PART THIRD

I

The water under the bridge ran violent and deep. Its slightly undulating rush seemed capable of scouring out a channel for itself through solid granite while you looked. But had it flowed through Razumov's breast, it could not have washed away the accumulated bitterness the wrecking of his life had deposited there.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he thought, staring downwards at the headlong flow so smooth and clean that only the passage of a faint air-bubble, or a thin vanishing streak of foam like a white hair, disclosed its vertiginous rapidity, its terrible force. "Why has that meddlesome old Englishman blundered against me? And what is this silly tale of a crazy old woman?"

He was trying to think brutally on purpose, but he avoided any mental reference to the young girl. "A crazy old woman," he repeated to himself. "It is a fatality! Or ought I to despise all this as absurd? But no! I am wrong! I can't afford to despise anything. An absurdity may be the starting-point of the most dangerous complications. How is one to guard against it? It puts to rout one's intelligence. The more intelligent one is the less one suspects an absurdity."

A wave of wrath choked his thoughts for a moment. It even made his body leaning over the parapet quiver; then he resumed his silent thinking, like a secret dialogue with himself. And even in that privacy, his thought had some reservations of which he was vaguely conscious.

"After all, this is not absurd. It is insignificant. It is absolutely insignificant--absolutely. The craze of an old woman--the fussy officiousness of a blundering elderly Englishman. What devil put him in the way? Haven't I treated him cavalierly enough? Haven't I just? That's the way to treat these meddlesome persons. Is it possible that he still stands behind my back, waiting?"

Razumov felt a faint chill run down his spine. It was not fear. He was certain that it was not fear--not fear for himself--but it was, all the same, a sort of apprehension as if for another, for some one he knew without being able to put a name on the personality. But the recollection that the officious Englishman had a

train to meet tranquillized him for a time. It was too stupid to suppose that he should be wasting his time in waiting. It was unnecessary to look round and make sure.

But what did the man mean by his extraordinary rigmarole about the newspaper, and that crazy old woman? he thought suddenly. It was a damnable presumption, anyhow, something that only an Englishman could be capable of. All this was a sort of sport for him--the sport of revolution--a game to look at from the height of his superiority. And what on earth did he mean by his exclamation, "Won't the truth do?"

Razumov pressed his folded arms to the stone coping over which he was leaning with force. "Won't the truth do? The truth for the crazy old mother of the--"

The young man shuddered again. Yes. The truth would do! Apparently it would do. Exactly. And receive thanks, he thought, formulating the unspoken words cynically. "Fall on my neck in gratitude, no doubt," he jeered mentally. But this mood abandoned him at once. He felt sad, as if his heart had become empty suddenly. "Well, I must be cautious," he concluded, coming to himself as though his brain had been awakened from a trance. "There is nothing, no one, too insignificant, too absurd to be disregarded," he thought wearily. "I must be cautious."

Razumov pushed himself with his hand away from the balustrade and, retracing his steps along the bridge, walked straight to his lodgings, where, for a few days, he led a solitary and retired existence. He neglected Peter Ivanovitch, to whom he was accredited by the Stuttgart group; he never went near the refugee revolutionists, to whom he had been introduced on his arrival. He kept out of that world altogether. And he felt that such conduct, causing surprise and arousing suspicion, contained an element of danger for himself.

This is not to say that during these few days he never went out. I met him several times in the streets, but he gave me no recognition. Once, going home after an evening call on the ladies Haldin, I saw him crossing the dark roadway of the Boulevard des Philosophes. He had a broad-brimmed soft hat, and the collar of his coat turned up. I watched him make straight for the house, but, instead of going in, he stopped opposite the still lighted windows, and after a time went away down a side-street.

I knew that he had not been to see Mrs. Haldin yet. Miss Haldin told me he was reluctant; moreover, the mental condition of Mrs. Haldin had changed. She seemed to think now that her son was living, and she perhaps awaited his arrival. Her immobility in the great arm-chair in front of the window had an air of

expectancy, even when the blind was down and the lamps lighted.

For my part, I was convinced that she had received her death-stroke; Miss Haldin, to whom, of course, I said nothing of my forebodings, thought that no good would come from introducing Mr. Razumov just then, an opinion which I shared fully. I knew that she met the young man on the Bastions. Once or twice I saw them strolling slowly up the main alley. They met every day for weeks. I avoided passing that way during the hour when Miss Haldin took her exercise there. One day, however, in a fit of absent-mindedness, I entered the gates and came upon her walking alone. I stopped to exchange a few words. Mr. Razumov failed to turn up, and we began to talk about him--naturally.

"Did he tell you anything definite about your brother's activities--his end?" I ventured to ask.

"No," admitted Miss Haldin, with some hesitation. "Nothing definite."

I understood well enough that all their conversations must have been referred mentally to that dead man who had brought them together. That was unavoidable. But it was in the living man that she was interested. That was unavoidable too, I suppose. And as I pushed my inquiries I discovered that he had disclosed himself to her as a by no means conventional revolutionist, contemptuous of catchwords, of theories, of men too. I was rather pleased at that--but I was a little puzzled.

"His mind goes forward, far ahead of the struggle," Miss Haldin explained. "Of course, he is an actual worker too," she added.

"And do you understand him?" I inquired point-blank.

She hesitated again. "Not altogether," she murmured.

I perceived that he had fascinated her by an assumption of mysterious reserve.

"Do you know what I think?" she went on, breaking through her reserved, almost reluctant attitude: "I think that he is observing, studying me, to discover whether I am worthy of his trust...."

"And that pleases you?"

She kept mysteriously silent for a moment. Then with energy, but in a confidential tone--

"I am convinced;" she declared, "that this extraordinary man is meditating some vast plan, some great undertaking; he is possessed by it--he suffers from it--and from being alone in the world."

"And so he's looking for helpers?" I commented, turning away my head.

Again there was a silence.

"Why not?" she said at last.

The dead brother, the dying mother, the foreign friend, had fallen into a distant background. But, at the same time, Peter Ivanovitch was absolutely nowhere now. And this thought consoled me. Yet I saw the gigantic shadow of Russian life deepening around her like the darkness of an advancing night. It would devour her presently. I inquired after Mrs. Haldin--that other victim of the deadly shade.

A remorseful uneasiness appeared in her frank eyes. Mother seemed no worse, but if I only knew what strange fancies she had sometimes! Then Miss Haldin, glancing at her watch, declared that she could not stay a moment longer, and with a hasty hand-shake ran off lightly.

Decidedly, Mr. Razumov was not to turn up that day. Incomprehensible youth!

But less than an hour afterwards, while crossing the Place Mollard, I caught sight of him boarding a South Shore tramcar.

"He's going to the Chateau Borel," I thought.

