Anna Karenina, v4

Leo Tolstoy

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translated by Constance Garnett

PART FOUR

I.

The Karenins, husband and wife, continued living in the same house, met every day, but were complete strangers to one another. Alexei Alexandrovich made it a rule to see his wife every day, so that the servants might have no grounds for suppositions, but avoided dining at home. Vronsky was never at Alexei Alexandrovich's house, but Anna saw him away from home, and her husband was aware of it.

The position was one of torture for all three; and not one of them would have been equal to enduring this position for a single day, had it not been for the expectation that it would change, that it was merely a temporary painful difficulty which would pass over. Alexei Alexandrovich hoped that this passion would pass, as everything does pass, that everyone would forget about it, and his name would remain unsullied. Anna, on whom the position

depended, and for whom it was more poignant than for any other, endured it because she not merely hoped, but firmly believed, that it would all very soon be settled and come right. She had not the least idea what would settle the situation, but she firmly believed that something would now very soon turn up. Vronsky unaccountably followed her lead, hoping too that something, independent of him, would be sure to clear up all difficulties.

In the middle of the winter Vronsky spent a very tiresome week. A foreign Prince, who had come on a visit to Peterburg, was put under his charge, and he had to show him the sights worth seeing. Vronsky was of distinguished appearance; he possessed, moreover, the art of behaving with respectful dignity, and was used to having to do with such grand personages that was how he came to be put in charge of the Prince. But he felt his duties to be very irksome. The Prince was anxious to miss nothing about which he would be asked at home: Had he seen this and that in Russia? And on his own account he was anxious to enjoy to the utmost all Russian forms of amusement. Vronsky was obliged to be his guide in satisfying both these inclinations. The mornings they spent driving to look at places of interest: the evenings they passed enjoying the national amusements. The prince enjoyed a health exceptional even among Princes. By gymnastics and careful attention to his person he had brought himself to such a point that in spite of his excesses in pleasure he looked as fresh as a big, glossy, green Dutch cucumber. The Prince had traveled a great deal, and considered one of the chief advantages of modern facilities of communication the accessibility of the pleasures of all nations. He had been in Spain, and there had indulged in serenades, and had made friends with a Spanish girl who played the mandolin. In Switzerland he had killed chamois. In England he had galloped in a red coat over hedges and killed two hundred pheasants on a bet. In Turkey he had got into a harem; in India he had traveled on an elephant; and now, in Russia, he wished to taste all the peculiarly Russian forms of pleasure.

Vronsky, who was, as it were, chief master of the ceremonies to him, was at great pains to distribute all the Russian amusements suggested by various persons to the Prince. They had race horses, and Russian pancakes and bear hunts, and troikas, and gypsy choruses, and drinking orgies, with the Russian accompaniment of broken crockery. And the Prince, with surprising ease, fell in with the Russian spirit; he smashed trays full of crockery, sat with a gypsy girl on his knee, and seemed to be asking: What more? Or does the whole Russian spirit consist in just this?

In reality, of all the Russian entertainments the Prince liked best French actresses, a ballet dancer, and white−seal champagne. Vronsky was used to Princes, but, either because he had himself changed of late, or that he was in too close proximity to the Prince, that week seemed fearfully wearisome to him. The whole of that week he experienced unceasingly a sensation such as a man might have who has been put in charge of a dangerous madman, who is afraid of the madman, and, at the same time, from being with him, fears for his own reason. Vronsky was continually conscious of the necessity of never for a second relaxing the tone of stern official respectfulness, so that he might not himself be insulted. The Prince's manner of treating the very people who, to Vronsky's surprise, were ready to descend to any depths to provide him with Russian amusements, was contemptuous. His criticisms of Russian women, whom he wished to study, more than once made Vronsky crimson with indignation. The chief reason why the Prince was so particularly disagreeable to Vronsky was that he could not help seeing himself in him. And what he saw in this mirror did not gratify his self−esteem. He was a very stupid and a very self−satisfied and a very healthy and a very well−washed man, and nothing else. He was a gentleman, it was true, and Vronsky could not deny it. He was equable and not cringing with his superiors, was free and ingratiating in his behavior with his equals, and was contemptuously indulgent with his inferiors. Vronsky was himself the same, and regarded it as a great merit to be so. But to this Prince he was an inferior, and his contemptuous and indulgent attitude to him revolted him.

"Brainless beef! Can I be like that?" he reflected.

Be that as it might, when, on the seventh day, he parted from the Prince, who was starting for Moscow, and received his thanks, he was happy to be rid of his uncomfortable position and the unpleasant reflection of himself. He said good−by to him at the station, on their return from a bear hunt, at which they had had a display of Russian

derring−do kept up all night.

II.

When he got home, Vronsky found there a note from Anna. She wrote: "I am ill and unhappy. I cannot come out, yet cannot go on longer without seeing you. Come in this evening. Alexei Alexandrovich goes to the Council at seven and will be there till ten." After a minute's reflection on the strangeness of her bidding him come straight to her, in spite of her husband's insisting on her not receiving him, he decided to go.

Vronsky had that winter got his promotion, was now a colonel, had left the regiment, and was living alone. After having some lunch, he lay down on the sofa immediately, and in five minutes memories of the hideous scenes he had witnessed during the last few days were jumbled and joined to a mental image of Anna and of the peasant, one of the encompassing people, who had played an important part in the bear hunt, and Vronsky fell asleep. He waked up in the dark, trembling with horror, and made haste to light a candle. "What was it? What? What was the dreadful thing I dreamed? Yes, yes; the peasant bear hunter, I think; a little dirty man with a disheveled beard was stooping down doing something, and all of a sudden he began saying some strange words in French. Yes, there was nothing else in the dream," he said to himself. "But why was it so awful?" He vividly recalled the peasant again and those incomprehensible French words the peasant had uttered, and a chill of horror ran down his spine.

"What nonsense!" thought Vronsky, and glanced at his watch.

It was half−past eight already. He rang up his servant, dressed in haste, and went out on the steps, completely forgetting the dream and only worried at being late. As he drove up to the Karenins' entrance he looked at his watch and saw it was ten minutes to nine. A high, narrow carriage with a pair of grays was standing at the entrance. He recognized Anna's carriage. "She is coming to me," thought Vronsky, "and better she should. I don't like going into that house. But no matter; I can't hide myself," he thought, and with that manner peculiar to him from childhood, as of a man who has nothing to be ashamed of, Vronsky got out of his sleigh and went to the door. The door opened, and the hall porter with a rug on his arm called the carriage. Vronsky, though he did not usually notice details, noticed at this moment the amazed expression with which the porter glanced at him. In the very doorway Vronsky almost ran up against Alexei Alexandrovich. The gas jet threw its full light on the bloodless, sunken face under the black hat, and on the white cravat, brilliant against the beaver of the coat. Karenin's fixed, dull eyes were fastened upon Vronsky's face. Vronsky bowed, and Alexei Alexandrovich, chewing his lips, lifted his hand to his hat and went on. Vronsky saw him get into the carriage without looking back, receive the rug and the opera glasses through the window, and disappear. Vronsky went into the hall. His brows were scowling, and his eyes gleamed with a proud and angry light in them.

"What a situation!" he thought. "If he would fight, would stand up for his honor, I could act, could express my feelings; but this weakness or baseness... He puts me in the position of playing false, which I never meant and never mean to do."

Vronsky's ideas had changed since the day of his conversation with Anna in the Vrede garden. Unconsciously yielding to the weakness of Anna who had surrendered herself up to him utterly, and simply looked to him to decide her fate, ready to submit to anything he had long ceased to think that their liaison might end as he had thought then. His ambitious plans had retreated into the background again, and feeling that he had got out of that circle of activity in which everything was definite, he had given himself up entirely to his passion, and that passion was binding him more and more closely to her.

He was still in the hall when he caught the sound of her retreating footsteps. He realized she had been expecting him, had listened for him, and was now going back to the drawing room.

"No," she cried, on seeing him, and at the first sound of her voice the tears came into her eyes. "No; if things are to go on like this, the end will come much, much too soon."

"What is it, dear one?"

"What? I've been waiting in agony for an hour, two hours... No, I won't... I can't quarrel with you. Of course you couldn't come. No, I won't."

She laid her two hands on his shoulders, and looked a long while at him with a profound, passionate, and, at the same time, searching look. She was studying his face to make up for the time she had not seen him. She was, every time she saw him, making the picture of him in her imagination (incomparably superior, impossible in reality) fit with him as he really was.

III.

"You met him?" she asked, when they had sat down at the table in the lamplight. "You're punished, you see, for being late."

"Yes; but how was it? Wasn't he to be at the Council?"

"He had been and come back, and was going out somewhere again. But that doesn't matter. Don't talk about it. Where have you been? With the Prince still?"

She knew every detail of his existence. He was going to say that he had been up all night and had dropped asleep, but looking at her thrilled and rapturous face, he was ashamed. And he said he had had to report on the Prince's departure.

"But it's over now? He is gone?"

"Thank God it's over! You wouldn't believe how insufferable it's been for me."

"Why so? Isn't it the life all of you all young men always lead?" she said, knitting her brows; and, taking up the crochet work that was lying on the table, she began drawing the hook out of it, without looking at Vronsky.

"I gave that life up long ago," said he, wondering at the change in her face, and trying to divine its meaning. "And I confess," he said, with a smile, showing his thick, white teeth, "this week I've been, as it were, looking at myself in a glass, seeing that life, and I didn't like it."

She held the work in her hands, but did not crochet, and looked at him with strange, shining, and hostile eyes.

"This morning Liza came to see me they're not afraid to call on me, in spite of the Countess Lidia Ivanovna," she put in "and she told me about your Athenian evening. How loathsome!"

"I was just going to say..."

She interrupted him.

"It was that Therese you used to know?"

"I was just saying..."

"How disgusting you are, you men! How is it you can't understand that a woman can never forget that," she said, getting more and more angry, and so letting him see the cause of her irritation, "especially a woman who cannot know your life? What do I know? What have I ever known?" she said. "Only what you tell me. And how do I know whether you tell me the truth?..."

"Anna, you hurt me. Don't you trust me? Haven't I told you that I haven't a thought I wouldn't lay bare to you?"

"Yes, yes," she said, evidently trying to suppress her jealous thoughts. "But if only you knew how wretched I am! I believe you, I believe you.... What were you saying?"

But he could not at once recall what he had been going to say. These fits of jealousy, which of late had been more and more frequent with her, horrified him, and however much he tried to disguise the fact, made him feel cold to her, although he knew the cause of her jealousy was her love for him. How often he had told himself that her love was happiness; and now she loved him as a woman can love when love has outweighed for her all the good things of life and he was much further from happiness than when he had followed her from Moscow. Then he had thought himself unhappy, but happiness was before him; now he felt that the best happiness was already left behind. She was utterly unlike what she had been when he first saw her. Both morally and physically she had changed for the worse. She had broadened out all over, and in her face at the time when she was speaking of the actress there was an evil expression of hatred that distorted it. He looked at her as a man looks at a faded flower he has gathered, with difficulty recognizing in it the beauty for which he picked and ruined it. And in spite of this he felt that then, when his love was stronger, he could, if he had greatly wished it, have torn that love out of his heart; but now when, as at this moment it seemed to him he felt no love for her, he knew that his bond with her could not be broken.

"Well, well, what was it you were going to say about the Prince? I have driven away the fiend, I have," she added. The fiend was the name they had given her jealousy. "What did you begin to tell me about the Prince? Why did you find it so tiresome?"

"Oh, it was intolerable!" he said, trying to pick up the thread of his interrupted thought. "He does not improve on closer acquaintance. If you want him defined, here he is: a prime, well−fed animal, such as takes medals at the cattle shows, and nothing more," he said, with a tone of vexation that interested her.

"No; how so?" she replied. "He's seen a great deal, anyway; he's cultured?"

"It's an utterly different culture their culture. He's cultivated, one sees, simply to be able to despise culture, as they despise everything but animal pleasures."

"But don't you all care for these animal pleasures?" she said, and again he noticed a dark look in her eyes that avoided him.

"How is it you're defending him?" he said, smiling.

"I'm not defending him, it's nothing to me; but I imagine, if you had not cared for those pleasures yourself, you might have got out of them. But it affords you satisfaction to gaze at Therese in the attire of Eve..."

"Again again the devil," Vronsky said, taking the hand she had laid on the table and kissing it.

"Yes; but I can't help it. You don't know what I have suffered waiting for you. I believe I'm not jealous. I'm not jealous: I believe you when you're here, near me; but when you're away somewhere leading your life alone, so incomprehensible to me..."

She turned away from him, pulled the hook at last out of the crochet work, and rapidly with the help of her forefinger, began working loop after loop of the wool that was dazzlingly white in the lamplight, while the slender wrist moved swiftly, nervously in its embroidered cuff.

"How was it, then? Where did you meet Alexei Alexandrovich?" Her voice sounded in an unnatural and jarring tone.

"We ran against each other in the doorway."

"And he bowed to you like this?"

She drew a long face, and half−closing her eyes, quickly transformed her expression, folded her hands, and Vronsky suddenly saw in her beautiful face the very expression with which Alexei Alexandrovich had bowed to him. He smiled, while she laughed gaily, with that sweet, deep laugh, which was one of her greatest charms.

"I don't understand him in the least," said Vronsky. "If after your avowal to him at your summer villa he had broken with you, if he had challenged me... But this I can't understand. How can he put up with such a position? He feels it, that's evident."

"He?" she said sneeringly. "He's perfectly satisfied."

"What are we all miserable for, when everything might be so well?"

"Except for him. Don't I know him the falsity in which he's utterly steeped?... Could one, with any feeling, live as he is living with me? He understands nothing, and feels nothing. Could a man of any feeling live in the same house with his unfaithful wife? Could he talk to her, call her 'my dear'?"

And again she could not help mimicking him: "Anna, ma chere; Anna, dear!"

"He's not a man, not a human being he's a mannikin! No one knows him; but I know him. Oh, if I'd been in his place, I'd long ago have killed, have torn to pieces a wife like me. I wouldn't have said, 'Anna, ma chere'! He's not a man, he's a ministerial machine. He doesn't understand that I'm your wife, that he's outside, that he's superfluous.... Don't let's talk of him!..."

"You're unfair, very unfair, dearest," said Vronsky, trying to soothe her. "But never mind, don't let's talk of him. Tell me what you've been doing. What is the matter? Why are you unwell, and what did the doctor say?"

She looked at him with mocking amusement. Evidently she had hit on other absurd and grotesque aspects in her husband and was awaiting the moment to give expression to them.

But he went on:

"I imagine that it's not illness, but your condition. When will it be?"

The ironical light died away in her eyes, but a different smile, a consciousness of something, he did not know what, and of quiet melancholy, came over her face.

"Soon, soon. You say that our position is miserable, that we must put an end to it. If you knew how terrible it is to me what I would give to be able to love you freely and unafraid! I should not torture myself and torture you with my jealousy.... And it will come soon, but not as we expect."

And at the thought of how it would come, she seemed so pitiable to herself that tears came into her eyes, and she could not go on. She laid on his sleeve her hand, shining with its whiteness and its rings in the lamplight.

"It won't come as we suppose. I didn't mean to say this to you, but you've made me. Soon, soon, all will be over, and we shall all, all be at peace, and suffer no more."

"I don't understand," he said, understanding her.

"You asked when? Soon. And I shan't live through it. Don't interrupt me!" and she made haste to speak. "I know it; I know for certain. I shall die; and I'm very glad I shall die, and release myself and you."

Tears dropped from her eyes; he bent down over her hand and began kissing it, trying to hide his emotion, which, he knew, had no sort of grounds, though he could not control it.

"Yes, it's better so," she said, tightly gripping his hand. "That's the only way the only way left us."

He had recovered himself, and lifted his head.

"How absurd! What absurd nonsense you are talking!"

"No, it's the truth."

"What what's the truth?"

"That I shall die. I have had a dream."

"A dream?" repeated Vronsky, and instantly he recalled the peasant of his dream.

"Yes, a dream," she said. "It's a long while since I dreamed it. I dreamed that I ran into my bedroom, that I had to get something there, to find out something; you know how it is in dreams," she said, her eyes wide with horror; "and in the bedroom, in the corner, stood something."

"Oh, what nonsense! How can you believe..."

But she would not let him interrupt her. What she was saying was too important to her.

"And the something turned round, and I saw it was a peasant with a disheveled beard a little man, and dreadful. I wanted to run away, but he bent down over a sack, and was fumbling there with his hands..."

She showed how he had moved his hands. There was terror in her face. And Vronsky, remembering his dream, felt the same terror filling his soul.

"He was fumbling and kept talking quickly, quickly in French, and, you know, he burred: Il faut le battre, le fer, le broyer, le petrir.... And in my horror I tried to wake up, and woke up... but woke up in the dream. And I began asking myself what it meant. And Kornei said to me: 'In childbirth you'll die, ma'am, you'll die....' And I woke up."

"What nonsense, what nonsense!" said Vronsky; but he felt himself that there was no conviction in his voice.

"But don't let's talk of it. Ring the bell, I'll have tea. And stay a little, now; it's not long I shall..."

But all at once she stopped. The expression of her face instantaneously changed. Horror and excitement were suddenly replaced by a look of soft, solemn, blissful attention. He could not comprehend the meaning of the change. She was listening to the stirring of the new life within her.

IV.

Alexei Alexandrovich, after meeting Vronsky on his own steps, drove, as he had intended, to the Italian opera. He sat through two acts there, and saw everyone he wanted to see. On returning home, he carefully scrutinized the hatstand, and noticing that there was not a military overcoat there, he went, as usual, to his own room. But, contrary to his usual habit, he did not go to bed; he walked up and down his study till three o'clock in the morning. The feeling of furious anger with his wife, who would not observe the proprieties and keep to the one stipulation he had laid on her not to receive her lover in her own house gave him no peace. She had not complied with his request, and he was bound to punish her and carry out his threat obtain a divorce and take away his son. He knew all the difficulties connected with this course, but he had said he would do it, and now he must carry out his threat. Countess Lidia Ivanovna had hinted that this was the best way out of his position, and of late the obtaining of divorces had been brought to such a pitch of perfection that Alexei Alexandrovich saw a possibility of overcoming the formal difficulties. Misfortunes never come singly, and the affairs of the reorganization of the native tribes, and of the irrigation of the lands of the Zaraisky province, had brought such official worries upon Alexei Alexandrovich that he had been of late in a continual state of extreme irritability.

He did not sleep the whole night, and his fury growing in a sort of vast, arithmetical progression, reached its highest limits in the morning. He dressed in haste, and, as though carrying his cup full of wrath, and fearing to spill any over, fearing to lose with his wrath the energy necessary for the interview with his wife, he went into her room directly he heard she was up.

Anna, who had thought she knew her husband so well, was amazed at his appearance when he went in to her. His brow was lowering and his eyes stared darkly before him, avoiding her eyes; his mouth was tightly and contemptuously shut. In his walk, in his gestures, in the sound of his voice there was a determination and firmness such as his wife had never seen in him. He went into her room, and, without greeting her, walked straight up to her writing table, and, taking her keys, opened a drawer.

"What do you want?" she cried.

"Your lover's letters," he said.

"They're not here," she said, shutting the drawer; but from that action he saw he had guessed right, and roughly pushing away her hand, he quickly snatched a portfolio in which he knew she used to put her most important papers. She tried to pull the portfolio away, but he pushed her back.

"Sit down! I have to speak to you," he said, putting the portfolio under his arm, and squeezing it so tightly with his elbow that his shoulder stood up.

Amazed and intimidated, she gazed at him in silence.

"I told you that I would not allow you to receive your lover in this house."

"I had to see him to..."

She stopped, not finding a reason.

"I do not enter into the details of why a woman wants to see her lover."

"I meant, I only..." she said, flushing hotly. This coarseness of his angered her, and gave her courage. "Surely you must feel how easy it is for you to insult me?" she said.

