

Why was Tolstoy's Kreutzer Sonata censored in Russia and England being obscene?



*Abstract and train of thoughts*¹

Madame Blavatsky comments on Count Tolstoy's Sonata.

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Prudish England will never allow a diagnosis of the state of its diseased morals and hidden ulcers in its social life to be made. 4

Jesus did not teach Monasticism but the law of Continence. For morality to exist between men and women, they must follow the law of Chastity. 5

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¹ Frontispiece: Kreutzer Sonata (1901) by René François Xavier Prinnet.

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Suggested reading for students.

From our Living the Life Series.

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Hilton MacRae as Posdnicheff in the Sonata a Kreutzer, Gate Theater, London 2012

Madame Blavatsky comments on Count Tolstoy's Sonata.

Why was Tolstoy's Kreutzer Sonata censored in Russia and England as being obscene?

Prudish England will never allow a diagnosis of the state of its diseased morals and hidden ulcers in its social life to be made.

A TREE IS KNOWN BY ITS FRUITS; an Age has to be judged by its most prominent authors. The intrinsic moral value of every particular period of history has generally to be inferred from what its best and most observant writers had to say of the habits, customs, and ethics of their contemporaries and the classes of Society they have observed or been living in. And what now do these writers say of our Age, and how are they themselves treated?

Zola's works are finally exiled in their English translations; and though we have not much to say against the ostracism to which his *Nana* and *La Terre* have been subjected, his last — *La Bête Humaine* — might have been read in English with some profit. With "Jack the Ripper" in the near past, and the hypnotic rage in the present, this fine psychological study of the modern male neurotic and "hysteric," might have done good work by way of suggestion. It appears, however, that prudish England is determined to ignore the truth and will never allow a diagnosis of the true state of its diseased morals to be made — not by a foreign writer at all events. First, then, have departed Zola's works, forcibly exiled. At this many applauded, as such fictions, though vividly pointing out some of the most hidden ulcers in social life, were told really too cynically and too indecently to do much good. But now comes the turn of Count Lev Tolstoy. His last work, if not yet exiled from the bookstalls, is being rabidly denounced by the English and American press. In the words of *Kate Field's Washington*, why?

Does *The Kreutzer Sonata* defy Christianity? No.

Does it advocate lax morals? No.

Does it make the reader in love with that "intelligent beast" Posdnicheff? On the contrary . . .

Why then is the *Kreutzer Sonata* so abused?

The answer comes: "because Tolstoy has told the truth," not as averred "very brutally," but very frankly, and "about a very brutal condition of things" certainly; and we, of the 19th century, have always preferred to keep our social skeletons securely locked in our closets and hidden far away from sight. We dare not deny the terribly

realistic truths vomited upon the immorality of the day and modern society by Posdnicheff; but we may call the creator of Posdnicheff names. Did he not indeed dare to present a mirror to modern Society in which it sees its own ugly face? Withal, he offers no possible cure for our social sores. Hence, with eyes lifted heavenward and foaming mouths, his critics maintain that, all its characteristic realism notwithstanding, the

Kreutzer Sonata is a prurient book, like to effect more harm than good, *portraying vividly the great immorality of life*, and offering no possible remedy for it.¹

Worse still.

It is simply *repulsive*. It is daring beyond measure and without excuse; . . . the work of a mind . . . not only morbid, but . . . far gone in disease through unwholesome reflection.^{2, 3}

Jesus did not teach Monasticism but the law of Continence. For morality to exist between men and women, they must follow the law of Chastity.

Thus the author of *Anna Karenina* and the *Death of Ivan Ilyitch*, the greatest psychologist of this century, stands accused of *ignoring* “human nature” by one critic, of being “the most conspicuous case out of Bedlam,” and by another⁴ called “the ex-great artist.” “He tilts,” we are told, “against the strongest human instincts” because forsooth, the author — an orthodox Russian born — tells us that far better no marriage at all than such a desecration of what his church regards as one of the holy Sacraments. But in the opinion of the Protestant *Vanity Fair*, Tolstoy is “an extremist,” because “with all its evils, the present marriage system, *taken even as the vile thing for which he gives it us* (italics are ours) is a surely less evil than the monasticism — with its effects — which he preaches.” This shows the ideas of the reviewer on *morality!*

“Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth.”⁵

Tolstoy, however, “preaches” nothing of the sort; nor does his Posdnicheff say so, though the critics misunderstand him from A to Z, as they do also the wise statement that “not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth” or a vile man’s heart and imagination. It is not “monasticism” but *the law of continence* as taught by Jesus (and Occultism) in its esoteric meaning — which most Christians are unable to perceive — that he preaches. Nothing can be more moral or conducive to human happiness and perfectibility than the application of this law. It is one ordained by Nature herself. Animals follow it instinctively, as do also the savage tribes. Once pregnant, to the last day of the nursing of her babe, *i.e.*, for eighteen or twenty months, the savage squaw *is sacred to her hus-*

¹ *Vanity Fair*

² *New York Herald*

³ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (DIAGNOSES AND PALLIATIVES) XII pp. 242-43

⁴ *Scot’s Observer*

⁵ *Matthew xv*, 11 KJV

band; the civilised and semi-civilized man alone breaking this beneficent law. Therefore, speaking of the *immorality* of marriage relations as at present practised, and of unions performed on commercial bases, or, what is worse, on mere sensual love, Posdnicheff elaborates the idea by uttering the greatest and the holiest truth, namely, that:

For morality to exist between men and women in their daily life, *they must make perfect chastity their law.*¹ In progressing towards this end, man subdues himself. When he has arrived at the last degree of subjection we shall have moral marriages. But if a man as in our Society advances only towards physical love, even though he surrounds it with deception and with the shallow formality of marriage, *he obtains nothing but licensed vice.*

A good proof that it is not “monasticism” and *utter celibacy* which are preached, but only *continence*, is found on page 84 where the fellow traveller of Posdnicheff is made to remark that the result of the theory of the latter would be “that a man would have to keep away from his wife except once every year or two.” Then again there is this sentence:

I did not at that time understand that the words of the Gospel as to looking upon a woman with the eyes of desire did not refer only to the wives of others, but especially and above all to one’s own wife.

Moral continence and chastity are mistaken for monasticism.

“Monastics” have no wives, nor do they get married if they would remain chaste on the physical plane. Tolstoy, however, seems to have answered in anticipation of British criticism and objections on these lines, by making the hero of his “grimy and revolting book”² say:

Think what a perversity of ideas there must be, when the happiest, the freest condition of the human being, that of (*mental*) chastity, is looked upon as something miserable and ridiculous. The highest ideal, the most perfect condition to be attained by woman, that of a pure being, a vestal, a virgin, provokes, in our society, fear and laughter.

Tolstoy might have added — and when moral continence and chastity, mistaken for “monasticism,” are pronounced far more evil than “the marriage system *taken even* as the vile thing for which he (Tolstoy) gives it us.” Has the virtuous critic of *Vanity Fair* or the *Scot’s Observer* never met with a woman who, although the mother of a numerous family, had withal remained all her life mentally and morally a pure virgin, or with a *vestal* (in vulgar talk, a *spinster*) who although physically undefiled, yet surpassed in *mental*, unnatural depravity the lowest of the fallen women? If he has not — we have.

We maintain that to call *Kreutzer Sonata* *pointless*, and “a vain book,” is to miss most egregiously the noblest as well as the most important points in it. It is nothing less

¹ All the italics throughout the article are ours. [Ed. *Lucifer*]

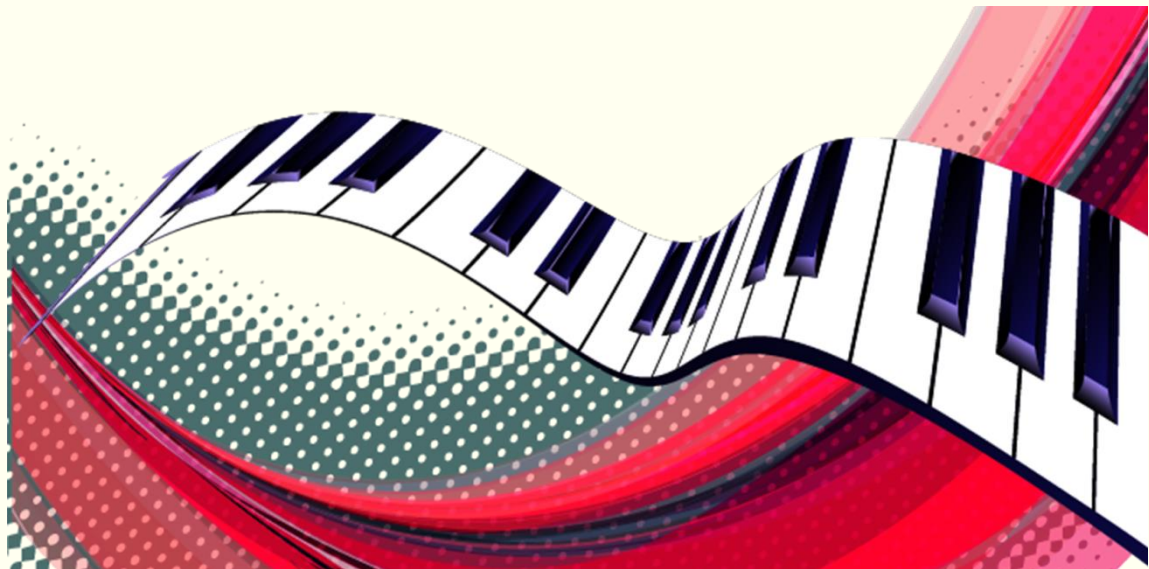
² *Scot’s Observer*

than wilful blindness, or what is still worse — that moral cowardice which will sanction every growing immorality rather than allow its mention, let alone its discussion, in public. It is on such fruitful soil that our moral leprosy thrives and prospers instead of being checked by timely palliatives. It is blindness to one of her greatest social evils of this kind that led France to issue her unrighteous law, prohibiting the so-called “search of paternity.” And is it not again the ferocious selfishness of the male, in which species legislators are of course included, which is responsible for the many iniquitous laws with which the country of old disgraced itself? *e.g.*, the right of every brute of a husband to sell his wife in a market-place with a rope around her neck; the right of every beggar-husband over his rich wife’s fortune, rights now happily abrogated. But does not law protect man to this day, granting him means for legal impunity in almost all his dealings with woman?

Has it never occurred to any grave judge or critic either — any more than to Posdnicheff

. . . that *immorality does not consist in physical acts alone but on the contrary, in liberating one’s self from all moral obligations, which such acts impose?*¹

And as a direct result of such legal “*liberation* from any moral obligations,” we have the present marriage system in every civilized nation, viz., men “steeped in corruption” seeking “at the same time for a virgin whose purity might be worthy” of them;² men, out of a thousand of whom “hardly one could be found who has not been married before at least a dozen times!”^{3, 4}



¹ *Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 32

² p. 39

³ p. 41

⁴ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (DIAGNOSES AND PALLIATIVES) XII pp. 243-46

There is no sanctity in worldly marriage of any kind.

Madame Blavatsky examines the meaning of marriage from the highest philosophical, metaphysical, and ethical perspectives.

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SOME ENQUIRE HOW THE WORLD IS TO GO ON IF ALL WERE TO BECOME OCCULTISTS, one of the vital conditions of that order being celibacy. Others say that the ancient Rishis married, quoting some of the names mentioned in the Hindu religious books; and argue therefrom that celibacy is not an essential condition for progress in *practical* occultism. Generally, they put a literal interpretation upon what is beautifully conveyed by means of an allegory and insist upon the dead-letter sense being correct, whenever such a course is profitable in their narrow interests. They find it difficult to control the lower animal desires; and, in order to justify their conduct of persistence in hankering after sensual pleasures, they resort to these books as their authority, interpreting them in a manner most convenient to themselves. Of course, when any passages, even in their exoteric sense, conflict with the dictates of their “lower self,” then others are quoted, which *esoterically* convey the same sense, although *exoterically* supporting their peculiar views. The question of the marriage of the *Rishis* is one of such disputed points. The readers of *The Theosophist* may recall here, with advantage, a passage occurring in the article under the heading of “Magicon,” where one of the occultists is said to have rejected the hand of a beautiful young lady, on the ground of his having taken the vow of celibacy, although he himself confesses further on to be courting a virgin whose name was “Sophia.” Now, it is explained there that “Sophia” is wisdom or the *Buddhi* — the spiritual soul (our sixth principle). This principle is everywhere represented as a “female,” because it is passive inasmuch as it is merely the vehicle of the seventh principle. This latter — which is called *Ātma* when spoken of in connection with an individual and *Purush* when applied in its relation to the Universe — is the active male, for it is the CENTRE OF ENERGY acting through and upon its female vehicle, the sixth principle.¹

The occultist, when he has identified himself thoroughly with his *Ātma*, acts upon the *Buddhi*, for, according to the laws of Cosmic Evolution, the *Purusha* — the universal seventh principle — is perpetually acting upon and manifesting itself through *Prakriti* — the universal sixth principle. Thus the MAHATMA, who has become one with his seventh principle — which is identical with *Purusha*, since there is no isola-

¹ [Cf. “Marriage made in Heaven” in our Secret Doctrine’s Third Proposition Series. — ED. PHIL.]

tion in the spiritual monad¹ — is practically a creator, for he has identified himself with the evolving and the manifesting energy of nature. It was in this sense that the Rishis are said to have married. And the union of *Śiva* and *Śakti* represents the same allegory. *Śiva* is the *Logos*, the *Vāch*, manifested through the *Śakti*; and the union of the two produces the phenomenal creation, for until the Son is born, the Father and the Mother are non-existent. Now *Śakti* being a female principle, it is *fully* manifested through a woman, although, properly speaking, the *inner* man is neither male, nor female. It is only the preponderance of either of the two principles (positive and negative) which determines the sex. Now, this preponderance is determined by the Law of Affinity; and hence in a woman is manifested abnormally the occult power represented by *Śakti*. She is moreover gifted with a wonderfully vivid imagination — stronger than man's. And as the phenomenal is the realization or rather the manifestation of the IDEAL, which can be properly and strongly conceived only by a *powerful* IMAGINATION — a WOMAN-ADEPT can produce high occultists — a race of “Buddhas and Christs,” born “without sin.” The more and the sooner the animal sexual affinities are given up, the stronger and the sooner will be the manifestation of the higher occult powers which alone can produce the “immaculate conception.” And this art is practically taught to the occultists at a very high stage of initiation. The “Adept,” whether the *Sthūla Śarīra* be male or female, is then able to bring a new being into existence by the manipulation of cosmic forces. *Anasūyā*, a female adept of the ancient times, is thus said to have conceived immaculately *Durvasas*, *Dattatreya* and *Chandra* — the three distinct types of Adeptship. Thus it will be seen that the marriage of the occultist (who is, as already explained, neither male nor female) is a “holy union,” devoid of sin, in the same manner as Krishna's union with thousands of *Gopīs*. Sensual-minded men have taken this fact up too literally; and, out of a wrong interpretation of the text, has arisen a sect which indulges in the most degrading practices. But, in fact, *Krishna* represents the seventh principle, while the *Gopīs* indicate the innumerable powers of that principle manifested through its “vehicle.” Its union “without sin,” or rather the action or manifestation of each of these powers through the “female principle” gives rise to the phenomenal appearances. In such a union the occultist is happy and “without sin” for the “conception” of his other-half — the female principle — is “immaculate.” The very fact, that this stage pertains to one of the very highest initiations, shows that the time — when ordinary humanity, during the course of cosmic evolution, will, in this manner, be able to produce a race of “Buddhas,” etc., born “without sin” — is yet very, very far off — perhaps attainable in the sixth or the seventh “round.” But when once this possibility and the actuality of this fact is recognized, the course of living and education may be so moulded as to hasten the approach of that eventful day when on this earth will descend “the Kingdom of Heaven.”

¹ [Note to Students: Monad (*μοναδα*, in Greek) is the accusative case of *μονα*. However, as the term is here used in the nominative case (*μονα*), i.e., the subject of the verb, it should be transliterated as monas (pl. monases), i.e., the object of the verb, and not as monad (pl. monads). The same grammatical rule applies to duad, triad, tetrad, pentad, hexad, heptad, ogdoad, hebdomad, decad, etc. — ED. PHIL.]

Madame Blavatsky appraises the religious, practical, and political aspects of sensual marriage.

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Mr. Ap Richard¹ has furnished with a powerful weapon those numerous Solomons of society who, under the mask of religion, have brought forward in every age the authority of the Bible to justify their shameful actions. They have appealed to it in support of slavery, and they now appeal to it in support of concubinage and licentiousness. The author deals with the question of marriage from every point of view — chiefly from that of animalism. He starts with the principle that “Liberty of Conscience” (for the *male* alone, note well) should be allowed. This implies in practice liberty of free commerce, the prostitution of woman as a *thing*, and reduces a tie which is regarded by many as holy and indissoluble to a mere product of free Love and trade, which is far from being always *fair Trade*.

The work may be a scholarly one from a literary point, but it starts from a principle still lower in the code of morality than that practiced by Mormons. It answers, perhaps, the aspirations of the average Mussulman. We doubt whether those of the average Christian (unless one of the *Upper Ten*²) will be as easily satisfied.

Our ideas of relationship are founded upon our social system, and as other races have very different habits and ideas on that subject, it is natural to expect that their systems of relationship would also differ from ours. The ideas and customs with regard to marriage are very dissimilar in different races and we may say, as a general rule, [35] that as we descend in the scale of civilization, the family diminishes and the tribe increases in importance.

Mr. Ap Richard seems to have made a careful classification of his subject, although it is artificial in every respect. He starts with the assumption that the Bible *must* be right, and argues thence to the infallibility of the Church. In so doing he exactly reverses the view taken by St. Augustine. “*Ego vero Evangelio non crederem; nisi me catholicæ Ecclesiæ commoveret auctoritas.*”³ Both the Catholic saint and the Protestant author, however, reason within a vicious circle, each from the respective point of his preconception. It may be pointed out, however, that there was a difference between temporary and permanent laws in the Old Testament.

“The blessing of God was given to the marriage of Adam and Eve.” Indeed? The author is discreetly silent, however, about the approval of the Almighty. It is previously

¹ [Cf. Ap Richard (*pseud.*). *Marriage and divorce: including religious, practical and political aspects of the question*. London: Trübner, 1888; 173pp. — ED. PHIL.]

² [“Upper Ten Thousand was a term used in the late 19th century to denote Britain’s ruling elite; those rich and landed persons and families, titled and untitled, who were thought to control the vast majority of the country’s political and financial system. This term included not only landed gentry, aristocracy, and the peerage; it also included the industrialists and financiers of the day. The invention of this term was a response to the broadening of the British elite caused by the Industrial Revolution.” — *Wikipedia*.]

³ [This passage is from St. Augustine’s essay entitled: *Contra Epistolam Manichæi quam vocant fundamenti* (Against the Epistle of Manichæus called Fundamental), and may be found in Chapter V thereof. The original text may be consulted in Migne, *Patr. Latina*, Vol. 42; in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. First Series, Vol. IV, the passage is translated as: “For my part, I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church.” — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

given to the sun, the moon and the creeping things which “were very good,” but no similar expression of approval is used about Eve. Abraham’s *liaison* with Hagar (the still worse one of Lot with his daughters is not mentioned) was “not condemned by the writer of the Book of the Beginnings.” Polygamy (and, it seems, incest also) “was recognized and allowed by the Mosaic law, but was not allowed on the woman’s side,” goes on our *authority*. We say if one *was*, the other was also, and shall prove it.

David, we are told by the author, was rebuked for his *adultery*, not for his *polygamy* (!). Solomon’s wives and concubines were allowed to him as “a thing advantageous.” The symbolism which makes all these mystic brides indicative of the forces of nature is again ignored by the very matter-of-fact author, who is a literalist *pur sang*. We then [36] are offered the N. Testament record. Christ did not forbid polygamy, nor did His Apostles. It was only in a bishop that it was disapproved. There is in fact no general prohibition of it in Scripture, and Mr. Ap Richard considers it an open question, as open as the questions of parachute descent or Stock Exchange speculation. *Utrum horum mavis accipe*.¹

We see here what comes of *Biblical* religion, which rests on no foundation of morality and is so dangerous in its dead letter. The author then takes the question of divorce, and discusses, in detail, *Exodus* xxi, 2, *Exodus* xxi, 7, *Deuteronomy* xxi, 10, *Deuteronomy* xxiv, I, and proceeds to teach that,

There is sufficient to show that concubinage under certain conditions was permitted. Divorce as a matter of expediency was allowed. The author gives no weight nor value to the declaration of Christ, that the Mosaic law was abrogated, and that marriage with a divorced person was distinctly forbidden. In all Mr. Ap Richard’s arguments, he takes the Protestant view and regards the Church of England as an *εντελέχεια*.² The Greek and Roman churches are entirely ignored, and left to be hatched, matched, or dispatched, at his own sweet will and pleasure.

Then the author considers the question of separation, though he never indicates the true distinctions between the divorce *a vinculo matrimonii*³ and the divorce *a mensa et thoro*.⁴ Still, giving due weight to his aspirations on the importance of observing Church Discipline in the Church of England, he shows how semi-detached couples may be brought into existence upon the biological plan of “fission.” In this work there is much which brings us face to face with questions of theology, or of right and wrong, supposed to act as the prime motors in what some call a sacrament and most others a deliberate contract. To the author, however, marriage is neither.

But let us now examine the question from two other aspects. Let us look at it from the standpoint of the woman [37] and her sacred rights involved in it; and from that of truth and a dispassionate analysis.

¹ [Take whichever you prefer; choose out of two evils. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

² [*i.e.*, full, complete reality (Liddell & Scott); frequently confused with *ενδελέχεια*, *i.e.*, continuity, persistency. Cf. “πέτρην κολιαινει ρανις υδατος ενδελεχεια,” Choerilus Epicus Samus, 10 — ED. PHIL.]

³ [From the bond of marriage, *i.e.*, legal dissolution of a marriage. — ED. PHIL.]

⁴ [From bed and board, *i.e.*, legal separation rather than dissolution. — ED. PHIL.]

The bloodthirsty ancient Israelites, the sensual Jews, as in the Old Testament, followed the instinct of all savages and regarded the female as a *thing* to be captured and used, and of which a conqueror would scarcely have too much. The iniquities of their bloody wars were perpetrated under the direct command of “the Lord thy God”¹ also carried out by Christian conquerors. The woman might be the property of all the males in the tribe. The Book of Ruth, if it is taken as most Jews take it, in its literal meaning, decidedly inculcates the principle of polyandry. Of course, occultists are acquainted with its real significance; meanwhile, female believers in the dead-letter text would be fully justified in clamouring for their rights of practicing polyandry on the same *authority*.

The Jews appear, according to their own showing, at one time of their history, to have been both polygamous and polyandrous, neither social practice being forbidden by their Torah, or Law.

As this law was acceptable to the individuals, it was readily accepted as the voice of “God.” As slavery brought money into the pockets of slaveholders, in America, the whole clergy supported the iniquitous claims of the Southerners by Biblical texts. While the Jews were polygamising and polyandrising, and Baal and Astoreth elevated their fanes beside that of the Ineffable יהוה, the prophets of Israel (not Judah) preserved the Secret and Sacred Doctrine amid many vicissitudes. They were the real custodians of Truth, into which they were initiated. The Jews around them knew nothing of their doctrine, as their religious duties chiefly consisted in selling doves, changing money, and slaughtering oxen in the Temple. But the real high places of Samaria told of the worship of the God of Truth. The hut circle on the mountain side, with its divine ☉, told worshippers what to worship, and where Deity should be worshipped. Protest after protest was made by these Tannaïm, the Initiated, against the brutalising influence of the Jews; but the intruders had learnt that the Promised Land abounded in milk and honey, and that if [38] they went east they would be beaten by the Arabs. The day of Karma came, and the Jews were successively beaten by Babylonians, by Romans, and centuries later by Christians. The knowledge of the ☉ became forgotten. The Jews learned social decency for the first time, when they copied the outward bearing of Roman courtesans, who at least taught them a higher morality than they knew of in their own land. In the time of Cicero,² we see that the Jews had a different code of morals in sexual matters, and a far lower one than even the not over-pious Romans, the latter being always chary to admit such sensualists into their midst.³ Polygamy might be tolerated by the Roman soldier, but polyandry was too strong for the Roman matron. The nation had not yet been so debased through contact with the Jews and their immoralities, the profligacy of the higher classes of the Empire notwithstanding. But early Christian asceticism placed the po-

¹ See *Hosea* xiii, 16.

