and Pyotr Vassilyitch, with a sad and troubled look, was having his second glass of vodka when Boris Andreyitch came to the door of the room. He had taken trouble over his dressing, putting on

a wide-skirted black coat in very good taste, the dark colour of which was very pleasing against his light grey trousers ; a low black neck-band and a beautiful dark blue under-coat. A gold chain fixed into the lowest button-hole went out of view into the side pocket ; the thin high boots made a little noise as is the way with good boots ; and when Boris Andreyitch came in the air was full of the smell of sweet oil and clean linen. Pyotr was only able to say " Ah!" and straight away took up his hat.

Boris Andreyitch put a grey leather glove on his left hand after first blowing into it ; then with the same hand he uncertainly gave himself a quarter of a glass of vodka and took it all. Then, taking his hat he went out into the doorway with Pyotr Vassilyitch.

" I am doing all this for *you*," said Boris Andreyitch getting into the carriage.

" Even if it is for me," said Pyotr Vassilyitch, who was clearly very moved at seeing Boris Andreyitch so well-dressed, " possibly you will be very pleased with me for doing it." And he gave the driver orders where to go and how to get there. The carriage went off.

“ We are going to see Sofya Kirillovna Zadnyeprovskaya,” said Pyotr Vassilyitch after there had been no exchange of talk for some time and the two friends had been seated as if turned to stone. “ Has anything come to your ears about her?”

“ I seem to have come across the name,” said Boris Andreyitch, “but why is she your selection?”

“ And why not? She is a woman with brains, property, and the air of a person who has been in Petersburg society, as one might say. But you will be able to have a look at her. You’ll not be forced into anything by that.”

“Certainly not,” said Boris Andreyitch, “and how old is she?”

“ Twenty-five, or seven—not more. In her best years, as they say.”

It was not ten miles to Madame Zadnyeprovskaya’s, but at least sixteen and a half, so that at the end of the journey Boris Andreyitch was very cold and had the warm collar of his overcoat pulled up over his red nose.

Generally Pyotr Vassilyitch had no fear of the cold—specially when he was all dressed up, then it was probable he would get unpleasingly warm. Madame Zadnye-

provskaya was living in a little new white house with a green roof. It was a small country house for summer use, but like those one sees in the town, with a square in front and a little garden. Such houses may frequently be seen near Moscow ; in other parts of Russia they are not so common. It was clear that Madame Zadnyeprovskaya had only come there a short time before. The friends got out of the carriage. On the steps was a footman in bright green trousers and a grey tail-coat with round edges and buttons with a design on them ; in the doorway, which was in good order though it had a seat in it, was another footman dressed like the first. Pyotr Vassilyitch gave him his name and that of Boris Andreyitch.

The footman did not go to her but said that he had been given orders to take them in.

They went in through the room for meals in which a small yellow bird was in the middle of a very loud song ; and came into the living-room, full of Russian seats and tables of the newest design. The seats had been made with great care, bent in all directions to give comfort to those who were seated on them, though in fact

they did the opposite. Two minutes had not gone by when the sound of a silk dress came to their ears from another room ; the curtain over the door was lifted and the woman of the house came in with quick steps.

Pyotr Vassilyitch made a sign of respect with bent head and took Boris Andreyitch to her.

“ I am very pleased to see you ; I have been hoping to do so for a long time,” said Madame Zadnyeprovskaya freely, looking at him quickly from head to foot. “ I am in Pyotr Vassilyitch’s debt for getting a person like yourself to come here. Please be seated.” And with the sound of moving skirts she took her place on a long low seat, falling back in it, stretching out her feet in their pleasing little boots and folding her arms. Her dress was of smooth green silk with white lights on it and an ornamented skirt.

Boris Andreyitch took his place in a low seat opposite her, Pyotr Vassilyitch a little farther away. Boris Andreyitch had a good look at Sofya Kirillovna. She was a tall, well-made woman, thin about the middle, dark and quite good-looking. The look on her face, and specially of her

great bright eyes sloping like a Chinaman's, gave one the feeling that she was certain of herself, and at the same time that she was not so certain; this look was clearly not natural. She had a way of half shutting her eyes and opening them again; and all the time her lips had a smile which was consciously without care. Her motions were very free and almost sudden. Her looks had, however, an attraction for Boris Andreyitch, though he was not pleased with the way her hair was parted at one side—which made her seem forward and gave her the air of a boy. It seemed to him that her Russian was over good. Boris Andreyitch had the same opinion as Pushkin, that one is no more able to take a pleasure in the Russian language talked without an error than in red lips without a smile. In fact Sofya Kirillovna was one of those women of whom it is said by men about town that “they are able to take care of themselves,” by married men that “they are a military sort of women” and by unmarried men that “they are ‘great girls’.”

At first the talk was about how uninteresting existence was in the country.

“ There is simply no one living here, no one to say a word to. I am quite unable to make out what the persons living here are like,” she went on, making a face ; “ those whom I would be pleased to be friends with don’t come to see me so that we poor persons have no one for company.”

Boris Andreyitch made a motion of the head, saying some foolish words regretting that he hadn’t come before, while Pyotr Vassilyitch gave him a look as if to say : Well, what did I say to you ? She is not at a loss for words, is she ?

“ Are you a smoker ? ” said Sofya Kirillovna.

“ Yes . . . But . . . ”

“ Please do. I am myself.”

And with these words she took a loud-looking silver box from the small table, and took a cigarette from it, before offering it to the men, who did the same. Sofya Kirillovna then gave a touch to the bell and gave orders to a boy in a wide red under-coat to get them a light. The boy came back with a wax light on a cut-glass tray. The cigarettes were lighted.

“ Now, for example, does it seem to you possible,” she went on, putting her head back and sending up a thin ring of smoke,

“ that there are persons here who take the view that it is all wrong for a woman to be seen smoking, and as for the idea of women on horseback, well, it’s shocking ! One would be stoned by them for doing it. Yes,” she went on again after stopping for a short time, “ anything which is not generally done, anything which is not in agreement with their ideas of good behaviour, is bitterly attacked.”

“ The women, specially, get angry at that sort of thing,” said Pyotr Vassilyitch.

“ Yes,” said Sofya Kirillovna in answer. “ If you have anything to do with them you will probably get into trouble. But they aren’t any of them friends of mine ; their foolish talking does not get to my far-away house.”

“ But isn’t it very uninteresting living here?” said Boris Andreyitch.

“ Uninteresting ? No, I have my books and when I am tired of reading I let my thoughts go and I have a look into the future.”

“ You see the future by cards!” said Pyotr Vassilyitch.

Sofya Kirillovna gave a smile as she might to a small boy. “ Why not ? I am old enough for that, am I not?”

“ Oh ! What now ? ” said Pyotr Vassilyitch.

Sofya Kirrillovna, with her eyes half shut gave him a look. “ But don't let's go on talking about this, ” she said, turning readily to Boris Andreyitch. “ Give me your attention Monsieur Vyazovnin. I am certain that you are interested in Russian books. ”

“ Yes naturally . . . ”

Vyazovnin took a great pleasure in reading, but he had done little in Russian and was not interested in it. The newer books, specially, he had no knowledge of. He had not got further than Pushkin.

“ Why, please, is Marlinsky so looked down on these days ? It seems to me very wrong. ”

“ Marlinsky is a good writer certainly, ” Boris Andreyitch said.

“ He is a writer of great verse ; he takes one's mind to strange and beautiful places, but in these days writers have taken to picturing everyday events, and, truly, what good is there in this everyday existence here on earth ? ” said Sofya Kirillovna waving her hand round her.

Boris Andreyitch was looking at her seriously with interest and attention.

“ I am not in agreement with you. It seems to me that there is much which is good *here*,” he said, with special force on the last word.

Sofya Kirillovna gave a short, sudden laugh and Pyotr Vassilyitch looking up equally suddenly, went on smoking again after a minute's thought,

The discussion went on in the same way till the meal was ready, changing all the time from one thing to another which it does not do when a discussion is truly interesting. Among some other things they were talking about the good and bad points of being married and about the general position of women. Sofya Kirillovna made a violent attack on the position of married persons, and becoming worked up at last and very heated, said what she had to say in very moving language, though those to whom she was talking said little on support of the opposite view ; her love of Marlinsky was not for nothing.

In addition she was able to make use of the most high-sounding ornaments of the

newest school of writing. The words *artistichesky*, *khudozhestrenost*, *obuslovlivat* were coming from her lips all the time.

The boy with the red under-coat came in and said that the meal was ready.

“ Will you come, please?” said Sofya Kirillovna, getting up from her long seat, and they all went into the other room.

The two friends were not pleased by the meal though they had been given a great number of different sorts of food, Pyotr Vassilyitch got up from the table with the feeling that he had not had enough. Boris Andreyitch, who had a taste for good food, was not pleased though it had been put on the table under covers and the plates were warm. The wines were of equally poor quality, though the bottles were ornamented with gold and silver tickets. Sofya Kirillovna went on talking all the time, though exchanging looks when necessary with the servants who were taking round the plates ; and she took quite an amount of wine, saying that in England all the women did so, while here even that was looked upon as shocking. After the meal Sofya Kirillovna took them back to the living-room, where they were offered tea or coffee. Boris Andreyitch

took tea, but after drinking it, had reason for regretting that he had not had taken coffee ; Pyotr Vassilyitch took coffee and after drinking it made the request for some tea which, after tasting, he put back on the tray.

Sofya Kirillovna took her seat, and, lighting her cigarette, seemed ready to take part in a very interesting talk ; her eyes were bright and there was colour in her dark face, but the two men made their answers to what she said without interest. They were more taken up with their smoking, and judging from the way they were looking about the room, were on the point of going.

Boris Andreyitch, however, would probably have gone on stopping there till nightfall ; he was at the start of an argument with Sofya Kirillovna, she having put the question to him somewhat self-consciously, was he not surprised at her living without another female in the house? But it was clear that Pyotr Vassilyitch's one desire was to get away. He got up, went to the door and gave orders for the horses.

