

Chapter 1

A SLOW JOURNEY

Again two carriages stood at the front door of the house at Petrovskoe. In one of them sat Mimi, the two girls, and their maid, with the bailiff, Jakoff, on the box, while in the other—a britchka—sat Woloda, myself, and our servant Vassili. Papa, who was to follow us to Moscow in a few days, was standing bareheaded on the entrance-steps. He made the sign of the cross at the windows of the carriages, and said:

"Christ go with you! Good-bye."

Jakoff and our coachman (for we had our own horses) lifted their caps in answer, and also made the sign of the cross.

"Amen. God go with us!"

The carriages began to roll away, and the birch-trees of the great avenue filed out of sight.

I was not in the least depressed on this occasion, for my mind was not so much turned upon what I had left as upon what was awaiting me. In proportion as the various objects connected with the sad recollections which had recently filled my imagination receded behind me, those recollections lost their power, and gave place to a consolatory feeling of life, youthful vigour, freshness, and hope.

Seldom have I spent four days more—well, I will not say gaily, since I should still have shrunk from appearing gay—but more agreeably and pleasantly than those occupied by our journey.

No longer were my eyes confronted with the closed door of Mamma's room (which I had never been able to pass without a pang), nor with the covered piano (which nobody opened now, and at which I could never look without trembling), nor with mourning dresses (we had each of us on our ordinary travelling clothes), nor with all those other objects which recalled to me so vividly our irreparable loss, and forced me to abstain from any manifestation of merriment lest I should unwittingly offend against HER memory.

On the contrary, a continual succession of new and exciting objects and places now caught and held my attention, and the charms of spring awakened in my soul a soothing sense of satisfaction with the present and of blissful hope for the future.

Very early next morning the merciless Vassili (who had only just entered our service, and was therefore, like most people in such a position, zealous to a fault) came and stripped off my counterpane, affirming that it was time for me to get up, since everything was in readiness for us to continue our journey. Though I felt inclined to stretch myself and rebel—though I would gladly have spent another quarter of an hour in sweet enjoyment of my morning slumber—Vassili's inexorable face showed that he would grant me no respite, but that he was ready to tear away the counterpane twenty times more if necessary. Accordingly I submitted myself to the inevitable and ran down into the courtyard to wash myself at the fountain.

In the coffee-room, a tea-kettle was already surmounting the fire which Milka the ostler, as red in the face as a crab, was blowing with a pair of bellows. All was grey and misty in the courtyard, like steam from a smoking dunghill, but in the eastern sky the sun was diffusing a clear, cheerful radiance, and making the straw roofs of the sheds around the courtyard sparkle with the night dew. Beneath them stood our horses, tied to mangers, and I could hear the ceaseless sound of their chewing. A curly-haired dog which had been spending the night on a dry dunghill now rose in lazy fashion and, wagging its tail, walked slowly across the courtyard.

The bustling landlady opened the creaking gates, turned her meditative cows into the street (whence came the lowing and bellowing of other cattle), and exchanged a word or two with a sleepy neighbour. Philip, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up, was working the windlass of a draw-well, and sending sparkling fresh water coursing into an oaken trough, while in the pool beneath it some early-rising ducks were taking a bath. It gave me pleasure to watch his strongly-marked, bearded face, and the veins and muscles as they stood out upon his great powerful hands whenever he made an extra effort. In the room behind the partition-wall where Mimi and the girls had slept (yet so near to ourselves that we had exchanged confidences overnight) movements now became audible, their maid kept passing in and out with clothes, and, at last the door opened and we were summoned to breakfast. Woloda, however, remained in a state of bustle throughout as he ran to fetch first one article and then another and urged the maid to hasten her preparations.

The horses were put to, and showed their impatience by tinkling their bells. Parcels, trunks, dressing-cases, and boxes were replaced, and we set about taking our seats. Yet, every time that we got in, the mountain of luggage in the britchka seemed to have grown larger than before, and we had much ado to understand how things had been arranged yesterday, and how we should sit now. A tea-chest, in particular, greatly inconvenienced me, but Vassili declared that "things will soon right themselves," and I had no choice but to believe him.

The sun was just rising, covered with dense white clouds, and every object around us was standing out in a cheerful, calm sort of radiance. The whole was beautiful to look at, and I felt comfortable and light of heart.

