Annouchka

by Ivan Turgenev

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Title: Annouchka: A Tale

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Translator: Franklin Pierce Abbott

Release date: April 11, 2012 [eBook #39427]

Language: English

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/39427

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ANNOUCHKA

A Tale

BY IVAN SERGHEÏEVITCH TURGENEF

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE AUTHOR'S OWN TRANSLATION

BY FRANKLIN ABBOTT

BOSTON CUPPLES, UPHAM AND COMPANY 1884

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ANNOUCHKA.

I.

I was then five-and-twenty,—that was a sufficient indication that I had a past, said he, beginning. My own master for some little time, I resolved to travel,—not to complete my education, as they said at the time, but to see the world. I was young, light-hearted, in good health, free from every care, with a well-filled purse; I gave no thought to the future; I indulged every whim,—in fact, I lived like a flower that expands in the sun. The idea that man is but a plant, and that its flower can only live a short time, had not yet occurred to me. "Youth," says a Russian proverb, "lives upon gilded gingerbread, which it ingenuously takes for bread; then one day even bread fails." But of what use are these digressions?

I travelled from place to place, with no definite plan, stopping where it suited me, moving at once when I felt the need of seeing new faces,—nothing more.

The men alone interested me; I abhorred remarkable monuments, celebrated collections, and ciceroni; the Galerie Verte of Dresden almost drove me mad. As to nature, it gave me some very keen impressions, but I did not care the least in the world for what is commonly called its beauties,—mountains, rocks, waterfalls, which strike me with astonishment; I did not care to have nature impose itself upon my admiration or trouble my mind. In return, I could not live without my fellow-creatures; their talk, their laughter, their movements, were for me objects of prime necessity. I felt superlatively well in the midst of a crowd; I followed gayly the surging of men, shouting when they shouted, and observing them attentively whilst they abandoned themselves to enthusiasm. Yes, the study of men was, indeed, my delight; and yet is study the word? I contemplated them, enjoying it with an intense curiosity.

But again I digress.

So, then, about five-and-twenty years ago I was living in the small town of Z., upon the banks of the Rhine. I sought isolation: a young widow, whose acquaintance I made at a watering-place, had just inflicted upon me a cruel blow. Pretty and intelligent, she coquetted with every one, and with me in particular; then, after some encouragement, she jilted me for a Bavarian lieutenant with rosy cheeks.

This blow, to tell the truth, was not very serious, but I found it advisable to give myself up for a time to regrets and solitude, and I established myself at Z.

It was not alone the situation of this small town, at the foot of two lofty mountains, that had impressed me; it had enticed me by its old walls, flanked with towers, its venerable lindens, the steep bridge, which crossed its limpid river, and chiefly by its good wine.

After sundown (it was then the month of June), charming little German girls, with

yellow hair, came down for a walk in its narrow streets, greeting the strangers whom they met with a gracious guten abend. Some of them did not return until the moon had risen from behind the peaked roofs of the old houses, making the little stones with which the streets were paved scintillate by the clearness of its motionless rays. I loved then to wander in the town of Z.; the moon seemed to regard it steadfastly from the depths of a clear sky, and the town felt this look and remained quiet and on the alert, inundated by the clearness that filled the soul with a trouble mingled with sweetness. The cock at the top of the gothic steeple shone with a pale reflection of gold; a similar reflection crept in little golden serpents over the dark depths of the river; at narrow windows, under slated roofs, shone the solitary lights. The German is economical! The vine reared its festoons mysteriously over the walls. At times a rustling could be heard in the obscurity near an old empty well upon the public square of the town; the watchman replied to it by a prolonged whistle, and a faithful dog uttered a deep growl. Then a breath of air came so softly caressing the face, the lindens exhaled a perfume so sweet, that involuntarily the chest dilated more and more, and the name of Marguerite, half in exclamation, half in appeal, arose to the lips.

The town of Z. is about a mile from the Rhine. I often went to admire that magnificent river, and I whiled away entire hours at the foot of a gigantic ash, dwelling, in my reveries, upon many things, among others, but not without a certain effort, upon the image of my faithless widow. A little madonna, with almost infantine features, whose breast showed a red heart, pierced with swords, looked at me in a melancholy way from the midst of the branches. Upon the opposite side of the river, rose up the town of L., a little larger than that in which I was living. I went one evening as usual to take my seat upon my favorite bench; I looked in turn at the water, the heavens, and the vines. Opposite me some tow-headed children clambered over the tarred hull of a boat that had been left upon the sands of the river, bottom up. Little boats, with sails puffed out by the breeze, advanced slowly; greenish

waves passed before me, creeping along, swelling out a little, and then going down with a feeble murmur. Suddenly I thought I distinguished the sound of an orchestra, which re-echoed in the distance. I listened; they were playing a waltz in the town of L. The double bass pealed out at intervals, the violin squeaked confusedly, the whistlings of the flute were quite distinct. "What is it?" I asked of an old man who was approaching me. He wore, after the custom of the country, a plush waistcoat, blue stockings, and buckled shoes.

"They are students, who have come from B. for a commersch," he replied, after shifting his pipe to the other side of his mouth.

"Let us see what is a commersch," I said to myself: "besides I have not seen the town of L." I hailed a boatman, and had him take me across the river.

II.

Many people, no doubt, are ignorant of what this word commersch means. Thus they designate a fête to which come all the students of the same country or of the same society to take part (Landsmannschaft). Most of the young men who resort to these gatherings wear the traditional costume of the German students, a frogged surtout, large boots, and a small cap, the lace of which is of the color of the country. The students assemble for the banquet, over which presides a Senior, or the oldest of the band, and remain at table until morning. They drink; they sing the Landesvater, the Gaudeamus; they smoke; they laugh at the Philistines, and often indulge in the luxury of an orchestra.

It was a gathering of this kind that was taking place in the garden of the hotel, with the sign of the Soleil. The house and garden, which looked upon the street, were draped with flags; the students were seated at tables under the lindens; an enormous bull-dog was lying under one of the tables; in a corner, under a thicket of ivy, were seated the musicians, who were playing their best, imbibing quantities of beer to

keep themselves in working order. A great number of curious townspeople were assembled in the street, before the rather high railing of the garden, the good citizens of the town of L. not wishing to let slip an occasion to examine closely the guests who had come among them. I joined the group of spectators. I could observe with pleasure the faces of the students; their embracings, their exclamations, the innocent presumption of youth, their enthusiastic glances, their impulsive laughter,—the best kind of laughter, that joyful ebullition of a life yet full, that impetuous flight towards no matter what aim, providing it was forward, that abandon full of thoughtlessness, touched and captivated me. Why should I not join them? I asked myself.

"Annouchka, have you not had enough of this?" suddenly said in Russian a man's voice behind me. "Stay a little longer," answered a woman's voice in the same language. I turned quickly, and my looks fell upon a man some young man in a riding-coat and cap; he had on his arm a young girl, very small, whose straw hat almost concealed her features.

"You are a Russian?" I asked of them, with a start which I could not help.

"Yes, we are Russian," answered the young man, smiling.

"I did not expect," I said to him, "in a foreign country to meet"—

"Nor we either," said he, interrupting me. "Allow me," continued he, "to make ourselves known to you; my name is Gaguine, and here is"—he hesitated a moment—"here is my sister. And you, monsieur?"

I in turn told him my name, and we engaged in conversation. I learned that Gaguine was travelling, like myself, for pleasure, and that, having arrived about a week ago at L., he had settled himself there for the time being.

I must confess I do not like to become intimate with Russians in a foreign country. As far as I can see them, I easily recognize their walk, the cut of their clothes, principally the expression of their face. This expression, supercilious and scornful in its nature, at times imperious, suddenly assumes a cautious and even a timid air.

They appear seized with a kind of restlessness; their eyes disclose a strange anxiety: "Seigneur! have I not said something foolish; are they laughing at me by chance?" their look seems to ask. Then one sees them again assume their majestic calmness, until a new feeling of uneasiness comes to trouble them. Yes, I say it again, I avoid all intercourse with my fellow-countrymen; nevertheless, at first sight, I felt attracted towards Gaguine. There are in the world such happy faces that one takes pleasure in looking at them, they reflect a warmth which attracts and does one good, as if one had received a caress. Such was Gaguine's, with large eyes as soft as the curls of his hair, and a voice whose sound made you divine that he had a smile upon his lips.

The young girl whom he called his sister at first sight appeared to me charming. There was an expression quite peculiar, piquant and pretty at times, upon her round and slightly brown face; her nose was small and slender, her cheeks chubby as a child's, her eyes black and clear. Though well proportioned, her figure had not yet entirely developed. Withal there was no resemblance to her brother.

"Will you come home with us?" said Gaguine to me. "It seems to me that we have looked long enough at these Germans. Russians by this time would have broken up the glasses and chairs; but these young fellows before us are too reserved. Come, Annouchka, is it not time to return home?"

The young girl assented by a nod of the head.

"We live out of town," added Gaguine, "in a small isolated house upon a hill, surrounded by vines. You shall see whether it is pretty! Come, our landlady has promised to make us some cheese-rennet. Besides the day is on the wane, and you will cross the Rhine more securely by moonlight."

We proceeded. A few moments after we passed through the low gate of the town, which was surrounded by an old stone wall that still preserved some battlements. We advanced into the country; after going along by the side of an old wall a hundred

paces, we stopped before a little door; Gaguine opened it and made us ascend a steep path, upon the sides of which were rows of vines.

The sun was just setting; a faint purple hue tinged the vines, the props that sustained them, the parched earth covered with pieces of slate, as well as the white walls of a little house, all the bright windows of which were framed in black bars, and towards which the footpath that we were climbing guided us.

"Here is our stopping-place!" cried Gaguine, when were a little way from the house, "and there's our landlady, too, bringing us some milk. Guten abend, madam," cried he. "We are going to have our frugal repast at once; but first," said he, "look about you and tell me what you think of the view."

The site that he showed me was, indeed, admirable. At our feet the silvery waters of the Rhine, illumined by the purple of the setting sun, flowed between the verdant banks. The town, peacefully placed on the river banks, displayed to our eyes all its houses and all its streets; the hills and fields stretched out about it.

If that which was at our feet was beautiful, more lovely still was the sight above our heads. One was struck by the depth and clearness of the heavens, the transparency and brilliancy of the atmosphere. Clear and light, the undulations of the breeze moved softly about us; that also seemed to take delight in the heights.

