Oblomov

by Ivan Goncharov

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By Ivan Goncharov

Translated From The Russian By C. J. Hogarth

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OBLOMOV

PART I

I

One morning, in a flat in one of the great buildings in Gorokliovaia Street, * the population of which was sufficient to constitute that of a provincial town, there was lying in bed a gentleman named Ilya Ilyitch Oblomov. He was a fellow of a little over thirty, of medium height, and of pleasant exterior. Unfortunately, in his dark-grey eyes there was an absence of any definite idea, and in his other features a total lack of concentration. Suddenly a thought would wander across his face with the freedom of a bird, flutter for a moment in his eyes, settle on his half-opened lips, and remain momentarily lurking in the lines of his forehead. Then it would disappear, and once more his face would glow with a radiant insouciance which extended even to his attitude and the folds of his night-robe. At other times his glance would darken as with weariness or ennui. Yet neither the one nor the other expression could altogether banish from his countenance that gentleness which was the ruling, the fundamental, characteristic, not only of his features, but also of the spirit which lay beneath them. That spirit shone in his eyes, in his smile, and in his every movement of hand and head. On glancing casually at Oblomov a cold, a

superficially observant person would have said, “Evidently he is good-natured, but a simpleton;” whereas a person of greater penetration and sympathy than the first would have prolonged his glance, and then gone on his way thoughtfully, and with a smile as though he were pleased with something.

* One of the principal streets of Petrograd.

Oblomov’s face was neither reddy nor dull nor pale, but of an indefinite hue. At all events, that was the impression which it gave—possibly because, through insufficiency of exercise, or through want of fresh air, or through a lack of both, he was wrinkled beyond his years. In general, to judge from the extreme whiteness of his bare neck, his small, puffy hands, and his soft shoulders, one would conclude that he possessed an effeminate body. Even when excited, his actions were governed by an unvarying gentleness, added to a lassitude that was not devoid of a certain peculiar grace. On the other hand, should depression of spirits show itself in his face, His glance would grow dull, and his brow furrowed, as doubt, despondency, and apprehension fell to contending with one another. Yet this crisis of emotion seldom crystallized into the form of a definite idea—still less into that of a fixed resolve. Almost always such emotion evaporated in a sigh, and shaded off into a sort of apathetic lethargy.

Oblomov’s indoor costume corresponded exactly with the quiet outlines of his face and the effeminacy of his form. The costume in question consisted of a dressing-gown of some Persian material—a real Eastern dressing-gown—a garment that was devoid both of tassels and velvet facings and a waist, yet so roomy that Oblomov might have wrapped himself in it once or twice over. Also, in accordance with the immutable custom of Asia, its sleeves widened steadily from knuckles to shoulder. True, it was a dressing-gown which had lost its pristine freshness, and had, in places, exchanged its natural, original sheen for one acquired by hard wear; yet still it retained both the clarity of its Oriental colouring and the soundness of its

texture. In Oblomov's eyes It was a garment possessed of a myriad invaluable qualities, for it was so soft and pliable that, when wearing it, the body was unaware of its presence, and, like an obedient slave, it answered even to the slightest movement. Neither waistcoat nor cravat did Oblomov wear when indoors, since he loved freedom and space. For the same reason his slippers were long, soft, and broad, to the end that, whenever he lowered his legs from the bed to the floor without looking at what he was doing, his feet might fit into the slippers at once.

With Oblomov, lying in bed was neither a necessity (as in the case of an invalid or of a man who stands badly in need of sleep) nor an accident (as in the case of a man who is feeling worn out) nor a gratification (as in the case of a man who is purely lazy). Rather, it represented his normal condition. Whenever he was at home—and almost always he was at home—he would spend his time in lying on his back. Likewise he used but the one room—which was combined to serve both as bedroom, as study, and as reception-room—in which we have just discovered him. True, two other rooms lay at his disposal, but seldom did he look into them save on mornings (which did not comprise by any means every morning) when his old valet happened to be sweeping out the study. The furniture in them stood perennially covered over, and never were the blinds drawn up.

At first sight the room in which Oblomov was lying was a well-fitted one. In it there stood a writing-table of redwood, a couple of sofas, upholstered in some silken material, and a handsome screen that was embroidered with birds and fruits unknown to Nature.

Also the room contained silken curtains, a few mats, some pictures, bronzes, and pieces of china, and a multitude of other pretty trifles. Yet even the most cursory glance from the experienced eye of a man of taste would have detected no more than a tendency to observe les convenances while escaping their actual observance. Without doubt that was all that Oblomov had thought of when furnishing his study.

Taste of a really refined nature would never have remained satisfied with such ponderous, ungainly redwood chairs, with such rickety whatnots. Moreover, the back of one of the sofas had sagged, and, here and there, the wood had come away from the glue. Much the same thing was to be seen in the case of the pictures, the vases, and certain other trifles of the apartment. Nevertheless, its master was accustomed to regard its appurtenances with the cold, detached eye of one who would ask, “Who has dared to bring this stuff here?” The same indifference on his part, added to, perhaps, an even greater indifference on the part of his servant, Zakhar, caused the study, when contemplated with attention, to strike the beholder with an impression of all-prevailing carelessness and neglect. On the walls and around the pictures there hung cobwebs coated with dust; the mirrors, instead of reflecting, would more usefully have served as tablets for recording memoranda; every mat was freely spotted with stains; on the sofa there lay a forgotten towel, and on the table (as on most mornings) a plate, a salt-cellar, a half-eaten crust of bread, and some scattered crumbs—all of which had failed to be cleared away after last night’s supper. Indeed, were it not for the plate, for a recently smoked pipe that was propped against the bed, and for the recumbent form of Oblomov himself, one might have imagined that the place contained not a single living soul, so dusty and discoloured did everything look, and so lacking were any active traces of the presence of a human being. True, on the whatnots there were two or three open books, while a newspaper was tossing about, and the bureau bore on its top an inkstand and a few pens; but the pages at which the books were lying open were covered with dust and beginning to turn yellow (thus proving that they had long been tossed aside), the date of the newspaper belonged to the previous year, and from the inkstand, whenever a pen happened to be dipped therein, there arose, with a frightened buzz, only a derelict fly.

On this particular morning Oblomov had (contrary to his usual custom) awakened at the early hour of eight. Somehow he looked perturbed; anxiety, regret, and vexation

kept chasing one another across his features. Evidently he had fallen a prey to some inward struggle, and had not yet been able to summon his wits to the rescue. The fact of the matter was that, overnight, he had received from the starosta * of his country estate an exceedingly unpleasant letter. We all know what disagreeable things a starosta can say in his letters—how he can tell of bad harvests, of arrears of debt, of diminished incomes, and so forth; and though this particular official had been inditing precisely similar epistles during the past three years, his latest communication had affected its recipient as powerfully as though Oblomov had received an unlooked-for blow. Yet, to do Oblomov justice, he had always bestowed a certain care upon his affairs. Indeed, no sooner had he received the starosta's first disturbing letter (he had done so three years ago) than he had set about devising a plan for changing and improving the administration of his property. Yet to this day the plan in question remained not fully thought out, although long ago he had recognized the necessity of doing something actually decisive.

* Overseer or steward.

Consequently, on awakening, he resolved to rise, to perform his ablutions, and his tea consumed, to consider matters, to jot down a few notes, and, in general, to tackle the affair properly. Yet for another halfhour he lay prone under the torture of this resolve; until eventually he decided that such tackling could best be done after tea, and that, as usual, he would drink that tea in bed—the more so since a recumbent position could not prove a hindrance to thought.

Therefore he did as he had decided; and when the tea had been consumed he raised himself upon his elbow and arrived within an ace of getting out of bed. In fact, glancing at his slippers, he even began to extend a foot in their direction, but presently withdrew it.

Half-past ten struck, and Oblomov gave himself a shake. "What is the matter?" he said vexedly. "In all conscience 'tis time that I were doing something! Would I

could make up my mind to—to———” He broke off with a shout of “Zakhar!” whereupon there entered an elderly man in a grey suit and brass buttons—a man who sported beneath a perfectly bald pate a pair of long, bushy, grizzled whiskers that would have sufficed to fit out three ordinary men with beards. His clothes, it is true, were cut according to a country pattern, but he cherished them as a faint reminder of his former livery, as the one surviving token of the dignity of the house of Oblomov. The house of Oblomov was one which had once been wealthy and distinguished, but which, of late years, had undergone impoverishment and diminution, until finally it had become lost among a crowd of noble houses of more recent creation.

For a few moments Oblomov remained too plunged in thought to notice Zakhar’s presence; but at length the valet coughed.

“What do you want?” Oblomov inquired.

“You called me just now, barin?” *

* “Master” or “sir”

“I called you, you say? Well, I cannot remember why I did so. Return to your room until I have remembered.”

Zakliar retired, and Oblomov spent another quarter of an hour in thinking over the accursed letter.

“I have lain here long enough,” at last he said to himself. “Really, I must rise.... But suppose I were to read the letter through carefully and then to rise? Zakhar!”

Zakhar re-entered, and Oblomov straightway sank into a reverie. For a minute or two the valet stood eyeing his master with covert resentment. Then he moved towards the door.

“Why are you going away?” Oblomov asked suddenly.

“Because, barin, you have nothing to say to me. Why should I stand here for

nothing?”

“What? Have your legs become so shrunken that you cannot stand for a moment or two? I am worried about something, so you must wait. You have just been lying down in your room, haven’t you? Please search for the letter which arrived from the starosta last night. What have you done with it?”

“What letter? I have seen no letter,” asserted Zakhar.

“But you took it from the postman yourself?”

“Maybe I did, but how am I to know where you have since placed it?” The valet fussed about among the papers and other things on the table.

“You never know anything,” remarked his master. “Look in that basket there. Or possibly the letter has fallen behind the sofa? By the way, the back of that sofa has not yet been mended. Tell the joiner to come at once. It was you that broke the thing, yet you never give it a thought!”

“I did not break it,” retorted Zakhar. “It broke of itself. It couldn’t have lasted for ever. It was bound to crack some day.” This was a point which Oblomov did not care to contest. “Have you found the letter yet?” he asked.

“Yes—several letters.”

“But they are not what I want.”

“I can see no others,” asserted Zakhar.

“Very well,” was Oblomov’s impatient reply. “I will get up and search for the letter myself.”

Zakhar retired to his room again, but had scarcely rested his hands against his pallet before stretching himself out, when once more there came a peremptory shout of “Zakhar! Zakhar!”

“Good Lord!” grumbled the valet as a third time he made for the study. “Why should I be tormented in this fashion? I would rather be dead!”

“My handkerchief!” cried Oblomov. “Yes, and very quickly, too! You might have guessed that that is what I am wanting.”

Zakhar displayed no particular surprise or offence at this reproachful command. Probably he thought both the command and the reproach natural.

“Who knows where the handkerchief is?” he muttered as he made a tour of the room and felt each chair (although he could not but have perceived that on them there was nothing whatsoever lying). “You lose everything,” he added, opening the door into the parlour in order to see whether the handkerchief might not be lurking there.

“Where are you going?” exclaimed Oblomov. “’Tis here you must search. I have not been into those other rooms since the year before last. Be quick, will you?”

“I see no handkerchief,” said Zakhar, spreading out his hands and peering into every corner. “There it is!” suddenly he croaked. “’Tis just underneath you. I can see its end sticking out. You have been lying on it all the time, yet you actually ask me to find it!” He hobbled away without waiting for an answer. For a moment or two Oblomov was taken aback, but soon found another means of putting his valet in the wrong.

“A nice way to do your cleaning!” he said. “What a lot of dust and dirt, to be sure! Look at those corners! You never bestir yourself at all.”

“If I never bestir myself,” retorted Zakhar offendedly, “at least I do my best, and don’t spare myself, for I dust and sweep almost every day. Everything looks clean and bright enough for a wedding.”

“What a lie!” cried Oblomov. “Be off to your room again!”

That he had provoked Zakhar to engage in this conversation was a fact which gave him small pleasure. The truth was he had forgotten that, once a delicate subject is touched upon, one cannot well avoid a fuss. Though he wished his rooms to be kept clean, he wished this task to be carried out invisibly, and apart from himself; whereas, whenever Zakhar was called upon to do even the least sweeping or dusting,

he made a grievance of it.

After Zakhar had retired to his den Oblomov relapsed into thought, until, a few minutes later, the clock sounded a halfhour of some sort.

“What is that?” cried Oblomov in horror. “Soon the time will be eleven, yet I am not yet up and washed! Zakhar! Zakhar!”

Zakhar reappeared.

“Are my washing things ready?” his master inquired.

“Yes, they have been ready a long time. Why do you not get up?”

“And why didn’t you tell me that the things are ready? Had you done that, I should have risen long ago. Go along, and I will follow you; but at the moment I must sit down and write a letter.”

Zakhar left the room. Presently he reappeared with a much-bescribbled, greasy account-book and a bundle of papers.

“If you are going to write anything,” he said, “perhaps you would like to check these accounts at the same time? Some money is due to be paid out.”

“What accounts? What money?” inquired Oblomov petulantly.

“The accounts sent in by the butcher, the greengrocer, the laundress, and the baker. All are wanting their money.”

“Always money and worry!” grumbled Oblomov. “Why do you not give me the accounts at intervals instead of in a batch like this?”

“Because each time you have sent me away, and then put matters off until the morrow.”

“Well, these accounts can wait until the morrow.”

“No, they cannot, for the creditors are pressing, and say they are going to allow you nothing more on credit. To-day is the first of the month, you must remember.”

“Ah! Fresh cares, fresh worries!” cried Oblomov gloomily. “Why are you standing there? Lay the table, and I will rise, wash, and look into the whole business. Is the water yet ready?”

“Quite.”

Oblomov raised himself and grunted as though he really intended to get out of bed.

“By the way,” said Zakhar, “whilst you were still asleep the manager of the building sent the dvornik * to say that soon you must quit the flat, since he wants it for some one else.”

* Porter or doorkeeper.

“Very well, then. We must go. Why worry me about it? This is the third time you have done so.”

“But they keep worrying me about it.”

“Then tell them that we intend to go.”

Zakhar departed again, and Oblomov resumed his reverie. How long he would have remained in this state of indecision it is impossible to say had not a ring at the doorbell resounded through the hall.

“Some one has called, yet I am not yet up!” exclaimed Oblomov as he slipped into his dressing-gown. “Who can it be?”

Lying down again, he gazed furiously towards the door.

II

T here entered a young fellow of about twenty-five. Beaming with health and irreproachably dressed to a degree which dazzled the eye with its immaculateness of linen and gorgeousness of jewellery, he was a figure calculated to excite envy.

“Good morning, Volkov!” cried Oblomov.

“And good morning to you,” returned the radiant gentleman, approaching the bed and looking about him for a spot whereon to deposit a hat. However, perceiving only dust, he retained his headgear in his hand. Next he drew aside the skirts of his coat (preparatory to sitting down), but a hasty inspection of the nearest chair convinced him that he had far better remain standing.

“So you are not yet up?” he went on. “And why on earth are you wearing a nightshirt? They have quite gone out of fashion.”

“’Tis not a nightshirt, it is a dressinggown,” said Oblomov, nestling lovingly into the ample folds of the garment. “Where are you from?”

“From the tailor’s. Do you think this frock-coat a nice one?” And he turned himself round and round for Oblomov’s inspection.

“Splendid! Made with excellent taste!” was the verdict. “Only why is it so broad behind?”

“The better to ride in it. It is a riding-coat. I ordered it for to-day for the reason that this is the first of May and I am to go to the Ekaterinhov * with Gorunov. He has just got his promotion, and we intend to cut a dash on the strength of it. He has a roan horse—all the horses in his regiment are roans—and I a black. How are you going-in a carriage or on foot?”

“By neither method,” replied Oblomov.

“What? To-day is the first of May, and you are not going to the Ekaterinhov? Why, every one will be there!”

“Not quite every one,” Oblomov lazily remarked.

“You must go, though. Sophia Nikolaevna and Lydia will be occupying two of the seats in our carriage, but the seat facing them will be vacant. Come with us, I tell you.”

“No, I do not intend to occupy the vacant seat. What sort of a figure should I cut on

it?”

“Then, if you like, Mischa Gorunov shall lend you a horse.”

“Of what is the fellow thinking?” said Oblomov as though to himself. “How come you and the Gorunov family to be so friendly with one another?”

“Give me your word of honour not to repeat what I may tell you, and I will explain.”

“Herewith I give it.”

“Very well. I am in love with Lydia.”

“Splendid! Have you been in love with her long? She seems a charming girl.”

“I have been in love with her for three weeks,” said Volkov, with a sigh. “And Mischa, for his part, is in love with Dashenka.”

“Who is Dashenka?”

“What! You do not know Dashenka? Why, the whole town is raving over her dancing. To-night I am going to the Opera with Mischa, and he is to throw her a bouquet. Well, I must be off to buy the necessary camelias for it.”

“Come back, then, and take lunch with me. I should like to have a talk with you, for I have just experienced two misfortunes.”

“Impossible, I fear, for I am lunching with Prince Tiumenev. All the Gorunova—yes, and Lydia, too—are to be there. What a cheerful house it is! And so is Tiumenev’s country place. I have heard that it is to be the scene of numberless dances and tableaux this summer. Are you likely to be one of the guests?”

“No—I think not.”

“What hospitality the Prince dispenses! This winter his guests averaged fifty, and sometimes a hundred.”

“How wearisome the whole thing must have been!”

“What! Wearisome? Why, the more the merrier. Lydia, too, used to be

there—though in those days I never so much as noticed her. In fact, never once did I do so until one day I found myself ‘vainly trying to forget her, vainly pitting reason in the lists with love.’” Volkov hummed the concluding words, and seated himself carelessly upon a chair. Almost instantly he leaped to his feet again, and blushed the dust from his trousers.

“What quantities of dirt you keep everywhere!” he remarked.“’tis Zakhar’s fault, not mine,” replied Oblomov.

“Well, now I must be off, as it is absolutely necessary that I should buy those camelias for Mischa’s bouquet. Au revoir!”

“Come and have tea after the opera, and tell me all about it.”

“No, that is impossible, for I am promised to supper at the Musinskis’. It is their reception day, you know. However, meet me there, and I’ll present you.”

“What is toward at the Musinskis’?”

“What, indeed? Why, entertainment in a house where you hear all the news.”

“Like everything else, it would bore me.”

“Then go and call upon the Mezdrovs, where the talk centres upon one topic, and one topic alone—the arts. Of nothing else will you hear but the Venetian School. Beethoven, Bach, Leonardo da Vinci, and so forth.”

“All of them boring subjects!” said Oblomov with a yawn. “What a lot of pedants the Mezdrovs must be! Do you never get tired of running about from house to house?”

“Tired? Why should I? Every morning I like to go out and learn the news, thank God, my official duties never require my actual presence, save twice a week, when they consist of lunching with and doing the civil to the General. * After that I proceed to call upon any people upon whom I have not called for a long while. Next there will be some new actress—whether at the Russian theatre or at the French.

Besides, always there is the Opera, to which I am a subscriber. Furthermore, I am in love, and Mischa is about to enjoy a month's leave from his regiment, and the summer is on the point of beginning, and Mischa and I intend to retire to his country house for a change of air. We shall have plenty of sport there, since he possesses excellent neighbours and they give bals champêtres. Also I shall be able to escort Lydia for walks through the woods, and to row her about in a boat, and to pluck flowers for her benefit. At the present moment I must leave you. Good-bye!"

* In this case the term "General" denotes a civil grade corresponding to the military rank of the same title.

Rising, he endeavoured to look at himself in a dust-coated mirror; after which he departed—though returning once more to show his friend the newest thing in Parisian gloves and an Easter card which Prince Tiumenev had recently sent him.

"What a life!" thought Oblomov, with a shrug of his shoulders. "What good can a man get out of it? It is merely a squandering and a wasting of his all. Of course, an occasional look into a theatre is not a bad thing, nor is being in love—for Lydia is a delightful girl, and pursuits like plucking flowers with her and rowing her about in a boat even I should enjoy; but to have to be in ten different places every day, as Volkov has——!"

He turned over on his back and congratulated himself that he at least cherished no vain social aspirations. 'Twas better to lie where he was and to preserve both his nerves and his human dignity....

Another ring at the doorbell interrupted his reflections. This time the visitor turned out to be a gentleman in a dark frock-coat with crested buttons whose most prominent features were a clean-shaven chin, a pair of black whiskers around a haggard (but quiet and sensible) face, and a thoughtful smile.

"Good day, Sudbinski!" cried Oblomov cheerfully.

"Good day to you," replied the gentleman. "'Tis a long time since I last saw you, but

you know what this devilish Civil Service means. Look at that bagful of reports which I have brought with me! And not only that, but I have had to leave word at the office that a messenger will find me here should I be wanted. Never do I get a single moment to myself."

"So you were on the way to your office? How come you to be going so late? Your usual hour used to be nine."

"Yes, it used to be nine, but now I go at twelve."

"Ah, I see: you have recently been made the head of a department. Since when?"

"Since Easter," replied Sudbinski, with a meaning nod. "But what a lot of work! It is terrible! From eight to twelve in the morning I am slaving at home; from twelve to five at the Chancellory; and all the evening at home again. I have quite lost touch with my acquaintances."

"Come and lunch with me to-day, and we will drink to your promotion," said Oblomov.

"No, to-day I am lunching with the Vice-Director, as well as have a report to prepare by Thursday. You see, one cannot rely upon provincial advices, but must verify every return personally. Are you going to the Ekaterinhov to-day?"

"No, for I am not very well," replied Oblomov, knitting his brows. "Moreover, like yourself, I have some work to do."

"I am very sorry," said Sudbinski; "for it is a fine day, and the only day on which I myself can hope for a little rest."

"And what news have you?" asked Oblomov.

"Oh, a good deal-of a sort. We are required no longer to write at the end of our official letters 'Your humble servant,' but merely 'Accept the assurance of my profound respect.' Also we have been told that we are to cease to make out formal documents in duplicate. Likewise, our office has just been allotted three new tables

and a couple of confidential clerks. Lastly, the Commission has now concluded its sittings. There's a budget of news for you!"

"And what of our old comrades?"

"Nothing at present, except that Svinkin has lost his case."

"And to think that you work from eight to twelve, and from twelve to five, and again in the evening! Dear, dear!"

"Well, what should I do if I were not in the Service?" asked Sudbinski.

"You would just read and write on your own account."

"But it is not given to every one to be a littérateur. For example, you yourself write nothing."

"No, for I have some property on my hands," said Oblomov with a sigh. "But I am working out a new system for it; I am going to introduce reforms of various kinds. The affair worries me terribly."

"Well, for my part, I must work, in order to make a little money. Besides, I am to be married this coming autumn."

"Indeed! And to whom?"

"To Mademoiselle Murashina. Do you remember their country villa, next to mine? I think you came to tea with me and met her there?"

"No, I have no recollection of it. Is she pretty?"

"Yes, charming. Suppose, one day, we go to lunch with her?"

Oblomov hesitated. "Very well," he said after a pause; "only——"

"What about next week?"

"Certainly. Next week let it be. But at the moment I have no suitable clothes. Is your fiancêe a financial catch?"

"Yes, for her father is a State councillor, and intends to give her ten thousand

roubles, as well as to let us have half his official house (a house of twelve rooms—the whole being furnished, heated, and lighted at the public expense); so we ought to do very well. Herewith I invite you to be my best man at the wedding."

Once more the doorbell rang.

"Good-bye," said Sudbinski. "I am annoyed that, as I surmise, I should be wanted at the office."

"Then stay where you are," urged Oblomov. "I desire your advice, for two misfortunes have just befallen me."

"No, no; I had better come and see you another day." And Sudbinski took his leave.

"Plunged up to the ears in work, good 'friend!" thought Oblomov as he watched him depart. "Yes, and blind and deaf and dumb to everything else in the world! Yet by going into society and at the same time, busying yourself about your affairs you will yet__win distinction, and promotion. Such is what they call 'a career'! Yet of how little use is a man like that! His intellect, his will, his feelings—what do they avail him? So many luxuries is what they are—nothing more. Such an individual lives out his little span without achieving a single thing worth mentioning; and meanwhile he works in an office from morning till night—yes, from morning till night, poor wretch!"

Certainly a modicum of quiet satisfaction was to be derived from the thought that from nine o'clock until three, and from eight o'clock until nine on the following day, he, Oblomov, could remain lying prone on a sofa instead of having to trot about with reports and to inscribe multitudes of documents. Yes, he preferred, rather, leisure for the indulgence of his feelings and imagination. Plunged in a philosophical reverie, he overlooked the fact that by his bedside there was standing a man whose lean, dark face was almost covered with a pair of whiskers, a moustache, and an imperial. Also the new-comer's dress was studied in its negligence.

"Good morning, Oblomov," he said.

“Good morning, Penkin,” was the response. “I should like to show you a letter which I have just received from my starnsta. Whence have you sprung?”

“From the newsagent’s, near by. I went to see if the papers are yet out. Have you read my latest article?”

“No.”

“Then you ought to do so.”

“What is it about?” Oblomov asked with a faint yawn.

“About trade, about the emancipation of women, about the beautiful April days with which we have been favoured, and about the newly formed fire-brigade. How come you not to have read that article? In it you will see portrayed the whole of our daily life. Over and above anything else, you will read therein an argument in favour of the present realistic: tendency in literature.”

“And have you no other work on hand?” inquired Oblomov.

“Yes, a good deal. I write two newspaper articles a week, besides reviewing a number of books. In addition, I have just finished a tale of my own.”

“What is it about?”

“It tells how, in a certain town, the governor used to beat the citizens with his own hand.”

“The realistic tendency, right enough!” commented Oblomov.

“Quite so,” said the delighted littérateur. “In my tale (which is novel and daring in its idea) a traveller witnesses a beating of this kind, seeks an interview with the governor of the province, and lays before him a complaint. At once the said governor of the province orders an official who happens to be proceeding to that town for the purpose of conducting another investigation to inquire also into the truth of the complaint just laid, and likewise to collect evidence as to the character and behaviour of the local administrator. The official in question calls together the

local citizens, on the pretext of a trade conference, and incidentally sounds them concerning the other matter. And what do you suppose they do? They merely smile, present their compliments, and load the governor of the town with praises! Thereafter the official makes extraneous inquiries, and is informed that the said citizens are rogues who trade in rotten merchandise, give underweight, cheat the Treasury, and indulge in wholesale immorality; wherefore the beatings have been a just retribution."

"Then you intend the assaults committed by the governor to figure in the story as the fatum of the old tragedians?"

"Quite so," said Penkin. "You have great quickness of apprehension, and ought yourself to tackle the writing of stories. Yes, it has always been my idea to expose the arbitrariness of our local governors, the decline of morality among the masses, the faulty organization existing among our subordinate officials, and the necessity of drastic, but legal, measures to counterbalance these evils. 'Tis a novel idea for a story, is it not?"

"Certainly; and to me who read so little a peculiarly novel one."

"True, I have never once seen you with a book in your hand. Nevertheless, I beseech you to read a poem which, I may say, is shortly to appear. It is called 'The Love of a Blackmailer for a Fallen Woman.' the identity ol the author I am not at liberty to disclose—at all events yet."

"Pray give me an idea of this poem."

"It exposes, as you will see, the whole mechanism of the social movement—but a mechanism that is painted only in poetic colours. Each spring of that engine is touched upon, and each degree of the social scale held up to the light. We see summoned to the bar, as it were, a weak, but vicious, lord, with a swarm of blackmailers who are engaged in cheating him. Also various categories of fallen women are dissected—French women, German women, and others; the whole being

done with vivid and striking verisimilitude. Certain extracts from the poem have come to my ears, and I may say that the author is a great man—one hears in him the notes both of Dante and of Shakespeare."

"And whence has he originated?" asked Oblomov, leaning forward in astonishment; but Penkin, perceiving that he had now said too much, merely repeated that Oblomov must read the poem, and judge for himself. This Oblomov declined to do.

"Why?" asked Penkin. "The thing will make a great stir and be much talked about."

"Very well: let people talk. 'Tis all some folks have to do. 'Tis their métier."

"Nevertheless, read it yourself, for curiosity's sake."

"What have I not seen in books!" commented the other. "Surely folk must write such things merely to amuse themselves?"

"Yes; even as I do. At the same time, what truth, what verisimilitude, do you not find in books! How powerfully some of them move one through the vivid portraiture which they contain! Whomsoever these authors take—a tchinovnik, * an officer, or a blackmailer—they paint them as living creatures."

* Government official.

"But what have those authors to worry about, seeing that if, as you say, one chooses to take a given model for amusement's sake, the picture is sure to succeed? Yet no: real life is not to be described like that. In a system of that kind there is no understanding or sympathy, nor a particle of what we call humanity. 'Tis all self-conceit—no more. Folk describe thieves and fallen women as though they were apprehending them in the streets and taking them to prison. Never in the tales of such writers is the note of 'hidden tears' to be detected—only that of gross, manifest malice and love of ridicule."

"And what more would you have? You yourself have said (and very aptly so) that seething venom, a taste for bilious incitement to vice, and a sneering contempt for

the fallen are the only ingredients needed."

"No, not the only ones," said Oblomov, firing up. "Picture a thief or a fallen woman or a cheated fool, if you like, but do not forget the rest of mankind. What about humanity, pray? Writers like yourself try to write only with the head. What? Do you suppose the intellect can work separately from the heart? Why, the intellect needs love to fertilize it. Rather, stretch out your hand to the fallen and raise him weep over him if he is lost beyond recall, but in no case make sport of him, for he is one to whom there should be extended only compassion. See in him yourself, and act accordingly. That done, I will read you, and bow my head before you. But in the writings of the school of which I have spoken, what art, what poetical colouring, are you able to discover? Should you elect to paint debauchery and the mire, at least do so without making any claim to poetry."

"What? You bid me depict nature—roses, nightingales, a winter's morning, and all that sort of thing—when things like these are seething and whirling around us? Nay, we need, rather, the bare physiology of society. No longer are love songs required."

"Give me man, and man alone." said Oblomov. "And, having given me him, do you try to love him."

"What? To love the usurer, the hypocrite, the peculating and stupid official? Why should I do that? 'tis evident you have had little experience of literature! Such fellows want punishing—want turning out of the civic circle and the community."

"Out of the civic circle and the community,' you say?" ejaculated Oblomov with a gasp as he rose and stood before Penkin. "That is tantamount to saying that once in that faulty vessel there dwelt the supreme element—that, ruined though the man may be, he is still a human being, as even are you and I. Turn him out, indeed! How are you going to turn him out of the circle of humanity, out of the bosom of Nature, out of the mercy of God?" Oblomov came near to shouting as he said this, and his eyes were blazing.

“How excited you have grown!” said Penkin in astonishment; whereupon even Oblomov realized that he had gone too far. He pulled himself up, yawned slightly, and stretched himself out sluggishly upon the sofa. For a while silence reigned.

“What kind of books do you mostly read?’ inquired Penkin.

“Books of travel,” replied Oblomov.

Again there was a silence.

“And will you read the poem when it has come out?” continued Penkin. “If so, I will bring you a copy of it.”

Oblomov shook his head.

“Nor my story?”

Oblomov signified assent.

“Very well, then. Now I must be off to press,” continued Penkin. “Do you know why I came to see you to-day? I came because I wanted to propose to you a visit to the Ekaterinhov. I have a conveyance of my own and, inasmuch as, to-morrow, I must write an article on current events, I thought we might jointly look over my notes on the subject, and you might advise me as to any point omitted. We should enjoy the expedition, I think. Let us go.”

“No, I am not well,” said Oblomov with a frown, covering himself with the bedclothes. “But you might come and lunch with me to-day, and then talk. I have just experienced a couple of misfortunes.”

“Ah! The whole of our staff is to lunch at St. George’s, * I fear, and then to go on to the festival. Also, at night I have my article to write, and the printer must receive the manuscript by daylight at the latest. Good-bye!”

* A smart restaurant in Petrograd.

“‘At night I have my article to write,’” mused Oblomov after his friend’s departure. “Then when does he sleep? However, he is making some five thousand roubles a

year, so his work is so much bread and butter to him. Yet to think of being continually engaged in writing, in wasting one's intellect upon trifles, in changing one's opinions, in offering one's brain and one's imagination for sale, in doing violence to one's own nature, in giving way to ebullitions of enthusiasm—and the whole without a single moment's rest, or the calling of a single halt! Yes, to think of being forced to go on writing, writing, like the wheel of a machine—writing to-morrow, writing the day after, writing though the summer is approaching and holidays keep passing one by! Does he never stop to draw breath, the poor wretch?" Oblomov glanced at the table, where everything lay undisturbed, and the ink had become dried up, and not a pen was to be seen; and as he looked he rejoiced to think that he was lying there as careless as a newborn baby—not worrying at all, nor seeking to offer anything for sale.

"But what of the starosta's letter and the notice to quit?" Yes, suddenly he had remembered these things; and once more he became absorbed in thought.

Again the doorbell rang.

"Why is every one seeking me out today?" he wondered as he waited to see who next should enter. This time the new-comer proved to be a man of uncertain age—of the age when it is difficult to guess the exact number of years. Also, he was neither handsome nor ugly, neither tall nor short, neither fair nor dark. In short, he was a man whom Nature had dowered with no sharp-cut, distinguishing features, whether good or bad, mental or physical.

