

A
NASTY
LEE
T
O
D
C
LEE
N
A

FYODOR
DOSTOYEVSKY

A Nasty Anecdote

by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

This nasty anecdote occurred precisely at the time when, with such irrepressible force and such touchingly naive enthusiasm, the regeneration of our dear fatherland began, and its valiant sons were all striving toward new destinies and hopes. Then, one winter, on a clear and frosty evening, though it was already past eleven, three extremely respectable gentlemen were sitting in a comfortably and even luxuriously furnished room, in a fine two-storied house on the Petersburg side, and were taken up with a solid and excellent conversation on a quite curious subject. These three gentlemen were all three of general's rank [These three gentlemen are all in the civil service, not the military. But civil service ranks had military equivalents]. They were sitting around a small table, each in a fine, soft armchair, and as they conversed they were quietly and comfortably sipping champagne. The bottle was right there on the table in a silver bucket with ice. The thing was that the host, privy councillor Stepan Nikiforovich Nikiforov, an old bachelor of about sixty-five, was celebrating the housewarming of his newly purchased house, and, incidentally, his birthday, which happened to come along and which he had never celebrated before. However, the celebration was none too grand; as we have already seen, there were only two guests, both former colleagues of Mr. Nikiforov and his former subordinates, namely: actual state councillor Semyon Ivanovich Shipulenko and the other, also an actual state councillor, Ivan Ilyich

Pralinsky. They came at around nine o'clock, had tea, then switched to wine, and knew that at exactly eleven-thirty they should go home. The host had liked regularity all his life. A couple of words about him: he began his career as a fortuneless petty clerk, quietly endured the drag for forty-five years on end, knew very well how far he would be promoted, could not bear having stars in his eyes, though he was already wearing two of them [The star was the decoration of a number of orders], and particularly disliked expressing his own personal opinion on any subject whatsoever. He was also honest, that is, he had never happened to do anything particularly dishonest; he was a bachelor because he was an egoist; he was far from stupid, but could not bear to display his intelligence; he particularly disliked sloppiness and rapturousness, which he considered moral sloppiness, and toward the end of his life sank entirely into some sweet, lazy comfort and systematic solitude. Though he himself sometimes visited people of the better sort, from his youth he could never bear to receive guests, and of late, when not playing patience, he was content with the company of his dining-room clock, imperturbably listening, as he dozed in his armchair, to its ticking under the glass dome on the mantelpiece. He was of extremely decent and clean-shaven appearance, looked younger than his years, was well preserved, promising to live a long time, and adhered to the strictest gentlemanliness. His post was rather comfortable: he sat somewhere and signed something. In short, he was considered a most excellent man. He had only one passion, or, better, one ardent desire: this was to own his own house, and precisely a grand house, not simply a solid one. His desire was finally realized: he picked out and purchased a house on the Petersburg side, far away, true, but the house had a garden, and was elegant besides. The new owner reasoned that far away was even better: he did not like receiving at home, and as for going to visit someone or to work—for that he had a fine two-place carriage of chocolate color, the coachman Mikhei, and two small but sturdy and handsome horses. All this had been duly acquired by forty

years of painstaking economy, and so his heart rejoiced over it all. This was why, having acquired the house and moved into it, Stepan Nikiforovich felt such contentment in his peaceful heart that he even invited guests for his birthday, which before he used carefully to conceal from his closest acquaintances. He even had special designs on one of the invited. He himself occupied the upper story of the house, and he needed a tenant for the lower one, which was built and laid out in the same way. So Stepan Nikiforovich was counting on Semyon Ivanovich Shipulenko, and during the evening even twice turned the conversation to that subject. But Semyon Ivanovich kept silent in that regard. This was a man who had also had a long and difficult time cutting a path for himself, with black hair and side-whiskers and a permanently bilious tinge to his physiognomy. He was a married man, a gloomy homebody, kept his household in fear, served self-confidently, also knew very well what he would achieve and still better what he would never achieve, sat in a good post and sat very solidly. At the new ways that were beginning he looked, if not without bile, still with no special alarm: he was very confident of himself and listened not without mocking spite to Ivan Ilyich Pralinsky's expatiating on the new themes. However, they were all somewhat tipsy, so that even Stepan Nikiforovich himself condescended to Mr. Pralinsky and entered into a light dispute with him about the new ways. But a few words about His Excellency Mr. Pralinsky, the more so as he is the main hero of the forthcoming story.

Actual state councillor Ivan Ilyich Pralinsky had been called "Your Excellency" for only four months—in short, he was a young general. He was young in years, too, about forty-three, certainly not more, and in looks he appeared and liked to appear still younger. He was a tall, handsome man, who made a show of his dress and of the refined solidity of his dress, wore an important decoration on his neck [Certain Russian decorations had two degrees, being worn either on the breast or on a ribbon around the neck.] with great skill, from childhood had managed to adopt a few high-society ways, and, being

a bachelor, dreamed of a rich and even high-society bride. He dreamed of many other things as well, though he was far from stupid. At times he was a great talker and even liked to assume parliamentary poses. He came from a good family, was a general's son and a sybarite, in his tender childhood wore velvet and cambric, was educated in an aristocratic institution, and, though he did not come out of it with much learning, was successful in the service and even got himself as far as a generalship. His superiors considered him a capable man and even placed hopes in him. Stepan Nikiforovich, under whom he began and continued his service almost up to the generalship, never considered him a very practical man and did not place any hopes in him. But he liked that he was from a good family, had a fortune, that is, a big rental property with a manager, was related to some not-insignificant people, and, on top of that, carried himself well. Stepan Nikiforovich inwardly denounced him for surplus imagination and light-mindedness. Ivan Ilyich himself sometimes felt that he was too vain and even ticklish. Strangely, at times he was overcome by fits of some morbid conscientiousness and even a slight repentance for something. With bitterness and a secret sting in his soul, he sometimes admitted that he had not flown at all as high as he thought. In those moments he would even fall into some sort of despondency, especially when his hemorrhoids were acting up, called his life *une existence manquée*, ceased believing (privately, of course) even in his parliamentary abilities, calling himself a *parleur*, a *phraseur*, and though all this was, of course, very much to his credit, it in no way prevented him from raising his head again half an hour later, and with still greater obstinacy and presumption taking heart and assuring himself that he would still manage to show himself and would become not only a dignitary, but even a statesman whom Russia would long remember. At times he even imagined monuments. From this one can see that Ivan Ilyich aimed high, though he kept his vague hopes and dreams hidden deep in himself, even with a certain fear. In short, he was a kind man, and even a poet in his

soul. In recent years, painful moments of disappointment had begun to visit him more often. He became somehow especially irritable, insecure, and was ready to consider any objection an offense. But the reviving Russia suddenly gave him great hopes. The generalship crowned them. He perked up; he raised his head. He suddenly started talking much and eloquently, talking on the newest topics which he adopted extremely quickly and unexpectedly, to the point of fierceness. He sought occasions for talking, drove around town, and in many places managed to become known as a desperate liberal, which flattered him greatly. That evening, having drunk some four glasses, he got particularly carried away. He wanted to make Stepan Nikiforovich, whom he had not seen for a long time prior to that and till then had always respected and even obeyed, change his mind about everything. For some reason he considered him a retrograde and attacked him with extraordinary heat. Stepan Nikiforovich made almost no objections and only listened slyly, though the topic interested him. Ivan Ilyich was getting excited and in the heat of the imagined dispute sampled from his glass more often than he should have. Then Stepan Nikiforovich would take the bottle and top up his glass at once, which, for no apparent reason, suddenly began to offend Ivan Ilyich, the more so in that Semyon Ivanych Shipulenko, whom he particularly despised and, moreover, even feared on account of his cynicism and malice, was most perfidiously silent just beside him, and smiled more often than he should have. "They seem to take me for a mere boy," flashed in Ivan Ilyich's head.

"No, sir, it's time, it's long since time," he went on with passion. "We're too late, sir, and, in my view, humaneness is the first thing, humaneness with subordinates, remembering that they, too, are people. Humaneness will save everything and keep it afloat..."

"Hee, hee, hee, hee!" came from Semyon Ivanovich's direction.

"But, anyhow, why are you scolding us so?" Stepan Nikiforovich finally objected, smiling amiably. "I confess, Ivan Ilyich, so far I'm unable to get the sense of what you're so kindly explaining. You put

forward humaneness. That means the love of mankind, doesn't it?"

"Yes, if you wish, the love of mankind. I..."

"Excuse me, sir. As far as I'm able to judge, the point is not just in that. Love of mankind is always proper. But the reform is not limited to that. Questions have come up about the peasants, the courts, management, tax-farming [A tax-farmer was a private person authorized by the government to collect taxes in exchange for a fixed fee], morality, and . . . and . . . and there's no end to them, these questions, and all together, all at once, they may produce great, so to speak, upheavals. That's what we're worried about, not just humaneness ..."

"Yes, sir, the thing goes a bit deeper," Semyon Ivanovich observed.

"I understand very well, sir, and allow me to observe, Semyon Ivanovich, that I shall by no means agree to lag behind you in the depth of my understanding of things," Ivan Ilyich observed caustically and much too sharply. "However, even so I shall make so bold as to observe that you, Stepan Nikiforovich, also have not quite understood me..."

"No, I haven't."

"And yet I precisely hold to and maintain everywhere the idea that humaneness, and precisely humaneness with subordinates, from clerk to scrivener, from scrivener to household servant, from servant to peasant—humaneness, I say, may serve, so to speak, as the cornerstone of the forthcoming reform and generally toward the renewal of things. Why? Because. Take the syllogism: I am humane, consequently they love me. They love me, therefore they feel trust. They feel trust, therefore they believe; they believe, therefore they love . . . that is, no, I mean to say, if they believe, they will also believe in the reform, understand, so to speak, the very essence of the matter, will, so to speak, embrace each other morally and resolve the whole matter amicably, substantially. Why are you laughing, Semyon Ivanovich? Is it not clear?"

Stepan Nikiforovich silently raised his eyebrows; he was surprised.

"I think I've had a bit too much to drink," Semyon Ivanych observed venomously, "that's why I'm hard of understanding. A certain darkening of the mind, sir."

Ivan Ilyich winced.

"We won't hold out," Stepan Nikiforovich said suddenly, after slight reflection.

"That is, how is it we won't hold out?" asked Ivan Ilyich, surprised at Stepan Nikiforovich's sudden and fragmentary observation.

"Just so, we won't hold out." Stepan Nikiforovich obviously did not wish to expand further.

"You don't mean about new wine in new bottles?" ["Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved" (Matthew 9:17)]. Ivan Ilyich objected, not without irony. "Ah, no, sir; I can answer for myself."

At that moment the clock struck half past eleven.

"They sit and sit, then up and go," said Semyon Ivanych, preparing to get up from his place. But Ivan Ilyich forestalled him, rising from the table at once and taking his sable hat from the mantelpiece. He looked as if offended.

"Well, then, Semyon Ivanych, you'll think?" said Stepan Nikiforovich, seeing his guests off.

"About the apartment, you mean? I'll think, I'll think, sir."

"And let me know quickly once you decide."

"Still business?" Mr. Pralinsky observed amiably, fawning somewhat and playing with his hat. It seemed to him that he was being forgotten.

Stepan Nikiforovich raised his eyebrows and said nothing, as a sign that he was not keeping his guests. Semyon Ivanych hastily took his leave.

"Ah . . . well ... as you wish, then . . . since you don't understand

simple amiability," Mr. Pralinsky decided to himself, and somehow with particular independence offered his hand to Stepan Nikiforovich.

In the front hall Ivan Ilyich wrapped himself in his light, expensive fur coat, trying for some reason to ignore Semyon Ivanych's shabby raccoon, and they both started down the stairs.

"Our old man seemed offended," Ivan Ilyich said to the silent Semyon Ivanych.

"No, why?" the other replied calmly and coldly.

"The flunky!" Ivan Ilyich thought to himself.

They came out on the porch, and Semyon Ivanych's sleigh with its homely gray stallion drove up.

"What the devil! Where has Trifon gone with my carriage!" Ivan Ilyich cried, not seeing his equipage.

They looked this way and that—no carriage. Stepan Nikiforovich's man had no idea about it. They turned to Varlaam, Semyon Ivanych's coachman, and received the answer that he had been standing there all the while, and the carriage had been there, too, but now they were no more.

"A nasty anecdote!" said Mr. Shipulenko. "Want me to give you a lift?"

"Scoundrelly folk!" Mr. Pralinsky cried in rage. "The rascal asked me to let him go to some wedding here on the Petersburg side, some female crony was getting married, devil take her. I strictly forbade him to leave. And now I'll bet he's gone there!"