"You have chosen an admirable place to live in," I said to Gaguine.

"It is Annouchka who found it out," he replied to me. "Come, Annouchka, give your orders. Have them bring everything here; we will sup in the open air, that we may hear the music better. Have you noticed," added he, turning to me, "that such music as a waltz near at hand seems detestable; heard at a distance, charms and makes all the poetic chords of your heart vibrate."

Annouchka directed her steps towards the house, and soon returned accompanied by the landlady. They brought an enormous dish of milk, spoons, plates, sugar, fruits, and bread. We seated ourselves and began to eat. Annouchka took off her hat; her

black hair, cut short, fell in large curls over her ears and her neck. My presence appeared to embarrass her; but Gaguine said to her, "don't be shy; he will not bite you."

These words made her smile, and a few moments after she spoke to me without the least embarrassment. She did not remain quiet a moment. Hardly was she seated than she arose, ran towards the house, and reappeared again, singing in a low voice; often she laughed, and her laugh had something strange about it—one would say that it was not provoked by anything that was said, but by some thoughts that were passing through her mind. Her large eyes looked one in the face openly, with boldness, but at times she half closed her eyelids, and her looks became suddenly deep and caressing.

We chatted for about two hours. It was some time since the sun had gone down, and the evening light, at first resplendent with fire, then calm and red, later on confused and dim, mingled little by little with the shades of night. Yet our conversation still went on. Gaguine had a bottle of Rhine wine brought; we drank it slowly. The music had not stopped, but the sounds that the wind brought us seemed sweeter. In the town and upon the river lights began to spring up. Annouchka suddenly lowered her head, her curly hair fell over her brow, then she became silent and sighed. In a few moments she told us that she was sleepy and went into the house. I followed her with my eyes, and saw her sitting a long time motionless in the shadow behind the closed window. At last the moon appeared on the horizon, and its rays made the waters of the Rhine scintillate softly. Everything before us suddenly changed; brightness, then darkness, sprang up in every direction, and the wine, even in our glasses, assumed a mysterious appearance. There was no longer any wind; it ceased suddenly, like a bird that folds its wings; a delicate and warm perfume arose from the ground.

"It is time to go!" I exclaimed, "otherwise I shall not find a boatman."

"Yes, it is time," replied Gaguine. We took the path that came down the mountain. Suddenly we heard some pebbles rolling behind us; it was Annouchka, who was coming to rejoin us.

"You did not go to bed then?" said her brother.

She did not reply, but ran down before us. Some of the lamps that the students had to light up the garden still threw a dying glimmer, which lighted up the foliage of the trees, at the foot of which they burnt, and gave to them a solemn and fantastic appearance. We found Annouchka upon the bank; she was talking with the boatman. I jumped into the boat and took leave of my new friends. Gaguine promised me a visit the next day. I gave him my hand, which he pressed; I offered the other to Annouchka, but she contented herself by looking at me and nodding her head. The boat was set loose from the bank, and the current carried it along with rapidity. The boatman, a robust old man, plunged his oars energetically into the dark waters of the river.

"You are going into the reflection of the moon," cried Annouchka; "you have broken it."

I looked upon the river, its dim shadows crowded about the boat.

"Adieu," she said once more.

"To-morrow, then," added Gaguine.

The boat reached the shore; I jumped out of it and looked behind me, but I no longer saw any one on the other bank. The reflection of the moon spread out again, like a bridge of gold, from one bank of the river to the other.

The last chords of a waltz of Lanner's could be heard, as if bidding me a farewell. Gaguine was right; these far-away sounds moved me strangely.

I regained the house through the fields, shrouded in a profound obscurity, inhaling slowly the balmy air; and when I had re-entered my little room, I felt troubled to the

bottom of my soul by the confused expectation of an undefined happiness. What do I say? I was already happy; why? I could not have told what I wanted, nor of what I was thinking, and yet I was happy.

At the time this superabundance of strange and delicious sensations almost made me laugh; I quickly went to bed, and just as I was closing my eyes I suddenly remembered that I had not thought the whole evening of my faithless one.—What does this mean, I asked myself; is it that I am no longer in love? But that question remained unanswered, and I slept like a child in its cradle.

III.

The next morning, being awake, but not yet up, I heard the sound of a walking-stick echoing under my window, and a voice that I recognized as that of Gaguine, pouring forth the following song:—

"Si je trouve encor dans les bras du sommeil, Je viens te reveiller au bruit de ma guitare."[1]

I hastened to open the door to him.

"Good-morning," said he, entering, "I disturb you very early, but the weather is so fine. See what a delicious freshness, the dew, the singing of the larks"—

And, indeed, he, with his rosy cheeks, his curly hair, and his half-bare neck, had all the freshness of morning.

I dressed myself; we went into my little garden and took a seat upon a bench; they brought our coffee there, and we began to talk.

Gaguine told of some of his future plans; having a fine fortune and dependent upon no one, he wished to devote himself to painting, and regretted only that he had taken it up so late, he had lost so much valuable time. I in turn confided to him the plans that I had formed, and took advantage of the opportunity to make him the confidant

of my unhappy love affair. He listened patiently, but I could see that the sufferings of my heart had but little interest for him. After having listened to my story for politeness' sake, with two or three sighs, he proposed that we should go and see his sketches. I immediately consented. We started. Annouchka was not at home. The landlady informed us that she must be at the ruins. They so called the remains of an old feudal castle, which was situated a mile or so from the town. Gaguine opened all his portfolios. I found that his sketches had much life and truth, something broad and bold; but none were finished, and the drawing appeared to me incorrect and careless.

I frankly expressed my opinion.

"Yes, yes," he replied, sighing, "you are right; all that is bad, and it is not matured by reflection. What am I to do? I have not worked enough; our cursed Slavic indolence always ends in getting the better of me! Whilst the work is still but an idea, like an eagle soaring in the air, we believe ourselves able to move the world; then at the moment of execution come weaknesses, and then—weariness."

I offered him some words of encouragement, but he interrupted me with a wave of the hand, picked up his sketches, and threw them in a heap upon the sofa.

"If perseverance does not fail me, I shall succeed," said he, between his teeth; "otherwise, I shall vegetate as a country squire, never amounting to anything.

"Let us go and look for Annouchka!"

IV.

The road that led to the ruins ran along the side of a narrow and wooded dell. At the bottom a rapid stream rushed noisily over the stones, as if in a hurry to lose itself in the great river, which was seen in the distance behind the dark rampart of steep mountains. Gaguine called my attention to several very harmonious effects of color, and his words revealed to me, if not a painter of talent, at least a true artist. The ruin was soon before us. It was at the top of a barren rock, a square tower, entirely

blackened, quite intact, but nearly split from top to bottom by a deep crack. Walls covered with moss were attached to the tower. Ivy clung here and there; stunted shrubbery sprang out of grayish embrasures and caved-in vaults; a stony path led to an entrance door standing upright. We were not far from it when a woman's figure appeared suddenly before us, leaped lightly upon a heap of rubbish, and stood erect upon the projection of a wall at the edge of a precipice.

"I am not mistaken!" exclaimed Gaguine; "it is Annouchka. How foolish of her!"

We passed through the door, and found ourselves in a small court almost entirely filled with nettles and wild apple trees. It was, indeed, Annouchka, sitting upon the projection of the wall. She turned her head towards us and began to laugh, not moving from her place; Gaguine shook his finger at her, and raising my voice, I reproached her for her imprudence.

"Be quiet," Gaguine said, in my ear; "let her do it; you have no idea of what she is capable when provoked; she would climb to the top of the tower. Admire rather the industrious spirit of the people of the country."

I turned and saw in a corner a booth of boards, on the floor of which was squatting an old woman knitting stockings, looking at us from under her spectacles. She had for sale beer, cakes, and seltzer water, for the use of tourists.

We seated ourselves upon a bench and began to drink foamy beer from heavy tin goblets. Annouchka still remained seated in the same place, her feet curled under her, her head enveloped in her muslin scarf; her charming profile outlined clearly against the blue sky; but I looked at her with some irritation. I believed the evening before that her manners were affected and unnatural. She wishes to astonish us, I thought; but why? what a childish whim. You would say that she had divined my thought, for, throwing upon me a quick penetrating glance, she began to laugh, descended from the wall in two jumps, then, approaching the old woman, she asked her for a glass of water.

"You think I wish to drink?" she said to her brother; "no, I wish to water the flowers upon the wall yonder that are dying and dried up by the sun."

Gaguine did not reply; she left us, her glass in her hand, and climbed once more upon the ruins. Stopping at intervals she stooped and poured out with a comic gravity some drops of water that sparkled in the sun. Her movements were very graceful; but I still watched her with disapproval, admiring, however, her nimbleness and activity. Coming to a dangerous place she purposely alarmed us by giving a little cry and then began to laugh. That was the finishing stroke to my impatience.

"She is a regular goat," muttered the old woman, who had stopped working.

Having emptied the last drop of water from her glass, Annouchka at length arose to rejoin us, approaching with a defiant manner. A strange smile for a moment contracted her lips and her eyebrows and dilated her nostrils; she half closed her black eyes with a provoking air of mockery.

"You think my conduct unbecoming," her face seemed to say; "no matter, I know that you admire me."

"Perfect! charming! Annouchka," said Gaguine.

Suddenly the young girl appeared to feel a sense of shame, and lowering her eyes, she came and sat by us like a culprit. For the first time I examined her features closely; and I have rarely seen more mobile ones. A few moments had scarcely elapsed before her face lost all color and took an expression approaching almost to sadness; it even seemed to me that her features assumed grandeur, artlessness. She appeared entirely absorbed.

We explored the ruins minutely. Annouchka kept behind us, and we began to admire the view. When the dinner hour arrived, Gaguine paid the old woman, and asked from her a last jug of beer; then turning to me, he said with a shy smile:—

"To the lady of your thoughts!"

"He has then—you have then a lady of whom you think?" asked Annouchka.

"And who has not?" replied Gaguine.

Annouchka remained thoughtful for some moments, the expression of her face changed again, and a smile of defiance, almost impudent, appeared once more upon her lips.

