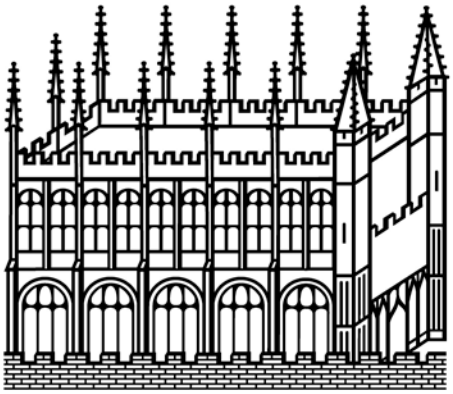

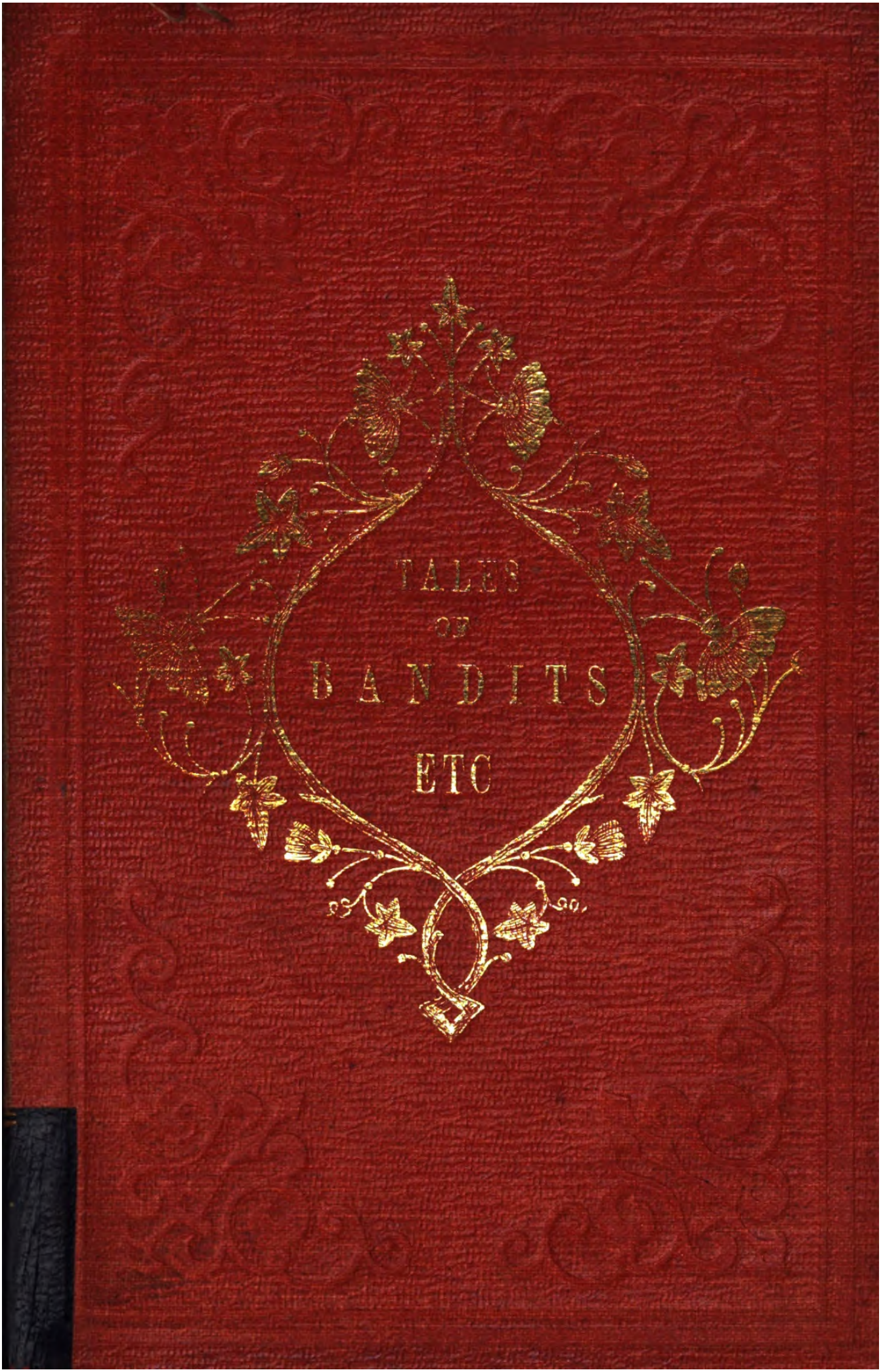
TALES
OF
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LONDON:
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TALES

OF

Bandits, Robbers,

AND

SMUGGLERS.

THE SMUGGLERS OF THE ARVE.

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PREFACE.

NEXT to those traditional Tales which have existed from time immemorial in every country, no class of Stories has perhaps obtained greater acceptance at the domestic fireside, than that of which the following Volume is composed. The present collection contains a series of Tales which will be new to most readers; and, while appealing, equally with other works of a like kind, to that love of marvel and adventure which is so universal, especially among the juvenile part of the population, it is hoped that all of them are perfectly free from whatever might be prejudicial to the minds either of old or young.

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BARBONE, THE ITALIAN BANDIT.

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THE first time I heard the name of "Barbone," the Bandit, was under circumstances calculated to leave a portrait of this strange man vividly daguerreotyped upon one's fancy. I was enjoying a pedestrian excursion along the Appian way with a number of fellow-collegians, and after having walked for some hours, we finally halted near a fountain by the road-side, not far distant from the well known village of L'Ariccia. When we took up our line of march again, a priest who was the chief of the party, said, "This fountain is celebrated, among other things, for what happened here to the outlaw 'Barbone.'" At our request our friend proceeded to give us an account of the occurrence to which he had alluded, accompanied with other details concerning the chief actor, with whom he had been personally acquainted. The moral of the story is a good one, for it goes to show how a whole lifetime may be rendered miserable by a first step falsely or imprudently taken, and also how great are the evils which flow from keeping bad company.

Francesco Annibali was a blacksmith in the town of Velletri, at the time of the occupation of Rome by the troops [illegible] Republic under General Berthier. [illegible] man of a quiet and

peaceful disposition, and his neighbours had no special remark to pass upon him, unless that he was a person of very few words, and excessively fond of spending his spare time shooting through the neighbouring forest, called "La Fajuola." The regulations introduced by the French were very stringent on the subject of keeping and bearing fire-arms, and still more so in reference to the sale and purchase of gunpowder. The Velletrani are proverbially of a fiery and even quarrelsome disposition, and under the French authorities a license was required, and not easily granted, for having in a private house so much as a simple fowling-piece; and even when this was obtained, so many signatures and *visas* were necessary that it was next to impossible to procure enough of powder to load it.

The penalties in case of infraction of the law were dictated by the spirit which prevails in a state of siege, and were accordingly of extreme severity. It is needless to say how much this state of things galled Francesco and his brother Nimrods of Velletri, to whom a day in the woods was the most genial of all recreations.

One day Francesco had been out gunning with a neighbour in the Fajuola, when after a short time their scanty stock of ammunition was spent, and they were compelled to bend their steps homeward in a sorrowful mood, while the sun was still high in the heavens, and they had only a beggarly account to give of their sport. While they were walking along in silence side by side, who should come in sight on the road leading from Rome to Velletri, but Padron Meo (Master Bartholomew), a bandy-legged old fellow, who filled the office of postino. The business of Meo was to go from Velletri twice a week to Albano, where he did little commissions for the men, and made purchases in a small way for the women,

bringing down also once a week any letters there might be for people in Velletri. After they had recognised Meo, the companion of Francesco remarked that the old fellow was no doubt provided with abundance of the very thing they needed so much—powder. The thought occurred to Francesco that perhaps the postino might be induced to sell them some, and, awaiting his approach, they tried to prevail upon him to do so. But it was of no use. He would not run the risk of breaking the law, even to oblige two old neighbours, nor would he be coaxed to give it, or lend it, or drop it and let them find it by accident, or evade in any other ingenious manner the decree that had gone forth against selling powder without license to the vendor, and permit to the purchaser. The young men argued that the law was a new and an unjust one, but Meo declined discussing the subject on logical grounds. But the next argument made him open his eyes a little wider than usual—for it did not rest on a philosophical distinction. They told him that they were two, and he only one! They forgot to recite a Paternoster, dwelling strongly on the petition "Lead us not into temptation," and the consequence was, that what he would not consent to give they took without his consent. Each helped himself to a pound of gunpowder, promising Padron Meo to break every bone in his body if he dared to breathe a word against them when he entered the town.

The two comrades now returned to their sport, and soon separated with the augury, "*Bocca al lupo!*" a cant phrase still prevalent in those parts, and equivalent to the wish, "Good luck and plenty of game to you!"

Francesco spent the whole day in the woods, and returned in great spirits to Velletri long after sunset. As he struck into the by-path that led towards the

suburb where his dwelling was situated, he heard his name called in a strange loud whisper, "Checco!" (Frank.)

"Who goes there?" said Francesco.

"Silence—it is I, thy friend Nino. Follow me."

Nino led the way hastily into a thick-set clump of underbrush, and the astonished Francesco followed him in silence. At length Nino stopped, his face pale as ashes, and his knees knocking together with fear.

"Nino, what on the earth is the matter?"

"Francesco, you must fly;—the gendarmes are after you;—your life is not worth that!" and he snapped the thumb and middle finger of his right hand.

He then went on to explain that his fellow-sportsman had returned to the town several hours before, and had been immediately arrested and tried by court-martial in the presence of the French military commander, found guilty, and sentenced to be shot at six o'clock the following morning. Moreover, that the gendarmes were now secreted in Francesco's house awaiting his return, to treat him with an equal amount of civility.

"But why, why all this terrible business?" gasped Francesco. "For the small matter," said Nino, "of having stopped old Meo to bid him good morning, or, as they style it, for having assaulted and robbed the mail on the public highway."

Poor Francesco now saw the whole business at a glance,—the crime of which he had been guilty, and its dreadful consequences. Thanking and embracing Nino, he turned back and disappeared in the forest, now darkened by the shadows of coming night.

He travelled many hours, and when he finally hed a place which he knew to be free from all

danger of surprise, or even approach, he still walked up and down in great agitation. Francesco was, as we have said, a good young man, and a kind-hearted fellow, well liked by his neighbours; and yet here he found himself, in the middle of the night, with grim rocks staring upon him from above, and dark wildwood hemming him in all around,—a vagabond, an outlaw, a wild man of the woods, upon whose head a price would be set, and who feared, like Cain, that he might be slain by the first of his fellow-men who might chance to cross his path. Sometimes he tried to think that the affair with Padron Meo was only a joke, or at most an idle freak like playing truant from school, or stealing fruit in an orchard. But it would not do. Nino had told him he was held to be a highway robber, and that he had stopped and broken the mail; and though Meo's greasy saddle-bags were rather a ridiculous object when served up by memory to fancy, there was too much truth and painful reality in the allegation to allow him to laugh at Meo or his saddle-bags either. He at length knelt down and prayed,—wept, and prayed to God and the blessed Virgin,—not to let him degenerate into an assassin as well as an outlaw, and stretched himself at length upon the unsheltered earth, little knowing for how many years it was to be the only couch where he could safely lay his head.

For some days he wandered about in this way, alternately praying, hoping, fearing, despairing,—his only nourishment being wild fruits and chestnuts (with which this neighbourhood abounds), when on the fourth day he at length saw a human face, and though a sufficiently ugly one, he actually hurried towards the wild-looking vagabond who wore it with the intention of embracing him, falling upon his

neck, and weeping from very fulness and bitterness of heart.

This flow of sentimentality, however, was suddenly checked by a remarkable gesture on the part of his new friend, who on seeing Francesco bear down so rapidly upon him, lifted to his shoulder a long carbine, as brown and wicked-looking as himself, and taking deliberate aim, quietly informed him that if he came one step nearer he would blow his brains out. Francesco's first feeling, of course, was fear; then, remembering that his own long and favourite gun, which he carried from habit and not for use (for he had no powder), justified the new comer's apprehensions, he threw it, in a fit of despair, upon the grass, folded his arms, and told him to fire and be hanged to him. The wild man immediately grounded his piece, and finally drew near. "Who are you?" "Francesco Annibali of Velletri. Who are you?" "I am the Devil." Explanations ensued. My Lord was not the real legitimate Devil, but only a rascally highwayman very much like him in principle and behaviour.

He soon learned Francesco's history, conducted him to his hiding-place in the woods, provided him with wine, food, dagger, ammunition, and any amount of the worst kind of advice, which, in his desperate situation, the misguided young man was induced to listen to at first unwillingly, and at length with eagerness, so that he became a tool ready for any unhallowed work in the hands of his cunning and hardened companion.

The robber had a piece of professional business in hand for that very evening. He reasoned with Annibali, threatened and coaxed him, until he finally enlisted him in it, though not without difficulty, promising that he should get half the booty for his

share, just as he had shared in the two pounds of powder taken from the postino. A young man of the village of Nemi had gone down to marry a girl belonging to Genzano, distant only a few miles. He and his bride were to be accompanied on the road back to Nemi, after the wedding feast, by a few friends in the cool of the evening, and between the jewels of the women and the money likely to be found upon the men, there was pretty promising booty in prospect. After much talk, and many qualms of conscience, our friend Francesco consented to assist his new acquaintance in the enterprise of relieving the bridal party of their valuables, with the understanding, however, that no blood should be shed.

The two friends posted themselves in the bushes in a solitary spot at a proper hour, and the party came in sight carrying torches formed of twine and pitch, the women riding on donkeys, and the men walking by their side, dressed in their holiday garments, all merry, musical, and unsuspecting. At a turn of the road the muzzles of two long carbines suddenly interrupted their progress, and the terrible voice of the practised bandit rang out, "Bocca a terra!" "Lie prostrate on the earth, or we fire!" The songs, the laughter and conversation of the gay party were immediately hushed, and struck with unspeakable terror, they fell upon their faces as they were bid by the terrible voice, not knowing whether one or fifty carbines were aimed at their heads, nor whether one or fifty assassins lurked behind the weapons of death. The elder outlaw sprang lightly forward, and brandishing a naked dagger, he approached each of the prostrate figures and divested them, in the speediest and most scientific manner, of all their finger-rings, ear-rings, jewellery, money, and watches. They were a party of peasants well-to-do, and each had all or some of these articles

about his person. Francesco remained in advance of the group: his instructions were to watch and shoot down any of the men who should attempt to offer resistance. He stood still, remorseful and ashamed, but said nothing, and allowed his comrade to do his work. This one was an old hand at his nefarious business, and did things coolly and thoroughly. He had spread a napkin on the ground, and as he plundered each one in turn, he dropped upon it all the trinkets and money, so as to gather them up in a bundle and decamp when the job was completed. He had now got pretty well through, and was engaged in despoiling the last of the women, who happened to be the bride. The poor girl had risen upon her knees, and in this position her beauty—rare even among the fine-looking people of her native town, and enhanced by her picturesque bridal costume,—attracted the insolent regard of the bandit, which Francesco failed not to observe.

"Let go my arm!" screamed the young woman, in deadly terror.

Her husband sprang immediately to her side.

"In the name of God and the Madonna Santissima," he exclaimed, "be satisfied with our jewels, and do not terrify my poor spouse—'figlio d'un porco'—son of a hog!" Here he ground his teeth; he could not help it, poor lad.

"I don't know—I don't know," replied the robber. "I think this fair girl would be a fitter spouse for a bold ranger of the forest than for a miserable vine-dresser like you. Come, courage, pretty lass; mount your donkey again, for I have made up my mind that you shall follow me."

As the young husband, with unspeakable anguish and rage, now endeavoured to rescue his trembling bride, the whole party rose, some to their knees, some upright.

The question, however, was apparently soon to be settled. The assassin eyed the unarmed husband with a malignant scowl, and drew the long gleaming dagger from his belt, when Francesco suddenly approached.

"Release the girl, villain!" he exclaimed, "and march! or I'll put a bullet through your heart!"

The assassin fell back in terror, for Francesco's flashing eye spoke things that cannot be uttered. Still he rallied a little, and even tried to laugh; but the attempt was rather a failure. Francesco did not threaten him when he saw he would not "march," but quietly levelling his carbine, he prayed briefly. "Mother of God," said he, "I have never committed a murder—forgive me this, my first one, which is in the cause of justice." His finger was upon the trigger, but the robber ran for his life, his own carbine being on the ground at the opposite end of the group, and so Francesco did not fire. He cheered the peasants, who thanked him with tears in their eyes, gave them back all their property, and saw them safe to the entrance of their village. He would accept nothing from them but one dollar, to save himself, as he said, from starvation.

When he left the good villagers, and wandered back alone into the world of forest leaves and darkness that had now become his home, he felt the sense of happiness that follows upon a temptation overcome and a good action performed. He reflected that bad company had brought him twice into trouble, and coming, after a while, in front of a wayside chapel of the Blessed Virgin, he knelt at the little wicket and promised that he would never, as long as he lived, associate with a vicious companion, and that he would never commit what his conscience told him was a theft, even if starvation were the only alternative. He bent him down and kissed the ground before the

Madonna's altar, and blessing himself, wandered forth again, a lone and friendless man. The promises he had made he faithfully kept. When hard pushed, he would accost a traveller with the salutation, "Vi saluta Barbone," and ask for charity; and on account both of his gentle manner and formidable appearance, he was seldom refused. What money he got he spent in procuring ammunition, and the game his unerring aim brought down he would sell at night in places where he knew no one would betray him. His hair and beard grew to enormous thickness and length, and he came gradually to be known only under the aforementioned name of "Barbone." He made application again and again for pardon, both under the French Government and after the return of the Pope to Rome; but of course the chance of a mail robber and outlaw, with a price set on his head, was small indeed, during a period of unusual disturbance, and where the police authorities were brought in as Judges or Counsellors of the Government.

So then Barbone lived on, shooting in the woods, avoiding inhabited districts, unless at night, and when obliged to leave his cover, preferring the bare and solitary campagna to every other place of resort.

During the spring months, when the flowers and herbs begin to sprout, and the autumn months, when the grain has been gathered in, the hay mown, and the grapes and other fruits are ripe, thousands of small birds make their appearance on the slopes of the hills which border the campagna, and flit over this desolate region. Many of the wealthy citizens of Rome come out at this time at early dawn to go a-birding at the distance of a few miles from the city. Some of them set reeds and bird-lime under cover of the hedges, and catch the little fools of the feathered tribe by that old-fashioned device; others choose the

margin of a stream, and depend upon decoys and clasp-nets, while many others prefer the *caccia alla civetta, i. e.*, the mode of bird-catching where a wise looking old owl serves as the centre of attraction. His owlship is placed upon a high perch, and partly induced by his innate politeness, partly by a string which the sportsman ties to his leg and pulls at from time to time, he goes through an incredible amount of bows and scrapes, and flaps and flutters his wings to prevent himself from losing his balance and falling from his stand. Meanwhile his big eyes are wide open, and he stares about him, and ducks his head up and down as if he saw everything, and understood twice as much as he saw. Now the little birds flying around, desert clover-seed and insects, to take a peep at this queer spectacle, and have a little laugh at the good old owl's quaint and conceited antics. The sportsman, meanwhile, watches his chance, shoots the little bird on the wing, and down he comes before he knows what has hurt him. The sportsman's dog glides out, seizes the game, runs back with it, and sits down again in expectation of another bird, with his tongue hanging down half a yard, and his eyes dilated in admiration of his own sagacity.

The tall, gaunt figure of our hero would often rise before these gentle sportsmen, his long beard sweeping his breast, and his favourite carbine slung over his shoulder, the muzzle just peeping above his ear. He would repeat with a smile his old cant phrase, "Bocca al lupo!"—"Good luck attend you!" and introduce himself by another of the few sayings he was heard to utter, "Vi saluta Barbone"—"Barbone salutes you." He would then ask the sportsman (who, if a keen one, and a frequenter of the campagna, knew him immediately), for a portion of the good things in the basket which never fails to be brought out on such expeditions, and of course he

was never refused. After discussing the cold fowl and tasting of the bottle of wine, he would bid his entertainer good bye, with his laconic formula, "Barbone thanks you," and would disappear, taking cheerfully a little money or powder, if it was offered, but never demanding it, and never doing violence to any one.

He became very popular among the country people, for they came to know that he never harmed a human being, that he never broke his word, that he had frequently saved travellers from outlaws, and jail-breakers thrown upon the rural districts by the revolutionary condition of the times; and that while he would willingly accept assistance from others, he would also part his last crust with any needy wretch he met with in his wandering life. It is said that he killed more than one Carabiniero, or constable, in self-defence, with what truth I know not. It is certain, however, that whenever any of their cloth showed a desire to get near Barbone, the outlaw was apprised of it by the country people, who loved him, and did all they could to assist and befriend him. I remember one time sitting in the old Cesarini Palace at Civita Lavinia, conversing with the venerable lady who then rented the mansion,—Signora Carolina Cassio, a kind and generous lady, now no more—and on asking her if the romantic stories which were told of Barbone were true, she replied that she recollected his coming into her house for shelter when she was first married, and that her husband entertained the Carabineers who were seeking for him, with bread and cheese and plenty of wine on the ground floor, while she helped Barbone to stow away his long beard and his longer legs under the bedstead of the identical little room of which I was at that time the occupant. Signora Carolina confirmed, also, the truth of a story about

the miller of a certain mill in the neighbourhood which my fellow-students and I often visited in our pedestrian excursions.

