The Portrait

Nikolai Gogol

## Part I.

Nowhere did so many people pause as before the little picture- shop in the Shtchukinui Dvor. This little shop offered, in fact, the most varied collection of curiosities. The pictures were principally in oil, covered with dark-green varnish, in tinsel frames of a dull yellow. Winter scenes with white trees; very red sunsets, like raging conflagrations; a Flemish boor, with pipe and crippled hand, more like a turkey-cock in cuffs than a human being,—these were the prevailing subjects. To these must be added a few engravings,—a portrait of Khozreff-Mirza in a sheepskin cap, and portraits of some generals or other with three-cornered hats and hooked noses. Moreover, the doors of such booths are usually festooned with bundles of publications, printed on large sheets of bark, which bear witness to the native talent of the Russian.

On one was the Tzarevna Miliktrisa Kirbitievna; on another the city of Jerusalem, over whose houses and churches spread red paint, embracing in its sweep a part of the ground, and two praying Russian muzhiks in their shirtsleeves. There are usually but few purchasers of these productions, but the gazers were many. Some truant lackey probably yawned before them, holding in his hand the dishes containing dinner from the cook-shop for his master, who would doubtless not get his soup very hot. Before them, too, would probably be standing, a soldier wrapped in his cloak,—that cavalier of the old-clothes’ mart, with two penknives for sale,— and Okhtenka, the huckstress, with her basketful of shoes. Each expresses his admiration in his own fashion. The muzhiks generally touch them with their fingers; the cavaliers gaze seriously at them; serving-boys and apprentices laugh, and tease each other with the colored caricatures; old lackeys in frieze mantles look at them merely for the sake of yawning away their time somewhere; and the hucksters, young Russian women, halt by instinct to hear what people are gossiping about, and to see what they are looking at.

At the time when our story opens, the young painter, Tchartkoff, paused involuntarily as he passed the shop. His old cloak and undandified attire showed him to be a man who was devoted to his art with self-denying zeal, and who had no time to trouble himself about clothes, which always have a secret attraction for young men. He paused before the little shop, and at first enjoyed an inward laugh over the monstrosities of pictures. At length he sank unconsciously into a revery, and began to ponder on the question, What sort of people wanted these productions? It did not seem remarkable to him that the Russian people should gaze with rapture upon Eruslanoff Lazarevitch, on The Glutton and The Carouser, on Thoma and Erema. The delineations of those subjects were sufficient and very easily intelligible to the masses. But where were there purchasers for those streaky, dirty oil-paintings? Who needed those Flemish boors, those red and blue landscapes, which put forth some claims to a higher stage of art, but which expressed all the depths of its degradation? They did not appear in the least like the works of a self-taught child. In that case, in spite of the intentional caricature of the design, a sharp distinction would have manifested itself. But here were visible only simple dulness, weak, faltering incapacity, which stood, through self-will, in the ranks of art, while its true place was among the lowest trades,—an incapacity which was true, nevertheless, to its vocation, and dragged its trade into art. The same colors, the same manner, the same driving, practiced hand, belonging rather to a manufactured automaton than to a man!

He stood long before the dirty pictures, thinking not at all of them at length; but meanwhile the proprietor of the stall, a little gray man, in a frieze cloak, with a beard which had not been shaved since Sunday, had been nudging him for some time, bartering and settling on prices, without even knowing what pleased him, or what he wanted. “Here, I’ll take a silver piece for these peasants and this little landscape. What painting! it fairly puts your eyes out; only just received from the factory; the varnish isn’t dry yet. Or, here is a winter scene,—take the winter scene; fifteen rubles; the frame alone is worth it. What a winter scene!” Here the merchant gave a light fillip to the canvas, as if to demonstrate all the merits of the winter scene. “Pray have them done up and sent to your house. Where do you live? Here, boy, give me some string!”

“Hold, brother, not so fast!” said the painter, coming to himself, and perceiving that the brisk dealer was beginning in earnest to do them up. He was rather ashamed not to take any thing after standing so long at the stall; and he said, “Here, stop! I will see if there is any thing I want here;” and, bending over, he began to pick up from the floor, where they were thrown in a heap, worn, dusty old paintings, which evidently commanded no respect. There were old family portraits, whose descendants, probably, could not be found on earth; totally unknown pictures, with torn canvas; frames minus their gilding; in a word, all sorts of old trash. But the painter began his search, thinking to himself, “Perhaps I may find something.” He had often heard stories about pictures of the great masters having been found among the rubbish at the cheap print-sellers’ shops.

The dealer, perceiving what he was about, ceased his importunities, and, assuming his usual attitude and the accompanying expression, took up his post again at the door, hailing the passers-by, and pointing to his stall with one hand. “Hither, friends, here are pictures; enter, enter; just received from the makers!” He shouted his fill, and generally in vain: he had a long talk with a rag-merchant standing opposite, also at the door of his stall; and finally, recollecting that he had a customer in his shop, he turned his back on the public, and went inside. “Well, batiushka [my friend], have you chosen any thing?” But the painter had already been standing for some time immovable before a portrait in a large, originally magnificent, frame, but upon which hardly a trace of gilding now remained.

It represented an old man, with a thin, bronzed face and high cheek-bones; it seemed as if the features were depicted in a moment of convulsive agitation, and bespoke an un-northern power; the burning south was stamped upon them. He was muffled in a voluminous Asiatic costume. Dusty and defaced as the portrait was, when he had succeeded in removing the dirt from the face, he saw traces of the work of a great artist. The portrait appeared to be unfinished, but the power of the handling was striking. The eyes were the most remarkable of all: it seemed as though the full power of the artist’s brush and all his care had been lavished upon them. They fairly looked, gazed, out of the portrait, destroying its harmony with their strange liveliness. When he carried the portrait to the door, the eyes glanced even more penetratingly. They produced nearly the same impression on the public. A woman standing behind him, exclaimed, “He looks, he looks!” and jumped back. He experienced an unpleasant feeling, inexplicable even to himself, and put the portrait on the floor.

“How? You take the portrait?” said the dealer.

“How much is it?” said the painter.

“Why chaffer over it? Give me seventy-five kopeks.”

“No.”

“Well, how much will you give?”

“Twenty kopeks,” said the painter, preparing to go.

“What a price! Why, you couldn’t buy the frame for that! Perhaps you will decide to purchase to-morrow. Sir, sir, turn back! Add ten kopeks. Take it, take it! give me twenty kopeks. To tell the truth, you are my first customer, and that’s the only reason.” Then he made a gesture, as if to signify, “So be it; let the picture go!”

Thus Tchartkoff quite unexpectedly purchased the old portrait, and at the same time reflected, “Why have I bought it? What is it to me?” But there was nothing to be done. He pulled the twenty- kopek piece from his pocket, gave it to the merchant, took the portrait under his arm, and carried it home. On the way thither, he remembered that the twenty-kopek piece he had given for it was his last. His thoughts at once grew dark. Vexation and careless indifference took possession of him at one and the same moment. “Devil take it! This world is disagreeable enough!” he said, with the feeling of a Russian whose affairs are going wrong. And almost mechanically he went on at a quickened pace, filled with indifference to every thing. The red light of sunset still lingered in half the sky; the houses facing that way still almost gleamed with its warm light; and meanwhile the cold blue light of the moon grew brighter. Light, half-transparent shadows fell in bands upon the ground, broken by the houses and the feet of the pedestrians. The painter began by degrees to glance up at the sky, flushed with a thin, transparent, dubious light; and nearly at the same moment from his mouth fell the words, “What a delicate tone!” and the words, “What a nuisance! Deuce take it!” and, re-adjusting the portrait, which slipped from under his arm incessantly, he quickened his pace.

Weary, bathed in perspiration, he dragged himself to the fifteenth line, on Vasilievsky Ostroff. With difficulty and much panting he made his way up the stairs flooded with soapsuds, and adorned with the tracks of dogs and cats. To his knock on the door, there was no answer: there was no one at home. He leaned against the window, and disposed himself to wait patiently, until at last there resounded behind him the footsteps of a boy in a blue blouse- -his servant, model, color-grinder, and scrubber of floors, who also dirtied them with his boots. The boy was called Nikita, and spent all his time in the streets when his master was not at home. Nikita tried for a long time to get the key into the lock, which was quite invisible, by reason of the darkness.

Finally the door was opened. Tchartkoff entered his ante-room, which was intolerably cold, as painters’ rooms always are, which fact, moreover, they do not notice. Without giving Nikita his coat, he went into his studio, a large, square, but low apartment, with frozen windows, and fitted up with all sorts of artistic rubbish,— bits of plaster hands, canvas stretched on frames, sketches begun and discarded, and draperies thrown over chairs. He was very tired: he threw off his cloak, placed the portrait abstractedly between two small canvases, and threw himself on the narrow divan, of which it was impossible to say that it was covered with leather, because a row of brass nails, which had formerly fastened it, had long been left alone by themselves, and the leather remained above by itself; so that Nikita was in the habit of stuffing dirty stockings, shirts, and all the soiled linen, under it. Having seated himself, and stretched himself, as much as it was possible to stretch, on the narrow divan, he finally called for a light.

“There are no candles,” said Nikita.

“How, none?”

“And there were none last night,” said Nikita. The artist recollected that, in fact, there had been no candles the previous evening, quieted down, and became silent. He let himself be undressed, and put on his old, much-worn dressing-gown.

“There has been a gentleman here,” said Nikita.

“Well, he came for money, I know,” said the painter, waving his hand.

“Yes, and he was not alone,” said Nikita.

“Who else?”“I don’t know,—some policeman or other.”

“But why a policeman?”

“I don’t know why: he says because your rent is not paid.”

“Well, what will come of it?”

“I don’t know what will come of it: he said, ‘If he won’t pay, why, let him leave the rooms.’ They are both coming again to- morrow.”

“Let them come,” said Tchartkoff, with sad indifference; and that gloomy mood took full possession of him.

Young Tchartkoff was an artist of talent, which promised great things: by fits and starts his work gave evidence of observation, thought, and a strong inclination to approach nearer to nature.

“Look here, my friend,” his professor said to him more than once, “you have talent; it will be a shame if you waste it: but you are impatient; you have but to be attracted by a thing to fall in love with a thing—you are all engrossed with it, and every thing else is rubbish, all else goes for nothing, you won’t even look at it. See to it that you do not become a fashionable artist: at present your colors begin to assert themselves too loudly; your drawing is not strong; at times it is quite weak,—no lines are to be seen: you are already striving after the fashionable light, because it strikes the eye at once.... See, you fall into the English style as if on purpose. Have a care! the world already begins to attract you: I have already seen you with a shiny hat, a foppish neckerchief.... It is seductive; it is possible to allow one’s self to paint fashionable little pictures and portraits for money; but talent is ruined, not developed, by that means. Be patient; think out every piece of work; discard your foppishness; let others amass money, your own will not fail you.”

The professor was partly right. Our artist sometimes wanted to carouse, to play the fop, in a word, to exhibit his youth in some way or other; but he could control himself withal. At times he could forget every thing, when he had once taken his brush in hand, and could not tear himself from it except as from a delightful dream. His taste perceptibly developed. He did not as yet understand all the depths of Raphael, but he was attracted by Guido’s broad and rapid handling, he paused before the portraits by Titian, he delighted in the Flemish masters. The dark veil enshrouding the ancient pictures had not yet passed away from before them; but he already saw something in them, though in private he did not agree with the professor that the old masters are irremediably lost to us: it seemed to him that the nineteenth century had improved upon them considerably, that the delineation of nature had become clearer, more vivid, nearer; in a word, he thought on this point as youth does think, having already accomplished something, and recognizing it with internal pride. It sometimes vexed him when he saw how a strange artist, French or German, sometimes not even a painter by profession, but only a skilful dauber, produced, by the celerity of his brush and the vividness of his coloring, a universal commotion, and amassed in a twinkling a funded capital. This did not occur to him when, fully occupied with his own work, he forgot food and drink and all the world: but when dire want arrived, when he had no money wherewith to buy brushes and colors, when his implacable landlord came ten times a day to demand the pay for his rooms, then did the luck of the wealthy artists present itself to his hungry imagination; then did the thought which so often traverses Russian minds, traverse his,—to give up altogether, and go down hill, and utterly to the bad. And now he was almost in this frame of mind.