We again took our way to the house, and Annouchka again began to laugh and frolic with more affectation than before. Breaking a branch from a tree, she shouldered it like a gun, and rolled her scarf about her head. I remember that we then met a large family of English people, with light hair, looking awkward; all, as if obeying a word of command, threw upon Annouchka their blue eyes, in which was depicted a cold look of astonishment; she began to sing in a loud voice, as if to defy them. When we arrived, she immediately went to her room, and did not reappear until dinner, decked out in her finest dress, her hair dressed with care, wearing a tight-fitting bodice, and gloves on her hands. At table she sat with dignity, scarcely tasted anything, and drank only water. It was evident she wished to play a new rôle in my presence: that of a young person, modest and well-bred. Gaguine did not restrain her; you could see that it was his custom to contradict her in nothing. From time to time he contented himself with looking at me, faintly shrugging his shoulders, and his kindly eye seemed to say: "She is but a child; be indulgent." Immediately after dinner she rose, bowed to us, and, putting on her hat, asked of Gaguine if she could go and see Dame Louise.

"How long have you been in need of my permission?" he replied, with his usual smile, which this time, however, was slightly constrained; "you are tired of us, then?"

"No; but yesterday I promised Dame Louise to go and see her; besides, I think you would be more at your ease without me. Monsieur," she added, turning to me, "you will—you will perhaps, have some more confidences."

She left us.

"Dame Louise," said Gaguine, trying to avoid my look, "is the widow of the old burgomaster of the town. She is rather a plain, but an excellent old woman. She has a great liking for Annouchka, who, moreover, has a mania for becoming intimate with people below her; a mania that, as far as I can observe, almost always springs from pride."

"You see," added he, after a moment's silence, "that I treat Annouchka like a spoiled child, and it could not be otherwise; I could not be exacting towards any body, how much less towards her?"

I did not reply. Gaguine began to talk upon another subject. The more I learned to know him the more he inspired me with affection. I soon summed up his character; it was a fine, good Russian nature, straightforward, upright, and unaffected, but unfortunately wanting in energy and earnestness. His youth did not give forth passion and ardor, but shone with a sweet and dim light. He had wit and charming manners, but how difficult to conjecture what would become of him when he became a man! An artist—no! Every art calls for hard work, unceasing efforts; and never, I said to myself, in looking at his calm features, listening to his languid voice, never could he bind himself to constant and well-directed work. And yet it was impossible not to like him; one became attached to him involuntarily. We passed nearly four hours together, sometimes side by side upon the sofa, sometimes walking slowly before the house, and our talk ended by uniting us. The sun went down, and I was thinking about going home.

Annouchka had not yet returned.

"Ah, what a wayward child!" exclaimed Gaguine. "Wait, I will see you home; would you not like to have me? As we go we will stop at Dame Louise's and see if she is yet there; it will not be much out of the way."

We descended into the town, and after following for a short time a narrow and

winding street, we stopped before a high, four-storied house, with but two windows in front; the second story projected over the street more than the first, and in the same manner the other two. This strange habitation, with its Gothic arches, placed upon two enormous posts and topped with a pointed tiled roof, and a dormer window, surmounted by an iron crane extended in the form of a beak, had the effect of an enormous bird meditating.

"Annouchka, are you there?" cried Gaguine.

A lighted window opened in the third story, and we perceived the brown head of the young girl. Behind her appeared the toothless face of an old German woman, her eyes weak with age.

"Here I am," said Annouchka, leaning coquettishly on the window-sill. "I like it very well. Wait, take this," added she, throwing to Gaguine a slip of geranium. "Imagine to yourself that I am the lady of your thoughts."

Dame Louise began to laugh.

"He is going away," replied Gaguine; "he wishes to bid you farewell."

"Really?" said Annouchka. "Well, then, as he is going, give him the flower. I will come home very soon."

She quickly closed the window, and I thought I saw her embrace the old German. Gaguine offered me the flower in silence. Without saying a word I put it in my pocket, and returning to the place where they cross the river, I passed over to the other side. I recollect walking towards my house with a singularly sad heart, though thinking of nothing, when a perfume well known to me, but rare enough in Germany, attracted my attention. I stopped, and saw near the road a plot of ground sown with hemp. The perfume that this plant of the steppes gave out suddenly transported me to Russia, and brought forth in my soul a passionate enthusiasm towards my country; I conceived the ardent desire of breathing my native air, and feeling again under my feet the soil of my fatherland. "What am I doing here?" I

exclaimed; "What interest have I in wandering in a strange land, among people who are nothing to me?" and the oppression that filled my heart soon gave way to an emotion violent and full of bitterness.

I re-entered my house in a state of mind the opposite to that of the night before; I felt almost vexed, and was long in calming myself. I felt a deep vexation, for which I could not account. I ended by sitting down, and recalling my faithless widow (she came to my recollection officially every evening); I took one of her letters, but did not open it, for my thoughts took wing to the other side of the river. I began to dream, and Annouchka was the subject. I recalled that in the course of our conversation; Gaguine gave me to understand that certain circumstances prevented him from returning to Russia.—"Who knows, indeed, if she is his sister," I asked myself aloud.

I laid down and tried to sleep, but an hour after I was still leaning on my elbow, and thinking again of that capricious little girl with a forced laugh. She has the figure of La Galathée of Raphael of the Farnese palace, I murmured.—It is well that—and she is not his sister. During this time the widow's letter reposed quietly upon the floor, lighted up by a pale ray of the moon.

V.

The next morning I returned to L. I persuaded myself that I should take the greatest pleasure in seeing Gaguine, but the fact is that I was secretly impelled by the desire of knowing how Annouchka would behave,—if she would act as strangely as the night before. I found them both in the parlor; and a singular thing,—but perhaps because I had been dreaming so long of Russia,—Annouchka seemed to me entirely Russian. I found in her the air of a young girl of the people, almost that of one of the servants. She wore quite an old dress, her hair was drawn back behind her ears, and, seated near the window, she was quietly working at her embroidery, as if she had

never done anything else in her life. Her eyes fixed upon her work, she scarcely spoke, and her features had an expression so dull, so commonplace, that I was involuntarily reminded of Macha and Katia[2] at home. To complete the resemblance she began to hum the air,—

O, ma mère, ma douce Colombe![3]

While observing her face, the dreams of the night before came back to mind, and without knowing why, I felt an oppression in my heart. The weather was magnificent.

Gaguine told us he intended to go out to sketch. I asked permission to accompany him if it would not trouble him.

"On the contrary," he said, "you can give me some good advice."

He put on his blouse, donned his round Van Dyck hat, took his portfolio under his arm, and started out. I followed him. Annouchka remained at home. On leaving, Gaguine begged her to see that the soup was not made too thin. She promised to keep her eye on the kitchen.

Leading me into the valley, with which I was already familiar, Gaguine seated himself upon a stone, and began to draw an old tufted oak.

I stretched myself upon the grass and took a book, but read two pages of it at the most. Gaguine, on his side, made but a poor daub. In return we did not fail to discuss very fully, and, in my opinion, not without judgment and justness, the best method to follow to work with profit, the dangers to avoid, the end to be aimed at, and the mission of the true artist in the age in which we live. Gaguine ended by declaring that to-day he did not feel sufficiently in spirits, and came and stretched himself at my side. Then we gave ourselves up to the irresistible temptation of one of those conversations so dear to youth, conversations sometimes enthusiastic, sometimes pensive and melancholy, but always sincere and always vague, in which we Russians love so much to indulge. After having talked to satiety, we took the road to

the town, very well satisfied with ourselves, as if we had just accomplished a difficult task, or brought a great enterprise to a good end. We found Annouchka exactly as we left her. I observed her with the utmost attention; I could discover in her neither the slightest shade of coquetry, or indication denoting a studied part; it was impossible this time to find in her any vestiges of oddity.

"Decidedly," said Gaguine, "she is fasting and doing penance."

Towards evening she yawned two or three times without the least affectation, and went to bed early. I took leave of Gaguine soon after, and, going home, I did not allow myself to dream. The day came to an end without my mind suffering the least trouble, only it seemed to me, as I lay down, that I said involuntarily aloud,—

"Oh! that little girl—she is, indeed, an enigma. And yet," added I, after a moment's reflection, "and yet she is not his sister!"

VI.

A fortnight elapsed after these events. I went every day to make Gaguine a visit. Annouchka seemed to shun me, and no longer indulged in those head-shakings that had annoyed me so much in the first days of our acquaintance. She seemed to conceal a grief or a secret trouble; she laughed more rarely. I continued to observe her with curiosity.

French and German were quite familiar to her, but a number of things made me divine that she had been without a woman's care in her infancy, that she had received a strange, desultory education, quite different from that of Gaguine. In him, in spite of his blouse and Van Dyck hat, you quickly discovered the Russian gentleman, nonchalant and slightly effeminate; she in no wise resembled a noble lady. All her movements implied a kind of restlessness; she was a seedling newly grafted, a wine that yet fermented. Naturally timid and distrustful of herself, she was vexed at feeling gauche, and sought in spite of it to give herself an unconstrained

and bold manner, but not always with success. Several times I led the conversation to her past, and her way of living in Russia; I saw that she replied with a bad grace to my questions. All that I could learn was that at the time she left Russia she was living in the country. One day I found her alone and reading; her head leaning on her hands, her fingers thrust in her hair, she was devouring the book before her with her eyes.

"Bravo!" I cried, approaching. "What, a love of study?"

She raised her head, and, looking at me with a serious and dignified air, "You thought, then, I could do nothing but laugh?" she said, and she rose to leave.

I glanced at the title of the book; it was a bad French novel.

"You might have made a better choice," I said to her.

"What must I read, then?" she cried, and, throwing her book upon the table, she added: "Then, in that case, I am going to amuse myself." And she ran towards the garden.

The same day, in the evening, I read to Gaguine Herrman and Dorothea. As I began to read, Annouchka went to and fro incessantly, then suddenly she stopped, listened, seated herself quietly beside me, and gave me her attention to the end.

The next day I was again surprised in no longer seeing the old Annouchka. I began to comprehend that she had suddenly taken into her head to be a housewife, wrapped up in her duties, like Dorothea. Finally her character seemed inexplicable to me. In spite of the excessive amour propre that I found in her, I felt attracted towards her, even when she made me angry. One thing, at least, appeared certain, and that was that she was not the sister of Gaguine. I did not find in him towards her the conduct of a brother; on her side too much respect and compliance, too little constraint.

