

#### XXIV. MYSELF

Only a few months remained before I was to matriculate for the University, yet I was making such good progress that I felt no apprehensions, and even took a pleasure in my studies. I kept in good heart, and learnt my lessons fluently and intelligently. The faculty I had selected was the mathematical one--probably, to tell the truth, because the terms "tangent," "differentials," "integrals," and so forth, pleased my fancy.

Though stout and broad-shouldered, I was shorter than Woloda, while my ugliness of face still remained and tormented me as much as ever. By way of compensation, I tried to appear original. Yet one thing comforted me, namely, that Papa had said that I had "an INTELLIGENT face." I quite believed him.

St. Jerome was not only satisfied with me, but actually had taken to praising me. Consequently, I had now ceased to hate him. In fact, when, one day, he said that, with my "capacities" and my "intellect," it would be shameful for me not to accomplish this, that, or the other thing, I believe I almost liked him.

I had long ago given up keeping observation on the maidservants' room, for I was now ashamed to hide behind doors. Likewise, I confess that the knowledge of Masha's love for Basil had greatly cooled my ardour for her, and that my passion underwent a final cure by their marriage--a

consummation to which I myself contributed by, at Basil's request, asking Papa's consent to the union.

When the newly-married couple brought trays of cakes and sweetmeats to Papa as a thank-offering, and Masha, in a cap with blue ribbons, kissed each of us on the shoulder in token of her gratitude, I merely noticed the scent of the rose pomade on her hair, but felt no other sensation.

In general, I was beginning to get the better of my youthful defects, with the exception of the principal one--the one of which I shall often again have to speak in relating my life's history--namely, the tendency to abstract thought.