After depositing Razumov at the gates of the Chateau Borel, some half a mile or so from the town, the car continued its journey between two straight lines of shady trees. Across the roadway in the sunshine a short wooden pier jutted into the shallow pale water, which farther out had an intense blue tint contrasting unpleasantly with the green orderly slopes on the opposite shore. The whole view, with the harbour jetties of white stone underlining lividly the dark front of the town to the left, and the expanding space of water to the right with jutting promontories of no particular character, had the uninspiring, glittering quality of a very fresh oleograph. Razumov turned his back on it with contempt. He thought it odious--oppressively odious--in its unsuggestive finish: the very perfection of mediocrity attained at last after centuries of toil and culture. And turning his back on it, he faced the entrance to the grounds of the Chateau Borel.

The bars of the central way and the wrought-iron arch between the dark weather-stained stone piers were very rusty; and, though fresh tracks of wheels ran under

it, the gate looked as if it had not been opened for a very long time. But close against the lodge, built of the same grey stone as the piers (its windows were all boarded up), there was a small side entrance. The bars of that were rusty too; it stood ajar and looked as though it had not been closed for a long time. In fact, Razumov, trying to push it open a little wider, discovered it was immovable.

"Democratic virtue. There are no thieves here, apparently," he muttered to himself, with displeasure. Before advancing into the grounds he looked back sourly at an idle working man lounging on a bench in the clean, broad avenue. The fellow had thrown his feet up; one of his arms hung over the low back of the public seat; he was taking a day off in lordly repose, as if everything in sight belonged to him.

"Elector! Eligible! Enlightened!" Razumov muttered to himself. "A brute, all the same."

Razumov entered the grounds and walked fast up the wide sweep of the drive, trying to think of nothing--to rest his head, to rest his emotions too. But arriving at the foot of the terrace before the house he faltered, affected physically by some invisible interference. The mysteriousness of his quickened heart-beats startled him. He stopped short and looked at the brick wall of the terrace, faced with shallow arches, meagrely clothed by a few unthriving creepers, with an ill-kept narrow flower-bed along its foot.

"It is here!" he thought, with a sort of awe. "It is here--on this very spot...."

He was tempted to flight at the mere recollection of his first meeting with Nathalie Haldin. He confessed it to himself; but he did not move, and that not because he wished to resist an unworthy weakness, but because he knew that he had no place to fly to. Moreover, he could not leave Geneva. He recognized, even without thinking, that it was impossible. It would have been a fatal admission, an act of moral suicide. It would have been also physically dangerous. Slowly he ascended the stairs of the terrace, flanked by two stained greenish stone urns of funereal aspect.

Across the broad platform, where a few blades of grass sprouted on the discoloured gravel, the door of the house, with its ground-floor windows shuttered, faced him, wide open. He believed that his approach had been noted, because, framed in the doorway, without his tall hat, Peter Ivanovitch seemed to be waiting for his approach.

The ceremonious black frock-coat and the bared head of Europe's greatest feminist accentuated the dubiousness of his status in the house rented by

Madame de S--, his Egeria. His aspect combined the formality of the caller with the freedom of the proprietor. Florid and bearded and masked by the dark blue glasses, he met the visitor, and at once took him familiarly under the arm.

Razumov suppressed every sign of repugnance by an effort which the constant necessity of prudence had rendered almost mechanical. And this necessity had settled his expression in a cast of austere, almost fanatical, aloofness. The "heroic fugitive," impressed afresh by the severe detachment of this new arrival from revolutionary Russia, took a conciliatory, even a confidential tone. Madame de S-- was resting after a bad night. She often had bad nights. He had left his hat upstairs on the landing and had come down to suggest to his young friend a stroll and a good open-hearted talk in one of the shady alleys behind the house. After voicing this proposal, the great man glanced at the unmoved face by his side, and could not restrain himself from exclaiming--

"On my word, young man, you are an extraordinary person."

"I fancy you are mistaken, Peter Ivanovitch. If I were really an extraordinary person, I would not be here, walking with you in a garden in Switzerland, Canton of Geneva, Commune of--what's the name of the Commune this place belongs to?... Never mind--the heart of democracy, anyhow. A fit heart for it; no bigger than a parched pea and about as much value. I am no more extraordinary than the rest of us Russians, wandering abroad."

But Peter Ivanovitch dissented emphatically--

"No! No! You are not ordinary. I have some experience of Russians who are--well--living abroad. You appear to me, and to others too, a marked personality."

"What does he mean by this?" Razumov asked himself, turning his eyes fully on his companion. The face of Peter Ivanovitch expressed a meditative seriousness.

"You don't suppose, Kirylo Sidorovitch, that I have not heard of you from various points where you made yourself known on your way here? I have had letters."

"Oh, we are great in talking about each other," interjected Razumov, who had listened with great attention. "Gossip, tales, suspicions, and all that sort of thing, we know how to deal in to perfection. Calumny, even."

In indulging in this sally, Razumov managed very well to conceal the feeling of anxiety which had come over him. At the same time he was saying to himself that there could be no earthly reason for anxiety. He was relieved by the evident sincerity of the protesting voice.

"Heavens!" cried Peter Ivanovitch. "What are you talking about? What reason can you have to...?"

The great exile flung up his arms as if words had failed him in sober truth. Razumov was satisfied. Yet he was moved to continue in the same vein.

"I am talking of the poisonous plants which flourish in the world of conspirators, like evil mushrooms in a dark cellar."

"You are casting aspersions," remonstrated Peter Ivanovitch, "which as far as you are concerned--"

"No!" Razumov interrupted without heat. "Indeed, I don't want to cast aspersions, but it's just as well to have no illusions."

Peter Ivanovitch gave him an inscrutable glance of his dark spectacles, accompanied by a faint smile.

"The man who says that he has no illusions has at least that one," he said, in a very friendly tone. "But I see how it is, Kirylo Sidorovitch. You aim at stoicism."

"Stoicism! That's a pose of the Greeks and the Romans. Let's leave it to them. We are Russians, that is--children; that is--sincere; that is--cynical, if you like. But that's not a pose."

A long silence ensued. They strolled slowly under the lime-trees. Peter Ivanovitch had put his hands behind his back. Razumov felt the ungravelled ground of the deeply shaded walk damp and as if slippery under his feet. He asked himself, with uneasiness, if he were saying the right things. The direction of the conversation ought to have been more under his control, he reflected. The great man appeared to be reflecting on his side too. He cleared his throat slightly, and Razumov felt at once a painful reawakening of scorn and fear.

"I am astonished," began Peter Ivanovitch gently. "Supposing you are right in your indictment, how can you raise any question of calumny or gossip, in your case? It is unreasonable. The fact is, Kirylo Sidorovitch, there is not enough known of you to give hold to gossip or even calumny. Just now you are a man associated with a great deed, which had been hoped for, and tried for too, without success. People have perished for attempting that which you and Haldin have done at last. You come to us out of Russia, with that prestige. But you cannot deny that you have not been communicative, Kirylo Sidorovitch. People you have met imparted their impressions to me; one wrote this, another that, but I form my own opinions. I

waited to see you first. You are a man out of the common. That's positively so. You are close, very close. This taciturnity, this severe brow, this something inflexible and secret in you, inspires hopes and a little wonder as to what you may mean. There is something of a Brutus...."