When at last the two friends were starting to say good-night, Sofya Kirillovna

did her best to keep them. She said with a sweet smile that it was unkind of them to go after so short a time. Boris Andreyitch, by seeming uncertain what to do and by the forced smile on his face, at least made it clear that what she said was having some effect on him, but Pyotr Vassilyitch kept saying in a low voice "quite impossible, time to be going, work to be done, its moonlight now," backing in the direction of the door with the one idea in his mind. Sofya Kirillovna, however, made them say that they would come again in a short time and gave them her hand for an English 'shake-hands.'

Only Boris Andreyitch gave any attention to this. He took her hand warmly and she, half shutting her eyes, gave a smile. At that minute Pyotr Vassilyitch was putting on his overcoat in the door-way.

When the carriage had got out of the little town he suddenly said :

"That's not the thing, not the thing, no, it will not do."

"What is in your mind?" said Boris Andreyitch.

"It's not the thing, not the thing," said Pyotr Vassilyitch, again looking away and turning a little to one side.

“ If you are saying that about Sofya Kirillovna, I am not in agreement with you ; she is a very pleasing woman, very pleasing, though she has a high opinion of herself.”

“ That is very true. Naturally if you were only looking for a . . . but you are conscious what I had in mind in taking you to see her.”

Boris Andreyitch made no answer.

“ Well, I say she is not right ! I see that myself. What a thing to say ! ‘ I am interested in my food.’ Why, I have two teeth out on the right side here, but I’m not given to talking about it. And anyone would be able to see it without my saying so. And then, she is a strange sort of housekeeper, isn’t she? Why my stomach is crying out for food. No. What I say is, be free in your ways, be a person of learning if you have a tendency in that direction, be polished if that is your desire, but be a good housekeeper before everything. No ! She’ll not do, she’ll not do, she’s not the woman for you. You are not one to be overcome by those red undercoats and hats over the plates.”

“ But have you any desire for me to be overcome?” said Boris Andreyitch.

“ Oh, now I see what you are needing—I see.”

“ But truly, I am in your debt for taking me to see Sofya Kirillovna.”

“ So much the better, but I say again she will not do.”

The friends got back at a late hour. When he was parting from Boris Andreyitch, Pyotr Vassilyitch took him by the hand and said, “ I’m not going to let you off though, I’m not going to let you take back what you said.”

“ Very well, I am in your hands,” said Boris Andreyitch.

“ That is all right then!” said Pyotr Vassilyitch and went off.

A complete week went by in the normal way, but for the fact that Pyotr Vassilyitch was away for a day. At last, one morning, he came again dressed in his best, and again said that he was going to take Boris Andreyitch to see some friends. Boris Andreyitch, who, it seemed, had been waiting for this not very quietly, did what he was ordered without protest.

“ Where are you taking me now?” he said to Pyotr Vassilyitch, seated at his side in the snow carriage. Winter had come on in the past week.

“ I am taking you now,” said Pyotr Vassilyitch importantly, “ to a family of good position—to the Tihodeuvs. It is a family of very good position, the old man is Colonel Tihodeuv and a first-rate man ; he is married to one of the best of women ; they have two girls, very pleasing young women of good education—and there is property. I have no idea which of the two girls will be the more pleasing to you. One, well, one is brighter, the other is quieter ; the other, to be quite open with you, does not put herself forward enough, but she, like her sister, is well able to take care of herself. Well, you will see.”

“ What is the father’s name?” Boris Andreyitch said, as if without interest.

“ Kalimon Ivanitch.”

“ Kalimon ! What a name . . . And the mother?”

“ The mother’s name is Pelageya Ivanovna.”

“ And the girls’ names?”

“ One is Pelageya and the other Emerentsiya.”

“ Emerentsiya ? I have never come across a name like that before . . . and Kalimonovna in addition.”

“ Yes, the name is certainly strange. But what a girl she is! Simply, one might say, made of a sort of burning desire for good!”

“ On my word, Pyotr Vassilyitch, what moving words! But which of them is Emerentsiya—the quiet one?”

“ No, the other. . . . But, there, you will see for yourself.”

“ Emerentsiya Kalimonovna!” Vyazovnin said again.

“ Her mother’s name for her is Emerance,” Pyotr Vassilyitch said in a low voice.

“ And for the father? It is Calimon?”

“ I have no idea, but you’ll see.”

“ All right,” said Boris Andreyitch.

To the Tihodeuvs it was a journey of almost 20 miles, as it had been to Sofya Kirillovna’s; but their house was of the old sort and not in the least like the bright little house of the free-living Sofya Kirillovna.

It was a building without much form—a house of some size, but taking up an unnecessary amount of space, with a mass of dark woodwork supporting the roof, and dark glass in the windows. There were tall trees in two lines at the

sides, and the dark brown tops of great *lime*¹ trees were to be seen at the back of the roof. There seemed to be trees everywhere. In summer they probably made it brighter, but in winter they gave it an even sadder air. There was no more feeling of comfort about the inside of the house ; there was nothing bright in it ; everything seemed to be older than it was. The friends sent in their names and were taken into the living-room.

The father and mother got up to say they were pleased to see them, but for a long time were able only to make signs and motions to which the two friends, for their part, were able to make answer only by smiles, so great was the noise made by the four white dogs who, on seeing them got up with a jump from the ornamented cushions on which they had been stretched. In one way and another, by waving things at them and so on, the angry dogs were made quiet, though one of them, the oldest and most violent, had to be pulled out from under a seat by a servant girl, who took it away to a bed-room, getting a bite on her right hand in the process.

¹ A tree with small sweet-smelling flowers, common in England.

When everything was quiet again, Pyotr Vassilyitch took the chance of effecting the meeting between Boris Andreyitch and the others.

The Tihodeuvs said together that they were very pleased at meeting a new friend ; then Kalimon Ivanitch took Boris Andreyitch to his daughters, naming them Polinka and Eminka.

Kalimon Ivanitch was a tall, fat, grey-haired man of about 55 years old. There was little sign of feeling on his face, which was somewhat thick and common looking, marking him as a man with no special interest and not hard working, but good-hearted. Pelageya Ivanovna, a thin little woman with a small face which was getting lined, and a false front of red hair under a high head-dress, seemed to be troubled all the time ; one was able to see that in the past she had put on unnatural airs. One of the daughters, Pelageya, a girl with dark hair and very dark skin was half looking up, and seemed to be violently self-conscious ; on the other hand, Emerentsiya, a light-haired, well-covered girl, with a round red face, little fixed mouth, a turned-up nose and sweet eyes, certainly put herself forward. It was clear that she

was responsible for looking after those who came to the house, a position which did not give her the least trouble. The two sisters had on white dresses with light blue bands waving at the least motion. Blue was quite the right colour for Emerentsiya but not for Polinka . . . in fact, it would have been hard to get anything which was right for her, though she was not bad-looking.

The two friends were seated and the normal questions were put to them—with that foolish and forced look seen in most persons of good family when talking for the first time to anyone. Our friends gave their answers in the same way. All this made the meeting a little stiff. Kalimon Ivanitch, who had not much power of invention, was questioning Boris Andreyitch as to how long he had been living in these parts—though Boris Andreyitch had given an answer to the same question from Pelageya Ivanovna a short time before. She, in a very soft voice, the voice used to anyone coming to the house for the first time, made a protest to Kalimon Ivanitch about his bad memory.

Kalimon Ivanitch wasn't quite certain where he'd got to so he gave his nose a

loud blow on a cloth with a squared design, causing a new outburst from one of the dogs ; but Emerentsiya quickly made it quiet again. She was a help to her father and mother in another way ; quietly, but with some authority, she took her place at Boris Andreyitch's side and made the talk brighter by putting questions to him with a pleasing air which, though about unimportant things, were designed to get answers causing amusement.

In a short time things were going very well ; the talk became general and interesting, everyone taking part but Polinka, who kept her eyes fixed on the floor while Emerentsiya went so far as to give a laugh, delicately lifting up one hand, and at the same time she seemed to be saying : " See, see how polished my behaviour is, and what a sweet girl I am ; see what a pleasing air I have, and what good friends I am with everyone ! " She seemed even to be using baby-talk to make herself pleasing ; her laugh was long and sweet, though Boris Andreyitch did not, at first, say anything to give amusement. Her laugh was even more frequent when Boris Andreyitch, seeing the good effect of

his words, did become full of biting and unkind humour. . . . Pyotr Vassilyitch was laughing with her.

Vyazovnin said, among other things, that music gave him very great pleasure. "Oh, what a love I have for music!" said Emerentsiya.

"It not only gives you pleasure, you are a first rate-player yourself," said Pyotr Vassilyitch.

"Is that so?" said Boris Andreyitch.

"Emerentsiya Kalimonovna and Pelageya Kalimonovna have very good voices and are very good piano players, specially Emerentsiya Kalimonovna."

At the sound of her name Polinka's face went red, and she almost gave a jump from her seat, while Emerentsiya's eyes were quietly turned to the floor.

"Oh, but please will you be so good?" said Boris Andreyitch, "please do not say no . . . do give me the pleasure. . . ."

"Truly . . . I'm not certain . . ." and with a side look at Pyotr Vassilyitch she went on in protest, "Oh, what a man you are!"

But Pyotr Vassilyitch, like a man of common sense, made his request straight to the mother.

“ Pelageya Ivanovna,” he said, “ please make your daughters give us the pleasure of hearing their voices or their playing.”

“ I have no idea what their voices are like to-day, but they may make an attempt.”

“ Yes, yes,” said their father.

“ Oh, Mama, but how . . . ”

“ Emerance, when I say that you are to . . . ” Pelageya Ivanovna said in French in a low but very serious voice. Like a great number of mothers she gave orders to her daughters or put them right about their behaviour in front of other persons in French, even though those persons had a knowledge of that language. This was even more strange in her because her knowledge of French was small and she said her words badly.

Emerentsiya got up.

“ What song is it to be, Mother? ” she said as if giving way.

“ I’ve no voice to-day,” Polinka got out after some trouble. “ My throat is dry.”

“ Ah, well, if so, Emerance give us your song, the Italian one which gives us so much pleasure. Polinka will go to the piano.”

“The one like the sound of falling raindrops,” said the father.