"An honest man and an honest woman may be insulted, but to tell a thief he's a thief is simply la constatation d'un fait."

"This cruelty is something new I did not know in you."

"You call it cruelty for a husband to give his wife liberty, giving her the honorable protection of his name, simply on the condition of observing the proprieties: is that cruelty?"

"It's worse that cruel it's base, if you want to know!" Anna cried, in a rush of hatred, and, getting up, she was about to leave the room.

"No!" he shrieked in his shrill voice, which pitched a note even higher than usual, and his big hands clutching her by the arm so violently that red marks were left from the bracelet he was squeezing, he forcibly made her sit down in her place. "Base! If you care to use that word, what is base is to forsake husband and child for a lover, while you eat your husband's bread!"

She bowed her head. She did not say what she had said the evening before to her lover, that he was her husband, and her husband was superfluous; she did not even think of that. She felt all the justice of his words, and only said softly:

"You cannot describe my position as worse than I feel it to be myself; but what are you saying all this for?"

"What am I saying it for? What for?" he went on, as angrily. "So that you may know that, since you have not carried out my wishes in regard to observing outward decorum, I will take measures to put an end to this state of things."

"Soon, very soon, it will end, anyway," she said; and again, at the thought of death near at hand and now desired, tears came into her eyes.

"It will end sooner than you and your lover have planned! If you must have the satisfaction of animal passion..."

"Alexei Alexandrovich! I won't say it's not generous, but it's not like a gentleman to strike anyone who's down."

"Yes, you only think of yourself! But the sufferings of a man who was your husband have no interest for you. You don't care that his whole life is ruined, that he is seff... seff..."

Alexei Alexandrovich was speaking so quickly that he began to stammer, and was utterly unable to articulate the word "suffering". In the end he pronounced it "saffering". She wanted to laugh, and was immediately ashamed that anything could amuse her at such a moment. And for the first time, for an instant, she felt for him, put herself in his place, and was sorry for him. But what could she say or do? Her head sank, and she sat silent. He too was silent for some time, and then began speaking in a frigid, less shrill voice, emphasizing random words that had no special significance.

I came to tell you..." he said.

She glanced at him. "No; it was my fancy," she thought, recalling the expression of his face when he stumbled over the word "suffering." "No; can a man with those dull eyes, with that self−satisfied complacency, feel anything?"

"I cannot change anything," she whispered.

"I have come to tell you that I am going tomorrow to Moscow, and shall not return again to this house, and you will receive notice of what I decide through the lawyer into whose hands I shall entrust the task of getting a divorce. My son is going to my sister's," said Alexei Alexandrovich, with an effort recalling what he had meant to say about his son.

"You take Seriozha to hurt me," she said, looking at him from under her brows. "You do not love him.... Leave me Seriozha!"

"Yes, I have lost even my affection for my son, because he is associated with the repulsion I feel for you. But still I shall take him. Good−by!"

And he was going away, but now she detained him.

"Alexei Alexandrovich, leave me Seriozha!" she whispered once more. "I have nothing else to say. Leave Seriozha till my... I shall soon be confined; leave him!"

Alexei Alexandrovich flared up, and, snatching his hand from her, he went out of the room without a word.

V.

The waiting room of the celebrated Peterburg lawyer was full when Alexei Alexandrovich entered it. Three ladies an old lady, a young lady, and a merchant's wife, and three gentlemen one a German banker with a ring on his finger, the second a merchant with a beard, and the third a wrathful−looking government clerk in official uniform, with a cross on his neck had obviously been waiting a long while already. Two clerks were writing at tables with scratching pens. The appurtenances of the writing tables, about which Alexei Alexandrovich was himself very fastidious, were exceptionally good. He could not help observing this. One of the clerks, without getting up, turned fretfully to Alexei Alexandrovich, half−closing his eyes.

"What is it you wish?"

"My business has to do with the lawyer."

"He is engaged," the clerk responded severely, and he pointed with his pen at the persons waiting, and went on writing.

"Can't he spare time to see me?" said Alexei Alexandrovich.

"He has no time free; he is always busy. Kindly wait your turn."

"Then I must trouble you to give him my card," Alexei Alexandrovich said with dignity, seeing the impossibility of preserving his incognito.

The clerk took the card and, obviously not approving of what he read on it, went to the door.

Alexei Alexandrovich was in principle in favor of the publicity of legal proceedings, though for some higher official considerations he disliked the application of the principle in Russia, and disapproved of it, as far as he could disapprove of anything instituted by authority of the Emperor. His whole life had been spent in administrative work, and consequently, when he did not approve of anything, his disapproval was softened by the recognition of the inevitability of mistakes and the possibility of reform in every department. In the new public law courts he disliked the restrictions laid on the lawyers conducting cases. But till then he had had nothing to do with the law courts, and so had disapproved of their publicity simply in theory; now his disapprobation was strengthened by the unpleasant impression made on him in the lawyer's waiting room.

"He will be out right away," said the clerk; and two minutes later there did actually appear in the doorway the large figure of an old student of jurisprudence who had been consulting with the lawyer, and the lawyer himself.

The lawyer was a little, squat, bald man, with a dark, reddish beard, light−colored long eyebrows, and beetling brow. He was attired as though for a wedding, from his cravat to his double watch chain and patent−leather shoes. His face was clever and rustic, but his dress was dandified and in bad taste.

"Pray walk in," said the lawyer, addressing Alexei Alexandrovich; and, gloomily ushering Karenin in before him, he closed the door. "Won't you sit down?" He indicated an armchair at a writing table covered with papers. He sat down himself, and, rubbing his little hands with short fingers covered with white hairs, he bent his head on one side. But as soon as he was settled in this position a moth flew over the table. The lawyer, with a swiftness that could never have been expected of him, opened his hands, caught the moth, and resumed his former attitude.

"Before beginning to speak of my business," said Alexei Alexandrovich, following the lawyer's movements with wondering eyes, "I ought to observe that the matter about which I have to speak to you is to be a secret."

The lawyer's drooping reddish mustaches were stirred by a scarcely perceptible smile.

"I should not be a lawyer if I could not keep the secrets confided to me. But if you would like proof..."

Alexei Alexandrovich glanced at his face, and saw that the shrewd, gray eyes were laughing, and seemed to know all about it already.

"You know my name?" Alexei Alexandrovich resumed.

"I know you and the good" again he caught a moth "work you are doing, like every Russian," said the lawyer, bowing.

Alexei Alexandrovich sighed, plucking up his courage. But, having once made up his mind, he went on in his shrill voice, without timidity or hesitation, accentuating a word here and there.

"I have the misfortune," Alexei Alexandrovich began, "to be a deceived husband, and I desire to break off all relations with my wife by legal means that is, to be divorced; but do this so that my son may not remain with his mother."

The lawyer's gray eyes tried not to laugh, but they were dancing with irrepressible glee, and Alexei Alexandrovich saw that it was not simply the delight of a man who has just got a profitable job: there was triumph and joy, there was a gleam like the malignant gleam he had seen in his wife's eyes.

"You desire my assistance in securing a divorce?"

"Yes, precisely; but I ought to warn you that I may be wasting your time and attention. I have come simply to consult you as a preliminary step. I want a divorce, but the form which it may take is of great consequence to me. It is very possible that if that form does not correspond with my requirements I may give up a legal action."

"Oh, that's always the case," said the lawyer, "and that's always for you to decide."

He let his eyes rest on Alexei Alexandrovich's feet, feeling that he might offend his client by the sight of his irrepressible amusement. He looked at a moth that flew before his nose, and moved his hand, but did not catch it from regard for Alexei Alexandrovich's situation.

"Though in their general features our laws on this subject are known to me," pursued Alexei Alexandrovich, "I should be glad to have an idea of the forms in which such things are done, in practice."

"You would be glad," the lawyer, without lifting his eyes, responded, adopting, with a certain satisfaction, the tone of his client's remarks, "for me to lay before you all the methods by which you could secure what you desire?"

And on receiving an assenting nod from Alexei Alexandrovich, he went on, stealing a glance now and then at Alexei Alexandrovich's face, which was growing red in patches.

"Divorce by our laws," he said, with a slight shade of disapprobation of our laws, "is possible, as you are aware, in the following cases... To wait!" he called to a clerk who put his head in at the door, but he got up all the same, said a few words to him, and sat down again. "In the following cases: physical defect in the married parties, desertion without communication for five years," he said, crooking a short finger covered with hair, "adultery" (this word he pronounced with obvious satisfaction), "subdivided as follows" (he continued to crook his fat fingers, though the cases and their subdivisions could obviously not be classified together): "physical defect of the husband or of the wife, adultery of the husband or of the wife." As by now all his fingers were used up, he straightened them and went on: "This is the theoretical view; but I imagine you have done me the honor to apply to me in order to learn its application in practice. And therefore, guided by precedents, I must inform you that in practice cases of divorce may all be reduced to the following there's no physical defect, I may assume, nor desertion?..."

Alexei Alexandrovich bowed his head in assent.

"They may be reduced to the following: adultery of one of the married parties, and the detection in the fact of the guilty party by mutual agreement, and, failing such agreement, accidental detection. It must be admitted that the latter case is rarely met with in practice," said the lawyer, and stealing a glance at Alexei Alexandrovich he paused, as a man selling pistols, after enlarging on the advantages of each weapon, might await his customer's choice. But Alexei Alexandrovich said nothing, and therefore the lawyer went on: "The most usual and simple, the sensible course, I consider, is adultery by mutual consent. I should not permit myself to express it so, speaking with a man of no education," he said, "but I imagine that to you this is comprehensible."

Alexei Alexandrovich was, however, so perturbed that he did not immediately comprehend all the reasonableness of adultery by mutual consent, and his eyes expressed this uncertainty; but the lawyer promptly came to his assistance.

"People cannot go on living together here you have a fact. And if both are agreed about it, the details and formalities become a matter of no importance. And at the same time this is the simplest and most certain method."

Alexei Alexandrovich understood fully now. But he had religious scruples, which hindered the execution of such a plan.

"That is out of the question in the present case," he said. "Only one alternative is possible: involuntary detection, supported by letters which I have."

At the mention of letters the lawyer pursed up his lips, and gave utterance to a thin little compassionate and contemptuous sound.

"Kindly consider," he began, "cases of that kind are, as you are aware, under ecclesiastical jurisdiction; the reverend fathers are fond of going into the minutest details in cases of that kind," he said, with a smile which betrayed his sympathy with the taste of the reverend fathers. "Letters may, of course, be a partial confirmation; but detection in the act there must be of the most direct kind that is, by eyewitnesses. In fact, if you do me the honor to trust me with your confidence, you will do well to leave me the choice of the measures to be employed. If one wants the result, one must allow the means."

"If it is so..." Alexei Alexandrovich began, suddenly turning white; but at that moment the lawyer rose and again went to the door to speak to the intruding clerk.

"Tell her we don't haggle over fees!" he said, and returned to Alexei Alexandrovich.

On his way back he caught, unobserved, another moth. "Nice state my rep curtains will be in by the summer!" he thought, frowning.

"And so you were saying?..." he said.

"I will communicate my decision to you by letter," said Alexei Alexandrovich, getting up, and he clutched at the table. After standing a moment in silence, he said: "From your words I may consequently conclude that a divorce may be obtained? I would ask you to let me know what your terms are."

"It may be obtained if you give me complete liberty of action," said the lawyer, without answering his question. "When can I count on receiving word from you?" he asked moving toward the door, his eyes and his patent−leather shoes shining.

"In a week's time. You will be kind enough to communicate to me your answer as to whether you will undertake to conduct the case, and on what terms."

"Very good, sir."

The lawyer bowed respectfully, let his client out of the door, and, left alone, gave himself up to his sense of amusement. He felt so mirthful that, contrary to his rule, he made a reduction in his terms to the haggling lady, and gave up catching moths, finally deciding that next winter he must have the furniture covered with velvet, like Sigonin's.

VI.

Alexei Alexandrovich had gained a brilliant victory at the sitting of the Commission of the 17th of August, but in the sequel this victory cut the ground from under his feet. The new commission for the inquiry into the condition of the native tribes on every aspect had been formed and despatched to its destination with an unusual speed and energy, inspired by Alexei Alexandrovich. Within three months a report was presented. The condition of the native tribes was investigated in its political, administrative, economic, ethnographic, material, and religious aspects. To all these questions there were answers admirably stated, and answers admitting no shade of doubt, since they were not a product of human thought, always liable to error, but were all the product of official activity.

The answers were all based on official data furnished by governors and bishops, and founded on the reports of district magistrates and ecclesiastical superintendents, founded in their turn on the reports of local authorities and parish priests; and so all of these answers were unhesitating and certain. All such questions as, for instance, the cause of crop failures, why certain tribes adhered to their ancient beliefs, and so on questions which, but for the convenient intervention of the official machine, are not, and cannot be solved for ages received full, unhesitating solution. And this solution was in favor of Alexei Alexandrovich's contention. But Stremov, who had felt stung to the quick at the last sitting, had, on the reception of the commission's report, resorted to tactics which Alexei Alexandrovich had not anticipated. Stremov, carrying with him several other members, went over to Alexei Alexandrovich's side, and, not contenting himself with warmly defending the measure proposed by Karenin, proposed other measures, still more extreme, in the same direction. These measures, still stronger than Alexei Alexandrovich's fundamental idea, were passed by the commission, and then the aim of Stremov's tactics became apparent. Carried to an extreme, the measures seemed at once to be so absurd that the highest authorities, and public opinion, and intellectual ladies, and the newspapers, all at the same time fell foul of them, expressing their indignation both with the measures and their nominal father, Alexei Alexandrovich. Stremov drew back, affecting to have blindly followed Karenin, and to be astounded and distressed at what had been done. This meant the defeat of Alexei Alexandrovich. But in spite of failing health, in spite of his domestic griefs, he did not give in. There was a split in the Commission. Some members, with Stremov at their head, justified their mistake on the ground that they had put faith in the commission of revision, instituted by Alexei Alexandrovich, and maintained that the report of the commission was rubbish, and simply so much wastepaper. Alexei Alexandrovich, with a following of those who saw the danger of so revolutionary an attitude to official documents, persisted in upholding the statements obtained by the revising commission. In consequence of this, in the higher spheres, and even in society, all was chaos, and although everyone was interested, no one could tell whether the native tribes really were becoming impoverished and ruined, or whether they were in a flourishing condition. The position of Alexei Alexandrovich, owing to this, and partly owing to the contempt lavished on him for his wife's infidelity, became very precarious. And in this position he took an important resolution. To the astonishment of the Commission, he announced that he should ask permission to go himself to investigate the question on the spot. And having obtained permission, Alexei Alexandrovich prepared to set off to these remote provinces.

Alexei Alexandrovich's departure created a great stir, the more so as just before he started he officially returned the posting fares allowed him for twelve horses to drive to his destination.

"I think it very noble," Betsy said about this to the Princess Miaghkaia. "Why take money for posting horses when everyone knows that there are railways everywhere now?"

But Princess Miaghkaia did not agree, and the Princess Tverskaia's opinion annoyed her indeed.

"It's all very well for you to talk," said she, "when you have I don't know how many millions; but I am very glad when my husband goes on a revising tour in the summer. It's very good for him and pleasant traveling about, and it's a settled arrangement for me to keep a carriage and hired coach on the money."

On his way to the remote provinces Alexei Alexandrovich stopped for three days at Moscow.

The day after his arrival he went to call on the governor general. At the crossroads by Gazetny Lane, where there are always crowds of carriages and hired sleighs, Alexei Alexandrovich suddenly heard his name called out in such a loud and cheerful voice that he could not help looking round. At the corner of the pavement, in a short, stylish overcoat and a low−crowned fashionable hat, jauntily askew, with a smile that showed a gleam of white teeth and red lips, stood Stepan Arkadyevich, radiant, young, and beaming. He called him vigorously and urgently, and insisted on his stopping. He had one arm on the window of a carriage that was stopping at the corner, and out of the window were thrust the heads of a lady in a velvet hat, and two children. Stepan Arkadyevich was smiling and beckoning to his brother−in−law. The lady smiled a kindly smile too, and she too waved her hand to Alexei Alexandrovich. It was Dolly with her children.

Alexei Alexandrovich did not want to see anyone in Moscow, and least of all his wife's brother. He raised his hat and would have driven on, but Stepan Arkadyevich told his coachman to stop, and ran across the snow to him.

"Well, what a shame not to have let us know! Been here long? I was at Dussot's yesterday and saw 'Karenin' on the visitors' list, but it never entered my head that it was you," said Stepan Arkadyevich, sticking his head in at the window of the carriage, "or I should have looked you up. I am glad to see you!" he said, knocking one foot against the other to shake the snow off. "What a shame you did not let us know!" he repeated.

"I had no time; I am very busy," Alexei Alexandrovich responded dryly.

"Come to my wife she does so want to see you."

Alexei Alexandrovich unfolded the rug in which his frozen feet were wrapped, and getting out of his carriage made his way over the snow to Darya Alexandrovna.

"Why, Alexei Alexandrovich, what are you cutting us like this for?" said Dolly smiling.

"I was very busy. Delighted to see you!" he said in a tone clearly indicating that he was annoyed by it. "How are you?"

"Tell me, how is my darling Anna?"

Alexei Alexandrovich mumbled something and would have gone on. But Stepan Arkadyevich stopped him.

"I tell you what we'll do tomorrow. Dolly, ask him to dinner. We'll ask Koznishev and Pestsov, so as to entertain him with our Moscow intellectuals."

"Yes, please, do come," said Dolly; "we will expect you at five or six o'clock, if you like. How is my darling Anna? How long..."

"She is quite well," Alexei Alexandrovich mumbled, frowning. "Delighted!" and he moved away toward his carriage.

"You will come?" Dolly called after him.

Alexei Alexandrovich said something which Dolly could not catch in the noise of the moving carriages.

"I shall come round tomorrow!" Stepan Arkadyevich shouted to him.

Alexei Alexandrovich got into his carriage, and buried himself in it so as neither to see nor to be seen.

"Queer fish!" said Stepan Arkadyevich to his wife, and, glancing at his watch, he made a motion of his hand before his face, indicating a caress to his wife and children, and walked jauntily along the pavement.

"Stiva! Stiva!" Dolly called, reddening.

He turned round.

"I must get coats, you know, for Grisha and Tania. Give me the money."

"Never mind; you tell them I'll pay the bill!" and he vanished, nodding genially to an acquaintance who drove by.

VII.

The next day was Sunday. Stepan Arkadyevich went to the Grand Theater to a rehearsal of the ballet, and gave Masha Chibisova, a pretty dancing girl who had been engaged through his protection, the coral necklace he had promised her the evening before, and, behind the scenes, in the dim daylight of the theater, managed to kiss her pretty little face, radiant over the present. Besides the gift of the necklace he wanted to arrange a meeting with her after the ballet. After explaining that he could not come at the beginning of the ballet, he promised he would come for the last act and take her to supper. From the theater Stepan Arkadyevich drove to Okhotny Riad, selected himself the fish and asparagus for dinner, and by twelve o'clock was at Dussot's, where he had to see three people, luckily all staying at the same hotel: Levin, who had recently come back from abroad and was staying there; the new head of his board who had just been promoted to that position, and had come on a tour of revision to Moscow; and his brother−in−law, Karenin, whom he must see, so as to be sure of bringing him to dinner.

Stepan Arkadyevich liked dining, but still better he liked to give a dinner, small, but very choice, both as regards the food and drink and as regards the selection of guests. He particularly liked the program of that day's dinner. There would be fresh perch, asparagus, and la piece de resistance first−rate, but quite plain, roast beef, and wines to suit: so much for the eating and drinking. Kitty and Levin would be of the party, and, so that this might not be obtrusively evident, there would be a girl cousin too, and young Shcherbatsky, and la piece de resistance among the guests Sergei Koznishev and Alexei Alexandrovich. Sergei Ivanovich was a Moscow man, and a philosopher; Alexei Alexandrovich a Peterburg man, and a practical politician. He was asking, too, the well−known eccentric enthusiast, Pestsov, a liberal, a great talker, a musician, a historian, and the most delightfully youthful person of fifty, who would be a sauce or garnish for Koznishev and Karenin. He would provoke them and set them off against one another.

