

# Mikhail Lermontov

## A Hero of Our Time

A Hero of Our Time, by Mikhail Yurievich Lermontov[1] (1814-1841), 1840[2], 1841. fiction. russian novel. romanticism. Realism. Title Geroy nashego vremeni[3] in russian; this is the second edition (1841), including the author's preface. This complete HTML e-text is based on the translation from the Russian into English by Martin Parker, published by Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1947, 1951, in the public domain in the United States of America. (A translation that has also been reprinted by but not copyrighted by the Everyman Library, 1995, revised and edited by Neil Cornwell, University of Bristol, ISBN 0-660-87566-3.) Illustrations are from the Moscow edition. We have extensively modified the Parker translation here, mostly by attempting to render it into modern American English and at the same time to restore what we consider the most likely original meaning.

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Another online edition of this work can be found at the University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center . That English translation, entitled "The Heart of a Russian," by J. H. Wisdom Marr Murray, N.Y.: Knopf, 1916, has a different order to the chapters and has heavy Victorian prose and sketchy footnotes. However, the edition, by Judy Boss, Carolyn Fay, and David Seaman, does have page numbers and

a few color illustrations. We did not refer to it when doing this edition. A text-only version of that translation was released in Project Gutenberg in May, 1997.

For further references, please see the books by Cornwell and Nabokov[4] previously cited, as they contain notes, a map, chronologies, excerpts from critical material, and everything you need.

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# **A Hero of Our Time**

## **By Mikhail Lermontov**

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# The Author's Preface



*W. Agnew*

The preface is the first and at the same time the last thing in any book. It serves either to explain the purpose of the work or to defend the author from his critics. Ordinarily, however, readers are concerned with neither the moral nor the journalistic attacks on the author – as a result they don't read prefaces. Well, that's too bad, especially in our country. Our public is still so immature and simple-hearted that it doesn't understand a fable unless it finds the moral at the end. It fails to grasp a joke or sense an irony[5] – it simply hasn't been brought up properly. It's as yet unaware that obvious violent abuse has no place in respectable society and respectable

books, that education nowadays has worked out a sharper, almost invisible, but nevertheless deadly weapon, which behind the curtain of flattery cuts with a stab against which there is no defense. Our public is like the person from the sticks[6] who, overhearing a conversation between two diplomats belonging to hostile courts, becomes convinced that each is being false to his government for the sake of a tender mutual friendship.

This book recently had the misfortune of being taken literally by some readers and even some reviewers. Some were seriously shocked at being given a man as amoral as the Hero of Our Time for a model. Others delicately hinted that the author had drawn portraits of himself and his acquaintances... What an old, weak joke! But apparently Russia is made up so that however she may progress in every other respect, she is unable to get rid of foolish ideas like this. With us the most fantastic of fairy tales has hardly a chance of escaping criticism as an attempt to hurt our feelings!

A Hero of Our Time, my dear readers, is indeed a portrait, but not of one man. It is a portrait

built up of all our generation's[7] vices in full bloom. you will again tell me that a human being cannot be so wicked, and I will reply that if you can believe in the existence of all the villains of tragedy and romance, why wouldn't believe that there was a Pechorin[8]? if you could admire far more terrifying and repulsive types, why aren't you more merciful to this character, even if it is fictitious? Isn't it because there's more truth in it than you might wish?

You say that morality will gain nothing by it. Excuse me. People have been fed so much candy they are sick to their stomachs. Now bitter medicine and acid truths are needed. But don't ever think that the author of this book was ever ambitious enough to dream about reforming human vices. May God preserve him from such foolishness! It simply amused him to picture the modern man as he sees him and as he so often-to his own and your own misfortune-has found him to be. It's enough that the disease has been diagnosed – how to cure it only the Lord knows!



# Part I[9]

## I. Bela

I was traveling along the military road[10] back from Tiflis[11]. the only luggage in the little cart [12] was one small suitcase half full of travel notes about Georgia. Fortunately for you most of them have been lost since then, though luckily for me the case and the rest of the things in it have survived.

The sun was already slipping behind a snow-capped ridge when I drove into Koishaur Valley. The Ossetian coachman, singing at the top of his voice, tirelessly urged his horses on in order to reach the summit of Koishaur Mountain before nightfall. What a glorious spot this valley is! All around it tower awesome mountains, reddish crags draped with hanging ivy and crowned with clusters of plane trees, yellow cliffs grooved by torrents, with a gilded fringe of snow high above, while down below the Aragva River embraces a nameless stream that noisily bursts forth from a black, gloom-filled gorge and then stretches in a

silvery ribbon into the distance, its surface shimmering like the scaly back of a snake.

On reaching the foot of the Koishaur Mountain we stopped outside a tavern where some twenty Georgians and mountaineers made up a noisy assembly. Nearby a camel caravan had halted for the night. I saw I would need oxen to haul my carriage to the top of the confounded mountain, for it was already fall and a thin layer of ice covered the ground, and the climb was a mile and a half long.

So I had no choice but to rent six oxen and several Ossetians. One of them lifted up my suitcase and the others started helping the oxen along-though they did little more than shout.

Behind my carriage came another pulled by four oxen with no visible effort, though the vehicle was piled high with baggage. This rather surprised me. In the wake of the carriage walked its owner, puffing at a small silver-inlaid Kabardian[13] pipe. He was wearing an officer's coat without epaulets[14] and a shaggy Circassian[15] cap. He looked about fifty, his tan[16] face showed a long relationship with the Caucasian sun, and his prematurely gray mustache did not

match his firm step and vigorous appearance. I went up to him and bowed. He silently returned my greeting, blowing out an enormous cloud of smoke.

"I guess we're fellow travelers?"

He bowed again, but did not say a word.

"I suppose you're going to Stavropol[17]?"

"Yes, sir, I am... with some government baggage."

"Will you please explain to me how it is that four oxen easily manage to pull your heavy carriage while six animals can barely haul my empty one with the help of all these Ossetians?"

He smiled wisely, casting a glance at me as if to size me up.

"I bet you haven't been long in the Caucasus?"

"About a year," I replied.

He smiled again.

"Why do you ask?"

"No particular reason, sir. They're awful good-for-nothings, these Asiatics[18]! you don't think their yelling helps much, do you? You can't tell what the hell they're saying. But the oxen understand them all right. Hitch up twenty of the animals if you want to and they won't budge as soon

as those fellows begin yelling in their own language. . . Terrific cheats, they are. But what can you do about them? They do like to skin the traveler. Spoiled, they are, the robbers!... you'll see they'll make you tip them too. I know them by now, they won't fool me!"

"Have you served long in these parts?"

"Yes, ever since General Aleksey Yermolov[19] was here," he replied, drawing himself up. "when he arrived at the line[20] i was a second lieutenant[21], and under him was promoted twice for service against the guerrillas[22]."

"And now?"

"Now I'm in the third line battalion. And you, may I ask?"

I told him.

This brought the conversation to an end and we walked along side by side in silence. On top of the mountain we ran into snow. The sun set and night followed day without any interval in between as is usual in the South. Thanks to the glistening snow, however, we could easily pick out the road which still continued to climb, though less steeply than before. I gave orders to put my suitcase in the carriage and replace the

oxen with horses, and turned to look back at the valley down below for the last time, but a thick mist that rolled in waves from the gorges blanketed it completely and not a sound reached us from its depths. The Ossetians loudly pestered me, demanding money for vodka. But the captain shouted at them so fiercely that they went away in a second.

"You see what they're like!" he grumbled. "They don't know enough Russian to ask for a piece of bread, but they've learned to beg for tips: 'Officer, give me money for vodka!' Even the Tatars[23] are better—at least, they don't drink alcohol...."

About a mile remained to the stage coach station. It was quiet all around, so quiet that you could trace the flight of a mosquito by its buzz. A deep gorge yawned black to the left. Beyond it and ahead of us the dark blue mountain peaks wrinkled with gorges and gullies and topped by layers of snow loomed against the pale horizon that still retained the last glimmer of twilight. Stars began to twinkle in the dark sky, and, strangely enough, it seemed that they were far higher here than in our northern sky in Russia.

On both sides of the road naked black boulders jutted up from the ground, and here and there some shrubs peeped from under the snow. Not a single dead leaf rustled, and it was pleasant to hear in the midst of this lifeless sleepiness of nature the snorting of the tired stage coach horses and the uneven tinkling of the Russian carriage bells.

"Tomorrow will be a fine day," I observed, but the captain did not reply. Instead he pointed to a tall mountain rising directly ahead of us.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Mount Gud."

"Yes?"

"See how it smokes?"

Indeed, Mount Gud was smoking. Light wisps of mist crept along its sides while a black cloud rested on the summit, so black that it stood out as a blotch even against the dark sky.

We could already make out the stage coach station and the roofs of the huts around it, and welcoming lights were dancing ahead when the gusts of cold raw wind came whistling down the gorge and it began to drizzle. Barely had I thrown a felt cape over my shoulders than the snow

came. I looked at the captain with respect now...

"We'll have to stay here overnight," he said, annoyed. "You can't get through the hills in a blizzard like this. Seen any avalanches on Cross Mountain?" he asked a coachman.

"No, sir," the Ossetian replied. "But there's a lot just waiting to come down."

As there was no room for travelers at the inn, we were given a place to stay in a smoky hut. I invited my fellow traveler to join me for tea, since I had with me a cast-iron tea-kettle-my sole comfort on my Caucasian travels.

The hut was built against a cliff. Three wet, slippery steps led up to the door. I groped my way in and stumbled upon a cow, for these people have a cow shed for an entry room. I couldn't figure out where to go. On one side sheep were bleating and on the other a dog growled. Fortunately a glimmer of light showed through the gloom and guided me to another opening that looked like a door. Here a rather interesting scene confronted me: the spacious hut with a roof supported by two smoke-blackened posts was full of people. A fire built on the bare earth crackled in the middle, and the smoke, forced

back by the wind through the opening in the roof, hung so thick that it took some time before I could see anything around me. By the fire sat two old women, a swarm of children and a lean Georgian man, all of them dressed in rags. There was nothing to do but to make ourselves comfortable by the fire and light up our pipes, and soon the tea-kettle was singing happily.

"Pitiable creatures!" I observed to the captain, nodding toward our grimy hosts who stared at us silently with something like stupid shock.

"A dull-witted people," he replied. "Believe me, they can't do anything, nor can they learn anything either. Our Kabardians[15] or Chechens[15] might be bums and tramps, but at least they're brave fighters. However, these guys take no interest in weapons or war: you won't find a decent knife on a single one of them. But what can you expect from Ossetians!"

"Were you long in the Chechen region?"

"Quite a while-ten years stationed at a fort with a company, out by the Stone Ford[24]. You know the place?"

"Heard of it."

"Yes, sir, we had enough of those gangs[22] -



now, thank God, things are quieter, but there was a time when you didn't dare go out a hundred paces beyond the rampart without some hairy devil stalking you, ready to put a noose around your neck or a bullet through the back of your head the minute he caught you napping. But they were brave men anyway."

"You must have had a whole lot of adventures?" I asked, with burning curiosity.

"Aye, many indeed..."

He began to pull at the left tip of his mustache, his head drooped, and he sank into deep thought. I very badly wanted to get some sort of tale out of him—a desire that is natural to anyone who travels about taking notes. In the meantime the tea came to the boil. I dug out two travelers' glasses from my suitcase, poured out tea and placed one before the captain. He took a sip and muttered as if to himself: "Yes, many indeed!" The exclamation raised my hopes, for I knew that Caucasian old-timers like to talk and tell a story: they seldom have a chance to do so, for a man may be stationed a full five years with a company somewhere in the back woods without anyone to greet him with a "Hello" (his sergeant always

says, "Good morning, sir.") And there is so much to talk about: the wild, strange people all around, the constant dangers, and the remarkable adventures—one can't help thinking it sad that we write down so little of it.

"Like to add a little rum?" I asked. "I have some white rum from Tiflis, it'll warm you up in this cold."

"No, thanks, I don't drink."

"How come?"

"Well... swore off the stuff. Once when I was still a second lieutenant we went on a brief spree, you know how it is, and that very night there was an alert. So we showed up before the ranks a little bit high, and there was hell to pay when old Yermolov found out. Lord preserve me from seeing a man as furious as he was. We escaped being court-martialed by a whisker. That's the way it is: sometimes you spend a whole year without seeing anyone, and if you get drunk you've had it."

On hearing this I nearly lost hope.

"Take even the Circassians," he went on, "as soon as they drink their fill of *booza*[25] at a wedding or a funeral the knife fight begins. Once[26] I barely managed to escape alive although I was

the guest of a neutral[27] prince."

"How did it happen?"

"Well," he filled and lit his pipe, took a long pull on it, and began the story, "you see, I was stationed at the time at a fort beyond the Terek with a company-that was nearly five years back. Once in the fall a supply convoy came up, and with it an officer[21], a young man of about twenty-five [28]. he reported to me in full dress uniform and announced that he had been ordered to join me at the fort. He was so slim and white, and so fashionably dressed up that I could tell at once that he was a newcomer to the Caucasus. 'You must've been transferred here from Russia?' I asked him. 'Yes, sir,' he replied. I took his hand and said: 'Glad to have you here, very glad. It'll be a bit dull for you... but we'll get along real good, I'm sure, us two. Just call me Maksim Maksimich[29], if you like, and, another thing-please don't bother wearing full dress uniform. Just come around in your service cap[30].' he was shown his quarters and he settled down in the fort."

"What was his name?" I asked Maksim Maksimich.

"Grigoriy Aleksandrovich *Pechorin*. A fine

man he was, I assure you, though a bit odd. For instance, he would spend days on end hunting in rain or cold-everybody else would be chilled and exhausted, but not he. Yet sometimes a mere draft in his room would be enough for him to declare he had caught cold-a banging shutter might make him jump and turn pale, yet I myself saw him go at a wild boar single-handed. Sometimes you couldn't get a word out of him for hours on end, but when he occasionally did start telling stories you'd split your sides laughing... Yes, sir, a most odd sort of young man he was, and, apparently, rich too, judging by the load of expensive trinkets he had."

"How long was he with you?" I asked.

"Just about a year. But it was a year I won't forget. He caused me plenty of trouble, God forgive him!-though that's not what I remember about him. But after all, there are people who, when they are born, the big book of life has it already written down that all sorts of amazing things will happen to them!"

"Amazing things?" I exclaimed eagerly as I poured him some more tea.

"I'll tell you the story. Some four miles from

the fort there lives a loyal prince. His son, a boy of about fifteen, got into the habit of riding over to see us. Not a day passed that he didn't come for one reason or another. Grigoriy Aleksandrovich and I really spoiled him. What a daredevil he was, good at everything: he could pick up a cap from the ground at full gallop, and he was a crack shot. But there was one bad thing about him: he had a terrible weakness for money. Once for a joke Pechorin promised him a gold coin if he stole the best goat from his father's herd, and what do you think? The very next night he dragged the animal in by the horns. Sometimes, if we just tried teasing him, he would flare up and reach for his dagger. 'You'll come to a bad end, Azamat,' I would tell him. '*Yaman*[31] [Bad!] -You won't keep your skull on your shoulders!'

"Once the old prince himself came over to invite us to a wedding. He was giving away his elder daughter and since we were *kunaks*[32] [blood brothers] there was no way to say no, of course, Tatar or not. So we went. A pack of barking dogs met us in the village. On seeing us the women hid themselves-the faces we did catch a glimpse of were far from pretty. 'I had a much better opin-

ion of Circassian women,' Grigoriy Aleksandrovich said to me. 'You wait a while,' I replied, smiling. I had something up my sleeve.

"There was quite a crowd assembled in the prince's house. It's the custom among those Asiatics[33], you know, to invite to their weddings everyone they happen to meet. We were welcomed with all the honors due to us and shown to the best room. Before going in, though, I took care to remember where they put our horses-just in case, you know."

"How do they celebrate weddings?" I asked the captain.

"Oh, in the usual way. First the mullah[34] reads them something from the Koran, then presents are given to the newlyweds and all their relatives. They eat, and drink *booza*, until finally the horsemanship display begins, and there is always some kind of filthy clown dressed in rags riding a mangy lame nag playing the fool to amuse the company. Later, when it grows dark, what we would call a ball[35] begins in the best room. Some miserable old man strums away on a three-stringed... can't remember what they call it... something like our balalaika[36]. The girls

and young men line up in two rows facing each other, clap their hands and sing. Then one of the girls and a man step into the center and begin to chant verses to each other, improvising as they go, while the rest pick up the refrain. Pechorin and I occupied the place of honor, and as we sat there the host's younger daughter, a girl of sixteen or so, came up to him and sang to him... what should I call it... a sort of compliment."

"You don't remember what she sang by any chance?"

"Yes, I think it went something like this: 'Our young horsemen are strong and their caftan robes are encrusted with silver, but the young Russian officer is even stronger still and his epaulets are of gold. He is like a poplar among the others, yet he shall neither grow nor bloom in our orchard.' Pechorin rose, bowed to her, pressing his hand to his forehead and heart, and asked me to reply to her. Knowing their language well I translated his reply.

"When she walked away I whispered to him: 'Well, what do you think of her?'

"'Exquisite,' replied he. 'What is her name?' 'Her name is Bela[37],' i replied.

"And indeed, she was beautiful: tall, slim, and her eyes as black as a gazelle's looked right into your soul. Pechorin grew thoughtful and did not take his eyes off her, and she frequently stole a glance at him. But Pechorin was not the only one who admired the pretty princess: from a corner of the room another pair of eyes, fixed and flaming, stared at her. I looked closer and recognized somebody I knew, Kazbich[38]. He was a man you couldn't say was loyal, though there was nothing to show he was hostile towards us. There were a good many suspicions but he had never been caught at any tricks. Occasionally he brought sheep[39] to us at the fort and sold them cheap, but he never bargained: you had to pay him what he asked – he would never cut a price even if his life depended on it. It was said of him that he'd ride out beyond the Kuban River with the bandits, and to tell the truth, he did look like a guerrilla[22]: he was short, wiry and broad-shouldered. And nimble he was, as clever as the devil! The embroidered shirt[40] he wore was always torn and patched, but his weapons were ornamented with silver. As for his horse, it was famous in all Kabarda[15], and indeed, you



couldn't think of a better horse. The horsemen all around had very good reason to be jealous, and time and again they tried to steal the animal, but never could. I can still see the horse as if he were before me now: as black as tar, with legs like taut violin strings and eyes no less beautiful than Bela's. He was a strong animal too, could gallop thirty miles at a stretch, and as for training, he would follow his master like a dog and always came when he called him. Kazbich never bothered to tie up the animal. A regular bandit horse!

"That evening Kazbich was gloomier than I had ever seen him, and I noticed that he had a coat of mail under his shirt. 'There must be a reason for the armor,' thought I. 'He is evidently plotting[41] something.'

"It was stuffy indoors, so I stepped out into the fresh air. The night was settling on the hills and the mist was beginning to weave in and out among the gorges.

"It occurred to me to look into the shelter where our horses stood and see whether they were being fed, and besides, caution never hurt anything. After all, I had a fine horse and a good

many Kabardians had cast fond glances at him and said: '*Yakshi tkhe, chek yakshi!*' [Good horse, excellent!]

"I was picking my way along the fence when suddenly I heard voices. One of the speakers I recognized right away: it was that good-for-nothing Azamat, our host's son. The other spoke more slowly and quietly. 'I wonder what they're up to,' thought I. 'I hope it's not about my horse.' I dropped down behind the fence and cocked my ears, trying not to miss a word. It was impossible to hear everything, for now and then the singing and the hum of voices from the hut drowned out the conversation I was so interested to hear.

"'That's a fine horse you have,' Azamat was saying. 'Were I the master of my house and the owner of a herd of three hundred mares, I'd give half of them for your horse, Kazbich!'

"'So it's Kazbich,' I thought and remembered the coat of mail.

"'You're right,' Kazbich replied after a momentary silence, 'you won't find another like him in all Kabarda. Once, beyond the Terek it was, I rode with the guerrillas[22] to pick up some Russian horses. We were unlucky though, and had to

scatter. Four Cossacks[42] came after me-I could already hear the infidels[43] shouting behind me, and ahead of me was a thicket. I bent low in the saddle, trusted myself to Allah and for the first time in my life insulted the horse by striking him. Like a bird he flew between the branches, the thorns tore my clothes, and the dry elm twigs lashed my face. The horse leapt over tree stumps and crashed through the brush. It would have been better for me to slip off him in some glade and take cover in the woods on foot, but I couldn't bear to part with him, so I held on, and the Prophet rewarded me. Some bullets whistled past overhead! I could hear the Cossacks, now dismounted, running along on my trail... Suddenly a deep gully opened up in front-my horse hesitated for a moment, and then jumped. But on the other side his hind legs slipped off the sheer edge and he was left holding on by the forelegs. I dropped the reins and slipped into the gully. This saved the horse, who managed to pull himself up. The Cossacks saw all this, but none of them came down into the ravine to look for me-they probably gave me up for dead. Then I heard them going after my horse. My heart bled as I crawled

through the thick grass of the gully until I was out of the woods. Now I saw some Cossacks riding out from the thicket into the open and my Karagyozy [44] galloping straight at them. With a shout they made a dash for him. They chased him for a long time. One of them almost got a lasso around his neck once or twice-I trembled, turned away and began praying. Looking up a few moments later I saw my Karagyozy flying free as the wind, his tail streaming while the infidels trailed far behind in the plain on their exhausted horses. I swear by Allah this is the truth, the truest truth! I sat in my gully until far into the night. And what do you think happened, Azamat? Suddenly through the darkness I heard a horse running along the edge of the gully, snorting, neighing and stamping his hoofs-I recognized the voice of my Karagyozy, for it was he, my comrade! Since then we have never separated.'

"You could hear the man patting the smooth neck of the horse and whispering to him all kinds of pet names.

"'Had I a herd of a *thousand* mares,' said Azamat, 'I would give it to you for your Karagyozy.'

"*Iok* , No, I wouldn't take it,' replied Kazbich indifferently.

"Listen, Kazbich,' Azamat coaxed him. 'You are a good man and a brave warrior; my father fears the Russians and doesn't let me go into the mountains. Give me your horse and I'll do anything you want, I'll steal for you my father's best musket or sword, whatever you wish-and his saber is a real Gurda[45]. Lay the blade against your hand and it will cut deep into the flesh. Mail like yours won't stop it.'

"Kazbich was silent.

"'When I first saw your horse,' Azamat went on, 'prancing under you, his nostrils open wide and sparks flying under his hoofs, something strange happened in my soul, and I lost interest in everything. I have nothing but contempt now for my father's best horses, I'm ashamed to be seen riding them, and I have been sick at heart. In my misery I've spent days on end sitting on a hill, thinking of nothing but your fleet-footed Karagyozy with his proud stride and sleek back as straight as an arrow, his blazing eyes looking into mine as if he wanted to speak to me. I'll die, Kazbich, if you will not sell him to me,' said

Azamat in a trembling voice.

"I thought I heard him sob; and I must tell you that Azamat was a most stubborn lad and even when he was younger nothing could ever make him cry.

"In reply to his tears I heard something like a laugh.

"Listen!" said Azamat, his voice firm now. "You see I am ready to do anything. I could steal my sister for you if you want. How she can dance and sing! And her gold embroidery is something wonderful! The Turkish Padishah himself never had a wife like her. If you want her, wait for me tomorrow night in the gorge where the stream flows. I'll go by with her on the way to the next village-and she'll be yours. Isn't Bela worth your steed?"

"For a long, long time Kazbich was silent. At last instead of replying, he began softly singing an old song:

*Many fair maids in this village of  
mine,  
Their eyes are dark pools where the  
stars seem to shine.  
Sweet flits the time making love to a*

*maid,  
Sweeter's the freedom of any young  
blade.  
Wives by the dozen are purchased  
with gold,  
But a spirited steed is worth riches  
untold;  
Swift o'er the plains like a whirlwind  
he flies,  
Never betrays you, and never tells  
lies.'*

note: [46]

"In vain Azamat pleaded with him; he tried tears, flattery, and profanity, until finally Kazbich lost patience with him: 'Get away with you, boy! Are you crazy? You could never ride my horse! He'd throw you after the first three paces and you'd smash your head against a rock.'

"'Me?' Azamat screamed in a fury, and his child's dagger rang against the coat of mail. A strong arm flung him back and he fell against the corral fence so violently that it shook. 'Now the fun will begin,' thought I and dashed into the stable, bridled our horses and led them to the yard at the back. Two minutes later a terrific uproar broke out in the hut. This is what happened:

Azamat ran into the hut in a torn shirt shouting that Kazbich had tried to kill him. Everybody rushed out and went for their rifles-and the fun was on! There was screaming and shouting and shots were fired, but Kazbich was already on his horse spinning around like a demon in the midst of the crowd swinging away with his saber. 'It'd be big trouble to get mixed up in this,' said I to Grigoriy Aleksandrovich as I caught him by the arm. 'Hadn't we better scam as fast as we can?'

"Let's wait a bit and see how it ends.'

"It's sure to end badly-that's what always happens with these Asiatics, as soon as they have enough drink they go slashing each other.' We got on our horses and rode home.

"What happened to Kazbich?" I asked impatiently.

"What can happen to these people?" replied the captain, finishing his glass of tea. "He got away, of course."

"Not even wounded, was he?" I asked.

"The Lord only knows. They're tough, the bandits! I have seen some of them in engagements; a man may be cut to ribbons with bayonets and still he will continue brandishing his saber." After



a brief silence the captain went on, stamping[47] his foot: "There is one thing I'll never forgive myself for. When we got back to the fort, the devil prompted me to tell Pechorin what I had overheard behind the fence. He laughed-the fox-though; he was already cooking up a scheme."

"What was it? I'd like to hear it."

"I suppose I'll have to tell you. Since I've begun telling the story, I might as well finish.

"Some four days later, Azamat rode up to the fort. As usual, he went in to see Grigoriy Aleksandrovich, who always had some tidbits for him. I was there too. The talk turned to horses, and Pechorin began to praise Kazbich's horse; as spirited and graceful as a chamois[48] the steed was, and, as Pechorin put it, there simply was no other horse like it in all the world.

"The Tatar boy's eyes lit up, but Pechorin pretended not to notice it; I tried to change the subject, but at once he brought it back to Kazbich's horse. This happened each time Azamat came. About three weeks later I noticed that Azamat was growing pale and wasting away as they do from love in novels. What was it all about?

"You see, I got the whole story later. Pechorin

egged him on to a point where the lad was simply desperate. Finally he put it point-blank: 'I can see, Azamat, that you want that horse very badly. Yet you have as little chance of getting it as of seeing the back of your own head. Now tell me what would you give if someone were to present it to you?'

"Anything he asks," replied Azamat.

"In that case I'll get the horse for you, but on one condition... Swear you will carry it out?'

"I swear... And you must swear too!"

"Good! I swear you'll get the horse, only you have to give me your sister Bela in exchange. Karagyozy will be the bride money [*kalim*[49]] ! I hope the bargain suits you.'

"Azamat was silent.

"You don't want to? As you wish. I thought you were a man, but I see you're still a child: you're too young to ride in the saddle.'

"Azamat flared up. 'What about my father?' he asked.

"Doesn't he ever go away anywhere?'

"That's true, he does... .'

"So you agree?'

"I agree," whispered Azamat, pale as death it-

self. 'When?'

"The next time Kazbich comes here; he has promised to bring a dozen sheep. The rest is my affair. You take care of your end of the bargain, Azamat!"

"So they arranged the whole business, and I must say it was a rotten business indeed. Later I said so to Pechorin, but he only replied that the primitive Circassian girl ought to be happy to have such a fine husband as himself, for, after all, everybody would regard him as her husband, and that Kazbich was a bandit who should be punished anyway. Judge for yourself, what could I say against this? But at the time I knew nothing about the conspiracy. So one day Kazbich came asking whether we wanted sheep and honey, and I told him to bring some the day after. 'Azamat,' Grigoriy Aleksandrovich said to the lad, 'tomorrow Karagyozy will be in my hands. If Bela is not here tonight you will not see the horse...'

"Good!" said Azamat and galloped back to his village. In the evening Grigoriy Aleksandrovich armed himself and rode out of the fort. How they managed everything, I don't know-but at night they both returned and the

sentry saw a woman lying across Azamat's saddle with hands and feet tied and head wrapped in a veil."

"And the horse?" I asked the captain.

"Just a moment. Early the next morning Kazbich came, driving along the dozen sheep he wanted to sell. Tying[50] his horse to a fence, he came to see me and I regaled him with tea, for, scoundrel though he was, he nevertheless was a *kunak* of mine.

"We began to chat about this and that. Suddenly I saw Kazbich jump-his face twisted and he dashed for the window, but it unfortunately opened to the backyard. 'What's wrong with you?' I asked.

"My horse... horse!' he said, shaking all over.

"And true enough I heard the beat of hoofs. 'Some Cossack must have arrived.'

"No! *Urus yaman, yaman* , [A bad, bad Russian!]' he cried and dashed out like a wild panther. In two strides he was in the courtyard; at the gates of the fort a sentry barred his way with a musket, but he leaped over the weapon and began running down the road. In the distance a cloud of dust whirled-it was Azamat urging on

the spirited Karagyozy. Kazbich drew his pistol from its canvas bag and fired as he ran. For a minute he stood motionless until he was certain he had missed. Then he screamed, dashed the gun to pieces against the stones, and rolled on the ground crying like a baby... People from the fort gathered around him-but he did not see anyone, and after standing about for a while talking it over they all went back. I had the money for the sheep placed next to him, but he did not touch it; he only lay there face down like a corpse. Would you believe it, he lay like that the rest of the day and all[51] through the night? Only the next morning he returned to the fort to ask whether anyone could tell him who the thief was. A sentry who had seen Azamat untie the horse and gallop off did not think it necessary to conceal the fact. When Kazbich heard the name his eyes flashed and he set out for the village where Azamat's father lived.'

"What did the father do?"

"The whole trouble was that Kazbich didn't find him. He had gone off somewhere for six days or so. If he hadn't done that, could Azamat have carried off his sister?"

"The father returned to find both daughter and son gone. The lad was a smart one—he knew very well that his head wouldn't be worth anything if he got caught. So he has been missing ever since. Most likely he joined some guerrilla band and perhaps ended his mad career on the Russian side of the Terek, or maybe the Kuban. And that's no more than he deserved!

"I must admit that it wasn't easy for me either. As soon as I learned that the Circassian girl was in Pechorin's quarters, I put on my epaulets and strapped on my sword and went to see him.

"He was lying on the bed in the front room, one hand under his head and the other holding a pipe that had gone out. The door leading to the next room was locked, and there was no key in the lock; all this I noticed at once. I coughed and stamped my heels on the threshold, but he pretended not to hear.

"'Ensign[21]! Attention!' I said as severely as I could. 'Don't you realize that I've come to see you?'

"'Ah, how do you do, Maksim Maksimich. Have a pipe,' he replied without getting up.

"'I beg your pardon! I am no Maksim Mak-

simich: I am captain to you!

"Oh, it's all the same. Would you care to have some tea? If you only knew what a load I've got on my mind!"

"I know everything," I replied, walking up to the bed.

"That's all the better, then. I am in no mood to go over it again."

"Ensign, you have committed an offense for which I too may have to answer..."

"Well, why not? Have we not always shared everything equally?"

"This is no time to joke. Will you surrender your sword?"

"Mitka, my sword!"

"Mitka brought the sword. Having thus done my duty, I sat down on the bed and said: 'Listen here, Grigoriy Aleksandrovich, you'd best admit that it's wrong.'

"What's wrong?"

"That you kidnapped Bela. What a crook that Azamat is! Come now, admit it," I said to him.

"Why should I? She happens to please me."

"Now what could I say to that? I didn't know what to do. Nevertheless after a moment's silence

I told him he would have to give the girl back if her father insisted.

"I don't see why I should!"

"But what if he finds out that she is here?"

"How will he?"

"Again I was in a blind alley.

"Listen, Maksim Maksimich,' said Pechorin, rising, 'you're a good soul-if we give the girl to that barbarian he'll either kill her or sell her. What has been done cannot be undone, and it won't do to spoil things by being overzealous. You keep my sword, but leave her with me...'

"Supposing you let me see her,' said I.