"Pray spare me those classical allusions!" burst out Razumov nervously. "What comes Junius Brutus to do here? It is ridiculous! Do you mean to say," he added sarcastically, but lowering his voice, "that the Russian revolutionists are all patricians and that I am an aristocrat?"

Peter Ivanovitch, who had been helping himself with a few gestures, clasped his hands again behind his back, and made a few steps, pondering.

"Not all patricians," he muttered at last. "But you, at any rate, are one of us."

Razumov smiled bitterly.

"To be sure my name is not Gugenheimer," he said in a sneering tone. "I am not a democratic Jew. How can I help it? Not everybody has such luck. I have no name, I have no...."

The European celebrity showed a great concern. He stepped back a pace and his arms flew in front of his person, extended, deprecatory, almost entreating. His deep bass voice was full of pain.

"But, my dear young friend!" he cried. "My dear Kirylo Sidorovitch...."

Razumov shook his head.

"The very patronymic you are so civil as to use when addressing me I have no legal right to--but what of that? I don't wish to claim it. I have no father. So much the better. But I will tell you what: my mother's grandfather was a peasant--a serf. See how much I am one of you. I don't want anyone to claim me. But Russia can't disown me. She cannot!"

Razumov struck his breast with his fist.

"I am it!"

Peter Ivanovitch walked on slowly, his head lowered. Razumov followed, vexed with himself. That was not the right sort of talk. All sincerity was an imprudence. Yet one could not renounce truth altogether, he thought, with despair. Peter Ivanovitch, meditating behind his dark glasses, became to him suddenly so

odious that if he had had a knife, he fancied he could have stabbed him not only without compunction, but with a horrible, triumphant satisfaction. His imagination dwelt on that atrocity in spite of himself. It was as if he were becoming light-headed. "It is not what is expected of me," he repeated to himself. "It is not what is--I could get away by breaking the fastening on the little gate I see there in the back wall. It is a flimsy lock. Nobody in the house seems to know he is here with me. Oh yes. The hat! These women would discover presently the hat he has left on the landing. They would come upon him, lying dead in this damp, gloomy shade--but I would be gone and no one could ever...Lord! Am I going mad?" he asked himself in a fright.

The great man was heard--musing in an undertone.

"H'm, yes! That--no doubt--in a certain sense...." He raised his voice. "There is a deal of pride about you...."

The intonation of Peter Ivanovitch took on a homely, familiar ring, acknowledging, in a way, Razumov's claim to peasant descent.

"A great deal of pride, brother Kirylo. And I don't say that you have no justification for it. I have admitted you had. I have ventured to allude to the facts of your birth simply because I attach no mean importance to it. You are one of us--un des notres. I reflect on that with satisfaction."

"I attach some importance to it also," said Razumov quietly. "I won't even deny that it may have some importance for you too," he continued, after a slight pause and with a touch of grimness of which he was himself aware, with some annoyance. He hoped it had escaped the perception of Peter Ivanovitch. "But suppose we talk no more about it?"

"Well, we shall not--not after this one time, Kirylo Sidorovitch," persisted the noble arch-priest of Revolution. "This shall be the last occasion. You cannot believe for a moment that I had the slightest idea of wounding your feelings. You are clearly a superior nature--that's how I read you. Quite above the common--h'm--susceptibilities. But the fact is, Kirylo Sidorovitch, I don't know your susceptibilities. Nobody, out of Russia, knows much of you--as yet!"

"You have been watching me?" suggested Razumov.

"Yes."

The great man had spoken in a tone of perfect frankness, but as they turned their faces to each other Razumov felt baffled by the dark spectacles. Under their

cover, Peter Ivanovitch hinted that he had felt for some time the need of meeting a man of energy and character, in view of a certain project. He said nothing more precise, however; and after some critical remarks upon the personalities of the various members of the committee of revolutionary action in Stuttgart, he let the conversation lapse for quite a long while. They paced the alley from end to end. Razumov, silent too, raised his eyes from time to time to cast a glance at the back of the house. It offered no sign of being inhabited. With its grimy, weather-stained walls and all the windows shuttered from top to bottom, it looked damp and gloomy and deserted. It might very well have been haunted in traditional style by some doleful, groaning, futile ghost of a middle-class order. The shades evoked, as worldly rumour had it, by Madame de S-- to meet statesmen, diplomatists, deputies of various European Parliaments, must have been of another sort. Razumov had never seen Madame de S-- but in the carriage.

Peter Ivanovitch came out of his abstraction.

"Two things I may say to you at once. I believe, first, that neither a leader nor any decisive action can come out of the dregs of a people. Now, if you ask me what are the dregs of a people--h'm--it would take too long to tell. You would be surprised at the variety of ingredients that for me go to the making up of these dregs--of that which ought, must remain at the bottom. Moreover, such a statement might be subject to discussion. But I can tell you what is not the dregs. On that it is impossible for us to disagree. The peasantry of a people is not the dregs; neither is its highest class--well--the nobility. Reflect on that, Kirylo Sidorovitch! I believe you are well fitted for reflection. Everything in a people that is not genuine, not its own by origin or development, is--well--dirt! Intelligence in the wrong place is that. Foreign-bred doctrines are that. Dirt! Dregs! The second thing I would offer to your meditation is this: that for us at this moment there yawns a chasm between the past and the future. It can never be bridged by foreign liberalism. All attempts at it are either folly or cheating. Bridged it can never be! It has to be filled up."

A sort of sinister jocularity had crept into the tones of the burly feminist. He seized Razumov's arm above the elbow, and gave it a slight shake.

"Do you understand, enigmatical young man? It has got to be just filled up."

Razumov kept an unmoved countenance.

"Don't you think that I have already gone beyond meditation on that subject?" he said, freeing his arm by a quiet movement which increased the distance a little between himself and Peter Ivanovitch, as they went on strolling abreast. And he added that surely whole cartloads of words and theories could never fill that

chasm. No meditation was necessary. A sacrifice of many lives could alone--He fell silent without finishing the phrase.

Peter Ivanovitch inclined his big hairy head slowly. After a moment he proposed that they should go and see if Madame de S-- was now visible.

"We shall get some tea," he said, turning out of the shaded gloomy walk with a brisker step.