"Ha!" said Oblomov as he greeted him. "So it is you, Alexiev? Whence are you come?"

"To tell the truth. I had not thought to call upon you to-day," replied the visitor, "but by chance I met Ovchinin, and he carried me off to his quarters, whither I, in my turn, have now come to convey you."

"To convey me to, to——?"

“To Ovchinin’s. Already Alianov, Pchailo, and Kolhniagin are there.”

“But why have they collected together? And what do they want with me?”

“Ovchinin desires you to lunch with him, and then to accompany him and the rest of us to the Ekaterinhov. Likewise he has instructed me to warn you to hire a conveyance. Come, get up! ’Tis fully time you were dressed.”

“How am I to dress? I have not yet washed myself.”

“Then do so at once.”

With that Alexiev fell to pacing the room. Presently he halted before a picture which he had seen a thousand times before; then he glanced once or twice out of the window, took from a whatnot an article of some sort, turned it over in his hands, looked at it from every point of view, and replaced the same. That done, he resumed his pacing and whistling—the whole being designed to avoid hindering Oblomov from rising and performing his ablutions. Ten minutes passed.

“What is the matter with you?” asked Alexiev suddenly.

“What is the matter with me?”

“I mean, why are you still in bed?”

“I cannot tell you. Is it really necessary that I should get up?”

“Of course it is necessary, for they are waiting for us. Besides, you said that you would like to go.”

“To go where? I have no such desire.”

“Only this moment you said we would go and lunch at Ovchinin’s, and then proceed to the Ekatennhov!”

“No, I cannot. It would mean my going out into the damp. Besides, rain is coming on. The courtyard looks quite dark.”

“As a matter of fact, not a single cloud is in the sky, and the courtyard looks dark only because you never have your windows washed.”

“Well, well!” said Oblomov. “By the way, have I yet told you of my misfortunes—of the letter from my starosta, and of the notice given me to quit this flat?”

“No,” answered Alexiev. “What about the letter?”

The document not being immediately forthcoming, Zakhar was summoned to search for it; and after it had been discovered beneath the counterpane Oblomov read it to his friend—though passing over certain greetings, added to inquiries as to the recipient’s health. The gist of the epistle was that the bulk of the crops on Oblomov’s estate were likely to fail for want of rain.

“Never mind,” said Alexiev. “One must never give way to despair.”

“And what would you do in my place?”

“I should first of all consider matters. Never ought one to come to a hasty decision.”

Crumpling the letter in his hands, Oblomov leaned forward with his elbows on his knees, and remained in that posture for a considerable time—his brain flooded with disturbing reflections.

“I wish Schtoltz would come!” at length he remarked. “He has written that he is about to do so, but God knows what has happened to him! He could solve the situation.”

Suddenly the doorbell rang with such vehemence that both men started, and Zakhar came hurrying out of his pantry.

III

The next moment there entered the room a tall, loosely built man who evidently did not believe in refinement of costume, nor was in any way ashamed of the fact. This was Mikhei Andreievitch Tarantiev, a native of the same district as Oblomov. Though an individual of rough, sullen mien, and of rather an overbearing manner, he

did not lack a certain keen ruggedness of wit; nor could any one be a better judge of mundane questions in general, nor a better resolver of tangled juridical problems (though usually he behaved rudely to the person who had sought his advice on these matters). Nevertheless, his abilities stopped short at a talent for verbal exposition; and no sooner was he called upon to transmit a theory into action than his whole bearing underwent a change, and in every case he discovered practical difficulties in the way of what he conceived to be the best course to take.

“How are you?” he said brusquely as he extended a hairy hand. “What do you mean by lying in bed like a log? Presently it will be twelve o’clock, yet you are sprawling about on your back!” The other forestalled him by hurriedly slipping his feet into his slippers, or the new-comer would have pulled him out of bed.

“I was just about to rise,” said Oblomov with a yawn.

“Yes; I know how you rise—how you go rolling about until lunch-time! Zakhar, come and help your master to dress!”

Zakhar entered and glared at Tarantiev. Raising himself on his elbow, Oblomov stepped from the bed like a man who is thoroughly worn out, and, dropping into an arm-chair, sat there without moving, Meanwhile Zakhar pomaded, parted, and combed his master’s hair, and then asked him if he desired to wash.

“Presently,” said Oblomov. “Do you wait a little.”

“Ah! So you are here?” said Tarantiev suddenly as he turned to Alexiev. “I had not seen you. By the way, what a swine is that kinsman of yours!”

“What kinsman?” inquired Alexiev with a stare. “I do not possess a single relative.”

“I mean Athanasiev. Surely he is a relative of yours? I know he is.”

“My name is Alexiev, not Athanasiev,” said the other. “And I repeat that I do not possess a single relative.”

“But he is just like you an ugly man, as well as (like yourself, again) a man of the

name of Vassili Nikolaitch?"

"Nevertheless he is no kinsman of mine. Besides, my first names are Ivan and Alexeitch."

"Well, he is exactly like you, and a swine besides. You can tell him that when next you meet him."

"I neither possess his acquaintance nor have ever set eyes upon him," said Alexiev, opening his snuffbox.

"Give me a pinch," put in Tarantiev. "You use the plain stuff, and not the French, do you? Why not use the French? Never have I seen a swine like that relative of yours. On one occasion I borrowed of him fifty roubles. That was two years ago. And fifty roubles are not a very large sum, are they? They are a sum which he might well have forgotten, mightn't he? Yes, he very well might. But as a matter of fact, he remembered it. Not a month had passed before he took to saying, whenever he met me: 'How about that debt?' I assure you I found him a perfect nuisance! And only yesterday he walked into our office, and said to me: 'I expect you have just received your salary, and are therefore in a position to repay me?' Well, I handed him over my salary, even though he had come there for the express purpose of shaming me in public. I had much ado not to put him out of the door. 'Poor fellow, you need the money, I suppose?' As though I had not needed it! Am I such a rich man that I should quietly let him pouch fifty roubles? Oblomov, hand me a cigar."

"The cigars are in that box there," said Oblomov, pointing to a whatnot. He was still posed in his usual lazy but becoming attitude—he was still taking no notice whatever of what was being done or said around him, but contemplating his small white hands.

"What a rubbishy weed!" Tarantiev remarked, after sending out a puff of tobacco smoke and inhaling another.

"You have come too early in the morning," suggested Oblomov with a yawn.

“Then I am boring you, am I?”

“No; I was merely making a remark. Usually you arrive at lunch-time, but to-day you have come an hour beforehand.”

“I have come an hour beforehand because I wish to find out what there is likely to be to eat at dinner. As a rule you provide such rubbishy stuff.”

“You had better go into the kitchen and inquire.”

Taramiev departed for the purpose,

“We are to have beef and veal,” he remarked, on returning. “Ah, friend Oblomov, though a landowner, you haven’t the smallest notion how to live. Your ménage is the ménage of a tradesman. Have you bought that Madeira yet?”

“I don’t know,” replied Oblomov, scarcely noticing what had been said. “You had better inquire of Zakhar. At all events there will be some sort of wine.”

“What? The rubbishy old stuff which you bought of a German dealer? You ought to go to the English Store for your wines.”

“Very well. Please send to the Store for some.”

“Money first, please!”

Oblomov fumbled in a cashbox, and produced therefrom a ten-rouble, note.

“Madeira costs seven roubles the bottle,” he said. “Here are ten roubles. You will be given change at the Store.”

Tarantiev hastened to cram the note into his pocket.

“Likewise, do you feel like hiring a conveyance and going to the Ekaterinhov today?” he inquired. “If so, you might take me with you.”

Oblomov shook his head.

“I have met with two misfortunes,” he remarked. “In the first place, I am to be turned out of this fiat.”

“Because you haven’t paid your rent, I suppose?”

“No, that is not the reason. I always pay in advance. Tell me what had better be done.”

“Who made me your adviser? Do you think I give advice for nothing? Ask him, rather”—and Tarantiev pointed to Alexiev—“or else that kinsman of his.”

“No, no. Tell me what I ought to do.”

“I should advise you to move to another flat.”

“I could have said that myself.”

“To the flat of a friend of mine in the Veaborg Quarter,” continued Tarantiev.

“What? To a flat in the Veaborg Quarter? In winter the whole district is overrun with wolves!” *

* The Veaborg Quarter is one of the most outlying suburbs of Petrograd.

“True, at times they come there from the Neva Islands, but my friend’s house has high walls to it, and, in addition, she and her family and a bachelor brother are nice people, and not like that fellow over there.” He pointed to Alexiev.

“But what has all this to do with me?” said Oblomov irritably. “I tell you I am not going to move there.”

“You fool!” exclaimed Tarantiev. “In that house you would be much quieter and more comfortable than you are here, and you would pay less, and you would have larger quarters. Besides, it is a more respectable place than this. Here one has to sit at a dirty table on which the pepper-pot is empty, the vinegar bottle the same, the knives are not clean, the tablecloth is falling to pieces, and dust, dust, dust, lies everywhere. Give me my cab-fare, and I will go and secure you the flat at once. Then you can move into it to-morrow.” Tarantiev started to leave the room.

“Stop, stop!” cried Oblomov. “I tell you I am not going to the Veaborg Quarter. Pray exercise your wits in contriving how I may remain where I am. Moreover, I have a

still more important affair on hand. That is to say, I have just received from my starosta a letter concerning which I should be glad of your advice."

With that he searched for the document, found it after some difficulty, and read it aloud.

"So you hear what the starosta says as to drought and a failure of the crops? What ought I to do?"

"The prime necessity," replied Tarantiev, "is complete quiet for you. That you would get at the house of the friend of whom I have just spoken; and I could come to see you every day."

"Yes, yes," said Oblomov. "But what about this affair of the starosta?"

"The starosta is lying. He is a thief and a rogue. Why, I know an estate, only fifty versts from yours, where the harvest of last year was so good that it cleared the owner completely of debt. That being so, why have the crops on your estate threatened to fail? Clearly the starosta is a robber. If I were there I'd teach him! Do you suppose this letter to be a natural, an honest one? No, no more than we can suppose that that sheep's head over there he pointed to Alexiev again—"is capable of writing an honest letter, or his kinsman either."

"Whom am I to appoint in the starosta's place?" asked Oblomov. "Another man might prove even worse than he."

"You yourself had better go to the estate, and stay there for the summer, and then move into my friend's house. I will see that her rooms shall be ready for you—yes, I will see to it at once. Personally, I should have sold that property of yours, and bought another. Hand it over to me, and I will very soon make the folk there aware that I am alive!"

The upshot of it was that Oblomov accorded a half-hearted consent to Tarantiev's procuring him a new lodging, and also to his writing to the governor of the district where his (Oblomov's) property was situated. After that Tarantiev departed, stating

that he would return to dinner at five o'clock.

With Tarantiev's departure a calm of ten minutes reigned in the apartment. Oblomov was feeling greatly upset, both by the starostas letter and by the prospect of the impending removal. Also, the tumultuous Tarantiev had thoroughly tired him out.

"Why do you not sit down and write the letter?" asked Alexiev. "If you wish I will clean the inkstand for you."

"Clean it, and the Lord bless you!" sighed Oblomov. "Let me write the letter alone, and then you shall fair-copy it after dinner."

"Very well," replied Alexiev. "But now I must be off, or I shall be delaying the Ekaterinhov party. Good-bye!"

Oblomov did not heed him, but, sinking back into a recumbent position in the armchair, relapsed into a state of meditative lethargy.

IV

Zakhar, after closing the door successively behind Tarantiev and Alexiev, stood expecting to receive a summons from his master, inasmuch as he had overheard the fact that the latter had undertaken to write a letter. But in Oblomov's study all remained silent as the tomb. Zakhar peeped through the chink of the door, and perceived that his master was lying prone on the sofa, with his head resting on the palm of his hand. The valet entered the room.

"Why have you lain down again?" he asked.

"Do not disturb me: cannot you see that I am reading?" was Oblomov's abrupt reply.

"Nay, but you ought to wash, and then to write that letter," urged Zakhar, determined not to be shaken on.

"Yes, I suppose I ought. I will do so presently. Just now I am engaged in thought."

As a matter of fact, he did read a page of the book which was lying open—a page which had turned yellow with a month's exposure. That done, he laid it down and yawned.

"How it all wearies me!" he whispered, stretching, and then drawing up, his legs. Glancing at the ceiling as once more he relapsed into a voluptuous state of coma, he said to himself with momentary sternness: "No—business first." Then he rolled over, and clasped his hands behind his head.

As he lay there he thought of his plans for improving his property. Swiftly he passed in review certain grave and fundamental schemes affecting his plough-land and its taxation; after which he elaborated a new and stricter course to be taken against laziness and vagrancy on the part of the peasantry, and then passed to sundry ideas for ordering his own life in the country.

First of all, he became engrossed in a design for a new house. Eagerly he lingered over a probable disposition of the rooms, and fixed in his mind the dimensions of the dining-room and the billiard-room, and determined which way the windows of his study must face. Indeed, he even gave a thought to the furniture and to the carpets. Next, he designed a wing for the building, calculated the number of guests whom that wing would accommodate, and set aside proper sites for the stables, the coachhouses, and the servants' quarters. Finally he turned his attention to the garden. The old lime and oak-trees should all be left as they were, but the apple-trees and pear-trees should be done away with, and succeeded by acacias. Also, he gave a moment's consideration to the idea of a park, but, after calculating the cost of its upkeep, came to the conclusion that such a luxury would prove too expensive—wherefore he passed to the designing of orangeries and aviaries.

So vividly did these attractive visions of the future development of his estate flit before his eyes that he came to fancy himself already settled there, and engaged in witnessing the result of several years' working of his schemes.

On a fair summer's evening he seemed to be sitting at a tea-table on the terrace of Oblomovka—sitting under a canopy of leafy shade which the sun was powerless to penetrate. From a long pipe in his hand he was lazily inhaling smoke, and revelling both in the delightful view which stretched beyond the circle of the trees and in the coolness and the quiet of his surroundings. In the distance some fields were turning to gold as the sun, setting behind a familiar birch-grove, tinged to red the mirror-like surface of the lake. From the fields a mist had risen, for the chill of evening was falling, and dusk approaching apace. To his ears, at intervals, came the clatter of peasantry as they returned homewards, and at the entrance gates the servants of the establishment were sitting at ease, while from their vicinity came the sound of echoing voices and laughter, the playing of balalaiki, * and the chattering of girls as they pursued the sport of goriclki. ** Around him, also, his little ones were frisking at times climbing on to his knee and hanging about his neck; while behind the samovar *** was seated the real ruler of all that his eyes were beholding his divinity, a woman, his wife!... And in the dining-room—a room at once elegant and simply appointed—a cheerful fire was glowing, and Zakhar, now promoted to the dignity of a major-domo, and adorned with whiskers turned wholly grey, was laying a large, round table to a pleasant accompanying tinkle of crystal and silver as he arranged, here a decanter and there a fork.

* Three-stringed, lute-like instruments. ** A sort of catch-as catch-can. *** Tea-urn.

Presently the dreamer saw his wife and himself sit down to a bountiful supper. Yes, and with them was Schtoltz, the comrade of his youth, his unchanging friend, with other well-known faces. Lastly, he could see the inmates of the house retiring to rest....

Oblomov's features blushed with delight at the vision. So clear, so vivid, so poetical was it all that for a moment he lay with his face buried in the sofa cushions. Suddenly there had come upon him a dim longing for love and quiet happiness;

suddenly he had become athirst for the fields and the hills of his native place, for his home, for a wife, for children....

After lying face downwards for a moment or two, he turned upon his back. His features were alight with generous emotion, and for the time being he was—happy.

Again the charming seductiveness of sleep-waking enfolded him in its embrace. He pictured to himself a small colony of friends who should come and settle in the villages and farms within a radius of fifteen or twenty versts of his country house. Every day they should visit one another's houses—whether to dine or to sup or to dance; until everywhere around him he would be able to see only bright faces framed in sunny days—faces which should be ever free of care and wrinkles, and round, and merry, and ruddy, and double-chinned, and of unfailing appetite. In all his neighbourhood there should be constant summertide, constant gaiety, unfailing good fare, the joys of perennial lassitude.... "My God, my God!" he cried in the fullness of his delight: and with that he awoke. Once more to his ears came the cries of hawkers in the courtyard as they vended coal, sand, and potatoes; once more he could hear some one begging for subscriptions to build a church; once more from a neighbouring building which was in course of erection there streamed a babel of workmen's shouts, mingled with the clatter of tools.

"Ah!" he sighed with a sense of pain. "Such is real life! What ugliness there is in the roar of the capital! When shall I attain the life of paradise—the life for which I yearn? Shall I ever see my own fields, my own forests? Would that at this moment I were lying on the grass under a tree, and gazing upwards at the sun through the boughs, and trying to count the birds which come and go over my head!"

But what about the plans for improving the estate? And what about the starosta and the flat? Once again these things knocked at his memory.

"Yes, yes," he answered them. "Seichass—presently."

With that he rose to a sitting posture on the sofa, lowered his legs to the level of his

slippers, and slipped the latter on to his feet; after which he sat still for a little while. At length he attained a wholly erect posture, and remained meditating for a couple of minutes.

“Zakhar! Zakhar!” he shouted as he eyed the table and the inkstand. “I want you to, to——” Further he failed to get, but mutely pointed to the inkstand, and then relapsed into thought.

The doorbell rang, and a little man with a bald head entered.

“Hullo, doctor!” Oblomov exclaimed as he extended one hand towards his guest, and with the other one drew forward a chair. “What chance brings you here?”

“The chance that, since all of you decline to be ill, and never send for me, I am forced to come of myself,” replied the doctor jestingly. “But no,” he added, in a more serious tone. “The truth is, I had to visit a neighbour of yours on the upper floor, and thought I might as well take you on the way. How are you?”

Oblomov shook his head despondently. “Poorly, doctor,” he said. “I have just been thinking of consulting you. My stomach will scarcely digest anything, there is a pain in the pit of it, and my breath comes with difficulty.”

“Give me your wrist,” said the doctor. He closed his eyes and felt the patient’s pulse. “And have you a cough?” he inquired.

“Yes—at night-time, but more especially while I am at supper.”

“Hm! And does your heart throb at all, or your head ache?” He then added other questions, bowed his bald pate, and subsided into profound meditation. At length he straightened himself with a jerk, and said with an air of decision—

“Two or three years more, of this room, of lying about, of eating rich, heavy foods, and you will have a stroke.”

Oblomov started.

“Then what ought I to do, doctor? Tell me, for Heaven’s sake!”

“Merely what other people do—namely, go abroad.”

“Pardon me, doctor, but how am I to do that?”

“Why should you not? Does money prevent you, or what?”

“Yes, yes; money is the reason,” replied Oblomov, gladly catching at the excuse, which was the most natural one that could possibly have been devised. “See here—just read what my slarosta writes.”

“Quite so, but that is no business of mine,” said the doctor. “My business is to inform you that you must change your mode of life, and also your place of residence. You must have fresh air—you must have something to do. Go to Kissingen or to Ems, and remain there during June and July, whilst you drink the waters. Then go on to Switzerland, or to the Tyrol, and partake of the local grape cure. That you can do during September and October.”

“Oh the devil take the Tyrol!” murmured Oblomov under his breath.

“Next, transfer yourself to some dry place like Egypt, and put away from you all cares and worries.”

“Excellent!” said Oblomov. “I only wish that starostas’ letters like this one reached you!”

“Also you must do no thinking whatsoever.”

“No thinking, you say?”

“Yes—you must impose upon the brain no exertion.”

“But what about my plans for my estate? I am not a log, if you will pardon my saying so.”

“Oh, very well. I have merely been warning you. Likewise, you must avoid emotion of every kind, for that sort of thing is sure to militate against a successful cure. Try, rather, to divert yourself with riding, with dancing, with moderate exercise in the open air, and with pleasant conversation—more especially conversation with the

opposite sex. These things are designed to make your heart beat more lightly, and to experience none but agreeable emotions. Again, you must lay aside all reading and writing. Rent a villa which faces south and lies embowered in flowers, and surround yourself also with an atmosphere of music and women."

"And may I eat at all?"

"Yes, certainly; but avoid all animal and farinaceous food, as well as anything which may be served cold. Eat only light soups and vegetables. Even in this great care will need to be exercised, for cholera, I may tell you, is about. Walk eight hours out of every twenty-four; go in for shooting."

"Good Lord!" groaned Oblomov.

"Finally," concluded the doctor, "go to Paris for the winter, where, surrounded by a whirlpool of gaiety, you will best be able to distract your mind from your habitual brooding. Cultivate, theatres, balls, masquerades, the streets, society friends, noise, and laughter."

"Anything else?" inquired Oblomov, with ill-concealed impatience. The doctor reflected a moment.

"Yes; also get the benefit of sea air," he said. "Cross over to England, or else go for a voyage to America."

With chat he rose to take his leave. "Should you carry out these instructions to the letter——" he began.

"Yes, yes. Of course I shall carry them out!" said Oblomov bitterly as he accompanied the physician to the door.

The doctor having departed, Oblomov threw himself back into an arm-chair, clasped his hands behind his head, and remained sitting in an almost unthinking heap. Roused by Zakhar to consider once more the question of changing his quarters, he engaged in a long and heated conversation with the valet. Eventually he dismissed

the man to his den, but could not dismiss from his own mind certain comparisons which Zakhar had drawn between his master's life and the life of ordinary people. How strange that suddenly there should have dawned in him thoughts concerning human fate and destiny! All at once he found his mind drawing a parallel between that destiny and his own existence; all at once questions of life arose before his vision, like owls in an ancient ruin flushed from sleep by a stray ray of sunlight. Somehow he felt pained and grieved at his arrested development, at the check which had taken place in his moral growth, at the weight which appeared to be pressing upon his every faculty. Also gnawing at his heart there was a sense of envy that others should be living a life so full and free, while all the time the narrow, pitiful little pathway of his own existence was being blocked by a great boulder. And in his hesitating soul there arose a torturing consciousness that many sides of his nature had never yet been stirred, that others had never even been touched, and that not one of them had attained complete formation. Yet with this there went an aching suspicion that, buried in his being, as in a tomb, there still remained a moribund element of sweetness and light, and that it was an element which, though hidden in his personality, as a nugget lies lurking in the bowels of the earth, might once have become minted into sterling coin. But the treasure was now overlaid with rubbish—was now thickly littered over with dust. 'Twas as though some one had stolen from him, and besmirched, the store of gifts with which life and the world had dowered him; so that always he would be prevented from entering life's field and sailing across it with the aid of intellect and of will. Yes, at the very start a secret enemy had laid a heavy hand upon him and diverted him from the road of human destiny. And now he seemed to be powerless to leave the swamps and wilds in favour of that road. All around him was a forest, and ever the recesses ox his soul were growing dimmer and darker, and the path more and more tangled, while the consciousness of his condition kept awaking within him less and less frequently—to arouse only for a fleecing moment his slumbering faculties. Brain and volition alike

had become paralysed, and, to all appearances, irrevocably—the events of his life had become whittled down to microscopical proportions. Yet even with them he was powerless to cope—he was powerless to pass from one of them to another. Consequently they bandied him to and fro like the waves of the ocean. Never was he able to oppose to any event elasticity of will; never was he able to conceive, as the result of any event, a reasoned-out impulse. Yet to confess this, even to himself, always cost him a bitter pang: his fruitless regrets for lost opportunities, coupled with burning reproaches of conscience, always pricked him like needles, and led him to strive to put away such reproaches and to discover a scapegoat....

Once again Oblomov sank asleep; and as he slept he dreamed of a different period, of different people, of a different place from the present. Let us follow him thither.

V

W e find ourselves transported to a land where neither sea nor mountains nor crags nor precipices nor lonely forests exist—where, in short, there exists nothing grand or wild or immense.

Of what advantage, indeed, is the grand, the immense? The ocean depresses the soul of man, and at the sight of its boundless expanse of billows—an expanse whereon the weary eye is allowed no resting-place from the uniformity of the picture—the heart of man grows troubled within him, and he derives no solace from the roaring and mad rolling of the waves. Ever since the world began, those waves have sung the same dim, enigmatical song. Ever since the world began, they have voiced but the querulous lament of a monster which, everlastingly doomed to torment, utters a chorus of shrill, malicious cries. On the shores of the sea no bird warbles; only the silent gulls, like lost spirits, fit wearily along its margin, or circle over its surface. In the presence of that turmoil of nature the roar even of the wildest beast sounds weak, and the voice of man becomes wholly overwhelmed. Yes, beside it man’s form

looks so small and fragile that it is swallowed up amid the myriad details of the gigantic picture. That alone may be why contemplation of the ocean depresses man's soul. During periods, also, of calm and immobility his spirit derives no comfort from the spectacle; for in the scarcely perceptible oscillation of the watery mass he sees ever the slumbering, incomprehensible force, which, until recently, has been mocking his proud will and, as it were, submerging his boldest schemes, his most dearly cherished labours and endeavours.

In the same way, mountains and gorges were not created to afford man encouragement, inasmuch as, with their terrible, menacing aspect, they seem to him the fangs and talons of some gigantic wild beast—of a beast which is reaching forth in an effort to devour him. Too vividly they remind him of his own frail build; too painfully they cause him to go in fear for his life. And over the summits of those crags and precipices the heavens look so remote and unattainable that they seem to have become removed out of the ken of humanity.

Not so that peaceful corner of the earth upon which our hero, in his slumber, opened his eyes. There, on the contrary, the heavens seemed to hug the earth—not in order that they might the better aim their thunderbolts, but in order that they might the closer enfold it in a loving embrace. In fact, they hovered low in order that, like a sheltering, paternal roof, they might guard this chosen corner of the earth from every adversity. Meanwhile the sun shone warm and bright during half the year, and, withdrawing, did so so slowly and reluctantly that it seemed ever to be turning back for one more look at the beloved spot, as though wishing to give it one more bright, warm day before the approaching weather of autumn. Also the hills of that spot were no more than reduced models of the terrible mountains which, in other localities, rear themselves to affright the imagination. Rather, they resembled the gentle slopes down which one may roll in sport, or where one may sit and gaze dreamily at the declining sun. Below them, toying and frisking, ran a stream. In one place it discharged itself into a broad pool, in another it hurried along in a narrow thread, in

a third it slackened its pace to a sudden mood of reverie, and, barely gliding over the stones, threw out on either side small rivulets whereof the gentle burbling seemed to invite sleep. Everywhere the vicinity of this corner of the earth presented a series of landscape studies and cheerful, smiling vistas. The sandy, shelving bank of the stream, a small copse which descended from the summit of that bank to the water, a winding ravine of which the depths were penetrated by a rill, a plantation of birch-trees—all these things seemed purposely to be fitted into one another, and to have been drawn by the hand of a master. Both the troubled heart and the heart which has never known care might have yearned to hide themselves in this forgotten corner of the world, and to live its life of ineffable happiness. Everything promised a quiet existence which should last until the grey hairs were come, and thereafter a death so gradual as almost to resemble the approach of sleep.

There the yearly round fulfils itself in a regular, serene order. As the calendar ordains, spring comes in in March, when turbid rivulets begin to run from the hills, and the earth, thawing, steams with tepid vapour. Then the peasant, doffing his sheepskin, goes out in shirtsleeves alone, and shades his eyes with' his hand as gladly he shrugs his shoulders and drinks his fill of the gleaming sunlight. Then, with a shaft in either hand, he draws forth the cart which has been lying bottom upwards, under the tiltshed, or examines and sounds with his foot the plough which has been reposing in the penthouse. All this is in preparation for the usual routine of toil, since in that region spring sees no return of sudden snowstorms to heap the fields and crack the branches. On the other hand, Winter, like a cold, unapproachable beauty, retains her character until the lawful season of thaw has arrived. Never does she mock one with unexpected softenings of the air; never does she triple-harness the earth with unheard-of degrees of frost. Everything proceeds according to rote—according to a generally prescribed order of nature. Although, in November, there begin snow and frost which, towards the festival of Epiphany, increase to the point of freezing to an icicle the beard of the peasant who has stepped

out of his hut for a breath of fresh air, the sensitive nose can, by February, detect the kindly odour of approaching spring.

Next, the summer is peculiarly ravishing. Only in that particular spot can one find that fresh, dry perfume which is the scent neither of laurel nor of lemon, but of mingled wormwood, pine, and cherry-blossom. Only there, also, can one find those bright days when the sun's rays are warm, but never scorching, and the sky remains cloudless for three mouths on end. As the bright days draw on they lengthen, week by week; and during that period the evenings are hot and the nights stifling, while the stars twinkle in the heavens with the welcoming mien of friends. And when rain at length arrives, how beneficent is its coming! Boisterously, richly, merrily it spates forth, like the large, hot tears of a man unexpectedly relieved of care; and as soon as ever it has passed the sun appears with a new smile of love, to dry the fields and the hillocks, and to cause all the countryside to assume an answering smile of delight. How gladly, too, the peasant greets the rain! "The good rain washes us, and the sun will dry us again," is his saying as he exposes his face to the tepid downpour and lets it play upon his shoulders and back. Moreover, in that region thunder is never terrible, but, rather, benevolent, and always occurs at one particular season (generally on Saint Elias' Day, in order that the people's established tradition may be fulfilled *). Also it would appear that, every year, both the number and the intensity of the peals remain the same—as though for each year the heavenly treasury had allotted a given measure of electricity. But of terrible and destructive storms that country can shew no record.

* Namely, that, should thunder occur on that day, the whole of the ensuing year will be prosperous, since the peals represent the saint's passage to heaven.

Nor has the country whereof I am speaking ever been visited with the Egyptian or other plagues. Never has any member of its population beheld a dire manifestation of Heaven, nor a thunderbolt, nor an unlooked-for darkness; nor do venomous

vermin abide there, and the locust comes not thither, and lions, tigers, bears, and wolves are unknown (owing to the fact that the country contains no fastnesses for them to dwell in). In short, over the fields and around the village wander only lowing cattle, bleating sheep, and cackling poultry.

Yet none but God knows whether a poet or a visionary would find himself satisfied with the natural features of this peaceful spot. Such gentlemen, we know, love to gaze upon the moon, and to listen to. the strains of nightingales; they love to see Luna clothe herself in coquettish, aureate cloud, and then glide mysteriously through the boughs of trees, and send forth clusters of silver beams to delight the eyes of her worshippers'! But in this country of Oblomov's dream no one knows such a moon; there Luna's features, as she looks down upon the villages and the fields, resembles, rather, a polished, cheery copper basin, and in vain would the poet fasten ravished eyes upon her, for she would return his gaze with the same indifference as that with which a round-faced rustic beauty meets the eloquent, passionate glances of a town gallant.

Nor has a nightingale ever been heard in that country—perchance for the reason that the region contains no shaded arbours or gardens of roses. But what an abundance of quails it can show!—so much so that in summer, when the harvest is in course of being gathered, urchins can catch them even in their hands! Yet it must not be supposed that thereafter the quails furnish a gastronomic dainty. Such an outrage would be repugnant to the moral sense of the inhabitants, since the quail is a bird, and therefore legally prohibited from being used for food. Consequently it lives but to delight the popular ear with its song, and in almost every house there hangs beneath the eaves a wicker cage wherein a member of that feathered species sits penned.

Even the general aspect of this modest, unaffected spot would fail to please the poet or the visionary. Never would it be theirs to behold a scene in which all

nature—woodland, lake, cotter's hut, and sandy hillside—is burning with a purplish glow, while sharply defined against a purple background may be seen moving along a sandy, winding road, a cavalcade of countrymen in attendance upon some great lady who is journeying towards a ruined castle—a castle where they will find awaiting them the telling of legends concerning the Wars of the Roses, the eating of wild goats for supper, and the singing of ballads to the lute by a young English damsel—a scene of Scottish or Swiss flavour of the kind which has been made familiar to our imagination by the pen of Sir Waiter Scott.

Of this there is nothing in our country.

How quiet and dreamy are the three or four villages which constitute that restful region! They lie not far from one another, and seem to have been thrown into their respective positions by some giant hand, and ever since to have maintained those positions. In particular, one hut stands on the edge of a ravine, with one-half its bulk projecting over the declivity, but supported on three props. Within it some three or four generations have spent happy, peaceful lives; for though it looks scarcely large enough to house a chicken, it is none the less tenanted by a well-to-do peasant and his wife. Onisim Suslov is the peasant's name, and he cannot stand upright in his abode. The veranda actually overhangs the ravine, and to reach it one has with one hand to grasp the herbage, and, with the other, the gable before setting foot upon the structure itself. Another of the huts is, as it were, gummed to the side of a hill, like a swallow's nest, while three others stand close beside it, and two are situated at the bottom of the ravine.

In the village all is quiet. The doors of its solitary little dwellings stand open, but not a soul is to be seen. Only the flies circle and buzz in clusters. Were you to enter one of the huts, you would call aloud in vain, for your only answer would be the deathlike silence, except that here and there you might hear the gasping of an invalid or the deep cough of some old woman who is living out her days upon the stove.

Also, there might appear from behind the fence a long-haired, barefooted youngster of three, clad only in a shirt, who would gaze mutely at the new-comer, and then timidly hide himself again.