"She's behind that door; I myself have been trying in vain to see her. She sits there in a corner all huddled up in her shawl and will neither speak nor look at you; she's as timid as a gazelle. I hired the innkeeper's wife who speaks Tatar to look after her and get her accustomed to the idea that she's mine-for she will never belong to anyone but myself,' he added, striking the table with his fist.

"I agreed to this too... What would you have had me do? There are some people who always get their own way."



""What happened in the end?" I asked Maksim Maksimich. "Did he actually win her over or did she pine away in captivity, longing for her native village?"

"Now why should she have longed for her native village? She could see the very same mountains from the fort as she had seen from the village, and that's all these barbarians want. Moreover, Grigoriy Aleksandrovich gave her some present every day. At first she proudly tossed the gifts aside without a word, whereupon they became the property of the innkeeper's wife and stimulated her eloquence. Ah, gifts! What wouldn't a woman do for a little colored cloth! But I'm getting off the subject... Pechorin tried long and hard to win her. In the meantime he learned to speak Tatar and she began to understand our language. Little by little she learned to look at him, at first sideways, but she was always melancholy and I too couldn't help feeling sad when I heard her from the next room singing her native songs in a low voice. I'll never forget a scene I once witnessed[52] while passing the window: Bela was seated on a couch, her head bowed, and Grigoriy Aleksandrovich stood before

her. 'Listen, baby,' he was saying, 'don't you realize that sooner or later you must be mine-why then do you torment me so? Or perhaps you love some Chechen? If you do, I'll let you go home at once.' She shuddered barely perceptibly and shook her head. 'Or,' he went on, 'am I altogether hateful to you?' She sighed. 'Perhaps your faith forbids your loving me?' She grew pale but did not say a word. 'Believe me, there is only one Allah for all people, and if he permits me to love you why should he forbid you to return my love?' She looked him straight in the face as if struck by this new thought: her eyes betrayed suspicion and sought reassurance. And what eyes she had! They shone like two coals.

"Listen to me, sweet, kind Bela!' Pechorin continued. 'You can see how I love you. I am ready to do anything to cheer you: I want you to be happy, and if you keep on grieving, I will die. Tell me, you will be more cheerful?' She thought for a moment, her black eyes searching his face, then smiled tenderly and nodded in agreement. He took her hand and began to persuade her to kiss him. But she resisted weakly and repeated over and over again: 'Please, please, no, no.' He be-

came persistent; she trembled and began to sob. 'I am your captive, your slave,' she said, 'and of course you can force me.' And again there were tears.

"Pechorin struck his forehead with his fist and ran into the next room. I went in to him: he was gloomily pacing up and down with arms folded. 'What now, old man?' I asked him. 'A she-devil, that's what she is!' he replied. 'But I give you my word that she will be mine!' I shook my head. 'But you want to bet?' he said. 'Give me a week.' 'Done!' We shook on it and separated.

"The next day he sent off a messenger to Kizlyar to make some purchases, and there was no end to the array of various kinds of Persian cloth that was brought back.

"'What do you think, Maksim Maksimich,' he said as he showed me the gifts, 'will an Asiatic beauty be able to resist a bunch of stuff like this?' 'You don't know these Circassian girls,' I replied. 'They're nothing like Georgian or Transcaucasian [53] Tatar women-nothing like them. they have their own rules of conduct. Different upbringing, you know.' Grigoriy Aleksandrovich smiled and began whistling a march.



"It turned out that I was right: the gifts did only half the trick; she became more friendly and confiding-but nothing more. So he decided to play his last card. One morning he ordered his horse saddled, dressed in Circassian fashion, armed himself, and went in to her. 'Bela,' he said, 'you know how I love you. I decided to carry you off believing that when you came to know me you would love me too. But I made a mistake. So, farewell, I leave you the mistress of everything I have, and if you want to, you can return to your father-you are free, I have wronged you and must be punished. Farewell, I will ride away: where, I don't know. Perhaps it will not be long before I

am cut down by a bullet or a saber blow; when that happens, remember me and try to forgive me.' He turned away and extended his hand to her in parting. She didn't take the hand, nor did she say a word. Standing behind the door I saw her through the crack, and I was sorry for her—such a deathly white had spread over her pretty little face. Hearing no reply, Pechorin took several steps towards the door. He was trembling, and do you know, I quite believe he was capable of actually doing what he threatened. The Lord knows that's the kind of man he was. But barely had he touched the door when she sprang up, sobbing, and threw her arms around his neck. Believe me, I also wept standing there behind the door, that is, I didn't exactly weep, but—well, never mind, it was just silliness.'

The captain fell silent.

"I might as well confess," he said after a while, tugging at his mustache, "I was annoyed because no woman had ever loved me like that."

"How long did their happiness last?" I asked.

"Well, she admitted that Pechorin had often appeared in her dreams since the day she first saw him and that no other man had ever made

such an impression on her. Yes, they were happy!"

"How boring!" I exclaimed involuntarily. Indeed, I was expecting a tragic end and it was a disappointment to see my hopes collapse so suddenly. "Don't tell me the father didn't guess she was with you in the fort?"

"I believe he did suspect. A few days later, however, we heard that the old man had been killed. This is how it happened..."

My interest was again aroused.

"I should tell you that Kazbich had the idea that Azamat had stolen the horse with his father's consent, at least, so I think. So he lay in ambush one day a couple of miles beyond the village when the old man was returning from a futile search for his daughter. The old man had left his cohorts lagging behind and was plunged deep in thought as he rode slowly down the road through the deepening twilight, when Kazbich suddenly sprang catlike from behind a bush, leapt behind him on the horse, cut him down with a blow of his dagger and grabbed the reins. Some of his men saw it all from a hill, but though they set out in pursuit they couldn't overtake Kazbich."

"So he compensated himself for the loss of his horse and took revenge as well," I said in order to draw an opinion out of my companion.

"Of course he was absolutely right according to their rules," said the captain.

I was struck by the ability of this Russian to reconcile himself to the customs of the peoples among whom he happens to live. I don't know whether this mental quality is a virtue or a vice, but it does reveal a remarkable flexibility and that sober common sense which forgives evil wherever it feels it to be necessary, or impossible to eradicate.



Meanwhile we had finished our tea. Outside, the horses had been harnessed long since and were now standing shivering in the snow; the moon, becoming pale in the western sky, was about to immerse itself in the black clouds that trailed like tattered bits of a torn curtain from the

mountain peaks in the distance. We stepped out of the hut. Contrary to my companion's prediction, the weather had cleared and promised a calm morning. The dances of stars, intertwined in a fantastic pattern in the distant heavens[54], went out one after another as the pale glimmer of the east spread out over the dark lilac sky, gradually casting its glow on the steep mountainsides blanketed by virginal snow. To right and left yawned gloomy, mysterious abysses, and the mist, coiling and twisting like a snake, crawled into them along the cracks and crevices of the cliffs as if in fearful anticipation of the coming day.

There was a great peace in the heavens and on earth as there is in one's heart at a morning prayer. Only now and then the cool east wind came in gusts, ruffling the hoary manes of the horses. We set out, the five lean nags hauling our carriages with difficulty along the tortuous road up Mount Gud. We walked behind, setting stones under the wheels when the horses could pull no longer; it seemed as if the road must lead straight to heaven, for it rose higher and higher as far as the eye could see and finally was lost in the cloud that had been resting on the mountain summit since



the day before, like a vulture awaiting its prey. The snow crunched underfoot; the air grew so rare that it was painful to breathe; I continually felt the blood rushing to my head, yet a feeling of elation coursed through my being and somehow it felt good to be so far above the world—a childish feeling, I admit, but as we drift farther away from the conventions of society and draw closer to nature we become children again whether we wished to or not—the soul is unburdened of whatever it has acquired and it becomes what it once was and what it will surely be again. Anyone who has had occasion, as I have, to roam in the desolate mountains, feasting his eyes upon their fantastic shapes and drinking in the invigorating air of the gorges, will understand my urge to describe, to portray, to paint these magic canvases. At least we reached the summit of Mount Gud and paused to look around us; a gray cloud rested on the mountain top and its cold breath held the threat of an imminent blizzard; but the east was so clear and golden that we, that is, the captain and I, promptly forgot about it... Yes, the captain too: for simple hearts feel the beauty and majesty of nature a hundred times

more keenly than do we, rapturous tellers of stories spoken or written.

"You are no doubt accustomed to these magnificent scenes,' I said to him.

"Yes, sir, you can get accustomed even to the whining of bullets, I mean, accustomed to concealing the involuntary acceleration of the heart-beat."

"On the contrary, I have been told that to some old soldiers it is sweet music."

"Yes, it is sweet too, if you please-but only because it makes the heart beat faster. Look," he added, pointing to the east, "what a country!"

Indeed it was a panorama I can hardly hope to see again: below us lay the Koishaur Valley, the Aragva and another river tracing their course across it like two silver threads. A bluish mist crept over it, seeking refuge in the neighboring gorge from the warm rays of the morning. To the right and to the left the mountain ridges, one higher than the other, crisscrossed and stretched out into the distance covered with snow and shrubs. Mountains as far as the eye could see, but no two crags alike-and all these expanses of snow burned with a rosy glow so merry and so vivid

that one wanted to stay there for ever. The sun barely showed from behind a dark-blue mountain which only the experienced eye could distinguish from a storm cloud, but above it stretched a crimson belt to which my comrade now drew my attention. "I told you," he exclaimed, "there's bad weather ahead. We'll have to hurry or it may catch us on the Mountain of the Cross. Get going, there!" he shouted to the coachmen.

Chains were passed through the wheels for brakes to prevent them from getting out of control. Leading the horses by their bridles we began the trip down. To the right of us was a cliff, and to the left an abyss so deep that an Ossetian village at the bottom looked like a swallow's nest. I shuddered at the thought that a dozen times a year some courier rides through the dark night along this road too narrow for two carts to pass, without getting off his jolting carriage. One of our drivers was a Russian peasant from Yaroslavl, the other an Ossetian. The Ossetian took the leading horse by the bridle after unhitching the first pair in good time and taking every other possible precaution, but our happy-go-lucky Russian didn't even bother to get down from the box. When I

suggested that he might have shown some concern, if only for my suitcase, which I had no desire to go down into the abyss to recover, he replied: "Don't worry, sir! With God's help we'll get there just as well as they. This is not the first time we've done it." And he was right-true, we might not have got through safely, yet we did. And if all men gave the matter more thought they would realize that life is not worth worrying over too much...

Perhaps you wish to hear the story of Bela to the end? Firstly, however, I am not writing a novel but simply travel notes, and hence I cannot make the captain resume his story sooner than he actually did. So you will have to wait, or, if you wish to do so, skip a few pages; only I do not advise you to, for the crossing of Mount Krestovaya, Mountain of the Cross (or *le Mont St Christophe* as the learned Gamba[55] calls it) is worthy of your interest. And so we descended from Mount Gud to Chertova Valley. There's a romantic name for you! Perhaps you already visualize the den of the Evil Spirit among the inaccessible crags-but if you do, you are mistaken: Chertova Valley derives its name from the word *cherta* [line or boundary]

and not *chort* [devil], for the boundary of Georgia once passed here. The valley was buried under snow drifts which gave the scene a rather strong resemblance to Saratov, Tambov[56] and other spots *dear to us* in our mother country.

"There's Kresrovaya," said the captain as we came down to Chertova Valley, pointing to a hill shrouded by snow. On the summit the black outline of a stone cross was visible, and past it ran a barely visible road which was used only when the road along the mountainside was snow bound. Our drivers said that there were no snow slides yet and in order to make it easier for the horses they took us the long way. Around a bend in the road we came upon five Ossetians who offered us their services, and, grabbing hold of the wheels and shouting, they began to help our carriage along. The road was dangerous indeed. To our right masses of snow hung overhead ready, it seemed, to crash down into the gorge with the first blast of wind. Some sections of the narrow road were covered with snow, which here and there gave way underfoot; others had been turned to ice under the action of the sun's rays and night frosts, so that we made headway

with difficulty. The horses kept slipping, and to the left of us yawned a deep fissure with a turbulent stream at the bottom that now slipped out of sight under a crust of ice, now plunged in frothy fury amidst black boulders. It took us all of two hours to go around Mount Cross—two hours to negotiate barely one mile! In the meantime the clouds came lower and it began to hail and snow. The wind bursting into the gorges howled and whistled like the Nightingale Robber[57], and soon the stone cross was blotted out by the mist which was coming in waves from the east, each wave thicker than the last. Incidentally, there is a queer but generally accepted legend that this cross was raised by Emperor Peter I[58] when he traveled through the Caucasus. Yet, in the first place, Peter was only in Daghestan, and, secondly, an inscription in big letters on the cross said it had been put up on the orders of General Yermolov, in 1824, to be exact. Despite the inscription, the legend had taken such firm root that one is at a loss to know what to believe, all the more so since we are not used to putting our faith in inscriptions.

We had another three miles to go down along

the ice-coated rocky ledges and through soft snow before reaching the station at Kobi. The horses were exhausted and we were thoroughly chilled, while the blizzard blew harder and harder much like our native, northern snow storms, except its wild refrain was sadder and more mournful. "You too are an exile," thought I, "mourning your wide, boundless steppes where there was space to spread out your icy wings, whilst here you are choked and hemmed in like the eagle who beats against the bars of his iron cage."

Looks bad," the captain was saying. "Nothing visible but mist and snow. If we don't take care we'll find ourselves falling into a gorge or getting stuck in some hole, and the Baidara down there will probably be running too high to cross. That's Asia for you! The rivers are as unreliable as the people."

The drivers shouted and swore as they whipped the snorting, balking horses which refused to take another step in spite of the eloquence of the whips. "Your Honor," one of the drivers finally said, "we can't reach Kobi today. Had we not better turn to the left while there is

still time? Over on that slope there are some huts, I believe. Travelers always stay over there in bad weather." Then he added, pointing to an Ossetian: "They say they'll guide us there if you give them some money for vodka."

"I know it, buddy, I know without you telling me!" said the captain. "These crooks! They always think up something to pick up a tip."

"All the same you have to admit that we'd be worse off without them," said I.

"Maybe, maybe," he muttered, "but I know these guides! They can tell by instinct when to take advantage of you-as if you couldn't find your way without them."

So we turned to the left and somehow after a good deal of trouble made our way to the scanty refuge consisting of two huts built of slabs and stones and surrounded by a wall of the same material. The tattered inhabitants gave us a cordial welcome. Later I found out that the government pays and feeds them on condition that they take in wayfarers who are caught by the storm.

"It's all for the best," said I, taking a seat by the fire. "Now you'll be able to tell me the rest of the story about Bela; I'm sure that wasn't the end of



it."

"What makes you so sure?" replied the captain, with a sly smile and a twinkle in his eye.

"Because things don't happen like that. Anything that begins so strangely must end in the same way."

"Well, you guessed right..."

"Glad to hear it."

"It's all very well for you to be glad, but for me it is really sad to recall. She was a fine girl, Bela was! I grew as fond of her in the end as if she were my own daughter, and she was fond of me too. I ought to tell you that I have no family. I haven't heard about my father or mother for some twelve years now, and I didn't think about getting a wife earlier-and now, you've got to admit, it would no longer be quite right. So I was happy to have found someone to spoil. She would sing to us or dance the Lezghinka... And how she danced! I've seen our provincial fine ladies and once some twenty years ago I was at the Nobles' Club in Moscow, but none of them could hold a candle to her. Pechorin dressed her up like a doll, petted and fondled her, and she grew so lovely that it was amazing. The tan disappeared from

her face and arms, and her cheeks grew rosy... How gay she was! How she used to tease me, the little vixen... May God forgive her!"

"What happened when you told her about her father's death?"

"We kept it from her for a long time, until she became accustomed to her new position. And when she was told, she cried for a couple of days and then forgot about it.

"For about four months everything went splendidly. Pechorin, I must have already told you, had a passion for hunting. Some irresistible force used to draw him to the forest to stalk wild boar or goats, but now he scarcely ventured beyond the ramparts. Then I noticed he was growing restless again—he would pace up and down the room with his arms folded behind his back. One day without saying a word to anyone he took his gun and went out, and was gone all morning. That happened once, twice, and then more and more frequently. Things are going badly, I thought, something must have come between them!

"One morning when I dropped in to see them—I can visualize it now—I found Bela sitting on the

bed wearing a black silk *besmet* and looking so pale and sad that I was really alarmed.

"Where's Pechorin?' I asked.

"Hunting.'

"When did he leave? Today?'

"She did not reply, it seemed difficult for her to speak.

"No, yesterday,' she finally said with a deep sigh.

"I hope nothing has happened to him.'

"All day yesterday I thought and thought,' she said, her eyes full of tears, 'and imagined all kinds of terrible things. First I thought a wild boar had injured him, then that the Chechen had carried him off to the mountains... And now I'm beginning to think that he doesn't love me.'

"Truly, my dear, you couldn't have imagined anything worse!"

"She broke into tears, and then proudly raised her head, dried her eyes, and continued: 'If he doesn't love me, what prevents him from sending me home? I am not forcing myself on him. And if this goes on I will leave myself! I am not his slave, I am a prince's daughter!"

"I tried to reason with her. 'Listen, Bela, he

can't sit here all the time like he's tied to your apron strings. He's a young man and likes to hunt. He'll go and he'll come back, but if you're going to mope around he'll only get tired of you quicker.'

"You're right,' she replied. 'I'll be happy. Laughing, she picked up her tambourine and began to sing and dance for me. But very soon she threw herself on the bed again and hid her face in her hands.

"What was I to do? You see, I'd never had dealings with women. I racked my brains for some way to comfort her but couldn't think of anything. For a time we both were silent. A most unpleasant situation, I assure you!

"At length I said: 'Would you like to go for a walk with me on the rampart? The weather's fine.' It was September, and the day was really wonderful, sunny but not too hot, the mountains as clearly visible as if laid out on a platter. We went out, and in silence walked up and down the ramparts of the fortress. After a while she sat down on the turf, and I sat next to her. It's really funny to recall how I fussed over her like a nanny.

"Our fort was on a big hill, and the view from

the parapet was excellent: on one side was a wide meadow[59] crossed by gullies and ending in a forest that stretched all the way to the top of the mountain ridge, and here and there on this expanse you could see the smoke of villages and herds of grazing horses, while on the other side flowed a creek bordered by dense bushes that covered the flinty hills merging with the main chain of the Caucasus. We were sitting at a corner of a bastion and so we had a perfect view of either side. As I scanned the landscape, a man riding a gray horse emerged from the woods and came closer and closer, until he finally stopped on the far side of the creek two hundred yards or so from where we were and began spinning around on his horse like mad. What the hell was that?

"Your eyes are younger than mine, Bela, see if you can make out that horseman," said I. "I wonder whom he is trying to impress with that display."

"She looked and cried out: 'It's Kazbich!'"

"Ah, the bandit! Has he come to mock us?" Now I could see it was Kazbich: the same dark face, and as ragged and dirty as ever. "That's my

father's horse,' Bela said, grabbing my arm; she trembled like a leaf and her eyes flashed. 'Aha, my little one,' thought I, 'bandit blood talks in you too.'

"Come here,' I called to a sentry, 'take aim and knock[60] that fellow off for me and you'll get a ruble in silver.' 'Yes, Your Honor, only he doesn't stay still...' 'Tell him to,' said I, laughing. 'Hey, there!' shouted the sentry waving his arm, 'wait a minute, will you, stop spinning like a top!' Kazbich actually paused to listen, probably thinking we wanted to negotiate, the insolent beggar! My grenadier took aim... bang!... and missed, for as soon as the powder flashed in the pan, Kazbich gave a jab to the horse making it leap aside. He stood up in his stirrups, shouted something in his own language, shook his whip menacingly in the air-and in a flash was gone.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!' I said to the sentry.

"Your Honor! He's gone off to die,' he replied. 'Such a cussed crowd they are you can't kill them with one shot.'

"A quarter of an hour later Pechorin returned from the chase. Bela ran to meet him and threw

her arms around his neck, and not a single complaint, not a single reproach for his long absence did I hear... Even I had lost patience with him. 'Look here,' said I, 'Kazbich was on the other side of the river just now and we fired at him; you could easily have run into him too. These mountaineers are revenging people, and do you think he doesn't suspect you helped Azamat? I'll bet he saw Bela here. And I happen to know that a year ago he was sure attracted by her-told me so himself, in fact. Had he had any hope of raising a substantial bride-price he surely would have asked for her in marriage...' Pechorin was serious now. 'Yes,' he said, 'we have to be more careful... Bela, after today you mustn't go out on the ramparts any more.'

"That evening I had a long talk with him; it made me sad that he had changed toward the poor girl, for besides being out hunting half the time, he began to treat her coldly, rarely showing her any affection. She began to waste away visibly, her face grew thin, and her eyes lost their glow. Whenever I asked her, 'Why are you sighing, Bela? Are you sad?' she would reply 'No.' 'Do you want anything?' 'No!' 'Are you homesick for

your family?' 'I have no family.' For days on end you couldn't get more than 'yes' or 'no' out of her.

"I decided to have a talk with him about this. 'Listen, Maksim Maksimich,' he replied, 'I have an unfortunate character. Whether it is my upbringing that made me like that or God who created me so, I don't know. I know only that if I cause unhappiness to others I myself am no less unhappy. I realize this is poor consolation for them-but the fact remains that it's so. In my early youth after leaving my parents, I plunged into all the pleasures money could buy, and naturally these pleasures grew distasteful to me. Then I went into high society, but soon enough grew tired of it; I fell in love with beautiful society women and was loved by them, but their love only aggravated my imagination and vanity while my heart remained desolate... I began to read and to study, but wearied of learning too. I saw that neither fame nor happiness depended on it in the slightest, for the happiest people were the most ignorant, and fame was a matter of luck, to achieve which you only had to be clever. And I grew bored... Soon I was transferred to the Caucasus-this was the happiest time of my life. I hoped that boredom would



not survive under Chechen bullets-but it's no use. In a month I had become so accustomed to their whine and the breath of death that, to tell the truth, the mosquitoes bothered me more, and life became more boring than ever because I had now lost practically my last hope. When I saw Bela in my quarters, when I held her on my lap and first kissed her raven locks, I foolishly thought she was an angel sent down to me by a compassionate Providence... Again I was mistaken: the love of a savage girl is little better than that of a well-born lady. The ignorance and simplicity of the one are as boring as the coquetry of the other. I still love her, if you want to know. I am grateful to her for a few rather blissful moments. I am ready to die for her even, but I am really bored with her... I don't know whether I am a fool or a scoundrel, but the fact is that I am to be pitied as much, if not more than she. My soul has been warped by the world, my mind is restless, my heart insatiable-nothing satisfies me. I grow accustomed to sorrow as readily as to joy, and my life becomes emptier from day to day. Only one thing is left for me, and that is to travel. As soon as possible I'll set out-not for Europe, God

forbid-but for America, Arabia, India-and maybe I'll die somewhere on the road! At least I'm sure that with the help of storms and bad roads this consolation won't soon cease to be a last resort.' He talked long in this vein and his words seared themselves in my memory for it was the first time I had heard such talk from a man of twenty-five, and, I hope to God, the last. Amazing! You probably were in the capital recently; perhaps you can tell me," the captain went on, talking to me, "whether the young people there are all like that?"

I replied that there are many who speak in the same way, and that most likely some of them are speaking the truth; but that disillusionment, having begun like all vogues in the upper strata of society, had descended to the lower, which wear it out, and that nowadays those who are really the most bored try hard to conceal that misfortune as if it were a vice. The captain didn't understand these subtleties, and he shook his head and smiled shyly. "It was the French, I suppose, who made boredom fashionable?"

"No, the English."

"Ah, so that's it!" he replied. "Of course,

they've always been habitual drunks!"

Involuntarily I recalled one Moscow lady who claimed Byron was nothing more than a drunkard. The captain's remark, however, was more excusable, for in order to abstain from drink he naturally tried to reassure himself that all the misfortunes in the world are caused by intemperance.

"Kazbich did not come again," he went on with his story. "Still, for some unknown reason, I couldn't get rid of the idea that his visit was to some purpose and that he was scheming something evil.

"One day Pechorin persuaded me to go hunting wild boar with him. I tried to resist, for what was a wild boar to me, but finally he did drag me with him. We set out early in the morning, taking five soldiers with us. Until ten o'clock we poked about the reeds and the woods without seeing a single animal. 'What do you say to turning back?' said I. 'What's the use of being stubborn? You can see for yourself it's an unlucky day.' But Pechorin didn't want to return empty-handed in spite of the heat and fatigue... That's how he was: if he set his mind on something, he had to get it—his moth-

er must have spoiled him as a child... At last around noon we came upon the cursed board-bang!... bang!... but no: the beast slipped into the reeds... yes, it was indeed our unlucky day. After a short rest we set out for home.

"We rode side by side, in silence, reins hanging loose, and had almost reached the fort, though we couldn't yet see it for the brush, when a shot rang out. We looked at each other, and the same suspicion flashed through our minds. Galloping in the direction of the sound, we saw a group of soldiers huddled together on the rampart, pointing to the field where a horseman was scooting off into the distance at breakneck speed with something white across his saddle. Pechorin yelled not a bit worse than any Chechen, drew his pistol from its holster and dashed in pursuit, and I after him.

"Luckily, because of our poor hunting luck, our horses were quite fresh. They strained under the saddle, and with every moment we gained on our target. Finally I recognized Kazbich, though I couldn't make out what he was holding in front of him. I drew up next to Pechorin and shouted to him: 'It's Kazbich!' He looked at me, nodded and

struck his horse with the stick.

"At last we were within gunshot range of Kazbich. Whether his horse was exhausted or whether it was worse than ours I don't know, but he wasn't able to get much speed out of the animal in spite of his efforts to urge it on. I am sure he was thinking of his Karagyozy then...

"I looked up and saw Pechorin aiming on the gallop. 'Don't shoot!' I yelled. 'Save the charge, we'll catch up with him soon enough.' But that's youth for you: always foolhardy at the wrong time... The shot rang out and the bullet wounded the horse in a hind leg. The animal made another dozen leaps before it stumbled and fell on its knees. Kazbich sprang from the saddle, and now we saw he was holding a woman bound in a veil in his arms. It was Bela... poor Bela! He shouted something to us in his own language and raised his knife over her... There was no time to waste and I fired impulsively. I must have hit him in the shoulder, for his arm suddenly dropped. When the smoke blew away there was the wounded horse lying on the ground and Bela next to it, while Kazbich, who had thrown away his gun, was scrambling up a cliff through the bushes like

a cat. I wanted to pick him off but my gun needed reloading now. We slipped out of the saddle and ran toward Bela. The poor girl lay motionless, blood streaming from her wound. The villain! Had he struck her in the heart, it all would have been over in a moment, but to stab her in the back in the foulest way! She was unconscious. We tore the veil into strips and bandaged the wound as tightly as we could. In vain did Pechorin kiss her cold lips-nothing could bring her back to consciousness.



"Pechorin mounted his horse and I raised her up from the ground, somehow managing to place her in front of him in the saddle. He put his arm

around her and we started back. After several minutes of silence, Grigoriy Aleksandrovich spoke: 'Listen, Maksim Maksimich, we'll never get her home alive at this pace.' 'You're right,' I said, and we spurred the horses to full gallop. At the fort gates a crowd was awaiting us. We carried the wounded girl gently into Pechorin's quarters and sent for the surgeon. Although he was drunk, he came at our summons, and after examining the wound said the girl could not live more than a day. But he was wrong...

"She recovered, then?" I asked the captain, hanging onto his arm, glad in spite of myself.

"No," he replied, "the surgeon was wrong only in that she lived another two days."

"But, tell me, how did Kazbich manage to kidnap her?"

"It was like this: disobeying Pechorin's instructions, she had left the fort and gone to the river. It was very hot, you know, and she had sat down on a rock and dipped her feet into the water. Kazbich crept up, grabbed and gagged her, dragged her into the bushes, jumped on his horse and galloped off. She managed to scream, however, and the sentries gave the alarm, fired

after him but missed, and that's when we arrived on the scene."

"Why did[61] Kazbich want to carry her off?"

"My dear sir! These Circassians are notorious thieves. Their fingers itch for anything that lies unguarded. Whether they need it or not, they steal—they just can't help themselves! Besides he had long had his eye on Bela."

"And she died?"

"Yes, but she suffered a great deal, and we too suffered enough watching her. About ten o'clock at night she regained consciousness. We were sitting at her bedside. As soon as she opened her eyes, she asked for Pechorin. 'I am here, beside you, my *dzhanechka*,' (that is, "darling" in our language) he replied, taking her hand. 'I will die,' she said. We began to reassure her, saying that the surgeon had promised to cure her without fail, but she shook her head and turned to the wall. She didn't want to die!

"During the night she grew delirious. Her head was on fire and every now and then she shook with fever. She was now talking incoherently about her father and brother. She wanted to go back to her mountains and home... Then she also



talked about Pechorin, calling him all kinds of tender names or reproaching him for not loving his *dzhanechka* any more...

"He listened in silence, his head resting on his hands. But throughout it all I didn't notice a single tear on his lashes-whether he held himself in deliberately, I don't know. As for myself, I had never witnessed anything more heart-breaking.

"By morning the delirium passed. For about an hour she lay motionless, pale and so weak that her breathing was barely perceptible. Presently she felt better and began to speak again, but can you guess of what? Such thoughts can occur only to the dying. She regretted that she was not a Christian and that in the world beyond, her soul would never meet Grigoriy Aleksandrovich's, that some other woman would be his soulmate in paradise. It occurred to me that she might be baptized before death, but when I suggested this she looked at me in indecision for a long time, unable to say a word. At last she replied that she would die in the faith in which she had been born. So the whole day passed. How she changed in that day! Her death-white cheeks grew sunken, her eyes seemed to become larger and larger, and her

lips were burning. The fever within her was like a red-hot iron pressing upon her breast.

"The second night came, and we sat at her bedside without closing an eyelid. She was in terrible agony, she moaned, but as soon as the pain subsided a little she tried to assure Pechorin that she was feeling better, urged him to get some sleep, and kissed his hand and clung to it with her own. Just before daybreak the agony of death set in, and she tossed on the bed, tearing off the bandage so that the blood flowed again. When the wound was dressed she calmed down for a moment and asked Pechorin to kiss her. He knelt next to the bed, raised her head from the pillow and pressed his lips against hers, which were now growing chill. She twisted her trembling arms tightly around his neck as if by this kiss she wished to give her soul to him. Yes, it was good that she died! What would have happened to her had Pechorin abandoned her? And that was bound to happen sooner or later...

"The first half of the next day she was quiet, silent and submissive in spite of the way our surgeon tortured her with hot wet pads[62] and other remedies. 'My good man!' I protested. 'You

yourself said she would not live, why then all these medicines of yours?' 'Got to do it, just the same, Maksim Maksimich,' he replied, 'so that my conscience will be at peace.' Conscience my eye!

"In the afternoon she was tortured by thirst. We opened the windows, but it was hotter outside than in the room. We placed ice next to her bed, but nothing helped. I knew that this unbearable thirst was a sign that the end was approaching, and I said so to Pechorin. 'Water, water,' she repeated hoarsely, raising herself from the bed.

"He went white as a sheet, picked up a glass, filled it with water, and gave it to her. I buried my face in my hands and began to recite a prayer, I can't remember which. Yes, sir, I had been through a great deal in my time, had seen men die in hospitals and on the battlefield, but it had been nothing like this! Nothing! I must confess that there was something else that made me sad—not once before her death did she remember me, and I think I loved her like a father. Well... May God forgive her! But then who am I that anyone would remember me on their death bed?

"As soon as she had drunk the water she felt better, and some three minutes later she passed

away. We pressed a mirror to her lips, but nothing showed on it. I led Pechorin out of the room, and then we walked on the fort wall, pacing back and forth side by side for a long while without uttering a word, our hands behind our backs. It angered me to detect no sign of emotion on his face, for in his place I'd have died of grief. Finally, he sat down on the ground in the shade and began to draw something in the sand with a stick. I began to speak, wishing to console him, more for the sake of good form than anything else, you know, whereupon he looked up and laughed... That laugh sent cold shivers running up and down my spine... I went to order the coffin.

