

ACT III

Evening of the same day. The small drawing-room in Leoníd
Fyódoritch's house, where the séances are always held. Leoníd
Fyódoritch and the Professor.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well then, shall we risk a séance with our new
medium?

PROFESSOR. Yes, certainly. He is a powerful medium, there is no doubt
about it. And it is especially desirable that the séance should take
place to-day with the same people. Grossman will certainly respond to
the influence of the mediumistic energy, and then the connection and
identity of the different phenomena will be still more evident. You will
see then that, if the medium is as strong as he was just now, Grossman
will vibrate.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Then I will send for Simon and ask those who wish to
attend to come in.

PROFESSOR. Yes, all right! I will just jot down a few notes. [Takes out
his note-book and writes].

Enter Sahátov.

SAHÁTOF. They have just settled down to whist in Anna Pávlovna's drawing-room, and as I am not wanted there--and as I am interested in your séance--I have put in an appearance here. But will there be a séance?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, certainly!

SAHÁTOF. In spite of the absence of Mr. Kaptchítch's mediumistic powers?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Vous avez la main heureuse.[11] Fancy, that very peasant whom I mentioned to you this morning, turns out to be an undoubted medium.

[11] LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. You bring good luck.

SAHÁTOF. Dear me! Yes, that is peculiarly interesting!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, we tried a few preliminary experiments with him just after dinner.

SAHÁTOF. So you've had time already to experiment, and to convince yourself ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, perfectly! And he turns out to be an exceptionally powerful medium.

SAHÁTOF [incredulously] Dear me!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. It turns out that it has long been noticed in the servants' hall. When he sits down to table, the spoon springs into his hand of its own accord! [To the Professor] Had you heard about it?

PROFESSOR. No, I had not heard that detail.

SAHÁTOF [to the Professor]. But still, you admit the possibility of such phenomena?

PROFESSOR. What phenomena?

SAHÁTOF. Well, spiritualistic, mediumistic, and supernatural phenomena in general.

PROFESSOR. The question is, what do we consider supernatural? When, not a living man but a piece of stone attracted a nail to itself, how did the phenomena strike the first observers? As something natural? Or supernatural?

SAHÁTOF. Well, of course; but phenomena such as the magnet attracting iron always repeat themselves.

PROFESSOR. It is just the same in this case. The phenomenon repeats itself and we experiment with it. And not only that, but we apply to the

phenomena we are investigating the laws common to other phenomena. These phenomena seem supernatural only because their causes are attributed to the medium himself. But that is where the mistake lies. The phenomena are not caused by the medium, but by psychic energy acting through a medium, and that is a very different thing. The whole matter lies in the law of equivalents.

SAHÁTOF. Yes, certainly, but ...

Enter Tánya, who hides behind the hangings.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Only remember that we cannot reckon on any results with certainty, with this medium any more than with Home or Kaptchitch. We may not succeed, but on the other hand we may even have perfect materialisation.

SAHÁTOF. Materialisation even? What do you mean by materialisation?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Why, I mean that some one who is dead--say, your father or your grandfather--may appear, take you by the hand, or give you something; or else some one may suddenly rise into the air, as happened to Alexéy Vladímiritch last time.

PROFESSOR. Of course, of course. But the chief thing is the explanation of the phenomena, and the application to them of general laws.

Enter the Fat Lady.

FAT LADY. Anna Pávlovna has allowed me to join you.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Very pleased.

FAT LADY. Oh, how tired Grossman seems! He could scarcely hold his cup. Did you notice [to the Professor] how pale he turned at the moment he approached the hiding-place? I noticed it at once, and was the first to mention it to Anna Pávlovna.

PROFESSOR. Undoubtedly,--loss of vital energy.

FAT LADY. Yes, it's just as I say, one should not abuse that sort of thing. You know, a hypnotist once suggested to a friend of mine, Véra Kónshin (oh, you know her, of course)--well, he suggested that she should leave off smoking,--and her back began to ache!

PROFESSOR [trying to have his say] The temperature and the pulse clearly indicate ...

FAT LADY. One moment! Allow me! Well, I said to her: it's better to smoke than to suffer so with one's nerves. Of course, smoking is injurious; I should like to give it up myself, but, do what I will, I can't! Once I managed not to smoke for a fortnight, but could hold out no longer.

PROFESSOR [again trying to speak] Clearly proves ...

FAT LADY. Yes, no! Allow me, just one word! You say, "loss of strength."
And I was also going to say that, when I travelled with post-horses ...
the roads used to be dreadful in those days--you don't remember--but I
have noticed that all our nervousness comes from railways! I, for
instance, can't sleep while travelling; I cannot fall asleep to save my
life!

PROFESSOR [makes another attempt, which the Fat Lady baffles] The loss
of strength ...