The story ran briefly as follows:—The bandit entered the mill one night, driven by his two standing enemies, hunger and the Carabinieri, and greeted the master as usual, "Vi saluta Barbone." The miller, a jolly and hospitable fellow, was on this particular evening in a fit of the dumps, and politely answered, "Vi saluta il Diavolo." Barbone tried to comfort him, but to no purpose. He learned, however, the cause of his sulkiness. His landlord, a Roman lawyer, had been with him that day, and had taken from him five hundred dollars, in virtue of a mortgage long expired, and which the poor man had understood, it appears, at the time of his taking the mill, he would never be required to pay. As it was, it took from him the last farthing he could beg or borrow, and left him no prospect for the following day but stoppage of business, and misery for himself and his family. Barbone at once gave it as his opinion, that the conduct of the lawyer was mean, miserly, and flagrantly unjust. He took some bread and cheese, and his host lent him a horse for a few hours, to enable him to leave the neighbourhood, as he alleged, under pressing necessity. Three hours afterwards, a gentleman, who was quietly dozing in a private carriage that rumbled lazily along the Appian way, was roused from his nap by the vehicle coming to a stand-still. The door was gently opened, and the sleepy lawyer saw a strange figure at the side of his carriage, which he at first fancied in his sleep was a favourite painting of a Bandit, by Salvator Rosa, much admired on account of the peculiar play of moonlight by which alone it was illumined.

"It is Salvator Rosa!" he exclaimed.

"You lie! I don't even know the man. It is Barbone."

The traveller, now thoroughly awakened, saw his mistake, for the shaggy figure addressed him: "Vi saluta Barbone." The reader must imagine the dialogue that ensued. Protestations of poverty on the one side, and an adroit playing with a carbine loaded and cocked on the other. The dialogue was a short one. Barbone bid the lawyer good night, and remounting his borrowed steed, he rode up to the mill three hours afterwards, and handed the miller five hundred dollars, as a loan, to be repaid in case he should happen to call for it, which of course he never did.

Barbone's coolness and presence of mind were truly admirable, and made him go about and do things which seemed of the utmost imprudence, and yet he was never caught, although his whole life was a series of hair-breadth escapes, and although the Carabineers who tracked him in the woods talked and laughed within a few feet of him, and to use his own expression, sometimes trod upon the barrel of his carbine as it stuck out in the grass from the bush behind which he lay hidden. He is reported by the people of Nemi to have gone frequently to hear Mass at the Convent Church of the Passionists on Monte Cavi, when he knew that there were no Carabinieri or dragoons in the neighbourhood, and to have left his gun leaning against the wall outside of the Church, thinking it would be irreverent to take it inside the sacred building; and they still boast that none of the peasants ever attempted to steal it, or to inform upon its owner, whom they all knew so well.

There proved to be, however, one individual who sought to bring the unfortunate though inoffensive

bandit into the hands of the authorities, tempted, it is said, by the reward which was offered for his apprehension. This man was the *ministro* or steward of the Prince Lancellotti (if I remember the name aright), the lord of a beautiful palace near the town of Velletri. He had laid several traps for the bandit, by which, in consequence of his confidence in the country people, he had more than once narrowly escaped. The steward had also boasted that he would yet succeed in securing his prey, and the boast cost him humiliation and punishment he little dreamed of, as we shall see.

During the season of the vintage the Prince had issued invitations for a grand party at his palace, and after a variety of pleasant entertainments, a large number of noble ladies and gentlemen sat down to a sumptuous banquet in the great hall. The evening was sultry, and a large window reaching down to the ground was left open at the end of the hall which opened upon the garden. When enjoyment was at its highest, one of the lady guests who sat on the right hand of the Prince, looking out upon the orange trees and rose bushes that waved before the window, saw a strange face peering in upon the assembly. Her terror attracted the attention of those near at hand, but before any explanations could be asked or given, a tall figure stepped suddenly into the hall, his long beard sweeping his breast, and the everlasting carbine grasped upright in his left hand. The unbidden guest seized the moment of terror and silence which his apparition had occasioned to calm the fears of all. "Signori and Signore" (ladies and gentlemen), said he, "Vi saluta Barbone! You will believe me, when I say that I come to do no harm to any one in this noble company. Signor Principe! I humbly ask your pardon for disturbing your festivities, but I know that you will forgive me when

you hear why I have come. To prevent any unpleasant mistakes, however, I wish to inform those gentlemen near the door (a number of waiters, who looked rather uneasy, and showed evident signs of a desire to hurry out of the room) that I will send a ball through the head of the first man who lays his hand upon the handle of that door unless by His Excellency's order. My gun never misses fire, and I never missed my aim in my life!"

A moment of silence ensued, and no one stirred in all that vast hall. The Prince knew by report the character of the man who stood before him, and he addressed him in a sufficiently steady voice: "Barbone," said he, "I have never injured you, and I know of no cause why you should disturb me and mine in this unwarranted manner. What do you require of me? and why do you come to terrify my friends after a fashion so—so—dangerous to—to—the safety of your life?"

"Eccellenza!" said Barbone; "my life is a matter about which I care but little; but there is a deed of justice to be done in your presence here this evening. Your steward is, I know, in this palace. Send some person from the room who will summon him before you, and let there be no attempt at treachery, or my death will not be the only one that will follow."

"Giovanni," said the Prince to the head waiter, "tell the steward to come in; I wish to see him. Speak to no one else, and return with him immediately." In a few moments the waiter returned, accompanied by the steward.

Barbone put him through a brief examination.

"Steward, did I ever do you an injury?"

"No!"

"Did I ever injure, or attempt to injure, your friends or your property?"

"No!"

"Did I, to your knowledge, ever do an injury to any living human being?"

"No!"

"You hear him, your Excellency; you hear him say what is the simple truth—that I never harmed anybody. Now ask him why he has sought my blood, by day and by night. Is it not enough that I have been driven like a wild beast away from the society of my fellow beings, that I am compelled to burrow with snakes and foxes in the wild Appennines, that I am pelted by the storms of winter, scorched by the summer sun, and have a price set on my head by the laws of man?" His voice here trembled with strong emotion.

"Poveretto!" exclaimed some of the ladies.

"Is all this not enough, that yon white-livered dog must join in the cruel chase through town, village, and wild-wood, and seek to take the life of a friendless, homeless man, who never injured him or his?"

The case seemed to be a clear one, and no one spoke for the steward. "You are all silent," said the bandit, looking round. "Now you shall see that Barbone is not the bloodthirsty assassin he is called by his enemies, but that he can be merciful even in revenge."

He now unbuttoned his coat, and drew forth two raw cowhides, and placing them in the hands of the two stoutest-looking servants in the room, he commanded them to thrash the unfortunate steward with all their might.

The steward was a haughty, overbearing fellow, who was much disliked, and this circumstance, added to the bandit's threat, caused the work to be thoroughly done. Barbone looked grimly and silently on, and when it became evident that further chastisement must endanger the victim's life, he expressed himself

satisfied, and bade the servants desist. His moderation secured him the sympathy of the witnesses of this strange scene: the Prince even asked him to help himself from the table. Barbone thanked him; but informing him with a grim smile that his health required that he should always take his meals in the open air, he placed some of the eatables nearest at hand in a napkin to take away, and after drinking a glass of wine to the health of the company, he vanished through the window as softly and as suddenly as he had entered.

Years rolled on, and the solitary bandit still continued to live the same erratic life. His applications for a pardon had so often proved fruitless, that he gave up all hope of ever being admitted to the society of his fellow-beings again, and he pined and grew sick at heart. At length, finding himself driven nearly to despair, he formed a resolution—the boldness of which is characteristic of the man—and carried it into effect with his usual cool self-possession.

There is a road running from the country residence of the Popes, at Castel Gandolfo, along the bank of the beautiful Lake of Albano, where the venerable Pius VII. was in the habit of walking in the cool of the evening, accompanied only by the two attendant prelates, and the two members of the noble guard who were on duty for the day in the ante-chamber. One fine evening in August the Pope was surprised by seeing start from among the bushes a tall wild-looking figure, which seemed to have risen like an apparition out of the earth at his feet. It was Barbone, with his long beard, and his favourite carbine, come to plead his cause in his own way at head-quarters. The noble guards drew their ornamental side-arms, and stepped before the person of the Pontiff. The bandit looked at those festive

weapons, and leaning upon his gun at a respectful distance, without showing any intention of drawing nearer, "Boys," said he, contemptuously, "put your little pen-knives back where they belong; they are not needed, and would be of no use if they were." The Pope looked at the man with curiosity, and motioned the young scions of nobility to stand aside. The stranger then spoke briefly, as was his wont, and to the point. "Most Holy Father," said he, "I am an unfortunate man, who has no home, no friend, no fellow upon this earth, no one to care whether he is dead or alive, but Him who is up yonder," pointing to the sky. "The only crime I ever committed in my life was the stealing of one pound of gunpowder, many years ago, when the French had possession of Velletri. For this crime I have done penance, God only knows how long and how bitter, ever since. I have made application for pardon to your government, which I never offended, through many good priests who have known me since my childhood, and who are willing to testify to my good character, as are all the people of the neighbouring villages to whom Barbone is well known, and none of whom has he ever injured. I have been driven to live like a wild beast in the forest, and those that forced me so to live brand me as an assassin, and would take my life to punish me for my manner of life, which is their work, and not mine. I am growing old, and I cannot live thus any longer. I would sooner live in a prison among malefactors, than where I can see no human face to cheer me, and drive away the demon that tempts me to self-destruction. If the law must have my life, so be it; but I am determined that my condemnation shall come from no other lips but yours. Oh! may you who have suffered so much take pity on me! I await my sentence, and stand here unprotected to receive it." As he spoke, he

threw his carbine upon the ground, and unbuckling his belt, in which there was a long knife, he threw that aside also; then taking off his hat, he came and knelt at the feet of the Holy Father. The gentle heart of Pius was touched by the emotion which Barbone endeavoured in vain to smother, by the simplicity and evident honesty of his words, and the allusion he had made to the meek and saintly Pontiff's own history. He spoke a few kind words to him, and bade him follow, as he turned back towards Castel Gandolfo.

On re-entering the palace, Barbone was left waiting for some time in the ante-chamber, where he was an object of no little curiosity. The Cardinal Secretary of State was closeted with the Pope, and one or two officers were sent for, entered, came out again, and departed.

At length a military personage addressed Barbone, and informed him that it was the Pope's wish he should accompany some prisoners who were to be escorted that night to Civita Vecchia, that his case would be investigated, and a final decision made known to him at that place. He went accordingly to Civita Vecchia, and after a few days was summoned before the Governor, who communicated to him the instructions he had received. The Carabinieri, the bandit's old enemies, had sent in a pretty hard report against him, which the Government could not altogether disregard. By sovereign order, however, his sentence of death, which had never been repealed, was commuted to imprisonment for life; the prison, however, was to be the town of Civita Vecchia, where, that he might have an opportunity of making an honest livelihood, he was to be employed as a porter in the government service, with liberal wages, and the promise of speedy promotion upon good behaviour.

Many years afterwards, the priest from whom I learned the above circumstances, saw Francesco Annibali in Civita Vecchia. He had risen to be the head of the government porters, and ruled that noisy and quarrelsome set of people in a manner that gave universal satisfaction. He gave my friend a history of his eventful life. He was now a happy and a useful man, hale and hearty still, but his head had grown venerable with age and exposure, and his long beard was as white as snow.*

* From "Italian Legends and Sketches," by Dr. Cummings, of New York.

DOUBROVSKY, THE RUSSIAN BRIGAND.

DOUBROVSKY,

THE RUSSIAN BRIGAND.

CHAPTER I.

MANY years ago there lived, on one of his numerous estates, an old Russian gentleman, by name Cyril Petrowich Troïekourof. His birth, his great wealth, and his powerful family connexions, made him a man of great consideration in the province in which his domain of Pakrovsky was situated.

Surrounded as he was by flatterers and parasites, to whom his every caprice was a law, it was natural he should indulge without restraint all the whims and fancies of his vain and narrow mind. His neighbours were all at his mercy; and there was not a government official in the whole district who did not tremble at the mere name of Troïekourof. Such tokens of submission he came to regard as his rightful tribute. His house was always full of guests, who tasked their utmost ingenuity to dissipate the *ennui* of the old lord, and who were always ready to share his amusements. It never entered anybody's head that it was possible to refuse an invitation of Troïekourof, nor would the boldest among them have ventured to dispense himself from the duty of appearing at Pakrovsky on the day on which he was expected to pay his

respects there. As little, too, would any one dare to act otherwise than with the most slavish deference to all the whims of their tyrannical host.

There was, however, a solitary exception to this general rule, in the person of Andrew Gavrilowich Doubrovsky. This exempt personage was an officer of the Guards, on half-pay, and Troïekourof's nearest neighbour. The wealthy gentleman, who would hardly deign to notice persons of a far more distinguished rank, loved Doubrovsky in spite of his poverty. They had served together in the same regiment, and Troïekourof well knew the pride and the sturdy independence of his old companion in arms.

Circumstances had separated them for some considerable time. While Troïekourof was mounting step by step the ladder of promotion, Doubrovsky found himself compelled by his decayed fortune to resign his commission, and retire to live on the one little estate he had left. When Cyril Petrowich heard of this step he offered him all kinds of aid, but Doubrovsky refused,—he preferred remaining independent.

Some time afterwards, when Troïekourof retired with the rank of general-in-chief, the two friends met again, to their mutual joy. They saw each other every day; and Cyril Petrowich, who would visit nobody else, did not disdain to seek out Doubrovsky in his modest retirement.

They were about the same age, their birth and education were the same, and their characters had a striking similarity. Except in its results of wealth and rank, they had engaged in the same career. Both had married early, both had married for love; both were now widowers, and each of them had an only child. Doubrovsky had sent his son to St. Petersburg to be educated; Troïekourof's daughter was at home with her father.

Everybody felt an exceeding jealousy of the intimacy between Troïekourof and his neighbour, and everybody was astonished and shocked to see a poor proprietor of some seventy souls express his opinion at table, without seeming to care in the least whether it was agreeable or otherwise to the master of the house. A very few were rash enough to use this example as a precedent, but they were sternly thrust back into their proper place. Doubrovsky alone had the privilege of perfect liberty of speech.

An unexpected occurrence put an end to this state of things.

One evening—it was in autumn—Troïekourof gave notice of an excursion. The huntsmen and whippers-in had already been ordered to be ready to start at five o'clock the next morning. A tent and a campaigning kitchen had been set up on the spot fixed upon by Cyril Petrowich for their dinner.

He set off, escorted by his party, to his kennel, where more than five hundred dogs of all breeds, and all kept in the very highest condition, were celebrating, after their own fashion, the munificence of their master.

Cyril Petrowich was not a little proud of this unique establishment, and took every opportunity of directing the attention of his guests to it. The fervour of their admiration, as you may suppose, was never suffered to cool, nor did the stream of their eulogies ever run dry. Sometimes he would slowly pace round the kennel, with the surgeon-in-chief on one side of him, and the head huntsman on the other, and point out to his obsequious suite the beauty and perfection of all its details. Sometimes he would halt at a stable door, ask after the health of sundry dogs by their names, and criticise the treatment they were undergoing. Then he would call for certain favourite dogs, and lavish on them his tenderest caresses.

Amidst the general admiration Doubrovsky alone remained silent, and with a frown on his brow. He, too, was passionately fond of hunting; but he was obliged to content himself with two greyhounds and a pointer.

"What ails you, brother?" asked Cyril Petrowich. "Do you see anything here to find fault with?"

"No;" answered Doubrovsky. "The kennel is beyond reproach or criticism. I was thinking only that your poor people have not quite as easy a time of it as your dogs."

One of the keepers was nettled at this remark. "Thank God, and our master," said he, "we have nothing to complain of. But I know some gentlefolks who would not make a bad bargain if they were to change their houses for the kennel of Cyril Petrowich; they would be warmer and better fed."

Troïekourof burst into a fit of laughter at this impertinent sally, and his troop of guests chimed in in full chorus, although they had an uneasy feeling that the compliment of the keeper was paid, in some sort, at their own expense.

Doubrovsky said nothing, but he became deadly pale with anger. Meanwhile some one brought to Troïekourof a basket-full of puppies, and he busied himself in examining them, and in selecting those which were to be reared and those whose destiny was to be drowned. While this investigation was absorbing the attention of every one, Doubrovsky stole quietly away.

It was not until the evening, just when they were sitting down to supper, that Troïekourof noticed that he was absent. His servants said that Doubrovsky had returned home; he sent immediately to summon him to supper. It had settled down into a general rule that Cyril Petrowich could not hunt without Doubrovsky, who was a consummate adept in the noble

craft, and was invariably the ultimate court of appeal in any matter of doubt connected therewith.

They were still at table when the servant returned with a message that Doubrovsky would not come. Thereupon followed, of course, a great burst of passion, and then a second message, with threats of a final and definitive rupture, if Doubrovsky did not come immediately.

Then Troïekourof rose from the table, dismissed his guests abruptly, and stalked off to bed.

Next morning his first care was to ask after Doubrovsky. A sealed note was put into his hands. He summoned his secretary, who opened the note, and read as follows :—

"I will not return to Pakrovsky until you have sent me the keeper Paramochka to apologize for his insolence. I will then consider whether I should pardon him, or chastise him as he deserves. I have no notion of putting up with the insults of your servants,—I never tolerate even yours. An elderly gentleman is no buffoon to be laughed at. And so I remain,

"Your most humble servant,

"ANDREW DOUBROVSKY."

In these days a letter like this would indicate a disregard of all propriety; but Troïekourof was less annoyed at its form than at its matter.

"What!" he shouted, as he jumped out of his bed; "he expects me to send my people to apologize to him! He takes on himself to punish them or to pardon them as he thinks fit! What can the man be thinking of? Does he know whom he has to deal with? I'll soon let him know. He shall smart well for this. I'll teach him to put up his back at Troïekourof!"

He then dressed, and set out a hunting; but everything went wrong. All the whole day they started only one hare, and that soon managed to get away from the dogs. The dinner under the tent did not go off any better; at least, nothing was cooked to the master's taste. He cuffed the cook and abused his guests, and on his way home he took care to pass through one of Doubrovsky's fields with all his train of horses and dogs.

Some days passed away, and still the quarrel lasted. Doubrovsky had not come near Pakrovsky. Troïekourof missed him continually, and found his time hang heavily on his hands without him; so he vented his spleen in abuse, which reached the ears of Doubrovsky, amplified and envenomed in the transit.

A fresh incident now crushed the last lingering hope of a reconciliation.

One evening, when Doubrovsky was looking round his little property, he heard the strokes of an axe in one of his woods, and in a few moments a tree fell with a loud crash. He ran towards the spot from which the sound came, and caught sight of some of the Pakrovsky peasants, who were making off at full speed. With the help of his coachman he managed to catch one of the fugitives, whom he gagged, and led off to his house. Besides this capture the enemy had left two horses in the hands of the conqueror. Doubrovsky was exasperated to the highest pitch. Formerly the peasants of Pakrovsky had never dared to commit the least depredation on his estate, notwithstanding their well-earned reputation of being the worst thieves in the province. He now saw that these rascals were beginning to take advantage of the quarrel of the two neighbours, and so he resolved to give his prisoner a useful lesson with the twigs of the very tree he had hoped to carry off from the wood,—it was done, and done to Doubrovsky's satisfaction. As

for the horses, he thought that they might best expiate their complicity by ploughing together with his own.

Tidings of this extraordinary event soon reached the lord of Pakrovsky. In the first explosion of his wrath he was on the point of heading an expedition against Kistenovka (the name of Doubrovsky's estate), with a firm resolution that he would not leave a single shrub standing, and that he would blockade the proprietor in his own house.

Troïekourof was just the man to execute a plan like this; and he would doubtless have done so if chance had not given another channel to his resentment.

While he was striding up and down his hall he caught sight of a britzka with three horses just drawing up at his door. A man wrapped in a cloak, and wearing a gilt helmet on his head, sprang from the vehicle, and took his way towards the steward's room. Troïekourof soon recognised the assessor Schabachkin, and sent for him at once.

In less than a minute the great official was in presence of the terrible nobleman, bowing most profoundly, and awaiting his orders with a demeanour of respectful awe.

"What are you after?" asked Troïekourof. "You, Mr. . . . . I can't think of your name . . . . what are you at here?"

"I am just come from the city, your Excellency; and I am come only to ask whether your steward has any commission to give me."

"You couldn't have come more seasonably . . . . What's your name, did you say? . . . . You are just the man I wanted to see. Take a glass of wine, and listen to what I have to say."

A reception so unusual and so distinguished was a very agreeable surprise for the assessor. He declined the proffered draught, but applied himself to listen with both ears.

"I have a neighbour," resumed Troïekourof; "a poor scoundrel, a blockhead, a worthless fellow. I want to seize his estate. . . . . What do you say to that?"

"Your Excellency, have you any title-deeds?"