"I confess that it was partly for distraction that I occupied myself with this business. I covered the coffin with a piece of Persian silk I had and ornamented it with some Circassian silver lace Grigoriy Aleksandrovich had bought for her.

"Early the next morning we buried her beyond the fort, next to the spot on the river bank where she had sat that last time. The small grave is now surrounded by white acacia and elder bushes. I wanted to put up a cross, but that was a bit awkward, you know, for after all she was not

a Christian...

"What did Pechorin do?' I asked.

"He was sick for a long time and lost weight, the poor guy. But we never spoke about Bela after that. I saw it'd be painful for him, so why should I mention her? Some three months later he was ordered to join the N- regiment, and he went to Georgia. I haven't seen him since. Oh yes, I remember someone telling me recently that he had returned to Russia, though it hadn't been mentioned in the divisional orders. Usually it takes a long time before news reaches us here."

Here, probably to drown his sad memories, he launched upon a long dissertation concerning the disadvantages of hearing year-old news.

I neither interrupted him nor listened.

An hour later it was already possible to continue our journey. The blizzard had died down and the sky cleared up, and we set out. On the road, however, I couldn't help directing the conversation back to Bela and Pechorin.

"Did you ever happen to hear what became of Kazbich?" I asked.

"Kazbich? Really, I don't know. I have heard that the Shapsugs[63] on the right flank of the

line have a Kazbich, a daredevil fellow who wears a red *besmet* , rides at a trot under our fire and bows with exaggerated politeness whenever a bullet whistles near him, but I doubt whether it's the same man."

Maksim Maksimich and I separated at Kobi, for I took the fast coach and he couldn't keep pace with me because of the heavy baggage. At the time we didn't think we'd ever meet again, yet we did, and if you wish, I'll tell you about it, but that is a story in itself... You must admit, however, that Maksim Maksimich is a man you can respect. If you do admit it, I'll be amply rewarded for my story, overlong though it may have been.



## II. Maksim Maksimich

"After parting with Maksim Maksimich, I made good time through the Terek and Daryal gorges and had breakfast at Kazbek and tea at Lars, driving into Vladikavkaz by supper time. I won't bore you with descriptions of mountains, exclamations that mean nothing and canvases that convey nothing, especially to those who have never been in these places, nor with statistical observations which, I'm certain, no one would bother to read.

I stayed at an inn where all travelers stay and where, incidentally, there is no one to serve you a roast pheasant or a plate of cabbage soup, for the three veterans in charge are either so stupid or so drunk that there is nothing to be got from them.

I was told that I would have to stay there for another three days, because the "occasional" [*okaziya* , or detail] from Yekaterinograd[64] hadn't come in yet, and therefore couldn't set out on the return trip. What an occasion! But a bad pun is no consolation to a Russian and in order to while away the time I decided to write down Maksim Maksimich's story about Bela, quite un-

aware that it would turn out to be the first link in a long chain of tales[9]. So you see how an occurrence insignificant in itself may have serious consequences... But perhaps you don't know what an "occasional" is? It's an escort of half a company of infantry and a gun detailed to protect the caravans[65] crossing Kabarda from Vladikavkaz to Yekarerinograd.

The first day was very boring, but early the next morning a carriage drove into the yard. It was Maksim Maksimich! We greeted each other like old friends. I offered him the use of my room. He didn't stand on ceremony. He even clapped me on the shoulder, and his mouth twisted into what passed for a smile. An odd man!

Maksim Maksimich was well versed in the culinary arts and turned out a wonderful roast pheasant with an excellent pickled cucumber sauce. I must admit that without him I would've had only a cold snack. A bottle of Kakherian wine helped us overlook the modesty of the meal, which consisted of only one course. Afterwards we lit our pipes and settled down for a smoke, I near the window and he next to the stove where a fire was going, for the day was chilly and raw.



We sat in silence-what was there to say?... He'd already told me all that was interesting about himself, and I had nothing to tell him. I looked out of the window. A long string of low houses, sprawling along the bank of the Terek, which here spreads wider and wider, was visible through the trees, while in the distance was the blue serrated wall of the mountains with Kazbek in its white cardinal's hat peeping over it. Mentally I was bidding them goodbye. I felt sorry to leave them...

We sat that way for a long time. The sun was setting behind the frigid peaks and a milky mist was spreading through the valleys when we heard the tinkling of bells and the shouting of drivers outside. Several carts with grimy Armenians drove into the courtyard, followed by an empty carriage whose lightness, comfort and elegance gave it a distinctly foreign air. Behind walked a man with a huge mustache wearing a braided jacket. He was rather well dressed for a manservant, but the way he knocked the ashes from his pipe and shouted at the coachman left no doubt as to his position. He was obviously the pampered servant of an indolent gentle-

man-something of a Russian Figaro[66]. "tell me, my good man," I called to him from the window, "is it the 'occasional'?" He looked at me rather insolently, straightened his neckerchief and turned away. An Armenian who'd been walking beside him smiled and replied for him that it was indeed the "occasional" and that it would set out on the return trip the next morning. "Thank God!" said Maksim Maksimich who had just come to the window. "A fine carriage!" he added. "Probably some official on his way to conduct a hearing in Tiflis. You can see he doesn't know our hills. No, my dear fellow, they're not for the likes of you. Even an English carriage wouldn't stand the jolting! I wonder who it is-let's find out..." We went into the hallway, at the far end of which a door was open into a side room. The valet and the driver were lugging in suitcases.

"Listen, friend," the captain asked the valet, "whose is that fine carriage, eh? A splendid carriage indeed!" The valet muttered something inaudible without turning and went on unstrapping a case. This was too much for Maksim Maksimich, who tapped the insolent fellow on the shoulder and said: "I'm talking to you, my man..."

"Whose carriage? My master's."

"And who is your master?"

"Pechorin."

"What did you say? Pechorin? Good God! Did he ever serve in the Caucasus?" Maksim Maksimich exclaimed, pulling at my sleeve. His eyes lit up with joy.

"I believe so... but I haven't been with him long."

"Well, well, there you are! Grigoriy Aleksandrovich is his name, isn't it? Your master and I used to know each other well," he added, with a friendly slap on the valet's shoulder that nearly made him lose his balance.

"Excuse me, sir, you are in my way," said the latter, frowning.

"What of it, man! Don't you know I'm an old friend of your master's, we lived together, too. Now, where can I find him?"

The servant announced that Pechorin had stayed behind to dine and spend the night with Colonel N-.

"He won't be here tonight?" said Maksim Maksimich. "Or perhaps you, my good man, will have some reason to see him? If you do, tell him Mak-

sim Maksimich is here-you just tell him that and he'll know... I'll tip you eighty kopecks..."

The valet put on a superior air on hearing this modest offer, but nevertheless promised Maksim Maksimich to run his errand.

"He'll come at once, I'm sure!" Maksim Maksimich told me triumphantly. "I'll go out to the gates to meet him. Pity I don't know N-."

Maksim Maksimich sat down on a bench outside the gate and I went into my room. I must admit that I too awaited the appearance of this Pechorin with some eagerness, for though the captain's story had not given me too favorable a picture of the man, some of his traits nevertheless struck me as quite remarkable. In an hour one of the veterans brought in a steaming samovar and a teapot. "Maksim Maksimich, will you have some tea?" I called to him from the window.

"Thank you, I really don't care for any."

"You'd better have some. It's late already and getting chilly."

"No, thank you ..."

"Well, as you wish!" I said and sat down to tea alone. In ten minutes or so the old man came in. "I suppose you are right," he said. "Better have

some tea... You see, I was waiting. His man has been gone a long time-looks as if something has detained him."

He hastily gulped down a cup of tea, refused a second, and went back to the gate, obviously upset. It was clear that the old man was hurt by Pechorin's unconcern, all the more so since he had spoken to me so recently about their friendship, and only an hour before had been certain that Pechorin would come running as soon as he heard his name.

It was late and dark when I again opened the window and called to remind Maksim Maksimich that it was time to go to bed. He muttered something in reply and I urged him again to come in, but he didn't answer.

Leaving a candle on the bench, I lay down on the couch, wrapped myself in my overcoat and was soon asleep. I would have slept peacefully all night had not Maksim Maksimich awakened me when he came in very late. He threw his pipe on the table, began pacing up and down the room, then fussed with the stove. Finally he lay down, coughing, spitting, and tossing about for a long time.

"Bedbugs bothering you?" I asked.

"Yes, bedbugs," he replied with a heavy sigh.

I woke up early next morning, but Maksim Maksimich had already got up. I found him sitting on the bench at the gate. "I've got to see the commandant," he said, "so if Pechorin comes will you please send for me?"

I promised to do so. He ran off as if his legs had regained the strength and agility of youth.

It was a fresh, fine morning. Golden clouds piled up on the mountains in a phantom range of summits. In front of the gates was a broad square, and beyond it the market place was seething with people, for it was Sunday. Bare-footed Ossetian boys, birchbark[67] baskets laden with honeycombs strapped to their backs, crowded around me, but I drove them away for I was too preoccupied to give them much thought. The good captain's anxiety was beginning to claim me too.

Ten minutes had not passed when the man for whom we had been waiting appeared at the far end of the square. With him was Colonel N-, who left him at the inn and turned back towards the fort. I immediately sent one of the veterans for

Maksim Maksimich.

Pechorin was met by his valet who reported that the horses would be harnessed in a moment, handed him a box of cigars, and, having received a few instructions, went off to carry them out. His master lit a cigar, yawned once or twice and sat down on a bench on the other side of the gate. Now I would like to draw you his portrait.

He was of medium height. His erect, lithe figure and broad shoulders suggested a strong physique equal to all the hardships of the road and variations of climate, unweakened by either the dissolute life of the capital or emotional storms. His dusty velvet coat was open except for the last two buttons, revealing an expanse of dazzlingly white shirt that betrayed the habits of a gentleman. His soiled gloves seemed to have been made for his small, aristocratic hands, and when he pulled off a glove, I was amazed at the slenderness of his white fingers. His walk was careless and indolent, but I noticed he didn't swing his arms—a sure sign of a certain reticence of character. But these are my personal opinions based on my own observations, and I can't compel you to accept them blindly. When he sank

down on the bench his straight frame sagged as if he hadn't a bone in his back. His whole posture now betrayed some nervous weakness. He sat as the thirty-year-old coquette[68] in balzac's book might sit in a cushioned easy chair after an exhausting ball. At first glance I wouldn't have thought him more[28] than twenty-three years old, though later I was ready to admit he looked thirty. There was something childlike in his smile. His skin was as delicate as a woman's, and his naturally curly fair hair made a pleasing frame for his pale, noble brow on which only careful scrutiny could disclose a fine network of wrinkles that probably were a good deal more in evidence at times of anger or spiritual anxiety. In spite of his light hair, his mustache and eyebrows were black-as much a sign of pedigree in a man as a black mane and tail are in a white horse. To complete the portrait, I will say that he had a slightly turned-up nose and that his teeth were dazzlingly white and his eyes hazel-but about his eyes I must say a few more words.

Firstly, they didn't laugh when he did. Have you ever had opportunity to observe this peculiarity in some people? It's a sign either of evil



nature or of deep constant sadness. They shone with a phosphorescent glow, if one may so put it, under half-closed eyelids. It was no reflection of spiritual warmth or fertile imagination. It was the flash of smooth steel, blinding but cold. His glance was brief but piercing and oppressive, it had the disturbing effect of an indiscreet question, and might have seemed audacious had it not been so calmly casual. Perhaps all these observations came to my mind only because I happened to know some details about his life, and another person might've obtained an entirely different impression, but since you won't learn about him from anyone else, you'll have to be satisfied with this portrayal. I must say in conclusion that, on the whole, he was handsome indeed and had one of those unusual faces that are particularly pleasing to society ladies.

The horses were harnessed, the bell attached to the shaft bow tinkled, and the valet had already reported twice to Pechorin that the carriage was waiting. But still there was no sign of Maksim Maksimich. Luckily Pechorin was deep in thought. He stared at the blue jagged ridge of the Caucasus, apparently in no hurry to be on his

way. I crossed over to him. "If you would care to wait a while," I said, "you will have the pleasure of meeting an old friend..."

"Ah, that's right!" he replied quickly. "I was told about him yesterday. But where is he?" I looked out over the square and saw Maksim Maksimich running towards us for all he was worth... In a few minutes he had reached us. He could barely catch his breath, beads of perspiration rolled down his face, damp strands of gray hair that had escaped from under his cap stuck to his forehead, and his knees shook. He was about to throw his arms around Pechorin's neck, but the latter extended his hand rather coldly, though his smile was pleasant enough. For a moment the captain was taken aback, then he eagerly gripped the hand with both of his. He was still unable to speak.

"This is a pleasure, dear Maksim Maksimich. How are you?" said Pechorin.

"And thou?...And you?..." faltered the old man, tears welling up in his eyes. "It's a long time... a very long time... But where are you off to?"

"On my way to Persia... and then farther..."

"Not immediately, I hope? Won't you stay

awhile, my dear man? We haven't seen each other for so long..."

"I must go, Maksim Maksimich," was the reply.

"My God, what's the hurry? I have so much to tell you and so many questions to ask... How are things, anyway? Retired, eh? What have you been doing?"

"I've been bored stiff," replied Pechorin, smiling.

"Remember our life in the fort? Wonderful hunting country, wasn't it? How you loved to hunt! Remember Bela?"

Pechorin turned white a little and turned away.

"Yes, I remember," he said, deliberately yawning almost in the same breath.

Maksim Maksimich urged him to stay on for another hour or two. "We'll have a fine dinner," he said. "I have two pheasants and the Kakhetian here is excellent... not the same as in Georgia, of course, but the best to be had here. And we could talk... you'll tell me about your stay in St. Petersburg, won't you?"

"I really have nothing to tell, dear Maksim Maksimich. And I have to say goodbye now, for I

must be off... In rather a hurry... It was kind of you not to have forgotten me," he added, taking the old man's hand.

The old man frowned. He was both grieved and hurt, though he did his best to conceal his feelings. "Forgotten!" he muttered. "No, I've forgotten nothing. Oh well, never mind... Only I didn't expect our meeting would be like this."

"Come, now," said Pechorin, embracing him in a friendly way. "I don't think I have changed. At any rate, it can't be helped. We all are destined to go our several ways. God knows whether we'll meet again." This he said as he climbed into the carriage and the coachman was already gathering up the reins.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute!" Maksim Maksimich suddenly shouted, holding the carriage door. "It completely slipped my mind... I still have your papers, Grigoriy Aleksandrovich... Been carrying them around with me... Thought I'd find you in Georgia, never dreaming the Lord would have us meet here... What do you want me to do with them?"

"Whatever you want," replied Pechorin. "Farewell!"

"So you are off to Persia... When do you expect to be back?" Maksim Maksimich shouted after him.

The carriage was already some distance off, but Pechorin waved in a way that could well be interpreted to mean: "I doubt whether I will return, nor is there any reason why I should!"

Long after the tinkling of the bell and the clatter of wheels against the flinty surface of the road had faded into the distance, the poor old fellow stood glued to the spot, lost in thought.



"Yes," he said at last, trying his best to preserve a nonchalant air though tears of disap-

pointment still showed in his eyes, "we were friends, of course, but what's friendship nowadays? What am I to him? I'm neither rich nor titled, and besides, I'm much older. What a dandy his visit to St. Petersburg has made him! Look at that carriage, and the pile of luggage... and the haughty valet!" This he said with an ironic smile. "Tell me," he went on, turning to me, "what do you think of it all! What sort of a demon is driving him to Persia now? Ridiculous, isn't it? I knew all along, of course, that he was the flighty sort of fellow you can't count on. It's a pity though that he had to come to a bad end... but it couldn't be otherwise, as you can see. I've always said that nothing good will come of those who forget old friends." At that he turned away to conceal his agitation and began pacing up and down the courtyard beside his carriage, pretending to examine the wheels, while the tears kept filling up his eyes.

"Maksim Maksimich," said I, walking up to him. "What were the papers Pechorin left with you?"

"The Lord knows! Some notes or other. . ."

"What do you intend to do with them?"

"Eh? I'll have them made into cartridges."

"You'd do better to give them to me."

He looked at me in amazement, muttered something under his breath and began to rummage through his suitcase. He took out one notebook and threw it contemptuously on the ground. The second, the third and the tenth all shared the fate of the first. There was something childish about the old man's resentment, and I was both amused and sorry for him.

"That's the lot," he said. "I congratulate you on your find."

"And I may do whatever I want with them?"

"Print them in the newspapers if you like, what do I care? Yes, indeed, am I a friend of his or a relative? True, we shared the same roof for a long time, but then I've lived with all sorts of people."

I took the papers and carried them off before the captain could change his mind. Soon we were told that the "occasional" would set out in an hour, and I gave orders to harness the horses. The captain came into my room as I was putting on my hat. He showed no sign of preparing for the journey. There was a strained coldness about

him.

"Aren't you coming, Maksim Maksimich?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I haven't seen the commandant, and I have to deliver some government property to him."

"But didn't you go to see him?"

"Yes, of course," he stammered, "but he wasn't in and I didn't wait for him."

I understood what he meant. For the first time in his life, perhaps, the poor old man had neglected his duties for his personal convenience, to put it in official language, and this had been his reward!

"I'm very sorry, Maksim Maksimich," I said, "very sorry indeed, that we have to part so soon."

"How can we ignorant old fogies keep up with you haughty young men of the world? Here, with Circassian bullets flying about, you put up with us somehow... but if we chanced to meet later on you'd be ashamed to shake hands with the likes of us."

"I haven't deserved this reproach, Maksim Maksimich."

"I'm just speaking at random, you know. Any-



way, I wish you luck and a pleasant journey."

We separated rather coldly. Good Maksim Maksimich was now an obstinate, cantankerous captain. And why? Because Pechorin through absent-mindedness or for some other reason had merely extended his hand when his old friend wanted to fling himself into his embrace. It's sad to see a young man's finest hopes and dreams shattered, to see him lose the rosy illusions with which he viewed man's deeds and emotions, although there is still hope that he may exchange the old delusions for new ones no less transitory but also no less sweet. But what is there to exchange them for at Maksim Maksimich's age? Without wishing it, the heart would harden and the soul wither...



I set out alone.

# PECHORIN'S JOURNAL

## Introduction

Recently I learned that Pechorin had died while returning from Persia. This news pleased me very much, for it gave me the right to publish these notes, and I took advantage of the opportunity to sign my name to another man's work. God forbid that the reader should cast blame on me for such an innocent forgery!

Now I have to explain briefly what it was that prompted me to make public the innermost secrets of a man I never knew. It might've been understandable had I been his friend, for the perfidious indiscretion of the true friend is something everyone can understand. But I saw him only once, on my travels, and hence can't regard him with that inexplicable hatred which, concealed under the mask of friendship, only waits for death or misfortune to overtake the object of affection in order to bring down upon his head a hailstorm of arguments, advice, mockery and sympathy.

Reading over these notes, I became convinced that the man must've been sincere in so merci-

lessly laying bare his own weaknesses and vices. The story of a human soul, even the pettiest of souls, can hardly be less interesting and instructive than the story of a nation, especially if it is the result of the observation of a mature mind and written without the vain desire to evoke compassion or to amaze. One of the defects of Rousseau's [69] Confessions is that he read them to his friends.

Thus it was purely the desire to do some good that impelled me to publish excerpts from a journal which I just happened to acquire. Though I've changed all proper names, those mentioned in it will no doubt recognize themselves and perhaps find justification for deeds they have held against a man who is no longer of this world. For we nearly always forgive that which we understand.

I have included in this book only excerpts bearing on Pechorin's stay in the Caucasus. This still leaves me with a fat notebook in which he tells the story of his whole life. Some day it too will be submitted to public judgment. Now, however, I dare not take the responsibility upon myself for many important reasons.

Some readers will probably want to know what I think of Pechorin's character. My reply may be found in the title of this book. "But that is wicked irony!" they'll say.

I don't know about that.

## I. Taman



**T**aman is the most miserable dump of all the seaboard towns in Russia. I very nearly died of hunger there, and was almost drowned in the bargain. I arrived by stage coach late at night. The coachman stopped his tired troika at the gate of the only brick building, which stood at the entrance to the town. Roused from a doze by the tinkling of the carriage bell, the Black Sea Cossack on sentry duty shouted wildly: "Who goes there?" A Cossack sergeant and a corporal emerged from the building. I explained that I was an officer on my way to join an active service unit on official

business and demanded housing for the night. The corporal took us around town. All the cottages we stopped at were occupied. It was chilly, and not having slept for three nights running, I was exhausted and began to lose my temper. "Take me anywhere you want, you good-for-nothing! To hell, if you please, as long as there's a place to stay!" I shouted. "There is still one place [70] left," the corporal replied, scratching the back of his head. "Only you won't like it, sir; there are strange[70] goings on there..." Failing to understand the precise meaning of the last remark, I told him to go ahead, and after wandering about for a long time in muddy alleys lined with rickety fences, we drove up to a small hut on the sea-shore.

A full moon lit up the reed roof and white walls of my prospective dwelling. In the courtyard, which was fenced in by a crude stone wall, stood another miserable, crooked hut, smaller and older than the first. A cliff dropped abruptly to the sea from the very walls of the hut, and down below the dark-blue waves broke against the shore with an incessant roar. The moon looked down serenely upon the restless ships at

anchor far from the shore, their black rigging a motionless cobweb against the paler background of the skyline. "There are ships in the anchorage," thought I. "Tomorrow I'll leave for Gelendzhik [71]."

A Cossack from a front-line unit served as my valet. Telling him to take down my suitcase and dismiss the driver, I called for the master of the house. There was no answer. I knocked, and still there was no reply. What could it mean? Finally a boy of about fourteen appeared from the porch.

"Where is the master?" "No master." "What? You mean there is no master at all?" "None at all." "And the mistress?" "Gone to town." "Who's going to open the door for me?" said I, kicking at it. The door opened by itself, and a damp smell came from the hut. I struck a sulfur match and brought it close to the youngster's nose, and in its light I saw two white eyes. He was blind, totally blind from birth. As he stood motionless before me I looked closely into his face.

I admit that I'm greatly prejudiced against all the blind, squint-eyed, deaf, mute, legless, armless, hunch-backed and so on. I've observed that there's always some strange relationship between

the external appearance of a man and his soul, as if with the loss of a limb the soul too has lost some faculty of sensation.

So I examined the blind lad's face, but what would you have me read on a face without eyes? I looked at him long with involuntary pity, when a faint smile flitted across his thin lips, making, I know not why, the most unpleasant impression on me. A suspicion that he wasn't as blind as he seemed flashed through my mind, and in vain I tried to assure myself that it's impossible to pretend to have a cataract. And why would anyone do that? But I couldn't help suspecting, for I am often inclined to preconceived notions.

"Are you the master's son?" I asked him at last. "Nay." "Then who are you?" "Orphan, a poor orphan." "Has the mistress any children?" "Nay. There was a daughter but she ran away across the sea with a Tatar." "What kind of a Tatar?" "The devil knows! A Crimean Tatar, a boatman from Kerch."

I walked into the hut. Two benches, a table and a huge trunk next to the stove were the sole furnishings. Not a single icon was there on the wall—a bad sign that! The sea wind blew in

through a broken window. I took out the stub of a wax candle from my suitcase and lighting it began to lay out my things. I put my sword and gun in a corner, laid my pistols on the table, and spread out my cloak on a bench while the Cosack laid out his on the other. In ten minutes he was snoring, but I couldn't sleep. The lad with the white eyes kept twirling before me in the darkness.

About an hour passed in this way. The moon shone into the window and a beam of light played on the earth floor of the hut. Suddenly a shadow darted across the bright strip on the floor. I got up and looked out of the window. Someone again ran past and disappeared, God knows where. It didn't seem possible that the somebody could have run down the cliff to the shore, yet he could not have gone anywhere else. I got up, put on my shirt, fastened a knife to my belt, and softly went out of the hut. The blind boy was coming towards me. I moved close to the fence, and he went past with sure though cautious tread. He carried a bundle under his arm. Turning toward the boat landing, he began down along a narrow, steep path. "On that day[72] shall



the mute sing out and the blind shall see,"... I thought, following close enough not to lose sight of him.

In the meantime clouds began to close around the moon and a fog came up at sea. The stern light of the ship nearest the shore was barely visible through it. On the shore gleamed the foam of the breakers[73], which threatened to submerge it at any moment. Picking my way with difficulty down the steep slope, I saw the blind boy stop, then turn to the right and proceed so close to the water that it seemed the waves must surely grab him and carry him out to sea. It was obvious, however, that this was not the first time he was taking this stroll, judging by the confidence with which he stepped from stone to stone and avoided the holes. At last he stopped as if listening for something, then sat down on the ground with his bundle beside him. Hidden behind a projecting cliff I watched his movements. A few minutes later a figure in white appeared from the other side, walked up to the blind boy and sat down beside him. The wind carried fragments of their conversation to me.

"What do you say, blind one?" a woman's

voice said. "The storm is too heavy; Yanko won't come."

"Yanko is not afraid of storms," the other replied.

"The fog's thickening," came the woman's voice again with a note of sadness.

"It will be easier to slip by the patrol ships in the fog," was the reply.

"What if he's drowned?"

"Well, what of it? You'll go to church on Sunday without a new ribbon."

A silence followed. I was struck, however, by one thing: the blind boy had spoken to me in the Ukrainian dialect, and now he was speaking pure Russian.

"You see, I'm right," said the blind boy again, clapping his hands. "Yanko does not fear the sea, or the winds, or the fog, or yet the coast patrols. Listen, that's not the waves splashing, you can't fool me; those are his long oars."

The woman jumped up and peered anxiously into the distance.

"You're raving, blind one," she said. "I don't see anything."

I must admit that, strain as I did, I couldn't de-

tect anything like a boat in the distance. Some ten minutes had passed that way when a black speck now growing larger, now smaller, appeared among the mountainous billows, slowly climbing to the crests of the waves and sharply dropping into the troughs, the boat approached the shore. It was an very brave oarsman who ventured on a night like this to cross the fifteen miles of the strait, and the reason that was behind it must have been important indeed. Thus thinking, my heart involuntarily quickening its beat, I watched the frail craft dive with the dexterity of a duck and then leap up from the watery chasm through the flying foam with a swift movement of the oars that recalled the thrust of wings. I thought it would have to crash full force against the shore and be dashed to pieces, but it neatly swung around and slipped safely into a tiny bay. A man of medium size, wearing a Tatar sheepskin cap, stepped from the boat. He motioned with his hand and all three began to haul something from the craft. The cargo was so great that to this day I can't understand why the boat hadn't sunk. Each shouldering a bundle, they set out along the shore and I soon lost sight of them. I had to re-

turn to my lodgings. I must admit, however, that all these strange doings alarmed me, and I could hardly wait for the morning.

My Cossack was very much surprised when upon waking up he found me fully dressed, but I gave him no explanation. After admiring for some time the blue sky mottled with ragged little clouds and the Crimean coast which spread out in a line of mauve in the distance and ended in a crag topped by the white tower of a lighthouse, I set out for the Phanagoria[74] fort to inquire at the commandant's when I could leave for Gelendzhik.

But, alas, the commandant was unable to tell me anything definite. The vessels in the harbor were either coast guard ships or merchant boats which hadn't even begun loading. "Perhaps there'll be a packet boat in three or four days," the commandant said, "and then we'll see." I returned to my lodgings sad and angry. My Cossack met me at the door with a scared look on his face.

"Looks bad, sir!" he said.

"Yes, my friend. The Lord knows when we will get away!" Now he looked still more worried. Bending toward me, he whispered: "It's an un-

clean place here! Today I met a Cossack sergeant I know—we were in the same detachment last year. When I told him where we'd stopped he said to me: 'Brother, it's unclean there; the people are no good!' And, come to think of it, what sort of a fellow is this blind man? Goes everywhere alone, to the market, for bread, and to fetch water. You can see they're used to that sort of thing here."

"What of it? Has the mistress of the house appeared at least?"

"While you were out today an old woman came with her daughter."

"What daughter? She has no daughter."

"God knows who she is then, if she's not. The old woman is in the hut now."

I went inside. The stove had been stoked up until it was hot and a dinner rather sumptuous for poor folk was cooking. To all my questions the old woman replied that she was deaf and couldn't hear me. What could I do? I addressed the blind boy, who was sitting in front of the stove feeding brushwood into the fire. "Now tell me, you blind imp," said I, taking hold of his ear, "where did you go last night with that bundle, eh?" He burst

into tears and began howling and wailing: "Where'd I go? Nowhere. And I don't know of any bundle." This time the old woman heard what was going on and began to grumble: "Of all the things to imagine, and about a poor boy like him, too! Why can't you leave him alone? What has he done to you?" I got tired of this and I walked out firmly resolved to find the key to the riddle.



I wrapped my cloak around me and sat down on a boulder beside the wall, looking into the distance. Before me spread the sea agitated by last night's gale, and its monotonous roar like the murmuring of a city falling into slumber reminded me of bygone years, carrying my

thoughts to the North, to our frigid capital. Stirred by memories I forgot all else. An hour and perhaps more passed that way. Suddenly something like a song caught my ear. It was indeed a song, and the voice was pleasant, feminine, but where did it come from? I listened to it. It was a strange melody, now slow and plaintive, now fast and lively. I looked around, but saw no one. I listened again, and the sound seemed to drop from the heavens. I looked up, and on the roof of the hut I saw a girl in a striped dress, a real mermaid[75] with loose long hair. Shading her eyes from the sun with her hand, she was looking into the distance, now smiling and talking to herself, now starting up the song again.

*I memorized the song word for word:  
Over boundless billows green,  
Over billows surging,  
Fly the ships with sails a-spread,  
Onward urging.  
There among those ships at sea,  
Sails my shallop sprightly,  
Curtsyng to wind and wave,  
Kissed by combers lightly.  
Stormy winds begin to blow,  
Stately ships a-rocking,*

*Widely do they spread their wings-  
To leeward flocking.  
The angry ocean then I pray,  
Bending low before him:  
"Spare my bark, Oh fearsome one!"-  
Thus I do implore him.-  
"Precious goods are stowed on  
board!-  
The sea foam is a fright!-  
Keep her safe-a crazy one steers  
Through the darkening night[76]!"*

It occurred to me that I had heard the same voice the night before. For a moment I was lost in thought, and when I looked up at the roof again, the girl was no longer there. Suddenly she skipped past me, singing a different tune. Snapping her fingers, she ran in to the old woman, and I heard their voices rise in argument. The old woman grew very angry but the girl merely laughed aloud. A short while later my mermaid came skipping along again. As she approached me she paused and looked me straight in the eyes, as if surprised at finding me there. Then she turned away carelessly and went quietly down to the boat landing. This, however, wasn't the end of it: all day long she hovered around near me,



singing and skipping about without a moment's rest. She was a strange creature indeed. There was nothing foolish about her expression—on the contrary, her eyes inspected me with keen penetration, they seemed to be endowed with some magnetic power, and each glance appeared to invite a question, but as soon as I opened my mouth to speak she ran away, smiling artfully.

Never had I seen a woman like her. She was far from beautiful, though I have my preconceived notions as regards beauty as well. There was much of the thoroughbred in her, and in women as in horses that is a great thing—this is something discovered by *Young France*[77]. It (I mean breeding, not Young France) is betrayed mainly by the walk and by the hands and feet, and particularly characteristic is the nose. In Russia a classic straight, Roman[78] nose is rarer than small feet. My songstress looked no more than eighteen. Her extraordinarily supple figure, the peculiar way she had of tilting her head, her long auburn hair, the golden sheen of her slightly sun-tanned neck and shoulders, and especially her finely chiseled straight nose enchanted me. Though I could read something wild and suspi-

cious in her sidelong glances and though there was something indefinable in her smile, the preconceived notions got the better of me. The chiseled nose knocked me off my feet, and I fancied I had found Goethe's Mignon[79], that fanciful figment of his German imagination. And indeed, there was much in common between the two, the same swift transitions from supreme agitation to utter immobility, the same enigmatic conversation, the same gambolling and the same strange songs...

Toward evening I stopped her in the doorway and engaged her in the following conversation:

"Tell me, my pretty one," I asked, "what were you doing on the roof today?"

"Looking where the wind blows from."

"Why?"

"Whence the wind blows, thence blows happiness."