SAHÁTOF [smiling] Yes; oh yes!

Leoníd Fyódoritch rings.

FAT LADY. I am awake one night, and another, and a third, and still I
can't sleep!

Enter Gregory.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Please tell Theodore to get everything ready for the
séance, and send Simon here--Simon, the butler's assistant,--do you
hear?

GREGORY. Yes, sir. [Exit].

PROFESSOR [to Sahátov]. The observation of the temperature and the pulse have shown loss of vital energy. The same will happen in consequence of the mediumistic phenomena. The law of the conservation of energy ...

FAT LADY. Oh yes, yes; I was just going to say that I am very glad that a simple peasant turns out to be a medium. That's very good. I always did say that the Slavophiles ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Let's go into the drawing-room in the meantime.

FAT LADY. Allow me, just one word! The Slavophiles are right; but I always told my husband that one ought never to exaggerate anything! "The golden mean," you know. What is the use of maintaining that the common people are all perfect, when I have myself seen ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Won't you come into the drawing-room?

FAT LADY. A boy--that high--who drank! I gave him a scolding at once. And he was grateful to me afterwards. They are children, and, as I always say, children need both love and severity!

Exeunt all, all talking together.

Tánya enters from behind the hangings.

TÁNYA. Oh, if it would only succeed! [Begins fastening some threads].

Enter Betsy hurriedly.

BETSY. Isn't papa here? [Looks inquiringly at Tányá] What are you doing here?

TÁNYA. Oh, Miss Elizabeth, I have only just come; I only wished ... only came in ... [Embarrassed].

BETSY. But they are going to have a séance here directly. [Notices Tányá drawing in the threads, looks at her, and suddenly bursts out laughing] Tányá! Why, it's you who do it all? Now don't deny it. And last time it was you too? Yes, it was, it was!

TÁNYA. Miss Elizabeth, dearest!

BETSY [delighted] Oh, that is a joke! Well, I never. But why do you do it?

TÁNYA. Oh miss, dear miss, don't betray me!

BETSY. Not for the world! I'm awfully glad. Only tell me how you manage it?

TÁNYA. Well, I just hide, and then, when it's all dark, I come out and do it. That's how.

BETSY [pointing to threads] And what is this for? You needn't tell me. I see; you draw ...

TÁNYA. Miss Elizabeth, darling! I will confess it, but only to you. I used to do it just for fun, but now I mean business.

BETSY. What? How? What business?

TÁNYA. Well, you see, those peasants that came this morning, you saw them. They want to buy some land, and your father won't sell it; well, and Theodore Ivánitch, he says it's the spirits as forbid him. So I have had a thought as ...

BETSY. Oh, I see! Well, you are a clever girl! Do it, do it.... But how will you manage it?

TÁNYA. Well, I thought, when they put out the lights, I'll at once begin knocking and shying things about, touching their heads with the threads, and at last I'll take the paper about the land and throw it on the table. I've got it here.

BETSY. Well, and then?

TÁNYA. Why, don't you see? They will be astonished. The peasants had the paper, and now it's here. I will teach ...

BETSY. Why, of course! Simon is the medium to-day!

TÁNYA. Well, I'll teach him ... [Laughs so that she can't continue] I'll tell him to squeeze with his hands any one he can get hold of! Of course, not your father--he'd never dare do that--but any one else; he'll squeeze till it's signed.

BETSY [laughing] But that's not the way it is done. Mediums never do anything themselves.

TÁNYA. Oh, never mind. It's all one; I daresay it'll turn out all right.

Enter Theodore Ivánitch.

Exit Betsy, making signs to Tánya.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Why are you here?

TÁNYA. It's you I want, Theodore Ivánitch, dear ...

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, what is it?

TÁNYA. About that affair of mine as I spoke of.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [laughs] I've made the match; yes, I've made the match. The matter is settled; we have shaken hands on it, only not had a drink on it.

TÁNYA [with a shriek] Never! So it's all right?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Don't I tell you so? He says, "I shall consult the missus, and then, God willing ..."

TÁNYA. Is that what he said? [Shrieks] Dear Theodore Ivánitch, I'll pray for you all the days of my life!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. All right! All right! Now is not the time. I've been ordered to arrange the room for the séance.

TÁNYA. Let me help you. How's it to be arranged?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. How? Why, the table in the middle of the room--chairs--the guitar--the accordion. The lamp is not wanted, only candles.

TÁNYA [helps Theodore Ivánitch to place the things] Is that right? The guitar here, and here the inkstand. [Places it] So?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Can it be true that they'll make Simon sit here?

TÁNYA. I suppose so; they've done it once.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Wonderful! [Puts on his pince-nez] But is he clean?

TÁNYA. How should I know?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Then, I'll tell you what ...