The second installment for the forest had been received from the merchant and was not yet exhausted; Dolly had been very amiable and good−humored of late, and the idea of the dinner pleased Stepan Arkadyevich from every point of view. He was in the most lighthearted mood. There were two circumstances a little unpleasant, but these two circumstances were drowned in the sea of good−humored gaiety which flooded the soul of Stepan Arkadyevich. These two circumstances were: first, that on meeting Alexei Alexandrovich the day before in the street Stiva had noticed that the latter was cold and reserved with him, and putting together the expression of Alexei Alexandrovich's face, and the fact that he had not come to see them, or let them know of his arrival, with the rumors he had heard about Anna and Vronsky, Stepan Arkadyevich guessed that something was wrong between the husband and wife.

That was one disagreeable thing. The other slightly disagreeable fact was that the new head of his board, like all new heads, already had the reputation of a terrible person, who got up at six o'clock in the morning, worked like a horse, and insisted on his subordinates working in the same way. Moreover, this new head had the further reputation of being a bear in his manners, and was, according to all reports, a man of a class in all respects the opposite of that to which his predecessor had belonged, and to which Stepan Arkadyevich had hitherto belonged himself. On the previous day Stepan Arkadyevich had appeared at the office in a uniform, and the new chief had been very affable and had talked to him as to an acquaintance. Consequently Stepan Arkadyevich deemed it his duty to call upon him in his nonofficial dress. The thought that the new chief might not give him a warm reception was the other unpleasant thing. But Stepan Arkadyevich instinctively felt that everything would come round all right. "They're all human, all men, like us poor sinners; why be nasty and quarrelsome?" he thought as he went into the hotel.

"Good day, Vassilii," he said, walking into the corridor with his hat cocked on one side, and addressing a footman he knew; "why, you've let your whiskers grow! Levin number seven, eh? Take me up, please. And find out whether Count Anychkin" (this was the new head) "is receiving."

"Yes, sir," Vassilii responded, smiling. "You've not been to see us for a long while."

"I was here yesterday, but at the other entrance. Is this number seven?"

Levin was standing with a peasant from Tver in the middle of the room, measuring a fresh bearskin, when Stepan Arkadyevich came in.

"What! You killed him?" cried Stepan Arkadyevich. "Well done! A she−bear? How are you, Arkhip!"

He shook hands with the peasant and sat down on a chair, without taking off his coat and hat.

"Come, take off your coat and stay a little," said Levin, taking his hat.

"No, I haven't time; I've only looked in for just a second," answered Stepan Arkadyevich. He threw open his fur coat, but afterward did take it off, and sat on for a whole hour, talking to Levin about hunting and the most intimate subjects. "Come, tell me, please, what you did abroad. Where have you been?" said Stepan Arkadyevich, when the peasant had gone.

"Oh, I stayed in Germany, in Prussia, in France, and in England not in the capitals, but in the manufacturing towns and saw a great deal that was new to me. And I'm glad I went."

"Yes, I knew your idea of the solution of the labor question."

"Not a bit: in Russia there can be no labor question. In Russia the question is that of the relation of the working people to the land; though the question exists there too but there it's a matter of repairing what's been ruined, while with us..."

Stepan Arkadyevich listened attentively to Levin.

"Yes, yes!" he said. "It's very possible you're right. But I'm glad you're in good spirits, and are hunting bears, and working, and interested. Shcherbatsky told me another story he met you: that you were in such a depressed state, talking of nothing but death..."

"Well, what of it? I've not given up thinking of death," said Levin. "It's true that it's high time I was dead; and that all this is nonsense. It's the truth I'm telling you. I do value my idea and my work awfully; but really, do consider this: all this world of ours is nothing but a speck of mildew, which has grown up on a tiny planet. And yet we think that something great is possible to us ideas, work! Grains of sand that's all they are."

"But all that's as old as the hills, my boy!"

"It is old; but, do you know, when you grasp this fully, then somehow everything becomes of no consequence. When you understand that you will die tomorrow, if not today, and nothing will be left, then everything is so unimportant! And I consider my idea very important, but it turns out really to be just as unimportant, even if it were carried out, as outwitting that she−bear. So one goes on living, amusing oneself with hunting, with work anything, so as not to think of death!"

Stepan Arkadyevich smiled a subtle and affectionate smile as he listened to Levin.

"Well, of course! Here you've come round to my point. Do you remember you attacked me for seeking enjoyment in life?

'Don't be, O moralist, severe...'"

"No; all the same, what's fine in life is..." Levin hesitated. "Oh! I don't know. All I know is that we shall soon be dead."

"Why so soon?"

"And I know there's less charm in life, when one thinks of death but there's more peace."

"On the contrary, the finish is always the best. But I must be going," said Stepan Arkadyevich, getting up for the tenth time.

"Oh, no, stay a bit!" said Levin, detaining him. "Now, when shall we see each other again? I'm going tomorrow."

"I'm a fine fellow! Why, that's just what I came for! You simply must come to dinner with us today. Your brother's coming, and Karenin, my brother−in−law."

"You don't mean to say he's here?" said Levin, and he wanted to inquire about Kitty. He had heard at the beginning of the winter that she was at Peterburg with her sister, the wife of the diplomat, and he did not know whether she had come back or not; but he changed his mind and did not ask. "Whether she's coming or not, I don't care," he said to himself.

"So you'll come?"

"Of course."

"At five o'clock, then, and wear a frock coat."

And Stepan Arkadyevich got up and went down below to the new head of his department. Instinct had not misled Stepan Arkadyevich. The terrible new head turned out to be an extremely amenable person, and Stepan Arkadyevich lunched with him and stayed on, so that it was past three o'clock before he got to Alexei Alexandrovich.

VIII.

Alexei Alexandrovich, on coming back from church service, had spent the whole morning indoors. He had two pieces of business before him that morning; first, to receive and send on a deputation from the native tribes which was on its way to Peterburg, and which was now at Moscow; secondly, to write the promised letter to the lawyer. The deputation, though it had been summoned at Alexei Alexandrovich's instigation, was not without its discomforting and even dangerous aspect, and he was glad he had found it in Moscow. The members of this deputation had not the slightest conception of their duty and the part they were to play. They naively believed that it was their business to lay before the Commission their needs and the actual condition of things, and to ask assistance of the government, and utterly failed to grasp that some of their statements and requests supported the contention of the enemy's side, and so spoiled the whole business. Alexei Alexandrovich was busily engaged with them for a long while, drew up a program for them from which they were not to depart, and on dismissing them wrote a letter to Peterburg for the guidance of the deputation. He had his chief support in this affair in the Countess Lidia Ivanovna. She was a specialist in the matter of deputations, and no one knew better than she how to puff, and put them in the way they should go. Having completed this task, Alexei Alexandrovich wrote the letter to the lawyer. Without the slightest hesitation he gave him permission to act as he might judge best. In the letter he enclosed three of Vronsky's notes to Anna, which were in the portfolio he had taken away.

Since Alexei Alexandrovich had left home with the intention of not returning to his family again, and since he had been at the lawyer's and had spoken, though only to one man, of his intention, since, moreover, he had translated the matter from the world of real life to the world of ink and paper, he had grown more and more used to his own intention, and by now distinctly perceived the feasibility of its execution.

He was sealing the envelope to the lawyer, when he heard the loud tones of Stepan Arkadyevich's voice. Stepan Arkadyevich was disputing with Alexei Alexandrovich's servant, and insisting on being announced.

"No matter," thought Alexei Alexandrovich, "so much the better. I will inform him at once of my position in regard to his sister, and explain why it is I can't dine with him."

"Come in!" he said aloud, collecting his papers, and putting them under the blotting pad.

"There, you see, you're talking nonsense, and he is at home!" responded Stepan Arkadyevich's voice, addressing the servant, who had refused to let him in, and, taking off his coat as he went, Oblonsky walked into the room. "Well, I'm awfully glad I've found you! So I hope..." Stepan Arkadyevich began cheerfully.

"I cannot come," Alexei Alexandrovich said coldly, standing and not asking his visitor to sit down.

Alexei Alexandrovich had thought to pass at once into those frigid relations in which he ought to stand with the brother of a wife against whom he was beginning a suit for divorce. But he had not taken into account the ocean of kindliness brimming over in the heart of Stepan Arkadyevich.

Stepan Arkadyevich opened wide his clear, shining eyes.

"Why can't you? What do you mean?" he asked in perplexity, speaking in French. "Oh, but it's a promise. And we're all counting on you."

"I want to tell you that I can't dine at your house, because the terms of relationship which have existed between us must cease."

"How? How do you mean? For what reason?" said Stepan Arkadyevich with a smile.

"Because I am beginning an action for divorce against your sister, my wife. I ought to have..."

But, before Alexei Alexandrovich had time to finish his sentence, Stepan Arkadyevich was behaving not at all as he had expected. Stepan Arkadyevich groaned and sank into an armchair.

"No, Alexei Alexandrovich! What are you saying?" cried Oblonsky, and his suffering was apparent in his face.

"It is so."

"Excuse me, I can't, I can't believe it!"

Alexei Alexandrovich sat down, feeling that his words had not had the effect he anticipated, and that it would be unavoidable for him to explain his position, and that, whatever explanations he might make, his relations with his brother−in−law would remain unchanged.

"Yes, I am brought to the painful necessity of seeking a divorce," he said.

"I will say one thing, Alexei Alexandrovich. I know you for an excellent, upright man; I know Anna excuse me, I can't change my opinion of her for a good, an excellent woman; and so you must excuse me if I cannot believe it. There is some misunderstanding," said he.

"Oh, if it were merely a misunderstanding!..."

"Pardon, I understand," interposed Stepan Arkadyevich. "But of course... One thing: you must not act in haste. You must not, you must not act in haste!"

"I am not acting in haste," Alexei Alexandrovich said coldly, "but one cannot ask advice of anyone in such a matter. I have quite made up my mind."

"This is awful!" said Stepan Arkadyevich. "I would do one thing, Alexei Alexandrovich. I beseech you do it!" he said. "No action has yet been taken, if I understand rightly. Before you take advice, see my wife, talk to her. She loves Anna like a sister, she loves you, and she's a wonderful woman. For God's sake, talk to her! Do me that favor, I beseech you!"

Alexei Alexandrovich pondered, and Stepan Arkadyevich looked at him sympathetically, without interrupting his silence.

"You will go to see her?"

"I don't know. That was just why I have not been to see you. I imagine our relations must change."

"Why so? I don't see that. Allow me to believe that, apart from our connection, you have for me, at least in part, the same friendly feeling I have always had for you... and sincere esteem," said Stepan Arkadyevich, pressing his hand. "Even if your worst suppositions were correct, I don't and never would take on myself to judge either side, and I see no reason why our relations should be affected. But now, do this, come and see my wife."

"Well, we look at the matter differently," said Alexei Alexandrovich coldly. "However, we won't discuss it."

"No; why shouldn't you come today to dine, anyway? My wife's expecting you. Please, do come. And, above all, talk it over with her. She's a wonderful woman. For God's sake, on my knees, I implore you!"

"If you so much wish it, I will come," said Alexei Alexandrovich, sighing.

And, anxious to change the conversation, he inquired about what interested them both the new head of Stepan Arkadyevich's board, a man not yet old, who had suddenly been promoted to so high a position.

Alexei Alexandrovich had previously felt no liking for Count Anychkin, and had always differed from him in his opinions. But now, from a feeling readily comprehensible to officials that hatred felt by one who has suffered a defeat in the service for one who has received a promotion he could not endure him.

"Well, have you seen him?" said Alexei Alexandrovich with a malignant smile.

"Of course; he was at our sitting yesterday. He seems to know his work capitally, and to be very energetic."

"Yes, but what is his energy directed to?" said Alexei Alexandrovich. "Is he aiming at doing anything, or simply doing again what's been done? It's the great misfortune of our government this paper administration, of which he's a worthy representative."

"Really, I don't know what fault one could find with him. His policy I don't know, but one thing is certain he's a very fine fellow," answered Stepan Arkadyevich. "I've just been seeing him, and he's really a fine fellow. We lunched together, and I taught him how to make you know that drink wine and oranges. It's so cooling. And it's a wonder he didn't know it. He liked it awfully. No, really, he's a fine fellow."

Stepan Arkadyevich glanced at his watch.

"Why, good heavens, it's four already, and I've still to go to Dolgovushin's! So please come round to dinner. You can't imagine how you will grieve my wife and me if you don't."

The way in which Alexei Alexandrovich saw his brother−in−law out was very different from the manner in which he had met him.

"I've promised, and I'll come," he answered wearily.

"Believe me, I appreciate it, and I hope you won't regret it," answered Stepan Arkadyevich, smiling.

And, putting on his coat as he went, he patted the footman on the head with his coat sleeve, chuckled, and went out.

"At five o'clock, and wear your frock coat, please," he shouted once more, returning at the door.

IX.

It was past five, and several guests had already arrived, before the host himself got home. He went in together with Sergei Ivanovich Koznishev and with Pestsov, both of whom had reached the street door at the same moment. These were the two leading representatives of the Moscow intellectuals, as Oblonsky had called them. Both were men respected for their character and their intelligence. They respected each other, but were in complete and hopeless disagreement upon almost every subject, not because they belonged to opposite parties, but precisely because they were of the same party (their enemies refused to see any distinction between their views); but, in that party, each had his own special shade of opinion. And since no difference is less easily overcome than the difference of opinion about semiabstract questions, they never agreed on any opinion, and, indeed, had long been accustomed to jeer without anger at each other's incorrigible aberrations.

They were just going in at the door, talking of the weather, when Stepan Arkadyevich overtook them. In the drawing room there were already sitting Prince Alexander Dmitrievich Shcherbatsky, young Shcherbatsky, Turovtsin, Kitty, and Karenin.

Stepan Arkadyevich saw immediately that things were not going well in the drawing room without him. Darya Alexandrovna, in her best gray silk gown, obviously worried about the children who were to have their dinner by themselves in the nursery, and by her husband's absence, was not equal to the task of making the party mix without him. All were sitting like so many priests' daughters on a visit (so the old Prince expressed it), obviously wondering why they were there, and pumping up remarks simply to avoid being silent. Turovtsin goodhearted man felt unmistakably like a fish out of water, and the smile with which his thick lips greeted Stepan Arkadyevich said, as plainly as words: "Well, old boy, you have popped me down in a learned set! A drinking party, and the Chateau des Fleurs, would be more in my line!" The old Prince sat in silence, his bright little eyes watching Karenin with a sidelong look; and Stepan Arkadyevich saw that he had already formed a sharp remark to sum up that politician of whom guests had been invited to partake, as though he were a sturgeon. Kitty was looking at the door, calling up all her energies to keep her from blushing at the entrance of Konstantin Levin. Young Shcherbatsky, who had not been introduced to Karenin, was trying to look as though he were not in the

least embarrassed by it. Karenin himself had followed the Peterburg. etiquette for a dinner with ladies present and was wearing evening dress and a white tie. Stepan Arkadyevich saw by his face that he had come simply to keep his promise, and was performing a disagreeable duty in being present at this gathering. He was indeed the person chiefly responsible for the chill benumbing all the guests before Stepan Arkadyevich came in.

On entering the drawing room Stepan Arkadyevich apologized, explaining that he had been detained by that Prince who was always the scapegoat for all his absences and unpunctualities, and in one moment he had made all the guests acquainted with each other, and, bringing together Alexei Alexandrovich and Sergei Koznishev, had started them on a discussion of the Russification of Poland, into which they immediately plunged with Pestsov. Slapping Turovtsin on the shoulder, he whispered something comic in his ear, and set him down by his wife and the old Prince. Then he told Kitty she was looking very pretty that evening, and presented Shcherbatsky to Karenin. In a moment he had so kneaded together the social dough that the drawing room became very lively, and there was a merry buzz of voices. Konstantin Levin was the only person who had not arrived. But this was so much the better, as, going into the dining room, Stepan Arkadyevich found to his horror that the port and sherry had been procured from Depre, and not from Leve, and, directing that the coachman should be sent off as speedily as possible to Leve's he started back to the drawing room.

In the dining room he was met by Konstantin Levin.

"I'm not late?"

"You can never help being late!" said Stepan Arkadyevich, taking his arm.

"Have you a lot of people? Who's here?" asked Levin, unable to help blushing, as he knocked the snow off his cap with his glove.

"All our own set. Kitty's here. Come along, I'll introduce you to Karenin."

Stepan Arkadyevich, for all his liberal views, was well aware that to meet Karenin was sure to be felt a flattering distinction, and so treated his best friends to this honor. But at that instant Konstantin Levin was not in a condition to feel all the gratification of making such an acquaintance. He had not seen Kitty since that memorable evening when he met Vronsky not counting, that is, the moment when he had had a glimpse of her on the highroad. He had known at the bottom of his heart that he would see her here today. But, to keep his thoughts free, he had tried to persuade himself that he did not know it. Now when he heard that she was here, he was suddenly conscious of such delight, and at the same time of such dread, that his breath failed him and he could not utter what he wanted to say.

"What is she like, what is she like? As she used to be, or as she was in the carriage? What if Darya Alexandrovna told the truth? Why shouldn't it be the truth?" he thought.

"Oh, please, introduce me to Karenin," he brought out with an effort, and with a desperately determined step he walked into the drawing room and beheld her.

She was not the same as she used to be, nor was she as she had been in the carriage; she was quite different.

She was scared, shy, shamefaced, and because of all this, still more charming. She saw him the very instant he walked into the room. She had been expecting him. She was delighted, and so confused at her own delight that there was a moment, the moment when he went up to her sister and glanced again at her, when she, and he, and Dolly, who saw it all, thought she would break down and begin to cry. She crimsoned, turned white, crimsoned again, and grew faint, waiting with quivering lips for him to come to her. He went up to her, bowed, and held out his hand without speaking. Except for the slight quiver of her lips and the moisture in her eyes, making them

brighter, her smile was almost calm as she said:

"How long it is since we've seen each other!" and, with desperate determination, with her cold hand squeezed his.

"You've not seen me, but I've seen you," said Levin, with a radiant smile of happiness. "I saw you when you were driving from the railway station to Ergushovo."

"When?" she asked, wondering.

"You were driving to Ergushovo," said Levin, feeling as if he would sob with the rapture that was flooding his heart. "And how dared I associate a thought of anything not innocent with this touching creature? And, yes, I do believe what Darya Alexandrovna told me is true," he thought.

Stepan Arkadyevich took him by the arm and led him away to Karenin.

"Let me introduce you." He mentioned their names.

"Very glad to meet you again," said Alexei Alexandrovich coldly, shaking hands with Levin.

"You are acquainted?" Stepan Arkadyevich asked in surprise.

"We spent three hours together in the train," said Levin smiling, "but got out, just as in a masquerade, quite mystified at least I was."

"Oh, so that's it! Come along, please," said Stepan Arkadyevich, pointing in the direction of the dining room.

The men went into the dining room and went up to the table for hors d'oeuvres, laid with six sorts of vodka and as many kinds of cheese, some with little silver spades and some without, caviar, herrings, preserves of various kinds, and plates with slices of French bread.

The men stood round the strong−smelling spirits and salt delicacies, and the discussion of the Russification of Poland between Koznishev, Karenin and Pestsov, died down in anticipation of dinner.

Sergei Ivanovich was unequaled in his skill in winding up the most heated and serious argument by some unexpected pinch of Attic salt that changed the disposition of his opponent. He did this now.

