Chapter 1

THE TUTOR, KARL IVANITCH

On the 12th of August, 18— (just three days after my tenth birthday, when I had been given such wonderful presents), I was awakened at seven o'clock in the morning by Karl Ivanitch slapping the wall close to my head with a fly-flap made of sugar paper and a stick. He did this so roughly that he hit the image of my patron saint suspended to the oaken back of my bed, and the dead fly fell down on my curls. I peeped out from under the coverlet, steadied the still shaking image with my hand, flicked the dead fly on to the floor, and gazed at Karl Ivanitch with sleepy, wrathful eyes. He, in a parti-coloured wadded dressing- gown fastened about the waist with a wide belt of the same material, a red knitted cap adorned with a tassel, and soft slippers of goat skin, went on walking round the walls and taking aim at, and slapping, flies.

"Suppose," I thought to myself," that I am only a small boy, yet why should he disturb me? Why does he not go killing flies around Woloda's bed? No; Woloda is older than I, and I am the youngest of the family, so he torments me. That is what he thinks of all day long—how to tease me. He knows very well that he has woken me up and frightened me, but he pretends not to notice it. Disgusting brute! And his dressing-gown and cap and tassel too— they are all of them disgusting."

While I was thus inwardly venting my wrath upon Karl Ivanitch, he had passed to his own bedstead, looked at his watch (which hung suspended in a little shoe sewn with bugles), and deposited the fly-flap on a nail, then, evidently in the most cheerful mood possible, he turned round to us.

"Get up, children! It is quite time, and your mother is already in the drawing-room," he exclaimed in his strong German accent. Then he crossed over to me, sat down at my feet, and took his snuff-box out of his pocket. I pretended to be asleep. Karl Ivanitch sneezed, wiped his nose, flicked his fingers, and began amusing himself by teasing me and tickling my toes as he said with a smile, "Well, well, little lazy one!"

For all my dread of being tickled, I determined not to get out of bed or to answer him,. but hid my head deeper in the pillow, kicked out with all my strength, and strained every nerve to keep from laughing.

"How kind he is, and how fond of us!" I thought to myself, Yet to think that I could be hating him so just now!"

I felt angry, both with myself and with Karl Ivanitch, I wanted to laugh and to cry at the same time, for my nerves were all on edge.

"Leave me alone, Karl!" I exclaimed at length, with tears in my eyes, as I raised my head from beneath the bed-clothes.

Karl Ivanitch was taken aback, He left off tickling my feet, and asked me kindly what the matter was, Had I had a disagreeable dream? His good German face and the sympathy with which he sought to know the cause of my tears made them flow the faster. I felt conscience-stricken, and could not understand how, only a minute ago, I had been hating Karl, and thinking his dressing-gown and cap and tassel disgusting. On the contrary, they looked eminently lovable now. Even the tassel seemed another token of his goodness. I replied that I was crying because I had had a bad dream, and had seen Mamma dead and being buried. Of course it was a mere invention, since I did not remember having dreamt anything at all that night, but the truth was that Karl's sympathy as he tried to comfort and reassure me had gradually made me believe that I HAD dreamt such a horrible dream, and so weep the more— though from a different cause to the one he imagined

When Karl Ivanitch had left me, I sat up in bed and proceeded to draw my stockings over my little feet. The tears had quite dried now, yet the mournful thought of the invented dream was still haunting me a little. Presently Uncle [This term is often applied by children to old servants in Russia] Nicola came in—a neat little man who was always grave, methodical, and respectful, as well as a great friend of Karl's, He brought with him our clothes and boots—at least, boots for Woloda, and for myself the old detestable, be-ribanded shoes. In his presence I felt ashamed to cry, and, moreover, the morning sun was shining so gaily through the window, and Woloda, standing at the washstand as he mimicked Maria Ivanovna (my sister's governess), was laughing so loud and so long, that even the serious Nicola—a towel over his shoulder, the soap in one hand, and the basin in the other—could not help smiling as he said, "Will you please let me wash you, Vladimir Petrovitch?" I had cheered up completely.