The two girls went to the piano, and Polinka, lifting the cover, put her music in position and took her seat while Emerent-siya, by her side, took every chance of letting her attractions be seen, though not letting herself seem forward, at times touching her lips with a cloth of silk. All this went on with the eyes of Boris Andreyitch and Pyotr Vassilyitch fixed upon her. At last the song was started, and her voice was like that of most other girls ; sharp and high and going off at times into animal-like cries. The words were not clear, but from certain sounds coming from her nose, it seemed that the song was in Italian.

Near the end she did make a noise like ‘falling raindrops’ to the great pleasure of Kalimon Ivanitch, who, lifting himself a little in his seat, said “Well done!”

But she did the last bit before its time so it was necessary for her sister to go on playing for a time by herself. This, however, did not keep Boris Andreyitch from saying how much pleasure it had given him or from saying kind things to

Emerentsiya, while Pyotr Vassilyitch, after twice saying, "Very good, very good," went on Do give us something Russian now, 'the Nightingale,' for example, or the 'Little Sarafan' or some Gipsy Song. These songs from other countries are not, it seems to me, for persons like us."

"You are right" said Kalimon Ivanitch.

"Give us 'Le Sarafan'," the mother said in a low voice but as seriously as before.

"No, not the 'Sarafan'" said Kalimon Ivanitch, "but 'We two Gipsy Girls' or 'Take off your hat and make a low bow.' Are you able to do that?"

"Father, how like you," said Emerentsiya, protesting, and she gave the song 'Take off your Cap' and did it quite well, Kalimon Ivanitch joining in without words, in a low voice, and marking the time with his foot, while Pyotr Vassilyitch was very, very pleased.

"Come, that's a different thing, that is much more in our line," he said. "You have given me very great pleasure Emerentsiya Kalimonovna. . . . Now I see you have the right to be named a lover of music and an expert in your art."

“ Oh, what a man you are!” said Emerentsiya in answer and would have gone back to her seat.

“ Now ‘ Le Sarafan ’,” said her mother.

Emerentsiya gave this song, but not so well as ‘ Take off your Cap,’ though she did it quite well.

It seemed necessary to Boris Andreyitch to say something kind again.

“ Emerance, see about the meal,” said Pelageya Ivanovna in very bad French.

“ Yes, mother,” said Emerentsiya and she went out giving a happy little jump in the doorway, which she would not have done if there had not been strange persons in the room.

Boris Andreyitch went up to Polinka, who was looking at him not without fear.

“ Your playing for your sister was beautiful,” he said, “ beautiful.”

Polinka, turning red to the ears, made no answer.

“ It is a great regret to me that I have not had the pleasure of hearing the song you do together ; what opera is it from?”

Polinka was looking round her in a troubled way. Vyazovnin was waiting for an answer, but no answer came.

“What sort of music gives you the most pleasure?” he said after a short time, “Italian or German?”

Polinka was looking down at the floor.

“Polinka, make an answer,” Pelageya Ivanovna said in a low, troubled voice.

“Any sort” Polinka said quickly.

“Any sort?” Boris Andreyitch went on. “Is that possible? Beethoven, for example, is one of the greatest writers of music but everyone is not pleased by his work.”

“No,” said Polinka.

“There is no end to the different sorts of art,” Boris Andreyitch went on unkindly.

“Yes,” said Polinka. Their talk did not go on for long.

At the meal Boris Andreyitch was seated between Kalimon Ivanitch and Emerentsiya. It was a Russian meal, simple but enough for all, and much more to Pyotr Vassilyitch's taste than the uncommon food they got at Sofya Kirillovna's. Polinka was seated at his side and, overcoming her nerves at last, did at any rate give answers to his questions. Emerentsiya, on the other hand, gave so much attention to Boris Andreyitch that at last he was

almost unable to put up with it. She had a trick of turning her head to the right while she was lifting something to her mouth with her left hand, as if she was playing with it. This was very unpleasing to Boris Andreyitch and further, he was not pleased by the way she went on talking all the time about herself, giving him an account with much feeling of the smallest details of her existence ; but as a man of good family he gave no sign of what his thoughts were, so that Pyotr Vassilyitch, looking at him across the table, was quite unable to make any decision about what sort of effect Emerentsiya was having on him.

After the meal Kalimon Ivanitch seemed to be taken up by his thoughts, or, more truly, he was sleeping ; it was common for him to do this after his meal and though, when he saw that the two men were on the point of going away, he said once or twice : “ But why is this, my friends, what are you going for ? How about playing cards ? ” in his heart he was pleased when he saw that they had their hats in their hands.

Pelageya Ivanovna, on the other hand, was very much awake in a minute, doing

her best to keep them, and she was supported strongly by Emerentsiya, who did everything possible to get them not to go ; even Polinka said " But sirs . . . "

Pyotr Vassilyitch did not say yes or no, but kept on looking at his friend. Boris Andreyitch said quite kindly but with great decision that it was necessary for them to go. In fact it was quite the opposite to their parting from Sofya Kirillovna. Giving their word that they would come back again in a short time, they went away at last.

The friends went off without saying anything to one another. Boris Andreyitch gave a smile to himself under cover of the collar of his winter coat, waiting to see what Pyotr Vassilyitch would say.

" Not the thing again," said Pyotr Vassilyitch.

But this time there was an uncertain note in his voice, and stretching his neck to see Boris Andreyitch over his collar, he said in a questioning voice : " It's not, is it?"

" No," said Boris laughing.

" It did not seem so to me," said Pyotr Vassilyitch, and after nothing had been

said for a short time went on : “ Though, after all, why not ? What quality is the young woman without ? ”

“ She is not without anything. In fact she has more than enough of everything. ”

“ What is your idea . . . more than enough ? ”

“ What I say ! ”

“ But, Boris Andreyitch, what you say is not clear to me. If you are talking about her education, is that wrong ? And as to her general qualities . . . her behaviour ? ”

“ Oh, Pyotr Vassilyitch, I am surprised that with your clear way of looking at things, you don't see through that Emerentsiya with her baby-talk ! That unnatural sweet way of hers. That unending self-love ! That quiet belief in her good qualities ! That kind way of looking down on you like a higher being !— but there is no need of words. If it had to be one of them, I would be twenty times happier married to the sister. She is able to keep quiet anyway ! ”

“ You are right, naturally, ” poor Pyotr Vassilyitch said in a low voice. He was unable to see the reason for Boris Andreyitch's sudden outburst.

“ No,” he said to himself, and it was the first time he had said it while he had been a friend of Vyazovnin’s, “ this man is on a different level from me, his education is so much better.”

“ So she is not the right person?” Boris Andreyitch said not very seriously to Pyotr Vassilyitch while he got out of the snow carriage with the help of his servant and went up the steps of his house, “ Eh, Pyotr Vassilyitch ?”

But Pyotr Vassilyitch made no answer and went back to his house that night.

The day after Emerentsiya sent a letter to her friend (she had a way of writing a great number of letters).

“ A man we have not seen before came to see us yesterday. He is living in this part of the country, and his name is Vyazovnin. He is a very pleasing and good-humoured person ; one is able to see straight away that he is a man of education, and, I will say it softly in your ear, I have an idea I had a pleasing effect on him. But do not be troubled my dear, my heart was not touched and there is nothing for Valentin to have fear of.”

This Valentin was a teacher in a good school. In town he was a very bright young

man but in the country he had a high and beautiful love for Emerentsiya.

The two friends saw one another in the morning in the normal way, and they went on living as before. Two weeks went by. Boris Andreyitch was waiting every day to be taken away again, but Pyotr Vassilyitch seemed to have given up his idea completely. Then Boris Andreyitch took to talking about Sofya Kirillovna and the Tihoduevs, saying that it was right to give everything three chances. But Pyotr Vassilyitch gave no sign that he saw the point. At last Boris Andreyitch was unable to keep himself from saying: "How is this, Pyotr Vassilyitch? It seems that it is my turn to put you in mind of what you said you would do."

"What was that?"

"Has it gone from your memory that you were to get me married? I am waiting." Pyotr Vassilyitch, turning in his seat, said:

"But you seem to be looking for so much! There is no pleasing you! It seems we have no young women here to your taste."

"That is bad, Pyotr Vassilyitch, but it is not right to give up hope after such

a short time. Two attempts is not very much. Anyway, Sofya Kirillovna had quite an attraction for me. If you give this business up I will go off to her."

"Well, go then—and God be with you."

"Pyotr Vassilyitch, I give you my word, I am seriously desiring to get married; take me to some other place."

"But truly, there is no one in this part of the country."

"That is not possible, Pyotr Vassilyitch; is it a fact then, that there is not one good-looking girl round here?"

"Naturally, there is a number. But not for you."

"Give me their names anyway."

Pyotr Vassilyitch took the end of his pipe in his teeth.

"Well, there is Verotchka Barsukov," he said at last. "Who is there better?—But not for you."

"Why not?"

"She is a simple girl."

"All the better, Pyotr Vassilyitch, all the better."

"And her father is such a strange person."

"That is not important . . . Pyotr Vassilyitch, my friend, do take me to see . . . what is the young woman's name?"

“ Barsukov.”

“ To this Barsukov girl, please.”

And Boris Andreyitch gave Pyotr Vassilyitch no rest till he gave his word to take him to the Barsukovs.

Two days later they went off to see the Barsukovs. There were two in the family, a father of 50 and a daughter of 19. Pyotr Vassilyitch had said rightly that the father was not a normal sort of person ; he was a strange man if ever there was one. After doing surprisingly well in a Government school, he became a sailor and those in authority quickly took note of him. But suddenly giving it up, he got married, went to the country, and by degrees gave up all work ; in the end he not only did not go anywhere, but did not even go out of his room.

In a short wide coat made of skins, and shoes without backs, with his hands deep in the pockets of his loose Turkish trousers he would go walking up and down his room for days at a time, making whistling noises as he did so. To whatever was said he would answer with a smile, “ Oo, Oo,” which was in place of “ Good, good.” “ Has it come to your ears, Stepan Petrovitch,” a friend would say

to him, for example, (those living near would come to see him readily because he was so kind and good-humoured) "has it come to your ears that there has been an increase of 15 paper roubles in the price of grain at Byelovo?" "Oo, Oo," Barsukov would say, untroubled though he had only got seven and a half for his a short time before.

"Has it come to your ears that 20,000 was taken from Pavel Fomitch at cards?"

"Oo, Oo" would be Barsukov's equally untroubled answer.