² *Oratio pro Flacco*

³ [No definite passage relating to this subject could be located in the text of Cicero’s *Oration*, although he expresses strong prejudice against both Jews and Greeks, especially with regard to their unreliability as witnesses in court (*pro Flacco*, IV, 9). In another place (XXVIII, 69), Cicero speaks of the Jewish religion and says that “the practice of their rites was at variance with the glory of our empire, the dignity of our name, the customs of our ancestors”, and also makes a passing remark to the “odium that is attached to Jewish gold” (XXVIII, 66). — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

sition of woman, and especially of married women, on a different basis. To whatever source we may refer the principles inculcated in the New Testament, they are embodied in a system of teaching which still exists, little as it may be followed, to the present day. Law, at least, enforces monogamy. The Jewish custom has been abrogated, and outwardly, at all events, man has improved in the potentialities of decent living, as compared to the life led by the Patriarchs and Kings.

It is the argument of Mr. Ap Richard that Christ did not intend positively and immediately to abrogate the Mosaic law on this subject.

Taking the Bible as the source of morality and the guide of truth, he asks his readers to disprove the assertion that [39] polygamy is not condemned by any authority, and text of "Holy Scripture." It is his argument that Christ himself did not condemn the liberty of polygamy. He admits that various questions concerning marriage, and particularly with regard to the principles of the Gospel in relation to it, were raised in the early days of the Christian Church. Some four or five years after the Apostle Paul had founded the Church in Corinth, and had made a lengthy stay there of a year and a half, the brethren wrote a letter to him requesting some further instructions and advice on several matters of doctrine and practice; and foremost amongst these, on some point touching the question of marriage. Paul, who knew that there were a large proportion of Jews who had not followed out the maxim *non cuius homini contingit adire Corinthum*,¹ noted the one vice for which the Corinthians were notorious, that of prostitution. He dealt with the subject of mixed marriages in a manner which has since been formulated and developed by generations of theologians in spirit, if not altogether carried out in practice. Mr. Ap Richard discusses at great length the argument of St. Paul. But as he bases it on the ground of private interpretation, the opinion of Falstaff: "'Twere good for you that it should be known in counsel, you'll be laughed at," must hold good. The gravity with which the author piles text upon text, to found an argument in favour of his obnoxious doctrine, emulates the glory of the old Puritan preacher, who thundered against female high headdresses, and divided the words of a text to prove his case. "Let him that is upon the house-top *not* come down!" Wherefore I say unto you, "Top-knot, come down!" As we are unable to recognize his premises, we cannot discuss his argument, merely noting that probably any form of aberration of the human intellect, or peculiar practice, can by judicious manipulation be justified by a text of the Scriptures.

The author arguing from the instincts of man, considers marriage, not merely as honourable in all; but as a necessary consequence to human existence. But this proceeds on the argument that all processes of life must end in marriage. A novel that does not end with a wedding is voted dull [40] by the average British public. The idea of the old Hindu *Kumāras* and the Archangel Michael, who refused to generate children, has entirely disappeared from modern society. The ceaseless efforts of frail man not to fulfil his end, namely to liberate his Spiritual Ego from the thralldom of matter, but to adopt a particularly comfortable condition of life, will probably be continued so long as the present race continues to infest the surface of the earth. The occult female element, a pure ray from the Ineffable Name, is ignored by the moderns, who

¹ [Quoting Horace's *Epistles* I, 17, 36: It is not every man's lot to go to Corinth, *i.e.*, to a centre of decadence and debauchery. — ED. PHIL.]

use marriage as a remedy for the softness of man's heart, and permit divorce for the hardness of that same heart. The higher grades of the condition of man, virginity and its consequent glory, are set aside for the objects of sensual pleasures and pecuniary advantages of marriage. The latter has become a regular traffic nowadays. The author is evidently too prosaic to contemplate glorified humanity, wherein earth should be like heaven, where there should be no marrying, or giving in marriage, and the population of the world should diminish, till the last survivor is merged in Ain-Soph. Rather should he look for marriage to be made pleasant and accessible to all, like a six-penny telegram. The restrictions which even the wildest missionary places in the way of polygamy may be cast aside. All persons are recommended to marry early *and often*, and all may be entitled to share (unless the Malthusians¹ stop them) in the task of "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth."

There is not evidently sufficient over-population yet in the sight of the author; not half enough starvation, and misery and resulting crime!

The old Jews did not care for their own individual sanctification. So long as they had a lot of children and their neighbours had something to be plundered by them, the highest aspirations of the Hebrew race were satisfied. We see this in the ceaseless and constant phallicism of the Jews, which culminates now in the hedonism and luxury which form the highest summum *bonum* amongst the Hebrew race, and its Christian imitators. Take up a novel by Auerbach or Beaconsfield. Gold lamps glitter everywhere; rich carpets lie under foot; sweet scents perfume the ambient [41] air; luxurious food tempts the jaded appetite; costly drink stimulates the feeble brain; beautiful females attract the eye; and everything is according to the heart of man. There is no moral shame in mere good living. But the philosophy of the old Egyptians, who produced the skeleton at their festival tables, ought to be oftener followed. The solemn lesson contained in the allegory of the Hand which wrote on the wall the words: *mene, mene, tekel, upharsin*² is forgotten. The pleasures of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, tempt many, and the increase of any custom which makes man more subject to the influences of the traditional devil is strongly to be disproven by those who aim at a higher power, and a theosophical mode of existence. To those, who think that the present generation is worthy of being the recipients of thought, the words of St. Polycarp may be cited:

*Illos vero indignos puto, quibus rationem reddam,*³

or as Goethe says: →

¹ [Believer in Malthusian theory. Cf. Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834). British economist who wrote *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), arguing that population tends to increase faster than food supply, with inevitably disastrous results, unless the increase in population is checked by moral restraints or by war, famine, and disease. — ED. PHIL.]

² ["It has been counted and counted, weighed and divided." Prophecy inscribed by a mysterious hand on a wall during Belshazzar's feast, the very night his kingdom fell (13th October 539 B.C.) — ED. PHIL.]

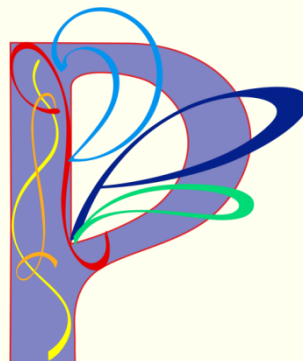
³ [The source of this statement is not definitely known. St. Polycarp (ca. 69 – 155 A.D.), Bishop of Smyrna and one of the Apostolic Fathers, wrote in Greek, and the only extant writing of his is his *Epistle to the Philippians*. The Latin sentence may be a translation from some Greek writing now not any longer extant. Its English rendering is: "I consider those, however, unworthy of my rendering them an account," or "not deserving of my taking the trouble to explain to them." — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

*Das Beste, was du wissen kannst,
Darffst du den Buben doch nicht sagen.*¹

There is a hundred times more dangerous immorality contained in this one volume crammed with Biblical quotations than in all the library of Zola's works. A deadly, sickening, atmosphere of sensual bestiality emanates from this work; yet one does not hear that *Marriage and Divorce* has been censured by any archbishop or even a stray bishop, let alone a Judge.

Those who have ever appreciated even the idea of another existence; who have seen, perchance, through the exercise of an hitherto undeveloped faculty of man, not merely the exterior world, but themselves, are not likely to [42] accept arguments in favour of polygamy, even though they may be supported by texts from the Old or even the New Testament. The thoughts of men are various and manifold; and we can only regret the appearance of such a volume. To bring forward arguments to show that it is by polygamy, and turning oneself into a beast, by the mere exercise of the human (or animal) faculties and passions, that the highest aim of man can be attained, is the culmination of this century's immorality, and of the influence of the *dead-letter* Bible.

The Hebrew race is avenged. It was robbed by the fanatics of the early Christian centuries of its heirloom, the Mosaic Books, and as thanks, was hooted, persecuted and murdered in the name of One supposed to have been foretold by the old prophets. And now, like the golden fruit in the fairy tale, the Bible, while the healthy juice contained in it evaporates unsensed and unperceived by the greedy eater, is made to gradually distil the lethal venom of its dead letter, and to poison the last clear waters which, however dormant, were still preserved to the present day in the hearts of Christendom. All that Protestant Christianity seems to have assimilated from the "Holy Bible" is the sleek, subtle and subservient advocacy of selfish and bestial passions, such as polygamy, and the *legal* spoliation by wars — as commanded by the Hebrew "Lord of Hosts"!



¹ ["After all, the best of what you know may not be told to boys." (Mephistopheles to Faust) from Goethe's *Faust* Pt. I, scene iv, 142. — ED. PHIL.]

Q & A on Theosophy and Asceticism.

From *The Key to Theosophy*, § XIII (ON THE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY) pp. 258-262.

Enquirer: I have heard people say that your rules require all members to be vegetarians, celibates, and rigid ascetics; but you have not told me anything of the sort yet. Can you tell me the truth once for all about this?

Theosophist: The truth is that our rules require nothing of the kind. The Theosophical Society does not even expect, far less require of *any* of its members that they should be ascetics in any way, except — if you call *that* asceticism — that they should try and benefit other people and be unselfish in their own lives.

Enquirer: But still many of your members are strict vegetarians, and openly avow their intention of remaining unmarried. This, too, is most often the case with those who take a prominent part in connection with the work of your Society.

Theosophist: That is only natural, because most of our really earnest workers are members of the Inner Section of the Society, which I told you about before.

Enquirer: Oh! then you do require ascetic practices in that Inner Section?

Theosophist: No; we do not *require* or *enjoin* them even there; but I see that I had better give you an explanation of our views on the subject of asceticism in general, and then you will understand about vegetarianism and so on.

Enquirer: Please proceed.

Theosophist: As I have already told you, most people who become really earnest students of Theosophy, and active workers in our Society, wish to do more than study theoretically the truths we teach. They wish to *know* the truth by their own direct personal experience, and to study Occultism with the object of acquiring the wisdom and power, which they feel that they need in order to help others, effectually and judiciously, instead of blindly and at haphazard. Therefore, sooner or later, they join the Inner Section.

Enquirer: But you said that “ascetic practices” are not obligatory even in that Inner Section?

Theosophist: No more they are; but the first thing which the members learn there is a true conception of the relation of the body, or physical sheath, to the inner, the true man. The relation and mutual interaction between these two aspects of human nature are explained and demonstrated to them, so that they soon become imbued with the supreme importance of the inner man over the outer case or body. They are taught that blind unintelligent asceticism is mere folly; that such conduct as that of St. Labro which I spoke of before, or that of the Indian Fakirs and jungle ascetics, who cut, burn and macerate their bodies in the most cruel and horrible manner, is simply self-torture for selfish ends, *i.e.*, to develop will-power, but is perfectly useless for the purpose of assisting true spiritual, or Theosophic, development.

Enquirer: I see, you regard only *moral* asceticism as necessary. It is as a means to an end, that end being the perfect equilibrium of the *inner* nature of man, and the attainment of complete mastery over the body with all its passions and desires?

Theosophist: Just so. But these means must be used intelligently and wisely, not blindly and foolishly; like an athlete who is training and preparing for a great contest, not like the miser who starves himself into illness that he may gratify his passion for gold.

Enquirer: I understand now your general idea; but let us see how you apply it in practice. How about vegetarianism, for instance?

Theosophist: One of the great German scientists has shown that every kind of animal tissue, however you may cook it, still retains certain marked characteristics of the animal which it belonged to, which characteristics can be recognised. And apart from that, every one knows by the taste what meat he is eating. We go a step farther, and prove that when the flesh of animals is assimilated by man as food, it imparts to him, physiologically, some of the characteristics of the animal it came from. Moreover, occult science teaches and proves this to its students by ocular demonstration, showing also that this “coarsening” or “animalizing” effect on man is greatest from the flesh of the larger animals, less for birds, still less for fish and other cold-blooded animals, and least of all when he eats only vegetables.

Enquirer: Then he had better not eat at all?

Theosophist: If he could live without eating, of course it would. But as the matter stands, he must eat to live, and so we advise really earnest students to eat such food as will least clog and weight their brains and bodies, and will have the smallest effect in hampering and retarding the development of their intuition, their inner faculties and powers.

Enquirer: Then you do not adopt all the arguments which vegetarians in general are in the habit of using?

Theosophist: Certainly not. Some of their arguments are very weak, and often based on assumptions which are quite false. But, on the other hand, many of the things they say are quite true. For instance, we believe that much disease, and especially the great predisposition to disease which is becoming so marked a feature in our time, is very largely due to the eating of meat, and especially of tinned meats. But it would take too long to go thoroughly into this question of vegetarianism on its merits; so please pass on to something else.

Enquirer: One question more. What are your members of the Inner Section to do with regard to their food when they are ill?

Theosophist: Follow the best practical advice they can get, of course. Don't you grasp yet that we never impose any hard-and-fast obligations in this respect? Remember once for all that in all such questions we take a rational, and never a fanatical, view of things. If from illness or long habit a man cannot go without meat, why, by all means let him eat it. It is no crime; it will only retard his pro-

gress a little; for after all is said and done, the purely bodily actions and functions are of far less importance than what a man *thinks* and *feels*, what desires he encourages in his mind, and allows to take root and grow there.

Enquirer: Then with regard to the use of wine and spirits, I suppose you do not advise people to drink them?

Theosophist: They are worse for his moral and spiritual growth than meat, for alcohol in all its forms has a direct, marked, and very deleterious influence on man's psychic condition. Wine and spirit drinking is only less destructive to the development of the inner powers, than the habitual use of hashish, opium, and similar drugs.



Q & A on Theosophy and Marriage.

From *The Key to Theosophy*, § XIII (ON THE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY)
pp. 262-63.

Enquirer: Now to another question; must a man marry or remain a celibate?

Theosophist: It depends on the kind of man you mean. If you refer to one who intends to live *in* the world, one who, even though a good, earnest Theosophist, and an ardent worker for our cause, still has ties and wishes which bind him to the world, who, in short, does not feel that he has done for ever with what men call life, and that he desires one thing and one thing only — to know the truth, and to be able to help others — then for such a one I say there is no reason why he should not marry, if he likes to take the risks of that lottery where there are so many more blanks than prizes. Surely you cannot believe us so absurd and fanatical as to preach against marriage altogether? On the contrary, save in a few exceptional cases of practical Occultism, marriage is the only remedy against immorality.

Enquirer: But why cannot one acquire this knowledge and power when living a married life?

Theosophist: My dear sir, I cannot go into physiological questions with you; but I can give you an obvious and, I think, a sufficient answer, which will explain to you the moral reasons we give for it. Can a man serve two masters? No! Then it is equally impossible for him to divide his attention between the pursuit of Occultism and a wife. If he tries to, he will assuredly fail in doing either properly; and, let me remind you, practical Occultism is far too serious and dangerous a study for a man to take up, unless he is in the most deadly earnest, and ready to sacrifice *all, himself first of all*, to gain his end. But this does not apply to the members of our Inner Section. I am only referring to those who are determined to tread that path of discipleship which leads to the highest goal. Most, if not all of those who join our Inner Section, are only beginners, preparing themselves in this life to enter in reality upon that path in lives to come.

The Kreutzer Sonata by Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy.

Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy. Крейцерова Соната, (*The Kreutzer Sonata*), a novella first published in 1889. Translated from the original Russian by Benjamin Ricketson Tucker.¹ Boston, Mass.: Benj. R. Tucker, Publisher, 1890; 4th ed., 143pp.

Chapter 1

Travellers left and entered our car at every stopping of the train. Three persons, however, remained, bound, like myself, for the farthest station: a lady neither young nor pretty, smoking cigarettes, with a thin face, a cap on her head, and wearing a semi-masculine outer garment; then her companion, a very loquacious gentleman of about forty years, with baggage entirely new and arranged in an orderly manner; then a gentleman who held himself entirely aloof, short in stature, very nervous, of uncertain age, with bright eyes, not pronounced in colour, but extremely attractive — eyes that darted with rapidity from one object to another.

This gentleman, during almost all the journey thus far, had entered into conversation with no fellow-traveller, as if he carefully avoided all acquaintance. When spoken to, he answered curtly and decisively, and began to look out of the car window obstinately.

Yet it seemed to me that the solitude weighed upon him. He seemed to perceive that I understood this, and when our eyes met, as happened frequently, since we were sitting almost opposite each other, he turned away his head, and avoided conversation with me as much as with the others. At nightfall, during a stop at a large station, the gentleman with the fine baggage — a lawyer, as I have since learned — got out with his companion to drink some tea at the restaurant. During their absence several new travellers entered the car, among whom was a tall old man, shaven and wrinkled, evidently a merchant, wearing a large heavily-lined cloak and a big cap. This merchant sat down opposite the empty seats of the lawyer and his companion, and straightway entered into conversation with a young man who seemed like an employee in some commercial house, and who had likewise just boarded the train. At first the clerk had remarked that the seat opposite was occupied, and the old man had answered that he should get out at the first station. Thus their conversation started.

I was sitting not far from these two travellers, and, as the train was not in motion, I could catch bits of their conversation when others were not talking.

¹ Nineteenth century proponent of American individualist anarchism, which he called “unterrified Jeffersonianism,” author, editor, publisher, and translator (1854–1939).

They talked first of the prices of goods and the condition of business; they referred to a person whom they both knew; then they plunged into the fair at Nijni Novgorod. The clerk boasted of knowing people who were leading a gay life there, but the old man did not allow him to continue, and, interrupting him, began to describe the festivities of the previous year at Kounavino, in which he had taken part. He was evidently proud of these recollections, and, probably thinking that this would detract nothing from the gravity which his face and manners expressed, he related with pride how, when drunk, he had fired, at Kounavino, such a broadside that he could describe it only in the other's ear.

The clerk began to laugh noisily. The old man laughed too, showing two long yellow teeth. Their conversation not interesting me, I left the car to stretch my legs. At the door I met the lawyer and his lady.

"You have no more time," the lawyer said to me. "The second bell is about to ring."

Indeed I had scarcely reached the rear of the train when the bell sounded. As I entered the car again, the lawyer was talking with his companion in an animated fashion. The merchant, sitting opposite them, was taciturn.

"And then she squarely declared to her husband," said the lawyer with a smile, as I passed by them, "that she neither could nor would live with him, because" . . .

And he continued, but I did not hear the rest of the sentence, my attention being distracted by the passing of the conductor and a new traveller. When silence was restored, I again heard the lawyer's voice. The conversation had passed from a special case to general considerations.

"And afterward comes discord, financial difficulties, disputes between the two parties, and the couple separate. In the good old days that seldom happened. Is it not so?" asked the lawyer of the two merchants, evidently trying to drag them into the conversation.

Just then the train started, and the old man, without answering, took off his cap, and crossed himself three times while muttering a prayer. When he had finished, he clapped his cap far down on his head, and said:

"Yes, sir, that happened in former times also, but not as often. In the present day it is bound to happen more frequently. People have become too learned."

The lawyer made some reply to the old man, but the train, ever increasing its speed, made such a clatter upon the rails that I could no longer hear distinctly. As I was interested in what the old man was saying, I drew nearer. My neighbour, the nervous gentleman, was evidently interested also, and, without changing his seat, he lent an ear.

"But what harm is there in education?" asked the lady, with a smile that was scarcely perceptible. "Would it be better to marry as in the old days, when the bride and bridegroom did not even see each other before marriage?" she continued, answering, as is the habit of our ladies, not the words that her interlocutor had spoken, but the words she believed he was going to speak. "Women did not know whether they would love or would be loved, and they were married to the first comer, and suffered all

their lives. Then you think it was better so?" she continued, evidently addressing the lawyer and myself, and not at all the old man.

"People have become too learned," repeated the last, looking at the lady with contempt, and leaving her question unanswered.

"I should be curious to know how you explain the correlation between education and conjugal differences," said the lawyer, with a slight smile.

The merchant wanted to make some reply, but the lady interrupted him.

"No, those days are past."

The lawyer cut short her words:

"Let him express his thought."

"Because there is no more fear," replied the old man.

"But how will you marry people who do not love each other? Only animals can be coupled at the will of a proprietor. But people have inclinations, attachments," the lady hastened to say, casting a glance at the lawyer, at me, and even at the clerk, who, standing up and leaning his elbow on the back of a seat, was listening to the conversation with a smile.

"You are wrong to say that, madam," said the old man. "The animals are beasts, but man has received the law."

"But, nevertheless, how is one to live with a man when there is no love?" said the lady, evidently excited by the general sympathy and attention.

"Formerly no such distinctions were made," said the old man, gravely. "Only now have they become a part of our habits. As soon as the least thing happens, the wife says: 'I release you. I am going to leave your house.' Even among the *moujiks*¹ this fashion has become acclimated. 'There,' she says, 'here are your shirts and drawers. I am going off with Vanka. His hair is curlier than yours.' Just go talk with them. And yet the first rule for the wife should be fear."

The clerk looked at the lawyer, the lady, and myself, evidently repressing a smile, and all ready to deride or approve the merchant's words, according to the attitude of the others.

"What fear?" said the lady.

"This fear — the wife must fear her husband; that is what fear."

"Oh, that, my little father, that is ended."

"No, madam, that cannot end. As she, Eve, the woman, was taken from man's ribs, so she will remain unto the end of the world," said the old man, shaking his head so triumphantly and so severely that the clerk, deciding that the victory was on his side, burst into a loud laugh.

¹ [Russian peasant, especially before 1917]

“Yes, you men think so,” replied the lady, without surrendering, and turning toward us. “You have given yourself liberty. As for woman, you wish to keep her in the seraglio. To you, everything is permissible. Is it not so?”

“Oh, man — that’s another affair.”

“Then, according to you, to man everything is permissible?”

“No one gives him this permission; only, if the man behaves badly outside, the family is not increased thereby; but the woman, the wife, is a fragile vessel,” continued the merchant, severely.

His tone of authority evidently subjugated his hearers. Even the lady felt crushed, but she did not surrender.

“Yes, but you will admit, I think, that woman is a human being, and has feelings like her husband. What should she do if she does not love her husband?”

“If she does not love him!” repeated the old man, stormily, and knitting his brows; “why, she will be made to love him.”

This unexpected argument pleased the clerk, and he uttered a murmur of approbation.

“Oh, no, she will not be forced,” said the lady. “Where there is no love, one cannot be obliged to love in spite of herself.”

“And if the wife deceives her husband, what is to be done?” said the lawyer.

“That should not happen,” said the old man. “He must have his eyes about him.”

“And if it does happen, all the same? You will admit that it does happen?”

“It happens among the upper classes, not among us,” answered the old man. “And if any husband is found who is such a fool as not to rule his wife, he will not have robbed her. But no scandal, nevertheless. Love or not, but do not disturb the household. Every husband can govern his wife. He has the necessary power. It is only the imbecile who does not succeed in doing so.”

Everybody was silent. The clerk moved, advanced, and, not wishing to lag behind the others in the conversation, began with his eternal smile:

“Yes, in the house of our employer, a scandal has arisen, and it is very difficult to view the matter clearly. The wife loved to amuse herself, and began to go astray. He is a capable and serious man. First, it was with the book-keeper. The husband tried to bring her back to reason through kindness. She did not change her conduct. She plunged into all sorts of beastliness. She began to steal his money. He beat her, but she grew worse and worse. To an unbaptized, to a pagan, to a Jew (saving your permission), she went in succession for her caresses. What could the employer do? He has dropped her entirely, and now he lives as a bachelor. As for her, she is dragging in the depths.”

“He is an imbecile,” said the old man. “If from the first he had not allowed her to go in her own fashion, and had kept a firm hand upon her, she would be living honest-

ly, no danger. Liberty must be taken away from the beginning. Do not trust yourself to your horse upon the highway. Do not trust yourself to your wife at home.”

At that moment the conductor passed, asking for the tickets for the next station. The old man gave up his.

“Yes, the feminine sex must be dominated in season, else all will perish.”

“And you yourselves, at Kounavino, did you not lead a gay life with the pretty girls?” asked the lawyer with a smile.

“Oh, that’s another matter,” said the merchant, severely. “Good-by,” he added, rising. He wrapped himself in his cloak, lifted his cap, and, taking his bag, left the car.

Chapter 2

Scarcely had the old man gone when a general conversation began.

“There’s a little Old Testament father for you,” said the clerk.

“He is a Domostroy,”¹ said the lady. “What savage ideas about a woman and marriage!”

“Yes, gentlemen,” said the lawyer, “we are still a long way from the European ideas upon marriage. First, the rights of woman, then free marriage, then divorce, as a question not yet solved.” . . .