"Are you nearly ready?" came Karl's voice from the schoolroom. The tone of that voice sounded stern now, and had nothing in it of the

kindness which had just touched me so much. In fact, in the schoolroom Karl was altogether a different man from what he was at other times. There he was the tutor. I washed and dressed myself hurriedly, and, a brush still in my hand as I smoothed my wet hair, answered to his call. Karl, with spectacles on nose and a book in his hand, was sitting, as usual, between the door and one of the windows. To the left of the door were two shelves— one of them the children's (that is to say, ours), and the other one Karl's own. Upon ours were heaped all sorts of books—lesson books and play books—some standing up and some lying down. The only two standing decorously against the wall were two large volumes of a Histoire des Voyages, in red binding. On that shelf could be seen books thick and thin and books large and small, as well as covers without books and books without covers, since everything got crammed up together anyhow when play time arrived and we were told to put the "library" (as Karl called these shelves) in order The collection of books on his own shelf was, if not so numerous as ours, at least more varied. Three of them in particular I remember, namely, a German pamphlet (minus a cover) on Manuring Cabbages in Kitchen-Gardens, a History of the Seven Years' War (bound in parchment and burnt at one corner), and a Course of Hydrostatics. Though Karl passed so much of his time in reading that he had injured his sight by doing so, he never read anything beyond these books and The Northern Bee.

Another article on Karl's shelf I remember well. This was a round piece of cardboard fastened by a screw to a wooden stand, with a sort of comic picture of a lady and a hairdresser glued to the cardboard. Karl was very clever at fixing pieces of cardboard together, and had devised this contrivance for shielding his weak eyes from any very strong light.

I can see him before me now—the tall figure in its wadded dressing-gown and red cap (a few grey hairs visible beneath the latter) sitting beside the table; the screen with the hairdresser shading his face; one hand holding a book, and the other one resting on the arm of the chair. Before him lie his watch, with a huntsman painted on the dial, a check cotton handkerchief, a round black snuff-box, and a green spectacle- case, The neatness and orderliness of all these articles show clearly that Karl Ivanitch has a clear conscience and a quiet mind.

Sometimes, when tired of running about the salon downstairs, I would steal on tiptoe to the schoolroom and find Karl sitting alone in his armchair as, with a grave and quiet expression on his face, he perused one of his favourite books. Yet sometimes, also, there were moments when he was not reading, and when the spectacles had slipped down his large

aquiline nose, and the blue, half-closed eyes and faintly smiling lips seemed to be gazing before them with a curious expression, All would be quiet in the room—not a sound being audible save his regular breathing and the ticking of the watch with the hunter painted on the dial. He would not see me, and I would stand at the door and think: "Poor, poor old man! There are many of us, and we can play together and be happy, but he sits there all alone, and has nobody to be fond of him. Surely he speaks truth when he says that he is an orphan. And the story of his life, too—how terrible it is! I remember him telling it to Nicola, How dreadful to be in his position!" Then I would feel so sorry for him that I would go to him, and take his hand, and say, "Dear Karl Ivanitch!" and he would be visibly delighted whenever I spoke to him like this, and would look much brighter.

On the second wall of the schoolroom hung some maps—mostly torn, but glued together again by Karl's hand. On the third wall (in the middle of which stood the door) hung, on one side of the door, a couple of rulers (one of them ours—much bescratched, and the other one his—quite a new one), with, on the further side of the door, a blackboard on which our more serious faults were marked by circles and our lesser faults by crosses. To the left of the blackboard was the corner in which we had to kneel when naughty. How well I remember that corner—the shutter on the stove, the ventilator above it, and the noise which it made when turned! Sometimes I would be made to stay in that corner till my back and knees were aching all over, and I would think to myself. "Has Karl Ivanitch forgotten me? He goes on sitting quietly in his arm-chair and reading his Hydrostatics, while I—!" Then, to remind him of my presence, I would begin gently turning the ventilator round. Or scratching some plaster off the wall; but if by chance an extra large piece fell upon the floor, the fright of it was worse than any punishment. I would glance round at Karl, but he would still be sitting there quietly, book in hand, and pretending that he had noticed nothing.

