

XVII. I GET READY TO PAY SOME CALLS

On awaking next morning my first thoughts were of the affair with Kolpikoff. Once again I muttered to myself and stamped about the room, but there was no help for it. To-day was the last day that I was to spend in Moscow, and it was to be spent, by Papa's orders, in my paying a round of calls which he had written out for me on a piece of paper--his first solicitude on our account being not so much for our morals or our education as for our due observance of the convenances. On the piece of paper was written in his swift, broken hand-writing: "(1) Prince Ivan Ivanovitch WITHOUT FAIL; (2) the Iwins WITHOUT FAIL; (3) Prince Michael; (4) the Princess Nechludoff and Madame Valakhina if you wish." Of course I was also to call upon my guardian, upon the rector, and upon the professors.

These last-mentioned calls, however, Dimitri advised me not to pay: saying that it was not only unnecessary to do so, but not the thing. However, there were the other visits to be got through. It was the first two on the list--those marked as to be paid "WITHOUT FAIL"--that most alarmed me. Prince Ivan Ivanovitch was a commander-in-chief, as well as old, wealthy, and a bachelor. Consequently, I foresaw that vis-a-vis conversation between him and myself--myself a sixteen-year-old student!--was not likely to be interesting. As for the Iwins, they too were rich--the father being a departmental official of high rank who had only on one occasion called at our house during my grandmother's time. Since her death, I had remarked that the younger Iwin had fought shy of

us, and seemed to give himself airs. The elder of the pair, I had heard, had now finished his course in jurisprudence, and gone to hold a post in St. Petersburg, while his brother Sergius (the former object of my worship) was also in St. Petersburg, as a great fat cadet in the Corps of Pages.

When I was a young man, not only did I dislike intercourse with people who thought themselves above me, but such intercourse was, for me, an unbearable torture, owing partly to my constant dread of being snubbed, and partly to my straining every faculty of my intellect to prove to such people my independence. Yet, even if I failed to fulfil the latter part of my father's instructions, I felt that I must carry out the former. I paced my room and eyed my clothes ready disposed on chairs--the tunic, the sword, and the cap. Just as I was about to set forth, old Grap called to congratulate me, bringing with him Ilinka. Grap pere was a Russianised German and an intolerably effusive, sycophantic old man who was more often than not tipsy. As a rule, he visited us only when he wanted to ask for something, and although Papa sometimes entertained him in his study, old Grap never came to dinner with us. With his subserviency and begging propensities went such a faculty of good-humour and a power of making himself at home that every one looked upon his attachment to us as a great honour. For my part, however, I never liked him, and felt ashamed when he was speaking.

I was much put out by the arrival of these visitors, and made no effort to conceal the fact. Upon Ilinka I had been so used to look down, and he

so used to recognise my right to do so, that it displeased me to think that he was now as much a matriculated student as myself. In some way he appeared to me to have made a POINT of attaining that equality. I greeted the pair coldly, and, without offering them any refreshment (since it went against the grain to do so, and I thought they could ask for anything, if they wanted it, without my first inviting them to state their requirements), gave orders for the drozhki to be got ready. Ilinka was a good-natured, extremely moral, and far from stupid young fellow; yet, for all that, what people call a person of moods. That is to say, for no apparent reason he was for ever in some PRONOUNCED frame of mind--now lachrymose, now frivolous, now touchy on the very smallest point. At the present moment he appeared to be in the last-named mood. He kept looking from his father to myself without speaking, except when directly addressed, at which times he smiled the self-deprecatory, forced smile under which he was accustomed to conceal his feelings, and more especially that feeling of shame for his father which he must have experienced in our house.

"So, Nicolas Petrovitch," the old man said to me, following me everywhere about the room as I went through the operation of dressing, while all the while his fat fingers kept turning over and over a silver snuff-box with which my grandmother had once presented me, "as soon as ever I heard from my son that you had passed your examinations so well (though of course your abilities are well-known to everyone), I at once came to congratulate you, my dear boy. Why, I have carried you on my shoulders before now, and God knows that I love you as though you were

my own son. My Ilinka too has always been fond of you, and feels quite at home with you."

Meanwhile the said Ilinka remained sitting silently by the window, apparently absorbed in contemplation of my three-cornered cap, and every now and then angrily muttering something in an undertone.

"Now, I also wanted to ask you, Nicolas Petrovitch." His father went on, "whether my son did well in the examinations? He tells me that he is going to be in the same faculty as yourself, and that therefore you will be able to keep an eye on him, and advise him, and so on."

"Oh, yes, I suppose he passed well," I replied, with a glance at Ilinka, who, conscious of my gaze, reddened violently and ceased to move his lips about. "And might he spend the day with you?" was the father's next request, which he made with a deprecatory smile, as though he stood in actual awe of me, yet always keeping so close to me, wherever I moved, that the fumes of the drink and tobacco in which he had been indulging were constantly perceptible to my nostrils. I felt greatly vexed at his placing me in such a false position towards his son, as well as at his distracting my attention from what was, to me, a highly important operation--namely, the operation of dressing; while, over and above all, I was annoyed by the smell of liquor with which he followed me about. Accordingly, I said very coldly that I could not have the pleasure of Ilinka's company that day, since I should be out.

"Ah! I suppose you are going to see your sister?" put in Ilinka with a smile, but without looking at me. "Well, I too have business to attend to." At this I felt even more put out, as well as pricked with compunction; so, to soften my refusal a little, I hastened to say that the reason why I should not be at home that day was that I had to call upon the PRINCE Ivan Ivanovitch, the PRINCESS Kornakoff, and the Monsieur Iwin who held such an influential post, as well as, probably, to dine with the PRINCESS Nechludoff (for I thought that, on learning what important folk I was in the habit of mixing with, the Graps would no longer think it worth while to pretend to me). However, just as they were leaving, I invited Ilinka to come and see me another day; but he only murmured something unintelligible, and it was plain that he meant never to set foot in the house again.

When they had departed, I set off on my round of calls. Woloda, whom I had asked that morning to come with me, in order that I might not feel quite so shy as when altogether alone, had declined on the ground that for two brothers to be seen driving in one drozhki would appear so horribly "proper."