Philip Vasilyevich's Story

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I WAS sitting in the town park on a bench under the trees, the wind shook angrily the black, wet branches over my head and, tearing off the last leaves, carried them away down the hill to the wide, turbid river, and the river exhaled damp, [illustration omitted] cold breaths toward the sky.

Beyond the river, in the yellow velvet of withered grass, a small lake was glimmering; the dull autumn sky reflected itself in it mournfully; the pale disk of the moon was wasting away in the sky. The sun had long set behind the dark wall of the distant forest and the purple strip of the setting sun, amidst the thick, dark−blue clouds, seemed like a stream of fire in the mountain straits.

"Listen!" said some one, softly, near me.

I turned around; a tall, poorly dressed young man stood near my bench. The noise of the trees had drowned his foot−steps and I did not hear when he came over to me.

"Give me something to buy bread with!" he continued, lowering his voice. He bent down his head, retreated a step, but did not remove his hat. I liked this. I silently thrust my hand into my pocket.

"Not much!" he said to me quickly, and lifted his head proudly. "You think I'm a beggar? No; I'm simply out of work. I'm hungry. Do you believe me?"

"I do," said I.

His face had prominent cheek bones, his large, soft−gray eyes sunk deep beneath his high forehead.

"Thank you," he replied morosely, taking the money with his long hand, which was trembling from cold or shame. "Thank you. Now I'll go to eat.

I got up and went together with him. There was something I liked in him; he aroused my curiosity; therefore I asked him:

"Could I, perhaps, be of more service to you?"

"Find work for me!" he exclaimed, quickly. "Can you?"

"I'll try."

"I am longing for work, just as I am longing for bread," he said, walking beside me. "It is hard for me and I am ashamed to beg. I can work; but there are more people in this town than there is work, as everywhere else," and he smiled.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Platon Bagrov. You see I am a peasant. I went through a village school, I studied well and the teacher loved me very much. She succeeded in persuading an old landowner to send me to the gymnasium."

There were large dark spots under his eyes. His gristly nose, with a small hump, was red from cold. The youth put his hands into the pockets of his old trousers, bent his spine and twitched his shoulders for cold. His thin coat, buttonedup to his throat; his high, outworn boots and his old rumpled hat made him look like a street organ grinder. He spoke calmly, without any sadness or complaint in his voice, and it seemed as tho he himself was listening to his words and was verifying them.

"I stayed four years at the gymnasium; when I was in the second class my mother died—she lost her way in the fields and was frozen to death—my father died before that, and when I was promoted to the fourth class the old land−owner died. Her heirs did not care to pay for me any longer and I had to leave the gymnasium. Here my education ended."

At this point a lady passing us jostled him; he quickly tossed his head back, glanced at her, raised his hand to his hat and said in a dull voice:

"Excuse me!"

The lady went past us without glancing at him. He closed his lips tightly and said, smiling:

"How people are accustomed to jostling one another, as tho it were nothing to jostle."

We came to a tavern and seated ourselves by a little table in the corner of a small room which was densely filled with tobacco smoke; I ordered some beer for myself, and he, while waiting for something to eat, continued his story in an undertone, looking about on all sides:

"At first I lived with one of the watchmen of the gymnasium, then he placed me in a grocer's shop as an errand boy, but my master turned out to be a drunkard and a bully, so I left him."

The waiter put a plate of bread on the table. Platon immediately took a piece of it, but his hand trembled strangely; he cast a quick glance at me, put the bread back on the plate, and went on, with lowered head:

"I was fourteen years at the time; now I am nineteen; two years from now I must serve in the army. During those years I have seen a great deal. I lived in different cities, I worked for a plumber, for a gardener, I was an errand boy in the office of a certain Southern newspaper, I was fishing in the Sea of Azof, I was also by the Caspian Sea; I have experienced a great deal. I have seen, I have reflected upon, life, and, do you know, life is poorly constructed."

The waiter brought a bowl which was filled with something thick and strong odored. Platon sniffed the air deeply and ravenously, moved the bowl with both hands closer to himself and, without interrupting his narration, began to pour the soup out into the plate.

"I am very fond of reading and I have a rule to spend one−third of my earnings on books. After I have read the book I sell it, of course. I always feel sorry about this, but how can I drag the books with me? I don't like to live long in one place. I want to see as much as possible, I want to be educated, to understand everything."