“Yes, be patient, be patient!” he exclaimed with vexation; “but there is an end to patience at last. Be patient! but what money am I to dine with to-morrow? No one will lend me any. If I bring myself to sell all my pictures and sketches, they would give me twenty kopeks for the whole of them. They are useful; I feel that not one of them was undertaken in vain; I learned something from each one. Yes, but of what use? studies, trial-sketches—and all will be studies, trial-sketches—and there will be no end to them. And who will buy, knowing me not even by name? yes, and who wants drawings from the antique, or the life class, or my unfinished love of a Psyche, or the perspective of my chamber, or the portrait of my Nikita, though it is better, to tell the truth, than the portraits by any of the fashionable artists? In fact, what does it mean? Why do I worry, and toil like a learner over the alphabet, when I might shine as brightly as the rest, and have money, too, like them?”

Thus speaking, the artist suddenly shuddered, and turned pale: a convulsively distorted face gazed at him, peeping forth from the surrounding canvas; two terrible eyes were fixed straight upon him, as if preparing to devour him; on the mouth was written a menacing command of silence. Frightened, he tried to scream and summon Nikita, who had already succeeded in setting up a gigantic snoring in his ante-room; but he suddenly paused and laughed; the sensation of fear subsided in a moment; it was the portrait he had bought, and which he had quite forgotten. The light of the moon illuminating the chamber, fell upon it, and lent it a strange likeness to life. He began to examine and wipe it off. He moistened a sponge with water, passed it over the picture several times, washed off nearly all the accumulated and incrusted dust and dirt, hung it on the wall before him, and wondered yet more at the remarkable workmanship: almost the whole face had gained new life, and the eyes gazed at him so that he shuddered at last; and, springing back, he exclaimed in a voice of surprise, “It looks, it looks, with human eyes!” Then suddenly there came to his mind a story he had heard long before from his professor, of a certain portrait by the renowned Leonardo da Vinci, upon which the great master labored several years, and still held it incomplete, and which, according to Vasari, was nevertheless deemed by all the most complete and finished product of his art. The most finished thing about it was the eyes, which amazed his contemporaries: the very smallest, barely visible veins in them were not omitted, but committed to the canvas. But here, in the portrait now before him, there was something singular. This was no longer art: it even destroyed the harmony of the portrait; they were living, human eyes! It seemed as though they had been cut from a living man, and inserted there Here was none of that high enjoyment which takes possession of the spirit at the sight of an artist’s production, no matter how terrible the subject he may have chosen: there was a painful, fatiguing sensation here. “What is it?” the artist asked himself involuntarily; “but this is nature, nevertheless, living nature. Whence this strangely unpleasant feeling? Is a slavish, literal copy of nature a crime which proclaims itself in a shrill, discordant shriek ? If you take an unsympathetic subject, one void of feeling, having no sympathy with it yourself, will it infallibly stand forth, in its fearful realism, unillumined by any intangible, hidden light, to the thoughts of all? will it stand forth in such realism as is displayed, when, wishing to understand the secret of a very handsome man, you arm yourself with an anatomical knife, cut to his heart, and behold a hideous man? Why does simple, lowly Nature reveal herself in the works of one artist in such a light that you experience no sensation of degradation,—on the contrary, you seem to enjoy it for some reason, and things seem to flow more quietly and smoothly around you after it? And why does this same Nature seem, in the hands of another artist, low and vile? Yet he was true to Nature too. But, no, there is nothing illuminating in her. It makes no difference what aspect Nature wears: however magnificent she may be, there is always something wanting, unless the sun is in the sky.”

Again he approached the portrait, in order to view those wondrous eyes, and perceived with terror that they were gazing at him. This was no copy from Nature: it was life, the strange life which might have lighted up the face of a dead man, who had risen from the grave. Whether it was the effect of the moonlight, which brought with it fantastic thoughts, and transformed things into strange likenesses, opposed to those of matter-of-fact day, or from some other cause, it suddenly became frightful to him, he knew not why, to sit alone in the room. He retreated softly from the portrait, turned aside, and tried not to look at it; but his eye involuntarily, of its own accord, glanced sideways, and watched it. Finally, he became afraid to walk about the room: it seemed as though some one were on the point of stepping up behind him; and every time he turned, he glanced timidly back. He had never been cowardly; but his imagination and nerves were sensitive, and that evening he could not explain his involuntary fear. He seated himself in the corner, but even then it seemed to him that some one was peeping over his shoulder into his face. Even Nikita’s snores, resounding from the ante-room, did not chase away his fear. At length he rose from his seat, timidly, without raising his eyes, went behind his screen, and lay down on his bed. Through the cracks of the screen he saw his room illuminated by the moon, and saw the portrait hanging stiffly on the wall. The eyes were fixed upon him in a still more terrible and significant manner, and it seemed as if they would not look at any thing but him. Overpowered with a feeling of oppression, he decided to rise from his bed, seized a sheet, and, approaching the portrait, covered it up completely.

Having done this, he lay down more quietly on the bed, and began to meditate upon the poverty and pitiful lot of the artist, of the thorny path before him in the world;—but, meanwhile, his eye glanced involuntarily through the joint of the screen, at the portrait muffled in the sheet. The light of the moon heightened the whiteness of the sheet, and it seemed to him as though those terrible eyes shone through the cloth. With terror he fixed his eyes more steadfastly on it, as if wishing to convince himself that it was all nonsense. But at length, in fact,... he sees, sees clearly: there is no longer a sheet;... the portrait is quite uncovered, and gazes past every thing around it, straight at him; gazes fairly into his heart.... His heart grows cold. And he sees: the old man has moved, and suddenly, supporting himself on the frame with both arms, has raised himself by his hands, and, putting forth both feet, has leaped out of the frame.... Through the crack of the screen, the empty frame alone was now visible. Footsteps resounded in the room, and they approached nearer and nearer to the screen. The poor artist’s heart began to beat harder. He expected every moment, his breath failing for fear, that the old man would look round the screen at him. And lo! he did look behind the screen, with the very same bronzed face, and with his big eyes roving about. Tchartkoff tried to scream, and felt that his voice was gone; he tried to move, to make a gesture; his limbs refused their office. With open mouth, and failing breath, he gazed at the terrible, tall phantom, in some sort of a voluminous Asiatic robe, and waited for what it would do. The old man sat down almost on his very feet, and then pulled out something from among the folds of his wide garment: it was a purse. The old man untied it, seized it by both ends, and shook it. Heavy rolls of money, like long pillars, fell out with a dull thud upon the floor: each was wrapped in blue paper, and on each was marked, “1,000 ducats.” The old man extended his long, bony hand from his wide sleeves, and began to undo the rolls. The gold glittered. Great as was the artist’s unreasoning fear, and feeling of oppression, he bent all his attention upon the gold, gazing motionless, as it made its appearance in the bony hands, gleamed, rang lightly or dully, and was wrapped up again. Then he perceived one packet which had rolled farther than the rest, to the very leg of his bedstead, near his pillow. He grasped it almost convulsively, and glanced in fear at the old man to see if he perceived it. But the old man appeared very much occupied: he collected all his rolls, replaced them in the purse, and went outside the screen without looking at him. Tchartkoff’s heart beat wildly as he heard the rustle of the retreating footsteps sounding through the room. He clasped his roll more closely in his hand, quivering in every limb; and suddenly he heard the footsteps approaching the screen again.... Apparently the old man had recollected that one roll was missing. And lo! again he looked round the screen at him. The artist in despair grasped the roll with all his strength, exerted all his power to make a movement, shrieked—and awoke.He was bathed in a cold perspiration; his heart beat as hard as it was possible for it to beat; his chest was oppressed, as though his last breath was about to fly from it. “Was it a dream?” he said, seizing his head with both hands. But the terrible life- likeness of the apparition did not resemble a dream. As he woke, he saw the old man step into the frame: the skirts of the voluminous garment even fluttered, and his hand felt plainly that a moment before it had held something heavy. The moonlight illumined the room, bringing out from the dark corners, here a canvas, there the model of a hand; a drapery thrown over a chair; trousers and uncleaned boots. Then he perceived that he was not lying in his bed, but standing upright, directly before the portrait. How he had come there, he could not in the least comprehend. Still more surprised was he, to find the portrait quite uncovered, and there actually was no sheet over it. Motionless with terror, he gazed at it, and perceived that the living, human eyes were fastened upon him. A cold perspiration started out upon his face. He wanted to move away, but felt that his feet had in some way become rooted to the earth. And he saw—that this was not a dream. The old man’s features moved, and his lips began to project towards him, as though he wanted to suck him in.... With a yell of despair he jumped back—and awoke.

“Was it a dream?” With his heart beating to bursting, he felt about him with both hands. Yes, he was lying in bed, and in precisely the position in which he had fallen asleep. Before him stood the screen. The moonlight flooded the apartment. Through the crack of the screen, the portrait was visible, covered with the sheet, as it should be, just as he had covered it. And so this, too, was a dream? But his clinched fist still felt as though something had been in it. The beating of his heart was violent, almost terrible; the weight upon his breast, intolerable. He fixed his eyes upon the crack, and stared steadfastly at the sheet. And lo! he sees plainly how the sheet begins to open, as though hands were pushing from underneath, and trying to throw it off. “Lord God, what is it!” he shrieked, crossing himself in despair—and awoke.

And was this also a dream? He sprang from his bed, frantic, half mad, and could not comprehend what had happened to him: was it the oppression of a nightmare, or domovoi (kobold), the raving of fever, or a living apparition? Striving to calm, as far as possible, his mental tumult, and wildly rushing blood, which beat with straining pulses in every vein, he went to the window, and opened the pane. The cool, fragrant breeze revived him. The moonlight lay on all the roofs and white walls of the houses, though small clouds passed frequently across the sky. All was still: from time to time there struck the ear, the distant rumble of a drozhky, whose izvoscthik was sleeping in some obscure alley, lulled to slumber by his lazy nag, as he awaited a belated passenger. He put his head out of the pane, and gazed long. Already the signs of approaching dawn were spreading in the sky. At last he felt drowsy, clapped to the pane, stepped back, lay down in bed, and quickly fell, like one exhausted, into a deep sleep.He awoke late, and with the disagreeable feeling of a man who has been choked with coal-gas: his head ached painfully. The room was dim: an unpleasant humidity pervaded the air, and penetrated the cracks of his windows, stopped with pictures and grounded canvas. Dissatisfied and depressed as a wet cock, he seated himself on his dilapidated divan, not knowing what to do, what to undertake, and at length remembered all his dream. As he recalled it, the dream presented itself to his mind as so oppressively real that he even began to wonder whether it were a dream, and simple delirium, whether there were not something else here, whether it were not an apparition. Removing the sheet, he looked at the terrible portrait by the light of day. The eyes were really striking in their extraordinary liveliness, but he found nothing particularly terrible in them; yet an indescribably unpleasant feeling lingered in his mind. Nevertheless, he could not quite convince himself that it was a dream. It struck him that there must have been some terrible fragment of reality in the midst of the dream. It seemed as though there were something in the old man’s very glance and expression which said that he had been with him that night: his hand felt the weight which had so recently lain in it as if some one had but just snatched it from him. It seemed to him, that, if he had only grasped the roll more firmly, it would have remained in his hand, even after his awakening.

“My God, if I had only a portion of that money!” he said, breathing heavily; and in his fancy, all those rolls, with their fascinating inscription, “1,000 ducats” began to pour out of the purse. The rolls opened, the gold glittered, was wrapped up again; and he sat motionless, with his eyes fixed on the empty air, as if he were incapable of tearing himself from such a sight, like a child who sits before a plate of sweets, and beholds, with watering mouth, other people devouring them.

At last there came a knock on the door, which recalled him unpleasantly to himself. The landlord entered with the constable of the district, whose presence, as is well known, is even more disagreeable to poor people than is the presence of a beggar to the rich. The landlord of the little house in which Tchartkoff lived resembled the other individuals who own houses anywhere in the fifteenth line of Vasilievsky Ostroff, on the Petersburg side, or in the distant regions of Kolomna,—individuals of which there are many in Russia, and whose character is as difficult to define as the color of a threadbare surtout. In his youth he had been a captain and a braggart, had served in the civil service, was a master in the art of flogging, was skilful and foppish and stupid; but in his old age he combined all these various qualities into a kind of dim indefiniteness. He was a widower, already on the retired list, no longer boasted, nor was dandified, no longer quarrelled, and loved only to drink tea and talk all sorts of nonsense over it; he walked about his room, and arranged the ends of the tallow candles; punctually at the end of each month he called upon his lodgers for his money; went out into the street, with the key in his hand, to look at the roof of his house, and sometimes chased the dvornik (porter) out of his kennel, where he had hidden himself to sleep; in a word, he was a man on the retired list, who, after the turmoils and wildness of his life, had only his old-fashioned habits left.