“The main thing, and the thing which such people as he do not understand,” rejoined the lady, “is that only love consecrates marriage, and that the real marriage is that which is consecrated by love.”

The clerk listened and smiled, with the air of one accustomed to store in his memory all intelligent conversation that he hears, in order to make use of it afterwards.

“But what is this love that consecrates marriage?” said, suddenly, the voice of the nervous and taciturn gentleman, who, unnoticed by us, had approached.

He was standing with his hand on the seat, and evidently agitated. His face was red, a vein in his forehead was swollen, and the muscles of his cheeks quivered.

“What is this love that consecrates marriage?” he repeated.

“What love?” said the lady. “The ordinary love of husband and wife.”

“And how, then, can ordinary love consecrate marriage?” continued the nervous gentleman, still excited, and with a displeased air. He seemed to wish to say something disagreeable to the lady. She felt it, and began to grow agitated.

“How? Why, very simply,” said she.

The nervous gentleman seized the word as it left her lips.

“No, not simply.”

“Madam says,” interceded the lawyer indicating his companion, “that marriage should be first the result of an attachment, of a love, if you will, and that, when love

¹ The Domostroy is a matrimonial code of the days of Ivan the Terrible.

exists, and in that case only, marriage represents something sacred. But every marriage which is not based on a natural attachment, on love, has in it nothing that is morally obligatory. Is not that the idea that you intended to convey?" he asked the lady.

The lady, with a nod of her head, expressed her approval of this translation of her thoughts.

"Then," resumed the lawyer, continuing his remarks.

But the nervous gentleman, evidently scarcely able to contain himself, without allowing the lawyer to finish, asked:

"Yes, sir. But what are we to understand by this love that alone consecrates marriage?"

"Everybody knows what love is," said the lady.

"But I don't know, and I should like to know how you define it."

"How? It is very simple," said the lady.

And she seemed thoughtful, and then said:

"Love . . . love . . . is a preference for one man or one woman to the exclusion of all others . . ."

"A preference for how long? . . . For a month, two days, or half an hour?" said the nervous gentleman, with special irritation.

"No, permit me, you evidently are not talking of the same thing."

"Yes, I am talking absolutely of the same thing. Of the preference for one man or one woman to the exclusion of all others. But I ask: a preference for how long?"

"For how long? For a long time, for a life-time sometimes."

"But that happens only in novels. In life, never. In life this preference for one to the exclusion of all others lasts in rare cases several years, oftener several months, or even weeks, days, hours . . ."

"Oh, sir. Oh, no, no, permit me," said all three of us at the same time.

The clerk himself uttered a monosyllable of disapproval.

"Yes, I know," he said, shouting louder than all of us; "you are talking of what is believed to exist, and I am talking of what is. Every man feels what you call love toward each pretty woman he sees, and very little toward his wife. That is the origin of the proverb — and it is a true one — 'Another's wife is a white swan, and ours is bitter wormwood.'"

"Ah, but what you say is terrible! There certainly exists among human beings this feeling which is called love, and which lasts, not for months and years, but for life."

"No, that does not exist. Even if it should be admitted that Menelaus had preferred Helen all his life, Helen would have preferred Paris; and so it has been, is, and will be eternally. And it cannot be otherwise, just as it cannot happen that, in a load of chick-peas, two peas marked with a special sign should fall side by side. Further,

this is not only an improbability, but it is certain that a feeling of satiety will come to Helen or to Menelaus. The whole difference is that to one it comes sooner, to the other later. It is only in stupid novels that it is written that ‘they loved each other all their lives.’ And none but children can believe it. To talk of loving a man or woman for life is like saying that a candle can burn forever.”

“But you are talking of physical love. Do you not admit a love based upon a conformity of ideals, on a spiritual affinity?”

“Why not? But in that case it is not necessary to procreate together (excuse my brutality). The point is that this conformity of ideals is not met among old people, but among young and pretty persons,” said he, and he began to laugh disagreeably.

“Yes, I affirm that love, real love, does not consecrate marriage, as we are in the habit of believing, but that, on the contrary, it ruins it.”

“Permit me,” said the lawyer. “The facts contradict your words. We see that marriage exists, that all humanity — at least the larger portion — lives conjugally, and that many husbands and wives honestly end a long life together.”

The nervous gentleman smiled ill-naturedly.

“And what then? You say that marriage is based upon love, and when I give voice to a doubt as to the existence of any other love than sensual love, you prove to me the existence of love by marriage. But in our day marriage is only a violence and falsehood.”

“No, pardon me,” said the lawyer. “I say only that marriages have existed and do exist.”

“But how and why do they exist? They have existed, and they do exist, for people who have seen, and do see, in marriage something sacramental, a sacrament that is binding before God. For such people marriages exist, but to us they are only hypocrisy and violence. We feel it, and, to clear ourselves, we preach free love; but, really, to preach free love is only a call backward to the promiscuity of the sexes (excuse me, he said to the lady), the haphazard sin of certain *raskolniks*.¹ The old foundation is shattered; we must build a new one, but we must not preach debauchery.”

He grew so warm that all became silent, looking at him in astonishment.

“And yet the transition state is terrible. People feel that haphazard sin is inadmissible. It is necessary in some way or other to regulate the sexual relations; but there exists no other foundation than the old one, in which nobody longer believes? People marry in the old fashion, without believing in what they do, and the result is falsehood, violence. When it is falsehood alone, it is easily endured. The husband and wife simply deceive the world by professing to live monogamically. If they really are polygamous and polyandrous, it is bad, but acceptable. But when, as often happens, the husband and the wife have taken upon themselves the obligation to live together all their lives (they themselves do not know why), and from the second month have

¹ [Dissenters from the Russian Orthodox Church and members of one of the several groups (as the Doukhobors, Khlysty, etc.) developing from the schism of the 17th century in protest against liturgical reforms; a.k.a. Old Believers, Old Ritualists.]

already a desire to separate, but continue to live together just the same, then comes that infernal existence in which they resort to drink, in which they fire revolvers, in which they assassinate each other, in which they poison each other.”

All were silent, but we felt ill at ease.

“Yes, these critical episodes happen in marital life. For instance, there is the Posdnicheff affair,” said the lawyer, wishing to stop the conversation on this embarrassing and too exciting ground. “Have you read how he killed his wife through jealousy?”

The lady said that she had not read it. The nervous gentleman said nothing, and changed colour.

“I see that you have divined who I am,” said he, suddenly, after a pause.

“No, I have not had that pleasure.”

“It is no great pleasure. I am Posdnicheff.”

New silence. He blushed, then turned pale again.

“What matters it, however?” said he. “Excuse me, I do not wish to embarrass you.”

And he resumed his old seat.

Chapter 3

I resumed mine, also. The lawyer and the lady whispered together. I was sitting beside Posdnicheff, and I maintained silence. I desired to talk to him, but I did not know how to begin, and thus an hour passed until we reached the next station. There the lawyer and the lady went out, as well as the clerk. We were left alone, Posdnicheff and I.

“They say it, and they lie, or they do not understand,” said Posdnicheff.

“Of what are you talking?”

“Why, still the same thing.”

He leaned his elbows upon his knees, and pressed his hands against his temples.

“Love, marriage, family — all lies, lies, lies.”

He rose, lowered the lamp-shade, lay down with his elbows on the cushion, and closed his eyes. He remained thus for a minute.

“Is it disagreeable to you to remain with me, now that you know who I am?”

“Oh, no.”

“You have no desire to sleep?”

“Not at all.”

“Then do you want me to tell you the story of my life?”

Just then the conductor passed. He followed him with an ill-natured look, and did not begin until he had gone again. Then during all the rest of the story he did not stop once. Even the new travellers as they entered did not stop him.

His face, while he was talking, changed several times so completely that it bore positively no resemblance to itself as it had appeared just before. His eyes, his mouth, his moustache, and even his beard, all were new. Each time it was a beautiful and touching physiognomy, and these transformations were produced suddenly in the penumbra; and for five minutes it was the same face, that could not be compared to that of five minutes before. And then, I know not how, it changed again, and became unrecognizable.

Chapter 4

“Well, I am going then to tell you my life, and my whole frightful history — yes, frightful. And the story itself is more frightful than the outcome.”

He became silent for a moment, passed his hands over his eyes, and began:

“To be understood clearly, the whole must be told from the beginning. It must be told how and why I married, and what I was before my marriage. First, I will tell you who I am. The son of a rich gentleman of the steppes, an old marshal of the nobility, I was a University pupil, a graduate of the law school. I married in my thirtieth year. But before talking to you of my marriage, I must tell you how I lived formerly, and what ideas I had of conjugal life. I led the life of so many other so-called respectable people — that is, in debauchery. And like the majority, while leading the life of a *débauché*, I was convinced that I was a man of irreproachable morality.

“The idea that I had of my morality arose from the fact that in my family there was no knowledge of those special debaucheries, so common in the surroundings of land-owners, and also from the fact that my father and my mother did not deceive each other. In consequence of this, I had built from childhood a dream of high and poetical conjugal life. My wife was to be perfection itself, our mutual love was to be incomparable, the purity of our conjugal life stainless. I thought thus, and all the time I marvelled at the nobility of my projects.

“At the same time, I passed ten years of my adult life without hurrying toward marriage, and I led what I called the well-regulated and reasonable life of a bachelor. I was proud of it before my friends, and before all men of my age who abandoned themselves to all sorts of special refinements. I was not a seducer, I had no unnatural tastes, I did not make debauchery the principal object of my life; but I found pleasure within the limits of society’s rules, and innocently believed myself a profoundly moral being. The women with whom I had relations did not belong to me alone, and I asked of them nothing but the pleasure of the moment.

“In all this I saw nothing abnormal. On the contrary, from the fact that I did not engage my heart, but paid in cash, I supposed that I was honest. I avoided those women who, by attaching themselves to me, or presenting me with a child, could bind my future. Moreover, perhaps there may have been children or attachments; but I so arranged matters that I could not become aware of them.

“And living thus, I considered myself a perfectly honest man. I did not understand that debauchery does not consist simply in physical acts, that no matter what physical ignominy does not yet constitute debauchery, and that real debauchery consists in freedom from the moral bonds toward a woman with whom one enters into carnal relations, and I regarded *this freedom* as a merit. I remember that I once tortured myself exceedingly for having forgotten to pay a woman who probably had given herself to me through love. I only became tranquil again when, having sent her the money, I had thus shown her that I did not consider myself as in any way bound to her. Oh, do not shake your head as if you were in agreement with me (he cried suddenly with vehemence). I know these tricks. All of you, and you especially, if you are not a rare exception, have the same ideas that I had then. If you are in agreement with me, it is now only. Formerly you did not think so. No more did I; and, if I had been told what I have just told you, that which has happened would not have happened. However, it is all the same. Excuse me (he continued): the truth is that it is frightful, frightful, frightful, this abyss of errors and debaucheries in which we live face to face with the real question of the rights of woman.” . . .

“What do you mean by the ‘real’ question of the rights of woman?”

“The question of the nature of this special being, organized otherwise than man, and how this being and man ought to view the wife . . .

Chapter 5

“Yes: for ten years I lived the most revolting existence, while dreaming of the noblest love, and even in the name of that love. Yes, I want to tell you how I killed my wife, and for that I must tell you how I debauched myself. I killed her before I knew her. I killed *the* wife when I first tasted sensual joys without love, and then it was that I killed *my* wife. Yes, sir: it is only after having suffered, after having tortured myself, that I have come to understand the root of things, that I have come to understand my crimes. Thus you will see where and how began the drama that has led me to misfortune.

“It is necessary to go back to my sixteenth year, when I was still at school, and my elder brother a first-year student. I had not yet known women but, like all the unfortunate children of our society, I was already no longer innocent. I was tortured, as you were, I am sure, and as are tortured ninety-nine one-hundredths of our boys. I lived in a frightful dread, I prayed to God, and I prostrated myself.

“I was already perverted in imagination, but the last steps remained to be taken. I could still escape, when a friend of my brother, a very gay student, one of those who are called good fellows — that is, the greatest of scamps — and who had taught us to drink and play cards, took advantage of a night of intoxication to drag us *there*. We started. My brother, as innocent as I, fell that night, and I, a mere lad of sixteen, polluted myself and helped to pollute a sister-woman, without understanding what I did. Never had I heard from my elders that what I thus did was bad. It is true that there are the ten commandments of the Bible; but the commandments are made only to be recited before the priests at examinations, and even then are not as exacting as the commandments in regard to the use of *ut* in conditional propositions.

“Thus, from my elders, whose opinion I esteemed, I had never heard that this was reprehensible. On the contrary, I had heard people whom I respected say that it was good. I had heard that my struggles and my sufferings would be appeased after this act. I had heard it and read it. I had heard from my elders that it was excellent for the health, and my friends have always seemed to believe that it contained I know not what merit and valour. So nothing is seen in it but what is praiseworthy. As for the danger of disease, it is a foreseen danger. Does not the government guard against it? And even science corrupts us.”

“How so, science?” I asked.

“Why, the doctors, the pontiffs of science. Who pervert young people by laying down such rules of hygiene? Who pervert women by devising and teaching them ways by which not to have children?”

“Yes: if only a hundredth of the efforts spent in curing diseases were spent in curing debauchery, disease would long ago have ceased to exist, whereas now all efforts are employed, not in extirpating debauchery, but in favouring it, by assuring the harmlessness of the consequences. Besides, it is not a question of that. It is a question of this frightful thing that has happened to me, as it happens to nine-tenths, if not more, not only of the men of our society, but of all societies, even peasants — this frightful thing that I had fallen, and not because I was subjected to the natural seduction of a certain woman. No, no woman seduced me. I fell because the surroundings in which I found myself saw in this degrading thing only a legitimate function, useful to the health; because others saw in it simply a natural amusement, not only excusable, but even innocent in a young man. I did not understand that it was a fall, and I began to give myself to those pleasures (partly from desire and partly from necessity) which I was led to believe were characteristic of my age, just as I had begun to drink and smoke.

“And yet there was in this first fall something peculiar and touching. I remember that straightway I was filled with such a profound sadness that I had a desire to weep, to weep over the loss forever of my relations with woman. Yes, my relations with woman were lost forever. Pure relations with women, from that time forward, I could no longer have. I had become what is called a voluptuary; and to be a voluptuary is a physical condition like the condition of a victim of the morphine habit, of a drunkard, and of a smoker.

“Just as the victim of the morphine habit, the drunkard, the smoker, is no longer a normal man, so the man who has known several women for his pleasure is no longer normal? He is abnormal forever. He is a voluptuary. Just as the drunkard and the victim of the morphine habit may be recognized by their face and manner, so we may recognize a voluptuary. He may repress himself and struggle, but nevermore will he enjoy simple, pure, and fraternal relations toward woman. By his way of glancing at a young woman one may at once recognize a voluptuary; and I became a voluptuary, and I have remained one.

Chapter 6

“Yes, so it is; and that went farther and farther with all sorts of variations. My God! when I remember all my cowardly acts and bad deeds, I am frightened. And I re-

member that 'me' who, during that period, was still the butt of his comrades' ridicule on account of his innocence.

"And when I hear people talk of the gilded youth, of the officers, of the Parisians, and all these gentlemen, and myself, living wild lives at the age of thirty, and who have on our consciences hundreds of crimes toward women, terrible and varied, when we enter a parlour or a ball-room, washed, shaven, and perfumed, with very white linen, in dress coats or in uniform, as emblems of purity, oh, the disgust! There will surely come a time, an epoch, when all these lives and all this cowardice will be unveiled!

"So, nevertheless, I lived, until the age of thirty, without abandoning for a minute my intention of marrying, and building an elevated conjugal life; and with this in view I watched all young girls who might suit me. I was buried in rottenness, and at the same time I looked for virgins, whose purity was worthy of me! Many of them were rejected: they did not seem to me pure enough!

"Finally I found one that I considered on a level with myself. She was one of two daughters of a landed proprietor of Penza, formerly very rich and since ruined. To tell the truth, without false modesty, they pursued me and finally captured me. The mother (the father was away) laid all sorts of traps, and one of these, a trip in a boat, decided my future.

"I made up my mind at the end of the aforesaid trip one night, by moonlight, on our way home, while I was sitting beside her. I admired her slender body, whose charming shape was moulded by a jersey, and her curling hair, and I suddenly concluded that *this was she*. It seemed to me on that beautiful evening that she understood all that I thought and felt, and I thought and felt the most elevating things.

"Really, it was only the jersey that was so becoming to her, and her curly hair, and also the fact that I had spent the day beside her, and that I desired a more intimate relation.

"I returned home enthusiastic, and I persuaded myself that she realized the highest perfection, and that for that reason she was worthy to be my wife, and the next day I made to her a proposal of marriage.

"No, say what you will, we live in such an abyss of falsehood, that, unless some event strikes us a blow on the head, as in my case, we cannot awaken. What confusion! Out of the thousands of men who marry, not only among us, but also among the people, scarcely will you find a single one who has not previously married at least ten times. (It is true that there now exist, at least so I have heard, pure young people who feel and know that this is not a joke, but a serious matter. May God come to their aid! But in my time there was not to be found one such in a thousand.)

"And all know it, and pretend not to know it. In all the novels are described down to the smallest details the feelings of the characters, the lakes and brambles around which they walk; but, when it comes to describing their *great* love, not a word is breathed of what *he*, the interesting character, has previously done, not a word about his frequenting of disreputable houses, or his association with nursery-maids, cooks, and the wives of others.

“And if anything is said of these things, such *improper* novels are not allowed in the hands of young girls. All men have the air of believing, in presence of maidens, that these corrupt pleasures, in which *everybody* takes part, do not exist, or exist only to a very small extent. They pretend it so carefully that they succeed in convincing themselves of it. As for the poor young girls, they believe it quite seriously, just as my poor wife believed it.

“I remember that, being already engaged, I showed her my ‘memoirs,’ from which she could learn more or less of my past, and especially my last *liaison* which she might perhaps have discovered through the gossip of some third party. It was for this last reason, for that matter, that I felt the necessity of communicating these memoirs to her. I can still see her fright, her despair, her bewilderment, when she had learned and understood it. She was on the point of breaking the engagement. What a lucky thing it would have been for both of us!”

Posdnicheff was silent for a moment, and then resumed:

“After all, no! It is better that things happened as they did, better!” he cried. “It was a good thing for me. Besides, it makes no difference. I was saying that in these cases it is the poor young girls who are deceived. As for the mothers, the mothers especially, informed by their husbands, they know all, and, while pretending to believe in the purity of the young man, they act as if they did not believe in it.

“They know what bait must be held out to people for themselves and their daughters. We men sin through ignorance, and a determination not to learn. As for the women, they know very well that the noblest and most poetic love, as we call it, depends, not on moral qualities, but on the physical intimacy, and also on the manner of doing the hair, and the colour and shape.

“Ask an experienced coquette, who has undertaken to seduce a man, which she would prefer — to be convicted, in presence of the man whom she is engaged in conquering, of falsehood, perversity, cruelty, or to appear before him in an ill-fitting dress, or a dress of an unbecoming colour. She will prefer the first alternative. She knows very well that we simply lie when we talk of our elevated sentiments, that we seek only the possession of her body, and that because of that we will forgive her every sort of baseness, but will not forgive her a costume of an ugly shade, without taste or fit.

“And these things she knows by reason, whereas the maiden knows them only by instinct, like the animal. Hence these abominable jerseys, these artificial humps on the back, these bare shoulders, arms, and throats.

“Women, especially those who have passed through the school of marriage, know very well that conversations upon elevated subjects are only conversations, and that man seeks and desires the body and all that ornaments the body. Consequently, they act accordingly? If we reject conventional explanations, and view the life of our upper and lower classes as it is, with all its shamelessness, it is only a vast perversity. You do not share this opinion? Permit me, I am going to prove it to you (said he, interrupting me).

“You say that the women of our society live for a different interest from that which actuates fallen women. And I say no, and I am going to prove it to you. If beings differ from one another according to the purpose of their life, according to their *inner life*, this will necessarily be reflected also in their *outer life*, and their exterior will be very different. Well, then, compare the wretched, the despised, with the women of the highest society: the same dresses, the same fashions, the same perfumeries, the same passion for jewellery, for brilliant and very expensive articles, the same amusements, dances, music, and songs. The former attract by all possible means; so do the latter. No difference, none whatever!

“Yes, and I, too, was captivated by jerseys, bustles, and curly hair.

Chapter 7

“And it was very easy to capture me, since I was brought up under artificial conditions, like cucumbers in a hothouse. Our too abundant nourishment, together with complete physical idleness, is nothing but systematic excitement of the imagination. The men of our society are fed and kept like reproductive stallions. It is sufficient to close the valve — that is, for a young man to live a quiet life for some time — to produce as an immediate result a restlessness, which, becoming exaggerated by reflection through the prism of our unnatural life, provokes the illusion of love.

“All our idylls and marriage, all, are the result for the most part of our eating. Does that astonish you? For my part, I am astonished that we do not see it. Not far from my estate this spring some *moujiks* were working on a railway embankment. You know what a peasant’s food is — bread, *kvass*,¹ onions. With this frugal nourishment he lives, he is alert, he makes light work in the fields. But on the railway this bill of fare becomes *cacha* and a pound of meat. Only he restores this meat by sixteen hours of labour pushing loads weighing twelve hundred pounds.

“And we, who eat two pounds of meat and game, we who absorb all sorts of heating drinks and food, how do we expend it? In sensual excesses. If the valve is open, all goes well; but close it, as I had closed it temporarily before my marriage, and immediately there will result an excitement which, deformed by novels, verses, music, by our idle and luxurious life, will give a love of the finest water. I, too, fell in love, as everybody does, and there were transports, emotions, poesy; but really all this passion was prepared by mamma and the dressmakers. If there had been no trips in boats, no well-fitted garments, etc., if my wife had worn some shapeless blouse, and I had seen her thus at her home, I should not have been seduced.

¹ *Kvass*, a sort of cider.

Chapter 8

“And note, also, this falsehood, of which all are guilty; the way in which marriages are made. What could there be more natural? The young girl is marriageable, she should marry. What simpler, provided the young person is not a monster, and men can be found with a desire to marry? Well, no, here begins a new hypocrisy.

“Formerly, when the maiden arrived at a favourable age, her marriage was arranged by her parents. That was done, that is done still, throughout humanity, among the Chinese, the Hindus, the Mussulmans, and among our common people also. Things are so managed in at least ninety-nine per cent. of the families of the entire human race.

“Only we riotous livers have imagined that this way was bad, and have invented another. And this other — what is it? It is this. The young girls are seated, and the gentlemen walk up and down before them, as in a bazaar, and make their choice. The maidens wait and think, but do not dare to say: ‘Take me, young man, me and not her. Look at these shoulders and the rest.’ We males walk up and down, and estimate the merchandise, and then we discourse upon the rights of woman, upon the liberty that she acquires, I know not how, in the theatrical halls.”

“But what is to be done?” said I to him. “Shall the woman make the advances?”

“I do not know. But, if it is a question of equality, let the equality be complete. Though it has been found that to contract marriages through the agency of match-makers is humiliating, it is nevertheless a thousand times preferable to our system. There the rights and the chances are equal; here the woman is a slave, exhibited in the market. But as she cannot bend to her condition, or make advances herself, there begins that other and more abominable lie which is sometimes called *going into society*, sometimes *amusing one’s self*, and which is really nothing but the hunt for a husband.

“But say to a mother or to her daughter that they are engaged only in a hunt for a husband. God! What an offence! Yet they can do nothing else, and have nothing else to do; and the terrible feature of it all is to see sometimes very young, poor, and innocent maidens haunted solely by such ideas. If only, I repeat, it were done frankly; but it is always accompanied with lies and babble of this sort:

“‘Ah, the descent of species! How interesting it is!’

“‘Oh, Lily is much interested in painting.’

“‘Shall you go to the Exposition? How charming it is!’

“‘And the troika, and the plays, and the symphony. Ah, how adorable!’

“‘My Lise is passionately fond of music.’

“‘And you, why do you not share these convictions?’

“And through all this verbiage, all have but one single idea: ‘Take me, take my Lise. No, me! Only try!’”

Chapter 9

“Do you know,” suddenly continued Posdnicheff, “that this power of women from which the world suffers arises solely from what I have just spoken of?”

“What do you mean by the power of women?” I said. “Everybody, on the contrary, complains that women have not sufficient rights, that they are in subjection.”