A strange circumstance seemed, according to all appearances, to strengthen my suspicions. One evening, approaching the hedge which surrounded Gaguine's house, I found the gate closed. Without stopping at this obstacle I reached a place where,

some days before, I had noticed that a part of the hedge was destroyed, and I jumped into the enclosure; some distance from there, a few steps from the path, there was a little arbor of acacias; scarcely had I passed it than I distinguished the voice of Annouchka, who cried out with fervor, weeping,—

"No, I shall never love any one but you; no, no, it is you alone whom I wish to love, and forever!"

"Come, calm yourself," replied Gaguine, "you know very well that I believe you." Their voices left the arbor. I could see them through the thin foliage; they did not observe me.

"You, you only," she repeated; and, throwing herself on his neck, she clung to him with convulsive sobs, covering him with kisses.

"Calm yourself, calm yourself," he kept repeating, passing his hand over the hair of the young girl.

I remained quiet for some moments, then I came to my senses.—Should I approach them? "No, not for the world," I immediately said.

I quickly regained the hedge, and, passing it at a stride, I again took the road to my house, running. I smiled, I rubbed my hands, I wondered at the chance that had unexpectedly confirmed my suppositions; the least doubt seemed no longer possible, and at the same time I felt in my heart an intense bitterness.

"I must confess," I said to myself, "that they can dissimulate well! But what is their object? And I—why should they make me their dupe? I should not expect such a thing from him. Then, what a melodramatic scene!"

VII.

I passed a bad night. Rising early in the morning, I threw over my shoulders my travelling bag, warned my landlady that I would not return during the day, and

walked by the side of the mountains, along the river, upon the borders of which was situated the little town of L. These mountains, whose chain bears the name of Hundsrüch (Dog's Back) are of a very curious formation; especially noticeable were columns of basalt very regular and of great purity of shape, but at the moment I hardly thought of making any geological observations. I could not account for the way I felt, only I was conscious that I no longer wished to persuade even myself that the only cause of the sudden estrangement with which they inspired me was my chagrin at being deceived by them. Nothing obliged them to give themselves out as—brother and sister. Finally I tried to banish the remembrance of them from my mind.

I wandered at leisure over mountains and valleys; I made some long stops in the village inns; engaging in a quiet conversation with the landlord and travellers, or else, lying down upon a flat stone, warmed by the sun, I looked at the clouds floating by. Happily for me the weather was beautiful. It was thus I occupied my leisure for three days, and I found in doing so a certain charm, though at times I felt depressed. The state of my mind was in perfect accord with the tranquil nature of these regions.

I abandoned myself entirely to chance, to all the impressions that happened to strike me. They followed each other slowly and left in the depths of my soul a general sensation, in which mingled harmoniously all that I had seen, felt, and heard for the last three days; yes, everything, without exception, the penetrating odor of rosin in the woods, the cries and the tappings of the woodpecker, the incessant rushing of the clear streams, with speckled trout playing on the sandy bottom, the undulating outlines of the mountains, the towering rocks; the neat little villages, with their respectable old churches; the storks in the meadows, the pretty mills with clattering wheels, the stout figures of the countrymen with their blue waistcoats and gray stockings, the lumbering carts drawn slowly by heavy horses and sometimes by cows, young travellers, with long hair, walking in groups on the smooth streets,

bordered with pear and apple trees.

I still find a charm in the remembrance of these impressions.

Hail to you! humble corner of German soil, abode of a modest comfort, where one meets at every step traces of a diligent hand, of a work slow, but full of perseverance, to you my vows and my reverence!

I returned home only on the evening of the third day. I have forgotten to say that, in my chagrin against Annouchka, I attempted to revive in my thoughts the image of my stony-hearted widow, but had my labor for my pains. I remember that as soon as I recalled her, I found myself face to face with a little girl of about five years of age, with a round and innocent face, with eyes animated with a naïve curiosity. She looked at me with such a candid expression that I felt quite ashamed before her glance; it was distasteful for me to lie even to myself in her presence, and my old idol disappeared from my remembrance forever.

Arriving home, I found a letter from Gaguine; he spoke of the astonishment that my sudden disappearance had caused him; reproached me for not having taken him for a companion, and begged me to come and see him as soon as I returned.

This letter caused me a painful impression; nevertheless, I started for L. the next day.

VIII.

Gaguine gave me a friendly greeting, and loaded me with affectionate reproaches. As to Annouchka, as if she did it on purpose, as soon as she saw me, she burst out laughing without the slightest cause, and immediately fled, as usual. Gaguine appeared embarrassed, stammered out that she was foolish, and begged me to excuse her. I confess that, being already displeased, I was so much the more wounded by this forced merriment and strange affectation. I feigned, however, to attach no importance to it, and related to Gaguine the details of my little excursion. On his

side, he informed me of what he had done during my absence; nevertheless the conversation languished, while Annouchka kept coming in and out of the room. I brought this to an end by pretending unavoidable work, and manifested my intention of leaving. Gaguine attempted at first to detain me; then, bestowing a searching glance at me, offered to accompany me. In the outer room Annouchka came up suddenly and offered me her hand. I just touched the ends of her fingers and scarcely bowed.

I crossed the Rhine with Gaguine, and when we were near the ash of the little Madonna we seated ourselves upon the bench to admire the view. Then we entered into a conversation I shall never forget.

We at first exchanged some commonplaces, then there was a silence. We fixed our eyes upon the transparent waters of the river.

"I should like to know what you think of Annouchka," said Gaguine suddenly, with his usual smile. "Does she not appear somewhat fantastic?"

"Yes," I replied, much surprised at the question, as I hardly expected him to venture upon such ground.

"That comes from not knowing her; thus you cannot judge her well," said he. "She has an excellent heart, but a very bad head. You must bear a great deal from her! You would not reproach her if you knew her history."

"Her history?" I exclaimed; "is she not then your"—

Gaguine stopped me with a look.

"You are not going to imagine that she is not my sister?" he replied, without paying any attention to my embarrassment. "Yes, she is indeed the daughter of my father. Give me your attention. I have confidence in you and am going to tell you everything.

"My father was an excellent man, having intelligence and a cultivated mind, but

whose life was nevertheless very sad. It was not that he was more ill-used by fortune than any one else, but he had not the strength to bear a first misfortune. While still young he had made a love marriage; his wife, who was my mother, did not live long; I was only six months old when she died. My father then took me into the country, and for twelve years did not put foot outside of his domain. He himself began my education, and would never have separated himself from me if his brother, my paternal uncle, had not come to see him on his estate. This uncle lived at Petersburg, and he held an important position there. He succeeded in persuading my father to confide me to his care, so that he would never need to leave his estate; he represented to him that isolation was injurious to a boy already grown, and who in the hands of a preceptor as sad and stern as my father would be far behind children of my own age, and that even my character would suffer.

"My father resisted his attempts for a long time, but finally yielded. I cried on being separated from him, for I loved him, though I had never seen a smile upon his lips. Arrived at Petersburg, I soon forgot the sad, dark place where my infancy was passed. I entered the military school, then a regiment of the Guard. I went every year to pass some weeks in the country. Each time I found my father more morose, more reserved and pensive, until at times he became fierce. He went every day to church, and almost entirely lost the habit of talking.

"During one of these visits (I was about twenty years of age) I perceived for the first time a slight girl with black eyes, about twelve years old; it was Annouchka. My father told me she was an orphan whom he took care of, and I paid but little attention to this child, wild, silent, and active as a young fallow deer. When I entered my father's favorite room, the vast chamber where my mother died, and so dark that they kept it lighted in broad day, Annouchka hid herself behind a large arm-chair or the bookcase. It happened that for three or four days after this last visit I was prevented by my duties from returning to my father's, but every month I received a few lines from his hand, in which he rarely spoke of Annouchka, and always without

going into any details of the subject. He was already over fifty, but appeared still a young man. You may imagine the shock when I suddenly received a letter from our steward, in which he announced to me that my father was dangerously ill, and implored me to come as soon as possible if I wished to see him before he died.

"I started immediately, and travelled with the greatest speed, and found my father still living, but just about to breathe his last. He was delighted to see me again, and clasped me in his emaciated arms, fastening his glance upon me, which appeared at once to fathom my thoughts and to address me a mute prayer, and making me promise to fulfil his last wish, he ordered his old valet to bring Annouchka into his room.

"The old man led her in; she could hardly stand, trembling all over.

"'Now,' said my father with an effort, 'I confide to your care my daughter, your sister; Iskof will relate everything to you,' he added, designating his old servant.

"Annouchka began to sob and fell upon the bed, hiding her face. Half an hour after, my father expired.

"This is what I learned: Annouchka was the daughter of my father and of an old waiting maid of my mother, named Tatiana. I recollect Tatiana very well. She was tall, with large, dark eyes, noble, severe, and intelligent features, and passed for a proud girl, rather unapproachable. As far as I could understand by the simple story with respectful omissions that Iskof related, my father did not notice Tatiana until several years after the death of my mother. At that time Tatiana no longer lived in the manor-house, but with one of her married sisters, charged with looking after the courtyard. My father had taken a fancy to her, and when I left the country he even thought of marrying her, but she resisted all his entreaties. 'The dead Tatiana Vlassievna,' said Iskof, standing reverentially near the door, his hands behind his back, 'was a person of great good judgment; she did not wish to bring prejudice against your father,'—'I become your wife, mistress here, you can't think of it?' she

cried, thus addressing your father in my presence." Inflexible upon this point, Tatiana would not even change her abode; she continued to live at her sister's with Annouchka. When I was a child I often remember having seen Tatiana on fête-days at church. A dark handkerchief on her head, a yellow shawl thrown over her shoulder, she stood with the other villagers near a window. Her stern profile stood out clearly against the panes, and she prayed with modest gravity, bowing profoundly after the custom of the old time, and touching the earth with the end of her fingers before touching it with her forehead.

"At the time my uncle took me away, little Annouchka was only two years old; she was nine when she lost her mother. After the death of Tatiana, my father took the child to his own house. Already he had several times expressed a wish to do so, but Tatiana was always opposed to it. You may imagine what Annouchka must have felt when she found herself established in the house of him they called "the master." Even to the present time she preserves the remembrance of the day when for the first time she put on a silk dress, and they made her kiss his hand. Her mother had brought her up with severity; my father did not place the least restraint upon her. He charged himself with her education; she had no other master. He did not spoil her, or load her with useless tasks. He loved her ardently; he could refuse her nothing. Annouchka soon learned that she was the principal personage of the house; she knew that the master was her father; even then she had a feeling of her false position, and an amour propre unhealthful and full of mistrust sprang up in her. Some bad habits took root; her naïveté disappeared; she wished, she confided to me later, to force the whole world to forget her origin. At times she blushed at it; then, ashamed at her blushes, she showed that she was proud of her mother. You see that she knew, and knows still, a great many things which she should have been ignorant of at her age; but whose fault was it? The passion of youth burst forth impetuously, and there was no friendly hand to direct her. It is so difficult to make good use of such entire independence. So, not wishing to be behind other nobles' daughters, she

devoted herself to reading; but what profit could she derive from it? Her life, begun in a false way, remained so, but her heart kept pure.