“Please to see for yourself, Varukh Kuzmitch,” said the landlord, turning to the officer, and throwing out his hands, “this man does not pay his rent, he does not pay.”

“How can I when I have no money? Wait, and I will pay.”

“I can’t wait, my good fellow,” said the landlord angrily, making a gesture with the key which he held in his hand. “Lieutenant-Colonel Potogonkin has lived with me seven years, seven years already; Anna Petrovna Buchmisteroff hires the carriage-house and stable, except two stalls, and has three household servants,... that is the kind of lodgers I have. I will say to you frankly, that this is not an establishment where people do not pay their rent. Pay your money at once, if you please, or else clear out.”

“Yes, if you hired the rooms, please to pay,” said the constable, with a slight shake of the head, as he laid his finger on one of the buttons of his uniform.

“Well, what am I to pay with? that’s the question. I haven’t a groschen just at present.”

“In that case, satisfy the claims of Ivan Ivanovitch with the fruits of your profession,” said the officer: “perhaps he will consent to take pictures.”

“No, thank you, my good fellow, no pictures. Pictures of holy subjects, such as one could hang upon the walls, would be well enough; or some general with a star, or Prince Kutusoff’s portrait: but this fellow has painted that muzhik, that muzhik in his blouse, his servant who grinds his colors! The idea of painting his portrait, the hog! I’ll thrash him well: he took all the nails out of my bolts, the scoundrel! Just see what subjects! here he has drawn this room. It would have been well enough if he had taken a clean, well-furnished room; but he has gone and drawn this one, with all the dirt and rubbish which he has collected. Just see how he has defaced my room! Look for yourself. Yes, and my lodgers have been with me seven years, the lieutenant-colonel, Anna Petrovna Buchmisteroff.... No, I tell you, there is no worse lodger than a painter: he lives like a pig; simply—God have mercy!”

And the poor artist had to listen patiently to all this. Meanwhile the officer had occupied himself with examining the pictures and studies, and showed that his mind was more advanced than the landlord’s, and that he was not insensible to artistic impressions.

“Heh!” said he, tapping one canvas, on which was depicted a naked woman, “this subject is—lively. But why so much black under her nose? did she take snuff?”“Shadow,” answered Tchartkoff gruffly, without looking at him.

“But it might have been put in some other place: it is too conspicuous under the nose,” observed the officer. “And whose likeness is this?” he continued, approaching the old man’s portrait. “It’s too terrible. Was he really so dreadful? Ah! why, he actually looks! What a thunder-cloud! From whom did you paint it?”

“Ah! it is from a—” said Tchartkoff, and did not finish his sentence: he heard a crack. It seems that the officer had pressed too hard on the frame of the portrait, thanks to the axelike build of his constable’s hands: the small boards on the side caved in, one fell on the floor, and with it fell, with a heavy clash, a roll in blue paper. The inscription caught Tchartkoff’s eye,—”1,000 ducats.” Like a madman, he sprang to pick it up, grasped the roll, and gripped it convulsively in his hand, which fell down with the weight.

“Wasn’t there a sound of money?” inquired the officer, hearing the noise of something falling on the floor, and not catching sight of it, by reason of the rapidity of the movement with which Tchartkoff had hastened to pick it up.

“What business is it of yours what is in my room?”

“It’s my business because you ought to pay your rent to the landlord at once, because you have money, and won’t pay,—that’s why it’s my business.”

“Well, I will pay him to-day.”

“Well, and why wouldn’t you pay him before, instead of making trouble for your landlord, and bothering the police to boot?”

“Because I did not want to touch this money. I will pay him all this evening, and leave the rooms to-morrow, because I will not stay with such a landlord.”

“Well, Ivan Ivanovitch, he will pay you,” said the constable, turning to the landlord. “But in case you are not satisfied in every respect this evening, then you must excuse me, Mr. Painter.” So saying, he put on his three-cornered hat, and went into the ante-room, followed by the landlord hanging his head, and apparently engaged in meditation.

“Thank God, Satan has carried them off!” said Tchartkoff, when he heard the door of the ante-room shut. He looked out into the anteroom, sent Nikita off on some errand, in order to be quite alone, fastened the door behind him, and, returning to his room, began with wildly beating heart to undo the roll.

In it were ducats, all new, and bright as fire. Almost beside himself, he sat down beside the pile of gold, still asking himself, “Is not this all a dream?” There were just a thousand in the roll: the exterior was precisely like what he had seen in his dream. He turned them over, and looked at them for some minutes, without coming to his senses. His imagination conjured up all the tales of hoards, cabinets with secret drawers, left by ancestors for their spendthrift descendants, with firm belief in the extravagance of their life. He pondered thus: “Did not some grandfather, in the present instance, leave a gift for his grandchild, shut up in the frame of the family portrait?” Filled with romantic fancies, he began to think: had not this some secret connection with his fate? was not the existence of the portrait bound up with his own existence, and was not his acquisition of it a kind of predestination? He began to examine the frame with curiosity. On one side a cavity was hollowed out, concealed so skillfully and neatly by a little board, that, if the massive hand of the constable had not effected a breach, the ducats might have remained hidden to the end of time. On examining the portrait, he marvelled again at the exquisite workmanship, the extraordinary treatment of the eyes; they no longer appeared terrible to him; but, nevertheless, each time, a disagreeable feeling involuntarily lingered in his mind. “No,” he said to himself, “no matter whose grandfather you were, I’ll put a glass over you, and get you a gilt frame.” Then he laid his hand on the golden pile before him, and his heart beat faster at the touch. “What shall I do with them?” he said, fixing his eyes on them. “Now I am independent for at least three years: I can shut myself up in my room and work. I have money for colors now; for dinner, tea, my food and lodging—no one will annoy and disturb me now. I will buy myself a first-class manikin, I will order a plaster torso, I will model feet, I will have a Venus, I will buy engravings of the best pictures. And if I work three years to satisfy myself, without haste, not for sale, I shall surpass them all, and I may become a distinguished artist.”

Thus he spoke in solitude, with his good judgment prompting; but louder and more distinct sounded another voice within him. And as he glanced once more at the gold, it was not thus that his twenty- two years and fiery youth spoke. Now every thing was within his power on which he had hitherto gazed with envious eyes, which he had viewed from afar with longing. How his heart beat when he thought of it! To wear a fashionable coat, to feast after long abstinence, to hire handsome apartments, to go, on the instant, to the theater, to the confectioner’s, to... other places; and seizing his money, he was in the street in a moment.

First of all he went to the tailor, clothed himself anew from head to foot, and began to look at himself incessantly, like a child. He bought perfumes, pomades; hired the first elegant suite of apartments with mirrors and plateglass windows which he came across in the Nevsky Prospect, without haggling about the price; bought, on the impulse of the moment, in a shop, a costly opera- glass; bought, also on impulse, a quantity of neckties of every description, many more than he needed; had his hair curled at the hairdresser’s; rode through the city twice without any object whatever; ate an immense amount of candy at the confectioner’s; and went to the French Restaurant, of which he had heard rumors as indistinct as though they had concerned the Empire of China. There he dined, with his arms akimbo, casting proud glances at the other visitors, and continually arranging his curls in the glass. There he drank a bottle of champagne, which had been known to him hitherto only by hearsay. The wine rather affected his head; and he emerged into the street, lively, pugnacious, ready to raise the Devil, according to the Russian expression. He strutted along the sidewalk, levelling his opera-glass at everybody. On the bridge he caught sight of his former professor, and slipped past him neatly, as if he did not see him, so that the astounded professor stood stock-still on the bridge for a long time, with a face suggestive of an interrogation-point.

All his things, every thing he owned,—easels, canvas, pictures,—were transported that same evening to his elegant quarters. He arranged the best of them in conspicuous places, threw the worst into a corner, and promenaded up and down the handsome rooms, glancing constantly in the mirrors. An unconquerable desire to seize fame by the tail, and show himself to the world at once, had arisen in his mind. He already heard the shouts, “Tchartkoff! Tchartkoff! Have you seen Tchartkoff’s picture? How rapidly Tchartkoff paints! How much talent Tchartkoff has!” He paced the room in a state of rapture, unconscious whither he went. The next day he took ten ducats, and went to the publisher of a popular journal, asking his charitable assistance. He was joyfully received by the journalist, who called him on the spot, “Most Respected sir,” squeezed both his hands, made minute inquiries as to his name, birthplace, residence; and the next day there appeared in the journal, below a notice of some newly invented tallow candles, an article with the following heading:—

“TCHARTLOFF’S IMMENSE TALENT.

“We hasten to delight the cultivated inhabitants of the capital with a discovery which we may call splendid in every respect. All are agreed that there are among us many very handsome physiognomies and faces, but hitherto there has been no means of committing them to the wonder-working canvas for transmission to posterity. This want has now been supplied: an artist has been found who unites in himself all desirable qualities. The beauty can now feel assured that she will be depicted with all the grace of her spiritual charms, airy, fascinating, wondrous, butterfly-like, flitting among the flowers of spring. The stately father of a family can see himself surrounded by his family. Merchant, warrior, citizen, statesman—hasten one and all, come from your promenade, your expedition to your friend, your cousin, to the glittering bazaar; hasten, wherever you may be. The artist’s magnificent establishment (Nevsky Prospect, such and such a number) is all hung with portraits from his brush, worthy of Van Dyck or Titian. One knows not which to admire most, their truth and likeness to the originals, or the wonderful brilliancy and freshness of the coloring. Hail to you, artist! you have drawn a lucky number in the lottery. Long live Andrei Petrovitch!” (The journalist evidently liked familiarity.) “Glorify yourself and us. We know how to prize you. Universal popularity, and with it money, will be your meed, though some of our brother journalists may rise against you.”

The artist read this article with secret satisfaction: his face beamed. He was mentioned in print; it was a novelty to him: he read the lines over several times. The comparison with Van Dyck and Titian flattered him extremely. The phrase, “Long live Andrei Petrovitch,” also pleased him greatly: being called by his Christian name and patronymic in print was an honor hitherto utterly unknown to him. He began to pace the chamber briskly, to tumble his hair; now he sat down in an arm-chair, then sprang up, and seated himself on the sofa, planning each moment how he would receive visitors, male and female; he went to his canvas, and made a rapid sweep of the brush, endeavoring to impart a graceful movement to his hand.

The next day, the little bell at his door rang: he hastened to open. A lady entered, followed by a lackey in a furred livery-coat; and with the lady entered an eighteen-year-old girl, her daughter.

“You are Monsieur Tchartkoff?”

The artist bowed.

“A great deal is being written about you: your portraits, it is said, are the height of perfection.” So saying, the lady raised her glass to her eyes, and glanced rapidly over the walls, upon which nothing was hanging. “But where are your portraits?”

“They have been taken away,” replied the artist, somewhat confusedly; “I have but just moved into these apartments; so they are still on the road,... they have not arrived.”

“You have been in Italy?” asked the lady, levelling her glass at him, as she found nothing else to point it at.

“No, I have not been there; but I wish to go,... and I have deferred it for a while....Here is an arm-chair, Madame: you are fatigued?”...

“Thank you: I have been sitting a long time in the carriage. Ah, at last I behold your work!” said the lady, running to the opposite wall, and bringing her glass to bear upon his studies, programmes, perspectives, and portraits which were standing on the floor. “C’est charmant, Lise! Lise, venez-ici. Rooms in the style of Teniers. Do you see? Disorder, disorder, a table with a bust upon it, a hand, a palette; here is dust... see how the dust is painted! C’est charmant. And here on this canvas is a woman washing her face. Quelle jolie figure! Ah! a little peasant, a muzhik in a Russian blouse! see,—a little muzhik! So you do not devote yourself exclusively to portraits?”