“That’s it; that’s it exactly,” said he, vivaciously. “That is just what I mean, and that is the explanation of this extraordinary phenomenon, that on the one hand woman is reduced to the lowest degree of humiliation and on the other hand she reigns over everything. See the Jews: with their power of money, they avenge their subjection, just as the women do. ‘Ah! you wish us to be only merchants? All right; remaining merchants, we will get possession of you,’ say the Jews. ‘Ah! you wish us to be only objects of sensuality? All right; by the aid of sensuality we will bend you beneath our yoke,’ say the women.

“The absence of the rights of woman does not consist in the fact that she has not the right to vote, or the right to sit on the bench, but in the fact that in her affectional relations she is not the equal of man, she has not the right to abstain, to choose instead of being chosen. You say that that would be abnormal. Very well! But then do not let man enjoy these rights, while his companion is deprived of them, and finds herself obliged to make use of the coquetry by which she governs, so that the result is that man chooses ‘formally,’ whereas really it is woman who chooses. As soon as she is in possession of her means, she abuses them, and acquires a terrible supremacy.”

“But where do you see this exceptional power?”

“Where? Why, everywhere, in everything. Go see the stores in the large cities. There are millions there, millions. It is impossible to estimate the enormous quantity of labour that is expended there. In nine-tenths of these stores is there anything whatever for the use of men? All the luxury of life is demanded and sustained by woman. Count the factories; the greater part of them are engaged in making feminine ornaments. Millions of men, generations of slaves, die toiling like convicts simply to satisfy the whims of our companions.

“Women, like queens, keep nine-tenths of the human race as prisoners of war, or as prisoners at hard labour. And all this because they have been humiliated, because they have been deprived of rights equal to those which men enjoy. They take revenge for our sensuality; they catch us in their nets.

“Yes, the whole thing is there. Women have made of themselves such a weapon to act upon the senses that a young man, and even an old man, cannot remain tranquil in their presence. Watch a popular festival, or our receptions or ball-rooms. Woman well knows her influence there. You will see it in her triumphant smiles.

“As soon as a young man advances toward a woman, directly he falls under the influence of this opium, and loses his head. Long ago I felt ill at ease when I saw a woman too well adorned — whether a woman of the people with her red neckerchief and her looped skirt, or a woman of our own society in her ball-room dress. But now it simply terrifies me. I see in it a danger to men, something contrary to the laws; and

I feel a desire to call a policeman, to appeal for defence from some quarter, to demand that this dangerous object be removed.

“And this is not a joke, by any means. I am convinced, I am sure, that the time will come — and perhaps it is not far distant — when the world will understand this, and will be astonished that a society could exist in which actions as harmful as those which appeal to sensuality by adorning the body as our companions do were allowed. As well set traps along our public streets, or worse than that.

Chapter 10

“That, then, was the way in which I was captured. I was in love, as it is called; not only did she appear to me a perfect being, but I considered myself a white blackbird. It is a commonplace fact that there is no one so low in the world that he cannot find someone viler than himself, and consequently puff with pride and self-contentment. I was in that situation. I did not marry for money. Interest was foreign to the affair, unlike the marriages of most of my acquaintances, who married either for money or for relations. First, I was rich, she was poor. Second, I was especially proud of the fact that, while others married with an intention of continuing their polygamic life as bachelors, it was my firm intention to live monogamically after my engagement and the wedding, and my pride swelled immeasurably.

“Yes, I was a wretch, convinced that I was an angel. The period of my engagement did not last long. I cannot remember those days without shame. What an abomination!

“It is generally agreed that love is a moral sentiment, a community of thought rather than of sense. If that is the case, this community of thought ought to find expression in words and conversation. Nothing of the sort. It was extremely difficult for us to talk with each other. What a toil of Sisyphus was our conversation! Scarcely had we thought of something to say, and said it, when we had to resume our silence and try to discover new subjects. Literally, we did not know what to say to each other. All that we could think of concerning the life that was before us and our home was said.

“And then what? If we had been animals, we should have known that we had not to talk. But here, on the contrary, it was necessary to talk, and there were no resources! For that which occupied our minds was not a thing to be expressed in words.

“And then that silly custom of eating bonbons, that brutal gluttony for sweetmeats, those abominable preparations for the wedding, those discussions with mamma upon the apartments, upon the sleeping-rooms, upon the bedding, upon the morning-gowns, upon the wrappers, the linen, the costumes! Understand that if people married according to the old fashion, as this old man said just now, then these eider-down coverlets and this bedding would all be sacred details; but with us, out of ten married people there is scarcely to be found one who, I do not say believes in sacraments (whether he believes or not is a matter of indifference to us), but believes in what he promises. Out of a hundred men, there is scarcely one who has not married before, and out of fifty scarcely one who has not made up his mind to deceive his wife.

“The great majority look upon this journey to the church as a condition necessary to the possession of a certain woman. Think then of the supreme significance which material details must take on. Is it not a sort of sale, in which a maiden is given over to a *débauché*, the sale being surrounded with the most agreeable details?”

Chapter 11

“All marry in this way. And I did like the rest. If the young people who dream of the honeymoon only knew what a disillusion it is, and always a disillusion! I really do not know why all think it necessary to conceal it.

“One day I was walking among the shows in Paris, when, attracted by a sign, I entered an establishment to see a bearded woman and a water-dog. The woman was a man in disguise, and the dog was an ordinary dog, covered with a sealskin, and swimming in a bath. It was not in the least interesting, but the Barnum accompanied me to the exit very courteously, and, in addressing the people who were coming in, made an appeal to my testimony. ‘Ask the gentleman if it is not worth seeing! Come in, come in! It only costs a franc!’ And in my confusion I did not dare to answer that there was nothing curious to be seen, and it was upon my false shame that the Barnum must have counted.

“It must be the same with the persons who have passed through the abominations of the honeymoon. They do not dare to undeceive their neighbour. And I did the same.

“The felicities of the honeymoon do not exist. On the contrary, it is a period of uneasiness, of shame, of pity, and, above all, of *ennui* — of ferocious *ennui*. It is something like the feeling of a youth when he is beginning to smoke. He desires to vomit; he drivels, and swallows his drivel, pretending to enjoy this little amusement. The vice of marriage” . . .

“What! *Vice*?” I said. “But you are talking of one of the most natural things.”

“Natural!” said he. “Natural! No, I consider on the contrary that it is against nature, and it is I, a perverted man, who have reached this conviction. What would it be, then, if I had not known corruption? To a young girl, to every unperverted young girl, it is an act extremely unnatural, just as it is to children. My sister married, when very young, a man twice her own age, and who was utterly corrupt. I remember how astonished we were the night of her wedding, when, pale and covered with tears, she fled from her husband, her whole body trembling, saying that for nothing in the world would she tell what he wanted of her.

“You say natural? It is natural to eat; that is a pleasant, agreeable function, which no one is ashamed to perform from the time of his birth. No, it is not natural. A pure young girl wants one thing — children. Children, yes, not a lover.” . . .

“But,” said I, with astonishment, “how would the human race continue?”

“But what is the use of its continuing?” he rejoined, vehemently.

“What! What is the use? But then we should not exist.”

“And why is it necessary that we should exist?”

“Why, to live, to be sure.”

“And why live? The Schopenhauers, the Hartmanns, and all the Buddhists, say that the greatest happiness is Nirvana, Non-Life; and they are right in this sense — that human happiness is coincident with the annihilation of ‘Self.’ Only they do not express themselves well. They say that Humanity should annihilate itself to avoid its sufferings, that its object should be to destroy itself. Now the object of Humanity cannot be to avoid sufferings by annihilation, since suffering is the result of activity. The object of activity cannot consist in suppressing its consequences. The object of Man, as of Humanity, is happiness, and, to attain it, Humanity has a law which it must carry out. This law consists in the union of beings. This union is thwarted by the passions. And that is why, if the passions disappear, the union will be accomplished. Humanity then will have carried out the law, and will have no further reason to exist.”

“And before Humanity carries out the law?”

“In the meantime it will have the sign of the unfulfilled law, and the existence of physical love. As long as this love shall exist, and because of it, generations will be born, one of which will finally fulfil the law. When at last the law shall be fulfilled, the Human Race will be annihilated. At least it is impossible for us to conceive of Life in the perfect union of people.”

Chapter 12

“Strange theory!” cried I.

“Strange in what? According to all the doctrines of the Church, the world will have an end. Science teaches the same fatal conclusions. Why, then, is it strange that the same thing should result from moral Doctrine? ‘Let those who can, contain,’ said Christ. And I take this passage literally, as it is written. That morality may exist between people in their worldly relations, they must make complete chastity their object. In tending toward this end, man humiliates himself. When he shall reach the last degree of humiliation, we shall have moral marriage.

“But if man, as in our society, tends only toward physical love, though he may clothe it with pretexts and the false forms of marriage, he will have only permissible debauchery, he will know only the same immoral life in which I fell and caused my wife to fall, a life which we call the honest life of the family. Think what a perversion of ideas must arise when the happiest situation of man, liberty, chastity, is looked upon as something wretched and ridiculous. The highest ideal, the best situation of woman, to be pure, to be a vestal, a virgin, excites fear and laughter in our society. How many, how many young girls sacrifice their purity to this Moloch of opinion by marrying rascals that they may not remain virgins — that is, superiors! Through fear of finding themselves in that ideal state, they ruin themselves.

“But I did not understand formerly, I did not understand that the words of the Gospel, that ‘he who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery,’ do not apply to the wives of others, but notably and especially to our own wives. I did not understand this, and I thought that the honeymoon and all of my acts during that period were virtuous, and that to satisfy one’s desires with his wife is an eminently chaste thing. Know, then, that I consider these departures, these iso-

lations, which young married couples arrange with the permission of their parents, as nothing else than a license to engage in debauchery.

“I saw, then, in this nothing bad or shameful, and, hoping for great joys, I began to live the honeymoon. And very certainly none of these joys followed. But I had faith, and was determined to have them, cost what they might. But the more I tried to secure them, the less I succeeded. All this time I felt anxious, ashamed, and weary. Soon I began to suffer. I believe that on the third or fourth day I found my wife sad and asked her the reason. I began to embrace her, which in my opinion was all that she could desire. She put me away with her hand, and began to weep.

“At what? She could not tell me. She was filled with sorrow, with anguish. Probably her tortured nerves had suggested to her the truth about the baseness of our relations, but she found no words in which to say it. I began to question her; she answered that she missed her absent mother. It seemed to me that she was not telling the truth. I sought to console her by maintaining silence in regard to her parents. I did not imagine that she felt herself simply overwhelmed, and that her parents had nothing to do with her sorrow. She did not listen to me, and I accused her of caprice. I began to laugh at her gently. She dried her tears, and began to reproach me, in hard and wounding terms, for my selfishness and cruelty.

“I looked at her. Her whole face expressed hatred, and hatred of me. I cannot describe to you the fright which this sight gave me. ‘How? What?’ thought I, ‘love is the unity of souls, and here she hates me? Me? Why? But it is impossible! It is no longer she!’

“I tried to calm her. I came in conflict with an immovable and cold hostility, so that, having no time to reflect, I was seized with keen irritation. We exchanged disagreeable remarks. The impression of this first quarrel was terrible. I say quarrel, but the term is inexact. It was the sudden discovery of the abyss that had been dug between us. Love was exhausted with the satisfaction of sensuality. We stood face to face in our true light, like two egoists trying to procure the greatest possible enjoyment, like two individuals trying to mutually exploit each other.

“So what I called our quarrel was our actual situation as it appeared after the satisfaction of sensual desire. I did not realize that this cold hostility was our normal state, and that this first quarrel would soon be drowned under a new flood of the intensest sensuality. I thought that we had disputed with each other, and had become reconciled, and that it would not happen again. But in this same honeymoon there came a period of satiety, in which we ceased to be necessary to each other, and a new quarrel broke out.

“It became evident that the first was not a matter of chance. ‘It was inevitable,’ I thought. This second quarrel stupefied me the more, because it was based on an extremely unjust cause. It was something like a question of money — and never had I haggled on that score; it was even impossible that I should do so in relation to her. I only remember that, in answer to some remark that I made, she insinuated that it was my intention to rule her by means of money, and that it was upon money that I based my sole right over her. In short, something extraordinarily stupid and base, which was neither in my character nor in hers.

“I was beside myself. I accused her of indelicacy. She made the same accusation against me, and the dispute broke out. In her words, in the expression of her face, of her eyes, I noticed again the hatred that had so astonished me before. With a brother, friends, my father, I had occasionally quarrelled, but never had there been between us this fierce spite. Some time passed. Our mutual hatred was again concealed beneath an access of sensual desire, and I again consoled myself with the reflection that these scenes were reparable faults.

“But when they were repeated a third and a fourth time, I understood that they were not simply faults, but a fatality that must happen again. I was no longer frightened, I was simply astonished that I should be precisely the one to live so uncomfortably with my wife, and that the same thing did not happen in other households. I did not know that in all households the same sudden changes take place, but that all, like myself, imagine that it is a misfortune exclusively reserved for themselves alone, which they carefully conceal as shameful, not only to others, but to themselves, like a bad disease.

“That was what happened to me. Begun in the early days, it continued and increased with characteristics of fury that were ever more pronounced. At the bottom of my soul, from the first weeks, I felt that I was in a trap, that I had what I did not expect, and that marriage is not a joy, but a painful trial. Like everybody else, I refused to confess it (I should not have confessed it even now but for the outcome). Now I am astonished to think that I did not see my real situation. It was so easy to perceive it, in view of those quarrels, begun for reasons so trivial that afterwards one could not recall them.

“Just as it often happens among gay young people that, in the absence of jokes, they laugh at their own laughter, so we found no reasons for our hatred, and we hated each other because hatred was naturally boiling up in us. More extraordinary still was the absence of causes for reconciliation.

“Sometimes words, explanations, or even tears, but sometimes, I remember, after insulting words, there tacitly followed embraces and declarations. Abomination! Why is it that I did not then perceive this baseness?

Chapter 13

“All of us, men and women, are brought up in these aberrations of feeling that we call love. I from childhood had prepared myself for this thing, and I loved, and I loved during all my youth, and I was joyous in loving. It had been put into my head that it was the noblest and highest occupation in the world. But when this expected feeling came at last, and I, a man, abandoned myself to it, the lie was pierced through and through. Theoretically a lofty love is conceivable; practically it is an ignoble and degrading thing, which it is equally disgusting to talk about and to remember. It is not in vain that nature has made ceremonies, but people pretend that the ignoble and the shameful is beautiful and lofty.

“I will tell you brutally and briefly what were the first signs of my love. I abandoned myself to beastly excesses, not only not ashamed of them, but proud of them, giving no thought to the intellectual life of my wife. And not only did I not think of her intellectual life, I did not even consider her physical life. I was astonished at the origin of our hostility, and yet how clear it was! This hostility is nothing but a protest of human nature against the beast that enslaves it. It could not be otherwise. This hatred was the hatred of accomplices in a crime. Was it not a crime that, this poor woman having become pregnant in the first month, our *liaison* should have continued just the same?

“You imagine that I am wandering from my story. Not at all. I am always giving you an account of the events that led to the murder of my wife. The imbeciles! They think that I killed my wife on the 5th of October. It was long before that that I immolated her, just as they all kill now. Understand well that in our society there is an idea shared by all that woman procures man pleasure (and *vice versa*, probably, but I know nothing of that, I only know my own case). *Wein, Weiber und Gesang*.¹ So say the poets in their verses: Wine, women, and song!

“If it were only that! Take all the poetry, the painting, the sculpture, beginning with Pouschkine’s ‘Little Feet,’ with ‘Venus and Phryne,’ and you will see that woman is only a means of enjoyment. That is what she is at Trouba,² at Gratchevka, and in a court ball-room. And think of this diabolical trick: if she were a thing without moral value, it might be said that woman is a fine morsel; but, in the first place, these knights assure us that they adore woman (they adore her and look upon her, however, as a means of enjoyment), then all assure us that they esteem woman. Some give up their seats to her, pick up her handkerchief; others recognize in her a right to fill all offices, participate in government, etc., but, in spite of all that, the essential point remains the same. She is, she remains, an object of sensual desire, and she knows it. It is slavery, for slavery is nothing else than the utilization of the labour of some for the enjoyment of others. That slavery may not exist people must refuse to enjoy the labour of others, and look upon it as a shameful act and as a sin.

“Actually, this is what happens. They abolish the external form, they suppress the formal sales of slaves, and then they imagine and assure others that slavery is abolished. They are unwilling to see that it still exists, since people, as before, like to

¹ [A waltz by Johann Strauss II, op. 333]

² A suburb of Moscow.

profit by the labour of others, and think it good and just. This being given, there will always be found beings stronger or more cunning than others to profit thereby. The same thing happens in the emancipation of woman. At bottom feminine servitude consists entirely in her assimilation with a means of pleasure. They excite woman, they give her all sorts of rights equal to those of men, but they continue to look upon her as an object of sensual desire, and thus they bring her up from infancy and in public opinion.

“She is always the humiliated and corrupt serf, and man remains always the debauched Master. Yes, to abolish slavery, public opinion must admit that it is shameful to exploit one’s neighbour, and, to make woman free, public opinion must admit that it is shameful to consider woman as an instrument of pleasure.

“The emancipation of woman is not to be effected in the public courts or in the chamber of deputies, but in the sleeping chamber. Prostitution is to be combated, not in the houses of ill-fame, but in the family. They free woman in the public courts and in the chamber of deputies, but she remains an instrument. Teach her, as she is taught among us, to look upon herself as such, and she will always remain an inferior being. Either, with the aid of the rascally doctors, she will try to prevent conception, and descend, not to the level of an animal, but to the level of a thing; or she will be what she is in the great majority of cases — sick, hysterical, wretched, without hope of spiritual progress.” . . .

“But why that?” I asked.

“Oh! the most astonishing thing is that no one is willing to see this thing, evident as it is, which the doctors must understand, but which they take good care not to do. Man does not wish to know the law of nature — children. But children are born and become an embarrassment. Then man devises means of avoiding this embarrassment. We have not yet reached the low level of Europe, nor Paris, nor the ‘system of two children,’ nor Mahomet. We have discovered nothing, because we have given it no thought. We feel that there is something bad in the two first means; but we wish to preserve the family, and our view of woman is still worse.

“With us woman must be at the same time mistress and nurse, and her strength is not sufficient. That is why we have hysteria, nervous attacks, and, among the peasants, witchcraft. Note that among the young girls of the peasantry this state of things does not exist, but only among the wives, and the wives who live with their husbands. The reason is clear, and this is the cause of the intellectual and moral decline of woman, and of her abasement.

“If they would only reflect what a grand work for the wife is the period of gestation! In her is forming the being who continues us, and this holy work is thwarted and rendered painful . . . by what? It is frightful to think of it! And after that they talk of the liberties and the rights of woman! It is like the cannibals fattening their prisoners in order to devour them, and assuring these unfortunates at the same time that their rights and their liberties are guarded!”

All this was new to me, and astonished me very much.

“But if this is so,” said I, “it follows that one may love his wife only once every two years; and as man” . . .

“And as man has need of her, you are going to say. At least, so the priests of science assure us. I would force these priests to fulfil the function of these women, who, in their opinion, are necessary to man. I wonder what song they would sing then. Assure man that he needs brandy, tobacco, opium, and he will believe those poisons necessary. It follows that God did not know how to arrange matters properly, since, without asking the opinions of the priests, he has combined things as they are. Man needs, so they have decided, to satisfy his sensual desire, and here this function is disturbed by the birth and the nursing of children.

“What, then, is to be done? Why, apply to the priests; they will arrange everything, and they have really discovered a way. When, then, will these rascals with their lies be uncrowned! It is high time. We have had enough of them. People go mad, and shoot each other with revolvers, and always because of that! And how could it be otherwise?

“One would say that the animals know that descent continues their race, and that they follow a certain law in regard thereto. Only man does not know this, and is unwilling to know it. He cares only to have as much sensual enjoyment as possible. The king of nature — man! In the name of his love he kills half the human race. Of woman, who ought to be his aid in the movement of humanity toward liberty, he makes, in the name of his pleasures, not an aid, but an enemy. Who is it that everywhere puts a check upon the progressive movement of humanity? Woman. Why is it so? For the reason that I have given, and for that reason only.

Chapter 14

“Yes, much worse than the animal is man when he does not live as a man. Thus was I. The horrible part is that I believed, inasmuch as I did not allow myself to be seduced by other women that I was leading an honest family life, that I was a very mortal being, and that if we had quarrels, the fault was in my wife, and in her character.

“But it is evident that the fault was not in her. She was like everybody else, like the majority. She was brought up according to the principles exacted by the situation of our society — that is, as all the young girls of our wealthy classes, without exception, are brought up, and as they cannot fail to be brought up. How many times we hear or read of reflections upon the abnormal condition of women, and upon what they ought to be. But these are only vain words. The education of women results from the real and not imaginary view which the world entertains of women’s vocation. According to this view, the condition of women consists in procuring pleasure and it is to that end that her education is directed. From her infancy she is taught only those things that are calculated to increase her charm. Every young girl is accustomed to think only of that.

“As the serfs were brought up solely to please their masters, so woman is brought up to attract men. It cannot be otherwise. But you will say, perhaps, that that applies only to young girls who are badly brought up, but that there is another education, an education that is serious, in the schools, an education in the dead languages, an ed-

ucation in the institutions of midwifery, an education in medical courses, and in other courses. It is false.

“Every sort of feminine education has for its sole object the attraction of men.

“Some attract by music or curly hair, others by science or by civic virtue. The object is the same, and cannot be otherwise (since no other object exists) — to seduce man in order to possess him. Imagine courses of instruction for women and feminine science without men — that is, learned women, and men not *knowing* them as learned. Oh, no! No education, no instruction can change woman as long as her highest ideal shall be marriage and not virginity, freedom from sensuality. Until that time she will remain a serf. One need only imagine, forgetting the universality of the case, the conditions in which our young girls are brought up, to avoid astonishment at the debauchery of the women of our upper classes. It is the opposite that would cause astonishment.

“Follow my reasoning. From infancy garments, ornaments, cleanliness, grace, dances, music, reading of poetry, novels, singing, the theatre, the concert, for use within and without, according as women listen, or practice themselves. With that, complete physical idleness, an excessive care of the body, a vast consumption of sweetmeats; and God knows how the poor maidens suffer from their own sensuality, excited by all these things. Nine out of ten are tortured intolerably during the first period of maturity, and afterward provided they do not marry at the age of twenty. That is what we are unwilling to see, but those who have eyes see it all the same. And even the majority of these unfortunate creatures are so excited by a hidden sensuality (and it is lucky if it is hidden) that they are fit for nothing. They become animated only in the presence of men. Their whole life is spent in preparations for coquetry, or in coquetry itself. In the presence of men they become too animated; they begin to live by sensual energy. But the moment the man goes away, the life stops.

“And that, not in the presence of a certain man, but in the presence of any man, provided he is not utterly hideous. You will say that this is an exception. No, it is a rule. Only in some it is made very evident, in other less so. But no one lives by her own life; they are all dependent upon man. They cannot be otherwise, since to them the attraction of the greatest number of men is the ideal of life (young girls and married women), and it is for this reason that they have no feeling stronger than that of the animal need of every female who tries to attract the largest number of males in order to increase the opportunities for choice. So it is in the life of young girls, and so it continues during marriage. In the life of young girls it is necessary in order to selection, and in marriage it is necessary in order to rule the husband. Only one thing suppresses or interrupts these tendencies for a time — namely, children — and then only when the woman is not a monster — that is, when she nurses her own children. Here again the doctor interferes.

“With my wife, who desired to nurse her own children, and who did nurse six of them, it happened that the first child was sickly. The doctors, who cynically undressed her and felt of her everywhere, and whom I had to thank and pay for these acts — these dear doctors decided that she ought not to nurse her child, and she was temporarily deprived of the only remedy for coquetry. A nurse finished the nurs-

ing of this first-born — that is to say, we profited by the poverty and ignorance of a woman to steal her from her own little one in favour of ours, and for that purpose we dressed her in a *kakoschnik*¹ trimmed with gold lace. Nevertheless, that is not the question; but there was again awakened in my wife that coquetry which had been sleeping during the nursing period. Thanks to that, she reawakened in me the torments of jealousy which I had formerly known, though in a much slighter degree.

Chapter 15

“Yes, jealousy, that is another of the secrets of marriage known to all and concealed by all. Besides the general cause of the mutual hatred of husbands and wives resulting from complicity in the pollution of a human being, and also from other causes, the inexhaustible source of marital wounds is jealousy. But by tacit consent it is determined to conceal them from all, and we conceal them. Knowing them, each one supposes in himself that it is an unfortunate peculiarity, and not a common destiny. So it was with me, and it had to be so. There cannot fail to be jealousy between husbands and wives who live immorally. If they cannot sacrifice their pleasures for the welfare of their child, they conclude therefrom, and truly, that they will not sacrifice their pleasures for, I will not say happiness and tranquillity (since one may sin in secret), but even for the sake of conscience. Each one knows very well that neither admits any high moral reasons for not betraying the other, since in their mutual relations they fail in the requirements of morality, and from that time distrust and watch each other.