In the middle of the room stood a table, covered with a torn black oilcloth so much cut about with penknives that the edge of the table showed through. Round the table stood unpainted chairs which, through use, had attained a high degree of polish. The fourth and last wall contained three windows, from the first of which the view was as follows, Immediately beneath it there ran a high road on which every irregularity, every pebble, every rut was known and dear to me. Beside the road stretched a row of lime-trees, through which glimpses could be caught of a wattled fence, with a meadow with farm buildings on one side of it and

a wood on the other—the whole bounded by the keeper's hut at the further end of the meadow, The next window to the right overlooked the part of the terrace where the "grownups" of the family used to sit before luncheon. Sometimes, when Karl was correcting our exercises, I would look out of that window and see Mamma's dark hair and the backs of some persons with her, and hear the murmur of their talking and laughter. Then I would feel vexed that I could not be there too, and think to myself, "When am I going to be grown up, and to have no more lessons, but sit with the people whom I love instead of with these horrid dialogues in my hand?" Then my anger would change to sadness, and I would fall into such a reverie that I never heard Karl when he scolded me for my mistakes.

At last, on the morning of which I am speaking, Karl Ivanitch took off his dressing-gown, put on his blue frockcoat with its creased and crumpled shoulders, adjusted his tie before the looking-glass, and took us down to greet Mamma.

Chapter 2

MAMMA

Mamma was sitting in the drawing-room and making tea. In one hand she was holding the tea-pot, while with the other one she was drawing water from the urn and letting it drip into the tray. Yet though she appeared to be noticing what she doing, in reality she noted neither this fact nor our entry.

However vivid be one's recollection of the past, any attempt to recall the features of a beloved being shows them to one's vision as through a mist of tears—dim and blurred. Those tears are the tears of the imagination. When I try to recall Mamma as she was then, I see, true, her brown eyes, expressive always of love and kindness, the small mole on her neck below where the small hairs grow, her white embroidered collar, and the delicate, fresh hand which so often caressed me, and which I so often kissed; but her general appearance escapes me altogether.

To the left of the sofa stood an English piano, at which my dark-haired sister Lubotshka was sitting and playing with manifest effort (for her hands were rosy from a recent washing in cold water) Clementi's "Etudes." Then eleven years old, she was dressed in a short cotton frock and white lace-frilled trousers, and could take her octaves only in arpeggio. Beside her was sitting Maria Ivanovna, in a cap adorned with pink ribbons and a blue shawl, Her face was red and cross, and it assumed an expression even more severe when Karl Ivanitch entered the room. Looking angrily at him without answering his bow, she went on beating time with her foot and counting, " One, two, three—one, two, three," more loudly and commandingly than ever.

Karl Ivanitch paid no attention to this rudeness, but went, as usual, with German politeness to kiss Mamma's hand, She drew herself up, shook her head as though by the movement to chase away sad thoughts from her, and gave Karl her hand, kissing him on his wrinkled temple as he bent his head in salutation.

"I thank you, dear Karl Ivanitch," she said in German, and then, still using the same language asked him how we (the children) had slept. Karl Ivanitch was deaf in one ear, and the added noise of the piano now prevented him from hearing anything at all. He moved nearer to the sofa, and, leaning one hand upon the table and lifting his cap above his head, said with, a smile which in those days always seemed to me the perfection of politeness: "You, will excuse me, will you not, Natalia Nicolaevna?"

The reason for this was that, to avoid catching cold, Karl never took off his red cap, but invariably asked permission, on entering the drawing-room, to retain it on his head.

"Yes, pray replace it, Karl Ivanitch," said Mamma, bending towards him and raising her voice, "But I asked you whether the children had slept well? "

Still he did not hear, but, covering his bald head again with the red cap, went on smiling more than ever,

"Stop a moment, Mimi." said Mamma (now smiling also) to Maria Ivanovna. "It is impossible to hear anything."

How beautiful Mamma's face was when she smiled! It made her so infinitely more charming, and everything around her seemed to grow brighter! If in the more painful moments of my life I could have seen that smile before my eyes, I should never have known what grief is. In my opinion, it is in the smile of a face that the essence of what we call beauty lies. If the smile heightens the charm of the face, then the face is a beautiful one. If the smile does not alter the face, then the face is an ordinary one. But if the smile spoils the face, then the face is an ugly one indeed.

Mamma took my head between her hands, bent it gently backwards, looked at me gravely, and said: "You have been crying this morning?"

I did not answer. She kissed my eyes, and said again in German: "Why did you cry?"

When talking to us with particular intimacy she always used this language, which she knew to perfection.