Alexei Alexandrovich had been maintaining that the Russification of Poland could only be accomplished as a result of greater principles, which ought to be introduced by the Russian government.

Pestsov insisted that one country can absorb another only when it is the more densely populated.

Koznishev admitted both points, but with limitations. As they were going out of the drawing room to conclude the argument, Koznishev said smiling:

"So, then, for the Russification of our foreign populations there is but one method to bring up as many children as one can. My brother and I are terribly at fault, I see. You married men especially you, Stepan Arkadyevich are the real patriots: what number have you reached?" he said, smiling genially at their host and holding out a tiny wineglass to him.

Everyone laughed, and Stepan Arkadyevich with particular good humor.

"Oh, yes, that's the best method!" he said, munching cheese and filling the wineglass with a special sort of vodka. The conversation dropped at the jest.

"This cheese is not bad. Shall I give you some?" said the master of the house. "Why, have you been going in for gymnastics again?" he asked Levin, pinching his muscle with his left hand. Levin smiled, bent his arm, and under Stepan Arkadyevich's fingers the muscles swelled up like a sound cheese, hard as a knob of iron, through the fine cloth of the coat.

"What biceps! A perfect Samson!"

"I imagine great strength is needed for hunting bears," observed Alexei Alexandrovich, who had the mistiest notions about the chase. He cut off and spread with cheese a wafer of bread fine as a spiderweb.

Levin smiled.

"Not at all. Quite the contrary a child can kill a bear," he said, with a slight bow moving aside for the ladies, who were approaching the hors d'oeuvres table.

"You have killed a bear, I've been told!" said Kitty, trying assiduously to catch with her fork a perverse mushroom that would slip away, and shaking the lace over her white arm. "Are there bears on your place?" she added, turning her charming little head to him and smiling.

There was apparently nothing extraordinary in what she said, but what unutterable meaning there was for him in every sound, in every turn of her lips, her eyes, her hand as she said it! There was entreaty for forgiveness, and trust in him, and tenderness soft, timid tenderness and promise, and hope, and love for him, which he could not but believe in, and which suffocated him with happiness.

"No, we've been hunting in the Tver province. It was coming back from there that I met your beau−frere in the train, or your beau−frere's brother−in−law," he said with a smile. "It was an amusing meeting."

And he began telling with droll good humor how, after not sleeping all night, he had, wearing a fur−lined, full−skirted coat, got into Alexei Alexandrovich's compartment.

"The conductor, forgetting the proverb, would have chucked me out on account of my attire; but thereupon I began expressing my feelings in elevated language, and... you, too," he said, addressing Karenin and forgetting his name, "at first would have ejected me on the ground of my coat, but afterward you took my part, for which I am extremely grateful."

"The rights of passengers generally to choose their seats are too ill−defined," said Alexei Alexandrovich, rubbing the tips of his fingers on his handkerchief.

"I saw you were in uncertainty about me," said Levin, smiling good−naturedly, "but I made haste to plunge into intellectual conversation to smooth over the defects of my attire."

Sergei Ivanovich, while he kept a conversation with their hostess, had one ear for his brother, and he glanced askance at him. "What is the matter with him today? Why such a conquering hero?" he thought. He did not know that Levin was feeling as though he had grown wings. Levin knew she was listening to his words and that she was glad to listen to him. And this was the only thing that interested him. Not in that room only, but in the whole world, there existed for him only himself, with enormously increased importance and dignity in his own eyes, and she. He felt himself on a pinnacle that made him giddy, and far away down below were all those kind, excellent Karenins, Oblonskys, and all the world.

Quite without attracting notice, without glancing at them, as though there were no other places left, Stepan Arkadyevich put Levin and Kitty side by side.

"Oh, you may as well sit there," he said to Levin.

The dinner was as choice as the china, of which Stepan Arkadyevich was a connoisseur. The soupe Marie−Louise was a splendid success; the tiny patties eaten with it melted in the mouth and were irreproachable. The two footmen and Matvei, in white cravats, did their duty with the dishes and wines unobtrusively, quietly, and dexterously. On the material side the dinner was a success; it was no less so on the immaterial. The conversation, at times general and at times between individuals, never paused, and toward the end the company was so lively that the men rose from the table without stopping speaking, and even Alexei Alexandrovich became lively.

X.

Pestsov liked threshing an argument out to the end, and was not satisfied with Sergei Ivanovich's words, especially as he felt the injustice of his view.

"I did not mean," he said over the soup, addressing Alexei Alexandrovich, "mere density of population alone, but in conjunction with fundamental ideas, and not by means of principles."

"It seems to me," Alexei Alexandrovich said languidly, and with no haste, "that that's the same thing. In my opinion, influence over another people is only possible to the people which has the higher development, which..."

"But that's just the question," Pestsov broke in in his bass. He was always in a hurry to speak, and seemed always to put his whole soul into whatever he was saying; "of what are we to make higher development consist? The English, the French, the Germans which is at the highest stage of development? Which of them will nationalize the other? We see the Rhine provinces have been turned French, yet the Germans are not at a lower stage!" he shouted. "There is another law at work there!"

"I fancy that the greater influence is always on the side of true civilization," said Alexei Alexandrovich, slightly lifting his eyebrows.

"But what are we to lay down as the outward signs of true civilization?" said Pestsov.

"I imagine such signs are generally very well known," said Alexei Alexandrovich.

"But are they fully known?" Sergei Ivanovich put in with a subtle smile. "It is the accepted view now that real culture must be purely classical; but we see most intense disputes on each side of the question, and there is no denying that the opposite camp has strong points in its favor."

"You are for the classics, Sergei Ivanovich. Will you take red wine?" said Stepan Arkadyevich.

"I am not expressing my own opinion of either form of culture," Sergei Ivanovich said, holding out his glass with a smile of condescension, as to a child. "I only say that both sides have strong arguments to support them," he went on, addressing Alexei Alexandrovich. "My sympathies are classical from education, but in this discussion I am personally unable to arrive at a conclusion. I see no distinct grounds for classical studies being given a pre−eminence over scientific studies."

"The natural sciences have just as great an educational value," put in Pestsov. "Take astronomy, take botany, or zoology, with its system of general principles."

"I cannot quite agree with that," responded Alexei Alexandrovich. "It seems to me that one must admit that the very process of studying the forms of language has a peculiarly favorable influence on intellectual development. Moreover, it cannot be denied that the influence of the classical authors is in the highest degree moral, while, unfortunately, with the study of the natural sciences are associated the false and noxious doctrines which are the curse of our day."

Sergei Ivanovich would have said something, but Pestsov interrupted him in his rich bass. He began warmly contesting the justice of this view. Sergei Ivanovich waited serenely to speak, obviously with a convincing reply ready.

"But," said Sergei Ivanovich, smiling subtly, and addressing Karenin, "one must allow that to weigh all the advantages and disadvantages of classical and scientific studies is a difficult task, and the question which form of education was to be preferred would not have been so quickly and conclusively decided if there had not been in favor of classical education, as you expressed it just now, its moral disons le mot antinihilist influence."

"Undoubtedly."

"If it had not been for the distinctive property of antinihilistic influence on the side of classical studies, we should have considered the subject more, have weighed the arguments on both sides," said Sergei Ivanovich with a subtle smile, "we should have given elbowroom to both tendencies. But now we know that these little pills of classical learning possess the medicinal property of antinihilism, and we boldly prescribe them to our patients.... But what if they had no such medicinal property?" he added his pinch of Attic salt.

At Sergei Ivanovich's little pills everyone laughed; Turovtsin in especial roared loudly and jovially, glad at last to have found something to laugh at all he ever looked for in listening to conversation.

Stepan Arkadyevich had not made a mistake in inviting Pestsov. With Pestsov intellectual conversation never flagged for an instant. Directly Sergei Ivanovich had concluded the conversation with his jest, Pestsov promptly started a new one.

"I can't agree even," said he, "that the government had that aim. The government obviously is guided by abstract considerations, and remains indifferent to the influence its measures may exercise. The education of women, for instance, would naturally be regarded as likely to be harmful, but the government opens schools and universities for women."

And the conversation at once passed to the new subject of the education of women.

Alexei Alexandrovich expressed the idea that the education of women is apt to be confounded with the emancipation of women, and that it is only so that it can be considered dangerous.

"I consider, on the contrary, that the two questions are inseparably connected together," said Pestsov; "it is a vicious circle. Woman is deprived of rights from lack of education, and the lack of education results from the absence of rights. We must not forget that the subjection of women is so complete, and dates from such distant ages, that we are often unwilling to recognize the gulf that separates them from us," said he.

"You mentioned rights," said Sergei Ivanovich, waiting till Pestsov had finished, "meaning the right of sitting on juries, of voting, of presiding at councils, the right of entering the civil service, of sitting in parliament...."

"Undoubtedly."

"But if women, as a rare exception, can occupy such positions, it seems to me you are wrong in using the expression 'rights'. It would be more correct to say duties. Every man will agree that in doing the duty of a juryman, a witness, a telegraph clerk, we feel we are performing duties. And, therefore, it would be correct to say that women are seeking duties, and quite legitimately. And one can but sympathize with this desire to assist in the general labor of man."

"Quite so," Alexei Alexandrovich assented. "The question, I imagine, is simply whether they are fitted for such duties."

"They will most likely be perfectly fitted," said Stepan Arkadyevich, "when education has become general among them. We see this..."

"How about the proverb?" said the Prince, who had a long while been intent on the conversation, his mocking little eyes twinkling. "I can say it before my daughters: her hair is long, but her wit is short...."

"Just what they thought of the Negroes before their emancipation!" said Pestsov angrily.

"What seems strange to me is that women should seek fresh duties," said Sergei Ivanovich, "while we see, unhappily, that men usually try to avoid them."

"Duties are bound up with rights power, money, honor; those are what women are seeking," said Pestsov.

"Just as though I should seek the right to be a wet nurse, and feel injured because women are paid for the work, while no one will take me," said the old Prince.

Turovtsin exploded in a loud roar of laughter, and Sergei Ivanovich regretted that he had not made this comparison. Even Alexei Alexandrovich smiled.

"Yes, but a man can't nurse a baby," said Pestsov, "while a woman..."

"No, there was an Englishman who did suckle his baby on board ship," said the old Prince, feeling this freedom in conversation permissible before his own daughters.

"There are as many such Englishmen as there would be women officials," said Sergei Ivanovich.

"Yes, but what is a girl to do who has no family?" put in Stepan Arkadyevich, thinking of Masha Chibisova, whom he had had in his mind all along, in sympathizing with Pestsov and supporting him.

"If the story of such a girl were thoroughly sifted, you would find she had abandoned a family her own or a sister's, where she might have found a woman's duties," Darya Alexandrovna broke in unexpectedly, in a tone of exasperation, probably suspecting what sort of girl Stepan Arkadyevich had in mind.

"But we take our stand on principle, on the ideal," replied Pestsov in his sonorous bass. "Woman desires to have the right to be independent, educated. She is oppressed, humiliated by the consciousness of her disabilities."

"And I'm oppressed and humiliated that they won't engage me at the Foundling Asylum," the old Prince said again, to the huge delight of Turovtsin, who in his mirth dropped his asparagus with the thick end in the sauce.

XI.

Everyone took part in the conversation except Kitty and Levin. At first, when they were talking of the influence that one people has on another, there rose to Levin's mind what he had to say on the subject. But these ideas, once of such importance in his eyes, seemed to come into his brain as in a dream, and had now not the slightest interest for him. It even struck him as strange that they should be so eager to talk of what was of no use to anyone. Kitty, too, one would have supposed, should have been interested in what they were saying of the rights and education of women. How often she had mused on the subject, thinking of her friend abroad, Varenka, of her painful state of dependence; how often she had wondered about herself as to what would become of her if she did not marry, and how often she had argued with her sister about it! But now it did not interest her at all. She and Levin had a conversation of their own, yet not a conversation, but a sort of mysterious communication, which brought them every moment nearer, and stirred in both a sense of glad terror before the unknown into which they were entering.

At first Levin, in answer to Kitty's question how he could have seen her last year in the carriage, told her that he had been coming home from the mowing along the highroad and had met her.

"It was very, very early in the morning. You were probably only just awake. Your maman was asleep in her corner. It was an exquisite morning. I was walking along wondering who it could be in the four−in−hand. It was a splendid set of four horses with bells, and in a second you flashed by, and I saw you at the window you were sitting, like this; holding the strings of your cap in both hands, and in awfully deep thought about something," he said, smiling. "How I should like to know what you were thinking about then! Something important?"

"Wasn't I dreadfully untidy?" she wondered, but seeing the smile of ecstasy these reminiscences called up, she felt that the impression she had made had been very good. She blushed and laughed with delight:

"Really I don't remember."

"How nicely Turovtsin laughs!" said Levin, admiring his humid eyes and heaving chest.

"Have you known him long?" asked Kitty.

"Oh, everyone knows him!"

"And I see you think he's a horrid man?"

"Not horrid, but there's nothing in him."

"Oh, you're wrong! And you must give up thinking so directly!" said Kitty. "I used to have a very poor opinion of him too, but he's an awfully fine and wonderfully goodhearted man. He has a heart of gold."

"How could you find out what sort of heart he has?"

"We are great friends. I know him very well. Last winter, soon after... you came to see us," she said, with a guilty and at the same time a confiding smile, "all Dolly's children had scarlatina, and he happened to come to see her. And only fancy," she said in a whisper, "he felt so sorry for her that he stayed and began to help her look after the children. Yes, and for three weeks he stopped with them, and looked after the children like a nurse."

"I am telling Konstantin Dmitrievich about Turovtsin and the scarlatina," she said, bending over to her sister.

"Yes, it was wonderful, noble!" said Dolly, glancing toward Turovtsin, who had become aware they were talking

of him, and smiling gently to him. Levin glanced once more at Turovtsin, and wondered how it was he had not realized all this man's goodness before.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, and I'll never think ill of people again!" he said gaily, genuinely expressing what he felt at the moment.

XII.

Connected with the conversation that had sprung up on the rights of women there were certain questions as to the inequality of rights in marriage, improper to discuss before the ladies. Pestsov had several times during dinner touched upon these questions, but Sergei Ivanovich and Stepan Arkadyevich carefully drew him off them.

When they rose from the table and the ladies had gone out, Pestsov did not follow them, but, addressing Alexei Alexandrovich, began to expound the chief ground of inequality. The inequality in marriage, in his opinion, lay in the fact that the infidelity of the wife and infidelity of the husband are punished unequally, both by the law and by public opinion.

Stepan Arkadyevich went hurriedly up to Alexei Alexandrovich and offered him a cigar.

"No, I don't smoke," Alexei Alexandrovich answered calmly, and, as though purposely wishing to show that he was not afraid of the subject, he turned to Pestsov with a chilly smile.

"I imagine that such a view has a foundation in the very nature of things," he said, and would have gone on to the drawing room. But at this point Turovtsin broke suddenly and unexpectedly into the conversation, addressing Alexei Alexandrovich.

"You heard, perhaps, about Priachnikov?" said Turovtsin, warmed up by the champagne he had drunk, and long waiting for an opportunity to break the silence that had weighed on him. "Vassia Priachnikov," he said, with a good−natured smile on his moist, red lips, addressing himself principally to the most important guest, Alexei Alexandrovich, "they told me today he fought a duel with Kvitsky at Tver, and has killed him."

Just as it always seems that one bruises oneself on a sore place, so Stepan Arkadyevich felt now that the conversation would by ill luck fall at any moment on Alexei Alexandrovich's sore spot. He would again have got his brother−in−law away, but Alexei Alexandrovich himself inquired, with curiosity:

"What did Priachnikov fight about?"

"His wife. Acted like a man, he did! Called him out and shot him!"

"Ah!" said Alexei Alexandrovich indifferently, and, lifting his eyebrows, he went into the drawing room.

"How glad I am you have come," Dolly said with a frightened smile, meeting him in the outer drawing room. "I must talk to you. Let's sit here."

Alexei Alexandrovich, with the same expression of indifference, due to his lifted eyebrows, sat down beside Darya Alexandrovna, and smiled affectedly.

"It's fortunate," said he, "especially as I meant to ask you to excuse me, and to be taking leave. I have to start tomorrow."

Darya Alexandrovna was firmly convinced of Anna's innocence, and she felt herself growing pale and her lips quivering with anger at this frigid, unfeeling man, who was so calmly intending to ruin her innocent friend.

"Alexei Alexandrovich," she said, with desperate resolution looking him in the face, "I asked you about Anna; you made me no answer. How is she?"

"She is, I believe, quite well, Darya Alexandrovna," replied Alexei Alexandrovich, without looking at her.

"Alexei Alexandrovich, forgive me, I have no right... But I love Anna as a sister, and esteem her; I beg, I beseech you to tell me what is wrong between you? What fault do you find with her?"

Alexei Alexandrovich frowned, and, almost closing his eyes, dropped his head.

"I presume that your husband has told you the grounds on which I consider it necessary to change my attitude to Anna Arkadyevna?" he said, without looking her in the face, but eying with displeasure Shcherbatsky, who was walking across the drawing room.

"I don't believe it, I don't believe it I can't believe it!" Dolly said, clasping her bony hands before her with a vigorous gesture. She rose quickly and laid her hand on Alexei Alexandrovich's sleeve. "We shall be disturbed here. Come this way, please."

Dolly's agitation had an effect on Alexei Alexandrovich. He got up and submissively followed her to the schoolroom. They sat down at a table covered with an oilcloth cut in slits by penknives.

"I don't I don't believe it!" Dolly said, trying to catch his glance, still avoiding her.

"One cannot disbelieve facts, Darya Alexandrovna," said he, with an emphasis on the word facts.

"But what has she done?" said Darya Alexandrovna. "What, precisely, has she done?"

"She has forsaken her duty, and deceived her husband. That's what she has done," said he.

"No, no, it can't be! No, for God's sake, you are mistaken," said Dolly, putting her hands to her temples and closing her eyes.

Alexei Alexandrovich smiled coldly, with his lips alone, meaning to signify to her and himself the firmness of his conviction; but this warm defense, though it could not shake him, reopened his wound. He began to speak with greater heat.

"It is extremely difficult to be mistaken when a wife herself informs her husband of the fact informs him that eight years of her life, and a son, are all a mistake, and that she wants to begin life anew," he said angrily, with a snort.

"Anna and sin I cannot connect them, I cannot believe it!"

"Darya Alexandrovna," he said, now looking straight into Dolly's kindly, troubled face, and feeling that his tongue was being loosened in spite of himself, "I would give a great deal for doubt to be still possible. When I doubted, I was miserable, but it was better than now. When I doubted, I had hope; but now there is no hope, and still I doubt everything. I am in such doubt of everything that I even hate my son, and sometimes do not believe he is my son. I am very unhappy."

He had no need to say that. Darya Alexandrovna had seen that as soon as he glanced into her face; and she felt sorry for him, and her faith in the innocence of her friend began to waver.

"Oh, this is awful, awful! But can it be true that you are resolved on a divorce?"

"I am resolved on extreme measures. There is nothing else for me to do."

"Nothing else to do, nothing else to do..." she replied, with tears in her eyes. "Oh no, don't say there's nothing else to do!" she said.

"What is horrible in a misfortune of this kind is that one cannot, as in any other in loss, in death bear one's trouble in peace, but that one must act," said he, as though guessing her thought. "One must get out of the humiliating position in which one is placed; one can't live a trois."

"I understand, I quite understand that," said Dolly, and her head sank. She was silent for a little, thinking of herself, of her own grief in her family, and all at once, with an impulsive movement, she raised her head and clasped her hands with an imploring gesture. "But wait a little! You are a Christian. Think of her! What will become of her, if you cast her off?"