“Oh, what a frightful feeling of jealousy! I do not speak of that real jealousy which has foundations (it is tormenting, but it promises an issue), but of that unconscious jealousy which inevitably accompanies every immoral marriage, and which, having no cause, has no end. This jealousy is frightful. Frightful, that is the word.

“And this is it. A young man speaks to my wife. He looks at her with a smile, and, as it seems to me, he surveys her body. How does he dare to think of her, to think of the possibility of a romance with her? And how can she, seeing this, tolerate him? Not only does she tolerate him, but she seems pleased. I even see that she puts herself to trouble on his account. And in my soul there rises such a hatred for her that each of her words, each gesture, disgusts me. She notices it, she knows not what to do, and how assume an air of indifferent animation? Ah! I suffer! That makes her gay, she is content. And my hatred increases tenfold, but I do not dare to give it free force, because at the bottom of my soul I know that there are no real reasons for it, and I remain in my seat, feigning indifference, and exaggerating my attention and courtesy to *him*.

“Then I get angry with myself. I desire to leave the room, to leave them alone, and I do, in fact, go out; but scarcely am I outside when I am invaded by a fear of what is taking place within my absence. I go in again, inventing some pretext. Or sometimes I do not go in; I remain near the door, and listen. How can she humiliate herself and humiliate me by placing me in this cowardly situation of suspicion and espionage? Oh, abomination! Oh, the wicked animal! And he too, what does he think of you? But

¹ [Head-dress worn by women and girls to accompany the sarafan, primarily worn in the northern regions of Russia in the 16th to 19th centuries.]

he is like all men. He is what I was before my marriage. It gives him pleasure. He even smiles when he looks at me, as much as to say: 'What have you to do with this? It is my turn now.'

"This feeling is horrible. Its burn is unendurable. To entertain this feeling toward any one, to once suspect a man of lusting after my wife, was enough to spoil this man forever in my eyes, as if he had been sprinkled with vitriol. Let me once become jealous of a being, and nevermore could I re-establish with him simple human relations, and my eyes flashed when I looked at him.

"As for my wife, so many times had I enveloped her with this moral vitriol, with this jealous hatred, that she was degraded thereby. In the periods of this causeless hatred I gradually uncrowned her. I covered her with shame in my imagination.

"I invented impossible knaveries. I suspected, I am ashamed to say, that she, this queen of 'The Thousand and One Nights,' deceived me with my serf, under my very eyes, and laughing at me. Thus, with each new access of jealousy (I speak always of causeless jealousy), I entered into the furrow dug formerly by my filthy suspicions, and I continually deepened it. She did the same thing. If I have reasons to be jealous, she who knew my past had a thousand times more. And she was more ill-natured in her jealousy than I. And the sufferings that I felt from her jealousy were different, and likewise very painful.

"The situation may be described thus. We are living more or less tranquilly. I am even gay and contented. Suddenly we start a conversation on some most commonplace subject, and directly she finds herself disagreeing with me upon matters concerning which we have been generally in accord. And furthermore I see that, without any necessity therefor, she is becoming irritated. I think that she has a nervous attack, or else that the subject of conversation is really disagreeable to her. We talk of something else, and that begins again. Again she torments me, and becomes irritated. I am astonished and look for a reason. Why? For what? She keeps silence, answers me with monosyllables, evidently making allusions to something. I begin to divine that the reason of all this is that I have taken a few walks in the garden with her cousin, to whom I did not give even a thought. I begin to divine, but I cannot say so. If I say so, I confirm her suspicions. I interrogate her, I question her. She does not answer, but she sees that I understand, and that confirms her suspicions.

"'What is the matter with you?' I ask.

"'Nothing, I am as well as usual,' she answers.

"And at the same time, like a crazy woman, she gives utterance to the silliest remarks, to the most inexplicable explosions of spite.

"Sometimes I am patient, but at other times I break out with anger. Then her own irritation is launched forth in a flood of insults, in charges of imaginary crimes and all carried to the highest degree by sobs, tears, and retreats through the house to the most improbable spots. I go to look for her. I am ashamed before people, before the children, but there is nothing to be done. She is in a condition where I feel that she is ready for anything. I run, and finally find her. Nights of torture follow, in which both

of us, with exhausted nerves, appease each other, after the most cruel words and accusations.

“Yes, jealousy, causeless jealousy, is the condition of our debauched conjugal life. And throughout my marriage never did I cease to feel it and to suffer from it. There were two periods in which I suffered most intensely. The first time was after the birth of our first child, when the doctors had forbidden my wife to nurse it. I was particularly jealous, in the first place, because my wife felt that restlessness peculiar to animal matter when the regular course of life is interrupted without occasion. But especially was I jealous because, having seen with what facility she had thrown off her moral duties as a mother, I concluded rightly, though unconsciously, that she would throw off as easily her conjugal duties, feeling all the surer of this because she was in perfect health, as was shown by the fact that, in spite of the prohibition of the dear doctors, she nursed her following children, and even very well.”

“I see that you have no love for the doctors,” said I, having noticed Posdnicheff’s extraordinarily spiteful expression of face and tone of voice whenever he spoke of them.

“It is not a question of loving them or of not loving them. They have ruined my life, as they have ruined the lives of thousands of beings before me, and I cannot help connecting the consequence with the cause. I conceive that they desire, like the lawyers and the rest, to make money. I would willingly have given them half of my income — and any one would have done it in my place, understanding what they do — if they had consented not to meddle in my conjugal life, and to keep themselves at a distance. I have compiled no statistics, but I know scores of cases — in reality, they are innumerable — where they have killed, now a child in its mother’s womb, asserting positively that the mother could not give birth to it (when the mother could give birth to it very well), now mothers, under the pretext of a so-called operation. No one has counted these murders, just as no one counted the murders of the Inquisition, because it was supposed that they were committed for the benefit of humanity. Innumerable are the crimes of the doctors! But all these crimes are nothing compared with the materialistic demoralization which they introduce into the world through women. I say nothing of the fact that, if it were to follow their advice — thanks to the microbe which they see everywhere — humanity, instead of tending to union, would proceed straight to complete disunion. Everybody, according to their doctrine, should isolate himself, and never remove from his mouth a syringe filled with phenic acid¹ (moreover, they have found out now that it does no good). But I would pass over all these things. The supreme poison is the perversion of people, especially of women. One can no longer say now: ‘You live badly, live better.’ One can no longer say it either to himself or to others, for, if you live badly (say the doctors), the cause is in the nervous system or in something similar, and it is necessary to go to consult them, and they will prescribe for you thirty-five copecks’ worth of remedies to be bought at the drug-store, and you must swallow them. Your condition grows worse? Again to the doctors, and more remedies! An excellent business!

“But to return to our subject. I was saying that my wife nursed her children well, that the nursing and the gestation of the children, and the children in general, quiet-

¹ [also known as Carbolic acid, or Phenyllic acid]

ed my tortures of jealousy, but that, on the other hand, they provoked torments of a different sort.

Chapter 16

“The children came rapidly, one after another, and there happened what happens in our society with children and doctors. Yes, children, maternal love, it is a painful thing. Children, to a woman of our society, are not a joy, a pride, nor a fulfilment of her vocation, but a cause of fear, anxiety, and interminable suffering, torture. Women say it, they think it, and they feel it too. Children to them are really a torture, not because they do not wish to give birth to them, nurse them, and care for them (women with a strong maternal instinct — and such was my wife — are ready to do that), but because the children may fall sick and die. They do not wish to give birth to them, and then not love them; and when they love, they do not wish to feel fear for the child’s health and life. That is why they do not wish to nurse them. ‘If I nurse it,’ they say, ‘I shall become too fond of it.’ One would think that they preferred India-rubber children, which could neither be sick nor die, and could always be repaired. What an entanglement in the brains of these poor women! Why such abominations to avoid pregnancy, and to avoid the love of the little ones?

“Love, the most joyous condition of the soul, is represented as a danger. And why? Because, when a man does not live as a man, he is worse than a beast. A woman cannot look upon a child otherwise than as a pleasure. It is true that it is painful to give birth to it, but what little hands! . . . Oh, the little hands! Oh, the little feet! Oh, its smile! Oh, its little body! Oh, its prattle! Oh, its hiccough! In a word, it is a feeling of animal, sensual maternity. But as for any idea as to the mysterious significance of the appearance of a new human being to replace us, there is scarcely a sign of it.

“Nothing of it appears in all that is said and done. No one has any faith now in a baptism of the child, and yet that was nothing but a reminder of the human significance of the newborn babe.

“They have rejected all that, but they have not replaced it, and there remain only the dresses, the laces, the little hands, the little feet, and whatever exists in the animal. But the animal has neither imagination, nor foresight, nor reason, nor a doctor. No! not even a doctor! The chicken droops its head, overwhelmed, or the calf dies; the hen clucks and the cow lows for a time, and then these beasts continue to live, forgetting what has happened. With us, if the child falls sick, what is to be done, how to care for it, what doctor to call, where to go? If it dies, there will be no more little hands or little feet, and then what is the use of the sufferings endured? The cow does not ask all that, and this is why children are a source of misery. The cow has no imagination, and for that reason cannot think how it might have saved the child if it had done this or that, and its grief, founded in its physical being, lasts but a very short time. It is only a condition, and not that sorrow which becomes exaggerated to the point of despair, thanks to idleness and satiety. The cow has not that reasoning faculty which would enable it to ask the why. Why endure all these tortures? What was the use of so much love, if the little ones were to die? The cow has no logic which tells it to have no more children, and, if any come accidentally, to neither love nor nurse them, that it may not suffer. But our wives reason, and reason in this way,

and that is why I said that, when a man does not live as a man, he is beneath the animal.”

“But then, how is it necessary to act, in your opinion, in order to treat children humanly?” I asked.

“How? Why, love them humanly.”

“Well, do not mothers love their children?”

“They do not love them humanly, or very seldom do, and that is why they do not love them even as dogs. Mark this, a hen, a goose, a wolf, will always remain to woman inaccessible ideals of animal love. It is a rare thing for a woman to throw herself, at the peril of her life, upon an elephant to snatch her child away, whereas a hen or a sparrow will not fail to fly at a dog and sacrifice itself utterly for its children. Observe this, also. Woman has the power to limit her physical love for her children, which an animal cannot do. Does that mean that, because of this, woman is inferior to the animal? No. She is superior (and even to say superior is unjust, she is not superior, she is different), but she has other duties, human duties. She can restrain herself in the matter of animal love, and transfer her love to the soul of the child. That is what woman’s *rôle* should be, and that is precisely what we do not see in our society. We read of the heroic acts of mothers who sacrifice their children in the name of a superior idea, and these things seem to us like tales of the ancient world, which do not concern us. And yet I believe that, if the mother has not some ideal, in the name of which she can sacrifice the animal feeling, and if this force finds no employment, she will transfer it to chimerical attempts to physically preserve her child, aided in this task by the doctor, and she will suffer as she does suffer.

“So it was with my wife. Whether there was one child or five, the feeling remained the same. In fact, it was a little better when there had been five. Life was always poisoned with fear for the children, not only from their real or imaginary diseases, but even by their simple presence. For my part, at least, throughout my conjugal life, all my interests and all my happiness depended upon the health of my children, their condition, their studies. Children, it is needless to say, are a serious consideration; but all ought to live, and in our days parents can no longer live. Regular life does not exist for them. The whole life of the family hangs by a hair. What a terrible thing it is to suddenly receive the news that little Basile is vomiting, or that Lise has a cramp in the stomach! Immediately you abandon everything, you forget everything, everything becomes nothing. The essential thing is the doctor, the enema, the temperature. You cannot begin a conversation but little Pierre comes running in with an anxious air to ask if he may eat an apple, or what jacket he shall put on, or else it is the servant who enters with a screaming baby.

“Regular, steady family life does not exist. Where you live, and consequently what you do, depends upon the health of the little ones, the health of the little ones depends upon nobody, and, thanks to the doctors, who pretend to aid health, your entire life is disturbed. It is a perpetual peril. Scarcely do we believe ourselves out of it when a new danger comes: more attempts to save. Always the situation of sailors on a foundering vessel. Sometimes it seemed to me that this was done on purpose, that my wife feigned anxiety in order to conquer me, since that solved the question so

simply for her benefit. It seemed to me that all that she did at those times was done for its effect upon me, but now I see that she herself, my wife, suffered and was tortured on account of the little ones, their health, and their diseases.

“A torture to both of us, but to her the children were also a means of forgetting herself, like an intoxication. I often noticed, when she was very sad, that she was relieved, when a child fell sick, at being able to take refuge in this intoxication. It was involuntary intoxication, because as yet there was nothing else. On every side we heard that Mrs. So-and-so had lost children, that Dr. So-and-so had saved the child of Mrs. So-and-so, and that in a certain family all had moved from the house in which they were living, and thereby saved the little ones. And the doctors, with a serious air, confirmed this, sustaining my wife in her opinions. She was not prone to fear, but the doctor dropped some word, like corruption of the blood, scarlatina, or else — heaven help us — diphtheria, and off she went.

“It was impossible for it to be otherwise. Women in the old days had the belief that ‘God has given, God has taken away,’ that the soul of the little angel is going to heaven, and that it is better to die innocent than to die in sin. If the women of to-day had something like this faith, they could endure more peacefully the sickness of their children. But of all that there does not remain even a trace. And yet it is necessary to believe in something; consequently they stupidly believe in medicine, and not even in medicine, but in the doctor. One believes in X, another in Z, and, like all believers, they do not see the idiocy of their beliefs. They believe *quia absurdum*,¹ because, in reality, if they did not believe in a stupid way, they would see the vanity of all that these brigands prescribe for them. Scarlatina is a contagious disease; so, when one lives in a large city, half the family has to move away from its residence (we did it twice), and yet every man in the city is a centre through which pass innumerable diameters, carrying threads of all sorts of contagions. There is no obstacle: the baker, the tailor, the coachman, the laundresses.

“And I would undertake, for every man who moves on account of contagion, to find in his new dwelling-place another contagion similar, if not the same.

“But that is not all. Everyone knows rich people who, after a case of diphtheria, destroy everything in their residences, and then fall sick in houses newly built and furnished. Everyone knows, likewise, numbers of men who come in contact with sick people and do not get infected. Our anxieties are due to the people who circulate tall stories. One woman says that she has an excellent doctor. ‘Pardon me,’ answers the other, ‘he killed such a one,’ or such a one. And *vice versa*. Bring her another, who knows no more, who learned from the same books, who treats according to the same formulas, but who goes about in a carriage, and asks a hundred roubles a visit, and she will have faith in him.

“It all lies in the fact that our women are savages. They have no belief in God, but some of them believe in the evil eye, and the others in doctors who charge high fees. If they had faith they would know that scarlatina, diphtheria, etc., are not so terrible, since they cannot disturb that which man can and should love — the soul. There can

¹ [Latin “credo quia absurdum,” I believe because it is absurd.]

result from them only that which none of us can avoid — disease and death. Without faith in God, they love only physically, and all their energy is concentrated upon the preservation of life, which cannot be preserved, and which the doctors promise the fools of both sexes to save. And from that time there is nothing to be done; the doctors must be summoned.

“Thus the presence of the children not only did not improve our relations as husband and wife, but, on the contrary, disunited us. The children became an additional cause of dispute, and the larger they grew, the more they became an instrument of struggle. One would have said that we used them as weapons with which to combat each other. Each of us had his favourite. I made use of little Basile (the eldest), she of Lise. Further, when the children reached an age where their characters began to be defined, they became allies, which we drew each in his or her own direction. They suffered horribly from this, the poor things, but we, in our perpetual hubbub, were not clear-headed enough to think of them. The little girl was devoted to me, but the eldest boy, who resembled my wife, his favourite, often inspired me with dislike.”

Chapter 17

“We lived at first in the country, then in the city, and, if the final misfortune had not happened, I should have lived thus until my old age and should then have believed that I had had a good life — not too good, but, on the other hand, not bad — an existence such as other people lead. I should not have understood the abyss of misfortune and ignoble falsehood in which I floundered about, feeling that something was not right. I felt, in the first place, that I, a man, who, according to my ideas, ought to be the master, wore the petticoats, and that I could not get rid of them. The principal cause of my subjection was the children. I should have liked to free myself, but I could not. Bringing up the children, and resting upon them, my wife ruled. I did not then realize that she could not help ruling, especially because, in marrying, she was morally superior to me, as every young girl is incomparably superior to the man, since she is incomparably purer. Strange thing! The ordinary wife in our society is a very commonplace person or worse, selfish, gossiping, whimsical, whereas the ordinary young girl, until the age of twenty, is a charming being, ready for everything that is beautiful and lofty. Why is this so? Evidently because husbands pervert them, and lower them to their own level.

“In truth, if boys and girls are born equal, the little girls find themselves in a better situation. In the first place, the young girl is not subjected to the perverting conditions to which we are subjected. She has neither cigarettes, nor wine, nor cards, nor comrades, nor public houses, nor public functions. And then the chief thing is that she is physically pure, and that is why, in marrying, she is superior to her husband. She is superior to man as a young girl, and when she becomes a wife in our society, where there is no need to work in order to live, she becomes superior, also, by the gravity of the acts of generation, birth, and nursing.

“Woman, in bringing a child into the world, and giving it her bosom, sees clearly that her affair is more serious than the affair of man, who sits in the Zemstvo, in the court. She knows that in these functions the main thing is money, and money can be made in different ways, and for that very reason money is not inevitably necessary,

like nursing a child. Consequently woman is necessarily superior to man, and must rule. But man, in our society, not only does not recognize this, but, on the contrary, always looks upon her from the height of his grandeur, despising what she does.

“Thus my wife despised me for my work at the Zemstvo, because she gave birth to children and nursed them. I, in turn, thought that woman’s labour was most contemptible, which one might and should laugh at.

“Apart from the other motives, we were also separated by a mutual contempt. Our relations grew ever more hostile, and we arrived at that period when, not only did dissent provoke hostility, but hostility provoked dissent. Whatever she might say, I was sure in advance to hold a contrary opinion; and she the same. Toward the fourth year of our marriage it was tacitly decided between us that no intellectual community was possible, and we made no further attempts at it. As to the simplest objects, we each held obstinately to our own opinions. With strangers we talked upon the most varied and most intimate matters, but not with each other. Sometimes, in listening to my wife talk with others in my presence, I said to myself: ‘What a woman! Everything that she says is a lie!’ And I was astonished that the person with whom she was conversing did not see that she was lying. When we were together; we were condemned to silence, or to conversations which, I am sure, might have been carried on by animals.

“‘What time is it? It is bed-time. What is there for dinner to-day? Where shall we go? What is there in the newspaper? The doctor must be sent for, Lise has a sore throat.’

“Unless we kept within the extremely narrow limits of such conversation, irritation was sure to ensue. The presence of a third person relieved us, for through an intermediary we could still communicate. She probably believed that she was always right. As for me, in my own eyes, I was a saint beside her.

“The periods of what we call love arrived as often as formerly. They were more brutal, without refinement, without ornament; but they were short, and generally followed by periods of irritation without cause, irritation fed by the most trivial pretexts. We had spats about the coffee, the table-cloth, the carriage, games of cards — trifles, in short, which could not be of the least importance to either of us. As for me, a terrible execration was continually boiling up within me. I watched her pour the tea, swing her foot, lift her spoon to her mouth, and blow upon hot liquids or sip them, and I detested her as if these had been so many crimes.

“I did not notice that these periods of irritation depended very regularly upon the periods of love. Each of the latter was followed by one of the former. A period of intense love was followed by a long period of anger; a period of mild love induced a mild irritation. We did not understand that this love and this hatred were two opposite faces of the same animal feeling. To live thus would be terrible, if one understood the philosophy of it. But we did not perceive this, we did not analyse it. It is at once the torture and the relief of man that, when he lives irregularly, he can cherish illusions as to the miseries of his situation. So did we. She tried to forget herself in sudden and absorbing occupations, in household duties, the care of the furniture, her dress and that of her children, in the education of the latter, and in looking after their health. These were occupations that did not arise from any immediate necessity, but she ac-

completed them as if her life and that of her children depended on whether the pastry was allowed to burn, whether a curtain was hanging properly, whether a dress was a success, whether a lesson was well learned, or whether a medicine was swallowed.

“I saw clearly that to her all this was, more than anything else, a means of forgetting, an intoxication, just as hunting, card-playing, and my functions at the Zemstvo served the same purpose for me. It is true that in addition I had an intoxication literally speaking — tobacco, which I smoked in large quantities, and wine, upon which I did not get drunk, but of which I took too much. Vodka before meals, and during meals two glasses of wine, so that a perpetual mist concealed the turmoil of existence.

“These new theories of hypnotism, of mental maladies, of hysteria are not simple stupidities, but dangerous or evil stupidities. Charcot, I am sure, would have said that my wife was hysterical, and of me he would have said that I was an abnormal being, and he would have wanted to treat me. But in us there was nothing requiring treatment. All this mental malady was the simple result of the fact that we were living immorally. Thanks to this immoral life, we suffered, and, to stifle our sufferings, we tried abnormal means, which the doctors call the ‘symptoms’ of a mental malady — *hysteria*.

“There was no occasion in all this to apply for treatment to Charcot or to anybody else. Neither suggestion nor bromide would have been effective in working our cure. The needful thing was an examination of the origin of the evil. It is as when one is sitting on a nail; if you see the nail, you see that which is irregular in your life, and you avoid it. Then the pain stops, without any necessity of stifling it. Our pain arose from the irregularity of our life, and also my jealousy, my irritability, and the necessity of keeping myself in a state of perpetual semi-intoxication by hunting, card-playing, and, above all, the use of wine and tobacco. It was because of this irregularity that my wife so passionately pursued her occupations. The sudden changes of her disposition, from extreme sadness to extreme gaiety, and her babble, arose from the need of forgetting herself, of forgetting her life, in the continual intoxication of varied and very brief occupations.

“Thus we lived in a perpetual fog, in which we did not distinguish our condition. We were like two galley-slaves fastened to the same ball, cursing each other, poisoning each other’s existence, and trying to shake each other off. I was still unaware that ninety-nine families out of every hundred live in the same hell, and that it cannot be otherwise. I had not learned this fact from others or from myself. The coincidences that are met in regular, and even in irregular life, are surprising. At the very period when the life of parents becomes impossible, it becomes indispensable that they go to the city to live, in order to educate their children. That is what we did.”

Posdnicheff became silent, and twice there escaped him, in the half-darkness, sighs, which at that moment seemed to me like suppressed sobs. Then he continued.

Chapter 18

“So we lived in the city. In the city the wretched feel less sad. One can live there a hundred years without being noticed, and be dead a long time before anybody will notice it. People have no time to inquire into your life. All are absorbed. Business, social relations, art, the health of children, their education. And there are visits that must be received and made; it is necessary to see this one, it is necessary to hear that one or the other one. In the city there are always one, two, or three celebrities that it is indispensable that one should visit. Now one must care for himself, or care for such or such a little one, now it is the professor, the private tutor, the governesses, . . . and life is absolutely empty. In this activity we were less conscious of the sufferings of our cohabitation. Moreover, in the first of it, we had a superb occupation — the arrangement of the new dwelling, and then, too, the moving from the city to the country, and from the country to the city.

“Thus we spent a winter. The following winter an incident happened to us which passed unnoticed, but which was the fundamental cause of all that happened later. My wife was suffering, and the rascals (the doctors) would not permit her to conceive a child, and taught her how to avoid it. I was profoundly disgusted. I struggled vainly against it, but she insisted frivolously and obstinately, and I surrendered. The last justification of our life as wretches was thereby suppressed, and life became baser than ever.

“The peasant and the workingman need children, and hence their conjugal relations have a justification. But we, when we have a few children, have no need of any more. They make a superfluous confusion of expenses and joint heirs, and are an embarrassment. Consequently we have no excuses for our existence as wretches, but we are so deeply degraded that we do not see the necessity of a justification. The majority of people in contemporary society give themselves up to this debauchery without the slightest remorse. We have no conscience left, except, so to speak, the conscience of public opinion and of the criminal code. But in this matter neither of these consciences is struck. There is not a being in society who blushes at it. Each one practices it — X, Y, Z, etc. What is the use of multiplying beggars, and depriving ourselves of the joys of social life? There is no necessity of having conscience before the criminal code, or of fearing it: low girls, soldiers’ wives who throw their children into ponds or wells, these certainly must be put in prison. But with us the suppression is effected opportunely and properly.