Before us the road ran like a broad, sinuous ribbon through cornfields glittering with dew. Here and there a dark bush or young birch-tree cast a long shadow over the ruts and scattered grass-tufts of the track. Yet even the monotonous din of our carriage-wheels and collar-bells could not drown the joyous song of soaring larks, nor the combined odour of moth-eaten cloth, dust, and sourness peculiar to our britchka overpower the fresh scents of the morning. I felt in my heart that delightful impulse to be up and doing which is a sign of sincere enjoyment.

As I had not been able to say my prayers in the courtyard of the inn, but had nevertheless been assured once that on the very first day when I omitted to perform that ceremony some misfortune would overtake me, I now hastened to rectify the omission. Taking off my cap, and stooping down in a corner of the britchka, I duly recited my orisons, and unobtrusively signed the sign of the cross beneath my coat. Yet all the while a thousand different objects were distracting my attention, and more than once I inadvertently repeated a prayer twice over.

Soon on the little footpath beside the road became visible some slowly moving figures. They were pilgrims. On their heads they had dirty handkerchiefs, on their backs wallets of birch-bark, and on their feet bundles of soiled rags and heavy bast shoes. Moving their staffs in regular rhythm, and scarcely throwing us a glance, they pressed onwards with heavy tread and in single file.

"Where have they come from?" I wondered to myself, "and whither are they bound? Is it a long pilgrimage they are making?" But soon the shadows they cast on the road became indistinguishable from the shadows of the bushes which they passed.

Next a carriage-and-four could be seen approaching us. In two seconds the faces which looked out at us from it with smiling curiosity

had vanished. How strange it seemed that those faces should have nothing in common with me, and that in all probability they would never meet my eyes again!

Next came a pair of post-horses, with the traces looped up to their collars. On one of them a young postillion-his lamb's wool cap cocked to one side-was negligently kicking his booted legs against the flanks of his steed as he sang a melancholy ditty. Yet his face and attitude seemed to me to express such perfect carelessness and indolent ease that I imagined it to be the height of happiness to be a postillion and to sing melancholy songs.

Far off, through a cutting in the road, there soon stood out against the light-blue sky, the green roof of a village church. Presently the village itself became visible, together with the roof of the manor-house and the garden attached to it. Who lived in that house? Children, parents, teachers? Why should we not call there and make the acquaintance of its inmates?

Next we overtook a file of loaded waggons—a procession to which our vehicles had to yield the road.

"What have you got in there?" asked Vassili of one waggoner who was dangling his legs lazily over the splashboard of his conveyance and flicking his whip about as he gazed at us with a stolid, vacant look; but he only made answer when we were too far off to catch what he said.

"And what have YOU got?" asked Vassili of a second waggoner who was lying at full length under a new rug on the driving-seat of his vehicle. The red poll and red face beneath it lifted themselves up for a second from the folds of the rug, measured our britchka with a cold, contemptuous look, and lay down again; whereupon I concluded that the driver was wondering to himself who we were, whence we had come, and whither we were going.

These various objects of interest had absorbed so much of my time that, as yet, I had paid no attention to the crooked figures on the verst posts as we passed them in rapid succession; but in time the sun began to burn my head and back, the road to become increasingly dusty, the impedimenta in the carriage to grow more and more uncomfortable, and myself to feel more and more cramped. Consequently, I relapsed into devoting my whole faculties to the distance-posts and their numerals, and to solving difficult mathematical problems for reckoning the time when we should arrive at the next posting-house.

"Twelve versts are a third of thirty-six, and in all there are forty-one to Lipetz. We have done a third and how much, then?", and so forth, and so forth.

"Vassili," was my next remark, on observing that he was beginning to nod on the box-seat, "suppose we change seats? Will you?" Vassili agreed, and had no sooner stretched himself out in the body of the vehicle than he began to snore. To me on my new perch, however, a most interesting spectacle now became visible—namely, our horses, all of which were familiar to me down to the smallest detail.

"Why is Diashak on the right today, Philip, not on the left?" I asked knowingly. "And Nerusinka is not doing her proper share of the pulling."

"One could not put Diashak on the left," replied Philip, altogether ignoring my last remark. "He is not the kind of horse to put there at all. A horse like the one on the left now is the right kind of one for the job."