"Indeed, were you invoking happiness by song?"

"Where there is song there is also good fortune."

"Supposing you sing in grief for yourself?"

"What of it? If things will not be better, they'll

be worse, and then it's not so far from bad to good."

"Who taught you that song?"

"No one taught it to me. I sing whatever comes to my mind; he to whom I sing will hear; he to whom I don't won't understand."

"What is your name, my nightingale?"

"Whoever named me knows."

"And who named you?"

"How should I know?"

"You are furtive! But I've learned something about you." There was no change in her expression, not even a trembling of her lips, as if it all were no concern of hers. "I've learned that you went down to the shore last night." Assuming an air of importance I told her everything I had seen, hoping to disconcert her, but no way! She only burst out laughing. "You saw a lot but you know little-and what you do know you'd best keep under lock and key."

"Supposing I took it into my head to report to the commandant?" And here I adopted a very serious, even severe face. Suddenly she bounded off and began singing, disappearing like a bird frightened into flight. My last remark was en-

tirely out of place, though at the time I did not suspect its full significance and only later had occasion to regret ever having made it.

It was already just dark and I told the Cossack to put on the kettle, lit a candle and sat at the table smoking my traveling pipe. I was already finishing my second glass of tea when the door suddenly creaked and I heard the soft rustle of a dress and light footsteps behind me. I was startled and turned around: it was she, my mermaid! She sat down opposite me without a word and looked at me with eyes that for some unfathomable reason seemed full of sweet tenderness. They reminded me of eyes that years before had so despotically played with my life. She seemed to wait for me to speak, but I was too confused to say a word. The deathly white of her face betrayed the tumult within her. Her hand aimlessly wandered over the table and I noticed that it trembled—now her bosom rose high, now she seemed to be holding her breath. The comedy began to fade and I was ready to cut it short in the most ordinary fashion by offering her a glass of tea when she jumped up, twisted her arms around my neck and planted a moist, fiery kiss

on my lips. Everything went dark before my eyes, my head swam, and I embraced her with all my youthful passion, but she slipped like a snake from my arms, whispering in my ear: "Meet me on the shore tonight after everyone is asleep", and ran out of the room as swift as an arrow. In the hallway she upset the tea-kettle and the candle standing on the floor. "She-devil!" shouted the Cossack, who had made himself comfortable on some straw and was intending to warm himself with the tea I had left. I came to myself suddenly.

Some two hours later when all was quiet in the harbor I woke up my Cossack. "If you hear a pistol shot," I told him, "run down to the waterfront." He opened his eyes wide but replied mechanically: "Yes, sir." I stuck a pistol under my belt and went out. She was waiting for me at the top of the slope, flimsily clad to say the least, a small shawl tied around her supple waist.

"Follow me," she said, taking me by the hand, and we started down the slope. I do not know how I managed not to break my neck. At the bottom we turned to the right and took the same path along which I had followed the blind boy the

night before. The moon had not risen yet, and only two stars like two distant lighthouses shone in the dark blue sky. The swell came in at even, regular intervals, barely lifting the lone boat moored to the shore. "Let's get into the boat," said my companion. I hesitated, for I have no predilection for sentimental sea jaunts, but this was not the time to retreat. She jumped into the boat and I followed, and before I knew it we had cast off. "What does this mean?" I asked, angrily now. "It means," she said as she pushed me on to a seat and wrapped her arms around me, "that I love you." She pressed her cheek against mine and I felt her breath hot on my face. Suddenly something splashed into the water; I reached for my belt, but the pistol was gone. Now a terrible suspicion crept into my heart and the blood rushed to my head. Looking around, I saw we were already some hundred yards from the shore, and there am I unable to swim! I wanted to push her away but she clung to my clothes like a cat, then gave me a sharp push that nearly threw me overboard. The boat rocked dangerously, but I regained my balance, and a desperate struggle began between us. Fury gave me strength, but I

soon noticed that my opponent was more agile than I. "What do you want?" I shouted, gripping her small hands. I could hear her fingers crack, but she didn't cry out-her snakelike nature was superior to the pain.

"You saw us," she replied, "and you will tell on us." With a superhuman effort she forced me against the gunwale until we both hung perilously over the water and her hair dipped into it. The moment was decisive. I braced my knee against the side of the boat and held her by the hair with one hand and the throat with the other. She let go of my clothes and in a flash I had hurled her into the sea.

It was already quite dark and after seeing her head bob up a couple of times in the foam I lost sight of her completely.

I found a piece of an old oar at the bottom of the boat, and after a great deal of effort managed to reach the landing. As I was making my way along the shore back to the hut, my eyes turned involuntarily toward the spot where the blind boy had waited for the nocturnal boatman the night before. The moon was coming up and in its light I thought I saw someone with white clothes

sitting on the shore. Spurred on by curiosity I crept towards it and lay down in the grass on top of a hill rising from the shore. By raising my head slightly I could observe everything that happened below, and I was neither too surprised nor too sorry to find my mermaid there. She was wringing the sea water from her long hair, and I noticed how her wet shift outlined her lithe form and raised breasts. Soon a boat appeared in the distance and quickly approached the shore. Like the night before, a man stepped out of it wearing a Tatar cap, though his hair was cut in Cossack fashion, and he had a large knife stuck under his belt. "Yanko," she said, "everything is lost!" They continued talking, but in so low a voice that I could not hear a word. "And where is the blind one?" Yanko finally asked in a louder tone. "I sent him for something," was the reply. A few minutes later the blind boy appeared carrying a bag on his back. This was put into the boat.

"Listen, blind one," said Yanko, "take care of that spot, you know what I mean? There's a wealth of goods there... And tell (the name I could not make out) that I am no longer his servant. Things have turned out badly and he'll see me no



more. It's dangerous to go on. I'm going to look for work elsewhere; he won't find another daredevil like me. And tell him that had he paid more generously, Yanko wouldn't have left him. I can always make my way wherever the wind blows and the sea roars!" After a brief pause, Yanko continued: "I'll take her with me, for she can't stay behind, and tell the old woman it's time she died. She's lived long enough and ought to know when her time's up. She'll never see us again."

"What about me?" the blind boy whimpered.

"What do I need you for?" was the answer.

In the meantime my mermaid had jumped into the boat and was making signs to the other to come. Yanko put something into the blind boy's hand and muttered: "Here, buy yourself some ginger cakes." "Is that all?" asked the blind one. "All right, take this too." The coin rang as it fell on the stones. The blind boy didn't pick it up. Yanko got into the boat, and as the wind was blowing out to sea, they raised a small sail and quickly slipped into the distance. For a long time the white sail flashed among the dark waves in the moonlight. The blind boy remained sitting on the shore, and I heard something that sounded like

sobbing: it was the blind boy crying, and he cried for a long, long time... A sadness came over me. Why did fate have to throw me into the peaceful lives of honest smugglers? Like a stone hurled into the placid surface of a pond I had disturbed their tranquillity, and like a stone had nearly gone to the bottom myself!



I returned to where I was staying. In the hall a candle spluttered its last on a wooden platter, while my Cossack, orders notwithstanding, was fast asleep, gripping a gun with both hands. I didn't disturb him, and picking up the candle went into the room. But alas, my box, my silver-inlaid saber and a Daghestan dagger that I'd received as a present from a friend had all disappeared. Now I guessed what the confounded blind boy had been carrying. Waking up the Cossack with little ceremony, I swore at him and vented my anger, but there was nothing that

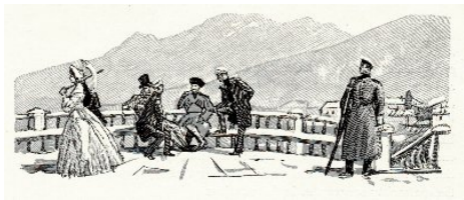
could be done about it any more. And wouldn't it have been idiotic for me to complain to my superiors that I'd been robbed by a blind boy and that an eighteen-year-old girl had all but drowned me?

Thank God an opportunity offered itself the following morning to travel on, and I left Taman. What became of the old woman and the poor blind boy, I don't know. And, after all, what have human joys and sorrows to do with me, an officer who travels around on official business!

# Part II. Conclusion of Pechorin's Journal

## II. Princess Mary

*11 May*



Yesterday I arrived in Pyatigorsk[80] and rented quarters in the outskirts at the foot of Mount Mashuk; this is the highest part of the town, so high that the clouds will reach down to my roof during thunderstorms. When I opened the window at five o'clock this morning the fragrance of the flowers growing in the modest little front garden flooded my room. The flower-laden branches of the cherry trees peep into my windows, and now and then the wind sprinkles my writing desk with the white petals. I have a mar-

velous view on three sides. Five-peaked Beshtau looms blue in the west like "the last cloud[81] of the storm blown over." In the north rises Mashuk like a shaggy Persian cap, concealing this part of the horizon. To the east the view is more cheerful: down below, the clean new town spreads colorfully before me, the medicinal fountains babble, and so do the multilingual crowds. Further in the distance the massive amphitheater of mountains grows ever bluer and mistier, while on the fringe of the horizon stretches the silvery chain of snow-capped peaks beginning with Kazbek and ending with twin-peaked Elbrus... It is a joy to live in a place like this! A feeling of elation flows in all my veins. The air is pure and fresh like the kiss of a child, the sun is bright and the sky blue-what more could one desire? What place is there here for passions, yearnings and regrets? But it's time to go. I'll walk down to Elizabeth Spring, where they say the spa society congregates in the mornings.

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[82] On reaching the center of the town I took the boulevard, where I encountered several melancholy groups slowly climbing the hill.

That most of them were land-owning families from the steppes[65] was obvious from the worn, old-fashioned coats of the men and the dainty dress of the wives and daughters. They evidently had all the eligible young men at the spa marked out, for they looked at me with fond curiosity. The Petersburg cut of my coat deceived them at first, but in discovering my army epaulets[14] they soon turned away in disgust.

The wives of the local officials, the hostesses of the springs, so to speak, were more graciously inclined. They carry eyeglasses[83] with handles and pay less attention to the uniform, for in the Caucasus they have learned to find ardent hearts under brass buttons and enlightened minds under white army caps. These ladies are very charming, and remain charming for a long time! Their admirers are renewed every year, which perhaps explains the secret of their endless good nature. As I climbed up the narrow path leading to Elizabeth Spring I passed a crowd of men, both civilians and military, who, as I discovered later, form a class in itself among those who wait for the movement of the waters. They drink, but not water, go out but little, make love for amusement

in a half-hearted way-they gamble and complain of boredom. They are dandies. They assume affected poses as they dip their wickered glasses into the sulfur water. The civilians show off pale-blue neckties, and the army men, ruffs showing above their collars. They express a deep disdain for provincial society and sigh at the thought of the aristocratic drawing rooms of the capital, which don't accept them.

Here at last is the well... On a site nearby, a little red-roofed building has been raised over the baths, and further on, a porch to shelter the promenaders when it rains. Several wounded officers-pale, sad-looking men-sat on a bench holding their crutches in front of them. Several ladies were briskly pacing back and forth, waiting for the water to take effect. Among them were two or three pretty faces. Through the avenues of vines that cover the slope of Mashuk I caught occasional glimpses of variegated bonnets that evidently belonged to seekers of solitude for two, since each bonnet was invariably accompanied by an army cap or an ugly round hat. On a steep cliff where there is a pavilion named the Aeolian Harp, sightseers were training a telescope on El-

brus[80]. Among them were two tutors with their charges who had come here in search of a cure for scrofula[82].

Panting, I had stopped at the brow of the hill and was leaning against a corner of the building surveying the picturesque scene, when I suddenly heard a familiar voice behind me: "Pechorin! Been here long?"

I turned around and saw Grushnitsky. We embraced. I had met him in a front-line unit. He had a bullet wound in the leg and had left for the watering place a week earlier than I.

Grushnitsky is a cadet. He has served only a year and wears a heavy soldier's overcoat which he shows off as his particular brand of foppery. He has a soldier's Cross of St George. He is well-built, dark-faced and dark-haired, and looks twenty-five though he can scarcely be more than twenty-one. He has a way of throwing his head back when talking, and he constantly twirls his mustache with his left hand, for with his right he leans on his crutch. His speech is glib and florid; he is one of those people who have a pompous phrase ready for every occasion, who are unmoved by simple beauty and who grandly as-



sume a wrap of extraordinary emotions, exalted passions and exquisite anguish. They delight in creating an impression, and romantic provincial ladies are infatuated with them to the point of distraction. In their old age they become either peaceable landlords or drunkards, sometimes both. They are often endowed with many good qualities, but they have not an ounce of poetry in their souls. Grushnitsky used to have[84] a passion for declaiming—he would shower you with words as soon as the conversation transcended the bounds of everyday matters, and I could never argue with him. He neither answers your rebuttal nor listens to what you have to say. As soon as you stop, he launches upon a long tirade which on the face of it seems to have some bearing on what you have said, but actually amounts only to a continuation of his own argument.

He is rather witty and his epigrams are frequently amusing but never pointed or malicious—he will never annihilate a person with a single word. He knows neither people nor their weak spots, for all his life he has been preoccupied with himself alone. His object in life is to become the hero of a romance. So often has he tried

to make others believe he is a being never intended for this world and hence doomed to some kind of occult suffering that he has practically convinced himself of it. That is why he shows off his heavy soldier's overcoat. I see through him and he dislikes me for it, though on the face of it we are on the friendliest of terms. Grushnitsky has a reputation for superb courage. I have seen him in action: he brandishes his saber, and dashes forward shouting with his eyes shut. There is something very un-Russian in that brand of gallantry!

I don't like him either, and I feel we are bound to fall foul of each other one day with sorry consequences for one of us.

His coming to the Caucasus too was the result of his romantic fanaticism. I am certain that on the eve of his departure from his father's village he tragically announced to some pretty neighbor that he was not going merely to serve in the army, but to seek death, because... at this point he probably covered his eyes with his hand and went on like this: "No, you must not know the reason! Your pure soul would shudder at the thought! And why should you? What am I to you?"

Could you understand me?" and so on and so forth.

He told me himself that the reason why he enlisted in the K- regiment will forever remain a secret between him and his Maker.

And yet when he discards his tragic role, Grushnitsky can be quite pleasant and amusing. I would like to see him in the company of women, for I imagine that's when he'd try to be at his best.

We greeted each other as old friends. I began to ask him many questions concerning life at the spa and the interesting people there were to be met.

"We lead a rather prosaic life," he sighed. "Those who drink the waters in the mornings are listless like all invalids, and those who drink wine in the evenings are unbearable like all people who enjoy good health. There is feminine company, but it offers little consolation. They play whist, dress badly and speak terrible French. This year Princess Ligovskaya with her daughter are the only visitors from Moscow, but I haven't met them. My overcoat is like a brand of ostracism. The sympathy it evokes is as unwelcome as charity."

Just then two ladies walked past us toward the spring, one middle-aged, the other young and slender. I couldn't see their faces for the bonnets, but they were dressed in strict conformity with the very best taste: everything was as it should be. The young woman wore a high-necked pearl-gray dress. A dainty silk scarf encircled her supple neck. A pair of dark-brown shoes encased her slender little feet up to the ankles so daintily that even one uninitiated into the mysteries of beauty would have caught his breath, if only in amazement. Her light but dignified gait had something virginal about it that eluded definition yet was tangible enough to the eye. As she walked past us, that subtle fragrance was wafted from her which sometimes is exhaled by a *billet-doux* [85] from a charming woman.

"That's Princess Ligovskaya," said Grushnitsky, "and her daughter, whom she calls Mary in the English manner. They've been here only three days."

"You seem to know her name already."

"Heard it quite by accident," he replied, blushing. "I must confess I have no desire to meet them. These haughty aristocrats look upon us

army men as savages. What's it to them if there's an intellect under a numbered cap and a heart beneath a thick overcoat?"

"Poor overcoat," said I, smiling. "And who is the gentleman going up to them and so obligingly offering them a glass?"

"Oh, that's the Moscow dandy Rayevich! He's a gambler, as you can see by the heavy gold chain across his blue vest. And look at that thick cane—just like Robinson Crusoe's! Or the beard he sports, and the haircut *à la moujik*[86]."

"You seem to bear a grudge against the whole human race."

"And with good reason..."

"Really?"

By this time the ladies had left the well and were again passing us. Grushnitsky hurried to strike a dramatic pose with the help of his crutch and replied loudly to me in French: "*Mon cher, je haïs les hommes pour ne pas les mépriser, car autrement la vie serait une farce trop dégoûtante.*" [87]"

The attractive young princess turned and bestowed on the speaker a long and searching glance. It was an obscure kind of look, but

without a trace of mockery. I mentally congratulated him on it from the bottom of my heart.

"This Princess Mary's extremely pretty," I said to him. "Her eyes are like velvet, yes, velvet. I'd advise you to adopt this expression when you talk about her eyes: the eyelashes, both upper and lower, are so long that the sunbeams find no reflection in her pupils. I love eyes like that—without a shine in them, and so soft that they seem to be caressing you... By the way, I think they are the only good point in her face... And are her teeth white? That's very important! It's a pity she didn't smile at your grandiloquence."

"You talk about a pretty woman as if she were an English thoroughbred," said Grushnitsky indignantly.

"*Mon cher,*" I replied, trying to fall into his tone, "*je méprise les femmes pour ne pas les aimer, car autrement la vie serait un mélodrame trop ridicule.*[88]"

I turned and walked off. For half an hour I strolled along the vine-clad walks, along the limestone rocks and among the low bushes between them, until it grew hot and I hurried home. As I passed by the sulfur spring I stopped to rest in

the shade of the covered gallery and thus became a witness of a rather interesting spectacle. This is how the actors were placed. The elder princess was sitting with the Moscow dandy on a bench in the gallery and seemed to be engaged in a serious conversation. The young princess, having apparently drunk her last glass full of water, was strolling thoughtfully up and down by the spring. Grushnitsky was standing at the well. There was no one else around.

I went up closer and hid behind a corner of the gallery. Just then Grushnitsky dropped his glass on the sand and tried to stoop to pick it up, but his wounded leg made it hard for him. Poor man! How he tried, leaning on his crutch, but failed. His expressive face actually registered pain.

Princess Mary saw all this better than I did.

Quicker than a bird she was at his side, bent down, picked up the glass and handed it to him with an inexpressibly sweet gesture. Then she blushed furiously and cast a glance in the direction of the gallery, but, seeing that her mother had not noticed anything, immediately regained her composure. When Grushnitsky opened his



mouth to thank her she was already far away. A minute later she left the gallery in the company of her mother and the dandy, but as she passed Grushnitsky she assumed a most prim and proper air, not even turning her head in his direction or noticing the fervent gaze with which he escorted her until she disappeared behind the lime trees of the boulevard at the foot of the hill... He caught a last glimpse of her bonnet on the other



side of the street as she hurried into the gateway of one of the finest houses in Pyatigorsk. Behind her walked her mother, who bid farewell to Rayevich at the gate.

Only now did the poor smitten cadet become aware of my presence.

"Did you see that?" he asked, gripping my hand firmly. "She's simply an angel!"

"Why?" asked I, pretending utter innocence.

"Didn't you see?"

"Of course, I saw her picking up your glass. If there had been a park keeper around he would have done the same, only quicker in hopes of getting a tip. Though it is not surprising that she took pity on you: you made such an awful face when you put your weight on your wounded leg..."

"Weren't you moved at all, the moment that you saw her soul shining in her eyes?"

"No."

I was lying, but I wanted to stir him up. I have an inborn urge to contradict. My whole life has been a mere chain of sad and futile opposition to the dictates of either heart or reason. The presence of an enthusiast makes me as cold as a mid-winter's day, and, I believe, frequent association

with a listless phlegmatic would make me an impassioned dreamer. I must also admit that at that moment an unpleasant but familiar sensation lightly crept over my heart; that sensation was envy. I say "envy" frankly, because I am accustomed to being honest with myself. And it is unlikely that any young man (a man of the world accustomed to indulging his vanities, of course), who, having met a woman who attracted his idle fancy, would not be unpleasantly impressed upon seeing her favor another man no less a stranger than he.

Grushnitsky and I descended the hill in silence and walked down the boulevard past the windows of the house which our enchantress had entered. She was sitting at the window. Tugging at my sleeve, Grushnitsky gave her one of those mistily tender looks that evoke so little response in women. I directed my eyeglass at her and saw that Grushnitsky's glance brought a smile to her face while my impertinent examination made her very angry. Indeed, how dare a Caucasian army officer level an eyeglass at a princess from Moscow?

***13 May***

The doctor dropped in to see me this morning. His name is Werner, but he is a Russian. There is nothing surprising in that. I once knew an Ivanov who was a German.

Werner is in many respects a remarkable man. He's a skeptic and a materialist like most medical men, but he's also a poet, and that quite seriously—a poet in all his deeds and frequently in words, though he never wrote two verses in his life. He has studied the vital chords of the human heart the way men study the ligaments of a corpse, but he had never been able to make use of his knowledge just as a splendid anatomist may not be able to cure a fever. As a rule, Werner secretly laughed at his patients, yet once I saw him cry over a dying soldier. He was poor and dreamed of possessing millions, but he would not have gone a step out of his way for the sake of money. Once he told me that he would rather do an enemy a favor than a friend, because in the latter case it would amount to profiting by one's charity, whereas hatred grows in proportion to the generosity of the enemy. He had a malicious tongue, and branded by his epigrams, more than one kindly soul came to be regarded as a vulgar

fool. His competitors, envious practitioners at the spa, spread a rumor that he drew caricatures of his patients—the latter were furious and he lost practically all his clientele. His friends, that is, all the really decent people serving in the Caucasus, tried in vain to boost his fallen prestige.

His appearance was of the kind that strikes one disagreeably at first sight but subsequently becomes likeable, when the eye has learned to find in the irregular features the imprint of suffering and nobility. There have been cases when women have fallen madly in love with men like him and would not have exchanged their ugliness for the beauty of the freshest and pinkest of Endymions[89]. Women must be given credit for possessing an instinct for spiritual beauty. Perhaps that is why men like Werner love women so passionately.

Werner was short, thin, and as frail as a child. Like Byron, he had one leg shorter than the other. His head was disproportionately large. He wore his hair cut very short, and the irregularities of his skull thus exposed would have astounded a phrenologist by their queer combination of contradictory inclinations. His small, black, ever rest-

less eyes probed your thoughts. He dressed immaculately and with good taste, and his lean, small, sinewy hands were neatly gloved in pale yellow. His coat, necktie and vest were invariably black. The young set called him Mephistopheles, and though he pretended to be displeased by the name, in reality it flattered his vanity. We soon understood each other and became companions-for I am incapable of friendship. Between two friends one is always the slave of the other, though frequently neither will admit it-the slave I cannot be, and to dominate is an hard job since one has to use deception as well. Besides, I have the servants and the money! This is how we became acquainted: I met Werner in the town of S-, at a large and boisterous gathering of the young set. Toward the end of the evening the conversation took a philosophical and metaphysical turn. We spoke about convictions, of which each had his own.

"As for me, I am convinced of only one thing ..." said the doctor.

"And what is that?" I asked, wishing to hear the opinion of a man who had been silent till then.

"That some fine morning, sooner or later, I will die," he replied.

"I am better off than you," said I. "I have another conviction besides, which is that one exceedingly foul night I had the misfortune to be born."

Everyone else was of the opinion that we were talking nonsense, but really nobody had anything more clever to say. From that moment we singled each other out from among the crowd. We used to meet frequently and discuss abstract matters in all seriousness until we both noticed that we were pulling each other's leg. Then, after looking each other in the eye significantly-the way Cicero [90] tells us the Roman augurs did - we would burst out laughing and leave separately, satisfied with an evening well spent.

I was lying on a couch, my eyes fixed upon the ceiling and my hands behind my head, when Werner walked into my room. He sat down in a chair, stood his cane in a corner, yawned and observed that it was getting hot outdoors. I replied that the flies were bothering me, and we both fell silent.

"You will have noticed, my dear doctor," said I,

"that without fools the world would be very boring... Now here we are, two intelligent people. We know in advance that it's possible to argue about everything endlessly, and so we don't argue. We each know nearly all the other's innermost thoughts. A single word tells us a whole story, and we see the kernel of each of our thoughts through a triple husk: Sad things strike us as funny, funny things as sad, and generally speaking, if you want to know, we are rather indifferent to everything except ourselves. Hence there can be no exchange of emotions and ideas between us. We know all we want to know about each other and don't wish to know more[91]. That leaves only one thing to talk about: the latest news. Haven't you any news to tell me?"

Tired by the long speech, I closed my eyes and yawned.

"There is one idea in the trash you are talking," he replied after a pause for thought.

"Two!" I replied.

"Tell me one of them and I will say what the other is."

"Good. You begin," said I, continuing to inspect the ceiling and smiling inwardly.

"You would like to know some details about someone who has arrived at the spa, and I can guess who it is you have in mind because that person has already been inquiring about you.

"Doctor! We definitely don't need to converse; we can read each other's minds."

"Now the other one..."

"The second idea is this: I'd like to induce you to tell me something; firstly, because listening is less tiring than talking, secondly, because in listening one doesn't give anything away, thirdly, because you may learn another man's secret, and, fourthly, because clever people like you prefer a listener to a talker. Now let's come to the point: what did Princess Ligovskaya have to say to you about me?"

"Are you sure it was not Princess Mary?"

"Quite certain."

"Why?"

"Because Princess Mary asked about Grushnit-sky."

"You possess a rare sagacity. The young princess said she was certain that this young man in the ordinary soldier's overcoat has been degraded to the ranks on account of a duel ..."



"I hope you didn't disabuse her of that pleasant illusion..."

"Naturally not."

"The plot thickens," I cried in elation, "and we'll see to the dénouement of the comedy. Fate apparently doesn't wish me to be bored."

"I have a notion that poor Grushnitsky will end up as your victim," said the doctor.

"And then what happened, doctor?"

"Princess Ligovskaya said your face was familiar. I observed that she must have met you somewhere in Petersburg society, and mentioned your name. She knew about you. It seems that your story made a sensation there. Then the princess went on to recount your adventures, probably spicing the society gossip with her own opinions. Her daughter listened with interest, visualizing you as the hero of a novel written in the modern style. I didn't contradict the princess though I knew she was talking nonsense.

"Worthy friend!" said I, extending my hand to him. The doctor gripped it with feeling and continued.

"If you wish me to, I'll introduce you..."

"My dear fellow!" said I, spreading my hands.

"Have you ever heard of heroes being formally presented? They make the acquaintance of their beloved by rescuing her from certain death..."

"Do you really intend to court Princess Mary?"

"Not at all, quite the contrary! Doctor, I score at last, for you don't understand me! Yet it's rather annoying just the same," I continued after a moment's silence. "I make it a rule never to disclose my own plans, and I'm very glad when others speculate about them, because that leaves me a loophole for denying them when necessary. But you must describe mama and daughter to me. What sort of people are they?"

"In the first place, Princess Ligovskaya is a woman of forty-five," replied Werner. "She has a splendid digestion, and a blood disorder-you can tell by the red spots on her cheeks. The latter half of her life she's spent in Moscow, where inactivity has caused her to put on weight. She likes spicy anecdotes and says improper things when her daughter is out of the room. She told me that her daughter was as innocent as a dove-though what it had to do with me, I don't know. I wanted to tell her that she might rest assured, I would tell no one about it! The princess is taking the cure for

rheumatism, and the daughter the Lord knows what for. I told them both to drink two glasses of sulfur water daily and bathe twice weekly in it. The old princess apparently is not used to ordering people about, and she respects the brains and knowledge of her daughter, who has read Byron in English and knows algebra, for it seems that the young ladies of Moscow have taken up learning-good for them, I would say. In general our men have such bad manners that intelligent women probably find it unbearable to flirt with them. The elder princess is very fond of young men, but Princess Mary regards them with a certain contempt-an old Moscow habit. In Moscow they go in for forty-year-old wits only."

"Were you ever in Moscow, doctor?"

"Yes, I was. Had a sort of practice there."

"Please go on."

"I believe I have said everything there is to say... Oh yes, one more thing: Princess Mary appears to love discussing sentiments, emotions, and the like. She spent a winter in Petersburg, but the city, and particularly its society, didn't please her. Evidently she was given a cool reception."

"You didn't meet anybody else at their place today, did you?"

"Yes, I did. There was an adjutant, a stuck-up guards officer, and a lady, one of the new arrivals, some relative of the princess by marriage, a very pretty woman but a very sick one, I believe. You didn't happen to see her at the spring? She is of medium height, blonde, with regular features, a consumptive complexion, and a little dark mole on her right cheek. I was struck by the expressiveness of her face."

"A mole?" I muttered. "Is it possible?"

The doctor looked at me and, laying his hand on my heart, said solemnly: "You know her." My heart indeed was beating faster than usual.

"It's your turn to exult now," said I. "Only I trust that you won't give me away. I haven't seen her yet, but I believe I recognize in the portrait you've painted a woman I loved in the old days... Don't tell her a thing about me, and if she asks you, talk bad things about me."

"As you wish," said Werner, shrugging his shoulders.

When he left, a terrible sadness came over me. Was it fate that had brought us together in the

Caucasus, or had she come on purpose, knowing she would find me here? What would the meeting be like? And was it she, after all? My vague fears had never deceived me. There isn't another person on earth over whom the past holds such sway as over me. Every memory of a past sorrow or joy sends a pang through my heart and invariably strikes the very same chords. I am stupidly made up, for I forget nothing-nothing!

After dinner I went down to the boulevard at about six and found a crowd there. The princess and her daughter were seated on a bench surrounded by a flock of young men who were paying them constant attention. I found myself another bench some distance away, stopped two Dragoon officers I knew and began telling them a story. Apparently it amused them, because they roared with laughter like crazy men. Curiosity drew to my bench some of the gallants who had clustered around Princess Mary-then little by little the rest too deserted her and joined my group. I talked without stop, telling anecdotes that were witty to the point of stupidity and ridiculing passing eccentrics with a malice bordering on viciousness... Thus I continued to amuse

my audience until sunset. Several times the young princess strolled arm-in-arm with her mother past me, along with a limping old man, and several times her gaze rested on me, expressing frustration while trying to communicate indifference.

"What was he talking about?" she asked one of the young men who returned to her out of sheer politeness. "It must have been a very thrilling story-about his battle exploits no doubt?" She spoke rather loudly, obviously with the intention of needling me. "Aha!" thought I, "you are thoroughly annoyed, my dear princess! Wait, there is more to come!"

Grushnitsky has been stalking her like a wild beast, never letting her out of his sight. I predict that tomorrow he will ask someone to present him to Princess Ligovskaya. She'll be very glad to meet him, for she's bored.

### ***16 May***

**D**uring the past two days things have been moving fast. Princess Mary definitely hates me. I've already been told of two or three rather biting, but nevertheless very flattering, epigrams pointed at me. It strikes her as very odd that I,

who am so accustomed to good society and on such intimate terms with her Petersburg cousins and aunts, would make no effort to make her acquaintance. We see each other every day at the spring and on the boulevard, and I do my best to entice her admirers, the glittering adjutants, white-faced Muscovites and others-with almost invariable success. I have always hated entertaining, but now I have a full house every day, for dinner, supper and a game of cards, and, there we are, my champagne triumphs over the magnetism of her eyes!

Yesterday I met her at Chelakhov's shop where she was bargaining for a splendid Persian rug. The princess pleaded with her mother not to refuse to spend the money, for the rug would look so well in her room... I overbid her by forty rubles and walked away with the rug, and was rewarded with a look of the most bewitching fury. At dinner time, I deliberately had my Circassian horse led past her windows with the rug thrown over its back. Werner, who was visiting them at the time, told me that the effect of the spectacle was most dramatic. Princess Mary wants to mount a campaign against me; I have

already noticed that in her presence two of the adjutants give me very curt nods, though they dine at my table every day.

Grushnitsky has assumed a mysterious air—he walks with his hands behind his back oblivious of everybody. His leg has suddenly healed, so that he scarcely limps. He found an occasion to engage the old princess in conversation and to pay a compliment to Princess Mary. The latter apparently is not too discriminating, for ever since she has been responding to his bows with the most charming smile.

"You are sure you do not wish to meet the Ligovskoy's?" he asked me yesterday. .

"Positive."

"Really! It's the most pleasant house at the spa. All the best local society..."