"Stuff and nonsense! Title-deeds, indeed! . . . . Mr. What's-your-name . . . . the question is to seize his estates with or without a title."

"Without a title-deed . . . . not so easy, your Excellency."

"Turn it over in your mind, d'ye hear? Turn it well over . . . ."

"If, now, your Excellency could in any way get hold of any title-deed, in virtue of which you could claim . . . then certainly . . . ."

"The worst of it is that in the last fire all the title-deeds were burnt . . . Do you see?"

"What, your Excellency, all the papers burnt? Well, that will do, I think. You have only to make a claim in law, and no doubt you would receive entire satisfaction."

"You think so, eh? Well, I rely on your zeal . . . . and you may reckon on my gratitude."

Schabachkin made a profound obeisance and withdrew. He then set to work with such vigour, that, thanks to his zeal, Doubrovsky received within a fortnight a summons to appear before the tribunal, and exhibit the title-deeds in virtue of which he held possession of Kistenovka.

On receiving it, Doubrovsky flew into a great rage, and wrote off a letter, couched in terms which might have been more civil, to the President of the Court of Justice, informing him that the little village of Kistenovka was his paternal inheritance, that neither Troïekourof nor anybody else had anything to do with it, and that any attempt upon his estate, from whatever quarter it might come, could be nothing else than a miserable, pettifogging fraud.

Nothing could have given Schabachkin greater pleasure than this epistle. He learned from it, —first, that Doubrovsky knew nothing about business; and, secondly, that it would not be difficult to involve a man whose character was so violent and unreflecting in some snare or other.

When Doubrovsky had pondered the matter in cold blood, he saw that it was necessary to answer the question legally put to him in a more precise and circumstantial way. He wrote a second letter; but in the issue this was pronounced to be insufficient.

The affair went on, and Doubrovsky was so confident of the justice of his claim that he took no steps to maintain it. Besides, he had no money to spend in lawyers' offices; so he contented himself with laughing at the venality of all the brotherhood, without any suspicion that he might become the victim of malevolence and cupidity. Troïekourof took the matter very easily; he left all the zeal and activity to Schabachkin, who employed his client's name and reputation to awe the judges, and his money to bribe them to pervert both law and right.

At length, on the 9th February, 17—, Doubrovsky was cited before the tribunal of the city, to hear read the decision of the judges in a question touching an estate claimed by Lieutenant Doubrovsky on the one side, and by General-in-chief Troïekourof on the other. The citation went on to say that the said Doubrovsky must either sign a renunciation of his claim, or show cause to the contrary.

The same day Doubrovsky met Troïekourof on the road as he was going towards the city. The old friends bent on each other a look of superb disdain, and Doubrovsky saw on the features of his opponent an expression of mortal hatred.

On reaching the city, Doubrovsky put up at the house of a merchant of his acquaintance; and the next

morning he presented himself before the judges, who scarcely deigned to notice him. But when Troïekourof made his appearance, all the members of the tribunal rose from their seats to salute him, and to express to him the interest they felt in his success. The rank, the age, and the corpulence of so great a personage seemed to these gentlemen to merit the honour of an arm-chair.

Doubrovsky was on the other side, leaning against the wall.

Then succeeded a profound silence, which was broken by the secretary, who, in a loud distinct voice, explained the bearings of the case. When he had finished, the assessor rose, and saluting Troïekourof with reverent humility, prayed him to sign the paper before him. The great man took the pen from the assessor's hand with a triumphant flourish, and wrote that he quite coincided with the decision of the judges.

When Doubrovsky's turn came, the secretary reached the paper towards him, but the old man stood motionless; a second request had no better success. The decision was to the effect that he was obliged to yield, or to give security for the production of his title to the estate in question at the proper time and before the competent tribunal, when his claims would be examined and decided upon.

Suddenly Doubrovsky raised his head; his eyes flashed fire; he stamped his foot on the ground, and then dealt the secretary a blow so vigorous that the unhappy official let his inkstand fall on the trousers of the assessor.

The whole court was in consternation. The guards made a rush on Doubrovsky, and, after a violent struggle, succeeded in securing his person. He was dragged out of the court and put into a cart.

Troïekourof followed him, attended by all the judi-

cial bench. This frantic act of his old friend had produced a great impression on him; and he scarcely condescended to bestow a look on the judges, who had reckoned on his gratitude. He returned to Pakrovsky as fast as possible, tormented by the reproaches of his conscience, and altogether disconcerted by his triumph.

Doubrovsky took to his bed. A physician, who was less ignorant than the run of his fellows, bled him, and employed counter-irritants so successfully that the patient was soon in a fit state to bear removal to Kistenovka, soon to be his no longer.

CHAPTER II.

SOME weeks passed away. Doubrovsky's health was no better; he had no return of delirium, but his strength was perceptibly diminishing. The old man had given up all his old habits; he seldom left his room, and he would sit for days together, and all day long, with his eyes fixed on the ground with a melancholy and gloomy expression.

Old Jegorovna, the faithful nurse of young Doubrovsky, watched over him as she would over a child, fed him, undressed him, and put him to bed. The old man would suffer no one else to come near him, nor would he pay the slightest attention to any voice but hers. As he was no longer able to attend to business or to domestic matters, Jegorovna resolved to write to her young master, who held a commission in the Guards at St. Petersburg, and to tell him how things stood.

With this intent she tore a leaf from her cash-book, summoned to her aid Chariton the cook, the only person at Kistenovka who knew anything about

writing, and dictated to him a despatch, which was carried to the town the same day and entrusted to the post.

Young Vladimir had been educated at the military school, and thence transferred to the Guards with the rank of ensign. His father spared nothing to enable him to make a suitable figure. Indeed his anxiety on this head went far beyond his means. Young Vladimir, like other young men, was thoughtless, spent money, amused himself with his companions, and gave himself no trouble about the future.

One day, when he was sitting in his own room smoking with a number of his comrades, his servant handed him a letter the direction and seal of which occasioned him no little wonder. He opened it, and hurriedly read as follows :—

" Vladimir Andreïvitch, I take the liberty of writing you these lines to inform you about the health of your father. He is very poorly, and now and then he is out of his senses. He seems as if he had gone back into childhood again—but God is the master of life as well as of death. Come as soon as you can; we will send horses to meet you at the last stage. They talk about justice assigning us to Cyril Petrowich, who boasts as if we already belonged to him. But for all that we have belonged to you these three hundred years; I never heard anything to the contrary all the years I have lived in the world. You might as well, as you are at St. Petersburg, submit the question to our father the Czar. I am sure he would not inflict this wrong and sorrow upon us.

" Your old and faithful nurse,

" Anna Jegorovna Bouzireva."

Vladimir read this letter several times. He had lost his mother while he was yet a child; he scarcely

knew his father, for he had been at St. Petersburg ever since he was eight years old. He had pictured to himself the peaceful joys of his family in colours the more seductive that he remembered nothing of his real home. The thought of losing his father chilled his heart. He saw him sick, alone in the deserted village, abandoned to the care of a few servants, and slowly yielding beneath his mental and bodily sufferings.

He bitterly reproached himself for his negligence. It was long since he had heard from his father, but supposing him occupied he had thought little of his silence. He resolved to set off at once, and even to throw up his commission if his father's state were such as to require his constant presence. His friends had taken their leave; he wrote for the necessary permission of absence, and then gave himself up to a gloomy reverie.

Vladimir was drawing near the station at which he was to find his own horses. Dark presentiments filled his soul; he feared he should not find his father alive, and he thought of the dreary life that awaited him in his native village. What was he to do, poor, isolated, compelled to devote himself to work about which he knew absolutely nothing?

When he reached the station, he found the horses had been waiting for him four days, and he soon recognised Antoine, the old coachman, who used to lead him about the stable when he was a child, and show him his little pony. Tears were running down the cheeks of the old domestic. He bowed almost to the ground when he saw his young master. On learning that his father was still alive, Vladimir ordered them to put to the horses; and on the way he began to question Antoine.

"Tell me, Antoine, what's all this between my father and Troïekourof?"

"God knows, my dear master. . . . Folk say they did not get on well together, and Cyril Petrowich has brought an action against him to get hold of his land. I know it isn't a servant's business to meddle in his lord's affairs . . . but still your father was foolish to run his head against the other . . . the lamb doesn't often eat the wolf."

"It seems, then, that Troïekourof does just what he likes on our estate, and that he wants to get hold of Kistenovka?"

"People say so; but God forbid that we should fall into his hands. His born serfs are wretched enough; what would become of us strangers? He wouldn't be content with our skin, he would want our flesh too. . . . God grant our master a long life! But if he takes him away, haven't we our young master? Don't you forsake us, and we will keep faithful and devoted to you."

Vladimir listened in silence. He was touched by the fidelity of the old servant. He remained lost in deep thought for about an hour, when he was suddenly recalled to real life by Antoine's exclamation: "There's Pakrovsky!"

He raised his eyes. They were driving along the shore of a large lake, into which a little river wound its way from the surrounding hills. From a small wood which crowned one of these hills arose the green roof and the turrets of a stone mansion. Close by were the cupola of the church and the old bell-tower. Around were scattered many cottages with vegetable gardens, and deep wells.

Doubrovsky recognised the scene. He recollected how often he had played on that very hill, with little Maria Troïekourof, who was two years younger than he was, and who gave promise of considerable beauty.

He opened his lips to ask about her, but a feeling of shame checked him.

As they passed in front of the lordly mansion, he caught sight of a white dress floating between the trees. At the same moment Antoine, with a coachman's instinct, put his horses to a gallop through the village. Thence the road led up the hill; and soon Vladimir saw in front of him a grove of birches, and on his left a small grey house with a red roof.

His heart beat violently . . . it was Kistenovka . . . that little house was his father's. . . . He entered with feelings we will not attempt to describe. He looked around—twelve years had gone by since he last saw his native village. The birches had grown high and tufted; the court, which used to be kept so neatly, was now like a meadow just before the hay harvest; and a horse was quietly feeding in it. The dogs, after barking loudly at first, soon recognised Antoine, and were quiet. The peasants came running from the outhouses to look upon their young master with reverence and with joy—he could scarcely manage to pass through the eager crowd. He ascended the broken steps and entered into the hall—old Jegorovna flung herself on his neck.

"How are you, my good nurse?" said he, as he returned her embrace; "and my father? how is he? where is he?"

At that moment there came forward, with slow steps, an old man, whose stately figure was in keeping with the spacious hall; he was pale and thin, and wore a dressing-gown and a cotton nightcap.

"Where is Volodka? where is my son?" he asked, in a feeble, exhausted voice.

And the son threw himself in silence into his father's arms. The shock was too much for the old man; his feet tottered, and he would have fallen to the ground if Vladimir had not supported him.

"He would get up for all I could say," muttered Jegorovno, "and he can scarcely put his legs to the ground."

The sick man was carried into his room; he tried to talk, but his ideas were all confused, and he could articulate only a few incoherent words. At length he sank back exhausted, and fell into a profound lethargy.

Vladimir was tortured with anxiety. He took possession of his father's room, and begged to be left alone. The servants bowed, and went off with Antoine to the kitchen to get their dinners and gossip at their ease.

Some days passed thus. Vladimir was anxious to see how their affairs stood; but the old man could give him no information, and he had always been sole and exclusive manager. He looked over his father's papers, and there he found the assessor's first letter and the draft of a reply; but these documents did not throw much light on the lawsuit. He thought it best to await the first trial, persuaded as he was of the justice of his cause.

The old man was sinking gradually. His faculties were gone; he was like the merest child; Vladimir never left his side.

The time appointed by law had expired and no appeal had been made. From that day Kistenovka belonged to the lord of Pakrovsky. Schabachkin waited on Troïekourof, bowed as if he wished to draw attention to the exact length of his spine, and asked, in his humblest tones, when it would please his Excellency to take possession of the estate recently acquired.

Cyril Petrowich could not shake off a feeling of uneasiness. He had never been actuated by interest

in this affair; he had sought only vengeance for an insult. He knew the state of his old companion in arms, and he began to regret his victory. He received Schabachkin with evident ill temper; but as he could find no pretext for accusing or abusing him, he could only send him about his business again. Schabachkin saw that the moment was not propitious, and hastily took his departure.

When he found himself alone, Troïekourof paced up and down his room humming a favourite air—

"Peal forth, victorious thunders . . ."

which always showed that he was in a fit of deep abstraction.

All at once he rang the bell, ordered the drosky to be brought to the door, threw a cloak over his shoulders, and drove at full speed towards the house of Doubrovsky. For a long time he hovered in suspense between two opposing feelings, and resentment and pride had his soul all to themselves. Then more noble feelings ventured in again, and got the upper hand. He resolved to make it up with his old friend, to burn all the documents connected with the lawsuit, and to let matters go on as they used to do. He felt his heart lighter and more cheerful, whipped his horse, and soon entered the court of Doubrovsky's house.

At that very moment the sick man was seated at the window of his bed-room; he recognised Troïekourof—his features became convulsed, a deep crimson replaced his customary paleness, his eyes shot fire, and he uttered strange inarticulate sounds. His son, who was busy with some accounts, raised his head, and was frightened at the change in the old man's countenance—he was pointing towards the door with an expression of mingled terror and wrath; he tried to rise—he succeeded, but only to fall at full length

on the floor. Vladimir ran to raise him—he was motionless and almost lifeless—he had been struck with apoplexy.

"Quick—off to the town! fetch the doctor!" shouted Vladimir to the servants, who entered at the sound of the old man's fall.

"General Troïekourof wishes to speak to you."

"Tell him to be off at once, if he doesn't wish me to set the dogs at him."

The servant did not wait to have the order repeated. He gave the message literally, while Jegorovna looked on, wringing her hands.

"Oh, my master!" she exclaimed, "you have dragged down your son in your fall . . . Cyril Petrowich will devour us all . . ."

"Hold your tongue, nurse," said Vladimir, in a tone of command, "and send Antoine at once for the doctor."

Jegorovna left the room; not a single servant was to be found in the antechamber; they had all run out to the door to see Troïekourof. This last-named personage had heard Vladimir's words, although he had not quitted his drosky. His features gathered gloom, a sardonic smile played over his lips, he cast around him a look of terrible contempt, and drove slowly away.

As he passed the door he turned once more to look at the window at which he had seen Doubrovsky, but he was no longer there. The message had been forgotten, not a servant had moved, when suddenly Vladimir made his appearance amongst them, and exclaimed, as if beside himself—

"My father is dead!"

It was like a thunderbolt . . : there was a momentary stupor, and then all ran towards the room of their master.

They found him stretched out on the couch to

which Vladimir had carried him; his right arm hung over its side, his head had fallen on his chest . . . not a sign of life animated his body . . . its features were horribly contorted.

Jegorovna shrieked, while the other servants proceeded to discharge their last duty towards the lifeless body. They washed it, clothed it in the old uniform, and then laid it out on the table at which for so many years they had seen their master seated.

CHAPTER III.

On the third day came the funeral. The corpse was laid on an open bier, covered with a pall, and surrounded with lighted candles. The dining-room was filled with serfs ready to bear the deceased to his last resting place. Vladimir was there to begin the mournful procession. The clergy had already set forth, chanting the office of burial.

The lord of Kistenovka crossed the threshold of his home for the last time. The procession moved slowly through the forest behind which was the little church. It was an autumn day; the air was clear and fresh; the path was strewed with fallen leaves. They issued from the forest and entered the church of Kistenovka, adjoining which was a cemetery planted with old lime-trees.

There lay Vladimir's mother, and at her side was a fresh grave. The church was crowded; all the peasants of Kistenovka had made it a point to pay this last token of respect to their late lord. Vladimir stood at the church door. He did not pray, nor did he weep, and his countenance wore an expression of ferocity which boded ill.

The mournful ceremony was over . . . the young man advanced to take one last look of the departed, and all the peasants followed his example . . . they nailed down the lid of the coffin. All around were women loud in lamentation, and here and there a sturdy peasant wiped away a tear, a tribute which the virtues of a master may win even from a serf.

Then the coffin was lowered into the grave. Every one present threw on it a handful of earth . . . and all was over. The peasants slowly dispersed, and Vladimir stalked fiercely on before them and was lost to view in the forest.

Jegorovna asked the clergy and attendants, in her master's name, to partake the funeral repast, and prayed them to excuse the absence of Vladimir; and as they walked home they discoursed of the virtues of the deceased, of the probable lot of young Doubrovsky, and of the consequences of the insult offered to Troïekourof, which had already got abroad.

"What is to be will be," said one; "but it would be a pity if Vladimir Andreïvitch is turned out. He is certainly an accomplished gentleman."

"And why should he be turned out?" asked Jegorovna. "Cyril Petrowich is headstrong enough, but I think he has found his match now. . . . Our young master knows how to act like a man; and, with the grace of God, his brave peasants won't forsake him. Cyril Petrowich is playing a less winning game than he thinks."

"For my part," suggested the assistant, "I would far rather have to do with the devil himself than with Cyril Petrowich. You have only to look at him, and your spine bends of its own accord."

"All things are but vanity," interposed the curate. "After all it will come to this, that we shall sing over Cyril Petrowich the psalms we have sung to-day over our old lord. The only difference is that the

dinner will be more sumptuous, and there will be more guests . . . but in the sight of heaven it is all one."

"We had meant to invite the whole village," replied Jegorova, "but Vladimir Andreïvitch would not hear of it. There is no lack, I assure you . . . we shall be few in number, but we shall try to do things decently."

This assurance quickened the steps of our party, and they reached the house in the best dispositions possible; the table was already laid, and the brandy awaited them.

Meanwhile Vladimir had been roaming all over the forest, trying to benumb his grief by violent exercise. He went on without knowing or caring whither; the branches scratched his face, he floundered in marshy spots—but he heeded nothing. At length he found a narrow path with deep wood on both sides. A little stream flowed in silence by the roots of the old trees. Vladimir threw himself down on the turf, worn out with fatigue, and gave himself up to the course of his gloomy thoughts.

He felt most painfully the perplexity and the isolation of his position, and the future spread itself out before him in ever deepening darkness. His outburst of anger against Troïekourof foreboded new troubles. His modest patrimony was, probably, about to pass into other hands . . . and what was to become of him? what could he do?

He lay dreaming thus for hours, watching the brook as it bore away on its smooth surface the withered leaves which were so emblematic of his own life and hopes. . . . At last he became aware that night was closing in around him, and he tried to find some path which would lead him out of the forest. . . . He wandered about for a long time, and at length hit upon a path which led straight to Kistenovka. He

saw in the distance the funeral party who were coming in his direction, and he drew from this circumstance an omen of ill. Doubrovsky hid himself behind the trees as they came near, and they passed by without noticing him.

As he came near to his home he saw a large crowd of people. The court-yard was swarming with peasants and servants. He heard an unwonted murmuring and muttering. In front of the stable were two droskys, each drawn by three horses, and on the steps of the door were several persons whom he had never seen before. Some were dressed in uniform, and all were examining the house attentively.

"What's the meaning of all this?" he asked of old Antoine, who came forward to meet him. "Who are these people? what do they want?"

"They are officers of justice," answered the faithful domestic; "they want to hand us over to Troïekourof, and to take us away from our good master."

Vladimir hung down his head; all came around him in silence and with compassion depicted on their countenances.

Suddenly a voice was heard:

"You are the son of our benefactor. We won't have any master but you! we will never leave you!"

And all rushed forward to kiss the hands or the garments of the young lord. Vladimir was deeply affected by these marks of devotedness and love; a heavy weight lay upon his heart.

"Be quiet," said he to them. "I will speak to the officers of justice."

"Speak to them! What use is that? have pity on us!"

Vladimir approached the group of officials. Schabachkin was there, his head covered and his arms crossed, looking about him with gratified arrogance. The captain of the band, a man of about fifty, tall

and bulky, with a face covered with pimples, and divided into two zones by a large moustache, was croaking like a raven.

"I repeat to you again," said he, with his hoarse voice, "that, in virtue of the decree of the law, you belong henceforth to his Excellency Cyril Petrowich, who is here represented by M. Schabachkin; that you have to obey him in whatever he may command you; and that the more you may love and honour him the more worthy you will be of his good graces."

After this witty address the captain laughed, and Schabachkin and his followers imitated his good example.

Vladimir's blood was boiling with rage.

"Permit me," said he, "to ask some explanation of these proceedings."

"The thing is clear enough," said the captain; "we are come to put my lord Cyril Petrovitch Troïekourof in possession of his newly acquired property; and so we invite one and all of you to decamp as soon as possible."

"It seems to me," replied Vladimir, "that it would have been in better taste to address me rather than these peasants; I am the proprietor, and if there are rights to transmit or to resign . . ."

"What do you mean?" said Schabackin, arrogantly interrupting him. "The former proprietor is dead; and who are you—to object to a legal decision? We know nothing of you."

"'Tis our young master!" shouted a voice in the crowd.

"Who is that who dares to speak here?" cried the captain, with a voice of anger. "You talk of masters—your master is Cyril Petrowich Troïekourof . . . do you understand that, you scoundrels?"

"God forbid!" said the same voice.

"What insolence!" yelled the captain. "Here,

staroste (the official advanced), arrest immediately the fellow who dares to interrupt me thus."