TÁNYA. Yes, Theodore Ivánitch?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Go and take a nail-brush and some Pears' soap; you may take mine ... and go and cut his claws and scrub his hands as clean as possible.

TÁNYA. He can do it himself.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well then, tell him to. And tell him to put on a clean shirt as well.

TÁNYA. All right, Theodore Ivánitch. [Exit].

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [sits down in an easy-chair] They're educated and learned--Alexéy Vladimíritch now, he's a professor--and yet sometimes one can't help doubting very much. The people's rude superstitions are being abolished: hobgoblins, sorcerers, witches.... But if one considers

it, is not this equally superstitious? How is it possible that the souls of the dead should come and talk, and play the guitar? No! Some one is fooling them, or they are fooling themselves. And as to this business with Simon--it's simply incomprehensible. [Looks at an album] Here's their spiritualistic album. How is it possible to photograph a spirit? But here is the likeness of a Turk and Leoníd Fyódoritch sitting by.... Extraordinary human weakness!

Enter Leoníd Fyódoritch.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Is it all ready?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [rising leisurely] Quite ready. [Smiles] Only I don't know about your new medium. I hope he won't disgrace you, Leoníd Fyódoritch.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. No, I and Alexéy Vladímiritch have tested him. He is a wonderfully powerful medium!

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Well, I don't know. But is he clean enough? I don't suppose you have thought of ordering him to wash his hands? It might be rather inconvenient.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. His hands? Oh yes! They're not clean, you think?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. What can you expect? He's a peasant, and there will

be ladies present, and Márya Vasílevna.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. It will be all right.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. And then I have something to report to you. Timothy, the coachman, complains that he can't keep things clean because of the dogs.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [arranging the things on the table absent-mindedly]
What dogs?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. The three hounds that came for Vasíly Leoníditch to-day.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [vexed] Tell Anna Pávlovna! She can do as she likes about it. I have no time.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. But you know her weakness ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. 'Tis just as she likes, let her do as she pleases. As for him,--one never gets anything but unpleasantness from him. Besides, I am busy.

Enter Simon, smiling; he has a sleeveless peasant's coat on.

SIMON. I was ordered to come.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, it's all right. Let me see your hands. That will do, that will do very well! Well then, my good fellow, you must do just as you did before,--sit down, and give way to your mood. But don't think at all.

SIMON. Why should I think? The more one thinks, the worse it is.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Just so, just so, exactly! The less conscious one is, the greater is the power. Don't think, but give in to your mood. If you wish to sleep, sleep; if you wish to walk, walk. Do you understand?

SIMON. How could one help understanding? It's simple enough.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. But above all, don't be frightened. Because you might be surprised yourself. You must understand that just as we live here, so a whole world of invisible spirits live here also.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH [improving on what Leoníd Fyódoritch has said]
Invisible feelings, do you understand?

SIMON [laughs] How can one help understanding! It's very plain as you put it.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. You may rise up in the air, or something of the kind, but don't be frightened.

SIMON. Why should I be frightened? That won't matter at all.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well then, I'll go and call them all.... Is everything ready?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. I think so.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. But the slates?

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. They are downstairs. I'll bring them. [Exit].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. All right then. So don't be afraid, but be at your ease.

SIMON. Had I not better take off my coat? One would be more easy like.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Your coat? Oh no. Don't take that off. [Exit].

SIMON. She tells me to do the same again, and she will again shy things about. How isn't she afraid?

Enter Tányá in her stockings and in a dress of the colour of the wall-paper. Simon laughs.

TÁNYA. Shsh!... They'll hear! There, stick these matches on your fingers

as before. [Sticks them on] Well, do you remember everything?

SIMON [bending his fingers in, one by one] First of all, wet the matches and wave my hands about, that's one. Then make my teeth chatter, like this ... that's two. But I've forgotten the third thing.

TÁNYA. And it's the third as is the chief thing. Don't forget as soon as the paper falls on the table--I shall ring the little bell--then you do like this.... Spread your arms out far and catch hold of some one, whoever it is as sits nearest, and catch hold of him. And then squeeze! [Laughs] Whether it's a gentleman or a lady, it's all one; you just squeeze 'em, and don't let 'em go,--as if it were in your sleep, and chatter with your teeth, or else howl like this. [Howls sotto-voce] And when I begin to play on the guitar, then stretch yourself as if you were waking up, you know.... Will you remember everything?

SIMON. Yes, I'll remember, but it is too funny.

TÁNYA. But mind you don't laugh. Still, it won't matter much if you do laugh; they'd think it was in your sleep. Only take care you don't really fall asleep when they put out the lights.

SIMON. No fear, I'll pinch my ears.