"Actually," Varlaam observed, "he did go there, sir, and he promised to manage it in just one minute, that is, to be here right on time."

"So there! I just knew it! He'll catch it from me!"

"You'd better give him a couple of good whippings at the police station, then he'll follow your orders," Semyon Ivanych said, covering himself with a rug.

"Kindly don't trouble yourself, Semyon Ivanych!"

"So you don't want a lift?"

"Safe journey, merci."

Semyon Ivanych drove off, and Ivan Ilyich went by foot along the wooden planks, feeling a rather strong irritation.

"No, you'll catch it from me now, you rogue! I'll go by foot on purpose so that you'll feel it, so that you'll get scared! He'll come back and find out that the master went by foot . . . blackguard!"

Ivan Ilyich had never cursed like that before, but he was very furious, and besides there was a clamor in his head. He was not used to drinking and therefore some five or six glasses worked quickly. But the night was delightful. It was frosty, but unusually calm and windless. The sky was clear, starry. The full moon flooded the earth with a matted silver gleam. It was so good that Ivan Ilyich, having gone some fifty steps, almost forgot his troubles. He was beginning to feel somehow especially pleasant. Besides, tipsy people change impressions quickly. He was even starting to like the plain wooden houses on the deserted street.

"It's really nice that I went by foot," he thought to himself, "both a lesson to Trifon and a pleasure for me. Indeed, I must go by foot more often. So what? On Bolshoi Prospect I'll find a cab at once. A nice night! What wretched little houses here. Must all be petty folk, clerks . . . merchants, maybe . . . that Stepan Nikiforovich! and what retrogrades they all are, the old nightcaps! Precisely nightcaps, *c'est le mot!* He's an intelligent man, though; he has this *bon sens*, a sober, practical understanding of things. No, but these old men, old men! They lack . . . what do you call it? Well, they lack something . . . We won't hold out! What did he mean by that? He even fell to thinking when he said it. By the way, he didn't understand me at all. But how could he not? It's harder not to understand than to understand. Above all, I'm convinced, convinced in my soul. Humaneness . . . love of mankind. Restore man to himself . . . revive his personal dignity, and then . . . with this ready material get down to business. Seems clear! Yes, sir! I beg your pardon, Your Excellency, take the syllogism: we meet a clerk, for instance, a poor, downtrodden clerk. 'Well . . . what

are you?' Answer: 'A clerk.' All right, so he's a clerk; then: 'What kind of a clerk?' Answer: such-and-such kind. 'You're in the civil service?' 'I am!' 'Want to be happy?' 'I do.' 'What does one need for happiness?' This and that. 'Why?' Because . . . And so the man understands me after a couple of words: the man is mine, the man is caught, so to speak, in the net, and I can do whatever I like with him—for his own good, that is. A nasty man, this Semyon Ivanych! And such a nasty mug ... A whipping at the police station—he said it on purpose. No, lies, you do the whipping, I won't; I'll get Trifon with words, I'll get him with reproaches, and he'll feel it. About birch rods, hm ... an unsolved problem [the "problem" of the abolition of corporal punishment with birch rods, then still allowed in the army and in the schools as well as with serfs.], hm . . . But shouldn't I stop at Entrance's? Pah, the devil, you cursed planks!" he cried, suddenly tripping. "And this is the capital! Enlightenment! You could break a leg. Hm. I hate this Semyon Ivanych; a most disgusting mug. He sniggered at me tonight when I said they'd embrace each other morally. So they will, and what do you care? You I won't embrace; sooner a peasant . . . I'll meet a peasant, and talk with a peasant. Anyhow, I was drunk, and maybe didn't express myself properly. Maybe I'm not expressing myself properly now either . . . Hm. I'm never going to drink. You babble in the evening, then the next day you repent. So what, I'm not staggering as I walk . . . And anyhow, they're all rogues!"

So Ivan Ilyich reasoned, desultorily and incoherently, as he went on down the sidewalk. The fresh air affected him and, so to speak, got him going. Another five minutes and he would have calmed down and wanted to sleep. But suddenly, about two steps from Bolshoi Prospect, he heard music. He looked around. On the other side of the street, in a very decrepit, one-story, but long wooden house, a great feast was going on, fiddles hummed, a string bass droned, and a flute spouted shrilly to a very merry quadrille tune. The public was standing under the windows, mostly women in quilted coats with kerchiefs on their heads; they strained all their efforts to make something out

through the chinks in the blinds. Obviously there was merriment. The sound of the dancers' stomping reached the other side of the street. Ivan Ilyich noticed a policeman not far away and went up to him.

"Whose house is that, brother?" he said, throwing his expensive fur coat open slightly, just enough so that the policeman could notice the important decoration on his neck.

"The clerk Pseldonymov's, a registrar," [The clerk's name is absurdly close to the Russian pseudonym ("pseudonym"), Pseldonymov is a collegiate registrar.] the policeman, who instantly managed to make out the decoration, replied, straightening up.

"Pseldonymov? Hah! Pseldonymov! . . . What's he doing, getting married?"

"Getting married, Your Honor, to a titular councillor's daughter. Mlekopitaev [also an absurd, though just plausible, name derived from the Russian word for "mammal."], a titular councillor . . . served on the board. That house comes with the bride, sir."

"So it's already Pseldonymov's house, not Mlekopitaev's?"

"Pseldonymov's, Your Honor. Used to be Mlekopitaev's, and now it's Pseldonymov's."

"Hm. I'm asking, brother, because I'm his superior. I'm general over the place where Pseldonymov works."

"Right, Your Excellency." The policeman drew himself all the way up, but Ivan Ilyich seemed to have lapsed into thought. He was standing and reflecting . . .

Yes, Pseldonymov actually was from his department, from his own office; he recalled that. He was a petty clerk, with a salary of about ten roubles a month. Since Mr. Pralinsky had taken over his office still very recently, he might not have remembered all his subordinates in too much detail, but Pseldonymov he did remember, precisely apropos of his last name. It had leaped out at him from the very first, so that he had been curious right then to have a closer look at the owner of such a name. He now recalled a man still very young, with a long, hooked nose, with blond and wispy hair, skinny and

malnourished, in an impossible uniform, and unmentionables impossible even to the point of indecency. He remembered how the thought had flashed in him right then: should he not award the wretch some ten roubles to fix himself up for the holiday? But since the wretch's face was all too lenten, and had an extremely unpleasant look, even causing disgust, the good thought somehow evaporated of itself, and so Pseldonymov remained without a bonus. The greater was his amazement when this same Pseldonymov, not more than a week ago, put in a request to get married [Clerks in the civil service had to have their superiors' permission to change departments, to move elsewhere, and even to marry]. Ivan Ilyich remembered that he had somehow had no time to occupy himself with the matter more thoroughly, so that the matter of the wedding had been decided lightly, hastily. But all the same he remembered with precision that Pseldonymov was taking his bride together with a wooden house and four hundred roubles in cash; this circumstance had surprised him then; he remembered even cracking a light joke about the encounter of the names Pseldonymov and Mlekopitaev. He clearly recalled it all.

As he went on recollecting, he fell to thinking more and more. It is known that whole trains of thought sometimes pass instantly through our heads, in the form of certain feelings, without translation into human language, still less literary language. But we shall attempt to translate all these feelings of our hero's and present the reader if only with the essence of these feelings, with what, so to speak, was most necessary and plausible in them. Because many of our feelings, when translated into ordinary language, will seem perfectly implausible. That is why they never come into the world, and yet everybody has them. Naturally, Ivan Ilyich's feelings and thoughts were a bit incoherent. But you know the reason why.

"What then!" flashed in his head. "So we all talk and talk, but once it gets to business, only a fig comes out. Here's an example, this very same Pseldonymov: he's just come from the church, all excited, all hopeful, expecting to taste . . . This is one of the most blissful days of

his life . . . Now he's busy with the guests, giving a feast—modest, poor, but merry, joyful, sincere . . . What, then, if he knew that at this very moment I, I, his superior, his chief superior, am standing right here by his house and listening to his music! But how, in fact, would it be with him? No, how would it be with him if I should suddenly up and walk in now? hm . . . Naturally, he'd be frightened at first, numb with bewilderment. I'd be interfering with him, I'd probably upset everything . . . Yes, that's how it would be if any other general walked in, but not I . . . Here's the thing, that any other, only not I . . .

"Yes, Stepan Nikiforovich! You didn't understand me just now, but here's a ready example for you.

"Yes, sir. We all shout about humaneness, but heroism, a great deed, that we're not capable of.

"What kind of heroism? This kind. Just consider: given the present-day relations between all members of society, for me, for me to come after midnight to the wedding of my subordinate, a registrar, who makes ten roubles—after all, this is bewilderment, this is a turnabout of ideas, the last day of Pompeii [K. P. Briullov (1799-1852), was most famous for his enormous historical painting The Last Day of Pompeii, evidently the epitome of turmoil and confusion for Pralinsky], bedlam! No one will understand it. Stepan Nikiforovich would die before he understood it. Didn't he say: we won't hold out. Yes, but that's you old people, people of paralysis and stagnation, but I will hold out! I'll turn the last day of Pompeii into the sweetest day for my subordinate, and a wild act into a normal, patriarchal, lofty and ethical one. How? Like this. Be so good as to listen . . .

"Well . . . here I am, suppose, going in: they're amazed, interrupt their dancing, stare wildly, back away. Right, sir, but here I show myself: I go straight to the frightened Pseldonymov and, with the tenderest smile, in the simplest words possible, say: 'Thus and so,' I say, 'I was visiting His Excellency Stepan Nikiforovich. I suppose you know, it's here in the neighborhood . . . ' Here I tell, lightly, in some amusing way, the adventure with Trifon. From Trifon I pass on to how I

went by foot . . . Well—I hear music, I ask a policeman, and find out that you, brother, are getting married. Why don't I stop at my subordinate's, I think, to see how my clerks make merry and . . . get married. Now, you're not going to drive me out, I suppose!' Drive out! What a phrase for a subordinate. The devil he'll drive me out! I think he'll lose his mind, he'll rush headlong to sit me in an armchair, he'll tremble with delight, he won't even know what to make of it at first! . . .

"Well, what could be simpler, more gracious, than such an act! Why did I come? That's another question! That's, so to speak, the moral side of the matter. There's where the juice is!

"Hm . . . What was I thinking about? Ah, yes!

"So then, of course, they'll seat me next to the most important guest, some titular councillor, or a relative, a retired staff captain with a red nose . . . Gogol described these originals nicely. So, naturally, I make the acquaintance of the bride, praise her, encourage the guests. I beg them not to be embarrassed, to make merry, to go on dancing, I joke, I laugh, in short—I'm amiable and charming. I'm always amiable and charming when I'm pleased with myself. Hm . . . the thing is that I still seem to be a bit . . . that is, not drunk, but just . . .

". . . Naturally, being a gentleman, I'm on an equal footing with them and by no means demand any special tokens . . . But morally, morally it's another matter: they'll understand and appreciate . . . My act will resurrect in them all the nobility of . . . And so I sit there for half an hour . . . Even an hour. I'll leave, naturally, just before supper, otherwise they'll start bustling about, baking, frying, they'll bow low before me, but I'll just drink a glass, congratulate them, and decline supper. I'll say: business. And as soon as I pronounce 'business,' their faces will all become respectfully stern at once. By this I'll delicately give a reminder that they and I are—different, sirs. Earth and sky. Not that I'd want to impose it, but it's needed . . . even in the moral sense it's necessary, whatever you say. However, I'll smile at once, even laugh, perhaps, and everyone will instantly cheer up . . . I'll joke once more with the bride; hm . . . and even this: I'll hint that I'll come again in

exactly nine months as a godfather, heh, heh! And she'll certainly give birth by then. Because they multiply like rabbits. So everyone bursts out laughing, the bride blushes; I kiss her on the forehead with feeling, even bless her, and . . . tomorrow my deed is already known in the office. Tomorrow I'm stern again, tomorrow I'm demanding again, even implacable, but by now they all know who I am. They know my soul, they know my essence: 'He's stern as a superior, but as a man he's an angel!' And so I'm victorious; I've caught them with some one small act that wouldn't even occur to you; they're mine now; I'm the father, they're the children . . . Go on, Stepan Nikiforovich, Your Excellency, try doing something like that . . .

". . . But do you know, do you understand, that Pseldonymov will recall for his children how the general himself feasted and even drank at his wedding! And those children will tell their children, and they will tell their grandchildren, like a sacred anecdote, that a dignitary, a statesman (and I'll be all that by then) deigned . . . etc., etc. But I'll raise the humiliated one morally, I'll restore him to himself . . . He gets a salary of ten roubles a month! But if I were to repeat this or some such thing five or ten times, I'd win popularity everywhere ... I'd be impressed on everybody's heart, and the devil alone knows what might come of it later, this popularity!..."