"My dear friend, I'm frightfully fed up with non-local society, let alone the local. Have you been calling on them?"

"Not yet. I've no more than spoken with Princess Mary once or twice. You know how unpleasant it is to fish for an invitation, though it is done here... It'd be another matter if I had my epaulettes."



"My dear fellow! You are far more interesting as you are. You simply do not know how to take advantage of your favorable position. Don't you know that a soldier's overcoat makes you a hero and a martyr in the eyes of any sensitive young lady?"

Grushnitsky smiled complacently.

"What nonsense!" he said.

"I am sure," I went on, "that the young princess has already fallen in love with you."

He blushed to the roots of his hair and puffed himself up.

Oh vanity! Thou art the lever with which Archimedes hoped to raise the globe!...

"You're always joking," he said, pretending to be angry. "In the first place, she hardly knows me..."

"Women love only the men they don't know."

"But I make no pretense toward pleasing her. I merely wish to get to know a pleasant household, and it would indeed be absurd to entertain any hopes whatsoever... Now you Petersburg lady killers are another matter: you only have to look once for a woman to melt... By the way, Pechorin, do you know what the young princess said about

you?"

"What? Has she already spoken to you about me?"

"You have no reason to rejoice, though. Once, quite by chance, I entered into conversation with her at the spring; almost her first remark was, 'Who is that gentleman with the unpleasant, heavy-eyed expression? He was with you when...' She blushed and was reluctant to mention the day, recalling her charming little exploit. 'You need not mention the day,' I replied, 'for I will always remember it...' Pechorin, my friend, I cannot congratulate you, for you are in her bad books... It's a pity, really, because my Mary[92] is very charming!"

It must be noted that Grushnitsky is one of those who in speaking of a woman they hardly know call her "my Mary" or "my Sophie", if she has had the good fortune to attract them.

Taking on a serious face, I replied: "Yes, she is rather good-looking... Only be careful, Grushnitsky! Russian young ladies for the most part go in only for Platonic love with no intention of marriage, and Platonic love is the most disturbing. It seems to me that Princess Mary is one of those

women who wish to be amused. If she is bored for two minutes in your company, you are doomed forever. Your silence must arouse her curiosity, your conversation must never completely satisfy her. You must keep her in a state of suspense all the time. Ten times she will defy public opinion for your sake and call it sacrifice, and in return she will begin to torment you and end up saying simply that she cannot tolerate you. If you don't get the advantage over her, even her first kiss will not give you the right to a second. She'll flirt with you to her heart's content and a year or two later marry an ugly man in obedience to her mother's will; then she will begin to assure you that she is unhappy, that she had loved only one man-that is, you-but that fate had not ordained that she be joined to him because he wore a soldier's overcoat, though beneath that thick gray garment there beat an ardent and noble heart... ."

Grushnitsky hit the table with his fist and began to pace up and down the room.

I shook with laughter inwardly and even smiled a couple of times, but luckily he didn't notice. He's clearly in love, for he has become more

credulous than ever: he even wears a new nullo-silver ring of local workmanship, which struck me as suspicious. On closer inspection what do you think I saw? The name Mary engraved in small letters on the inside and next to it the date when she picked up that famous glass. I said nothing of my discovery. I don't want to extract any confessions from him; I want him to make me his confidant by his own choice-and that's when I am going to enjoy myself...

\* \* \*

Today I got up late, and by the time I reached the spring no one was there. It was getting hot. White fluffy clouds raced across the sky, away from the snow-capped mountains and promising a thunderstorm. Mashuk's summit was smoking like an extinguished torch, and around it gray pieces of clouds, stopped in their flight and seemingly caught in the mountain brambles, writhed and crawled like serpents. The atmosphere was charged with electricity. I took the vine-flanked avenue leading to the grotto-I felt depressed. I was thinking of the young woman with the mole on her cheek, whom the doctor had mentioned. What was she doing here? And was it she? And

why'd I think it was she? Why was I so certain about it? Are there so few women with moles on their cheeks? Thinking all this over, I reached the grotto. A woman sat on a stone bench in the cool shade of its roof. She was wearing a straw hat. A black shawl was wrapped round her shoulders, and her head was lowered so that the hat concealed her face. I was about to turn back, so as not to disturb her meditations, when she looked up at me.



"Vera!" I cried out involuntarily.

She jumped and turned pale. "I knew you were here," she said. I sat down next to her and took her hands. A long-forgotten tremor shot through my veins at the sound of that sweet voice. Her deep, tranquil eyes looked straight into mine. In them I could read distress and something like a reproach.

"We have not seen each other for so long," said I.

"Yes, and we both have changed a great deal."

"You mean, you do not love me any more?"

"I am married!" she said.

"Again? Some years ago there was the same reason, but in spite of that..."

She snatched her hand away and her cheeks flamed.

"Perhaps you are in love with your second husband?"

She made no reply and turned away.

"Or maybe he is very jealous?"

Silence.

"Well, he must be a fine, handsome young fellow, very rich, I suppose, and you are afraid that..." I looked at her and was startled. Her face ex-

pressed dire distress, and tears glistened in her eyes.

"Tell me," she whispered at last, "does it give you so much pleasure to torment me? I ought to hate you. Ever since we have known each other, you have brought me nothing but pain..." Her voice shook, and she leaned towards me, resting her head on my chest.

"Perhaps," I thought, "that is why you loved me, for joy is forgotten, but sorrow never..."

I pressed her close to me and we remained that way for a long time. Then our lips met and merged in a burning, rapturous kiss. Her hands were ice-cold, her head feverishly hot. There began one of those conversations that make no sense on paper, that cannot be repeated or even remembered, for the significance of words is substituted and enriched by that of sounds, just as in Italian opera.

She is resolved that I should not meet her husband, who is the lame old man I caught a glimpse of on the boulevard. She married him for the sake of her son. He is rich and suffers from rheumatism. I didn't allow myself a single disparaging remark about him, for she respects him like

a father-and will deceive him as a husband... A strange thing, the human heart, and a woman's heart in particular!

Vera's husband, Semyon Vasilyevich G-v, is a distant relative of Princess Ligovskaya. They are next-door neighbors, and Vera is often at the princess's. I promised her that I would meet the Ligovskoy's and pay court to the young princess so as to divert attention from Vera. This doesn't interfere with my plans at all and I'll have a good time...

A good time! Yes, I've already passed that period of spiritual life when people seek happiness alone and when the heart feels the need to love someone passionately. Now I only want to be loved, and then only by the very few. As a matter of fact, I believe one constant attachment would be enough for me-a sentimental fashion only to be pitied!

It has always struck me as odd that I had never become the slave of the woman I loved. On the contrary, I've always acquired an invincible sway over their will and heart, without any effort on my part. Why is that? Was it because I've never particularly treasured anything and they've been



afraid to let me slip out of their hands for a moment? Or was it the magnetic appeal of a strong personality? Or simply because I've never met a woman with enough strength of character?

I must admit that I don't care for women with a mind of their own-it doesn't suit them!

Though I recall now that once, but only once, I loved a woman with a strong will, whom I never could conquer... We separated enemies, yet had I met her five years later the parting might have been quite different...

Vera is ill, very ill, although she won't admit it; I am afraid she has consumption or the disease they call *fièvre lente* -not a Russian ailment at all and hence it has no name in our language.

The thunderstorm overtook us in the grotto and kept us there another half an hour. She didn't make me promise to be faithful to her, nor did she ask me whether I had loved others since we separated... She trusted me again as wholeheartedly as before. And I won't deceive her-she is the only woman in the world I would not have the heart to deceive. I know that we'll part again soon, perhaps forever. We'll both go our different ways to the grave, but I'll always cherish her

memory. I've always told her so and she believes me, though she says she doesn't.

At length we separated, and I stood there following her with my eyes until her hat disappeared behind the bushes and rocks. My heart contracted painfully, just as when we separated the first time. Oh, how I was glad to experience this feeling! Was it youth with its beneficent tempests reasserting itself, or merely its farewell glance, a parting gift-a souvenir? Yet it's absurd-to think, I still look like a boy. Though my face is pale, it is still fresh, my limbs are supple and graceful, my hair thick and curly, eyes flashing, and the blood courses swiftly through my veins...

On coming home, I got up on my horse and galloped into the steppe, for I love riding a spirited horse through the tall grass, with the desert wind in my face, greedily drinking in the fragrant air and looking into the blue distance to see hazy outlines of objects that grow more distinct every moment. Whatever sorrow weighs down the heart or anxiety plagues the mind, it is all immediately dispersed, and a peace settles over the soul as physical fatigue prevails over mental un-

rest. There are no feminine eyes I would not forget when gazing on the mountains covered with curly shrubs, bathed in the southern sunshine, contemplating the blue sky, or listening to the roar of the torrent falling from crag to crag.

I would imagine the Cossack sentinels standing drowsily in their watchtowers must have been greatly puzzled on seeing me galloping along without aim or purpose, for they most likely took me for a Circassian on account of my costume. As a matter of fact I had been told that mounted and wearing Circassian costume I look more like a Kabardian than many Kabardians. And indeed, as far as this noble battle dress is concerned I am a perfect dandy: not an extra piece of braiding, costly weapons with the simplest finish, the fur on my cap neither too long nor too short, leggings and soft-leather boots fitting perfectly, white *besmet* and dark-brown Circassian coat[93]. I practiced long the mountain people's way of sitting a horse-nothing so flatters my vanity as praise for my ability to ride a horse as the Caucasians do. I keep four horses, one for myself and three for my friends, so as to avoid the boredom of riding out alone through the

fields, but though they are pleased to have my horses to ride they never ride with me. It was already six o'clock in the afternoon when I remembered that it was time for dinner-moreover, my horse was exhausted. I rode out on to the road leading from Pyatigorsk to the German colony where the spa society frequently goes *en piquenique*. The road winds its way through the scrub land, dipping into shallow gullies where noisy creeks flow in the shadow of the tall grasses. All around is the towering blue amphitheater of Beshtau, Zmeinaya, Zheleznaya and Lysaya mountains. I had stopped in one of these gullies [*balki*[94]] to water my horse when a noisy and glittering cavalcade appeared down the road. There were ladies in black and sky-blue riding clothes and gentlemen in a costume that was a mixture of Circassian and Nizhni-Novgorodan style[95]. Grushnitsky and Princess Mary rode in front.

Ladies who come to take the waters still believe the stories of Circassian raids in broad daylight, and that probably explained why Grushnitsky had belted a saber and a pair of pistols over his soldier's overcoat-he looked rather ridiculous

in these heroic vestments. A tall bush concealed me from them, but I had a perfect view through the foliage and could tell by the expression of their faces that the conversation was in a sentimental vein. Finally they neared the dip in the road. Grushnitsky gripped the reins of the young princess's horse, and now I could hear the end of their conversation:

"And you wish to remain in the Caucasus all your life?" said the princess.

"What is Russia to me?" replied her escort. "A country where thousands of people will despise me because they are wealthier than I, whereas here-why here this thick overcoat was no obstacle to my making your acquaintance..."

"On the contrary..." said the princess, blushing.

Grushnitsky looked pleased. He continued:

"Here my days will flow past thick and fast under the bullets of the barbarians, and if only God would send me each year one radiant feminine glance, one like..."

By this time they drew level with me; I struck my horse with my whip and rode out from behind the bushes.

"*Mon Dieu, un Circassien!*" cried the princess in terror.

To reassure her I replied in French, with a slight bow: "*Ne craignez rien, madame, je ne suis pas plus dangereux que votre cavalier.*[96]"

She was thrown into confusion-I wonder why? Because of her mistake, or because she thought my reply insolent? I wish indeed that the latter supposition were the case. Grushnitsky glanced at me with displeasure.

Late that night, that is, about eleven o'clock, I went for a walk along the lime-tree avenue of the boulevard. The town was fast asleep, and only here and there a light shone in a window. On three sides loomed the black ridges of the spurs of Mashuk, on whose summit lay an ominous cloud; the moon was rising in the east; in the distance the snow-capped summits glistened in a silvery fringe. The cries of sentries intermingled with the noise of the hot springs now running freely for the night. At times ringing hoof beats echoed down the street, accompanied by the creaking of a covered ox wagon and the plaintive chant of a Tatar refrain. I sat down on a bench and sank into thought. I felt a need to unburden

my thoughts in a friendly talk... but with whom? What was Vera doing now, I wondered. I would have given much to press her hand just then.

Suddenly I heard quick, uneven steps... Probably Grushnitsky... and so it was!

"Where have you been?"

"At Princess Ligovskaya's," he said, full of importance. "How beautifully Mary sings!"

"You know what," said I, "I'll bet she doesn't know you're a cadet, but thinks you're a demoted officer."

"Maybe. What do I care!" he said absently.

"Well, I just mentioned it..."

"Do you know that you just made her terribly angry? She thought it was downright insolence on your part. I had a hard time trying to assure her that you are so well-bred and so much at home in society that you couldn't have had any intention of insulting her. She says you have an impudent look and must be very conceited."

"She's right... You seem to be taking her part, don't you?"

"I'm sorry to say I haven't that right yet."

"Oho!" thought I. "Evidently he already has hopes..."

"It'll only be the worse for you," Grushnitsky went on. "Now it'll be hard for you to meet them—what a pity! It's one of the pleasantest houses I know. . . ."

I smiled inwardly.

"The pleasantest house for me just now is my own," said I yawning, and rose to go.

"Still you must admit that you regret it?"

"What nonsense! I could be at the princess's tomorrow night if I wished. . . ."

"We'll see about that . . ."

"To please you, I will even pay court to the Princess Mary. . . ."

"That is, if she is willing to speak to you. . . ."

"I'll wait till she gets bored with your conversation. . . . Good night!"

"And I'm going for a prow—couldn't fall asleep for anything now. . . . Look here, let's go to the restaurant, to the gambling tables. . . . Violent sensations are what I need tonight."

"I hope you lose. . . ."

I went home.

## ***21 May***

**N**early a week has passed and I've still not met the Ligovskoy's. I'm waiting for my opportu-



ity. Grushnitsky follows Princess Mary about like a shadow, and they talk incessantly. I wonder when she'll get tired of him? Her mother takes no notice of what's going on because he's *not eligible*. That is the logic of mothers for you! I have noticed two or three tender looks-must put a stop to this.

Yesterday Vera made her first appearance at the spring. Since our meeting in the grotto, she's not left the house. We dipped our glasses into the water at the same time and, as she bent down, she whispered to me: "You don't want to get to know the Ligovksoys? It is the only place where we can meet."

A reproach-how boring! But I deserved it.

By the way, tomorrow there's a subscription ball at the restaurant hall, and I intend to dance the mazurka with Princess Mary.

## **22 May**

**T**he restaurant ballroom turned into a Nobles' Club hall. By nine o'clock everybody was there. Princess Ligovskaya and her daughter were among the last to arrive. Many of the ladies eyed Princess Mary with envy and ill will, for she dresses with very good taste. Those who consider

themselves the local aristocrats concealed their envy and attached themselves to her. What else could be expected? Wherever there is feminine society, there is an immediate division into the upper and lower circles. Grushnitsky stood among the crowd outside the window, pressing his face to the glass and eating his goddess with his eyes; in passing she gave him a barely noticeable nod. He beamed like the sun... The first dance was a polonaise, then the orchestra struck up a waltz. Spurs jingled and coat tails whirled.

I stood behind a fat lady sprouting rose-colored feathers. The splendor of her gown was reminiscent of the farthingale age and the blotchiness of her coarse skin of the happy epoch of the black-taffeta beauty spot. The biggest wart on her neck was concealed beneath a clasp. She was saying to her partner, a captain of dragoons: "This young Princess Ligovskaya is an unbearable minx. Think of it, she bumped into me and didn't bother to apologize, and actually turned round to look at me through her eyeglass. . . *C'est impayable* ! What cause has she to give herself airs? It would do her good to be taught a lesson..."

"Leave it to me!" replied the obliging captain

and repaired to another room.

I went over at once to Princess Mary and asked for the waltz, taking advantage of the freedom of the local customs which allow one to dance with strangers.

She was scarcely able to suppress a smile and thus conceal her triumph, but quickly enough she managed to assume a totally indifferent and even severe appearance. She carelessly laid her hand on my shoulder, tilted her head a bit to one side, and off we started. I know no other waist so voluptuous and supple. Her sweet breath caressed my face. Now and then a ringlet of hair broke loose from its companions in the whirl of the dance and brushed my burning cheek... I made three turns round the room. (She waltzes delightfully.) She was panting, her eyes looked blurred and her separated lips could hardly whisper the necessary "*Merci, monsieur*".

After a few minutes of silence I said, assuming the humblest of expressions: "I have heard, Princess, that while still an utter stranger to you, I had the misfortune to evoke your displeasure, that you found me impertinent... Is that really true?"

"And you would like to strengthen that opinion now?" she replied, with an ironical little grimace that, incidentally, matched well the quick mobility of her features.

"If I had the audacity to offend you in any way, will you allow me the greater audacity of asking your forgiveness? Really, I'd like very much to prove that you were mistaken in your opinion of me..."

"That will be a rather difficult task for you .

"Why?"

"Because you don't come to our house and these balls probably won't be repeated frequently."

"That means," thought I, "their doors are closed to me for all time."

"Do you know, Princess," said I with a shade of annoyance, "that one should never spurn a repentant sinner, for out of sheer desperation he may become twice as sinful... and then..."

Laughter and whispering around us made me break off and look round. A few paces away stood a group of men, among them the captain of dragoons who had expressed his hostile intentions toward the charming princess. He seemed to be

highly pleased with something, rubbing his hands, laughing loudly and exchanging winks with his comrades. Suddenly a gentleman in a tail coat and with long mustaches and a red face stepped out of their midst and walked unsteadily towards Princess Mary. He was obviously drunk. Stopping in front of the bewildered princess, with his hands behind his back, he directed his bleary gray eyes at her and said in a wheezy high-pitched voice: "*Permettez... oh, to heck with it... I'll just take you for the mazurka. . .*"

"What do you want, sir?" she said with a tremor in her voice, casting about a glance for help from somebody. But, alas, her mother was far away, nor were there any of the gallants she knew nearby, except one adjutant who, I believe, saw what was going on, but hid behind the crowd to avoid being involved in an unpleasant scene.

"Well, well!" said the drunken gentleman, winking at the captain of dragoons who was spurring him on with encouraging signals. "You would rather not? I once more have the honor of inviting you *pour mazurk...* Maybe you think I'm drunk? That's all right! Dance all the better, I assure you..."

I saw she was on the verge of fainting from terror and shame.

I stepped up to the intoxicated gentleman, gripped him firmly enough by the arm and, looking him straight in the eyes, asked him to go away, because, I added, the princess had long since promised me the mazurka.

"Oh, I see! Another time, then!" he said, with a laugh, and rejoined his cronies who, looking rather crestfallen, guided him out of the room.

I was rewarded with a deeply charming glance.

Princess Mary went over to her mother and told her what had happened, and the latter sought me out in the crowd to thank me. She told me that she knew my mother and was a friend of a half a dozen of my aunts.

"I simply can't understand how it is we haven't met before," she added, "though you must admit that it's your own fault. You hold yourself so aloof you know, you really do. I hope the atmosphere of my drawing room will dispel your spleen... Don't you think so?"

I replied with one of those polite phrases everyone must have in store for occasions like

this.

The quadrilles dragged out as if they would never end.

Finally the mazurka struck up and I sat down beside the young princess.

I made no reference to the drunken gentleman, nor to my previous conduct, nor yet to Grushnitsky. The impression the unpleasant incident had made on her gradually faded, her face glowed, and she chatted charmingly. Her conversation was sharp without pretensions to wit, it was vivacious and free of restraint, and some of her observations were profound indeed... I let her understand in a confused, rambling sort of way that I had long been attracted by her. She bent her head and blushed faintly.

"You are a strange man!" she said presently with a constrained laugh and smile, raising her velvety eyes to me.

"I didn't want to be introduced to you," I continued, "because you are surrounded by too great a crowd of admirers and I was afraid I might get completely lost in them."

"You had nothing to fear. They are all exceedingly dull..."

"All of them? Really, all?"

She looked at me closely as if trying to recall something, then blushed faintly again and finally said in a definite tone of voice: "*All of them!*"

"Even my friend Grushnitsky?"

"Is he your friend?" she asked with some doubt.

"He is."

"He, of course, cannot be classed as a bore."

"But as an unfortunate, perhaps?" said I, laughingly.

"Of course! Why are you amused? I would like to see you in his place."

"Why? I was a cadet once myself, and believe me, that was the finest period of my life!"

"Is he a cadet?" she asked quickly, adding a moment later: "And I thought..."

"What did you think?"

"Nothing, nothing at all... Who is that lady?"

The conversation took a different turn and this subject was not brought up again.

The mazurka ended and we separated-until we meet again. The ladies went home. Going in for supper, I met Werner.

"Aha," he said, "so that's it! And you said you



would only make the young princess's acquaintance by rescuing her from certain death?"

"I did better," I replied, "I saved her from fainting at the ball!"

"What happened? Tell me!"

"No, you will have to guess. Oh you, who can divine everything under the sun!"

### ***23 May***

I was walking on the boulevard about seven o'clock in the evening. Grushnitsky, seeing me from afar, came over, a ridiculously rapturous light gleaming in his eyes. He clasped my hand tightly and said in a tragic tone: "I thank you, Pechorin... You understand me, don't you?"

"No, I don't. In any case there's nothing to thank me for," I replied, for I really had no good deed on my conscience.

"Why, what about yesterday? Have you forgotten? Mary told me everything..."

"You don't say you already share everything? And gratitude too?"

"Listen," said Grushnitsky with an impressive air. "Please don't make fun of my love if you wish to remain my friend... You see, I love her madly... and I believe, I hope, that she loves me too. I have

a favor to ask of you: you will be visiting them this evening, promise me to observe everything. I know you are experienced in these matters and you know women better than I do. Oh women, women! Who really does understand them? Their smiles contradict their glances, their words promise and beguile, but their tone of voice repulses. They either figure out in a flash your innermost thought or they don't get the most obvious hint... Take the young princess, for instance: yesterday her eyes glowed with passion when they dwelt on me, but now they're dull and cold..."

"That perhaps is the effect of the waters," replied I.

"You always look at the seamy side of things... you materialist!" he added scornfully. "But let us get down to another matter." Pleased with this bad pun, his spirits rose.

Around nine o'clock we went together to the princess's house. On passing Vera's windows, I saw her looking out, and we exchanged a very short glance. She entered the Ligovskoy's drawing room soon after us. The old princess introduced her to me as a relative of hers. Tea was

served, there were many guests, and the conversation went around. I did my best to charm the old princess, told jokes and made her laugh heartily several times. Her daughter too wanted to laugh more than once, but she suppressed the desire so as not to abandon the role she had assumed. She believes that a pose of languor becomes her-and perhaps she's right. I believe Grushnitsky was very glad that my gaiety did not infect her.

After tea we all went into the sitting room.

"Are you pleased with my obedience, Vera?" I asked as I passed her.

She gave me a look full of love and gratitude. I am used to these glances; but there was a time when they were my heart's delight. Princess Ligovskaya made her daughter sit down to the piano and everybody begged her to sing. I said nothing, and taking advantage of the hubbub retreated to a window with Vera, who hinted that she had something to say of great importance to both of us. It turned out to be nonsense.

My indifference did not please the young princess, however, as I could guess by the one angry flashing glance she gave me... How well do I un-

derstand this mute but eloquent way of communicating, so brief yet so forceful!

She sang; her voice is pleasant but she sings badly... as a matter of fact, I didn't listen. But Grushnitsky, with his elbows on the piano facing the princess, ate her up her with his eyes, mumbling "*Charmant! Déclicieux!*" over and over again.

"Listen," Vera was saying, "I don't want you to meet my husband, but you must get into the old princess's good graces. You can do it easily, you can do anything you want to. We will meet only here..."

"Nowhere else?"

She blushed and went on: "You know I am your slave, I never could resist you. And I'll be punished for it. Because you'll stop loving me! At least, I want to save my reputation... not because of myself, you know that very well. But please don't torment me as you used to with idle doubts and pretended indifference. I may die soon, for I feel I am growing weaker day by day... but in spite of that I can't think of the future, I think only of you. You men don't understand the rapture one can find in a glance or a touch of hands,

but, I swear to you, the sound of your voice fills me with a deep, strange bliss that no passionate kisses ever could replace."

In the meantime Princess Mary had stopped singing. A chorus of praise broke out around her. I walked up to her last and said something very casual about her voice.

She pouted and made a mock curtsy.

"It is all the more flattering to me," she said, "because you weren't listening at all. But perhaps you don't care for music?"

"On the contrary, I do, particularly after dinner."

"Grushnitsky is right when he says that your tastes are most prosaic. Even I can see that you appreciate music from the point of view of the gourmand. . ."

"You are wrong again. I am no gourmand and I have a poor digestion. Nevertheless music after dinner lulls you to sleep and a nap after dinner is good for you; hence I like music in the medical sense. In the evening, on the contrary, it excites my nerves too much, and I find myself either too depressed or too gay. Both are tedious when there is no good reason either to mope or to re-

joyce. Besides, to be downcast in company is ridiculous and excessive gaiety is in bad taste... ."

She walked off without waiting for me to finish and sat down beside Grushnitsky. The two engaged in a sentimental conversation: the princess seemed to respond to his wise sayings in an absent-minded and rather inept way, though she simulated interest, and he glanced at her every now and then with a look of surprise as if trying to determine the cause of the inner turmoil reflected in her troubled eyes.

But I have unraveled your secret, my charming princess, so beware! You wish to repay me in the same currency by wounding my vanity-but you won't succeed! And if you declare war on me, I'll be ruthless.

Several times in the course of the evening I deliberately tried to join in their conversation, but she countered my remarks rather drily, and I finally withdrew pretending resentment. The princess was triumphant, and so was Grushnitsky. Triumph, my friends, while you may... you have not long to triumph! What will happen? I have a presentiment... Upon meeting a woman I have always been able to tell for certain whether she'll

fall in love with me or not...

The remainder of the evening I spent with Vera, and we talked our fill about the past. I really don't know why she loves me so. Especially since she's the only woman who has ever completely understood me with all my petty frailties and evil passions... Can evil indeed be so attractive?

I left together with Grushnitsky. Outside he took my arm and after a long silence said: "Well, what do you say?"

I wanted to tell him, "You are a fool," but restrained myself and merely shrugged my shoulders.

### ***29 May***

All these days I have not once departed from my systematic plan. The young princess is beginning to enjoy my conversation. I told her some of the strange incidents of my life, and she's beginning to regard me as an unusual person. I mock at everything under the sun, emotions in particular, and this is beginning to frighten her. She doesn't dare to launch upon sentimental debates with Grushnitsky when I'm present, and already on several occasions she's replied to his

efforts with an ironical smile. Yet each time Grushnitsky approaches her, I assume a humble air and leave the two alone. The first time I did so she was glad, or tried to look pleased; the second time she lost patience with me, and the third time with Grushnitsky.

"You have very little pride!" she told me yesterday. "Why do you think I prefer Grushnitsky's society?"

I replied that I was sacrificing my own pleasure for a friend's happiness.

"And my pleasure as well," she added.

I looked at her intently and put on a serious face. Then for the rest of the day I didn't talk to her... She was thoughtful last night, and even more wistful this morning at the spring. As I walked up to her, she was hardly listening to Grushnitsky who, I believe, was going on and on about the beauties of nature, but as soon as she saw me she began to laugh heartily (rather irrelevantly), pretending not to notice me. I went away a little distance and watched her out of the corner of my eye. She turned away from her companion and yawned twice. There is no doubt about it: she's bored with Grushnitsky. But I



won't speak to her for another two days.

### **3 June**

I often ask myself why it is that I so persistently seek to win the love of a young girl whom I do not wish to seduce and whom I will never marry. Why this feminine coquetry? Vera loves me better than Princess Mary ever will. Were she an unconquerable beauty, the difficulty of the undertaking might serve as an inducement...

But far from it! Hence this is not the restless craving for love that torments us in the early years of our youth and casts us from one woman to another until we meet one who cannot endure us; this is the beginning of our constancy—the true unending passion that may mathematically be represented by a line extending from a point into space, the secret of whose endlessness consists merely in the impossibility of attaining the goal, that is, the end.

What is it that spurs me on? Envy of Grushnitsky? Poor man! He doesn't deserve it. Or is it the result of that malicious but indomitable impulse to annihilate the blissful illusions of a fellow man in order to have the petty satisfaction of telling him when in desperation he asks what he should

believe: "My friend, the same thing happened to me! Yet as you see, I dine, sup and sleep well, and, I hope, will be able to die without any fuss or tears!"

And yet to possess a young soul that has barely developed is a source of very deep delight. It is like a flower whose richest perfume goes out to meet the first ray of the sun. One must pluck it at that very moment and, after inhaling its perfume to one's heart's content, discard it along the wayside on the chance that someone will pick it up. I sense in myself that insatiable avidity that devours everything in its path. And I regard the sufferings and joys of others merely in relation to myself, as food to sustain my spiritual strength. Passion is no longer capable of robbing me of my sanity. My ambition has been crushed by circumstances, but it has manifested itself in a new form, for ambition is nothing but lust for power, and my greatest pleasure I derive from subordinating everything around me to my will. Is it not both the first token of power and its supreme triumph to inspire in others the emotions of love, devotion and fear? Is it not the sweetest fare for our vanity to be the cause of pain or joy for

someone without the least claim thereto? And what is happiness? Pride gratified. Could I consider myself better and more powerful than anyone else in the world, I would be happy. Were everybody to love me, I'd find in myself unending wellsprings of love. Evil begets evil; one's first suffering awakens a realization of the pleasure of tormenting another. The idea of evil cannot take root in the mind of man without his desiring to apply it in practice. Someone has said that ideas are organic entities: their very birth imparts them form, and this form is action. He in whose brain the most ideas are born is more active than others, and because of this a genius shackled to an office desk must either die or lose his mind, just as a man with a powerful body who leads a modest, sedentary life dies from an apoplectic stroke.

Passions are nothing more than ideas at the first stage of their development. They belong to the heart's youth, and he is foolish who thinks they will stir him all his life. Many a placid river begins as a roaring waterfall, but not a single stream leaps and froths all the way to the sea. Frequently this placidity is a symptom of great

though latent force. The fullness and depth of emotions and thought precludes furious impulses, for the soul in its suffering or rejoicing is fully alive to what is taking place and conscious that so it must be. It knows that were there no storms the constant heat of the sun would shrivel it. It is imbued with its own life, fostering and chastising itself as a mother does her beloved child. Only in this state of supreme self-knowledge can a man appreciate divine judgment.

Reading over this page I notice that I have digressed far from my subject. But what of it? For I am writing this diary for myself and hence anything I jot down will in time become a precious memory to me.

\* \* \*

Grushnitsky came and flung himself on my neck—he had received his commission. We ordered some champagne. Doctor Werner came in immediately after.

"I don't offer you my congratulations," he said to Grushnitsky.

"Why?"

"Because the soldier's overcoat suits you very well and you will have to admit that an infantry

officer's uniform tailored here at the spa will not add anything of interest to you... You see, so far you have been an exception, whereas now you will be quite commonplace."

"Say what you will, doctor, you can't prevent me from rejoicing. He doesn't know," Grushnitsky whispered in my ear, "what hopes I attach to these epaulets. Oh epaulets, epaulets! Your stars are little guiding stars... No! I'm perfectly happy now."

"Are you coming with us for a walk to the ravine?" I asked him.

"Oh no! I wouldn't show myself to Princess Mary for anything until my new uniform is ready."

"Shall I tell her about your good fortune?"

"Please don't, I want it to be a surprise."

"Tell me though, how are you getting along with her?"

He was embarrassed and thought awhile. He would have liked to brag about it and lie, but his conscience wouldn't let him, and at the same time he was ashamed to confess the truth.

"Do you think she loves you?"

"Does she love me? For goodness sake, Pechor-

in, what ideas you have! How can you expect it so soon? And even if she did, a respectable woman would not say so..."

"Good! You probably believe that a respectable man too must conceal his passion."

"Ah, my good fellow, there is a proper way to do everything. Many things are not said but guessed..."