TÁNYA. Well then Sim darling, only mind do as I tell you, and don't get frightened. He'll sign the paper, see if he don't! They're coming!

Gets under the sofa.

Enter Grossman and the Professor, Leoníd Fyódoritch and the Fat Lady, the Doctor, Sahátov and Anna Pávlovna. Simon stands near the door.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Please come in, all you doubters! Though we have a new and accidentally discovered medium, I expect very important phenomena to-night.

SAHÁTOF. That's very, very interesting.

FAT LADY [pointing to Simon] Mais il est très bien![12]

[12] FAT LADY. But he looks quite nice.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes, as a butler's assistant, but hardly ...

SAHÁTOF. Wives never have any faith in their husbands' work. You don't believe in anything of this kind?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Of course not. Kaptchítch, it is true, has something exceptional about him, but Heaven knows what all this is about!

FAT LADY. No, Anna Pávlovna, permit me, you can't decide it in such a

way. Before I was married, I once had a remarkable dream. Dreams, you know, are often such that you don't know where they begin and where they end; it was just such a dream that I ...

Enter Vasíly Leoníditch and Petrístchef.

FAT LADY. And much was revealed to me by that dream. Nowadays the young people [points to Petrístchef and Vasíly Leoníditch] deny everything.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. But look here, you know--now I, for instance, never deny anything! Eh, what?

Betsy and Márya Konstantínovna enter, and begin talking to Petrístchef.

FAT LADY. And how can one deny the supernatural? They say it is unreasonable. But what if one's reason is stupid; what then? There now, on Garden Street, you know ... why, well, it appeared every evening! My husband's brother--what do you call him? Not beau-frère--what's the other name for it?--I never can remember the names of these different relationships--well, he went there three nights running, and still he saw nothing; so I said to him ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, who is going to stay here?

FAT LADY. II II

SAHÁTOF. I.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA [to Doctor] Do you mean to say you are going to stay?

DOCTOR. Yes; I must see, if only once, what it is that Alexéy Vladímiritch has discovered in it. How can we deny anything without proofs?

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Then I am to take it to-night for certain?

DOCTOR. Take what?... Oh, the powder. Yes, it would perhaps be better. Yes, yes, take it.... However, I shall come upstairs again.

ANNA PÁVLOVNA. Yes please, do. [Loud] When it is over, mesdames et messieurs, I shall expect you to come to me upstairs to rest from your emotions, and then we will finish our rubber.

FAT LADY. Oh, certainly.

SAHÁTOF. Yes, thanks!

Exit Anna Pávlovna.

BETSY [to Petrístchef] You must stay, I tell you. I promise you something extraordinary. Will you bet?

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. But you don't believe in it?

BETSY. To-day I do.

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA [to Petrístchef] And do you believe?

PETRÍSTCHEF. "I can't believe, I cannot trust a heart for falsehood framed." Still, if Elizabeth Leonídovna commands ...

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Let us stay, Márya Konstantinovna. Eh, what? I shall invent something épâtant.

MÁRYA KONSTANTÍNOVNA. No, you mustn't make me laugh. You know I can't restrain myself.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH [loud] I remain!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [severely] But I beg those who remain not to joke about it. It is a serious matter.

PETRÍSTCHEF. Do you hear? Well then, let's stay. Vovo, sit here, and don't be too shy.

BETSY. Yes, it's all very well for you to laugh; but just wait till you see what will happen.

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Oh, but supposing it's true? Won't it be a go! Eh, what?

PETRÍSTCHEF [trembles] Oh, I'm afraid, I'm afraid! Márya Konstantínovna, I'm afraid! My tootsies tremble.

BETSY [laughing] Not so loud.

All sit down.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Take your seats, take your seats. Simon, sit down!

SIMON. Yes, sir. [Sits down on the edge of the chair].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Sit properly.

PROFESSOR. Sit straight in the middle of the chair, and quite at your ease. [Arranges Simon on his chair].

Betsy, Márya Konstantínovna and Vasíly Leoníditch laugh.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [raising his voice] I beg those who are going to remain here not to behave frivolously, but to regard this matter seriously, or bad results might follow. Do you hear, Vovo! If you can't be quiet, go away!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Quite quiet! [Hides behind Fat Lady].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Alexéy Vladímiritch, will you mesmerise him?

PROFESSOR. No; why should I do it when Antón Borísitch is here? He has had far more practice and has more power in that department than I...
Antón Borísitch!

GROSSMAN. Ladies and gentlemen, I am not, strictly speaking, a spiritualist. I have only studied hypnotism. It is true I have studied hypnotism in all its known manifestations; but what is called spiritualism, is entirely unknown to me. When a subject is thrown into a trance, I may expect the hypnotic phenomena known to me: lethargy, abulia, anæsthesia, analgesia, catalepsy, and every kind of susceptibility to suggestion. Here it is not these but other phenomena we expect to observe. Therefore it would be well to know of what kind are the phenomena we expect to witness, and what is their scientific significance.