“Thus we passed two years more. The method prescribed by the rascals had evidently succeeded. My wife had grown stouter and handsomer. It was the beauty of the end of summer. She felt it, and paid much attention to her person. She had acquired that provoking beauty that stirs men. She was in all the brilliancy of the wife of thirty years, who conceives no children, eats heartily, and is excited. The very sight of her was enough to frighten one. She was like a spirited carriage-horse that has long been idle, and suddenly finds itself without a bridle. As for my wife, she had no bridle, as for that matter, ninety-nine hundredths of our women have none.”

Chapter 19

Posdnicheff's face had become transformed; his eyes were pitiable; their expression seemed strange, like that of another being than himself; his moustache and beard turned up toward the top of his face; his nose was diminished, and his mouth enlarged, immense, frightful.

"Yes," he resumed "she had grown stouter since ceasing to conceive, and her anxieties about her children began to disappear. Not even to disappear. One would have said that she was waking from a long intoxication, that on coming to herself she had perceived the entire universe with its joys, a whole world in which she had not learned to live, and which she did not understand.

"'If only this world shall not vanish! When time is past, when old age comes, one cannot recover it.' Thus, I believe, she thought, or rather felt. Moreover, she could neither think nor feel otherwise. She had been brought up in this idea that there is in the world but one thing worthy of attention — love. In marrying, she had known something of this love, but very far from everything that she had understood as promised her, everything that she expected. How many disillusionments! How much suffering! And an unexpected torture — the children! This torture had told upon her, and then, thanks to the obliging doctor, she had learned that it is possible to avoid having children. That had made her glad. She had tried, and she was now revived for the only thing that she knew — for love. But love with a husband polluted by jealousy and ill-nature was no longer her ideal. She began to think of some other tenderness; at least, that is what I thought. She looked about her as if expecting some event or some being. I noticed it, and I could not help being anxious.

"Always, now, it happened that, in talking with me through a third party (that is, in talking with others, but with the intention that I should hear), she boldly expressed — not thinking that an hour before she had said the opposite — half joking, half seriously, this idea that maternal anxieties are a delusion; that it is not worthwhile to sacrifice one's life to children. When one is young, it is necessary to enjoy life. So she occupied herself less with the children, not with the same intensity as formerly, and paid more and more attention to herself, to her face — although she concealed it — to her pleasures, and even to her perfection from the worldly point of view. She began to devote herself passionately to the piano, which had formerly stood forgotten in the corner. There, at the piano, began the adventure.

"The *man* appeared."

Posdnicheff seemed embarrassed, and twice again there escaped him that nasal sound of which I spoke above. I thought that it gave him pain to refer to the *man*, and to remember him. He made an effort, as if to break down the obstacle that embarrassed him, and continued with determination.

"He was a bad man in my eyes, and not because he has played such an important rôle in my life, but because he was really such. For the rest, from the fact that he was bad, we must conclude that he was irresponsible. He was a musician, a violinist. Not a professional musician, but half man of the world, half artist. His father, a country proprietor, was a neighbour of my father's. The father had become ruined, and the children, three boys, were all sent away. Our man, the youngest, was sent to

his godmother at Paris. There they placed him in the Conservatory, for he showed a taste for music. He came out a violinist, and played in concerts.”

On the point of speaking evil of the other, Posdnicheff checked himself, stopped, and said suddenly:

“In truth, I know not how he lived. I only know that that year he came to Russia, and came to see me. Moist eyes of almond shape, smiling red lips, a little moustache well waxed, hair brushed in the latest fashion, a vulgarly pretty face — what the women call ‘not bad,’ — feebly built physically, but with no deformity; with hips as broad as a woman’s; correct, and insinuating himself into the familiarity of people as far as possible, but having that keen sense that quickly detects a false step and retires in reason — a man, in short, observant of the external rules of dignity, with that special Parisianism that is revealed in buttoned boots, a gaudy cravat, and that something which foreigners pick up in Paris, and which, in its peculiarity and novelty, always has an influence on our women. In his manners an external and artificial gayety, a way, you know, of referring to everything by hints, by unfinished fragments, as if everything that one says you knew already, recalled it, and could supply the omissions. Well, he, with his music, was the cause of all.

“At the trial the affair was so represented that everything seemed attributable to jealousy. It is false — that is, not quite false, but there was something else. The verdict was rendered that I was a deceived husband, that I had killed in defence of my sullied honour (that is the way they put it in their language), and thus I was acquitted. I tried to explain the affair from my own point of view, but they concluded that I simply wanted to rehabilitate the memory of my wife. Her relations with the musician, whatever they may have been, are now of no importance to me or to her. The important part is what I have told you. The whole tragedy was due to the fact that this man came into our house at a time when an immense abyss had already been dug between us, that frightful tension of mutual hatred, in which the slightest motive sufficed to precipitate the crisis. Our quarrels in the last days were something terrible, and the more astonishing because they were followed by a brutal passion extremely strained. If it had not been he, some other would have come. If the pretext had not been jealousy, I should have discovered another. I insist upon this point — that all husbands who live the married life that I lived must either resort to outside debauchery, or separate from their wives, or kill themselves, or kill their wives as I did. If there is any one in my case to whom this does not happen, he is a very rare exception, for, before ending as I ended, I was several times on the point of suicide, and my wife made several attempts to poison herself.

Chapter 20

“In order that you may understand me, I must tell you how this happened. We were living along, and all seemed well. Suddenly we began to talk of the children’s education. I do not remember what words either of us uttered, but a discussion began, reproaches, leaps from one subject to another. ‘Yes, I know it. It has been so for a long time.’ . . . ‘You said that.’ . . . ‘No, I did not say that.’ . . . ‘Then I lie?’, etc.

“And I felt that the frightful crisis was approaching when I should desire to kill her or else myself. I knew that it was approaching; I was afraid of it as of fire; I wanted to restrain myself. But rage took possession of my whole being. My wife found herself in the same condition, perhaps worse. She knew that she intentionally distorted each of my words, and each of her words was saturated with venom. All that was dear to me she disparaged and profaned. The farther the quarrel went, the more furious it became. I cried, ‘Be silent,’ or something like that. She bounded out of the room and ran toward the children. I tried to hold her back to finish my insults. I grasped her by the arm, and hurt her. She cried: ‘Children, your father is beating me.’ I cried: ‘Don’t lie.’ She continued to utter falsehoods for the simple purpose of irritating me further. ‘Ah, it is not the first time,’ or something of that sort. The children rushed toward her and tried to quiet her. I said: ‘Don’t sham.’ She said: ‘You look upon everything as a sham. You would kill a person and say he was shamming. Now I understand you. That is what you want to do.’ ‘Oh, if you were only dead!’ I cried.

“I remember how that terrible phrase frightened me. Never had I thought that I could utter words so brutal, so frightful, and I was stupefied at what had just escaped my lips. I fled into my private apartment. I sat down and began to smoke. I heard her go into the hall and prepare to go out. I asked her: ‘Where are you going?’ She did not answer. ‘Well, may the devil take you!’ said I to myself, going back into my private room, where I lay down again and began smoking afresh. Thousands of plans of vengeance, of ways of getting rid of her, and how to arrange this, and act as if nothing had happened — all this passed through my head. I thought of these things, and I smoked, and smoked, and smoked. I thought of running away, of making my escape, of going to America. I went so far as to dream how beautiful it would be, after getting rid of her, to love another woman, entirely different from her. I should be rid of her if she should die or if I should get a divorce, and I tried to think how that could be managed. I saw that I was getting confused, but, in order not to see that I was not thinking rightly, I kept on smoking. “And the life of the house went on as usual. The children’s teacher came and asked: ‘Where is Madame? When will she return?’ The servants asked if they should serve the tea. I entered the dining-room. The children, Lise, the eldest girl, looked at me with fright, as if to question me, and she did not come. The whole evening passed, and still she did not come. Two sentiments kept succeeding each other in my soul — hatred of her, since she tortured myself and the children by her absence, but would finally return just the same, and fear lest she might return and make some attempt upon herself. But where should I look for her? At her sister’s? It seemed so stupid to go to ask where one’s wife is. Moreover, may God forbid, I hoped, that she should be at her sister’s! If she wishes to torment any one, let her torment herself first. And suppose she were not at her sister’s. Suppose she were to do, or had already done, something.

“Eleven o’clock, midnight, one o’clock. . . . I did not sleep. I did not go to my chamber. It is stupid to lie stretched out all alone, and to wait. But in my study I did not rest. I tried to busy myself, to write letters, to read. Impossible! I was alone, tortured, wicked, and I listened. Toward daylight I went to sleep. I awoke. She had not returned. Everything in the house went on as usual, and all looked at me in astonishment, questioningly. The children’s eyes were full of reproach for me. And always the same feeling of anxiety about her, and of hatred because of this anxiety.

“Toward eleven o’clock in the morning came her sister, her ambassadress. Then began the usual phrases: ‘She is in a terrible state. What is the matter?’ ‘Why, nothing has happened.’ I spoke of her asperity of character, and I added that I had done nothing, and that I would not take the first step. If she wants a divorce, so much the better! My sister-in-law would not listen to this idea, and went away without having gained anything. I was obstinate, and I said boldly and determinedly, in talking to her, that I would not take the first step. Immediately she had gone I went into the other room, and saw the children in a frightened and pitiful state, and there I found myself already inclined to take this first step. But I was bound by my word. Again I walked up and down, always smoking. At breakfast I drank brandy and wine, and I reached the point which I unconsciously desired, the point where I no longer saw the stupidity and baseness of my situation.

“Toward three o’clock she came. I thought that she was appeased, or admitted her defeat. I began to tell her that I was provoked by her reproaches. She answered me, with the same severe and terribly downcast face, that she had not come for explanations, but to take the children, that we could not live together. I answered that it was not my fault, that she had put me beside myself. She looked at me with a severe and solemn air, and said: ‘Say no more. You will repent it.’ I said that I could not tolerate comedies. Then she cried out something that I did not understand, and rushed toward her room. The key turned in the lock, and she shut herself up. I pushed at the door. There was no response. Furious, I went away.

“A half hour later Lise came running all in tears. ‘What! Has anything happened? We cannot hear Mamma!’ We went toward my wife’s room. I pushed the door with all my might. The bolt was scarcely drawn, and the door opened. In a skirt, with high boots, my wife lay awkwardly on the bed. On the table an empty opium phial. We restored her to life. Tears and then reconciliation! Not reconciliation; internally each kept the hatred for the other, but it was absolutely necessary for the moment to end the scene in some way, and life began again as before. These scenes, and even worse, came now once a week, now every month, now every day. And invariably the same incidents. Once I was absolutely resolved to fly, but through some inconceivable weakness I remained.

“Such were the circumstances in which we were living when the *man* came. The man was bad, it is true. But what! No worse than we were.

Chapter 21

“When we moved to Moscow, this gentleman — his name was Troukhatchevsky — came to my house. It was in the morning. I received him. In former times we had been very familiar. He tried, by various advances, to re-establish the familiarity, but I was determined to keep him at a distance, and soon he gave it up. He displeased me extremely. At the first glance I saw that he was a filthy *débauché*. I was jealous of him, even before he had seen my wife. But, strange thing! some occult fatal power kept me from repulsing him and sending him away, and, on the contrary, induced me to suffer this approach. What could have been simpler than to talk with him a few minutes, and then dismiss him coldly without introducing him to my wife? But no, as if on purpose, I turned the conversation upon his skill as a violinist, and he answered that, contrary to what I had heard, he now played the violin more than formerly. He remembered that I used to play. I answered that I had abandoned music, but that my wife played very well.

“Singular thing! Why, in the important events of our life, in those in which a man’s fate is decided — as mine was decided in that moment — why in these events is there neither a past nor a future? My relations with Troukhatchevsky the first day, at the first hour, were such as they might still have been after all that has happened. I was conscious that some frightful misfortune must result from the presence of this man, and, in spite of that, I could not help being amiable to him. I introduced him to my wife. She was pleased with him. In the beginning, I suppose, because of the pleasure of the violin playing, which she adored. She had even hired for that purpose a violinist from the theatre. But when she cast a glance at me, she understood my feelings, and concealed her impression. Then began the mutual trickery and deceit. I smiled agreeably, pretending that all this pleased me extremely. He, looking at my wife, as all debauches look at beautiful women, with an air of being interested solely in the subject of conversation — that is, in that which did not interest him at all.

“She tried to seem indifferent. But my expression, my jealous or false smile, which she knew so well, and the voluptuous glances of the musician, evidently excited her. I saw that, after the first interview, her eyes were already glittering, glittering strangely, and that, thanks to my jealousy, between him and her had been immediately established that sort of electric current which is provoked by an identity of expression in the smile and in the eyes.

“We talked, at the first interview, of music, of Paris, and of all sorts of trivialities. He rose to go. Pressing his hat against his swaying hip, he stood erect, looking now at her and now at me, as if waiting to see what she would do. I remember that minute, precisely because it was in my power not to invite him. I need not have invited him, and then nothing would have happened. But I cast a glance first at him, then at her. ‘Don’t flatter yourself that I can be jealous of you,’ I thought, addressing myself to her mentally, and I invited the other to bring his violin that very evening, and to play with my wife. She raised her eyes toward me with astonishment, and her face turned purple, as if she were seized with a sudden fear. She began to excuse herself, saying that she did not play well enough. This refusal only excited me the more. I remember the strange feeling with which I looked at his neck, his white neck, in contrast with his black hair, separated by a parting, when, with his skipping gait, like that of a

bird, he left my house. I could not help confessing to myself that this man's presence caused me suffering. 'It is in my power,' thought I, 'to so arrange things that I shall never see him again. But can it be that I, I, fear him? No, I do not fear him. It would be too humiliating!'

"And there in the hall, knowing that my wife heard me, I insisted that he should come that very evening with his violin. He promised me, and went away. In the evening he arrived with his violin, and they played together. But for a long time things did not go well; we had not the necessary music, and that which we had my wife could not play at sight. I amused myself with their difficulties. I aided them, I made proposals, and they finally executed a few pieces — songs without words, and a little sonata by Mozart. He played in a marvellous manner. He had what is called the energetic and tender tone. As for difficulties, there were none for him. Scarcely had he begun to play, when his face changed. He became serious, and much more sympathetic. He was, it is needless to say, much stronger than my wife. He helped her, he advised her simply and naturally, and at the same time played his game with courtesy. My wife seemed interested only in the music. She was very simple and agreeable. Throughout the evening I feigned, not only for the others, but for myself, an interest solely in the music. Really, I was continually tortured by jealousy. From the first minute that the musician's eyes met those of my wife, I saw that he did not regard her as a disagreeable woman, with whom on occasion it would be unpleasant to enter into intimate relations.

"If I had been pure, I should not have dreamed of what he might think of her. But I looked at women, and that is why I understood him and was in torture. I was in torture, especially because I was sure that toward me she had no other feeling than of perpetual irritation, sometimes interrupted by the customary sensuality, and that this man — thanks to his external elegance and his novelty, and, above all, thanks to his unquestionably remarkable talent, thanks to the attraction exercised under the influence of music, thanks to the impression that music produces upon nervous natures — this man would not only please, but would inevitably, and without difficulty, subjugate and conquer her, and do with her as he liked.

"I could not help seeing this. I could not help suffering, or keep from being jealous. And I was jealous, and I suffered, and in spite of that, and perhaps even because of that, an unknown force, in spite of my will, impelled me to be not only polite, but more than polite, amiable. I cannot say whether I did it for my wife, or to show him that I did not fear HIM, or to deceive myself; but from my first relations with him I could not be at my ease. I was obliged, that I might not give way to a desire to kill him immediately, to 'caress' him. I filled his glass at the table, I grew enthusiastic over his playing, I talked to him with an extremely amiable smile, and I invited him to dinner the following Sunday, and to play again. I told him that I would invite some of my acquaintances, lovers of his art, to hear him.

"Two or three days later I was entering my house, in conversation with a friend, when in the hall I suddenly felt something as heavy as a stone weighing on my heart, and I could not account for it. And it was this, it was this: in passing through the hall, I had noticed something which reminded me of *him*. Not until I reached my study did I realize what it was, and I returned to the hall to verify my conjecture. Yes, I was not

mistaken. It was his overcoat (everything that belonged to him, I, without realizing it, had observed with extraordinary attention). I questioned the servant. That was it. He had come. I passed near the parlour, through my children's study-room. Lise, my daughter, was sitting before a book, and the old nurse, with my youngest child, was beside the table, turning the cover of something or other. In the parlour I heard a slow *arpeggio*, and his voice, deadened, and a denial from her. She said: 'No, no! There is something else!' And it seemed to me that someone was purposely deadening the words by the aid of the piano.

"My God! How my heart leaped! What were my imaginations! When I remember the beast that lived in me at that moment, I am seized with fright. My heart was first compressed, then stopped, and then began to beat like a hammer. The principal feeling, as in every bad feeling, was pity for myself. 'Before the children, before the old nurse,' thought I, 'she dishonours me. I will go away. I can endure it no longer. God knows what I should do if. . . . But I must go in.'

The old nurse raised her eyes to mine, as if she understood, and advised me to keep a sharp watch. 'I must go in,' I said to myself, and, without knowing what I did, I opened the door. He was sitting at the piano and making *arpeggios* with his long, white, curved fingers. She was standing in the angle of the grand piano, before the open score. She saw or heard me first, and raised her eyes to mine. Was she stunned, was she pretending not to be frightened, or was she really not frightened at all? In any case, she did not tremble, she did not stir. She blushed, but only a little later.

"'How glad I am that you have come! We have not decided what we will play Sunday,' said she, in a tone that she would not have had if she had been alone with me.

"This tone, and the way in which she said 'we' in speaking of herself and of him, revolted me. I saluted him silently. He shook hands with me directly, with a smile that seemed to me full of mockery. He explained to me that he had brought some scores, in order to prepare for the Sunday concert, and that they were not in accord as to the piece to choose — whether difficult, classic things, notably a sonata by Beethoven, or lighter pieces. And as he spoke, he looked at me. It was all so natural, so simple, that there was absolutely nothing to be said against it. And at the same time I saw, I was sure, that it was false, that they were in a conspiracy to deceive me.

"One of the most torturing situations for the jealous (and in our social life everybody is jealous) are those social conditions which allow a very great and dangerous intimacy between a man and a woman under certain pretexts. One must make himself the laughing stock of everybody, if he desires to prevent associations in the ball-room, the intimacy of doctors with their patients, the familiarity of art occupations, and especially of music. In order that people may occupy themselves together with the noblest art, music, a certain intimacy is necessary, in which there is nothing blameworthy. Only a jealous fool of a husband can have anything to say against it. A husband should not have such thoughts, and especially should not thrust his nose into these affairs, or prevent them. And yet, everybody knows that precisely in these occupations, especially in music, many adulteries originate in our society.

“I had evidently embarrassed them, because for some time I was unable to say anything. I was like a bottle suddenly turned upside down, from which the water does not run because it is too full. I wanted to insult the man, and to drive him away, but I could do nothing of the kind. On the contrary, I felt that I was disturbing them, and that it was my fault. I made a pretence of approving everything, this time also, thanks to that strange feeling that forced me to treat him the more amiably in proportion as his presence was more painful to me. I said that I trusted to his taste, and I advised my wife to do the same. He remained just as long as it was necessary in order to efface the unpleasant impression of my abrupt entrance with a frightened face. He went away with an air of satisfaction at the conclusions arrived at. As for me, I was perfectly sure that, in comparison with that which preoccupied them, the question of music was indifferent to them. I accompanied him with especial courtesy to the hall (how can one help accompanying a man who has come to disturb your tranquillity and ruin the happiness of the entire family?), and I shook his white, soft hand with fervent amiability.

Chapter 22

“All that day I did not speak to my wife. I could not. Her proximity excited such hatred that I feared myself. At the table she asked me, in presence of the children, when I was to start upon a journey. I was to go the following week to an assembly of the Zemstvo, in a neighbouring locality. I named the date. She asked me if I would need anything for the journey. I did not answer. I sat silent at the table, and silently I retired to my study. In those last days she never entered my study, especially at that hour. Suddenly I heard her steps, her walk, and then a terribly base idea entered my head that, like the wife of Uri, she wished to conceal a fault already committed, and that it was for this reason that she came to see me at this unseasonable hour. ‘Is it possible,’ thought I, ‘that she is coming to see me?’ On hearing her step as it approached: ‘If it is to see me that she is coming, then I am right.’

“An inexpressible hatred invaded my soul. The steps drew nearer, and nearer, and nearer yet. Would she pass by and go on to the other room? No, the hinges creaked, and at the door her tall, graceful, languid figure appeared. In her face, in her eyes, a timidity, an insinuating expression, which she tried to hide, but which I saw, and of which I understood the meaning. I came near suffocating, such were my efforts to hold my breath, and, continuing to look at her, I took my cigarette, and lighted it.

“‘What does this mean? One comes to talk with you, and you go to smoking.’

“And she sat down beside me on the sofa, resting against my shoulder. I recoiled, that I might not touch her.

“‘I see that you are displeased with what I wish to play on Sunday,’ said she.

“‘I am not at all displeased,’ said I.

“‘Can I not see?’

“‘Well, I congratulate you on your clairvoyance. Only to you every baseness is agreeable, and I abhor it.’

“‘If you are going to swear like a trooper, I am going away.’

“Then go away. Only know that, if the honour of the family is nothing to you, to me it is dear. As for you, the devil take you!”

“What! What is the matter?”

“Go away, in the name of God.”

“But she did not go away. Was she pretending not to understand, or did she really not understand what I meant? But she was offended and became angry.

“‘You have become absolutely impossible,’ she began, or some such phrase as that regarding my character, trying, as usual, to give me as much pain as possible. ‘After what you have done to my sister (she referred to an incident with her sister, in which, beside myself, I had uttered brutalities; she knew that that tortured me, and tried to touch me in that tender spot) nothing will astonish me.’

“‘Yes, offended, humiliated, and dishonoured, and after that to hold me still responsible,’ thought I, and suddenly a rage, such a hatred invaded me as I do not remember to have ever felt before. For the first time I desired to express this hatred physically. I leaped upon her, but at the same moment I understood my condition, and I asked myself whether it would be well for me to abandon myself to my fury. And I answered myself that it would be well, that it would frighten her, and, instead of resisting, I lashed and spurred myself on, and was glad to feel my anger boiling more and more fiercely.

“‘Go away, or I will kill you!’ I cried, purposely, with a frightful voice, and I grasped her by the arm. She did not go away. Then I twisted her arm, and pushed her away violently.

“‘What is the matter with you? Come to your senses!’ she shrieked.

“‘Go away,’ roared I, louder than ever, rolling my eyes wildly. ‘It takes you to put me in such a fury. I do not answer for myself! Go away!’

“In abandoning myself to my anger, I became steeped in it, and I wanted to commit some violent act to show the force of my fury. I felt a terrible desire to beat her, to kill her, but I realized that that could not be, and I restrained myself. I drew back from her, rushed to the table, grasped the paper-weight, and threw it on the floor by her side. I took care to aim a little to one side, and, before she disappeared (I did it so that she could see it), I grasped a candlestick, which I also hurled, and then took down the barometer, continuing to shout:

“‘Go away! I do not answer for myself!’

“She disappeared, and I immediately ceased my demonstrations. An hour later the old servant came to me and said that my wife was in a fit of hysterics. I went to see her. She sobbed and laughed, incapable of expressing anything, her whole body in a tremble. She was not shamming, she was really sick. We sent for the doctor, and all night long I cared for her. Toward daylight she grew calmer, and we became reconciled under the influence of that feeling which we called ‘love.’ The next morning, when, after the reconciliation, I confessed to her that I was jealous of Troukhatchevsky, she was not at all embarrassed, and began to laugh in the most natural way, so strange did the possibility of being led astray by such a man appear to her.

“‘With such a man can an honest woman entertain any feeling beyond the pleasure of enjoying music with him? But if you like, I am ready to never see him again, even on Sunday, although everybody has been invited. Write him that I am indisposed, and that will end the matter. Only one thing annoys me — that anyone could have thought him dangerous. I am too proud not to detest such thoughts.’

“And she did not lie. She believed what she said. She hoped by her words to provoke in herself a contempt for him, and thereby to defend herself. But she did not succeed. Everything was directed against her, especially that abominable music. So ended the quarrel, and on Sunday our guests came, and Troukhatchevsky and my wife again played together.