"I cried about a dream, Mamma" I replied, remembering the invented vision, and trembling involuntarily at the recollection.

Karl Ivanitch confirmed my words, but said nothing as to the subject of the dream. Then, after a little conversation on the weather, in which Mimi also took part, Mamma laid some lumps of sugar on the tray for one or two of the more privileged servants, and crossed over to her embroidery frame, which stood near one of the windows.

"Go to Papa now, children," she said, "and ask him to come to me before he goes to the home farm."

Then the music, the counting, and the wrathful looks from Mimi began again, and we went off to see Papa. Passing through the room which had been known ever since Grandpapa's time as "the pantry," we entered the study,

Chapter 3

PAPA

He was standing near his writing-table, and pointing angrily to some envelopes, papers, and little piles of coin upon it as he addressed some observations to the bailiff, Jakoff Michaelovitch, who was standing in his usual place (that is to say, between the door and the barometer) and rapidly closing and unclosing the fingers of the hand which he held behind his back, The more angry Papa grew, the more rapidly did those fingers twirl, and when Papa ceased speaking they came to rest also. Yet, as soon as ever Jakoff himself began to talk, they flew here, there, and everywhere with lightning rapidity. These movements always appeared to me an index of Jakoff's secret thoughts, though his face was invariably placid, and expressive alike of dignity and submissiveness, as who should say, "I am right, yet let it be as you wish." On seeing us, Papa said, "Directly—wait a moment," and looked towards the door as a hint for it to be shut.

"Gracious heavens! What can be the matter with you to-day, Jakoff?" he went on with a hitch of one shoulder (a habit of his). "This envelope here with the 800 roubles enclosed,"—Jacob took out a set of tablets, put down "800" and remained looking at the figures while he waited for what was to come next—"is for expenses during my absence. Do you understand? From the mill you ought to receive 1000 roubles. Is not that so? And from the Treasury mortgage you ought to receive some 8000 roubles. From the hay—of which, according to your calculations, we shall be able to sell 7000 poods [The pood = 40 lbs.]at 45 copecks a piece there should come in 3000, Consequently the sum-total that you ought to have in hand soon is—how much?—12,000 roubles. Is that right?"

"Precisely," answered Jakoff, Yet by the extreme rapidity with which his fingers were twitching I could see that he had an objection to make. Papa went on:

"Well, of this money you will send 10,000 roubles to the Petrovskoe local council, As for the money already at the office, you will remit it to

me, and enter it as spent on this present date." Jakoff turned over the tablet marked "12,000," and put down "21,000"—seeming, by his action, to imply that 12,000 roubles had been turned over in the same fashion as he had turned the tablet. "And this envelope with the enclosed money," concluded Papa, "you will deliver for me to the person to whom it is addressed."

I was standing close to the table, and could see the address. It was "To Karl Ivanitch Mayer." Perhaps Papa had an idea that I had read something which I ought not, for he touched my shoulder with his hand and made me aware, by a slight movement, that I must withdraw from the table. Not sure whether the movement was meant for a caress or a command, I kissed the large, sinewy hand which rested upon my shoulder.

"Very well," said Jakoff. "And what are your orders about the accounts for the money from Chabarovska?" (Chabarovska was Mamma's village.)

"Only that they are to remain in my office, and not to be taken thence without my express instructions."

For a minute or two Jakoff was silent. Then his fingers began to twitch with extraordinary rapidity, and, changing the expression of deferential vacancy with which he had listened to his orders for one of shrewd intelligence, he turned his tablets back and spoke.

"Will you allow me to inform you, Peter Alexandritch," he said, with frequent pauses between his words, "that, however much you wish it, it is out of the question to repay the local council now. You enumerated some items, I think, as to what ought to come in from the mortgage, the mill, and the hay (he jotted down each of these items on his tablets again as he spoke)." Yet I fear that we must have made a mistake somewhere in the accounts." Here he paused a while, and looked gravely at Papa.

"How so?"

"Well, will you be good enough to look for yourself? There is the account for the mill. The miller has been to me twice to ask for time, and I am afraid that he has no money whatever in hand. He is here now. Would you like to speak to him?"