"To be educated is a beautiful desire, but it seems to me that it is necessary to stay long in one place for that. However, eat," I said, noticing how his nostrils expanded scenting the smell of the food. He smiled and began to eat, vainly attempting to conceal from me his hungry greediness.

It was somewhat strange to hear his simple words, in which rang a certain unseizable rhythm and profound seriousness, which was rather unbecoming to the youth of the man. He was somewhat showing off by his smooth speech, and it was obvious that he was endeavoring to convince me of his intelligence. Now, as I observed the acute rapacity with which he was eating, I tried not to look at him, so as not to confuse him, and, thinking of him, I was examining the room.

In the opposite corner sat a telegraphist, with his cap moved up to the back of his head. He leaned his chest heavily on the table and scrutinized sternly the bottle of vodka which stood before him. Big black flies were flying around over him, filling the air with a discontented and disturbing buzz. They now lost themselves amidst the dust−covered leaves of the flowers on the windows, and now with a swing struck bluntly against the window panes. A suffocating smell of tobacco, sour cabbage, geranium and of vodka filled the room.

A tall, pimple−faced man entered, seated himself by the little table oppositethe telegraphist, silently filled a glass with vodka, drank it, then he licked around his red mustache carefully, and asked in a basso:

"How are you?"

The telegraphist threw himself back in his chair, struck the table with the palm of his hand, and replied, angrily:

"I am in such a mood that I feel like smashing window panes!"

"Make a complaint," advised the red−headed man, pouring out more vodka.

"The devil! Everybody's complaining. But who pays attention?"

Platon glanced at me and said in a low voice:

"I don't drink, but I am very fond of sitting in taverns. It's interesting. You can always hear peculiar words. You can catch an idea."

"It is all ugly and tedious," I remarked. "If you are fond of reading then you ought to read more, for in books you will find more valuable ideas than in taverns; isn't it so?"

"Y−yes, of course," he assented, hesitating awhile for some reason or other; and, after a pause, added: "Altho, do you know, you may sometimes find even in ugly words the same idea which you read in a book. Then you believe the book all the more and the people seem better, wiser."

"Have you had any intelligent people among your acquaintances?" I asked.

"Yes, when I worked in the newspaper office. The contributors treated me well. They used to give me books. And then I had another acquaintance in Rostov; he is a carpenter, and a very intelligent man; he has a whole library," said Platon, slowly.

He became somewhat dizzy from his meal and it seemed that he felt sleepy; his eyes grew dim. I got up, gave him my address, told him to come up to my house on the next day and extended my hand to him. He shook it firmly and said simply, with a nod:

"Thank you."

I noticed that he was not affected by my attitude toward him, and, tho, of course, I expected no gratitude, yet I was not much pleased with this indifference or whatever it was. We are all obliged to appreciate mutual favors done to another; this is essential to social life.

It was already dark when I came out on the street. A long row of lanterns glimmering stretched itself into the darkness, the wind was blowing and the lights were trembling.

"He must feel cold in his light coat," I thought of Platon Bagrov.

* * * * *

I succeeded in finding for Platon a position as porter in the house of an acquaintance of mine, a very amiable old man, who had given up lecturing at the university several years ago and who now lived modestly and quietly, busying himself with investigating a certain parasite of wheat.

His house was small and charming; it stood on the outskirts of the city, and in the summer, surrounded as it was on all sides by old linden trees, and sinking in thick waves of acacia and lilacs, it looked out of a sea of verdure like a hospitable, quiet and clean island.

The professor had a daughter, a young girl with blue eyes and with ringing laughter. She played the piano fairly well, she painted, read belles−lettres, and always wore white dresses; these were becoming to her even as the white bark is becoming to the birch. She was always surrounded by friends who were just as refined as she was. Students, well−bred youths, carried away by their love of art, used to visit the professor's home frequently. It was noisy and lively every evening in the room of the lower story; the young people played, argued, read poetry, danced, and the old professor sat somewhere in a corner, and, stroking his gray beard, smiled at the merriment of the youths. Everything was simple, cheerful and pleasant.

I used to come up to the house frequently, and I met Platon every time. Now his face had become fuller, the dark circles disappeared from around his eyes, he wore a heavy black waistcoat on top of a colored shirt, black, loose trousers and high leather boots. It must have been his desire to impress himself upon people by this rather unusual costume. Tall and bony, he was stiff in his movements. His dark, short hair was somewhat curly, his eyes had a meditative,calm look, and there was something striking about his face, with its prominent cheek bones.