The same deep silence, the same deep peace, lies also upon the fields. Only somewhere over the distant soil there can be seen moving, like an ant, a sunburnt ploughman. Occasionally he leans upon his plough to clear his forehead of the sweat. Even the manners of that region are possessed of a still restfulness which nothing can disturb. Never has a robbery or a murder or a similar happening been known there; never have the inhabitants succumbed to strong passions, or experienced hazardous adventures. Indeed, what passions, what adventures would have the power to move them? No man has ever strayed beyond his own circle, for the local inhabitants dwell far from other men, and both the nearest village and the nearest country town lie distant from twenty-five to thirty versts.

True, at given seasons the peasants cart their grain to the river wharf which lies nearest to them, and once a year, also, they attend a fair; but they maintain no relations beyond these. In fact, all their interests are centred in themselves. True, they know that eighty versts away there stands the provincial capital; but few of them have ever journeyed thither. Also they know that beyond it stand Saratov and Nizhni Novgorod—likewise they have heard that such places as Moscow and Petrograd exist, and that on the farther side of them dwell folk who are known as Germans and French; but beyond that point there begins for them, as it did for the ancients, a mysterious world of unknown countries which are peopled with monsters and two-headed giants, and bounded on the outer side by a void of mist, and, again, by the colossal fish which bears the world on its bark. Moreover, since this peaceful corner of the universe is almost inaccessible, there filters thither but few items of news concerning the great white universe. * Indeed, even traders in rustic wares who live twenty versts away know no more than they do. Likewise, it never enters into their heads to compare their lot with those of other men—to inquire whether other

men are rich or poor, comfortable or in need, for these peasants live in the fortunate belief that no circumstances could ever be different to their own—that all other folk must surely be living even as they are, and that to live in any other fashion would be a sin. Were you to assure them that others plough, sow, reap, or sell their produce in any way than that which obtains in this particular spot, the inhabitants would not believe you. That being so, how could any element of vexation or disturbance ever come nigh them? True, they resemble the rest of humanity in that they have their cares and weaknesses and obligations of lax-payment and fits of laziness and lethargy; but these press upon them but lightly, and occasion no real stirring of the blood. Indeed, during the past five years not a single soul of that local population of hundreds has died either a violent death or a natural. Even should a man or a woman expire of old age or a senile disease, it is not long before the rest have got ever their astonishment at the unusual occurrence. In the same way, after the trader Tarass had come near to steaming himself to death in his hut, and had had to be revived with cold water, the affair caused scarcely any stir in the neighbourhood.

* As distinguished from the black universe, the unknown.

Of crimes, one only—that of theft of produce from market gardens—is at all prevalent. Also, once two pigs and a chicken mysteriously disappeared. True, the latter event threw the district into something of a turmoil, but was unanimously ascribed to a pedlar who, the previous evening, had passed through the district on his way to a fair. In general, such untoward incidents are of the greatest rarity.

However, in a ditch in a paddock near the bridge once there was found lying a man—apparently a member of a party which had just traversed the neighbourhood en route for the country town. Some boys were the first to notice him, and at once they came running home with a horrifying tale of a great serpent or werewolf which was crouching in a hole. To this they added a statement that the said creature had pursued them, and come near to devouring Kuzka. From far and near the peasants

armed themselves with hatchets and pitchforks, and proceeded to the ditch en masse.

“Whither away?” the old men said reprovingly. “Are you mad? What do you want to do? Leave things alone, and no harm will come of it!”

Nevertheless the peasants set forth, and, when about a hundred paces from the spot, began to adjure the monster in varying terms. But no answer was returned. Next, after halting a moment, the party advanced a little further. The man seemed still to be lying in the ditch, with his head resting against a fence, while beside him lay a satchel and a cudgel (on the latter of which was slung a pair of boots). Yet the peasants could not summon up the necessary courage to approach him or to touch him.

“Hi, friend!” they shouted—one scratching his head and another the back of his neck. “What are you doing there? Who are you? What’s the matter?”

The traveller made as though to raise his head a little, but failed. Evidently he was ill or tired out. Then a peasant ventured to touch him with a pitchfork.

“Don’t interfere with him, don’t interfere with him!” cried the rest. “How do we know what he is, seeing that he refuses to speak? Leave him alone, friends!”

“Yes, we had better go away,” added certain others. “What has he to do with us? Harm might come of him.”

So all returned to the village, and told the elder men that, lying in a ditch, there was a strange man who would not speak, and whose identity was known only to God.

“If he does not belong to these parts, leave him alone,” advised the elders from the spot where, with hands on knees, they were sitting resting on a bank. “Yes, leave him to himself. ’Tis no use your going there.”

This, then, was the corner of the world whither Oblomov passed in his sleep. Of the three or four scattered villages in the region, one was named Sosnovka, and a second Vavilovka—the two being distant from one another about a verst. Together they

constituted Oblomov's hereditary estate, and bore the joint title of Oblomovka. In Sosnovka stood the manor-house and the farm, while five versts from the village there lay the hamlet of Verklevo—once the property of the Oblomovs, but long since passed into other hands. The same hamlet had attached to it a number of outlying huts. As a whole, Verklevo belonged to a rich landowner, a constant absentee, and the estate was managed by a German bailiff. There you have the geography of this remote corner of the world.

Oblomov dreamed that, aged seven, he awoke in his little cot at home. He felt merry and full of life. What a goodly, handsome, plump youngster he was, with cheeks of such rotundity that, however desperately any other young scamp might have tried to rival them by inflation of his own, no competitor could possibly have succeeded. Oblomov's nurse had long been waiting for him to awake, and now she began to draw on for him his stockings. This he refused to allow her to do; which end he attained by frisking and kicking, while she tried to catch hold of his leg, and the pair laughed joyously together. Finally, she lifted him on to her lap, and washed him, and combed his hair; after which she conducted him to his mother. On seeing his long-dead parent, the sleeping Oblomov's form trembled with delight and affection, and from under his unconscious eyelids there stole and remained two burning tears....

Upon him his mother showered affectionate kisses, and gazed at him with tender solicitude to see whether his eyes were clear and healthy. Did he in any way ail? she inquired. Had he (tiffs to his nurse) slept quietly, or had he lain awake all night? Had he had any dreams? Had he been at all feverish? Lastly, she took him by the hand, and led him to the sacred ikon. Kneeling with one arm around his form, she prompted him in the words of the prayers, while the boy repeated them with scanty attention, since he preferred, rather, to turn his eyes to the windows, whence the freshness and scent of a lilac-tree was flooding the room.

“Shall we go for a walk to-day, mamma?” suddenly he asked.

“Yes, darling,” she replied hastily, but kept her gaze fixed upon the ikon, and hurriedly concluded the sacred formula. Yet into the words of that formula her very soul was projected, whereas the little one repeated them only in nonchalant fashion.

The prayer over, they went to greet his father, and then to take morning tea. Beside the table Oblomov could see seated the aunt of eighty who had always lived with them. Never did she cease to grumble at the ancient serving-maid who, her head trembling with senility, stood behind her chair to wait upon her. Also there were present three old maiden ladies who were distant relatives of his father’s; a weak-minded gentleman named Chekmenev, who, the brother-in-law of Oblomov’s mother, was the owner of seven serfs, and happened to be staying with Oblomov’s parents; and certain other old men and women. The latter, the domestic staff and retinue of the Oblomov family, caught hold of the little Ilya Ilyitch, and started to heap him with caresses and attentions—so much so that he had much ado to wipe away the traces of these unsought kisses. Then there began the feeding of the child with rolls, biscuits, and cream; after which his mother bestowed upon him another embrace, and sent him out to walk round the garden and the courtyard and the lake—accompanying her farewell with particular instructions to the nurse that never must she leave the child alone for a single moment, nor yet must she allow him to approach the horses, the dogs, or the goat, nor yet must she take him far from home. Above all things, never must the nurse suffer him to approach the ravine, which was the most dreaded spot in the neighbourhood, and bore an evil reputation. Once there had been found there a dog which confessed itself a mad one, inasmuch as it had run headlong from folk who chased it with hatchets and pitchforks, and had disappeared behind a neighbouring hill. Likewise to the ravine carrion was carted, while robbers and wolves and various other creatures which never existed in the world at all were supposed to dwell there.

But to these warnings of his mother's the child paid little heed. Already he was outside, in the courtyard. With gleeful surprise (as though for the first time in his life) he went the round of his parents' establishment, with its gates sagging outwards, its dinted roof where lichen grew, its tottering veranda, its various annexes and outbuildings, and its overgrown garden. Also he yearned to ascend to the hanging gallery which girdled the house, that thence he might see the river; but the gallery was now in decay, and scarcely able to hold together, so that none but the servants trod it, and at no time did the gentry walk there. Heedless of his mother's warnings, however, the little Oblomov was on the point of making for its seductive steps when the nurse showed herself on the veranda, and caught hold of him. Next, he rushed from her towards the hay-loft, with the intention of scaling its steep ladder; and just had she time to destroy successive schemes of ascending to the pigeon-cote, of penetrating to the cattle-yard, and—Heaven preserve us all!—of making his way to the ravine!

"God bless the child!" exclaimed the nurse. "Will you be quiet, then, young sir? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" Indeed, the whole day, as well as every day and every night, was spent by her in similar alarums and excursions, in alternations of torture and relief on the child's account, in terror because he had fallen and broken his nose, in gratification at his warm, childish caresses, and in dim anxiety concerning his ultimate future. Only these and like emotions made her old heart beat and her old blood grow warm; only these retained in her the drowsy life which, but for them, would long ago have flickered out.

Yet the child was not always mischievous. Sometimes he would grow suddenly quiet as, sitting beside her, he gazed fixedly before him with his childish intellect taking in the various phenomena which presented themselves to his vision. Such phenomena were sinking fast into his mind, to grow and ripen there even as it grew and ripened.

The morning was a splendid one, and the air still fresh, since the sun had not yet attained much height. From the house, from the trees, from the dovecote, and from the gallery there streamed long shadows which formed, in the garden and in the orchard, cool corners which invited meditation and sleep. Only in the distance a rye-held was glowing with flame, and the river sparkling and flashing in the rays of the sun until actually it hurt the eyes to look at it.

“Why is it so dark in one place and bright in another?” asked the child. “Will it soon be bright everywhere?”

“Yes. That is because the sun has come out to meet the moon, and at times keeps frowning because he cannot catch sight of her. By and by he will catch sight of her. Then he will send out his light once more.” The child pondered, and gazed at the scene around him. Before him he could see Antip driving the watercart, with another Antip, ten times as large as the real one, accompanying him, and the barrel of the cart looking as large as a house, and the horse’s shadow covering the whole of the pond. Then the shadows seemed to take two strides across the pond, and then to move behind the hill, though the figure of Antip had not yet left the courtyard. In his turn the child took a couple of strides, and then a third, to see if he too would end by disappearing behind the hill, which he had a great longing to ascend, for the purpose of ascertaining what had become of the horse. Consequently he set on towards the gates but only to hear his mother calling from a window—

“Nurse, nurse, do you not see that the boy has just run out into the sunshine? Pray bring him back into the shade, or he will get a sunstroke, and be ill, and sick, and unable to eat! Besides, he might run down into the ravine!”

“Oh, the naughty darling!” the nurse muttered to herself as she dragged him back on to the veranda. The child looked about him with the keen, observant glance of a “grown-up” who is debating how best a morning can be spent. Not a trifle, not a circumstance, escaped the child’s inquisitive attention, so that insensibly the picture

of his home life engraved itself upon his mind, and his sensitive intellect nourished itself on living examples, and involuntarily modelled its programme of life on the life which surrounded it.

Never at any time could it be said that the morning was wasted in the Oblomovs' establishment. The sound of knives in the kitchen, as they minced cutlets and vegetables, reached even to the village; while from the servants' quarters came the hum of a spindle, coupled with the thin, low voice of an old woman—but a voice so low that with difficulty could one distinguish whether she were weeping, or whether she were merely improvising to herself a mournful "song without words." Also, on Antip returning with the watercart, there would advance to meet it, with pails, cans, and pitchers, a number of maidservants and grooms, while from the storehouse an old woman would produce a vessel of meal and a pile of eggs, and carry them to the kitchen. There, on the cook suddenly throwing some water out of the window, the cat Arapka—which, with eyes fixed upon the view, had spent the morning in agitating the tip of her tail and licking herself—came in for a splashing.

The head of the family, too, was not idle, for he spent the morning in sitting by the window and following with his eyes everything which took place in the courtyard.

"Hi, Ignashka, what have you there, you rascal?" he cried to a man who happened to cross the open space.

"Some knives to be sharpened in the scullery," the man replied, without looking at his master.

"Very well, then. Mind you sharpen them properly."

Next, the master stopped one of the maidservants.

"Where are you going?" he inquired.

"To the cellar to get some milk for the table," she replied, shading her eyes with her hand.

“Good!” he pronounced. “And see that you don’t spill any. You, Zakharka—where are you off to once more? This is the third time I have seen you gadding about. Go back to your place in the hall.” Whereupon Zakharka returned to her day-dreams at the post mentioned. Again, as soon as the cows returned from pasture, old Oblomov was always there to see that they were properly watered. Also, when, from his post at the window, he chanced to observe the yard-dog chasing one of the hens he hastened to take the necessary measures against a recurrence of such conduct. In the same way, his wife was fully employed. For three hours she discussed with Averka, the tailor, the best ways and means of converting a waistcoat of her husband’s into a jacket for her son—herself drawing the requisite lines in chalk, and seeing to it that Averka should pilfer not a morsel of the cloth. Thereafter she passed to the maids’ room, where she parcelled cut to each damsel the day’s portion of lacemaking; whence she departed to summon one of her personal maids to attend her in the garden, for the purpose of seeing how the apples were swelling, which of them had fallen or were turning ripe, which trees wanted grafting or pruning, and so forth. But her chief care was the kitchen and the dinner. Concerning the latter she consulted the entire household, including the aged aunt. Each member of the family proposed a special dish, and the sum of these proposals was taken into consideration, adjudicated upon in detail, and adopted or rejected according to the final decision of the mistress. From time to time, also, a maid was dispatched to the culinary regions to remind the cook of this, or to tell her to add that, or to instruct her to change the other, while conveying to her sugar, honey, and wine for flavouring, and also seeing to it that the said cook was using everything which had been measured out. In fact, the supervision of food was the first and the principal domestic preoccupation of Oblomovka.

What calves were not fattened for the year’s festivals! What poultry was not reared! What forethought and care and skill were not devoted to the consumption of comestibles! Game fowls and pullets were set apart solely for birthdays and other

solemn occasions; wherefore they were stuffed with nuts. For the same reason geese were caught several days beforehand, and hung up in bags until wanted, in order that, being restrained from exercise, they might put on the more fat. And what a roasting and a pickling and a baking would sometimes take place, and what mead and kvass * were there not brewed, and what pies were there not compounded!

* A liquor made from fermented bread crusts or fruit.

Until noon, therefore, everything at Oblomovka was in a state of bustle and commotion. Life was indeed full and antlike and in evidence! Even on Sundays and holidays these labour-loving ants did not desist from their toil, for on such days the clatter of knives in the kitchen sounded louder and more rapid than ever, a maid made several journeys from the storeroom to the kitchen with double quantities of meal and eggs, and in the poultry-run an added amount of cackling and of bloodshed took place. Likewise, on such days there was baked a gigantic pie, which was eaten by the gentry on the same and the following days, and by the maids on the third and fourth; after which, should it survive to the fifth day, the last stale remnants, devoid of stuffing, were given, as a special favour, to Antip, who, crossing himself, undauntedly attacked the rock-hard fragments—though it was in the thought that it had recently been the gentry's pie rather than in the pie itself that he took most delight; even as an archaeologist rejoices to drink even the poorest wine from the shell of a thousand-year-old vessel.

All this the boy noted with his childish, ever-watchful mind. He perceived that, after mornings thus usefully and busily spent, there ensued noon and dinner. On the present occasion noontide was sultry, and not a cloud was in the sky. Indeed, the sun seemed to be standing still to scorch the grass, and the air to have ceased to circulate—to be hanging without the slightest movement. Neither from tree nor lake could the faintest rustle be heard, and over the village and the countryside there hung an unbroken stillness, as though everything in them were dead. Only from afar

could a human voice be distinguished, while, some twenty sazhens * away, the drone of a flying beetle, with the snoring of some one who had sunk into the thick herbage to enjoy a refreshing sleep, came gently to the ear. Even the house was possessed by a silence as of death, for the hour of post-prandial slumber had arrived. The boy's father, mother, and aged grandaunt, with their attendants, could be seen disposed in various corners; and, should any one not possess a particular corner, he or she repaired either to the hay-loft or to the garden or to a cool resting-place among the growing hay or, with face protected from the flies with a handkerchief, to a spot where the scorching heat would assist digestion after the enormous dinner. Even the gardener stretched himself out beneath a bush by the side of his plot, and the coachman in the stable.

* The zazhen = six English feet.

Little Oblomov proceeded to peep into the servants' hall, where the inmates were sleeping as though slumber had become an epidemic. On the benches, on the floor, and on the threshold they slept, while their children crawled about the courtyard and fashioned mud pies. Indeed, the very dogs had crawled into their kennels, since there was no longer any one to bark at. In short, one might have traversed the entire establishment without meeting a single soul; and everything in it could with ease have been stolen, and removed in carts from the courtyard, since no one would have been there to prevent the deed. The prevailing lethargy was all-consuming, all-conquering—a true image of death; seeing that, but for the fact that from various corners there came snores in different notes and keys, every one seemed wholly to have departed this life. Only at rare intervals would some one raise his head with a start, gaze around him with vacant eyes, and then turn over to the other side.

After dinner the child accompanied his nurse for a second airing out of doors. Yet, despite her mistress's injunctions and her own resolves, the old woman could not altogether resist the general call of sleep, and began to fall a victim to the

all-prevalent malady of Oblomovka. At first she kept a vigilant eye upon her little charge, and, chiding him for his waywardness, never let him stray from her side; but presently, after giving him strict instructions not to go beyond the gates, nor to interfere with the goat, nor to climb either the dovecote or the gallery, she settled herself in a shady spot, with the ostensible intention of at once knitting a stocking and of watching over young Oblomov. Next she took to checking him only in lazy fashion, as her head nodded and she said to herself: "Look you, he will certainly climb those stairs to the gallery, or else"—her eyes had almost closed—"he will run down into the ravine." With that her head sank forward, and the stocking slipped from her hands. In a second her open mouth had emitted a gentle snore, and the boy had disappeared from her vision.

Needless to say, this was the moment which the youngster had been impatiently awaiting, for it marked the beginning of an independent existence, and he was now alone in the wide, wide world. On tiptoe he left the nurse's side, and, peeping cautiously at the other slumberers, kept stopping to throw a second glance at any one who chanced to stir, or to spit, or to snuffle in his sleep. At last, with a tremor of joy in his heart, he made for the gallery, ascended the creaking stairs at a run, scaled also the dovecote, explored the recesses of the garden, listened to the buzzing of beetles, and followed with his eyes their flight through the air. Next, on hearing a chirping sound in the grass, he sought and captured the disturber of the public peace, in the shape of a dragon-fly, whose wings he proceeded to tear off, and whose body to impale upon a straw, in order that he might see how, thus hampered, the creature would contrive to fly. Afterwards, fearing almost to breathe, he watched a spider suck blood from a captured fly, while the wretched victim struggled and buzzed in the spider's claws. Finally the tragedy was brought to an end by the boy slaying both torturer and tortured. Next, he repaired to the moat to search for sundry small roots which he knew of; which found, he peeled them, and then devoured the same with relish, in the make-believe that they were the apples and preserves which his

mamma was accustomed to give him. This item exhausted, he hied him through the entrance gates—his object in so doing being to reach a birch copse which looked to him so close at hand that, should he take the direct route, and not the circuitous high-road (that is to say, should he walk straight across the moat, and through the osier plantation), he would be able to attain his goal in five minutes. But, alas! he felt afraid, for he had heard tales of wood goblins, of brigands, and of fearsome wild beasts. Next, the spirit moved him to make for the ravine, which lay a hundred paces from the garden; so, running to the edge of the declivity, and puckering his eyes, he gazed into its depths as into Vulcan's crater. Suddenly to his mind recurred all the tales and traditions concerning the spot; and terror seized him. and, half-dead, half-alive, he rushed back and threw himself into his nurse's arms. Awakened, she sprang up, straightened the cap on her head, arranged her grey curls with one finger, and pretended never to have been to sleep at all. Glancing suspiciously at the little Ilya, and then at the gentry's windows, she began with tremulous hands to work the knitting needles of the stocking which had been lying in her lap.

Meanwhile the heat had decreased, and everything in nature had revived a little since the sun was fast declining towards the forest. Gradually the stillness indoors also began to be broken. Here and there a door creaked, footsteps could be heard crossing the yard, and some one sneezed in the hay-loft. Soon from the kitchen a man came hurrying under the weight of a huge samovar, and the entire household then assembled for tea—one man with his face flushed and his eyes still dim, another man with red marks on his cheek and temple, a third speaking in a voice not his own for drowsiness, and all of them snuffling, wheezing, yawning, scratching their heads, and stretching themselves in a semiwaking condition. It seemed that dinner and sleep had combined to arouse an unquenchable thirst which parched the throat, for even dozens of cupfuls of tea could not assuage it, and, amid a chorus of sighs and grunts, resort had to be made to bilberry wine, to perry, to kvass, and even to more medicinal methods of moistening this avidity of gullet. The company sought

relief from thirst as from a Heaven-sent plague, and all felt as exhausted as though they were travelling in the Arabian desert, and could nowhere find a spring.

By his mother's side the child gazed at the strange faces around him, and listened to the drowsy, drawling talk. Yet the spectacle delighted him, and he found each stray word interesting.

After tea every one took up some minor occupation or another. One man repaired to the riverside, and strolled along the brink—kicking pebbles into the water as he did so. Another took a seat in a window, and followed with his eyes each passing occurrence. Should a cat cross the courtyard, or a jackdaw fly by, the watcher scanned both the one and the other, and turned his head to right and to left in order to do so. In the same way will dogs spend whole days at a window—their heads thrust into the sunlight, and their gaze taking stock of every passer-by.

The mother took little Ilya's head in her hands, drew it down into her lap, and combed his hair with a gentle caress as, inviting her maids to admire him, she talked concerning his future, and preordained for him the hero's part in some splendid epic. For their part, the maids foretold for him mountains of gold.

At length dusk began to draw in. Once more the fire crackled in the kitchen, and the clatter of knives became audible. Supper was being prepared. Meanwhile the rest of the servants gathered at the entrance gates, and thence came sounds of laughter, and of music, and of the playing of gorielki. The sun had sunk behind the forest, yet still was sending forth rays in a fiery, faintly warm streak which, as it passed over the surface of the treetops, touched to gold the tips of the pines. Finally these rays successively expired, until only a solitary beam could be seen fixed, needle-like, in a cluster of boughs before going to join its comrades. Objects then began to lose their outline, and the scene to become blurred in, first greyness, then a blank almost of total obscurity. The songs of birds grew fainter, then ceased altogether, save for one persistent singer which, as though disagreeing with its fellows, continued to break

the silence with intermittent warbling. Presently it too took to uttering its song at rarer intervals, and to whistling with' more feeble insistence; until finally it breathed a last soft-drawn note, gave a flutter or two which gently stirred the foliage around it, and—fell asleep.

After that all was silent, save that some crickets were chirping in chorus and against one another. A mist was rising from the earth, and spreading over lake and river. Like everything else, the latter had sunk to rest; and though something caused it to splash for a last time, the water instantly resumed its absolute immobility. In the air a dampness could be detected, and the air itself could be felt growing warmer and warmer. Amid it the trees looked like groups of monsters; and when, suddenly, something cracked in the weird depths of the forest, it might have been thought that one of those monsters had been shifting its position, and with its foot had snapped a dry bough in doing so. Overhead, the first star could be seen glowing like a living eye, while in the windows of the house were a few twinkling lights. The hour of nature's most solemn, all-embracing silence had arrived—the hour when the creative brain can work at its best, and when poetic thought seethes most ardently, and when the heart flames with the greatest heat of passion or with the greatest poignancy of grief—the hour when the cruel soul ripens to a maximum of strength and composure as it meditates evil—the hour when, at Oblomovka, every one settled down to a night of profound, calm restfulness.

"Let us go for a walk," said little Ilya to his mother.

"God bless the child!" she cried. "How could we go for a walk? It is now damp, and you would get your little feet wet. Besides, we should find it dreadful out of doors, for at this hour the wood goblin is abroad, and he carries off little boys."

"To what place does he carry them, and what is he like, and where does he live?" asked the child; whereupon the mother gave full rein to her unbridled fancy. As she did so the child listened with blinking eyes; until at length, on sleep completely

overcoming him, the nurse approached, took him from his mother's lap, and bore him to bed, with his head hanging over her shoulder.

"Another day is over, praise be to God!" said the inmates of Oblomovka as, yawning, they made the sign of the cross and then retired to rest. "Well spent it has been, and God send that to-morrow be like it. Glory, O Lord, to Thee this night! Glory, O Lord, to Thee!"

Oblomov dreamed a second dream. On a long winter's evening he was pressing close to his nurse, and she was whispering of some unknown country where neither cold nor darkness were known, and where miracles took place, and where rivers ran honey and milk, and where no one did anything the year round, and where only good boys like Ilya Ilyitch himself walked day by day in company with maidens such as neither tongue nor pen could hope to describe. Also (the nurse said) there dwelt there a kind witch who sometimes revealed herself to mortals in the shape of a pikefish; and this witch singled out as her especial favourite a quiet, inoffensive boor who formerly had been the butt of his fellows, and, for some unknown reason, heaped him with her bounty, so that always he possessed plenty to eat, and clothes ever ready to wear, and ended by marrying a marvellous beauty whose name was Militrissa Kirbitievna.

The nurse related the story, and the child, with alert eyes and ears, hung upon her words. So artfully did the nurse or tradition eliminate from the story all resemblance to everyday life that the boy's keen intellect and imagination, fired by the device, remained enthralled until, in later years, he had come even to man's estate. As a matter of fact, the tale which the nurse thus lovingly related was the legend of the fool Emel—that clever, biting satire upon our forefathers and, it may be, also upon ourselves. True, in proportion as he grew up, little Oblomov came to learn that no such things as rivers of honey and milk, or even such persons as kind witches, really existed; yet, though he came to smile at his nurse's stories, that smile was never

wholly sincere, since always it would be accompanied by a sigh. For him the legend confounded itself with life, and, unconsciously, he found himself regretting that the legend differed from life, and that life differed from the legend. Involuntarily he would dream of Militrissa Kirbitievna, and feel attracted towards the country whereof nothing was known except that folk there went for walks, and were free from sorrow and care. Never could he rid himself of a longing to spend his days in lying upon the stove (even as the favourite of the legend had done), and to be dressed in ready-made, unearned clothes, and to eat at the expense of a benevolent witch. To the same story had his father and his grandfather listened as, shaped according to the stereotyped version current throughout antiquity, it had issued from the mouths of male and female nurses through the long course of ages and of generations.

Then Oblomov's nurse proceeded to draw another picture for the imagination of her charge. That is to say, she told him of the exploits of the Russian Achilleses and Ulysseses, and of the manner in which those heroes had been used to wander about Russia, and to kill and slay; and of how once they had disputed as to which of them could best drain a beaker of wine at a draught. Also, she told the boy of cruel robbers, of sleeping princesses, and of cities and peoples which had been turned into stone. Lastly, she passed to Russian demonology, to dead folk, to monsters, and to werewolves. With a simplicity, yet a sincerity, worthy of Homer, with a lifelike similitude of detail and a power of clear-cut relief that might have vied with the great Greek poet's, she fired the boy's intellect and imagination to a love for that Iliad which our heroes founded during the dim ages when man had not yet become adapted to the sundry perils and mysteries of nature and of life—when still he trembled before werewolves and wood demons, and sought refuge with protectors like Alesha Popovitch from the calamities which surrounded him—when air and water and forest and held alike were under the continued sway of the supernatural. Truly, the life of a mortal of those days must have been full of fear and trembling,

seeing that, should he but cross his threshold, he stood in danger of being devoured by a wild beast, or of having his throat cut by a brigand, or of being despoiled of his all by a Tartar, or of disappearing from human ken without trace left! Again, celestial portents would be seen in the shape cf pillars and balls of fire, while over a freshly made grave a light would glow, and some one would seem to be walking through the forest with a lantern, and laughing horribly, and flashing bright eyes amid the gloom: And in man's own personality much that passed his understanding would also take shape and materialize. No matter how long or how righteously a man might have lived, he would suddenly start babbling, or shout aloud in a voice not his own, or go wandering o' nights in a trance, or involuntarily begin beating and assaulting his fellows. And just at the moment when such things happened a hen would crow like a cock, and a raven would croak from the gable! Consequently feeble mankind, peering tremblingly at life, sought in its own imagination, its own nature, a key to the mysteries which surrounded it: and it may be that the immobility, the inertia, the absence of all active passion or incident or peril which such a retired existence imposed upon man led him to create, in the midst of the world of nature, another and an impossible world, in which he found comfort and relief for his idle intellect, explanations of the more ordinary' sequences of events, and extraneous solutions of extraordinary phenomena. In fact, our poor forefathers lived by instinct. Neither wholly giving rein to nor wholly restraining their volition, they found themselves either naïvely surprised at or overcome with terror by the evils and the misfortunes which befell them, and resorted for the causes of these things to the dim, dumb hieroglyphics of nature. In their opinion, death might come of carrying a corpse from a house head foremost instead of with feet in front, and a fire be caused by the fact of a dog having howled, three nights running, beneath a window. Hence always they were at pains to remove a dead person feet foremost—though continuing to eat the same quantity of food as before, and to sleep on the bare ground; while, with regard to a howling dog, always they drove away the

animal with blows—though continuing to scatter sparks broadcast over tinder-dry floors.

To this day the Russian, though surrounded by a stern, unimaginative world of reality, loves to believe the seductive talcs of antiquity. And long will it be before he will have been weaned from that belief. In the same way, as little Oblomov listened to his nurse's legends concerning the Golden Fleece, the great Cassowary Bird, and the cells and secret dungeons of the Enchanted Castle, he became more and more fired to the idea that he too was destined to become the hero of doughty deeds. Tale succeeded to tale, and the nurse pursued her narrative with such ardour and vividness and attractiveness of description that at times her breath choked in her throat. For she too half-believed the legends which she related; so that, during the telling of them, her eyes would shoot fire, her head shake with excitement, and her voice attain an unwonted pitch, while the child, overcome with mysterious horror, would press closer and closer to her side, and have tears in his eyes. Whether the narrative treated of dead men rising from the tomb at midnight, or of victims languishing in slavery to a monster, or of a bear with a wooden leg which went roaming the villages and farms in search of the natural limb which had been chopped from its body, the boy's hair bristled with fear, his childish imagination alternately seethed and froze, and he experienced the harassing, the sickly sweet, process of having his nerves played upon like the strings of an instrument. When his nurse repeated the words of the bear, "Creak, creak, wooden leg! I have visited every village and farm, and have found all the women asleep save one, who is now sitting on my back, and searing my flesh, and weaving my coat into cloth;" when, also, the bear entered the right hut, and was just getting ready to pounce upon the true ravisher of his natural leg—why, then the boy could stand it no longer, but, trembling and whimpering, flung himself into his nurse's arms with tears of terror—yet also with a laugh of joy to think that he was not in the clutches of the bear, but sitting on the stove couch beside his old guardian. Full of strange phantoms

was his mind, and fear and grief had sunk deep (and, possibly, for ever) into his soul. Mournfully he gazed about him, and saw that everything in life was charged with evil and misfortune. And as he did so he would keep thinking of the magic country where neither cruelty nor noise nor grief existed, and where Militrissa Kirbitievna lived, and where folk were fed and clothed for nothing....

Not only over the Oblomovkan children, but also over the Oblomovkan adults, did this legend exercise a lifelong sway. Every one in the house and the village alike—from the barin and his wife down to the blacksmith Tarass—became a trifle nervous as evening drew on, seeing that at that hour every tree became transformed into a giant, and every bush into a robbers' den. The rattle of a shutter, the howl of the wind in the chimney, caused these folk to turn pale. At Epiphany-tide not a man or a woman of them would go out of doors after ten o'clock at night; and never during the season of Easter would any one venture o' nights into the stable, lest there he should be confronted by the domovoi, by the horse demon.

At Oblomovka everything was believed in—including even ghosts and werewolves. Had you informed an inmate of the place that a haycock was walking about in the fields, he would have believed it. Had you spread abroad a rumour that (say) a certain sheep was not a sheep at all, but something else, or that Martha or Stepanida had become turned into a witch, the company would thenceforth have walked in terror both of the sheep and of the maidservant. Never would their heads have thought it necessary to inquire why the sheep had ceased to be a sheep, or why Martha or Stepanida had become turned into a witch. Rather these credulous folk would have thrown themselves upon any doubter—so strong was Oblomovka's belief in supernatural phenomena.

Later, little Oblomov came to see that the world is ordered on a simple plan, and that dead folk never rise from the tomb, and that no sooner do giants appear than they are clapped into booths, as robbers are cast into prison: yet, though his actual belief in

such marvels vanished, there remained behind a sediment of terror and of unaccountable sadness. Nothing was to be apprehended from monsters—that he knew full well; but always he stood in awe of something which seemed to be awaiting him at every step; and, if left alone in a dark room, or if fated to catch sight of a corpse, he would tremble with that sense of oppressive foreboding which his infancy had instilled into his very being. Inclined, of a morning, to laugh at his fears, of an evening Lis countenance paled again.