"At this time I was but twenty years of age, and charged with the care of a young girl of thirteen. For the first few days after my father's death the sound of my voice was sufficient to throw her into a fever. My caresses caused her agony; it was but gradually and almost insensibly that she became accustomed to me. It is true that later, when she saw that I was thoughtful of her, and loved her as a sister, she became ardently attached to me; she could feel nothing half way.

"I took her to Petersburg, and though hard for me to leave her, it not being in my power to keep her near me, I placed her in one of the best boarding-schools of the city. Annouchka understood the necessity of this separation, but she fell ill and nearly died. Later she became accustomed to this kind of life. She remained at boarding-school four years, and, contrary to my expectation, she came out nearly the same as she went in. The mistress of the boarding-school often complained of her. "Punishments have no effect upon her," she told me, "and marks of affection find her equally insensible." Annouchka was very intelligent; she studied hard, and in this respect led all her companions; but nothing could make her comply with the ordinary rules,—she remained obstinate, and with an unsociable humor. I do not blame her entirely; she was in a position where there were but two ways of acting open to her,—a complacent servility or a proud shyness. Among all her schoolmates, she was intimate with but one, a young girl, quite plain, poor, and persecuted. The other scholars of the boarding-school, most of them of the aristocracy, did not like her, and pursued her with their sarcasms. Annouchka kept aloof from them in every way. One day the priest charged with their religious instruction spoke of the faults of youth; Annouchka said aloud: "There are no greater faults than flattery and meanness." In a word, her character did not change, only her manners improved, although there was still much to be desired.

"So she reached her seventeenth year. My position was quite embarrassing; but a happy thought suddenly occurred to me: it was to leave the service, pass three or four years in a strange country and take my sister with me. As soon as I conceived this resolution I put it in execution, and that is why you find us both upon the banks of the Rhine, I attempting to paint, and she doing anything she wishes, according to her fancy. Now I hope that you will not judge her too severely, for I warn you that Annouchka, though pretending to care nothing about it, is very sensitive to the opinion that others have of her, and to yours above all."

As he said these last words, Gaguine smiled with his usual calmness. I pressed his hand with warmth.

"All this is nothing," he replied, "but I tremble for her in the future. She has one of the most inflammable natures. Up to the present time no one has pleased her; but if she ever loves, who can tell what may result from it? I do not at times know how to behave towards her. Imagine those days when she wished to prove to me that I was cool towards her, whilst she loved only me, and would never love another man! and while saying this she would weep bitterly.

"It is for this reason then?—" I began to say, but I immediately stopped myself.

"Since we are in the chapter of confidences," I replied, "allow me one question. Is it true that no one has pleased her up to the present time? Yet at Petersburg she must have seen a great many young people?"

"They were all to the highest degree displeasing to her. You see, Annouchka was seeking for a hero, an extraordinary man, or some handsome shepherd living in a mountain cave. But it is time for me to stop; I detain you," added he, rising.

"No," I said to him, "let us rather go to your house. I don't wish to go into the house."

"And your work?" he asked of me.

I did not reply to him. Gaguine kindly smiled, and we returned to L. In again seeing

the vineyard and the white house on the mountain, I felt a peculiarly sweet emotion that penetrated my soul; it was as if balm had been poured into my heart.

Gaguine's story relieved me greatly.

IX.

Annouchka came to meet us at the threshold of the door. I was expecting a fresh burst of laughter, but she approached us pale, silent, her eyes cast down.

"I have brought him back," said Gaguine, "and it is well to add that he wished to come himself."

She looked at me with a questioning air. I put my hand out to her this time, and pressed with fervor her cold and trembling fingers. I felt a profound pity for her. I understood, indeed, the sides of her character which had appeared inexplicable to me. That agitation one saw in her, that desire of putting herself forward, joined with the fear of appearing ridiculous, was quite clear to me now.

A weighty secret oppressed her constantly, her inexperienced amour propre came forward and receded incessantly, but her whole being sought the truth. I understood what attracted me towards this strange young girl: it was not only the half-savage charm bestowed upon her lovely and graceful young figure, it was also her soul that captivated me. Gaguine began to rummage over his portfolios; I proposed to Annouchka to accompany me into the vineyard. She immediately consented, with a gay and almost submissive air. We went half way down the mountain, and seated ourselves upon a stone.

"And you were not dull without us?" she asked me.

"You were then dull without me?" I replied to her.

Annouchka looked at me slyly.

"Yes!" she said, and almost immediately began,—

"The mountains must be very beautiful. They are high, higher than the clouds. Tell me what you saw. You have already told my brother, but I have not heard."

"But you did not care to hear, since you went out."

"I went out because,—you see very well that I don't go out now," added she in a tender tone; "but this morning you were angry."

"I was angry?"

"Yes!"

"Come now, why should I have been?"

"I don't know; but you were angry, and went away in the same mood. I was very sorry to see you go away so, and I am glad to see you come back."

"And I am very glad to be back," I answered.

Annouchka shrugged her shoulders, as children do when they are pleased. "Oh! I know it," she replied. "I used to know by the way in which my father coughed whether he was pleased with me or not."

It was the first time that she had spoken of her father; it surprised me.

"You loved your father very much?" I asked her; and suddenly, to my great disgust, I felt that I blushed.

She did not answer, and blushed also.

We kept silent for some time. In the distance the smoke of a steamboat rose up on the Rhine; we followed it with our eyes.

"And your story," she said to me in a low voice.

"Why did you sometimes begin to laugh when you saw me?" I asked her.

"I don't know. Sometimes I feel like weeping, and I begin to laugh. You must not judge of me by the way I act. Apropos, what is that legend about the fairy Lorelei? This is her rock that one sees here. They say that formerly she drowned everybody,

until, falling in love, she threw herself into the Rhine. I like the story. Dame Louise knows a great many of them; she tells them all to me. Dame Louise has a black cat with yellow eyes."

Annouchka raised her head and shook her curls.

"Ah! how happy I am," she said. At that moment low, monotonous sounds began to be heard at intervals,—hundreds of voices, chanting in chorus, with cadenced interruptions, a religious song. A long procession appeared on the road below us, with crosses and banners.

"Suppose we join them," Annouchka said to me, listening to the chants that came to us growing fainter and fainter by degrees.

"You are then very religious?"

"One should go to some place very far away for devotion, or to accomplish a perilous work!" she added. "Otherwise the days slip by—life passes uselessly."

"You are ambitious," I said to her. "You do not wish to end your life without leaving behind some traces of your existence?"

"Is it then impossible?"

"Impossible!" I was going to answer; but I looked at the eyes that shone with ardor, and confined myself to saying, "Try!"

"Tell me," after a moment's silence, during which indescribable shades passed over her countenance, which again had become pale. "Then that lady pleases you very much? You know, the one whose health my brother drank at the ruins the day after you met us?"

I began to laugh.

"Your brother but jested; no woman was in my mind, or at least is there now."

"And what is it that you like about women?" she asked, turning her head with a childlike curiosity.

"What a singular question!" I cried.

Annouchka was immediately troubled.

"I shouldn't have asked you such a question, should I? Forgive me; I am accustomed to say whatever comes into my head. That is why I am afraid to speak."

"Speak, I beg you! Fear nothing, I am so delighted at seeing you less wild."

Annouchka lowered her eyes, and for the first time I heard a sweet low laugh come from her lips.

"Come, tell me about your trip," she said, arranging the folds of her dress over her knees, as if to install herself there for a long time; "begin or recite something to me, that which you read from Onéguine."[4]

She suddenly became pensive, and murmured in a low voice,—

"Où sont aujourd'hui la croix et l'ombrage Qui marquaient la tombe de ma pauvre mère."

"That's not exactly the way that Pouchkina[5] expressed himself," I said.

"I should like to be Tatiana,"[6] continued she, still pensive. "Come, speak," she said with vivacity.

But that was far from my thoughts. I looked at her; inundated by the warm light of the sun, she seemed to me so calm, so serene.—About us, at our feet, above our heads, the country, the river, the heavens,—all were radiant; the air seemed to me quite saturated with splendor.

"See, how beautiful it is," I said, lowering my voice involuntarily.

"Oh, yes, very beautiful," she replied in the same tone, without looking at me. "If you and I were birds, how we would dart forth into space—into all that infinite blue! But we are not birds."

"Yes, but we can bring forth wings."

"How's that?"

"Life will teach you. There are many feelings that will raise you above this earth; never fear, the wings will come to you."

"Have you had any?"

"What shall I say? I don't think that I have taken wing so far."

Annouchka became thoughtful once more. I was leaning over her.

"Can you waltz?" she said to me suddenly.

"Yes," I replied, a little surprised at the question.

"Then come quickly; come. I am going to beg my brother to play us a waltz. We will pretend that the wings have appeared, and that we are flying into space."

She ran towards the house. I quickly followed her, and a few moments had hardly elapsed before we were whirling about the narrow room, to the sounds of a waltz of Lanner's. Annouchka danced with much grace and animation. I do not know what womanly charm suddenly appeared upon her girlish face. Long afterwards the charm of her slender figure still lingered about my hand; for a long time I felt her quick breathing near me, and I dreamed of her dark eyes, motionless and half closed, with her face animated, though pale, about which waved the curls of her sweet hair.

X.