“Oh! that is rubbish. I was trying experiments... studies.”“Tell me your opinion of the portrait painters of the present day. Is it not true that there are none now like Titian? There is not that strength of color, that—that... What a pity that I cannot express to you in Russian.” (The lady was fond of paintings, and had gone through all the galleries in Italy with her eyeglass.) “But Monsieur Nohl... ah, how he paints! what remarkable work! I think his faces have even more expression than Titian’s. You do not know M. Nohl?”

“Who is Nohl?” inquired the artist.

“Monsieur Nohl. Ah, what talent! He painted her portrait when she was only twelve years old. You must certainly come to see us. Lise, you shall show him your album. You know, we came expressly that you might begin her portrait immediately.”

“What? I am ready this very moment.” And in a trice he pulled forward an easel with a piece of canvas already prepared, grasped his palette, and fixed his eyes on the daughter’s pretty little face. If he had been acquainted with human nature, he might have read in it the dawning of a childish passion for balls, the dawning of sorrow and misery at the length of time before dinner and after dinner, of a desire to go to walk in her dress only, the heavy traces of uninterested application to various arts, insisted upon by her mother for the elevation of the sentiments of her soul. But the artist perceived only the tender little face, a seductive subject for his brush, the body almost as transparent as porcelain, the slight attractive fatigue, the delicate white neck, and the aristocratically slender form. And he prepared beforehand to triumph, to display the delicacy of his brush, which had hitherto had to deal only with the harsh features of coarse models, with severe antiques and copies of classic masters. He already saw in fancy how this delicate little face would turn out.

“Do you know,” said the lady with a positively touching expression of countenance, “I should like... she is dressed up now; I confess, that I should not like her in the costume to which we are accustomed: I should like her to be simply attired, and seated among green shadows, like meadows, with a flock or a grove in the distance,... so that it could not be seen that she goes to balls or fashionable entertainments. Our balls, I confess, so murder the intellect, so deaden all remnants of feeling.... Simplicity, would there were more simplicity!” Alas! it was stamped on the faces of mother and daughter, that they had so overdanced themselves at balls, that they had become almost wax figures.

Tchartkoff set to work, seated the original, reflected a bit, fixed upon the idea, waved his brush in the air, settling the points mentally, screwed his eyes up a little, retreated, looked off in the distance, and then began and finished the sketching in, in an hour. Satisfied with it, he began to paint: the work fascinated him; he forgot every thing, forgot the very existence of the aristocratic ladies, began even to display some artistic tricks, uttering various odd sounds; humming to himself now and then, as artists do when immersed heart and soul in their work. Without the slightest ceremony, with one wave of his brush, he made the sitter lift her head, which finally began to turn in a very decided manner, and express utter weariness.

“Enough, for the first time, enough,” said the lady.

“A little more,” said the artist, forgetting himself.

“No, it is time to stop. Lise, three o’clock!” said the lady, taking out a tiny watch, which hung by a gold chain from her girdle. “Ah, how late it is!” she cried.

“Only a minute,” said Tchartkoff innocently, with the pleading voice of a child.

But the lady appeared to be not at all inclined to yield to his artistic demands on this occasion: she promised instead, to sit longer the next time.

“It is vexatious, all the same!” thought Tchartkoff to himself: “I had just got my hand in;” and he remembered that no one had interrupted him or stopped him when he was at work in his studio on Vasilievsky Ostroff. Nikita sat motionless in one place—you might paint him as long as you pleased: he even went to sleep in the attitude prescribed to him. And, dissatisfied, he laid his brush and palette on a chair, and paused in irritation before the picture.

The woman of the world’s compliments awoke him from his revery. He flew to the door to show them out: on the stairs he received an invitation to dine with them the following week, and returned with a cheerful face to his apartments. The aristocratic lady had completely charmed him. Up to that time he had looked upon such beings as unapproachable,—born solely to ride in magnificent carriages with liveried footmen and stylish coachman, and to cast indifferent glances on the poor man travelling on foot in a cheap cloak. And now, all of a sudden, one of those beings had entered his room: he was painting her portrait, was invited to dinner in an aristocratic house. An unusual feeling of pleasure took possession of him: he was completely intoxicated, and rewarded himself with a splendid dinner, an evening at the theater; and afterwards he took a ride through the city in a carriage without any necessity whatever.

But during all these days, his ordinary work did not fall in with his mood at all. He did nothing but prepare himself, and wait for the moment when the bell should ring. At last the aristocratic lady arrived with her pale daughter. He seated them, pulled forward the canvas, with skill, and some efforts at fashionable airs, and began to paint. The sunny day and bright light aided him not a little: he saw in his dainty sitter much, which, caught and committed to the canvas, would give great value to the portrait; he perceived that he might bring forth something rare if he could reproduce, with accuracy, all which nature then offered to his eyes. His heart even began to beat faster when he felt that he was expressing something which others had not even seen as yet. His work engrossed him completely: he was entirely taken up with his painting, and again forgot the aristocratic origin of the sitter. With heaving breast he saw the delicate traits and the almost transparent body of the eighteen-year-old maiden appear under his hand. He had caught every shade, the slight sallowness, the almost imperceptible blue tinge under the eyes,—and was already preparing to put in the tiny pimple on the brow, when he suddenly heard the mother’s voice behind him.

“Ah! why do you paint that? it is not necessary: and you have made it here... in several places, rather yellow... and here quite so, like dark spots.” The artist undertook to explain that the spots and yellow tinge would turn out well, that they brought out the delicate and pleasing tones of the face. He was informed that they did not bring out tones, and would not turn out well at all, and that it merely seemed so to him. “But permit me to touch up just this one place, here, with yellow,” said the simple-minded artist. But he was not permitted. It was explained to him that just today Lise did not feel quite well; that she never was sallow, and that her face was distinguished for its fresh coloring. Sadly he began to erase what his brush had produced upon the canvas. Many a nearly invisible trait disappeared, and with it vanished also a portion of the resemblance. He began indifferentiy to give it that commonplace coloring which can be painted mechanically, and which lends to a face, even when taken from nature, the sort of cold ideality observable on school programmes. But the lady was satisfied when the objectionable color was quite banished. She merely expressed surprise that the work lasted so long, and added that she had heard that he finished a portrait completely in two sittings. The artist could not think of any answer to this. The ladies rose, and prepared to depart. He laid aside his brush, escorted them to the door, and then stood disconsolate for a long while in one spot, before his portrait.

He gazed stupidly at it; and meanwhile there passed before his mind those delicate feminine features, those shades, and airy tints which he had copied, which his brush had annihilated. Engrossed with them, he set the portrait on one side, and hunted up the head of Psyche, which he had long before thrown on canvas in a sketchy manner. It was a pretty little face, well painted, but entirely ideal, cold, consisting of the common features not assumed by a living being. For lack of occupation, he now began to go over it, imparting to it all he had taken note of in his aristocratic sitter. Those features, shadows, tints, which he had noted, made their appearance here in the purified form in which they appear when the painter, after closely observing nature, subordinates himself to her, and produces a creation equal to her own.

Psyche began to live; and the scarce dawning thought began, little by little, to clothe itself in a visible form. The type of face of the fashionable young lady was unconsciously communicated to Psyche, and nevertheless she had an expression of her own which gave it claims to be considered in truth, an original creation. It seemed as if he made use of some things and yet of all that the original suggested to him throughout, and gave himself up entirely to his work. For several days he was engrossed by it alone. And the ladies surprised him at this work on their arrival. He had not time to remove the picture from the easel. Both ladies uttered a cry of amazement, and clasped their hands.

“Lise, Lise! Ah, how like! Superbe, superbe! What a happy thought to drape her in a Greek costume! Ah, what a surprise!”

The artist could not see his way to disabusing the ladies of their pleasant mistake. Shamefacedly, with drooping head, he murmured, “This is Psyche.”

“In the character of Psyche? C’est charmant!” said the mother, smiling, upon which the daughter also smiled. “Confess, Lise, does it not please you to be painted in the character of Psyche better than any other way? Quelle id‚e delicieuse! But what treatment! It is Correggio himself. I must say, that, although I had read and heard about you, I did not know you had so much talent. You positively must paint me too.” Evidently, the lady wanted to be portrayed as some sort of Psyche also.

“What am I to do with them?” thought the artist. “If they will have it so, why, let Psyche pass for what they choose:” and he said aloud, “Pray sit a little longer: I will touch it up here and there.”

“Ah! I am afraid you will... it is such a likeness now!”

But the artist understood that the difficulty was with the sallowness, and so he reassured them by saying that he only wished to give more brilliancy and expression to the eyes. But, in truth, he was ashamed, and wished to impart a little more likeness to the original, lest any one should accuse him of actual barefaced flattery. And, in fact, the features of the pale young girl at length appeared more clearly in Psyche’s countenance.

“Enough,” said the mother, beginning to fear that the likeness might become too decided. The artist was remunerated in every way,- -with smiles, money, compliments, cordial pressures of the hand, invitations to dinner: in a word, he received a thousand flattering rewards.

The portrait created a furor in the city. The lady exhibited it to her friends: all admired the skill with which the artist had preserved the likeness, and at the same time conferred more beauty on the original. The last remark, of course, was prompted by a slight tinge of envy. And the artist was suddenly overwhelmed with work. It seemed as if the whole city wanted to be painted by him. The door-bell rang incessantly. From one point of view, this might be considered advantageous, as presenting to him endless practice in variety and number of faces. But, unfortunately, they were all people who were hard to get along with, busy, hurried people, or belonging to the fashionable world, consequently more occupied than any one else, and therefore impatient to the last degree. In all quarters, the demand was merely that the likeness should be good and quickly done. The artist perceived that it was a simple impossibility to finish his work; that it was necessary to exchange the power of his treatment for lightness and rapidity,—to catch only the general, palpable expression, and not waste labor on delicate details—in a word, to copy nature in her finish was utterly out of the question. Moreover, it must be added that nearly all his sitters made many stipulations on various points. The ladies required that mind and character chiefly should be represented in their portraits: that he should make a point of nothing else; that all angles should be rounded, all unevenness smoothed away, and even removed entirely if possible; in a word, that their faces should be such as to cause every one to stare with admiration, if not fall in love with outright. And in consequence of this, when they sat to him, they sometimes assumed expressions which greatly amazed the artist: one tried to express melancholy; another, meditation; another wanted to make her mouth small on any terms, and puckered it up to such an extent that it finally looked like a spot about as big as a pinhead. And in spite of it all, they demanded of him good likenesses and unconstrained naturalness. And the men were no better than the ladies: one insisted upon being painted with an energetic, muscular turn to his head; another, with upturned, inspired eyes; a lieutenant of the guard demanded that Mars should be visible in his eyes, without fail; an official in the civil service drew himself up to his full height in order to express his uprightness, his nobility, in his face, and so that his hand might rest upon a book bearing the words in plain characters, “He always stood up for the right.” At first such demands threw the artist into a cold perspiration: he had to think it over, to consider; and there was but very little time for that. Finally he acquired the knack of it, and never troubled himself at all about it. He understood at a word how each wanted himself portrayed. If a man wanted Mars in his face, he put in Mars: he gave a Byronic turn and attitude to those who aimed at Byron. If the ladies wanted to be Corinne, Undine, or Aspasia, he agreed with great readiness, and threw in a sufficient measure of good looks from his own imagination, which, as is well known, does no harm, and for the sake of which an artist is even forgiven a lack of resemblance. He soon began to wonder himself at the rapidity and dash of his brush. And of course those who sat to him were in ecstasies, and proclaimed him a genius.