Thus or almost thus reasoned Ivan Ilyich (gentlemen, a man sometimes says all sorts of things to himself, and in a somewhat peculiar state besides). All this reasoning flashed through his head in about half a minute, and, of course, he might have limited himself to these little dreams and, having mentally shamed Stepan Nikiforovich, gone quite calmly home and to bed. And it would have been well if he had! But the whole trouble was that the moment was a peculiar one.

As if on purpose, suddenly, at that very instant, his susceptible imagination pictured the complacent faces of Stepan Nikiforovich and Semyon Ivanovich.

"We won't hold out!" Stepan Nikiforovich repeated, smiling superciliously.

"Hee, hee, hee!" echoed Semyon Ivanovich with his nastiest smile.

"And now let's see how we won't hold out!" Ivan Ilyich said resolutely, and his face even flushed hotly. He stepped off the planks and with firm tread went straight across the street to the house of his subordinate, the registrar Pseldonymov.

His star drew him on. He walked briskly through the open gate and in disdain shoved aside with his foot the hoarse, shaggy little cur that, more for decency's sake than meaning any business, rushed at his legs with a rasping bark. By a wooden boardwalk he reached a covered porch, jutting like a booth into the yard, and by three decrepit wooden steps he went up to a tiny entryway. Though a tallow candle-end or something like a lamp was burning somewhere in a corner, that did not prevent Ivan Ilyich, just as he was, in galoshes, from stepping with his left foot into a galantine set out to cool. Ivan Ilyich bent down and, looking with curiosity, saw standing there two more dishes of some sort of aspic, as well as two molds, obviously of blancmange. The squashed galantine embarrassed him a bit, and for one tiny instant the thought flitted through him: shouldn't I slip away right now? But he considered it too low. Reasoning that no one had seen and that no one was going to suspect him, he quickly wiped off the galosh, so as to conceal all traces, groped for the felt-upholstered door, opened it, and found himself in the tiniest of anterooms. One half of it was literally heaped with overcoats, caftans, cloaks, bonnets, scarves, and galoshes. In the other half the musicians had settled: two fiddles, a flute, and a string bass, four men in all, brought in, naturally, from the street. They were sitting by an unpainted wooden table, with one tallow candle, and sawing away for all they were worth at the last figure of a quadrille. Through the open door to the main room people could be seen dancing, in dust, smoke, and haze. It was somehow furiously merry. Guffaws, shouts, and ladies' shrieks were heard. The cavaliers were stomping like a squadron of horses. Above this whole pandemonium sounded the commands of the master of ceremonies,

probably an extremely unconstrained and even unbuttoned man: "Cavaliers, step out, *chaine de dames, balancez!*" and so on and so forth. Ivan Ilyich, in some slight agitation, threw off his fur coat and galoshes and, holding his hat, entered the room. Anyhow, he was no longer reasoning . . .

For the first moment no one noticed him: they were all finishing the end of the dance. Ivan Ilyich stood as if stunned and could make out nothing of this porridge in detail. Ladies' dresses, cavaliers with cigarettes in their teeth flashed by . . . some lady's light blue scarf flashed by and brushed his nose. After her, in furious ecstasy, a medical student swept, his tousled hair all in a whirl, and shoved him hard on his way. Before him also flashed, long as a milepost, an officer of some regiment. Someone shouted in an unnaturally shrill voice as he flew by, stomping, with everyone else: "E-e-eh, Pseldonymushka!" There was something sticky under Ivan Ilyich's feet: the floor must have been waxed. In the room, not a small one incidentally, there were upward of thirty guests.

But a minute later the quadrille was over, and almost at once the very thing took place which Ivan Ilyich had imagined as he was dreaming on the plank sidewalk. Some sort of hum, some sort of extraordinary whisper passed through the guests and dancers, who had not yet had time to catch their breath and wipe the sweat from their faces. All eyes, all faces quickly began to turn to the newly entered guest. Then at once everyone started slowly retreating and backing away. Those who had not noticed were pulled by the clothes and brought to reason. They would look around and at once start backing away along with the others. Ivan Ilyich went on standing by the door, not taking one step forward, and the open space between him and the guests, the floor strewn with countless candy wrappers, tickets, and cigarette butts, was growing wider and wider. Suddenly a young man in a uniform, with wispy blond hair and a hooked nose, timidly stepped into this space. He moved forward, bending, and looked at the unexpected guest in exactly the same way as a dog

looks at its master who has called it in order to give it a kick.

"Hello, Pseldonymov, recognize me?..." said Ivan Ilyich, and in that same instant felt that he had said it terribly awkwardly; he also felt that at that moment he was, perhaps, committing the most frightful foolishness.

"Y-Y-Your Ex-cellency!..." mumbled Pseldonymov.

"Well, so there. I stopped entirely by chance, brother, as you can probably imagine..."

But Pseldonymov obviously could not imagine anything. He stood, goggle-eyed, in terrible bewilderment.

"You won't drive me out, I suppose . . . Glad or not, welcome the guest!..." Ivan Ilyich went on, feeling that he was abashed to the point of indecent weakness, that he wished to smile but no longer could; that the humorous story about Stepan Nikiforovich and Trifon was becoming more and more impossible. But Pseldonymov, as if on purpose, would not come out of his stupor and went on staring at him with an utterly foolish look. Ivan Ilyich cringed, he felt that another minute like this and an incredible bedlam would break out.

"Maybe I've interfered with something . . . I'll go!" he barely uttered, and some nerve twitched at the right corner of his mouth . . .

But Pseldonymov recovered himself . . .

"Your Excellency, good heavens, sir . . . The honor ..." he was mumbling, bowing hurriedly, "deign to sit down, sir..." And, still more recovered, he showed him with both hands to the sofa, from which the table had been moved aside for the dancing . . .

Ivan Ilyich felt relieved and lowered himself onto the sofa; someone rushed at once to move the table back. He glanced around cursorily and noticed that he alone was sitting down, while all the others were standing, even the ladies. A bad sign. But it was not yet time to remind and encourage. The guests still kept backing away, and before him, bent double, there still stood Pseldonymov alone, who still understood nothing and was far from smiling. It was nasty; in short: during this moment our hero endured such anguish that his

Harun-al-Rashidian invasion of his subordinate, for the sake of principle, could actually have been considered a great deed. [Harun-al-Rashid, or Harun the Just (766-809), Abbasid caliph of Baghdad (786-809), is known in legend for walking about the city anonymously at night, familiarizing himself with the life of his subjects. He became a hero of songs and figures in some of the tales in *The Thousand and One Nights*.] But suddenly some little figure turned up beside Pseldonymov and started bowing. To his inexpressible pleasure and even happiness, Ivan Ilyich at once recognized him as a chief clerk from his office, Akim Petrovich Zubikov, with whom he was not, of course, acquainted, but whom he knew to be an efficient and uncomplaining official. He immediately rose and proffered Akim Petrovich his hand, the whole hand, not just two fingers. The man received it in both of his palms with the deepest reverence. The general was triumphant; all was saved.

And actually Pseldonymov was now, so to speak, not the second, but the third person. He could turn directly to the chief clerk with his story, necessarily taking him as an acquaintance and even a close one, and Pseldonymov meanwhile could simply keep silent and tremble with awe. Consequently, decency was observed. And the story was necessary; Ivan Ilyich felt it; he saw that all the guests were expecting something, that even all the domestics were crowding both doorways, almost climbing on one another in order to see and hear him. The nasty thing was that the chief clerk, in his stupidity, still would not sit down.

"Come, come!" said Ivan Ilyich, awkwardly indicating the place beside him on the sofa.

"Good heavens, sir . . . here's fine, sir..." and Akim Petrovich quickly sat down on a chair, offered him almost in flight by Pseldonymov, who stubbornly remained on his feet.

"Can you imagine what's happened," Ivan Ilyich began, addressing Akim Petrovich exclusively, in a somewhat trembling but now casual voice. He even drew out and separated the words,

emphasized their syllables, began to pronounce the letter a somehow like ah—in short, he himself felt and was aware that he was being affected, but was no longer able to control himself; some external force was at work. He was painfully aware of terribly much at that moment.

"Can you imagine, I'm only just coming from Stepan Nikiforovich Nikiforov's—you've heard of him, perhaps, a privy councillor. Well ... on that commission..."

Akim Petrovich leaned his whole body forward deferentially, as if to say: "How could I have not heard, sir."

"He's your neighbor now," Ivan Ilyich went on, momentarily addressing Pseldonymov, for the sake of propriety and naturalness, but quickly turning away, seeing at once from Pseldonymov's eyes that it made decidedly no difference to him.

"The old man, as you know, was raving all his life about buying himself a house . . . So now he's bought it. The prettiest little house. Yes . . . And today also happened to be his birthday, though he never celebrated it before, even concealed it from us, making excuses out of stinginess, heh, heh! and now he's so glad of his new house that he invited me and Semyon Ivanovich. You know—Shipulenko."

Akim Petrovich leaned forward again. Zealously leaned forward! Ivan Ilyich was somewhat comforted. For it had already occurred to him that the chief clerk might perhaps surmise that, at that moment, he was a necessary point of support for His Excellency. That would have been nastiest of all.

"Well, we three sat there, he stood us to some champagne, talked about business . . . Well, about this and that . . . about problems . . . Even had a little dispute . . . Heh, heh!"

Akim Petrovich deferentially raised his eyebrows.

"Only that's not the thing. I finally say good night to him, he's a punctual old man, goes to bed early—old age, you know. I go out . . . my Trifon isn't there! I worry, I ask: 'What did Trifon do with the carriage?' It turns out that, in hopes I'd stay long, he went to the

wedding of some female crony of his or else his sister . . . God knows with him. Somewhere here on the Petersburg side. And incidentally took the carriage." Again, for propriety's sake, the general glanced at Pseldonymov. The man bent double instantly, but not at all in the way the general would have liked. "No sympathy, no heart," flashed in his head.

"You don't say!" said the deeply struck Akim Petrovich. A little hum of astonishment went through the whole crowd.

"Can you imagine my position..." (Ivan Ilyich glanced at them all.) "No help for it, I set out by foot. I thought I'd toddle along to Bolshoi Prospect, and there find some cabbie . . . heh, heh!"

"Hee, hee, hee!" Akim Petrovich echoed deferentially. Again a hum, now on a merry note, passed through the crowd. At that moment the glass of a wall lamp cracked with a loud noise. Someone zealously rushed to put it right. Pseldonymov roused himself and gave the lamp a stern look, but the general did not even pay attention, and everything quieted down.

"I'm walking . . . and the night is so beautiful, still. Suddenly I hear music, stomping, dancing. I ask a policeman: Pseldonymov's getting married. So, brother, you're throwing a ball for the whole Petersburg side? ha, ha," he suddenly addressed Pseldonymov again.

"Hee, hee, hee! yes, sir..." echoed Akim Petrovich; the guests stirred again, but the stupidest thing of all was that Pseldonymov, though he did bow again, even now did not smile, just as if he were made of wood. "Is he a fool, or what?" thought Ivan Ilyich. "The ass ought to have smiled now, then everything would go swimmingly." Impatience raged in his heart. "I thought, why not visit my subordinate. He won't drive me out . . . glad or not, welcome the guest. Excuse me, please, brother. If I'm interfering, I'll go ... I only stopped to have a look..."

But little by little a general movement was beginning. Akim Petrovich gazed with a sweetened air, as if to say: "Could Your Excellency possibly interfere?" All the guests were stirring and

beginning to show the first tokens of casualness. The ladies almost all sat down. A good and positive sign. Those who were braver fanned themselves with handkerchiefs. One of them, in a shabby velvet dress, said something deliberately loudly. The officer she had addressed also wanted to reply loudly, but since the two of them were the only loud ones, he passed. The men, most of them clerks, plus two or three students, exchanged glances, as if urging each other to loosen up, coughed, and even began making a couple of steps in different directions. Anyhow, none of them was particularly timid, only they were all uncouth and almost all of them looked with animosity at the person who had barged in on them to disrupt their merrymaking. The officer, ashamed of his pusillanimity, gradually began to approach the table.

"But listen, brother, allow me to ask your name and patronymic?" Ivan Ilyich asked Pseldonymov.

"Porfiry Petrovich, Your Excellency," the man replied, goggle-eyed, as if on review.

"Now then, Porfiry Petrovich, introduce me to your young wife . . . Take me to . . . I..."

And he made a show of getting up. But Pseldonymov rushed headlong to the drawing room. The young bride, however, had been standing right at the door, but on hearing that the talk was about her, she hid at once. A minute later Pseldonymov led her out by the hand. Everyone made way, letting them pass. Ivan Ilyich rose solemnly and addressed her with a most amiable smile.

