

### III. DREAMS

"To-day I will make my confession and purge myself of every sin," I thought to myself. "Nor will I ever commit another one." At this point I recalled all the peccadilloes which most troubled my conscience. "I will go to church regularly every Sunday, as well as read the Gospel at the close of every hour throughout the day. What is more, I will set aside, out of the cheque which I shall receive each month after I have gone to the University, two-and-a-half roubles" (a tenth of my monthly allowance) "for people who are poor but not exactly beggars, yet without letting any one know anything about it. Yes, I will begin to look out for people like that--orphans or old women--at once, yet never tell a soul what I am doing for them.

"Also, I will have a room here of my very own (St. Jerome's, probably), and look after it myself, and keep it perfectly clean. I will never let any one do anything for me, for every one is just a human being like myself. Likewise I will walk every day, not drive, to the University. Even if some one gives me a drozhki [Russian phaeton.] I will sell it, and devote the money to the poor. Everything I will do exactly and always" (what that "always" meant I could not possibly have said, but at least I had a vivid consciousness of its connoting some kind of prudent, moral, and irreproachable life). "I will get up all my lectures thoroughly, and go over all the subjects beforehand, so that at the end of my first course I may come out top and write a thesis. During my second course also I will get up everything beforehand, so that I may

soon be transferred to the third course, and at eighteen come out top in the examinations, and receive two gold medals, and go on to be Master of Arts, and Doctor, and the first scholar in Europe. Yes, in all Europe I mean to be the first scholar.--Well, what next?" I asked myself at this point. Suddenly it struck me that dreams of this sort were a form of pride--a sin which I should have to confess to the priest that very evening, so I returned to the original thread of my meditations.

"When getting up my lectures I will go to the Vorobievi Gori, [Sparrow Hills--a public park near Moscow.] and choose some spot under a tree, and read my lectures over there. Sometimes I will take with me something to eat--cheese or a pie from Pedotti's, or something of the kind. After that I will sleep a little, and then read some good book or other, or else draw pictures or play on some instrument (certainly I must learn to play the flute). Perhaps SHE too will be walking on the Vorobievi Gori, and will approach me one day and say, 'Who are you?' and I shall look at her, oh, so sadly, and say that I am the son of a priest, and that I am happy only when I am there alone, quite alone. Then she will give me her hand, and say something to me, and sit down beside me. So every day we shall go to the same spot, and be friends together, and I shall kiss her. But no! That would not be right! On the contrary, from this day forward I never mean to look at a woman again. Never, never again do I mean to walk with a girl, nor even to go near one if I can help it. Yet, of course, in three years' time, when I have come of age, I shall marry. Also, I mean to take as much exercise as ever I can, and to do gymnastics every day, so that, when I have turned twenty-five, I shall be stronger even than Rappo. On my first day's training I mean to hold

out half a pood [The Pood = 40 Russian pounds.] at arm's length for five minutes, and the next day twenty-one pounds, and the third day twenty-two pounds, and so on, until at last I can hold out four poods in each hand, and be stronger even than a porter. Then, if ever any one should try to insult me or should begin to speak disrespectfully of HER, I shall take him so, by the front of his coat, and lift him up an arshin [The arshin = 2 feet 3 inches.] or two with one hand, and just hold him there, so that he may feel my strength and cease from his conduct. Yet that too would not be right. No, no, it would not matter; I should not hurt him, merely show him that I--"

Let no one blame me because the dreams of my youth were as foolish as those of my childhood and boyhood. I am sure that, even if it be my fate to live to extreme old age and to continue my story with the years, I, an old man of seventy, shall be found dreaming dreams just as impossible and childish as those I am dreaming now. I shall be dreaming of some lovely Maria who loves me, the toothless old man, as she might love a Mazeppa; of some imbecile son who, through some extraordinary chance, has suddenly become a minister of state; of my suddenly receiving a windfall of a million of roubles. I am sure that there exists no human being, no human age, to whom or to which that gracious, consolatory power of dreaming is totally a stranger. Yet, save for the one general feature of magic and impossibility, the dreams of each human being, of each age of man, have their own distinguishing characteristics. At the period upon which I look as having marked the close of my boyhood and the beginning of my youth, four leading sentiments formed the basis

of my dreams. The first of those sentiments was love for HER--for an imaginary woman whom I always pictured the same in my dreams, and whom I somehow expected to meet some day and somewhere. This she of mine had a little of Sonetchka in her, a little of Masha as Masha could look when she stood washing linen over the clothes-tub, and a little of a certain woman with pearls round her fair white neck whom I had once seen long, long ago at a theatre, in a box below our own. My second sentiment was a craving for love. I wanted every one to know me and to love me. I wanted to be able to utter my name--Nicola Irtenieff--and at once to see every one thunderstruck at it, and come crowding round me and thanking me for something or another, I hardly knew what. My third sentiment was the expectation of some extraordinary, glorious happiness that was impending--some happiness so strong and assured as to verge upon ecstasy. Indeed, so firmly persuaded was I that very, very soon some unexpected chance would suddenly make me the richest and most famous man in the world that I lived in constant, tremulous expectation of this magic good fortune befalling me. I was always thinking to myself that "IT is beginning," and that I should go on thereafter to attain everything that a man could wish for. Consequently, I was forever hurrying from place to place, in the belief that "IT" must be "beginning" just where I happened not to be. Lastly, my fourth and principal sentiment of all was abhorrence of myself, mingled with regret--yet a regret so blended with the certain expectation of happiness to which I have referred that it had in it nothing of sorrow. It seemed to me that it would be so easy and natural for me to tear myself away from my past and to remake it--to forget all that had been,

and to begin my life, with all its relations, anew--that the past never troubled me, never clung to me at all. I even found a certain pleasure in detesting the past, and in seeing it in a darker light than the true one. This note of regret and of a curious longing for perfection were the chief mental impressions which I gathered from that new stage of my growth--impressions which imparted new principles to my view of myself, of men, and of God's world. O good and consoling voice, which in later days, in sorrowful days when my soul yielded silently to the sway of life's falseness and depravity, so often raised a sudden, bold protest against all iniquity, as well as mercilessly exposed the past, commanded, nay, compelled, me to love only the pure vista of the present, and promised me all that was fair and happy in the future! O good and consoling voice! Surely the day will never come when you are silent?