"I have thought, Darya Alexandrovna I have thought a great deal," said Alexei Alexandrovich. His face turned red in patches, and his dim eyes looked straight before him. Darya Alexandrovna at that moment pitied him with all her heart. "That indeed was what I did when she herself made known to me my humiliation; I left everything as of old. I gave her a chance to reform, I tried to save her. And with what result? She would not regard the least request that she should observe decorum," he said, getting heated. "One may save anyone who does not want to be ruined; but if the whole nature is so corrupt, so depraved, that ruin itself seems to her salvation, what's to be done?"

"Anything, only not divorce!" answered Darya Alexandrovna.

"But what is anything?"

"No, it is awful! She will be no one's wife; she will be lost!"

"What can I do?" said Alexei Alexandrovich, raising his shoulders and his eyebrows. The recollection of his wife's last act had so incensed him that he had become frigid, as at the beginning of the conversation. "I am very grateful for your sympathy, but I must be going," he said, getting up.

"No, wait a minute. You must not ruin her. Wait a little; I will tell you about myself. I was married, and my husband deceived me; in anger and jealousy I would have thrown up everything, I would myself... But I came to myself again; and who did it? Anna saved me. And here I am living on. The children are growing up, my husband has come back to his family, and feels his fault, is growing purer, better, and I live on... I have forgiven it, and you ought to forgive!"

Alexei Alexandrovich heard her, but her words had no effect on him now. All the hatred of that day when he had resolved on a divorce had sprung up again in his soul. He shook himself, and said in a shrill loud voice:

"Forgive I cannot, and do not wish to, and I regard it as wrong. I have done everything for this woman, and she has trodden it all in the mud to which she is kin. I am not a spiteful man, I have never hated anyone, but I hate her with my whole soul, and I cannot even forgive her, because I hate her too much for all the wrong she has done me!" he said, with tears of hatred in his voice.

"Love those that hate you..." Darya Alexandrovna whispered, timorously.

Alexei Alexandrovich smiled contemptuously. That he knew long ago, but it could not be applied to his case.

"Love those that hate you, but to love those one hates is impossible. Forgive me for having troubled you. Everyone has enough to bear in his own grief!" And, regaining his self−possession, Alexei Alexandrovich quietly took leave and went away.

XIII.

When they rose from the table, Levin would have liked to follow Kitty into the drawing room; but he was afraid she might dislike this, as too obviously paying her attention. He remained in the little ring of men, taking part in the general conversation, and, without looking at Kitty, he was aware of her movements, her looks, and the place where she was in the drawing room.

He did at once, and without the smallest effort, keep the promise he had made her always to think well of all men, and to like everyone always. The conversation fell on the village commune, in which Pestsov saw a sort of special principle, called by him the choral principle. Levin did not agree with Pestsov, nor with his brother, who had a special attitude of his own, both admitting yet not admitting the significance of the Russian commune. But he talked to them, simply trying to reconcile and soften their differences. He was not in the least interested in what he said himself, and even less so in what they said; all he wanted was that they and everyone should be happy and contented. He knew now the one thing of importance; and that one thing was at first there, in the drawing room, and then began moving across, and came to a standstill at the door. Without turning round he felt her eyes fixed on him, and her smile, and he could not help turning round. She was standing in the doorway with Shcherbatsky, looking at Levin.

"I thought you were going toward the piano," said he, going up to her. "That's something I miss in the country music."

"No; we only came to fetch you, and I thank you," she said, rewarding him with a smile that was like a gift, "for coming. What do they want to argue for? No one ever convinces anyone, you know."

"Yes; that's true," said Levin; "it generally happens that one argues warmly simply because one can't make out what one's opponent wants to prove."

Levin had often noticed in discussions between the most intelligent people that after enormous efforts, and an enormous expenditure of logical subtleties and words, the disputants finally arrived at the realization that what they had so long been struggling to prove to one another had long ago, from the beginning of the argument, been known to both, but that they liked different things, and would not define what they liked for fear of its being attacked. He had often had the experience of suddenly grasping in a discussion what it was his opponent liked and at once liking it too, and immediately he found himself agreeing, and then all arguments fell away as useless. Sometimes, too, he had experienced the opposite, expressing at last what he liked himself, which he was devising arguments to defend, and, chancing to express it well and genuinely, he had found his opponent at once agreeing and ceasing to dispute his position. He tried to say this.

She knit her brow, trying to understand. But directly he began to illustrate his meaning, she understood at once.

"I know: one must find out what he is arguing for, what is precious to him, then one can..."

She had completely guessed and expressed his badly expressed idea. Levin smiled joyfully; he was struck by this

transition from the confused, verbose discussion with Pestsov and his brother to this laconic, clear, almost wordless communication of the most complex ideas.

Shcherbatsky moved away from them, and Kitty, going up to a card table, sat down, and, taking up the chalk, began drawing diverging circles over the new green cloth.

They began again on the subject that had been started at dinner the liberty and occupations of women. Levin was of the opinion of Darya Alexandrovna that a girl who did not marry should find a woman's duties in a family. He supported this view by the fact that no family can get on without women to help; that in every family, poor or rich, there are and must be nurses, either relations or hired.

"No," said Kitty, blushing, but looking at him all the more bravely with her truthful eyes; "a girl may be so circumstanced that she cannot live in the family without humiliation, while she herself..."

At the hint he understood her.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Yes, yes, yes you're right; you're right!"

And he saw all that Pestsov had been maintaining at dinner about the liberty of woman, simply from getting a glimpse of the terror of an old maid's existence and its humiliation in Kitty's heart; and loving her, he felt that terror and humiliation, and at once gave up his arguments.

A silence followed. She was still drawing with the chalk on the table. Her eyes were shining with a soft light. Under the influence of her mood he felt in all his being a continually growing tension of happiness.

"Ah! I've scribbled all over the table!" she said, and, laying down the chalk, she made a movement as though to get up.

"What! Shall I be left alone without her?" he thought with horror, and he took the chalk. "Wait a minute," he said, sitting down to the table. "I've long wanted to ask you one thing."

He looked straight into her caressing, though frightened eyes.

"Please, ask it."

"Here," he said; and he wrote the initial letters, w, y, t, m: i, c, n, b, d, t, m, n, o, t. These letters meant, "When you told me: it could never be, did that mean never, or then?" There seemed no likelihood that she could make out this complicated sentence; but he looked at her as though his life depended on her understanding the words.

She glanced at him seriously, then leaned her puckered brow on her hands and began to read. Once or twice she stole a look at him, as though asking him, "Is it what I think it is?"

"I understand," she said, flushing.

"What is this word?" he said, pointing to the n that stood for never.

"It means never," she said; "but that's not true!"

He quickly rubbed out what he had written, gave her the chalk, and stood up. She wrote, t, i, c, n, a, d.

Dolly was completely comforted in the depression caused by her conversation with Alexei Alexandrovich when she caught sight of the two figures: Kitty with the chalk in her hand, with a shy and happy smile looking upward at Levin, and his handsome figure bending over the table with glowing eyes fastened one minute on the table and the next on her. He was suddenly radiant: he had understood. It meant, "Then I could not answer differently."

He glanced at her questioningly, timidly.

"Only then?"

"Yes," her smile answered.

"And n... And now?" he asked.

"Well, read this. I'll tell you what I should like should like so much!" She wrote the initial letters, i, y, c, f, a, f, w, h. This meant, "If you could forget and forgive what happened."

He snatched the chalk with nervous, trembling fingers, and breaking it, wrote the initial letters of the following phrase, "I have nothing to forget and to forgive; I have never ceased to love you."

She glanced at him with a smile that did not waver.

"I understand," she said in a whisper.

He sat down and wrote a long phrase. She understood it all, and without asking him, "Is it this?" took the chalk and at once answered.

For a long while he could not understand what she had written, and often looked into her eyes. He was stupefied with happiness. He could not supply the words she had meant; but in her charming eyes, beaming with happiness, he saw all he needed to know. And he wrote three letters. But he had hardly finished writing when she read them over her arm, and herself finished and wrote the answer, "Yes."

"You're playing secretaire?" said the old Prince. "But we must really be getting along if you want to be in time at the theater."

Levin got up and escorted Kitty to the door.

In their conversation everything had been said; it had been said that she loved him, and that she would tell her father and mother that he would come tomorrow morning.

XIV.

When Kitty had gone and Levin was left alone, he felt such uneasiness without her and such an impatient longing to get as quickly as possible to tomorrow morning, when he would see her again and be plighted to her forever, that he felt afraid, as though of death, of those fourteen hours that he had to get through without her. It was essential for him to be with someone to talk to, so as not to be left alone; to deceive time. Stepan Arkadyevich would have been the companion most congenial to him, but he was going out, he said, to a soiree in reality to the ballet. Levin only had time to tell him he was happy, and that he loved him, and would never, never forget what he had done for him. The eyes and the smile of Stepan Arkadyevich showed Levin that he comprehended that feeling fittingly.

"Oh, so it's not time to die yet?" said Stepan Arkadyevich, pressing Levin's hand with emotion.

"N−n−no!" said Levin.

Darya Alexandrovna too, as she said good−by to him, gave him a sort of congratulation, saying, "How glad I am you have met Kitty again! One must value old friends." Levin did not like these words of Darya Alexandrovna's. She could not understand how lofty and beyond her it all was, and she ought not to have dared to allude to it. Levin said good−by to them, but, not to be left alone, he attached himself to his brother.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to a meeting."

"Well, I'll come with you. May I?"

"What for? Yes, come along," said Sergei Ivanovich, smiling. "What is the matter with you today?"

"With me? Happiness is the matter with me!" said Levin, letting down the window of the carriage they were driving in. "You don't mind? It's so stifling. Happiness is all that's the matter with me! Why is it you have never married?"

Sergei Ivanovich smiled.

"I am very glad she seems a lovely gi..." Sergei Ivanovich was beginning.

"Don't say it! Don't say it!" shouted Levin, clutching at the collar of his fur coat with both hands, and muffling him up in it. "She's a lovely girl" were such simple, humble words, so out of harmony with his feeling.

Sergei Ivanovich laughed outright a merry laugh, which was rare with him.

"Well, anyway, I may say that I'm very glad of it."

"That you may do tomorrow, tomorrow and say no more! Nothing, nothing silence," said Levin, and muffling him once more in his fur coat, he added: "I do like you so! Well, is it possible for me to be present at the meeting?"

"Of course it is."

"What is your discussion about today?" asked Levin, never ceasing smiling.

They arrived at the meeting. Levin heard the secretary hesitatingly read the minutes which he obviously did not himself understand; but Levin saw from this secretary's face what a good, fine, kindhearted person he was. This was evident from his confusion and embarrassment in reading the minutes. Then the discussion began. They were disputing about the reckoning off of certain sums and the laying of certain pipes, and Sergei Ivanovich was very cutting to two members, and said something at great length with an air of triumph; and another member, scribbling something on a bit of paper, began timidly at first, but afterward answered him very viciously and delightfully. And then Sviiazhsky (he was there also) said something too, very handsomely and nobly. Levin listened to them, and saw clearly that this reckoning off of sums and these pipes were not anything real, and that they were not at all angry, but were all the finest, kindest people, and everything was as happy and charming as possible among them. They did no harm to anyone, and were all enjoying it. What struck Levin was that he could see through them all today, and from little, almost imperceptible signs knew the soul of each, and saw distinctly

that they were all good at heart. And they were all extremely fond of Levin in particular that day. This was evident from the way they spoke to him, from the friendly, affectionate way even those whom he did not know looked at him.

"Well, are you contented with it?" Sergei Ivanovich asked him.

"Very much. I never supposed it was so interesting, nice, capital!"

Sviiazhsky went up to Levin and invited him to come round to tea with him. Levin was utterly at a loss to comprehend or recall what it was he had disliked in Sviiazhsky, what he had failed to find in him. He was a clever and wonderfully goodhearted man.

"Most delighted," he said, and asked after his wife and sister−in−law. And from a queer association of ideas, because in his imagination the idea of Sviiazhsky's sister−in−law was connected with marriage, it occurred to him that there was no one to whom he could more suitably speak of his happiness, than to Sviiazhsky's wife and sister−in−law, and he was very glad to go to see them.

Sviiazhsky questioned him about his improvements on his estate, presupposing, as he always did, that there was no possibility of doing anything not done already in Europe, and now this did not in the least annoy Levin. On the contrary, he felt that Sviiazhsky was right, that the whole business was of little value, and he saw the wonderful suavity and consideration with which Sviiazhsky avoided fully expressing his correct view. The ladies of the Sviiazhsky household were particularly delightful. It seemed to Levin that they knew all about it already, and sympathized with him, saying nothing merely out of delicacy. He stayed with them one hour, two, three, talking of all sorts of subjects, but implied in it the only thing that filled his heart, and did not observe that he was boring them dreadfully, and that it was long past their bedtime. Sviiazhsky went with him into the hall, yawning and wondering at the strange humor his friend was in. It was past one o'clock. Levin went back to his hotel, and was dismayed at the thought that all alone now with his impatience he had ten hours still left to get through. The servant, whose turn it was to be up all night, lighted his candles, and would have gone away, but Levin stopped him. This servant, Iegor, whom Levin had not noticed before, struck him as a very intelligent, excellent, and, above all, a goodhearted man.

"Well, Iegor, it's hard work not sleeping, isn't it?"

"What's to be done! It's part of our work, you see. In a gentleman's house it's easier; but then here one makes more."

It appeared that Iegor had a family three boys and a daughter, a seamstress, whom he wanted to marry to a cashier in a saddler's shop.

Levin, on hearing this, informed Iegor that, in his opinion, in marriage the great thing was love, and that with love one would always be happy, for happiness rests only on oneself.

Iegor listened attentively, and obviously quite took in Levin's idea, but by way of assent to it he enunciated, greatly to Levin's surprise, the observation that when he had lived with good masters he had always been satisfied with his masters, and now was perfectly satisfied with his employer, though he was a Frenchman.

"Wonderfully goodhearted fellow!" thought Levin.

"Well, but you yourself, Iegor, when you got married, did you love your wife?"

"Ay! And why not?" responded Iegor.

And Levin saw that Iegor too was in an excited state and intending to express all his most heartfelt emotions.

"My life, too, has been a wonderful one. From a child up..." he was beginning with flashing eyes, apparently catching Levin's enthusiasm, just as people catch yawning.

But at that moment a ring was heard. Iegor departed, and Levin was left alone. He had eaten scarcely anything at dinner, had refused tea and supper at Sviiazhsky's, but he was incapable of thinking of supper. He had not slept the previous night, but was incapable of thinking of sleep either. His room was cold, but he was oppressed by heat. He opened both the movable panes in his windows and sat down on the table opposite the open panes. Over the snow−covered roofs could be seen a decorated cross, with chains, and above it the rising triangle of Auriga, with the yellowish light of Capella. He gazed at the cross, then at the star, drank in the fresh freezing air that flowed evenly into the room, and followed as though in a dream the images and memories that rose in his imagination. At four o'clock he heard steps in the passage and peeped out of the door. It was the gambler Miaskin, whom he knew, coming from the club. He walked gloomily, frowning and coughing. "Poor, unlucky fellow!" thought Levin, and tears came into his eyes from love and pity for this man. He would have talked with him, and tried to comfort him, but remembering that he had nothing but his shirt on, he changed his mind and sat down again at the open pane to bathe in the cold air and gaze at the exquisite lines of the cross, silent, but full of meaning for him, and the mounting lurid yellow star. At six o'clock there was a noise of people polishing the floors, and church bells ringing to some divine service, and Levin felt that he was beginning to get frozen. He closed the pane, washed, dressed, and went out into the street.

XV.

The streets were still empty. Levin went to the house of the Shcherbatskys. The visitors' doors were closed and everything was asleep. He walked back, went into his room again, and asked for coffee. The day servant, not Iegor this time, brought it to him. Levin would have entered into conversation with him, but a bell rang for the servant, and he went out. Levin tried to drink coffee and take a bite of a roll, but his mouth was quite at a loss what to do with the roll. Levin, rejecting the roll, put on his coat and went out again for a walk. It was nine o'clock when he reached the Shcherbatskys' steps the second time. In the house they were only just up, and the cook came out to go marketing. He had to get through at least two hours more.

All that night and morning Levin lived perfectly unconsciously, and felt perfectly lifted out of the conditions of material life. He had eaten nothing for a whole day, he had not slept for two nights, had spent several hours undressed in the frozen air, and felt not only fresher and stronger than ever, but felt utterly independent of his body; he moved without muscular effort, and felt as if he could do anything. He was convinced he could fly upward or lift the corner of the house, if need be. He spent the remainder of the time in the street, incessantly looking at his watch and gazing about him.

And what he saw then, he never saw again after. Especially the children going to school, the blue−gray doves fluttering down from the roofs to the pavement, and the little loaves covered with flour, set out by an unseen hand, touched him. Those loaves, those doves, and those two boys were not of this earth. It all happened at the same time: a boy ran toward a dove and glanced smiling at Levin; the dove, with a whir of her wings, darted away, flashing in the sun, amid grains of snow that quivered in the air, while from a little window there came a smell of fresh−baked bread, and the loaves were set out. All of this together was so extraordinarily resplendent that Levin laughed and cried with delight. Going a long way round by Gazetny Lane and Kislovka, he went back again to the hotel, and, putting his watch before him, sat down to wait for twelve o'clock. In the next room they were talking about some sort of machines, and swindling, and coughing their morning coughs. They did not realize that the hand was near twelve. The hand reached it. Levin went out on the steps. The sleigh drivers clearly knew all about it. They crowded round Levin with happy faces, quarreling among themselves, and offering their services. Trying not to offend the other sleigh drivers, and promising to drive with them too, Levin took one and told him to drive

to the Shcherbatskys'. The sleigh driver was splendid in a white shirt collar, sticking out over his overcoat and into his strong, full−blooded red neck. The sleigh was high and comfortable, and altogether such a one as Levin never drove in after, and the horse was a good one, and tried to gallop yet didn't seem to move. The driver knew the Shcherbatskys' house, and drew up at the entrance, squaring his arms and saying a "Whoa!" especially indicative of respect for his fare. The Shcherbatskys' hall porter certainly knew all about it. This was evident from the smile in his eyes and the way he said:

"Well, it's a long while since you've been to see us, Konstantin Dmitrievich!"

Not only did he know all about it, but he was unmistakably delighted and making efforts to conceal his joy. Looking into his kindly old eyes, Levin realized even something new in his happiness.

"Are they up?"

"Pray walk in! Leave it here," said he, smiling, as Levin would have come back to take his hat. That meant something.

"To whom shall I announce your honor?" asked the footman.

The footman, though a young man, and one of the new school of footmen a dandy was a very kindhearted, good fellow, and he too knew all about it.

"The Princess... the Prince... the young Princess..." said Levin.

The first person he saw was Mademoiselle Linon. She walked across the room, and her ringlets and her face were beaming. He had barely spoken to her, when suddenly he heard the rustle of a skirt at the door, and Mademoiselle Linon vanished from Levin's eyes, and a joyful terror came over him at the nearness of his happiness. Mademoiselle Linon was in great haste, and, leaving him, went out at the other door. Directly she had gone out, swift, swift light steps sounded on the parquet, and his bliss, his life, his own self what was best in himself, what he had so long sought and longed for was quickly, so quickly approaching him. She did not walk, but seemed, by some unseen force, to float toward him.

He saw nothing but her clear, truthful eyes, frightened by the same bliss of love that flooded his heart. Those eyes were shining nearer and nearer, blinding him with their light of love. She stopped close to him, touching him. Her hands rose and dropped on his shoulders.

She had done all she could she had run up to him and given herself up entirely, shy and happy. He put his arms round her, and pressed his lips to her mouth, which sought his kiss.

She too had not slept all night, and had been expecting him all the morning.

Her mother and father had consented without demur, and were happy in her happiness. She had been waiting for him. She wanted to be the first to tell him her happiness and his. She had got ready to see him alone, and had been delighted at the idea, and had been shy and ashamed, and did not know herself what she was to do. She had heard his steps and voice, and had waited at the door for Mademoiselle Linon to go. Mademoiselle Linon had gone away. Without thinking, without asking herself how and what, she had gone up to him, and did as she was doing.