Tchartkoff became a fashionable artist in every sense of the word. He began to dine out, to escort ladies to the galleries and even to walk, to dress foppishly, and to assert audibly that an artist should belong to society, that he must uphold his profession, that artists dress like shoemakers, do not know how to behave themselves, do not preserve the highest tone, and are lacking in all polish. At home, in his studio, he carried cleanliness and spotlessness to the last extreme, set up two superb footmen, took foppish pupils, dressed several times a day in various morning costumes, curled his hair, practiced various manners of receiving his callers, busied himself in adorning his person in every conceivable way, in order to produce a pleasing impression on the ladies: in a word, it would soon have been impossible for any one to recognize in him the modest artist who had formerly toiled unknown in his miserable quarters in the Vasilievsky Ostroff. He now expressed himself decidedly concerning artists and art; declared that too much credit had been given to the old masters; that they all, down to Raphael, painted not figures, but herrings; that the idea that there was any holiness about them existed only in the minds of the spectators; that even Raphael did not always paint well, and that fame attached to many of his works, simply by force of tradition; that Michael Angelo was a braggart because he could boast only a knowledge of anatomy; that there was no grace about him, and that real brilliancy and power of treatment and coloring were to be looked for only in the present century. And there, naturally, the question touched him personally. “No, I do not understand,” said he, “how others toil and work with difficulty: a man who labors for months over a picture is a dauber, and no artist in my opinion; I don’t believe he has any talent: genius works boldly, rapidly. Here,” said he, turning generally to his visitors, “is this portrait which I painted in two days, this head in one day, this in a few hours, this in little more than an hour. No, I... I confess I do not recognize as art that which adds line to line: that is a trade, not art.” In this manner did he lecture his visitors; and the visitors admired the strength and boldness of his works, even uttered exclamations on hearing how fast they had been produced, and then said to each other, “This is talent, real talent! see how he speaks, how his eyes gleam. Il y a quelque chose d’extraordinaire dans toute sa figure!”

It flattered the artist to hear such reports about himself. When printed praise appeared in the papers, he rejoiced like a child, although this praise was purchased with his money. He carried the printed slips about with him everywhere, showed them to friends and acquaintances as if by accident, and it pleased him to the extent of simple-minded naivete. His fame increased, his works and orders multiplied. Already the same portraits over and over wearied him with the same attitudes and turns, which he had learned by heart. He painted them now without any great interest in the work, trying to make some sort of a head, and giving them to his pupils to finish. At first he had tried to devise a new attitude each time, to surprise with his power and the effect. Now this had grown wearisome to him. His brain was tired with planning and thinking. It was out of his power, then or ever: his fast life, and society, where he tried to play the part of a man of the world, all this bore him far away from labor and thought. His work grew cold and dim; and he betook himself with indifference to monotonous, set, well-worn forms. The uniform, cold, eternally spick and span, and, so to speak, buttoned-up faces of the government officials, soldiers, and statesmen, did not offer a wide field for his brush: it forgot superb draperies, and powerful emotion and passion. Of groups, artistic drama and its lofty connections, there was nothing to be said. Before him was only a uniform, a corsage, a dress-coat, in the face of which the artist feels cold, and before which all imagination vanishes. Even his own peculiar merits were no longer visible in his works, yet they continued to enjoy renown; although genuine connoisseurs and artists merely shrugged their shoulders when they saw his latest productions. But some who had known Tchartkoff before, could not understand how the talent of which he had given such clear indications in the beginning, could have so vanished; and they strove in vain to divine by what means genius could be extinguished in a man just when he had attained to the full development of his powers.

But the intoxicated artist did not hear these criticisms. He began to attain to the age of dignity, both in mind and years: he began to grow stout, and increase visibly in flesh. He read in the papers phrases with adjectives, “Our most respected Andrei Petrovich; our worthy Andrei Petrovitch.” He began to receive offers of distinguished posts in the service, invitations to examinations and committees. He began, as is usually the case in maturer years, to advocate Raphael and the old masters, not because he had become thoroughly convinced of their transcendent merits, but in order to snub the younger artists. He began, according to the universal custom of those who have attained maturity, to accuse all young men, without exception, of immorality and a vicious turn of mind. He began to believe that every thing in the world simply happens, that there is no higher inspiration, and that every thing should of necessity be brought under one strict rule in the interests of accuracy and uniformity. In a word, his life already was approaching the verge of the years when every thing which suggests impulse, contracts within a man; when a powerful chord appeals more feebly to the spirit, and weaves no piercing strains about the heart; when the touch of beauty no longer converts virgin strength into fire and flame, but all the burnt-out sentiments become more vulnerable to the sound of gold, hearken more attentively to its seductive music, and, little by little, permit themselves to be completely lulled to sleep by it. Fame can give no pleasure to him who has stolen it, not won it: it produces a permanent shock only in the breast of him who is worthy of it. And so all his feelings and impulses turned towards gold. Gold was his passion, his ideal, his fear, his delight, his aim. The bundles of bank-bills increased in his coffers; and, like all to whose lot falls this fearful gift, he began to grow miserly, inaccessible to every sentiment except the love of gold, a causeless miser, an extravagant amasser, and on the point of becoming one of those strange beings of whom there are many in this unfeeling world, on whom the man full of life and heart gazes with horror; who regards them as walking stony sepulchres with dead men inside, instead of hearts. But something occurred which gave him a powerful shock, and disturbed the whole tenor of his life.

One day he found upon his table a note, in which the Academy of Painting begged him, as a worthy member of its body, to come and give his opinion upon a new work which had been sent from Italy by a Russian artist who was perfecting himself there. The artist was one of his former comrades, who had been possessed with a passion for art from his earliest years, had given himself up to it with his whole soul, estranged himself from his friends, from his relatives, from his pleasant habits, and had hastened there, where, under a magnificent sky, flourishes a splendid hot-bed of art, to wonderful Rome, at whose very name the artist’s heart beats wildly and hotly. There, like an exile, he buried himself in his work and in toil from which he permitted nothing to entice him. He cared not whether his character were talked about, or not, or his ignorance of the art of getting on with people, or his neglect of polite usages; nor of the discredit which he cast upon his calling of artist by his poor, old-fashioned dress. It was nothing to him if his brother artists were angry. He neglected every thing, and devoted himself wholly to art. He visited the galleries unweariedly, he stood for hours at a time before the works of the great masters, seizing and studying their marvelous methods. He never finished any thing without revising his impressions several times before these great teachers, and reading in their works silent but eloquent counsels. He entered into no noisy conversations or disputes. He neither advocated nor opposed the purists. He gave each impartially his due, appropriating from all only that which was most beautiful, and finally became the pupil of the divine Raphael alone—as a great poet-artist, after reading many works of various kinds, full of many charms and splendid beauties, at last made Homer’s Iliad alone his breviary, having discovered that it contains all one wants, and that there is nothing which is not expressed in it, in deep and grand perfection. And so he brought away from his school the grand conception of creation, the mighty beauty of thought, the high charm of that heavenly brush.

When Tchartkoff entered the room, he found a great crowd of visitors already collected before the picture. The most profound silence, such as rarely settles upon a throng of critics, reigned over all, on this occasion. He hastened to assume the significant expression of a connoisseur, and approached the picture; but, O God! what did he behold!

Pure, faultless, beautiful as a bride, stood the picture before him. Modest, reverent, innocent, and simple as a guardian angel, it rose above them all. It seemed as though the divine figures, embarrassed by the many glances directed at them, had dropped their beautiful eyelashes in confusion. The critics regarded the new, hitherto unknown work, with a feeling of involuntary wonder. All seemed united in it,—the art of Raphael, which was reflected in the lofty grace of the grouping; the art of Correggio, breathing from the finished perfection of the workmanship. But more striking than all else was the evident power of creation, still contained in the artist’s mind. The very minutest object in the picture was informed with it; every thing was done with order and inward power; he had caught that melting roundness of outline which is visible in nature only to the artist creator, and which comes out as angles with a copyist. It was plainly to be seen how the artist, having drawn it all from the visible world, had first stored it in his mind, and then had drawn it thence, as from a spiritual source, into one harmonious, triumphant song. And it was evident, even to the uninitiated, how vast a gulf was fixed between creation and a mere copy from nature. It was almost impossible to describe that rare silence which unconsciously overpowered all who cast their eyes on the picture,—not a rustle, not a sound: and the picture seemed more and more noble with every moment that passed; more brilliantly and wonderfully stood forth at length in one instant,— the fruit which had descended from heaven into the artist’s mind,— the instant for which all human life is but the preparation. Involuntary tears stood ready to fall in the eyes of those who surrounded the picture. It seemed as though all tastes, all bold, irregular errors of taste, even, joined in a silent hymn to the divine work.

Motionless, with open mouth, Tchartkoff stood before the picture; and at length, when by degrees the visitors and critics began to murmur and comment upon the merits of the work, and when at length they turned to him, and begged him to express an opinion, he came to himself once more; he tried to assume an indifferent, every-day expression; tried to make some of the commonplace, every- day remarks of hardened artists, in the following style: “Yes, in fact, to tell the truth, it is impossible to deny the artist’s talent; there is something to it; he evidently tried to express something; but as to the chief point”... and then as a conclusion to this, of course follow praises to such an effect that no artist would have felt flattered by them: he tried to do this; but the speech died upon his lips, tears and sobs burst forth uncontrollably for answer, and he rushed from the room like one beside himself.

In a moment he stood, deprived of sense and motion, in the middle of his magnificent studio. All his being, all his life, had been aroused in one instant, as if youth had returned to him, as if the dying sparks of his talent had blazed forth afresh. The bandage suddenly fell from his eyes. Heavens! to think of having mercilessly wasted the best years of his youth, of having extinguished, trodden out perhaps, the spark of fire, which, cherished in his breast, might perhaps have been developed now into magnificence and beauty, and have extorted, too, its meed of tears and admiration! And to have ruined it all, ruined it without pity! It seemed as though suddenly and all together there revived in his soul those impulses, that, devotion, which he had known in other days. He seized a brush, and approached his canvas. The perspiration started out upon his face with his efforts: one thought possessed him wholly, one desire consumed him; he tried to depict a fallen angel. This idea was most in harmony with his frame of mind. But alas! his figures, attitudes, groups, thoughts, arranged themselves stiffly, disconnectedly. His hand and his imagination had been too long confined to one groove; and the powerless effort to escape from the bonds and fetters which he had imposed upon himself, showed itself in irregularities and errors. He had despised the long, wearisome ladder to knowledge and the first fundamental law of the future great man. He gave vent to his vexation. He ordered all his last productions to be taken out of his studio, all the fashionable, lifeless pictures, all the portraits of hussars, ladies, and councillors of state.

He shut himself up alone in his room, would order no food, and devoted himself entirely to his work. He sat toiling like a youth, like a scholar. Rut how pitifully ignoble was all which proceeded from his hand! He was stopped at every step by his ignorance of the very first principles: the simple ignorance of the mechanical part chilled all inspirations, and formed an impassable barrier to his imagination. His brush returned involuntarily to hackneyed forms: the hands folded themselves in a set attitude; the heads dared not make any unusual turn; the very folds of the garments turned out commonplace, and would not subject themselves or drape themselves to any unaccustomed posture of the body. And he felt, he felt and saw it all himself.

“But had I really any talent?” he said at length: “did not I deceive myself?” And, uttering these words, he turned to his early works, which he had painted so purely, so unselfishly, in former days, in his wretched cabin yonder in lonely Vasilievsky Ostroff, far from people, luxury, and every indulgence. He turned to them now, and began attentively to examine them all; and all the misery of his former life came back to him. “Yes,” he cried despairingly, “I had talent: the signs and traces of it are everywhere visible.”...

He paused suddenly, and shivered all over: his eyes encountered eyes fixed immovably upon him. It was that remarkable portrait which he had bought in the Shtchukinui Dvor. All this time it had been covered up, concealed by other pictures, and had utterly gone out of his mind. Now, as if by design, when all the fashionable portraits and paintings had been removed from the studio, it looked forth, together with the productions of his early youth. As he recalled all the strange story; as he remembered that this singular portrait had been, in a manner, the cause of his errors: that the hoard of money which he had obtained in such peculiar fashion had given birth in his mind to all the wild caprices which had destroyed his talent,—madness was on the point of taking possession of him. On the instant he ordered the hateful portrait to be removed. But his mental excitement was not thereby diminished. Every feeling, his whole being, was shaken to its foundation; and he suffered that fearful torture which is sometimes exhibited in nature, as a striking anomaly, when a feeble talent strives to display itself on a scale too great for it, and cannot display itself,—that torture which in youth gives birth to greatness, but, when revery is carried to too great an extent, is converted into unquenchable thirst,—that fearful torture which renders a man capable of terrible things. A horrible envy took possession of him, envy which bordered on madness. The gall flew to his face when he beheld a work which bore the stamp of talent. He gnashed his teeth, and devoured it with the glare of a basilisk. He conceived the most devilish plan which ever entered into the mind of man, and he hastened with the strength of madness to carry it into execution. He began to purchase the best which art produced, of every kind. Having bought a picture at a great price, he transported it to his room with care, and flung himself upon it with the ferocity of a tiger, cut it, tore it, chopped it into bits, and stamped upon it, accompanying these proceedings with a grin of delight. The incalculable riches which he had amassed, enabled him to gratify this devilish desire. He opened his bags of gold, and unlocked his coffers. No monster of ignorance ever destroyed so many superb productions of art as did this raging avenger. At any auction where he made his appearance, every one despaired at once of obtaining any work of art. It seemed as if an angry heaven had sent this fearful scourge into the world expressly to destroy all harmony. This terrible passion communicated to him a horrible color: the gall abode permanently in his face. Blame of the world, and scorn of it, were expressed in his countenance. It seemed as though that awful demon were incarnate in him, which Pushkin has described in an ideal manner. His tongue uttered nothing except biting and censorious words. He swooped down like a harpy into the street; and all, even his acquaintances, catching sight of him in the distance, sought to turn aside and avoid a meeting with him, saying that it poisoned all the rest of the day.