Chapter 23

“I think that it is superfluous to say that I was very vain. If one has no vanity in this life of ours, there is no sufficient reason for living. So for that Sunday I had busied myself in tastefully arranging things for the dinner and the musical *soirée*. I had purchased myself numerous things for the dinner, and had chosen the guests. Toward six o'clock they arrived, and after them Troukhatchevsky, in his dress-coat, with diamond shirt-studs, in bad taste. He bore himself with ease. To all questions he responded promptly, with a smile of contentment and understanding, and that peculiar expression which was intended to mean: ‘All that you may do and say will be exactly what I expected.’ Everything about him that was not correct I now noticed with especial pleasure, for it all tended to tranquillize me, and prove to me that to my wife he stood in such a degree of inferiority that, as she had told me, she could not stoop to his level. Less because of my wife's assurances than because of the atrocious sufferings which I felt in jealousy, I no longer allowed myself to be jealous.

“In spite of that, I was not at ease with the musician or with her during dinner-time and the time that elapsed before the beginning of the music. Involuntarily I followed each of their gestures and looks. The dinner, like all dinners, was tiresome and conventional. Not long afterward the music began. He went to get his violin; my wife advanced to the piano, and rummaged among the scores. Oh, how well I remember all the details of that evening! I remember how he brought the violin, how he opened the box, took off the serge embroidered by a lady's hand, and began to tune the instrument. I can still see my wife sit down, with a false air of indifference, under which it was plain that she hid a great timidity, a timidity that was especially due to her comparative lack of musical knowledge. She sat down with that false air in front of the piano, and then began the usual preliminaries — the *pizzicati* of the violin and the arrangement of the scores. I remember then how they looked at each other, and cast a glance at their auditors who were taking their seats. They said a few words to each other, and the music began. They played Beethoven's ‘Kreutzer Sonata.’ Do you know the first *presto*? Do you know it? Ah!” . . .

Posdnicheff heaved a sigh, and was silent for a long time.

“A terrible thing is that sonata, especially the *presto*! And a terrible thing is music in general. What is it? Why does it do what it does? They say that music stirs the soul. Stupidity! A lie! It acts, it acts frightfully (I speak for myself), but not in an ennobling way. It acts neither in an ennobling nor a debasing way, but in an irritating way.

How shall I say it? Music makes me forget my real situation. It transports me into a state which is not my own. Under the influence of music I really seem to feel what I do not feel, to understand what I do not understand, to have powers which I cannot have. Music seems to me to act like yawning or laughter; I have no desire to sleep, but I yawn when I see others yawn; with no reason to laugh, I laugh when I hear others laugh. And music transports me immediately into the condition of soul in which he who wrote the music found himself at that time. I become confounded with his soul, and with him I pass from one condition to another. But why that? I know nothing about it? But he who wrote Beethoven's 'Kreutzer Sonata' knew well why he found himself in a certain condition. That condition led him to certain actions, and for that reason to him had a meaning, but to me none, none whatever. And that is why music provokes an excitement which it does not bring to a conclusion. For instance, a military march is played; the soldier passes to the sound of this march, and the music is finished. A dance is played; I have finished dancing, and the music is finished. A mass is sung; I receive the sacrament, and again the music is finished. But any other music provokes an excitement, and this excitement is not accompanied by the thing that needs properly to be done, and that is why music is so dangerous, and sometimes acts so frightfully.

"In China music is under the control of the State, and that is the way it ought to be. Is it admissible that the first comer should hypnotize one or more persons, and then do with them as he likes? And especially that the hypnotizer should be the first immoral individual who happens to come along? It is a frightful power in the hands of any one, no matter whom. For instance, should they be allowed to play this 'Kreutzer Sonata,' the first *presto* — and there are many like it — in parlours, among ladies wearing low necked dresses, or in concerts, then finish the piece, receive the applause, and then begin another piece? These things should be played under certain circumstances, only in cases where it is necessary to incite certain actions corresponding to the music. But to incite an energy of feeling which corresponds to neither the time nor the place, and is expended in nothing, cannot fail to act dangerously. On me in particular this piece acted in a frightful manner. One would have said that new sentiments, new virtualities, of which I was formerly ignorant, had developed in me. 'Ah, yes, that's it! Not at all as I lived and thought before! This is the right way to live!'

"Thus I spoke to my soul as I listened to that music. What was this new thing that I thus learned? That I did not realize, but the consciousness of this indefinite state filled me with joy. In that state there was no room for jealousy. The same faces, and among them *he* and my wife, I saw in a different light. This music transported me into an unknown world, where there was no room for jealousy. Jealousy and the feelings that provoke it seemed to me trivialities, nor worth thinking of.

"After the *presto* followed the *andante*, not very new, with commonplace variations, and the feeble *finale*. Then they played more, at the request of the guests — first an elegy by Ernst, and then various other pieces. They were all very well, but did not produce upon me a tenth part of the impression that the opening piece did. I felt light and gay throughout the evening. As for my wife, never had I seen her as she was that night. Those brilliant eyes, that severity and majestic expression while she

was playing, and then that utter languor, that weak, pitiable, and happy smile after she had finished — I saw them all and attached no importance to them, believing that she felt as I did, that to her, as to me, new sentiments had been revealed, as through a fog. During almost the whole evening I was not jealous.

“Two days later I was to start for the assembly of the Zemstvo, and for that reason, on taking leave of me and carrying all his scores with him, Troukhatchevsky asked me when I should return. I inferred from that that he believed it impossible to come to my house during my absence, and that was agreeable to me. Now I was not to return before his departure from the city. So we bade each other a definite farewell. For the first time I shook his hand with pleasure, and thanked him for the satisfaction that he had given me. He likewise took leave of my wife, and their parting seemed to me very natural and proper. All went marvellously. My wife and I retired, well satisfied with the evening. We talked of our impressions in a general way, and we were nearer together and more friendly than we had been for a long time.

Chapter 24

“Two days later I started for the assembly, having bid farewell to my wife in an excellent and tranquil state of mind. In the district there was always much to be done. It was a world and a life apart. During two days I spent ten hours at the sessions. The evening of the second day, on returning to my district lodgings, I found a letter from my wife, telling me of the children, of their uncle, of the servants, and, among other things, as if it were perfectly natural, that Troukhatchevsky had been at the house, and had brought her the promised scores. He had also proposed that they play again, but she had refused.

“For my part, I did not remember at all that he had promised any score. It had seemed to me on Sunday evening that he took a definite leave, and for this reason the news gave me a disagreeable surprise. I read the letter again. There was something tender and timid about it. It produced an extremely painful impression upon me. My heart swelled, and the mad beast of jealousy began to roar in his lair, and seemed to want to leap upon his prey. But I was afraid of this beast, and I imposed silence upon it.

“What an abominable sentiment is jealousy! ‘What could be more natural than what she has written?’ said I to myself. I went to bed, thinking myself tranquil again. I thought of the business that remained to be done, and I went to sleep without thinking of her.

“During these assemblies of the Zemstvo I always slept badly in my strange quarters. That night I went to sleep directly, but, as sometimes happens, a sort of sudden shock awoke me. I thought immediately of her, of my physical love for her, of Troukhatchevsky, and that between them everything had happened. And a feeling of rage compressed my heart, and I tried to quiet myself.

“‘How stupid!’ said I to myself; ‘there is no reason, none at all. And why humiliate ourselves, herself and myself, and especially myself, by supposing such horrors? This mercenary violinist, known as a bad man — shall I think of him in connection with a respectable woman, the mother of a family, *my* wife? How silly!’ But on the other hand, I said to myself: ‘Why should it not happen?’

“Why? Was it not the same simple and intelligible feeling in the name of which I married, in the name of which I was living with her, the only thing I wanted of her, and that which, consequently, others desired, this musician among the rest? He was not married, was in good health (I remember how his teeth ground the gristle of the cutlets, and how eagerly he emptied the glass of wine with his red lips), was careful of his person, well fed, and not only without principles, but evidently with the principle that one should take advantage of the pleasure that offers itself. There was a bond between them, music — the most refined form of sensual voluptuousness. What was there to restrain them? Nothing. Everything, on the contrary, attracted them. And she, she had been and had remained a mystery. I did not know her. I knew her only as an animal, and an animal nothing can or should restrain. And now I remember their faces on Sunday evening, when, after the ‘Kreutzer Sonata,’ they played a passionate piece, written I know not by whom, but a piece passionate to the point of obscenity.

“‘How could I have gone away?’ said I to myself, as I recalled their faces. ‘Was it not clear that between them everything was done that evening? Was it not clear that between them not only there were no more obstacles, but that both — especially she — felt a certain shame after what had happened at the piano? How weakly, pitifully, happily she smiled, as she wiped the perspiration from her reddened face! They already avoided each other’s eyes, and only at the supper, when she poured some water for him, did they look at each other and smile imperceptibly.’



“Now I remember with fright that look and that scarcely perceptible smile. ‘Yes, everything has happened,’ a voice said to me, and directly another said the opposite. ‘Are you mad? It is impossible!’ said the second voice.

“It was too painful to me to remain thus stretched in the darkness. I struck a match, and the little yellow-papered room frightened me. I lighted a cigarette, and, as always happens, when one turns in a circle of inextricable contradiction, I began to smoke. I smoked cigarette after cigarette to dull my senses, that I might not see my contradictions. All night I did not sleep, and at five o’clock, when it was not yet light, I decided that I could stand this strain no longer, and that I would leave directly. There was a train at eight o’clock. I awakened the keeper who was acting as my servant, and sent him to look for horses. To the assembly of Zemstvo I sent a message that I was called back to Moscow by pressing business, and that I begged them to substitute for me a member of the Committee. At eight o’clock I got into a *tarantass*¹ and started off.

Chapter 25

“I had to go twenty-five versts² by carriage and eight hours by train. By carriage it was a very pleasant journey. The coolness of autumn was accompanied by a brilliant sun. You know the weather when the wheels imprint themselves upon the dirty road. The road was level, and the light strong, and the air strengthening. The *tarantass* was comfortable. As I looked at the horses, the fields, and the people whom we passed, I forgot where I was going. Sometimes it seemed to me that I was travelling without an object — simply promenading — and that I should go on thus to the end of the world. And I was happy when I so forgot myself. But when I remembered where I was going, I said to myself: ‘I shall see later. Don’t think about it.’

“When half way, an incident happened to distract me still further. The *tarantass*, though new, broke down, and had to be repaired. The delays in looking for a *tél-ègue*,³ the repairs, the payment, the tea in the inn, the conversation with the *dvor-nik*,⁴ all served to amuse me. Toward nightfall all was ready, and I started off again. By night the journey was still pleasanter than by day. The moon in its first quarter, a slight frost, the road still in good condition, the horses, the sprightly coachman, all served to put me in good spirits. I scarcely thought of what awaited me, and was gay perhaps because of the very thing that awaited me, and because I was about to say farewell to the joys of life.

“But this tranquil state, the power of conquering my preoccupation, all ended with the carriage drive. Scarcely had I entered the cars, when the other thing began. Those eight hours on the rail were so terrible to me that I shall never forget them in my life. Was it because on entering the car I had a vivid imagination of having already arrived, or because the railway acts upon people in such an exciting fashion? At any rate, after boarding the train I could no longer control my imagination, which incessantly, with extraordinary vivacity, drew pictures before my eyes, each more cynical than its predecessor, which kindled my jealousy. And always the same things about what was happening at home during my absence. I burned with indignation, with rage, and with a peculiar feeling which steeped me in humiliation, as I contem-

¹ [A four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage on a long longitudinal frame, reducing road jolting on long-distance travel. It was widely used in Russia in the first half of the 19th century.]

² [Obsolete Russian unit of length, equivalent to 1.0668 kilometres or 3,500 feet.]

³ [A four-wheeled horse-drawn carriage but without springs.]

⁴ [Russian concierge, who takes care of the pavement and yard in front of a house.]

plated these pictures. And I could not tear myself out of this condition. I could not help looking at them, I could not efface them, I could not keep from evoking them.

“The more I looked at these imaginary pictures, the more I believed in their reality, forgetting that they had no serious foundation. The vivacity of these images seemed to prove to me that my imaginations were a reality. One would have said that a demon, against my will, was inventing and breathing into me the most terrible fictions. A conversation which dated a long time back, with the brother of Troukhatchevsky, I remembered at that moment, in a sort of ecstasy, and it tore my heart as I connected it with the musician and my wife. Yes, it was very long ago. The brother of Troukhatchevsky, answering my questions as to whether he frequented disreputable houses, said that a respectable man does not go where he may contract a disease, in a low and unclean spot, when one can find an honest woman. And here he, his brother, the musician, had found the honest woman. ‘It is true that she is no longer in her early youth. She has lost a tooth on one side, and her face is slightly bloated,’ thought I for Troukhatchevsky. ‘But what is to be done? One must profit by what one has.’

“‘Yes, he is bound to take her for his mistress,’ said I to myself again; ‘and besides, she is not dangerous.’

“‘No, it is not possible’ I rejoined in fright. ‘Nothing, nothing of the kind has happened, and there is no reason to suppose there has. Did she not tell me that the very idea that I could be jealous of her because of him was humiliating to her?’ ‘Yes, but she lied,’ I cried, and all began over again.

“There were only two travellers in my compartment: an old woman with her husband, neither of them very talkative; and even they got out at one of the stations, leaving me all alone. I was like a beast in a cage. Now I jumped up and approached the window, now I began to walk back and forth, staggering as if I hoped to make the train go faster by my efforts, and the car with its seats and its windows trembled continually, as ours does now.”

And Posdnicheff rose abruptly, took a few steps, and sat down again.

“Oh, I am afraid, I am afraid of railway carriages. Fear seizes me. I sat down again, and I said to myself: ‘I must think of something else. For instance, of the inn keeper at whose house I took tea.’ And then, in my imagination arose the *dvornik*, with his long beard, and his grandson, a little fellow of the same age as my little Basile. My little Basile! My little Basile! He will see the musician kiss his mother! What thoughts will pass through his poor soul! But what does that matter to her! She loves.

“And again it all began, the circle of the same thoughts. I suffered so much that at last I did not know what to do with myself, and an idea passed through my head that pleased me much — to get out upon the rails, throw myself under the cars, and thus finish everything. One thing prevented me from doing so. It was pity! It was pity for myself, evoking at the same time a hatred for her, for him, but not so much for him. Toward him I felt a strange sentiment of my humiliation and his victory, but toward her a terrible hatred.

“‘But I cannot kill myself and leave her free. She must suffer, she must understand at least that I have suffered,’ said I to myself.

“At a station I saw people drinking at the lunch counter, and directly I went to swallow a glass of vodki. Beside me stood a Jew, drinking also. He began to talk to me, and I, in order not to be left alone in my compartment, went with him into his third-class, dirty, full of smoke, and covered with peelings and sunflower seeds. There I sat down beside the Jew, and, as it seemed, he told many anecdotes.

“First I listened to him, but I did not understand what he said. He noticed it, and exacted my attention to his person. Then I rose and entered my own compartment.

“‘I must consider,’ said I to myself, ‘whether what I think is true, whether there is any reason to torment myself.’ I sat down, wishing to reflect quietly; but directly, instead of the peaceful reflections, the same thing began again. Instead of the reasoning, the pictures.

“‘How many times have I tormented myself in this way,’ I thought (I recalled previous and similar fits of jealousy), ‘and then seen it end in nothing at all? It is the same now. Perhaps, yes, surely, I shall find her quietly sleeping. She will awaken, she will be glad, and in her words and looks I shall see that nothing has happened, that all this is vain. Ah, if it would only so turn out!’ ‘But no, that has happened too often! Now the end has come,’ a voice said to me.

“And again it all began. Ah, what torture! It is not to a hospital filled with syphilitic patients that I would take a young man to deprive him of the desire for women, but into my soul, to show him the demon which tore it. The frightful part was that I recognized in myself an indisputable right to the body of my wife, as if her body were entirely mine. And at the same time I felt that I could not possess this body, that it was not mine, that she could do with it as she liked, and that she liked to do with it as I did not like. And I was powerless against him and against her. He, like the Vanka of the song,¹ would sing, before mounting the gallows, how he would kiss her sweet lips, etc., and he would even have the best of it before death. With her it was still worse. If she *had not done it*, she had the desire, she wished to do it, and I knew that she did. That was worse yet. It would be better if she had already done it, to relieve me of my uncertainty.

“In short, I could not say what I desired. I desired that she might not want what she *must* want. It was complete madness.

Chapter 26

“At the station before the last, when the conductor came to take the tickets, I took my baggage and went out on the car platform, and the consciousness that the climax was near at hand only added to my agitation. I was cold, my jaw trembled so that my teeth chattered. Mechanically I left the station with the crowd, I took a *tchik*, and I started. I looked at the few people passing in the streets and at the *dvorniks*. I read the signs, without thinking of anything. After going half a *verst* my feet began to feel cold, and I remembered that in the car I had taken off my woollen socks, and had

¹ [Ах ты, Ванька, Ах, You Vanka. Cf. one of three Russian folk songs, by Sergei Rachmaninoff in 1926.]

put them in my travelling bag. Where had I put the bag? Was it with me? Yes, and the basket?

“I bethought myself that I had totally forgotten my baggage. I took out my check, and then decided it was not worthwhile to return. I continued on my way. In spite of all my efforts to remember, I cannot at this moment make out why I was in such a hurry. I know only that I was conscious that a serious and menacing event was approaching in my life. It was a case of real auto-suggestion. Was it so serious because I thought it so? Or had I a presentiment? I do not know. Perhaps, too, after what has happened, all previous events have taken on a lugubrious tint in my memory.

“I arrived at the steps. It was an hour past midnight. A few *isvotchiks* were before the door, awaiting customers, attracted by the lighted windows (the lighted windows were those of our parlour and reception room). Without trying to account for this late illumination, I went up the steps, always with the same expectation of something terrible, and I rang. The servant, a good, industrious, and very stupid being, named Gregor, opened the door. The first thing that leaped to my eyes in the hall, on the hat-stand, among other garments, was an overcoat. I ought to have been astonished, but I was not astonished. I expected it. ‘That’s it!’ I said to myself.

“When I had asked Gregor who was there, and he had named Troukhatchevsky, I inquired whether there were other visitors. He answered: ‘Nobody.’ I remember the air with which he said that, with a tone that was intended to give me pleasure, and dissipate my doubts. ‘That’s it! that’s it!’ I had the air of saying to myself. ‘And the children?’

“‘Thank God, they are very well. They went to sleep long ago.’

“I scarcely breathed, and I could not keep my jaw from trembling. Then it was not as I thought. I had often before returned home with the thought that a misfortune had awaited me, but had been mistaken, and everything was going on as usual. But now things were not going on as usual. All that I had imagined, all that I believed to be chimeras, all really existed. Here was the truth.

“I was on the point of sobbing, but straightway the demon whispered in my ear: ‘Weep and be sentimental, and they will separate quietly, and there will be no proofs, and all your life you will doubt and suffer.’ And pity for myself vanished, and there remained only the bestial need of some adroit, cunning, and energetic action. I became a beast, an intelligent beast.

“‘No, no,’ said I to Gregor, who was about to announce my arrival. ‘Do this, take a carriage, and go at once for my baggage. Here is the check. Start.’

“He went along the hall to get his overcoat. Fearing lest he might frighten them, I accompanied him to his little room, and waited for him to put on his things. In the dining-room could be heard the sound of conversation and the rattling of knives and plates. They were eating. They had not heard the ring. ‘Now if they only do not go out,’ I thought.

“Gregor put on his fur-collared coat and went out. I closed the door after him. I felt anxious when I was alone, thinking that directly I should have to act. How? I did not yet know. I knew only that all was ended, that there could be no doubt of *his* inno-

cence, and that in an instant my relations with her were going to be terminated. Before, I had still doubts. I said to myself: 'Perhaps this is not true. Perhaps I am mistaken.' Now all doubt had disappeared. All was decided irrevocably. Secretly, all alone with him, at night! It is a violation of all duties! Or, worse yet, she may make a show of that audacity, of that insolence in crime, which, by its excess, tends to prove innocence. All is clear. No doubt. I feared but one thing — that they might run in different directions, that they might invent some new lie, and thus deprive me of material proof, and of the sorrowful joy of punishing, yes, of executing them.

"And to surprise them more quickly, I started on tiptoe for the dining-room, not through the parlour, but through the hall and the children's rooms. In the first room slept the little boy. In the second, the old nurse moved in her bed, and seemed on the point of waking, and I wondered what she would think when she knew all. And pity for myself gave me such a pang that I could not keep the tears back. Not to wake the children, I ran lightly through the hall into my study. I dropped upon the sofa, and sobbed. 'I, an honest man, I, the son of my parents, who all my life long have dreamed of family happiness, I who have never betrayed! . . . And here my five children, and she embracing a musician because he has red lips! No, she is not a woman! She is a bitch, a dirty bitch! Beside the chamber of the children, whom she had pretended to love all her life! And then to think of what she wrote me! And how do I know? Perhaps it has always been thus. Perhaps all these children, supposed to be mine, are the children of my servants. And if I had arrived to-morrow, she would have come to meet me with her *coiffure*, with her *corsage*, her indolent and graceful movements (and I see her attractive and ignoble features), and this jealous animal would have remained forever in my heart, tearing it. What will the old nurse say? And Gregor? And the poor little Lise? She already understands things. And this impudence, this falsehood, this bestial sensuality, that I know so well,' I said to myself.

"I tried to rise. I could not. My heart was beating so violently that I could not hold myself upon my legs. 'Yes, I shall die of a rush of blood. She will kill me. That is what she wants. What is it to her to kill? But that would be too agreeable to him, and I will not allow him to have this pleasure. Yes, here I am, and there they are. They are laughing, they. . . . Yes, in spite of the fact that she is no longer in her early youth, he has not disdained her. At any rate, she is by no means ugly, and above all, not dangerous to his dear health, to him. Why did I not stifle her then?' said I to myself, as I remembered that other scene of the previous week, when I drove her from my study, and broke the furniture.

"And I recalled the state in which I was then. Not only did I recall it, but I again entered into the same bestial state. And suddenly there came to me a desire to act, and all reasoning, except such as was necessary to action, vanished from my brain, and I was in the condition of a beast, and of a man under the influence of physical excitement pending a danger, who acts imperturbably, without haste, and yet without losing a minute, pursuing a definite object.

"The first thing that I did was to take off my boots, and now, having only stockings on, I advanced toward the wall, over the sofa, where firearms and daggers were hanging, and I took down a curved Damascus blade, which I had never used, and which

was very sharp. I took it from its sheath. I remember that the sheath fell upon the sofa, and that I said to myself: 'I must look for it later; it must not be lost.'

"Then I took off my overcoat, which I had kept on all the time, and with wolf-like tread started for *the room*. I do not remember how I proceeded, whether I ran or went slowly, through what chambers I passed, how I approached the dining-room, how I opened the door, how I entered. I remember nothing about it.

Chapter 27

"I Remember only the expression of their faces when I opened the door. I remember that, because it awakened in me a feeling of sorrowful joy. It was an expression of terror, such as I desired. Never shall I forget that desperate and sudden fright that appeared on their faces when they saw me. He, I believe, was at the table, and, when he saw or heard me, he started, jumped to his feet, and retreated to the sideboard. Fear was the only sentiment that could be read with certainty in his face. In hers, too, fear was to be read, but accompanied by other impressions. And yet, if her face had expressed only fear, perhaps that which happened would not have happened. But in the expression of her face there was at the first moment — at least, I thought I saw it — a feeling of *ennui*, of discontent, at this disturbance of her love and happiness. One would have said that her sole desire was not to be disturbed *in the moment of her happiness*. But these expressions appeared upon their faces only for a moment. Terror almost immediately gave place to interrogation. Would they lie or not? If yes, they must begin. If not, something else was going to happen. But what?

"He gave her a questioning glance. On her face the expression of anguish and *ennui* changed, it seemed to me, when she looked at him, into an expression of anxiety for *him*. For a moment I stood in the doorway, holding the dagger hidden behind my back. Suddenly he smiled, and in a voice that was indifferent almost to the point of ridicule, he said:

"'We were having some music.'

"'I did not expect . . . ,' she began at the same time, chiming in with the tone of the other.

"But neither he nor she finished their remarks. The same rage that I had felt the previous week took possession of me. I felt the need of giving free course to my violence and 'the joy of wrath.'

"No, they did not finish. That other thing was going to begin, of which he was afraid, and was going to annihilate what they wanted to say. I threw myself upon her, still hiding the dagger, that he might not prevent me from striking where I desired, in her bosom, under the breast. At that moment he saw . . . and, what I did not expect on his part, he quickly seized my hand, and cried:

"'Come to your senses! What are you doing? Help! Help!'