The *staroste* came near and asked the crowd who of them had spoken? There was a dead silence . . . then a murmur was heard amongst those furthest off . . . it increased and came nearer and nearer, and at length exploded in a violent tumult.

The captain judged it expedient to lower his tone, and tried in vain to harangue them.

"My boys, what's the use of all this nonsense?" exclaimed several voices. "Lay hold on that fellow."

And the crowd moved onwards. Schabachkin and his followers retreated into the porch and shut the door behind them.

"Break open the door!"

The peasants were advancing to obey the order thus given, when Doubrovsky shouted with a voice of thunder:—"Stop! Do you wish to destroy both yourselves and me? Go to your homes, and let me manage the matter. The Czar is merciful; I will seek his protection. We are all his children, and he will not permit so great an injustice. But how can we hope for success if you begin by an act of rebellion?"

These firm words, and the air of authority with which they were uttered, soon calmed the crowd. In an instant the court was empty. Vladimir mounted the steps and Schabachkin opened the door. The assessor thanked him with extreme servility for the service he had just done them, but Vladimir did not deign a word in reply.

"We intend passing the night here," continued Schabachkin. "The day is declining, and your peasants might assail us on our road. Will you have the goodness to order some straw or hay to be spread in the guest chamber. We will be off early in the morning."

"Do as you please," answered Doubrovsky; "I am no longer master here; I have no orders to give."

Doubrovsky entered his father's room, and said to himself: "Well, all is over. This morning I had a shelter and a morsel of bread, at least. To-morrow I must leave the house in which I was born. The little nook in which my father sleeps his last sleep will belong to the author of his misery—to his murderer!"

He gnashed his teeth. . . . His eyes dwelt long and tenderly on his mother's picture . . . "And that portrait," said he, "will belong to the enemy of my house! May be he will toss it away in some attic—or it will be hung up in the scullery to feed the ribaldry of menials! And this room . . . in which my father died . . . here the steward will live, or . . . No! he shall never possess this dwelling . . . he has driven me forth . . . it shall never be his! . . ."

Just at this moment the noise his unwelcome guests were making increased his exasperation. "This rabble must needs play the master here!" Then all became still . . . a terrible idea flashed across the mind of the young man.

He opened the cupboards and drawers, and examined his father's papers. He tore up all the accounts. One packet he laid aside. It was labelled: "*Letters from my wife.*" He opened it with deep emotion. They dated from the Turkish war, and were written from Kistenovka to the Russian camp. They were full of details of the quiet life of his mother, of her regrets at her separation from her beloved husband, of eager hopes that he would soon return.

In one of them she expresses her anxiety about the health of little Vladimir; in another she exults

at his precocity of talent, and foretells for him a brilliant and happy lot. The orphan was absorbed in this perusal when the clock struck eleven. He put the letters into his pocket, took the light, and went out.

The guests were sleeping, some on the straw, some on the table. At their sides were empty glasses, and a strong smell of spirits filled the hall. Vladimir turned away his eyes in disgust and passed into the antechamber, where all was deserted and still. He fancied he saw some one crouching in a corner, and on examination he found it was the blacksmith, Archippus.

"What are you doing here?" he asked with astonishment.

"I . . . I . . . I wanted to see if they were all there . . ."

"And this axe, what were you going to do with it?"

"What was I going to do with it? These officers of justice are so queer, you see, that it is always safer to have one's axe with one. . . ."

"You are drunk . . . give me your axe, and go to sleep."

"Me drunk, master! God forbid! Not a drop has crossed my lips. Who can think of brandy now? Don't we all know that those scoundrels are going to seize us, and to drive our master away? How the brutes sleep! . . I wish they were all at the bottom of the pond!"

Doubrovsky knit his brows. "Listen, Archippus; put away these evil thoughts. . . . It is not their fault . . . light your lantern and follow me."

Archippus took the light, found his lantern, and both went quietly down stairs. When they were in the court, the watchman was awake and the dogs barked. He sent away to their beds those who had been compelled to watch all night—a command they did not wait to hear twice.

Doubrovsky went a few steps, and came upon Antoine and Grischka.

"What are you awake for, at this hour?"

"Oh, dear master, how could we sleep? after having lived to this day to see a sight like this!"

"Silence! . . . Where is Jegorovna?"

"In her room," said Grischka.

"Go and call her . . let none of you remain in the chateau . . . make haste."

"Antoine, put the horses in the britzka."

Grischka returned in a few minutes with the old woman, who had not undressed. No one had been able to sleep.

"Are you all here?" asked Doubrovsky.

"All, except the officers."

"Poor fellows! they are clever enough to save themselves. Bring straw and hay."

It was done immediately.

"Under the staircase . . . just so . . . now, my children, a light!"

Archippus opened his lantern, and Doubrovsky lighted a pine-wood torch.

"Stop, Archippus; are all the doors open? give them a fair chance of escape."

Archippus ran and executed his commission. When he returned, Doubrovsky plunged his torch in the hay, and the whole court was lighted up with its blaze.

"Mercy!" cried Jegorovna, "what is your intention, Vladimir Andreïvitch?"

"Silence!" said the young man. "Adieu, my children; God be with you! I can only make you miserable by remaining here. May you be happy with your new master!"

"Father," cried the peasants, "we wish to die with you—we wish to follow you!"

Doubrovsky mounted the carriage, with Grischka

at his side. Antoine smacked his whip . . . in the twinkling of an eye they were gone . . . for ever.

The flames crackled vigorously on. The roof fell in with a loud crash. Cries of distress were heard. Some of the officers rushed forth from the whirlwind of smoke. Some appeared for a moment at the window, shrieked, fell, and all was still again.

Archippus was in high glee. His one regret was that all the officers were not burnt. "What a splendid sight this must be from Pakrovsky," said he, rubbing his hands.

A cat was seen on the roof of an outhouse. It dared not jump, for the flames were encircling it; so it uttered loud and lamentable cries, to the great delight of the children whom the fire had attracted to the spot.

"Imps that you are, what is there to laugh at?" said Archippus. "You are glad to see the poor brute burnt, eh?"

He then placed a ladder, and mounted to the roof. He contrived to raise the cat, and descended, though not without being scorched considerably.

"Now, good bye, my children," he shouted; "I have nothing more to do here." And he disappeared from their view.

The fire had consumed everything that would burn. There remained a vast mass of glowing embers, which made the darkness of the night yet more horrible. And around it, in groups, were the wretched peasants of Kistenovka.

The news of this terrible catastrophe soon spread throughout the country, and the most contradictory conjectures as to its cause were circulated. Some said that Doubrovsky's people had got drunk at the

funeral feast; others cast the blame upon the officers of justice, who had celebrated the taking possession with immoderate libations. It was averred on both sides that Doubrovsky and his people had perished with the officers. The few of the latter who had escaped could give no information, and so it never occurred to any one to suspect that the author of this disaster was no other than the lawful heir of Kistenovka.

In the morning Troïekourof made his appearance on the scene of the fire, and proceeded to take information concerning it. It appeared that the captain, the assessor, an attorney, and a clerk, had disappeared, as well as Doubrovsky, old Jegorovna, Grischka, Antoine the coachman, and Archippus the blacksmith. He addressed a lengthy report to the Government, which went on from office to office, and then was —forgotten.

But very soon the attention of the idle and the newsmongers of the neighbourhood was diverted from the fire by reports far more serious. A band of brigands infested the country and laughed at the efforts of justice. Nobody was safe, either in the villages or on the high roads.

The robbers drove furiously about in swift britzkas in broad daylight; they stopped the mails, they pillaged country houses and set them on fire. Wonderful stories were circulated of the captain of the band. Everybody was full of his cleverness, his valour, and the kind of elevation of soul which distinguished him from his fellows.

Doubrovsky's name was in everybody's mouth, and he was generally said to be the captain. One thing only seemed to make against this conclusion— Troïekourof's property was spared; no one had ever emptied his barns or stopped his carriages. Troïekourof himself attributed this exemption to the

terror inspired by his name, and to the excellent police he had established on his property.

People smiled at his pride, and every one expected to hear that some fine day the audacious band had visited Pakrovsky, where they were sure of a rich booty; at length it was suspected that the brigands were really afraid to attack Troïekourof.

The old nobleman was full of exultation; whenever he heard of a robbery he had plenty of jokes for the governor, the captains of police, and the colonel of the regiment. Anyhow the robbers always contrived to escape, safe and sound.

CHAPTER IV.

It was the 1st October, the annual festival of the church of Pakrovsky, and also the fête day of the old lord. His only daughter was just seventeen, and in the full splendour of her charms. Her father doated on her, although his fondness did not exempt her from feeling the effects of his extreme irritability. He was always eager to gratify her smallest wish, but he had never been able to win her confidence; so that Marie had instinctively concealed her opinions and feelings, lest they should expose her to ridicule. She had no one to whom she could open her heart, and grew up in perfect isolation; for the company and pleasures of Troïekourof did not admit the presence of his daughter. She very rarely made her appearance at table, but a library, chiefly consisting of French literature, was at her disposal.

About this time a tutor was engaged for the purpose of instructing a little boy named Alexander, a protégé of the old lord. The tutor arrived just at the time when the robbers were the great topic of conver-

sation. He charmed Troïekourof by his pleasing appearance, and his simple expression of countenance. Cyril ran his eye over the young man's testimonials—there was only one objection—the Mentor was rather young. Not that he thought this defect incompatible with the patience and solidity necessary to a tutor. His ideas ran in another channel, and so he sent for Marie, who spoke French.

"Come here, Marie, and tell Monsieur that I take him on condition that he behaves properly, and keeps his proper place."

Marie approached, saying simply to the young man that her father required of him decency and good behaviour.

The young man bowed, and replied that he hoped to secure esteem at least, if not affection.

Marie translated this reply literally to her father.

"What on earth has he to do with esteem or affection? All he has to do is to teach the boy to read, write, and so on . . . I don't care a straw for anything else . . . just translate that to him."

Marie softened down the asperity of these words as well as she could; Cyril dismissed the Frenchman with a wave of his hand, and a room was allotted him in one of the wings of the mansion.

Marie was so full of the aristocratic prejudices in which she had grown up, that she took not the slightest notice of the new guest. In her eyes a tutor was only a kind of servant, a labourer . . . and she never looked on that sort of people as being really men. She did not even notice the impression she had produced in M. Desforges. The confusion of the young man when he met her, the tremulous voice with which he addressed her . . . all this was unobserved. An unforeseen accident changed the opinion she entertained of Monsieur.

The old lord had a whim—he kept always a number

of young bears, who were regularly brought into the dining-room to play with the dogs and cats; as they grew older and stronger they were chained up and kept for baiting. Sometimes he had them brought out in the court under his window and teased in various ways. Sometimes he would harness two of them to a britzka, and compel some of his guests to take the reins. But of all other amusements, the most ingenious and the one he liked best was the following.

A hungry bear was shut up in an empty room. He was chained to a ring in the wall, and the chain was so long that it allowed the bear the range of all the room except the furthest corners. The trick was to induce one or other of the guests to enter the room and to close the door on him. Face to face with the shaggy brute the hapless victim was obliged to crouch in one of the corners for hours, feeling the breath of the monster warm on his cheek, and hearing the growling with which he accompanied his furious efforts to get at him.

A few days after the tutor's arrival, Troïekourof took it into his head to submit him to this experiment of the bear. One morning he called the Frenchman, led him into a gloomy corridor—two doors were thrown open, and in a moment the tutor was pushed in by the shoulders and the door was shut.

When he opened his eyes and recovered from his first surprise, he saw the bear rolled up in a corner. The animal caught sight of him, rose on his hind legs, and advanced to reconnoitre him. Desforges very coolly awaited his approach. When the brute came near enough, he put his pistol into his ear, and stretched him dead on the floor.

The report of the pistol made every one run eagerly towards the room. The door was opened, Cyril Troïekourof entered, and was in consternation at the issue

of his experiment. Who could have forewarned the Frenchman? Why did he carry fire-arms on his person?

Marie was sent for, and translated these questions.

"No one had forewarned me," said Desforges; "but I always carry a pistol because I have no notion of submitting to insults for which I should, in my position, vainly seek satisfaction."

Troïekourof asked no more questions; he ordered the dead bear to be dragged out and skinned, muttering at the same time, "He's a game cock, that fellow! I wonder what he's afraid of?"

From that moment he became very fond of Desforges. But this occurrence made a still deeper impression on Marie. She had always before her mind's eye the prostrate bear, and Desforges answering with the cool courage of a manly heart. She concluded hence that courage and self-respect are not the exclusive prerogatives of a caste, and she began to treat the tutor with more respect. New relations arose between them. Marie had a fine voice and great taste in music; Desforges was ordered to give her lessons... already a tender sentiment had sprung up between master and pupil.

It was the eve of the feast we were speaking of in the last chapter, and the guests were arriving in great numbers. Some were lodged in the château, some with the steward, or with the better class of peasants. The stables were full of horses, and the court-yard was crowded with vehicles of all sorts and sizes.

At nine o'clock in the morning the bell rang for service, and everybody went to the church. So large was the attendance that the church was filled with strangers, and the peasants knelt outside.

Troïekourof made his appearance punctually at the hour in a calèche drawn by six horses, and advanced to his place with great dignity, his daughter walking

at his side. All the men admired her beauty, the ladies could only criticise her toilette.

The choir began. Now and then Cyril Petrovitch joined in the singing. He prayed with an air of lofty condescension, and bent to the ground when the curé uttered aloud a prayer for the patron of the church.

When the service was ended, the crowd gravitated, so to speak, around the wealthy nobleman, presenting their respects and complimenting Marie. They returned in great state to the château, and eighty guests sat down to dinner. Cyril Petrovitch was at the head of the table, the ladies on one side and the gentlemen on the other, and at the bottom was Desforges with his pupil Alexander.

The guests were served in hierarchical order, and Cyril looked around him with complete satisfaction. Suddenly the sound of a calèche was heard.

"Who's that?" asked Troïekourof.

The servant ran out, and returned with the newly-arrived guest, M. Antoine Paphnutovitch Spitzoun. He was a portly personage, about fifty years old, marked with the small-pox, and blessed with a triple chin. He rolled into the hall, bowing right and left, stammering his excuses for being late.

"Another plate!" shouted Cyril. "Sit down there, Paphnutovitch, and tell us what's the matter . . . you didn't come to church . . . that I can understand . . . but to find *you* late at dinner! That's something out of your line, for I take you, at least, to be a man who likes a good dinner."

"Pardon me," said Paphnutovitch, with hesitating voice, as he tucked his napkin into the first button-hole of his new coat; "pardon me, my dear Petrovitch. "I set out in excellent time, but before I had got ten versts on the way . . . crack! one of my wheels lost its tire. What was to be done? Fortu-

nately a village was close by. But by the time we got there, and found the blacksmith, and he had bungled over the broken tire, three good hours had been lost. I had nothing left for it but to take a short cut through the wood of Kistenovka . . . it went against my grain, though, and I would rather have gone miles round . . ."

"You don't give me the idea of a man of heroic courage," said the host ironically . . . "what were you afraid of?"

"Why, that deadly fellow, Doubrovsky. Before you know where you are, he fixes his claws upon you. He lets nobody go by without plucking a few feathers from him . . . and as for me, I believe he wouldn't be content to pluck me, he would want my skin."

"To what do you owe this distinction?"

"The law-suit with poor old Andrew Gavrilowich," muttered the bulky guest. "Didn't I arrange matters for the love of you? but I hope within the bounds of my conscience and my duty, so that Doubrovsky had no further right to Kistenovka. The old man promised to square accounts with me after his own fashion, and I fancy his son won't forget the promise. Hitherto, thank God, they have only unfurnished a barn or two; but I don't feel sure they won't have further dealings with me yet."

"True," said Cyril, with a smile, "and your house is worth ransacking. That red chest of yours is ready to burst with gold, eh?"

"Once it wasn't so badly lined; but now one must look very sharp to find anything in it worth having."

"Stuff and nonsense, Antoine, as if everybody did not know you well enough. What do you do with all your money? You live like a beggar; you were never known to give a crust of bread to the poor . . .

you squeeze your peasants hard, and you think of nothing but hoarding . . ."

"You always like your joke," said the stout man, with constrained good humour; "but for all that I'm all but a ruined man."

Cyril Petrovitch turning to the new captain of the district, whom he had never seen before, and who was seated close to Desforges, he exclaimed,—

"Well, M. the Captain, let us see what you are like . . . can't you contrive to arrest Doubrovsky?"

The captain was perplexed; he smiled and bowed, and then replied,—

"Your Excellency, we will do our best."

"Do your best, eh? You've been doing your best a long time, and it doesn't seem to be a great deal, after all."

"True enough, your Excellency," stammered the disconcerted captain; the guests tittered all around.

"I like the candour of that man," said Troïekourof, "but I'm sorry we lost his predecessor . . . But this Doubrovsky, what do people say about him? what tricks has he been playing lately?"

"He has paid me a visit, Cyril Petrovitch," said a lady. "I actually had him to dinner on Monday last."

All eyes were turned towards the widow Globof, and she was implored to relate the whole affair. She continued:—

"You must know that, three weeks ago, I had sent my steward to post a letter for my Ivan. I don't spoil my boy; and if I wished to do so I have not the means. But an officer in the Guards must dress decently, and so I send him the half of my little income. The letter contained two thousand roubles. I had thought of Doubrovsky, but then I said to myself—'tis only seven versts to the post; he can't hurt in that little distance. Well, I waited, and

waited, and in the evening in comes my steward, white as a sheet, and with his clothes all torn . . . I condoled with him . . . what's the matter? what have they done to you?—'The brigands have robbed me,' said he; 'they wanted to hang me . . . Doubrovsky was with them, and he had pity on me . . . but they have taken everything, horses, carriage, and all.'—You may fancy I was ready to faint. What will Ivan do? said I to myself. But that didn't help much. I wrote to tell him of the misfortune I had met with, and sent him my blessing instead of the money.

"One week passed away . . a second . . One fine day a calèche drove up to the door. A general wished to speak to me. I told them to ask him up stairs, and a man of about thirty-five was introduced. He had a fine head of hair and magnificent moustaches. He said he was an old friend of Ivan Andreïevitch, and told me he could not pass my door without calling. I ordered dinner. We talked of all kinds of things, until at last we began to talk of Doubrovsky, and I told him my story about the money. The general knit his brows. 'It is odd,' said he, 'for I have always heard that Doubrovsky attacks only old misers, and does not strip even them. But no one has ever laid a murder to his charge. There is some trick in this. Call your steward.' The steward came in great alarm.

"'Come, I want to hear your story about Doubrovsky,' said my guest.

"The steward could not speak a word.

"'Well, go on!'

"'He said to me, Where are you going?'

"'And then?'

"'Then he took the letter and the money . . . which I delivered into his own hands.'

"'And then?'

" 'He gave me back the letter and the money, and said, God bless you! Go, and fulfil your commission.'

" 'Well!'

" 'Pardon! pardon!'

" 'Listen, my fine fellow. Now you have to settle with me. I'll wager anything that the money is in your drawer . . . Go and see . . . I'll attend to his punishment.'

" We searched, and the money was found. The general went on with his dinner, as if nothing had happened, having first ordered the thief to be tied up to his calèche. Then he took leave with the air of a perfectly well-bred man, and next day my steward was found hanging, on an oak close by, with the marks of a good scourging on his back."

The guests listened eagerly, the young girls especially, because they saw in Doubrovsky quite a hero of romance—and none listened more intently than Marie, who was then nourishing her taste on the fictions of Mrs. Radcliffe.

" So you fancy 'twas Doubrovsky?" said Troïekourof. " You are wrong, Anne Savitchna; it couldn't be."

" But who else stops people and searches their pockets?"

" That's another question; but I say your man wasn't Doubrovsky. I fancy I see him now. His hair may have turned brown, but then it was flaxen and curly. And as to his age, he can't be more than twenty-three . . . He is just five years older than Marie."

" Precisely so, your Excellency," said the captain. " The description I have of him says twenty-three years."

And therewithal the captain assumed an official expression of countenance, drew a paper from his pocket, and read as follows:—

"*Description of Doubrovsky.*

Age	24 years.
Height	middle.
Face	oval.
Beard	shaven.
Eyes	brown.
Hair	blond.
Nose	straight.
Particular marks	——"

"Is that all?" asked Troïekourof.

"All," answered the captain, carefully folding the paper.

"Permit me to congratulate you, M. the Captain! With a description like that you can't miss your man. Who is not of middle height? Who hasn't blond hair and a straight nose? Why, my friend, I'll bet what you like you might talk with Doubrovsky for hours without suspecting he was the man. 'Pon my word, you are sharp fellows, you officers of the police!"

The captain said nothing. He simply put the paper into his pocket, and consoled himself by taking on his plate a fine fat partridge.

The servants filled the glasses all round, corks were bounding towards the ceiling in all directions, and the guests tried hard to believe that the wine was champagne; at any rate, they began to talk more at their ease.

"Ha, you'll see I shall have to try my hand," said Troïekourof. "I am longing to have a run at this Doubrovsky of yours. I'd soon track him to his lair. I'm too much used to bear hunting to be afraid of a mere brigand!"

"*A propos* to bears, how do yours get on?" asked Antoine Paphnutovitch, who remembered a certain interview with one of those shaggy hermits in his cell.