After this fragment of eloquence, Philip turned towards Diashak and began to do his best to worry the poor animal by jogging at the reins, in spite of the fact that Diashak was doing well and dragging the vehicle almost unaided. This Philip continued to do until he found it convenient to breathe and rest himself awhile and to settle his cap askew, though it had looked well enough before.

I profited by the opportunity to ask him to let me have the reins to hold, until, the whole six in my hand, as well as the whip, I had attained complete happiness. Several times I asked whether I was doing things right, but, as usual, Philip was never satisfied, and soon destroyed my felicity.

The heat increased until a hand showed itself at the carriage window, and waved a bottle and a parcel of eatables; whereupon Vassili leapt briskly from the britchka, and ran forward to get us something to eat and drink.

When we arrived at a steep descent, we all got out and ran down it to a little bridge, while Vassili and Jakoff followed, supporting the carriage on either side, as though to hold it up in the event of its threatening to upset.

After that, Mimi gave permission for a change of seats, and sometimes Woloda or myself would ride in the carriage, and Lubotshka or Katenka in the britchka. This arrangement greatly pleased the girls, since much more fun went on in the britchka. Just when the day was at its hottest, we got out at a wood, and, breaking off a quantity of branches, transformed our vehicle into a bower. This travelling arbour then bustled on

to catch the carriage up, and had the effect of exciting Lubotshka to one of those piercing shrieks of delight which she was in the habit of occasionally emitting.

At last we drew near the village where we were to halt and dine. Already we could perceive the smell of the place—the smell of smoke and tar and sheep—and distinguish the sound of voices, footsteps, and carts. The bells on our horses began to ring less clearly than they had done in the open country, and on both sides the road became lined with huts—dwellings with straw roofs, carved porches, and small red or green painted shutters to the windows, through which, here and there, was a woman's face looking inquisitively out. Peasant children clad in smocks only stood staring open-eyed or, stretching out their arms to us, ran barefooted through the dust to climb on to the luggage behind, despite Philip's menacing gestures. Likewise, red-haired waiters came darting around the carriages to invite us, with words and signs, to select their several hostelries as our halting-place.

Presently a gate creaked, and we entered a courtyard. Four hours of rest and liberty now awaited us.

Chapter 2

THE THUNDERSTORM

The sun was sinking towards the west, and his long, hot rays were burning my neck and cheeks beyond endurance, while thick clouds of dust were rising from the road and filling the whole air. Not the slightest wind was there to carry it away. I could not think what to do. Neither the dust-blackened face of Woloda dozing in a corner, nor the motion of Philip's back, nor the long shadow of our britchka as it came bowling along behind us brought me any relief. I concentrated my whole attention upon the distance- posts ahead and the clouds which, hitherto dispersed over the sky, were now assuming a menacing blackness, and beginning to form themselves into a single solid mass.

From time to time distant thunder could be heard—a circumstance which greatly increased my impatience to arrive at the inn where we were to spend the night. A thunderstorm always communicated to me an inexpressibly oppressive feeling of fear and gloom.

Yet we were still ten versts from the next village, and in the meanwhile the large purple cloudbank—arisen from no one knows where—was advancing steadily towards us. The sun, not yet obscured, was picking out its fuscous shape with dazzling light, and marking its front with grey stripes running right down to the horizon. At intervals, vivid lightning could be seen in the distance, followed by low rumbles which increased steadily in volume until they merged into a prolonged roll which seemed to embrace the entire heavens. At length, Vassili got up and covered over the britchka, the coachman wrapped himself up in his cloak and lifted his cap to make the sign of the cross at each successive thunderclap, and the horses pricked up their ears and snorted as though to drink in the fresh air which the flying clouds were outdistancing. The britchka began to roll more swiftly along the dusty road, and I felt uneasy, and as though the blood were coursing more quickly through my veins. Soon the clouds had veiled the face of the sun, and though he threw a last

gleam of light to the dark and terrifying horizon, he had no choice but to disappear behind them.