Nothing could have been more delightful than that day. We amused ourselves like children. Annouchka was pleasing and artless. Gaguine regarded her with pleasure. I left them a little later. When I reached the middle of the Rhine I begged the boatman to let his boat drift down the river. The old man rested on his oars, and the majestic river carried us along. I looked about me, listened, and dreamed. Suddenly I felt a weight at my heart. Astonished, I raised my eyes to the heavens, but found no quiet there. Studded with stars, the entire heavens seemed to be moving, palpitating, trembling; I leaned towards the river, but down there in those cold and dark depths,

there, too, were the stars trembling and moving. Everything appeared incited by a restless agitation, and my own trouble only increased it. I leaned upon the edge of the boat. The sighing of the wind in my ears, the rippling of the water, which made a wake behind the stern, irritated me, and the cold air from over the water did not refresh me. A nightingale began to sing near the river bank, and the sweetness of the melodious voice ran through me like a delicious and burning poison. But they were not tears from an excitement without cause; what I felt was not the confused emotion of vague desires,—it was not that effervescence of the soul which wished to clasp everything in its embrace, because it could understand and love everything that exists; no, the thirst for happiness was kindled in me. I did not yet venture to put it into words—but happiness, happiness to satiety—that was what I wished, what I longed for. Meanwhile, the boat kept on down the stream, and the old boatman dozed on his oars.

XI.

While going the next morning to Gaguine's, I did not ask myself if I was in love with Annouchka, but did not cease to dream of her, to ponder on her fate; I rejoiced in our unforeseen reconciliation. I felt that I had not understood her until the previous evening; up to that time she was an enigma. Now, at length, she was revealed to me; in what an entrancing light was her image enshrouded, how new she was to me, and what did she not promise!

I followed deliberately the road that I had gone over so many times, glancing at every step at the little white house that was seen in the distance. I thought not of the far-off future; I did not even give a thought to the next day; I was happy.

When I entered the room Annouchka blushed. I noticed that she had again dressed herself with care, but by the expression of her face she was not entirely at her ease, and I—I was happy. I even thought I noticed a movement to run away, as usual, but,

making an effort, she remained. Gaguine was in that particular state of excitement which, like a fit of madness, suddenly takes hold of the dilettanti, when they imagine that they have caught Nature in the act and can hold her.

He was standing, quite dishevelled and covered with paint, before his canvas, bestowing upon it, right and left, great strokes of his brush.

He greeted me with a nod that had something quite fierce about it, going back a few steps, half closing his eyes, then again dashing at his picture. I did not disturb him, but went and sat by Annouchka. Her dark eyes turned slowly towards me.

"You are not the same to-day as you were yesterday," I said, after vainly trying to smile.

"It is true, I am not the same," she replied in a slow and dull voice; "but that's nothing. I have not slept well. I was thinking all night long."

"Upon what?"

"Ah, mon Dieu, upon a great many things. It is a habit of my childhood, of the time that I still lived with my mother."

She spoke this last word with an effort, but repeated it again:—

"When I lived with my mother I often asked myself why no one knew what would happen to them, and why, when foreseeing a misfortune, one cannot avoid it. And why also can one not tell the whole truth. I was thinking moreover last night that I ought to study, that I know nothing; I need a new education. I have been badly brought up. I have neither learned to draw nor to play upon the piano; I hardly know how to sew. I have no talent, people must be very much bored with me."

"You are unjust to yourself," I replied to her; "you have read a great deal, and with your intelligence"—

"And I am intelligent?" she asked, with such a curious naïve air that I could hardly keep from laughing.

"Am I intelligent, brother?" she asked of Gaguine.

He did not reply, but kept on painting assiduously, changing his brush over and over again, and raising his hand very high at every stroke.

"Really at times I have no idea what I have in my head," replied Annouchka, still thoughtful. "Sometimes, I assure you, I am afraid of myself. Ah! I would like—Is it true that women should not read a great many things?"

"A great many things are not necessary, but"—

"Tell me what I should read, what I should do. I will follow your advice in everything," added she, turning towards me with a burst of confidence.

I could not think immediately of what I ought to tell her.

"Come, would you not be afraid that I should weary you?"

"What a strange idea!"

"Well, thanks for that," said she, "I was afraid that you might be wearied in my society," and with her small burning hand clasped mine.

"I say! N——," cried Gaguine at this moment, "is not this tone too dark?"

I approached him, and the young girl rose and left the room.

XII.

She reappeared in about an hour at the door, and beckoned me to her.

"Listen," said she; "if I should die, would you be sorry?"

"What singular ideas you have to-day," I exclaimed.

"I don't think that I shall live long; it often seems to me that everything about me is bidding me good-by. It is better to die than to live as—Ah! don't look at me so; I assure you that I'm not pretending; otherwise, I shall begin again to be afraid of you."

"Were you afraid of me then?"

"If I am queer, you must not reproach me. See, already I can no longer laugh."

She remained sad and preoccupied until the end of the evening. I could not understand what had come over her. Her eyes often rested upon me; my heart was oppressed under her enigmatic look. She appeared calm; nevertheless, in looking at her, I could not keep from saying something to lessen her trouble. I contemplated her with emotion; I found a touching charm in the pallor spread over her features, in the timidity of her indecisive movements. She all the while imagined that I was in a bad humor.

"Listen," she said to me before I left, "I fear that you do not take me seriously. In future believe all that I tell you; but you, in your turn, be frank with me; be sure that I shall never tell you anything but the truth,—I give you my word of honor!"

This expression, "word of honor," made me smile once more.

"Ah! don't laugh," said she vivaciously, "or I shall repeat what you told me yesterday, 'Why do you laugh?' Do you remember," added she, after a moment's silence, "that yesterday you spoke to me of wings? These wings have sprung forth. I don't know where to fly."

"Come, then," I replied, "all roads are open to you."

She looked at me earnestly for some moments.

"You have a bad opinion of me to-day," she said, frowning slightly.

"I! a bad opinion of you?"

"Why are you standing there, with those dismal faces?" asked Gaguine at that moment. "Do you wish me to play a waltz for you, as I did yesterday?"

"No, no," cried she, clasping her hands; "not for the world to-day!"

"Don't excite yourself; I don't wish to force you."

"Not for the world," repeated she, growing pale.

"Does she love me?" I thought, as I approached the Rhine, whose dark waters rushed rapidly along.

XIII.

"Does she love me?" I asked myself the next morning on awakening. I feared to question myself more. I felt that her image—the image of the young girl with the "rire forcé"—was engraved on my mind, and that I could not easily efface it. I returned to L., and remained there the entire day, but I only caught a glimpse of Annouchka. She was indisposed; she had a headache. She only came down for a few moments, a handkerchief wrapped about her forehead. Pale and unsteady, with her eyes half closed, she smiled a little, and said,—

"It will pass away; it is nothing. Everything passes away, doesn't it?" and she went out.

I felt wearied, moved by a sensation of emptiness and sadness, and yet I could not decide to go away. Later on I went home without having seen her again.

I passed all the next morning in a kind of moral somnolence. I tried to lose myself by working; impossible, I could do nothing. I tried to force myself to think of nothing; that succeeded no better. I wandered about the town; I re-entered the house, then came out again.

"Are you not Monsieur N——?" said suddenly behind me the voice of a little boy.

I turned about,—a child had accosted me.

"From Mademoiselle Anna."

And he handed me a letter.

I opened it and recognized her handwriting, hasty and indistinct:—

"I must see you. Meet me to-day at four o'clock in the stone chapel, on the road that leads to the ruins.—I have been very imprudent. Come, for heaven's sake! You shall

know everything. Say to the bearer, Yes."

"Is there any answer?" asked the little boy.

"Say to the young lady, Yes," I replied. And he ran away.

XIV.

I went back to my room, and, sitting down, began to reflect. My heart beat quickly. I read Annouchka's letter over several times. I looked at my watch; it was not yet noon.

The door opened and Gaguine entered. He looked gloomy. He took my hand and pressed it fervently. You could see that he was under the influence of a deep emotion.

"What has happened?" I asked him. Gaguine took a chair, and seated himself by my side.

"Three days ago," he said to me, with an uneasy smile and a constrained voice, "I told you some things that surprised you; to-day I am going to astonish you still more. To another than you, I would not speak so frankly; but you are a man of honor, and a friend, I hope; then listen. My sister Annouchka loves you."

I started, and rose quickly.

"Your sister, you tell me—?"

"Yes," he replied bruskly, "I said so. It is foolish; she will drive me mad. Fortunately, she cannot lie, and confides everything to me. Ah! what a heart that child has; but she will surely ruin herself!"

"You are certainly in error," I exclaimed, interrupting him.

"No, I am not mistaken. Yesterday she remained in bed the entire day without taking anything. It is true she did not complain; but she never does complain. I felt no uneasiness, but towards evening she had a little fever. About two in the morning our

landlady came and awoke me.

"'Go and see your sister,' she said to me; 'I think she is ill.'

"I ran to Annouchka's room, and found her still dressed, consumed with fever, in tears; her head was on fire; her teeth chattered.

"'What is the matter with you?' I asked.

"She threw herself upon my neck and begged me to take her away, if I valued her life. Without being able to understand anything, I tried to calm her; her sobs redoubled, and, suddenly, in the depth of her grief, she confessed to me,—in a word, I learned that she loves you.—There! You and I are grown men, governed by reason. Well! we will never understand how deep are the sentiments that Annouchka feels, and with what violence they manifest themselves; it is something at once unforeseen and irresistible, like the bursting of a storm. You are, without doubt, a very attractive man," continued Gaguine, "but yet, how have you inspired such a violent passion? I cannot conceive of it, I confess it! She pretends that, as soon as she saw you, she was attracted towards you. That is why she wept so much of late in assuring me that she would never love any one in the world but me. She thinks that you look down upon her, knowing probably her origin. She asked me if I had told you her story. I told her No, as you may imagine, but her penetration frightens me. She had but one thought, that was to go away, and quickly. I stayed with her until morning. She made me promise that we should start to-morrow, and only then was she quieted. After mature reflection, I decided to come and confer with you upon the subject. In my opinion, my sister is right; the best thing is to leave, and I should have taken her away to-day if an idea had not occurred to me, and stopped me. Who knows? Perhaps my sister pleases you; if so, why then should we part? So I decided, and putting aside my pride, relying upon some observations that I had made—yes—I decided to come—to come and ask you"—

Here Gaguine, disconcerted, stopped short.

"Pray excuse me—pardon—I am not accustomed to interviews of this kind."

I took his hand.

"You wish to know if your sister pleases me!" I said to him firmly. "She does please me!"

Gaguine fixed his eyes upon me. "But, in short," replied he, hesitating,—"would you marry her?"

"How can I answer that question. I make you the judge of it.—Can I do it now?"