Meeting me in the house he would bow his head to me affably and silently; he was tactful; he never addressed me in the presence of the host or hostess, evidently feeling that he might thus place me and himself in an awkward position. But when I met him in the yard alone I used to shake hands with him and start a conversation.

"Well, how do you like it here, Platon?"

"Fairly well," he would reply, good−naturedly. "I haven't as much leisure as I expected to have, but I find time for reading, nevertheless. I think that I will gain a great deal of good in this house. To see a great deal, to feel, to work, to think a great deal, that is life! Isn't it so?"

"Yes, yes!" I said, approvingly, admiring his enthusiasm. "And, above all, read more good books. Well, and how do you like the master and the young lady?"

"They seem to be fine people. The mere fact that they don't quarrel and that they are in general polite with their domestics is a blessing in itself. It is something rare to find. The young lady is amusing. She runs around, screams, makes wry faces. She's always so clean, just like a fondled little pig."

I didn't like this opinion about Lidia Alekseyevna. The negative relation of servants to their masters is perfectly natural, but Platon was half−intelligent, and he should have known that by this attitude of his toward the mistress of the house he lowered himself to the psychology of the kitchen maids. I said nothing to him with regard to this, and he went on, smiling:

"But she's a fine girl, nevertheless. She's kind, amiable, and, altho capricious, she treats the servants well. Sometimes she chides the chambermaid, but that isn't offensive; it is rather childish."

"She's only one year younger than you," I remarked.

"That's nothing," he replied, calmly. "Years are not alike. Time should be measured by the number and nature of impressions. What has she seen and what does she know?"

He liked to boast of his experience of life. I grew tired of this, too. And, besides, I had a reason for not

believing him. I noticed several times that when Lidia Alekseyevna walked past the porter his hand rose to his cap with suspicious quickness, his head bowed to her submissively, and he bent himself together so comically and awkwardly, as tho fearing to frighten the girl by his long figure, which was like a poorly built tower; he was so monstrously awkward and big compared with the young mistress of the house. I did not understand the meaning of these salutes, but Lidochka noticed them; the ridiculous in a man is most easily accessible to the eye of woman.

Thus the cheerful young girl directed her attention to the porter; she smiled to him kindly, occasionally she granted him a few insignificant words, and once, when he was chopping wood, she even asked him whether he was not tired.

One day she somehow asked me to tell her once more the story of my meeting with Platon. I complied with her wish and said in conclusion:

"He is too self−confident, considering himself an exceptional individual, in my opinion; he is apt to take God knows what into his head!"

She paid no attention to my words.

"He's a queer fellow," she said pensively, smiling. "He's so comical, so tall; and he's forever philosophizing there, in the kitchen. And they all make sport of him on this account."

Then she told me that the servants of the house considered Platon as a half−idiot because he did not make love to the chambermaids and did not sit in front of the gates on holidays eating sunflower seeds, but was forever reading books.

In the eyes of the cook and the chambermaids his behavior was not at all becoming to a porter; he spoke very much, and incomprehensibly; he sermonized to them, and his speeches irritated the people in the kitchen.

"We ought to advise him to take up the examinations for teacher and let him go to the country to enlighten the people," I said.

"Yes," assented Lidia Alekseyevna, "that would be better for him. Here he is out of place."

And evidently from this moment on she began to pay closer attention to Platon; of course, not because she expected to discover in him a fairy tale prince in disguise, but she was simply curious to find out how the man who sweeps the yard of her house feels and reasons.

Spring was setting in; the rooks coming home. The loud croaking of the busy birds resounded unceasingly all day long in the old linden trees, over the roof of the house.

I noticed that Platon's eyes looked somewhat strangely; they looked far away beyond the things that were near him, as tho they were persistently searching for something indispensable to him, but did not find it, and widening with surprise, they smiled a sad smile. He became taciturn and disconcerted in his movements. One quiet night in April, as he was locking the gates behind me, he asked me in a low voice:

"May I come up to you to−morrow?"

"Please," I said, "come between five and six. Good night! Between five and six."

He came exactly at the appointed hour; he was dressed as usual in his waistcoat; he smiled to me confusedly and seated himself heavily by the table.

I began to speak of the books he had read, but this apparently did not interest him; he answered absent−mindedly, unwillingly, and gazed with melancholy eyes somewhere over my head or through my face. Sadness was not becoming to his physiognomy, with prominent cheek bones, and there was something ludicrous about it.