"No. Tell me what he says," replied Papa, showing by a movement of his head that he had no desire to have speech with the miller,

"Well, it is easy enough to guess what he says. He declares that there is no grinding to be got now, and that his last remaining money has gone to pay for the dam. What good would it do for us to turn him out? As to what you were pleased to say about the mortgage, you yourself are aware that your money there is locked up and cannot be recovered at a

moment's notice. I was sending a load of flour to Ivan Afanovitch to-day, and sent him a letter as well, to which he replies that he would have been glad to oblige you, Peter Alexandritch, were it not that the matter is out of his hands now, and that all the circumstances show that it would take you at least two months to withdraw the money. From the hay I understood you to estimate a return of 3000 roubles?" (Here Jakoff jotted down "3000" on his tablets, and then looked for a moment from the figures to Papa with a peculiar expression on his face.) "Well, surely you see for yourself how little that is? And even then we should lose if we were to sell the stuff now, for you must know that—"

It was clear that he would have had many other arguments to adduce had not Papa interrupted him,

"I cannot make any change in my arrangements," said Papa. "Yet if there should REALLY have to be any delay in the recovery of these sums, we could borrow what we wanted from the Chabarovska funds."

"Very well, sir." The expression of Jakoff's face and the way in which he twitched his fingers showed that this order had given him great satisfaction. He was a serf, and a most zealous, devoted one, but, like all good bailiffs, exacting and parsimonious to a degree in the interests of his master. Moreover, he had some queer notions of his own. He was forever endeavouring to increase his master's property at the expense of his mistress's, and to prove that it would be impossible to avoid using the rents from her estates for the benefit of Petrovskoe (my father's village, and the place where we lived). This point he had now gained and was delighted in consequence.

Papa then greeted ourselves, and said that if we stayed much longer in the country we should become lazy boys; that we were growing quite big now, and must set about doing lessons in earnest,

"I suppose you know that I am starting for Moscow to-night?" he went on, "and that I am going to take you with me? You will live with Grandmamma, but Mamma and the girls will remain here. You know, too, I am sure, that Mamma's one consolation will be to hear that you are doing your lessons well and pleasing every one around you."

The preparations which had been in progress for some days past had made us expect some unusual event, but this news left us thunderstruck, Woloda turned red, and, with a shaking voice, delivered Mamma's message to Papa.

"So this was what my dream foreboded!" I thought to myself. "God send that there come nothing worse!" I felt terribly sorry to have to leave Mamma, but at the same rejoiced to think that I should soon be grown

up, "If we are going to-day, we shall probably have no lessons to do, and that will be splendid, However, I am sorry for Karl Ivanitch, for he will certainly be dismissed now. That was why that envelope had been prepared for him. I think I would almost rather stay and do lessons here than leave Mamma or hurt poor Karl. He is miserable enough already."

As these thoughts crossed my mind I stood looking sadly at the black ribbons on my shoes, After a few words to Karl Ivanitch about the depression of the barometer and an injunction to Jakoff not to feed the hounds, since a farewell meet was to be held after luncheon, Papa disappointed my hopes by sending us off to lessons—though he also consoled us by promising to take us out hunting later.

On my way upstairs I made a digression to the terrace. Near the door leading on to it Papa's favourite hound, Milka, was lying in the sun and blinking her eyes.

"Miloshka," I cried as I caressed her and kissed her nose, we are going away today. Good-bye. Perhaps we shall never see each other again." I was crying and laughing at the same time.

Chapter 4

LESSONS

Karl Ivanitch was in a bad temper, This was clear from his contracted brows, and from the way in which he flung his frockcoat into a drawer, angrily donned his old dressing-gown again, and made deep dints with his nails to mark the place in the book of dialogues to which we were to learn by heart. Woloda began working diligently, but I was too distracted to do anything at all. For a long while I stared vacantly at the book; but tears at the thought of the impending separation kept rushing to my eyes and preventing me from reading a single word. When at length the time came to repeat the dialogues to Karl (who listened to us with blinking eyes—a very bad sign), I had no sooner reached the place where some one asks, "Wo kommen Sie her?" ("Where do you come from?") and some one else answers him, "lch komme vom Kaffeehaus" ("I come from the coffee-house"), than I burst into tears and, for sobbing, could not pronounce, "Haben Sie die Zeitung nicht gelesen?" (Have you not read the newspaper?") at all. Next, when we came to our writing lesson, the tears kept falling from my eyes and, making a mess on the paper, as though some one had written on blotting- paper with water, Karl was very angry. He ordered me to go down upon my knees, declared that it was all obstinacy and " puppet- comedy playing" (a favourite expression of his) on my part, threatened me with the ruler, and commanded me to say that I was sorry. Yet for sobbing and crying I could not get a word out. At last—conscious, perhaps, that he was unjust—he departed to Nicola's pantry, and slammed the door behind him. Nevertheless their conversation there carried to the schoolroom.