"Very, very glad to make your acquaintance," he said with a most high-society half bow, "and what's more on such a day..."

He gave a most insidious smile. The ladies got pleasantly excited.

"Sharmay," the lady in the velvet dress said almost aloud.

The bride was worthy of Pseldonymov. This was a thin little damsel, still only some seventeen years old, pale, with a very small face and a sharp little nose. Her small eyes, quick and furtive, were

not at all abashed, but, on the contrary, looked at him intently and even with a certain tinge of spite. Obviously, Pseldonymov had not taken her for her beauty. She was wearing a white muslin dress with pink doubling. Her neck was skinny, her body like a chicken's, all protruding bones. To the general's greeting she was able to say precisely nothing.

"Yes, you got yourself a pretty little thing," he went on in a low voice, as if addressing Pseldonymov alone, but purposely so that the bride heard it, too. But Pseldonymov said precisely nothing here as well, and this time did not even sway. It even seemed to Ivan Ilyich that there was in his eyes something cold, secretive, even something kept to himself, peculiar, malignant. And yet he had at all costs to get at some feeling. It was for that he came.

"A fine pair, though," he thought. "However..."

And he again addressed himself to the bride, who was placed beside him on the sofa, but all he received to his two or three questions was again only a "yes" or a "no," and in fact he did not quite receive even that.

"If only she'd get a little embarrassed," he went on to himself. "Then I could start joking. Otherwise there's no way out." And Akim Petrovich, as if on purpose, was also silent, though only out of stupidity, but still it was inexcusable.

"Gentlemen! am I not perhaps interfering with your pleasures?" he tried to address everyone in general. He felt that his palms were even sweating.

"No, sir . . . Don't worry, Your Excellency, we'll get started right away, and for now . . . we're cooling our heels, sir," the officer replied. The bride glanced at him with pleasure: the officer was still young and wore the uniform of some command or other. Pseldonymov stood right there, thrusting himself forward, and seemed to stick his hooked nose out still more than before. He listened and watched, like a lackey who stands holding a fur coat and waiting for the parting words of his masters to come to an end. Ivan Ilyich made this comparison himself;

he was at a loss, felt that he was ill at ease, terribly ill at ease, that the ground was slipping from under his feet, that he had gotten somewhere and could not get out, as if in the dark.

Suddenly everyone stepped aside, and a heavyset and not very tall woman appeared, elderly, simply dressed though with some festiveness, a big shawl around her shoulders, pinned at the throat, and wearing a bonnet to which she was obviously not accustomed. In her hands was a small, round tray on which stood a not yet started, but already uncorked, bottle of champagne and two glasses, no more nor less. The bottle was evidently meant for only two guests.

The elderly woman went straight up to the general.

"Don't find fault, Your Excellency," she said, bowing, "but since you haven't disdained us, doing us the honor of coming to my son's wedding, be so kind as to congratulate the young folk with wine. Don't disdain it, do us the honor."

Ivan Ilyich seized upon her as his salvation. She was not such an old woman, about forty-five or -six, no more. But she had such a kind, red-cheeked, such an open, round Russian face, she smiled so good-naturedly, bowed so simply, that Ivan Ilyich was almost reassured and began to have hopes.

"So yo-o-ou are the ma-ter-nal pa-a-arent of your so-o-on?" he said, rising from the sofa.

"The maternal parent, Your Excellency," Pseldonymov maundered, stretching his long neck and again sticking his nose out.

"Ah! Very glad, ve-ry glad to make your acquaintance."

"Don't scorn us, then, Your Excellency."

"Even with the greatest pleasure."

The tray was set down, Pseldonymov leaped over and poured the wine. Ivan Ilyich, still standing, took the glass.

"I am especially, especially glad of this occasion, since I can..." he began, "since I can . . . herewith pay my . . . In a word, as a superior . . . I wish you, madam" (he turned to the bride), "and you, my friend Porfiry—I wish you full, prosperous, and enduring happiness."

And, even with emotion, he drank off the glass, his seventh that evening. Pseldonymov looked serious and even sullen. The general was beginning to hate him painfully.

"And this hulk" (he glanced at the officer) "is stuck here, too. Why doesn't he shout 'hurrah!' Then it would take off, take right off..."

"And you, too, Akim Petrovich, drink and congratulate them," added the old woman, addressing the chief clerk. "You're a superior, he's your subordinate. Look after my boy, I ask you as a mother. And don't forget us in the future, dear Akim Petrovich, kind man that you are."

"How nice these Russian old women are!" thought Ivan Ilyich. "She's revived them all. I've always liked our folkways..."

At that moment another tray was brought to the table. It was carried by a wench in a rustling, not yet laundered calico dress with a crinoline. She could barely get her arms around the tray, it was so big. On it was a numberless multitude of little plates with apples, bonbons, gumdrops, candied fruit, walnuts, and so on and so forth. Till then the tray had been in the drawing room, for the pleasure of all the guests, mainly the ladies. But now it was brought over to the general alone.

"Don't scorn our victuals, Your Excellency. What we've got, we're glad to give," the old woman repeated, bowing.

"Heavens..." said Ivan Ilyich, and even with pleasure he took and crushed between his fingers a single walnut. He was resolved to be popular to the end.

Meanwhile the bride suddenly began to giggle.

"What, ma'am?" Ivan Ilyich asked with a smile, glad of some signs of life.

"It's Ivan Kostenkinych there, making me laugh, sir," she replied, looking down.

The general actually made out a blond youth, not bad-looking at all, hiding on the other side of the sofa in a chair, who kept whispering something to Madame Pseldonymov. The youth got up. He was apparently very timid and very young.

"I was telling her about the 'dream book,' Your Excellency," he murmured, as if making an excuse.

[A parodical Dream Book of Contemporary Russian Literature, written by N. F. Shcherbina, was circulated in manuscript at the end of the 1850s.]

"About what dream book?" Ivan Ilyich asked indulgently.

"The new one, sir, the literary one. I was telling her, sir, that if you see Mr. Panaev in your dreams, it means you'll spill coffee on your shirtfront, sir."

[Ivan Ivanovich Panaev (1812-62), a now-forgotten writer and journalist, published some important memoirs in The Contemporary, a liberal magazine he co-edited for a time with the poet Nikolai Nekrasov.]

"What innocence," thought Ivan Ilyich, even angrily. The youth, though he became very red as he was saying it, was still incredibly glad that he had told about Mr. Panaev.

"Well, yes, yes, I've heard..." responded His Excellency.

"No, there's an even better one," another voice said, right beside Ivan Ilyich, "there's a new lexicon being published, they say Mr. Kraevsky himself will write articles, Alferaki . . . and expose literature..."

[The "new lexicon" in question was the government-subsidized Encyclopedic Dictionary Composed by Russian Scholars and Writers, which began to appear in 1861. When A. A. Kraevsky (1810-89), then editor of the magazine Fatherland Notes, was named editor in chief of this project, there was general indignation, since he was neither a scholar nor a writer. N. D. Alferaki (d. 1860), a merchant from Taganrog in the south of Russia, was a notorious entrepreneur of the time. The expose (which Dostoyevsky jocularly refers to here, as he would later in Notes from Underground, with the mispronunciation "expose"), was the favorite journalistic form of the young radicals of the 1860s.]

This was said by a young man, not a bashful one this time, but a

rather casual one. He was wearing gloves, a white waistcoat, and held his hat in his hand. He did not dance, had a supercilious look, because he was a collaborator on the satirical magazine *The Firebrand*, set the tone, and showed up at this wedding by chance, invited as a guest of honor by Pseldonymov, with whom he was on intimate terms and with whom, still last year, he had shared a life of poverty "in corners" rented from some German woman. [It was possible to rent not a room but only part of a room. This living "in corners" signified the direst poverty (or, in Soviet Russia, the direst shortage of housing).] He did drink vodka, however, and for that purpose had already absented himself more than once to a cozy little back room, the way to which was known to all. The general took a terrible dislike to him.

"And that's funny, sir, because," the blond youth suddenly interrupted joyfully, the one who had told about the shirtfront and to whom the collaborator in the white waistcoat had given a hateful look for it, "funny because, Your Excellency, the writer assumes that Mr. Kraevsky doesn't know how to spell and thinks that 'expose literature' should be written 'espose literature'..."

But the poor youth barely finished. He could see by his eyes that the general had known that long ago, because the general also became as if abashed himself, obviously because he did know it. The young man was incredibly ashamed. He managed hurriedly to efface himself somewhere, and for the rest of the time afterward was very sad. Instead, the casual collaborator on *The Firebrand* came closer still and, it seemed, was intending to sit down somewhere nearby. To Ivan Ilyich such casualness seemed a bit ticklish.

"Yes! tell me, please, Porfiry," he began, in order to talk about something, "why—I've been wanting to ask you personally about it—why are you called Pseldonymov, and not Pseudonymov? Surely you're Pseudonymov?"

"I'm unable to give a precise report, Your Excellency," Pseldonymov replied.

"It must have been mixed up already on his father's papers, sir, when he entered the service, sir, so now he's stayed Pseldonymov," Akim Petrovich responded. "It happens, sir."

"Ab-so-lutely," the general picked up heatedly, "absolutely, because, consider for yourself: Pseudonymov—that comes from the literary word 'pseudonym.' Well, and Pseldonymov doesn't mean anything."

"Out of stupidity, sir," Akim Petrovich added.

"That is, what, in fact, is out of stupidity?"

"The Russian people, sir; out of stupidity they sometimes change letters, sir, and pronounce things sometimes in their own way, sir. For instance, they say ninvalid, when they ought to say invalid, sir."

"Well, yes . . . ninvalid, heh, heh, heh..."

"They also say liberry, Your Excellency," the tall officer blurted out, having long had an itch to distinguish himself somehow.

"That is, liberry meaning what?"

"Liberry instead of library, Your Excellency."

"Ah, yes, liberry . . . instead of library . . . Well, yes, yes . . . heh, heh, heh!..." Ivan Ilyich was obliged to chuckle for the officer as well.

The officer straightened his tie.

"And they also say perfick," the collaborator on The Firebrand attempted to mix in. But His Excellency tried this time not to hear. He was not going to chuckle for everyone.

"Perfick instead of perfect," the "collaborator" went on pestering with visible irritation.

Ivan Ilyich gave him a stern look.

"Stop pestering him!" Pseldonymov whispered to the collaborator.

"What do you mean, I'm just talking. What, can't I talk?" the other objected in a whisper, but nevertheless fell silent and with concealed rage left the room.

He made his way straight to the alluring little back room where, ever since the evening began, a small table had been placed for the

dancing gentlemen, covered with a Yaroslavl tablecloth, on which stood vodka of two kinds, pickled herring, cheap caviar, and a bottle of the strongest sherry from the national cellar. With spite in his heart, he was just pouring himself some vodka, when suddenly in ran the medical student with the tousled hair, the foremost dancer and can-canner at Pseldonymov's ball. With hasty greed he rushed for the decanter.

"They're starting now!" he said, hurriedly serving himself. "Come and watch: I'll do a solo upside down, and after supper I'll risk the fish. It's even suitable for a wedding. A friendly hint, so to speak, to Pseldonymov . . . She's nice, this Kleopatra Semyonovna, you can risk whatever you like with her."

[The folk dance called "the fish" was described by Ivan Turgenev in his *Old Portraits* (1881) as one in which a male soloist imitates the movements of a fish taken out of the water.]

"He's a retrograde," the collaborator said gloomily, drinking his glass.

"Who's a retrograde?"

"That one, that personage, sitting in front of the gumdrops. A retrograde, I tell you!"

"Ah, you!" the student muttered, and dashed out of the room, hearing the ritornello of the quadrille.

The collaborator, left alone, poured himself some more for the sake of greater bravado and independence, drank up, ate a bite, and never before had the actual state councillor Ivan Ilyich acquired for himself a fiercer enemy or a more implacable avenger than this slighted-by-him collaborator on *The Firebrand*, especially after two glasses of vodka. Alas! Ivan Ilyich suspected nothing of the sort. Nor did he yet suspect another capital circumstance, which had an influence on all further mutual relations of the guests with His Excellency. The thing was that, though for his part he had given a decent and even detailed explanation of his presence at his subordinate's wedding, this explanation had not in fact satisfied

anyone, and the guests went on being embarrassed. But suddenly everything changed, as if by magic; they all calmed down and were ready to make merry, guffaw, squeal, and dance just as if the unexpected guest were not in the room at all. The reason for it was the rumor, the whisper, the news which suddenly spread, no one knew how, that the guest seemed to be . . . under the influence. And though the matter had, at first glance, the look of the most terrible slander, it gradually began to justify itself, as it were, so that everything suddenly became clear. What's more, they suddenly became extraordinarily free. And it was at this same moment that the quadrille began, the last one before supper, to which the medical student had hastened so.