"True enough... Only the love we read in a woman's eyes is noncommittal, whereas words... Take care, Grushnitsky, she isn't truthful with you. . . "

"She?" he replied, raising his eyes to the sky and smiling complacently. "I pity you, Pechorin!"

He left.

In the evening a large company set out on foot for the ravine.

The local experts are of the opinion that this chasm is nothing but an extinct crater. It is located on the slopes of Mashuk within a mile of the town. It is approached by a narrow path, winding through the brush and crags. As we climbed the mountainside I offered my arm to Princess Mary, who didn't let go of it through the entire walk.

Our conversation started with scandal. I

began to go through the people we knew, both present and absent, first describing their ridiculous features, then their bad habits. My gall was up and after starting off in jest I finished in deadly earnest. At first she was amused, then alarmed.

"You are a dangerous man!" she told me. "I would rather risk a murderer's knife in the forest than be flayed by your tongue. I beg of you quite earnestly-if you should ever take it into your mind to speak badly of me, take a knife instead and kill me. I believe you would not find it too difficult to do."

"Do I look like a murderer?"

"You are worse..."

I thought for a moment and then said, taking on a deeply touched face: "Yes, such has been my lot since childhood. Everyone read signs of non-existent evil traits in my features. But since they were expected to be there, they did make their appearance. Because I was reserved, they said I was sly, so I grew reticent. I was keenly aware of good and evil, but instead of being indulged I was insulted and so I became spiteful. I was sulky while other children were merry and talkative,

but though I felt superior to them I was considered inferior. So I grew envious. I was ready to love the whole world, but no one understood me, and I learned to hate. My cheerless youth passed in conflict with myself and society, and fearing ridicule I buried my finest feelings deep in my heart, and there they died. I spoke the truth, but nobody believed me, so I began to practice duplicity. Having come to know society and its mainsprings, I became versed in the art of living and saw how others were happy without that proficiency, enjoying for free the favors I had so painfully striven for. It was then that despair was born in my heart-not the despair that is cured with a pistol, but a cold, impotent desperation, concealed under a polite exterior and a good-natured smile. I became a moral cripple; I had lost one half of my soul, for it had shriveled, dried up and died, and I had cut it off and cast it away, while the other half stirred and lived, adapted to serve every comer. No one noticed this, because no one suspected there had been another half. Now, however, you have awakened memories of it in me, and what I have just done is to read its epitaph to you. Many regard all epi-



taphs as ridiculous, but I do not, particularly when I remember what rests beneath them. Of course, I am not asking you to share my opinion; if what I have said seems ridiculous to you, please laugh, though I warn you that it will not annoy me in the slightest."

At that moment our eyes met, and I saw that hers swam with tears. Her arm resting on mine trembled, her cheeks were red hot. She was sorry for me! Compassion-that emotion which all women so easily yield to-had sunk its claws into her inexperienced heart. Throughout the walk she was absent-minded and flirted with no one-and that is a great omen indeed!

We reached the ravine. The other ladies left their escorts, but she didn't release my arm. The witticisms of the local dandies didn't amuse her. The steepness of the bluff on the brink of which she stood didn't alarm her, though the other young ladies squealed and closed their eyes.

On the way back I did not resume our sad conversation, but to my idle questions and jests she gave only brief and distracted answers.

"Have you ever been in love?" I finally asked her.

She looked at me intently, shook her head and again was lost in thought. It was evident that she wanted to say something but didn't know where to begin. Her chest heaved... Indeed, a muslin sleeve affords but slight protection, and an electric tremor ran from my arm to hers-most passions begin that way, and we frequently deceive ourselves when we think that a woman loves us for our physical or moral qualities. True, they prepare the ground, dispose the heart to receive the sacred flame, but nevertheless it is the first physical contact that decides the issue.

"I have been very friendly today, have I not?" the princess said with a forced smile when we returned from our walk.

We parted.

She is displeased with herself; she accuses herself of being cool. Ah, this is the first and most important triumph! Tomorrow she'll want to reward me. I know it all by rote-and that is what makes it all so boring.

#### ***4 June***

I have just seen Vera. She nagged me to death with jealousy. I figure Princess Mary has chosen to confide her secrets of the heart to Vera. An ap-

appropriate choice, that's for sure!

"I can guess what it all will lead to," Vera said to me. "It'd be better if you told me frankly now that you love her."

"But supposing I don't love her?"

"Then why pursue her, disturb her and stir her imagination? Oh, I know you too well! If you want me to believe you, come to Kislovodsk[97] a week from now. We are going there the day after tomorrow. Princess Ligovskaya is remaining here a little longer. Rent the apartment next door to ours. We'll stay in the large house near the spring, on the mezzanine floor. Princess Ligovskaya will occupy the floor below, and next door there's another house belonging to the same owner which hasn't been taken yet-Will you come?"

I promised, and the very same day sent a message to rent the apartment.

Grushnitsky dropped in at six in the evening and announced that his uniform would be ready the next day, just in time for the ball.

"At last I'll dance with her all evening... And talk to my heart's content," he added.

"When is the ball?"

"Tomorrow. Didn't you know? It's quite a gala

event, and the local authorities are sponsoring it."

"Let's go out on the boulevard."

"Goodness no, not in this hideous overcoat..."

"What? Do you mean to say you don't like it any more?"

I went out alone, and, encountering Princess Mary, asked her for the mazurka. She looked surprised and pleased.

"I thought you danced only when necessary, like the last time," she said, smiling very prettily.

She seemed to be totally unaware of Grushnitsky's absence.

"You'll have a pleasant surprise tomorrow," I said to her.

"What is it?"

"It's a secret... You'll see for yourself at the ball."

I wound up the evening at Princess Ligovskaya's. There were no guests besides Vera and a very amusing old man. I was in good form and improvised all kinds of fantastic stories. Princess Mary sat opposite me listening to my chatter with an attention so great, intense and even tender, that I felt a pang of remorse. What had become of her vivacity, her coquetry, her caprices, her

haughty air, her contemptuous smile and absent gaze?

Vera noticed it all and a deep sadness was reflected on her thin face. She sat in the shadows at the window, sunk in a large armchair. I was sorry for her...

Then I told them the whole dramatic story of our friendship and love, naturally using fictitious names.

So vividly did I describe my tender feelings, anxieties and raptures, and portrayed her actions and character in so favorable a light that she could not but forgive me my flirtation with the young princess.

She got up, moved to a seat closer to us and recovered her spirits... and only at two o'clock in the morning did we recollect that her physician's orders were to retire at eleven.

### ***5 June***

**H**alf an hour before the ball, Grushnitsky came to my apartment in the full splendor of an infantry officer's uniform. A bronze chain on which a double eyeglass dangled was attached to his third button. He wore epaulets of incredible size which curled up like Cupid's wings. His boots

squeaked. In his left hand he carried both a pair of brown kid gloves and his cap, while with his right he kept twirling his frizzled forelock into tiny curls. Complacency tinged with a certain hesitancy was written on his face. His festive appearance and his proud carriage would have made me roar with laughter had that been in keeping with my intentions.

He threw his cap and gloves on the table and began to pull at his coat-tails and preen himself in front of the mirror. An enormous black scarf twisted into a high stiffener for his necktie, with bristles that supported his chin, stuck up a half an inch above the collar; he thought that too little and pulled it up to his ears. The exertion made his face grow purple, for the collar of his uniform coat was very tight and uncomfortable.

"They say you have been hot on the heels of my princess lately," he said rather nonchalantly, without looking at me.

"Fools should be so deep-contemplative," replied I, repeating a favorite saying by one of the cleverest rakes of the past, once praised by Pushkin.

"I say, does this thing fit me well? Oh, damn

that Jew[98]! It's tight under the arms!... Have you any perfume at all?"

"For goodness sake, how much more do you want? You already reek of rose pomade."

"Never mind. Let's have some..."

He poured half a bottle on his necktie, handkerchief and sleeves.

"Will you be dancing?" he asked.

"I don't think so."

"I'm afraid the princess and I will have to start the mazurka, and I scarcely know a single figure..."

"Did you ask her for the mazurka?"

"No, not yet...."

"Take care no one gets there before you...".

"You're right, by gad!" he said, slapping his forehead. "Good-bye, I'll go and wait for her at the entrance." He took his cap and ran off.

Half an hour later I too set out. The streets were dark and deserted. Around the club rooms or inn-whichever you want to call it-the crowds were gathering. The windows were ablaze with light, and the strains of the regimental band wafted toward me on the evening wind. I walked slowly, steeped in melancholy. Can it be, thought

I, that my sole mission on earth is to destroy the hopes of others? Ever since I began to live and act, fate has somehow associated me with the last act of other people's tragedies, as if without me no one could either die or give way to despair! I have been the inevitable character who comes in at the final act, involuntarily playing the detestable role of the hangman or the traitor. What has been fate's object in all this? Has it destined me to be the author of middle-class tragedies and family romances-or a purveyor of tales for, say, the Reader's Library[99]? who knows? are there not many who begin life by aspiring to end it like Alexander the Great, or Lord Byron, and yet remain petty civil servants all their lives?

On entering the hall I mingled with the crowd of men and began making my observations. Grushnitsky was standing beside Princess Mary and talking with great ardor. She was listening to him absent-mindedly, looking around and pressing her fan to her lips. Her face expressed impatience and her eyes searched for someone. I quietly slipped behind them so as to overhear the conversation.

"You are tormenting me, Princess," Grushnit-



sky said. "You have changed terribly since I saw you last."

"You too have changed," she replied, throwing him a swift look whose veiled scorn was lost on him.

"I? Changed? Never! You know that is impossible! Whoever has seen you once will carry your divine image with him to the grave..."

"Stop..."

"Why will you not listen now, when you so recently and so often lent a favorable ear?"

"Because I don't like repetition," she replied, laughing.

"Oh, I have been bitterly mistaken! I thought, fool that I am, that at least these epaulets would give me the right to hope... Yes, it would have been better to spend the rest of my life in that despicable soldier's overcoat, to which I perhaps owed your attention."

"In fact, the overcoat made you look far better..."

At that moment I came up and bowed to the princess. She blushed slightly, saying hurriedly: "Don't you think, M'sieu Pechorin, that the gray overcoat suits M'sieu Grushnitsky much better?"

"I don't agree with you," replied I. "He looks even younger in this uniform."

Grushnitsky could not bear this thrust, for like all boys he lays claim to being a man of some years. He thinks that the deep traces of passion on his face can pass for the stamp of age. He threw a furious look at me, stamped his foot, and strode away.

"You must admit," I said to the princess, "that although he has always been very ridiculous he struck you as interesting only a short while ago... in his gray overcoat."

She dropped her eyes and said nothing.

Grushnitsky pursued the princess the whole evening, dancing either with her or *vis-a-vis*. He devoured her with his eyes, sighed and wearied her with his supplications and reproaches. By the end of the third quadrille she already hated him.

"I didn't expect this of you," he said, coming up to me and taking me by the arm.

"What are you talking about?"

"Are you going to dance the mazurka with her?" he asked me in a solemn tone. "She admitted as much to me..."

"Well, what of it? Is it a secret?"

"Of course... I should have expected it from that hussy, that flirt... Never mind, I'll take my revenge!"

"Blame your overcoat or your epaulets, but why accuse her? Is it her fault that she no longer likes you?"

"Why did she give me reason to hope?"

"Why did you hope? To want something and to strive for it, that I can understand, but who-ever hopes?"

"You have won the bet, but not entirely," he said, with a spiteful sneer.

The mazurka began. Grushnitsky invited none but Princess Mary. Other cavaliers chose her every minute. It was obviously a conspiracy against me-but that was all for the better. She wanted to talk with me; she was prevented from doing so-good! She would want to all the more.

I pressed her hand once or twice; the second time she pulled her hand away without a word.

"I will sleep badly tonight," she said to me when the mazurka was over.

"Grushnitsky is to blame for that."

"Oh no!" And her face grew so thoughtful, so sad, that I promised myself I would certainly kiss

her hand that night.

Everybody began to disperse. Having helped the princess into her carriage, I quickly pressed her little hand to my lips. It was dark and no one could see.

I returned to the ballroom, highly pleased with myself.

The young gallants were having supper around a large table, Grushnitsky among them. When I entered they all fell silent; they must have been talking about me. Ever since the previous ball many of them, the captain of dragoons in particular, have had a bone to pick with me, and now it seems that a hostile band is being organized against me under Grushnitsky's command. He wears such a cocky air of bravura.

I am very glad of it, for I love enemies, though not in the Christian way. They amuse me and quicken my pulse. To be always on one's guard, to catch every look and the significance of every word, to guess intentions, foil conspiracies, pretend to be deceived and then to overthrow with a single blow the whole vast edifice of artifice and design raised with so much effort-that is what I call life.

Throughout the meal Grushnitsky spoke in whispers and exchanged winks with the captain of dragoons.

### **6 June**

**T**his morning Vera left for Kislovodsk with her husband. Their carriage passed me as I was on my way to Princess Ligovskaya's. She nodded to me—there was reproach in her eyes.

Who is to blame, after all? Why doesn't she not want to give me an opportunity to see her alone? Love, like fire, dies out without fuel. Perhaps jealousy will succeed where my pleadings have failed.

I stayed a whole hour at the princess's. Mary didn't come down—she was indisposed. In the evening she didn't appear on the boulevard. The newly formed gang had armed itself with eyeglasses with little handles and looked formidable indeed. I am glad that the young princess was ill, for they would have affronted her in some way. Grushnitsky's hair was messed up, and he looked desperate; he actually seems to be embittered, his vanity especially has been wounded. But some people are really amusing even in despair!

On returning home I felt a vague longing. *I*

*had not seen her! She was ill!* Have I actually fallen in love? What nonsense!

## **7 June**

**A**t eleven o'clock in the morning, at which hour Princess Ligovskaya usually sweats it out at the Yermolov baths, I walked past her house. Princess Mary was sitting at the window lost in thought. On seeing me, she jumped to her feet.

I walked into the waiting room. There was no one around and, taking advantage of the freedom of the local customs, I went straight to the drawing room without being announced.

A dull white had spread over the princess's charming features. She stood by the piano, leaning with one arm on the back of a chair; the hand trembled slightly. Quietly I walked up to her and said: "Are you angry with me?"

She raised her eyes to me with a deep, languorous look and shook her head. Her lips wanted to say something, but could not. Her eyes filled with tears. She sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands.

"What is the matter?" I said, taking her hand.

"You don't respect me! Oh, leave me alone!"

I stepped back a few paces. She stiffened in

the chair and her eyes flashed...

I paused, my hand on the door knob, and said: "I beg your pardon, Princess! I acted rashly... it will not happen again, I'll see to it. Why should you know what has been going on in my heart? You'll never know it, which is all the better for you. Farewell."

As I went out I thought I heard her sobbing.

Until evening I wandered about the outskirts of Mashuk, tired myself out thoroughly and, on returning home, flung myself on the bed in utter exhaustion.

Werner dropped in to see me.

"Is it true," he asked, "that you intend to marry the young Princess Ligovskaya?"

"Why do you ask?"

"The whole town is talking about it. All my patients can think of nothing else but this important news, and these watering-place people know everything!"

"This is Grushnitsky's little joke!" thought I.

"To prove to you, doctor, how unfounded these rumors are, I will tell you in confidence that I am moving on to Kislovodsk tomorrow."

"And Princess Mary as well?"

"No, she will remain here another week."

"So you don't intend to marry?"

"Doctor, doctor! Look at me: do I look like a bridegroom or anything of the kind?"

"I am not saying you do... But, you know, it sometimes happens," he added, smiling slyly, "that a man of honor is obliged to marry, and that there are fond mamas who at any rate do not prevent such things from arising... So as a friend, I advise you to be more cautious. The air is highly dangerous here at the waters. How many splendid young men worthy of a better fate have I seen leave here bound straight for the altar. Believe it or not, they even wanted to marry me off too. It was the doing of one provincial mama with a very pale daughter. I had the misfortune to tell her that the girl would regain her color after marriage; whereupon, with tears of gratitude in her eyes, she offered me her daughter's hand and all her property – fifty souls[100], I believe it was. I told her, however, that I was quite unfit for matrimony."

Werner left fully confident that he had given me a timely warning.

From what he had said I gathered that many



malicious rumors had been spread all over town about Princess Mary and myself: Grushnitsky will have to pay for this!

### ***10 June***

**I**t is three days since I arrived in Kislovodsk. I see Vera every day at the spring or on the promenade. When I wake up in the morning I sit at the window and direct eyeglasses at her balcony. Having dressed long before, she waits for the signal agreed upon, and we meet as if by accident in the garden, which slopes down to the spring from our houses. The invigorating mountain air has brought the color back to her cheeks and given her strength. It is not for nothing that Narzan[101] is called the source of heroes. The local inhabitants claim that the air in Kislovodsk is conducive to love and that all the love affairs that ever began at the foot of Mashuk have invariably reached their ending here. And, indeed, everything here breathes of seclusion. Everything is mysterious—the dense shadows of the lime trees bordering the torrent which, falling noisily and frothily from flag to flag, cuts its way through the green mountains, and the gorges, full of gloom and silence, that branch out from here in all dir-

ections. And the freshness of the fragrant air, laden with the aroma of the tall southern grasses and the white acacia[102], and the incessant deliciously drowsy babble of the cool brooks which, mingling at the end of the valley, rush onward to hurl their waters into the Podkumok River. On this side the gorge is wider and spreads out into a green depression, and through it meanders a dusty road. Each time I look at it, I seem to see a carriage approaching and a pretty rosy-cheeked face looking out of its window. Many a carriage has already rolled along that road – but there still is no sign of that particular one. The settlement beyond the fort is now densely populated; from the restaurant, built on a hill a few paces from my apartment, lights have begun to glimmer in the evenings through the double row of poplars, and the noise and the clinking of glasses can be heard until late at night.

Nowhere is there so much Kakhetian wine and mineral water drunk up as here.

*To jumble up[103] such various kinds  
of fun  
There's many take delight: for me, I  
am not one.*

Grushnitsky and his gang whoop it up daily in the saloon. He barely acknowledges me now.

He arrived only yesterday, but he's already managed to pick a quarrel with three old men who wanted to take their baths before him. Bad luck's decidedly developing a bellicose spirit in him.

### ***11 June***

**A**t last they've arrived. I was sitting at the window when I heard their carriage drive up, and my heart jumped. What does it mean? Could I be in love? So senselessly am I constructed that it might indeed be expected of me.

I had dinner with them. Princess Ligovskaya eyed me very tenderly and did not leave her daughter's side—a bad sign that! But Vera is jealous of Princess Mary. I have managed to bring about that happy state after all! What would a woman not do to hurt a rival! I recall one woman who loved me simply because I was in love with another. Nothing is more paradoxical than the feminine mind. It is hard to convince women of anything—they must be brought to a point where they will convince themselves. The means of supplying evidence by which they finish off their

prejudices is highly original, and to get to know their dialectic one must rid the mind of all academic rules of logic. For example, the ordinary method is this:

This man loves me; but I am married; hence, I must not love him.

The feminine method is this:

I must not love him because I am married; but he loves me, and hence...

Here follows a pregnant pause, for reason is now dumb, and all the talking is mainly done by the tongue, eyes, and eventually the heart, if there is one.

What if these notes should fall into a woman's hands some day? "Slander!" she will cry indignantly.

Ever since poets began to write and women to read them (for which they must be heartily thanked), the latter have been called angels so often that in the simplicity of their hearts they have actually come to believe in this compliment, forgetting that for money the very same poets exalted Nero as a semigod.

It might appear not quite right that I should speak of them with such malice-I, who have nev-

er loved anything else under the sun-I, who have always been ready to sacrifice my peace of mind, ambition and life for their sake... Yet it is not in a fit of annoyance or injured vanity that I try hard to draw aside that magic veil which only the accustomed eye can penetrate. No, all that I say about them is only the result of

*The cold reflections[104] of the mind  
And bitter insights of the heart.*

Women should wish all men to know them as well as I do, for I have loved them a hundred times more since I overcame my fear of them and discovered their petty frailties.

Incidentally, Werner the other day compared women with the enchanted forest described by Tasso in his Jerusalem Delivered[105].

"You have but to approach it," he said, "to be assaulted from all sides by ungodly terrors: duty, pride, respectability, public opinion, ridicule, contempt... You must not heed them, but go straight on. Little by little the monsters vanish and before you opens a quiet, sunny glade with green myrtle blooming in its midst. But woe to you if your heart quails when you take those first steps and

you turn back!"

## ***12 June***

This evening was full of many events. Some two miles out of Kislovodsk, in the gorge where the Podkumok flows, there is a crag called The Ring, forming a natural gateway that towers above a high hill. Through it the setting sun casts its last fiery glance at the world. A large cavalcade set out to watch the sunset through the rocky window. To tell the truth, though, none of us was thinking of the sunset. I rode next to Princess Mary. On the way back we had to ford the Podkumok. Even the shallowest mountain streams are dangerous, chiefly because their beds are a perfect kaleidoscope, changing day by day under the action of the current—where there was a rock yesterday, there may be a pit today. I took the princess's horse by the bridle and led it to the water, which did not rise above the knees. We started crossing slowly at an angle against the current. It is a well-known fact that in crossing rapids one should not look down at the water because it makes you dizzy. I forgot to warn Princess Mary of this.

We were already in midstream, where the

current is the swiftest, when she suddenly swayed in the saddle. "I feel faint!" she gasped. Quickly I bent over toward her and put my arm around her supple waist.



"Look up!" I whispered to her. "Don't be afraid, it's quite all right; I am with you."

She felt better and wanted to free herself from my arm, but I tightened my embrace about her soft slender waist. My cheek almost touched hers.

I could feel a fiery glow from her.

"What are you doing to me? My God!"

I paid no heed to her quivering confusion and my lips touched her soft cheek. She jumped, but said nothing. We were riding behind the others-no one saw us. When we clambered ashore, everyone set off at a trot. The princess, however, reined in her horse, and I remained with her. It was obvious that she was worried by my silence, but I swore to myself not to say a word-out of sheer curiosity. I wanted to see how she would get herself out of this embarrassing situation.

"Either you despise me, or you love me very much," she said at last in a voice that shook with tears. "Perhaps you wish to mock me, to play on my feelings, and then leave me... That would be so vile, so low, that the very thought... Oh no! Surely," she added with an air of tender trustfulness, "there is nothing in me that would preclude respect, is there? Your presumptuous conduct... I must, I must forgive you because I permitted it... Answer me, speak to me, I want to hear your voice!" There was so much feminine impetuosity in her last words that I could not suppress a smile; luckily, it was growing dark. I did not



reply.

"You have nothing to say?" she continued. "Perhaps you wish me to be the first to say that I love you?"

I was silent.

"Do you want me to do that?" she went on, swiftly turning toward me. There was something awe-inspiring in the earnestness of her eyes and voice.

"Why should I?" I replied, shrugging my shoulders.

She struck her horse with her riding stick and set off at full gallop along the narrow, dangerous road. It all happened so quickly that I was hardly able to overtake her, and did so only when she had already joined the rest of the company. All the way home she talked and laughed incessantly. There was a feverishness in her movements, and not once did she look at me. Everybody noticed this unusual gaiety. Princess Ligovskaya rejoiced inwardly as she watched her daughter, but her daughter was merely suffering a fit of nerves and would spend a sleepless night crying. The very thought gives me infinite pleasure. There are moments when I understand the

Vampire...[106] And yet I have the reputation of being a good fellow and try to live up to it!

Having got down from the horses, the ladies went in to Princess Ligovskaya's. I was agitated and galloped into the hills to get rid of the thoughts that crowded into my mind. The dewy evening breathed a delicious coolness. The moon was rising from behind the darkly looming mountains. Every step my unshod horse took echoed dully in the silence of the gorges. I watered my horse at a waterfall, eagerly drank in a few breaths of the invigorating air of the southern night, and retraced my steps. I rode through the settlement. Lights were going out in the windows; sentries on the ramparts of the fort and Cossack pickets on the outposts yelled to each other on a sustained note.

I noticed that one of the houses in the village which had been built on the brink of a gully was unusually brightly lit, and every now and then I could hear a babble of voices and shouting which meant a military carousal. I dismounted and crept up to the window. A loose shutter made it possible for me to see the revelers and overhear what they were saying. They were talking about

me.

The captain of dragoons, red-faced with wine, pounded the table with his fist to command attention.

"Gentlemen!" he said. "This won't do at all. Pechorin must be taught a lesson. These Petersburg upstarts get uppity until they're rapped on the knuckles! Just because he always wears clean gloves and shiny boots he thinks he's the only society man around."

"And that supercilious smile of his! Yet I'm certain he's a coward-yes, a coward!"

"I believe so too," said Grushnitsky. "He turns everything into a joke. Once I told him off in such terms that another man would have cut me down on the spot, but Pechorin just laughed it off. I, of course, didn't challenge him, because it was up to him to do so; besides I didn't want the bother..."

"Grushnitsky has it in for him because he got ahead of him with the young princess," said someone.

"What nonsense! True, I did run after the princess a bit, but I gave it up soon enough because I have no desire to marry and I do not believe in compromising a girl."

"Yes, I assure you he is a coward of the first water-Pechorin, I mean, not Grushnitsky. Grushnitsky is a fine man and a good friend of mine to boot!" said the captain of dragoons. "Gentlemen! Does anyone here want to stand up for him? No one? All the better! Do you wish to test his courage? It will be amusing..."

"Yes, we do. But how?"

"Now listen to me: since Grushnitsky's grievance is the biggest, his will be the leading role. He will take exception to some trifle and challenge Pechorin to a duel... Wait, this is the point... He will challenge Pechorin-so far so good! Everything, the challenge, the preparations and the conditions will be made in as solemn and formidable a fashion as possible-I will take care of that, for I'll be your second, my poor friend! Very well! Now this is the trick: we won't load the pistols. I give you my word, Pechorin will show the cowardly white feather-six paces from one another, I'll place them, damn it! Are you agreeable, gentlemen?"

"Grand idea, splendid! What fun!" came from all sides.

"And you, Grushnitsky?"

I awaited Grushnitsky's reply with a little fear. A cold fury gripped me at the thought that mere chance had saved me from being made the butt of these fools' jest. Had Grushnitsky not agreed to it, I would have flung my arms around him. After a brief silence, however, he rose from his seat, extended his hand to the captain and said very pompously: "Very well, I agree."

The elation of the whole honorable company defies description.

I returned home a prey to two conflicting emotions. One was sadness. "Why do they all hate me?" I thought. "Why? Had I offended anybody? No. Can it be that I am one of those whose mere appearance excites ill will?" And I felt a poisonous wrath gradually take possession of me. "Take care, Mr. Grushnitsky," I said to myself as I paced up and down the room, "you cannot trifle thus with me. You might have to pay dearly for the approval of your stupid friends. I am not a toy for you to play with!..."

I lay awake all night. In the morning I looked as yellow as a wild orange.

Early in the day I met Princess Mary at the spring.

"Are you sick?" she asked, looking at me intently.

"I didn't sleep all night."

"Neither did I... I blamed you... unjustly perhaps? But if you'd only explain, I could forgive you everything."

"Everything?"

"Yes, everything... Only you have to tell the truth... be quick... You see, I've gone over it again and again, trying to find some explanation that would justify your conduct. Perhaps you fear opposition on the part of my relatives? You don't have to worry about that; when they hear of it"-her voice trembled-"I'll persuade them. Or perhaps it's your own position... but I want you to know that I'm capable of sacrificing everything for the sake of the man I love... Oh, answer me quickly-have pity on me... Tell me, you don't despise me, do you?"

She held my hand.

Princess Ligovskaya was walking ahead of us with Vera's husband and saw nothing. But we could have been observed by the strolling convalescents, and they are the most inquisitive of all inquisitive gossips, so I quickly disengaged my

hand from her passionate hold.

"I will tell you the whole truth," I said, "without trying to justify myself or to explain my actions. I do not love you."

Her lips paled slightly.

"Leave me," she said in a barely audible voice. I shrugged my shoulders, turned, and walked away.

### **14 June**

Sometimes I despise myself; is that why I despise others too? I am no longer capable of noble impulses; I am afraid of appearing ridiculous to myself. Another in my place would have offered the princess *son coeur et sa fortune* but for me the verb "to marry" has an ominous ring: no matter how passionately I might love a woman, it's farewell to love if she as much as hints at my marrying her. My heart turns to stone, and nothing can warm it again. I'd make any sacrifice but this—twenty times I can stake my life, even my honor, but my freedom I'll never sell. Why do I prize it so much? What do I find in it? What am I aiming at? What have I to expect from the future? Nothing, absolutely nothing. It's some innate fear, an inexplicable foreboding... After all,

some people have an unreasoning fear of spiders, cockroaches, mice... Shall I confess? When I was still a child, some old woman told my fortune for my mother, predicting that I'd die through a wicked wife. It made a deep impression on me at the time, and an insuperable abhorrence for marriage grew within me. And yet something tells me that her prophecy will come true-but at least I'll do my best to put off its fulfilment for as long as possible.

### ***15 June***

**A**pfelbaum, the conjurer, arrived here yesterday. A long poster appeared on the restaurant doors informing the worthy public that the above-named amazing magician, acrobat, chemist and optician would have the honor to present a magnificent spectacle this day at eight o'clock in the evening in the hall of the Nobles' Club (in other words, the restaurant); admission two rubles and a half.

Everybody intends to go and see the amazing conjurer. Even Princess Ligovskaya has taken a ticket for herself, although her daughter is sick.

As I was walking past Vera's windows today after dinner-she was sitting on the balcony alone-



a note fell at my feet:

Come tonight at ten o'clock in the evening by the main staircase; my husband has gone to Pyatigorsk and will not be back until tomorrow morning. My menservants and chambermaids will not be in: I gave them all, as well as the princess's servants, tickets to the show. I will wait for you; come without fail.

"Aha!" thought I. "At last things are going my way."

At eight o'clock I went to see the conjurer. It was nearly nine when the audience had assembled and the performance began. In the back rows I recognized the lackeys and chambermaids of both Vera and Princess Ligovskaya. They were all accounted for. Grushnitsky was sitting in the first row with his opera glass. The conjurer turned to him each time he needed a handkerchief, watch, ring or the like.

Grushnitsky has not bowed to me for some time, and now he eyed me rather insolently once or twice. He will be sorry for it all when the time comes to settle scores.

It was nearly ten when I rose and went out.

It was pitch dark outside. Heavy, chill clouds

lay on the summits of the surrounding mountains, and only now and then did the dying breeze rustle the tops of the poplars around the restaurant. People were crowding round the windows. I went down the hill and, after turning into the gate, walked faster. Suddenly I felt that someone was following me. I stopped and looked around. It was too dark to see anything, but for the sake of caution I walked around the house as if merely out for a stroll. As I passed Princess Mary's windows I again heard footsteps behind me, and a man wrapped in a overcoat ran past me. This worried me-nevertheless I crept up to the porch and hurried up the dark staircase. The door opened, a little hand grabbed mine...

"No one saw you?" Vera whispered, clinging to me.

"No!"

"Now do you believe that I love you? Oh, I have hesitated so long, tormented myself so long... but I am as clay in your hands."

Her heart pounded, and her hands were cold as ice. Then followed reproaches and jealous recriminations-she demanded a full confession, vowing she would meekly endure my faithless-

ness, for her only desire was to see me happy. I didn't quite believe that but nevertheless reassured her with vows, promises, and so on.

"So you're not going to marry Mary? You don't love her? And she thinks... do you know she is madly in love with you, the poor thing!..."

\* \* \*

At about two o'clock in the morning I opened the window and, knotting two shawls together, let myself down from the upper balcony to the lower, holding on to a column as I did so. A light was still burning in Princess Mary's room. Something attracted me toward that window. The curtains were not drawn tight and I was able to cast a curious glance into the interior of the room. Mary was sitting on her bed, her hands crossed on her knees. Her abundant tresses had been gathered under a lace nightcap, a large scarlet shawl covered her white shoulders, and her tiny feet were concealed in a pair of brightly colored Persian slippers. She sat motionless, her head sunk on her breast; on a table before her lay an open book, but her fixed gaze, full of inexpressible sadness, seemed to be skimming one and the same page for the hundredth time, while

her thoughts were far away...