"Let us go to mamma!" she said, taking him by the hand. For a long while he could say nothing, not so much because he was afraid of desecrating the loftiness of his emotion by a word, as that every time he tried to say something, instead of words he felt that tears of happiness were welling up. He took her hand and kissed it.

"Can it be true?" he said at last in a choked voice. "I can't believe you love me, dear!"

She smiled at that "dear," and at the timidity with which he glanced at her.

"Yes!" she said significantly, deliberately. "I am so happy!"

Without letting go his hand, she went into the drawing room. The Princess, seeing them, breathed quickly, and immediately began to cry, and then immediately began to laugh, and, with a vigorous step Levin had not expected, ran up to him, and hugging his head, kissed him, wetting his cheeks with her tears.

"So it is all settled! I am glad. Love her. I am glad... Kitty!"

"You've not been long settling things," said the old Prince, trying to seem unmoved; but Levin noticed that his eyes were wet when he turned to him. "I've long always wished for this!" said the Prince, taking Levin by the arm and drawing him toward himself. "Even when this little featherhead fancied..."

"Papa!" shrieked Kitty, and shut his mouth with her hands.

"Well, I won't!" he said. "I'm very, very... plea... Oh, what a fool I am...."

He embraced Kitty, kissed her face, her hand, her face again, and made the sign of the cross over her.

And there came over Levin a new feeling of love for this man, the old Prince, till then so little known to him, when he saw how slowly and tenderly Kitty kissed his muscular hand.

XVI.

The Princess was sitting in her armchair, silent and smiling; the Prince sat down beside her. Kitty stood by her father's chair, still holding his hand. All were silent.

The Princess was the first to put everything into words, and to translate all thoughts and feelings into practical questions. And all felt equally strange and painful for the first minute.

"When is it to be? We must have the benediction and announcement. And when's the wedding to be? What do you think, Alexandre?

"Here he is," said the old Prince, pointing to Levin "he's the principal person in the matter."

"When?" said Levin blushing. "Tomorrow. If you ask me, I should say, the benediction today, and the wedding tomorrow."

"Come, mon cher, that's nonsense!"

"Well, in a week."

"He's quite mad."

"No, why so?"

"Well, upon my word!" said the mother, smiling, delighted at this haste. "How about the trousseau?"

"Will there really be a trousseau and all that?" Levin thought with horror. "But can the trousseau and the benediction and all that can it spoil my happiness? Nothing can spoil it!" He glanced at Kitty and noticed that she was not in the least, not in the very least, disturbed by the idea of the trousseau. "Then it must be all right," he thought.

"Oh, I know nothing about it; I only said what I should like," he said apologetically.

"We'll talk it over, then. The benediction and announcement can take place now. That's very well."

The Princess went up to her husband, kissed him, and would have gone away, but he held her back, embraced her, and tenderly, as a young lover, kissed her several times, smiling. The old people were obviously muddled for a moment, and did not quite know whether it was they who were in love again or their daughter. When the Prince and the Princess had gone, Levin went up to his betrothed and took her hand. He was self−possessed now and could speak, and he had a great deal he wanted to tell her. But he did not say at all what he had to say.

"How I knew it would be so! I never hoped for it; and yet in my heart I was always sure," he said. "I believe that it was ordained."

"And I?" she said. "Even when..." She stopped and went on again, looking at him resolutely with her truthful eyes, "Even when I thrust my happiness from me. I always loved you only, but I was carried away. I ought to tell you... Can you forgive it?"

"Perhaps it was for the best. You will have to forgive me so much. I ought to tell you..."

This was one of the things he had meant to speak about. He had resolved from the first to tell her two things that he was not chaste as she was, and that he was not a believer. It was agonizing, but he considered he ought to tell her both these facts.

"No, not now, later!" he said.

"Very well, later, but you must certainly tell me. I'm not afraid of anything. I want to know everything. Now it is settled."

He added:

"Settled that you'll take me whatever I may be you won't give me up? Yes?"

"Yes, yes."

Their conversation was interrupted by Mademoiselle Linon, who with an affected but tender smile came to congratulate her favorite pupil. Before she had gone, the servants came in with their congratulations. Then relations arrived, and there began that state of blissful absurdity from which Levin did not emerge till the day after his wedding. Levin was in a continual state of awkwardness and discomfort, but the intensity of his happiness went on increasing all the while. He felt continually that a great deal was being expected of him what, he did not know; and he did everything he was told, and it all gave him happiness. He had thought his engagement would have nothing about it like others, that the ordinary conditions of engaged couples would spoil his special happiness; but it ended in his doing exactly as other people did, and his happiness being only increased thereby and becoming more and more special, more and more unlike anything that had ever happened.

"Now we shall have sweetmeats to eat," said Mademoiselle Linon and Levin drove off to buy sweetmeats.

"Well, I'm very glad," said Sviiazhsky. "I advise you to get the bouquets from Fomin's."

"Oh, are they wanted?" And he drove to Fomin's.

His brother recommended lending money to him, as he would have so many expenses, presents to give...

"Oh, are presents wanted?" And he galloped to Foulde's.

And at the confectioner's, and at Fomin's, and at Foulde's he saw that he was expected; that they were pleased to see him, and prided themselves on his happiness, just as everyone did whom he had to do with during those days. What was extraordinary was that everyone not only liked him, but even people previously unsympathetic, cold, and callous, were enthusiastic over him, gave way to him in everything, treated his feelings with tenderness and delicacy, and shared his conviction that he was the happiest man in the world because his betrothed was beyond perfection. Kitty too felt the same thing. When Countess Nordstone ventured to hint that she had hoped for something better, Kitty was so angry and proved so conclusively that nothing in the world could be better than Levin, that Countess Nordstone had to admit it, and in Kitty's presence never met Levin without a smile of ecstatic admiration.

The confession he had promised was the one painful incident of this time. He consulted the old Prince, and with his sanction gave Kitty his diary, in which there was written the confession that tortured him. He had written this diary at the time with a view to his future wife. Two things caused him anguish: his lack of purity and his lack of faith. His confession of unbelief passed unnoticed. She was religious, had never doubted the truths of religion, but his external unbelief did not affect her in the least. Through love she knew all his soul, and in his soul she saw what she wanted, and that such a state of soul should be called unbelieving was to her a matter of no account. The other confession set her weeping bitterly.

Levin, not without an inner struggle, handed her his diary. He knew that between him and her there could not be, and should not be, any secrets, and so he had decided that so it must be. But he had not realized what an effect it would have on her, he had not put himself in her place. It was only when the same evening he came to their house before the theater, went into her room, and saw her tearstained, pitiful, sweet face, miserable with the suffering he had caused and nothing could undo, that he felt the abyss that separated his shameful past from her dovelike purity, and was appalled at what he had done.

"Take them, take these dreadful books!" she said, pushing away the notebooks lying before her on the table. "Why did you give them me? No, it was better anyway," she added, touched by his despairing face. "But it's awful, awful!"

His head sank, and he was silent. He could say nothing.

"You can't forgive me," he whispered.

"Yes, I forgive you; but it's horrible!"

But his happiness was so immense that this confession did not shatter it, it only added another shade to it. She forgave him; but from that time, more than ever, he considered himself unworthy of her, morally bowed down lower than ever before her, and prized more highly than ever his undeserved happiness.

XVII.

Unconsciously going over in his memory the conversations that had taken place during and after dinner, Alexei

Alexandrovich returned to his solitary room. Darya Alexandrovna's words about forgiveness had aroused in him nothing but annoyance. The applicability or nonapplicability of the Christian precept to his own case was too difficult a question to be discussed lightly, and this question had long ago been answered by Alexei Alexandrovich in the negative. Of all that had been said, what stuck most in his memory was the phrase of stupid, good−natured Turovtsin: "Acted like a man, he did! Called him out and shot him!" Everyone had apparently shared this feeling, though from politeness they had not expressed it.

"But the matter is settled; it's useless thinking about it," Alexei Alexandrovich told himself. And thinking of nothing but the journey before him, and the revision work he had to do, he went into his room and asked the porter who escorted him where his man was; the porter said that the man had just gone out. Alexei Alexandrovich ordered tea to be sent him, sat down to the table, and, taking the schedule, began considering the route of his journey.

"Two telegrams," said his valet, coming into the room. "I beg your pardon, Your Excellency; I'd just stepped out this very minute."

Alexei Alexandrovich took the telegrams and opened them. The first telegram was the announcement of Stremov's appointment to the very post Karenin had coveted. Alexei Alexandrovich flung the telegram down, and, flushing, got up and began to pace up and down the room. "Quos vult perdere dementat," he said, meaning by quos the persons responsible for this appointment. He was not so much annoyed at not receiving the post, as at having been so conspicuously passed over; but it was incomprehensible, amazing to him that they did not see that the wordy phrasemonger Stremov was the last man fit for it. How could they fail to see they were ruining themselves, lowering their prestige by this appointment?

"Something else in the same line," he said to himself bitterly, opening the second telegram. The telegram was from his wife. Her name, written in blue pencil, "Anna," was the first thing that caught his eye. "I am dying; I beg, I implore you to come. I shall die easier with your forgiveness," he read. He smiled contemptuously, and flung down the telegram. That this was a trick and a fraud, of that he thought for the first minute there could be no doubt.

"There is no deceit she would stick at. She was near her confinement. Perhaps it is the confinement. But what can be their aim? To legitimize the child, to compromise me, and prevent a divorce," he thought. "But something was said in it: I am dying..." He read the telegram again, and suddenly the plain meaning of what was said in it struck him. "And if it is true?" he said to himself. "If it is true that in the moment of agony and nearness to death she is genuinely penitent, and I, taking it for a trick, refuse to go? That would not only be cruel, and everyone would blame me, but it would be stupid on my part."

"Piotr, call a coach; I am going to Peterburg," he said to his servant.

Alexei Alexandrovich decided that he would go to Peterburg and see his wife. If her illness was a trick, he would say nothing and go away again. If she were really in danger, and wished to see him before her death, he would forgive her if he found her alive, and pay her the last duties if he came too late.

All the way he thought no more of what he ought to do.

With a sense of weariness and uncleanness from the night spent in the train, in the early fog of Peterburg, Alexei Alexandrovich drove through the deserted Nevsky Prospect, and stared straight before him, without thinking of what was awaiting him. He could not think about it, because in picturing what would happen, he could not drive away the reflection that her death would at once remove all the difficulty of his position. Bakers, closed shops, night cabmen, street sweepers sweeping the pavements flashed past his eyes, and he watched it all, trying to smother the thought of what was awaiting him, and what he dared not hope for, and yet was hoping for. He drove

up to the steps. A hackney sleigh, and a coach with its coachman asleep, stood at the entrance. As he went into the entry, Alexei Alexandrovich seemed to get out his resolution from the remotest corner of his brain, and mastered it thoroughly. Its meaning ran: "If it's a trick, then calm contempt and departure. If truth, do what is seemly."

The porter opened the door before Alexei Alexandrovich rang. The porter, Kapitonich, looked queer in an old coat, without a tie, and in slippers.

"How is your mistress?"

"She was confined yesterday, successfully."

Alexei Alexandrovich stopped short and turned white. He felt distinctly now how intensely he had longed for her death.

"And how is she?"

Kornei in his morning apron ran downstairs.

"Very ill," he answered. "There was a consultation yesterday, and the doctor's here now."

"Take my things," said Alexei Alexandrovich, and, feeling some relief at the news that there was still hope of her death, he went into the hall.

On the hatstand there was a military overcoat. Alexei Alexandrovich noticed it and asked:

"Who is here?"

"The doctor, the midwife, and Count Vronsky."

Alexei Alexandrovich went into the inner rooms.

In the drawing room there was no one; at the sound of his steps the midwife came out of Anna's boudoir, in a cap with lilac ribbons.

She went up to Alexei Alexandrovich, and with the familiarity given by the approach of death took him by the arm and drew him toward the bedroom.

"Thank God you've come! She keeps on talking about you, and nothing but you," she said.

"Make haste with the ice!" the doctor's peremptory voice came from the bedroom.

Alexei Alexandrovich went into the boudoir. At her table, sitting sideways in a low chair, was Vronsky, his face hidden in his hands, weeping. He jumped up at the doctor's voice, took his hands from his face, and saw Alexei Alexandrovich. Seeing the husband, he was so overwhelmed that he sat down again, drawing his head into his shoulders, as if he wanted to disappear; but he made an effort over himself, got up and said:

"She is dying. The doctors say there is no hope. I am entirely in your power, only let me be here... though I am at your disposal. I..."

Alexei Alexandrovich, seeing Vronsky's tears, felt a rush of that nervous emotion always produced in him by the sight of other people's sufferings, and, turning away his face, he moved hurriedly to the door, without hearing the

rest of the words. From the bedroom came the sound of Anna's voice saying something. Her voice was lively, animated, with exceedingly distinct intonations. Alexei Alexandrovich went into the bedroom, and walked up to the bed. She was lying with her face turned toward him. Her cheeks were flushed crimson, her eyes glittered, her little white hands thrust out from the cuffs of her dressing gown were playing with the quilt, twisting it about. It seemed as though she were not only well and blooming, but in the happiest frame of mind. She was talking rapidly, musically, and with exceptionally correct articulation and expressive intonation.

"Because Alexei I am speaking of Alexei Alexandrovich (what a strange and awful thing that both are Alexeis, isn't it?) Alexei would not refuse me. I should forget, he would forgive... But why doesn't he come? He's so good, he doesn't know himself how good he is. Ah, my God, what pangs! Give me some water, quick! Oh, that will be bad for her my little girl! Oh, very well then, give her to a nurse. Yes, I agree, it's better in fact. He'll be coming; it will hurt him to see her. Give her to the nurse."

"Anna Arkadyevna, he has come. Here he is!" said the midwife, trying to attract her attention to Alexei Alexandrovich.

"Oh, what nonsense!" Anna went on, not seeing her husband. "No, give her to me; give me my little one! He has not come yet. You say he won't forgive me, because you don't know him. No one knows him. I'm the only one, and it was hard for me even. I ought to know his eyes Seriozha has just such eyes and I can't bear to see them because of it. Has Seriozha had his dinner? I know everyone will forget to do it. He would not forget. Seriozha must be moved into the corner room, and Mariette must be asked to sleep with him."

All of a sudden she shrank back, and was silent; and in terror, as though expecting a blow, as though to defend herself, she raised her hands to her face. She had seen her husband.

"No, no!" she began. "I am not afraid of him; I am afraid of death. Alexei, come here. I am in a hurry, because I've no time, I haven't long left to live; the fever will begin directly and I shall understand nothing more. Now I understand, I understand it all I see it all!"

Alexei Alexandrovich's wrinkled face wore an expression of suffering; he took her by the hand and tried to say something, but he could not utter it; his lower lip quivered, but he still went on struggling with his emotion, and only now and then glanced at her. And each time he glanced at her, he saw her eyes gazing at him with such passionate and exultant tenderness as he had never yet seen in them.

"Wait a minute, you don't know... Stay a little, stay!..." She stopped, as though collecting her ideas. "Yes," she began, "yes, yes, yes! This is what I wanted to say. Don't be surprised at me. I'm still the same... But there is another woman in me I'm afraid of her: she loved that man, and I tried to hate you, and could not forget about her that used to be. That woman isn't myself. Now I'm my real self. I'm dying now, I know I shall die ask him. Even now I feel see here, the weights on my feet, on my hands, on my fingers. My fingers see how huge they are! But this will soon be all over... Only one thing I want: forgive me, forgive me quite. I'm terrible, but my nurse would tell me the holy martyr what was her name? She was worse. And I'll go to Rome; there's a wilderness, and there I shall be no trouble to anyone, only I'll take Seriozha and the little one.... No, you can't forgive me! I know, it can't be forgiven! No, no, go away, you're too good!" She held his hand in one burning hand, while she pushed him away with the other.

The nervous agitation of Alexei Alexandrovich kept increasing, and had by now reached such a point that he ceased to struggle with it. He suddenly felt that what he had regarded as nervous agitation was on the contrary a blissful spiritual condition that gave him all at once a new happiness he had never known. He did not think that the Christian law, which he had been all his life trying to follow, enjoined on him to forgive and love his enemies; but a joyous feeling of love and forgiveness for his enemies filled his heart. He knelt down, and laying his head in the curve of her arm, which burned him as with fire through the sleeve, he sobbed like a little child. She put her

arm around his head, which was beginning to grow bald, moved toward him, and with defiant pride lifted up her eyes.

"That is he. I knew him! Now, good−by, everyone, good−by!... They've come again; why don't they go away?... Oh, take these fur coats off me!"

The doctor unloosed her hands, carefully laying her on the pillow, and covered her up to the shoulders. She lay back submissively, and looked before her with beaming eyes.

"Remember one thing, that I needed nothing but forgiveness, and I want nothing more.... Why doesn't he come?" she said, turning to the door, toward Vronsky. "Do come, do come! Give him your hand."

Vronsky came to the side of the bed, and seeing Anna, again hid his face in his hands.

"Uncover your face look at him! He's a saint," she said. "Oh! uncover your face, do uncover it!" she said angrily. "Alexei Alexandrovich, do uncover his face! I want to see him."

Alexei Alexandrovich took Vronsky's hands and drew them away from his face, which was awful with the expression of agony and shame upon it.

"Give him your hand. Forgive him."

Alexei Alexandrovich gave him his hand, not attempting to restrain the tears that streamed from his eyes.

"Thank God, thank God!" she said, "now everything is ready. Only to stretch my legs a little. There, that's capital. How badly these flowers are done not a bit like a violet," she said, pointing to the hangings. "My God, my God! when will it end? Give me some morphine. Doctor, give me some morphine! Oh, my God, my God!"

And she tossed about on the bed.

The doctors said that it was puerperal fever, and that ninety−nine chances in a hundred it would end in death. The whole day long there was fever, delirium, and unconsciousness. At midnight the patient lay without consciousness, and almost without pulse.

The end was expected every minute.

Vronsky had gone home, but in the morning he came to inquire, and Alexei Alexandrovich, meeting him in the hall, said: "Better stay, she might ask for you," and himself led him to his wife's boudoir. Toward morning there was a return again of excitement, rapid thought and talk, and again it ended in unconsciousness. On the third day it was the same thing, and the doctors said there was hope. That day Alexei Alexandrovich went into the boudoir where Vronsky was sitting, and, closing the door, sat down opposite him.

"Alexei Alexandrovich," said Vronsky, feeling that a statement of the situation was coming, "I can't speak, I can't understand. Spare me! However hard it is for you, believe me, it is more terrible for me."

He would have risen; but Alexei Alexandrovich took him by the hand and said:

"I beg you to hear me out; it is necessary. I must explain my feelings, the feelings that have guided me, and will guide me, so that you may not be in error regarding me. You know I had resolved on a divorce, and had even begun to take proceedings. I won't conceal from you that in beginning this I was in uncertainty, I was in misery; I will confess that I was pursued by a desire to revenge myself on you and on her. When I got the telegram, I came

here with the same feelings; I will say more I longed for her death. But..." He paused, pondering whether to disclose or not to disclose his feelings. "But I saw her and forgave her. And the happiness of forgiveness has revealed to me my duty. I forgive completely. I would offer the other cheek, I would give my cloak if my coat be taken. I pray to God only not to take from me the bliss of forgiveness!"

Tears stood in his eyes, and the luminous, serene look in them impressed Vronsky.

"This is my position: you can trample me in the mud, make me the laughingstock of the world I will not abandon her, and I will never utter a word of reproach to you," Alexei Alexandrovich went on. "My duty is clearly marked for me; I ought to be with her, and I will be. If she wishes to see you, I will let you know, but now I suppose it would be better for you to go away."