"How are you getting along?" I asked.

"I am not feeling well. I feel ill at ease in that house. It is such a good, pure house, and the people are sensible, kind; I thought that near them I would set myself right, that I would learn a great deal. But it doesn't work. My mind does not grasp anything. A certain anguish seizes on me. And I have even started to write verses; really I have."

He glanced at me confusedly and asked in a low voice:

"Does it seem to you funny?"

"No, not at all," I said, reassuring him. "Read the verses to me; would you care to?"

He nodded his head; his sad eyes smiled; he put his elbows on the table, lowered his shaggy head upon them and began to read abruptly, in a dull voice:

"Night has come. I'm sitting by the window. The garden is asleep. Gloom and silence reign supreme. I gaze

into the darkness mute. And suddenly my soul cries out: 'Wherefore am I distressed with pain? Wherefore?'"

His verses smelt of cheap tobacco, his boots of tar; the waistcoat was worn out at the sleeves, there were some buttons missing at the collar, and I saw that the veins on Platon's neck were beating painfully fast. He sat motionless, and, staring at the table, read on:

"There is no answer for my soul anywhere. . . . All is clothed around me in a stifling gloom. . . . The earth's asleep, the moist air is mute, only my heart is beating loud. . . . Oh, wherefore does she always laugh? Wherefore?"

He became silent, lifted his head, and his eyebrows were raised interrogatively.

"Well, how is it?" he asked.

I felt sorry for the young fellow and I wanted to turn his lyric into a jest.

"No good," I said, smiling. "It's necessary either that both should laugh or that both should cry. That would have been better. Have you any more verses with you?"

"Yes," he said, in a low voice, and again lowering his head he began to read slowly and mournfully:

"Farewell! My soul is filled with grief. . . . As before, I am alone again. . . . And again my life is dark. Good−by, my dear light of mine! . . . Farewell! Farewell! I have set my sail. . . . I stand sadly at the helm. And the playful sea−gulls' voices, and the strips of the white foam. All—by which the world bids me farewell. . . . Good−by!"

His dull voice rang monotonously and it somehow reminded me of the reading of the Psalter over the dead. He fell silent for awhile, glanced at me, and, heaving a sigh, went on:

"The distant sea is threatening me with misery, and the worm of sorrow gnaws my soul, and the gray billow howls sternly. . . .But the sea with all its waves can never wash you out of my heart. . . . Farewell!"

He became silent and sat motionless. I felt ill at ease and awkward. I was afraid that he might begin to cry, and I did not know how to help him. Upon reflection I decided to act like a surgeon, to cut off the unnecessary part at once. I rose, walked over to him and, placing my hand on his shoulder, asked:

"Are you in love?"

"Yes, of course," he said, in a low voice.

"Who is she, the chambermaid, Feklusha?"

He raised his eyebrows with surprise and replied calmly:

"Lidia Alekseyevna herself."

I knew it, of course, but I never expected that he would tell it to me so frankly, and I did not want to hear it from his lips. It was somewhat unpleasant to me and very ridiculous.

"Listen, my dear," I said as seriously and gently as I could; "you must understand that this is amusing."

"Amusing!" he exclaimed, in a low voice, and his eyes opened wide with astonishment.

"Yes, of course," I said. "It is simply difficult for me to speak to you seriously."

"Why?" He repeated his stifled exclamation.

"Just think of it; you are nineteen years old. Well, say that you have seen something, that you know something, but are you her equal? She's an intelligent girl, with refined tastes. Everything that's coarse is organically repulsive to her. But, besides, that isn't the question. Such a combination as you and she is a matter of absolute impossibility. Being a rather sensible man, you should have felt this impossibility yourself. That should be felt!"

"And yet I do not feel it," said he, softly but obstinately, and then asked in the same tone:

"Am I not a man like all men?"

I shrugged my shoulders and began to speak to him again, while he looked at me with his gray eyes; stubbornness was reflected in them and I felt that my words produced no effect on him.

"And, besides everything," I said, stepping aside from Platon, "I know that Lidia Alekseyevna loves me."

He rose from his chair slowly, closed his lips firmly, and, stooping, he went away, forgetting to give me his hand.

As I escorted him I felt that I must seriously interfere with this amusing but unpleasant affair.

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On the very next day, toward evening, I came to Lidia Alekseyevna and told her cautiously, so as not to make the matter appear too ridiculous, but at the same time quite seriously, that it would be better for her to stop paying

attention to the porter.