The lady companion had been on the look out. Her dark skirt whisked into the doorway as the two men came in sight round the corner. She ran off somewhere altogether, and had disappeared when they entered the hall. In the crude light falling from the dusty glass skylight upon the black and white tessellated floor, covered with muddy tracks, their footsteps echoed faintly. The great feminist led the way up the stairs. On the balustrade of the first-floor landing a shiny tall hat reposed, rim upwards, opposite the double door of the drawing-room, haunted, it was said, by evoked ghosts, and frequented, it was to be supposed, by fugitive revolutionists. The cracked white paint of the panels, the tarnished gilt of the mouldings, permitted one to imagine nothing but dust and emptiness within. Before turning the massive brass handle, Peter Ivanovitch gave his young companion a sharp, partly critical, partly preparatory glance.

"No one is perfect," he murmured discreetly. Thus, the possessor of a rare jewel might, before opening the casket, warn the profane that no gem perhaps is flawless.

He remained with his hand on the door-handle so long that Razumov assented by a moody "No."

"Perfection itself would not produce that effect," pursued Peter Ivanovitch, "in a world not meant for it. But you shall find there a mind--no!--the quintessence of feminine intuition which will understand any perplexity you may be suffering from by the irresistible, enlightening force of sympathy. Nothing can remain obscure before that--that--inspired, yes, inspired penetration, this true light of femininity."

The gaze of the dark spectacles in its glossy steadfastness gave his face an air of absolute conviction. Razumov felt a momentary shrinking before that closed door.

"Penetration? Light," he stammered out. "Do you mean some sort of thought-reading?"

Peter Ivanovitch seemed shocked.

"I mean something utterly different," he retorted, with a faint, pitying smile.

Razumov began to feel angry, very much against his wish.

"This is very mysterious," he muttered through his teeth.

"You don't object to being understood, to being guided?" queried the great feminist. Razumov exploded in a fierce whisper.

"In what sense? Be pleased to understand that I am a serious person. Who do you take me for?"

They looked at each other very closely. Razumov's temper was cooled by the impenetrable earnestness of the blue glasses meeting his stare. Peter Ivanovitch turned the handle at last.

"You shall know directly," he said, pushing the door open.

A low-pitched grating voice was heard within the room.

"Enfin."

In the doorway, his black-coated bulk blocking the view, Peter Ivanovitch boomed in a hearty tone with something boastful in it.

"Yes. Here I am!"

He glanced over his shoulder at Razumov, who waited for him to move on.

"And I am bringing you a proved conspirator--a real one this time. Un vrai celui la."

This pause in the doorway gave the "proved conspirator" time to make sure that his face did not betray his angry curiosity and his mental disgust.

These sentiments stand confessed in Mr. Razumov's memorandum of his first interview with Madame de S--. The very words I use in my narrative are written where their sincerity cannot be suspected. The record, which could not have been meant for anyone's eyes but his own, was not, I think, the outcome of that strange impulse of indiscretion common to men who lead secret lives, and accounting for the invariable existence of "compromising documents" in all the plots and conspiracies of history. Mr. Razumov looked at it, I suppose, as a man

looks at himself in a mirror, with wonder, perhaps with anguish, with anger or despair. Yes, as a threatened man may look fearfully at his own face in the glass, formulating to himself reassuring excuses for his appearance marked by the taint of some insidious hereditary disease.

II

The Egeria of the "Russian Mazzini" produced, at first view, a strong effect by the death-like immobility of an obviously painted face. The eyes appeared extraordinarily brilliant. The figure, in a close-fitting dress, admirably made, but by no means fresh, had an elegant stiffness. The rasping voice inviting him to sit down; the rigidity of the upright attitude with one arm extended along the back of the sofa, the white gleam of the big eyeballs setting off the black, fathomless stare of the enlarged pupils, impressed Razumov more than anything he had seen since his hasty and secret departure from St. Petersburg. A witch in Parisian clothes, he thought. A portent! He actually hesitated in his advance, and did not even comprehend, at first, what the rasping voice was saying.

"Sit down. Draw your chair nearer me. There--"

He sat down. At close quarters the rouged cheekbones, the wrinkles, the fine lines on each side of the vivid lips, astounded him. He was being received graciously, with a smile which made him think of a grinning skull.

"We have been hearing about you for some time."

He did not know what to say, and murmured some disconnected words. The grinning skull effect vanished.

"And do you know that the general complaint is that you have shown yourself very reserved everywhere?"

Razumov remained silent for a time, thinking of his answer.

"I, don't you see, am a man of action," he said huskily, glancing upwards.

Peter Ivanovitch stood in portentous expectant silence by the side of his chair. A slight feeling of nausea came over Razumov. What could be the relations of these two people to each other? She like a galvanized corpse out of some Hoffman's Tale--he the preacher of feminist gospel for all the world, and a super-revolutionist besides! This ancient, painted mummy with unfathomable eyes, and this burly, bull-necked, deferential...what was it? Witchcraft, fascination.... "It's for her money," he thought. "She has millions!"

The walls, the floor of the room were bare like a barn. The few pieces of furniture had been discovered in the garrets and dragged down into service without having been properly dusted, even. It was the refuse the banker's widow had left behind her. The windows without curtains had an indigent, sleepless look. In two of them

the dirty yellowy-white blinds had been pulled down. All this spoke, not of poverty, but of sordid penuriousness.

The hoarse voice on the sofa uttered angrily--

"You are looking round, Kirylo Sidorovitch. I have been shamefully robbed, positively ruined."

A rattling laugh, which seemed beyond her control, interrupted her for a moment.

"A slavish nature would find consolation in the fact that the principal robber was an exalted and almost a sacrosanct person--a Grand Duke, in fact. Do you understand, Mr. Razumov? A Grand Duke--No! You have no idea what thieves those people are! Downright thieves!"

Her bosom heaved, but her left arm remained rigidly extended along the back of the couch.

"You will only upset yourself," breathed out a deep voice, which, to Razumov's startled glance, seemed to proceed from under the steady spectacles of Peter Ivanovitch, rather than from his lips, which had hardly moved.

"What of hat? I say thieves! Voleurs! Voleurs!"

Razumov was quite confounded by this unexpected clamour, which had in it something of wailing and croaking, and more than a suspicion of hysteria.

"Voleurs! Voleurs! Vol...."

"No power on earth can rob you of your genius," shouted Peter Ivanovitch in an overpowering bass, but without stirring, without a gesture of any kind. A profound silence fell.

Razumov remained outwardly impassive. "What is the meaning of this performance?" he was asking himself. But with a preliminary sound of bumping outside some door behind him, the lady companion, in a threadbare black skirt and frayed blouse, came in rapidly, walking on her heels, and carrying in both hands a big Russian samovar, obviously too heavy for her. Razumov made an instinctive movement to help, which startled her so much that she nearly dropped her hissing burden. She managed, however, to land it on the table, and looked so frightened that Razumov hastened to sit down. She produced then, from an adjacent room, four glass tumblers, a teapot, and a sugar-basin, on a black iron tray.

The rasping voice asked from the sofa abruptly--

"Les gateaux? Have you remembered to bring the cakes?"