SAHÁTOF. I thoroughly agree with Mr. Grossman. Such an explanation would be very interesting.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I think Alexéy Vladímiritch will not refuse to give us a short explanation.

PROFESSOR. Why not? I can give an explanation if it is desired. [To the Doctor] Will you kindly note his temperature and pulse? My explanation must, of necessity, be cursory and brief.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, please; briefly, quite briefly.

DOCTOR. All right. [Takes out thermometer] Now then, my lad ... [Places the thermometer].

SIMON. Yes, sir!

PROFESSOR [rising and addressing the Fat Lady--then reseating himself] Ladies and gentlemen! The phenomenon we are investigating to-night is regarded, on the one hand, as something new; and, on the other, as something transcending the limits of natural conditions. Neither view is correct. This phenomenon is not new but is as old as the world; and it is not supernatural but is subject to the eternal laws that govern all that exists. This phenomenon has been usually defined as "intercourse with the spirit world." That definition is inexact. Under such a definition the spirit world is contrasted with the material world. But this is erroneous; there is no such contrast! Both worlds are so closely connected that it is impossible to draw a line of demarcation, separating the one from the other. We say, matter is composed of molecules ...

PETRÍSTCHEF. Prosy matter! [Whispering and laughter].

PROFESSOR [pauses, then continues] Molecules are composed of atoms, but the atoms, having no extension, are in reality nothing but the points of application of forces. Strictly speaking, not of forces but of energy, that same energy which is as much a unity and just as indestructible as matter. But matter, though one, has many different aspects, and the same is true of energy. Till recently only four forms of energy, convertible into one another, have been known to us: energies known as the dynamic, the thermal, the electric, and the chemic. But these four aspects of energy are far from exhausting all the varieties of its manifestation. The forms in which energy may manifest itself are very diverse, and it is one of these new and as yet but little known phases of energy, that we are investigating to-night. I refer to mediumistic energy.

Renewed whispering and laughter among the young people.

PROFESSOR [stops and casts a severe look round] Mediumistic energy has been known to mankind for ages: prophecy, presentiments, visions and so on, are nothing but manifestations of mediumistic energy. The manifestations produced by it have, I say, been known to mankind for ages. But the energy itself has not been recognised as such till quite recently--not till that medium, the vibrations of which cause the manifestations of mediumistic energy, was recognised. In the same way that the phenomena of light were inexplicable until the existence of an imponderable substance--an ether--was recognised, so mediumistic

phenomena seemed mysterious until the now fully established fact was recognised, that between the particles of ether there exists another still more rarified imponderable substance not subject to the law of the three dimensions ...

Renewed laughter, whispers, and giggling.

PROFESSOR [again looks round severely] And just as mathematical calculations have irrefutably proved the existence of imponderable ether which gives rise to the phenomena of light and electricity, so the successive investigations of the ingenious Hermann, of Schmidt, and of Joseph Schmatzhofen, have confirmed beyond a doubt the existence of a substance which fills the universe and may be called spiritual ether.

FAT LADY. Ah, now I understand. I am so grateful ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, but Alexéy Vladímiritch, could you not ... condense it a little?

PROFESSOR [not heeding the remark] And so, as I have just had the honour of mentioning to you, a succession of strictly scientific experiments have made plain to us the laws of mediumistic phenomena. These experiments have proved that, when certain individuals are plunged into a hypnotic state (a state differing from ordinary sleep only by the fact that man's physiological activity is not lowered by the hypnotic influence but, on the contrary, is always heightened--as we have

recently witnessed) when, I say, any individual is plunged into such a state, this always produces certain perturbations in the spiritual ether--perturbations quite similar to those produced by plunging a solid body into liquid matter. These perturbations are what we call mediumistic phenomena ...

Laughter, and whispers.

SAHÁTOF. That is quite comprehensible and correct; but if, as you are kind enough to inform us, the plunging of the medium into a trance produces perturbations of the spiritual ether, allow me to ask why (as is usually supposed to be the case in spiritualistic séances) these perturbations result in an activity on the part of the souls of dead people?

PROFESSOR. It is because the molecules of this spiritual ether are nothing but the souls of the living, the dead, and the unborn, and any vibration of the spiritual ether must inevitably cause a certain vibration of its atoms. These atoms are nothing but human souls, which enter into communication with one another by means of these movements.

FAT LADY [to Sahátotf] What is it that puzzles you? It is so simple....

Thank you so, so much!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I think everything has now been explained, and that we may commence.

DOCTOR. The fellow is in a perfectly normal condition: temperature 37 decimal 2, pulse 74.