"Have you heard that the children are going to Moscow, Nicola?" said Karl.

"Yes. How could I help hearing it?"

At this point Nicola seemed to get up for Karl said, "Sit down, Nicola," and then locked the door. However, I came out of my corner and crept to the door to listen.

"However much you may do for people, and however fond of them you may be, never expect any gratitude, Nicola," said Karl warmly. Nicola, who was shoe-cobbling by the window, nodded his head in assent.

"Twelve years have I lived in this house," went on Karl, lifting his eyes and his snuff-box towards the ceiling, "and before God I can say that I have loved them, and worked for them, even more than if they had been my own children. You recollect, Nicola, when Woloda had the fever? You recollect how, for nine days and nights, I never closed my eyes as I sat beside his bed? Yes, at that time I was 'the dear, good Karl Ivanitch'—I was wanted then; but now"—and he smiled ironically—"the children are growing up, and must go to study in earnest. Perhaps they never learnt anything with me, Nicola? Eh?"

"I am sure they did," replied Nicola, laying his awl down and straightening a piece of thread with his hands.

"No, I am wanted no longer, and am to be turned out. What good are promises and gratitude? Natalia Nicolaevna"—here he laid his hand upon his heart—"I love and revere, but what can SHE I do here? Her will is powerless in this house."

He flung a strip of leather on the floor with an angry gesture. "Yet I know who has been playing tricks here, and why I am no longer wanted. It is because I do not flatter and toady as certain people do. I am in the habit of speaking the truth in all places and to all persons," he continued proudly, "God be with these children, for my leaving them will benefit them little, whereas I—well, by God's help I may be able to earn a crust of bread somewhere. Nicola, eh?"

Nicola raised his head and looked at Karl as though to consider whether he would indeed be able to earn a crust of bread, but he said nothing. Karl said a great deal more of the same kind—in particular how much better his services had been appreciated at a certain general's where he had formerly lived (I regretted to hear that). Likewise he spoke of Saxony, his parents, his friend the tailor, Schonheit (beauty), and so on.

I sympathised with his distress, and felt dreadfully sorry that he and Papa (both of whom I loved about equally) had had a difference. Then I returned to my corner, crouched down upon my heels, and fell to thinking how a reconciliation between them might be effected.

Returning to the study, Karl ordered me to get up and prepare to write from dictation. When I was ready he sat down with a dignified air in his arm-chair, and in a voice which seemed to come from a profound abyss began to dictate: "Von al-len Lei- den-shaf-ten die grau-samste ist. Have

you written that? " He paused, took a pinch of snuff, and began again: "Die grausamste ist die Un-dank-bar-keit [The most cruel of all passions is ingratitude.] a capital U, mind."

The last word written, I looked at him, for him to go on,

"Punctum" (stop), he concluded, with a faintly perceptible smile, as he signed to us to hand him our copy-books.

Several times, and in several different tones, and always with an expression of the greatest satisfaction, did he read out that sentence, which expressed his predominant thought at the moment, Then he set us to learn a lesson in history, and sat down near the window. His face did not look so depressed now, but, on the contrary, expressed eloquently the satisfaction of a man who had avenged himself for an injury dealt him.

By this time it was a quarter to one o'clock, but Karl Ivanitch never thought of releasing us, He merely set us a new lesson to learn. My fatigue and hunger were increasing in equal proportions, so that I eagerly followed every sign of the approach of luncheon. First came the housemaid with a cloth to wipe the plates, Next, the sound of crockery resounded in the dining-room, as the table was moved and chairs placed round it, After that, Mimi, Lubotshka, and Katenka. (Katenka was Mimi's daughter, and twelve years old) came in from the garden, but Foka (the servant who always used to come and announce luncheon) was not yet to be seen. Only when he entered was it lawful to throw one's books aside and run downstairs.

