

XIII. I BECOME GROWN-UP

When, on May 8th, I returned home from the final, the divinity, examination, I found my acquaintance, the foreman from Rozonoff's, awaiting me. He had called once before to fit me for my gown, as well as for a tunic of glossy black cloth (the lapels of which were, on that occasion, only sketched in chalk), but to-day he had come to bring me the clothes in their finished state, with their gilt buttons wrapped in tissue paper.

Donning the garments, and finding them splendid (notwithstanding that St. Jerome assured me that the back of the tunic wrinkled badly), I went downstairs with a complacent smile which I was powerless to banish from my face, and sought Woloda, trying the while to affect unconsciousness of the admiring looks of the servants, who came darting out of the hall and corridor to gaze upon me with ravished eyes. Gabriel, the butler, overtook me in the salle, and, after congratulating me with much empressement, handed me, according to instructions from my father, four bank-notes, as well as informed me that Papa had also given orders that, from that day forth, the groom Kuzma, the phaeton, and the bay horse Krassavchik were to be entirely at my disposal. I was so overjoyed at this not altogether expected good-fortune that I could no longer feign indifference in Gabriel's presence, but, flustered and panting, said the first thing which came into my head ("Krassavchik is a splendid trotter," I think it was). Then, catching sight of the various heads protruding from the doors of the hall and corridor, I felt that I

could bear no more, and set off running at full speed across the salle, dressed as I was in the new tunic, with its shining gilt buttons. Just as I burst into Woloda's room, I heard behind me the voices of Dubkoff and Nechludoff, who had come to congratulate me, as well as to propose a dinner somewhere and the drinking of much champagne in honour of my matriculation. Dimitri informed me that, though he did not care for champagne, he would nevertheless join us that evening and drink my health, while Dubkoff remarked that I looked almost like a colonel, and Woloda omitted to congratulate me at all, merely saying in an acid way that he supposed we should now--i.e. in two days time--be off into the country. The truth was that Woloda, though pleased at my matriculation, did not altogether like my becoming as grown-up as himself. St. Jerome, who also joined us at this moment, said in a very pompous manner that his duties were now ended, and that, although he did not know whether they had been well done or ill, at least he had done his best, and must depart to-morrow to his Count's. In replying to their various remarks I could feel, in spite of myself, a pleased, agreeable, faintly self-sufficient smile playing over my countenance, as well as could remark that that smile, communicated itself to those to whom I was speaking.

So here was I without a tutor, yet with my own private drozhki, my name printed on the list of students, a sword and belt of my own, and a chance of an occasional salute from officials! In short, I was grownup and, I suppose, happy.

Finally, we arranged to go out and dine at five o'clock, but since Woloda presently went off to Dubkoff's, and Dimitri disappeared in his usual fashion (saying that there was something he MUST do before dinner), I was left with two whole hours still at my disposal. For a time I walked through the rooms of the house, and looked at myself in all the mirrors--firstly with the tunic buttoned, then with it unbuttoned, and lastly with only the top button fastened. Each time it looked splendid. Eventually, though anxious not to show any excess of delight, I found myself unable to refrain from crossing over to the coach-house and stables to gaze at Krassovchik, Kuzma, and the drozhki. Then I returned and once more began my tour of the rooms, where I looked at myself in all the mirrors as before, and counted my money over in my pocket--my face smiling happily the while. Yet not an hour had elapsed before I began to feel slightly ennuye--to feel a shade of regret that no one was present to see me in my splendid position. I began to long for life and movement, and so sent out orders for the drozhki to be got ready, since I had made up my mind to drive to the Kuznetski Bridge and make some purchases.

In this connection I recalled how, after matriculating, Woloda had gone and bought himself a lithograph of horses by Victor Adam and some pipes and tobacco: wherefore I felt that I too must do the same. Amid glances showered upon me from every side, and with the sunlight reflected from my buttons, cap-badge, and sword, I drove to the Kuznetski Bridge, where, halting at a Picture shop, I entered it with my eyes looking to every side. It was not precisely horses by Adam which I meant to buy,