In the next dream Oblomov saw himself a boy of thirteen or fourteen. By this time he was going to school at the village of Verkievo, five versts from Oblomovka, where an old German named Schtoltz kept a small educational establishment for the sons of neighbouring gentry. Schtoltz had a son of his own—one Andrei, a boy almost of the same age as Oblomov; while likewise he had been given charge of a boy who did few lessons, for the reason that he suffered from scrofula and was accustomed to spend most of his days with his eyes and ears bandaged, and weeping quietly because he was not living with his grandmother, but, rather, in a strange house and amid hardhearted folk who never petted him or baked him his favourite pies. These three boys constituted the only pupils. As for the tutor himself, he was both capable and strict—like most Germans; wherefore Oblomov might have received a good education had Oblomovka stood five hundred versts from Verklevo. As it was, the atmosphere, the mode of life, and the customs of Oblomovka extended also to Verklevo, and the one place represented a sort of replica of the other, until only old Schtoltz's establishment stood clear of the primordial mist of laziness, of simplicity of morals, of inertia, and of immobility for which Oblomovka was distinguished. With the scenes, the incidents, and the morals of that mode of life young Oblomov's mind and heart had become saturated before even he had seen his first book. Who knows how early the growth of the intellectual germ in the youthful brain begins? Can we, in that youthful consciousness, follow the growth of first impressions and ideas? Possibly, even before a child has learnt to speak, or even to

walk, or even to do more than to look at things with the dumb, fixed gaze which his elders call “dull,” it has already discerned and envisaged the meaning, the inter-connection, of such phenomena as encompass its sphere—and that though the child is still powerless to communicate the fact, whether to itself or to others.

Thus for a long time past young Oblomov may have remarked and understood what was being said and done in his presence; for a long time past he may have understood why his father, in plush breeches and a wadded, cinnamon-coloured coat, walked to and fro with his hands behind his back, and took snuff, and sneezed, while his mother passed from coffee to tea, and from tea to dinner, in the daily round, and his father always refused to believe how many sheaves had been cut and reaped, but was for ever looking out for derelictions of duty, and, a handkerchief in his hand, holding forth on the subject of irregularities, and turning the whole place upside down. Briefly, for a long time past the boy may have decided in his mind that that, and no other, order of life was the right one. For how else could he have decided? In what manner did the “grown-ups” of Oblomovka live? God only knows whether they ever asked themselves for what purpose life had been given them. Did they, at all events, return themselves any answer to that question? No, no answer at all, since the whole thing seemed to them at once simple and clear. Had they, then, never heard of a hard life wherein people walk with anxious hearts, and roam the face of the earth, and devote their existence to everlasting toil? No, the good folk of Oblomovka had no belief in disturbing the mind; they never adopted as their mode of life a round of ceaseless aspirations somewhither, and towards an indefinite end. In fact, they feared the distraction of passion as they did fire; and as, in other spheres, men’s and women’s bodies burn with the volcanic violence of inward and spiritual flame, so the souls of the denizens of Oblomovka lay plunged in an undisturbed inertia which possessed their ease-loving organisms to the core. Consequently, life did not stamp them, as it stamped others, with premature wrinkles; nor did it deal out to them any morally destructive blows or misfortunes.

These good-humoured folk looked upon life as, rather, an idyll of peace and inactivity—though an idyll occasionally broken by such untoward incidents as sicknesses, losses, quarrels, and rare bouts of labour. That labour they endured as a punishment formerly imposed upon their forefathers also; yet they never loved it, and invariably escaped its incidence whenever they found it possible so to do. Such an avoidance they considered permissible, for never did they worry themselves with vague moral or intellectual questions. In this manner they flourished in constant health and cheerfulness: for which reason most of them lived to a green old age. Men of forty would look like youths, and old men, instead of battling with the approach of a hard and painful end, lived to the utmost possible limit, and then died, as it were, unawares, and with a gentle chilling of the frame, and an imperceptible drawing of the closing breath. No wonder that in these days folk say that the people used to be more robust!

Yes, it was more robust, for the reason that in those days parents did not hurry to explain to a boy the meaning of life, and to prepare him for life as for something at once difficult and solemn. No, they did not weary a child with books which would cloud his head with questions likely to devour the heart and the intellect, and to shorten existence. Rather, the standard of life was furnished him and taught him by parents who had received it ready-made from their parents, together with a testamentary injunction to preserve the integrity, the inviolability of that standard as they would have done that of the Vestal flame. As things were done in the time of Oblomovkan fathers and grandfathers, so were they done in the time of the present Oblomov's tenure of the estate. Of what needed he to think? Concerning what needed he to trouble his head? What needed he to learn? What ends needed he to compass? The Oblomovs required nothing—their life flowed like a peaceful river, and all that they had to do was to sit on the bank of that river, and to observe the inevitable phenomena which, successively, and unsought, presented themselves to the eyes of each observer.

Before the vision of the steeping Oblomov there next uprose a series of living pictures of the three chief acts of Oblomovkan life, as played in the presence of his family, of his relatives, and of his friends—namely, the three acts of birth, of marriage, and of death. This was succeeded by a varied procession of minor incidents of life, whether grave or gay—of baptisms, birthdays, family festivals, Shrovetides, Easters, Convivial feasts, family gatherings, welcomes, farewells, and occasions of official congratulation or condolence. These passed before Oblomov's vision with solemn exactitude, and also he beheld the bearing of familiar faces at these ceremonies, according as they were affected by vanity or by care. No matter what the festival might be—whether a betrothal or a solemn wedding or a name-day—every possible social rule had to be consulted, and no mistake made as to where each person was to sit, what presents, and to what value, ought to be given, who was to walk with whom at the ceremony, and what signals had best be made during its course.

Do you think, then, that goodly children would not result from such formal unitings? For answer you would need but to look at the rosy, heavy little cupids which the mothers of the place carried or led by the hand. Every one of those mothers would have insisted that their little ones were the plumpest, the whitest, and the healthiest children possible. Another local custom was to make a lark-pie as soon as spring came in. Without it spring would not have been spring at all, for observances of this kind comprised the whole life, the whole scientific knowledge, of the inhabitants, all of whose joys and sorrows were bound up with Oblomovka, and whose hearts beat high at the anticipation of such local rites and feasts and ceremonies. Yet no sooner had they christened, married, or buried an individual than they forgot both the latter and his (or her) fate, and relapsed into their usual apathy until aroused by a new occasion—by a baptism, a wedding, or other happening of the kind. Directly a child was born the parents made it their first care to perform over the little one every ceremony prescribed by decorum, and then to follow up the christening with a

banquet. Thereafter the child's bringing up began according to a system dictated by the mother and the nurse for his healthy development, and for his protection from cold, from the evil eye, and from sundry other inimical influences. Indeed, no pains were spared to keep the youngster in good appetite and spirits. Also as soon as he was able to fend for himself, and a nurse had become a superfluity, his mother would be seized with a desire to procure for him a helpmeet as strong and as ruddy as himself; whereupon there would ensue a further epoch of rites and feastings, until eventually a marriage had been arranged. Always this consummation represented the epitome of life's incidents, and as soon as it was reached there began a repetition of births, rites, and banquets, until, finally, a funeral ceremony interrupted the festivities—though not for long, since other faces would appear to succeed the old ones, and children would become youths and maidens, and plight their troth to one another, and marry one another, and produce individuals similar to themselves. Thus life stretched out in a continuous, uniform chain which broke off imperceptibly only when the tomb had been reached.

Time, the rare times when other cares overtook the good folk of Oblomovka, but always they faced the situation with stoical immobility, and the said cares, after circling over their heads, flew away like birds which, having sought to cling to a smooth, perpendicular wall, find that they are fluttering their wings in vain against the stubborn stone, and therefore spread those pinions and depart. For instance, on one occasion a portion of the gallery around the house fell upon, and buried under its ruins, a hencoop full of poultry, as well as, in doing so, narrowly missed a serving-woman who happened to be sitting near the spot with her husband. At once the establishment was in an uproar. Every one came running to the scene, under the impression that not only the hencoop, but also the barinia and little Ilya, were lying under the debris. Every one held up his or her hands in horror, and fell to blaming every one else for not having foreseen the catastrophe. Every one expressed surprise that the gallery had fallen, and also surprise that it had not fallen long ago. Upon that

there ensued a clamour and a discussion as to how things could best be put right; after which, with sighs of regret for the poultry, the company slowly dispersed, while strictly forbidding little Ilya to approach the rums. Three weeks later Andrushka, Petrushka, and Vassika were ordered to chop the planks and the remainder of the balustrade in pieces, and then to remove the fragments to the outbuildings, lest the road should become obstructed; and in the outbuildings those fragments tossed about until the following spring. Every time that the elder Oblomov saw them from the window he fell to thinking, what had best be done with them. Summoning the carpenter, he took counsel with the man as to whether he had better build a new gallery or pull down what was left of the old one; until finally he dismissed his subordinate with the words, “Do you wait a little until I have considered the matter further.” The same thing went on until, one day, either Vassika or Motika reported to the barin that that morning, while he (Vassika or Motika) had been climbing over the remains of the old gallery, the corners of it had come away from the walls, and more of the structure had fallen; whereupon the carpenter was summoned to a final consultation, and the upshot was that some of the old fragments were used to prop the remaining portions of the gallery. Sure enough, by the close of the month this had been done.

“Aye, that gallery looks as good as new,” the old man said to his wife. “See how splendidly Thedot has re-erected the beams! They resemble the pillars which the Governor has just had fitted to his house. The job has been well done, and will last for a long time.”

Here some one reminded him that it would be as well also to have the gates rehung and the veranda repaired, since the holes in the steps to the latter were affording access, not only to the cats, but also to the pigs.

“Yes, yes, it ought to be done,” said the barin thoughtfully. Then he went out to look at the veranda. “Yes, certainly the thing is breaking up,” he continued as he

see-sawed one of the planks like a cradle.

“They have been loose ever since the veranda was made,” some one remarked.

“How so?” asked the barin. “They are loose only because the floor has not been mended for sixteen years. It was done then by Luka. He was a carpenter, if you like! Now he is dead, may God rest his soul! Workmen are not as clever as they used to be—they merely spoil things.”

From that old Oblomov turned his attention to something else; and to this day—so report has it—the veranda is rickety, though not actually fallen to pieces. Certainly Luka must have been a good workman!

However, to do the master and the mistress justice, they were capable of being shaken out of their apathy, even to the point of growing angry and heated, should any failure or misfortune occur. How, they would inquire, could such and such a matter have come to be overlooked or neglected? At once due measures must be taken. Perhaps this would be relative to the fact that the footbridge over the moat needed mending, or that the garden fence called for repairs at a spot where the planking was lying flat upon the ground and allowing the cattle to enter and spoil the shrubs. Indeed, so solicitous was the barin for his property that once, when walking in the garden, he, with his own hands, and with many grunts and groans, lifted up a length of fencing, and ordered the gardener to fix a couple of props to the same; and to this activity on the part of the proprietor was due the fact that the said fence remained upright during the whole of the remainder of the summer—until once more a winter snowstorm laid it low. Also, when Antip, with his horse and water-cart, fell through the bridge into the moat three new planks were inserted into the structure! Indeed, Antip had not recovered from his bruising before the bridge was looking almost as good as new! And even when the garden fence collapsed a second time the cows and the goats did not reap very much advantage from the event. True, they managed to devour a few currant-bushes, and also to strip a dozen

lime-trees; but before they could begin also upon the apple-trees an order was issued that the fence should be properly dug in and reditched. But this was only after two cows and a goat had been caught redhanded. You should have seen the distension of their stomachs with the generous fare!...

Once more Oblomov dreamed that he was in the great, dark drawing-room at home. The long winter's evening was closing in, and his mother, seated on the sofa and engaged in quietly knitting a boy's stocking, was yawning occasionally, and scratching her head with a knitting-needle. Beside her were two maids—their heads bent over their work as industriously they fashioned a holiday garment either for young Ilya or for his father or for themselves. Meanwhile the barin, with hands clasped behind his back, was pacing cheerfully to and fro, or seating himself on a chair for a moment or two before resuming his walk. Ever and anon, too, he would take a pinch of snuff, sneeze, and then take another pinch. As for light, it came from a single tallow candle, and even the said candle was a luxury permitted only on autumn and winter evenings; for in summer every one contrived to rise and to go to bed by daylight, so that candles might be saved altogether. This was a practice which had arisen partly from custom and partly from economy. Of every commodity not produced at home, but requiring, rather, to be bought, the good folk of Oblomovka were extremely parsimonious; so that, although they would willingly slaughter a fine gamefowl or a dozen young pullets for a guest's entertainment, not a raisin too much would be put into a pudding, and every face would whiten if the said guest should pour himself out a second glassful of wine. Very seldom, however, did such contretemps occur: only the most abandoned of wretches would have done things like those—and guests of that kidney never obtained even admittance to Oblomovka. Local manners required that, what though twice or thrice invited to partake of a given dish or a given bottle of wine, the guest should not do so, since he was supposed to be aware that even the first invitation had conveyed a secret prayer that he would kindly abstain from the dish or bottle of wine after merely tasting of

the same. Nor were two candles lit for every guest, since candles required to be bought in the town, and therefore, like all other purchased articles, were kept under lock and key by the lady of the house, and, with the candle-ends, were counted before being stored away.

In short, Oblomovka disliked disbursing hard cash; so much so that, however much a given article might be required, the money for it would be handed out with reluctance, however insignificant the sum. As for any considerable outlay, it was accompanied with groans, lamentations, and high words, since the Oblomovkans would suffer any kind of misfortune rather than part with their coin. For this reason the sofa in the drawing-room had long been in rags, and the leather on the barin's arm-chair leather only by courtesy, since most of its cord and rope stuffing was now exposed, and only a single strip of the original covering clung to the back of the chair—the rest having, during the past five years, become split into strips, and fallen away. For the same reason the entrance gates had sagged, and the veranda become rickety. Nevertheless, to pay out, say, from two to five hundred roubles for a given purpose, however necessary that purpose might be, seemed to the inhabitants of the establishment something almost approaching suicide. In fact, on hearing that a young landowner of the neighbourhood had gone to Moscow and there paid three hundred roubles for a dozen shirts, twenty-five for a pair of boots, and forty for a waistcoat (it was on the occasion of the landowner's marriage), old Oblomov crossed himself, and exclaimed with an expression of horror:

"That young man ought to be clapped into prison!" In general, the Oblomovkans paid no heed to politico-economic axioms concerning the necessity of swift, brisk circulation of capital, or concerning the active production and exchange of commodities. In the simplicity of their souls they considered that the best theory, as well as the best practice, with regard to capital was to hoard it.

On chairs in the drawing-room there would be seated snoring, in different attitudes,

the gentry and customary intimates of the house. For the most part a profound silence would reign among them, for they saw one another every day, and their respective stores of intellectual wealth had long been tapped and explored, while news from without arrived but scantily. Indeed, amid the stillness the only sound to be heard would be that of old Oblomov's heavy, workaday slippers, the dull beat of the clock in its case, and the snapping of thread as one or another of the sewing party bit or broke off a piece. Perhaps after half an hour of this one of those present would yawn—then make the sign of the cross over the lips, and murmur: "Lord, pardon me!" Next, some one would follow suit, and then a third, until the infectious desire to ventilate the lungs had gone the round of the company. Next, old Oblomov would approach the window, look through it, and say with a touch of surprise: "Only five o'clock, yet already it is dark in the courtyard!"

"Yes," some one would answer, "'tis always dark by this time. The long evenings are beginning to draw in."

In spring, contrariwise, the company would fall to expressing surprise and gratification at the thought that the long days were approaching. Yet, had you inquired what the long days meant to them, they could not possibly have told you! After this episode silence would resume its sway, until, perhaps, in snuffing the candle, some one would chance to extinguish it. Upon that every one would give a start, and one of the company would be sure to ejaculate:

"An unexpected guest is making his way in our direction." In fact, it was not an uncommon phenomenon for the incident to give rise to a lengthy conversation.

Time, at Oblomovka, was reckoned mostly by festivals, by the seasons of the year, and by various family and domestic events—no reference whatsoever being made, to months or to the days of a month. This may have partly arisen from the fact that none but old Oblomov were capable of distinguishing between the names of the months and the dates in a given month.

Presently the head of the family would relapse into meditation, while little Ilya, lolling behind his mother's back, would also be sunk in dreams, and at times actually dozing. Suddenly old Oblomov would (to take a typical incident) halt in the middle of his pacing, and clap his hand anxiously to the tip of his nose; whereupon there would ensue some such dialogue as the following:

The master of the house: What on earth is the matter with me? See! Some one must have passed away, for the tip of my nose is itching!

His wife: Good Lord! Why should any one have passed away because the tip of your nose is sore? Some one has passed away only when the bridge of one's nose is hurting one. What a forgetful man you are, to be sure! Were you to say a thing like that before strangers, you would make us blush for you.

The master of the house: But every part of my nose is hurting me?

His wife: Pain at the side of it means news to come; in the eyebrows, sorrow; in the forehead, a greeting; on the right side, a man; on the left side, a woman; in the ears, rain; in the lips, a kiss; in the whiskers, a present of something to eat; in the elbow, a new place to sleep in; and in the sole of the foot, a journey.

And so forth, and so forth.

Lastly, when nine o'clock had struck there would follow supper; after which the company would disperse to rest, and sleep would once more reign over the care-free heads of the Oblomovkans.

In his dream Oblomov saw not only an evening spent in this manner, but whole weeks and months and years of such evening's. Never did anything occur to interrupt the uniformity of that life, nor were the Oblomovkans in any way wearied by it, since they could conceive no other existence, and would have turned from any other with distaste. Had there been imported into that existence any change due to circumstances, they would have regretted the fact, and felt troubled by the thought that to-morrow was not going to be precisely as to-day. What wanted they with the

diversity, the changes, the incidents, for which others yearned? “Let others drink of that cup,” said they; “but for us Oblomovkans—no such thing. Let others live as they please.” Incident—even pleasing incident—they considered to bring disturbance and fuss and worry and commotion in its train, so that one could not sit quietly in one’s seat and just talk and eat one’s meals. Therefore, as decade succeeded decade, the Oblomovkans dozed and yawned, and indulged in good-humoured laughter at rustic jests, and assembled in corners to relate of what they had dreamed during the previous night. Had their dreams been unpleasant, the company at once became thoughtful and nervous, and refrained from jesting. On the other hand, had their dreams been of a prophetic nature, at once the company grew cheerful or despondent, according as the visions had promised sorrow or joy. Lastly, had their dreams called for the consideration of some portent, the company proceeded to take such active measures as might be necessary to deal with the situation. Also, every one indulged in card-playing, games of “fools,” and so forth; while, as for the womenfolk, they would discuss the neighbourhood, and pry not only into its family life and social gaiety, but also into its secret ends and desires. About these they would dispute, and then pass censure upon various persons (more particularly upon unfaithful husbands), and relate details of birthdays, christenings, namedays, and dinner parties, with the lists of the invited and non-invited guests. Likewise they would show one another various articles of their wardrobes, and the hostess would proudly vaunt the merits of her sheets, her knitted garments, and her lace of home manufacture. Yet at length even these things would begin to pall; whereupon coffee, tea, and cakes would be served, and a silence, broken only by desultory remarks, ensue.

Of course, also, there were certain rare occasions when these methods of spending the time were interrupted by such happenings as the entire household falling ill of a fever, or some member of it either tripping over a stake in the dark or falling out of the hayloft or being struck on the head by a beam which had slipped from the roof.

Yet, as I say, such events were rare, and when they occurred, every known and tried domestic remedy was brought into play. The injured spot was rubbed with ointment, a dose of holy water was administered, a prayer was muttered—and all was well. On the other hand, a winter headache * was quite a common phenomenon and in that case the household would retire to bed, groans and sighs would resound. One person would wrap a cucumber poultice and insert cranberries in his ears. A third walk about with nothing on but his shirt conscious, roll about the room at regular periods of once or twice a month. This happened, for the reason that the Oblomovkans did not like to allow any superfluous heat to escape by the chimney, but covered the stoves when the flames were rising high. Consequently upon no single stove-couch or stove could a hand be laid without danger of that hand being blistered.

* Due to the fumes of the charcoal used for heating purposes.

Only once was the monotony of Oblomovkan life broken by a wholly unexpected circumstance. The household, exhausted by the labours of dinner, had assembled for tea, when there entered a local peasant who had just been making an expedition to the town. Thrusting his hand into his bosom, he with difficulty produced a much-creased letter, addressed to the master of the house. Every one sat thunderstruck, and even the master himself changed countenance. Not an eye was there which did not dart glances at the missive. Not a nose was there which was not strained in its direction.

“How unlooked for!” at length said the mistress of the household as she recovered herself. “From whom can the letter have come?”

Old Oblomov took it, and turned it over in his hands, as though at a loss what to do with the epistle.

“Where did you get it from?” he inquired of the peasant. “And who gave it you?”

“I got it at the inn where I put up,” replied the man. “Twice did folk come from the post-office to inquire if any peasantry from Oblomovka were there, since a letter

was awaiting the barin. The first time they came, I kept quiet, and the postman took the letter away; but afterwards the deacon of Verklevo saw me, and they came and gave me the letter, and made me pay five kopecks for it. I asked them what I was to do with the letter, and they said that I was to hand it to your Honour."

"Then at first you refused it?' the mistress remarked sharply.

"Yes, I refused it. What should we want with letters? We have no need for them, nor had I any orders to take charge of such things. So I was afraid to touch it. 'Don't you go too fast with that thing,' I said to myself. Yet how the postman abused me! He would have complained to the authorities had I left the letter where it was."

"Fool!" exclaimed the lady of the house.

"And from whom can it be?" said old Oblomov meditatively as he studied the address. "Somehow I seem to know the handwriting."

Upon that the missive fell to being passed from one person to another; and much guessing and discussion began. Finally the company had to own itself nonplussed. The master of the house ordered his spectacles to be fetched, and quite an hour and a half were consumed in searching for the same; but at length be put them on, and then bethought him of opening the letter.

"Wait a moment," said his wife, hastily, arresting his hand. "Do not break the seal. Who knows what the letter may contain? It may portend something dreadful, some misfortune. To what have we not come nowadays? To-morrow, or the day after, will be soon enough. The letter will not walk away of itself."

So the letter was placed under lock and key, and tea passed round. In fact, the document would have lain there for a year, had it not constituted a phenomenon so unusual as to continue to excite the Oblomovkans' curiosity. Both after tea and on the following day the talk was of nothing else. At length things could no longer be borne, and on the fourth day, the company being assembled, the seal was diffidently broken, and old Oblomov glanced at the signature.

“Radistchev!” he exclaimed. “So the message is from Philip Matveitch!”

“Oh! Ah! From him, indeed?” resounded on all sides. “To think that he is actually alive! Glory be to God! And what does he say?”

Upon that old Oblomov started to read the letter aloud. It seemed that Philip Matveitch desired him to forward the recipe for a certain beer which was brewed at Oblomovka.

“Then send it, send it,” exclaimed the chorus. “Yes, and also write him an answer.”

Two weeks elapsed.

“Really we must write that note,” old Oblomov kept repeating. “Where is the recipe?”

“Where is it?” retorted his wife. “Why, it still has to be looked for. Wait a little. Why need we hurry? Should God be good, we shall soon be having another festival, and eating flesh again. Let us write then. I tell you, the recipe won’t run away.”

“Yes, I daresay it would be better to write when we have reached the festival.”

Sure enough, the said festival arrived, and again there was talk of the letter. In fact, old Oblomov did in truth get himself ready to write it. He shut himself up in his study, he put on his spectacles, and he sat down to the table. Everything in the house was profoundly quiet, since orders had been issued that the establishment was not to stamp upon the floor, nor, indeed, to make a noise of any kind. “The barin is writing,” was said in much the same tone of respectful awe that might have been used had a dead person been lying in the house.

Hardly had old Oblomov inscribed the words “Dear Sir”—slowly and crookedly, and with a shaking hand, and as cautiously, as though he had been engaged in a dangerous task—when there entered to him his wife.

“I have searched and searched,” she said, “but can find no recipe. Nevertheless the bedroom wardrobe still remains to be ransacked, so how can you write the letter

now?”

“It ought to go by the next post,” her husband remarked.

“And what will it cost to go?”

Old Oblomov produced an ancient calendar. “Forty kopecks,” he said.

“What? You are going to throw away forty kopecks on such a trifle?” she exclaimed. “We had far better wait until we are sending other things also to the town. Let the peasants know about it.”

“That might be better,” agreed old Oblomov, tapping his pen against the table. With that he replaced the pen in the inkstand, and took off his spectacles.

“Yes, it might be better,” he concluded.

And to this day no one knows how long Philip Matveitch had to wait for that recipe.

Also, there were times when old Oblomov actually took a book in his hands. What book it might be he did not care, for he felt no actual craving to read; he looked upon literature as a mere luxury which could easily be indulged in, or be done without, even as one might have a picture on one’s wall, or one might not—one might go out for an occasional walk, or one might not. Hence, as I say, he was indifferent to the identity of a book, since he looked upon such articles as mere instruments of distraction from ennui and lack of employment. Also, he always adopted towards authors that half-contemptuous attitude which used to be maintained by gentry of the ancien régime; for, like many of his day, he considered a writer of books to be a roisterer, a ne’er-do-well, a drunkard, a sort of merry-andrew. Also, he would read aloud items of intelligence from journals three years old—such items as, “It is reported from The Hague that, on returning to the Palace from a short drive, the King gazed at the assembled onlookers through his spectacles,” or “At Vienna such and such an Ambassador has just presented his Letter of Credentials.”

Again, there was a day when he read aloud the intelligence that a certain work by a foreign writer had just been translated into Russian.

“The only reason why they go in for translating such things,” remarked a small landowner who happened to be present, “is that they may wheedle more money out of us dvoriané.” *

* Squires, or gentry

Meanwhile the little Ilya was engaged in journeying backwards and forwards to Schtoltz’s school every Monday, when he awoke, he felt overcome with depression, should he happen to hear Vassika’s rapping voice shout aloud from the veranda: “Antipka, harness the piebald, as the young barin has to drive over to the German’s!” Yes, then Ilya’s heart would tremble, and he would repair sadly to his mother, who would know why he did so, and begin to gild the pill, while secretly sighing to herself at the thought that she was to be parted from the lad for a whole week. Indeed, on such mornings he could scarcely be given enough to eat, and scarcely could a sufficiency of buns and cakes and pies and sweetmeats be made to take with him (the said sufficiency being based upon an assumption that at the German’s the pupils fared far from richly).

“One couldn’t overeat oneself there,” said the Oblomovkans. “For dinner one gets nothing but soup, roast, and cabbage, for tea only cold meat, and for supper morgen fri.” *

* German black pudding.

However, there were Mondays when he did not hear Vassika’s voice ordering the piebald to be harnessed, and when his mother met him with a smile and the pleasant tidings, that he was not to go to school that day, since the following Thursday would be a holiday, and it was not worth while for him to make the journey to and fro for a stay only of three days. At other times he would be informed that that week was the Week of Kindred, * and that therefore cake-baking, and not book-learning, would be

the order of the day. Or on a Monday morning his mother would glance at him, and say: “Your eyes look dull to-day. Are you sure that you are well?” Then she would shake her head dubiously, and though the crafty youngster would be in perfect health, he would hold his tongue on the subject. Thereafter she would continue: “You must stay at home this week, for God knows what might happen to you at that other place.” And in her decision she would be confirmed by the whole of the rest of the household. True, these fond parents were not blind to the value of education; it was that they realized only its external value. That is to say, they could not look beyond the fact that education enabled folk to get on in the world so far as the acquisition of rank, crosses, and money was concerned. Certain evil rumours had arisen regarding the necessity, of learning not only one’s letters, but also various branches of science which until now had remained unknown to the world of Oblomovka; but, as I say, the good folk of that place had only the dimmest, the remotest, comprehension of any internal demand for education, and therefore desired to secure for their little Ilya only certain showy advantages, and no more—to wit, a fine uniform, and the getting of him into the Civil Service (his mother even foresaw him become a provincial governor!). Yet this, they thought, ought to be attained at as little cost as possible, and by means of a covert evasion of the various rocks and barriers which lay strewn about the path of enlightenment. Yes, those rocks and barriers, they said, must be walked around, not scaled; learning must be assimilated lightly, and not at the cost of exhaustion both of body and mind. In their view the process need be continued only until the little Ilya had obtained some sort of a certificate to the effect that he had been through “a course of the arts and sciences.”

* Week of the Dead.

But to this Oblomovkan system old Schtoltz was wholly opposed; and probably his German persistency would have carried the day, had he not had to contend with difficulties even in his own camp. That is to say, his son was accustomed to spoil

young Oblomov by doing his exercises for him, and prompting him in his translations. Also, young Oblomov could clearly discern the differences between his home life and life at school. At home, no sooner would he have awakened than he would find Zakhar standing by his bed. Even as the nurse had done, Zakhar would draw on for the lad his stockings, and put on his boots; and if Master Ilya—now become a boy of fourteen—did not altogether approve of Zakhar's performances he would nudge the valet on the nose with his toe. Moreover, should the boy at any time want anything, he had three or four servants to hasten to do his bidding; and in this fashion he never learnt what it was to do a single thing for himself. Yet in the end his parents' fond solicitude wearied him for at no time could he even cross the courtyard, or descend the staircase, without hearing himself followed by shouts of "Where are you going to, Ilya?" or "How can you do that?" or "You will fall and hurt yourself!" Thus, pampered like an exotic plant in a greenhouse, he grew up slowly and drowsily, and in a way which turned his energies inwards, and gradually caused them to wither.

Yet on rare occasions he would still awake as fresh and vigorous and cheerful as ever; he would awake feeling that an imp of mischief was egging him on to climb the roof, or to go and roll in a field, or to rush round the meadow where the hay was being cut, or to perch himself on the top of a fence, or to start teasing the farm dogs—in short, to take to running hither and thither and everywhere.

At length the thing was no longer to be borne; no longer could he resist the imp's prompting. One winter's morning, capless, he leaped from the veranda into the courtyard, and thence through the entrance gates. Thereafter, rolling a snowball hastily in his hands, he darted towards a crowd of boys. The fresh air cut his face, the frost nipped his ears, his mouth and throat felt choked with cold, but in his breast there was a great joy. He rushed forward as fast as his legs could carry him, he shouted and he laughed. In two seconds he was in the thick of the boys. One snowball he threw—it achieved a miss; a second snowball he threw—it achieved the

same; and just as he was seizing a third his face became converted into one large clot of snow. He fell, and, being unused to falling, hurt himself; yet still he laughed merrily, though the tears had sprung to his eyes. Behind the knot of youngsters ran two dogs, pulling at their clothes; for, as every one knows, dogs cannot with equanimity see a human being running. Thus the whole gang sped through the village—a noisy, shouting, barking crew. At length the lads were caught, and justice was meted out—to one on the head, to a second on the ears, to a third on the rump. Also, the fathers of the culprits were threatened with retribution. As for the young barin, he was hastily thrust into a snatched-up greatcoat, then into his father's sheepskin, and, lastly, into a couple of quilts; after which he was borne homeward in triumph. The entire household had expected to behold him arrive in a moribund condition; and indescribable was his parents' delight on seeing him carried in both alive and unharmed..Yes, they gave thanks to God, they dosed the boy with mint and elderberry wine and raspberry syrup, and they kept him three days in bed—although the one thing that would have done him any good would have been to have let him go out again and play in the snow!

Entering quietly, Zakhar tried to arouse the sleeper, but failed. Suddenly a loud laugh proceeded from the neighbourhood of the door. Oblomov started up.

"Schtoltz! Schtoltz!" he cried rapturously as he threw himself upon the newcomer.

PART II

I

Often Oblomov's old school friend had endeavoured—though in vain—to wean his comrade from the state of inertia in which he (Oblomov) was plunged. The pair were discussing the same subject in Oblomov's study.

"Once upon a time," said Schtoltz, "I remember you a slim, lively young fellow.

Have you forgotten our joint readings of Rousseau, Schiller, Goethe, and Byron?"

"Have I forgotten them?" re-echoed Oblomov. "No. How could I forget them? How I used to dream over those books, and to whisper to myself my hopes for the future, and to make plans of all sorts!—though I kept them from you for fear lest you would laugh at them. But that expired at Verklevo; and never since has it been repeated. What is the reason, I would ask? Never have I gone through any great mental tempest or upheaval, my conscience is as clear as a mirror, and no adverse stroke of fortune has occurred to destroy my self-conceit. Yet for some reason or another I have gone to pieces." He sighed. "You see, Andrei, at no point in my life have I been touched with a fire which could either save me or destroy me. I have lived a life different from that of others. With me it has not been a morning dawn which, gradually broadening to a sultry, bustling noon, has faded, imperceptibly, naturally, into eventide. No, I began life with a quenching of the light of day, and, from the first moment that I realized myself, realized also that I was on the wane. I realized that fact as I sat at my desk in the chancellory, as I read, as I consorted with friends, as I squandered my means upon Minia, as I lounged on the Nevski Prospect, as I attended receptions where I was welcomed as an eligible parti, as I wasted my life and brains in fluctuating between town and country. Even my self-conceit—upon what was it flung away? Upon figuring in clothes made by a good tailor, upon gaining the entrée to well-known houses, upon having my hand shaken by Prince P———! Yet self-conceit ought to be the very salt of life. Whither is mine gone? Either I have never understood the life of which I speak or it was never suited to me. Oh, that I had never known or seen it, that no one had ever pointed it out to me! For yourself, you entered and left my orbit like a bright, swift comet; and when you were gone I forgot everything, and began to fade."