PROFESSOR [takes out his pocket-book and notes this down] What I have just had the honour of explaining will be confirmed by the fact, which we shall presently have an opportunity of observing, that after the medium has been thrown into a trance his temperature and pulse will inevitably rise, just as occurs in cases of hypnotism.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, yes. But excuse me a moment. I should like to reply to Sergéy Ivánitch's question: How do we know we are in communication with the souls of the dead? We know it because the spirit that appears, plainly tells us--as simply as I am speaking to you--who he is, and why he has come, and whether all is well with him! At our last séance a Spaniard, Don Castillos, came to us, and he told us everything. He told us who he was, and when he died, and that he was suffering for having taken part in the Inquisition. He even told us what was happening to him at the very time that he was speaking to us, namely, that at the very time he was talking to us he had to be born again on earth, and, therefore, could not continue his conversation with us.... But you'll see for yourselves ...

FAT LADY [interrupting] Oh, how interesting! Perhaps the Spaniard was born in one of our houses and is a baby now!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Quite possibly.

PROFESSOR. I think it is time we began.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I was only going to say ...

PROFESSOR. It is getting late.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Very well. Then we will commence. Antón Borísitch, be so good as to hypnotise the medium.

GROSSMAN. What method would you like me to use? There are several methods. There is Braid's system, there is the Egyptian symbol, and there is Charcot's system.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [to the Professor] I think it is quite immaterial.

PROFESSOR. Quite.

GROSSMAN. Then I will make use of my own method, which I showed in Odessa.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. If you please!

Grossman waves his arms above Simon. Simon closes his eyes and stretches himself.

GROSSMAN [looking closely at him] He is falling asleep! He is asleep! A remarkably rapid occurrence of hypnosis. The subject has evidently already reached a state of anæsthesia. He is remarkable,--an unusually impressionable subject, and might be subjected to interesting experiments!... [Sits down, rises, sits down again] Now one might run a needle into his arm. If you like ...

PROFESSOR [to Leoníd Fyódoritch] Do you notice how the medium's trance acts on Grossman? He is beginning to vibrate.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, yes ... can the lights be extinguished now?

SAHÁTOF. But why is darkness necessary?

PROFESSOR. Darkness? Because it is a condition of the manifestation of mediumistic energy, just as a given temperature is a condition necessary for certain manifestations of chemical or dynamic energy.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. But not always. Manifestations have been observed by me, and by many others, both by candlelight and daylight.

PROFESSOR [interrupting] May the lights be put out?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, certainly. [Puts out candles] Ladies and gentlemen! attention, if you please.

Tánya gets from under the sofa and takes hold of a thread tied to a chandelier.

PETRÍSTCHEF. I like that Spaniard! Just in the midst of a conversation--off he goes head downwards ... as the French say: piquer une tête.[13]

[13] To take a header.

BETSY. You just wait a bit, and see what will happen!

PETRÍSTCHEF. I have only one fear, and that is that Vovo may be moved by the spirit to grunt like a pig!

VASÍLY LEONÍDITCH. Would you like me to? I will ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Gentlemen! Silence, if you please!

Silence. Simon licks the matches on his fingers and rubs his knuckles with them.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. A light! Do you see the light?

SAHÁTOF. A light? Yes, yes, I see; but allow me ...

FAT LADY. Where? Where? Oh dear, I did not see it! Ah, there it is.

Oh!...

PROFESSOR [whispers to Leoníd Fyódoritch, and points to Grossman, who is moving] Do you notice how he vibrates? It is the dual influence. [The light appears again].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [to the Professor] It must be he--you know!

SAHÁTOF. Who?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. A Greek, Nicholas. It is his light. Don't you think so, Alexéy Vladímiritch?

SAHÁTOF. Who is this Greek, Nicholas?

PROFESSOR. A certain Greek, who was a monk at Constantinople under Constantine and who has been visiting us lately.

FAT LADY. Where is he? Where is he? I don't see him.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. He is not yet visible ... Alexéy Vladímiritch, he is particularly well disposed towards you. You question him.

PROFESSOR [in a peculiar voice] Nicholas! Is that you?

Tánya raps twice on the wall.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [joyfully] It is he! It is he!

FAT LADY. Oh dear! Oh! I shall go away!

SAHÁTOF. Why do you suppose it is he?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Why, the two knocks. It is an affirmative answer; else all would have been silence.

Silence. Suppressed giggling in the young people's corner. Tánya throws a lampshade, pencil and penwiper upon the table.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [whispers] Do you notice, gentlemen, here is a lamp-shade, and something else--a pencil!... Alexéy Vladímiritch, it is a pencil!

PROFESSOR. All right, all right! I am watching both him and Grossman!

Grossman rises and feels the things that have fallen on the table.