since I did not wish to be accused of too closely imitating Woloda; wherefore, out of shame for causing the obsequious shopmen such agitation as I appeared to do, I made a hasty selection, and pitched upon a water-colour of a woman's head which I saw displayed in the window--price twenty roubles. Yet no sooner had I paid the twenty roubles over the counter than my heart smote me for having put two such beautifully dressed shop-assistants to so much trouble for such a trifle. Moreover, I fancied that they were regarding me with some disdain. Accordingly, in my desire to show them what manner of man I was, I turned my attention to a silver trifle which I saw displayed in a show-case, and, recognising that it was a porte-crayon (price eighteen roubles), requested that it should forthwith be wrapped in paper for me. Next, the money paid, and the information acquired that splendid pipes and tobacco were to be obtained in an adjacent emporium, I bowed to the two shopmen politely, and issued into the street with the picture under my arm. At the shop next door (which had painted on its sign-board a negro smoking a cigar) I bought (likewise out of a desire to imitate no one) some Turkish tobacco, a Stamboul hookah, and two pipes. On coming out of the shop, I had just entered the drozhki when I caught sight of Semenoff, who was walking hurriedly along the pavement with his head bent down. Vexed that he should not have recognised me, I called out to him pretty loudly, "Hold on a minute!" and, whipping up the drozhki, soon overtook him.

"How do you do?" I said.

"My respects to you," he replied, but without stopping.

"Why are you not in your University uniform?" I next inquired.

At this he stopped short with a frown, and parted his white teeth as though the sun were hurting his eyes. The next moment, however, he threw a glance of studied indifference at my drozhki and uniform, and continued on his way.

From the Kuznetski Bridge, I drove to a confectioner's in Tverskaia Street, and, much as I should have liked it to be supposed that it was the newspapers which most interested me, I had no choice but to begin falling upon tartlet after tartlet. In fact, for all my bashfulness before a gentleman who kept regarding me with some curiosity from behind a newspaper, I ate with great swiftness a tartlet of each of the eight different sorts which the confectioner kept.

On reaching home, I experienced a slight touch of stomach-ache, but paid no attention to it, and set to work to inspect my purchases. Of these, the picture so much displeased me that, instead of having it framed and hung in my room, as Woloda had done with his, I took pains to hide it behind a chest of drawers, where no one could see it. Likewise, though I also found the porte-crayon distasteful, I was able, as I laid it on my table, to comfort myself with the thought that it was at least a SILVER article--so much capital, as it were--and likely to be very useful to a student. As for the smoking things, I decided to put them into use at

once, and try their capabilities.

Unsealing the four packages, and carefully filling the Stamboul pipe with some fine-cut, reddish-yellow Turkish tobacco, I applied a hot cinder to it, and, taking the mouthpiece between my first and second fingers (a position of the hand which greatly caught my fancy), started to inhale the smoke.

The smell of the tobacco seemed delightful, yet something burnt my mouth and caught me by the breath. Nevertheless, I hardened my heart, and continued to draw abundant fumes into my interior. Then I tried blowing rings and retaining the smoke. Soon the room became filled with blue vapours, while the pipe started to crackle and the tobacco to fly out in sparks. Presently, also, I began to feel a smarting in my mouth and a giddiness in my head. Accordingly, I was on the point of stopping and going to look at myself and my pipe in the mirror, when, to my surprise, I found myself staggering about. The room was whirling round and round, and as I peered into the mirror (which I reached only with some difficulty) I perceived that my face was as white as a sheet. Hardly had I thrown myself down upon a sofa when such nausea and faintness swept over me that, making up my mind that the pipe had proved my death, I expected every moment to expire. Terribly frightened, I tried to call out for some one to come and help me, and to send for the doctor.

However, this panic of mine did not last long, for I soon understood what the matter with me was, and remained lying on the sofa with a

racking headache and my limbs relaxed as I stared dully at the stamp on the package of tobacco, the Pipe-tube coiled on the floor, and the odds and ends of tobacco and confectioner's tartlets which were littered about. "Truly," I thought to myself in my dejection and disillusionment, "I cannot be quite grown-up if I cannot smoke as other fellows do, and should be fated never to hold a chibouk between my first and second fingers, or to inhale and puff smoke through a flaxen moustache!"

When Dimitri called for me at five o'clock, he found me in this unpleasant predicament. After drinking a glass of water, however, I felt nearly recovered, and ready to go with him.

"So much for your trying to smoke!" said he as he gazed at the remnants of my debauch. "It is a silly thing to do, and waste of money as well. I long ago promised myself never to smoke. But come along; we have to call for Dubkoff."