And just as Ivan Ilyich was addressing himself to the bride again, trying this time to get at her with some quip, the tall officer suddenly jumped over to her and swung himself down on one knee. She jumped up from the sofa at once and fluttered off with him to line up for the quadrille. The officer did not even apologize, nor did she even glance at the general as she left, as if she were even glad of her deliverance.

"However, essentially she's in her rights," thought Ivan Ilyich, "and besides, they don't know propriety."

"Hm . . . you mustn't stand on ceremony, brother Porfiry," he turned to Pseldonymov. "Perhaps you have something there ... to tend to ... or whatever . . . please, don't be embarrassed.—Is he keeping watch on me, or what?" he added to himself.

He was beginning to find Pseldonymov unbearable, with his long neck and eyes fixed intently on him. In short, all this was not it, not it at all, but Ivan Ilyich was still far from wanting to admit it.

The quadrille began.

"Shall I, Your Excellency?" Akim Petrovich asked, deferentially holding the bottle in his hands and preparing to fill His Excellency's glass.

"I ... I don't really know if..."

But Akim Petrovich, with a reverently beaming face, was already

pouring the champagne. Having filled his glass, he also, as if on the sly, as if thievishly, shrinking and cringing, filled his own, with the difference that he filled it one whole finger less, which was somehow more deferential. He was like a woman in childbirth sitting next to his immediate superior. What indeed was he to talk about? Yet he had to entertain His Excellency even out of duty, since he had the honor of keeping him company. The champagne served as a way out, and it was even pleasing to His Excellency to have his glass filled— not for the sake of the champagne, which was warm and the most natural swill, but just so, morally pleasing.

"The old boy wants a drink himself," thought Ivan Ilyich, "and he doesn't dare without me. I mustn't hinder . . . And it's ridiculous if the bottle just stands between us."

He took a sip, which in any case seemed better than just sitting there.

"I'm here," he began, with pauses and emphases, "I'm here, so to speak, by chance, and, of course, it may be that the others find . . . that it's ... so to speak, in-ap-pro-priate for me to be at such a . . . gathering."

Akim Petrovich was silent and listened with timid curiosity.

"But I hope you understand why I'm here . . . It's not really that I came to drink wine. Heh, heh!"

Akim Petrovich was about to chuckle along with His Excellency, but somehow stopped short and again did not respond with anything reassuring.

"I'm here ... in order, so to speak, to encourage ... to show, so to speak, a moral, so to speak, goal," Ivan Ilyich went on, vexed at Akim Petrovich's obtuseness, but suddenly fell silent himself. He saw that poor Akim Petrovich had even lowered his eyes, as if he were guilty of something. The general, in some perplexity, hastened to take another sip from his glass, while Akim Petrovich, as if his whole salvation lay in it, seized the bottle and poured more.

"It's not that you have so many resources," thought Ivan Ilyich,

looking sternly at poor Akim Petrovich. The latter, sensing this stern general's glance on him, resolved now to be definitively silent and not raise his eyes. So they sat facing each other for two minutes or so, a painful two minutes for Akim Petrovich.

A couple of words about this Akim Petrovich. He was a placid man, like a hen, of the oldest cast, nurtured on obsequiousness, and yet a kind man and even a noble one. He came from Petersburg Russians—that is, both his father and his father's father were born, grew up, and served in Petersburg and never once left Petersburg. These are a totally special type of Russian people. They have scarcely the faintest notion of Russia, and that does not trouble them at all. Their whole interest is confined to Petersburg and, above all, to the place where they serve. All their cares are concentrated around penny preference, grocery shop, and monthly salary. They do not know even a single Russian custom, nor a single Russian song, except "Luchinushka," [The slow and mournful "Luchinushka" is perhaps the most well known of all Russian songs.] and that only because barrel organs play it. However, there are two essential and unshakable tokens by which you may instantly distinguish a true Russian from a Petersburg Russian. The first is that all Petersburg Russians, all, without exception, always say Academic Bulletin and never Petersburg Bulletin. [The Petersburg Bulletin was published by the Academy of Science in Petersburg; hence the telltale nickname.] The second, equally essential token is that a Petersburg Russian never uses the word "breakfast," but always says "*Frühstück*," ["breakfast" in German] putting special emphasis on the *Früh*. By these basic and distinctive tokens you can always distinguish them: in short, this is a humble type and was formed definitively over the last thirty-five years. However, Akim Petrovich was by no means a fool. Had the general asked him something appropriate for him, he would have replied and kept up the conversation, whereas it was quite unfitting for a subordinate to answer such questions, though Akim Petrovich was dying of curiosity to learn something more specific

about His Excellency's real intentions . . .

And meanwhile Ivan Ilyich was falling more and more into reverie and into a certain round of ideas; distracted, he imperceptibly but ceaselessly sipped from his glass. Akim Petrovich at once and most diligently poured more. Both were silent. Ivan Ilyich was beginning to watch the dancing, and soon it attracted his attention somewhat. Suddenly one circumstance even surprised him . . .

The dancing was indeed merry. Here people danced precisely in simplicity of heart, to make merry and even get wild. Among the dancers very few were adroit; but the non-adroit stomped so hard that they might have been taken for adroit. The officer distinguished himself above all: he especially liked the figures where he remained alone, as in a solo. Then he would bend himself amazingly—namely, standing straight as a milepost, he would suddenly lean to one side so that you would think he was about to fall over, but at the next step he would suddenly lean to the opposite side, at the same sharp angle to the floor. He maintained a most serious expression and danced with the full conviction that everyone was amazed at him. Another gentleman, after getting potted beforehand, prior to the quadrille, fell asleep beside his partner at the second figure, so that his lady had to dance alone. A young registrar, who was dancing away with the lady in the blue scarf, in all the figures and all five quadrilles that had been danced that evening, kept pulling one and the same stunt—namely, he would lag behind his partner a little, pick up the end of her scarf, and, in air, at the changing of partners, would manage to plant about twenty kisses on it. The lady would go sailing on ahead of him as if she noticed nothing. The medical student indeed performed a solo upside down and provoked furious rapture, stomping, and squeals of pleasure. In short, there was unconstraint in the extreme. Ivan Ilyich, in whom the wine was also having its effect, was beginning to smile, but gradually some bitter doubt began to creep into his soul: of course, he very much liked casualness and unconstraint; he had desired, his soul had even called for this casualness, as they were all backing away,

but now this casualness was beginning to go beyond limits. One lady, for instance, wearing a shabby blue velvet dress, bought at fourth hand, pinned her skirt up for the sixth figure in such a way that it was as if she were wearing trousers. This was that same Kleopatra Semyonovna with whom one could risk anything, as her partner, the medical student, had put it. Of the medical student there was nothing else to say: simply Fokine. [Fokine, "hero of the *can-can*," was popular in Petersburg during the 1860s. His dancing was considered the ultimate in shamelessness.] How could it be? First they backed away, and then suddenly they got so quickly emancipated! It seemed like nothing, yet this transition was somehow strange: it foreboded something. As if they had totally forgotten there was any Ivan Ilyich in the world. Naturally, he was the first to laugh and he even risked applauding. Akim Petrovich deferentially chuckled in unison with him, though, by the way, with obvious pleasure and not suspecting that His Excellency was already beginning to nurse a new worm in his heart.

"You dance nicely, young man," Ivan Ilyich felt forced to say to the student as he was passing by: the quadrille had just ended.

The student turned sharply to him, pulled some sort of grimace, and, bringing his face indecently close to His Excellency's, gave a loud cock-crow. This was too much. Ivan Ilyich got up from the table. In spite of that, there followed a burst of irrepressible laughter, because the cock-crow was astonishingly natural, and the whole grimace was completely unexpected. Ivan Ilyich was still standing in perplexity when Pseldonymov himself suddenly came and, bowing, began inviting him to supper. After him came his mother.

"Your Excellency," she said, bowing, "do us the honor, dearie, don't scorn our poverty..."

"I ... I really don't know..." Ivan Ilyich began, "it was not for this that I ... I ... was just about to leave..."

He was indeed holding his hat in his hand. Not only that: just then, at that very instant, he had given himself his word of honor that he would leave without fail, at once, whatever the cost, and not stay for

anything, and . . . and he stayed. A minute later he was leading the procession to the table. Pseldonymov and his mother went ahead, clearing the way for him. He was seated in the place of honor, and again a full bottle of champagne appeared before him. There were appetizers: herring and vodka. He reached out, poured himself a huge glass of vodka, and drank it. He had never drunk vodka before. He felt as if he were tumbling down a mountain, falling, falling, falling, that he must hold on, get a grip on something, but there was no opportunity for that.

His position was indeed becoming more and more peculiar. Not only that: it was some sort of mockery of fate. God knows what had happened to him in one little hour. When he came in, he was, so to speak, opening his embrace to all mankind and all his subordinates; and here, before one little hour had passed, he felt and knew with all his aching heart that he hated Pseldonymov, cursed him, and his wife, and his wedding. Not only that: from his face, from his eyes alone, he could see that Pseldonymov also hated him, that his eyes were all but saying: "Go to blazes, curse you! Fastened yourself on my neck! ..." All this he had long since read in his look.

Of course, even now, as he was sitting down at the table, Ivan Ilyich would sooner have let his hand be cut off than admit sincerely, not only aloud, but even to himself, that all this was indeed exactly so. The moment had not yet fully come, and for now there was still a certain moral balance. But his heart, his heart ... it was sick! it begged for freedom, air, rest. Ivan Ilyich was all too kindly a man.

He knew, he knew very well, that he should have left long ago, and not only so as to leave, but so as to save himself. That all this had suddenly become something else—well, had turned out totally unlike his dream on the planks that evening.

"Why did I come? Did I really come to eat and drink here?" he asked himself, munching on pickled herring. He even got into negation. There were moments when irony at his great deed stirred in his soul. He was even beginning not to understand himself why, in

fact, he had come.

But how could he leave? To leave like that, without going through with it, was impossible. "What will people say? They'll say I go dragging myself around to indecent places. In fact, it will even come out that way if I don't go through with it. What, for instance, will be said tomorrow (because it will spread everywhere), by Stepan Nikiforovich, by Semyon Ivanych, in the offices, at the Shembels', at the Shubins'? No, I must leave in such a way that they all understand why I came, I must reveal the moral purpose..." And meanwhile this touching moment refused to be caught. "They don't even respect me," he went on. "What are they laughing at? They're so casual, as if unfeeling . . . Yes, I've long suspected the whole younger generation of being unfeeling! I must stay, whatever the cost! . . . They've just been dancing, but once they've gathered around the table . . . I'll start talking about problems, about reforms, about Russia's greatness . . . I'll still get them carried away! Yes! Maybe absolutely nothing is lost yet . . . Maybe this is how it always is in reality. Only how shall I begin with them so as to attract them? What sort of method must I come up with? I'm at a loss, simply at a loss . . . And what do they want, what do they demand? ... I see they're laughing at something over there . . . Can it be at me, oh, Lord God! But what is it that I want . . . why am I here, why don't I leave, what am I after?..." He thought this, and some sort of shame, some deep, unbearable shame wrung his heart more and more.

But it all went on that way, one thing after another.

Exactly two minutes after he sat down at the table, a dreadful thought took possession of his whole being. He suddenly felt that he was terribly drunk, that is, not as before, but definitively drunk. The cause of it was the glass of vodka, which, drunk on top of the champagne, produced an immediate effect. He felt, he sensed with his whole being, that he was definitively weakening. Of course, this greatly increased his bravado, yet consciousness did not abandon him, but cried out: "Not nice, not nice at all, and even quite indecent!"

Of course, his unsteady, drunken thoughts could not settle on any one point: suddenly, even tangibly for himself, something like two sides appeared in him. On one was bravado, a yearning for victory, the overthrowing of obstacles, and a desperate conviction that he would still reach his goal. The other side made itself known to him by a tormenting ache in his soul and some gnawing at his heart. "What will people say? where will it end? what will tomorrow bring, tomorrow, tomorrow!..."

Earlier he had somehow vaguely sensed that he already had enemies among the guests. "That's because I was drunk then, too," he thought with tormenting doubt. What was his horror now, when he indeed became convinced, by indubitable signs, that he indeed had enemies at the table, and it was no longer possible to doubt it.

"And for what? for what?" he thought.