"The cows at Salykovo have got the disease," another person present would say.

"Oo, Oo."

"The young Lapin girl has gone off with the manager."

"Oo, Oo, Oo."

And so it went on. If someone said to him that his horse had a damaged leg, that a Jew had come with some goods, that the clock had gone from the wall, that the boy had no idea where his boots were, the only thing he said was "Oo, Oo." But everything was more or less in order in his house, his land workers were well off, and he himself had no

debts. Barsukov was physically pleasing ; his round face, with great brown eyes, a delicate regular nose and red lips, was almost like that of a young man, and this was the more marked because his hair was snow-white. A little smile was on his lips almost all the time, or more frequently, in the little hollows about his mouth. His laugh was very unfrequent, but when he did give a laugh it was very high and uncontrolled and he became unwell after it. But for his " Oo, Oo " he said very little and only what was quite necessary, cutting his words as short as possible. His daughter, Verotchka, was very much like him in face, in her way of smiling and in the look in her dark eyes, which seemed even darker from the delicate colour of her light hair. She was quite short and beautifully made. She had no special attraction, but one look at her, or the sound of her voice, was enough to make one say : " There is a good, kind girl." The father and daughter had a great love for one another. Verotchka did the house-keeping and took pleasure in it . . . she had no other interests. Pyotr Vassilyitch was right when he said that she was simple.

When Pyotr Vassilyitch and Boris Andreyitch came to see Barsukov he was walking up and down his room as he generally was. This room, which was about half the size of the little house, was used for living in and for meals. The seats in it were far from beautiful though full of comfort ; all down one wall was a wide, soft seat with a great number of cushions on it—a seat which was quite noted among the men in that part of the country—in fact it was a beautiful feeling being stretched on it. In the other rooms there were only small seats, little tables of different sorts and cupboards ; all these rooms had doors opening into one another and there was no one living in them. Verotchka's clean little bedroom had a window overlooking the garden, and there was nothing in it but her little bed, the wash-basin with a little looking-glass over it, and a seat. On the other hand, everywhere there were bottles of liqueurs and pots of fruit paste with the names put on them by Verotchka herself.

On coming into the house Pyotr Vassilyitch would have sent in his name and that of Boris Andreyitch, but a boy in a long-skirted coat, after one look at him,

took off his overcoat and said, " Will you please go in, Sir."

The friends went into Stepan Petrovitch's room and Pyotr Vassilyitch said who Boris Andreyitch was.

Stepan Petrovitch took his hand warmly and said, " Very pleased. . . very. . . you are cold . . . vodka?" with a motion of his head in the direction of the food which was waiting on a small table. Then he went walking up and down the room again. After drinking their glasses of vodka, Boris Andreyitch and his friend took their places on the wide seat with its mass of cushions. It seemed to Boris Andreyitch that he had been seated there for ever and that Stepan Petrovitch had been a friend of his for a very great number of years. Everyone who came to see Barsukov had that feeling. He was not by himself that day ; and in fact he was very unfrequently by himself. There was seated with him an unimportant government servant, a poor badly-dressed little man with a face lined like an old woman's, a hooked nose, and eyes which were never at rest. Till a short time before he had a safe little position in a government office, but now he was waiting to come before the judge for some

reason. Gripping his neck cloth with one hand and the front of his coat with the other, he was keeping watch on Stepan Petrovitch, waiting till the two friends were seated, before saying with a deep breath: "Oh, Stepan Petrovitch, Stepan Petrovitch! It is simple for a man to be judged, but what about the saying: 'Good men and bad men do wrong'? We all get our living by doing wrong."

"Oo," Stepan Petrovitch was starting to say, but stopping himself he went on, "A disgusting saying."

"Who says it is not? Naturally it is; but what is a man to do? Being poor is not a help, it takes all the good out of a man. Here I'm ready to put myself in the hands of these great men if only they will be so good as to give their attention to the facts of my position. . . ."

"May I have a smoke?" Boris Andreyitch said to Stepan Petrovitch, who made a motion to him to do so.

"Naturally," the badly-dressed little man went on, "I have been angry with myself and with men generally; have had the feeling, if I may say so, of being angry at wrongs done to others."

“The invention of the worst sort of men,” said Stepan Petrovitch, stopping him in the middle of what he was saying.

At the words “the worst sort of men” the little man gave a jump. “That is . . . How’s that, Stepan Petrovitch? Do you say that to be angry that a wrong has been done is an invention of the worst sort of men?”

Stepan Petrovitch made another motion of his head. The man was quiet for a time, then suddenly he gave a cracked laugh, letting everyone see that he had not a tooth in his head—though he said his words clearly. “He, he, Stepan Petrovitch, how like you to say that. Our man of law may well say that you have a good sense of humour.”

“Oo, Oo,” came Barsukov’s answer.

At that minute the door was pushed open and Verotchka came in, moving with a certain, but delicate step, with a round green tray in her hands on which were two cups of coffee and a pot of milk. Her dark grey dress was hanging pleasingly about her delicate form. Boris Andreyitch and Pyotr Vassilyitch got up from their seats. She made a motion of her body in

answer, keeping the tray in her hands ; then going up to the table she put it down. " Here is your coffee," she said.

" Oo. . . Two more cups," said her father, pointing to the two friends. " Boris Andreyitch—my daughter."

Boris Andreyitch made a motion of the head.

" Will you have coffee?" she said, looking quietly straight into his eyes, " It is an hour and a half till we have our meal."

" With the greatest pleasure," said Boris Andreyitch.

" And you Pyotr Vassilyitch?" she said, turning to Krupitsyn.

" I will have a cup, please."

" In a minute. I haven't seen you for a long time, Pyotr Vassilyitch," and saying this, Verotchka went out.

Boris Andreyitch kept his eyes on her while she went out, and with his head bent over his friend, said in a soft voice in his ear : " But she is very sweet, and how natural!"

" That comes from experience," Pyotr Vassilyitch said. " Why, this house is like a restaurant ; someone is coming or going all the time."

And, as if in support of these words, another man came into the room. He was very fat, with a wide face, great eyes, thick lips and rough hair ; he had a bad-humoured look on his face, an acid look, as if he was never pleased with anything. He had on a wide coat and his body had a side to side motion when he was walking. It was only after falling on to the long seat that he said " Good-day," quite generally however, and not to anyone special.

" Vodka?" Stepan Petrovitch said to him.

" Vodka ! No!" said the man who had come in, " I have no desire for any vodka. How are you, Pyotr Vassilyitch " he went on, turning round.

" Good-day, Mihey Miheyitch," said Pyotr Vassilyitch.

Verotchka came in with two more cups of coffee on a tray. Mihey Miheyitch made a sign of respect to her.

" One more," said the father.

" Why do you take all this trouble yourself?" Boris Andreyitch said when he took the cup from her.

" It is no trouble," said Verotchka, " and it is better for me to do it than the servant."

“Certainly, coming from your hands.”

But Verotchka was out of hearing. She went out and came back in a minute with coffee for Mihey Miheyitch.

“Has it come to your ears,” Mihey Miheyitch said when he had taken his coffee, “that Marva Ilyinitchna is ill in bed without the use of her tongue?”

Stepan Petrovitch came to a stop, lifting his head.

“Yes, yes,” Mihey Miheyitch went on “you have in mind the pleasure she took in good food. Well, the day before yesterday, while she was seated at table, and friends with her, they were given iced Russian soup and she had taken two plates full and was making a request for a third—when suddenly looking round, she said quite slowly, like this: “Take away the soup, everyone is green,” and then went down on the floor. They went to her help as quickly as possible, questioning her about what was wrong. . . she made signs with her hands, but there was no power in her tongue. Our medical man made it clear then what sort of man he was by jumping to his feet and crying ‘Help! Get a medical man!’ He was quite unbalanced. And, after all, what is his

business? He simply makes his living from dead bodies.”

“Oo, Oo,” said Barsukov, deep in thought.

The talk went on for quite a long time in this way. Barsukov himself took little part in it and kept on walking about the room. At the meal everyone did very well: everything was good though it was simply cooked. Verotchka, seated at the head of the table, sent round the iced Russian soup and the other food, watching how the others were getting on to see what their needs were.

Vyazovnin, seated at her side, was watching her with great attention. Like her father she was unable to say anything without a smile, and this was her great attraction. Vyazovnin put questions to her now and then, not for the purpose of getting an answer but simply to see that smile. After the meal, Mihey Miheyitch, Pyotr Vassilyitch and the other little man, whose name was Onufrey Ilyitch, took their places for cards.

All this time Stepan Petrovitch was walking about the room and Boris Andreyitch kept near Verotchka. Their talk was very broken because Verotchka

was frequently going out of the room, and was so unimportant that it would be hard to put it down on paper. The sort of thing he said to her was : " Who is living in this part of the country ? Do you frequently go out to other houses ? Do you get any pleasure out of house-keeping ? " To the question " What are you reading , " she made the answer , " I do no reading ; I haven't the time . " But when , at nightfall , a boy came into the room and said that the horses were ready he was sad that he was going away , sad not to go on seeing those kind eyes and that bright smile . If Stepan Petrovitch had made the suggestion he would certainly have made a stop for the night ; but Stepan Petrovitch did not do so , not because he was not pleased with his new friend , but because his rule was that if anyone had a desire to make a stop for the night , he gave orders himself for a bed to be got ready . Mihey Miheyitch and Onufrey Ilyitch did so ; they were sleeping in the same room in fact , where they went on talking long after 12 .

On their way back Boris Andreyitch and Pyotr Vassilyitch were quiet for a long time . Pyotr Vassilyitch even went to

sleep, comforted by the sound of the bell and the smooth motion of the snow carriage.

“ Pyotr Vassilyitch ” Boris Andreyitch said at last.

“ Well,” said Pyotr Vassilyitch only half awake.

“ Why don't you put some questions to me?”

“ About what?”

“ Why, as you did the other times.”

“ About Verotchka, in fact?”

“ Yes!”

“ So that is what is in your mind. But it wasn't my idea at all to get you married to her. You're quite wrong about that. She is not good enough for you.”

“ You are wrong about that. She has a much greater attraction for me than all your Emerentsiyas and Sofya Kirillovnas.”

“ What is this?”