"Oh, your old friend is done up. He died the death of the brave, at the hand of the enemy. There's his conqueror" (pointing to Desforges); "so that your scores with him are settled now .... You remember?" "Yes; those are jokes one doesn't soon forget," replied Antoine. "'Tis a pity, however; for you will hardly find another so intelligent. And why did this Monsieur kill him?"

Troïekourof related the whole affair, and seemed delighted that a man in his service should have shown so much pluck. All eyes were turned on the Frenchman, who seemed absorbed in teaching his pupil how young gentlemen ought to behave at dinner.

The dinner lasted three hours, at the end of which the guests passed into the drawing-room to partake of coffee.

About ten o'clock many of the guests began to talk of retiring, but Troïekourof was in such good humour that he ordered the gates of the court-yard to be shut, and declared that nobody should leave until the morning. Soon there came in divers musicians, and all began to dance. The host, with a few old friends who had relinquished dancing, occupied a corner, and looked on. Desforges waltzed in perfection, and so won the good opinion of the ladies. He had several times the honour of dancing with Marie, and so of serving as a text for certain commentaries more clever than good-natured.

At midnight the ball ceased, and the master of the house retired to his room. His absence left the guests more at their ease. Jokes and laughter abounded, and all were in perfect good humour except Antoine Paphnutovitch. He was lost in meditation on the probable fate of his red chest. He had said truly that there was not much in it, but he had not said that all his bank-notes were sewn up in his girdle. He wondered where he should sleep, and his imagination was

crowded with visions of robbers. At length he resolved to take Desforges into his confidence. The young man was strong, and his adventure with the bear showed that he was brave,—he could not have a better protector. He turned to the Frenchman and coughed, and then begged to know whether he could find room for him in his room. Desforges bowed, and begged him to speak French; and Antoine Paphnutovitch contrived at length to make him understand his question.

"I am at your service," answered Desforges.

The guests retired, and Antoine Paphnutovitch followed Desforges into his retired chamber. The night was dark; Desforges lighted a lantern and led the way. Before extinguishing the light Paphnutovitch proceeded to inspect the room. The result was not comforting .... There was no lock to the door, no bolt to the windows. He tried to translate his grievances into bad French, but his companion could not understand him. So they went to bed, and Desforges blew out the candle.

"*Pourquoi* .... *pourquoi* .... *Monsieur*, you do .... you love sleep in dark?"

Desforges pretended not to understand, and said good night.

"Cursed heathen!" muttered the miser. "*Monsieur, Monsieur!* me sleep never without light .... wish talk with you .... me pay you lesson French."

Desforges snored audibly.

"He is snoring like a pig already! Before I can rouse him the robbers will come in at the window. A cannon fired off at his ear wouldn't rouse him. He's nothing to lose, the scoundrel! *Monsieur* .... *Monsieur!*"

At length our miser was wearied out. The wine began to tell upon him, and overcame his fears, so that he was soon sound asleep. Terrible was his

waking. He was dreaming that a hand was drawing him along by the collar of his shirt,—he opened his eyes, and by the grey light of an autumn morning he saw Desforges standing near the bed. The Frenchman had a pistol in one hand and the precious girdle in the other.

Antoine Paphnutovitch was half dead with fear.

"What are you doing, Monsieur? What are you doing?"

"Hold your tongue!" said the Frenchman, in the purest Russian. "Hold your tongue, or you are a dead man. *I am Doubrovsky!*"

CHAPTER V.

A FEW months before this incident a traveller was waiting at a station until it should please the postmaster to supply his britzka with horses. His patience and modesty betrayed a man of dependent position, or the sort of stranger whom a postmaster serves only when he has nothing else to do. A slight portmanteau was all his luggage. He ordered neither tea nor coffee; but passed the time in looking out of the window and whistling, to the great irritation of the landlady.

"How the fellow whistles," she muttered to herself. "I wish he was whistling his own death-chant."

"What does it matter to you?" asked her husband. "Let him whistle his belly-full if he likes."

"You'd better give him his horses, and let him be off."

"The Frenchman can wait. If we happen to get guests of the proper sort they won't have so much patience .... I'm not going to leave my stables

empty for him. There! there comes somebody who seems in a hurry .... he is driving like the wind .... 'tis a general, that, at the least."

A calèche stopped at the station-house, a servant jumped down and opened the door of the vehicle, and a young man, wearing a military cloak, stepped out. He entered the house, and was followed by a servant, who carried a small casket.

"Horses!" said the officer, with the air of one accustomed to command.

"In a moment ...." answered the inspector .... "Have the goodness to show me your passport."

"I have none .... I don't travel on the highway .... Quick! .... Don't you happen to know me?"

The inspector looked again .... and then set off with the speed of lightning to execute his orders. Meanwhile the new comer paced up and down the room,—then he asked the landlady in a low voice who was the other traveller.

"I know not who the French dog is," answered the old woman. "He has done nothing but whistle for five blessed hours. Those people don't know how to behave ...."

The officer went up to the young man and addressed him in French. He learned from him that he was engaged as tutor to a young boy in a gentleman's house,—that he hoped to reach his employer's house that same evening, but that he could not get horses.

"With whom are you engaged?"

"General Troïekourof."

"Troïekourof! Then I don't envy you. He is a tyrant in his house, and a bad style of man altogether."

"What can I do? He gives me 3,000 roubles a year, and pays my travelling expenses. I have an aged mother, who will live in comfort on half my

salary; out of the rest I hope to save enough to return to Paris and start on my own account."

"Does any one know you in Troïekourof's house?"

"No. One of my friends is cook to a relation of the general's .... the cook recommended me to this relation, and this relation to the general."

The officer listened with a thoughtful ear.

"If, instead of uncertain hopes, you were offered 10,000 roubles in hand, would you set off for Paris at once?"

The Frenchman gazed in astonishment at the officer.

"Your carriage is ready," shouted the inspector.

"It is no joke; I will give you now the 10,000 roubles, on condition that you set off this moment, and that you give me your papers." And he opened the casket, and produced a number of bank-notes.

The Frenchman opened his eyes, and did not well know what to make of this sudden proposition.

"Perhaps 'tis only a joke .... this departure .... my papers .... what use can they be to you?"

"That's not your affair .... *yes* or *no?*"

The Frenchman took his papers from his pocket-book and handed them to the officer.

"Let me see .... passport .... letters of recommendation .... baptismal register .... all right. Now count your money, and be off at once .... Adieu!"

The Frenchman thought it was a dream .... he was going out at the door when the officer ran after him,—

"I have forgotten the chief thing .... this matter is between our two selves .... your word of honour?"

"My word of honour .... but what am I to do without papers?"

"At the first town you come to give yourself up to the authorities, and say that you have been stopped

and robbed by Doubrovsky. The thing will seem likely enough, and they will give you other papers to continue your journey."

The officer mounted his calèche, and was off like lightning. The inspector stared after him for a few moments, and when he was out of sight he said to his wife,—

"Do you know who that was .... Doubrovsky!"

The old woman ran to the window, but the calèche was out of sight.

"What an old fool you are, to tell me that now!" said she, with real ill-temper. "Now God only knows whether I shall have another chance of seeing him!"

The Frenchman quietly waited until evening for his horses. But for the bank-notes he would have fancied the whole affair a dream. At length he entered his britzka, and set off at a gentle trot.

Provided with his papers Doubrovsky presented himself to Troïekourof, and was received as we have related above. Had he any scheme in his head? Up to this time he had made no attempt upon Troïekourof. He paid very little attention to the young Alexander; but, by way of compensation, he took especial pains with Marie's mind. In a short time the tutor was a general favourite. Troïekourof took to him because he was such a good shot; Marie liked him for his unflagging zeal at the piano; Alexander liked him for his indulgence; and the servants for his liberality. He, too, seemed much attached to the family, and looked on himself as a member of it. A month had passed since the fête. Doubrovsky had not once left Pakrovsky; but his band was still talked of—the absence of their chief did not stay their expeditions though they were fewer and less daring.

Doubrovsky had been unable to resist his longing to chastise Antoine Paphnutovitch, one of the prin-

cipal instruments of his ruin. And great was the terror of the hapless miser when, instead of the humble tutor, he found himself in the avenging grasp of his irritated foe—that foe whose name caused a thrill of terror throughout the district.

CHAPTER VI.

In the meantime the life of the inmates of Pakrovsky flowed away in tranquil monotony. Cyril Petrowich hunted every day. Reading, walking, and, above all, music, filled up Marie's time, and her heart began to speak more articulately. She was obliged to confess to herself, with timid reluctance, that she was far from being insensible to the many merits of the young Frenchman. He, on his part, had observed towards her a very distant respect; and this gratified her pride, while it laid her fears to rest. The charm worked slowly and beneath a veil, but not the less certainly for that. Soon the presence of Desforges became a necessity, and his opinion her law. It could not be called a passion, because nothing had as yet impeded the quiet ease of their relation to each other,—some shock, some crisis was necessary to reveal to her the real state of her heart.

One day on entering the saloon she observed, with surprise, that Desforges was pale and anxious. She sat down to the piano, and struck a few chords .... her tutor begged her to excuse him, as he was suffering from headache; but as he left the room he slipped a note into her hand. She retired to her room immediately, and read as follows:—

"I expect you this evening, at seven, in the arbour near the fountain: I have a very particular communication to make."

Marie's curiosity was excited to the utmost. It is true she had a kind of presentiment of a declaration, but her pleasure was mingled with anxiety; she could not conceal from herself that there was something very improper in listening to a man whose rank disqualified him from aspiring to her hand. After many doubts and fears she resolved to meet him at the hour appointed, and tried to make up her mind as to the reply she was to give. Should she pretend anger? should she treat the whole thing as a joke? should she express a kind compassion, without allowing him to know her real sentiments? She looked at her watch from time to time, without coming to any conclusion. Twilight was creeping on; some visitors arrived; Troïekourof proposed whist.

It was near the appointed time. Marie timidly descended the steps, and plunged into the dusky alleys of the garden. The sky was overcast, and at the distance of a few steps nothing could be seen distinctly .... she was soon near the arbour. She was about to pause to collect her scattered thoughts, but Desforges was already at her side.

"Thank you," said he with a voice which betrayed considerable emotion. "Thank you for having granted my request .... a refusal would have driven me to despair."

"I hope," said Marie, "you will give me no cause to repent of my acquiescence."

There was a brief silence; and Desforges continued with tremulous voice:—

"Imperious fate bids me leave you .... you may soon learn why .... whatever may happen, an explanation between us is necessary."

Marie listened in silence, and saw in his confusion only the preface of the expected declaration.

"You have taken me for Desforges," he continued; "undeceive yourself. I am Doubrovsky."

Marie could not repress a shriek.

"For heaven's sake don't let this name affright you. I am the hapless one whose history you have heard .... driven forth from my paternal inheritance by the injustice of your father .... But you have no reason to fear either for yourself or for him .... my heart has forgotten all .... you have saved him from my resentment. My vengeance was to have begun with him .... I have hovered round this house planning its destruction by fire .... I had taken all necessary steps .... I should have gone into his room and said to him: Thou shalt not escape the son of Doubrovsky. But you stood before me as an angel of peace, and my fury was quelled by your gentleness. The house in which you lived became to me a holy place; my hand could never be uplifted against the father of Marie! .... For days and days I have hovered about the village with the hope that I might catch a glimpse of your white dress. Often I have followed you in your rambles, happy to feel that my protection encompassed you. At length a fortunate chance gave me the opportunity of entering your house. The days I have spent there have been the happiest of my life, and will ever be the consolation of my wretched days .... I am not what I seem .... the lion has been becoming the lamb again .... To-day I must leave .... there is no alternative. But I could not bear to go away laden with your contempt — with your curses. Think sometimes of Doubrovsky. Think in your heart: he was not born for a life of crime—he has a noble heart—he loved me with all the energy of his being—with all the tender respect ...."

"At this moment a shrill whistle was heard in the distance .... Doubrovsky took Marie's hand and pressed it to his lips.

A second and louder whistle was heard.

"That signal bids me away," said the young man; "a moment's delay may be fatal to me."

He crept cautiously out of the arbour, leaving Marie astounded by the unexpectedness and character of his disclosures . . . she saw him pause and turn as if to take one last look. . . .

"If ever," he said, "you have need of succour, of any kind of protection, promise to apply to me."

And as Marie wept on without uttering a word:— "Delay will ruin me," he exclaimed; "and yet I cannot go until you have spoken."

"I promise it."

He disappeared amongst the trees.

Marie hurried back to the house in an agitation beyond words. She fancied she saw something extraordinary at the door. There was a group of persons in the courtyard; a britzka with three horses was in waiting; servants were running in all directions, and, high above the tumult, was heard the voice of Troïekourof. Marie ran into the saloon, fearing lest her absence might have been remarked.

Cyril Petrowich advanced to meet her. The guests had gathered round the captain of the police and were overwhelming him with questions and ejaculations, while he looked on with an anxious and mysterious air.

"Marie," asked Troïekourof; "do you know what has become of Desforges?"

Marie could just manage to summon strength to stammer forth a negative.

"Only fancy . . the captain wants to arrest him; he wants to make out he is Doubrovsky."

"Your Excellency," said the captain, with profound respect, "the description . . ."

"Stuff! the description indeed! I won't give up my Frenchman without sifting the matter to the bottom. Where is the tutor? You are fool enough to believe Antoine Paphnutovitch . . the idiot dreamed,

forsooth, that my tutor robbed him . . . If so, why did he steal off the next morning without saying a word?"

"Your Excellency! the Frenchman had threatened him with fearful punishment if he dared to breathe a word."

"What stuff! we must put an end to all this . . . where is the tutor? Go to look for him, some of you."

"Can't find him anywhere," answered several servants.

"Look again . . let me see your famous description, captain."

Troïekourof began to feel some little doubt, and ran his eye over the paper, pensively, until the servant came to say that the tutor was no where to be found. Marie was more dead than alive; she was quaking with fear, and her father began to be very much annoyed.

"How pale you are, Marie; you are afraid, are you not?"

She feigned a headache, kissed her father's hand, and escaped to her own room. There she threw herself on the bed, and sobbed aloud Meanwhile the house was searched from top to bottom. Troïekourof paced his saloon with long strides, whistling *fortissimo* his favourite air: "*Leap forth, victorious thunders!*" Every one spoke in a whisper . . the captain was fidgetty. "Where can he have hidden himself? Perhaps he got scent of us" . . every body was ready with an hypothesis. At last Troïekourof, weary and surly, dismissed the captain and stalked off to bed

CHAPTER VII.

THE winter passed away, and Troïekourof had returned to his ordinary mode of life. The month of May had put to flight the mourning season of the year, and Prince Vereisky, one of Troïekourof's neighbours, had come to visit his estates, after a long sojourn in foreign lands. His property was about thirty versts from Pakrovsky. Being accustomed to a life of dissipation and excitement, the prince found his solitude intolerable, and before three days were over he had made up his mind to go and dine with his neighbour Troïekourof, though he had never seen him in his life.

He was a man of about fifty, but he looked considerably older. A life of dissipation had destroyed his health, and left on his features its ineffaceable, unmistakeable impression. For all that, his appearance was amiable, and the being accustomed to the best society, gave him that kind of veneer of agreeableness which, by women especially, is so often taken for real worth. At any cost, he felt he must seek some distraction; he was wearied to death of solitude and the country.

Cyril Petrowich was flattered by the visit. He did not fail to show the prince his house, his stables, his kennel, his gardens in the old French style, with their long alleys and clipped trees, who praised everything with great civility, and from time to time affected to be ravished with delight. At last he was delivered from the obligation of praising everything, by the announcement of dinner. He was already repenting his rash step—when Marie advanced to welcome them.

The prince was struck with her beauty. He placed

himself next to her, and her presence made him feel himself young again. He spared nothing to make himself pleasing, and he contrived to make his conversation really interesting. After dinner, Cyril Petrowich proposed a ride on horseback; but the prince excused himself by holding up his velvet boots, and joking with the best grace possible under the circumstances, on the inconveniences of the gout. It was then resolved that they should drive instead—on condition that Marie should be of the party. During the drive the flow of conversation was wonderful, and Marie felt a kind of pleasure in listening to a jargon so new to her.

All at once the prince asked his neighbour what those ruins were, and whether the spot was his. Troïekourof knit his brows . . . the desolate aspect of Kistenovka recalled only painful recollections.

"It is mine now," said he, "but formerly Kistenovka belonged to Doubrovsky."

"To Doubrovsky! the famous brigand?"

"To his father . . . although, if truth must be spoken, the father was a brigand too."

"And what is the youth doing now? Is he taken, or does he ply his vocation still?"

"They have not been able to arrest him as yet . . . but has he not paid you a visit?"

"They say he did come to my place last year, and that his troop made very short work of it . . . but, my lovely neighbour, would it not be interesting to know a hero of this stamp?"

"It would not have even the charm of novelty," replied Troïekourof, "since he gave her lessons on the piano for three weeks . . . but, thank God! he gave his lessons gratis."

And here Troïekourof narrated the episode of Desforges, while Marie sat on thorns. The prince thought story a capital one, and changed the conversation.

They then returned to Pakrovsky, and after tea the prince took his leave, notwithstanding the urgent entreaties of his host that he would stay the night. He, however, made Troïekourof and his daughter promise that they would return his visit. The old general thought that with the title of prince, numberless decorations, and a handsome fortune, his neighbour might be allowed, without presumption, to treat with him on a footing of equality.

A few days afterwards, Troïekourof and Marie returned the prince's visit. As they drove through the village they could not help being struck with wonder at the cleanly and cheerful appearance of the cottages, and the magnificence of the mansion, which was built and furnished in English style. A lawn of exquisite green was in front, and Swiss cows were seen at intervals gladdening the landscape, and making the air pleasant with the tinkling of their little bells. The house stood in the middle of an immense park, in which art had striven to produce the finest effects of nature; and everything was in harmonious keeping with the country around.

The prince came to the bottom of the steps to welcome his guests, and helped his beautiful neighbour, as he called her, to alight from the carriage. They were introduced into a sumptuous hall, and they noticed that the table was laid for three persons only. From the large pointed window the view was enchanting. Far in the distance flashed the winding reaches of the Volga; boats with sails shot from side to side, and fishermen dotted it at intervals. Towards the east the bank rose gradually until it met those mountains whose bluish summits blended with the horizon. Fields carefully cultivated, and villages scattered over the plain, completed this fine picture. When they had admired these beauties of nature, the prince showed them his gallery, which he had collected at great

expense. He talked of the various pictures like a man of sense, and without affecting the jargon of a *connoisseur;* and Marie listened with sincere and gratified attention. Dinner was served, and Troïekourof paid a well-deserved tribute of eulogy to the genius of the cook and his host's cellar, while Marie felt the full charm of this delicious conversation, and wondered how she could feel so much at home with a man whom she had met only twice. When dinner was over, the prince proposed a walk in the park. Coffee was served in a *kiosk*, or summer-house, on the margin of a lake dotted with islets. On a sudden the sound of music was heard on the water, and a magnificent gondola approached the kiosk. The prince invited his guests to embark, and they were rowed towards the little islands. At every step Marie found some new surprise, something new to admire. Now it was a statue; now a lone grotto; and now a monument with some mysterious inscription. It had already become late, and Marie had not taken note of time. The prince then proposed that they should return to the house; and when tea was served, he induced Marie to do the honours of the table. She discharged her duties with perfect gracefulness, and was listening to some striking anecdote, when she was alarmed by a sudden explosion—it was an exhibition of fireworks, ordered by their amiable host. She enjoyed with natural delight a spectacle so new to her. As for Troïekourof, he felt particularly flattered, because he took all this attention as a mark of consideration and deference for himself. Supper was served with luxurious elegance; and at length Cyril Petrowich and his daughter were conducted to rooms furnished with finished taste, and on the morrow they parted with promises of meeting soon again.

One day Marie was sitting at her open window, with her embroidery frame before her, and the

summer air fanning her cheek. Her hands were mechanically reproducing her pattern; her thoughts were far, far away. All at once a hand appeared above the window-sill, and a letter was thrown at her feet. Ere she had recovered from her surprise, a servant came to summon her to her father. She hastily hid the letter in her bosom and went down to the drawing room.

Cyril Petrowich was not alone. The prince rose as she entered, and greeted her with an air of confusion not at all usual with him.

"Come in, Marie; I have something new to tell you . . . here is your betrothed husband . . . the prince has asked your hand in marriage."

Marie stood petrified . . . she could not utter a word, but became as pale as marble. The prince, recovering from his momentary confusion, took her hand, and asked her whether she would consent to make him a happy man, &c. &c.

"You understand, prince . . . it is all natural enough . . . a young girl is sewing in her room, and she is told . . . nothing is more natural . . . girls never do answer such questions frankly . . . quite natural . . . but I see that she consents . . . 'tis a settled thing."

Marie could not move—the prince kissed her hand—the poor girl burst into a flood of tears.

The prince knit his brows.

"Go and wipe away your tears, Marie, and come back to us with a cheerful countenance. They all cry when you talk to them of these things . . . now let us go to business, and talk of the dowry."