"I know it, I know it," cried Gaguine; "no, I have no right to expect an answer from you, and the question that I have asked you is unconventional in every particular, but force of circumstances compelled me to do so. It is not safe to play with fire! You don't understand what Annouchka is. She may fall ill, or run away, or even—or even give you a rendezvous. Another would know how to conceal her feelings and wait, but she cannot. It is her first experience, that's the worst of it! If you could have seen to-day the way in which she sobbed at my feet, you would share my fears."

I began to reflect. The words of Gaguine, "Give you a rendezvous," oppressed my heart. It seemed shameful to me not to answer his honest frankness by a loyal confession.

"Yes!" I at length said to him, "you are right. I received, about an hour ago, a letter from your sister; there it is." He took it, ran through it rapidly, and again let his hands fall upon his knees. The astonishment that his features expressed would have been laughable, if I could have laughed at that moment.

"You are a man of honor," he said. "I am not the less embarrassed to know what to do. How! She asks me to fly, and in this letter she reproaches herself for her imprudence! But when, then, did she have the time to write to you? and what are her intentions in regard to you?"

I reassured him, and we applied ourselves, with as much coolness as was possible, to

discuss what we should do. This is the plan which we finally determined upon to prevent all unhappiness. It was agreed that I should go to the rendezvous and speak plainly with Annouchka. Gaguine promised to remain at home, without showing that he had read the letter; and it was decided, moreover, that we should meet in the evening.

"I have full confidence in you," he said, pressing my hand; "have consideration for her and for me; but, nevertheless, we will leave to-morrow," added he, rising, "since it is settled that you will not marry her."

"Give me until this evening," I replied.

"So be it! you will not marry her!"

He took his departure; I threw myself upon the divan and closed my eyes. I was dazed; too many thoughts at once crowded into my brain. I was angry with Gaguine for his frankness; I was angry with Annouchka: her love filled me with joy—and yet I was afraid of it.

I could not account for her having made a full confession to her brother. That which above all caused me great pain was the absolute necessity of making a sudden and almost instantaneous decision.

"Marry a girl of seventeen, with a disposition like that; it is impossible!" I cried, rising.

XV.

At the hour agreed upon I crossed the Rhine, and the first person I met on the bank was the same little boy who had found me in the morning. He seemed to be waiting for me. "From Mademoiselle Anna," he said to me, in a low voice, and he gave me another note.

Annouchka announced to me that she had changed the place of the rendezvous. She

told me to meet her in an hour and a half—not at the chapel, but at Dame Louise's; I was to knock at the door, enter, and go up three flights.

"Again Yes?" asked the little boy.

"Yes," I replied, and walked along the river bank. I had not time enough to return to my house, and did not wish to wander about the streets.

Behind the walls of the town stretched a little garden, with a bowling-alley covered with a roof, and some tables for beer-drinkers. I entered it.

Several middle-aged Germans were bowling; the balls rolled noisily along; exclamations could be heard from time to time. A pretty little waiting-maid, her eyes swollen from crying, brought me a jug of beer; I looked her in the face, she turned away bruskly and withdrew.

"Yes, yes!" muttered a stout German with very red cheeks, who was seated near me; "our Hannchen is in great distress to-day; her sweetheart is drawn in the conscription." I looked at her at this moment; retiring into a corner, she was resting her cheek upon her hand, and great tears slowly rolled between her fingers. Some one asked for beer; she brought him a jug, and went back to her place. This grief reacted upon me, and I began to think of my rendezvous with sadness and uneasiness.

It was not with a light heart that I was going to this interview. I must not give myself up to the joys of a reciprocal love. Must keep to my word, fulfil a difficult duty. "It is not safe to play with fire." This expression, which Gaguine had used in speaking of his sister, pierced me like a sharp arrow to the bottom of my soul. Yet three days before, in that boat carried along by the stream, was I not tormented by a thirst for happiness? Now I could satisfy it, and I hesitated. I thrust back this happiness; it was my duty to do so; the unforeseen something which it presented frightened me. Annouchka herself, with her impulsive nature, her education, this girl strange and full of fascination, I confess it, frightened me.

I struggled a long time with these feelings. The moment fixed upon approached. "I can not marry her," at last I said to myself; "she will not know that I have loved her."

I arose, put a thaler into poor Hannchen's hand (she did not even thank me), and proceeded towards the house of Dame Louise.

The shades of night were already in the air, and above the dark street stretched a narrow band of sky, reddened by the setting sun. I gently tapped at the door; it was immediately opened.

I crossed the threshold and found myself in complete darkness.

"This way," said a cracked voice, "you are expected."

I groped along in the dark a few steps; a bony hand seized mine.

"Is it you, Dame Louise?" I asked.

"Yes!" answered the same voice, "it is I, my fine young man."

The old woman took me up a very steep staircase, and stopped upon the landing of the third story. I recognized then, by the faint glimmer from a little garret window, the wrinkled face of the burgomaster's widow. A sly and mawkish smile half opened her toothless mouth, and made her dull eyes glitter. She pointed out a door. I opened it with a convulsive movement, and slammed it after me.

XVI.

The little room in which I found myself was quite dark, and it was some moments before I saw Annouchka. She was seated near the window, enveloped in a large shawl, her head turned away and almost concealed, like a startled bird. I felt a deep pity for her. I approached; she turned away her head still more.

"Anna Nicolaëvna!" I said to her. She turned quickly and tried to fasten her look upon mine, but had not the strength. I took her hand; it was like a dead person's, motionless and cold in mine.

"I would like," said she, attempting to smile, but her pale lips would not allow of it; "I would like—no, impossible," she murmured. She was silent; indeed, her voice grew fainter at every word.

I sat down by her.

"Anna Nicolaëvna!" I said again, and, in my turn, I could say nothing more. There was a long silence. Retaining her hand in mine, I gazed at her. Sinking down, she breathed quickly, biting her lower lip, in order to keep back the tears which were ready to flow. I continued to gaze at her; there was in her motionless and timorous attitude an expression of weakness deeply touching. It was as if she had fallen crushed upon the chair and could not stir. My heart was filled with pity.

"Annouchka!" I said in a low voice. She slowly raised her eyes to mine. O the look of a woman whose heart has just opened to love! how find words to describe it?—They beseech, those eyes! they question, they give themselves up.—I could not resist them—a subtle fire ran through my veins. I bent over her head and covered it with kisses.—Suddenly my ear was struck by a trembling sound like a stifled sob. I felt a hand which trembled like a leaf pass over my hair. I raised my head and saw her face.—What a sudden transfiguration had come over it!—Fright had disappeared; her eyes had a far-away look that seemed to ask mine to join with them; her lips were slightly apart; her forehead was as pale as marble, whilst her curls floated behind her head, as if a breath of air had blown them back!

I forgot everything. I drew her towards me. She offered no resistance. Her shawl slipped from her shoulders, her head fell and rested gently upon my breast, under the kisses of my burning lips.

"I am yours!" she murmured feebly.

Suddenly the thought of Gaguine flashed across me.

"What are we doing?" I cried, pushing her from me convulsively. "Your brother knows everything; he knows that we are here together!"

Annouchka fell back upon the chair.

"Yes," I said, rising and going away from her, "your brother knows everything! I was forced to tell him all."

"Forced?" she stammered. She seemed hardly to understand me.

"Yes, yes," I repeated harshly, "and it is your fault,—yours, yours alone! What reason had you to give up your secret? Were you forced to tell your brother everything? He came to me this morning and repeated all you had told him."

I tried not to look any more at her, and paced the room.

"Now," I replied, "all is lost,—all, absolutely all."

Annouchka attempted to rise.

"Stay!" I cried. "Stay, I beseech you; fear nothing, you have to do with a man of honor! But, for heaven's sake, speak! What has frightened you? Have I changed towards you? As to myself, when your brother came to me yesterday, I could not do otherwise than tell him what our relations were."

"Why tell her all that?" I thought to myself, and the idea that I was a cowardly deceiver, that Gaguine was aware of our rendezvous, that all was disclosed—lost beyond redemption—immediately crossed my mind.

"I did not send for my brother last night," she said, with a choking voice, "he came of himself."

"But do you see what this has led to? Now you wish to go away."

"Yes, I must go," she said, in a very low voice. "I besought you to come here to say farewell."

"And you think, perhaps, that to part from you costs me nothing?"

"But why was it necessary to confide in my brother?" replied Annouchka in a stupefied tone.

"I repeat to you, I could not do otherwise. If you had not betrayed yourself"—

"I was shut up in my room," she replied naïvely. "I did not know that the landlady had another key."

This innocent excuse at the moment put me in a rage; and now I cannot think of it without deep emotion. Poor child, what an upright and frank soul!

"So all is at an end," I replied once more; "at an end—; and we must part."

I looked at her furtively. The color mounted to her face; shame and terror—I felt it only too keenly—seized her. On my side, I walked to and fro, speaking as if in delirium.

"There was in my heart," I continued, "a feeling just springing up, which, if you had left it to time, would have developed! You have yourself broken the bond that united us; you have failed to put confidence in me."

While I spoke, Annouchka leaned forward more and more.—Suddenly she fell upon her knees, hid her face in her hands, and began to sob. I ran to her, I attempted to raise her, but she resisted obstinately.

Woman's tears thoroughly upset me. I cried out to her:—

"Anna Nicolaëvna! Annouchka,—pray, for heaven's sake,—calm yourself,—I beseech you."

And I took her hand in mine.

But at the moment when I least expected it, she suddenly arose, then, like a flash, ran towards the door and disappeared.

Dame Louise, who entered the room a few moments later, found me in the same place, as if struck by a thunderbolt.

I could not understand how this interview could have ended so abruptly, and in such a ridiculous manner, before I had expressed a hundredth part of what I had to say; before I even could foresee what the consequences of it were.

"Mademoiselle has gone?" Dame Louise asked me, raising her yellow eyebrows.

I looked at her with a stupefied air, and left.

XVII.

I passed through the town and walked straight ahead to the fields. A feeling of vexed disappointment filled my heart. I loaded myself with reproaches. Why did I not appreciate the motive that had induced this young girl to change the place of our meeting? Why did I not appreciate how hard it would be for her to go to this old woman's house? Why, finally, did I not stay away?

Alone with her in that dark, isolated room, I had had the courage to thrust her away, and to remonstrate with her; and, now her image pursued me, I asked her pardon—her pale face, her eyes timid and full of tears; her hair in disorder, flowing over her bended neck; the touch of her forehead as it rested upon my breast; all these remembrances made me beside myself, and I thought I still heard her murmuring, "I am yours!"