At this table all thirty guests were placed, some of whom were definitively done in. The others behaved with a certain nonchalant, malignant independence; they all shouted, talked loudly, offered premature toasts, fired bread balls with the ladies. One, a sort of uncomely person in a greasy frock coat, fell off his chair as soon as he sat at the table, and remained that way until the end of the supper. Another absolutely insisted on climbing onto the table and delivering a toast, and only the officer, who grabbed him by the coattails, restrained his premature enthusiasm. The supper was a perfect omniumgatherum, though a cook had been hired to prepare it, some general's serf: there was a galantine, there was tongue with potatoes, there were meat cakes with green peas, there was, finally, a goose, and, to crown it all, blancmange. For drinks there were beer, vodka, and sherry. A bottle of champagne stood in front of the general alone, which forced him to pour for Akim Petrovich as well, since the man no longer dared use his own initiative at supper. For toasts the rest of the guests were meant to drink Georgian wine or whatever there happened to be. The table itself consisted of many tables put together, among them even a card table. It was covered with many

tablecloths, including a colored Yaroslavl one. Gentlemen and ladies were seated alternately. Pseldonymov's maternal parent did not want to sit at the table; she bustled about and gave orders. Instead there appeared a malignant female figure who had not made an appearance earlier, in a sort of reddish silk dress, with a bound cheek, and in the tallest of bonnets. As it turned out, this was the bride's mother, who had finally agreed to come from the back room for supper. She had not come out till then on account of her implacable enmity for Pseldonymov's mother; but of that we shall speak later. This lady looked spitefully, even mockingly, at the general, and apparently did not wish to be introduced to him. To Ivan Ilyich this figure seemed highly suspect. But, besides her, certain other persons were also suspect and inspired an involuntary apprehension and alarm. It even seemed that they were in some conspiracy among themselves, and precisely against Ivan Ilyich. At least it seemed so to him, and in the course of the supper he became more and more convinced of it. Namely: there was malignancy in one gentleman with a little beard, a free artist of some sort; he even glanced several times at Ivan Ilyich and then, turning to his neighbor, whispered something in his ear. Another, a student, was in truth already thoroughly drunk, but all the same was suspect by certain tokens. The medical student also boded ill. Even the officer himself was not altogether trustworthy. But an especial and obvious hatred shone from the collaborator on *The Firebrand*: he sprawled so in his chair, had such a proud and presumptuous air, snorted so independently! And though the rest of the guests did not pay any special attention to the collaborator, who had written only four little ditties for *The Firebrand*, thus becoming a liberal, and evidently even disliked him, still, when a bread ball suddenly fell next to Ivan Ilyich, obviously sent in his direction, he was ready to stake his head that the perpetrator of this bread ball was none other than the collaborator on *The Firebrand*.

All this, of course, affected him in a lamentable fashion.

Particularly disagreeable was yet another observation: Ivan Ilyich was fully convinced that he was beginning to articulate words somehow unclearly and with difficulty, that he wanted to say a great deal, but his tongue would not move. Then, that he had suddenly begun as if to forget himself and, above all, out of the blue, would suddenly snort and laugh when there was nothing at all to laugh at. This disposition quickly passed after a glass of champagne, which Ivan Ilyich, though he had poured it for himself, had no wish to drink, but suddenly drank somehow quite accidentally. After this glass, he suddenly almost wanted to weep. He felt he was lapsing into the most peculiar sentimentality; he was beginning to love again, to love everybody, even Pseldonymov, even the collaborator on *The Firebrand*. He suddenly wanted to embrace them all, to forget everything and make peace. Not only that: to tell them everything frankly, everything, everything, that is, what a kind and nice man he was, with what excellent abilities. How he was going to be useful to the fatherland, how he was able to make the fair sex laugh, and, above all, what a progressist he was, how humanely he was prepared to condescend to everyone, to the most lowly, and, finally, in conclusion, to tell frankly the whole motive that had induced him to come, uninvited, to Pseldonymov's, drink two bottles of champagne, and overjoy them with his presence.

"The truth, the sacred truth first of all, and frankness! I'll get them with frankness. They'll believe me, I see it clearly; they even look hostile, but when I reveal everything to them, I'll subject them irresistibly. They'll fill their glasses and, with a shout, drink my health. The officer, I'm sure of it, will break his glass on his spur. There may even be a shout of 'hurrah!' Even if they should decide to toss me hussar fashion, I wouldn't resist, it would even be rather nice. I'll kiss the bride on the forehead; she's a sweetie. Akim Petrovich is also a very good man. Pseldonymov, of course, will improve in time. He lacks, so to speak, this worldly polish . . . And though, of course, this whole new generation lacks this delicacy of heart, but . . . but I'll tell

them about the modern destiny of Russia among the other European powers. I'll mention the peasant question, too, yes, and . . . and they'll all love me, and I'll come out with glory!..."

These dreams were, of course, very pleasant, but the unpleasant thing was that amid all these rosy hopes Ivan Ilyich suddenly discovered in himself yet another unexpected ability: namely, spitting. At least the saliva suddenly began leaping from his mouth quite regardless of his will. He noticed it because Akim Petrovich, whose cheek he had sprayed, was sitting there not daring, out of deference, to wipe it off right away. Ivan Ilyich took a napkin and suddenly wiped it off himself. But this at once appeared so preposterous to him, so beyond anything reasonable, that he fell silent and began to be surprised. Akim Petrovich, though he had been drinking, sat all the same as if he were in shock. Ivan Ilyich now realized that, for almost a quarter of an hour already, he had been telling him about some most interesting topic, but that Akim Petrovich, while listening to him, was as if not only embarrassed, but even afraid of something. Pseldonymov, who was sitting two chairs away, also kept stretching his neck toward him, his head inclined to one side, listening with a most disagreeable air. He actually was as if keeping watch on him. Glancing around at the guests, he saw that many were looking straight at him and guffawing. But the strangest thing of all was that this did not embarrass him in the least; on the contrary, he sipped once more from his glass and suddenly started speaking for all to hear.

"I was saying!" he began as loudly as he could, "gentlemen, I was just saying to Akim Petrovich that Russia . . . yes, precisely Russia ... in short, you understand what I mean to sa-sa-say . . . Russia, in my deepest conviction, experiences hu-humaneness..."

"Hu-humaneness!" came from the other end of the table.

"Hu-hu!"

"Coo-coo!"

Ivan Ilyich paused. Pseldonymov rose from his chair and started

peering: who had shouted? Akim Petrovich was covertly shaking his head, as if admonishing the guests. Ivan Ilyich noticed it very well, but painfully held his tongue.

"Humaneness!" he went on stubbornly. "And this evening . . . and precisely this evening I was saying to Stepan Niki-ki-forovich . . . yes . . . that . . . that the renewal, so to speak, of things ..."

"Your Excellency!" came loudly from the other end of the table.

"What can I do for you?" the interrupted Ivan Ilyich replied, trying to make out who had shouted.

"Precisely nothing, Your Excellency, I got carried away, please continue, con-tin-ue!" the voice came again.

Ivan Ilyich winced.

"The renewal, so to speak, of these very things..."

"Your Excellency!" the voice shouted again.

"What is it you want?"

"Hello there!"

This time Ivan Ilyich could not restrain himself. He interrupted his speech and turned to the offender and violator of order. This was a still very young student, totally crooked and arousing enormous suspicion. He had been hollering for a long time and even broke a glass and two plates, insisting that that was what was done at weddings. At the same moment that Ivan Ilyich turned to him, the officer began to reprimand the shouter sternly.

"What's with you, why are you hollering? You ought to be taken out, that's what!"

"It's not about you, Your Excellency, it's not about you! Do continue!" shouted the merrymaking schoolboy, sprawling on his chair. "Do continue, I'm listening and I'm very, ve-ry, very pleased with you! Pra-aiseworthy, pra-aiseworthy!"

"A drunken brat!" Pseldonymov prompted in a whisper.

"I can see he's drunk, but..."

"It's that I just told an amusing anecdote, Your Excellency!" the officer began. "About a certain lieutenant of our command, who had

exactly that way of talking to superiors; so now he's imitating him. To every word of his superior, he would add: pra-aiseworthy, pra-aiseworthy! He was expelled from the service for it ten years ago."

"Wha-what lieutenant is that?"

"From our command, Your Excellency, he went mad over this praiseworthy. First they admonished him with milder measures, then they put him under arrest . . . His superior officer admonished him like a father; and all he said was: pra-aiseworthy, pra-aiseworthy! And it's strange: he was a courageous officer, six foot six. They wanted to court-martial him, but noticed that he was crazy."

"Meaning ... a prankster. For prankishness they shouldn't be so severe ... I, for my part, am ready to forgive..."

"There was medical evidence, Your Excellency."

"What! an autopsy?"

"Good heavens, he was perfectly alive, sir."

A loud and almost general burst of laughter came from the guests, who in the beginning had behaved themselves decorously. Ivan Ilyich became furious.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" he cried, at first almost without stammering, "I am quite well able to distinguish that autopsies are not performed on the living. I thought that in his madness he was no longer living . . . that is, already dead . . . that is, I mean to say . . . that you don't love me . . . And yet I love you all . . . yes, and I love Por . . . Porfiry ... I humiliate myself by saying so..."

At that moment an enormous spit flew out of Ivan Ilyich's mouth and spattered on the tablecloth in a most conspicuous place. Pseldonymov rushed to wipe it up with his napkin. This last disaster finally crushed him.

"Gentlemen, this is too much!" he cried out in despair.

"A drunk man, Your Excellency," Pseldonymov prompted again.

"Porfiry! I see that you . . . all . . . yes! I say that I hope . . . yes, I challenge you all to say: how have I humiliated myself?"

Ivan Ilyich was on the verge of tears.

"Your Excellency, good heavens, sir!"

"Porfiry, I turn to you . . . Say, if I came . . . yes . . . yes, to the wedding, I had a goal. I wanted to morally uplift ... I wanted them to feel. I address you all: am I very humiliated in your eyes, or not?"

Deathly silence. That was just the thing, that there was deathly silence, and to such a categorical question. "Why, why don't they cry out at least at such a moment!" flashed in His Excellency's head. But the guests only exchanged looks. Akim Petrovich was sitting there more dead than alive, and Pseldonymov, numb with fear, repeated to himself a terrible question, which had already presented itself to him long before:

"What am I going to get for all this tomorrow?"

Suddenly the already very drunk collaborator on The Firebrand, who had been sitting in glum silence, addressed Ivan Ilyich directly and, his eyes flashing, began to reply on behalf of the whole company.

"Yes, sir!" he cried in a thundering voice, "yes, sir, you've humiliated yourself, yes, sir, you're a retrograde . . . Re-tro-grade!"

"Young man, come to your senses! To whom, as it were, are you speaking!" Ivan Ilyich cried furiously, again jumping up from his seat.

"To you, and, secondly, I'm not a young man . . . You came to show off and seek popularity."

"Pseldonymov, what is it!" cried Ivan Ilyich.

But Pseldonymov jumped up in such horror that he stood like a post and absolutely did not know what to start doing. The guests, too, froze in their places. The artist and the student were applauding and shouting, "bravo, bravo!"

The collaborator went on shouting with irrepressible rage:

"Yes, you came to flaunt your humaneness! You interfered with everybody's merrymaking. You drank champagne without realizing that it was too expensive for a clerk who makes ten roubles a month, and I suspect that you're one of those superiors who relish their subordinates' young wives! Not only that, I'm convinced that you're in favor of tax-farming . . . Yes, yes, yes!"

"Pseldonymov, Pseldonymov!" Ivan Ilyich cried, holding his arms out to him. He felt that each of the collaborator's words was like a new dagger in his heart.

"Wait, Your Excellency, kindly do not worry!" Pseldonymov cried out energetically, jumped over to the collaborator, grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, and pulled him away from the table. It was even impossible to expect such physical strength from the scrawny Pseldonymov. But the collaborator was very drunk, and Pseldonymov perfectly sober. Then he gave him several whacks on the back and chucked him out the door.

"You're all scoundrels!" the collaborator cried. "By tomorrow I'll make caricatures of you all in The Firebrand!..."

They all jumped up from their seats.

"Your Excellency, Your Excellency!" cried Pseldonymov, his mother, and some of the guests, crowding around the general. "Calm yourself, Your Excellency!"

"No, no!" cried the general, "I'm destroyed ... I came ... I wanted, so to speak, to baptize. And look here, for all that, for all that!"

He sank onto the chair as if unconscious, put both hands on the table, and lowered his head to them, right into a dish of blancmange. No need to describe the universal horror. A minute later he rose, as if wishing to leave, staggered, tripped against the leg of a chair, fell flat on the floor, and started snoring . . .

This happens to non-drinkers when they accidentally get drunk. To the last stroke, to the last instant they remain conscious, and then suddenly fall as if cut down. Ivan Ilyich lay on the floor, having lost all consciousness. Pseldonymov seized himself by the hair and froze in that position. The guests hastily began to depart, each discussing in his own way what had happened. It was about three o'clock in the morning.