Suddenly everything around us seemed changed, and assumed a gloomy aspect. A wood of aspen trees which we were passing seemed to be all in a tremble, with its leaves showing white against the dark lilac background of the clouds, murmuring together in an agitated manner. The tops of the larger trees began to bend to and fro, and dried leaves and grass to whirl about in eddies over the road. Swallows and white-breasted swifts came darting around the britchka and even passing in front of the forelegs of the horses. While rooks, despite their outstretched wings, were laid, as it were, on their keels by the wind. Finally, the leather apron which covered us began to flutter about and to beat against the sides of the conveyance.

The lightning flashed right into the britchka as, cleaving the obscurity for a second, it lit up the grey cloth and silk galloon of the lining and Woloda's figure pressed back into a corner.

Next came a terrible sound which, rising higher and higher, and spreading further and further, increased until it reached its climax in a deafening thunderclap which made us tremble and hold our breaths. "The wrath of God"—what poetry there is in that simple popular conception!

The pace of the vehicle was continually increasing, and from Philip's and Vassili's backs (the former was tugging furiously at the reins) I could see that they too were alarmed.

Bowling rapidly down an incline, the britchka cannoned violently against a wooden bridge at the bottom. I dared not stir and expected destruction every moment.

Crack! A trace had given way, and, in spite of the ceaseless, deafening thunderclaps, we had to pull up on the bridge.

Leaning my head despairingly against the side of the britchka, I followed with a beating heart the movements of Philip's great black fingers as he tied up the broken trace and, with hands and the butt-end of the whip, pushed the harness vigorously back into its place.

My sense of terror was increasing with the violence of the thunder. Indeed, at the moment of supreme silence which generally precedes the greatest intensity of a storm, it mounted to such a height that I felt as though another quarter of an hour of this emotion would kill me.

Just then there appeared from beneath the bridge a human being who, clad in a torn, filthy smock, and supported on a pair of thin shanks bare

of muscles, thrust an idiotic face, a tremulous, bare, shaven head, and a pair of red, shining stumps in place of hands into the britchka.

"M-my lord! A copeck for—for God's sake!" groaned a feeble voice as at each word the wretched being made the sign of the cross and bowed himself to the ground.

I cannot describe the chill feeling of horror which penetrated my heart at that moment. A shudder crept through all my hair, and my eyes stared in vacant terror at the outcast.

Vassili, who was charged with the apportioning of alms during the journey, was busy helping Philip, and only when everything had been put straight and Philip had resumed the reins again had he time to look for his purse. Hardly had the britchka begun to move when a blinding flash filled the welkin with a blaze of light which brought the horses to their haunches. Then, the flash was followed by such an ear-splitting roar that the very vault of heaven seemed to be descending upon our heads. The wind blew harder than ever, and Vassili's cloak, the manes and tails of the horses, and the carriage-apron were all slanted in one direction as they waved furiously in the violent blast.

Presently, upon the britchka's top there fell some large drops of rain—"one, two, three:" then suddenly, and as though a roll of drums were being beaten over our heads, the whole countryside resounded with the clatter of the deluge.

From Vassili's movements, I could see that he had now got his purse open, and that the poor outcast was still bowing and making the sign of the cross as he ran beside the wheels of the vehicle, at the imminent risk of being run over, and reiterated from time to time his plea, "For-for God's sake!" At last a copeck rolled upon the ground, and the miserable creature—his mutilated arms, with their sleeves wet through and through, held out before him— stopped perplexed in the roadway and vanished from my sight.

The heavy rain, driven before the tempestuous wind, poured down in pailfuls and, dripping from Vassili's thick cloak, formed a series of pools on the apron. The dust became changed to a paste which clung to the wheels, and the ruts became transformed into muddy rivulets.

At last, however, the lightning grew paler and more diffuse, and the thunderclaps lost some of their terror amid the monotonous rattling of the downpour. Then the rain also abated, and the clouds began to disperse. In the region of the sun, a lightness appeared, and between the white-grey clouds could be caught glimpses of an azure sky.

Finally, a dazzling ray shot across the pools on the road, shot through the threads of rain—now falling thin and straight, as from a sieve—, and fell upon the fresh leaves and blades of grass. The great cloud was still louring black and threatening on the far horizon, but I no longer felt afraid of it—I felt only an inexpressibly pleasant hopefulness in proportion, as trust in life replaced the late burden of fear. Indeed, my heart was smiling like that of refreshed, revived Nature herself.