Just then someone moved behind a bush. I jumped down to the lawn from the balcony. An invisible hand clamped down on my shoulder. "Aha!" said a gruff voice. "Got you! I'll teach you to go prowling in princesses' rooms at night!"

"Hold him fast!" yelled another, leaping from behind the corner.

It was Grushnitsky and the captain of dragoons.

I struck the latter on the head with my fist, knocking him down, and ran for the bushes. I knew all the paths in the garden covering the slope opposite our houses.

"Thieves! Help!" they shouted; a shot was fired; the glowing wad fell almost at my feet.

A minute later I was in my own room, undressed and in bed. My manservant had scarcely locked the door, when Grushnitsky and the captain began pounding on it.

"Pechorin! Are you asleep? Are you there?" the captain shouted.

"I'm in bed," I replied irritably.

"Get up! Thieves! The Circassians!"

"I have a cold," I replied, "I don't want to catch

pneumonia."

They went away. I shouldn't have answered them. They'd have spent another hour searching for me in the garden. In the meantime the big alarm went up. A Cossack galloped down from the fort. All was astir, Circassians were being hunted in every bush, but of course, none were found. Many people, however, probably remained firmly convinced that had the garrison displayed greater courage and speed at least a dozen or two marauders could have been left for dead.

### ***16 June***

The Circassian night raid was the sole subject of conversation at the spring this morning. Having drunk the prescribed number of glasses of Narzan and walked some ten times up and down the long linden avenue, I met Vera's husband, who had just returned from Pyatigorsk. He took my arm and we went into the restaurant for breakfast. He was exceedingly worried about his wife. "She had a terrible fright last night!" he said. "A thing like this would have to happen, just when I was away!" We sat down for breakfast near the door leading to the corner room which

was occupied by a dozen gallants, Grushnitsky among them. And for the second time Destiny offered me an opportunity to overhear a conversation that was to decide his fate. He didn't see me, and hence I couldn't conclude that he was talking deliberately for my benefit-but that only enhanced his guilt in my eyes.

"Could it really have been the Circassians?" said someone. "Did anyone see them?"

"I'll tell you the whole truth," replied Grushnitsky, "only I ask you not to give me away. This is what happened: last night a man, whose name I will not mention, came to me with the story that he had seen someone sneaking into the Ligovskoy house at about ten at night. Let me remind you that Princess Ligovskaya was here at the time, and Princess Mary at home. So I set out with him to lie in wait for the lucky fellow under her window."

I admit I was alarmed lest my companion, engrossed though he was with his breakfast, might hear some rather unpleasant things, supposing Grushnitsky had guessed the truth. Blinded by jealousy, however, the latter did not even suspect what had happened.

"So you see," Grushnitsky continued, "we set off taking along a gun loaded with a blank charge in order to give the fellow a fright. Until two o'clock we waited in the garden. Finally he appeared, the Lord knows from where, only it wasn't through the window because it didn't open-he probably came through the glass door hidden behind a column-finally, as I say, we saw somebody climbing down from the balcony... What do you think of the young princess, eh? I must admit, these Moscow ladies are incredible! What can you believe in after this? We tried to hold him, but he broke loose and scurried for the bushes like a rabbit-that's when I shot at him."

A murmur of incredulity broke out around Grushnitsky.

"You don't believe me?" he continued. "I give you my word of honor that this is the downright truth, and to prove it, perhaps I will mention the name of the gentleman in question."

"Who was it, who was it?" came from all sides.

"Pechorin," replied Grushnitsky.

At that moment he raised his eyes-to see me standing in the doorway facing him. He turned scarlet. I stepped up to him and said very slowly

and distinctly: "I am very sorry that I entered after you had already given your word of honor in confirmation of the most abominable piece of slander. My presence might have saved you from that added villainy."

Grushnitsky leapt to his feet, all ready to flare up.

"I beg of you," I continued in the same tone of voice, "I beg of you to retract at once what you have said; you are very well aware that it is a lie. I do not believe that the indifference of a woman to your brilliant qualities deserves such dreadful retaliation. Think it over well: if you persist in your opinion, you forfeit any right to your reputation as a man of honor and risk your life."

Grushnitsky stood before me, eyes downcast, in violent agitation. But the struggle between conscience and vanity was brief. The captain of dragoons, who was sitting next to him, nudged him with his elbow. He twitched and quickly replied to me without raising his eyes: "My dear sir, when I say something, I mean it, and am ready to repeat it... Your threats do not intimidate me and I'll stop at nothing."

"The last you have already proved," I replied



coldly, and taking the arm of the captain of dragoons, led him out of the room.

"What do you want with me?" asked the captain.

"You are a friend of Grushnitsky's and will probably be his second?"

The captain bowed with much hauteur.

"You've guessed right," he replied. "Moreover, I'm obliged to be his second, for the insult you have offered him concerns me too... I was with him last night," he added, squaring his stooping shoulders.

"Ah, so it was you I hit so clumsily on the head?"

He went yellow, then blue. Suppressed anger showed on his face.

"I will have the honor to send my second to you shortly," I added, bowing very politely and pretending to ignore his fury.

On the steps of the restaurant I met Vera's husband. He had evidently been waiting for me.

He grabbed my hand with something like rapture.

"Noble-minded young man!" he said with tears in his eyes. "I heard everything. What a

scoundrel! The ingratitude! Just think of admitting them into a respectable house after this! Thank God I have no daughters! But she for whom you are risking your life will reward you. You may be assured of my discretion for the time being," he continued. "I was young once myself and served in the army; I know one mustn't interfere in affairs like this. Goodbye!"

Poor fellow! He is glad that he has no daughters...

I went straight to Werner, whom I found at home, and told him everything-my relations with Vera and Princess Mary and the conversation I had overheard, which showed me these gentlemen's intentions to make a fool of me by having us shoot it out with blank charges. Now, however, that affair had overstepped the bounds of a joke. They probably had not expected it to end like this.

The doctor agreed to act as my second. I gave him a few instructions concerning the conditions of the duel-he was to insist on the greatest secrecy, for, though I am always ready to risk my life, I am not disposed in the slightest to spoil my future in this world for all time to come.

Afterwards I went home. An hour later the doctor returned from his expedition.

"There is indeed a conspiracy against you," he said. "I found the captain of dragoons and another gentleman, whose name I do not remember, at Grushnitsky's. I stopped for a moment in the hallway to take off my galoshes. Inside there was a terrific noise and argument going on. 'I will not agree on any account!' Grushnitsky was saying. 'He insulted me publicly; previously it was an entirely different matter...' 'Why should it concern you?' replied the captain. 'I'm taking everything upon myself. I've been a second in five duels and know how these things are arranged. I've thought it out in every detail. Only be so good as not to interfere with me. It'll do him good to give him a fright. So why should you run a risk if you don't have to?...' At that point I walked in. They immediately fell silent. Our negotiations lasted for quite a while, and finally we came to the following arrangement: about three miles from here there is a lonely gorge. They'll go there tomorrow morning at four o'clock, and we are to leave half an hour later. You'll fire at six paces-Grushnitsky insisted on that distance himself. The dead man is

to be credited to the Circassians. Now I'll tell you what I suspect: they, the seconds, I mean, have apparently amended the earlier scheme somewhat and want to put a bullet only into Grushnitsky's pistol. It looks rather like murder, but cunning is permitted in wartime, particularly in an Asiatic war. I dare say, though, that Grushnitsky is a slightly better man than his comrades. What do you think? Should we let them know that we have guessed their stratagem?"

"Not for anything in the world, doctor! You can rest assured I won't give in to them."

"What do you intend to do?"

"That's my secret."

"Take care you don't fall into a trap... Remember the distance is only six paces!"

"Doctor, I'll expect you tomorrow at four. The horses will be saddled. Goodbye!"

I sat at home until evening, locked up in my room. A footman came with an invitation from Princess Ligovskaya, but I said I was ill.

It is two o'clock in the morning, but I can't fall asleep. I know I should rest, so that my hand will be steady tomorrow. It'll be hard to miss at six paces though. Ah, Mr. Grushnitsky, your plots

won't succeed! We will exchange roles, and now it'll be for me to look for signs of secret terror on your pale face. Why did you insist on these fatal six paces? You think that I'll submissively offer you my brow as a target... but we'll draw lots! And then... then... but what if fortune smiles on him? What if my star fails me at last? And little wonder if it did-it has faithfully served my caprices long enough: there is no more constancy in the heavens than on earth.

Ah, well! If I must die, I must! The world will lose little, and I am weary enough of it all. I am like a man who yawns at a ball and doesn't go home to sleep only because his carriage hasn't come. But now the carriage is here-goodbye!

I run through my past life in my mind and involuntarily ask myself: Why have I lived? For what purpose was I born? There must have been a purpose, and certainly fate must have something noble in store for me, for I am conscious of untapped powers within me... But I didn't figure out my destination. I allowed myself to be carried away by the temptation of vain and frivolous passions. I emerged from their crucible hard and cold like iron, but gone forever was the

ardor of noble aspirations-life's finest flower. How often since then have I played the role of an ax in the hands of fate! Like an instrument of execution I have fallen upon the heads of the condemned, often without malice, always without regret... My love has never made anyone happy, for I have never sacrificed anything for those I loved; I have loved only for myself, for my own pleasure. I have striven only to satisfy a strange craving of the heart, greedily absorbing their emotions, their tenderness, their joys and sufferings-and have never been fully satisfied. I have been like the starving man who falls into a stupor from sheer exhaustion and dreams of luxurious foods and sparkling wines-exultingly he shovels in these ephemeral gifts of the imagination, and seems to feel better-but when he awakes the vision is gone... and redoubled hunger and despair remain!

Perhaps I will die tomorrow, and there won't be anyone left on earth who understands me fully. Some think of me worse, others better, than I really am. Some will say: he was a good fellow; others: he was a scoundrel. And both will be wrong. Is it worth the trouble to live after this?

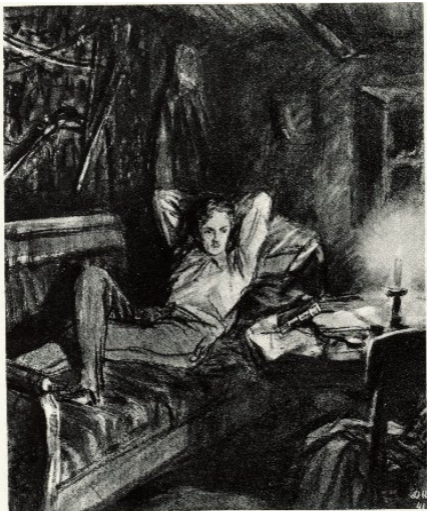
And yet you go on living-out of curiosity, in expectation of something new... How ludicrous and how vexatious!

A month and a half has passed since I arrived at the fort of N-. Maksim Maksimich has gone out hunting... I am all alone. I am sitting at the window. Outside, the gray clouds have concealed the mountains to their very base. The sun looks like a yellow blotch through the mist. It is cold. The wind is sighing and rattling the shutters... How wearisome it all is! I'll resume writing my journal, which has been interrupted by so many strange events.

Reading over the last page, it strikes me as amusing. I thought I would die-but that was out of the question, for I have not yet drained my cup of misery to the dregs and now I feel that I still have long to live.

How clearly and sharply everything that has happened is imprinted in my memory! Time hasn't obliterated a single line or nuance.

I recall that on the night before the duel I didn't sleep a wink. A mysterious uneasiness took hold of me and I couldn't write for long. For about an hour I paced the room, then I sat down



and opened a novel by Walter Scott that had lain on my table: it was *Old Mortality*[107]. At first I read with an effort, then, carried away by the enchanting fiction, I was soon oblivious to everything. Surely, the Scottish bard is rewarded in heaven for every joyous minute his book gives to the reader...

At last day broke. My nerves had grown calm. I examined my face in the mirror; a dull white



had spread over my features, which still showed traces of a racking sleepless night, but my eyes, though encircled by dark shadows, shone proudly and remorselessly. I was satisfied with myself.

Ordering the horses to be saddled, I dressed and hurried to the baths. As I immersed myself in the cold Narzan water, I felt my physical and spiritual strength returning. I left the baths as refreshed and vigorous as if about to attend a ball. After this, no one can tell me that the soul is not dependent on the body!

On returning home, I found the doctor there. He was wearing gray riding pants, a light jacket gathered in at the waist and a Circassian cap. I burst out laughing at the sight of his slight body beneath the enormous shaggy cap. His face is anything but warlike, and this time he looked more dejected than usual.

"Why so sad, doctor?" I said to him. "Haven't you seen people off to the next world a hundred times with the greatest indifference? Imagine that I have a bilious fever, and that I have equal chances of recovering or succumbing. Both outcomes are in the order of things. Try to regard me

as a patient stricken with a disease you have not yet diagnosed-that will stimulate your curiosity to the utmost. You may now make some important physiological observations on me... Isn't expectation of death by violence a real illness in itself?"

This thought impressed the doctor and his spirits rose.

We mounted. Werner clung to the reins with both hands and we set off. In a flash we had galloped through the settlement, past the fort, and entered the gorge, through which a road wound its way. It was half overgrown with tall grass and crossed at short intervals by noisy brooks which we had to ford, much to the despair of the doctor, whose horse would halt each time in the water.

I can't remember a bluer or fresher morning. The sun had barely peeped over the green summits and the merging of the first warmth of its rays with the dying coolness of the night brought a sweet languor to the senses. The exultant rays of the new day hadn't yet penetrated into the gorge. Now they gilded only the tops of the crags that towered above us on both sides. The dense foliage of the bushes growing in the deep crevices of the cliffs showered a silvery rain upon us at

the slightest breath of wind. I remember that at that moment I loved nature as never before. With what curiosity did I gaze at each dewdrop that trembled on the broad vine leaves, reflecting millions of rainbow glints! How eagerly my eyes sought to pierce the hazy distance! There the path grew narrower and narrower, the crags bluer and more awesome, seeming to merge at last into an impregnable wall. We rode along in silence.

"Have you made your will?" Werner asked all of a sudden.

"No."

"What if you are killed?"

"The heirs will turn up themselves."

"Have you no friends to whom you would wish to send your last farewell?"

I shook my head.

"Is there no woman in the world to whom you would want to leave something to remember you by?"

"Do you want me to lay bare my soul to you, doctor?" I replied. "You see, I'm past the age when people die with the names of their beloved on their lips and bequeath a lock of pomaded, or unpomaded, hair to a friend. When I think of im-

minent and possible death, I think only of myself; some do not even do that. Friends, who will forget me tomorrow, or, worse still, who will weave God knows what fantastic yarns about me; and women, who in the embrace of another man will laugh at me in order that he might not be jealous of the departed-what do I care for them? From life's turmoil I've drawn a few ideas, but no feeling. For a long time now I have been living by my reason, not my heart. I weigh and analyze my own emotions and actions with stern curiosity, but without sympathy. There are two men in me-one lives in the full sense of the word, the other reasons and passes judgment on the first. The first will perhaps take leave of you and the world forever in an hour now; and the second... the second? Look, doctor, do you see the three dark figures on the cliff to the right? I believe those are our adversaries."

We spurred our horses on.

Three horses were tethered in the bushes at the foot of the cliff. We tied up ours there too and continued on foot up a narrow path to a ledge where Grushnitsky was waiting for us with the captain of dragoons and another second, by the

name of Ivan Ignatyevich-his last name I never heard.

"We have been waiting a long time for you," said the captain of dragoons, with an ironical smile.

I pulled out my watch and showed it to him.

He apologized, saying that his watch was fast.

For several minutes there was an awkward silence. At last the doctor broke it, turning to Grushnitsky: "I believe," he said, "that having both shown your readiness to fight and thereby duly discharged your debt of honor, you might, gentlemen, come to an understanding and end this affair in a friendly fashion."

"I am ready to do so," said I.

The captain winked at Grushnitsky, who, thinking that I was showing the white feather, assumed a haughty air, although his face had been sickly gray until that moment. Now, for the first time since our arrival, he looked at me; the glance was uneasy and it betrayed his inner conflict.

"Tell me your conditions," he said, "and you may rest assured that I will do all I can for you..."

"These are my conditions: you will today pub-

licly retract your false insult and apologize to me..."

"My dear sir, I am amazed that you dare suggest anything of the kind..."

"What else could I suggest?"

"We'll shoot it out."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"So be it. Only remember that one of us is bound to be killed."

"I hope it'll be you."

"I'm quite certain of the contrary."

He moved involuntarily and flushed red, and then he forced a laugh.

The captain took him by the arm and led him aside. They spoke in whispers at some length. I had arrived quite peaceably disposed, but now these proceedings were beginning to infuriate me.

The doctor came up to me.

"Look here," he said, obviously worried, "have you forgotten about their conspiracy? I don't know how to load a pistol, and if that's the case... You are a strange man! Tell them you are aware of their intentions, and they won't dare... Where's the sense of it? They will shoot you down like a

sitting duck..."

"Please, doctor, do not alarm yourself, and wait a little... I'll handle the whole thing so that they won't have any advantage. Let them whisper..."

"Gentlemen, this is becoming tiresome!" I said to them in a loud voice. "If we are to fight, let us do so; you had time enough yesterday to talk it over..."

"We are ready," replied the captain. "Take your places, gentlemen! Doctor, will you measure out six paces?"

"Take your places!" repeated Ivan Ignatyevich in a squeaky voice.

"I beg your pardon!" I said. "There is one more condition. Inasmuch as we intend to fight to the death, we are obliged to take every precaution that this encounter should remain a secret and that our seconds should bear no responsibility. Do you agree?"

"We agree fully."

"This is what I have worked out. Do you see the narrow ledge on top of that sheer cliff to the right? The drop from there to the bottom is a good two hundred feet, if not more; down below

there are jagged rocks. Each of us will take his position on the very edge of the shelf, which will make even a slight wound deadly. That should coincide with your wishes, since you yourselves set the distance at six paces. If one of us is wounded he will inevitably go over and be dashed to pieces. The doctor will remove the bullet, and the sudden death can easily be explained as an accident. We will draw lots to see who is to shoot first. In conclusion I wish to make it clear that I will fight on no other terms."

"Let it be so!" said the captain after a meaningful look at Grushnitsky, who nodded his agreement. His facial expression changed every moment. I had placed him in a difficult position. Under ordinary conditions, he could have aimed at my leg and wounded me lightly, thus getting his revenge without laying too heavy a burden on his conscience. Now, however, he either had to fire into the air or become a murderer, or, finally, abandon his dastardly scheme and run the same risk as I. I wouldn't have wished to be in his boots at that moment. He led the captain aside and began to talk to him very heatedly. I noticed how his lips, now turned bluish, quivered. The cap-



tain, however, turned away from him with a contemptuous smile. "You're a fool!" he said to Grushnitsky rather loudly. "You don't understand anything. Let's go, gentlemen!"

A narrow path winding between the bushes led up the steep incline. Broken fragments of rock formed the precarious steps of this natural staircase. Clutching at the bushes, we began climbing. Grushnitsky went ahead, followed by his seconds, and the doctor and I came last.

"You amaze me," said the doctor, clasping my hand warmly. "Let me feel your pulse. Oho, it's pounding feverishly! But your face betrays nothing; only your eyes shine brighter than usual."

Suddenly small stones rolled noisily down to our feet. What had happened? Grushnitsky had stumbled; the branch he had been holding snapped and he would have fallen backwards had his seconds not supported him.

"Take care!" I called out to him. "Don't fall too soon; it's an ill omen. Remember Julius Caesar [108]!"

And so we reached the top of the projecting cliff. The ledge was covered with fine sand as if specially spread there for the duel. All around,

wrapped in the golden mist of morning, the mountain peaks clustered like a numberless herd, while in the south Elbrus loomed white, bringing up the rear of a chain of icy summits among which roamed the feathery clouds blown in from the east. I walked to the brink of the ledge and looked down. My head nearly swam. Down below it was dark and cold as the grave, and the moss-grown jagged rocks, hurled down by storm and time, awaited their prey.

The ledge on which we were to fight was an almost regular triangle. Six paces were measured off from the projecting angle, and it was decided that he who would first have to face his opponent's fire would stand at the very edge with his back to the abyss. If he were not killed, the adversaries would change places.

I decided to give Grushnitsky every advantage, for I wanted to test him—a spark of generosity might have been awakened in his soul, in which case everything would have turned out for the best, but vanity and weakness of character were bound to triumph... I wanted to give myself full justification for not sparing him if fate showed mercy to me. Who has not thus struck a bargain

with his conscience?

"Toss the coin, doctor!" said the captain.

The doctor produced a silver coin from his pocket and held it aloft.

"Tails!" cried Grushnitsky suddenly, like a man just awakened by a friendly nudge.

"Heads!" said I.

The coin rose into the air and came down with a clink. We all rushed over to look at it.

"You're lucky," I said to Grushnitsky, "you're to shoot first. But remember, if you don't kill me, I won't miss-I give you my word of honor."

He turned red. The thought of killing an unarmed man filled him with shame. I looked at him intently, and for a moment I thought he would throw himself at my feet and beg my forgiveness; but how could he confess to a scheme so vile? One way out remained for him: to fire into the air. I was certain he would fire into the air! Only one thing might prevent him from doing so: the thought that I might demand a second duel.

"It's time now!" the doctor whispered to me, tugging at my sleeve. "If you will not tell them now that we know their intention, all will be lost. See, he is loading already. If you won't, I'll tell

them..."

"Certainly not, doctor!" I replied, restraining him by the arm. "You'll spoil everything; you gave me your word you wouldn't interfere... And why should it concern you? Perhaps I want to be killed."

He looked at me in amazement.

"Oh, that's another matter! Only don't blame me in the next world..."

Meanwhile the captain had loaded his pistols. One he gave Grushnitsky, smilingly whispering something to him, the other to me.

I took my place at the far corner of the ledge, firmly bracing my left foot against the rock and leaning slightly forward so as not to fall backwards in case I was lightly wounded.

Grushnitsky took his place opposite me, and when the signal was given, started to raise the pistol. His knees shook. He aimed straight at my forehead...

Savage anger sprang up in my heart.

Suddenly he lowered the muzzle of his pistol and, going as white as a sheet, turned to his second.

"I can't do it," he said hoarsely.

"Coward!" replied the captain.

The shot rang out. The bullet scratched my knee. Involuntarily, I took a few steps forward, to get away from the brink as quickly as possible.

"Well, brother Grushnitsky, it's a pity you missed!" said the captain. "Now it's your turn; take your place! Embrace me before you go, for we will meet no more!" They embraced, the captain scarcely able to restrain himself from laughter. "Don't be afraid," he added, with a sly look at Grushnitsky, "everything in the world's a pack of nonsense! Nature, fate, life itself: all are naught but worthless pelf!"

This tragic utterance made with due solemnity, the captain withdrew to his place. With tears in his eyes, Ivan Ignatyevich also embraced Grushnitsky, and now the latter remained alone facing me. To this day I have tried to explain to myself the emotion that then surged in my breast: it was the vexation of injured vanity, and contempt, and wrath born of the realization that this man, who was now eyeing me so coolly, with such calm insolence, two minutes before had sought to kill me like a dog without endangering himself in the slightest-for had I been wounded a

little more severely in the leg, I would certainly have toppled over the cliff.

I looked him squarely in the face for a few minutes, trying to detect the slightest sign of repentance. Instead I thought I saw him suppressing a smile.

"I advise you to say your prayers before you die," I told him then.

"You need not be more concerned about my soul than about your own. I only beg of you to fire with the least delay."

"And you will not retract your slander? Or apologize to me? Think well, has your conscience nothing to say to you?"

"Mr Pechorin!" shouted the captain of dragoons. "You are not here to take confession, allow me to observe... Let us get it over and done with as quickly as possible. Someone might ride through the gorge and see us."

"Very well. Doctor, will you come to me?"

The doctor came over. Poor doctor! He was paler than Grushnitsky had been ten minutes before.

I spoke the following words with deliberation, loudly and distinctly, as sentences of death are

pronounced: "Doctor, these gentlemen, no doubt in their haste, forgot to put a bullet into my pistol. Would you please reload it-and do it thoroughly!"

"It can't be!" cried the captain. "It can't be! I loaded both pistols; the bullet may have rolled out of yours... That's not my fault! And you have no right to reload... no right whatsoever... it is most decidedly against the rules. I will not allow it..."

"Very good!" I said to the captain. "In that case, you and I will shoot it out on the same terms... ."

He didn't know what to say.

Grushnitsky stood there, his head sunk on his breast, embarrassed and gloomy.

"Let them do as they wish!" he finally said to the captain, who was trying to grab my pistol from the doctor's hand. "You know yourself that they are right."

In vain did the captain make signs to him. Grushnitsky did not even look up.

Meanwhile the doctor loaded the pistol and handed it to me.

Seeing this, the captain spat and stamped his foot. "You are a fool, my friend," he said, "a darned fool. If you're counting on me, you should

do everything I say... You're getting what you deserve, so go ahead and be wiped out like a fly!" He turned away, muttering: "But it's altogether against the rules."

"Grushnitsky!" said I. "There's still time; retract your false insult and I'll forgive you everything. You've failed to make a fool of me, and my vanity is satisfied. Remember that once we were friends..."

His face twisted with passion, his eyes flashed.

"Fire!" he replied. "I despise myself and hate you. If you don't kill me, I'll stab you in the back some night. The world is too small to hold us both..."

I fired.

When the smoke cleared, there was no Grushnitsky on the ledge. Only a thin pillar of dust curled over the brink of the precipice.

Everybody cried out at once.

"*Finita la commedia!*[109]" I said to the doctor.

He did not reply, but turned away in horror.

I shrugged my shoulders and bowed to Grushnitsky's seconds.

As I came down the path I saw Grushnitsky's bloodstained corpse between the clefts in the



rocks. Involuntarily I closed my eyes.



Untying my horse, I set out for home at a walking pace. My heart was heavy within me. The sun seemed to have lost its brilliance and its rays did not warm me.

Before reaching the settlement I turned into a gorge on my right. I could not have endured the sight of anyone just then-I wanted to be alone. With the reins hanging loose and my head sunk

on my breast, I rode on for some time, until I found myself in an entirely unfamiliar spot. I turned back and sought the road. The sun was setting when I reached Kislovodsk, a spent man on a spent horse.

My manservant told me that Werner had called and gave me two notes, one from him, and the other from Vera.

I opened the first; it contained the following:

*Everything has been arranged as well as possible. The mutilated body has been brought in and the bullet removed from the chest. Everybody believes that his death was accidental. Only the commandant, who probably knows of your quarrel, shook his head, but said nothing. There is no evidence against you and you may sleep peacefully... if you can. Goodbye...*

I hesitated long before opening the second note. What could she have to write to me? An ominous presentiment racked my soul.

Here it is, that letter whose every word inefaceably seared itself into my memory:

*I am writing to you quite certain that we will never see each other again. When we*

*parted several years ago, I thought the same; but it pleased heaven to try me a second time; I did not withstand the test, my weak heart was again conquered by that familiar voice... but you will not despise me for this, will you? This letter is at once a farewell and a confession: I must tell you everything that has been stored in my heart ever since it first learned to love you. I will not accuse you – you behaved to me as any other man might have done: you loved me as your property, as a source of the reciprocal joys, fears and sorrows without which life would be wearisome and monotonous. I realized this from the very beginning... But you were unhappy, and I sacrificed myself in the hope that some day you would appreciate my sacrifice, that some day you would understand my infinite tenderness which nothing could affect. Much time has passed since then. I have fathomed all the secrets of your soul... and I see that mine was a vain hope. How it hurt me! But my love and my soul have melted into one: the flame is dimmer, but it has not died.*

*We are parting forever, yet you may be certain that I will never love another. My*

soul has spent all its treasures, its tears and hopes on you. She who has once loved you cannot but regard other men with some measure of contempt, not because you are better than they – oh no! – but because there is something unique in your nature, something peculiar to you alone, something so proud and unfathomable. Whatever you may be saying, your voice holds an invincible power. In no one is the desire to be loved so constant as in you. In no one is evil so attractive. In no one's glance is there such a promise of bliss. Nobody knows better than you how to use his advantages, and no one else can be so genuinely unhappy as you, because nobody tries so hard as you to convince himself of the contrary.

Now I must explain the reason for my hasty departure; it will strike you as of little consequence, because it concerns me alone.

This morning my husband came to me and told me about your quarrel with Grushnitsky. My face must have given me away, for he looked me straight in the eye long and searchingly. I nearly fainted at the thought that you were having to fight a duel and

*that I was the cause. I thought I would lose my mind... Now, however, when I can reason clearly, I am certain that you will live – it is impossible that you would die without me, impossible! My husband paced the room for a long time; I don't know what he said to me, nor do I remember what I replied... I probably told him that I loved you... I only remember that at the end of our conversation he insulted me with a terrible word and left the room. I heard him order the carriage... For three hours now I have been sitting at the window and awaiting your return... But you're alive, you can't die! The carriage is almost ready... Farewell, farewell! I'm lost – but what of it? If I could be certain that you will always remember me – I say nothing of loving me, no – only remember... Goodbye! Someone is coming... I have to hide this letter...*

*You don't love Mary, do you? You won't marry her? Oh, but you must make this sacrifice for me – I have given up everything in the world for your sake...*

Like a madman I dashed outside, leapt into the saddle of my horse who was being led across the courtyard, and set off at full gallop along the

road to Pyatigorsk. I mercilessly spurred on the exhausted beast, which, panting and covered with froth, sped me along the rocky road.

The sun had vanished into a black cloud resting on the mountain range in the west, and it turned dark and damp in the gorge. The Podkumok River picked its way through the rocks with a dull and monotonous roar. Breathless with impatience I galloped on. The thought that I might not find her in Pyatigorsk pounded like a sledgehammer at my heart. Oh, but to see her for a minute, only one more minute, to say goodbye, to clasp her hand... I prayed, I cursed, I cried, I laughed... no, no words can express my anxiety, my despair! Now that I realized I might lose her forever, Vera became for me the most precious thing on earth, more precious than life, honor or happiness! God only knows what odd, wild ideas swarmed in my head... And all the while I rode on, spurring my horse mercilessly. Finally I noticed that the animal was breathing more laboriously, and once or twice he stumbled on a level stretch. There still remained three miles to Essentuki, a Cossack hamlet where I could get another mount.

Everything would have been redeemed had my horse had the strength to carry on for another ten minutes. But suddenly, at a sharp bend in the road coming up from a shallow ravine as we were emerging from the hills, he crashed to the ground. I leapt nimbly out of the saddle, but try as I might to get him up, pull as I might at the reins, my efforts were in vain. A scarcely audible groan escaped from between his clenched teeth and a few minutes later he was dead. I was left alone in the steppe, my last hope gone. I tried to continue on foot, but my knees gave way and, exhausted by the day's anxieties and the sleepless night, I fell on to the wet grass and sobbed like a child.

I lay there for a long time motionless and cried bitterly, without trying to check the tears and sobs. I thought my heart would be torn apart. All my resolution, all my composure vanished like smoke-my spirit was impotent, my reason paralyzed, and had someone seen me at that moment he would have turned away in contempt.

When the night dew and mountain breeze had cooled my fevered brow and I had collected my thoughts once more, I realized that it was useless

and senseless to pursue a happiness that was lost. What more did I want? To see her? Why? Wasn't everything over between us? One bitter farewell kiss wouldn't make my memories sweeter, and it'd be only the harder to part.

It's pleasant for me to know, however, that I can weep! Although the real reason was perhaps frayed nerves, the sleepless night, the two minutes I had stood looking into the muzzle of a pistol, and an empty stomach.

Everything works out for the best. As for this new sensation of pain, it served as a happy diversion, to employ a military term. It does one good to cry, and had I not ridden my horse to death and then been compelled to walk the ten miles back, I perhaps would not have closed my eyes that night either.

I returned to Kislovodsk at five o'clock in the morning, threw myself on the bed and slept like Napoleon after Waterloo.

When I awoke, it was dark outside. Unfastening my jacket, I sat at an open window-and the breeze from the mountains cooled my breast, which was not yet becalmed even by the sleep of heavy fatigue. Far away beyond the river the



lights of the fort and the village twinkled through the thick crowns of the overshadowing lindens. The courtyard was deadly still, and in the Princess Ligovskaya's house all was in darkness.

The doctor entered. His brow was furrowed, and contrary to his usual practice he did not offer me his hand.