As Schtoltz listened to Oblomov's words there was no trace of a contemptuous smile on his features.

“Not long ago,” resumed Oblomov, “you said that my face had lost its freshness and colour. Yes, that is so. I am like a ragged, cast-off garment—though less from the fact that during the past twelve years there has lain within me a light that has ever been seeking an outlet, but has been doomed to illumine only its own prison. Now, therefore, unable to gain its freedom, it is becoming altogether extinguished. Am I alone in this, however? Look around you. The name of the tribe to which I belong is legion.”

“Nevertheless, I intend to take you travelling with me,” remarked Schtoltz, rising. “We will start to-morrow. It must be done now or never.” With that he went to bed.

“Now or never.” Somehow to Oblomov the words seemed a sort of threat. He approached his dusty writing-table, and took up a pen. Of ink there was none, nor yet a single scrap of writing-paper. Mechanically and at random he traced some letters in the dust with his finger. There resulted the word Oblomovstchina. * He obliterated it with a quick movement of his sleeve. Often in his dreams had he seen the word written in letters of fire on the ceiling, even as once Belshazzar saw characters traced on the wall of his banqueting-room. “Now or never.” Oblomov listened to this last despairing call of his reason and his energy, and, weighing; in the balance what little volition still remained to him, considered to what end he could best devote that sorry fragment. Which was he to do? To go forward or to stand still? To go forward would mean divesting, not only his shoulders, but also his intellect, his soul, of his dressing-gown; it would mean sweeping away, not only from his chamber walls, but also from his eyes, the dust and the cobwebs. Yet how was he to take the first step necessary? Where was he to begin? He remembered Schtoltz’s words: “Go to Oblomovka, and there learn what sowing and grinding mean, and why the peasant is poor or rich. Walk the fields, attend the local elections, visit the mills, and linger by the river wharves.”

* The disease of Oblomovka. See later.

Yes, that was what Schtoltz had said. But it would mean going forward, and going forward unceasingly. In that case farewell to they poetic ideal of life! Such a course would connote work in a smithery rather than life: it would entail a continual round of heat and of clatter. What would be the good of it? Would it not be better to stand still? To stand still would merely mean occasionally putting on a shirt inside out, dinners with Tarantiev, thinking as little as possible of anything, leaving “A Voyage to Africa” unread to the end, and attaining a peaceful old age in the fiat of which Tarantiev had spoken. “Now or never.”

“To be or not to be.” Oblomov rose from his chair, but, failing at once to insert his foot into a slipper, sat down again.

Two weeks later Schtoltz departed for England, after exacting from Oblomov a pledge to join him later in Paris. Oblomov even went to the length of procuring a passport, ordering an expensive travelling coat, and purchasing a cap. The furniture of the flat was to be removed to the quarters of Tarantiev’s crony in the Veaborg Quarter, and stored in the three rooms until its owner’s return.

A month went by—three months; yet Oblomov still did not start. Schtoltz, who had reached Paris long ago, continued to send him letter after letter, but they remained unanswered. Why so? Was it because the ink in the inkstand had become dried up and no writing-paper was available? No; both ink, pens, and paper were present in abundance. Indeed, more than once Oblomov sat down to write, and did so fluently, and, at times, as expressively and eloquently as he had done in the days when, with Schtoltz, he had dreamed of the strenuous life, and of traveling. Likewise he had taken to rising at seven o’clock in the morning, and to reading, and to carrying books about with him. Also, his face had lost its look of dreaminess, weariness, ennui—there was colour in his cheek, a sparkle in his eye, and an air almost of adventurousness—at least, almost of self-assurance—about his whole bearing. Lastly, no longer was the dressing-gown to be seen, for Tarantiev had carried it off

to his friend's flat, along with the rest of Oblomov's effects. Thus Oblomov wore better clothes than had been his wont, and even sang cheerfully as he moved about. Why so? The reason was that there had come into his life two friends of Schtoltz's, in the shape of a pretty girl named Olga Sergievna Ilyinitch and her aunt. On his first visit to them he was overcome with constraint. "How gladly I would take off my gloves!" he thought to himself. "And how hot the room is! And how unused to this sort of thing I have grown!"

"Besides, she will keep looking at me," was his further reflection as diffidently he scanned his clothes. He even wiped his face with his handkerchief, lest a smut should have settled on his nose. Also, he touched his tie, to make sure that its folds had not come undone, as had sometimes happened with him. But no—all was as it should be. Yet she would persist in regarding him attentively. Next, a footman tendered him a cup of tea, with a plate of biscuits. He tried to subdue his nervousness, and to unbend; but in the act of unbending he seized such a handful of cracknels, biscuits, and sugared buns that the girl tittered and the rest of those present gazed at the pile with unconcealed interest. "My God, she is still looking at me!" he thought to himself. "What on earth am I to do with all these biscuits?"

Without looking, he could tell that Olga had risen from her seat and moved to another corner. This helped to relieve his breast of a certain amount of weight. None the less she continued to contemplate him, in order to see what he would do with the confectionery.

"Probably I had best eat them as quickly as possible," he thought; with which he fell to hurriedly selecting one after another. Luckily all were of the sort which melts in the mouth. When only two of them remained he heaved a sigh of relief, and decided to glance towards the corner where he knew Olga to be seated. Horrors! She was standing by a bust, with one hand resting on its pedestal, and her eyes closely observing him! Nay, she had even come out of her corner to get a closer view of

him! Without doubt she must have noted his awkwardness with the biscuits!

True, at supper she sat at the other end or the table, and ate and talked as though she were in no way concerned with him; yet never once did he throw a timid glance in her direction (in the hope that she was not looking his way) but straightway he encountered her gaze—a gaze which, though good-humoured, was also charged with curiosity. That was enough. He hastened to take leave of her aunt, who invited him to come and dine another day. He bowed, and moved away across the drawing-room without raising his eyes. Presently he encountered a screen, with behind it, the grand piano. He looked again—and behold, behind the screen was seated Olga! She was still gazing at him with intent curiosity. Also, she seemed to him to be smiling.

"Certainly Andrei has often told me that I put on pairs of odd socks, and my shirt inside out," he reflected as he drove home. From that moment he could not get Olga's glance out of his head. In bed he lay on his back and tried to adopt the most comfortable attitudes; yet still he could not sleep....

One fine morning Tarantiev came and carried off the rest of Oblomov's furniture; with the result that its owner spent three such days as he had never before experienced—days during which he was bedless and sofa-less, and therefore driven to dine at the house of Olga's aunt. Suddenly he noticed that opposite the aunt's house there stood an untenanted villa. Consequently he hired it (furnished) at sight, and went to live there. Thereafter he spent his whole time with Olga—he read with her, he culled flowers with her, he walked by the lake and over the hills with her. Yes, he, Oblomov! How came this about? It came about thus.

On the evening of the fateful dinner-party at the aunt's house Oblomov experienced the same torture during the meal as he had done on the previous occasion. Every word that he spoke he uttered with an acute sense that over him, like a searchlight, there was hovering that glance, and that it was burning and irritating him, and that it was stimulating his nerves and blood. Surely, on the balcony, he thought, he would

be able, when ensconced behind a cloud of tobacco smoke, to succeed in momentarily concealing himself from that silent, that insistent gaze?

"What does it all mean?" he said to himself as he rocked himself to and fro. "Why, it is sheer torture! Have I made myself ridiculous? At no one else would she dare to stare as she does at me. I suppose it is because I am quieter than the rest. However, I will make an agreement with her. I will tell her, in so many words, that her eyes are dragging my very soul out of my body."

Suddenly she appeared on the threshold of the balcony. He handed her a chair, and she took a seat beside him.

"Are you so very ennuyé?" she inquired.

"Ennuyé, yes—but not much so. I have pursuits of my own."

"Ah? Schtoltz tells me that you are engaged in drawing up a scheme of some sort?"

"Yes. I want to live upon my estate, and am making a few preparations for doing so."

"And you are going abroad?"

"Undoubtedly—as soon as ever Schtoltz is ready to accompany me."

"Shall you be very glad to go?"

"Yes, very."

He looked at her. A smile was hovering on her face, and illuminating her eyes, and gradually spreading over her cheeks. Only her lips remained as pressed together as usual. He lacked the spirit to continue his lies calmly.

"However, I—I am rather a lazy person," he began. "But, but——"

Suddenly he felt vexed to think that she should have extracted from him a confession of his lethargy. "What is she to me?" he thought. "Am I afraid of her?"

"Lazy?" she exclaimed with a scarcely perceptible touch of archness. "What? A man be lazy? That passes my comprehension."

“Why should it?” was his inward comment. “It is all simple enough. I have taken to sitting at home more and more, and therefore Schtoltz thinks that I——”

“But I expect you write a great deal?” she went on. “And have you read much?” Somehow her gaze seemed very intent.

“No, I cannot say that I have.” The words burst from him in a sudden fear lest she should see fit: to put him through a course of literary examination.

“What do you mean?” she inquired, laughing. Then he too laughed.

“I thought that you were going to crossquestion me about some novel or another,” he explained. “But, you see, I never read such things.”

“Then you thought wrong. I was only going to ask you about a few books of travel.”

He glanced at her quickly. Her lips were still compressed, but the rest of her face was smiling.

“I must be very careful with her,” he reflected.

“What do you read?” she asked with seeming curiosity.

“It happens that I am particularly fond of books of travel,” he replied.

“Travels in Africa, for instance?” There was quiet demureness in the tone. He reddened at the not wholly unreasonable conjecture that she was aware not only of what he read but of how he read.

“And are you also musical?” she continued, in order to relieve him of his embarrassment. At this moment Schtoltz (who had now returned from abroad) appeared on the scene.

“Ha, Ilya!” he cried. “I have told Olga Sergievna that you adore music, and that to-night she must sing something—‘Casta Diva,’ for example.”

“Why did you speak for me at all?” protested Oblomov. “I am by no means an adorer of music.”

“What?” Schtoltz exclaimed. “Why, the man is offended! I introduce him as a

person of taste, and here is he stumbling over himself to destroy his good reputation!"

"I am only declining the rôle of connoisseur," said Oblomov. "'Tis too difficult and risky a rôle. Sometimes I can listen with pleasure to a cracked barrel-organ, and its tunes stick in my memory; while at other times I leave the Opera before the piece is half over. It all depends upon the mood in which I am. In fact, there are moments when I could close my ears even to Mozart."

"Then it is clear that you do love music," said Olga.

"Sing him something," requested Schtoltz.

"But suppose that Monsieur Oblomov were, at this very moment, to be feeling inclined to close his ears?" she said as she turned to him.

"I suppose I ought to utter some compliment or another," he replied. "But I cannot do so, and I would not, even if I could."

"Why?"

"Because," was Oblomov's naïve rejoinder, "things would be so awkward for me if I were to find that you sing badly."

"Even as, the other day, you found things awkward with the biscuits?" she retorted before she could stop herself. The next moment she reddened as though she would have given worlds to have been able to recall her words. "Pardon me," she added. "I ought not to have said that."

Oblomov had been unprepared, and was quite taken aback.

"That was a cruel advantage," he murmured.

"No—only a small revenge (and an unpremeditated one) for your failure to have had a compliment ready."

"Then perhaps I will have one ready when I have heard you sing."

"'You wish me to sing, then?"

“No; he wishes it.” Oblomov pointed to Schtoltz.

“But what of yourself?”

Oblomov shook his head deprecatingly.

“I could not wish for what I have not yet experienced,” he said.

“You are very rude, Ilya,” put in Schtoltz. “See what comes of lolling about at home and confining your efforts to having your socks put on for you.”

“Pardon me,” said Oblomov quickly, and without giving him time to finish. “I should find it no trouble to say: ‘I shall be most glad, most delighted, to hear you sing, for of course you sing perfectly.’ So,” he went on, “‘it will afford me the very greatest possible pleasure.’ But do you really think it necessary?”

“At least you might express a desire that I should sing—if only out of curiosity.”

“I dare not do so,” replied Oblomov. “You are not an actress.”

“Then it shall be for you that I will sing,” she said to Schtoltz.

“While you, Ilya,” he added, “can be getting your compliment ready.”

Evening was closing in, and the lamp had been lit. Moonlike, it cast through the ivy-covered trellis a light so dim that the dusk still veiled the outlines of Olga’s face and figure—it still shrouded them, as it were, in crepe; while the soft, strong voice, vibrating with nervous tension, came ringing through the darkness with a note of mystery. At Schtoltz’s prompting she sang several arias and romances, of which some expressed suffering, with a vague forecast of joy, while others expressed joy, coupled with a lurking germ of sorrow.

As Oblomov listened he could scarcely restrain his tears or the cry of ecstasy that was almost bursting from his soul. In fact, he would have undertaken the tour abroad if thereby he could have remained where he was at that moment, and then gone.

“Have I pleased you to-night?” she inquired of Schtoltz.

“Ask, rather, Oblomov,” he replied. “Confess now, Ilya: how long is it since you felt

as you are feeling at this moment?"

"Yet he might have felt like that this morning if 'a cracked barrel-organ' had happened to pass his window," put in Olga—but so kindly as to rob the words of their sarcasm.

"He never keeps his windows open," remarked Schtoltz. "Consequently, he could not possibly hear what is going on outside."

That night Oblomov was powerless to sleep. He paced the room in a mood of thoughtful despondency, and at dawn left the house to roam the city, with his head and his heart full of God only knows what feelings and reflections!

Three days later he called again at the aunt's.

"I want you," said Olga, "to feel thoroughly at home here."

"Then pray do not look at me as you are doing now, and as you have always done."

Instantly her glance lost its usual expression or curiosity, and became wholly softened to kindness.

"Why do you mind my looking at you so much?" she asked.

"I do not know. Somehow your gaze seems to draw from me everything that I would rather people did not learn—you least of all."

"Why so? You are a friend of Schtoltz's, and he is a friend of mine, and therefore——"

"And therefore there is no reason why you should know as much about me as he does," concluded Oblomov.

"No, there is no reason. But at least there is a possibility that I may do so."

"Yes—— thanks to his talkativeness! Indeed a poor service!"

"Have you, then, any secrets to conceal—or even crimes?" With a little laugh she edged away from him.

“Perhaps,” he said with a sigh.

“Yes, to put on odd socks is a grave crime,” she remarked with demure timidity. Oblomov seized his hat.

“I will not stand this!” he cried. “Yet you want me to feel at home here! As for Schtoltz, I detest him! He told you about the socks, I suppose?”

“Nay, nay,” she said. “Pardon me this once, and I will try to look at you in quite a different way. As a matter of fact, ’tis you who are looking at me in rather an odd fashion.”

True enough, he was gazing into her kindly, grey-blue eyes—he was doing so simply because he could not help it—and thinking to himself that never in all the world had he seen a maiden so beautiful.

“Something seems to pass from her into myself,” he reflected. “And that something is making my heart beat and boil. My God, what a joy to the eye she is!”

“The important question,” she went on, “is how to preserve you from feeling ennuyé.”

“You can do that by singing to me again.”

“Ah, I was expecting that compliment!” The words came from her in a sudden burst as of pleasure. “Do you know, had you not uttered that gasp after I had finished singing the other evening, I should never have slept all night—I should have cried my very eyes out.”

“Why?” he asked.

“I do not know. I merely know that that time I sang as I had never done before. Do not ask me to sing now, however—I could not do it.”

Nevertheless she did sing to him again; and, ah! what did that song not voice? It seemed to be charged with her very soul.

As she finished, his face was shining with the happiness of a spirit which has been

moved to its utmost depths.

“Come!” she said. “Why do you look at me like that?”

“Yet she knew why he was doing so, and a modest touch of triumph that she could so greatly have affected him filled her soul.

“Look at yourself in the mirror,” she went on, “and you will see that your eyes are shining, and that—yes, really!—they have tears in them. How deeply you must feel music!”

“No—it is not music that I am feeling,” he replied slowly; “but—but love!”

‘Her glance met his, and instantly she saw that he had uttered the word in spite of himself, that the word had got him in its power, and that the word had voiced the truth.

Recovering himself, he picked up his hat, and left the room. When he had gone she remained standing like a statue by the piano—her eyes cast down, and her breast rising and falling tumultuously.

II

From that time forth she lived in him alone, while he, for his part, racked his brains to avoid incurring the loss of her esteem. Whenever she detected in his soul—and she could probe that soul very deeply—the least trace of its former characteristics, she would work for him to heap himself with reproaches for his lethargy and fear of life. Just as he was about to yawn, as he was actually opening his mouth for the purpose, her astonished glance would transfix him, and cause his mouth to snap with a click which jarred his teeth. Still more did he hasten to resume his alacrity whenever he perceived that his lassitude was communicating itself to her, and threatening to render her cold and contemptuous. Instantly he would undergo a revival of strenuous activity; and then the shadow between them would disappear,

and mutual sympathy once more beat in strong, clear accord. Yet this solicitude on his part had not, as yet, its origin in the magic ring of love. Indeed, the effect of his charmed toils was negative rather than positive. True, he no longer slept all day—on the contrary, he rode, read, walked, and even thought of resuming his writing and his agricultural schemes; yet the ultimate direction, the inmost significance, of his life still remained confined to the sphere of good intentions. Particularly disturbing did he find it whenever Olga plied him with some particular question or another, and demanded of him, as of a professor, full satisfaction of her curiosity. This occurred frequently, and arose not out of pedantry on her part, but out of a desire to know the right and the wrong of things.

At times a given question would absorb her even to the point of forgetting her consideration for Oblomov. For instance, on one occasion, when she had besought his opinion concerning double stars, and he was incautious enough to refer her to Herschel, he was dispatched to purchase the great authority's book, and commanded to read it through, and to explain the same to her full satisfaction. On another occasion he was rash enough to let slip a word or two concerning various schools of painting; wherefore he had to undergo another week's reading and explaining, and also to pay sundry visits to the Hermitage Museum. In the end how he trembled whenever she asked him a question!

"Why do you not say something?" she would say to him. "Surely it cannot be that the subject wearies you?"

"No, but how I love you!" he would reply, as though awakening from a trance; to which she would retort—

"Do you really? But that is not what I have just asked you."

On another occasion he said to her—

"Cannot you see what is taking place in me? To me, speaking is a difficulty. Give me your hand, give me your hand! There seems to be something hindering me,

something weighing me down. It is a something that is like the great rock which oppresses a man during deep sorrow. And, strangely enough, the effect of it is the same whether I happen to be sad or gay. Somehow my breath seems to hurt me as I draw it, and occasionally I come near to weeping. Yet, like a man overcome with grief, I feel that I should be lightened and relieved if I could weep. What, think you, is amiss with me?"

She looked at him with a smile of happiness which nothing could disturb. Evidently no weight was pressing upon her heart.

"Shall I tell you?" she said. "Yes."

"You are in love."

He kissed her hand.

"And you?" he asked. "Are you in love?"

"In love?" she repeated. "I do not like the term for myself. I like you: that is better."

"'I like you'?" he re-echoed. "But a mother or a father or a nurse or even a dog may be liked: the phrase may be used as a garment, even as can, can—"

"Even as can an old dressing-gown," she suggested with a smile. Presently she added—

"Whether I am actually in love with you or not I hardly know. Perhaps it is a stage that has not yet arrived. All I know is that I have never liked father or mother or nurse or dog as I like you. I feel lost without you. To be parted from you for a short while makes me sorry; to be parted from you for a long while makes me sad; and, were you to die, I should wear mourning for the rest of my life, and never again be able to smile. To me such love is life, and life is——"

"Yes?"

"Is a duty, an obligation. Consequently love also is a duty. God has sent me that duty, and has bid me perform it." As she spoke she raised her eyes to heaven.

“Who can have inspired her with these ideas?” Oblomov thought to himself. “Neither through experience nor through trial nor through ‘fire and smoke’ can she have attained this clear, simple conception of life and of love.”

“Then, since there is joy in life, is there also suffering?” he asked aloud.

“I do not know,” she replied. “That lies beyond my experience as much as it lies beyond my understanding.”

“But how well I understand it!”

“Ah!” she said merrily. “What glances you throw at me sometimes! Even my aunt has noticed it.”

“But how can there be joy in love if it never brings one moments of ecstatic delight?”

“What?” she replied with a glance at the scene around her. “Is not all this so much ecstatic delight?” She looked at him, smiled, and gave him her hand. “Do you think,” she continued, “that presently I shall not be sorry when you take your leave? Do you think that I shall not go to bed the earlier in order that I may the sooner fall asleep, and cheat the wearisome night, and be able to see you again in the morning?” The light in Oblomov’s face had become brighter and brighter with each successive question, and his gaze more and more suffused with radiance.

III

Next morning, however, he rose pale and sombre. There were traces of sleeplessness on his features, wrinkles on his brow, and a lack of fire and eagerness in his eyes. Once upon a time he would have sunk back upon the pillow after drinking his tea, but now he had grown out of the habit, and contented himself with resting his elbow where his head had just been lying. Something in him was working strongly; but that something was not love. True, Olga’s image was still before him, but only at a

distance, and in a mist, and shorn of its rays, like that of some stranger. With aching eyes he gazed at it for a moment or two, and then sighed.

"To live as God wills, and not as oneself wills, is a wise rule," he murmured. "Nevertheless———"

"Clearly that is so," presently he went on. "Otherwise, one would fall into a chaos of contradictions such as no human mind, however daring and profound, could hope to resolve. Yesterday one has wished, to-day one attains the madly longed-for object, and tomorrow one will blush to think that one ever desired it. Therefore one will fall to cursing life. And all because of a proud, independent striding through existence and a wilful 'I will'! No; rather does one need to feel one's way, to close one's eyes, to avoid becoming either intoxicated with happiness or inclined to repine because it has escaped one. Yes, that is life. Who was it first pictured life as happiness and gratification? The fool! 'Life is a duty,' says Olga. 'Life is a grave obligation which must be fulfilled as such.'" He heaved a profound sigh.

"No, I cannot visit Olga to-day," he went on. "My eyes are now open, and I see my duty before me. Better part with her now, while it is still possible, than later, when I shall have sworn to part with her no more."

How had this mood of his come about? What wind had suddenly affected him? How had it brought with it these clouds? Wherefore was he now for assuming such a grievous yoke? Only last night he had looked into Olga's soul, and seen there a radiant world and a smiling destiny; only last night he had read both her horoscope and his own. What had since happened?

Frequently, in summer, one goes to sleep while the weather is still and cloudless, and the stars are glimmering softly. "How beautiful the countryside will look to-morrow under the bright beams of morning!" one thinks to oneself. "And how glad one will be to dive into the depths of the forest and seek refuge from the heat!" Then suddenly one awakes to the beating of rain, to the sight of grey, mournful

clouds, to a sense of cold and damp.

In Oblomov's breast the poison was working swiftly and vigorously. In thought he reviewed his life, and for the hundredth time felt his heart ache with repentance and regret for what he had lost. He kept picturing to himself what, by now, he would have been had he strode boldly ahead, and lived a fuller and a broader life, and exerted his faculties; whence he passed to the question of his present condition, and of the means whereby Olga had contrived to become fond of him, and of the reason why she still was so. "Is she not making a mistake?" was a thought which suddenly flashed through his mind like lightning; and as it did so the lightning seemed to strike his heart, and to shatter it. He groaned with the pain. "Yes, she is making a mistake," he kept saying again and again. "She merely loves me as she works embroidery on canvas. In a quiet, leisurely manner a pattern has evolved itself, and she has turned it over, and admired it. Soon she will lay it aside, and forget all about it. Yes, her present affection is a mere making ready to fall in love, a mere experiment of which I am the subject, for the reason that I chanced to be the first subject to come to hand." So he collated the circumstances, and compared them. Never would she have noticed him at all, had not Schtoltz pointed him out, and infected her young. impressionable heart with sympathy for his (Oblomov's) position, and therefore implanted in her a desire to see if possibly she could shake that dreamy soul from its lethargy before leaving it once more to its own devices.

"Yes, that is how the case stands," he said to himself with an access of revulsion. He rose and lit a candle with a trembling hand. "'Tis just that and nothing more. Her heart was ready to accept love—it was tensely awaiting it—and I happened to fall in her way, and at the same time to fall into a blunder. Only would some one else need to arrive for her to renounce that blunder. As soon as ever she saw that some one else she would turn from me with horror. In fact, I am stealing what belongs to another; I am no better than a thief. My God, to think that I should have been so blind!"

Glancing into the mirror, he saw himself pale, dull, and sallow. Involuntarily he pictured to his mind those handsome young fellows who would one day come her way. Suddenly she would take fire, glance at him, and—burst out laughing! A second time he glanced into the mirror. No, he was not the type with which women could fall in love! He flung himself down upon the bed, and buried his face in the pillow.

"Forgive me, Olga!" he murmured. "And may you always be happy!"

He gave orders that he was to be reported as "not at home" to any one who might call from the Ilyinskis' house. Then he sat down to write Olga a letter. He wrote it swiftly. In fact, the pen flew over the pages. And when he had finished the missive he was surprised to find that his spirits felt cheered, and his mind easier.

"Why so?" he reflected. "Probably because I have put into what I have just written the whole sorrow of my heart."

Next, he dispatched the letter by the hand of Zakhar, and, leaving the house, turned into the park, and seated himself on the grass. Among the turf-shoots ants were scurrying hither and thither, and jostling one another, and parting again. From above, the scene looked like the commotion in a human market-place—it showed the same bustle, the same congestion, the same swarm of population. Here and there, too, a bumble bee buzzed over a flower, and then crept into its chalice, while a knot of flies had glued themselves to a drop of sap on the trunk of a lime-tree, in the foliage a bird was repeating an ever-insistent note (as though calling to its mate), and a couple of butterflies were tumbling through the air in a giddy, fluttering, intricate movement which resembled a waltz. Everywhere from the herbage strong scents could be detected arising; everywhere there could be heard a ceaseless chirping and twittering.

Suddenly he saw Olga approaching. Walking very quietly, she was wiping her eyes with a handkerchief as she did so. He had not expected those tears. Somehow they

seemed to sear his heart. He rose and ran to meet her.

“Olga, Olga!” were his first tender words.

She started, looked at him with an air of astonishment, and turned away. He followed her.

“You are weeping?” he said.

“Yes, and’ is you have made me do so,” she replied, while her form shook with sobs. “But it is beyond your power to comfort me.”

“That miserable letter!” he ejaculated, suddenly becoming full of remorse.

For answer she opened a basket which she was carrying, took from it the letter, and handed it to him.

“Take it away,” she said. “The sight of it will only make me weep more bitterly.”

He stuffed it silently into his pocket, and, with head bent, seated himself beside her.

“Give me credit for good intentions,” he urged. “In any case the letter was evidence only of my care for your happiness—of the fact that I was thinking of it in advance, and was ready to sacrifice myself on its account. Do you think that I wrote the message callously—that inwardly I was not shedding tears the whole time? Why should I have acted as I did?”

“Why, indeed?” she interrupted. “For the reason that you wished to surprise me here, and to see whether I was weeping, and how bitterly. Had you really meant the letter as you say, you would be making preparations to go abroad instead of meeting me as you are now doing. Last night you wanted my ‘I love you’; to-day you want to see my tears; and to-morrow, I daresay, you will be wishing that I were dead!”

“How can you wrong me like that? Believe me, I would give half my life to see smiles on your face instead of tears.”

“Yes—now that you have seen a woman weeping on your account. But no; you have no heart. You say that you had no desire to make me weep. Had that been so, you

would not have acted as you have done."

"Then what ought I to do?" he asked tenderly. "Will you let me beg your pardon?"

"No; only children beg pardon, or persons who have jostled some one in a crowd. Moreover, even when granted, such pardon is worth nothing."

"But what if the letter should be true, and your affection for me all a mistake?" he suggested.

"You are afraid, then?—you are afraid of falling into a well?—you are afraid lest some day I should hurt you by ceasing to be fond of you?"

"Would I could sink into the ground!" he reflected. The pain was increasing in proportion as he divined Olga's thoughts.

"On the other hand," she went on, "suppose you were to weary of love, even as you have wearied of books, of work, and of the world in general? Suppose that, fearing no rival, you were to go to sleep by my side (as you do on your sofa at home), and that my voice were to become powerless to wake you? Suppose that your present swelling of heart were to pass away, and your dressing-gown come to acquire more value in your eyes than myself? Often and often do such questions prevent my sleeping; yet I do not, on that account, trouble you with conjectures as to the future. Always I hope for better things, for, with me, happiness has cast out fear. Only for one thing have I long been sitting and waiting—namely, for happiness; until at length I had come to believe that I had found it.... Even if I have made a mistake, at least this"—and she laid her hand upon her heart—"does not convict me of guilt. God knows that I never desired such a fate! And I had been so happy!" She broke off abruptly.

"Then be happy again," urged Oblomov.

"No. Rather, go you whither you have always been wishing to go," she said softly.

"You are wiser than I am," he murmured, twisting a sprig of acacia between his

fingers.

“No, I am simpler and more daring than you. What are you afraid of? Do you really think that I should cease to love you?”

“With you by my side I fear nothing,” he replied. “With you by my side nothing terrible can fall to my lot.”

PART III

I

Oblomov’s face beamed as he walked home. His blood was boiling, and a light was shining in his eyes. He entered his room—and at once, the radiance disappeared as his eyes, full of disgusted astonishment, became glued to one particular spot. That particular spot was the arm-chair, wherein was snugly ensconced Tarantiev.

“Why is it I never find you here?” the visitor asked sternly. “Why are you always gadding about? That old fool Zakhar has quite got out of hand. I asked him for a morsel of food and a glass of vodka, and he refused me both!”

“I have been for a walk in the park,” replied Oblomov coldly. For the moment he had forgotten the murky atmosphere wherein he had spent so much of his life. And now, in a twinkling, Tarantiev had brought him tumbling from the clouds! His immediate, thought was that the visitor might insist on remaining to dinner, and so prevent him from paying his visit to Olga and her aunt.

“Why not come and take a look at that flat?” went on Tarantiev.

“Because there is no need,” replied Oblomov, avoiding his interlocutor’s eye. “I have decided not to move.”

“Not to move?” exclaimed Tarantiev threateningly. “Not when I have hired the place for you, and you have signed the lease?”

This led Oblomov to remember that, on the very day of his removal from town to the country villa, he had signed, without previously perusing it, a document which his present visitor had submitted to him.

"Nevertheless," he remarked, "I shall not want the flat. I am going abroad."

"I am sure you are not," retorted Tarantiev coolly. "What is more, the sooner you hand over to me a half-year's rent, the better. Your new landlady does not care for such tricks to be played upon her. I have paid the money on your behalf, and I require to be repaid."

"Where did you contrive to get the money from?"

"That has nothing to do with you. As a matter of fact, I had an old debt repaid me."

"A better flat you could not find in all the city."

"Nevertheless I do not want it. It lies too far from—from——"

"From where? From the centre of the city?"

Oblomov forbore to specify what he meant, but merely remarked that he should not be dining at home that evening.

"Then hand me over the rent, and the devil take you!" exclaimed Tarantiev.

"I possess no money at all. As it is, I shall have to borrow some."

"Well, repay me at least my cab fare," insisted the visitor. "It was only three roubles."

"Where is the cabman? Why has he charged you so much?"

"I dismissed him long ago. I may add that the fare home is another three roubles."

"By the coach you could travel for half a rouble." However, Oblomov tendered Tarantiev four roubles, which the man at once pocketed.

"Also, I have expended some seven roubles on your account," went on Tarantiev. "Besides, you might as well advance me something towards the price of a dinner.

Roadside inns are dear. As a rule they fleece one of five roubles."

Silently Oblomov handed him another rouble, in the hope that the man would now depart; but Tarantiev was not to be so easily shaken off.

"And also you might order Zakhar to bring me a snack now," he said.

"But I thought you intended to dine at an inn?"

"Yes, to dine, but at the moment the time is two o'clock, and no more."

Oblomov issued the necessary orders. On receiving them, Zakhar looked darkly at Tarantiev.

"We have no food ready," he said'. "Also, where are my master's shirt and jacket?"

"Shirt and jacket? Why, I gave them back to you long ago. I stuffed them into your own hands, and you bundled them away into a corner. Yet you come asking me where they are!"

"Also, what about a floorbrush and two cups which you carried off?" persisted Zakhar.

"Floorbrush? What floorbrush?" retorted Tarantiev. "Go and get me something to eat, you old fool!"

"We have not a single morsel in the house," said Zakhar; "and also there is nobody to cook it." With which he withdrew.

'Tarantiev looked about him, and, perceiving Oblomov to be possessed both of a hat and a cap, attempted unsuccessfully to borrow the former for the remainder of the summer, and then took his leave.

When he had gone Oblomov sat plunged in thought. He recognized that his bright, cloudless holiday of love was over, and that workaday love had now become the order of the day, and that already it was so completely entering into his life's ordinary tendencies that things were beginning to lose their rainbow colours.