He got up, and sobs cut short his words. Vronsky too was getting up, and in a stooping, not yet erect posture, looked up at him from under his brows. He did not understand Alexei Alexandrovich's feeling, but he felt that it was something higher, and even unattainable for him with his view of life.

XVIII.

After the conversation with Alexei Alexandrovich, Vronsky went out on the steps of the Karenins' house and stood still, with difficulty remembering where he was, and where he ought to walk or drive. He felt disgraced, humiliated, guilty, and deprived of all possibility of washing away his humiliation. He felt thrust out of the beaten track along which he had so proudly and lightly walked till then. All the habits and rules of his life that had seemed so firm, had turned out suddenly false and inapplicable. The betrayed husband, who had figured till that time as a pitiful creature, an incidental and somewhat ludicrous obstacle to his happiness, had suddenly been summoned by her herself, elevated to an awe−inspiring pinnacle, and on the pinnacle that husband had shown himself not malignant, not false, not ludicrous but kind and straightforward and grand. Vronsky could not but feel this, and the roles were suddenly reversed. Vronsky felt the other's elevation and his own abasement, the other's truth and his own falsehood. He felt that the husband was magnanimous even in his sorrow, while he had been base and petty in his deceit. But this sense of his own humiliation before the man he had unjustly despised made up only a small part of his misery. He felt unutterably wretched now, for his passion for Anna, which had seemed to him of late to be growing cooler, now that he knew he had lost her forever, was stronger than ever it had been. He had seen all of her in her illness, had come to know her very soul, and it seemed to him that he had never loved her till then. And now, when he had learned to know her, to love her as she should be loved, he had been humiliated before her, and had lost her forever, leaving with her nothing of himself but a shameful memory. Most terrible of all had been his ludicrous, shameful position when Alexei Alexandrovich had pulled his hands away from his humiliated face. He stood on the steps of the Karenins' house like one distraught, and did not know what to do.

"A hack, sir?" asked the porter.

"Yes a hack."

On getting home, after three sleepless nights, Vronsky, without undressing, lay prone on the sofa, clasping his hands and laying his head on them. His head was heavy. Images, memories, and ideas of the strangest description followed one another with extraordinary rapidity and vividness. First it was the medicine he had poured out for the patient and spilled out of the spoon; then the midwife's white hands; then the queer posture of Alexei Alexandrovich on the floor beside the bed.

"To sleep! To forget!" he said to himself with the serene confidence of a healthy man that if he is tired and sleepy, he will go to sleep at once. And the same instant his head did begin to feel drowsy and he began to drop off into

forgetfulness. The waves of the sea of unconsciousness had begun to meet over his head, when all at once it seemed as though a violent shock of electricity had passed over him. He started so that he leaped up on the springs of the sofa, and leaning on his arms got on his knees in a fright. His eyes were wide open as though he had never been asleep. The heaviness in his head and the flabbiness in his limbs that he had felt a minute before had suddenly gone.

"You may trample me in the mud," he heard Alexei Alexandrovich's words and saw him standing before him, and saw Anna's face with its burning flush and glittering eyes, gazing with love and tenderness not at him but at Alexei Alexandrovich; he saw his own, as he fancied, foolish and ludicrous figure when Alexei Alexandrovich had taken his hands away from his face. He stretched out his legs again and flung himself on the sofa in the same position and shut his eyes.

"To sleep! To sleep!" he repeated to himself. But with his eyes shut he saw more distinctly than ever Anna's face as it had been on the memorable evening before the races.

"This cannot, and will not be, and she wants to wipe it out of her memory. But I cannot live without it. How can we be reconciled? How can we be reconciled?" he said aloud, and unconsciously began to repeat these words. This repetition of words checked the rising of fresh images and memories, which he felt were thronging in his brain. But repeating words did not check his imagination for long. Again, in extraordinarily rapid succession, his best moments rose before his mind, and then his recent humiliation. "Take away his hands," Anna's voice was saying. He takes away his hands and feels the shame−struck and idiotic expression of his face.

He was still lying down, trying to sleep, though he felt there was not the smallest hope of it, and kept repeating stray words from some chain of thought, trying by this to check the rising flood of fresh images. He listened, and heard words repeated in a strange, mad whisper: "You did not appreciate it, did not make enough of it. You did not appreciate it, did not make enough of it."

"What's this? Am I going out of my mind?" he said to himself "Perhaps. What makes men go out of their minds what makes men shoot themselves?" he answered himself, and, opening his eyes, he saw with wonder an embroidered cushion beside him, worked by Varia, his brother's wife. He touched the tassel of the cushion, and tried to think of Varia, of when he had seen her last. But to think of anything extraneous was an agonizing effort. "No, I must sleep!" He moved the cushion up, and pressed his head into it, but he had to make an effort to keep his eyes shut. He jumped up and sat down. "That's all over for me," he said to himself. "I must think what to do. What is left?" His mind rapidly ran through his life apart from his love of Anna.

"Ambition? Serpukhovskoy? Society? The Court?" He could not come to a pause anywhere. All of it had had meaning before, but now there was no reality in it. He got up from the sofa, took off his coat, undid his belt, and, uncovering his hairy chest to breathe more freely, walked up and down the room. "This is how people go mad," he repeated, "and how they shoot themselves... to escape humiliation," he added slowly.

He went to the door and closed it, and then with fixed eyes and clenched teeth he went up to the table, took a revolver, looked it about, turned it to a loaded barrel, and sank into thought. For two minutes, his head bent forward with an expression of an intense effort of thought, he stood with the revolver in his hand, motionless, thinking. "Of course," he said to himself, as though a logical, continuous, and clear chain of reasoning had brought him to an indubitable conclusion. In reality this "of course," so convincing to him, was simply the result of repeating exactly the same circle of memories and images through which he had already passed ten times during the last hour. There were the same memories of happiness lost forever, the same conception of the senselessness of everything to come in life, the same consciousness of humiliation. There was the same sequence of these images and emotions too.

"Of course," he repeated, when for the third time his thought passed again round the same spellbound circle of memories and images, and, putting the revolver to the left side of his chest, and twitching vigorously with his whole hand, as though squeezing it in his fist, he pulled the trigger. He did not hear the sound of the shot, but a violent blow on his chest knocked him down. He tried to clutch at the edge of the table, dropped the revolver, staggered, and sat down on the ground, looking about him in astonishment. He did not recognize his room, as he looked up from the ground at the bent legs of the table, at the wastepaper basket, and the tigerskin rug. The hurried, creaking steps of his servant coming through the drawing room brought him to his senses. He made an effort at thought, and was aware that he was on the floor; and seeing blood on the tigerskin rug and on his arm, he knew he had shot himself.

"Idiotic! Missed!" he said, fumbling after the revolver. The revolver was close beside him he was groping farther off. Still groping for it, he stretched out to the other side, and not being strong enough to keep his balance, fell over, streaming with blood.

The elegant, whiskered manservant, who used to be continually complaining to his acquaintances of the delicacy of his nerves, was so panic−stricken on seeing his master lying on the floor that he left him losing blood while he ran for assistance. An hour later Varia, his brother's wife, had arrived, and with the assistance of three doctors, whom she had sent for in all directions, and who all appeared at the same moment, she got the wounded man to bed, and remained to nurse him.

XIX.

The mistake made by Alexei Alexandrovich, when preparing to see his wife, in having overlooked the possibility that her repentance might be sincere, and that he might forgive her, and she might not die this mistake was two months after his return from Moscow brought home to him in all its significance. But the mistake made by him had arisen not simply from his having overlooked that contingency, but also from the fact that, until the day of his interview with his dying wife, he had not known his own heart. At his sick wife's bedside he had for the first time in his life given way to that feeling of sympathetic suffering always roused in him by the sufferings of others, and hitherto looked on by him with shame as a harmful weakness. And pity for her, and remorse for having desired her death, and, most of all, the joy of forgiveness, made him at once conscious, not simply of the relief of his own sufferings, but of a spiritual peace he had never experienced before. He suddenly felt that the very thing that was the source of his sufferings had become the source of his spiritual joy; that what had seemed insolvable while he was judging, blaming, and hating, had become clear and simple when he forgave and loved.

He forgave his wife and pitied her for her sufferings and her remorse. He forgave Vronsky, and pitied him, especially after reports reached him of his despairing action. He felt more for his son than before. And he blamed himself now for having taken too little interest in him. But for the little newborn baby he felt a quite peculiar sentiment, not of pity only, but of tenderness. At first, from a feeling of compassion alone, he had been interested in the delicate little creature, who was not his child, and who was neglected during her mother's illness, and would certainly have died if he had not troubled about her; and he did not himself observe how fond he became of her. He would go into the nursery several times a day, and sit there for a long while, so that the nurse and wet nurses, who were at first afraid of him, got quite used to his presence. Sometimes, for half an hour at a stretch, he would sit silently gazing at the saffron−red, downy, wrinkled face of the sleeping baby, watching the movements of the frowning brows, and the plump little hands with clenched fingers, that rubbed the little eyes and bridge of the nose with the back of their palms. At such moments particularly Alexei Alexandrovich had a sense of perfect peace and inward harmony, and saw nothing extraordinary in his position, nothing that ought to be changed.

But, as time went on, he saw more and more distinctly that however natural the position now seemed to him, he would not long be allowed to remain in it. He felt that besides the blessed spiritual force controlling his soul, there was another, a brutal force, as powerful, or more powerful, which controlled his life, and that this force would not

allow him that humble peace he longed for. He felt that everyone was looking at him with inquiring wonder, that he was not understood, and that something was expected of him. Above all, he felt the instability and unnaturalness of his relations with his wife.

When the softening effect of the near approach of death had passed away, Alexei Alexandrovich began to notice that Anna was afraid of him, ill at ease with him, and could not look him straight in the face. She seemed to be wanting, yet not daring, to tell him something; and, as though foreseeing that their present relations could not continue, she seemed to be expecting something from him.

Toward the end of February Anna's baby daughter, who had also been named Anna, happened to fall ill. Alexei Alexandrovich was in the nursery in the morning, and leaving orders for the doctor to be sent for, he went to his office. On finishing his work, he returned home at four. Going into the hall he saw a handsome footman, in a gallooned livery and a bear−fur cape, holding a white fur cloak.

"Who is here?" asked Alexei Alexandrovich.

"Princess Elizaveta Fiodorovna Tverskaia," the footman answered, and it seemed to Alexei Alexandrovich that the fellow grinned.

During all this difficult time Alexei Alexandrovich had noticed that his worldly acquaintances, especially women, took a peculiar interest in him and his wife. He observed all these acquaintances with difficulty concealing their mirth at something the same mirth that he had perceived in the lawyer's eyes, and, just now, in the eyes of this footman. Everyone seemed, somehow, hugely delighted, as though just come from a wedding. When they met him, they inquired with ill−disguised enjoyment after his wife's health.

The presence of Princess Tverskaia was unpleasant to Alexei Alexandrovich from the memories associated with her, and also because he disliked her, and he went straight to the nursery. In the day nursery Seriozha, leaning on the table with his legs on a chair, was drawing and chatting away merrily. The English governess, who had during Anna's illness replaced the French one, was sitting near the boy, knitting mignardise. She hurriedly got up, curtsied, and pulled Seriozha.

Alexei Alexandrovich stroked his son's hair, answered the governess's inquiries about his wife, and asked what the doctor had said of the baby.

"The doctor said it was nothing serious, and he ordered a bath, sir."

"But she is still in pain," said Alexei Alexandrovich, listening to the baby's screaming in the next room.

"I think it's the wet nurse, sir," the Englishwoman said firmly.

"What makes you think so?" he asked, stopping short.

"It's just as it was at Countess Paul's, sir. They gave the baby medicine, and it turned out that the baby was simply hungry: the wet nurse had no milk, sir."

Alexei Alexandrovich pondered, and after standing still a few seconds he went in at the other door. The baby was lying with its head thrown back, stiffening itself in the nurse's arms, and would not take the plump breast offered it; and it never ceased screaming in spite of the double hushing of the wet nurse and the other nurse, who was bending over her.

"Still no better?" said Alexei Alexandrovich.

"She's very restless," answered the nurse in a whisper.

"Miss Edwards says that perhaps the wet nurse has no milk," he said.

"I think so too, Alexei Alexandrovich."

"Then why didn't you say so?"

"Who's one to say it to? Anna Arkadyevna is still ill..." said the nurse discontentedly.

The nurse was an old servant of the family. And in her simple words there seemed to Alexei Alexandrovich an allusion to his position.

The baby screamed louder than ever, struggling and choking. The nurse, with a gesture of despair, went to it, took it from the wet nurse's arms, and began walking up and down, rocking it.

"You must ask the doctor to examine the wet nurse," said Alexei Alexandrovich.

The smartly dressed and healthy−looking nurse, frightened at the idea of losing her place, muttered something to herself, and, covering her bosom, smiled contemptuously at the idea of doubts being cast on her abundance of milk. In that smile, too, Alexei Alexandrovich saw a sneer at his position.

"Luckless child," said the nurse, hushing the baby, and still walking up and down with it.

Alexei Alexandrovich sat down, and with a despondent and suffering face watched the nurse walking to and fro.

When the child at last was still, and had been put in a deep bed, and the nurse, after smoothing the little pillow, had left her, Alexei Alexandrovich got up, and, walking awkwardly on tiptoe, approached the baby. For a minute he was still, and with the same despondent face gazed at the baby; but all at once a smile that moved his hair and the skin of his forehead, came out on his face, and he went as softly out of the room.

In the dining room he rang the bell, and told the servant who came in to send again for the doctor. He felt vexed with his wife for not being anxious about this charming baby, and in this vexed humor he had no wish to go to her; he had no wish, either, to see Princess Betsy. But his wife might wonder why he did not go to her as usual; and so, overcoming his disinclination, he went toward her bedroom. As he walked over the soft rug toward the door, he could not help overhearing a conversation he did not want to hear.

"If he hadn't been going away, I could have understood your refusal and his too. But your husband ought to be above that," Betsy was saying.

"It's not for my husband it's for myself I don't wish it. Don't say that!" answered Anna's excited voice.

"Yes, but you must care to say good−by to a man who has shot himself on your account...."

"That's just why I don't want to."

With a dismayed and guilty expression, Alexei Alexandrovich stopped and would have gone back unobserved. But reflecting that this would be undignified, he turned back again, and, clearing his throat, he approached the bedroom. The voices were silent, and he went in.

Anna, in a gray dressing gown, with a crop of short clustering black curls on her round head, was sitting on a settee. The animation died out of her face, as it always did, at the sight of her husband; she dropped her head and looked round uneasily at Betsy. Betsy, dressed in the height of the latest fashion, in a hat that towered over her head like a shade on a lamp, in a dove−colored dress with crude oblique stripes, slanting one way on the bodice and the other way on the skirt, was sitting beside Anna, her tall flat figure held erect. Bowing her head, she greeted Alexei Alexandrovich with an ironical smile.

"Ah!" she said, as though surprised. "I'm very glad you're at home. You never put in an appearance anywhere, and I haven't seen you ever since Anna has been ill. I have heard all about it your anxiety. Yes, you're a wonderful husband!" she said, with a significant and affable air, as though she were bestowing an order of magnanimity on him for his conduct toward his wife.

Alexei Alexandrovich bowed frigidly, and, kissing his wife's hand, asked how she was.

"Better, I think," she said, avoiding his eyes.

"But you've rather a feverish complexion," he said, laying stress on the word "feverish."

"We've been talking too much," said Betsy. "I feel it's selfishness on my part, and I am going away."

She got up, but Anna, suddenly flushing, quickly caught at her hand.

"No, wait a minute, please. I must tell you... no, I mean you," she turned to Alexei Alexandrovich, and her neck and brow were suffused with crimson. "I won't and can't keep anything secret from you," she said.

Alexei Alexandrovich cracked his fingers and bowed his head.

"Betsy's been telling me that Count Vronsky wants to come here to say good−by before his departure for Tashkend." She did not look at her husband, and was evidently in haste to have everything out, however hard it might be for her. "I told her I could not receive him."

"You said, my dear, that it would depend on Alexei Alexandrovich," Betsy corrected her.

"Oh, no, I can't receive him; and what object would there be in..." She stopped suddenly, and glanced inquiringly at her husband (he did not look at her). "In short, I don't wish it...."

Alexei Alexandrovich advanced and would have taken her hand.

Her first impulse was to jerk back her hand from the damp hand with big swollen veins that sought hers, but with an obvious effort to control herself she pressed his hand.

"I am very grateful to you for your confidence, but..." he said, feeling with confusion and annoyance that what he could decide easily and clearly by himself, he could not discuss before Princess Tverskaia, who to him stood for the incarnation of that brute force which would inevitably control him in the life he led in the eyes of the world, and hinder him from giving way to his feeling of love and forgiveness. He stopped short, looking at Princess Tverskaia.

"Well, good−by, my darling," said Betsy, getting up. She kissed Anna, and went out. Alexei Alexandrovich escorted her out.

"Alexei Alexandrovich! I know you are a truly magnanimous man," said Betsy, stopping in the little drawing room, and with special warmth shaking hands with him once more. "I am an outsider, but I love her so, and respect you, that I venture to advise. Receive him. Alexei Vronsky is the soul of honor, and he is going away to Tashkend."

"Thank you, Princess, for your sympathy and advice. But the question of whether my wife can or cannot see anyone she must decide herself."

He said this from habit, lifting his brows with dignity, and reflected immediately that whatever his words might be, there could be no dignity in his position. And he saw this by the suppressed, malicious, and ironical smile with which Betsy glanced at him after this phrase.

XX.

Alexei Alexandrovich took leave of Betsy in the drawing room, and went to his wife. She was lying down, but hearing his steps she sat up hastily in her former attitude, and looked in a scared way at him. He saw she had been crying.

"I am very grateful for your confidence in me." He repeated gently in Russian the phrase he had said in Betsy's presence in French, and sat down beside her. When he spoke to her in Russian, using the Russian "thou" of intimacy and affection, it was insufferably irritating to Anna. "And I am very grateful for your decision. I, too, imagine that since he is going away, there is no sort of necessity for Count Vronsky to come here. However, if..."

"But I've said so already, so why repeat it?" Anna suddenly interrupted him, with an irritation she could not succeed in repressing. "No sort of necessity," she thought, "for a man to come and say good−by to the woman he loves, for whom he was ready to ruin himself, and has ruined himself, and who cannot live without him. No sort of necessity!" She compressed her lips, and dropped her burning eyes to his hands with their swollen veins. They were slowly rubbing each other. "Let us never speak of it," she added more calmly.

"I have left this question to you to decide, and I am very glad to see..." Alexei Alexandrovich was beginning.

"That my wish coincides with your own," she finished quickly, exasperated at his talking so slowly while she knew beforehand all he would say.

"Yes," he assented; "and Princess Tverskaia's interference in the most difficult private affairs is utterly uncalled for. She especially..."

"I don't believe a word of what's said about her," said Anna quickly. "I know she really cares for me."

Alexei Alexandrovich sighed and said nothing. She played nervously with the tassel of her dressing gown, glancing at him with that torturing sensation of physical repulsion for which she blamed herself, though she could not control it. Her only desire now was to be rid of his repelling presence.

"I have just sent for the doctor," said Alexei Alexandrovich.

"I am very well; what do I want the doctor for?"

"No the little one cries, and they say the wet nurse hasn't enough milk."

"Why didn't you let me nurse her, when I begged to? Anyway" (Alexei Alexandrovich knew what was meant by

that "anyway"), "she's a baby, and they're killing her." She rang the bell and ordered the baby to be brought her. "I begged to nurse her, I wasn't allowed to, and now I'm blamed for it."

"I don't blame..."

"Yes, you do blame me! My God! Why didn't I die!" And she broke into sobs. "Forgive me, I'm nervous, I'm unjust," she said, controlling herself, "but do go away..."