The main thing was that Pseldonymov's situation was much worse than could have been imagined, quite apart from the whole unattractiveness of the present circumstances. And while Ivan Ilyich is

lying on the floor, with Pseldonymov standing over him, desperately tugging himself by the hair, let us interrupt the chosen current of our story and give a few words of explanation about Porfiry Petrovich Pseldonymov himself.

Still as recently as a month before his marriage, he was perishing quite irretrievably. He came from the provinces, where his father had once served as something and where he had died while under prosecution. When, some five months before the wedding, after perishing for a whole year in Petersburg, Pseldonymov got his tenrouble post, he was resurrected in body and spirit, but circumstances soon laid him low again. In the whole world there remained only two Pseldonymovs, he and his mother, who had left the provinces after her husband's death. Mother and son were perishing together in the cold and feeding on doubtful substances. There were days when Pseldonymov took a mug and went to the Fontanka himself to fetch water, which he also drank there. Having obtained his post, he and his mother somehow settled themselves in corners somewhere. She began taking in laundry, and he knocked together some savings over four months, so as somehow to provide himself with boots and a bit of an overcoat. And how much grief he endured in his office: his superiors would approach him asking if it was long since he had taken a bath. There was a rumor that he had nests of bedbugs thriving under the collar of his uniform. But Pseldonymov was a man of firm character. In appearance, he was quiet and placid; he had very little education, and hardly ever was any conversation heard from him. I do not know positively whether he thought, made plans and systems, or dreamed of anything. But instead he was developing some instinctive, deep-seated, unconscious resolve to make his way out of his nasty situation. There was an antlike persistence in him: destroy an anthill and they will immediately start rebuilding it, destroy it again—again they will rebuild it, and so on without tiring. This was a nest-building and domestic being. One could see written on his brow that he would find his way, make his nest, and perhaps even put

something aside. His mother alone in the whole world loved him and loved him to distraction. She was a firm, tireless, hardworking woman, and kind besides. They would just have gone on living in their corners for another five or six years, until circumstances changed, had they not run into the retired titular councillor Mlekopitaev, who had been a treasurer serving somewhere in the provinces, but had recently moved to Petersburg and settled there with his family. He knew Pseldonymov and had once owed something to his father. He had a bit of money, not much, of course, but he did have it; how much there was in reality—of this no one knew anything, neither his wife, nor his elder daughter, nor his relations. He had two daughters, and since he was a terrible despot, a drunkard, a domestic tyrant, and ailing besides, he suddenly took a notion to marry one daughter to Pseldonymov: "I know him," he said, "the father was a good man, and the son will be a good man." Whatever Mlekopitaev wanted, he did; no sooner said than done. He was a very strange despot. He spent most of his time sitting in his armchair, some illness having deprived him of the use of his legs, though that did not prevent him from drinking vodka. He drank and swore the whole day long. He was a wicked man; he absolutely had to torment someone constantly. For that he kept several distant female relations around him: his own sister, ailing and shrewish; his wife's two sisters, also wicked and multiloquent; and then his old aunt, who had broken a rib on some occasion. He kept yet another sponger, a Russified German woman, for her talent in telling him tales from *The Thousand and One Nights*. All his pleasure consisted in picking on these unfortunate hangers-on, cursing them constantly and seven ways to Sunday, though none of them, including his wife, who had been born with a toothache, dared to make a peep before him. He got them to quarrel among themselves, invented and fomented gossip and strife among them, and afterward guffawed and rejoiced seeing how they all nearly came to blows among themselves. He was overjoyed when his elder daughter, who for about ten years had lived in poverty with some

officer, her husband, was finally widowed and moved in with him, bringing three small, ailing children. Her children he could not stand, but since their appearance increased the material on which his daily experiments could be conducted, the old man was very pleased. This whole heap of wicked women and ailing children, together with their tormentor, crowded into a wooden house on the Petersburg side, not eating enough, because the old man was miserly and handed out money by kopecks, though he did not stint on his vodka; not sleeping enough, because the old man suffered from insomnia and demanded to be entertained. In short, the whole thing lived in poverty and cursed its fate. It was at this time that Mlekopitaev sought out Pseldonymov. He was struck by his long nose and humble look. His puny and homely younger daughter had then turned seventeen. Though she had once attended some German Schule, she had not learned much more in it than the rudiments. After that, she grew up, scrofulous and sapless, under the crutch of her lame and drunken parent, amid a bedlam of household gossip, spying, and calumny. She never had any girlfriends, or any intelligence. She had long been wishing to get married. With other people she was silent, but at home, by her mummy and the spongers, she was wicked and piercing as a little drill. She particularly liked pinching and dealing out swats to her sister's children, peaching on them for stolen sugar or bread, which caused an endless and unquenchable quarrel between her and her elder sister. The old man himself offered her to Pseldonymov. But he, wretched though he was, nevertheless asked for some time to reflect. He and his mother pondered long together. But the house was to be registered in the bride's name, and though it was wooden, though it was one-storied and disgusting, it was still worth something. On top of that came four hundred roubles—when would he ever save up so much! "Why am I taking a man into my house?" the drunken tyrant shouted. "First, since you're all females, and I'm sick of just females. I want Pseldonymov to dance to my music, too, because I'm his benefactor. Second, I'm taking him, because you all don't want it and

you're angry. So I'll do it just to spite you. What I've said I'll do, I'll do! And you, Porfirka, beat her when she's your wife; she's had seven demons sitting in her since the day she was born. Drive them all out, I'll even get the stick ready..."

Pseldonymov kept silent, but he had already decided. He and his mother were received into the house still prior to the wedding washed, clothed, shod, given money for the wedding. The old man patronized them, perhaps precisely because the whole family spited them. He even liked the old Pseldonymov woman, so he restrained himself and did not pick on her. However, Pseldonymov himself he made dance the Little Cossack for him a week before the wedding. [The "Little Cossack" is a folk dance imitative of military steps.] "Well, enough, I just wanted to make sure you don't forget yourself with me," he said when the dance was finished. He gave just enough money for the wedding and invited all his relations and acquaintances. On Pseldonymov's side there were only the collaborator on The Firebrand and Akim Petrovich, the guest of honor. Pseldonymov knew very well that the bride loathed him and that she would much rather be marrying an officer and not him. But he endured it all, for such was his arrangement with his mother. The whole day of the wedding and the whole evening the old man spent drinking and cursing in nasty language. The whole family, on account of the wedding, huddled in the back rooms, which were crowded to the point of stinking. The front rooms were reserved for the ball and the supper. Finally, when the old man fell asleep, completely drunk, at around eleven o'clock in the evening, the bride's mother, who had been especially angry with Pseldonymov's mother that day, decided to exchange her wrath for mercy and come out for the ball and the supper. Ivan Ilyich's appearance upset everything. Mrs. Mlekopitaev became embarrassed, offended, and began accusing them of not warning her that a general had been invited. They assured her that he had come on his own, uninvited—she was so stupid that she refused to believe it. Champagne was necessary. Pseldonymov's mother had

only one rouble, Pseldonymov himself—not a kopeck. They had to bow and scrape before the wicked old Mlekopitaev woman, begging money for one bottle, then for another. They pictured future official relations for her, the career, trying to bring her to reason. She finally gave her own money, but she made Pseldonymov drink such a cup of gall and vinegar [re. The drink Christ was offered just before the crucifixion (Matthew 27:34).] that he ran more than once into the little room where the nuptial bed had been prepared, seized himself silently by the hair, and threw himself headfirst onto the bed destined for paradisaal delights, all atremble with impotent rage. No! Ivan Ilyich did not know the cost of the two bottles of Jackson he had drunk that night. What was Pseldonymov's horror, anguish, and even despair, when the business with Ivan Ilyich ended in so unexpected a way! Again there was going to be a fuss, and maybe a whole night of shrieking and tears from the capricious bride, and reproaches from her muddleheaded relations. He already had a headache without that, already without that the fumes and darkness clouded his eyes. And now Ivan Ilyich needed help, they had to look for a doctor or a carriage at three o'clock in the morning, to take him home, and it must be a carriage, not a hired hack, because it was impossible for such a person, and in such a state, to be sent home in a cab. And where find money at least for the carriage? The Mlekopitaev woman, infuriated that the general had not said even two words to her, nor so much as glanced at her during supper, announced that she did not have a kopeck. And perhaps she really did not have a kopeck. Where to find the money? What to do? Yes, he did have cause for pulling his hair.

Meanwhile, Ivan Ilyich was moved temporarily to a small leather sofa that stood right there in the dining room. While they were clearing and separating the tables, Pseldonymov rushed to all corners to borrow money, even tried borrowing from the servants, but no one turned out to have anything. He even risked troubling Akim Petrovich, who stayed longer than the others. But he, though he was a good man, became so bewildered and even frightened at the mention of

money, that he came out with the most unexpected rubbish.

"At some other time, it would be my pleasure," he mumbled, "but now . . . really, you must excuse me..."

And, taking his hat, he quickly fled the house. Only the kindhearted youth who had told about the book of dreams proved good for anything, and inopportune at that. He, too, stayed longer than the rest, taking a heartfelt interest in Pseldonymov's calamities. Finally, Pseldonymov, his mother, and the youth decided in general council not to send for a doctor, but rather to send for a carriage to take the sick man home, and meanwhile, before the carriage, to try some household remedies on him, such as wetting his temples and head with cold water, putting ice on the top of his head, and the like. This was undertaken by Pseldonymov's mother. The youth flew off to look for the carriage. Since at that hour there were not even any hacks on the Petersburg side, he set off for a carriage stand somewhere far away, where he woke up the coachmen. They started bargaining, saying that at such an hour even five roubles would not be enough to charge for a carriage. They settled, however, for three. But when, at almost four o'clock, the youth arrived at Pseldonymov's in the hired carriage, their decision had long since been changed. It turned out that Ivan Ilyich, who was still unconscious, had become so ill, was groaning and tossing so much, that to move him and take him home in such condition became completely impossible and even risky. "What will come of it?" said the completely discouraged Pseldonymov. What was to be done? A new question arose. If the sick man was to be kept at home, where was he to be moved to and where was he to be put? In the whole house there were only two beds: one huge double bed on which old man Mlekopitaev slept with his spouse, and another, newly purchased, with walnut veneer, also a double bed, intended for the newlyweds. All the other inhabitants, or, better to say, female inhabitants, of the house slept on the floor beside each other, mostly on featherbeds, but rather worn-out and malodorous ones, that is, altogether indecent, and of these there was

barely enough; or not even that. Where, then, to put the sick man? They might, perhaps, produce a featherbed—they could pull one out from under somebody as a last resort, but where, and upon what, to put it? It turned out that it would have to be put in the big room, because it was farthest removed from the depth of the family and had its own separate exit. But what to put it on? surely not on chairs? It is known that beds are made up on chairs only for boarding-school students when they come home on Saturday to stay overnight, but for such a person as Ivan Ilyich it would be very disrespectful. What would he say the next morning, seeing himself on some chairs? Pseldonymov would not hear of it. One thing remained: to move him to the nuptial bed. This nuptial bed, as we have already mentioned, was set up in a small room just next to the dining room. On the bed was an as yet unused, newly purchased double mattress, clean linen, four pillows covered in pink calico, and, over that, muslin pillowcases trimmed with ruche. The coverlet was of satin, pink, with a quilted pattern. From a golden ring above, muslin curtains hung down. In short, everything was as it ought to be, and the guests, almost all of whom had visited the bedroom, had praised the furnishings. The bride, though she could not stand Pseldonymov, had nevertheless run over several times during the evening, especially, on the sly, to have a peek. What was her indignation, her anger, when she learned that they wanted to put on her nuptial bed a man sick with something like cholera! The bride's mama tried to intercede for her, cursing, vowing to complain to her husband the next day; but Pseldonymov showed his mettle and insisted: Ivan Ilyich was moved, and the bed for the newlyweds was made up in the drawing room on chairs. The young woman sniveled, was ready to start pinching, but dared not disobey: her papa had a stick she was very well acquainted with, and she knew that the next day her papa was sure to demand a detailed account of a certain something. To comfort her, the pink coverlet and the pillows in pink cases were moved to the drawing room. At that moment the youth arrived with the carriage; on learning that the

carriage was no longer needed, he became terribly frightened. He had to pay for it himself, and he had never yet had even ten kopecks. Pseldonymov declared his total bankruptcy. They tried to reason with the driver. But he started making noise and even rapped on the shutters. How it ended, I do not know in detail. It seems the youth went in the carriage as a hostage to Peski, [a neighborhood at the opposite end of the city from the Petersburg side.] to the Fourth Rozhdestvensky Street, where he hoped to awaken some student who was spending the night with his acquaintances and see if he might not have some money. It was already past four in the morning when the young couple was left alone and the door of the room was closed. Pseldonymov's mother stayed at the sufferer's bedside all night. She huddled on the floor, on a little rug, and covered herself with a fur jacket, but was unable to sleep, because she was forced to get up every moment: Ivan Ilyich had a terribly upset stomach. Mrs. Pseldonymov, a courageous and magnanimous woman, undressed him herself, took off all his clothes, looked after him as after her own son, and spent the whole night carrying the necessary vessels from the bedroom to the corridor and back again. And yet the disasters of this night were far from over.