“ What I say.”

“ But be serious. She is quite a simple girl. She may be a good housekeeper it is true, but that is not what you are in need of.”

“ Why not? Possibly that is the very thing I am looking for.”

“What are you talking about, Boris Andreyitch? Well! Why, she hasn't even any knowledge of French.”

“What about it? Have you got the idea one is unable to do without French?” Pyotr Vassilyitch was quiet for a time.

“This comes as a surprise to me . . . from you, that is; aren't you saying this in sport?”

“No, I am not.”

“I don't see your idea then! Why, it seemed to me she would do for a person like me. However, she is one of the very best of girls.” And pulling his hat straight, Pyotr Vassilyitch put his head on the cushions and went to sleep.

But Boris Andreyitch still had Verotchka in his thoughts. He saw her smile and the quiet good-humoured look in her eyes. The night was bright and cold. The light on the snow was blue like that from a jewel; the sky was covered with bright stars; the ice was cracking under the snow carriage, and on the branches of the trees it made a noise like little bells, the moonlight on it making it seem like glass.

At such times, ideas come quickly to the mind. Vyazovnin had this experience. He

had given thought to a number of things before the carriage was stopped at last at his steps ; but the picture of Verotchka never went from his mind and was with him in all his thoughts.

As we have said before, Pyotr Vassilyitch was surprised at the effect Verotchka had had on Boris Andreyitch, but he was even more surprised two days later, when his friend said he was going to go to the Barsukovs' and if Pyotr Vassilyitch would not go with him he would go by himself. Pyotr Vassilyitch naturally said he would go with pleasure and the two friends went off to Barsukov's and were there all day. As before there were two or three others present, to whom Verotchka gave coffee before the meal, and fruit paste after ; but Vyazovnin was able to have a longer talk with her than before, that is he said more to her . . . giving her an account of what he had done in the past, about Petersburg, about his journeys, in fact about anything which came into his head. In a quiet way she was interested in what he had to say, sometimes smiling and looking at him, without for a minute overlooking what she had to do. Whenever she saw that anyone was in need of

anything she would get up and get it for them herself. When she went away, Vyazovnin, looking quietly about him, did not get up from his seat ; when she came back she would again be seated at his side, and would go on with her work while he went on talking to her. Sometimes Stepan Petrovitch would go up to them and, on hearing Vyazovnin's words, would say " Oo, Oo." The hours went by like the wind. This time the two friends made a stop for the night and did not go away till nightfall the day after. . . .

At parting Vyazovnin took Verotchka's hand warmly. The colour came to her face; no man had ever done that before, but it was her idea of what was done in Petersburg.

After that the two men frequently went to see Stepan Petrovitch ; and they came to have the feeling, Boris Andreyitch specially, that they were quite old friends. At times Boris Andreyitch had a great desire to go there, and once or twice he went by himself.

Verotchka had a greater and greater attraction for him, and by that time they had become friends ; but it quickly seemed to him that her feelings for him were not warm enough.

Pyotr Vassilyitch did not say anything to him now about Verotchka. But one morning, after looking at him for some time as he frequently did without saying anything, he said at last, as if he had something important in mind, "Boris Andreyitch."

"Well?" said Boris Andreyitch, and went a little red though he had no idea why he did so.

"There is something it is necessary for me to say to you. Boris Andreyitch. . . Take care you don't. . . er . . . it would be bad, for example, if anything . . ."

"I've no idea what you are talking about," said Boris Andreyitch.

"Why, about Verotchka. . ."

"About Verotchka," and Boris Andreyitch's face went redder.

"Yes, take care, you see, damage is quickly done . . . Wrong, that is . . . don't be angry because I am open with you ; but it seems to me that it is right as a friend. . ."

"But where did you get that idea from, Pyotr Vassilyitch?" said Boris Andreyitch, stopping him. "Verotchka is a girl with a very high idea of what is right. . . and anyway we are nothing more than friends."

“ Oh, don't be foolish,” Pyotr Vassilyitch said in his turn. “ How is a man of your education able to be the friend of a country girl who has never been outside the four walls of her house?”

“ You are starting that again!” said Boris Andreyitch stopping, him a second time. “ I have no idea why you keep talking about education.” Boris Andreyitch was a little angry.

“ Well, give me your attention, anyway ” said Pyotr Vassilyitch quickly. “ Things being as they are, it is necessary for me to say that though you naturally have the right not to let me into your secrets, I see very well what is in fact going on. You are not only one who has eyes. Yesterday”—they had been at Stepan Petrovitch's the day before—“ made a number of things clear to me . . . ”

“ And what did it make clear to you?” said Boris Andreyitch.

“ That you are in love with her and that the thought that another man may be interested in her makes you unhappy.”

“ Well, and is she in love with me?”

“ I am unable to say that for certain, but it would be strange if she was not.”

“ Because of my education, in fact ? Is that your idea?”

“ Because of that, and because you are well off. And, in addition, you are good looking, but the property is the chief thing!”

Vyazovnin got up and went to the window.

“ How were you able to see that another man’s interest in her made me unhappy?” he suddenly said, turning to Pyotr Vassilyitch.

“ Because you were not like yourself yesterday till that loose-living Karantjev had gone.”

Vyazovnin made no answer but in his heart he had the feeling that his friend was right.

“ Pyotr Vassilyitch,” he said, going up to Krupitsyn and facing him, “ it is necessary for me. . . I am conscious that you are right. I have had this feeling for a long time but you have made me see it clearly. I am certainly interested in Verotchka, but what about it? We have no desire to do anything wrong ; anyway, as I have said, I see no signs that she has any great feeling for me.”

“That is so, but Satan has great power.”

Boris Andreyitch was quiet for a time.

“What are you going to do? Give up going there.”

“That is your opinion?”

“Naturally you are not going to get married to her.”

Vyazovnin was again quiet for a time.

“And why not get married to her?” he said at last.

“I have said why before, Boris Andreyitch. She is not your equal.”

“I don’t see that.”

“Well if you don’t see it, do what seems best to you. I am not your keeper.”

Pyotr Vassilyitch put some tobacco in his pipe.

Boris Andreyitch, full of thought, took a seat in the window. Pyotr Vassilyitch did not say anything more but sent out little clouds of smoke in a quite untroubled way. At last Boris Andreyitch got up, clearly very moved, and gave orders for his carriage to be got ready.

“Where to?” Pyotr Vassilyitch said to him.

“To the Barsukovs’.” Boris Andreyitch’s answer was sharp.

Pyotr Vassilyitch went on pulling at his pipe. "Am I to go with you or not?"

"No, Pyotr Vassilyitch, I will go without you to-day; I am going to get things clear with Verotchka herself."

"You have the knowledge of what is best for you."

"So," he said to himself when Boris Andreyitch went out, "this is how something done for amusement becomes serious when one gives thought to it...and all because of having nothing to do," he went on, taking a place on the long seat.

At nightfall the same day, Pyotr Vassilyitch, who had gone to his house without waiting for his friend to come back, was about to go to bed, when suddenly Boris Andreyitch, covered with powdered snow, came running into the room, and put his arms round his friend's neck.

"My friend, Pyotr Vassilyitch, say how pleased you are," he said, talking to him for the first time, and from now on, as one of the family. "She has said 'Yes,' and the old man is in agreement. It's all fixed."

"How's that? What is the idea?" Pyotr Vassilyitch said in a low voice with great surprise.

“ I’m going to get married.”

“ To Verotchka?”

“ Yes. . . it’s all fixed, completely fixed.”

“ It isn’t possible!”

“ What a man you are ! I say it is all fixed.”

Pyotr Vassilyitch quickly put his feet into his shoes, and put on his dressing-coat, crying : “ Makedonia ! Tea!”

“ Well, if it is all fixed there is no use talking about it. May God take care of you. But, please, give me an account of how it came about.”

“ With pleasure,” said Vyazovnin.

This was the story,

When Boris Andreyitch got to Stepan Petrovitch’s house, there was no one about ; he was not walking about in his normal way but was in a seat of great size and comfort. He was not very well.

When he was like this he did not say anything, and so he only made a good humoured sign to Vyazovnin, first pointing to the table with food on it and then to Verotchka, shutting his eyes after doing so. This was all Vyazovnin was needing ; he took a seat at Verotchka’s side, talking to her in a low voice about Stepan Petrovitch’s condition.

“ I am in fear all the time,” said Verotchka quietly, “ when he is ill. You see what he is like ; he never says anything is wrong and never makes a request for anything ; I am unable to make him say a word. He will be ill and say nothing.”

“ He is very dear to you?” said Vyazovnin.

“ Who ? Father ? Yes, he is more to me than any other person on earth. God keep him safe. I am certain I would be unable to go on living without him.”

“ It would be impossible for you to go away from him?”

“ Go away ? What reason would there be for that?”

“ A girl is not able to go on living in her father’s house for ever.”

“ Ah—I see your idea. Well, there’s no need for me to be troubled. Who would have me?”

“ I,” Boris Andreyitch was on the point of saying, but kept the words back.”

“ What is in your mind?” she said, looking at him with the smile which she was never without.

“ I have the idea,” he said in answer, “ I have . . . I have the idea that . . . ”

And suddenly changing from what he was going to say, he put a question about how long Karantjev had been a friend of hers.

“ I’m not certain . . . such a number of persons come to see father. I have the idea he came here for the first time last year.”

“ Is he pleasing to you?”

“ No,” said Verotchka after a minute’s thought.

“ Why not?”

“ He is so dirty,” she said simply, “ but no doubt he’s a good-hearted young man, and his songs are so beautiful . . . one is deeply moved by them.”

“ Ah,” said Vyazovnin, and after a minute went on :

“ Who is pleasing to you, then?”

“ A number of persons . . . you, for example.”

“ You and I are friends ; but is there no other person who is more to you than the rest?”

“ How full of questions you are!”

“ And you are very cold!”

“ In what way?” said Verotchka simply.

“ Give me your attention,” Vyazovnin was starting . . . But at that minute

Stepan Petrovitch made a move in his seat.

“ You see,” he went on very quietly, with a tight feeling in his throat, “ there is something it is necessary for me to say to you, very important . . . but not here.”

“ Where, then?”

“ Why, in the room through there, for example.”