I reflected: I have obeyed the voice of my conscience.—But no? it was false! for, most certainly, I should never have wished in my heart for such a dénouement.—And, then, to be separated from her, to live without her, shall I have the strength?—"Fool! miserable fool that I am!" I cried angrily.

In the meantime night was approaching. I directed my hurried steps towards the dwelling of Annouchka.

XVIII.

Gaguine came out to meet me.

"Have you seen my sister?" he cried, from a distance.

"She is not at home then?" I asked him.

"No."

"Not returned?"

"No."

"No,—but I have something to confess," continued he: "in spite of the promise I made you, I couldn't help going to the chapel. I didn't find her there. Did she not go there, then?"

"No, not to the chapel."

"And you have not seen her?"

I was obliged to admit that I had seen her.

"Where then?"

"At Dame Louise's.—I left her about an hour ago; I thought she was about to return."

"We will wait for her," Gaguine said to me.

We entered the house, and I sat down beside him. We were silent; a painful constraint was on us both. On the alert for the least sound, sometimes we looked at each other stealthily, sometimes we cast our eyes upon the door.

"I can stay here no longer!" said he, rising; "she will kill me with anxiety. Come, let us look for her."

"Yes, let us do so!"

We went out; it was already night.

"Come, tell me what happened," demanded Gaguine, drawing his hat over his eyes.

"Our interview lasted but five minutes at the utmost, and I spoke to her as we agreed upon."

"Do you know," said he, "I think we had better separate. Let us look for her each on his own responsibility; that is the quicker way to find her; but in any case return to the house in an hour."

XIX.

I hastened down the path that passed through the vineyards and entered the town; after hurrying through all the streets and looking in every direction, even at Dame Louise's windows, I came back to the Rhine, and ran along the river bank. Here and there was a figure of a woman, but none of them Annouchka's. It was no longer vexation that consumed me, but a secret terror; still more it was repentance that I felt, boundless pity, finally love—yes, the deepest love. I threw my arms about; I called Annouchka; at first, as the shades of night were deepening, in a low voice, then louder and louder; I repeated a hundred times that I loved her, swearing never to leave her; I would have given all that I possessed to press once more her cold hand, to hear once more her timid voice, to see her once more before me. She had been so near me; she had come to me with such resolution, in all the frankness of her heart; she had brought me her young life, her purity,—and I did not take her in my arms; I had foregone the happiness of seeing her sweet face brighten.—The thought drove me mad!

"Where can she have gone? what could she have done?" I cried, in the impotent rage of despair.

Something whitish suddenly appeared at the edge of the water. I recognized the place. There, above the grave of a man who drowned himself seventy years before, arose a stone cross, half sunken in the ground, covered with characters almost illegible. My heart was beating as though it would break. The white figure had disappeared.

"Annouchka," I cried, in such a fierce voice, that I even frightened myself.

But no one answered; I finally decided to go and find out whether Gaguine had not found her.

XX.

Quickly going up the vineyard road, I perceived a light in Annouchka's room. This sight calmed me a little. I approached the house; the entrance door was closed. I knocked. A window that had no light opened softly in the lower story, and Gaguine thrust out his head.

"You have found her?" I asked him.

"She has returned," he answered in a low voice. "She is in her room and is going to bed. All is for the best."

"God be praised!" I cried, in a paroxysm of indescribable joy. "God be praised! Then everything is all right; but you know we have not had our talk together."

"Not now," he answered, half closing the window; "another time. In the meanwhile, farewell!"

"To-morrow," I said, "to-morrow will decide everything."

"Farewell," repeated Gaguine.

The window closed.

I was upon the point of knocking at it,—I wished to speak to Gaguine one instant longer, to ask his sister's hand,—but a proposal of marriage at such an hour! "To-morrow," I thought, "to-morrow I shall be happy."

Happiness has no to-morrow; it has no yesterday; it remembers not the past; it has no thought of the future; it knows only the present, and yet this present is not a day, but an instant.

I know not how I returned to Z.—It was not my legs that carried me, it was not a boat that took me to the other side; I was wafted along, so to speak, by strong, large wings.

I passed a thicket where a nightingale was singing. I stopped, listened a long time; it

seemed to be singing of my love and my happiness.

XXI.

The next morning, on approaching the white house, I was astonished to see the windows open, also the entrance door. Some pieces of paper were scattered about the threshold; a servant, her broom in her hand, appeared at the door. I approached her.

"They have gone!" she exclaimed, before I could ask whether Gaguine were at home.

"Gone!" I repeated; "how is that? Where have they gone?"

"They went this morning at six o'clock, and did not say where they were going. But are you not Monsieur N——?"

"Yes."

"Very well! my mistress has a letter for you."

She went upstairs, and came back with a letter in her hand.

"Here it is," said she.

"You must be mistaken, it's impossible!" I stammered.

The servant looked at me vacantly, and began to sweep.

I opened the letter; it was from Gaguine. Not a line from Annouchka!

In beginning, he begged me to forgive him for this hasty departure. He added that when I was calmer I would approve, no doubt, of his determination. It was the only means of getting out of an embarrassing position, and one that might become dangerous.

"Yesterday evening," he said to me, "while we were waiting for Annouchka in silence, I was convinced of the necessity of a separation. There are prejudices that I

respect; I can understand that you could not marry her. She has told me all, and for her sake I must yield to her urgent entreaties."

At the end of his letter he expressed regret at the breaking off of our friendly intercourse so soon; hoped that I would always be happy; pressed my hand, and begged me not to try and meet them again.

"A question of prejudices indeed!" I exclaimed, as if he could hear me. "Folly all that! What right has he to take her away from me?" I clutched my head wildly.

The servant began to scream for her mistress, and her fright brought me to my senses. I felt that I had but one object: to find them again; to find them again at any cost. To bear such a blow; to resign myself; to see things end in this way was truly beyond my strength! I learned from the landlady that they went at six o'clock to take the steamboat down the Rhine. I went to the office; they told me that they had taken places for Cologne. I returned to my house to pack up and immediately follow them.

As I passed Dame Louise's house I heard some one call me. I raised my head and perceived the burgomaster's widow at the window of the room where the previous evening I had seen Annouchka. Upon her lips hovered that disagreeable smile that I had noticed before. She beckoned to me. I turned away, and was about to go on, but she called out that she had something to give me. These words stopped me, and I entered the house. How can I express to you my emotion, when I found myself again in that little room.

"To tell the truth," began the old woman, showing me a note, "I should only have given you this if you had come to my house of your own accord; but you are such a fine young man—there!"

I took the note; I read upon a little piece of paper the following lines, traced in haste with a pencil:—

"Farewell! we shall see each other no more. It is not through pride that I go away; I cannot do otherwise. Yesterday, when I wept before you, if you had said to me but

one word, a single word, I would have remained. You did not say it.—Who knows? Perhaps it is for the best that it is so. Farewell forever!"

She had expected but "one word!" Fool that I was! That word I said the previous evening again and again with many tears; I threw it to the wind; I cried it out in the midst of lonely fields: but I did not say it to her; I did not tell her that I loved her! Yes, it was then impossible for me to pronounce that word. In this fatal room, where I found myself face to face with her, I was not yet fully conscious of my love; it did not awaken even then, when in a dull and gloomy silence I stood near her brother,—it only burst forth, sudden and irresistible, a few moments after, when, terrified by the thought of a misfortune, I began to seek her, calling aloud; but then already it was too late!—It is impossible, they will tell me;—I know not if it is impossible, but I know that it was so. Annouchka would not have gone if she had had the least coquetry, if she had not found herself in an essentially false position. An uncertain position that any other woman would have accepted she found intolerable. This did not occur to me. My evil genius, then, at my last interview with Gaguine, under his dark window, had checked that confession which was upon my lips, and thus the last thread that I could have seized had broken in my hands.

I returned the same day to L. with my traps, and started for Cologne. I often remember that at the moment when the steamboat left the shore, and when I said farewell to all those streets, to all those places that I should never forget, I perceived Hannchen, the little servant-maid.

She was seated upon a bench near the river bank: though yet pale, her face was no longer sorrowful. A handsome young fellow was by her side and laughing with her, whilst at the other side of the Rhine my little Madonna, concealed in the dark foliage of the old ash, followed me sadly with her glance.

XXII.

At Cologne I again came upon the track of Gaguine and his sister. I learned that they had gone to London. I immediately went to that city; all researches that I made there were in vain. For a long time I did not allow myself to be discouraged; for a long time I showed obstinate persistence, but finally was obliged to give up all hope of meeting them again.

I never saw them again! I never again saw Annouchka!—Later I heard some quite vague rumors of her brother; but as to her I have never heard her spoken of; I do not even know if she still lives.

Some years ago, while travelling, I caught sight for an instant, at the door of a railway-carriage, of a woman whose face had a little resemblance to those features that I shall never forget; but this resemblance was doubtless the result of chance. Annouchka lived in my memory as the young girl whom I saw at our last interview, pale and trembling, leaning upon the back of a wooden chair in the dark corner of a lonely room.

Besides, I must confess that the course of my grief was not of long duration. Soon I persuaded myself that fate had been favorable to me in preventing my marriage with her, and that a woman with such a disposition would certainly not make me happy. I was still young at this period, and that time so short and limited that they call the future appeared to me infinite. "That which has happened once to me upon my travels," I said to myself, "can I not meet it again, more charming and more delightful?" Since then I have known other women; but that feeling so tender that Annouchka had once awakened was never again aroused. No—no glance has ever replaced the glance of those eyes fastened upon mine; I have never again clasped to my breast a heart to whose throbbing mine has responded with an ecstacy so joyful. Condemned to the solitary existence of a wandering man, without a home, I regard those days the saddest of my life; but I still preserve as a relic two little notes and a withered sprig of geranium that she once threw me from the window; it breathes

even now a slight fragrance, whilst the hand that gave it to me, that hand that I pressed upon my lips only once, has, perhaps, long since returned to dust. And I, what have I become? What is there left in me of the man of former days, of the restlessness of youth, of my plans, of my ambitious hopes?—Thus the slight perfume of a blade of grass outlives all joys, all human griefs,—outlives even man himself.

[1] Verse from Romance of Glinker.

[2] Diminutives of Mary and Catherine.

[3] National Russian air.

[4] Poem of Pouchkina.

[5] Instead of "mère," the Russian text says "nourrice."

[6] Heroine of the poem.

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