Peter Ivanovitch, without a word, marched out on to the landing, and returned instantly with a parcel wrapped up in white glazed paper, which he must have extracted from the interior of his hat. With imperturbable gravity he undid the string and smoothed the paper open on a part of the table within reach of Madame de S--'s hand. The lady companion poured out the tea, then retired into a distant corner out of everybody's sight. From time to time Madame de S-- extended a claw-like hand, glittering with costly rings, towards the paper of cakes, took up one and devoured it, displaying her big false teeth ghoulishly. Meantime she talked in a hoarse tone of the political situation in the Balkans. She built great hopes on some complication in the peninsula for arousing a great movement of national indignation in Russia against "these thieves--thieves thieves."

"You will only upset yourself," Peter Ivanovitch interposed, raising his glassy gaze. He smoked cigarettes and drank tea in silence, continuously. When he had finished a glass, he flourished his hand above his shoulder. At that signal the lady companion, ensconced in her corner, with round eyes like a watchful animal, would dart out to the table and pour him out another tumblerful.

Razumov looked at her once or twice. She was anxious, tremulous, though neither Madame de S-- nor Peter Ivanovitch paid the slightest attention to her. "What have they done between them to that forlorn creature?" Razumov asked himself. "Have they terrified her out of her senses with ghosts, or simply have they only been beating her?" When she gave him his second glass of tea, he noticed that her lips trembled in the manner of a scared person about to burst into speech. But of course she said nothing, and retired into her corner, as if hugging to herself the smile of thanks he gave her.

"She may be worth cultivating," thought Razumov suddenly.

He was calming down, getting hold of the actuality into which he had been thrown--for the first time perhaps since Victor Haldin had entered his room...and had gone out again. He was distinctly aware of being the object of the famous--or notorious--Madame de S--'s ghastly graciousness.

Madame de S-- was pleased to discover that this young man was different from the other types of revolutionist members of committees, secret emissaries, vulgar and unmannerly fugitive professors, rough students, ex-cobblers with apostolic

faces, consumptive and ragged enthusiasts, Hebrew youths, common fellows of all sorts that used to come and go around Peter Ivanovitch--fanatics, pedants, proletarians all. It was pleasant to talk to this young man of notably good appearance--for Madame de S-- was not always in a mystical state of mind. Razumov's taciturnity only excited her to a quicker, more voluble utterance. It still dealt with the Balkans. She knew all the statesmen of that region, Turks, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Roumanians, Greeks, Armenians, and nondescripts, young and old, the living and the dead. With some money an intrigue could be started which would set the Peninsula in a blaze and outrage the sentiment of the Russian people. A cry of abandoned brothers could be raised, and then, with the nation seething with indignation, a couple of regiments or so would be enough to begin a military revolution in St. Petersburg and make an end of these thieves....

"Apparently I've got only to sit still and listen," the silent Razumov thought to himself. "As to that hairy and obscene brute" (in such terms did Mr. Razumov refer mentally to the popular expounder of a feministic conception of social state), "as to him, for all his cunning he too shall speak out some day."

Razumov ceased to think for a moment. Then a sombre-toned reflection formulated itself in his mind, ironical and bitter. "I have the gift of inspiring confidence." He heard himself laughing aloud. It was like a goad to the painted, shiny-eyed harridan on the sofa.

"You may well laugh!" she cried hoarsely. "What else can one do! Perfect swindlers--and what base swindlers at that! Cheap Germans--Holstein-Gottorps! Though, indeed, it's hardly safe to say who and what they are. A family that counts a creature like Catherine the Great in its ancestry--you understand!"

"You are only upsetting yourself," said Peter Ivanovitch, patiently but in a firm tone. This admonition had its usual effect on the Egeria. She dropped her thick, discoloured eyelids and changed her position on the sofa. All her angular and lifeless movements seemed completely automatic now that her eyes were closed. Presently she opened them very full. Peter Ivanovitch drank tea steadily, without haste.

"Well, I declare!" She addressed Razumov directly. "The people who have seen you on your way here are right. You are very reserved. You haven't said twenty words altogether since you came in. You let nothing of your thoughts be seen in your face either."

"I have been listening, Madame," said Razumov, using French for the first time, hesitatingly, not being certain of his accent. But it seemed to produce an excellent impression. Madame de S-- looked meaningly into Peter Ivanovitch's

spectacles, as if to convey her conviction of this young man's merit. She even nodded the least bit in his direction, and Razumov heard her murmur under her breath the words, "Later on in the diplomatic service," which could not but refer to the favourable impression he had made. The fantastic absurdity of it revolted him because it seemed to outrage his ruined hopes with the vision of a mock-career. Peter Ivanovitch, impassive as though he were deaf, drank some more tea. Razumov felt that he must say something.

"Yes," he began deliberately, as if uttering a meditated opinion. "Clearly. Even in planning a purely military revolution the temper of the people should be taken into account."

"You have understood me perfectly. The discontent should be spiritualized. That is what the ordinary heads of revolutionary committees will not understand. They aren't capable of it. For instance, Mordatiev was in Geneva last month. Peter Ivanovitch brought him here. You know Mordatiev? Well, yes--you have heard of him. They call him an eagle--a hero! He has never done half as much as you have. Never attempted--not half...."

Madame de S-- agitated herself angularly on the sofa.

"We, of course, talked to him. And do you know what he said to me? 'What have we to do with Balkan intrigues? We must simply extirpate the scoundrels.' Extirpate is all very well--but what then? The imbecile! I screamed at him, 'But you must spiritualize--don't you understand?--spiritualize the discontent.'..."

She felt nervously in her pocket for a handkerchief; she pressed it to her lips.

"Spiritualize?" said Razumov interrogatively, watching her heaving breast. The long ends of an old black lace scarf she wore over her head slipped off her shoulders and hung down on each side of her ghastly rosy cheeks.

"An odious creature," she burst out again. "Imagine a man who takes five lumps of sugar in his tea.... Yes, I said spiritualize! How else can you make discontent effective and universal?"

"Listen to this, young man." Peter Ivanovitch made himself heard solemnly. "Effective and universal."

Razumov looked at him suspiciously.

"Some say hunger will do that," he remarked.

"Yes. I know. Our people are starving in heaps. But you can't make famine universal. And it is not despair that we want to create. There is no moral support to be got out of that. It is indignation...."

Madame de S-- let her thin, extended arm sink on her knees.

"I am not a Mordatiev," began Razumov.

"Bien sur!" murmured Madame de S--.

"Though I too am ready to say extirpate, extirpate! But in my ignorance of political work, permit me to ask: A Balkan--well--intrigue, wouldn't that take a very long time?"

Peter Ivanovitch got up and moved off quietly, to stand with his face to the window. Razumov heard a door close; he turned his head and perceived that the lady companion had scuttled out of the room.