Marie eagerly embraced the opportunity of escape thus afforded her. In her own room she wept more freely. The old prince became hateful in her eyes. "No! never!" she exclaimed, with the energy of despair; "rather death itself! What a difference between him and Doubrovsky!"

As you may imagine, she had not forgotten the letter. She opened it. It contained only these words: "To-night, at ten o'clock, on the same spot."

The moon was shining bright; the night was mild and still; a slight air just moved the leaves of the old limes. She glided like a shadow through the alleys which led to the summer-house. This time she was first at the rendezvous . . . a slight rustling in the hedge . . . and Doubrovsky stood before her.

"I know all," said he, with a sad voice; "think of your promise."

'If you offer me your support, can you imagine that I hesitate to accept it."

"I will rid you of that man."

"In the name of Heaven, no violence! If you love me, don't burden my conscience with a murder."

"Your will is sacred to me . . your intercession has saved him. But what do you wish?"

"I have not lost all hope that I shall bend my father . . . he is harsh and hasty, but he loves me tenderly."

"You are deceiving yourself. He could never comprehend the motives of your reluctance. He would persist in making you happy, in spite of yourself; for he looks only at a fortune and rank. He will throw you into the arms of this old dotard!"

"Listen, Doubrovsky. Have pity on her . . who would rather be your wife!"

Doubrovsky trembled . . . there he stood, pale and silent, measuring all the greatness of the sacrifice.

"Exert all your power," said he, "to escape this fatal bond. Implore, resist . . . and if your prayers are spurned, tell him that you have a protector, a terrible protector."

Marie wept. This last struggle disclosed to her the whole extent and strength of her love.

"Wretch that I am!" continued the young man

"I thought myself happy when I could see you now and then, and touch your beloved hand . . . and now, what can I say to you? Were I to say, I love you! —I am bound to put away the thought of a bliss which would involve you in my ruin."

He took her hand; they looked at each other—they understood each other. At length Marie said, "It is time;" and Doubrovsky awoke as from a dream.

"Take this ring," said he; "if ever you need me, come and place it in the hollow of this tree."

He kissed her hand, and was lost in the gloom.

The approaching union of Marie with the prince was no longer a secret in the neighbourhood; Troïekourof had received congratulations from all sides, and his vanity hastened on the needful preparations. Marie recoiled from a formal consent, and received her aged adorer with icy coldness and reserve; the prince did not expect love, but only a quiet resignation, which would come, he thought, in time.

Marie felt the necessity of a decisive step. She wrote to the prince that she hoped he would break off a marriage which threatened nothing but misery to them both, and she implored him to shelter her from the violence of her father. Vereisky was surprised at this request; but far from granting it, he thought it high time to decide the matter, and he showed the letter to Troïekourof.

The anger of the old general was beyond all words. The prince could scarcely persuade him not to say anything to Marie. They agreed to cut short the question by fixing the marriage for the morrow. The prince paid Marie a visit, and, without saying anything about this arrangement, he told her that her

letter had caused him much anguish, and that he could not bring himself to renounce all hope of her, &c. &c.

"I do hope that in time you will be able to give me some little affection in return for all my tenderness."

He had scarcely left the room when Troïekourof entered. He said only that she was to get herself ready to be married the next morning.

Marie fell at his feet.

"O my father," she said; "this marriage will be my death! . . . I do not love the prince . . . I cannot, dare not, marry him."

"What do you mean? This is something new. Now, when all is fixed and settled, you bring out this whim of yours. A truce to such childish caprice now. That won't go down with me!"

"You do not wish my death, I am sure? I ask only to remain with you . . to be rescued from a man I detest . . if you were parting with your only daughter to see her happy . . ."

Cyril Petrovitch was moved a little; but he thrust down the paternal emotion.

"Don't I know best what is good for you? You ought to have thought of all this before; now you have only to obey. After to-morrow you will be the Princess Vereisky!"

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Marie. "But no —it cannot be. Listen, then! Since you have sworn to kill me, I will seek another protector . . . it is your own doing."

Troïekourof thought her mad, and looked at her in consternation.

"I congratulate you on your prospects of a deliverer! Meanwhile you will not leave your room until the ceremony."

And with these words he went out, locked the door, and took away the key. The poor child wept long

and bitterly . . . but her woman's heart had found strength in this avowal. The first point was to do away with this abhorred marriage. Between a gouty prince and a young handsome brigand, she could not long hesitate. And while reflecting on the lot which awaited her, she held in her hand the ring of Doubrovsky.

"I will consult him once more," she said to herself, "and I will abandon myself to his counsels."

She had a presentiment that he would be at the summer-house at nightfall. As soon as she thought it dark enough, she tried the door—it was locked! The maid, who was watching on the outside, told her that her father had expressly forbidden her egress. She had no resource but to sit at her window and gaze at the stars, until, overcome with fatigue, she fell asleep in her chair. She was roused from a painful dream by the first rays of the morning sun.

CHAPTER VIII.

As soon as Marie had opened her eyes she rang—her waiting-maid told her, without opening the door, that Cyril Petrowich had gone off the evening before to the prince and had not returned until very late. The orders as to Marie were precise. The preparations for the marriage were limited to what was indispensable, and the clergyman was in attendance.

This information confirmed our fair captive in her resolve of resistance. She determined to find some means of communicating with Doubrovsky, and of conveying the ring to the appointed place. She was pondering deeply when a stone fell into the room. She ran to the window and saw little Alexander, on whose affection she knew she could count.

"Alexander, have you anything to say to me?"

"I only wanted to know if you had any need of me. All the servants have orders not to listen to you; but I, you see, will do anything you like."

"Thank you, dear child; you can, indeed, do me a great service. You know where the old hollow oak is, close to the summer-house?"

"Yes."

"Well; take this ring, and go and hide it there . . . but take care nobody sees you."

The child picked up the ring, and ran as hard as he could to the spot she had indicated. There he stopped to take breath, looked all around, and then hid the ring. He was preparing to return to Marie when he saw a little ragged red-haired urchin come out of the summer-house. The child ran to the oak, plunged his hand into the hollow, and drew out the ring with the nimbleness of a squirrel.

He ran as fast as his legs could carry him to Kis-
ovka, stopped at a tumble-down cottage, knocked

at the window, and was answered immediately by an old woman.

"Grandmother, a bit of bread! I've eaten nothing all day, and I'm dying with hunger."

"Oh, you, is it, Micah; and where have you been, you young imp?"

"I'll tell you all about it, grandmother; but bread, bread, a bit of bread!"

"Come in, then."

"I can't—I've a long run yet... Quick... bread!"

The old woman grumbled, gave him a few crusts, and he set off, eating as he ran.

It was becoming dark... Micah ran in the direction of the forest. When he reached two firs which stood like sentinels at the entrance of the forest, he stopped, looked round, and uttered a shrill whistle with the assistance of his fingers. Another whistle replied to his, and a man came forth from the depth of the forest and advanced towards him. The ring was produced, and the two were soon engaged in close conversation.

Cyril Petrowich strode up and down his long hall. The whole house was in motion; servants were going and coming in all directions. A lady was in the dressing-room, helping the lady's maid to arrange Marie's hair and dress. The poor girl was standing before the mirror, pale and motionless. From time to time she heaved a deep sigh, but she said not a word.

"Will she be ready soon?" exclaimed her father.

"In a moment," answered the lady. "Look at yourself in the glass, Marie Cyrilovna; how do you like yourself so?"

Marie made no reply... the doors were thrown open.

"The bride is ready," said the lady to Troïekourof; "let the carriages draw up."

Poor Marie fell on her knees sobbing.

"Father, father!" and her voice was suffocated with her sobs.

She was carried, rather than led, to the carriage. The lady who filled the place of her deceased mother sat at her side, and they drove off to the church.

They had gone some distance, when a sudden cry was heard . . . In a moment a troop of armed men had surrounded the carriage, while a tall figure, wearing a mask, appeared at the door near which Marie was seated.

"You are free . . . alight."

"Who is this? what does this mean?" asked the astonished lady.

"It is Doubrovsky!" exclaimed Marie.

The lady fainted at the terrible name, and was left to recover as best she might.

"And the prince?" asked Marie of her lover.

"He will trouble you no further. I have sent him back to his château quite prepared to take his departure for the metropolis."

There was a pause . . . each seemed to be asking the other what was to be done. Doubrovsky took Marie's hand and read his answer in her eyes, nor did he read it wrongly.

"Forwards—to the church!"

The priest was standing at the altar prepared for the ceremony. The few scruples which his terror allowed him to feel were dissipated by the appearance of so compact a band of armed men, who were not accustomed to stand upon ceremony. He stammered through the words . . . all was over.

The carriage returned to the house where Cyril Petrovitch was awaiting them. He ran eagerly to the door, and beheld Marie and . . . Doubrovsky!

Ere he could utter a word, the unexpected bridegroom addressed him:

"Cyril Petrovsky! This day has healed the long melancholy breach between our families. Ask not how you have obtained a son whom you did not expect. Let it suffice that from the moment I saw Marie I destined her for my own. Long, long years have passed away, and my resolve is accomplished. You did foul wrong to my father and to me . . . I had vowed dire and utter revenge. Marie has stood between you and my avenging arm. For her sake I have spared you. And now, see in our union the extinction of our feud. Give me your blessing as . . . my father."

Troïekourof was petrified with astonishment. His rage would have burst forth terribly against him who had cast to the ground his gay castles in the air; but he felt that resistance was useless, that the marriage was regular and legal, and conscience whispered that it was a just requital of the fearful wrong he had done to his old friend. With a mighty effort he suppressed his anger, and led the way into the hall. The servants rejoiced to see their favourite tutor again; nor was his popularity at all injured by the reputation of Doubrovsky.

Doubrovsky's heart was not hardened. Misanthropy had impelled him to make war upon his kind—rather on their tyrants and oppressors. With his marriage came back all the better feelings of his earlier days. He and Marie left Russia immediately to avoid any perquisitions which justice might have made. They were gone before tidings of this last highest act of daring reached the baffled captain of police.

Troïekourof became reconciled to his children. He disappears for nearly half of each year. No one cares to ask where he goes, but every one knows that his

months of absence are passed with Doubrovsky and his family.

The prince travelled again into foreign lands. He took care never to allude to his discomfiture, and as his heart had been untouched, we may presume that he soon forgot this episode in his history. We do not hear that he was ever again tempted to think of matrimony.

THE

SMUGGLERS OF THE ARVE.

THE SMUGGLERS OF THE ARVE.

An Adventure in the Savoy.

One of the roads from Sixt to the valley of the Arve crosses a chain of lofty mountains, which extend between Cluses and Sallenche. This route is little known, and is scarcely used by any but smugglers, who abound in that part of the country. These adventurous men lay in a stock of goods at Martigny, in Valais, and then, heavily laden with enormous burdens, they descend into the valleys of the interior of Savoy, while the "douaniers," or custom-house officers, are keeping strict watch on the frontiers.

The latter are men who wear a uniform, and sit idly in the sun, with a pipe in their mouth, until some vehicle passes; which, however, seldom comes near them unless it happens to contain no smuggled goods. They then ask the question, whether the travellers have any merchandise to declare. On being answered in the negative, they burst open the portmanteaus, and grope among the linen, silks, and pocket-handkerchiefs. For doing this the state pays them, which has always seemed to me somewhat strange.

The smugglers are men armed to the teeth, and always inclined to send a shot in the neighbourhood of an officer who shows any inclination to intrude upon their walks. Fortunately, the officers are aware of this, and either abstain from such intrusion, or make their rounds elsewhere; a kind of conduct which has always appeared to me to savour of discretion.

I have not often had to do with smugglers; but, on one occasion, when I took it into my head to travel alone, from Sixt to Sallenche, across the mountains already mentioned, an adventure occurred to me which I shall proceed to relate. The route which I was to take had been pointed out to me. An hour before reaching the summit, I was told that I should arrive at the side of a small lake, called the Lake of Gers; that then I should have to climb a ridge of rocks; after which I should descend towards the forests which crown the cascade of Arpenas, in the direction of Sallenche. After three hours passed in a rapid ascent, I discovered the little lake. It was a pool, enclosed between grassy, sloping banks, which were reflected in it in sombre colours, while the transparent water allowed the eye to penetrate down to the brilliant mosses that clothed the bottom. I seated myself on the brink of this pool, amusing myself with this spectacle, while I busily employed myself at the same time in despatching the leg of a fowl, by way of repast.

While thus engaged it seemed to me that I saw a man's head, or a woman's, or an animal's—or, at any rate, something alive—moving on the declivity of a mountain—the very mountain which I was about to ascend. I raised my eyes quickly, in order to discover what the object might be, but I could see nothing; and ascribing the phenomenon to some agiation on the surface of the water, I continued my

journey, persuaded that no one was in that quarter but myself. As, however, I became convinced, on further reflection, that I had seen some being or other, I stopped occasionally to look about me; and when I had reached the place where I thought I had seen the head, I cautiously stepped round some rocks, and redoubled my watchfulness.

It was very warm during this part of the passage; but I scarcely felt the heat, for at such an elevation it was greatly tempered by the keenness of the air; and, moreover, the beauty of the prospect is such as to captivate the soul, and make it forget slight inconveniences, which, in a mountainous plain, would sometimes seem intolerable. Looking backwards, I thought I saw, not very far off, something moving behind the last fir-trees I had passed. I fancied it might be the feet to which the head belonged that I had seen, and I continued my journey with increasing circumspection.

Courage is a quality of which I cannot boast. I have no love for the danger in which heroes are said to delight. The mere idea that, in a combat, you may be exposed to the risk of seeing a sword's point presented at your right eye, has always been sufficient to make me extremely prudent, in spite of my natural temper, which is somewhat impetuous. And now something worse than a fight might happen; it might be in the shape of an attempt on my purse, or on my person, or on both at once; a frightful catastrophe might take place, and no one be present to carry home the tidings. When this idea occurred to me, it possessed me so entirely that I hid myself among the rocks to observe from thence what might take place behind me. I remained at my post of observation for more than half an hour, when an ill-looking fellow crept forth gently from behind the fir-trees. He looked for a long time in the direction in which I was

concealed, and then struck his hands together twice. At this signal a number of men appeared; and all began ascending the hill, composedly smoking their pipes, which they had just re-lit. They soon arrived close to the very place where I lay, crouching on the ground, behind the rock. Fortunately, they had their backs to me, so that I had leisure to make my observations, while I could also hear all that was said. They seemed to me to be well armed, with a large sack which my imagination filled with gunpowder; and I shuddered at the idea lest there should be a train near at hand, when one of them rose for the purpose of going away for a short distance, and placed his lighted pipe on the sack.

The man who had gone away ascended an eminence, from which he looked around him on the road they were about to take; and having rejoined his companions, he threw himself on the ground, and when he had told them that he could no longer see the person whom they had observed, a general conversation took place. "It's all the same," replied one; "that one knave was quite enough to betray us." "I will swear," said another, "it was for that he ran on before us so quickly. A custom-house officer, no doubt, in disguise." He stopped, as if he smelt a rat, and looked about him on every side. "What a pity it is we did not despatch him!" said he. "No one would have seen or known it in this solitary and convenient corner. The dead tell no tales!"

With these words he rose and gave the signal to set out. "By Heaven!" he exclaimed, as on turning round the rock, he now perceived me, "we have made the discovery! Here is our man!" The others at these words started up, and I saw, or fancied I saw, a countless array of pistols levelled at v head.

'Gentlemen," said I to them; "gentlemen, I . . .

you are mistaken. Allow me . . . put down your weapons first. Gentlemen, I am the most innocent person in the world." (Here they frowned.) "I beg you to put down your pistols, which may go off without your intending it. I am a literary man, and have nothing at all to do with the customs. I am married, and the father of a family. . . . I beg of you to put down your arms, which prevent me from collecting my thoughts. . . . Do please to continue your journey without troubling yourselves about me. I detest the customs-officers. . . . I even feel an interest in your occupation. . . . You are worthy men, who by your trade carry abundance among the victims of a hateful custom-house system. . . . I have the honour, gentlemen, to present my respects to you."

"You are here for the purpose of watching us," said the worst-looking of the band, in a fierce tone.

"Not at all, not at all; I came here for . . ."

"Watching and betraying us! We know you; we saw you below, spying and looking . . ."

"At the beauties of Nature, my good friends; nothing else."

"The beauties of Nature, indeed! And that corner where you were lurking behind the rock, there?—tell me, were you employed in collecting simples, there? These mountains are ours, and woe to him who comes here to be a spy upon us! Come, say your prayers."

As he raised his pistol, I fell to the earth. The others drew near without seeming to interfere, and all spoke together in a low tone; after which, one of them, without any ceremony, placed his burden on my shoulders, exclaiming, "Go along!" I thus found myself engaged, for the first time in my life, in a smuggling expedition.

It appeared that my fate was decided in the council just held; for the men no longer took any notice of

me, but walked on in silence, carrying by turns the remaining burdens. I sought an opportunity, however, of alluding again to the question of my innocence; but the experienced eye of these men pleaded more effectually in my favour than all my own assurances. They had only reached the point of being unable to explain how it was that I walked so carefully along, and looked round about me, at a time when I thought myself all alone. I supplied them with a key to this mystery, in telling them of the appearance which had struck me when looking at the pool of water.

"It is all one," replied the ill-looking fellow; "innocent or guilty, you may betray us. Trudge on. We shall soon reach the forest, where your fate will be decided."

The unfavourable meaning which I attached to these words may easily be conceived: and thus, during the half-hour's walk towards the forest, I had time to form a correct idea of the anguish of a sufferer on his road to the scaffold. Meantime we arrived at the place appointed. My burden was then taken from me; but, instead of shooting me, they tied me strongly to a great larch-tree.

"We must have twenty-four hours' start of you," said they. "Have patience; should we pass this way again, we will unbind you, and gratitude will render you discreet." So saying, they took the burden, and went away.

Nature, at that moment, never seemed so beautiful and radiant to me; and, what was singular, the larch-tree gave me no inconvenience whatever. Twenty-four hours seemed but a minute; and I now looked upon the men as excellent fellows—from necessity rather rude, perhaps, but otherwise estimable, and ·t ignorant of good manners. The truth was, I was ·ored to life; and so, after a few minutes, joy suc-

ceeded the most frightful distress. I fainted away, and when I came to myself, tears flowed down my cheeks.

It was now two hours after noon. The spot was a wild one, and not at all frequented by travellers, so that I knew not how long I might have to endure this novel species of imprisonment, and whether in fact I might not in the meantime die of starvation. While I was indulging these unpleasant reflections, as good luck would have it, a peasant came in sight. This countryman had a very questionable physiognomy; his hat was in holes; he had no stockings, and under his nose appeared a sort of black crust arising from the excessive use, apparently, of smuggled snuff. I forthwith shouted out for him to come to my assistance. In place of running up to me, he stopped short and took an enormous pinch of snuff.

The Savoyard is not cunning, but prudent; he is never in a hurry, and never stretches out his arms but where he sees his way clear, nor meddles with an affair but when he sees that there will be no disagreement with his neighbours, or quarrelling with authority. Otherwise, he is the best person in the world, and I say this seriously, having experienced it on many occasions.

My countryman was then, no doubt, the best fellow possible; but his first thought would be, a man bound to a larch-tree—what can be the meaning of it? It must have been done by authority, or by some one, for some sufficient cause; and, therefore, before coming forward himself, he wanted to see me do so. At length he said, smiling slyly, "This is very beautiful weather, very beautiful"—as if I had been there for the pleasure of a walk.

"Come," I said, "untie the rope, instead of talking to me about the fine weather."

"Oh, you will be unfastened soon enough. Have you been long here?"

"Yes, several hours. Come, set to work.'

He advanced two steps. "Were they really wicked people who did this?" he inquired.

"Oh, I will tell you all about that; only undo the rope."

He advanced three steps further; and I thought I had at length arrived at the end of my sufferings, when he began to say, in a low voice, and with an air of mystery, "Tell me truly, were they the —— who tied you up?"

"You are right; it was they. The villains did it in order that I might be dead before they should pass this way again."

These words produced a prodigious effect on the Savoyard; he drew back with terror, and looked as it he would shuffle off. Being no longer able to contain my rage, I called him a fool, a coward, a fiend in human shape. Without appearing to care for my reproaches, he walked away, quietly muttering to himself, "We will see, we will see; no doubt you will soon be untied." He then disappeared at double quick time, round the corner of the footpath, while I followed him with my curses.

I was at a loss what to think or what to do. My situation seemed aggravated by what I had just said to this man, who might compromise me with the smugglers—if, indeed, he was not himself an associate of the band. Time passed on; my imagination began to depict matters in the darkest colours, and I was fast becoming a prey to despair. All at once I perceived a tall, stout man approaching, followed by my acquaintance, the peasant. The big man had three chins, a face like the full moon, a little eye, unfortunately very cautious, a three-cornered hat, and a long-tailed coat. When he saw me, he placed himself in an attitude of observation.

"Who are you?" I inquired.

"The Syndic of the commune," he replied, without moving a step.

"Very well, Mr. Syndic; I request you to unbind me, or to cause me to be unbound by that companion of yours, who is cramming himself with snuff at your side."

"You will soon be unbound," they both replied at the same time. "Tell us something about this affair," added the Syndic.

Taught by experience, I resolved not to say a single word about smugglers.