Vassili took off his cloak and wrung the water from it. Woloda flung back the apron, and I stood up in the britchka to drink in the new, fresh, balm-laden air. In front of us was the carriage, rolling along and looking as wet and resplendent in the sunlight as though it had just been polished. On one side of the road boundless oatfields, intersected in places by small ravines which now showed bright with their moist earth and greenery, stretched to the far horizon like a checkered carpet, while on the other side of us an aspen wood, intermingled with hazel bushes, and parquettèd with wild thyme in joyous profusion, no longer rustled and trembled, but slowly dropped rich, sparkling diamonds from its newly-bathed branches on to the withered leaves of last year.

From above us, from every side, came the happy songs of little birds calling to one another among the dripping brushwood, while clear from the inmost depths of the wood sounded the voice of the cuckoo. So delicious was the wondrous scent of the wood, the scent which follows a thunderstorm in spring, the scent of birch-trees, violets, mushrooms, and thyme, that I could no longer remain in the britchka. Jumping out, I ran to some bushes, and, regardless of the showers of drops discharged upon me, tore off a few sprigs of thyme, and buried my face in them to smell their glorious scent.

Then, despite the mud which had got into my boots, as also the fact that my stockings were soaked, I went skipping through the puddles to the window of the carriage.

"Lubotshka! Katenka!" I shouted as I handed them some of the thyme, "Just look how delicious this is!"

The girls smelt it and cried, "A-ah!" but Mimi shrieked to me to go away, for fear I should be run over by the wheels.

"Oh, but smell how delicious it is!" I persisted.

Chapter 3

A NEW POINT OF VIEW

Katenka was with me in the britchka; her lovely head inclined as she gazed pensively at the roadway. I looked at her in silence and wondered what had brought the unchildlike expression of sadness to her face which I now observed for the first time there.

"We shall soon be in Moscow," I said at last. "How large do you suppose it is?"

"I don't know," she replied.

"Well, but how large do you IMAGINE? As large as Serpukhov?"

"What do you say?"

"Nothing."

Yet the instinctive feeling which enables one person to guess the thoughts of another and serves as a guiding thread in conversation soon made Katenka feel that her indifference was disagreeable to me; wherefore she raised her head presently, and, turning round, said:

"Did your Papa tell you that we girls too were going to live at your Grandmamma's?"

"Yes, he said that we should ALL live there,"

"ALL live there?"

"Yes, of course. We shall have one half of the upper floor, and you the other half, and Papa the wing; but we shall all of us dine together with Grandmamma downstairs."

"But Mamma says that your Grandmamma is so very grave and so easily made angry?"

"No, she only SEEMS like that at first. She is grave, but not bad-tempered. On the contrary, she is both kind and cheerful. If you could only have seen the ball at her house!"

"All the same, I am afraid of her. Besides, who knows whether we—"

Katenka stopped short, and once again became thoughtful.

"What?" I asked with some anxiety.

"Nothing, I only said that—"

"No. You said, 'Who knows whether we—'"

"And YOU said, didn't you, that once there was ever such a ball at Grandmamma's?"

"Yes. It is a pity you were not there. There were heaps of guests—about a thousand people, and all of them princes or generals, and there was music, and I danced— But, Katenka" I broke off, "you are not listening to me?"

"Oh yes, I am listening. You said that you danced—?"

"Why are you so serious?"

"Well, one cannot ALWAYS be gay."

"But you have changed tremendously since Woloda and I first went to Moscow. Tell me the truth, now: why are you so odd?" My tone was resolute.

"AM I so odd?" said Katenka with an animation which showed me that my question had interested her. "I don't see that I am so at all."

"Well, you are not the same as you were before," I continued. "Once upon a time any one could see that you were our equal in everything, and that you loved us like relations, just as we did you; but now you are always serious, and keep yourself apart from us."

"Oh, not at all."

"But let me finish, please," I interrupted, already conscious of a slight tickling in my nose—the precursor of the tears which usually came to my eyes whenever I had to vent any long pent-up feeling. "You avoid us, and talk to no one but Mimi, as though you had no wish for our further acquaintance."

"But one cannot always remain the same—one must change a little sometimes," replied Katenka, who had an inveterate habit of pleading some such fatalistic necessity whenever she did not know what else to say.