“ What is it? A secret, then?” said Verotchka, getting up.

“ Yes, a secret.”

“ A secret!” said Verotchka again in surprise, and she went into the other room.

Vyazovnin went after her, feeling as if his blood was boiling.

“ Well, what is it?” she said with interest.

Boris Andreyitch’s idea was to come slowly to the point, but looking at that young face, bright with the little smile he had so much love for, at those clear eyes looking so softly at him, his self-control went from him and he said straight out :

“ Vera Stepanova, will you be married to me?”

“ What!” said Verotchka, feeling a sudden heat running through her body and turning red to the ears.

“ Will you be married to me?” Vyazovnin said again, automatically.

“ I . . . I . . . truly, I’m not able to say. I had no idea . . . it’s so . . . ” said Verotchka in a low voice, stretching out her hand to the window to keep herself from falling—and suddenly she went running out of the room to her bedroom.

Boris Andreyitch, after waiting where he was for a short time, went back to the other room in great trouble of mind.

On the table was a copy of the *Moscow News*. He took it up, looking at the printed lines not only without seeing what was in them but even without any idea of what he was doing generally. A quarter of an hour had gone by in this way when, suddenly, there was a little sound at his back, and without looking round he was certain Verotchka had come in.

More minutes went by. He took a quick look at her over the pages of the *Moscow News*. She was seated in the window, turned away from him, and her face was white. At last, overcoming his fear, he got up and went to her and took a seat at her side. Stepan Petrovitch, in his low seat with his head back, made no move.

“Do not be angry with me, Vera Stepanovna,” said Vyazovnin, forcing the words out. “I am in the wrong . . . it was not right so suddenly . . . and . . . I had naturally no reason . . .”

Verotchka made no answer.

“But now that it has come about like this,” Boris Andreyitch went on, “please give me your answer . . .”

Verotchka let her head go slowly forward, and the colour again came into her face.

“Vera Stepanovna, one word.”

“I have no idea, truly,” she said. “Boris Andreyitch, my answer is dependent on my father.”

“Unwell?” Stepan Petrovitch’s question came suddenly.

Verotchka made a sudden move, quickly lifting her head. There was trouble in Stepan Petrovitch’s eyes, which were fixed on her. She went up to him straight away.

“Were you saying something to me, father?”

“Feeling unwell?” he said again.

“Who? . . . I? . . . No. What gives you that idea?”

“ Truly quite well?” he said again, looking at her for a long time.

“ Certainly. Are you feeling all right?”

“ Oo, Oo,” he said softly, shutting his eyes again.

Verotchka made a move in the direction of the door, but was stopped by Boris Andreyitch.

“ Anyway, may I have a talk with your father?”

“ Yes,” she said in a low voice, “ but, Boris Andreyitch, it seems to me I am not the right person for you.”

Boris Andreyitch would have taken her hand, but, moving out of his way, she went out of the room. “ Strange!” the thought came to him. “ She says the same thing as Krupitsyn.”

When he was by himself with Stepan Petrovitch, Boris Andreyitch said to himself with great decision that he would make his position clear with more sense and reason than he had done to Verotchka, and as far as possible make Stepan Petrovitch ready for his surprising request. But he made the discovery that it was even harder talking to him than to Verotchka.

Stepan Petrovitch was a little overheated and he was half in thought, half in a sort of sleep. To the questions and observations with which Boris Andreyitch was hoping to come at last to the point, he made his answers slowly and unreadily. In fact, Boris Andreyitch, seeing his suggestions were being wasted, was forced to come straight to the question.

A number of times he took breath as if about to say something, but every time he came to a stop without having got a word out.

But, starting at last, he said : “ Stepan Petrovitch, my purpose is to make a request which will be a very great surprise to you.”

“ Oo, Oo,” was Stepan Petrovitch’s untroubled answer.

“ A request which you will not be ready for,” he went on.

Stepan Petrovitch’s eyes became open.

“ But please don’t be angry with me. . .”

Stepan Petrovitch’s eyes became wider open.

“ I . . . I am requesting you to let me be married to your daughter, Vera Stepanovna.”

Stepan Petrovitch got up quickly from his seat.

“What?” He put the question in quite the same voice and with the same look on his face as Verotchka had had.

Boris Andreyitch was forced to say it again.

Stepan Petrovitch kept his eyes fixed on Vyazovnin for such a long time without saying anything that Boris Andreyitch became quite self-conscious.

“Has Vera any knowledge of this?” said Stepan Petrovitch at last.

“I have had a talk with Vera Stepanovna and she has let me put my request to you.”

“Have you been talking to her now?”

“Yes.”

“One minute, please,” said Stepan Petrovitch, and he went out.

Boris Andreyitch was by himself in the strange old man's room.

He was feeling like a man in sleep, looking first at the walls and then at the floor, when suddenly there was the sound of horses' feet and the noise of the front door shutting. A thick voice said, “Is he in?” The sound of footsteps came to his ears, and there was Mihey Miheyitch walking into the room with his strange side to side motion.

This was a great blow to Boris Andreyitch.

“How warm it is here!” said Mihey Miheyitch, dropping onto the long seat.

“Ah, how are you? And where is Stepan Petrovitch?”

“He went out a minute before; he will be back in a short time,” said Vyazovnin.

“It’s very cold to day,” said Mihey Miheyitch, giving himself a glass of vodka, and drinking it down straight away. He went on quickly:

“I have come from the town again.”

“From the town?” said Vyazovnin. It was hard for him to keep his feelings under control.

“From the town,” said Mihey Miheyitch again, “and all because of that outlaw Onufry!”

Stepan Petrovitch came into the room, and Mihey Miheyitch went on to give the story of his experiences with Onufry.

“And why does not someone give him a good whipping?” he said.

“... doesn’t someone give him a good whipping!” Stepan Petrovitch said after him, and went off suddenly into a loud laugh. Mihey Miheyitch gave a laugh

with him, saying: "Quite so, a good whipping is the right thing for him." But when Stepan Petrovitch was stretched on the long seat, laughing without control, Mihey Miheyitch, turning to Boris Andreyitch and putting up his hands, said: "There! He is like that all the time . . . a burst of laughing and no one has any idea what he is laughing at. That's his way."

Verotchka came in with red eyes, looking troubled.

"Father is not very well today," she said in a low voice to Mihey Miheyitch.

Mihey Miheyitch made a motion of agreement and put a bit of cheese into his mouth. At last Stepan Petrovitch became quiet, and getting up with a deep breath, went walking about the room.

Boris Andreyitch kept his eyes away from his and took a seat as if he was on pin points. Mihey Miheyitch again went on with his angry story about Onufry Ilyitch. They had their meal and at it Mihey Miheyitch was again the only person who did any talking. It was almost nightfall when Stepan Petrovitch took Boris Andreyitch by the arm into the other room.

“ You are a good man?” he said, looking into his face.

“ I am an upright man,” said Boris Andreyitch. “ I give you my word for that—and I am in love with your daughter.

“ You are in love with her? Truly?”

“ I am in love with her and I will do my best to get her love.”

“ You’ll not get tired of her?”

“ Never.”

A look of pain came into Stepan Petrovitch’s face. “ Well . . . take care . . . give her your love. My decision is ‘ yes ’.”

Boris Andreyitch would have put his arms round him, but Stepan Petrovitch said: “ Later . . . that’s all right,” and, turning away, he went to the wall. Boris Andreyitch was able to see that he was crying.

Stepan Petrovitch, drying his eyes without turning round, went back to his room, going past Boris Andreyitch and saying without looking at him but with his normal smile: “ Please, no more today . . . tomorrow . . . everything necessary . . . ”

“ Certainly, certainly,” Boris Andreyitch said quickly, and went after him into



the other room, exchanging looks with Verotchka.

His heart was happy but at the same time troubled.

It was impossible to be any longer at Stepan Petrovitch's in the company of Mihey Miheyitch. He had a great desire to be by himself, and to give the news to Pyotr Vassilyitch. He went away, giving his word to come back the day after.

Kissing Verotchka's hand, he said good-night to her. She gave him a look.

"Till tomorrow," he said.

"Good night," she said softly.

"Pyotr Vassilyitch," said Boris Andreyitch, when the story was ended and he was walking up and down his friend's bedroom, "it seems to me that frequently a young man doesn't get married because he has a fear of putting himself in a prison. 'What need is there for me to be so quick?' he says. 'There is any amount of time, possibly I may come across something better;' and the normal end of the business is that he is an old man living by himself, unmarried. Or possibly he gets married to the first woman he comes across. It all comes from valuing oneself overmuch and having no thought for

others. If God has sent you a sweet, good girl, take your chance, be happy and pleased with what you have got. I will never get a better woman than Verotchka ; and if she has not had a very good education it will be my work to make it better. Her feelings are not very readily moved, but there is nothing wrong in that—quite the opposite. That is why I made my decision so quickly. You yourself said I would be wise to get married, and if I have been wrong,” he said, coming to a stop, and after a little thought, went on, “ there is no great damage done. I would never have made much of my existence, anyway.” Pyotr Vassilyitch gave attention to his friend without saying anything, from time to time drinking from a cracked glass a little of the disgusting tea which had been got ready by the hard-working Makedonia.

“ Why don't you say something?” Boris Andreyitch said at last, stopping before him. “ I am talking sense, am I not? You are in agreement with me, aren't you?”

“ The question has been put,” said Pyotr Vassilyitch, talking slowly and with great weight, “ the father has given his approval,

the daughter has not said no, so there is no point in further discussion. Possibly it will be the best thing in the end. Now it is right for our thoughts to be turned to the happy day, without questioning if the step was wise or not. But one's head is clearer in the morning; we will have a talk about everything tomorrow. You there! Take Boris Andreyitch down."

"You might at least take me in your arms and say how pleased you are, anyway," said Boris Andreyitch. "What a man you are!"

"Certainly I will, with pleasure," said Pyotr Vassilyitch, kissing him. "May God make you very happy."

Boris Andreyitch went away.

"It's all because," Pyotr Vassilyitch said out loud, after he had been in bed for some time, turning from side to side, "it is all because he has not been in the army. He has become used to doing whatever comes into his head, and has never been under any control."