"Why?" she asked, surprised. "He is so amusing. Do you know it is very interesting to speak with him. Sometimes his stories, notwithstanding their crudity, are so touching. And they depict so vividly the life of the common people. Why, then, O despot, must I not speak to him?"

Then I told her plainly that Platon was in love with her and that first love, whatever it may be, formulates the heart of a man for all his life. She shuddered with aversion, her eyes became round with surprise, her cheeks flushed brightly, and, offended and confused and agitated, she began to run about in the room.

"How does he dare?" she exclaimed, disconcerted. "He! He always has such perspiring hands. And they're so red. And his ears are also red. But how is it that I didn't guess it myself? How funny it is! I feel sorry for him. And this is so bad, so rude. You say he composed verses?"

"And I think they're not bad, either," I remarked.

"Oh, what a queer fellow! But how is it that I didn't notice it myself? Really this is interesting. A democrat in love. It's a romance! Ah, my God! but what is to be done with him now, Philip Vasilyevich? It is necessary to dismiss him, isn't it?"

"Not now by any means," I advised. "Why offend a man since it can be managed without offending him? It is, of course, necessary to dismiss him, but it must be done cautiously, not at once. Wait a little."

"But I should like to see his verses, anyway," she said, thoughtfully.

Later I regretted sincerely and bitterly that I gave her such advice, losing sight of Lidochka's childish light−mindedness.

I left the city on the next day, and two or three days later everybody in the house knew that the porter was in love with the young lady. As I learned later, lively, and I must say wicked, scenes took place there.

"Platon!" Lidochka would call.

Platon would come.

"Do you love me?" she asked, tenderly.

"Yes!" replied the porter, firmly.

"Very much?"

"Yes!" he repeated.

"And if I were to ask for something," Lidochka said softly and mysteriously, pensively surveying his face with its prominent cheek bones, "you would do everything for me, wouldn't you, Platon?"

"Everything!" replied the porter with unshaken confidence.

"Well, if that's the case," she continued, smiling triumphantly; "if that's the case, my dear Platon—"

Her face became sad and she concluded with a deep sigh:

"—put up the samovar!"

And a merry smile beamed in her eyes.

He would go, with drooping head, and put up the samovar; his cheek bones grew ever sharper and sharper, and his eyes sunk ever deeper and deeper under his forehead.

Sometimes Lidochka, after cross−examining as to the power of his love, would make him wash her mud−covered rubber shoes, or would send him to take away a note to her friend, and whatever she asked of him she always dragged in his love; she always spoke with him in the name of his love.

In the evening when the visitors came together she called in Platon, made him read his verses, and he read, with bowed head, not looking at any one. The people praised him, smiling; he bowed, and his face was motionless, as tho chiseled out of stone. Lidochka would say to the guests in his presence:

"They are not bad, are they? Worse verses than these are sometimes printed. These are not clever, but they are sincere. I know that the poet is really in love and hopelessly so! The prejudices of society and the cold heart of her whose praises he is singing stand in his way toward happiness."

I find that she treated the youth imprudently and with undeserved wickedness. It seems to me that his love offended her self−respect and she avenged herself on the poor fellow for this. But then no one treated him any better. The old professor was a good−natured man, who loved all insects with the love of a sage, yet even he found pleasure in jesting at the youth's expense.

"Listen, poet!" he would say. "I earnestly request you not to put so much manure on the asparagus beds. I have told you more than once about it, but you're forever forgetting. And I'll remain without asparagus if the thing will

go on so badly. However, I am not angry; I understand your position. He−he−he! It draws you to Arcadia. Well? It's legitimate. In childhood a man is sick with measles and with scarlet fever; in youth he falls in love, writes verses and dreams of heroic exploits. It's a waste of time—of little use to life. But, anyway, it is better than the prudence of old age!"

The professor always spoke at length and his eloquence was rather tedious, but he liked it.

The servants also poked fun at him; they, of course, were simpler and ruder in their jokes. And all jests were apparently well aimed, for the target was so big. But Lidochka was more inventive than all; I cannot conceal this, and, of course, I don't approve it.

In the evening, while the moon was shining, she would seat herself in a beautiful and thoughtful pose by the open window and would tell her girl friends loudly that love knows no obstacles, that to love there are neither nobles nor peasants, there's only the man, the beloved. And Platon heard it.