Fortunately for the world and art, such a strained and forced life could not last long: the measure of his passions was too abnormal and colossal for his feeble strength. The attacks of madness began to appear more frequently, and ended at last in the most frightful illness. A violent fever, combined with galloping consumption, seized upon him with such force, that in three days there remained only a shadow of his former self. To this was added indications of hopeless madness. Sometimes several men were unable to hold him. The long-forgotten, living eyes of the remarkable portrait began to torment him, and then his madness became dreadful. All the people who surrounded his bed seemed to him horrible portraits. The portrait doubled and quadrupled itself in his eyes; all the walls seemed hung with portraits, which fastened their living, motionless eyes upon him; horrible portraits glared at him from the ceiling, from the floor; the room widened and lengthened endlessly, in order to make room for more of the motionless eyes. The doctor who had undertaken to attend him, having learned something of his strange history, strove with all his might to fathom the secret connection between the visions of his fancy and the occurrences of his life, but without the slightest success. The sick man understood nothing, felt nothing, except his own tortures, and gave utterance only to frightful yells and unintelligible gibberish. At last his life ended in a final attack of unutterable suffering. His corpse was horrible. Nothing could be found of all his great wealth; but when they beheld the mutilated fragments of all the grand works of art, the value of which exceeded a million, they understood the terrible use which had been made of it.

## Part II.

A throng of carriages, droschkis, and calashes stood at the entrance of a house in which an auction sale was going on of the effects belonging to one of those wealthy art-lovers who have dreamed their lives sweetly away, engrossed with Loves and Zephyrs, have innocently passed for Maecenases, and in a simpleminded fashion expended, to that end, the millions amassed by their thrifty fathers, and frequently even by their own early labors. As is well known, there are no such Maecenases in existence now; and our nineteenth century long ago acquired the aspect of a parsimonious banker, rejoicing in his millions only in the form of figures jotted down on paper. The long saloon was filled with the most motley throng of visitors, collected like birds of prey swooping down upon an unburied corpse. There was a whole squadron of Russian shop-keepers from the Gostinnui Dvor, and even from the old-clothes mart, in blue coats of foreign make. Their faces and expressions were a little more sedate here, more natural, and did not display that fictitious desire to serve which is so marked in the Russian shopkeeper when he stands before a customer in his shop. Here they stood upon no ceremony, although the saloons were full of those very aristocrats before whom, in any other place, they would have been ready to sweep, with reverences, the dust brought in by their feet. Here they were quite at their ease, handled pictures and books without ceremony, desirous of ascertaining the value of the goods, and boldly disarranged the prices attached by the connoisseur-Counts. There were many of the infallible attendants of auctions who make it a point to go to one every day as regularly as to take their breakfast; aristocratic connoisseurs, who look upon it as their duty not to miss any opportunity of adding to their collections, and who have no other occupation between twelve o’clock and one; finally those noble gentlemen, with garments and pockets very threadbare, who make their daily appearance without any selfish object in view, but merely to see how it all goes off,—who will give more, who less, who will outbid the other, and who will get it. A quantity of pictures were lying about in disorder: with them were mingled furniture, and books with possibly the cipher of the former owner, who never was moved by any laudable desire to glance into them. Chinese vases, marble slabs for tables, old and new furniture with curving lines, with griffins, sphinxes, and lions’ paws, gilded and ungilded, chandeliers, sconces,—all were heaped together, and not in the order of the shops. It presented a perfect chaos of art. The feeling we generally experience at an auction is a strange one: every thing about it bears some likeness to a funeral procession. The room in which it takes place, is always rather dark,—the windows, piled up with furniture and pictures, admit but scant light: the silence expressed in the faces, and the funereal voice of the auctioneer, the tapping of the hammer and the requiem of the poor arts, met together so strangely here; all this seems to heighten still further the peculiar unpleasantness of the impression.

The auction appeared to be at its height. A whole throng of respectable people had collected in a group, and were discussing something eagerly. On all sides resounded the words, rubles, rubles, giving the auctioneer no time to repeat the added price, which had already reached a sum four times as great as the price announced. The surging throng was competing for a portrait which could not but arrest the attention of all who possessed any knowledge of art. The skilled hand of an artist was plainly visible in it. The portrait had apparently been several times restored and renovated, and presented the dark features of an Asiatic in voluminous garments, with a strange and remarkable expression of countenance; but what struck the buyers more than all else, was the peculiar liveliness of the eyes. The more the people looked at them, the more did they seem to pierce into each man’s heart. This peculiarity, this strange illusion of the artist, attracted the attention of nearly all. Many who had been bidding for it, withdrew because the price had risen to an incredible sum. There remained only two well-known aristocrats, amateurs of painting, who were unwilling to forego such an acquisition. They grew warm, and would, probably, have raised the price to an impossible sum, had not one of the lookers-on suddenly exclaimed, “Permit me to interrupt your competition for a while: I, perhaps more than any other, have a right to this portrait.”

These words at once fixed the attention of all upon him. He was a tall man of thirty-five, with long black curls. His pleasing face, full of a certain bright nonchalance, indicated a soul removed from all wearisome, worldly excitement; his garments made no pretence to fashion: all about him indicated the artist. He was, in fact, B. the painter, personally well known to many of those present.

“However strange my words may seem to you,” he continued, perceiving that the general attention was directed to him, “yet, if you consent to listen to a short story, you may possibly see that I was right in uttering them. Every thing assures me that this is the portrait which I am looking for.”

A very natural curiosity illumined the faces of nearly all; and even the auctioneer paused as he was opening his mouth, and with hammer uplifted in the air, prepared to listen. At the beginning of the story, many glanced involuntarily towards the portrait; but later on, all bent their attention solely on the narrator, as his tale grew gradually more absorbing.

“You know that portion of the city which is called Kolomna,” he began. “There every thing is unlike any thing else in Petersburg: there it is neither capital nor provinces. It seems, you know, when you traverse those streets, as though all youthful desires and impulses deserted you. Thither the future never comes, all is peace and desolation, all that has fallen away from the movement of the capital. Retired tchinovniks’ remove thither to live; widows; people not very well off, who have acquaintance in the senate, and therefore condemn themselves to this for nearly the whole of their lives; retired cooks, who gossip all day at the markets, talk nonsense with the muzhiks in the petty shops, purchasing each day five kopeks’ worth of coffee, and four of sugar; and, in short, that whole list of people who can be described by the one word ash- colored,—people whose garments, faces, hair, eyes, have a sort of troubled, ashy surface, like a day when there is in the sky neither cloud nor sun, but it is simply neither one thing nor the other: the mist settles down, and robs every object of its distinctness. Among them may be reckoned retired theatrical servants, retired titular councillors, retired sons of Mars, with ruined eyes and swollen lips. These people are utterly passionless. They walk along without glancing at any thing, and maintain silence without thinking of any thing. There are not many possessions in their chambers,—sometimes merely a stoup of pure Russian vodka, which they absorb monotonously all day long, without its having any marked tendency to affect their heads, caused by a strong dose such as the young German mechanic loves to treat himself to on Sundays,- -that bully of Myeshtchanskaya Street, sole controller of all the sidewalks after twelve o’clock at night.

“Life in Kolomna is terribly lonely: rarely does a carriage appear, except, perhaps, one containing an actor, which disturbs the universal stillness by its rumble, noise, and jingling. There all are—pedestrians: the izvoshtchik frequently loiters along, carrying hay for his shaggy little horse. You can get lodgings for five rubles a month, coffee in the morning included. Widows with pensions are the most aristocratic families there; they conduct themselves well, sweep their rooms often, chatter with their friends about the dearness of beef and cabbage; they frequently have a young daughter,—a taciturn, quiet, sometimes pretty creature,—an ugly little dog, and wall-clocks which strike in a melancholy fashion. Then come the actors whose salaries do not permit them to desert Kolomna, an independent folk, living, like all artists, for pleasure. They sit in their dressing-gowns, cleaning their pistols, glueing together all sorts of things out of cardboard, which are useful about a house, playing checkers and cards with any friend who chances to drop in, and so pass away the morning, doing pretty nearly the same in the evening, with the addition of punch now and then. After these great people and aristocracy of Kolomna, come the rank and file. It is as difficult to put a name to them as to number the multitude of insects which breed in stale vinegar. There are old women who get drunk, who make a living by incomprehensible means, like ants, drag old clothes and rags from the Kalinkin Bridge to the old-clothes mart, in order to sell them there for fifteen kopeks,—in a word, the very dregs of mankind, whose condition no beneficent, political economist has devised any means of ameliorating.

“I have enumerated them in order to show you how often such people find themselves under the necessity of seeking immediate temporary assistance, of having recourse to borrowing; and there settles among them a peculiar race of money-lenders who lend small sums on security at an enormous percentage. These petty usurers are sometimes more heartless than the great ones, because they penetrate into the midst of poverty, and sharply displayed beggarly rags, which the rich usurer, who has dealings only with carriage- customers, never sees,—and because every feeling of humanity, too, soon dies within them. Among these usurers was a certain... but I must not omit to mention that the occurrence which I have undertaken to relate, refers to the last century; namely, to the reign of our late Empress Ekaterina the Second. You will understand that the very appearance and life of Kolomna must have changed materially. So, among the usurers was a certain person,—an extraordinary being in every respect, who had settled in that quarter of the city long before. He went about in voluminous Asiatic attire; his dark complexion pointed to a Southern origin; but to what particular nation he belonged,—India, Greece, or Persia,—no one could say with certainty. Of tall, almost colossal stature, with dark, thin, glowing face, and an indescribably strange color in his large eyes of unwonted fire, with heavy, overhanging brows, he differed sharply and strongly from all the ash-colored denizens of the capital.

“His very dwelling was unlike the other small wooden houses. It was of stone, in the style of those formerly much affected by Genoese merchants, with irregular windows of various sizes, with iron shutters and bars. This usurer differed from other usurers also in that he could furnish any required sum, from that desired by the poor old beggar-woman to that demanded by the extravagant court grandee. The most gorgeous equipages often showed themselves in front of his house, and from their windows sometimes peeped forth the head of an elegant lady of society. Rumor, as usual, reported that his iron coffers were full of untold gold, treasures, diamonds, and all sorts of pledges, but that, nevertheless, he was not the slave of that avarice which is characteristic of other usurers. He lent money willingly, stipulating very favorable terms of payment, so it appeared, but, by some curious method of reckoning, made them amount to an incredible percentage. So said rumor, at least. But what was strangest of all, and could not fail to strike many, was the peculiar fate of all who received money from him: all ended their lives in some unhappy way. Whether this was simply the popular opinion, stupid, superstitious rumors, or reports circulated with an object, is not known. But several instances which happened within a brief space of time before the eyes of all, were vivid and striking.