A month later Vyazovnin was married to Verotchka. He would not let it be put off longer. Pyotr Vassilyitch was 'best man.' In that month Vyazovnin went every day to Stepan Petrovitch's, but

there was no great change in his behaviour to Verotchka or in hers to him ; she was not quite so open with him, but that was all. He took her *Yurey Miloslavsky*, reading parts of it to her. She was pleased with Zagoski's book, but when it was ended she made no request for another.

The day before she was married, Verotchka was very sad and Stepan Petrovitch was unhappy. He had hopes that Boris Andreyitch would come to his house, but Boris Andreyitch said nothing about this, and in fact made the suggestion that it would be a good thing for Stepan Petrovitch to come to Vyazovno for a time. The old man said he wouldn't ; he was used to his old room.

Verotchka gave her word she would come and see him at least once a week. How unhappy was her father's "Oo, Oo!"

Such was Boris Andreyitch's start as a married man. At first everything went well. Verotchka, being a very good housekeeper, put everything in order. He had a great respect for the quiet care with which she did her work, for her kind, untroubled rule, and he gave her

the name of his ' little Dutchwoman.' He frequently said to Pyotr Vassilyitch that he had never had any idea before what it was like to be happy. It is necessary to say, however, that from the day they were married Pyotr Vassilyitch gave up coming to see him so much and stopping so long, though Boris Andreyitch was as pleased to see him as ever when he did come and though Verotchka had a true love for him.

“ Your existence is not the same now,” he would say to Vyazovnin when Boris Andreyitch made a protest that he had become colder to him. “ You are a married man. I am unmarried. I may be in your way.”

At first Vyazovnin did not say he was wrong, but by degrees he came to see that he had not enough company at times without his friend. He was no less free because of Verotchka; in fact, sometimes he gave no thought to her at all, and sometimes for a complete morning he would not say one word to her, though he never gave a look which was not kind and touched with pleasure, and every time she went by him with her soft step, he would take her hand and give it a kiss,

and every time he did this a smile came to her lips, the same smile for which he had so much love ; but is a smile by itself enough ?

They did not have enough in common, and he was becoming conscious of it.

“ There’s no doubt that Verotchka is very limited in her interests,” was Boris Andreyitch’s thought one day, when he was on the long seat with his arms folded, and the words Verotchka had said to him on the day he made the suggestion of getting married, “ I am not the right person for you,” came back to his mind.

“ If I had been a German or a man of learning,” he went on in his thoughts, “ or if I had had something to do which took up most of my time, such a woman would have been the best person for me, but as it is . . . Is it possible that I have made an error?” This last thought gave him a surprising amount of pain.

When that same morning Pyotr Vassilyitch said again that it was not possible for him to be anything but in his way, Boris Andreyitch was unable to keep his feelings under control, and said : “ But, truly, you are not the least bit in our way. In fact, when you are here the

two of us are very much brighter." He had almost said "we get on better"—which was certainly true.

Boris Andreyitch got as much pleasure from his talks with Pyotr Vassilyitch as he had done before he was married, and Verotchka was quite happy talking to him. On the other hand, though she had a great respect for Boris Andreyitch and would clearly do anything for him, she had no idea what to say to him or how to give him amusement. Further, she saw that he was brighter when Pyotr Vassilyitch was with him. In the end they were unable to do without him in the house. Verotchka was as dear to him as a daughter; and in fact no feeling but love was possible for so good and kind a person.

When Boris Andreyitch, feeling the need for support, put his secret thoughts and troubles before him, Pyotr Vassilyitch said he was very much in the wrong because he did not see how good and kind Verotchka was, and then put before him all her good qualities. Once, in answer to Boris Andreyitch's statement that he had been of the opinion that they were not made for one another, Pyotr Vassilyitch

said angrily that Boris Andreyitch was not good enough for her.

“ I’m unable to see anything in her,” said Boris Andreyitch as if talking to himself.

“ See nothing in her ! Why ? Are you looking for something uncommon in her ? You have got one of the very best of women—let me say that !”

“ That is true,” Vyazovnin said quickly, in agreement.

Everything in the house went on as before, in peace and quiet, because not only was it impossible to have an argument with Verotchka but it was impossible for there to be any sort of trouble between her and Boris Andreyitch. But all the time there was the feeling that, at heart, they were not in harmony. So the effect of an unseen wound inside a man may be seen in all his being.

It was not Verotchka’s way to make any sort of protest, and the thought never came into her head that Boris Andreyitch had done anything which was not right or that she was not quite happy living with him. Only two persons saw her position clearly, her old father and Pyotr Vassilyitch.

When she was kissed by Stepan Petrovitch it was with a special loving care, as if he saw what was wrong and was sad about her ; when she came to see him he would give a look into her eyes, but when he went walking up and down the room, the deep, sad intakes of breath were more frequent, and his " Oo, Oo " no longer had the note of untroubled peace of a mind far away from the things of this earth.

In the time in which he had been parted from his daughter he seemed to have become white and thin. What was going on in her heart was no secret from him or from Pyotr Vassilyitch. The idea never came into her head that there was any reason for Boris Andreyitch to give her his attention, or even to say anything to her, but she was troubled by the thought that because of her he was no longer free.

Pyotr Vassilyitch came across her one day, turned with her face to the wall, her body quite stiff. She was very like her father in a number of ways, and like him she had no desire to be seen crying—turning to one side when she did so, even if she was by herself in the room. Pyotr Vassilyitch went softly by her, giving her

no cause to get the idea that he had any knowledge of why she was there with her face to the wall. But he gave Vyazovnin no peace ; though he did not, it is true, say those disgusting and unnecessary words, " I said it would be like this "—words which even the best of women make use of at times when they have the kindest feelings for those they are talking to. But he was very bitter against Boris Andreyitch for taking so little interest, and once Boris Andreyitch was so moved that he went running to Verotchka, unhappy about her, and looking at her with a troubled face, put questions to her. She gave him so kind a look and was so quiet in answering that he went away, sad at heart because of what Pyotr Vassilyitch had said to him . . . but pleased that Verotchka at heart had no idea of the position

So the winter went by . . .

It is not possible for such relations to go on for long ; in the end they are broken off or changed, not frequently for the better

Boris Andreyitch did not become bad humoured or angry about little things like most persons who are conscious that they

are in the wrong. He did not give himself the cheap and low pleasure of making sport of her or laughing at her, which is common even among persons with brains ; he did not become sad ; all he did was to become completely taken up with the idea of how to get away—for a time, naturally.

“ To go away somewhere,” he said to himself when he got up in the morning. “ To go away,” he said to himself when he got into bed.

In these words there was for him a strange attraction. He went, in his desire for a change, to see Sofya Kirillovna. But her quick talk and her free behaviour, her little smiles and airs seemed very foolish and unnatural. “ How different from Verotchka ” he said to himself, looking at the beautifully dressed Sofya Kirillovna, but the thought of getting away from Verotchka never went from his mind . . .

The breath of the coming spring—spring which has power over the birds themselves on the other side of the seas—sent the blood to his head and took away his last doubts. He went to Petersburg, giving as his reason that he had some

important business there which he was unable to put off—though nothing had been said about it till then . . . When parting he suddenly had a tight feeling at his heart ; he was sad about his sweet, kind Verotchka. He was crying when he gave her his last kiss, “ I will be back in a short—a very short time, and I will send you a letter, my dearest,” he kept saying, and putting her in Pyotr Vassilyitch’s loving care he got into his carriage, sad and unhappy . . .

When he saw the soft green trees on the wide road which was a mile and a half from his property, he was no longer sad. A strange happy feeling, like that of a boy, came over him, making his heart go quicker.

Vera was now by herself, but in the first place Pyotr Vassilyitch came to see her frequently, and further, they got the old father to come away from his much loved room to his daughter’s house for a time.

The three of them got on very well together ; their tastes and ways were completely in harmony. But they did not put Vyazovnin out of their minds—in fact, they had the feeling that he kept

them together in some unseen, quite immaterial way. They were talking about him all the time ; his brains ; how good he was ; his polish and learning ; his simple good humour. Their love for Boris Andreyitch seemed to have become even greater now that he was away. The good weather came ; the days did not go by quickly—no, they went by quietly and in peace like high bright clouds in a blue and clear sky.

Reading and reading again Vyazovnin's letters which came from time to time was a great pleasure to them. In every one of them he said something about coming back . . . at last, one day, Pyotr Vassilyitch got this letter from him,

“ Dear Friend, my dear kind Pyotr Vassilyitch : I have been uncertain for a long time about how this letter is to be started, but it seems to me that the best way is to say straight out that I am going away from Russia for a time. This news will be a surprise to you and even make you angry ; it will be something quite unlooked for—and you will be quite right if you say that I am an irresponsible and foolish person ; I make no attempt to say that what I have done is in any way right,

and at this minute I am conscious that my face is burning with shame. But let me say all I have to say. In the first place I am going for a very short time, and in such society, and under such pleasing conditions that it will be hard for you to have any idea of what a chance it is ; in the second, I am certain that after being foolish for the last time, after giving way for the last time to my desire to see everything and have every experience, I will become a good friend to Verotchka and a quiet family man, and I will make it clear that I am conscious of the fact that chance has been very kind in giving me a girl like Verotchka.

Please make Verotchka see this and give her this letter. I am not writing to her now because of my fear of what her feelings will be, but I will certainly send a letter from Stettin, where our steamer is going. Say to her now that I am on my knees before her, requesting her not to be angry with her foolish Boris Andreyitch. Being conscious of the sweet woman she is, I am certain she will not be angry with me, and I give her my word, by everything on earth, that in three months, not a day later, I will be back at Vyazovno and

no force will take me away again until the end of my days. Till our meeting, which is not far off, I send you my love and a kiss for the sweet hands of my Verotchka."

"I will be writing another letter from Stettin, where you will be able to send yours. If a sudden decision is needed in connection with the place generally, I am as certain of you as I would be of a wall of stone."

Your Boris Vyazovnin.

Have my room papered again for the Fall . . . do you see? . . . make certain it is done."

But Boris Andreyitch's hopes in this letter were not to become true.

Because of the great number of things he saw and the little things he had to do, he had not time to send a letter to Verotchka from Stettin, but he sent her one from Hamburg saying he was going to Paris—for the purpose of seeing certain organizations of industry, and of hearing certain necessary talks—and requesting her to send on her letter to the post-office there.