Then she called him, gazed coldly and indifferently into his face and made him do something for her.

She played sad tunes, tenderly touching the soul of the lover by the soft, caressing accords; she sang sweet, tender songs, in which rang the anticipation of caresses and yearning for the beloved.And all this she did in such a manner that the porter should see and hear and feel it.

One day he came over to her in the garden and said:

"Why do you laugh at me? Don't make sport of me; you ought not to do it. What's there to laugh at if I love you? I'll leave the city soon. I wish to remember you as kind and gentle. Don't torture me!"

His face was gray, his eyebrows lowered and between a stern wrinkle was formed. He spoke in a low voice, and stood motionless, but Lidochka was frightened by something she noticed about him, and she ran away without saying a word to him.

And on the next day she could not deny herself the pleasure of torturing him a little more; she called him into the house and made him read verses before two of her girl friends. The verses were about a young, strong oak; one of its branches had touched the face of a queen and the queen gave orders to cut down the oak. The verses were clumsy; the young ladies smiled as they listened to them.

Soon the affair came to an end. One day I received a telegram from Lidochka.

"Please come immediately. Misfortune happened Platon. Lida."

She met me, disconcerted, pale, half sick.

"Do you know? He shot himself!"

"Is that possible?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, yes! There you have it!" she said, running about in the room, nervously. "And you are to blame for it—you!"

"I?"

"Of course! We should have dismissed him then, at once, and you advised not to do it! There, now! Poor man! I pity him."

Tears glistened in her eyes; it was evident that she had not slept the night before and that she had been crying.

"If I knew that he was really—in earnest—I would not have allowed myself to trifle with him," she said, putting her handkerchief to her face and quivering. "They say he's still alive. Go over to see him! I can't; I'll go later. Papa is so upset. And everybody feels sorry for him. For he was so original!"

Child! Even now she spoke of him as of a broken toy.

I immediately started for the hospital and on the way thought sadly of Platon. He had seemed to me so sturdy and firm and here at the first collision with life he was overthrown and shattered. And I could not understand in Platon this lack of perseverance which is quite clear in a cultured man who leads a nervous life.

He lay on his back; his face was yellow, bloodless, covered with wrinkles; his eyes had grown dim, they had become enormously big, and grief and pain stood in them motionlessly. His teeth were set together firmly and his cheek bones protruded in sharp angles. His long, sinewy hand was weakly hanging down from the cot, touching the ground with his fingers. He stared for a long time into my face with a wide−eyed, painful look and maintained silence. Finally, out of breath for weakness, he muttered to me through his teeth with an effort, in a creaking voice:

"Ask them! I have worked for them, so as to make their life more comfortable and clean. Why have they crippled me? Ask them!"

And his eyes closed slowly. I lifted his hand, put it on my knees and said gently:

"There was no crime in this, my friend; this is an error, a misunderstanding. One should not judge people so severely. You'll recover and all this will be cleared up. You know that they are good people."

He quietly withdrew his hand from my knees and it rolled off again to the floor weakly. Without opening his eyes he said:

"I have some books left there. Send them to Rostov, to the carpenter Yevsey Skryabin. Don't forget!"

"Very well, I'll attend to it."

Taking out my notebook I jotted down his request and the address of the carpenter, while Platon lay motionless. There was a dull rattle in his chest and the large, dark in place of his eyes made his face look dead.

I looked at him, maintaining silence, and I felt uncomfortable to stay there and uncomfortable to leave.

At last he opened his eyes and, noticing me, whispered:

"Go away!"

"Good−by!" said I, again lifting his hand and pressing it. He did not respond either by a sound or by a motion of the hand.

Slowly, with an unpleasant, cutting sensation in my heart, I left the ward and when I came out into the corridor I heard Platon's hoarse voice:

"Nurse! Don't let anybody in to me."

He evidently must have thought that Lidochka might come.

And that night he died.

Fulfilling my promise, I sent off to Rostov the books he left behind. I learned from the servants that he had burned his copy books with his verses in the stove, but among his books I came upon a sheet of note paper covered with scribbling; the following lines, full of youthful pathos, were written upon it in a quick hand:

"Slowly and patiently I was ascending from the bottom of life to you, to its summit, and I looked at everything on my way with the eyes of a scout going to the promised land."

I took the leaf for myself as a memento of Platon; recently, while looking over the papers on my table, I found it and recalled the youth. And here I have told the story as well as I could.