SAHÁTOF. Excuse me, excuse me! I should like to see whether it is not the medium who is doing it all himself?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Do you think so? Well, sit by him and hold his hands.

But you may be sure he is asleep.

SAHÁTOF [approaches. Tánya lets a thread touch his head. He is frightened, and stoops]. Ye ... ye ... yes! Strange, very strange!
[Takes hold of Simon's elbow. Simon howls].

PROFESSOR [to Leoníd Fyódoritch] Do you notice the effect of Grossman's presence? It is a new phenomenon--I must note it ... [Runs out to note it down, and returns again].

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes.... But we cannot leave Nicholas without an answer. We must begin ...

GROSSMAN [rises, approaches Simon and raises and lowers his arm] It would be interesting to produce contraction! The subject is in profound hypnosis.

PROFESSOR [to Leoníd Fyódoritch] Do you see? Do you see?

GROSSMAN. If you like ...

DOCTOR. Now then, my dear sir, leave the management to Alexéy Vladimíritch, the affair is turning out serious.

PROFESSOR. Leave him alone, he [referring to Grossman] is talking in his sleep!

FAT LADY. How glad I now am that I resolved to be present! It is frightening, but all the same I am glad, for I always said to my husband ...

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Silence, if you please.

Tánya draws a thread over the Fat Lady's head.

FAT LADY. Aie!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. What? What is it?

FAT LADY. He took hold of my hair!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [whispers] Never mind, don't be afraid, give him your hand. His hand will be cold, but I like it.

FAT LADY [hides her hands] Not for the world!

SAHÁTOF. Yes, it is strange, very strange!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. He is here and is seeking for intercourse. Who wishes to put a question to him?

SAHÁTOF. I should like to put a question, if I may.

PROFESSOR. Please do.

SAHÁTOF. Do I believe or not?

Tánya knocks twice.

PROFESSOR. The answer is affirmative.

SAHÁTOF. Allow me to ask again. Have I a ten rouble note in my pocket?

Tánya knocks several times and passes a thread over Sahátot's head.

SAHÁTOF. Ah! [Seizes the thread and breaks it].

PROFESSOR. I should ask those present not to ask indefinite or trivial questions. It is unpleasant to him!

SAHÁTOF. No, but allow me! Here I have a thread in my hand!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. A thread? Hold it fast; that happens often, and not only threads but sometimes even silk cords--very ancient ones!

SAHÁTOF. No--but where did this thread come from?

Tánya throws a cushion at him.

SAHÁTOF. Wait a bit; wait! Something soft has hit me on the head. Light a candle--there is something ...

PROFESSOR. We beg of you not to interrupt the manifestations.

FAT LADY. For goodness' sake don't interrupt! I should also like to ask something. May I?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, if you like.

FAT LADY. I should like to ask about my digestion. May I? I want to know what to take: aconite or belladonna?

Silence, whispers among the young people; suddenly Vasily Leoníditch begins to cry like a baby: "ou-a, ou-a!" [Laughter.] Holding their mouths and noses, the girls and Petrístchef run away bursting with laughter.

FAT LADY. Ah, that must be the monk who's been born again!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [beside himself with anger, whispers] One gets nothing but tomfoolery from you! If you don't know how to behave decently, go away!

Exit Vasily Leoníditch. Darkness and silence.

FAT LADY. Oh, what a pity! Now one can't ask any more! He is born!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Not at all. It is only Vovo's nonsense. But he is here. Ask him.

PROFESSOR. That often happens. These jokes and ridicule are quite usual occurrences. I expect he is still here. But we may ask. Leoníd Fyódoritch, will you?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. No, you, if you please. This has upset me. So unpleasant! Such want of tact!...

PROFESSOR. Very well.... Nicholas, are you here?

Tánya raps twice and rings. Simon roars, spreads his arms out, seizes Sahátóf and the Professor--squeezing them.

PROFESSOR. What an unexpected phenomenon! The medium himself reacted upon! This never happened before! Leoníd Fyódoritch, will you watch? It is difficult for me to do so. He squeezes me so! Mind you observe Grossman! This needs the very greatest attention!

Tánya throws the peasants' paper on the table.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Something has fallen upon the table.

PROFESSOR. See what it is!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Paper! A folded paper!

Tánya throws a travelling inkstand on the table.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. An inkstand!

Tánya throws a pen.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. A pen!

Simon roars and squeezes.

PROFESSOR [crushed] Wait a bit, wait: a totally new manifestation! The action proceeding not from the mediumistic energy produced, but from the medium himself! However, open the inkstand, and put the pen on the table, and he will write!

Tánya goes behind Leoníd Fyódoritch and strikes him on the head with the guitar.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. He has struck me on the head! [Examining table] The pen is not writing yet and the paper remains folded.