I recollect that once, when having a quarrel with Lubotshka, who had called her "a stupid girl," she (Katenka) retorted that EVERYBODY could not be wise, seeing that a certain number of stupid people was a necessity in the world. However, on the present occasion, I was not satisfied that any such inevitable necessity for "changing sometimes" existed, and asked further:

"WHY is it necessary?"

"Well, you see, we MAY not always go on living together as we are doing now," said Katenka, colouring slightly, and regarding Philip's back with a grave expression on her face. "My Mamma was able to live with your mother because she was her friend; but will a similar arrangement

always suit the Countess, who, they say, is so easily offended? Besides, in any case, we shall have to separate SOME day. You are rich—you have Petrovskoe, while we are poor—Mamma has nothing."

"You are rich," "we are poor"—both the words and the ideas which they connoted seemed to me extremely strange. Hitherto, I had conceived that only beggars and peasants were poor and could not reconcile in my mind the idea of poverty and the graceful, charming Katenka. I felt that Mimi and her daughter ought to live with us ALWAYS and to share everything that we possessed. Things ought never to be otherwise. Yet, at this moment, a thousand new thoughts with regard to their lonely position came crowding into my head, and I felt so remorseful at the notion that we were rich and they poor, that I coloured up and could not look Katenka in the face.

"Yet what does it matter," I thought, "that we are well off and they are not? Why should that necessitate a separation? Why should we not share in common what we possess?" Yet, I had a feeling that I could not talk to Katenka on the subject, since a certain practical instinct, opposed to all logical reasoning, warned me that, right though she possibly was, I should do wrong to tell her so.

"It is impossible that you should leave us. How could we ever live apart?"

"Yet what else is there to be done? Certainly I do not WANT to do it; yet, if it HAS to be done, I know what my plan in life will be."

"Yes, to become an actress! How absurd!" I exclaimed (for I knew that to enter that profession had always been her favourite dream).

"Oh no. I only used to say that when I was a little girl."

"Well, then? What?"

"To go into a convent and live there. Then I could walk out in a black dress and velvet cap!" cried Katenka.

Has it ever befallen you, my readers, to become suddenly aware that your conception of things has altered—as though every object in life had unexpectedly turned a side towards you of which you had hitherto remained unaware? Such a species of moral change occurred, as regards myself, during this journey, and therefore from it I date the beginning of my boyhood. For the first time in my life, I then envisaged the idea that we—i.e. our family—were not the only persons in the world; that not every conceivable interest was centred in ourselves; and that there existed numbers of people who had nothing in common with us, cared nothing for us, and even knew nothing of our existence. No doubt I had

known all this before—only I had not known it then as I knew it now; I had never properly felt or understood it.

Thought merges into conviction through paths of its own, as well as, sometimes, with great suddenness and by methods wholly different from those which have brought other intellects to the same conclusion. For me the conversation with Katenka—striking deeply as it did, and forcing me to reflect on her future position—constituted such a path. As I gazed at the towns and villages through which we passed, and in each house of which lived at least one family like our own, as well as at the women and children who stared with curiosity at our carriages and then became lost to sight for ever, and the peasants and workmen who did not even look at us, much less make us any obeisance, the question arose for the first time in my thoughts, "Whom else do they care for if not for us?" And this question was followed by others, such as, "To what end do they live?" "How do they educate their children?" "Do they teach their children and let them play? What are their names?" and so forth.

Chapter 4

IN MOSCOW

From the time of our arrival in Moscow, the change in my conception of objects, of persons, and of my connection with them became increasingly perceptible. When at my first meeting with Grandmamma, I saw her thin, wrinkled face and faded eyes, the mingled respect and fear with which she had hitherto inspired me gave place to compassion, and when, laying her cheek against Lubotshka's head, she sobbed as though she saw before her the corpse of her beloved daughter, my compassion grew to love.

I felt deeply sorry to see her grief at our meeting, even though I knew that in ourselves we represented nothing in her eyes, but were dear to her only as reminders of our mother—that every kiss which she imprinted upon my cheeks expressed the one thought, "She is no more—she is dead, and I shall never see her again."

Papa, who took little notice of us here in Moscow, and whose face was perpetually preoccupied on the rare occasions when he came in his black dress-coat to take formal dinner with us, lost much in my eyes at this period, in spite of his turned-up ruffles, robes de chambre, overseers, bailiffs, expeditions to the estate, and hunting exploits.