"I tore my hands from his grasp, and leaped upon him. I must have been very terrible, for he turned as white as a sheet, to his lips. His eyes scintillated singularly, and — again what I did not expect of him — he scrambled under the piano, toward the

other room. I tried to follow him, but a very heavy weight fell upon my left arm. It was she.

“I made an effort to clear myself. She clung more heavily than ever, refusing to let go. This unexpected obstacle, this burden, and this repugnant touch only irritated me the more. I perceived that I was completely mad, that I must be frightful, and I was glad of it. With a sudden impulse, and with all my strength, I dealt her, with my left elbow, a blow squarely in the face.

“She uttered a cry and let go my arm. I wanted to follow the other, but I felt that it would be ridiculous to pursue in my stockings the lover of my wife, and I did not wish to be grotesque, I wished to be terrible. In spite of my extreme rage, I was all the time conscious of the impression that I was making upon others, and even this impression partially guided me.

“I turned toward her. She had fallen on the long easy chair, and, covering her face at the spot where I had struck her, she looked at me. Her features exhibited fear and hatred toward me, her enemy, such as the rat exhibits when one lifts the rat-trap. At least, I saw nothing in her but that fear and hatred, the fear and hatred which love for another had provoked. Perhaps I still should have restrained myself, and should not have gone to the last extremity, if she had maintained silence. But suddenly she began to speak; she grasped my hand that held the dagger.

“‘Come to your senses! What are you doing? What is the matter with you? Nothing has happened, nothing, nothing! I swear it to you!’

“I might have delayed longer, but these last words, from which I inferred the contrary of what they affirmed — that is, that *everything* had happened — these words called for a reply. And the reply must correspond to the condition into which I had lashed myself, and which was increasing and must continue to increase. Rage has its laws.

“‘Do not lie, wretch. Do not lie!’ I roared.

“With my left hand I seized her hands. She disengaged herself. Then, without dropping my dagger, I seized her by the throat, forced her to the floor, and began to strangle her. With her two hands she clutched mine, tearing them from her throat, stifling. Then I struck her a blow with the dagger, in the left side, between the lower ribs.

“When people say that they do not remember what they do in a fit of fury, they talk nonsense. It is false. I remember everything. I did not lose my consciousness for a single moment. The more I lashed myself to fury, the clearer my mind became, and I could not help seeing what I did. I cannot say that I knew in advance what I would do, but at the moment when I acted, and it seems to me even a little before, I knew what I was doing, as if to make it possible to repent, and to be able to say later that I could have stopped.

“I knew that I struck the blow between the ribs, and that the dagger entered.

“At the second when I did it, I knew that I was performing a horrible act, such as I had never performed — an act that would have frightful consequences. My thought was as quick as lightning, and the deed followed immediately. The act, to my inner

sense, had an extraordinary clearness. I perceived the resistance of the corset and then something else, and then the sinking of the knife into a soft substance. She clutched at the dagger with her hands, and cut herself with it, but could not restrain the blow.

“Long afterward, in prison when the moral revolution had been effected within me, I thought of that minute, I remembered it as far as I could, and I co-ordinated all the sudden changes. I remembered the terrible consciousness which I felt — that I was killing a wife, *my* wife.

“I well remember the horror of that consciousness and I know vaguely that, having plunged in the dagger, I drew it out again immediately, wishing to repair and arrest my action. She straightened up and cried:

“‘Nurse, he has killed me!’

“The old nurse, who had heard the noise, was standing in the doorway. I was still erect, waiting, and not believing myself in what had happened. But at that moment, from under her corset, the blood gushed forth. Then only did I understand that all reparation was impossible, and promptly I decided that it was not even necessary, that all had happened in accordance with my wish, and that I had fulfilled my desire. I waited until she fell, and until the nurse, exclaiming, ‘Oh, my God!’ ran to her; then only I threw away the dagger and went out of the room.

“‘I must not be agitated. I must be conscious of what I am doing,’ I said to myself, looking neither at her nor at the old nurse. The latter cried and called the maid. I passed through the hall, and, after having sent the maid, started for my study.

“‘What shall I do now?’ I asked myself.

“And immediately I understood what I should do. Directly after entering the study, I went straight to the wall, took down the revolver, and examined it attentively. It was loaded. Then I placed it on the table. Next I picked up the sheath of the dagger, which had dropped down behind the sofa, and then I sat down. I remained thus for a long time. I thought of nothing, I did not try to remember anything. I heard a stifled noise of steps, a movement of objects and of tapestries, then the arrival of a person, and then the arrival of another person. Then I saw Gregor bring into my room the baggage from the railway; as if any one needed it!

“‘Have you heard what has happened?’ I asked him. ‘Have you told the *dvornik* to inform the police?’

“He made no answer, and went out. I rose, closed the door, took the cigarettes and the matches, and began to smoke. I had not finished one cigarette, when a drowsy feeling came over me and sent me into a deep sleep. I surely slept two hours. I remember having dreamed that I was on good terms with her, that after a quarrel we were in the act of making up, that something prevented us, but that we were friends all the same.

“A knock at the door awoke me.

“‘It is the police,’ thought I, as I opened my eyes. ‘I have killed, I believe. But perhaps it is *she*; perhaps nothing has happened.’

“Another knock. I did not answer. I was solving the question: ‘Has it happened or not? Yes, it has happened.’

“I remembered the resistance of the corset, and then. . . . ‘Yes, it has happened. Yes, it has happened. Yes, now I must execute myself,’ said I to myself.

“I said it, but I knew well that I should not kill myself. Nevertheless, I rose and took the revolver, but, strange thing, I remembered that formerly I had very often had suicidal ideas, that that very night, on the cars, it had seemed to me easy, especially easy because I thought how it would stupefy her. Now I not only could not kill myself, but I could not even think of it.

“‘Why do it?’ I asked myself, without answering.

“Another knock at the door.

“‘Yes, but I must first know who is knocking. I have time enough.’

“I put the revolver back on the table, and hid it under my newspaper. I went to the door and drew back the bolt.

“It was my wife’s sister — a good and stupid widow.

“‘Basile, what does this mean?’ said she, and her tears, always ready, began to flow.

“‘What do you want?’ I asked roughly.

“I saw clearly that there was no necessity of being rough with her, but I could not speak in any other tone.

“‘Basile, she is dying. Ivan Fedorowitch says so.’

“Ivan Fedorowitch was the doctor, *her* doctor, her counsellor.

“‘Is he here?’ I inquired.

“And all my hatred of her arose anew.

“Well, what?

“‘Basile, go to her! Ah! how terrible it is!’ said she.

“‘Go to her?’ I asked myself; and immediately I made answer to myself that I ought to go, that probably that was the thing that is usually done when a husband like myself kills his wife, that it was absolutely necessary that I should go and see her.

“‘If that is the proper thing, I must go,’ I repeated to myself. ‘Yes, if it is necessary, I shall still have time,’ said I to myself, thinking of my intention of blowing my brains out.

“And I followed my sister-in-law. ‘Now there are going to be phrases and grimaces, but I will not yield,’ I declared to myself.

“‘Wait,’ said I to my sister-in-law, ‘it is stupid to be without boots. Let me at least put on my slippers.’

Chapter 28

“Strange thing! Again, when I had left my study, and was passing through the familiar rooms, again the hope came to me that nothing had happened. But the door of the drugs, iodoform and phenic acid, brought me back to a sense of reality.

“‘No, everything has happened.’

“In passing through the hall, beside the children’s chamber, I saw little Lise. She was looking at me, with eyes that were full of fear. I even thought that all the children were looking at me. As I approached the door of our sleeping-room, a servant opened it from within, and came out. The first thing that I noticed was *her* light grey dress upon a chair, all dark with blood. On our common bed she was stretched, with knees drawn up. She lay very high, upon pillows, with her chemise half open. Linen had been placed upon the wound. A heavy smell of iodoform filled the room. Before, and more than anything else, I was astonished at her face, which was swollen and bruised under the eyes and over a part of the nose. This was the result of the blow that I had struck her with my elbow, when she had tried to hold me back. Of beauty there was no trace left. I saw something hideous in her. I stopped upon the threshold.

“‘Approach, approach her,’ said her sister.

“‘Yes, probably she repents,’ thought I; ‘shall I forgive her? Yes, she is dying, I must forgive her,’ I added, trying to be generous.

“I approached the bedside. With difficulty she raised her eyes, one of which was swollen, and uttered these words haltingly:

“‘You have accomplished what you desired. You have killed me.’

“And in her face, through the physical sufferings, in spite of the approach of death, was expressed the same old hatred, so familiar to me.

“‘The children . . . I will not give them to you . . . all the same. . . . She (her sister) shall take them.’ . . .

“But of that which I considered essential, of her fault, of her treason, one would have said that she did not think it necessary to say even a word.

“‘Yes, revel in what you have done.’

“And she sobbed.

“At the door stood her sister with the children.

“‘Yes, see what you have done!’

“I cast a glance at the children, and then at her bruised and swollen face, and for the first time I forgot myself (my rights, my pride), and for the first time I saw in her a human being, a sister.

“And all that which a moment before had been so offensive to me now seemed to me so petty — all this jealousy — and, on the contrary, what I had done seemed to me so important that I felt like bending over, approaching my face to her hand, and saying:

“‘Forgive me!’

“But I did not dare. She was silent, with eyelids lowered, evidently having no strength to speak further. Then her deformed face began to tremble and shrivel, and she feebly pushed me back.

“‘Why has all this happened? Why?’

“‘Forgive me,’ said I.

“‘Yes, if you had not killed me,’ she cried suddenly, and her eyes shone feverishly. ‘Forgiveness — that is nothing. . . . If I only do not die! Ah, you have accomplished what you desired! I hate you!’

“Then she grew delirious. She was frightened, and cried:

“‘Fire, I do not fear . . . but strike them all . . . He has gone. . . . He has gone.’ . . .

“The delirium continued. She no longer recognized the children, not even little Lise, who had approached. Toward noon she died. As for me, I was arrested before her death, at eight o’clock in the morning. They took me to the police station, and then to prison, and there, during eleven months, awaiting the verdict, I reflected upon myself, and upon my past, and I understood it. Yes, I began to understand from the third day. The third day they took me to the house.” . . .

Posdnicheff seemed to wish to add something, but, no longer having the strength to repress his sobs, he stopped. After a few minutes, having recovered his calmness, he resumed:

“I began to understand only when I saw her in the coffin.” . . .

He uttered a sob, and then immediately continued, with haste:

“Then only, when I saw her dead face, did I understand all that I had done. I understood that it was I, I, who had killed her. I understood that I was the cause of the fact that she, who had been a moving, living, palpitating being, had now become motionless and cold, and that there was no way of repairing this thing. He who has not lived through that cannot understand it.”

We remained silent a long time. Posdnicheff sobbed and trembled before me. His face had become delicate and long, and his mouth had grown larger.

“Yes,” said he suddenly, “if I had known what I now know, I should never have married her, never, not for anything.”

Again we remained silent for a long time.

“Yes, that is what I have done, that is my experience, We must understand the real meaning of the words of the Gospel¹ ‘that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery’; and these words relate to the wife, to the sister, and not only to the wife of another, but especially to one’s own wife.”

¹ Matthew v, 28

Lesson of the Sonata by the Author.

I HAVE RECEIVED, AND STILL CONTINUE TO RECEIVE, numbers of letters from persons who are perfect strangers to me, asking me to state in plain and simple language my own views on the subject handled in the story entitled *The Kreutzer Sonata*. With this request I shall now endeavour to comply.

My views on the question may be succinctly stated as follows: Without entering into details, it will be generally admitted that I am accurate in saying that many people condone in young men a course of conduct with regard to the other sex which is incompatible with strict morality, and that this dissoluteness is pardoned generally. Both parents and the government, in consequence of this view, may be said to wink at profligacy, and even in the last resource to encourage its practice. I am of opinion that this is not right.

It is not possible that the health of one class should necessitate the ruin of another, and, in consequence, it is our first duty to turn a deaf ear to such an essential immoral doctrine, no matter how strongly society may have established or law protected it. Moreover, it needs to be fully recognized that men are rightly to be held responsible for the consequences of their own acts, and that these are no longer to be visited on the woman alone. It follows from this that it is the duty of men who do not wish to lead a life of infamy to practice such continence in respect to all woman as they would were the female society in which they move made up exclusively of their own mothers and sisters.

A more rational mode of life should be adopted which would include abstinence from all alcoholic drinks, from excess in eating and from flesh meat, on the one hand, and recourse to physical labour on the other. I am not speaking of gymnastics, or of any of those occupations which may be fitly described as playing at work; I mean the genuine toil that fatigues. No one need go far in search of proofs that this kind of abstemious living is not merely possible, but far less hurtful to health than excess. Hundreds of instances are known to everyone. This is my first contention.

In the second place, I think that of late years, through various reasons which I need not enter, but among which the above-mentioned laxity of opinion in society and the frequent idealization of the subject in current literature and painting may be mentioned, conjugal infidelity has become more common and is considered less reprehensible. I am of opinion that this is not right. The origin of the evil is twofold. It is due, in the first place, to a natural instinct, and, in the second, to the elevation of this instinct to a place to which it does not rightly belong. This being so, the evil can only be remedied by effecting a change in the views now in vogue about “falling in love” and all that this term implies, by educating men and women at home through

family influence and example, and abroad by means of healthy public opinion, to practice that abstinence which morality and Christianity alike enjoin. This is my second contention.

In the third place I am of opinion that another consequence of the false light in which “falling in love,” and what it leads to, are viewed in our society, is that the birth of children has lost its pristine significance, and that modern marriages are conceived less and less from the point of view of the family. I am of opinion that this is not right. This is my third contention.

In the fourth place, I am of opinion that the children (who in our society are considered an obstacle to enjoyment — an unlucky accident, as it were) are educated not with a view to the problem which they will be one day called on to face and to solve, but solely with an eye to the pleasure which they may be made to yield to their parents. The consequence is, that the children of human beings are brought up for all the world like the young of animals, the chief care of their parents being not to train them to such work as is worthy of men and women, but to increase their weight, or add a cubit to their stature, to make them spruce, sleek, well-fed, and comely. They rig them out in all manner of fantastic costumes, wash them, over-feed them, and refuse to make them work. If the children of the lower orders differ in this last respect from those of the well-to-do classes, the difference is merely formal; they work from sheer necessity, and not because their parents recognize work as a duty. And in over-fed children, as in over-fed animals, sensuality is engendered unnaturally early.

Fashionable dress to-day, the course of reading, plays, music, dances, luscious food, all the elements of our modern life, in a word, from the pictures on the little boxes of sweetmeats up to the novel, the tale, and the poem, contribute to fan this sensuality into a strong, consuming flame, with the result that sexual vices and diseases have come to be the normal conditions of the period of tender youth, and often continue into the riper age of full-blown manhood. And I am of opinion that this is not right.

It is high time it ceased. The children of human beings should not be brought up as if they were animals; and we should set up as the object and strive to maintain as the result of our labours something better and nobler than a well-dressed body. This is my fourth contention.

In the fifth place, I am of opinion that, owing to the exaggerated and erroneous significance attributed by our society to love and to the idealized states that accompany and succeed it, the best energies of our men and women are drawn forth and exhausted during the most promising period of life; those of the men in the work of looking for, choosing, and winning the most desirable objects of love, for which purpose lying and fraud are held to be quite excusable; those of the women and girls in alluring men and decoying them into *liaisons* or marriage by the most questionable means conceivable, as an instance of which the present fashions in evening dress may be cited. I am of opinion that this is not right.

The truth is, that the whole affair has been exalted by poets and romancers to an undue importance, and that love in its various developments is not a fitting object to consume the best energies of men. People set it before them and strive after it, because their view of life is as vulgar and brutish as is that other conception frequently

met with in the lower stages of development, which sees in luscious and abundant food an end worthy of man's best efforts. Now, this is not right and should not be done. And, in order to avoid doing it, it is only needful to realize the fact that whatever truly deserves to be held up as a worthy object of man's striving and working, whether it be the service of humanity, of one's country, of science, of art, not to speak of the service of God, is far above and beyond the sphere of personal enjoyment. Hence, it follows that not only to form a *liaison*, but even to contract marriage, is, from a Christian point of view, not a progress, but a fall. Love, and all the states that accompany and follow it, however we may try in prose and verse to prove the contrary, never do and never can facilitate the attainment of an aim worthy of men, but always make it more difficult. This is my fifth contention.

How about the human race? If we admit that celibacy is better and nobler than marriage, evidently the human race will come to an end. But, if the logical conclusion of the argument is that the human race will become extinct, the whole reasoning is wrong.

To that I reply that the argument is not mine; I did not invent it. That it is incumbent on mankind so to strive, and that celibacy is preferable to marriage, are truths revealed by Christ 1,900 years ago, set forth in our catechisms, and professed by us as followers of Christ.

Chastity and celibacy, it is urged, cannot constitute the ideal of humanity, because chastity would annihilate the race which strove to realize it, and humanity cannot set up as its ideal its own annihilation. It may be pointed out in reply that only that is a true ideal, which, being unattainable, admits of infinite gradation in degrees of proximity. Such is the Christian ideal of the founding of God's kingdom, the union of all living creatures by the bonds of love. The conception of its attainment is incompatible with the conception of the movement of life. What kind of life could subsist if all living creatures were joined together by the bonds of love? None. Our conception of life is inseparably bound up with the conception of a continual striving after an unattainable ideal.

But even if we suppose the Christian ideal of perfect chastity realized, what then? We should merely find ourselves face to face on the one hand with the familiar teaching of religion, one of whose dogmas is that the world will have an end; and on the other of so-called science, which informs us that the sun is gradually losing its heat, the result of which will in time be the extinction of the human race.

Now there is not and cannot be such an institution as Christian marriage, just as there cannot be such a thing as a Christian liturgy,¹ nor Christian teachers, nor church fathers,² nor Christian armies, Christian law courts, nor Christian States. This is what was always taught and believed by true Christians of the first and following centuries. A Christian's ideal is not marriage, but love for God and for his neighbour. Consequently in the eyes of a Christian relations in marriage not only do

¹ *Matthew* vi, 5-12; *John* iv, 21

² *Matthew* xxiii, 8-10

not constitute a lawful, right, and happy state, as our society and our churches maintain, but, on the contrary, are always a fall.

Such a thing as Christian marriage never was and never could be. Christ did not marry, nor did he establish marriage; neither did his disciples marry. But if Christian marriage cannot exist, there is such a thing as a Christian view of marriage. And this is how it may be formulated: A Christian (and by this term I understand not those who call themselves Christians merely because they were baptized and still receive the sacrament once a year, but those whose lives are shaped and regulated by the teachings of Christ), I say, cannot view the marriage relation otherwise than as a deviation from the doctrine of Christ — as a sin. This is clearly laid down in *Matthew* v, 28, and the ceremony called Christian marriage does not alter its character one jot. A Christian will never, therefore, desire marriage, but will always avoid it.

If the light of truth dawns upon a Christian when he is already married, or if, being a Christian, from weakness he enters into marital relations with the ceremonies of the church, or without them, he has no other alternative than to abide with his wife (and the wife with her husband, if it is she who is a Christian) and to aspire together with her to free themselves of their sin. This is the Christian view of marriage; and there cannot be any other for a man who honestly endeavours to shape his life in accordance with the teachings of Christ.

To very many persons the thoughts I have uttered here and in *The Kreutzer Sonata* will seem strange, vague, even contradictory. They certainly do contradict, not each other, but the whole tenor of our lives, and involuntarily a doubt arises, “on which side is truth — on the side of the thoughts which seem true and well-founded, or on the side of the lives of others and myself?” I, too, was weighed down by that same doubt when writing *The Kreutzer Sonata*. I had not the faintest presentiment that the train of thought I had started would lead me whither it did. I was terrified by my own conclusion, and I was at first disposed to reject it, but it was impossible not to hearken to the voice of my reason and my conscience. And so, strange though they may appear to many, opposed as they undoubtedly are to the trend and tenor of our lives, and incompatible though they may prove with what I have heretofore thought and uttered, I have no choice but to accept them. “But man is weak,” people will object. “His task should be regulated by his strength.”

This is tantamount to saying, “My hand is weak. I cannot draw a straight line — that is, a line which will be the shortest line between two given points — and so, in order to make it more easy for myself, I, intending to draw a straight, will choose for my model a crooked line.”

The weaker my hand, the greater the need that my model should be perfect.

LEO TOLSTOY

Suggested reading for students.



From our Living the Life Series.

- ATTUNE YOUR SELF WITH THE SELF IN ALL
- BLAVATSKY ON BUDDHISM
- BRAHMANISM IS THE ELDER SISTER OF BUDDHISM
- CAN THERE BE JOY WITHOUT LOVE?
- CHARITY EMPTIES HER PURSE WITH AN INVISIBLE HAND
- DELIGHT IN THE BEAUTY OF THE SOUL
- DENUNCIATION IS NOT A DUTY
- DISCORD IS THE HARMONY OF THE UNIVERSE
- EMERSON ON LOVE
- EVIL OMENS AND MYSTERIOUS DISEASES
- GODLESS BUDDHISM IS PHILOSOPHICAL AGNOSTICISM
- GOETHE'S MAXIMS AND REFLECTIONS
- HAPPINESS IS BUT A DREAM
- HARTMANN ON CHASTITY
- HYPOCRISY, DIAGNOSES AND PALLIATIVES
- IMPRISONED IN THE NARROW VASE OF DOGMATISM
- JUDGE ON THE UNIVERSAL APPLICATIONS OF DOCTRINE
- JUDGE ON THE UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD
- LET EVERY MAN PROVE HIS OWN WORKS
- LET YOUR DAILY LIFE BE YOUR TEMPLE AND GOD
- LÉVI ON THE POWER OF MIND, UNRUFFLED BY DESIRE - TR. WAITE
- LODGES OF MAGIC
- MARCUS AURELIUS' MEDITATIONS - TR. CASAUBON
- MEDICINE OF THE MIND
- OCCULT LAWS AND PARADOXES

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SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS

- OCCULT LAWS CAN BE ENTRUSTED ONLY TO THOSE WHO LIVE THE LIFE DIRECTED BY THEOSOPHY
- OPPOSITE AND OPPOSING FORCES ARE CONVERTIBLE
- PARADOX IS THE LANGUAGE OF OCCULTISM
- PHILOSOPHERS AND PHILOSOPHICULES
- PLUTARCH ON HOW WE MAY PROFIT FROM OUR ENEMIES - TR. HARTCLIFFE
- PLUTARCH ON HOW WE MAY SHOW OFF WITHOUT BEING ENVIED – TR. LANCASTER
- PLUTARCH ON LOVE - TR. PHILIPS
- PLUTARCH ON MAN’S PROGRESS IN VIRTUE – TR. TOD
- PLUTARCH ON MORAL VIRTUE
- PLUTARCH ON WHETHER VICE IS SUFFICIENT TO RENDER A MAN UNHAPPY
- PROCLUS ON THE GOOD, THE JUST, AND THE BEAUTIFUL
- PROVERBIAL WISDOM FROM THE HITOPADESHA
- PYTHAGOREAN ETHICS AFTER STOBÆUS
- PYTHAGOREAN SYMBOLS - TR. BRIDGMAN
- SENTENCES BY SECTUS THE PYTHAGOREAN - TR. TAYLOR
- SERJEANT COX ON THE NEGATORS OF SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION
- SEVEN OCCULT TAMIL PROVERBS
- SPIRITUALITY IS NOT A VIRTUE
- THE ENNOBLING POWER OF THORACIC EXPANSION
- THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS THE TEMPLE OF TRUTH
- THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU BY TOLSTOY
- THE NELLORE YANADIS
- THE NILGIRI SANNYASIS
- THE NOBLE AIM OF EDUCATION IS TO AWAKEN THE DIVINITY WITHIN
- THE POWER TO HEAL
- THE PRAYER OF THE TRUE PHILOSOPHER IS HIS ADORATION
- THE SAYINGS OF LAO TZU - TR. GILES
- THE SCIENCE OF LIFE BY BLAVATSKY AND TOLSTOY
- THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE
- THEAGES ON VIRTUE
- THEOSOPHICAL JEWELS - LIVE IN THE IDEAL
- THEOSOPHICAL JEWELS - THE RAINBOW OF HOPE
- THOU SHALT CROUCH AT MY FEET

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- WHAT SHALL WE DO FOR OUR FELLOW-MEN?