“Among the aristocracy of that day, the one who speedily attracted to himself the eyes of all was a young man of one of the best families, distinguished also in his early years in court- circles, a warm admirer of all true and noble things, zealous for all which art or the mind of man produced, and giving promise of becoming a Maecenas. He was soon deservedly distinguished by the Empress, who conferred upon him an important post, fully proportioned to his desires,—a post in which he could accomplish much for science and the general welfare. The youthful dignitary surrounded himself with artists, poets, and learned men. He wished to give work to all, to encourage all. He undertook, at his own expense, a number of useful publications; gave many orders; proclaimed many prizes for the encouragement of different arts; spent a great deal of money, and finally ruined himself. But, full of noble impulses, he did not wish to relinquish his work, sought a loan everywhere, and finally betook himself to the well-known usurer. Having effected a considerable loan from him, the man changed completely in a short time: he became a persecutor and oppressor of budding talent and intellect. He saw the bad side in every publication, and every word he uttered was false. Then, unfortunately, came the French Revolution. This furnished him with an excuse for every sort of suspicion. He began to discover a revolutionary tendency in every thing: he encountered hints in every thing. He became suspicious to such a degree, that he began, finally, to suspect himself; began to concoct terrible and unjust accusations, made scores of people unhappy. Of course, such conduct could not fail, in time, to reach the throne. The kind-hearted Empress was shocked; and, full of the noble spirit which adorns crowned heads, she uttered words which, although they could not descend to us in all their sharpness, have yet preserved the memory of their deepest meaning engraven on many hearts. The Empress remarked, that not under a monarchical government were the high and noble impulses of souls persecuted; not there were the creations of intellect, poetry, and art contemned and oppressed; that, on the other hand, monarchs alone were their protectors; that Shakespeare and Moliere flourished under their magnanimous protection, while Dante could not find a corner in his republican birthplace; that true geniuses arise in the period of brilliancy and power of emperors and empires, but not in the time of monstrous political apparitions and republican terrorism, which, up to that time, had never given to the world a single poet; that poet-artists should be marked out for favor, for peace, and divine quiet alone compose their minds, not excitement and tumult; that learned men, poets, and all producers of art, are the pearls and diamonds in the imperial crown: by them is the epoch of the great ruler adorned, and from them it receives yet greater brilliancy. In a word, when the Empress uttered these words, she was divinely beautiful for the moment. I remember old men who could not speak of it without tears. All were interested in the affair. It must be remarked, to the honor of our national pride, that in the Russian’s heart there always beats a fine feeling that he must adopt the part of the persecuted. The dignitary who had betrayed his trust was punished in an exemplary manner, and degraded from his post. But he read a much more dreadful punishment in the faces of his fellow- countrymen: this was a sharp and universal scorn. It is impossible to describe what that vain-glorious soul suffered: pride, betrayed self-love, ruined hopes, all united, and he died in a terrible attack of raving madness.

“Another striking example occurred also in view of all: among the beauties in which our Northern capital is assuredly not poor, one decidedly surpassed all the rest. Her loveliness was a combination of our Northern charms with the charms of the South,—a brilliant such as rarely makes its appearance on earth. My father admitted that he had never beheld any thing like it in the whole course of his life. Every thing seemed to be united in her,— wealth, intellect, and spiritual charms. She had throngs of admirers; and the most distinguished of them all was Prince R., the most noble-minded, the best, of all young men, the finest in face, and in his magnanimous and knightly sentiments the grand ideal of romance and women, a Grandison in every acceptation of the term. Prince R. was passionately and desperately in love: he was requited by a like ardent passion. But the match seemed unequal to the parents. The prince’s family estates had not been in his possession for a long time, his family was out of favor, and the sad state of his affairs was well known to all. Of a sudden the prince quitted the capital, as if for the purpose of arranging his affairs, and after a short interval re-appeared, surrounded with luxury and incredible splendor. Brilliant balls and parties made him known at court. The beauty’s father began to relent, and a most interesting wedding took place in the city. Whence this change in circumstances, this unheard-of wealth of the bridegroom, came, no one could fully explain; but it was whispered that he had entered into a compact with the mysterious usurer, and had borrowed money of him. However that may have been, the wedding was a source of interest to the whole city, and the bride and bridegroom were the objects of general envy. Every one knew of their warm and faithful love, the long persecution they had had to endure from every quarter, the great personal worth of both. Ardent women at once sketched out the heavenly bliss which the young couple would enjoy. But it turned out very differently.

“In the course of a year a frightful change came over the husband. His character, up to that time so fine and noble, became poisoned with jealous suspicions, irritability, and inexhaustible caprices. He became a tyrant and persecutor to his wife,—something which no one could have foreseen,—and indulged in the most inhuman deeds, even in blows. In a year’s time, no one would have recognized the woman who such a little while before had shone, and drawn about her throngs of submissive adorers. Finally, no longer able to endure her heavy lot, she proposed a divorce. Her husband flew into a rage at the very suggestion. In the first burst of passion, he chased her about the room with a knife, and would doubtless have murdered her then and there, if they had not seized him and prevented him. In a burst of madness and despair he turned the knife against himself, and ended his life amid the most horrible sufferings.

“Besides these two instances which occurred before the eyes of all the world, stories circulated of a great number which took place among the lower classes, near]y all of which had tragic endings. Here an honest, sober man became a drunkard; there a shop- keeper’s clerk robbed his master; again, an izvoshtchik who had conducted himself properly for a number of years, cut his passenger’s throat for a groschen. It was impossible that such occurrences, related, too, sometimes not without embellishments, should not inspire a sort of involuntary horror in the sedate inhabitants of Kolomna. No one cherished any doubt as to the presence of an evil power in this man. They said that he imposed conditions which made the hair rise on one’s head, and which the miserable wretch never afterward dared reveal to any other being; that his money possessed a power of attraction; that it grew hot of itself, and that it bore strange marks.... In short, many were the silly stories in circulation. And it is worthy of remark, that all this colony of Kolomna, this whole race of poor old women, petty officials, petty artists, and, in a word, all the insignificant people whom we have just recapitulated, agreed that it was better to endure any thing, and to suffer the extreme of misery, rather than to have recourse to the terrible usurer: old women were even found dying of hunger, who preferred to kill their bodies rather than lose their souls. Those who met him in the street felt an involuntary fear. Pedestrians took care to turn aside from his path, and gazed long after the extremely tall, receding figure. In his face alone, there was enough that was uncommon to cause any one to ascribe to him a supernatural nature. The strong features, so deeply chiselled, not seen in many men; the glowing bronze of his complexion; the incredible thickness of his brows; the intolerable, terrible eyes; even the wide folds of his Asiatic garment,— everything seemed to indicate that all passions of other people were pale compared to the passions raging in that body. My father stopped short every time he met him, and could not refrain each time from saying, ‘A devil, a perfect devil!’ But I must introduce you as speedily as possible to my father, who, with others, is the chief character in this story.

“My father was a remarkable man in many respects. He was an artist of rare ability, a self-taught artist, seeking in his own soul, without teachers or schools, principles and rules, carried away only by the thirst for perfection, and treading a path indicated by his own instincts, for reasons unknown, perchance, even to himself,—one of those natural marvels whom their contemporaries often honor with the insulting title of fools, and who are chilled neither by blame nor their own lack of success, who gain only fresh vigor, and, in their own minds, have gone far beyond those works on account of which they have received the name of fools. Through some lofty and secret instinct he perceived the presence of a soul in every object; he embraced, by his unaided mind, the true significance of the words, historical painting; he comprehended why a simple head, a simple portrait by Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Correggio, can be considered an historical painting, and why a huge picture with historical subject remains, nevertheless, a genre picture, in spite of all the artist’s pretensions to historical painting. And this secret instinct and personal conviction turned his brush to Christian subjects, grand and lofty to the last degree. He had none of the vanity or irritability so inseparable from the character of many artists. His was a strong character: he was an honorable, upright, even rough man, covered with a sort of hard rind without, not entirely lacking in pride, and given to expressing himself both sharply and scornfully about people. ‘What are they looking at?’ he generally said. ‘I am not working for them. I don’t carry my pictures to the tavern. He who understands me is grateful. The man of the world is not to blame that he understands nothing about painting; but he does understand cards, and he knows good wine and horses;—why should a gentleman know more? Observe, if you please, how he tries one, and then another, and then begins to consider, when his living does not depend upon it. Let every man attend to his own affairs. To my mind, that man is the best of all who says frankly that he does not understand a thing, rather than the man who pretends, talks as though he knew a thing he does not know, and is simply disgusting and intolerable.’ He worked for very small pay; that is to say, for just enough to support his family, and obtain the tools to work with. Moreover, he never, under any circumstances, refused to aid any one, or to lend a helping hand to a poor artist: he believed with the simple, reverent faith of his ancestors; and from that cause, it may be, that noble expression which even brilliant talents cannot acquire, showed itself in the faces he painted. At length, by his unintermitting labor, and perseverance in the path he had marked out for himself, he began to win the approbation of those who honored his folly and his self- taught talent. They gave him constant orders for churches, and he never lacked employment. One of his paintings possessed a strong interest for him. I no longer recall the precise subject: I only know that he needed to represent the Spirit of Darkness in it. He pondered long what form to give him: he wished to concentrate in his face all that weighs down and oppresses a man. In the midst of his meditations, there suddenly occurred to his mind the image of the mysterious usurer; and he thought involuntarily, ‘That’s what I ought to paint for the Devil!’ Imagine his amazement when one day, as he was at work in his studio, he heard a knock at the door, and directly after there entered that very same terrible usurer. He could not repress an inward shudder, which involuntarily traversed every limb.

“ ’You are an artist?’ he said to my father abruptly.

“ ’I am,’ answered my father in surprise, waiting for what should come next.

“ ’Good! Paint my portrait. I may possibly die soon. I have no children; but I do not wish to die completely, I wish to live. Can you paint a portrait that shall be as though it lived?’

“My father reflected, ‘What could be better? He offers himself for the Devil in my picture.’ He promised. They agreed upon a time and price; and the next day my father took palette and brushes, and went to his house. The lofty court-yard, dogs, iron doors and locks, arched windows, coffers draped with strange covers, and, last of all, the remarkable owner himself, seated motionless before him, all produced a strange impression on him. The windows seemed intentionally barred, and so encumbered below that they admitted the light only from the top. ‘Devil take him, how well his face is lighted!’ he said to himself, and began to paint assiduously, as though afraid that the favorable light would disappear. ‘What strength!’ he repeated to himself. ‘If I make half a likeness of him, as he is just now, it will surpass all my other works: he will simply start from the canvas if I am only partly true to nature. What remarkable features!’ he kept repeating, redoubling his energy; and he began himself to see how some traits were making their appearance on the canvas. But the more closely he approached him, the more conscious he became of an aggressive, uneasy feeling, which he could not explain to himself. But, notwithstanding this, he set himself to copy with literal accuracy every slightest trait and expression. First of all, however, he busied himself with the eyes. There was so much force in those eyes, that it seemed impossible to reproduce them exactly as they were in nature. But he resolved, at any price, to seek in them the most minute characteristics and shades, to penetrate their secret.... But as soon as he approached them, and began to redouble his exertions, there sprang up in his mind such a terrible feeling of repulsion, of inexplicable oppression, that he was forced to lay aside his brush for a while, and begin anew. At last he could bear it no longer: he felt as if those eyes were piercing into his soul, and causing intolerable emotion. On the second and third days this became still stronger. It became horrible to him. He threw down his brush, and declared abruptly that he could paint him no longer. You should have seen how the terrible usurer changed countenance at these words. He threw himself at his feet, and besought him to finish the portrait, saying that his fate and his existence in the world depended on it; that he had already caught his prominent features; that if he could reproduce them accurately, his life would be preserved in his portrait, in a supernatural manner; that by that means he would not die completely; that it was necessary for him to continue to exist in the world.

“My father was frightened by these words: they seemed to him strange and terrible to such a degree, that he threw down his brushes and palette, and rushed headlong from the room.