"No, it can't go on like this," Alexei Alexandrovich said to himself resolutely as he left his wife's room.

Never had the impossibility of his position in the world's eyes, and his wife's hatred of him, and, above all, the might of that mysterious brutal force that guided his life against his spiritual inclinations and exacted conformity with its decrees and a change in his present attitude to his wife never had it been presented to him with such distinctness as on that day. He saw clearly that all the world and Anna expected something of him, but what exactly he could not make out. He felt that this was rousing in his soul a feeling of anger destructive of his peace of mind, and of all the good of his achievement. He believed that for Anna herself it would be better to break off all relations with Vronsky; but if they all thought this out of the question, he was even ready to allow these relations to be renewed, so long as the children were not disgraced, and he was not deprived of them nor forced to change his position. Bad as this might be, it was at any rate better than a rupture, which would put her in a hopeless and shameful position, and deprive him of everything he cared for. But he felt helpless; he knew beforehand that everyone was against him, and that he would not be allowed to do what seemed to him now so natural and right, but would be forced to do what was wrong, though to them it seemed the proper thing.

XXI.

Before Betsy had time to walk out of the drawing room, she was met in the doorway by Stepan Arkadyevich, who had just come from Ielisseev's, where a consignment of fresh oysters had been received.

"Ah! Princess! What a delightful meeting!" he began. "I've been to see you."

"A meeting for one minute, for I'm going," said Betsy, smiling and putting on her glove.

"Don't put on your glove yet, Princess; let me kiss your hand. There's nothing I'm so thankful to the revival of the old fashions for as kissing the hand." He kissed Betsy's hand. "When shall we see each other?"

"You don't deserve it," answered Betsy, smiling.

"Oh, yes, I deserve a great deal, for I've become a most serious person. I not only manage my own domestic affairs, but other people's too," he said, with a significant expression.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" answered Betsy, at once understanding that he was speaking of Anna. And, going back into the drawing room, they stood in a corner. "He's killing her," said Betsy in a whisper full of meaning. "It's impossible, impossible..."

"I'm so glad you think so," said Stepan Arkadyevich, shaking his head with a serious and sympathetically distressed expression, "that's what I've come to Peterburg for."

"The whole town's talking of it," she said. "It's an impossible situation. She pines and pines away. He doesn't understand that she's one of those women who can't trifle with their feelings. One of two things: either let him take her away, act with energy, or give her a divorce. This is stifling her."

"Yes, yes... just so..." Oblonsky said, sighing.

"That's what I've come for. At least not solely for that... I've been made a Kammerherr; of course, one has to give thanks. But the chief thing was having to settle this."

"Well, God help you!" said Betsy.

After accompanying Betsy to the outside hall, once more kissing her hand above the glove, at the point where the pulse beats, and murmuring to her such unseemly nonsense that she did not know whether to laugh or to be angry, Stepan Arkadyevich went to his sister. He found her in tears.

Although he happened to be bubbling over with good spirits, Stepan Arkadyevich immediately and quite naturally fell into the sympathetic, poetically emotional tone which harmonized with her mood. He asked her how she was, and how she had spent the morning.

"Very, very miserably. Today, and this morning, and all past days, and all the days to come," she said.

"I think you're giving way to pessimism. You must rouse yourself, you must look life in the face. I know it's hard, but..."

"I have heard it said that women love men even for their vices," Anna began suddenly, "but I hate him for his virtues. I can't live with him. Do you understand? The sight of him has a physical effect in me I am beside myself from it. I can't, I can't live with him. What am I to do? I have been unhappy, and used to think one couldn't be unhappier, but the awful state of things I am going through now I could never have conceived. Would you believe it, that, knowing he's a good man, a splendid man, that I'm not worth his little finger, I still hate him. I hate him for his generosity. And there's nothing left for me but..."

She would have said "death," but Stepan Arkadyevich would not let her finish.

"You are ill and overwrought," he said; "believe me, you're exaggerating dreadfully. There's nothing so terrible in it."

And Stepan Arkadyevich smiled. No one else in Stepan Arkadyevich's place, having to do with such despair, would have ventured to smile (the smile would have seemed brutal); but in his smile there was so much of sweetness and almost feminine tenderness that his smile did not wound, but softened and soothed. His gentle, soothing words and smiles were as soothing and softening as almond oil. And Anna soon felt this.

"No, Stiva," she said, "I'm lost, lost! Worse than lost! I can't say yet that all is over; on the contrary, I feel that it's not over. I'm an overstrained cord that must snap. But it's not ended yet... And it will have a fearful end."

"No matter, we must let the cord be loosened, little by little. There's no position from which there is no way of escape."

"I have thought, and thought. Only one..."

Again he knew from her terrified eyes that this one way of escape in her thought was death, and he would not let her say it.

"Not at all," he said. "Listen to me. You can't see your own position as I can. Let me tell you candidly my opinion." Again he smiled discreetly his almond−oil smile. "I'll begin from the beginning. You married a man twenty years older than yourself. You married him without love and not knowing what love was. It was a mistake,

let's admit."

"A fearful mistake!" said Anna.

"But, I repeat, it's an accomplished fact. Then you had, let us say, the misfortune to love a man not your husband. That was a misfortune; but that, too, is an accomplished fact. And your husband knew it and forgave it." He stopped at each sentence, waiting for her to object, but she made no answer. "That's that. Now the question is: Can you go on living with your husband? Do you wish it? Does he wish it?"

"I know nothing, nothing."

"But you said yourself that you can't endure him."

"No, I didn't say so. I deny it. I don't know anything, I don't understand anything."

"Yes, but let..."

"You can't understand. I feel I'm lying head downward in a sort of pit, but I ought not to save myself. And I can't..."

"Never mind, we'll slip something under you and pull you out. I understand you: I understand that you can't take it on yourself to express your wishes, your feelings."

"There's nothing, nothing I wish... except for it to be all over."

"But he sees this and knows it. And do you suppose it weighs on him any less than on you? You're wretched, he's wretched, and what good can come of it? While divorce would solve the whole difficulty." With some effort Stepan Arkadyevich brought out his central idea, and looked significantly at her.

She said nothing, and shook her cropped head in dissent. But from the look in her face, that suddenly brightened into its former beauty, he saw that if she did not desire this, it was simply because it seemed to her an unattainable happiness.

"I'm awfully sorry for you both! And how happy I should be if I could arrange things!" said Stepan Arkadyevich, smiling more boldly. "Don't speak, don't say a word! God grant only that I may speak as I feel. I'm going to him."

Anna looked at him with dreamy, shining eyes, and said nothing.

XXII.

Stepan Arkadyevich, with the same somewhat solemn expression with which he used to take his presidential chair at his board, walked into Alexei Alexandrovich's room. Alexei Alexandrovich was walking about his room with his hands behind his back, thinking of just what Stepan Arkadyevich had been discussing with his wife.

"I'm not interrupting you?" said Stepan Arkadyevich, on the sight of his brother−in−law becoming suddenly aware of a sense of embarrassment unusual with him. To conceal this embarrassment he took out a newly purchased cigarette case that opened in a new way, and, sniffing the leather, took a cigarette out of it.

"No. Do you want anything?" Alexei Alexandrovich said reluctantly.

"Yes, I wished... I wanted... Yes, I wanted to talk to you," said Stepan Arkadyevich, with surprise aware of an unaccustomed timidity.

This feeling was so unexpected and so strange that he did not believe it was the voice of conscience telling him that what he meant to do was wrong. Stepan Arkadyevich made an effort and struggled with the timidity that had come over him.

"I hope you believe in my love for my sister and my sincere affection and respect for you," he said, reddening.

Alexei Alexandrovich stood still and said nothing, but his face struck Stepan Arkadyevich by its expression of an unresisting sacrifice.

"I intended... I wanted to have a little talk with you about my sister and your mutual position," he said, still struggling with an unaccustomed constraint.

Alexei Alexandrovich smiled mournfully, looked at his brother−in−law, and, without answering, went up to the table, took from it an unfinished letter, and handed it to his brother−in−law.

"I think unceasingly of the same thing. And here is what I had begun writing, thinking I could say it better by letter, and that my presence irritates her," he said, as he gave him the letter.

Stepan Arkadyevich took the letter, looked with incredulous surprise at the lusterless eyes fixed so immovably on him, and began to read:

"I see that my presence is irksome to you. Painful as it is to me to believe it, I see that it is so, and cannot be otherwise. I don't blame you, and God is my witness that on seeing you at the time of your illness I resolved with my whole heart to forget all that had passed between us, and to begin a new life. I do not regret, and shall never regret, what I have done; but I have desired one thing your good, the good of your soul and now I see I have not attained that. Tell me yourself what will give you true happiness and peace to your soul. I put myself entirely in your hands, and trust to your feeling of what is right."

Stepan Arkadyevich handed back the letter, and, with the same surprise, continued looking at his brother−in−law, not knowing what to say. This silence was so awkward for both of them that Stepan Arkadyevich's lips began twitching nervously, while he still gazed without speaking at Karenin's face.

"That's what I wanted to say to her," said Alexei Alexandrovich, turning away.

"Yes, yes..." said Stepan Arkadyevich, not able to answer for the tears that were choking him. "Yes, yes, I understand you," he brought out at last.

"I want to know what she would like," said Alexei Alexandrovich.

"I am afraid she does not understand her own position. She is not a judge," said Stepan Arkadyevich, recovering himself. "She is crushed, simply crushed by your generosity. If she were to read this letter, she would be incapable of saying anything she would only hang her head lower than ever."

"Yes, but what's to be done in that case? How explain... how find out her wishes?"

"If you will allow me to give my opinion, I think that it lies with you to point out directly the steps you consider necessary to end the situation."

"So you consider it must be ended?" Alexei Alexandrovich interrupted him. "But how?" he added, with a gesture of his hands before his eyes, not usual with him. "I see no possible way out of it."

"There is some way of getting out of every situation," said Stepan Arkadyevich, standing up and becoming more cheerful. "There was a time when you thought of breaking off... If you are convinced now that you cannot make each other happy..."

"Happiness may be variously understood. But suppose that I agree to everything, that I want nothing: what way is there of getting out of our situation?"

"If you care to know my opinion," said Stepan Arkadyevich, with the same smile of softening, almond−oil tenderness with which he had been talking to Anna. His kindly smile was so winning that Alexei Alexandrovich, feeling his own weakness and unconsciously swayed by it, was ready to believe what Stepan Arkadyevich was saying. "She will never speak out about it. But one thing is possible, one thing she might desire," he went on; "that is the cessation of your relations, and all memories associated with them. To my thinking, in your situation the essential thing is the formation of a new attitude to one another. And that can only rest on a basis of freedom on both sides."

"Divorce," Alexei Alexandrovich interrupted, in a tone of aversion.

"Yes, I imagine that divorce... Yes, divorce," Stepan Arkadyevich repeated, reddening. "That is from every point of view the most rational course for married people who find themselves in the situation you are in. What can be done if married people find that life is impossible for them together? That may always happen."

Alexei Alexandrovich sighed heavily and closed his eyes.

"There's only one point to be considered: is either of the parties desirous of forming new ties? If not, it is very simple," said Stepan Arkadyevich, feeling more and more free from constraint.

Alexei Alexandrovich, scowling with emotion, muttered something to himself, and made no answer. All that seemed so simple to Stepan Arkadyevich, Alexei Alexandrovich had thought over thousands of times. And, so far from being simple, it all seemed to him utterly impossible: divorce, the details of which he knew by this time, seemed to him now out of the question, because the sense of his own dignity and respect for religion forbade his taking upon himself a fictitious charge of adultery, and still more, suffering his wife, pardoned and beloved by him, to be caught in the fact and put to public shame. Divorce appeared to him impossible also on other, still more weighty grounds.

What would become of his son in case of a divorce? To leave him with his mother was out of the question. The divorced mother would have her own illegitimate family, in which his status as a stepson, and his education, would be probably bad. Keep him with him? He knew that would be an act of vengeance on his part, and that he did not desire. But, apart from this, what more than all made divorce seem impossible to Alexei Alexandrovich was that, by consenting to a divorce, he would be completely ruining Anna. The saying of Darya Alexandrovna at Moscow, that in deciding on a divorce he was thinking of himself, and not considering that by this he would be ruining her irrevocably, had sunk into his heart. And connecting this saying with his forgiveness of her, with his devotion to the children, he understood it now in his own way. To consent to a divorce, to give her her freedom, meant in his thoughts to take from himself the last tie that bound him to life the children whom he loved; and to take from her the last prop that kept her on the path of right, to thrust her down to her ruin. If she were divorced, he knew she would join her life to Vronsky's, and their tie would be an illegitimate and criminal one, since a wife, by the interpretation of the ecclesiastical law, could not marry while her husband was living. "She will join him, and in a year or two he will throw her over, or she will form a new tie," thought Alexei Alexandrovich. "And I, by agreeing to an unlawful divorce, shall be to blame for her ruin." He had thought it all over hundreds of times, and

was convinced that a divorce was not at all simple, as Stepan Arkadyevich had said, but was utterly impossible. He did not believe a single word Stepan Arkadyevich said to him; to every word he had a thousand objections to make, but he listened to him, feeling that his words were the expression of that mighty brutal force which controlled his life, and to which he would have to submit.

"The only question is on what terms you agree to give her a divorce. She does not want anything, does not dare ask you for anything she leaves it all to your magnanimity."

"My God, my God! What for?" thought Alexei Alexandrovich, remembering the details of divorce proceedings in which the husband took the blame on himself, and with just the same gesture with which Vronsky had done it, he hid his face in his hands in shame.

"You are troubled, I understand that. But if you think it over..."

"'And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also,'" thought Alexei Alexandrovich.

"Yes, yes!" he cried in a shrill voice. "I will take the disgrace on myself, I will give up even my son, but... But wouldn't it be better to let it alone? Still, you may do as you like...."

And, turning away so that his brother−in−law could not see him, he sat down on a chair at the window. There was bitterness, there was shame in his heart, but with bitterness and shame he felt joy and emotion at the height of his own meekness.

Stepan Arkadyevich was touched. He was silent for a space.

"Alexei Alexandrovich, believe me, she appreciates your magnanimity," he said. "But it seems it was the will of God," he added, and as he said it felt how foolish a remark it was, and with difficulty repressed a smile at his own foolishness.

Alexei Alexandrovich would have made some reply, but tears stopped him.

"This is an unhappy fatality, and one must accept it as such. I accept the calamity as an accomplished fact, and am doing my best to help both her and you," said Stepan Arkadyevich.

When he went out of his brother−in−law's room he was touched, but that did not prevent him from being glad he had successfully brought the matter to a conclusion, for he felt certain Alexei Alexandrovich would not go back on his words. To this satisfaction was added the fact that an idea had just struck him for a conundrum turning on his successful achievement when the affair was over he would put it to his wife and most intimate friends. He tried this conundrum in two or three different ways. "But I'll work it out better than that," he said to himself with a smile.

XXIII.

Vronsky's wound had been a dangerous one, though it did not touch the heart, and for several days he hovered between life and death. The first time he was able to speak, Varia, his brother's wife, was alone in the room.

"Varia," he said, looking sternly at her, "I shot myself by accident. And please never speak of it, and tell everyone so. Or else it's too ridiculous."

Without answering his words, Varia bent over him, and with a delighted smile gazed into his face. His eyes were clear, not feverish; but their expression was stern.

"Thank God!" she said. "You're not in pain?"

"A little here," he pointed to his breast.

"Then let me change your bandages."

In silence, stiffening his broad jaws, he looked at her while she bandaged him up. When she had finished he said:

"I'm not delirious. Please manage that there may be no talk of my having shot myself on purpose."

"No one says so. Only I hope you won't shoot yourself by accident any more," she said, with a questioning smile.

"I think I won't, but it would have been better..."

And he smiled gloomily.

In spite of these words and this smile, which so frightened Varia, when the inflammation was over and he began to recover, he felt that he was completely free from one part of his misery. By his action he had, as it were, washed away the shame and humiliation he had felt before. He could now think calmly of Alexei Alexandrovich. He recognized all his magnanimity, but he did not now feel himself humiliated by it. Besides, he got back again into the beaten track of his life. He saw the possibility of looking men in the face again without shame, and he could live in accordance with his own habits. One thing he could not pluck out of his heart, though he never ceased struggling with it the regret, amounting to despair, at having lost her forever. That, having expiated his sin against the husband, he was now bound to renounce her, and never in future to stand between her with her repentance and her husband, he had firmly decided in his heart; but he could not tear out of his heart his regret at the loss of her love; he could not erase from his memory those moments of happiness which he had known with her and had so little prized at the time, and which haunted him with all their charm.

Serpukhovskoy had planned his appointment at Tashkend, and Vronsky agreed to the proposal without the slightest hesitation. But the nearer the time of departure came, the bitterer was the sacrifice he was making to what he thought his duty.

His wound had healed, and he was driving about making preparations for his departure for Tashkend.

"To see her once, and then to bury myself, to die," he thought, and, as he was paying farewell visits, he uttered this thought to Betsy. Charged with this commission, Betsy had gone to Anna, and brought him back a negative reply.

"So much the better," thought Vronsky, when he received the news. "It was a weakness which would have shattered what strength I have left."

Next day Betsy herself came to him in the morning, and announced that she had heard through Oblonsky, as a positive fact, that Alexei Alexandrovich had agreed to a divorce, and that therefore Vronsky could see Anna.

Without even troubling himself to see Betsy out of his flat, forgetting all his resolutions, without asking when he could see her or where her husband was, Vronsky drove straight to the Karenins'. He ran up the stairs, seeing no one and nothing, and with a rapid step, almost breaking into a run, he went into her room. And without considering, without noticing whether there was anyone in the room or not, he flung his arms round her, and

began to cover with kisses her face, her hands, her neck.

Anna had been preparing herself for this meeting, had thought what she would say to him, but she did not succeed in saying anything; his passion mastered her. She tried to calm him, to calm herself, but it was too late. His feeling infected her. Her lips trembled so that for a long while she could say nothing.

"Yes, you have conquered me, and I am yours," she said at last, pressing his hands to her bosom.

"So it had to be," he said. "So long as we live, it must be so. I know it now."

"That's true," she said, getting whiter and whiter, and embracing his head. "Still, there is something terrible in it after all that has happened."

"It will all pass, it will all pass; we shall be so happy. Our love, if it only could be stronger, will be strengthened by there being something terrible in it," he said, lifting his head and showing his strong teeth in a smile.

And she could not but respond with a smile not to his words, but to the love in his eyes. She took his hand and stroked her chilled cheeks and cropped head with it.

"I don't know you with this short hair. You've grown so pretty. A boy. But how pale you are!"

"Yes, I'm very weak," she said, smiling. And her lips began trembling again.

"We'll go to Italy; you will get strong," he said.

"Can it be possible we could be like husband and wife, alone, our own family?" she said, looking close into his eyes.

"It only seems strange to me that it can ever have been otherwise."

"Stiva says that he has agreed to everything, but I can't accept his magnanimity," she said, looking dreamily past Vronsky's face. "I don't want a divorce; it's all the same to me now. Only I don't know what he will decide about Seriozha."

He could not conceive how at this moment of their meeting she could remember and think of her son, of divorce. What did it all matter?

"Don't speak of that, don't think of it," he said, turning her hand in his, and trying to draw her attention to him; but still she did not look at him.

"Oh, why didn't I die! It would have been better," she said, and, without sobbing, tears flowed down both her cheeks; but she tried to smile, so as not to wound him.

To decline the flattering and dangerous appointment at Tashkend would have been, Vronsky had till then considered, disgraceful and impossible. But now, without an instant's consideration, he declined it, and observing dissatisfaction in the upper quarters at this step, he immediately retired from the army.

A month later Alexei Alexandrovich was left alone with his son in his house at Peterburg, while Anna had gone abroad with Vronsky, without having obtained a divorce, and having absolutely declined all idea of one.