"The history of this affair is a very simple one," I replied. "I have been tied to this tree, and I ask to be released without delay."

"That is it," replied the Syndic; "by robbers, was it?"

"Yes, by robbers. I was crossing the mountain on a mule, which carried my portmanteau, and they plundered me of both."

"Oh, now I understand the matter!"

"Yes, that is, indeed, the state of the case; and now that you are informed of everything, pray come and unloose me at once."

Instead of coming forward, the Syndic kept repeating that he "understood the matter;" adding, that it would cost much to get up a written statement.

"Unbind me!" I exclaimed; "what do I want with a written statement?"

"Why, do you see, an official report must be drawn up; all this, my friend, is according to rule."

"Well, well, you can report afterwards; but now you must untie me."

"It is not possible, my good Sir; I should be acting against rule. The report must be made first of all, and your unbinding take place afterwards. I must have witnesses, two of whom must sign their names. Time is required for this, you know, and the

people must be paid; but, no doubt, you are able to do this."

Then, turning to the peasant, the Syndic said, "Go to La Pernette, at Maglens; she will tell you where to find her husband, the notary, whom you must send hither. After that, you must go to St. Martin, and find out Benatton, the churchwarden, who is certainly there, because this is the day when he rings the bells for the wedding of the Chozets. Tell him, also, that he must come up; and let the notary bring the stamped paper and inkstand, for mine is empty. Go, my lad, and be quick about it. With respectable people there is no danger in settling accounts afterwards, and nothing is lost by it."

"Come, come!" I cried, out of all patience, "unbind me, and I will give each of you a louis-d'or."

On hearing this the peasant, who was already on his way, pricked up his ears and opened his eyes, which seemed already to gloat upon the promised gold; but the Syndic said, "You will pay for the writings and the expenses, and bestow a gratuity afterwards as you please; but as to bribing people beforehand, you may heap gold-piece on gold-piece to no purpose whatever. You must know that the office of Syndic of the parish has descended from father to son since my ancestor, Antoine Baptiste; and that the Arve will cease to flow, ere our family honour is tarnished.—Go you, Sir," he then called out to the peasant. "And have you patience," he added, as he left me. "I am going to fetch you a pint of wine, which will comfort you greatly."

I was again left to myself; and now, being very certain that my deliverance would not take place till to-morrow morning, I endeavoured to familiarise myself with the idea. The evening was warm, and deliciously serene. The sun, now descending, shot his rays horizontally into the forest, which was

impervious to his beams during the day, and the trunks of the larch-trees threw their long shadows on the mossy soil, which was resplendent with brilliant and warm colours. Some buzzards, which I had seen hovering over my head, had disappeared; the crows passed along the valley of the Arve, croaking as they flew to reach their nocturnal abode; and the mountain peaks themselves, while losing, by degrees, their lustre, seemed to change from the activity of life to the silence of sleep. This tranquillity of the evening, this aspect of nature, clothing itself in shade, and sinking into repose, exercises over the soul a secret power, by which distress and anxiety of mind are held captive within the spell of a soothing melancholy. In spite of my uncomfortable situation, I did not escape the influence of these impressions. My heart, gently touched, conned over the hours of this day, and recalling the agonising feelings of the morning, tasted, with deeper relish, the tranquil calm of the evening, and the cheering hope of a certain, if not a very speedy deliverance.

At sunset, I perceived in the distance a posse of men, women, and children—in fact, the population of a whole village. Their forms, placed between the sun and myself, were traced in moving shadows on the transparent foliage of the lower larches, so that I did not recognise at first the Syndic, with his pint of wine. He was there, however, and the Curé, too, who had been attracted by the report of my adventure. The visit of the ecclesiastic revived my hopes, and I set about preparing to enlist him, with all the eloquence I could command, in behalf of my rescue.

He was somewhat old and infirm, and ascended the mountain slowly. "O ho!" he said, on seeing me; "good evening to you; these villains have strapped you infamously."

The frank and open manner of this worthy man overcame me with delight.

"Shamefully, indeed!" I replied. "Excuse me, Mons. le Curé, if I cannot bow to you, or take off my hat. May I speak a few moments with you in private?"

"The best plan, it seems to me, is to set you instantly at liberty," he replied. "You can talk to me more conveniently afterwards. Come, Anthony," he said, speaking to the Syndic, "set to work and cut these ropes; that is the quickest plan."

My expressions of gratitude were unbounded, and certainly came from the heart. Taking out his knife, Anthony was about to cut the cords, when the peasant, who longed to possess them uninjured and entire, put aside the knife, and began to undo the knot, in which he succeeded in a few moments. No sooner was I at liberty than I warmly grasped the Curé's hand, and, in the transports of my delight, kissed him on both cheeks. At the same time, I was seized with a violent pain in all my limbs, and, being unable to move my torpid legs, I sat down on the ground. Anthony then came to me with his pint of wine, while the Curé sent off one of his parishioners for his mule. These orders having been given, he then expressed his willingness to listen to my account of what had befallen me; while the whole assembly —women, shepherds, little boys, churchwarden, Syndic, and all—made a circle around us, just as the sun was going down. I told my story in all its veracity, without forgetting the excessive prudence of the peasant, or the praiseworthy disinterestedness of the Syndic.

When my recital was ended, "It is well," said the old Curé; and then addressing the parishioners— "Listen to me. You tremble with fear before these scoundrels, and this is the reason why they are so

daring; and what is much worse, there are some who profit by their abominable merchandise. See, now, André, to what a state your extravagant use of snuff has brought you, and the foolish practice of using it beyond your means. Your nose is gorged, and you have not a pair of stockings to your legs. But, to say nothing of that, you buy the snuff from fraudulent dealers, and then, that you may not quarrel with them, you dare not help a man in distress, as becomes a Christian. Do as I tell you, my friend; take less snuff, and buy it of the honest dealer. As for Anthony, he thought he was doing right, and what is better, he really did what was right. What binds him is rule and law, not his appetite." The worthy Curé, when he had finished speaking, clapped Anthony familiarly on the back, who, exulting in the approbation bestowed before all the village on his prudent and disinterested conduct, felt himself raised six inches higher in his own estimation; while he held his pint-pot in one hand, and his three-cornered hat in the other.

During this conversation the mule arrived. I was assisted upon it, and was able at length to bid good-bye to the larch-tree, and to descend the mountain. The Syndic held the bridle, the worthy Curé chatted at my side, and the parishioners came next, forming, in the twilight of a fine evening, a picturesque procession, sometimes scattered over the mossy carpet of the forest, sometimes collected at the bottom of a ravine, or descending, in file, along the windings of a narrow pathway.

At the end of half an hour we reached the open pastures, from which we perceived the other side of the valley of the Arve, now buried in profound night; and, at a short distance from us, some cultivated land, beech-trees, and a church spire. It was the village. When we entered, the Curé courteously bade good

evening to all his parishioners. "As for you," he said, addressing himself to me, "I beg to offer you some supper and a bed."

After we had discussed a supper with this worthy man, and a bottle of old wine, which he broached in my honour, I took leave of him for the night, in order to enjoy that rest of which I stood so much in need. Next day I descended to Maglens. It had been my intention to visit Chamouni; but after so rude an adventure, I no longer felt the least desire to see the country, and so, turning my back on the mountains, I hastened to regain my home by the shortest route. This was my first adventure with contrabandists, and I have taken good care it should be the last.

THE

ROBBERS OF THE CAUCASUS.

THE ROBBERS OF THE CAUCASUS.

THE mountains of the Caucasus have been for a long period inhabited by a great number of small tribes, separated by language and different interests, whose political intercourse with each other is very slight, though all are animated by the same love of independence and plunder.

One of the most numerous and formidable is that of the Tchetchenges, who occupy the great and little Kabarda, provinces the deep valleys of which extend to the summits of the Caucasus. The men are handsome, bold, intelligent, but cruel and addicted to freebooting, and in nearly a continual state of warfare with the Russian line troops.*

It is in the midst of these dangerous hordes, and in the very centre of this immense chain of mountains, that Russia has established a road of communication with its possessions in Asia. Redoubts, placed from distance to distance, secure the road as far as Georgia; but no wayfarer would dare venture alone to travel over the space which separates them. Twice a week,

* This word designates the *line* of posts guarded by the Russian troops between the Caspian and Black Seas, from the mouth of the Terek to that of the Cuban.

a convoy of infantry, with guns, and a large party of Cossacks, escorts the travellers and the government despatches. One of the redoubts, situated on the outlet from the mountains, has become a small and rather populous town. Its situation has caused it to be called *Wladi*-Caucasus: * it is used as a residence for the officer commanding the troops who have to go through the hard duty just described.

Major Kascambo, of the Wologda regiment, a Russian nobleman belonging to a family of Greek origin, was to go and assume the command of the post of Lars in the passes of the Caucasus. Impatient to reach his post, and brave even to rashness, he was imprudent enough to undertake the journey with an escort of only fifty Cossacks who were at his disposal, and was still more imprudent in mentioning his project, and boasting of it previous to its execution.

The Tchetchenges who are near the frontier, and who are called the *peaceable* Tchetchenges, are subject to Russia, and consequently have free access to Mosdok; but they mostly keep up a connexion with the mountain people, and are very often sharers in their depredations. The latter, informed of Kascambo's journey, and aware of the day of his departure, went and posted themselves in large numbers on his passage, and lay in ambush for him. At a short distance from Mosdok, on turning a small hillock covered with bushes, he was attacked by a large body of men on horseback. Retreat was impossible. The Cossacks dismounted, and resisted the onset with great firmness, hoping to be rescued by the troops of a redoubt which was not very far off.

The inhabitants of the Caucasus, though individually brave, are incapable of attacking as a body, and are therefore not very dangerous for a troop who

* Wladi-Caucasus proceeds from the Russian verb *wladeti*, which signifies to command or overlook.

behave well; but they have good weapons, and aim well. Their great number, in this instance, made the contest too unequal. After a somewhat prolonged firing, more than half the Cossacks were killed or disabled; the remainder had contrived with the dead horses to erect a circular rampart, from behind which they fired their last cartridges. The Tchetchenges, who always take along with them on their expeditions Russian deserters, of whom they make use, if need be, as interpreters, made them shout to the Russians,—"Surrender the major to us, or you shall all be killed to the last man." Kascambo, perceiving his troop was irretrievably lost, resolved to surrender himself, to save the lives of those that remained; he resigned his sword to his Cossacks, and advanced alone towards the Tchetchenges, who immediately ceased firing, their object being to take him alive, in order to obtain a ransom. He had hardly delivered himself up to the enemy when he perceived in the distance the rescue which was sent to his aid. It was, however, too late: the banditti made off with the utmost rapidity.

His *denchik** had remained behind with the mule bearing the major's baggage, and, concealed in a ravine, he awaited the issue of the fight. Here the Cossacks found him, and informed him of his master's misfortune. The good fellow immediately resolved to share his fate, and proceeded in the direction where the Tchetchenges had disappeared, driving his mule on before and following the trail of the horses. When he began to lose it, owing to the darkness coming on, he met with one of the enemy's sledges, which took him to the place where the Tchetchenges assembled.

One can easily imagine the feeling experienced by the unfortunate prisoner on seeing his denchik come voluntarily to share his evil fortune. The Tchetchenges immediately shared amongst themselves the

* A soldier servant.

booty thus brought to them; only leaving the major a guitar, which happened to be among his baggage, and which was returned to him derisively. Ivan* (the denchik's name) seized hold of it, and refused to throw it away, as his master advised him. "Why be disheartened?" said he, "*the God of the Russians is great,*† the interest of the robbers is to keep you in safety, they will not harm you in any way."

After a few hours' halt, the bandits were about to start again on their march, when one of their people, who had just joined them, informed them that the Russians still continued to advance, and that in all probability the troops of the other redoubts would join in the pursuit. The chiefs held counsel: the question was how to conceal their retreat, not only in order to keep their prisoner, but also to divert the enemy from their villages, and thus avoid reprisal. Their plan of proceeding was soon arranged. The horde dispersed itself by different roads. A certain number were set apart to conduct the prisoners, whilst a hundred horsemen kept together and marched in a different direction to that about to be followed by Kascambo.

When the prisoners with their escort had reached the first village, Kascambo, suffering equally from grief and fatigue, appeared to his guards so weak and failing, that they entertained fears for his life, and treated him more humanely. He was allowed a little rest and a horse for the march; but in order to divert the Russians from the search which they might follow up, and to prevent the possibility of the prisoner himself acquainting his friends with the place of his retreat, he was carried from village to village, and from one

* His name was Ivan Smirnoff, which might be translated "John the Gentle," which contrasted strangely with his character, as will be seen in the sequel.

† A proverb familiar to the Russian soldiers in the moment of danger.

valley to another, care being taken to blindfold him several times; he thus passed a large river which he judged to be the Sonja. He was treated as well as possible during these peregrinations, being allowed sufficient food and necessary rest. But when he had reached the distant village where he was to be confined definitely, the Tchetchenges suddenly changed their behaviour towards him, and made him undergo all kinds of hardship. Irons were put on his ankles and wrists, and a chain round his neck, to the extremity of which was fastened a block of oak wood. The denchik was treated with less harshness; his irons were lighter, and permitted him to render his master some services.

In this situation, and at each new outrage practised on him, a man who spoke Russian came to see him, and advised him to write to his friends to obtain his ransom, which had been fixed at ten thousand roubles. The prisoner was not in circumstances to pay such a large amount, and only trusted in the hope of the protection of Government, who had redeemed, some years before, a colonel who had fallen like himself into the hands of the freebooters. The interpreter promised to furnish him with paper, and to get his letter conveyed to its destination; but after having obtained his assent, he did not appear again for some days, and the intervening time was employed in making the major endure increased ill treatment. He was deprived of food, the mat on which he slept, and a Cossack saddle-cushion which he used as a pillow; and when at last the interpreter returned, he informed him, in a confidential manner, that if the "line" refused the stated amount, or if its payment was delayed, the Tchetchenges had made up their minds to get rid of him, to spare them further expense and anxiety. The object of this conduct was to persuade him to write in a more pressing manner.

Paper was then given him, with a reed cut after the Tartar fashion; the irons which held his hands to his neck were removed, that he might write freely; and when the letter was written, it was translated to the chiefs, who were to send it on to the officer commanding the line.

From that time he was treated less harshly, and was only loaded with a single chain, which joined his right foot to his hand.

His host, or rather jailer, was an old man threescore, of a gigantic height and ferocious aspect, which his temper did not belie. Two of his sons had been killed in an encounter with the Russians—a circumstance which had caused him to be chosen, amongst all the inhabitants of the village, to keep guard over the prisoner.

The family of this man, whose name was Ibrahim, was composed of the widow of one of his sons, aged thirty-five years, and of her child, a boy of seven or eight years old, called Mamet. The widow was as ill-natured and still more capricious than the old keeper. Kascambo had to suffer much from her; but the endearments and familiarity of the little Mamet became a diversion to him after a time, and even a real solace amidst his misfortunes. The child showed such affection for him, that the threats and harsh treatment of his grandfather could not prevent him from running to play with the prisoner whenever he could find an opportunity. He had given the latter the name of *Koniak*, which, in the dialect of the country, means a guest, a friend. Touched with compassion at the privations he saw him undergo, he availed himself skilfully of the occasional absence of his parents, to bring him bread and potatoes baked in the ashes, and also a supply of fruit, whenever he was able to obtain it.

Some months elapsed since the sending of the

letter, without any remarkable incident. During that time Ivan had found out how to win the good graces of the woman and the old man, or at least had been able to render himself essential to their comfort and convenience. He was acquainted with all the culinary art proper to the table of an officer of a detachment. He made *kislitchi* * wonderfully well, prepared cucumbers pickled in salt, and soon accustomed his hosts to many little delicacies hitherto unknown in their *ménage*.

To gain their confidence still more, he had begun to practise the tricks of a jester, and contrived to get up every day something new to amuse them. Ibrahim above all enjoyed seeing him go through the Cossack dance. When any of the villagers happened to come and see them, Ivan's irons were taken off, and he was set to dancing, which he always performed with good humour, adding each time some ridiculous gambol to the last. By-and-by, owing to this accomplishment, he was allowed the liberty of running about the village, through which he was generally followed by heaps of children attracted by his drolleries; and, as he understood the Tartar language, he soon caught up that of the country, which is a dialect closely resembling it.

The major himself was often compelled to sing, with his denchik, Russian songs, and to play the guitar to amuse this savage company. In the beginning, the irons fastened round his right wrist were removed when this amusement was required at his hands; but the woman having discovered that he sometimes played, in spite of his fetters, in order to divert himself, he was no longer allowed the same indulgence; and the wretched musician repented more than once that he had displayed his talent.

* A kind of Russian small beer made with flour.

He little thought then how much his guitar would one day contribute to procure his liberty.

To obtain the longed-for freedom, the two prisoners formed a thousand plans, each more difficult than another to execute. On their arrival at the village, the inhabitants sent every night, each in his turn, a man to increase the guard. By degrees this precaution was relaxed, and it often happened even that the sentry would not come. The woman and child slept in the next room, and old Ibrahim alone remained with them; but he carefully kept the key of the fetters about his person, and awoke at the least sound. As day succeeded day the prisoner was treated more rigorously. As the answer to his letters did not come, the Tchetchenges often entered his prison to insult and threaten him with the most cruel treatment. He was deprived of his meals, and he was grieved to see one day poor little Mamet beaten unmercifully for a few medlars which the child had brought him.

A very remarkable circumstance, in the painful state in which Kascambo found himself, was the trust which his persecutors placed in him, and the esteem with which he had inspired them. Although these barbarians made him undergo continual insult, they often came to consult and take him as the arbitrator in their affairs, and in the quarrels they had amongst themselves. Amongst other contests over which he was named judge, the following deserves to be mentioned from its singularity:—

One of these men had entrusted one of his friends, proceeding to the neighbouring valley, with a Russian bill for five roubles, and directing him to hand it to some one. The messenger lost his horse, which died on the way, and persuaded himself that he had a right to keep the five roubles as an indemnity for the loss he had sustained. This reasoning,

worthy of Caucasus, was not at all in the way of thinking of the owner of the money. When the traveller returned, there was a great hubbub in the village. The two men had each assembled around him his relations and friends, and the brawl might have turned out sanguinary, had not the ancients of the tribe, after having in vain attempted to appease them, persuaded them to submit their cause to the decision of the prisoner. The whole population of the village ran tumultuously to his dwelling, the sooner to learn the issue of this strange suit. Kascambo was taken out of his prison and led up to the platform used as a roofing to the house.

Most of the dwellings in the valleys of Caucasus are partly sunk into the ground, and only rise three or four feet above the level; the roof is horizontal and made of a layer of beaten clay. The inhabitants, and mostly the women, come and rest on these terraces after sunset, and often spend the night there in the fine season.

When Kascambo appeared on the roof, there was a deep silence. Doubtless it would have amazed an eye-witness to see, at this singular court of justice, enraged suitors, armed with pistols and daggers, submit their cause to a judge loaded with chains, half dead with hunger and misery, who nevertheless judged without appeal, and whose decisions were always respected.

Without hoping to make the accused listen to reason, the major made him approach, and so as to get at least the joke on the side of justice, he put to him the following questions: "If, instead of giving these five roubles to take to his creditor, thy friend had merely requested thee to bear him greeting, would not thy horse have died all the same?"

"Perhaps," said the culprit.

"And in that case what wouldst thou ha

with the greeting? Wouldst thou not have been obliged to have kept it in payment, and to be satisfied with that? I therefore order that thou return the promissory note, and that thy friend give thee greeting."

When this sentence was interpreted to the audience, bursts of laughter announced all around the wisdom of the new Solomon. The convict himself, after having haggled some time, was obliged to give in; and said, looking at the promissory note: "I knew beforehand that I should lose if that dog of a Christian had anything to do with the matter." This singular confidence shows the idea that these tribes have of European superiority, and the innate sentiment of justice which exists amongst even the most savage men.

More than three months had passed since the unhappy expedition which has been alluded to, when Ivan thought he perceived an extraordinary agitation throughout the village. Some mules laden with powder had arrived from the plain. The men cleaned their weapons, and prepared cartridges. He soon learnt that a great expedition was in preparation. The whole nation was to unite in attacking a neighbouring tribe, which had placed itself under the protection of Russia, and had allowed the latter to construct a redoubt in their territory. They meant no less than to exterminate the whole tribe, as well as the Russian battalion which protected the erection of the fort.

A few days after, Ivan, on leaving the hut in the morning, found the village deserted; all the men able to bear arms had left it in the night. When he entered the house again he found the old man employed in visiting Kascambo's irons. A new comer was sitting in the room: a man whom an intermittent fever had prevented joining his companions, and who had been sent to Ibrahim's to increase the guard over the prisoners till the inhabitants should return. Ivan

remarked this precaution without showing any surprise. The absence of the men from the village offered a favourable opportunity for the execution of his projects; but the increased vigilance of their guardian, and, above all, the presence of the fevered man, rendered his success very doubtful. However, failure was certain if he waited the return of the inhabitants; so he determined at once to proceed.

Kascambo, who began to lose all hopes, had fallen lately into a kind of stupor, and kept quite silent. One day Ivan, more self-possessed and gayer than usual, surpassed himself in the preparation of the meal which he cooked, singing Russian songs, with which he mingled consoling words for his master.