"In matters of politics I am a supernaturalist." Madame de S-- broke the silence harshly.

Peter Ivanovitch moved away from the window and struck Razumov lightly on the shoulder. This was a signal for leaving, but at the same time he addressed Madame de S-- in a peculiar reminding tone---

"Eleanor!"

Whatever it meant, she did not seem to hear him. She leaned back in the corner of the sofa like a wooden figure. The immovable peevishness of the face, framed in the limp, rusty lace, had a character of cruelty.

"As to extirpating," she croaked at the attentive Razumov, "there is only one class in Russia which must be extirpated. Only one. And that class consists of only one family. You understand me? That one family must be extirpated."

Her rigidity was frightful, like the rigor of a corpse galvanized into harsh speech and glittering stare by the force of murderous hate. The sight fascinated Razumov--yet he felt more self-possessed than at any other time since he had entered this weirdly bare room. He was interested. But the great feminist by his side again uttered his appeal--

"Eleanor!"

She disregarded it. Her carmine lips vaticinated with an extraordinary rapidity. The liberating spirit would use arms before which rivers would part like Jordan, and ramparts fall down like the walls of Jericho. The deliverance from bondage would be effected by plagues and by signs, by wonders and by war. The women....

"Eleanor!"

She ceased; she had heard him at last. She pressed her hand to her forehead.

"What is it? Ah yes! That girl--the sister of...."

It was Miss Haldin that she meant. That young girl and her mother had been leading a very retired life. They were provincial ladies--were they not? The mother had been very beautiful--traces were left yet. Peter Ivanovitch, when he called there for the first time, was greatly struck....But the cold way they received him was really surprising.

"He is one of our national glories," Madams de S-- cried out, with sudden vehemence. "All the world listens to him."

"I don't know these ladies," said Razumov loudly rising from his chair.

"What are you saying, Kirylo Sidorovitch? I understand that she was talking to you here, in the garden, the other day."

"Yes, in the garden," said Razumov gloomily. Then, with an effort, "She made herself known to me."

"And then ran away from us all," Madame de S-- continued, with ghastly vivacity. "After coming to the very door! What a peculiar proceeding! Well, I have been a shy little provincial girl at one time. Yes, Razumov" (she fell into this familiarity intentionally, with an appalling grimace of graciousness. Razumov gave a perceptible start), "yes, that's my origin. A simple provincial family.

"You are a marvel," Peter Ivanovich uttered.

But it was to Razumov that she gave her death's-head smile. Her tone was quite imperious.

"You must bring the wild young thing here. She is wanted. I reckon upon your success--mind!"

"She is not a wild young thing," muttered Razumov, in a surly voice.

"Well, then--that's all the same. She may be one of these young conceited democrats. Do you know what I think? I think she is very much like you in character. There is a smouldering fire of scorn in you. You are darkly self-sufficient, but I can see your very soul."

Her shiny eyes had a dry, intense stare, which, missing Razumov, gave him an absurd notion that she was looking at something which was visible to her behind him. He cursed himself for an impressionable fool, and asked with forced calmness--

"What is it you see? Anything resembling me?"

She moved her rigidly set face from left to right, negatively.

"Some sort of phantom in my image?" pursued Razumov slowly. "For, I suppose, a soul when it is seen is just that. A vain thing. There are phantoms of the living as well as of the dead."

The tenseness of Madame de S--'s stare had relaxed, and now she looked at Razumov in a silence that became disconcerting.

"I myself have had an experience," he stammered out, as if compelled. "I've seen a phantom once." The unnaturally red lips moved to frame a question harshly.

"Of a dead person?"

"No. Living."

"A friend?"

"No."

"An enemy?"

"I hated him."

"Ah! It was not a woman, then?"

"A woman!" repeated Razumov, his eyes looking straight into the eyes of Madame de S--. "Why should it have been a woman? And why this conclusion? Why should I not have been able to hate a woman?"

As a matter of fact, the idea of hating a woman was new to him. At that moment he hated Madame de S--. But it was not exactly hate. It was more like the abhorrence that may be caused by a wooden or plaster figure of a repulsive kind. She moved no more than if she were such a figure; even her eyes, whose unwinking stare plunged into his own, though shining, were lifeless, as though they were as artificial as her teeth. For the first time Razumov became aware of a faint perfume, but faint as it was it nauseated him exceedingly. Again Peter Ivanovitch tapped him slightly on the shoulder. Thereupon he bowed, and was about to turn away when he received the unexpected favour of a bony, inanimate hand extended to him, with the two words in hoarse French--

"Au revoir!"

He bowed over the skeleton hand and left the room, escorted by the great man, who made him go out first. The voice from the sofa cried after them--

"You remain here, Pierre."

"Certainly, ma chere amie."

But he left the room with Razumov, shutting the door behind him. The landing was prolonged into a bare corridor, right and left, desolate perspectives of white and gold decoration without a strip of carpet. The very light, pouring through a large window at the end, seemed dusty; and a solitary speck reposing on the balustrade of white marble--the silk top-hat of the great feminist--asserted itself extremely, black and glossy in all that crude whiteness.

Peter Ivanovitch escorted the visitor without opening his lips. Even when they had reached the head of the stairs Peter Ivanovitch did not break the silence. Razumov's impulse to continue down the flight and out of the house without as much as a nod abandoned him suddenly. He stopped on the first step and leaned his back against the wall. Below him the great hall with its chequered floor of black and white seemed absurdly large and like some public place where a great power of resonance awaits the provocation of footfalls and voices. As if afraid of awakening the loud echoes of that empty house, Razumov adopted a low tone.

"I really have no mind to turn into a dilettante spiritualist."

Peter Ivanovitch shook his head slightly, very serious.

"Or spend my time in spiritual ecstasies or sublime meditations upon the gospel of feminism," continued Razumov. "I made my way here for my share of action--action, most respected Peter Ivanovitch! It was not the great European writer who

attracted me, here, to this odious town of liberty. It was somebody much greater. It was the idea of the chief which attracted me. There are starving young men in Russia who believe in you so much that it seems the only thing that keeps them alive in their misery. Think of that, Peter Ivanovitch! No! But only think of that!"

The great man, thus entreated, perfectly motionless and silent, was the very image of patient, placid respectability.

"Of course I don't speak of the people. They are brutes," added Razumov, in the same subdued but forcible tone. At this, a protesting murmur issued from the "heroic fugitive's" beard. A murmur of authority.

"Say--children."

"No! Brutes!" Razumov insisted bluntly.

"But they are sound, they are innocent," the great man pleaded in a whisper.