Hark! Steps resounded on the staircase, but they were not Foka's. Foka's I had learnt to study, and knew the creaking of his boots well. The door opened, and a figure unknown to me made its appearance,

Chapter 5

THE IDIOT

The man who now entered the room was about fifty years old, with a pale, attenuated face pitted with smallpox, long grey hair, and a scanty beard of a reddish hue. Likewise he was so tall that, on coming through the doorway, he was forced not only to bend his head, but to incline his whole body forward. He was dressed in a sort of smock that was much torn, and held in his hand a stout staff. As he entered he smote this staff upon the floor, and, contracting his brows and opening his mouth to its fullest extent, laughed in a dreadful, unnatural way. He had lost the sight of one eye, and its colourless pupil kept rolling about and imparting to his hideous face an even more repellent expression than it otherwise bore.

"Hullo, you are caught!" he exclaimed as he ran to Woloda with little short steps and, seizing him round the head, looked at it searchingly. Next he left him, went to the table, and, with a perfectly serious expression on his face, began to blow under the oil-cloth, and to make the sign of the cross over it, "O-oh, what a pity! O-oh, how it hurts! They are angry! They fly from me!" he exclaimed in a tearful choking voice as he glared at Woloda and wiped away the streaming tears with his sleeve, His voice was harsh and rough, all his movements hysterical and spasmodic, and his words devoid of sense or connection (for he used no conjunctions). Yet the tone of that voice was so heartrending, and his yellow, deformed face at times so sincere and pitiful in its expression, that, as one listened to him, it was impossible to repress a mingled sensation of pity, grief, and fear.

This was the idiot Grisha. Whence he had come, or who were his parents, or what had induced him to choose the strange life which he led, no one ever knew. All that I myself knew was that from his fifteenth year upwards he had been known as an imbecile who went barefooted both in winter and summer, visited convents, gave little images to any one who cared to take them, and spoke meaningless words which some

people took for prophecies; that nobody remembered him as being different; that at, rate intervals he used to call at Grandmamma's house; and that by some people he was said to be the outcast son of rich parents and a pure, saintly soul, while others averred that he was a mere peasant and an idler.

At last the punctual and wished-for Foka arrived, and we went downstairs. Grisha followed us sobbing and continuing to talk nonsense, and knocking his staff on each step of the staircase. When we entered the drawing-room we found Papa and Mamma walking up and down there, with their hands clasped in each other's, and talking in low tones. Maria Ivanovna was sitting bolt upright in an arm-chair placed at tight angles to the sofa, and giving some sort of a lesson to the two girls sitting beside her. When Karl Ivanitch entered the room she looked at him for a moment, and then turned her eyes away with an expression which seemed to say, "You are beneath my notice, Karl Ivanitch." It was easy to see from the girls' eyes that they had important news to communicate to us as soon as an opportunity occurred (for to leave their seats and approach us first was contrary to Mimi's rules). It was for us to go to her and say, "Bon jour, Mimi," and then make her a low bow; after which we should possibly be permitted to enter into conversation with the girls.

What an intolerable creature that Mimi was! One could hardly say a word in her presence without being found fault with. Also whenever we wanted to speak in Russian, she would say, "Parlez, donc, francais," as though on purpose to annoy us, while, if there was any particularly nice dish at luncheon which we wished to enjoy in peace, she would keep on ejaculating, "Mangez, donc, avec du pain!" or, "Comment est-ce que vous tenez votre fourchette?" "What has SHE got to do with us?" I used to think to myself. "Let her teach the girls. WE have our Karl Ivanitch." I shared to the full his dislike of "certain people."

"Ask Mamma to let us go hunting too," Katenka whispered to me, as she caught me by the sleeve just when the elders of the family were making a move towards the dining-room.

"Very well. I will try."

Grisha likewise took a seat in the dining-room, but at a little table apart from the rest. He never lifted his eyes from his plate, but kept on sighing and making horrible grimaces, as he muttered to himself: "What a pity! It has flown away! The dove is flying to heaven! The stone lies on the tomb!" and so forth.

Ever since the morning Mamma had been absent-minded, and Grisha's presence, words, and actions seemed to make her more so.