"Indeed," he reflected, "this morning may have seen the extinction of the last roseate

ray of love's festival—so that henceforth my life is to be warmed rather than lighted. Yes, life will swallow up love, although secretly it will remain moved by its powerful springs, and its manifestations be of an invariably simple, everyday nature. Yes, the poem is fading, and stem prose is to follow—to follow with a drab series of incidents which shall comprise a marriage ceremony, a journey to Oblomovka, the building of a house, an application to the local council, the laying out of roads, an endless transaction of business with peasants, a number of improvements, harvests, and so forth, the frequent spectacle of the bailiff's anxious face, elections to the council of nobles, and sundry sittings on the local bench." Somewhere he could see Olga beaming upon him, and singing Casta Diva, and then giving him a hasty kiss before he went forth to work, or to the town, or to interview the bailiff. Guests would call (a no very comforting prospect!), and they would talk about the wine which each happened to be brewing in his vats, and about the number of arshins * of cloth which each happened to have rendered to the Treasury. What would this amount to? What was it he was promising for himself? Was it life? Whether life or not, it would have to be lived as though it, and it alone, constituted existence. At least it would be an existence that would find favour with Schtoltz!

* Ells.

But the actual wedding ceremony—that, at all events, would represent the poetry of life, its nascent, its just opening flower? He pictured himself leading Olga to the altar. On her head there would' be a wreath of orange-blossoms, and to her gown a long train, and the crowd would whisper in amazement. Shyly, and with gently heaving bosom and brow bent forward in gracious pride, she would give him her hand in complete unconsciousness that the eyes of all were fixed upon her. Then, a bright smile would show itself on her face, the tears would begin to well, and for a moment or two the furrow on her forehead would twitch with thought. Then, when they had arrived home and the guests had all departed, she, yes, she—clad still in her gorgeous raiment—would throw herself upon his breast as she had done that

morning!

Unable any longer to keep his fancies to himself, he went with them to Olga. She listened to him with a smile; but when he jumped up with the intention of informing also her aunt she frowned with such decision that he halted in awe.

“Not a word to any one!” she said. “The right moment is not yet come.”

“What ought we to do first, then?”

“To go to the registrar, and to sign the record.”

“And then?”

“After marriage to go and live at Oblomovka, and to see what can be done there.”

“We shall not be able to do that, for the house is in ruins, and a new one must first be built.”

“Then where are we to live?”

“We must take a flat in town.”

“Then you had better go at once and see about it.”

“Alas!” was Oblomov’s reflection. “Olga wishes for ever to be on the move. Apparently she cares nothing about dreaming over the poetical phases of life, or losing herself in reveries. She is like Schtoltz. It would seem as though the two had conspired to live life at top speed.”

II

Late that August rain set in, and, one day, Oblomov saw a vanload of the Ilyinskis’ furniture come past his windows. To remain in his country villa, now that the park was desolate and the shutters hung closed over the Ilyinskis’ windows, seemed to him impossible. At length he removed to the rooms which had been recommended him by Tarantiev, until such time as he should be able to find for himself a new flat. He took hasty meals at restaurants, and spent most of his evenings with Olga.

But the long autumn evenings in town were not like the long, bright days amid fields and woods.

Here he could not visit Olga three times a day, nor send her notes by Zakhar, seeing that she was five versts away. Thus the polled poem of the late summer seemed somehow to have halted, or to be moving more slowly, as though it contained less substance than of yore.

Sometimes they would keep silence for quite half an hour at a time, while she busied herself with her needlework, and he busied himself in a chaos of thoughts which ranged beyond the immediate present. Only at intervals would he gaze at her and tremble with passion; only at intervals would she throw him a fleeting glance, and smile as she caught the rays of tender humility, of silent happiness, which his eyes conveyed.

Yet on the sixth day, when Olga invited him to meet her at a certain shop, and to escort her homeward on foot, he found his position begin to grow a trille awkward.

“Oh, if you knew how difficult things are!” he said. She returned no answer, but sighed.

On another occasion she said to him—“Until we have arranged everything we cannot possibly tell my aunt. Nor must we see so much of one another. You had better come to dinner only on Sundays and Wednesdays. Also, we might meet at the theatre occasionally, if I first give you notice that we are going to be there. Also, as soon as a fine day should occur I mean to go for a walk in the Summer Gardens, * and you might come to meet me. The scene will remind us of our park in the country.” She added this last with a quiver of emotion.

* A public park in Petrograd

He kissed her hand in silence, and parted from her until Sunday. She followed him with her eyes—then sat down to immerse herself in a wave of sound at the piano. But something in her was weeping, and the notes seemed to be weeping in

sympathy. She tried to sing, but no song would come.

A few days later, Oblomov was lolling on the sofa and playing with one of his slippers—now picking it up from the door with his toe, now dropping it again. To him entered Zakhar.

“What now?” asked Oblomov indifferently. Zakhar said nothing, but eyed him with a sidelong glance.

“Well?” said Oblomov again.

“Have you yet found for yourself another flat?” Zakhar countered.

“No, not yet. Why should you want to know?”

“Because I suppose the wedding will be taking place soon after Christmas.”

“The wedding? What wedding?” Oblomov suddenly leaped up.

“You know what wedding—your own,” replied Zakhar with assurance, as though he were speaking of an event long since arranged for. “You are going to be married, are you not?”

“I to be married? To whom?” And Oblomov glared at the valet.

“To Mademoiselle Ilyinski——” Almost before the man could finish his words Oblomov had darted forward.

“Who put that idea into your head?” he cried in a carefully suppressed voice.

“The Lord bless us all and protect us!” Zakhar ejaculated, backing towards the door. “Who told me about it? Why, the Ilyinskis’ servants, this very summer.”

“Rubbish!” hissed Oblomov as he shook a warning finger at the old man. “Remember—henceforth let me hear not a word about it!” He pointed to the door, and Zakhar left the room—filling the flat with his sighs as he did so.

Somehow Oblomov could not recover his composure, but remained gazing at the spot which Zakhar had just vacated. Then he clasped his hands behind his head, and reseated himself in the arm-chair.

“So the servants’ hall and the kitchen are talking!” was his insistent reflection. “It has come to this, that Zakhar can actually dare to ask me when the wedding is to be! Yes, and that though even Olga’s aunt has not an inkling of the truth! What would she think of it if she knew? The wedding, that most poetical moment in the life of a lover, that crown of all his happiness—why, lacqueys and grooms are talking of it even though nothing is yet decided upon! No answer has come from the estate, my registry certificate is a blank, and a new flat still remains to be found.”

With that he fell to analysing that poetical phase from which the colour had faded with Zakhar’s mention of the same. Oblomov was beginning to see the other face of the medal. He tossed and turned from side to side, lay flat on his back, leaped up and took a stride or two, and ended by sinking back into a reclining position.

“How come folk to know about it?” he reflected. “Olga has kept silence, and I too have breathed not a word. So much for stolen meetings at dawn and sunset, for passionate glances, for the wizardry of song! Ah, those poems of love! Never do they end save in disaster. One should go beneath the wedding canopy before one attempts to swim in an atmosphere of roses. To think that before any preparations have been made—before even an answer has come, from the estate, or I have obtained either money or a flat—I should have to go to her aunt, and to say: ‘This is my betrothed!’ At all costs must I put a stop to these rumours. Marriage! What is marriage?”

He smiled as he remembered his recent poetical idealization of the ceremony—the long train to the gown, the orange-blossoms, the whispers of the crowd. Somehow the colours had now changed; the crowd now comprised also the uncouth, the slovenly Zakhar and the whole staff of the Ilyinskis’ servants’ ball. Also, he could see a long line of carriages and a sea of strange, coldly inquisitive faces. The scene was replete with glimmering, deadly weariness.

Summoning Zakhar to his presence, he again asked him how he had dared to spread

such rumours.

“For do you know what marriage means?” he demanded of his valet. “It means that a lot of idle lacqueys and women and children start chattering in kitchens and shops and the market-place. A given individual ceases to be known as Ilya Ilyitch or Peter Petrovitch, and henceforth ranks only as the zhenich. * Yesterday no one would have noticed him, but by to-morrow every one will be staring at him as though he were a notorious rascal. Neither at the theatre nor in the street will folk let him pass without whispering, ‘Here comes the zhenich! And every day other folk will call upon him with their faces reduced to an even greater state of imbecility than distinguishes yours at this moment—all in order that they may, vie with one another in saying imbecile things. That is how such an affair begins. And early each morning the zhenich must go to see his betrothed in lemon-coloured gloves—never at any time may he look untidy or weary; and always he must eat and drink what is customary under the circumstances, in order that his sustenance may appear to comprise principally bouquets and air. That is the programme which is supposed to continue fully for three or four months! How could I go through such an ordeal? Meanwhile you, Zakhar, would have had to run backwards and forwards between my place and my betrothed’s, as well as to keep making a round of the tailors’, the bootmakers’, and the cabinetmakers’ establishments, owing to the fact that I myself could not have been in every spot at once. And soon the whole town would have come to hear of it. ‘Have you yet heard the news?’ ‘Oblomov is going to be married!’ ‘Really? To whom? And what is she like? And when is the ceremony to be?’ Talk, talk, talk! Besides, how could I have afforded the necessary expenses? You know how much money I possess. Have I yet found another flat? And am I not owing a thousand roubles for this one? And would not the hire of fresh quarters have cost me three thousand roubles more, considering the extra rooms which would have been required? And would there not have been the cost of a carriage, and of a cook, and so forth? How could I possibly have paid for it all?”

* Bridegroom to-be.

Oblomov checked himself abruptly. He felt horrified to think of the threatening, the uncomfortable, vision which his imagination had conjured up. The roses, the orange-blossoms, the glitter and show, the whispers of the crowd—all these had faded into the background. His fond dreams, his peace of mind alike were gone. He could not eat or sleep, and everything had assumed an air of gloom and despondency. In seeking to overawe Zakhar, he had ended by frightening also himself, for he had stumbled upon the practical view of marriage, and come to perceive that, despite nuptial poetry, marriage constitutes an official, a very real step towards a serious assumption of new and insistent obligations. Unable, therefore, to make up his mind as to what he should say to Olga when he next met her, he decided to defer his visit until the following Wednesday. Having arrived at this decision, he felt easier.

Two days later, Zakhar entered the room with a letter from Olga.

“I cannot wait until Wednesday,” she wrote. “I feel so lost through these long absences from your side that I shall look to see you in the Summer Gardens at three o’clock to-morrow.”

“I cannot go,” he thought to himself. The next moment he comforted himself with the reflection that very likely, her aunt, or some other lady, would be with her; in which case he would have a chance of concealing his nervousness.

Scarcely had he reached the Gardens when he saw her approaching. She was veiled, and at first he did not recognize her.

“How glad I am that you have come!” she exclaimed. “I was afraid you would not do so.”

She pressed his hand, and looked at him with an air so frank, so full of joy at having stolen this moment from Fate, that he felt envious of her, and regretful that he could not share in her lighthearted mood. Her whole face bespoke a childish confidence in

the future, in her happiness, and in him. Truly she was very charming!

“But why do you look so gloomy?” suddenly she exclaimed. “Why do you say nothing? I had thought you would be overjoyed to see me whereas I find you gone to sleep again! Wake up, sir!”

“I am both well and happy,” he hastened to say—fearful lest things should attain the point of her guessing what was really in his mind. “But I am disturbed that you should have come alone.”

“Rather, it is for me to be disturbed about that,” she retorted. “Do you think I ought to have brought my aunt with me?”

“Yes, Olga.”

“Then, if I had known that, I would have invited her to come,” offendedly she said as she withdrew her hand from his. “Until now I had imagined that your greatest happiness in life was to be with me, and with me alone. Let us go for a row in a boat.”

With that she set off towards the river, dragging his unwilling form behind her.

“Are you coming to our house to-morrow?” she inquired when they were safely settled in their seats.

“My God!” he reflected. “Already she has divined my thoughts, and knows that I do not want to come!”

“Yes, yes,” he answered aloud.

“In the morning, and for the whole day?”

“Yes.”

She splashed his face playfully with water.

“How bright and cheerful everything looks!” she remarked as she gazed about her. “Let us come again to-morrow. This time I shall come straight from home.”

“Then you have not come straight from home to-day?”

“No, but from a shop, from a jeweller’s.”

Oblomov looked alarmed.

“Suppose your aunt were to find out?” he suggested.

“Oh, suppose the Neva were to become dried up, and that this boat were to overturn, and that our house were suddenly to fall down, and that—that you were suddenly to lose your love for me?” As she spoke she splashed him again.

“Listen, Olga,” he said when they had landed on the bank. “At the risk of vexing and offending you, I ought to tell you something.”

“What is it?” Her tone was impatient.

“That we ought not to be indulging in these secret meetings.”

“But we are betrothed to one another?”

“Yes, dearest Olga,” he replied, pressing her hands, “and therefore we are bound to be all the more careful. I would rather be walking with you along this avenue publicly than by stealth—I would rather see the eyes of passers-by drop respectfully before you than run the risk of incurring a suspicion that you have so far forgotten your modesty and your upbringing as to lose your head and fail in your duty.”

“But I have not forgotten my modesty and my upbringing,” she exclaimed, withdrawing her hands.

“No, I know that you have not,” he agreed. “I was merely thinking of what people might say—of how the world in general might look upon it all. Pray do not misunderstand me. What I desire is that to the world you should seem to be as pure, as irreproachable, as in actual fact you are. To me your conduct seems solely honourable and modest; but would every one believe it to be so?”

“What you say is right,” she said after a pause. “Consequently, let us tell my aunt to-morrow, and obtain her consent.”

Oblomov turned pale. “Why hurry so?” he asked. “I know that, two weeks ago, I

myself was urging haste; but at that time I had not thought of the necessary preparations."

"Then your heart is failing you? That I can see clearly."

"No; I am merely cautious. Even now I see a carriage approaching us. Are you sure that the people in it are not acquaintances of yours? How these things throw one into a fever of perspiration I Let us depart as quickly as possible." And with that he set off, almost at a run.

"Until to-morrow, then," she said.

"No, until the day after to-morrow. That would be better. Or even until Friday or Saturday."

"No, no; you must come to-morrow. Do you hear? What have we not come to! What a mountain of sorrow are you not threatening to bring upon my head!"

She turned to go home.

III

On arriving at his rooms again, Oblomov never noticed that Zakhar gave him a cold dinner, or that, after it, he rolled into bed and slept heavily and insensibly; like a stone. Next day he received a letter in which Olga said that she had spent the whole night weeping.

"She has been unable to sleep!" he thought to himself. "Poor angel! Why does she care for me so much? And why am I so fond of her? Would we had never met! It is all Schtoltz's fault. He shed love over us as he might have shed a disease. What sort of a life is this? Nothing but anxiety and emotion! How can it ever lead to peaceful happiness and rest?"

Sighing deeply, he threw himself upon the sofa—then rose again, and went out into the street, as though seeking the normal existence which pursues a daily, gradual

course of contemplation of nature, and constitutes a series of calm, scarcely perceptible phenomena of family life. Of existence as a spacious, a turbulent, a billowing river, as Schtoltz always conceived it to be, he could form no conception whatever.

He wrote to Olga that he had taken a slight chill in the Summer Gardens—wherefore he must stay at home for a couple of days; but that he hoped soon to be better, and to see her on the following Sunday. In reply she wrote that he must take the greatest care of himself; that even on Sunday he must not come should he not be well enough; and that a whole week's separation would be bearable to her if thereby he were enabled to avoid risking his health. This excuse for omitting the Sunday visit Oblomov gladly seized upon; wherefore he sent back word that, as a matter of fact, a few days' additional convalescence would be no more than prudent.

Day succeeded day throughout the week. He read, he walked about the streets, and, occasionally, he looked in upon his landlady for the purpose of exchanging a couple of words and drinking some of her excellent coffee. So comfortable did she make him that he even thought of giving her a book to read; but when he did so she merely read the headings of a chapter or two, and then returned him the volume, saying that later she would get her little girl to read the work to her.

Meanwhile Olga received unexpected news. This was to the effect that a lawsuit with regard to her property had ended in her favour, and that within a month's time she would be able, should she wish, to enter into actual possession. But of this, and of her other plans for the future, she decided not to tell Oblomov, but to spend the present hour in dreams of the happiness that was to be hers and his when she had seen love complete its revolution in his apathetic soul, and the slothfulness fall from his shoulders.

That very day he was to come. Yet three o'clock arrived—four o'clock—and no Oblomov. By half-past five the beauty and the freshness of her features had begun to

fade. Insensibly her form assumed a drooping posture, and as she sat at the table her face was pale. Yet no one noticed this. The rest of the guests consumed the dishes which she had prepared for him alone, and carried on a desultory, indifferent chatter of conversation. Until ten o'clock she vacillated between hope and despair. Then, on the arrival of that hour, she withdrew to her room. At first she showered upon his head all the resentment that was seething within her. Not a word of mordant sarcasm in her vocabulary would she not have devoted to his punishing, had he been present. But after a while her mind passed from fierceness to a thought which chilled it like ice.

"He is sick," was that thought. "He is lonely and ill, and unable even to write." So much did the idea gain upon her that she passed a sleepless night, and rose pale, quiet, and determined. The same morning—it was Monday—the landlady informed Oblomov that a visitor desired to see him.

"To see me? Surely not?" he exclaimed. "Where is she?"

"Outside. Shall I send her away?" Oblomov was about to assent when Olga's maid, Katia, entered the room. Oblomov changed countenance. "How come you to be here?" he asked.

"My mistress is outside," she replied, "and has sent me in to bid you go to her." There was no help for it, so he went out, and found Olga alone.

"Are you quite well?" she exclaimed. "What has been the matter with you?" With that they entered his study.

"I am better now—the sore throat is almost gone," he replied; and as he spoke he touched the part mentioned, and coughed slightly.

"Then why did you not come last night?" She raked him with a glance so keen that for the moment he found himself tongue-tied.

"And why have you taken such a step as this?" he countered. "Surely you know what you are doing?"

“Never mind,” she retorted impatiently. “I do not believe you have been ill at all.”

“No—I have not,” he confessed.

“You have been deceiving me? Why so?”

“I will explain later. Important reasons have kept me away from you for a fortnight.”

“What are they?”

“I—I am afraid of scandal, of people’s tongues.”

“And not of the fact that possibly I might pass sleepless nights—that possibly I might be so anxious as to be unable to rest?”

“You cannot think what is passing within me,” he said, pointing to his head, and then to his heart. “I am all on edge, all on fire.”

With that he told her what Zakhar had said to him, and ended with a statement that, like herself, he could not sleep, and that in every glance he saw a question, or a sneer, or a veiled hint at the relations which might be existing between her and himself.

“Let us decide to tell my aunt this week,” she replied, “and at once this chatter will cease. Had I not known you so well, I should scarcely have been able to understand the fact that you can be afraid of servants’ gossip, yet not of making me anxious. Really I cannot understand you.”

“Listen,” presently she went on. “There is more in this than meets the eye. Tell me all that is in your mind. What does it mean?”

He looked at her—then kissed her hand and sighed.

“What have you been doing during the past week or so?” she persisted as she glanced round the room. “What a wretched place you have got! The windows are small, and the curtains dirty. Where are your other rooms?”

He hastened to show her them, in the hope that he might divert her mind from the question of his late doings; but she only repeated the question.

“I have been reading,” he replied, “and writing, and thinking of you.”

“Have you yet read my books?” she inquired. “Where are they? I will take them back with me.”

One of them happened to be lying on the table. She looked at the page at which it was open, and saw that the page was covered with dust.

“You have not read them!” she exclaimed.

“No,” he confessed.

Once more she looked at the mess and disorder in the room, and then inquired: “Then what have you been doing? You have neither been writing nor reading.”

“No; I have not had time to do so.. In this place, as soon as one rises, the rooms need to be swept, and other interruptions occur afterwards. Next, when dinner is over——”

“When dinner is over you need to go to sleep.”

So positive in its assurance was her tone that after a moment’s hesitation he replied that her conjecture was correct.

“Why do you do that?”

“In order to pass the time. You are not here with me, Olga, and life is wearisome and unbearable without you.”

Her gaze became so stern that he broke off abruptly.

“Listen, Ilya,” she said very gravely. “Do you remember saying in the park that at length your life had been fired to flame, and that you believed me to be the aim, the ideal, of your life?”

“How should I not remember it, seeing that it has revolutionized my whole existence? Cannot you see how happy I am?”

“No, I do not see it,” she replied coldly. “Not only have you deceived me, but also you are letting yourself relapse into your former ways.”

“Deceived you? I swear to God that, were that so, I would leap into the pit of Hell!”

“Yes—if the pit of Hell were just beneath your feet; but, were you to put off doing so, even for a day or two, you would straightway change your mind, and become nervous about the deed—more especially should Zakhar and the rest begin gossiping on the subject! That is not love.”

“Ah, you have no idea how these cares and distractions have injured my health!” he exclaimed. “Ever since I have known you, nothing but anxiety has been my lot. Yet deprivation of you would cause me to die or to go out of my mind. Only through you can I breathe or feel or see. Is it, then, wonderful that, when you are not with me, I fall ill? Without you everything is wearisome and distasteful. I feel like a machine, I walk and act without knowing ever what I am doing. Yes, I am like a machine whereof only you are the fuel, the motive power....”

When she had gone he trod the floor as on air. “How clearly she sees life!” he reflected. “How unerringly from that book of wisdom is she able to divine her road!” Yes, his life and hers had been bound to come together like two rivers, for she, and only she, was his true guide and instructor.

Next day there arrived a letter from the lawyer on his estate. He read it through—then let it slip from his fingers to the ground. The gist of the document was that his property was greatly involved, and that, if he wished matters to be set in order, he must hasten to take up his residence on the spot.

“Then marriage is not to be thought of for at least another year,” he reflected with dismay. “First of all I shall need to complete my plans for the estate, and then to consult an architect, and then, and then——”

He broke off with a sigh.

IV

Are you certain that nothing remains to you of your properly—that there is no hope of anything?" asked Olga a few days later.

"Yes, I am certain," he replied—then added with a touch of hesitation in his tone: "But perhaps within a year or so——"

"Within a year or so you may be able to order your life and your affairs? Reflect a moment."

He sighed, for he was fighting a battle with himself, and the battle was reflected in his face.

"Listen," she went on. "Remember that you and I are no longer children, and that we are not jesting, and that the matter may affect our whole lives. Inquire sternly of your conscience, therefore, and tell me (for I know you, as well as trust you) whether you can stand by me your life long, and be to me all that I need? You know me as I know you: consequently you understand what it is that I am trying to say. Should you return me a bold, a considered 'Yes,' I will cancel a certain decision of mine—I will give you my hand, and together we will go abroad, or to your estate, or to the Veaborg Quarter."

"Ah, if you knew how much I love you!" he began.

"I desire no protestations of love.—only a brief answer."

"Do not torture me, Olga," he cried with weariness in his tone.

"Then am I right in what I suppose?" she asked.

"Yes—you are right," was the firm, but significant, reply.

There followed a long pause.

"Shall I tell you what you would have done had we married?" at length she said. "Day by day you would have relapsed farther and farther into your slough. And I? You see what I am—that I am not yet grown old, and that I shall never cease to live. But you would have taken to waiting for Christmas, and then for Shrovetide, and to

attending evening parties, and to dancing, and to thinking of nothing at all. You would have retired to rest each night with a sigh of thankfulness that the day had passed so quickly; and each morning you would have awakened with a prayer that to-day might be exactly as yesterday. That would have been our future. Is it not so? Meanwhile I should have been fading away. Do you really think that in such a life you would have been happy?"

He tried to rise and leave the room, but his feet refused their office. He tried to say something, but his throat seemed dry, and no sound would come. All he could do was to stretch out his hand.

"Forgive me!" he murmured.

She too tried to speak, but could not. She too tried to extend her hand, but it fell back. Finally, her face contracted painfully, and, sinking forward upon his shoulder, she burst into a storm of sobbing. It was as though all her weapons had slipped from her grasp, and once more she was just a woman—a woman defenceless in her fight with sorrow.

"Good-bye, good-bye!" she said amid her spasms of weeping. He sat listening painfully to her sobs, but felt as though he could say nothing to check them. Sinking into a chair, and burying her face in her handkerchief, she wept bitter, burning tears, with her head bowed upon the table.

"Olga," at length he said, "why, torture yourself in this way? You love me, and could never survive a parting. Take me, therefore, as I am, and love in me just so much as may be worthy of it."

Without raising her head, she made a gesture of refusal.

"No, no," she forced herself to gasp. "Nor need you fear for me and my grief. I know myself. I am merely weeping my heart out, and shall then weep no more. Do not hinder me, but go. God has punished me. Yet how it hurts, how it hurts!"

Her sobs redoubled.

“But suppose the pain should not pass?” he said. “Suppose it should wreck your health? Tears like these are tears of poison. Olga, darling, do not weep. Forget the past.”

“No, no; let me weep. I am weeping not so much for the future as for the past.” She could scarcely utter the words. “It was all so bright—but now it is gone! It is not I that am weeping; it is my memory—my memory of the summer, of the park—that is pouring out its grief. Do you remember those things? Yes, I am yearning for the avenue, and for the lilac that you gave me... They had struck their roots into my heart, and—and the plucking of them up is painful indeed!”

In her despair she bowed her head, and sobbed again—repeating: “Oh, how it hurts! Oh, how it hurts!”

“But suppose you were to die of this?” he said in sudden alarm. “Olga, Olga! Think a moment!”

“No, no,” she interrupted, raising her head, and striving to look at him through her tears. “Not long ago I realized that I was loving in you only what I wished you to contain—that it was only the future Oblomov of my dreams that was so dear to me. Ilya, you are good and honourable and tender; but you are all this only as is a dove which, with its head hidden under its wing, wishes to see nothing better. All your life you would have sat perched beneath the eaves. But I am different—I wish for more than that; though what it is I wish for even I myself could scarcely say. On the other hand, do you think that you could have taught me what that something is, that you could have supplied me with what I lack, that you could have given me all that I——?”

Oblomov’s legs were tottering under him. Sinking into a chair, he wiped his hands and forehead with his handkerchief. The words had been harsh—they had stung him to the quick. Somehow, too, they had seared him inwardly, while outwardly, they had chilled him as with a breath of frost. No more could he do than smile the sort of

pitiful, deprecating smile which may be seen on the face of a beggar who is being rated for his sorry clothing—the sort of smile which says: “I am poor and naked and hungry. Beat me, therefore—beat me.”

Suddenly Olga realized the sting which her words had contained, and threw herself impetuously upon him.

“Forgive me, my friend,” she said tenderly and with tears in her voice. “I did not think what I was saying, for I am almost beside myself. Yes, forget all that has happened, and let us be as formerly—let all remain unchanged.”

“No,” he replied, as abruptly he rose to his feet and checked her outburst with a decisive gesture. “All cannot remain unchanged. Nor need you regret that you have told me the truth. I have well deserved it.”

She burst into a renewed fit of weeping.

“Go!” she said, twisting her tear-soaked handkerchief in her hands. “I cannot bear this any longer. To me at least the past is dear.”

She covered her face, and the sobs poured forth afresh.

“Why has everything thus come to rack and ruin?” she cried. “Who has put a curse upon you, Ilya? Why have you done this? You are clever and kind and good and noble; yet you can wreck our lives in this way! What nameless evil has undone you?”

“It has a name,” he said almost inaudibly. She looked at him questioningly with tear-filled eyes.

“That name,” he added, “is ‘The Disease of Oblomovka.’”

Turning with bowed head, he departed.

Whither he wandered, or what he did, he never afterwards knew. Late at night he returned home. His landlady, hearing his knock, awoke Zakhar, who undressed his master, and wrapped him in the old dressing-gown.

“How comes that to be here?” asked Oblomov, glancing at the garment.

“I was given it by the landlady to-day,” replied Zakhar. “She has just cleaned and mended it.”

Sinking into an arm-chair, Oblomov remained there. All around was growing dim and dreamlike. As he sat there with his head resting on his hand he neither remarked the dimness nor heard the striking of the hours. All his mind was plunged in a chaos of formless, indefinite thoughts which, like the clouds in the sky, passed aimlessly, disconnectedly athwart the surface of his brain. Of none of them could he catch the actual substance. His heart felt crushed, and for the moment the life in it was in abeyance. Mechanically he gazed in front of him without even noticing that day was breaking, or that his landlady’s dry cough was once more audible, or that the dvornik was beginning to cut firewood in the courtyard, or that the usual clatter in the house had begun again. At length he went to bed, and fell into a leaden, an uncomfortable sleep....

“To-day is Sunday,” whispered the kindly voice of the landlady, “and I have baked you a pie. Will you not have some?”

He returned no answer, for he was in a high fever.

PART IV

I

F or many a day after his illness Oblomov’s mood was one of dull and painful despondency; but gradually this became replaced with a phase of mute indifference, in which he would spend hours in watching the snow fall and listening to the grinding of the landlady’s coffee-mill, to the barking of the housedogs as they rattled at their chains, to the creaking of Zakhar’s boots, and to the measured tick of the

clock's pendulum. As of old, Agafia Matvievna, his landlady, would come and propose one or another dish for his delectation; also her children would come running to and fro through his rooms. To the landlady he returned kindly, indifferent answers, and to the youngsters he gave lessons in reading and waiting, while smiling wearily, involuntarily at their playfulness. Little by little he regained his former mode of life.

One day Schtoltz walked into his room.

"Well, Ilya?" he said, with a questioning sternness which caused Oblomov to lower his eyes and remain silent.

"Then it is to be 'never'?" went on his friend.

"'Never'?" queried Oblomov.

"Yes. Do you not remember my saying to you, 'Now or never'?"

"I do," the other returned. "But I am not the man I then was. I have now set my affairs in order, and my plans for improving my estate are nearly finished, and I write regularly for two journals, and I have read all the books which you left behind you."

"But why have you never come to join me abroad?" asked Schtoltz.

"Something prevented me."

"Olga?"

Oblomov gathered animation at the question.

"Where is she?" he exclaimed. "I heard that she had gone abroad with her aunt—that she went there soon after, after——"

"Soon after she had recognized her mistake," concluded Schtoltz.

"You know the story, then?" said Oblomov, scarcely able to conceal his confusion.

"Yes, the whole of it—even to the point of the sprig of lilac. Do you not feel ashamed of yourself, Ilya? Does it not hurt you? Are you not consumed with regret

and remorse?"

"Yes; please do not remind me of it," interrupted Oblomov hurriedly. "So great was my agony when I perceived the gulf set between us that I fell ill of a fever. Ah, Schtoltz, if you love me, do not torture me, do not mention her name. Long ago I pointed out to her her mistake, but she would not listen to me. Indeed I am not so much to blame."

"I am not blaming you," said Schtoltz gently; "for I have read your letter. It is I that am most to blame—then she—then you least of all."

"How is she now?"

"How is she? She is in great distress. She weeps, and will not be comforted."

Mingled anguish, sympathy, and alarm showed themselves on Oblomov's features.

"What?" he cried, rising to his feet. "Come, Schtoltz! We must go to her at once, in order that I may beg her pardon on my knees."

Schtoltz thought it well to change his tactics.

"Do you sit still," he said with a laugh. "I have not been telling you the exact truth. As a matter of fact, she is well and happy, and bids me give you her greeting. Also, she wanted to write to you, but I dissuaded her on the ground that it would only cause you pain."

"Thank God for that!" cried Oblomov, almost with tears of joy. "Oh, I am so glad, Schtoltz! Pray let me embrace you, and then let us drink to her happiness!"

"But why are you hidden away in this corner?" asked Schtoltz after a pause.

"Because it is quiet here—there is no one to disturb me."

"I suppose so," retorted Schtoltz. "In fact, you have here—well, Oblomovka over again, only worse." He glanced about him. "And how are you now?"

"I am not very well. My breathing is bad, and spots persist in floating before my eyes. Sometimes, too, when I am asleep, some one seems to come and strike me a

blow upon the back and head, so that I leap up with a start."

"Listen, Ilya," said Schtoltz gravely. "I tell you, in all seriousness, that if you do not change your mode of life you will soon be seized with dropsy or a stroke. As for your future, I have no hopes of it at all. If Olga, that angel, could not bear you from your swamp on her wings, neither shall I succeed in doing so. However, to the end I shall stand by you: and when I say that, I am voicing not only my own wish, but also that of Olga. For she desires you not to perish utterly, not to be buried alive; she desires that at least I shall make an attempt to dig you from the tomb."

"Then she has not forgotten me?" cried Oblomov with emotion—adding: "As though I were worthy of her remembrance!"

"No, she has not forgotten you, and, I think, never will. Indeed, she is not the sort of person to forget you. Some day you must go and pay her a visit in the country."

"Yes, yes—but not now," urged Oblomov.

"Even at this moment I—I——" He pointed to his heart.

"What does it contain?" asked Schtoltz. "Love?"

"No, shame and sorrow. Ah, life, life!"

"What of it?"

"It disturbs me—it allows me no rest."

"Were it to do so, the flame of your candle would soon go out, and you would find yourself in darkness. Ah, Ilya, Ilya! Life passes too swiftly for it to be spent in slumber. Would, rather, it were a perpetual fire!—that one could live for hundreds and hundreds of years! Then what an immensity of work would one not do!"

"You and I are of different types," said Oblomov. "You have wings; you do not merely exist—you also fly. You have gifts and ambition; you do not grow fat; specks do not dance before your eyes; and the back of your neck does not need to be periodically scratched. In short, my organism and yours are wholly dissimilar."