Vyazovnin got to Paris in the morning, and after going round the Boulevards, the Tuileries, The Place de la Concorde,

and the Palais Royal, and even going up the Vendôme Column, he had a meal at Vêfeurs, with the polished air of one who was frequently there, and then went to the Château des Fleurs—to see, simply as an onlooker, what the “can-can” dance was like and how it was danced by the girls of Paris. Vyazovnin saw little attraction in the dance itself, but one of the dancers doing it, a bright, well-made, dark girl, with a turned-up nose and humour in her eyes, did have an attraction for him. He came to a stop near her more and more frequently, exchanging looks, then smiles, then words with her. Half an hour later he was walking arm in arm with her and she was giving him her first name—Julie—and making the suggestion that she was ready for food and that nothing would be better than a meal at the Maison d’Or, in a little private room.

Boris Andreyitch had no desire for food himself and in fact the idea of a meal in the society of Mdlle. Julie had never come into his head . . . “However, if that’s the way here,” was his thought, “it seems I will have to do it. Come on, then,” he said out loud—but at the same time his foot was stamped on by someone.

He gave a cry and, turning round, saw facing him a thickly made man with a wide back, about 45 years old, in a stiff neck-band, and a tail-coat buttoned all the way up, and full trousers of military cut.

Pulling his hat right down to his nose, under which the unnaturally coloured hair on his lip came down like two little waterfalls, and pushing out his trousers pockets with the great fingers of his hair-covered hands, this man, who by every sign was in the *Infantry*,¹ was looking at Vyazovnin with the air of one who will not give way. The look in his yellow eyes, his great blue-coloured chin, his face generally, was that of a rough man with a desire to make trouble.

“ Was it *you* who did that ?” said Boris Andreyitch.

“ Yes, my dear Sir.”

“ But at such times . . . one has regrets.”

“ But if I haven't any Mr. Russian?” In Paris they see straight away who is a Russian.

“ Then it is your desire to do something to make me angry?” said Vyazovnin.

¹ Branch of the army which does its fighting on foot.

“ Yes, Sir . . . your nose is not pleasing to me.”

“ Oh ! The disgusting man, he is angry because of me,” said Julie in a low voice. She had clearly seen him before.

“ But then . . . ” Vyazovnin was starting as if at a loss.

“ Then it is necessary to have a fight,” said the man, taking up Vyazovnin’s words. “ Naturally. Very good. Here is my card.”

“ And here is mine,” said Vyazovnin, still at a loss about what was taking place—and writing as if in his sleep, on the polished paper of his card, with the little gold pencil he had got a short time before for his watch chain—“ Hotel des Trois Monarques No 46.”

The man, with a motion of his head, said that he would have the pleasure of sending his representatives to “ Mr . . . Mr . . . ” lifting Vyazovnin’s card to his right eye. “ Mr. Vazavononin,” he said, at last, turning his back on Boris Andreyitch who then went away from the Chateau des Fleurs. Mdlle. Julie made an attempt to keep him but he gave her a very cold look . . . and turning away from him she went to a seat by the wall, where she did

her best to make something clear to the heated Infantryman, who as before kept his hands in his trouser pockets, his lips twisted angrily—and never gave a smile.

On getting into the street Vyazovnin came to a stop under the first street light, reading for a second time, and with great care, the card which had been given to him.

On it were these words,

“ Captain Alexander Leboeuf,
83rd of the Line.”

“ Is it possible that this will come to anything?” was his thought. “ Is it true that I am going to have a fight? And what for? And on the very day I get to Paris! How foolish!”

He made a start at writing a letter to Verotchka and to Pyotr Vassilyitch, but did not go on with it, pulling the pages to bits and pushing them violently away from him.

“ There’s no sense in it! It’s so foolish!” he said again and went to bed. But his thoughts were very different in the morning, when two men very much like Mr. Leboeuf, but younger (all French Infantry-men have the same face), came to see him, giving their names as Lieutenant

LeCoq and Lieutenant Pinochet of the "83rd of the line," and saying that they were representatives of "our friend Captain Leboeuf" and sent by him to do everything necessary because Captain Leboeuf would take no statements of regret.

Vyazovnin was forced to say to them, these friends of Leboeuf, that being new to Paris he had not had time to get a representative ("Is one enough?" "Quite enough," said M. Pinochet) and for that reason would they let him have four more hours to get one. After looking at one another they made a sign that it was of no interest to them, but said 'yes,' however, and got up from their seats.

"If, sir," said Mr. Pinochet, stopping before the door (of the two he was certainly the readier with his tongue and had been given the business of doing all the talking; Mr. LeCoq only made noises in agreement) "if you are desiring it, sir," he went on (Galisi, his hairdresser in Moscow, who frequently made use of these words, came back to Vyazovnin's memory) "we are able to put forward a friend of ours in the 83rd, Lieutenant Barbichon, who will certainly be ready to give you help in

view of the position you are in, and if he becomes your representative he will certainly take your interests to heart."

At first Vyazovnin was very much surprised at such a suggestion, but when the thought came to him that he had no friend in Paris, he said it was very good of Mr. Pinochet and that he would be ready to see Mr. Barbichon—and Mr. Barbichon was not slow in coming. This young man "who would certainly take his interests to heart" was a very quick person with a sharp brain who said, "This animal Leboeuf is doing this all the time . . . he is an Othello . . . a complete Othello." "Is it your desire to take this seriously?" he said to Vyazovnin, and without waiting for an answer, went on: "That is enough for me. Let me do everything." And in fact he did it all so quickly and took Vyazovnin's interests to heart so warmly, that poor Boris Andreyitch, who had no experience of fighting with blades, was waiting four hours later, in the very middle of an open green space in the Bois de Vincennes with his coat off and the arms of his shirt rolled up, with a blade in his hand, two steps from Leboeuf, in the bright sunlight. Vyazovnin had no clear

idea how he came to be there: he kept saying to himself: "How foolish it is! How foolish it is!" He had a feeling of shame as if he was taking part in some uninteresting and foolish trick—there seemed to be an unhappy smile inside him and he never took his eyes off the low head and short black hair of the Frenchman before him.

"Everything is ready," said a voice.

"Start!" said another.

A look came over Leboeuf's face not so much violent as cruel: Vyazovnin was waving his blade (Pinochet had said that the fact of having no experience of this sort of fighting would be a great help to him) when suddenly something very strange took place. There was the noise of a blade and a footstep, a bright light, and Vyazovnin had the feeling that there was a great cold stick in the right side of his chest. He had the desire to get it out of him and say "Don't," but by that time he was stretched on his back with the strange, almost foolish feeling that they were attempting to take out teeth from all over his body . . . then the earth was moving slowly under him . . . a voice said, "Everything has been done in

agreement with the rules, has it not?" A man said "Yes, certainly," and crack! Everything seemed to go round and then into the earth.

"Verotchka!" was the only thought which had time to come in to Vyazovnin's unhappy mind.

About nightfall the young man who had taken his interests so much to heart took him back to the hotel Des Trois Monarques. Death came in the night—he went to that land from which there is no coming back. He did not become conscious before his death and only twice said brokenly: ("I will go back straight away to the country—its nothing . . . to the country now . . .")

The Russian Father for whom the hotel keeper sent, gave an account of all this to the Russian Embassy—and two days later the unhappy end of a Russian in Paris was in all the newspapers.

It had been hard and bitter work for Pyotr Vassilyitch to give Verotchka an account of what was in Boris Andreyitch's letter; but when the news of Vyazovnin's death came to him he had no idea what to do. The first to see it in the papers was Mihey Miheyitch who went straight off

to Pyotr Vassilyitch with Onufry Illyitch (who had again become his friend), crying the minute he got through the doorway : “ Upon my word ! What a shocking event ! ” and so on. For a long time Pyotr Vassilyitch had no belief in what he said, but when there was no possible doubt about it, after waiting a complete day, he at last went off to Verotchka.

Only to see him crushed and broken put such fear into her heart that her knees almost gave way under her.

He made an attempt to say something which would make the shock of the news less great, but he was unable to do so ; crying, he took a seat and said in a broken voice : “ He is dead ! He is dead ! ”

A year has gone past. From the roots of the cut tree come new green stems, in time the deepest wound is made well, the living in their turn take the place of the dead, even as death will take them— and Verotchka’s heart was slowly becoming less troubled and her wound better.

And then Vyazovnin was not one of those persons whose place another is unable to take (and are there such

persons?). And Verotchka was not able to give herself up for ever to one feeling (and are there such feelings?).

She had become married to Vyazovnin without being forced in any way and without a great desire to do so. She had been true to him and had done everything for him she was able to do, but her mind had not been completely taken up by him; she was truly unhappy because of his death but not violently so. What more was to be desired?

Pyotr Vassilyitch did not give up coming to see her; he was, as before, her dearest friend, and so it was not at all surprising that when he was by himself with her one day, looking into her face, he very quietly made the suggestion that they might get married. She gave a smile in answer and put out her hand to him. After they were married they went on living in very much the same way as before. There was no need to make a change.

Ten years have gone past.

Old Barsukov is living with them and gets younger every year. He is never far from his Verotchka's little ones of which there are three up to now; two boys and a girl. He even has talks with them—

specially Stepan, named after him, a boy with dark eyes and waving hair. He is a little monkey, and being very conscious that he is much loved by Stepan Petrovitch, he has so little fear of him that he goes about the room walking in the same way as he does, and says "Oo, Oo," which bit of bad behaviour gives the greatest amusement at all times. They all have memories of poor Vyazovnin to this day. Pyotr Vassilyitch has a great respect for him, talking of him at all times with special feeling, and at every chance he is certain to say that his unhappy friend was pleased by this or had a way of doing that. Pyotr Vassilyitch, Verotchka and everyone in the house go on living in the same way, in peace and in quiet; they are happy . . . because this is the only way on earth to be happy.

THE END

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Science and Well-Being. A selection from J. B. S. Haldane.

The Outlook of Science. A further selection from Prof. Haldane.

Black Beauty. Anna Sewell's story. For school use.

Death in High Society. Strange stories by Inez Holden.

Carl and Anna. Leonhard Frank's story. Not for school use.

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