"As far as that goes, a brute is sound enough." Razumov raised his voice at last. "And you can't deny the natural innocence of a brute. But what's the use of disputing about names? You just try to give these children the power and stature of men and see what they will be like. You just give it to them and see.... But never mind. I tell you, Peter Ivanovitch, that half a dozen young men do not come together nowadays in a shabby student's room without your name being whispered, not as a leader of thought, but as a centre of revolutionary energies--the centre of action. What else has drawn me near you, do you think? It is not what all the world knows of you, surely. It's precisely what the world at large does not know. I was irresistibly drawn-let us say impelled, yes, impelled; or, rather, compelled, driven--driven," repented Razumov loudly, and ceased, as if startled by the hollow reverberation of the word "driven" along two bare corridors and in the great empty hall.

Peter Ivanovitch did not seem startled in the least. The young man could not control a dry, uneasy laugh. The great revolutionist remained unmoved with an effect of commonplace, homely superiority.

"Curse him," said Razumov to himself, "he is waiting behind his spectacles for me to give myself away." Then aloud, with a satanic enjoyment of the scorn prompting him to play with the greatness of the great man--

"Ah, Peter Ivanovitch, if you only knew the force which drew--no, which drove me towards you! The irresistible force."

He did not feel any desire to laugh now. This time Peter Ivanovitch moved his head sideways, knowingly, as much as to say, "Don't I?" This expressive movement was almost imperceptible. Razumov went on in secret derision--

"All these days you have been trying to read me, Peter Ivanovitch. That is natural. I have perceived it and I have been frank. Perhaps you may think I have not been very expansive? But with a man like you it was not needed; it would have looked like an impertinence, perhaps. And besides, we Russians are prone to talk too much as a rule. I have always felt that. And yet, as a nation, we are dumb. I assure you that I am not likely to talk to you so much again--ha! ha!--"

Razumov, still keeping on the lower step, came a little nearer to the great man.

"You have been condescending enough. I quite understood it was to lead me on. You must render me the justice that I have not tried to please. I have been impelled, compelled, or rather sent--let us say sent--towards you for a work that no one but myself can do. You would call it a harmless delusion: a ridiculous delusion at which you don't even smile. It is absurd of me to talk like this, yet some day you shall remember these words, I hope. Enough of this. Here I stand before you-confessed! But one thing more I must add to complete it: a mere blind tool I can never consent to be."

Whatever acknowledgment Razumov was prepared for, he was not prepared to have both his hands seized in the great man's grasp. The swiftness of the movement was aggressive enough to startle. The burly feminist could not have been quicker had his purpose been to jerk Razumov treacherously up on the landing and bundle him behind one of the numerous closed doors near by. This idea actually occurred to Razumov; his hands being released after a darkly eloquent squeeze, he smiled, with a beating heart, straight at the beard and the spectacles hiding that impenetrable man.

He thought to himself (it stands confessed in his handwriting), "I won't move from here till he either speaks or turns away. This is a duel." Many seconds passed without a sign or sound.

"Yes, yes," the great man said hurriedly, in subdued tones, as if the whole thing had been a stolen, breathless interview. "Exactly. Come to see us here in a few days. This must be gone into deeply--deeply, between you and me. Quite to the bottom. To the...And, by the by, you must bring along Natalia Victorovna--you know, the Haldin girl....

"Am I to take this as my first instruction from you?" inquired Razumov stiffly.

Peter Ivanovitch seemed perplexed by this new attitude.

"Ah! h'm! You are naturally the proper person--la personne indiquee. Every one shall be wanted presently. Every one."

He bent down from the landing over Razumov, who had lowered his eyes.

"The moment of action approaches," he murmured.

Razumov did not look up. He did not move till he heard the door of the drawing-room close behind the greatest of feminists returning to his painted Egeria. Then he walked down slowly into the hall. The door stood open, and the shadow of the house was lying aslant over the greatest part of the terrace. While crossing it slowly, he lifted his hat and wiped his damp forehead, expelling his breath with force to get rid of the last vestiges of the air he had been breathing inside. He looked at the palms of his hands, and rubbed them gently against his thighs.

He felt, bizarre as it may seem, as though another self, an independent sharer of his mind, had been able to view his whole person very distinctly indeed. "This is curious," he thought. After a while he formulated his opinion of it in the mental ejaculation: "Beastly!" This disgust vanished before a marked uneasiness. "This is an effect of nervous exhaustion," he reflected with weary sagacity. "How am I to go on day after day if I have no more power of resistance--moral resistance?"

He followed the path at the foot of the terrace. "Moral resistance, moral resistance;" he kept on repeating these words mentally. Moral endurance. Yes, that was the necessity of the situation. An immense longing to make his way out of these grounds and to the other end of the town, of throwing himself on his bed and going to sleep for hours, swept everything clean out of his mind for a moment. "Is it possible that I am but a weak creature after all?" he asked himself, in sudden alarm. "Eh! What's that?"

He gave a start as if awakened from a dream. He even swayed a little before recovering himself.

"Ah! You stole away from us quietly to walk about here," he said.

The lady companion stood before him, but how she came there he had not the slightest idea. Her folded arms were closely cherishing the cat.

"I have been unconscious as I walked, it's a positive fact," said Razumov to himself in wonder. He raised his hat with marked civility.

The sallow woman blushed duskily. She had her invariably scared expression, as if somebody had just disclosed to her some terrible news. But she held her ground, Razumov noticed, without timidity. "She is incredibly shabby," he thought. In the sunlight her black costume looked greenish, with here and there threadbare patches where the stuff seemed decomposed by age into a velvety, black, furry state. Her very hair and eyebrows looked shabby. Razumov wondered whether she were sixty years old. Her figure, though, was young enough. He observed that she did not appear starved, but rather as if she had been fed on unwholesome scraps and leavings of plates.

Razumov smiled amiably and moved out of her way. She turned her head to keep her scared eyes on him.

"I know what you have been told in there," she affirmed, without preliminaries. Her tone, in contrast with her manner, had an unexpectedly assured character which put Razumov at his ease.

"Do you? You must have heard all sorts of talk on many occasions in there."

She varied her phrase, with the same incongruous effect of positiveness.

"I know to a certainty what you have been told to do."

"Really?" Razumov shrugged his shoulders a little. He was about to pass on with a bow, when a sudden thought struck him. "Yes. To be sure! In your confidential position you are aware of many things," he murmured, looking at the cat.

That animal got a momentary convulsive hug from the lady companion.

"Everything was disclosed to me a long time ago," she said.

"Everything," Razumov repeated absently.

"Peter Ivanovitch is an awful despot," she jerked out.

Razumov went on studying the stripes on the grey fur of the cat.

"An iron will is an integral part of such a temperament. How else could he be a leader? And I think that you are mistaken in--"

"There!" she cried. "You tell me that I am mistaken. But I tell you all the same that he cares for no one." She jerked her head up. "Don't you bring that girl here. That's what you have been told to do--to bring that girl here. Listen to me; you

had better tie a stone round her neck and throw her into the lake."

Razumov had a sensation of chill and gloom, as if a heavy cloud had passed over the sun.