"The time is at hand," said he, adding to each sentence the burthen of a popular Russian song, *hai luli, hai luli.* "Time is at hand to end our misery or perish. To-morrow, *hai luli*, we shall be on the road to a town, a pretty town, *hai luli*, which I must not name. Courage, master! Do not be downhearted. The God of the Russians is great."

Kascambo, indifferent either to life or death—unaware of the projects of his denchik—merely said to him, "Do what thou pleasest, and be silent."

Towards evening, the sick man, who had been generously treated, in order to keep him, and who, besides the plentiful meal he had made, had, moreover, amused himself the remainder of the day by eating *chis lik*,* was seized with such a violent attack that he entreated to be allowed to go home, which was agreed to without much objection. Ivan retired early to the extremity of the room, and lay down on a bench next the wall, waiting till Ibrahim should fall asleep; but the latter had apparently made up his mind to watch all night, for instead of reclining on a mat near the fire,

* Mutton roasted on a stick by little bits.

as he usually did, he sat down on a block of wood facing the prisoner, and sent away his daughter-in-law, who retired to the next room, where her child lay, and shut the door after her.

From the dark corner in which he had placed himself, Ivan narrowly scanned all that was before him; by the glimmering of the fire which blazed up now and then an axe shone in a nook in the wall. The old man, overcome at last by sleep, let his head fall downwards. Ivan saw it was now time, and rose quietly to his feet. The suspicious gaoler, however, was instantly awake again. "What art thou about, there?" said he sharply. Ivan, instead of replying, drew near the fire, yawning, like a man just waking out of a deep sleep. Ibrahim, who felt his own eyelids grow heavy, made Kascambo play the guitar to keep him awake. The latter was about to refuse, but Ivan presented him with the instrument, making a signal agreed upon. "Play, master," said he. "I want to speak to you." Kascambo tuned the instrument, and, beginning to sing, they commenced the following singular duet:—

KASCAMBO.

"Hai luli, hai luli; what wouldst thou tell me? Take care." (At each question and its answer they sang together the stanzas of the following Russian song)—

"I am dull and anxious,
And know not what to do;
My sweetheart should come,
And I wait here alone.
Hai luli, hai luli,
How dull to wait for him."

IVAN.

"*Do you see that axe? but do not look towards it*—Hai luli, hai luli. *I will split the rascal's head.*

"I sit down to spin,
Ere I begin my thread snaps;
I will spin to-morrow,
To-day I must weep.
Hai luli, hai luli,
Where can my love be?"

KASCAMBO.

"*Useless murder!* hai luli; *how can I escape with my irons?*

"As the calf follows its mother,
As the shepherd his flock,
Like the goat in the vale
Goes to seek the spring grass;
Hai luli, hai luli,
I wait for my love."

IVAN.

"*The key of the irons will be found in the thief's pocket,* hai luli.

"When I go to the well
In the morning to draw water,
Without thought I go
By the path which leads,
Hai luli, hai luli,
To the cottage of my love."

KASCAMBO.

"*The woman will give the alarm,* hai luli.

"Alas! I languish alone,
And the ungrateful one
Perhaps is unfaithful,
With another lassie,
Hai luli, hai luli,
It was I lost my love."

IVAN.

"*Let what may happen; will you not die all the same,* hai luli, *from wretchedness and want of food?*

"Ah, if he really be false,
If one day to forsake me,
The village may burn,
And I with the village.
Hai luli, hai luli,
Why live without love?"

As the old man had grown attentive they increased the "hai lulis," accompanied by vigorous strumming.

"*Play, Master; strike up the Cossack dance. I will dance round the room to get near the axe; play boldly.*"

KASCAMBO.

"*Well, so be it—this suspense must end.*"

He turned away his face, and began playing the dance with all his might.

Ivan began the steps and ridiculous attitudes of the *cosaque*, which particularly delighted the old man; jumping and skipping about, and hallooing, to divert his attention. When Kascambo felt that the dancer was nearing the axe his heart beat with anxiety. The instrument of their freedom was in a kind of doorless cupboard, made in the wall, but at a height which Ivan could barely reach. To get it within grasp, he seized a favourable moment, clutched it suddenly, and put it immediately to the ground, in the shadow formed by Ibrahim's body. When the latter cast his eyes in his direction, he was already away from the spot, and continuing to dance. This dangerous scene had been lasting some time, and Kascambo, tired of playing, began to think that his denchik wanted courage, or did not consider the moment favourable. He glanced at him, just as, having seized hold of the axe, the intrepid dancer advanced with a firm step to give the old robber a blow. The emotion felt by the major was so intense that he ceased playing, and dropped the guitar on his knees. At the same instant the old man, stooping forward, had advanced to throw some scattered brushwood on to the fire; some dry leaves caught fire, and threw a strong light through the whole room. Ibrahim turned round to seat himself again.

If, at this instant, Ivan had followed up his purpose, a hand-to-hand contest would have been inevitable;

the alarm might have been given, which was, above all, to be avoided; but his presence of mind saved him. When he perceived the major's faltering, and saw Ibrahim rise, he laid down the axe behind the log itself, which the latter used as a seat, and set to dancing again. "Play on," said he to his master. "What are you thinking about?" The major, aware of the imprudence he had been guilty of, began to play softly again. The old gaoler harboured no suspicion, and sat down; but he ordered them to cease the music and lay down. Ivan went quietly to fetch the case, and came and set it down on the hearth; but instead of receiving the instrument which his master held out to him, he suddenly caught up the axe behind Ibrahim, and gave him such a terrific blow on the head with it that the wretch did not even give vent to a sigh, and fell quite dead with his face in the fire. Ivan drew him away by the feet, and covered him over with a mat.

They listened, to know if the woman had been awakened; but all was quiet.

He lighted a splinter of larch-wood, and began searching the old robber's cartridge-box and pockets; the key of the fetters was not to be found there. He searched also in a chest, and everywhere he could conceive it to be hid. In vain—it was nowhere to be found. Ivan, with the corner of the axe, was able to snap the wrist-ring, but that which fastened the chain round the ankles resisted all his efforts; he was afraid of hurting his master, and did not venture to employ all his strength. Besides, night was closing in, the danger became pressing, and they made up their minds to start as they were. Ivan tied up strongly the chain to the major's belt, so that it should impede him as little as possible, and not make a clashing noise. He put in a wallet a quarter of mutton, the remainder of yesterday's meal, added

a few other provisions, and armed himself with the dead man's pistol and dagger. Kascambo took up his *bourka.** They left the house in silence, and going round it, to avoid meeting anybody, they advanced by the road leading to the mountains, instead of following the direction of Mosdok, and the ordinary track; concluding that they would certainly be pursued in that direction. They skirted, during the remainder of the night, the heights on their right; and when day began to dawn they entered a beech wood, which crowned the whole mountain, and which sheltered them from the danger of being seen from a distance.

It was in the month of February: the soil in these high regions, and, above all, in the forest, was covered with hardened snow, which supported the wayfarers' steps during the night and part of the morning. But towards noon, when it thawed under the sun, they sank every minute, which made their progress very slow. They thus reached with difficulty the slope of a deep valley, which they had to cross, and at the bottom of which the snow had quite disappeared. A beaten track followed the undulations of the stream, and gave notice that the place was frequented. This consideration, together with the fatigue which overcame the major, decided our adventurers to wait the night in that spot. They encamped amongst a few isolated rocks jutting out from the snow. Ivan cut a few fir branches to make a thick couch, on which the major lay down.

As he reposed, Ivan endeavoured to recognise their whereabouts. The valley, on the top of which he was placed, was surrounded with high mountains, between which no issue could be discovered. He saw that it

* A cloak of waterproof felt, with long hair, like to a bear's skin. The bourka, the common Cossack cloak, is only manufactured in their own country; with it they can brave the heavy rains and mud of the bivouac.

was impossible to avoid the beaten track, and that to extricate themselves from this labyrinth they would be obliged to follow the course of the stream. It was about eleven o'clock at night, and the snow began to grow hard, when they descended into the valley. But before venturing they set fire to their construction, as much to warm themselves as to prepare a slight meal of chislik, which they much needed. A handful of snow was their drink, and a sip of brandy closed the feast. They crossed, happily, the valley without seeing a soul, and entered the defile, where the road and the stream were closely confined between towering mountains. They advanced as quick as they were able, feeling how much they were in danger of being met in this narrow passage. At nine in the morning they quitted it. The dark defile then suddenly expanded, and they discovered at the foot of the smaller mountains, which crossed each other, the immense horizon of Russia, like a distant sea.

It can hardly be imagined what rapture was felt by the major at this unexpected sight. Russia! Russia! was the only word he could utter. The travellers sat down to rest themselves, and enjoy beforehand their approaching liberty. This presentiment of happiness was mingled in the major's mind with the fatal recollection of the catastrophe which he had just witnessed, vividly retraced by the blood with which his garments and irons were stained. With his eyes fixed on the distant term of his labours, he calculated the difficulties of the journey. The aspect of the long and perilous road which yet remained to be got over, with irons on his feet, and his legs swollen with fatigue, soon effaced even the trace of transient pleasure which the aspect of his native country had caused. To the torments of his imagination was added a burning thirst.

Ivan went down to the stream, which flowed at

some distance, to fetch water for his master: he there found a bridge formed of two trees, and saw, a little further on, a habitation. This was a kind of châlet, a summer Tchetchenge residence, which was deserted for the time. In the situation of the fugitives this isolated dwelling was a treasure. Ivan went to drive away his master's sad thoughts, and took him to the refuge which he had just found out; and, after having placed him there, he immediately began hunting for the store-room.

The inhabitants of the Caucasus, who, for the most part, are half nomadic, and often exposed to the incursions of their neighbours, always have in the vicinity of their houses some underground spot, where they conceal their provisions and goods. These store-rooms, in the shape of a narrow well, are closed by a board or large stone, carefully covered over with earth, and are always made in spots where grass is wanting, lest the colour of it should betray the store. In spite of these precautions the Russian soldiers often find them out: they thrash the ground with their ramrods in the beaten paths surrounding the dwellings, and the sound tells them where the cavities they seek lie. Ivan discovered one beneath a shed annexed to the house; in which he found some earthenware, maize, a bit of rock-salt, and several tools and household utensils. He ran to fetch some water to set a-going the cooking; the quarter of mutton and a few potatoes, which they had brought with them, were put on the fire. While soup was making, Kascambo roasted the ears of maize; lastly, a few nuts, found amongst the stores, completed the feast. When they had done, Ivan, with more leisure and by means of the tools, was able to unshackle his master; and the latter, more tranquil, and revived by an excellent meal, as far as circumstances went, fell into a deep sleep, and it was quite dark when he woke. In spite of this rest, when he tried to start

again his swollen legs had stiffened to such an extent that he could not make the slightest motion without feeling the acutest pain. It was necessary, however, to get on. Leaning on his servant, he walked on, painfully and sorrowfully, persuaded that he should never be able to reach the longed after destination. He walked all night, stopping frequently, and starting on again immediately. Sometimes growing discouraged, he would throw himself on the ground, and beseech Ivan to abandon him to his fate. His intrepid companion, however, not only encouraged him by his exhortation and example, but almost used violence to lift him up and drag him along with him.

They found in their way a difficult and dangerous pass, which they could not avoid: to wait for day would have been an irreparable loss of time; they determined, therefore, to cross the ravine at all risks; but, before allowing his master to enter it, Ivan wished to reconnoitre alone. As he was descending, Kascambo remained on the edge of the rock in a state of anxiety difficult to describe. The night was dark: he could hear beneath his feet the low murmur of the rapid river which flowed through the valley; the noise of the stones which rolled down the mountain beneath the steps of his companion, and which fell into the water, showed him the tremendous depth of the precipice over which he sat. At this moment of anguish, which might, perhaps, be the last of his life, the memory of his mother came into his mind. She had tenderly blessed him, and invoked the protection of heaven upon him before leaving the line: that thought restored his courage. A secret presentiment made him hope he should see her again. "My God," said he, "let her prayer not be in vain!"

As he ended this short but fervent petition, Ivan reappeared. The pass reconnoitred was not so difficult as they had at first thought. After descend-

a few feet amongst the rocks, it was necessary to skirt a rocky bank, narrow and slanting, covered over with slippery snow, beneath which the mountain rose perpendicularly. Ivan opened in the snow, with his axe, holes, which facilitated the passage. The road looked fearful, but they commended themselves to God, and moved forward. "Come," said Kascambo, "if I perish, let it not at least be for want of courage; illness alone could deprive me of that. I will advance now as far as it please God to give me strength." They finished successfully this dangerous attempt, and continued their way. The paths began to be more plain and more trodden. They found no more snow, except in the places bearing a northern aspect, and in the pits where it had accumulated. They were lucky enough not to meet with any one till day-break, when the sight of two men who appeared at some distance obliged them to lie close to the ground, so as not to be perceived by them.

On leaving the mountains, in these provinces, there is no more wood to be seen: the soil is perfectly naked, and a tree would be looked for in vain, excepting along the banks of large rivers, where there are a very few; a thing rather remarkable, considering the great richness of the soil. They had been following for some time the stream of the Sonja, which they were to cross to go to Mosdok, seeking a place where the water, less rapid, could offer them a more convenient passage, when they discovered a man on horseback who was coming straight up to them. The country, quite bare, neither offered trees nor bushes for concealment. They huddled themselves up beneath the bank of the Sonja, close to the water. The traveller was passing a few steps from their hiding-place. Their intention at first was merely to defend themselves, in case of attack. Ivan drew his dagger, and handed the pistol to the major. But perceiving that

the rider was merely a boy of twelve or thirteen, it occurred to them that an act of appropriation, even against the proprietor's will, would here be allowable, and they determined to make use of the horse for their immediate necessity.

Ivan rushed suddenly upon the youth, seized him by the collar, and threw him down on the grass. The latter would have resisted; but, seeing the major appear on the bank of the river, pistol in hand, he fled with all his might. The horse was without a saddle, with a halter passed in the mouth instead of a bridle. The two fugitives immediately made use of their capture to cross the river. This meeting was a fortunate one for them; for they soon perceived that it would have been impossible for them to cross the river on foot, as they had planned. The horse, though loaded with the weight of two men, was nearly carried away by the rapidity of the current. They reached, however, the opposite bank without danger; but it was, unluckily, too steep to allow the horse to land. Having got off to relieve it, Ivan pulled at it with all his might to get it up the bank; but the halter broke, and remained in his grasp. The animal fell back, and plunged into the water; and, on looking back, they found it had safely reached the opposite bank, and was already seized by its lawful owner.

Our travellers now directed their steps towards a hillock covered with detached rocks, which they saw further on, with the intention of concealing themselves, and to rest there till nightfall. On calculating the distance they had already come, they calculated that the dwellings of the more peaceful Tchetchenges could not be very far off. But nothing was less safe than to give themselves up to these men, whose probable treason might prove their loss; yet, considering the state of weakness in which Kascambo found himself, it was difficult for

him to reach the Tereck without aid. Their provisions were exhausted: they spent the remainder of the day in gloomy silence, not daring to impart to each other their mutual anxieties.

Towards evening the weather, which had till then been in their favour, changed. The cold wind of Russia blew violently, and threw sleet in their faces. A new mishap, too, happened to them during the night. As they were crossing a small ravine, the ice gave way beneath their feet, and they sank up to their knees in water. The efforts made by Kascambo to get out made him thoroughly wet his clothes. After a quarter of an hour's walk, overcome with cold, he sank down from fatigue and pain, and refused to proceed farther. Seeing the impossibility of attaining his journey's end, he esteemed it useless and cruel to keep back his companion, who could easily escape alone. "Listen, Ivan," said he, "God is witness that I have done all I can, up till now, to profit by the aid thou hast afforded me; but thou seest now that it can no longer save me. Go to the lines, my dear Ivan; return to our regiment—I wish it. Tell my former friends and my superiors of my fate, and that I wish them better fortune." Having said these words, he stretched himself on the ground, and covered himself over entirely with his bourka.

"There is one resource left," replied Ivan; "that is, to seek out a Tchetchenge dwelling, and to win over its master with promises. If he betray us, we shall have at least nothing to reproach ourselves with. Try and drag yourself thus far; or else," added he, seeing his master keep silent, "I will go alone. I will try and persuade a Tchetchenge; and if the affair turn out well, I will return with him to fetch you: if it prove otherwise, if I perish, and return no more, here, take this pistol." Kascambo drew his hand from under his bourka, and clutched the pistol.

Ivan covered him over with dry twigs and grass, for fear of his being discovered by anybody during the excursion he was going to make. As he was about to start, his master called him back. "Ivan," said he, "listen still to my last request. If thou shouldst cross the Tereck again, and if thou seest my mother without me . . . "

"Master," said Ivan, interrupting, "till we meet again in the course of the day. If you perish, neither your mother nor mine will ever see me again."

After an hour's march, Ivan discovered, from a slight elevation, two villages three or four versts apart. This was not what he sought; he wished to find some isolated house, into which he could enter without being seen, to gain over the master in secret. The distant smoke of a chimney made him discover such a one as he wanted. He proceeded thither without delay, and entered without hesitation. The master of the house was squatting on the ground, employed in mending his boots. "I come," said Ivan, "to propose to thee to earn two hundred roubles, and to request a service. Thou hast, doubtless, heard speak of Major Kascambo, prisoner to the mountain robbers. Well, I have carried him off: he is here, hard by, ill, and in thy power. If thou wouldst deliver him over to his enemies again, they will doubtless praise thee for it; but thou art aware they will not reward thee. If thou consent, on the contrary, to save him, by keeping him in thy house during three days only, I will go to Mosdok, and I will bring the two hundred roubles, ready money, for his ransom. If thou darest to leave thy place," added he, drawing his dagger, "and give the alarm to detain me, I will instantly cut thy throat. Thy word directly, or thou art dead."

The bold address of Ivan persuaded the Tchetchenge, without frightening him. "Young man," said he,

quietly pulling on his boot, "I have also a dagger at my belt, and thine doth not alarm me. If thou hadst entered my dwelling in a friendly manner, I would never have betrayed a man who has crossed my threshold; as it is, I promise nothing. Sit down there, and tell me what you want."

Ivan, seeing the kind of man with whom he had to deal, sheathed his dagger, sat down, and repeated his proposal.

"What pledge wilt thou give me?" asked the Tchetchenge, "of the execution of thy promise?"

"I will leave thee the major himself," replied Ivan. "Dost thou think I could suffer for fifteen months, and that I would bring my master to thy house, and then abandon him?"

"Good, I trust thee; but two hundred roubles is not enough: I must have four hundred."

"Why not ask for four thousand? it costs nothing; but I, who wish to keep my word, I offer thee two hundred, because I know where to find them, and not a kopeck more. Wouldst thou give me an opportunity of cheating thee?"

"Well, agreed; for two hundred roubles; and thou wilt return within three days, and alone?"

"Yes, about three days hence, I give thee my word; but thou—hast thou given me thine? Is the major thy guest?"

"He is my guest, as also thou, from this time forth; and I give thee my word."

They shook hands, and ran to seek the major, whom they carried back at the point of expiring with cold and hunger.

Instead of going to Mosdok, Ivan, on learning that he was nearer Tchervelianskaya-Staniza, where was a considerable post of Cossacks, went there immediately. He had no difficulty in collecting the requisite sum. The Cossacks, some of whom had been en-

gaged in the unlucky affair which had cost Kascambo his liberty, subscribed eagerly to complete the ransom. On the appointed day, Ivan started to go and deliver his master at last; but the colonel commanding the post, fearing some fresh treachery, would not allow him to go back alone; and, in spite of the agreement made with the Tchetchenge, had him accompanied by a few Cossacks.

This precaution was nearly fatal once more to Kascambo. As soon as his host could perceive the lances of the Cossacks, he thought he had been betrayed; and, giving vent immediately to the bold ferocity of his country, he led the major, still infirm, on to the top of his house, tied him up to a post, placing himself opposite him, his gun in his hands. "If you advance," said he, as soon as Ivan was within hearing, and levelling his gun at his prisoner, "if you advance a step nearer, I will blow the major's brains out; and I have fifty rounds for my enemies, and for the traitor who brings them."

"Thou art not betrayed," exclaimed the denchik, trembling for his master's life: "I was compelled to return accompanied. But I bring the two hundred roubles, and keep my promise."

"Let the Cossacks retire," added the Tchetchenge, "or I fire." Kascambo himself requested the officer to retire. Ivan followed the detachment some time, and then returned alone; but the suspicious host did not allow him to draw near. He made him tell out his roubles a hundred yards from the house, on the path, and told him to depart.

As soon as he had taken the money up, he went on to the roof again, and threw himself down on his knees to the major, asking his pardon, and begging him to forget the harsh treatment which he had been compelled, as he said, to use towards him for his safety.

"I will remember only," replied Kascambo, "that I

have been thy guest, and that thou hast kept thy word. But before begging my pardon, begin by removing my bonds."

Instead of censuring him, the Tchetchenge, seeing Ivan come back again, left the roof, and disappeared like lightning.

On that very day the brave Ivan had the glory and satisfaction of bringing his master safely back among his friends, who had long despaired of ever seeing him again alive.