“The memory of it troubled him all day and all night; but the next morning he received the portrait from the usurer, brought by a woman who was the only creature in his service, who announced that her master did not want the portrait, would pay nothing for it, and had sent it back. On the evening of the same day he learned that the usurer was dead, and that preparations were in progress to bury him according to the rites of his religion. All this seemed to him inexplicably strange. But from that day a marked change showed itself in his character. He was possessed by a troubled, uneasy feeling, of which he was unable to explain the cause; and he soon committed a deed which no one could have expected of him. For some time the works of one of his pupils had been attracting the attention of a small circle of connoisseurs and amateurs. My father had perceived his talent, and manifested a particular liking for him in consequence. Suddenly he became envious of him. The general interest in him and talk about him became unendurable to my father. Finally, to complete his vexation, he learned that his pupil had been asked to paint a picture for a recently built and wealthy church. This enraged him. ‘No, I will not permit that fledgling to triumph!’ said he: ‘it is early, friend, to think of consigning the old men to the gutters. I still have powers, God be praised! We’ll soon see which will put down the other.’ And the straightforward, honorable man employed intrigues and plots which he had hitherto abhorred. He finally contrived that there should be a competition for the picture which other artists were permitted to enter into with their works. Then he shut himself up in his room, and grasped his brush with zeal. It seemed as if he were striving to summon all his strength for this occasion. And, in fact, it turned out to be one of his best works. No one doubted that he would bear off the palm. The pictures were placed on exhibition, and all the others seemed to his as night to day. Then, of a sudden, one of the members present, an ecclesiastical personage if I mistake not, made a remark which surprised every one. ‘There is certainly much talent in this artist’s picture,’ said he, ‘but no holiness in the faces: there is even, on the contrary, a sort of demoniacal look in the eyes, as though some evil feeling had guided the artist’s hand.’ All looked, and could not but acknowledge the truth of the words. My father rushed forward to his picture, as though to verify for himself this offensive remark, and perceived with horror that he had bestowed the usurer’s eyes upon nearly all the figures. They had such an annihilatingly diabolical gaze, that he involuntarily shuddered. The picture was rejected; and he was forced to hear, to his indescribable vexation, that the palm was awarded to his pupil. It is impossible to describe the state of rage in which he returned home. He almost killed my mother, he drove the children away, broke his brushes and easels, tore down the usurer’s portrait from the wall, demanded a knife, and ordered a fire built in the chimney, intending to cut it in pieces and burn it. A friend, an artist, caught him in the act as he entered the room,—a jolly fellow, like my father, always satisfied with himself, inflated by no unattainable wishes, doing daily any thing that came to hand, and taking still more gayly to his dinner and little carouses.

“ ’What are you doing? What are you preparing to burn?’ he asked, and stepped up to the portrait. ‘Why, this is one of your very best works. This is the usurer who died a short time ago: yes, it is a most perfect thing. You did not stop until you had got into his very eyes. Never in life did eyes look as these of yours do now.’

“ ’Well, I’ll see how they look in the fire!’ said my father, making a movement to fling the portrait into the grate.

“ ’Stop, for Heaven’s sake!’ exclaimed his friend, restraining him: ‘give it to me, rather, if it offends your eyes to such a degree.’ My father began to insist, but yielded at length; and the jolly fellow, well pleased with his acquisition, carried the portrait home with him.

“When he was gone, my father felt more calm. The burden seemed to have disappeared from his soul together with the portrait. He was surprised himself at his evil feelings, his envy, and the evident change in his character. Reviewing his acts, he became sad at heart; and not without inward sorrow did he exclaim, ‘No, it was God who punished me! my picture, in fact, brought disgrace. It was meant to ruin my brother-man. A devilish feeling of envy guided my brush, and that devilish feeling must have made itself visible in it.’ He set out at once to seek his former pupil, embraced him warmly, begged his forgiveness, and endeavored as far as possible to excuse his own fault. His labors continued, as before, undisturbed; but his face more frequently was thoughtful. He prayed more, grew more taciturn, and expressed himself less sharply about people: even the rough exterior of his character was modified to some extent. But a certain occurrence soon disturbed him more than ever. He had seen nothing for a long time of the comrade who had begged the portrait of him. He had already decided to hunt him up, when the latter suddenly made his appearance in his room. After a few words and questions on both sides, he said, ‘Well, brother, it was not without cause that you wished to burn that portrait. Devil take it, there’s something horrible about it!... I don’t believe in sorcerers; but, begging your pardon, there’s an unclean spirit in it.”...

“ ’How so?’ asked my father.

“ ’Well, from the very moment I hung it up in my room, I felt such depression... just as if I wanted to murder some one. I never knew in my life what sleeplessness was; but now I suffer not from sleeplessness alone, but from such dreams!... I cannot tell whether they are dreams, or what; it is as if a kobold were strangling one: and the old man appears to me in my sleep. In short, I can’t describe my state of mind. I never had any thing of the sort before. I have been wandering about miserably all the time: I have had a sensation of fear, of expecting something unpleasant. I have felt as if I could not speak a cheerful or sincere word to any one: it is just as if a spy were sitting over me. And from the very hour that I gave that portrait to my nephew, who asked for it, I felt as if a stone had been rolled from my shoulders: I immediately felt cheerful, as you see me now. Well, brother, you made the very Devil!’

“During this recital, my father listened with unswerving attention, and finally inquired, ‘And your nephew now has the portrait?’

“ ’My nephew, indeed! he could not stand it!’ said the jolly fellow: ‘do you know, the soul of that usurer has migrated into it; he jumps out of the frame, walks about the room; and what my nephew tells of him is simply incomprehensible. I should take him for a lunatich, if I had not undergone a part of it myself. He sold it to some collector of pictures; and he could not stand it either, and got rid of it to come one else.’

“This story produced a deep impression on my father. He became seriously pensive, fell into hypochondria, and finally became fully convinced that his brush had served as a tool of the Devil; that a portion of the usurer’s life had actually passed into the portrait, and was now troubling people, inspiring diabolical excitement, beguiling painters from the true path, producing the fearful torments of envy, and so forth, and so forth. Three catastrophes which occurred afterwards, three sudden deaths of wife, daughter, and infant son, he regarded as a divine punishment on him, and firmly resolved to leave the world. As soon as I was nine years old, he placed me in an academy of painting, and, paying all his debts, retired to a lonely cloister, where he soon afterwards took the vows. There he amazed every one by the strictness of his life, and his untiring observance of all the monastic rules. The prior of the monastery, hearing of his skill in painting, ordered him to paint the principal ikon in the church. But the humble brother said plainly that he was unworthy to touch a brush, that his was contaminated, that with toil and great sacrifice must he first purify his spirit in order to render himself fit to undertake such a task. They did not care to force him. He increased the rigors of monastic life for himself as much as possible. At last, even it became insufficient, and not strict enough for him. He retired, with the approval of the prior, into the desert, in order to be quite alone. There he constructed for himself a cell from branches of trees, ate only uncooked roots, dragged about a stone from place to place, stood in one spot with his hands lifted to heaven, from the rising until the going-down of the sun, reciting prayers without cessation: in short, he underwent, it seemed, every possible degree of suffering and of that pitiless self-abnegation, of which instances can perhaps be found in some Lives of the Saints. In this manner did he long—for several years—exhaust his body, invigorating it, at the same time, with the strength of fervent prayer. At length, one day he came to the cloister, and said firmly to the prior, ‘Now I am ready. If God wills, I will finish my task.’ The subject he selected was the Birth of Christ. A whole year he sat over it, without leaving his cell, barely sustaining himself with coarse food, and praying incessantly. At the end of the year the picture was ready. It was a really wonderful work. You must know, that neither prior nor brethren knew much about painting; but all were struck with the marvelous holiness of the figures. The expression of reverent humility and gentleness in the face of the Holy Mother, as she bent over the Child; the deep intelligence in the eyes of the Holy Child, as though he saw something afar; the triumphant silence of the Magi, amazed by the Divine Miracle, as they bowed at his feet; and finally, the indescribable peace which informed the whole picture,- -all this was presented with such even strength and powerful beauty, that the impression it made was magical. All the brethren threw themselves on their knees before the new ikon; and the prior, deeply affected, exclaimed, ‘No, it is impossible for any artist, with the assistance only of earthly art, to produce such a picture: a holy, divine power guided thy brush, and the blessing of Heaven rested upon thy labor!’

“By that time I had completed my education at the academy, received the gold medal, and with it the joyful hope of a journey to Italy,—the fairest dream of a twenty-year-old artist. It only remained for me to take leave of my father, from whom I had been separated for twelve years. I confess that even his image had long faded from my memory. I had heard somewhat of his grim saintliness, and rather expected to meet a hermit of rough exterior, a stranger to every thing in the world, except his cell and his prayers, worn out, dried up, by eternal fasting and penance. But how great was my surprise, when a handsome, almost divine, old man stood before me! And no traces of exhaustion were visible on his countenance: it beamed with the light of a heavenly joy. His beard, white as snow, and his thin, almost transparent hair of the same silvery hue, fell picturesquely upon his breast, and upon the folds of his black gown, and even to the rope with which his poor monastic garb was girded. But most surprising to me of all, was to hear from his mouth such words and thoughts about art, as, I confess, I long shall bear in mind, and I sincerely wish that all my comrades would do the same.

“ ’I expected you, my son,’ he said, when I approached for his blessing. ‘The path awaits you, in which your life is henceforth to flow. Your path is pure,—desert it not. You have talent: talent is the most priceless of God’s gifts,—destroy it not. Search out, learn all you see, subject all things to your brush; but in all, see that you find the hidden soul, and most of all, strive to attain to the grand secret of creation. Blessed is the elect one, who masters that! There is for him, no mean object in nature. In lowly themes, the artist creator is as great as in great ones: in the despicable, there is nothing for him to despise; for the glorious mind of the creator penetrates it, and the despicable has received a lofty significance, for it has passed through the purifying fire of his mind. An intimation of God’s heavenly paradise is contained for the artist, in art, and by that alone is it higher than all else. But by as much as triumphant rest is grander than every earthly emotion; by as much as the angel, pure in the innocence of its bright spirit, is above all invisible powers and the proud passions of Satan,—by just so much is the lofty creation of art higher than every thing else on earth. Sacrifice every thing to it, and love it with passion,—not with the passion breathing with earthly desire, but a peaceful, heavenly passion. Without it a man is not capable of elevating himself above the earth, and cannot produce wondrous sounds of soothing; for the grand creations of art descend into the world in order to soothe and reconcile all. It cannot plant discord in the spirit, but ascends, like a resounding prayer, eternally to God. But there are moments, dark moments’... he paused, and I observed that his bright face darkened, as though some cloud crossed it for a moment. ‘There is one incident of my life,’ he said. ‘Up to this moment, I cannot understand what that terrible figure was, of which I painted a likeness. It was certainly some diabolical apparition. I know that the world denies the existence of the Devil, and therefore I will not speak of him. I will only say that I painted him with repugnance: I felt no liking for my work, even at the time. I tried to force myself, and, stifling every emotion in a hard-hearted way, to be true to nature. It was not a creation of art: and therefore the feelings which overpower every one who looks at it, are feelings of repulsion, disturbing emotions, not the feelings of an artist; for an artist infuses peace into commotion. I have been informed that this portrait is passing from hand to hand, and sowing unpleasant impressions, inspiring artists with feelings of envy, of dark hatred towards their brethren, with malicious thirst for persecution and oppression. May the Almighty preserve you from such passions! There is nothing more terrible. It is better to endure the bitterness of all possible persecution than to subject any one to even the shadow of persecution. Preserve the purity of your mind. He who possesses talent should be purer than all others. Much is forgiven to another which is not forgiven to him. A man who has emerged from his house in brilliant, festive garments, has but to be spattered with a single drop of mud from a wheel, and people surround him, and point the finger at him, and talk of his want of cleanliness; while the same people do not perceive the multitude of spots upon other passers-by, who are clothed in ordinary garments, for spots are not visible on ordinary garments.’

“He blessed and embraced me. Never in my life was I so grandly moved. Reverently, rather than with the feeling of a son, I leaned upon his breast, and kissed his scattered silver locks.

“Tears shone in his eyes. ‘Fulfil myone request, my son,’ said he, at the moment of parting. ‘You may chance to see the portrait I have mentioned, somewhere. You will know it at once by the strange eyes, and their peculiar expression. Destroy it at any cost.’...

“Judge for yourselves whether I could refuse to promise, with an oath, to fulfil this request. In the space of fifteen years, I had never succeeded in meeting with any thing which in any way corresponded to the description given me by my father, until now, all of a sudden, at an auction “...

The artist did not finish his sentence, but turned his eyes to the wall in order to glance once more at the portrait. The whole throng of his auditors made the same movement, seeking the wonderful portrait with their eyes. But, to their extreme amazement, it was no longer on the wall. An indistinct murmur and exclamation ran through the crowd, and then was heard distinctly the word, stolen. Some one had succeeded in carrying it off, taking advantage of the fact that the attention of the spectators was distracted by the story. And those present remained long in a state of surprise, not knowing whether they had really seen those remarkable eyes, or whether it was simply a dream, which had floated for an instant before their vision, strained with long gazing at old pictures.