

XXI. KATENKA AND LUBOTSHKA

Katenka was now sixteen years old--quite a grown-up girl; and although at that age the angular figures, the bashfulness, and the gaucherie peculiar to girls passing from childhood to youth usually replace the comely freshness and graceful, half-developed bloom of childhood, she had in no way altered. Still the blue eyes with their merry glance were hers, the well-shaped nose with firm nostrils and almost forming a line with the forehead, the little mouth with its charming smile, the dimples in the rosy cheeks, and the small white hands. To her, the epithet of "girl," pure and simple, was pre-eminently applicable, for in her the only new features were a new and "young-lady-like" arrangement of her thick flaxen hair and a youthful bosom--the latter an addition which at once caused her great joy and made her very bashful.

Although Lubotshka and she had grown up together and received the same education, they were totally unlike one another. Lubotshka was not tall, and the rickets from which she had suffered had shaped her feet in goose fashion and made her figure very bad. The only pretty feature in her face was her eyes, which were indeed wonderful, being large and black, and instinct with such an extremely pleasing expression of mingled gravity and naivete that she was bound to attract attention. In everything she was simple and natural, so that, whereas Katenka always looked as though she were trying to be like some one else, Lubotshka looked people straight in the face, and sometimes fixed them so long with her splendid black eyes that she got blamed for doing what was

thought to be improper. Katenka, on the contrary, always cast her eyelids down, blinked, and pretended that she was short-sighted, though I knew very well that her sight was excellent. Lubotshka hated being shown off before strangers, and when a visitor offered to kiss her she invariably grew cross, and said that she hated "affection"; whereas, when strangers were present, Katenka was always particularly endearing to Mimi, and loved to walk about the room arm in arm with another girl. Likewise, though Lubotshka was a terrible giggler, and sometimes ran about the room in convulsions of gesticulating laughter, Katenka always covered her mouth with her hands or her pocket-handkerchief when she wanted to laugh. Lubotshka, again, loved to have grown-up men to talk to, and said that some day she meant to marry a hussar, but Katenka always pretended that all men were horrid, and that she never meant to marry any one of them, while as soon as a male visitor addressed her she changed completely, as though she were nervous of something. Likewise, Lubotshka was continually at loggerheads with Mimi because the latter wanted her to have her stays so tight that she could not breathe or eat or drink in comfort, while Katenka, on the contrary, would often insert her finger into her waistband to show how loose it was, and always ate very little. Lubotshka liked to draw heads; Katenka only flowers and butterflies. The former could play Field's concertos and Beethoven's sonatas excellently, whereas the latter indulged in variations and waltzes, retarded the time, and used the pedals continuously--not to mention the fact that, before she began, she invariably struck three chords in arpeggio.

Nevertheless, in those days I thought Katenka much the grander person of the two, and liked her the best.