"The girl?" he said. "What have I to do with her?"

"But you have been told to bring Nathalie Haldin here. Am I not right? Of course I am right. I was not in the room, but I know. I know Peter Ivanovitch sufficiently well. He is a great man. Great men are horrible. Well, that's it. Have nothing to do with her. That's the best you can do, unless you want her to become like me--disillusioned! Disillusioned!"

"Like you," repeated Razumov, glaring at her face, as devoid of all comeliness of feature and complexion as the most miserable beggar is of money. He smiled, still feeling chilly: a peculiar sensation which annoyed him. "Disillusioned as to Peter Ivanovitch! Is that all you have lost?"

She declared, looking frightened, but with immense conviction, "Peter Ivanovitch stands for everything." Then she added, in another tone, "Keep the girl away from this house."

"And are you absolutely inciting me to disobey Peter Ivanovitch just because--because you are disillusioned?"

She began to blink.

"Directly I saw you for the first time I was comforted. You took your hat off to me. You looked as if one could trust you. Oh!"

She shrank before Razumov's savage snarl of, "I have heard something like this before."

She was so confounded that she could do nothing but blink for a long time.

"It was your humane manner," she explained plaintively. "I have been starving for, I won't say kindness, but just for a little civility, for I don't know how long. And now you are angry...."

"But no, on the contrary," he protested. "I am very glad you trust me. It's possible that later on I may..."

"Yes, if you were to get ill," she interrupted eagerly, "or meet some bitter trouble,

you would find I am not a useless fool. You have only to let me know. I will come to you. I will indeed. And I will stick to you. Misery and I are old acquaintances--but this life here is worse than starving."

She paused anxiously, then in a voice for the first time sounding really timid, she added--

"Or if you were engaged in some dangerous work. Sometimes a humble companion--I would not want to know anything. I would follow you with joy. I could carry out orders. I have the courage."

Razumov looked attentively at the scared round eyes, at the withered, sallow, round cheeks. They were quivering about the corners of the mouth.

"She wants to escape from here," he thought.

"Suppose I were to tell you that I am engaged in dangerous work?" he uttered slowly.

She pressed the cat to her threadbare bosom with a breathless exclamation. "Ah!" Then not much above a whisper: "Under Peter Ivanovitch?"

"No, not under Peter Ivanovitch."

He read admiration in her eyes, and made an effort to smile.

"Then--alone?"

He held up his closed hand with the index raised. "Like this finger," he said.

She was trembling slightly. But it occurred to Razumov that they might have been observed from the house, and he became anxious to be gone. She blinked, raising up to him her puckered face, and seemed to beg mutely to be told something more, to be given a word of encouragement for her starving, grotesque, and pathetic devotion.

"Can we be seen from the house?" asked Razumov confidentially.

She answered, without showing the slightest surprise at the question--

"No, we can't, on account of this end of the stables." And she added, with an acuteness which surprised Razumov, "But anybody looking out of an upstairs window would know that you have not passed through the gates yet."

"Who's likely to spy out of the window?" queried Razumov. "Peter Ivanovitch?"

She nodded.

"Why should he trouble his head?"

"He expects somebody this afternoon."

"You know the person?"

"There's more than one."

She had lowered her eyelids. Razumov looked at her curiously.

"Of course. You hear everything they say."

She murmured without any animosity--

"So do the tables and chairs."

He understood that the bitterness accumulated in the heart of that helpless creature had got into her veins, and, like some subtle poison, had decomposed her fidelity to that hateful pair. It was a great piece of luck for him, he reflected; because women are seldom venal after the manner of men, who can be bought for material considerations. She would be a good ally, though it was not likely that she was allowed to hear as much as the tables and chairs of the Chateau Borel. That could not be expected. But still.... And, at any rate, she could be made to talk.

When she looked up her eyes met the fixed stare of Razumov, who began to speak at once.

"Well, well, dear...but upon my word, I haven't the pleasure of knowing your name yet. Isn't it strange?"

For the first time she made a movement of the shoulders.

"Is it strange? No one is told my name. No one cares. No one talks to me, no one writes to me. My parents don't even know if I'm alive. I have no use for a name, and I have almost forgotten it myself."

Razumov murmured gravely, "Yes, but still..."

She went on much slower, with indifference--

"You may call me Tekla, then. My poor Andrei called me so. I was devoted to him. He lived in wretchedness and suffering, and died in misery. That is the lot of all us Russians, nameless Russians. There is nothing else for us, and no hope anywhere, unless..."

"Unless what?"

"Unless all these people with names are done away with," she finished, blinking and pursing up her lips.

"It will be easier to call you Tekla, as you direct me," said Razumov, "if you consent to call me Kirylo, when we are talking like this--quietly--only you and me."

And he said to himself, "Here's a being who must be terribly afraid of the world, else she would have run away from this situation before." Then he reflected that the mere fact of leaving the great man abruptly would make her a suspect. She could expect no support or countenance from anyone. This revolutionist was not fit for an independent existence.

She moved with him a few steps, blinking and nursing the cat with a small balancing movement of her arms.

"Yes--only you and I. That's how I was with my poor Andrei, only he was dying, killed by these official brutes--while you! You are strong. You kill the monsters. You have done a great deed. Peter Ivanovitch himself must consider you. Well--don't forget me--especially if you are going back to work in Russia. I could follow you, carrying anything that was wanted--at a distance, you know. Or I could watch for hours at the corner of a street if necessary,--in wet or snow--yes, I could--all day long. Or I could write for you dangerous documents, lists of names or instructions, so that in case of mischance the handwriting could not compromise you. And you need not be afraid if they were to catch me. I would know how to keep dumb. We women are not so easily daunted by pain. I heard Peter Ivanovitch say it is our blunt nerves or something. We can stand it better. And it's true; I would just as soon bite my tongue out and throw it at them as not. What's the good of speech to me? Who would ever want to hear what I could say? Ever since I closed the eyes of my poor Andrei I haven't met a man who seemed to care for the sound of my voice. I should never have spoken to you if the very first time you appeared here you had not taken notice of me so nicely. I could not help speaking of you to that charming dear girl. Oh, the sweet creature! And strong!

One can see that at once. If you have a heart don't let her set her foot in here. Good-bye!"

Razumov caught her by the arm. Her emotion at being thus seized manifested itself by a short struggle, after which she stood still, not looking at him.

"But you can tell me," he spoke in her ear, "why they--these people in that house there--are so anxious to get hold of her?"

She freed herself to turn upon him, as if made angry by the question.

"Don't you understand that Peter Ivanovitch must direct, inspire, influence? It is the breath of his life. There can never be too many disciples. He can't bear thinking of anyone escaping him. And a woman, too! There is nothing to be done without women, he says. He has written it. He--"

The young man was staring at her passion when she broke off suddenly and ran away behind the stable.