Ten minutes had not passed since the young couple was shut in the drawing room, when a rending cry was suddenly heard, a cry not of joy, but of a most malignant quality. The cries were followed by a noise, a crash, as of the falling of chairs, and instantly, into the still dark room, there unexpectedly burst a whole crowd of gasping and frightened women in all possible dishabille. These women were: the bride's mother, her elder sister, who for the time had abandoned her ailing children, her three aunts, even the one with the broken rib came padding in. Even the cook was there, even the sponging German woman who told fairy tales, from under whom her own featherbed had been pulled by force for the newlyweds, which was the best one in the house and constituted her entire property, came padding in along with the rest. All these respectable and perspicacious women had already

stolen on tiptoe from the kitchen to the corridor some quarter of an hour earlier, and were eavesdropping in the anteroom, consumed by the most inexplicable curiosity. Meanwhile someone quickly lighted a candle, and they all beheld an unexpected sight. The chairs, unable to bear the double weight and supporting the heavy featherbed only on the edges, had slid apart, and the featherbed had fallen on the floor between them. The young woman was sniveling with anger; this time she was offended to the heart. The morally crushed Pseldonymov stood like a criminal caught in his evildoing. He did not even try to justify himself. Gasps and shrieks came from all sides. Pseldonymov's mother also came running at the noise, but this time the bride's mummy was fully on top of things. First she showered Pseldonymov with strange and for the most part unjust reproaches on the theme of "What kind of husband are you after that, my dear? What are you good for, my dear, after such shame?" and so on, and finally, taking her daughter by the hand, she drew her from her husband to her own room, taking upon herself personally the next day's responsibility before the terrible father when he called for an account. Everyone cleared out after her, saying "ah" and wagging their heads. Only his mother stayed with Pseldonymov and tried to comfort him. But he immediately drove her away from him.

He could not be bothered with comforting. He made his way to the sofa and sat down in the gloomiest pondering, barefoot as he was and in only the most necessary underwear. Thoughts crossed and tangled in his head. At times, as if mechanically, he glanced around this room where so recently there had been wild dancing and where cigarette smoke still hung in the air. Cigarette butts and candy wrappers were still lying on the spilt-upon and dirtied floor. The wreckage of the nuptial bed and the overturned chairs testified to the frailty of the best and surest of earthly hopes and dreams. He went on sitting like that for nearly an hour. Heavy thoughts kept coming into his head, as for example: what now awaited him at work? He was painfully aware that he had to change his place of work at all costs,

and that it was impossible to remain at his former place, precisely owing to all that had happened that evening. He also thought about Mlekopitaev, who, perhaps the very next day, would make him dance the Little Cossack again, in order to test his meekness. He also realized that, though Mlekopitaev had given him fifty roubles for the wedding day, which had been spent to the last kopeck, he had not yet dreamed of giving him the four hundred roubles of the dowry, there had not been any mention of it. And the house itself had not yet been formally transferred. He also thought about his wife, who had abandoned him at the most critical moment of his life, about the tall officer who had gone on one knee before her—he had managed to notice that. He thought about the seven demons who were sitting in his wife, by her father's own testimony, and about the stick ready to drive them out . . . Of course, he felt strong enough to endure a lot, but fate kept slipping in such surprises as could make one finally doubt one's strength.

Thus Pseldonymov grieved. Meanwhile the candle-end was going out. Its glimmering light, falling directly on Pseldonymov's profile, reproduced him in colossal form on the wall, with outstretched neck, hooked nose, and two wisps of hair sticking up from his crown and forehead. Finally, when morning's freshness was already wafting, he got up, chilled and benumbed of soul, made his way to the featherbed lying between the chairs, and, not straightening anything, not blowing out the candle-end, not even putting a pillow under his head, crawled onto it on all fours and fell into that dead, leaden sleep that must be the sleep of those sentenced to civil execution the next day.

On the other hand, what could compare with the painful night Ivan Ilyich Pralinsky spent on the nuptial bed of the unfortunate Pseldonymov! For some time the headache, vomiting, and other most unpleasant attacks would not leave him for a minute. These were the torments of hell. Consciousness, though barely flickering in his head, lit up such abysses of horror, such dismal and loathsome pictures, that it would have been better not to regain consciousness. However,

everything was still mixed up in his head. He recognized Pseldonymov's mother, for instance—heard her gentle admonishments, such as: "Be patient, dovey, be patient, my dear, nothing ventured, nothing gained"—recognized her and yet was unable to give himself any logical account of her presence at his side. Loathsome phantoms pictured themselves to him: most often it was Semyon Ivanych, but, on closer inspection, he noticed that this was not Semyon Ivanych at all, it was Pseldonymov's nose. Before him also flitted the free artist, and the officer, and the old woman with the bound cheek. Most of all he was preoccupied with the golden ring that hung over his head, from which the curtains came. He made it out clearly by the dim light of a candle-end, and kept seeking mentally: what is the purpose of this ring, why is it there, what does it signify? He asked the old woman about it several times, but obviously did not say what he meant to say, and she evidently did not understand him, no matter how he sought to explain. Finally, toward morning, his attacks ceased, and he fell asleep, fast asleep, without dreams. He slept for about an hour, and when he woke up, he was already almost fully conscious, feeling an unbearable ache in his head, and in his mouth, on his tongue, which had turned into some piece of flannel, the foulest taste. He sat up in bed, looked around, and fell to thinking. The pale light of the dawning day, stealing in narrow strips through the cracks in the blinds, trembled on the wall. It was about seven o'clock in the morning. But when Ivan Ilyich suddenly realized and recalled all that had happened to him since evening; when he recalled all the adventures at supper, his miscarried great deed, his speech at the table; when he imagined all at once, with horrifying clarity, all that might come of it now, all that would now be said and thought about him; when he looked around and saw, finally, to what a sad and hideous state he had brought the peaceful nuptial bed of his subordinate—oh, then such mortal shame, such torment descended suddenly into his heart, that he cried out, covered his face with his hands, and in despair threw himself down on the pillow. A moment

later he jumped out of bed, saw his clothes right there on a chair, properly folded and already cleaned, grabbed them, and quickly, hurrying, looking over his shoulder and terribly afraid of something, began pulling them on. Right there on the other chair lay his fur coat, and his hat, and in the hat his yellow gloves. He was about to slip away quietly. But the door suddenly opened and old Mrs. Pseldonymov came in with an earthenware bowl and a washstand. On her shoulder hung a towel. She set the washstand down and, without further talk, announced that it was absolutely necessary to wash.

"Come now, dearie, wash yourself, you can't go without washing..."

And at that moment Ivan Ilyich realized that if there was at least one being in the whole world of whom he now could neither be ashamed nor afraid, it was precisely this old woman. He washed himself. And for a long time afterward, in difficult moments of his life, he recalled, amid other pangs of conscience, all the circumstances of this awakening, this earthenware bowl with the faience washstand, filled with cold water in which pieces of ice still floated, and the soap in its pink wrapper, of an oval shape, with some letters stamped on it, fifteen kopecks' worth, obviously bought for the newlyweds, but of which Ivan Ilyich was to be the first user; and the old woman with the damask towel on her left shoulder. The Cold water refreshed him, he dried himself off, and, without saying a word, not even thanking his sister of mercy, seized his hat, took on his shoulders the fur coat held for him by Mrs. Pseldonymov, and through the corridor, through the kitchen, where the cat was already miaowing and the cook, raising herself on her pallet, gazed after him with greedy curiosity, ran out to the courtyard, to the street, and rushed for a passing cab. The morning was frosty, a chilled yellowish fog still enveloped the houses and all objects. Ivan Ilyich turned up his collar. He thought that everyone was watching him, that everyone knew him, that everyone recognized him . . .

For eight days he did not leave his house or go to work. He was ill, painfully ill, but more morally than physically. In those eight days he lived through an entire hell, and they must have been counted to his credit in the other world. There were moments when he would start thinking about becoming a monk. There really were. His imagination would even run particularly free on those occasions. He pictured quiet underground singing, an open coffin, [refers to the old custom among anchorites and monks of sleeping in their own coffins.] life in a secluded cell, forests and caves; but, coming to his senses, he would realize almost at once that all this was the most terrible nonsense and exaggeration, and he was ashamed of this nonsense. Then moral fits began, concerned with his existence manquee. Then shame again flared up in his soul, taking possession of it all at once, burning and exacerbating everything. He shuddered, imagining various pictures to himself. What would they say about him, what would they think, how would he enter the office, what whispering would pursue him for a whole year, for ten years, all his life? His anecdote would be handed down to posterity. Sometimes he even lapsed into such faintheartedness that he was ready to go at once to Semyon Ivanych and beg for his forgiveness and friendship. Himself he did not even try to justify, he blamed himself definitively: he found no justifications for himself and was ashamed of them.

He also thought of taking his retirement immediately and thus simply, in solitude, devoting himself to the happiness of mankind. In any case, he certainly had to change all his acquaintances and in such fashion as to eradicate any memory of himself. Then the thought came to him that this was all nonsense and that through increased strictness with his subordinates the whole thing could still be mended. Then he would begin to have hope and take courage. Finally, after a whole eight days of doubt and torment had passed, he felt he could endure the uncertainty no longer, and *un beau matin* he decided to go to the office.

Before, when he was still sitting at home, in anguish, he had

imagined a thousand times how he would enter his office. He was convinced, to his horror, that he was sure to hear ambiguous whispers behind his back, to see ambiguous faces, to reap the most malignant smiles. What was his amazement when none of it in fact happened. He was met deferentially; he was bowed to; everyone was serious; everyone was busy. Joy filled his heart as he made his way to his inner office.

He at once and most seriously got down to business, listened to some reports and explanations, made decisions. He felt he had never yet reasoned and decided so intelligently, so efficiently, as that morning. He saw that people were pleased with him, honored him, treated him with respect. The most ticklish insecurity would have been unable to notice anything. Business went splendidly.

Finally Akim Petrovich also appeared with some papers. At his appearance something as if stung Ivan Ilyich in his very heart, but only for an instant. He got busy with Akim Petrovich, talked gravely, showed him what needed to be done, and gave explanations. He noticed only that he as if avoided looking at Akim Petrovich for too long, or, better to say, that Akim Petrovich was afraid to look at him. But then Akim Petrovich was finished and began to gather up the papers.

"And here is another petition," he began as dryly as he could, "from the clerk Pseldonymov, about his transfer to the — department. His Excellency Semyon Ivanovich Shipulenko has promised him a post. He asks your gracious assistance, Your Excellency."

"Ah, so he's transferring," Ivan Ilyich said, and felt an enormous weight lift from his heart. He looked at Akim Petrovich, and at that moment their eyes met.

"Why, then I, for my part ... I will employ," Ivan Ilyich replied, "I am prepared."

Akim Petrovich obviously wanted to slip away quickly. But Ivan Ilyich suddenly, on an impulse of nobility, decided to speak himself out definitively. Apparently inspiration had come over him again.

"Tell him," he began, directing a clear and profoundly meaningful look at Akim Petrovich, "tell Pseldonymov that I wish him no evil; no, I do not! . . . That, on the contrary, I am even ready to forget all the past, to forget all, all..."

But suddenly Ivan Ilyich stopped short, staring in amazement at the strange behavior of Akim Petrovich, who from a sensible man suddenly turned out, for some reason, to be a most terrible fool. Instead of listening and hearing him out, he suddenly blushed to the point of ultimate stupidity, began bowing somehow hastily and even indecently with some sort of little bows and at the same time backing toward the door. His whole look expressed a wish to fall through the floor, or, better to say, to get quickly back to his desk. Ivan Ilyich, left alone, rose from his chair in perplexity. He was looking into the mirror without noticing his own face.

"No, strictness, strictness, strictness alone!" he was whispering to himself almost unconsciously, and suddenly bright color poured all down his face. He suddenly felt so ashamed, so distressed, as he had not felt in the most unbearable moments of his eight-day illness. "I didn't hold out!" he said to himself, and sank weakly into his chair.