“Fie, fie! Man was created to order his own being, and even to change his own nature; yet, instead, he goes and develops a paunch, and then supposes that nature has laid upon him that burden. Once upon a time you too had wings. Now you have laid them aside.”

“Where are they?” asked Oblomov. “I am powerless, completely powerless.”

“Rather, you are determined to be powerless. Even during your boyhood at Oblomovka, and amid the circle of your aunts and nurses and valets, you had begun to waste your intellect, and to be unable to put on your own socks, and so forth. Hence your present inability to live.”

“All that may be so,” said Oblomov with a sigh; “but now it is too late to turn back.”

“And what am I to say to Olga on my return?”

Oblomov hung his head in sad and silent meditation.

“Say nothing,” at length he said. “Or say that you have not seen me....”

A year and a half later Oblomov was sitting in his dull, murky rooms. He had now grown corpulent, and from his eyes ennui peered forth like a disease. At intervals, too, he would rise and pace the room, then lie down again, then take a book from the table, read a few lines of it, yawn, and begin drumming with his fingers upon the table’s surface. As for Zakhar, he was more seedy and untidy than ever. The elbows of his coat were patched, and he had about him a pinched and hungry air, as though his appetite were bad, his sleep poor, and his work three times as much as it ought to have been. Oblomov’s dressing-gown also was patched: yet, carefully though the holes had been mended, the seams were coming apart in various places. Likewise the coverlet of the bed was ragged, while the curtains, though clean, were faded and hanging in strips.

Suddenly the landlady entered to announce a visitor, and also to say that it was neither Tarantiev nor Alexiev.

“Then it must be Schtoltz again!” thought Oblomov, with a sense of horror. “What can he want with me? However, it does not matter.”

“How are you?” inquired Schtoltz when he entered the room. “You have grown stout, yet your face is pale.”

“Yes, I am not well,” agreed Oblomov. “Somehow my left leg has lost all feeling.” Schtoltz threw at him a keen glance, and then eyed the dressing-gown, the curtains, and the coverlet.

“Never mind,” said Oblomov confusedly. “You know that never at any time do I keep my place tidy. But how is Olga?”

“She has not forgotten you. Possibly you will end by forgetting her?”

“No, never! Never could I forget the time when I was really alive and living in Paradise. Where is she, then?”

“In the country.”

“With her aunt?”

“Yes—and also with her husband.”

“So she is married? Has she been married long? And is she happy?” Oblomov had quite sloughed his lethargy. “I feel as though you had removed a great burden from my mind. True, when you were last here, you assured me that she had forgiven me; but all this time I have been unable to rest for the gnawing at my heart.... Tell me who the fortunate man is?”

“Who he is?” repeated Schtoltz. “Why, cannot you guess, Ilya!”

Oblomov’s gaze grew more intent, and for a moment or two his features stiffened, and every vestige of colour left his cheeks.

“Surely it is not yourself?” he asked abruptly.

“It is. I married her last year.”

The agitation faded from Oblomov’s expression, and gave place to his usual

apathetic moodiness. For a moment or two he did not raise his eyes; but when he did so they were full of kindly tears.

“Dear Schtoltz!” he cried, embracing his friend. “And dear Olga! May God bless you both! How pleased I am! Pray tell her so.”

“I will tell her that in all the world there exists not my friend Oblomov’s equal.” Schtoltz was profoundly moved.

“No, tell her, rather, that I was fated to meet her, in order that I might set her on the right road. Tell her also that I bless both that meeting and the road which she has now taken. To think that that road might have been different! As it is, I have nothing to blush for, and nothing of which to repent. You have relieved my soul of a great burden, and all within it is bright. I thank you, I thank you!”

“I will tell her what you have said,” replied Schtoltz. “She has indeed reason for never forgetting you, for you would have been worthy of her—yes, worthy of her, you who have a heart as deep as the sea. You must come and visit us in the country.”

“No,” replied the other. “It is not that I am afraid of witnessing your married happiness, or of becoming jealous of her love for you. Yet I will not come.”

“Then of what are you afraid?”

“Of growing envious of you. In your happiness I should see, as in a mirror, my own bitter, broken life. Yet no life but this do I wish, or have it in my power, to live. Do not, therefore, disturb it. Memories are the height of poetry only when they are memories of happiness. When they graze wounds over which scars have formed they become an aching pain. Let us speak of something else. Let me thank you for all the care and attention which you have devoted to my affairs. Yet never can I properly requite you. Seek, rather, requital in your own heart, and in your happiness with Olga Sergievna. Likewise, forgive me for having failed to relieve you of your duties with regard to Oblomovka. It is my fixed intention to go there before long.”

“You will find great changes occurred in the place. Doubtless you have read the

statements of accounts which I have sent you?”

Oblomov remained silent.

“What? You have not read them?” exclaimed Schtoltz, aghast. “Then where are they?”

“I do not know. Wait a little, and I will look for them after dinner.”

“Ah, Ilya, Ilya! Scarcely do I know whether to laugh or to weep.”

“Never mind. We will attend to the affair after dinner. First let us eat.”

During the meal Oblomov bestowed high encomiums upon his landlady’s cooking.

“She looks after everything,” he said. “Never will you see me either with unmended socks or with a shirt turned inside out. She supervises every detail.”

He ate and drank with great gusto—so much so that Schtoltz contemplated him with amazement.

“Drink, dear friend, drink,” said Oblomov. “This is splendid vodka. Even Olga could not make vodka or patties or mushroom stews equal to these. They are like what we used to have at Oblomovka. No man could be better looked after by a woman than I am by my landlady, Agafia Matvievna. Nevertheless I, I———” He hesitated.

“Well, what?” prompted Schtoltz.

“I owe her ten thousand roubles on note of hand.”

“Ten thousand roubles? To your landlady? For board and lodging?” gasped Schtoltz, horrified.

“Yes. You see, the sum has gone on accumulating, for I live generously, and the debt includes accounts for peaches, pineapples, and so forth.”

“Ilya,” said Schtoltz, “what is this woman to you?”

The other made no reply.

“She is robbing him,” thought his friend. “She is wheedling his all out of him. Such things are everyday, occurrences, yet I had not guessed it.”

Desirous of taking Oblomov away with him, he nevertheless found all his efforts in that direction ineffectual.

“I ask you once again,” he said. “In what relation do you stand to your landlady?”

Again Oblomov reddened.

“Why are you desirous of knowing?” he countered.

“Because, on the score of our old friendship, I think it my duty to give you a very serious warning indeed.”

“A warning against what?”

“A warning against a pit into which you may fall, Now I must be going. I will tell Olga that we may expect to see you this summer whether at our place or at Oblomovka.”

Then Schtoltz departed.

Not for some years did he visit the capital again, for Olga’s health necessitated a lengthy sojourn in the Crimea. For some reason or other her recovery after the birth of a child had been slow.

“How happy I am!” was her frequent reflection. Yet, no sooner had she passed her life in admiring review than she would find herself relapsing into a meditative mood. What a curious person she was!—a person who, in proportion as her felicity became more, complete, plunged ever deeper and deeper into a brooding over the past! Delving into the recesses of her own mind, she began to realize that this peaceful existence, this halting at various stages of felicity, annoyed her. However, with an effort of will she shook her soul clear of this despondency, and quickened her steps through life in a feverish desire to seek noise and movement and occupation. Yet the bustle of society brought her small relief, and she would retire again into her

corner—there to rid her spirit of the unwonted sense of depression. Then she would go out once more, and busy herself with petty household cares which confined her to the nursery and the duties of a nurse and a mother, or join her husband in reading and discussing serious books or poetry. Her main fear was lest she should fall ill of the disease, the apathetic malady, of Oblomovka. Yet, for all her efforts to slough these phases of torpor and of spiritual coma, a dream of happiness other than the present used to steal upon her, and wrap her in a haze of inertia, and cause her whole being to halt, as for a rest from the exertions of life. Again, to this mood there would succeed a phase of torture and weariness and apprehension—a phase of dull sorrowfulness which kept asking itself dim, indefinite questions and ceaselessly pondering upon them. And as she listened to those questions she would examine herself, yet never discover what it was she yearned for, nor why, at times, she seemed to tire of her comfortable existence, to demand of it new and unfamiliar impressions, and to be gazing ahead in search of something.

"What does it all mean?" she would say to herself with a shudder. "Is there really anything more that I require, or that I need wish for? Whither am I travelling? I have no farther to go—my journey is ended. Yet have I really completed my cycle of existence? Is this really all—all?" Then she would glance timidly around her, and wonder, in doubt and trembling, what such whispers of the soul might portend. With anxious eyes she would scan the earth, the heavens, and the wilds, yet find therein no answer, but merely gloom, profundity, and remoteness. All nature seemed to be saying the same thing; in nature she could perceive only a ceaseless, uniform current of life to which there was neither a beginning nor an ending. Of course, she knew whom she could consult concerning these tremors—she knew who could return the needed answers to her questionings. But what would those answers import? What if Schtoltz should say that her self-questionings represented the murmurings of an unsympathetic, an unwomanly, heart—that his quondam idol possessed but a blasé, dissatisfied soul from which nothing good was to be looked for? Yes, how greatly

she might fall in his estimation, were he to discover these new and unwonted pangs of hers! Consequently, whenever, in spite of her best efforts to conceal the fact, her eyes lost their velvety softness, and acquired a dry and feverish glitter; whenever, too, a heavy cloud overspread her face, and she could not force herself to smile, and to talk, and to listen indifferently to the latest news in the political world, or to descriptions of interesting phenomena in some new walk of learning, or to remarks upon some new creation of art—well, then she hid herself away, on the plea of illness.

Yet she felt no desire to give way to tears; she experienced none of those sudden alarms which had been hers during the period when her girlish nerves had been excited even to the point of self-expression. So if, while resting on some calm, beautiful evening, there came stealing upon her, even amid her husband's talk and caresses, a feeling of weariness and indifference to everything, she would merely ask herself despairingly what it all meant. At one moment she would become, as it were, turned to stone, and sit silent; at another she would make feverish attempts to conceal her strange malady. Finally a headache would supervene, and she would retire to rest. Yet all the while it was a difficult matter for her to evade the keen eyes of her husband. This she knew well, and therefore prepared herself for conversation with him as nervously as she would have done for confession to a priest.

II

One evening she and Schtoltz were pacing the poplar avenue in their garden. She was suffering from her usual inexplicable lack of energy, and finding herself able to return but the briefest of answers to what he said.

"By the way," he remarked, "the nurse tells me that Olinka is troubled with a night cough. Ought we not to send for the doctor to-morrow?"

"No. I have given her some hot medicine, and am going to keep her indoors for the

present," answered Olga dully.

In silence they walked to the end of the avenue.

"Why have you sent no reply to that letter from your friend Sonichka?" he inquired. "This is the third letter that you have left unanswered."

"I would rather forget her altogether," was Olga's brief rejoinder.

"Then you are not well?" he continued after a pause.

"Oh yes; nothing is the matter with me. Why should you think otherwise'?"

"Then you are ennuyée?"

She clasped her hands upon his shoulder.

"No," she said, in a tone of assumed cheerfulness—yet a tone in which the note of ennui was only too plainly apparent.

He led her clear of the shade of the trees, and turned her face to the moonlight.

"Look at me," he commanded. He gazed intently into her eyes.

"One would say that you were unhappy," he commented. "Your eyes have a strange expression in them which I have noticed more than once before. What is the matter with you, Olga?"

She took him by the sleeve and drew him back into the shade.

"Are you aware," she said with forced gaiety, "that I am hungry for supper?"

"No, no," he protested. "Do not make a jest of this."

"Unhappy, indeed?" she said reproachfully, halting in front of him. "Yes, I am unhappy—but only from excess of happiness." So tender was her tone, and so caressing the note in her voice, that he bent down and kissed her.

With that she grew bolder. The jesting supposition that she could be unhappy inspired her to greater frankness.

"No, I am not ennuyée," she went on; "nor should I ever be so. You know that well,

yet you refuse to believe my words. Nor am I ill. It is merely that, that well, that sometimes a feeling of depression comes over me. You are a difficult man to conceal things from. Sometimes I feel depressed, though I could not say why."

She laid her head upon his shoulder.

"Nevertheless, what is the reason of it?" he asked her gently as he bent over her.

"I do not know," she repeated.

"Yet there must be a reason of some sort. If that reason lies neither in me nor in your surroundings, it must lie in yourself. Sometimes such depression is a symptom of ill-health. Are you sure that you are quite well?"

"At all events I feel so," she replied gravely. "See for yourself how I eat and walk and sleep and work! Yet every now and then there comes over me a mood in which life seems to me incomplete.... Do not mind this, however. It is nothing—nothing at all."

"Tell me more," he urged. "Certainly life is incomplete, but what would you add to it?"

"And sometimes," she continued, "I grow afraid lest everything should be about to be changed, or to come to an end; while at other times I find myself torturing my brain with a stupid wondering as to what more is to be expected from the future, this happiness of ours, this life, with its joys and sorrows"—she had dropped her voice to a whisper, in a sort of shame at her own questionings—"I know to be quite natural; yet something seems still to be drawing me onwards, and to be making me dissatisfied with my lot. How ashamed I feel of my folly and fancifulness! But do not notice me: this despondency of mine will soon pass away, and I shall once more become bright and cheerful."

She pressed herself closer with a timid caress, as though she were asking pardon for what she termed her "folly." He questioned her as to her symptoms as a physician might have done, and, in return, she described to him her dull self-interrogations, her

confusion of soul. Meanwhile Schtoltz paced the avenue with his head on his breast and his mind filled with doubt and anxiety—anxiety at the fact that he so little understood his wife. At length she, in her turn, drew him into the light of the moon, and gazed inquiringly into his eyes.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked bashfully. "Are you smiling at my foolishness? Yes, 'tis very foolish, this despondency of mine. Do you not think so?"

He made no reply.

"Why do you not speak?" she urged impatiently.

"You have long been keeping silence," he replied, "although always you have known how solicitous I am on your account. Permit me, therefore, to keep silence and reflect."

"Yet, if you do that, I shall feel uneasy. Never ought I to have spoken out. Pray say something."

"What am I to say?" he asked meditatively. "It may be that a nervous break down is hanging over you. Should that be so, the doctor, not I, will have to decide how best you can be treated. I will send for him to-morrow. In any case, if the mischief is not that, then——"

"Then what?" she queried, shaking his arm.

"It is over-imagination on your part. You are too full of life and hitherto been maturing." He was speaking rather to himself than to her.

"Pray utter your thoughts aloud, Andrei,"

"It is over—I am still maturing," she said beseechingly. "I cannot bear it when you go muttering to yourself like that. I have told you of my follies, and you merely bow your head and mumble something into your beard. In this dark spot such conduct makes me feel uncomfortable."

"I am at a loss what to say. You tell me, 'Depression comes over me,' and 'I find

myself troubled with disturbing questions.' What am I to make of that? Let us speak on the subject again later, and in the meanwhile consider matters. Possibly you require a course of sea-bathing, or something of the kind."

"But you said to yourself: 'Hitherto you have been maturing.' What did you mean by that?"

"I was thinking that, that——" He spoke slowly and hesitatingly, as though he were distrustful of his own thoughts and ashamed of his own words. "You see, there are moments when symptoms of this kind betoken that, if a woman has nothing radically wrong with her health, she has reached maturity—has arrived at the stage when life's growth becomes arrested, and there remains for her no further problem to solve."

"Then you mean that I am growing old?" she interrupted sharply. "How can you say that? I am still young and strong." And she drew herself up as she spoke.

He smiled.

"Do not fear," he said. "You are not of the kind that will ever grow old. True, in old age one's energies fail, and one ceases to battle with life; but that is a very different thing. Provided it be what I take it to be, your sense of depression and weariness is a sign of vigour. Frequently the growings of a vivid, excitable intellect transcend the limits of everyday existence, and, finding no answer to what that intellect demands of life, become converted into despondency and a temporary dissatisfaction with life. The meaning of it is that the soul is sorrowful at having to ask life its secret. Perhaps such is the case with you. If so, you need not term it folly."

She sighed, but, apparently, with relief at the thought that the danger was over, and that she had not fallen in her husband's estimation.

"I am quite happy," she repeated, "nor do I spend my time in dreaming, nor is my life monotonous. What more, then, is there for me to have? What do these questionings portend? They harass me like a sickness."

“They are a spur to encourage a weak, groping intellect which has lacked full preparation. True, such depression and self-questionings have caused many to lose their senses; but to others they seem mere formless visions, a mere fever of the brain.”

“To think that just when one’s happiness is full to overflowing, and one is thoroughly in love with life, there should come upon one a taint of sorrow!” she murmured.

“Yes; such is the payment exacted for the Promethean fire. You must not only endure, you must even love and respect, the sorrow and the doubts and the self-questionings of which you have spoken: for they constitute the excess, the luxury, of life, and show themselves most when happiness is at its zenith, and has alloyed with it no gross desires. Such troubles are powerless to spring to birth amid life which is ordinary and everyday; they cannot touch the individual who is forced to endure hardship and want. That is why the bulk of the crowd goes on its way without ever experiencing the cloud of doubt, the pain of self-questioning. To him or to her, however, who voluntarily goes to meet those difficulties they become welcome guests, not a scourge.”

“But one can never get even with them. To almost every one they bring sorrow and indifference.”

“Yes; but that does not last. Later they serve to shed light upon life, for they lead one to the edge of the abyss whence there is no return—then gently force one to turn once more and look upon life. Thus they seem to challenge one’s tried faculties in order that the latter may be prevented from sinking wholly into inertia.”

“And to think, also, that one should be disturbed by phantoms at all!” she lamented. “When all is bright, one’s life suddenly becomes overshadowed with some sinister influence. Is there no resource against it?”

“Yes, there is one. That resource lies in life itself. Without such phantoms and such

questionings life would soon become a wearisome business."

"Then what ought I to do? To submit to them, and to wear out my heart?"

"No," he replied. "Rather, arm yourself with resolution, and patiently, but firmly, pursue your way." With that he embraced her tenderly. "You and I are not Titans; it is not for us to join the Manfreds and the Fausts of this world in going out to do battle with rebellious problems. Rather, let us decline the challenge of such difficulties, bow our heads, and quietly live through the juncture until such time as life shall have come to smile again, and happiness be once more ours."

"But suppose they decline to pass us by? Will not our doubts and fears continue to increase?"

"No; for we shall accept them as a new verse in life's poem. In this case, however, there is no fear of that. Your trouble is not peculiar to you alone; it is an infectious malady common to all humanity, of which a touch has visited you with the rest. Invariably does a human being feel lost when he or she first breaks away from life and finds no support in place of it. May God send that in the present instance this mood of yours be what I believe it to be, and not a forerunner of some bodily illness. That would be worse, for it would be the one thing before which I should be nerveless and destitute of weapons. Surely that cloud, that depression, those doubts, those self-questionings of yours, are not going to deprive us of our happiness, of our———?" before he could do so, she had flung herself upon him in a frantic embrace.

"Nothing shall ever do that!" she murmured in an access of renewed joy and confidence. "No, neither doubts nor sorrow nor sickness! No, nor yet—nor yet death itself!" Never had she seemed to love him as she did at that moment.

"Take care that Fate does not overhear what you have whispered," he interposed with a superstitious caution born of tender forethought for her. "Yes, take care that it does not rate you ungrateful, for it likes to have its gifts appreciated at their true

worth. Hitherto you have been learning only about life: now you are going also to experience it. Soon, as life pursues its course, there will come to you fresh sorrows and travail; and, together, they will force you to look beyond the questions of which you have spoken, and therefore you must husband your strength."

Schtoltz uttered these words softly, and almost as though he were speaking to himself. And in the words was a note of despondency which seemed to say that already he could see approaching her "sorrows" and "travail."

She said nothing—she was too deeply struck with the mournful foreboding in his tone. Yet she trusted him implicitly—his voice alone inspired in her belief; and for that very reason his gravity affected her deeply, and concentrated her thoughts upon herself. Leaning upon him, she paced the avenue slowly and mechanically, with her soul awed to a silence which she could not break. Following her husband's eyes, she was gazing forward at the vista of life, and trying to discern the point where, according to his words, "sorrows and travail" were awaiting her. And as she did so she saw arise before her a vision in which there became revealed to her a sphere of life that was no longer to be bright and leisured and protected, that was no longer to be passed amid plenty, that was no longer to be spent alone with him. In that sphere she could descry only a long sequence of losses and privations, with copious tears, strict asceticism, involuntary renunciation of whims born of hours of ease, and new and unwonted sensations which should call forth from her cries of pain and disappointment. Yes, in that vision she saw before her only sickness, material ruin, the loss of her husband, and...

Shuddering and faltering, she, with a man's courageous curiosity, continued to gaze at this unfamiliar presentment of life, and timidly to review and to estimate her ability to cope with it. Only love, she saw, would never fail her—only love would over this new existence keep ever-faithful watch and ward. Yet it would be love of a different kind. From it there would be absent all ardent sighs and shining days and

rapturous nights; as the years went on such things would come to seem children's sport compared with the non-intimate affection which life, now grown profound and menacing, would cause her to adopt for her guide. From that life came to her ears no sound of laughter and kisses and tremulous, soulful intercourse amid groves and flowers, while life and nature kept high holiday. No, such things were "withered and gone." The love beheld in that vision was a love which, unfading and indestructible, expressed itself on the features of husband and wife only during seasons of mutual sorrow, and shone forth only in slow, silent glances of mutual sympathy, and voiced itself only in a constant, joint endurance of the trials of life as he and she restrained the tears, and choked back the sobs, which those trials called forth. With that there came stealing into the midst of the doubts and fears which beset her other visions—visions remote but clear, inspiring but definite....

Her husband's calm, assured reasoning, added to her own implicit confidence in him, helped Olga to succeed in shaking off both her enigmatical, singular misgivings and her visionary, menacing dreams concerning the future. Once more, therefore, she strode boldly forward. To the night of doubt there succeeded a brilliant morning of maternal and housewifely duties. On the one hand, there beckoned to her the flower garden and the meadows; on the other hand there beckoned to her her husband's study. No longer did she play with life as with a means of carefree indulgence. Rather, life had become a season of mysterious, systematic waiting, and of getting ready.

Yet once, when Schtoltz happened to mention Oblomov's name, she let fall her sewing, and sank into a reverie.

"What of him?" later she asked. "Could we not find out how he is through some of his friends?"

"Even so, we should find out no more than we know already. Independently of his friends, I happen to be aware that he is alive and well, and living in the same rooms

as formerly. But how he is spending his days, and whether he is morally dead or still there is flickering in him a last spark of vitality, it is impossible for an outsider to ascertain."

"Do not speak like that, Andrei," said Olga. "It hurts me to hear you do so. Were I not afraid, I would go in person to glean news of him." The tears had risen very near to her eyes.

"Next spring we ourselves shall be in Petrograd," the husband remarked. "Then we will find out."

"But it is not sufficient merely to find out: we ought also to do all we can for him!"

"Already I have done what is possible. When one is with him he is ready to take any steps desired; but directly one's back is turned he relapses into slumber. 'Tis like trying to deal with a drunken man."

"Then why turn your back upon him ever? He ought to be treated firmly—he ought to, be removed from his rooms and taken away. Were I to ask him, he would come with us into the country. I feel sure I should never get over it if I were to see him sink to rack and ruin. Perhaps my tears——"

"Might revive him, you think?"

"No, but at least compel him to look around him, and to exchange his life for something better. With us he would be out of the mire, and living among his equals."

"Surely you do not love him as you used to do?" Schtoltz asked half-jestingly.

"No, I do not," she replied (and as she did so her grave eyes seemed to be gazing back into the past). "Yet in him there is something for which I have an abiding affection, and to which I shall ever remain true."

"Shall I tell you what that something is?" She nodded an assent."'Tis an honourable, trustworthy heart. That heart is the nugget given him of Nature, and he has carried it

unsullied through all his life. Under life's stress he fell, lost his enthusiasm, and ended by going to sleep—a broken, disenchanted man who had lost his power to live, but not his purity and his intrinsic worth. Never a false note has that heart sounded; never a particle of mire has there clung to his soul; never a specious lie has he heeded; never to the false road has he been seduced by any possible attraction. Even were a whole ocean of evil and rascality to come seething about him, and even were the whole world to become infected with poison and be turned upside down, Oblomov would yet refuse to bow to the false image, and his soul would remain as clean, as radiant, and as without spot as ever. That soul is a soul of crystal transparency. Of men like him but few exist, so that they shine amid the mob like pearls. No price could be high enough to purchase his heart. Everywhere and always that heart would remain true to its trust. It is to this element in him that you have always remained true; and it is owing to the same element in him that my task of keeping watch will never become a burden. In my day I have known many men with splendid qualities. Never have I known a man cleaner, brighter, and more simple than Oblomov. For many a man have I cherished an affection. Never for a man have I cherished an affection more ardent and lasting than that which I cherish for Oblomov. Once known, his personality is an entity for which one's love could never die.... Is that so? Have I divined aright?"

She said nothing: her eyes were fixed intently upon her work. At length she arose, ran to her husband, gazed into his eyes for a moment as she embraced him, and let her head sink forward upon his shoulder. During those few moments there had arisen to her memory Oblomov's kindly, pensive face, his tender, deprecating gaze, and the shy, wistful smile with which, at their last parting, he had met her reproaches. As she saw those things her heart ached with pity.

"You will never abandon him—you will never let him leave your sight?" she asked with her arms around her husband's neck.

“No, never!—not though an abyss should open between us, and a dividing wall arise!”

She kissed him.

“Nor shall I ever forget the words which you have just spoken,” she murmured.

III

In the Veaborg Quarter peace and quietness reigned supreme. They reigned in its unwashed streets, with their wooden sidewalks, and in its lean gardens amid the nettle-encumbered ditches, where a goat with a ragged cord around its neck was diligently engaged in cropping the herbage and snatching dull intervals of slumber. At midday, however, the high, smart boots of a clerk clattered along a sidewalk, the muslin curtain at a window was pulled aside to admit the features of a Civil Service official’s lady, and for a brief moment there showed itself over a garden fence the fresh young face of a girl—then the face of a companion—then the face which had first appeared, as two maidens laughed and tittered during the process cf swinging each other on a garden swing.

Also in the abode of Oblomov’s landlady all was quiet. Had you entered the little courtyard, you would have happened upon an idyllic scene. The poultry would have started running hither and thither in fussy alarm, and the dogs given tongue in furious accents, while Akulina would have paused in her pursuit of milking the cow, and the dvornik in his task of chopping firewood, in order that they might gaze unhampered at the visitor. “Whom do you wish to see?” the dvornik would have inquired; and on your mentioning Oblomov’s name, or that of the mistress of the house, he would have pointed to the steps of the front door, and then resumed his task of wood-chopping; whereupon the visitor would have followed the neat, sanded path to the steps (which he would have found covered with a plain, clean carpet of some sort), and, reaching for the brightly polished knob of the doorbell, would have

had the door opened to him by Anisia, one of the children, the landlady herself, or Zakhar. Everything in Agafia Matvievna's establishment smacked of an opulence and a domestic sufficiency which had been lacking in the days when she had shared house with her brother, Tarantiev's bosom friend. The kitchen, the lumber-room, and the pantry were alike fitted with cupboards full of china, crockery, and household wares of every sort; while in cases were set out Oblomov's plate and articles of silver (long ago redeemed, and never since pledged). In short, the place abounded in such commodities as are to be found in the abode of every frugal housewife. Also, so carefully was everything packed in camphor and other preservatives that when Agafia Matvievna went to open the doors of the cupboards she could scarcely stand against the overwhelming perfume of mingled narcotics which came forth, and had to turn her head aside for a few moments. Hams hung from the ceiling of the storeroom (to avoid damage by mice), and, with them, cheeses, loaves-of—sugar, dried fish, and bags of nuts and preserved mushrooms. On a table stood tubs of butter, pots of sour cream, baskets of apples, and God knows what else besides, for it would require the pen of a scribe Homer to describe in full, and in detail, all that had become accumulated in the various corners and on the various floors of this little nest of domestic life. As for the kitchen, it was a veritable palladium of activity on the part of the mistress and her efficient assistant, Anisia. Everything was kept indoors and in its proper place; throughout there prevailed a system of orderliness and cleanliness; and only into one particular nook of the house did a ray of light, a breath of air, the good housewife's eye, and the nimble, all-furbishing hand of the domestic never penetrate. That nook was Zakhar's den. Lacking a window, it was so constantly plunged in darkness that its resemblance to a lair rather than to a human habitation was rendered the more complete. Whenever Zakhar surprised in his den the mistress of the house (come thither to plan a cleaning or various improvements) he explained to her, in forcible terms, that it was not a woman's business to sweep out a place where faggots,

blacking, and boots ought to lie, and that it mattered not a jot that clothes should be tossed in a heap on the floor, or that the bed in the stove corner had become overspread with dust, seeing that it was he, and not she, whose function it was to repose upon that bed. As for a besom, a few planks, a couple of bricks, the remains of a barrel, and two blocks of wood which he always kept in his room, he could not, he averred, get on in his domestic duties without them (though why that was so he left to the imagination). Finally, according to his own statement, neither the dust nor the cobwebs in the least inconvenienced him—to which he begged to add a reminder that, since he never obtruded his nose into the kitchen, he should be the more pleased if he could be left alone by those to whom the kitchen was at all times open. Once, when he surprised Anisia in his sanctum, he threatened her so furiously with uplifted fist that the case was referred to the court of superior instance—that is to say, to Oblomov himself, who walked supinely to the door of the den, inserted his head therein, scanned the apartment and its contents, sneezed, and returned mutely to his own quarters.

“What have you gained by it all?” said Zakhar to the mistress and her myrmidon, who had accompanied Oblomov, in the hope that his participation in the affair would lead to a change of some sort. Then the old valet laughed to himself in a way which twisted his eyebrows and whiskers askew.

In the other rooms of the house, however, everything looked bright and clean and fresh. The old stuff curtains had disappeared, and the doors and windows of the drawing-room and the study were hung with blue and green drapery and muslin curtains—the work of Agafia Matvievna’s own hands. Indeed, for days at a time Oblomov, prone upon his sofa, had watched her bare elbows flicker to and fro as she plied needle and thread; nor had he once gone to sleep to the sound of thread being alternately inserted and bitten off, as had been his custom in the old days at Oblomovka.

“Enough of work,” he had nevertheless said to her at intervals, “Pray cease your labours for a while.”

“Nay,” she had always replied, “God loves those who toil.”

Nor was his coffee prepared for him with less care, attention, and skill than had been the case before he had changed his old quarters for his present ones. Giblet soup, macaroni with Parmesan cheese, soup concocted of kvass and herbs, home-fed pullets—all these dishes succeeded one another in regular rotation, and by so doing helped to make agreeable breaks in the otherwise monotonous routine of the little establishment. Nor did the sun, whenever shining, fail to brighten his room from morning till night—thanks to the fact that the market-gardens on either side of the building prevented that luminary’s rays from being shaded off by any obstacle. Outside, ducks quacked cheerfully, while, within, a geranium, added to a few hyacinths which the children had brought home, filled the little apartment with a perfume which mingled pleasantly with the smoke of Havana cigars and the scent of the cinnamon or the vanilla which the mistress of the house would be preparing with bare, energetic arms.

Thus Oblomov lived in a sort of gilded cage—a cage within which, as in a diorama, the only changes included alternations of day and night and of the seasons. Of changes of the disturbing kind which stir up the sediment from the bottom of life’s bowl—a sediment only too frequently both bitter and obnoxious—there were none. Ever since the day when Schtoltz had cleared him of debt, and Tarantiev and Tarantiev’s friend had taken themselves off for good, every adverse element had disappeared from Oblomov’s existence, and there surrounded him only good, kind, sensible folk who had agreed to underpin his existence with theirs, and to help him not to notice it, nor to feel it, as it pursued its even course. Everything was, as it were, at peace, and of that peace, that inertia, Oblomov represented the complete, the natural, embodiment and expression. After passing in review and considering his

mode of life, he had sunk deeper and deeper therein, until finally he had come to the conclusion that he had no farther to go, and nothing farther to seek, and that the ideal of his life would best be preserved where he was—albeit without poetry, without those finer shades wherewith his imagination had once painted for him a spacious, careless course of manorial life on his own estate and among his own peasantry and servants.

Upon his present mode of life he looked as a continuation of the Oblomovkan existence (only with a different colouring of locality, and, to a certain extent, of period). Here, as at Oblomovka, he had succeeded in escaping life, in driving a bargain with it, and ensuring to himself an inviolable seclusion. Inwardly he congratulated himself on having left behind him the irksome, irritating demands and menaces cf mundane existence—on having placed a great distance between himself and the horizon where there may be seen flashing the lightning-bolts of keen pleasure, and whence come the thunderpeals of sudden affliction, and where flicker the false hopes and the splendid visions of average happiness, and where independence of thought gradually engulfs and devours a man, and where passion slays him outright, and where the intellect fails or triumphs, and where humanity engages in constant warfare, and leaves the field of battle in a state of exhaustion and of ever-unsatisfied, ever-insatiable desire. Never having experienced the consolations to be won in combat, he had none the less renounced them, and felt at ease only in a remote corner to which action and lighting and the actual living of life were alike strangers.