PROFESSOR. See what the paper is, and quickly; evidently the dual influence--his and Grossman's--has produced a perturbation!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [goes out and returns at once] Extraordinary! This paper is an agreement with some peasants that I refused to sign this morning and returned to the peasants. Probably he wants me to sign it?

PROFESSOR. Of course! Of course! But ask him.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Nicholas, do you wish ...

Tánya knocks twice.

PROFESSOR. Do you hear? It is quite evident!

Leoníd Fyódoritch takes the paper and pen and goes out. Tánya knocks, plays on the guitar and the accordion, and then creeps under the sofa. Leoníd Fyódoritch returns. Simon stretches himself and coughs.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. He is waking up. We can light the candles.

PROFESSOR [hurriedly] Doctor, Doctor, please, his pulse and temperature! You will see that a rise of both will be apparent.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [lights the candles] Well, what do you gentlemen who

were sceptical think of it now?

DOCTOR [goes up to Simon and places thermometer] Now then my lad. Well, have you had a nap? There, put that in there, and give me your hand.
[Looks at his watch].

SAHÁTOF [shrugging his shoulders] I must admit that all that has occurred cannot have been done by the medium. But the thread?... I should like the thread explained.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. A thread! A thread! We have been witnessing manifestations more important than a thread.

SAHÁTOF. I don't know. At all events, je réserve mon opinion.

FAT LADY [to Sahátov] Oh no, how can you say: "je réserve mon opinion?" And the infant with the little wings? Didn't you see? At first I thought it was only an illusion, but afterwards it became clearer and clearer, like a live ...

SAHÁTOF. I can only speak of what I have seen. I did not see that--nothing of the kind.

FAT LADY. You don't mean to say so? Why, it was quite plainly visible! And to the left there was a monk clothed in black bending over it ...

SAHÁTOF [moves away. Aside] What exaggeration!

FAT LADY [addressing the Doctor] You must have seen it! It rose up from your side.

Doctor goes on counting pulse without heeding her.

FAT LADY [to Grossman] And that light, the light around it, especially around its little face! And the expression so mild and tender, something so heavenly! [Smiles tenderly herself].

GROSSMAN. I saw phosphorescent light, and objects changed their places, but I saw nothing more than that.

FAT LADY. Don't tell me! You don't mean it! It is simply that you scientists of Charcot's school do not believe in a life beyond the grave! As for me, no one could now make me disbelieve in a future life--no one in the world!

Grossman moves away from her.

FAT LADY. No, no, whatever you may say, this is one of the happiest moments of my life! When I heard Sarasate play, and now.... Yes! [No one listens to her. She goes up to Simon] Now tell me, my friend, what did you feel? Was it very trying?

SIMON [laughs] Yes, ma'm, just so.

FAT LADY. Still not unendurable?

SIMON. Just so, ma'm. [To Leoníd Fyódoritch] Am I to go?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, you may go.

DOCTOR [to the Professor] The pulse is the same, but the temperature is lower.

PROFESSOR. Lower! [Considers awhile, then suddenly divines the conclusion] It had to be so--it had to descend! The dual influence crossing had to produce some kind of reflex action. Yes, that's it!

Exeunt, all talking at once.

{ LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. I'm only sorry we had no complete

{ materialisation. But still.... Come, gentlemen, let us go to the

{ drawing-room?

{

{ FAT LADY. What specially struck me was when he flapped his wings,

{ and one saw how he rose!

{

{ GROSSMAN [to Sahátov] If we had kept to hypnotism, we might have

{ produced a thorough state of epilepsy. The success might have been

{ complete!

{

{ SAHÁTOF. It is very interesting, but not entirely convincing. That

{ is all I can say.

Enter Theodore Ivánitch.

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH [with paper in his hand] Ah, Theodore, what a remarkable séance we have had! It turns out that the peasants must have the land on their own terms.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. Dear me!

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Yes, indeed. [Showing paper] Fancy, this paper that I returned to them, suddenly appeared on the table! I have signed it.

THEODORE IVÁNITCH. How did it get there?

LEONÍD FYÓDORITCH. Well, it did get there! [Exit, Theodore Ivánitch follows him out].

TÁNYA [gets from under the sofa and laughs] Oh dear, oh dear! Well, I did get a fright when he got hold of the thread! [Shrieks] Well, anyhow, it's all right--he has signed it!

Enter Gregory.

GREGORY. So it was you that was fooling them?

TÁNYA. What business is it of yours?

GREGORY. And do you think the missis will be pleased with you for it?

No, you bet; you're caught now! I'll tell them what tricks you're up to,
if you don't let me have my way!

TÁNYA. And you'll not get your way, and you'll not do me any harm!

Curtain.