Karl Ivanitch—whom Grandmamma always called "Uncle," and who (Heaven knows why!) had taken it into his head to adorn the bald pate of my childhood's days with a red wig parted in the middle—now looked to me so strange and ridiculous that I wondered how I could ever have failed to observe the fact before. Even between the girls and ourselves there seemed to have sprung up an invisible barrier. They, too, began to have secrets among themselves, as well as to evince a desire to show off their ever-lengthening skirts even as we boys did our trousers and ankle-straps. As for Mimi, she appeared at luncheon, the first Sunday, in such a gorgeous dress and with so many ribbons in her cap that it was clear that we were no longer en campagne, and that everything was now going to be different.

Chapter 5

MY ELDER BROTHER

I was only a year and some odd months younger than Woloda, and from the first we had grown up and studied and played together. Hitherto, the difference between elder and younger brother had never been felt between us, but at the period of which I am speaking, I began to have a notion that I was not Woloda's equal either in years, in tastes, or in capabilities. I even began to fancy that Woloda himself was aware of his superiority and that he was proud of it, and, though, perhaps, I was wrong, the idea wounded my conceit—already suffering from frequent comparison with him. He was my superior in everything—in games, in studies, in quarrels, and in deportment. All this brought about an estrangement between us and occasioned me moral sufferings which I had never hitherto experienced.

When for the first time Woloda wore Dutch pleated shirts, I at once said that I was greatly put out at not being given similar ones, and each time that he arranged his collar, I felt that he was doing so on purpose to offend me. But, what tormented me most of all was the idea that Woloda could see through me, yet did not choose to show it.

Who has not known those secret, wordless communications which spring from some barely perceptible smile or movement—from a casual glance between two persons who live as constantly together as do brothers, friends, man and wife, or master and servant— particularly if those two persons do not in all things cultivate mutual frankness? How many half-expressed wishes, thoughts, and meanings which one shrinks from revealing are made plain by a single accidental glance which timidly and irresolutely meets the eye!

However, in my own case I may have been deceived by my excessive capacity for, and love of, analysis. Possibly Woloda did not feel at all as I did. Passionate and frank, but unstable in his likings, he was attracted by the most diverse things, and always surrendered himself wholly to such attraction. For instance, he suddenly conceived a passion for pictures,

spent all his money on their purchase, begged Papa, Grandmamma, and his drawing master to add to their number, and applied himself with enthusiasm to art. Next came a sudden rage for curios, with which he covered his table, and for which he ransacked the whole house. Following upon that, he took to violent novel-reading—procuring such works by stealth, and devouring them day and night. Involuntarily I was influenced by his whims, for, though too proud to imitate him, I was also too young and too lacking in independence to choose my own way. Above all, I envied Woloda his happy, nobly frank character, which showed itself most strikingly when we quarrelled. I always felt that he was in the right, yet could not imitate him. For instance, on one occasion when his passion for curios was at its height, I went to his table and accidentally broke an empty many-coloured smelling-bottle.

"Who gave you leave to touch my things?" asked Woloda, chancing to enter the room at that moment and at once perceiving the disorder which I had occasioned in the orderly arrangement of the treasures on his table. "And where is that smelling bottle? Perhaps you—?"

"I let it fall, and it smashed to pieces; but what does that matter?"

"Well, please do me the favour never to DARE to touch my things again," he said as he gathered up the broken fragments and looked at them vexedly.

"And will YOU please do me the favour never to ORDER me to do anything whatever," I retorted. "When a thing's broken, it's broken, and there is no more to be said." Then I smiled, though I hardly felt like smiling.

"Oh, it may mean nothing to you, but to me it means a good deal," said Woloda, shrugging his shoulders (a habit he had caught from Papa). "First of all you go and break my things, and then you laugh. What a nuisance a little boy can be!"

"LITTLE boy, indeed? Then YOU, I suppose, are a man, and ever so wise?"

"I do not intend to quarrel with you," said Woloda, giving me a slight push. "Go away."

"Don't you push me!"

"Go away."

"I say again—don't you push me!"

Woloda took me by the hand and tried to drag me away from the table, but I was excited to the last degree, and gave the table such a push with my foot that I upset the whole concern, and brought china and crystal ornaments and everything else with a crash to the floor.

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