Yet moments there were when his imagination stirred within him again, and when there recurred to his mind forgotten memories and unrealized dreams, and when he felt in his conscience whispered reproaches for having made of his life so little as he had done. And whenever that occurred he slept restlessly, awoke at intervals, leaped out of bed, and shed chill tears of hopelessness over the bright ideal that was now extinguished for ever. He shed them as folk shed them over a dead friend whom

with bitter regret they recognize to have been neglected during his lifetime. Then he would glance at his surroundings, hug to himself his present blessings, and grow comforted on noting how quietly, how restfully, the sun was rising amid a blaze of glory. Thus he had come to a decision that not only was his life compounded in the best manner for expressing the possibilities to which the idealistic-peaceful side of human existence may attain, but also that it had been expressly created for and preordained to, that purpose. To others, he reflected, let it fall to express life's restless aspects; to others let it be given to exercise forces of construction and destruction; to each man be allotted his true métier.

Such the philosophy which our Plato of Oblomovka elaborated for the purpose of lulling himself to sleep amid the problems and the stern demands of duty and of destiny. He had been bred and nourished to play the part, not of a gladiator in the arena but of a peaceful onlooker at the struggle. Never could his diffident, lethargic spirit have faced either the raptures or the blows of life. Hence he expressed only one of its aspects, and had no mind either to succeed in it, or to change anything in it, or to repent of his decision. As the years flowed on both emotion and repining came to manifest themselves at rarer and rarer intervals, until, by quiet, imperceptible degrees, he became finally interned in the plain, otiose tomb of retirement which he had fashioned with his own hands, even as desert anchorites who have turned from the world dig for themselves a material sepulchre. Of reorganizing his estate, and removing thither with his household; he had given up all thought. The steward whom Schtoltz had placed in charge of Oblomovka regularly sent him the income therefrom, and the peasantry proffered him flour and poultry at Christmastide, and everything on the estate was prospering.

Meanwhile he ate heartily and much, even as he had done at Oblomovka. Also, he walked and worked sluggishly and little—again, as he had done at Oblomovka. Lastly, in spite of his advancing years, he drank beer and vodka à raisin with complete insouciance, and took to sleeping ever more and more protractedly after

dinner.

But suddenly a change occurred. One day, after his usual quota of slumber and day dreams, he tried to rise from the sofa, but failed, and his tongue refused to obey him. Terrified, he could compass only a gesture when he tried to call for help. Had he been living with Zakhar alone, he might have continued to signal for assistance until next morning, or have died, and not been found there till the following day; but, as it was, the eyes of his landlady had been watching over him like the eyes of Providence itself, and it cost her no skill of wit, but only an instinct of the heart, to divine that all was not well with Oblomov. No sooner had the instinct dawned upon her than Anisia was dispatched in a cab for a doctor, while Agafia Matvievna herself applied ice to the patient's head, and extracted from her medicine chest the whole armoury of smelling-bottles and fomentations which custom and report had designated for use at such a juncture. Even Zakhar managed to get one of his boots on, and, thus shod, to fuss around his master in company with the doctor, the mistress of the house, and Anisia.

At length, blood having been let, Oblomov returned to consciousness, and was informed that he had just sustained an apoplectic stroke, and that he must adopt a different course of life. Henceforth, vodka, beer, wine, coffee, and rich food were, with certain exceptions, to be prohibited, while in their place there were prescribed for him daily exercise and a regular amount of sleep of an exclusively nocturnal nature. Even then these remedies would have come to nothing but for Agafia Matvievna's watchfulness; but she had the wit so to introduce the system that the entire household involuntarily assisted in its working. Thus, partly by, cunning and partly by kindness, she contrived to wean Oblomov from his attractive indulgences in wind, postprandial slumber, and fish pasties. For instance, as soon as ever he began to doze, either a chair would be unset in an adjoining room, or, of its own volition, some old and worthless crockery would begin flying into splinters, or the children would start making a noise, and be told, fortissimo, to be gone. Lastly,

should even this not prove effective, her own kindly voice would be heard calling to him, in order to ask him some question or another.

Also, the garden path was lengthened, and on it Oblomov accomplished, morning and evening, a constitutional of some two hours' duration. With him there would walk the landlady—or, if she could not attend, one of the children, or his old friend, the irresponsible and to every man both humble and agreeable Alexiev. One morning Oblomov, leaning on the boy Vania's arm, slowly paced the path. By this time Vania had grown into almost a youth, and found it hard to restrict his brisk, rapid step to Oblomov's more tardy gait. As the elder man walked he made little use of one of his legs, which was a trace of the stroke which he had recently sustained.

"Let us go indoors now, Vaniushka," he said; wherefore they directed their steps towards the door. But to meet them! there issued Agafia Matvievna.

"Why are you coming in so early?" she inquired.

"Early, indeed? Why, we have paced the path twenty times each way, and from here to the fence is a distance of fifty sazhens; wherefore we have covered two versts in all."

"And how many times do you say you have paced it?" she inquired of Vania.

He hesitated.

"Do not lie, but look me straight in the face," she continued, fixing him with her gaze. "I have been watching you the whole time. Remember next Sunday. Possibly I might not let you go to the party that night."

"Well, mother," the boy said at length, "we have paced the path only twelve times."

"Ah, you rogue!" exclaimed Oblomov. "You were nipping off acacia-leaves all the time, whereas I was keeping the most careful account."

"Then you must go and do some more walking," decided the landlady. "Besides, the fish soup is not yet ready." And she closed the door upon the pair.

Oblomov, much against his will, completed another eight pacings of the path, and then entered the dining-room. On the large round table the fish soup was now steaming, and all hastened to take their usual seats—Oblomov in solitary state on the sofa, the landlady on his right, and the rest in due sequence.

“I will help you to this herring, as it is the fattest,” said Agafia Matvievna.

“Very well,” he remarked. “Only, I think that a pie would go well with it.”

“Oh dear! I have forgotten the pies! I meant to make some last night, but my memory is all gone to pieces!” The artful Agafia Matvievna! “Besides, I am afraid that I have forgotten the cutlets and the cabbage. In fact, you must not expect very much of a dinner to-day.” This was addressed ostensibly to Alexiev.

“Never mind,” he replied. “I can eat anything.”

“But why not cook him some pork and peas, or a beef-steak?” asked Oblomov.

“I did go to the butcher’s for a beefsteak, but there was not a single morsel of good beef left. However, I have made Monsieur Alexiev a cherry compote instead. I know he likes that.” The truth was that cherry compote was not bad for Oblomov; wherefore the complacent Alexiev had no choice but both to eat it and to like it.

After dinner no power on earth could prevent Oblomov from assuming a recumbent position; so, to obviate his going to sleep, the landlady was accustomed to place beside him his coffee, and then to inspire, her children to play games on the floor, so that, willy-nilly, Oblomov should be forced to join in their sport. Presently she withdrew to the kitchen to see if the coffee was yet ready, and, meanwhile, the children’s clatter died away. Almost at once a gentle snore arose in the room—then a louder one—then one louder still; and when Agafia Matvievna returned with the steaming coffee-pot she encountered such a volume of snoring as would have done credit to a post-house.

Angrily she shook her head at Alexiev.

“It is not my fault,” he said deprecatingly. “I tried to stir up the children, but they would not listen to me.”

Swiftly depositing the coffee-pot upon the table, she caught up little Andriusha from the floor, and gently seated him upon the sofa by Oblomov’s side; whereupon the child wriggled towards him, climbed his form until he had reached his face, and grasped him firmly by the nose.

“Hi! Hullo! Who is that?” cried Oblomov uneasily as he opened his eyes.

“You had gone to sleep, so Andriusha climbed on to the sofa and awoke you,” replied the landlady kindly.

“I had gone to sleep, indeed?” retorted Oblomov, laying his arm around the little one. “Do you think I did not hear him creeping along on all fours? Why, I hear everything. To think of the little rascal catching me by the nose! I’ll give it him! But there, there.” Tenderly embracing the child, he deposited him on the floor again, and heaved a profound sigh. “Tell us the news, Ivan Alexiev,” he said.

“You have heard it all. I have nothing more to tell.”

“How so? You go into society, and I do not. Is there nothing new in the political world?”

“It is being said that the earth is growing colder every day, and that one day it will become frozen altogether.”

“Away with you! Is that politics?”

A silence ensued. Oblomov quietly relapsed into a state of coma that was neither sleeping nor waking. He merely let his thoughts wander at will, without concentrating them upon anything in particular as calmly he listened to the beating of his heart and occasionally blinked his eyes. Thus he sank into a vague, enigmatical condition which partook largely of the nature of hallucination. In rare instances there come to a man fleeting moments of abstraction when he seems to be

reliving past stages of his life. Whether he has previously beheld in sleep the phenomena which are passing before his vision, or whether he has gone through a previous existence and has since forgotten it, we cannot say; but at all events he can see the same persons around him as were present in the first instance, and hear the same words as were uttered then.

So was it with Oblomov now. Gradually there spread itself about him the hush which he had known long ago. He could hear the beating of the well-known pendulum, the snapping of the thread as it was bitten off, and the repetition of familiar whispered sentences like “I cannot make the thread go through the eye of the needle. Pray do it for me, Masha—your eyesight is keener than mine.”

Lazily, mechanically he looked into his landlady’s face; and straightway from the recesses of his memory there arose a picture which, somewhere, had been well known to him.

To his vision there dawned the great, dark drawing-room in the house of his youth, lit by a single candle. At the table his mother and her guests were sitting over their needlework, while his father was silently pacing up and down. Somehow the present and the past had become fused and interchanged, so that, as the little Oblomov, he was dreaming that at length he had reached the enchanted country where the rivers run milk and honey, and bread can be obtained without toil, and every one walks clad in gold and silver.

Once again he could hear the old legends and the old folk-tales, mingled with the clatter of knives and crockery in the kitchen. Once again he was pressing close to his nurse to listen to her tremulous, old woman’s voice. “That is Militrissa Kirbitievna,” she was saying as she pointed to the figure of his landlady. Also, the same clouds seemed to be floating in the blue zenith that used to float there of yore, and the same wind to be blowing in at the window, and ruffling his hair, and the same cock of the Oblomovkan poultry-yard to be strutting and crowing below. Suddenly a dog

barked. Some other guest must be arriving! Would it be old Schtoltz and his little boy from Verklevo? Yes, probably, for to-day is a holiday. And in very truth it is they—he can hear their footsteps approaching nearer and nearer! The door opens, and "Andrei!" he exclaims excitedly, for there, sure enough, stands his friend—but now grown to manhood, and no longer a little boy!...

IV

Oblomov recovered consciousness. Before him Schtoltz was standing—but the Schtoltz of the present, not the Schtoltz of a daydream.

Swiftly the landlady caught up the baby Andriusha, swept the table clear of her work, and carried off the children. Alexiev also disappeared, and Schtoltz and Oblomov found themselves alone. For a moment or two they gazed at one another amid a tense silence.

"Is that really you. Schtoltz?" asked Oblomov in tones scarcely audible for emotion—such tones as a man employs only towards his dearest friend and after a long separation.

"Yes, it is I," replied Schtoltz quietly. "And you—are you quite well?"

Oblomov embraced him heartily. In that embrace were expressed all the long-concealed grief and joy which, fermenting ever in his soul, had never, since Schtoltz's last departure, been expressed to any human being. Then they seated themselves, and once more gazed at one another.

"Are you really well?" Schtoltz asked again.

"Yes, thank God!" replied Oblomov. "But you have been ill?"

"Yes—I was seized with a stroke."

"Ah, Ilya, Ilya! Evidently you have let yourself go again. What have you been doing? Actually, it is five years since last we saw one another!"

Oblomov sighed, but said nothing.

“And why did you not come to Oblomovka?” pursued Schtoltz. “And why have you never written to me?”

“What was there to say?” was Oblomov’s sad reply. “You know me. Consequently you need ask no more.”

“So you are still living in these rooms?” And Schtoltz surveyed the room as he spoke. “Why have you not moved?”

“Because I am still here. I do not think the move will ever take place.”

“Why are you so sure?”

“Because I am sure.”

Again Schtoltz eyed him closely, then became thoughtful, and started to pace the room.

“And what of Olga Sergievna?” was Oblomov’s next question. “Where is she now, and does she still remember me?” At this point he broke off abruptly.

“Yes, she is well, and has of you a remembrance as clear as though she had parted from you yesterday. Presently I will tell you where she is.”

“And your children?”

“The children too are well. But are you jesting when you say that you are going to remain where you are? My express purpose in coming here is to carry you off to our place in the country.”

“No, no!” cried Oblomov, though lowering his voice as he glanced at the door. Evidently the proposal had disturbed him greatly. “Do not say a word about it,” he pleaded. “Do not begin your arguments again.”

“But why will you not come? What is the matter with you? You know me well, and know that long ago I undertook this task, and shall never relinquish it. Hitherto business affairs have occupied my time, but now I am free once more. Come and

live with us, or, at all events, near us. Olga and I have decided that you must do so. Thank God that I have found you the same as before, and not worse! My hopes of doing that had been small. Let us be off at once. I am prepared even to abduct you by force. You must change your mode of life, as you well know."

To this speech Oblomov listened with impatience.

"Do not speak so loudly," he urged. "In there——"

"Well—in there?"

"Is the landlady, and, should she hear us, she will think that I am going to leave her."

"And why should you not leave her? Let her think what she likes!"

"Listen, Andrei." Oblomov's tone was one of unwonted firmness. "Do not continue your useless attempts to persuade me. Come what may, I must remain where I am."

Schtoltz gazed at his friend in astonishment, but Oblomov returned the gaze with quiet resolution on his features.

"Remain here, and you are lost," said Schtoltz. "This house, that woman, this way of living?—I tell you the thing cannot be. Let us go."

He caught Oblomov by the sleeve, and started to drag him towards the door.

"Why do you want to take me away?" asked Oblomov, hanging back.

"Because I want you to leave this den, this swamp, for the world of light and air and health and normal existence." Schtoltz was speaking sternly, and almost in a tone of command. "To what point have you sunk?" he went on. "What is going to become of you? Think for a moment. Are you so attached to this mode of life that you wish to go to sleep like a mole in its burrow? Remember that——-"

"I desire to remember nothing. Do not disturb the past. It can never be brought back again." Into Oblomov's face there had come a full consciousness of his power to think, to reason, and to will. "What is it you wish me to do? From the world to

which you would abduct me I have parted for ever; and to solder together two pieces which have started asunder is impossible. I have grown to look upon this nook as my world. Should you uproot me from it, I shall die."

"But look at the place, at the people with whom you are living!"

"I know what you mean—I am perfectly conscious of the facts. Ah, Andrei, believe me when I say that so well do I feel and understand things that for many a day past I have been ashamed to show myself abroad. Yet I cannot accompany you on your road. Even did I wish it, such a course is out of my power. Possibly, when you were last here, I might have made the attempt; but now"—here he dropped his eyes for a moment and paused—"now it is too late. Go, and waste no further time upon me. Your friendship, as God in heaven knows, I value; but your disturbance of my peace I do not value."

"Nothing that you can say will turn me from my purpose. I intend to carry you off, ard the more so because I suspect certain things. Look here. Put on a garment of some sort, and come and spend the evening at my rooms. I have much to tell you, for I suppose you know what is afoot at our place?"

Oblomov looked at him inquiringly.

"Ah, I had forgotten," Schtoltz went on. "You no longer go into society. Well, come with me, and I will tell you the whole story. Also, do you know who is waiting for me in a carriage at the gates? I will go and call her in."

"What? Olga?" As the words burst tremulously from Oblomov's lips his face underwent a sudden change. "For God's sake do not bring her here! Go, go for God's sake!"

But the elder man refused to move, although his friend half started to push him towards the door.

"I cannot return to her without you," he said. "I have pledged my word on that. If you will not come with me to-day, then you must come to-morrow. You are merely

putting me off for a time: you will never put me off for ever. Even should it be the day after to-morrow, we still shall meet again."

Oblomov said nothing, but hung his head as though afraid to meet Schtoltz's eye.

"When are you coming, therefore?" went on Schtoltz. "Olga will be sure to ask me when."

"Ah, Andrei," cried the other in a tone of affectionate appeal as he embraced his friend and laid his head upon his shoulder, "Pray leave me and—forget me."

"What? For ever?" cried Schtoltz in astonishment as he withdrew a little from Oblomov's embrace in order the better to look him in the face.

"Yes," whispered Oblomov.

Schtoltz stepped back a pace or two.

"Can this really be you, Ilya?" he exclaimed reproachfully. "Do you really reject me in favour of that woman, of that landlady of yours?" He started with a sudden pang. "So that child which I saw just new is your child? Ah, Ilya, Ilya! Come hence at once. How you have fallen! What is that woman to you?"

"She is my wife," said Oblomov simply.

Schtoltz stood petrified.

"Yes, and the child is my son," Oblomov continued. "He has been called Andrei after yourself." Somehow he seemed to breathe more freely now that he had got rid of the burden of these disclosures. As for Schtoltz, his face fell, and he gazed around the room with vacant eyes. A gulf had opened before him, a high wall had suddenly shot up, and Oblomov seemed to have ceased to exist—he seemed to have vanished from his friend's sight, and to have fallen headlong. The only feeling in Schtoltz's mind was an aching sorrow of the kind which a man experiences when, hastening to visit a friend after a long parting, he finds that for many a day past that friend has been dead.

"You are lost!" he kept whispering mechanically. "What am I to say to Olga?"

At length Oblomov caught the last words, and tried to say something, but failed. All he could do was to extend his hands in Schtoltz's direction. Silently, convulsively the pair embraced, even as before death or a battle. In that embrace was left no room for words or tears or expressions of feeling.

"Never forget my little Andrei," was Oblomov's last choking utterance. Slowly and silently Schtoltz left the house. Slowly and silently he crossed the courtyard and entered the carriage. When he had gone Oblomov reseated himself upon the sofa in his room, rested his elbows upon the table, and buried his face in his hands....

"No, never will I forget your little Andrei," thought Schtoltz sadly as he drove homewards. "Ah, Ilya, you are lost beyond recall! It would be useless now to tell you that your Oblomovka is no longer in ruins, that its turn is come again, and that it is basking in the rays of the sun. It would be useless now to tell you that, some four years hence, it will have a railway-station, and that your peasantry are clearing away the rubbish there, and that before long an iron road will be carrying your grain to the wharves, and that already local schools have been built. Such a dawn of good fortune would merely affright you; it would merely cause your unaccustomed eyes to smart. Yet along the road which you could not tread I will lead your little Andrei; and with him I will put into practice those theories whereof you and I used to dream in the days of our youth. Farewell, Oblomovka of the past! You have outlived your day!" For the last time Schtoltz looked back at Oblomov's diminutive establishment.

"What do you say?" asked Olga with a beating heart.

"Nothing," Schtoltz answered dryly and abruptly.

"Is he alive and well?"

"Yes," came the reluctant reply.

"Then why have you returned so soon? Why did you not call me to the house, or else bring him out to see me? Let me go back, please."

“No, you cannot.”

“Why so? What has happened there? Will you not tell me?”

Schtoltz continued to say nothing.

“Again I ask you: what is the matter with him?”

“The disease of Oblomovka,” was the grim response. And throughout the rest of the journey homeward Schtoltz refused to answer a single one of Olga’s questions.

V

Five years have passed, and more than one change has taken place in the Veaborg Quarter. The street which used to lead, unenclosed, to Oblomov’s humble abode is now lined with villas. In the midst of them a tall stone Government office rears its head between the sunlight and the windows of that quiet, peaceful little house which the sun’s rays once warmed so cheerfully.

The house itself has grown old and crazy: it wears a dull, neglected look like that of a man who is unshaven and unwashed. In places the paint has peeled away, and in others the gutters are broken. To the latter is due the fact that pools of dirty water stand in the courtyard, and that thrown across them is a piece of old planking. Should a visitor approach the wicket, the old watchdog no longer leaps nimbly to the extent of his chain, but gives tongue hoarsely and lazily from the interior of his kennel.

And, within the house, what changes have taken place! Over it there reigns a different housewife to the former one, and different children sport in play. Again is seen about the premises the lean countenance of Tarantiev, rather than the kindly, careless features of Alexiev; while of Zakhar and Anisia also there is not a sign discernible. A new cook performs, rudely and unwillingly, the quiet behests of Agafia Matvievna, and our old friend Akulina—her apron girded around her

middle—washes up, as formerly, the domestic crockery and the pots and pans. Lastly, the same old sleepy dvornik whiles away the same old idle life in the same old den by the gates, and at a given hour each morning, as well as always at the hour of the evening meal, there flashes past the railings of the fence the figure of Agafia's brother, clad, summer and winter alike, in galoshes, and always carrying under his arm a large bundle of documents.

But what of Oblomov? Where is he—where? Under a modest urn in the adjoining cemetery his body rests among the shrubs. All is quiet where he is lying; only a lilac-tree, planted there by a loving hand, waves its boughs to and fro over the grave as it mingles its scent with the sweet, calm odour of wormwood. One would think that the Angel of Peace himself were watching over the dead man's slumbers....

Despite his wife's ceaseless and devoted care for every moment of his existence, the prolonged inertia, the unbroken stillness, the sluggish gliding from day to day had ended by quietly arresting the machine of life. Thus Oblomov met his end, to all appearances without pain, without distress, even as stops a watch which its owner has—forgotten to wind up. No one witnessed his last moments or heard his expiring gasp. A second stroke of apoplexy occurred within a year of the first, and, like its precursor, passed away favourably. Later, however, Oblomov became pale and weak, took to eating little and seldom walking in the garden, and increased in moodiness and taciturnity as the days went on. At times he would even burst into tears, for he felt death drawing nearer, and was afraid of it. One or two relapses occurred, from which he rallied, and then Agafia Matvievna entered his room, one morning, to find him resting on his deathbed as quietly as he had done in sleep—the only difference being that his head had slipped a little from the pillow, and that one of his hands was convulsively clutching the region of the heart in a manner which suggested that the pain had there centred itself until the circulation of the blood had stopped for ever.

After his death Agafia Matvievna's sister-in-law, Irina Paptelievna, assumed control of the establishment. That is to say, she arrogated to herself the right to rise late in the morning, to drink three cups of coffee for breakfast, to change her dress three times a day, and to confine her housewifely energies to seeing that her gowns were starched to the utmost degree of stiffness. More she would not trouble to undertake, and, as before, Agafia Matvievna remained the active pendulum of the domestic clock. Not only did she superintend the kitchen and the dining-room, and prepare tea and coffee for the entire household, but also she did the general mending and supervised the linen, the children, Akulina, and the dvornik.

Why was this? Was she not Madame Oblomov and the proprietress of a landed estate? Might she not have maintained a separate, an independent establishment, and have wanted for nothing, and have been at no one's beck and call? What had led her to take upon her shoulders the burden of another's housekeeping, the care of another's children, and all those petty details which women usually assume only at the call of love, or in obedience to sacred family ties, or for the purpose of earning a morsel of daily bread? Where, too, were Zakhar and Anisia—now become, by every right of law, her servants? Where, too, was the little treasure, Andrei, which Oblomov had bequeathed her? Where, finally, were her children by her first husband?

Those children were now all provided for. That is to say, Vania had finished his schooling and entered Government service, his sister had married the manager of a Government office, and little Andrei had been committed to the care of Schtoltz and his wife, who looked upon him as a member of their own family. Never for a moment did Agafia Matvievna mentally compare his lot, or place it on a level with, that of her first children—although, unconsciously it may be, she allotted them all an equal place in her heart. In her opinion the little Andrei's upbringing, mode of life, and future career stood divided by an immeasurable gulf from the fortunes of Vania and his sister.

"What are they?" she would say to herself when she called to see Andrei. "They are children born of the people, whereas this one was born a young barin."

Then she would caress the boy, if not with actual timidity, at all events with a certain touch of caution, and add to herself with something like respect: "What a white skin he has! 'Tis almost transparent. And what tiny hands and feet, too, and what silky hair! He is just like his dead father." Consequently she was the more ready to accede to Schtoltz's request when he asked her that he (Schtoltz) should educate the youngster; since she felt sure that Schtoltz's household was far more the lad's proper place than was her own establishment, where he would have been thrown among her grimy young nephews.

Clad in black, she would glide like a shadow from room to room of the house—opening and shutting cupboards, sewing, making lace, but doing everything quietly, and without the least sign of energy. When spoken to, she would reply as though to do so were an effort. Moreover, her eyes no longer glanced swiftly from object to object, as they had done in the old days: rather, they remained fixed in a sort of ever concentrated gaze. Probably they had assumed that gaze during the hour when she had stood looking at her dead husband's face.

That the light of her life was fast flickering before going out, that God had breathed His breath into her existence and taken it away again, and that her sun had shone brilliantly and was setting for ever, she clearly understood. Yes, that sun was setting for ever, but not before she had learnt the reason why she had been given life, and the fact that she had not lived in vain. Greatly she had loved, and to the full: she had loved Oblomov as a lover, as a husband, and as a barin. But around her there was no one to comprehend this; wherefore she kept her grief the more closely locked, in her own bosom.

Only, next winter, when Schtoltz came to town, she ran to see him, and to gaze hungrily at little Andrei, whom she covered with caresses. Presently she tried to say

something—to thank Schtoltz, and to pour out before him all that had been accumulating in her heart in the absence of an outlet. Such words he would have understood perfectly, had they been uttered. But the task was beyond her—she could only throw herself upon Olga, glue her lips to her hand, and burst into such a torrent of scalding tears that perforce Olga wept with her, and Schtoltz, greatly moved, hastened from the room. All three had now a common bond of sympathy—that bond being the memory of Oblomov's unsullied soul. More than once Schtoltz and Olga besought the widow to come and live with them in the country, but always she replied: "Where I was born and have lived my live, there must I also die." Likewise, when Schtoltz proposed to render her an account of his management of the Oblomovkan property, she returned him the income therefrom, with a request that he should lay it by for the benefit of little Andrei.

"'Tis his, not mine," she said. "He is the barin, and I will continue to live as I have always done."

VI

One day, about noon, two gentlemen were walking along a pavement in the Veaborg Quarter, while behind them a carriage quietly paced. One of the gentlemen was Schtoltz, the other a literary friend of his—a stout individual with an apathetic face and sleepy, meditative eyes. As they drew level with a church, Mass had just ended, and the congregation was pouring into the street. In front of them a knot of beggars was collecting a rich and varied harvest.

"I wonder where these mendicants come from," said the literary gentleman, glancing at the reapers.

"Out of sundry nooks and corners, I suppose," replied the other carelessly.

"That is not what I meant. What I meant is, how have they descended to their present position of beggars? Have they come to it suddenly or gradually, for a good

reason or for a bad one?”

“Why are you so anxious to know? Are you contemplating writing a ‘Mysteries of Petrograd’?”

“Perhaps I am,” the literary gentleman explained with an indolent yawn.

“Then here is a chance for you. Ask any one of them, and, for the sum of a rouble, he will sell you his story, which, jotted down, you could resell to the nobility. For instance, take this old man here. He looks a good example of the normal type. Hi, old man! We want you!”

The old man turned his head at the summons, doffed his cap, and approached the two gentlemen.

“Good sirs,” he whined, “pray help a poor man who has been wounded in thirty battles and grown old in war.”

“It is Zakhar!” exclaimed Schtoltz in astonishment. “It is you, Zakhar, is it not?”

But Zakhar said nothing. Then suddenly, he shaded his eyes from the sun, and, staring intently at Schtoltz, muttered—

“Pardon me, your Honour—I do not recognize you. I am nearly blind.”

“What? You have forgotten your old friend, the bavin Schtoltz?” the other asked reproachfully.

“Dear, dear! Is it really your Honour? My bad sight has got the better of me.”

Catching Schtoltz impetuously by the hand, the old man imprinted kiss after kiss upon the skirt of his coat.

“The Lord Himself has permitted a poor lost wretch to see a joyful day!” he said, half-laughing, half-crying. Over his face, and particularly over his nose, there had spread a purplish tinge, while his head was almost completely bald, and his whiskers, though still long, looked so matted and entangled as to resemble pieces of felt wherein snowballs have been wrapped. As for his clothing, it consisted of an

old, faded cloak, with one of the lapels missing, and a pair of down-at-heel goloshes. In his hands was a cap from which the fur had become worn away.

"Ah, good sir!" he repeated. "Heaven has indeed granted me joy for to-day's festival!"

"But why are you in this state?" Schtoltz inquired. "Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"Yes, your Honour; but what else could I do?" And Zakhar heaved a profound sigh. "How else was I to live? So long as Anisia was alive I had not to go wandering about like this, for I was given bite and sup whenever I wanted it; but she died of cholera (Heaven rest her soul!), and her brother straightway refused to support me, saying that I was nothing but an old hanger-on. From Michei Andreitch Tarantiev too I received shameful abuse, and neither of them—would you believe it, your Honour?—ever gave me a morsel of bread! Indeed, had it not been for the barinia, God bless her"—and Zakhar crossed himself—"I should long ago have perished of the cold; but for a while she gave me a bit of clothing, and as much bread as I could eat, and a place by the stove of a night. Then they took to rating her on my account; so at last I left the house to wander whither my eyes might lead me. This is the second year that I have been dragging out this miserable existence."

"But why did you not go and seek a situation?" Schtoltz inquired.

"Where was I to get one at this time of day, your Honour? True, I tried for two, but was unsuccessful. Things are not what they used to be: everything has changed for the worse. Nowadays masters require their lacqueys to look respectable, and the gentry no longer keep their halls chock-full of footmen. Indeed, 'tis seldom that you will find so many as two footmen in a house. Yes," he went on, "the gentry actually take off their own boots! They have even gone so far as to invent a machine to do it with!" Evidently the idea cut Zakhar to the heart. "Yes," he repeated, "our gentry are a shame and a disgrace to the country. They are fast coming to rack and ruin." A

sigh of profound regret followed.

“At one place,” presently he resumed, “I did obtain a situation. ’Twas with a German merchant, who engaged me to be his hall lacquey. After a while, however, he sent me to serve in the pantry. Now, was that my proper business? One day I was carrying some crockery across the room on a tray, and the floor happened to be smooth and slippery, and down I fell, and the tray and the crockery with me. So I was turned out of doors. Next, an old countess took a fancy to my looks. ‘He is of respectable appearance,’ she said to herself, and added me to her staff of Swiss lacqueys. The post was a light one, and bid fair to be permanent, too. All that I had to do was to sit as solemnly as possible on a chair, to cross one leg over the other, and, when any rascal called, not to answer him, but just to grunt and send the fellow away—or else give him a box on the ear. Of course, to the gentry one had to behave differently—just to wave one’s staff like this.” Zakhar gave an illustration of what he meant. “As I say, ’twas an easy job, and the lady, God bless her! was not overdifficult to please. But one day she happened to peep into my room and to see there a bug. With that she bristled up and shrieked as though it had been I who had invented bugs! When was a household ever without a bug? So the next time she passed me she pretended that I smelt of liquor, and dismissed me.”

“Yes, and you smell of it now—and very strongly,” remarked Schtoltz.

“To my sorrow, I suppose so,” whined Zakhar, wrinkling his brow bitterly. “Well, then I tried to get a coachman’s job, and took service with a gentleman; but one day I had my feet frost-bitten (for I was overold and weak for the job), and another day the brute of a horse fell down and nearly broke my ribs, and another day I ran over an old woman and got taken to the police-station.”

“Well, well! Instead of drinking and getting yourself into trouble, come to my house, and I will give you a corner there until it is time for us to return to the country. Do you hear?”

"Yes, your Honour—yes; but, but——"

Zakhar sighed again. "I would rather not leave these parts. You see, the grave is here—the grave where my old patron is lying." Zakhar sobbed. "Only to-day I have been there to commend his soul to God. What a barin the Lord God has taken from us! 'Twould have been good for us if he could have lived another hundred years. Yes, only to-day I have been visiting his grave. Whenever I am near the spot I go and sit beside it, and shed tears—ah, such tears! And sometimes, too, when all is quiet there, I seem to hear him calling to me once more, 'Zakhar! Zakhar!'—and shivers go running down my back. Never lived there such a barin as he! And how fond of yourself he was, your Honour! May the Lord remember him when the heavenly kingdom shall come!"

"You ought to see our little Andrei," said Schtoltz. "If you like, you can have charge of him." And he handed the old man some money.

"Yes, I will come! How could I not come when it is to see little Andrei Ilyitch? By this time he must be grown into a tall young gentleman. What joy the Lord has reserved for me this day! Yes, I will come, your Honour, and may God send you good health and many a long year of life!" But it was after a departing carriage that Zakhar was dispatching his benedictions.

"Did you hear the old beggar's story?" Schtoltz asked of his companion.

"Yes. Who was the Oblomov whom he mentioned?"

"He was—Oblomov. More than once I have spoken to you of him."

"Ah, I think I remember the name. Yes, he was a friend and comrade of yours, was he not? What became of him?"

"He came to rack and ruin—though for no apparent reason." As he spoke Schtoltz sighed heavily. Then he added: "His intellect was equal to that of his fellow's, his soul was as clear and as bright as glass, his disposition was kindly, and he was a gentleman to the core. Yet he—he fell."

“Wherefore? What was the cause?”

“The cause?” re-echoed Schtoltz. “The cause was—the disease of Oblomovka.”

“The disease of Oblomovka?” queried the literary gentleman in some perplexity. “What is that?”

“Some day I will tell you. For the moment leave me to my thoughts and memories. Hereafter you shall write them down, for they might prove of value to some one.”

In time Schtoltz related to his friend what herein is to be found recorded.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OBLOMOV ***

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