"Where have you come from, doctor?"

"From Princess Ligovskaya's. Her daughter is ill-nervous breakdown... But that's not why I am here. The trouble is that the authorities are beginning to suspect, and though nothing definite can be proved I would advise you to be more cautious. The princess just told me that she was aware you fought a duel over her daughter. That old man-what's his name?-told her. He witnessed your altercation with Grushnitsky in the restaurant. I came to warn you. So goodbye-perhaps we will not see each other again-very likely you'll be sent away."

He paused on the threshold. He wanted to shake my hand. And had I given him the slightest encouragement he would have flung himself on my neck, but I remained as cold as a stone, and he went away.

That is just like human beings! They are all alike; though fully aware in advance of all the evil aspects of a deed, they aid and abet and even give their approval to it when they see there is no other way out-and then they wash their hands of it and turn away with disapproval from him who dared assume the full burden of responsibility. They are all alike, even the kindest and wisest of them!

The following morning, when I had received orders from my superiors to report at the fort of N-, I dropped in at Princess Ligovskaya's to say goodbye.

Princess Ligovskaya was taken aback when in reply to her question whether I had anything important to tell her I merely said that I wished her all the best, and so forth.

"I must have a very serious talk with you, however."

I sat down without saying a word.

She was obviously at a loss how to begin. Her face turned red and she drummed her pudgy fingers on the table. Finally she began haltingly: "Monsieur Pechorin, I believe you are an honorable man."

I bowed.

"I am even certain of it," she continued, "though your conduct has been somewhat questionable. You may have your reasons, however, of which I am not aware, and if so, you must share them with me now. You protected my daughter's reputation, engaged in a duel on her behalf, and risked your life in doing so... Pray do not reply, for I know you will not admit it because Grushnitsky is dead." (She crossed herself.) "God forgive him, and you too, I hope! That is none of my concern... I have no right to condemn you, for it was my daughter, blameless though she is, who was the cause. She has told me everything... everything, I am sure. You have declared you love her, and she has confessed her love for you." (Here the princess drew a deep sigh.) "But she is ill and I am certain that it is not an ordinary malady. Some secret grief is killing her-she doesn't admit it, but I am certain that you are the cause... Listen to me: you perhaps think that I am after rank and immense riches-if so, you are mistaken. I seek only my daughter's happiness. Your present position is unenviable, but it may mend. You are wealthy. My daughter loves

you, and her upbringing is such that she can make her husband happy. I am rich, and she is my only child... Tell me, what is it that is stopping you? I would not have told you all this, but I rely upon your heart and honor-remember that I have only one daughter... only one. . ."

She began to sob.

"Princess," I said, "I cannot answer you-allow me to speak to your daughter alone."

"Never!" she cried, rising from her chair in great agitation.

"As you wish," replied I, preparing to leave.

She thought it over, motioned me to wait, and left the room.

Some five minutes passed; my heart pounded, but my thoughts were orderly and my head cool. Search as I might in my heart for even the tiniest spark of love for the charming Mary, my efforts were hopeless.

The door opened and she entered. Heavens! How she had changed since I saw her last-and that but a short while ago!

When she reached the middle of the room, she swayed. I leapt to her side, offered her my arm and led her to an armchair.

I stood facing her. For a long time neither of us said a word. Her big eyes full of ineffable sorrow seemed to search mine for something akin to hope. In vain her pale lips tried to smile. Her delicate hands folded on her knees were so fragile and transparent that I began to feel sorry for her.

"Princess," said I, "you know I have mocked you, do you not? You must despise me."

A feverish red colored her cheeks.

"Hence, you cannot love me..." I continued.

She turned away, leaned her elbows on the table and covered her eyes with her hand, and I thought I saw tears glistening in them.

"Oh God!" she said scarcely audibly.

The situation was growing unbearable. In another minute I would have thrown myself at her feet.

"So you see for yourself," I said in as steady a voice as I could, forcing a smile, "you see for yourself that I can't marry you. Even if you wished to do so now, you'd regret the decision very soon. The talk I had with your mother compels me to speak to you now so frankly and brutally. I hope she is mistaken, but you can easily undeceive her. As you can see I am playing a

most contemptible and disgusting role in your eyes, and I admit it-that is the most I can do for you. However bad your opinion may be of me, I'll accept it. You see I am abasing myself before you... Even if you did love me, you would despise me from this moment-now, wouldn't you?"

She turned to me a face as white as marble but with eyes flashing wondrously.

"I hate you..." she said.

I thanked her, bowed respectfully and walked out.

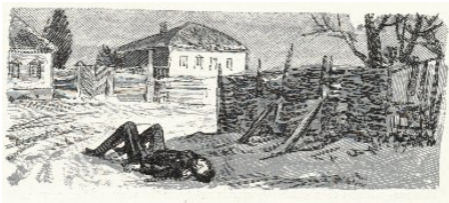
An hour later a stage coach troika was carrying me rapidly from Kislovodsk. A few miles from Essentuki I saw the carcass of my spirited steed by the roadside. The saddle had been removed-probably by some passing Cossack-and in its place two ravens now sat. I sighed and turned away...

And now, here in this dreary fort, as my mind dwells on the past, I frequently ask myself: why did I not wish to tread the path fate held open to me with a promise of tranquil joys and peace of mind? No, I could never have reconciled myself to such a fate. I am like a mariner born and bred on board a buccaneer brig whose soul has be-

come so used to storm and strife that, if cast ashore, he would weary and fade away, no matter how alluring the shady groves and how bright the gentle sun. All day long he walks up and down the sandy beach, listening to the monotonous roar of the breakers and looking into the hazy distance to catch, in the pale strip dividing the blue deep from the gray clouds, the flash of the long-awaited sail that at first is like the wing of a seagull and then gradually stands out from the white of the spray, as it steadily makes for its lonely anchorage...



### III. The Fatalist



I happened once to spend two weeks in a Cossack village on the left flank. A battalion of infantry was stationed there, and the officers used to meet at each other's quarters in turn, playing cards in the evenings.

One time at Major S-'s, having tired of boston [110], we threw the cards under the table and sat on talking until late, for this time the conversation was interesting. We were discussing the Moslem belief that the fate of man is preordained in heaven, which was said to find many adherents among us, Christians, too. Each of us had some unusual occurrences to relate pro or contra.

"All you have been saying, gentlemen, proves nothing," said the old major. "After all, none of



you witnessed any of the strange happenings which you try to use to support your views, did you?"

"Of course not," several said. "But we have it on reliable authority!"

"Nonsense!" someone said. "Where is the reliable authority who has seen the scroll on which the hour of our death is appointed? And if there is such a thing as predestination, why have we been given will and reason? Why are we held accountable for our actions?"

At this point an officer who had been sitting in a corner of the room stood up, walked slowly over to the table, and surveyed us all with a calm, solemn look. He was a Serb by birth, as you could tell from his name.

Lieutenant Vulić's appearance was in keeping with his character. His tall stature and the swarthy complexion, black hair, black, piercing eyes, and the large but regular nose typical of his nation, the cold, melancholy smile that eternally played on his lips—all this was as if designed to endow him with the appearance of an unusual person, incapable of sharing his thoughts and emotions with those whom fate had

made his comrades.

He was brave, he spoke little but bluntly. He confided his intimate and family secrets to no one. He scarcely ever drank any wine, and he never paid court to the young Cossack women, whose charms must be seen to be appreciated. It was said nevertheless that the colonel's wife was not indifferent to his expressive eyes, but he was always angered by hints to that effect.

There was only one passion that he didn't conceal—his passion for gambling. At a green-topped table he was oblivious to the world. He usually lost, but persistent bad luck only fed his obstinacy. It was said that one night, during an expedition, when he was keeping the bank on a pillow and having a terrific run of luck, shots suddenly rang out, the alarm was given, and everyone sprang up and rushed for their weapons. "Stake the pool!" cried Vulić, who had not moved, to one of the most involved players. "Seven!" replied the latter as he dashed off. In spite of the general confusion, Vulić dealt to the end; he turned up a seven for the player.

When he reached the skirmish line, the firing was already heavy. Vulić paid no attention either

to the bullets or the Chechen sabers. He was searching for his lucky player.

"It was a seven!" Vulić shouted, catching sight of him at last in the firing line, that was beginning to dislodge the enemy from a wood. Going up to him, he pulled out his wallet and gave it to the winner, in spite of the latter's objections to this ill-timed settlement. Having performed this unpleasant duty, Vulić dashed forward at the head of the soldiers and with the utmost calm exchanged fire with the Chechens to the very end of the engagement.

When Lieutenant Vulić walked up to the table everybody fell silent, expecting something original from him.

"Gentlemen!" he said (his voice was calm though it was pitched lower than usual). "Gentlemen, why this idle argument? You wish for proof: I propose we test it out on ourselves whether a man can do what he wants with his own life, or whether the fateful moment has been preordained for each of us... Who wants to try?"

"Not I, not I!" was the response from all sides. "What a card! Of all the things to think of!"

"I suggest a wager," I said in jest.

"What sort of a wager?"

"I maintain there is no such thing as predestination," I said, emptying some twenty gold pieces on the table from my pockets—all that I happened to have on me.

"Done!" replied Vulić in a low voice. "Major, you be the umpire—here are fifteen gold pieces. You owe me five, so will you do me the favor of making up the difference?"

"Very well," said the major. "Though I haven't the slightest idea what it's all about, or how you propose to settle the matter."

Without a word Vulić went into the major's bedroom, we following him. Going over to a wall hung with weapons, he took down at random from its nail one of the pistols, of which there were several of different calibers. We didn't realize what he was up to at first, but when he cocked the weapon and primed it, several of us involuntarily stepped up and grabbed him by the arms.

"What are you going to do? Are you mad?" we shouted at him.

"Gentlemen!" he said with deliberation, disengaging his arms. "Which of you would care to pay twenty gold pieces for me?"

Everyone fell silent and drew back.

Vulić went into the next room and sat down at the table. The rest of us followed him. He motioned us to take our seats around the table. We obeyed him in silence, for at this moment he had acquired some mysterious power over us. I looked intently into his eyes, but they met my searching gaze calmly and unwaveringly, and his pale lips smiled; yet in spite of his composure I thought I could read the seal of death on his dull white face. I have observed, and many old soldiers have confirmed the observation, that frequently the face of a person who is to die in a few hours' time bears some strange mark of his inevitable fate, which an experienced eye can hardly fail to detect.

"You will die today," I said to him. He turned sharply to me, but replied with calm deliberation: "I may, and then again I may not..."

Then, turning to the major, he asked whether the pistol was loaded. In his confusion, the major couldn't remember exactly.

"That's enough, Vulić!" someone cried. "It must be loaded since it hung at the head of the bed. What sort of a joke is this!"

"A stupid joke!" threw in another.

"I'll wager fifty rubles to five that the pistol is not loaded!" a third shouted.

Fresh bets were made.

I got tired of this endless ceremony. "Look here," I said, "either fire or hang the pistol back in its place and let's go to bed."

"That's right," many exclaimed. "Let's go to bed."

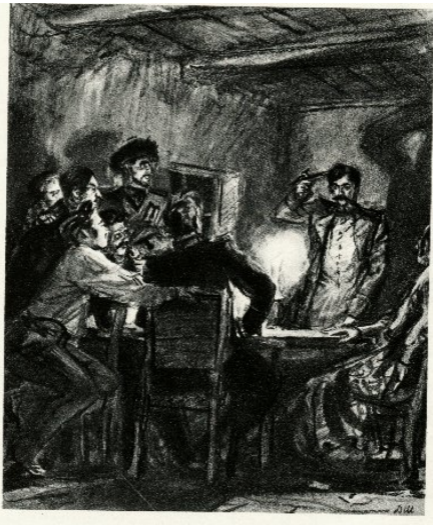
"Gentlemen, I beg of you not to move!" said Vulić, pressing the muzzle of the pistol to his forehead. We were all petrified.

"Mr Pechorin," he went on, "will you take a card and throw it up in the air."

As I recall now, I picked up an ace of hearts from the table and threw it up. We watched with bated breath, our eyes, wide with fear and an indefinable curiosity, shifting back and forth between the pistol and the fateful ace which was now slowly fluttering downwards. The moment it touched the table, Vulić pulled the trigger-but the pistol didn't go off.

"Thank God!" several voices cried. "It wasn't loaded..."

"We'll see about that," said Vulić. Again he



cocked the weapon and aimed at a cap hanging above the window. A shot rang out and smoke filled the room, and when it dispersed the cap was taken down—there was the hole in the very center of it and the bullet had imbedded itself deep in the wall.

For a good three minutes no one could utter a word. Vulić calmly poured my money into his purse.

Speculation began as to why the pistol did not go off the first time. Some claimed that the pan must have been clogged, others whispered that the powder was damp at first, and that Vulić had afterwards sprinkled some fresh powder on it. I, however, assured them that the latter supposition was incorrect, for I had not taken my eyes off the pistol for a moment.

"You have gambler's luck!" I said to Vulić.

"For the first time in my life," he replied, smiling complacently. "This is better than faro or shtoss[111]."

"But slightly more dangerous."

"Well? Have you begun to believe in predestination?"

"I do believe in it. Only I don't understand why it seemed to me that you were doomed to die today ..."

The very same man, who so short a time before had with supreme indifference aimed a pistol at his own forehead, now suddenly flared up and looked disconcerted.

"That will do!" he said, rising. "Our bet's finished and now your remarks seem out of place to me..." He picked up his cap and walked out. His



behavior struck me as strange-and rightly so.

Soon everyone left, each giving his own interpretation of Vulić's eccentric behavior on the way home, and, probably, unanimously branding me an egoist for having wagered against a man who wanted to shoot himself-as if he could not have found a convenient opportunity without my help!

I returned home through the deserted side streets of the settlement. The full moon, red as the lurid glow of a fire, was just coming up over the jagged skyline of the housetops. The stars shone placidly in the dark-blue firmament, and I was amused at the thought that there once were sages who believed the heavenly bodies have a share in our wretched squabbles over a tiny territory or some other imaginary rights. Yet these lamps, which they thought had been lighted only to illuminate their battles and triumphs, still burn with undiminished brilliance, while their passions and hopes have long since died out together with them like a campfire left burning on the fringe of a forest by a careless wayfarer. But what strength of will they drew from the certainty that all the heavens with their numberless inhabitants looked down on them with constant

though mute sympathy! Whereas we, their wretched descendents, who roam the earth without convictions or pride, without joys or fear other than the nameless dread that constricts the heart at the thought of the inevitable end, we are no longer capable of great sacrifices either for the good of mankind or even for our personal happiness, since we know that happiness is impossible; and we pass indifferently from one doubt to another just as our forebears floundered from one delusion to another, without the hopes they had and without even that vague but potent sense of joy the soul derives from any struggle with man or destiny...

Many similar thoughts passed through my mind. I did not hold back their passage, because I don't care to dwell upon abstract ideas-for what can they lead to? In my early youth I was a dreamer. I liked to toy with the images, now gloomy, now radiant, which my restless, eager imagination drew for me. But what have I derived from it all? Only weariness, like the aftermath of a nighttime battle with a phantom, and dim memories filled with regrets. In this futile struggle, I exhausted the fervor of spirit and the

constancy of will which are essential to real life. When I embarked on that life, I had already lived it in my mind, and therefore it has become as boring and repulsive to me as a poor imitation of a long-familiar book.

The evening's events had made a rather deep impression on me and worked on my nerves. I'm not certain whether I now believe in predestination or not, but that night I firmly believed in it. The proof had been striking, and regardless of the fact that I had ridiculed our forebears and their complacent astrology, I found myself thinking as they did-but I caught myself in time on this dangerous road, and having made it a rule never to reject anything categorically and never to believe in anything blindly, I cast metaphysics aside and began to watch the ground under my feet. Such caution was timely, for I nearly stumbled over something thick and soft but apparently dead. I bent down-the moon now lit up the road-and what did I see lying in front of me, but a pig sliced into two with a saber... I had hardly had time to look at it when I heard footsteps: two Cossacks came running from a side street. One of them came up to me and asked whether I had

seen a drunken Cossack pursuing a pig. I told them that I had not met the Cossack, but showed them the unlucky victim of his ferocious skill.

"The bandit!" said the second Cossack. "As soon as he drinks his fill of wine[112], he's out to cut up everything that comes his way. Let's go after him, Yeremeich; we've got to tie him up, or else..."

They went off and I continued on my way more warily than before, at last reaching my quarters safe and sound.

I was staying with an old Cossack non-commissioned officer, whom I liked because of his kindly nature and particularly because of his pretty daughter, Nastya.

She was waiting for me as usual at the gate, wrapped in a fur coat; the moon shone on her sweet lips now blue from the cold of the night. Seeing me, she smiled, but I had other things on my mind. "Good night, Nastya," I said, passing by. She was about to say something in reply, but sighed instead.

I locked the door of my room, lit a candle and flung myself on the bed. Tonight, however, sleep eluded me for longer than usual. The east was

already beginning to grow pale when I fell asleep, but evidently the heavens had ordained that I was not to sleep this night. At four o'clock in the morning two fists banged at my window. I sprang up-what was the matter? "Wake up and get dressed!" several voices shouted. I dressed hastily and went out. "Do you know what's happened?" the three officers who had come for me said to me in chorus; they were as white as death.

"What?" "Vulić has been killed." I was stupefied. "Yes, killed!" they went on. "Let's go, quick." "Where to?" "We'll tell you on the way."

We set off. They told me everything that had happened, adding to the story various observations concerning the strange predestination that had saved him from certain death half an hour before he died. Vulić had been walking alone along a dark street, when the drunken Cossack who had slashed up the pig bumped into him, and might perhaps have gone on without paying any attention to him had Vulić not stopped suddenly and said: "Who you looking for, boy?"

"You!" the Cossack answered, striking him with his saber and splitting him from the shoulder nearly to the heart... The two Cossacks

whom I had seen and who were pursuing the murderer reached the spot, and picked up the wounded man, but he was already breathing his last and mouthed only the words: "He was right!" I alone understood the dark meaning of these words—they referred to me. I had involuntarily predicted the poor man's fate. My instinct had not failed me—I had indeed read on his altered features the stamp of death coming soon.

The murderer had locked himself in a vacant hut at the far end of the settlement, and that's where we went. A large number of women were running in the same direction, wailing as they went. Every now and then a Cossack sprang belatedly out into the street, hurriedly buckling on a dagger, and ran past us. There was a fearful commotion.

At last we arrived on the scene to find a crowd gathered around the hut, whose doors and shutters had been fastened from the inside. Officers and Cossacks were holding a hot argument and the women kept howling and lamenting. Among them I noticed an old woman whose imposing face expressed frantic despair. She was seated on a thick log, her elbows on her knees and her

hands supporting her head. She was the murderer's mother. At times her lips moved... was it with a prayer or a curse?

In the meantime, some decision had to be made and the perpetrator arrested. But no one was anxious to go in first.

I went up to the window and looked in through a crack in a shutter. The man lay on the floor, holding a pistol in his right hand. A blood-stained saber lay beside him. His face was pale, and his expressive eyes rolled fearfully. At times he shuddered and clutched at his head, as if hazily recollecting the happenings of the previous day. There did not seem to be much resolve in his uneasy glance and I told the major that there was no reason why he shouldn't order the Cossacks to break down the door and rush him, for it would be better to do so now rather than later when the man would've fully recovered his senses.

Just then an old captain of the Cossacks went up to the door and called to the man inside by name. The latter responded.

"You've sinned, brother Yefimych," said the Cossack captain. "So there's nothing you can do

but give yourself up!"

"I won't!" replied the Cossack.

"You should fear God's anger! You are not a heathen Chechen, you're an honest Christian. You've gone astray and it can't be helped. You can't escape your fate!"

"I won't give myself up!" the Cossack shouted menacingly, and we could hear the click of the pistol as he cocked it.

"Hey, missus!" the Cossack captain said to the old woman. "You speak to your son-maybe he'll listen to you... After all, this sort of thing is only defying God. Look, the gentlemen have been waiting for two hours now."

The old woman looked at him intently and shook her head.

"Vasiliy Petrovich," said the Cossack captain, walking over to the major, "he won't give himself up-I know him. And if we break in the door, he'll kill many of our men. Wouldn't it be better if you ordered him to be shot? There is a wide crack in the shutter."

At that moment, a strange thought flashed through my mind; like Vulić, I thought of putting fate to a test.



"Wait," I said to the major, "I'll take him alive." Telling the Cossack captain to keep him talking and stationing three Cossacks at the entrance with instructions to break in the door and to rush to help me as soon as the signal was given, I walked around the hut and approached the fateful window, my heart pounding.

"Hey there, you donkey!" shouted the Cossack captain. "Are you making fun of us or what? Or maybe you think we won't be able to capture you?" He began hammering at the door with all his strength, while I, pressing my eye to the hole, followed the movements of the Cossack inside, who did not expect an attack from this side. Then I suddenly broke off the shutter and threw myself through the window, head first. The pistol went off next to my ear and the bullet tore off an epaulet. The smoke that filled the room, however, prevented my adversary from finding his saber, which lay beside him. I hugged him in my arms – the Cossacks broke in, and in less than three minutes the criminal was tied up and led off under guard. The people left for home and the officers congratulated me-and indeed they had reason to do so.

After all this, one might think, how could one help becoming a fatalist? But who knows for certain whether he is convinced of anything or not? And how often we mistake a deception of the senses or an error of reason for conviction!

I prefer to doubt everything. Such a disposition does not preclude a resolute character. On the contrary, as far as I am concerned, I always advance more boldly when I don't know what is waiting me for me. After all, nothing worse than death can happen-and death you can't escape!

After returning to the fort, I told Maksim Maksimich everything I had seen and experienced, and wanted to hear his opinion about predestination. At first he didn't understand the word, but I explained it to him as best I could, whereupon he said, wisely shaking his head: "Yes, sir! It's a funny business that! By the way, these Asiatic pistol cocks often miss fire if they are poorly oiled, or if you don't press hard enough with your finger. I must admit I don't like those Circassian rifles either. They are a bit inconvenient for the likes of us-the butt is so small that unless you watch out you can get your nose scorched... Their sabers, now, are a different matter-I take my cap

off to them!"

Then he added after thinking a little more: "Yes, I'm sorry for that poor man... Why the hell did he stop to talk to a drunk at night! I suppose, though, that all that happened to him was already written in that big book[113] when he was born!"

I could get nothing more out of him. In general he doesn't like metaphysical talk.



*1837-9[114]*

# Примечания

(accent on first syllable) was a great poet and not a bad landscape painter either. He was exiled to the front line of the colonial war that the Russians carried on against the Caucasian tribesmen in the first part of the 19th century – twice. He had visited the area as a boy a couple of times. After attending Moscow University and graduating from military school he became friends with some of those who played a part in the failed Decembrist uprising. He greatly admired the Russian poet Aleksandr Pushkin and was upset by his death in a duel in January 1837, so he wrote a eulogy – that caused his first political exile. There he fought bravely, studied and translated some Caucasian literature, and met some revolutionary exiles. As well as doing some painting he picked up the ideas for this book and some great poems. After his return to Moscow, he again got into trouble and was exiled to the Caucasus a second time. He was killed in a duel, much like the one in this book, at the age of 26. Nabokov translates a wonderful recursive poem he wrote just before that duel. The reported reaction by Czar Nicholas

I was "a dog's death for a dog."

[^^^]

## 2

Lermontov's title in manuscript was One of the Heroes of the Beginning of the Century, although the book as printed is supposed to take place starting in the fall of 1837. In English, the novel has been variously entitled A Hero of our Own Time, The Hero of Our Days, A Hero of Our Times, and The Heart of a Russian. We employ the most common and traditional title.

[^^^]

### 3

Written 1837 to 1839, the book was first printed April 1840, after three of the chapters had been published as stories in a magazine. The preface was added for the second edition, 1841 – it was at that time printed at the beginning of volume (part) 2. (Some translations put the preface at the end of the book.) This book comes at the end of the Romantic period and many critics feel it makes a transition to Realism. Some point out its striking modern aspects of existential irony and innovative narrative discourse.

[^^^]



## 4

We also referred to but did not literally copy from the interpretation in the 1958 translation by Vladimir and Dmitri Nabokov, Doubleday Anchor Books. (We draw attention especially to the authoritative introduction and notes of this book, even though they did not have access to the early editions – and the Edward Gorey cover hits the nail on the head for modern readers.) Referred to hereafter as "Nabokov."

[^^^]

## 5

how to interpret the irony in this book is the subject of a raft of books and articles listed in the Everyman edition, ranging from early Russian critics to Soviet Marxist-Leninist to Formalist to modernist and post-modernist and psychoanalytic. But why not just read the book here and decide for yourself?

[^^^]

# 6

slang American term for rural, provincial, i.e., not St. Petersburg or Moscow.

[^^^]

actually, the Romantic excesses were incurred by the generation that was just ending, with the Byronic hero as the exemplar, while Lermontov's contemporaries such as those portrayed by Turgenev and Dostoeyevsky went on to new vices and virtues. However, the personality of this type of hero or criminal has fascinated a lot of writers and even readers of detective or spy novels in many cultures.

[^^^]

## 8

the name is derived from that of a Siberian river, as is Onegin by Pushkin. Of course, there are endless speculations about the character of Pechorin. What do you think? Have you known anyone like him?

[^^^]

the division into parts this way makes no sense (Nabokov called it "purely fortuitous") and seems to have been an invention of the clumsy editor of the second edition. Russian literature did not yet have a tradition of the prose novel, while European printers at the time usually divided novels into separate volumes for convenience and sales. If one wanted to read the book in chronological order of the fictional events, it would be this way: Taman, Princess Mary, Bela (The Fatalist comes in the middle of this), Maksim Maksimich, and the Preface. However, the order Lermontov uses does spiral in on Pechorin's character effectively. By the way, there are references in the book to "a long chain of tales" and teases about "a fat notebook" of remaining material, but, sorry, this is all we've got.

[^^^]

The Georgian (and Ossetian) north-south military highways built by the Russians over the middle part of the Caucasus Mountains are still the main routes. The track from Tibilisi (Tiflis) to Vladikavkaz follows the Aragva River, over the 8,000-ft. Pass of the Cross, the Koyshaur Canyon, and down through Kazbek and Lars along the Terek River, which flows to the Caspian Sea. The road is more than 120 miles long. The area is called "Asiatic" by European Russians.

[^^^]

now called T'bilisi, capital of the now independent nation of Georgia. Georgia has had a long relationship with Russia, notably between the Treaty of Georgievsk, 1783, and 1878, when the Russians drove to the Black Sea in a war against the Turks. In 1837 Georgia was peacefully run by the Russians. However, the mountain people to the north were involved in bitter resistance to the Russian takeover of their territory, and political rebels were sent to this front by the Czar's government just as they were to Siberia.

[^^^]



# 12

*telezhka*, crude springless horse-drawn carriage.

[^^^]

people (Cherkes) in the northwest Caucasus Mountains (Abkhazia, Kabardia) fought the Russians from 1815 to about 1839, when they were mostly subdued. In 1864 the entire nation of about 400,000 people emigrated to Ottoman territory rather than live under the Russians. They have an ancient origin evidently absorbing Greek, Roman and possibly Crusader elements, and because they were tall, handsome, and intelligent were favored slaves, mercenaries, and managers.

[^^^]

*epaulets* or *epaulettes*, fancy shoulder boards with fringes hanging from the ends showing an officer's rank. Although mostly generals or admirals wear them now for fancy dress, even lowly officers wore them then regularly.

[^^^]

The Chechens, and the Lezgians of Dagestan (the eastern part of the mountains), are Muslims, but speak Indo-European languages. Like many Native American Indians and third-world people in other countries, they bravely resisted the white man's colonization and pacification attempts, with a dirty guerrilla war that lasted years. The Dagestan guerrillas were conquered in 1857-9, when many of them went south to Armenia. The Chechens, many in North Ossetia in the mid part of the Caucasus, were also defeated. In 1920 they formed a province (oblast) under the Russians, united with the Inguish, but were exiled to Central Asia by Stalin after they were charged with collaboration with the Germans during World War II (in 1957 Khrushchev allowed them to return). December 11, 1994, Chechnia was again invaded by Russian troops, who destroyed the capital but failed to completely subdue the mountain guerrillas. We have seen little on the Internet about Ossetia, but here is a record of a visit by Fitzroy Maclean, we don't know when. And this Australian web page contains a full list of links to

other resources about the Caucasus region.

[^^^]

older translations use "swarthy" – Nabokov comments that Lermontov uses both cliched and strange words for colors.

[^^^]

Russian army headquarters in North Caucasus,  
160 miles northwest of Vladikavkaz.

[^^^]

i.e., not European Russians, who were those to the north but closer to the West. The term used by Maksim Maksimivich – though, is not one of much respect, more like the derogatory slang used by an American soldier, either for enemy or ally or just foreign civilian – just refers usually to the "foreign" Muslims in general.

[^^^]



(1772-1861), greatly respected leader of Russian counter-guerrilla operations, especially in Chechnia and Dagestan, 1818-1827.

[^^^]

here, the row of front-line forts in the counter-guerrilla war.

[^^^]

the officers' ranks in this book are significant – it seems that Pechorin was demoted after the duel and before the Bela episode, although he still outranked a cadet as an ensign. A second lieutenant or *shtabs-kapitan* was below captain but above ensign.

[^^^]

Parker's word is "ruffians", Nabokov's is "cut-throats." It indicates the resentment of the regular army officer against the unconventional but effective tactics of the mountain guerrillas, a word we sometimes use for Parker's *abreks*.

[^^^]

also spelled Tartars, descendents of invaders from Central Asia, but essentially at this point any Muslims who speak Turkish languages. Remember the Circassians don't speak a Turkic dialect, but a rare Indo-European one.

[^^^]

*Kammeny Brod*, probably fictional.

[^^^]

or *boza*, a new wine or other fermented drink made with hemp seed, not related to the slang word "booze", which is from Middle English for cup.

[^^^]

sounds like an interesting story, but we aren't told that story here.

[^^^]



*mirnoy knyaz'* – he didn't take sides between the Russians and the guerrillas.

[^^^]

the age is of interest since he insults the young cadet, who was about 21, a few years before, in "Princess Mary," and because a psychoanalytic interpretation of Pechorin's personality indicates narcissism and inordinate concern about his appearance and being an adult, or at least so say some experts.

[^^^]

short for Maksim Maksimovich, and pronounced like "Mack-SEE-much" according to Nabokov. We have changed the name throughout from Parker's "Maksimych."

[^^^]

"white army caps": an ordinary informal, fatigue uniform cap that would, however, be worn by an officer demoted in rank, such as a political exile or one who had killed another in a duel. (Cornwell notes the undertext of political exile in this locale through the book.) Regular Army epaulets indicate a lesser grade than a royal Guards officer from the capital. A cadet might wear an army overcoat to pretend he had been in a duel and so reduced in rank.

[^^^]

"Bad" according to the text, although it is not certain how skilled Lermontov (or Maksim Maksimich, or the unnamed narrator, either, for that matter) was with the maze of Caucasian languages. Can we trust any of the narrators here?

[^^^]

ritual blood-brother in this culture, sworn buddy, from the word for "guest" in Turkic dialect; it doesn't seem that it means much in this story.

[^^^]

in this case, all Muslims.

[^^^]

Muslim religious leader.

[^^^]



formal dance.

[^^^]

strummed Russian string instrument.

[^^^]

although in Latin languages it might connote "beautiful," in Turkic it means "grief." However, the Circassian language is not Turkic but Ibero-Caucasian, an Indo-European branch.

[^^^]

pronounced with the accent on the second syllable.

[^^^]

actually, *barani* meaning rams.

[^^^]

*besmet* or *bashmet*, a silk or cotton shirt or smock belted at the waist and usually fancily embroidered; the jacket over it was usually worn open to expose it.

[^^^]

planning what? The plot is thin here.

[^^^]

southern Russian tribesmen, Christians, who served as skilled cavalrymen and sort of military police force.

[^^^]



word used is actually "Giaour," Turkish for non-Muslim, like the Yiddish "goy."

[^^^]

Nabokov believes it means "Black Eye" in Turkic, but again, the Circassians here didn't speak a Turkic language. The love affair between Russian men and their horses is described in many books.

[^^^]

famous sword-maker made very sharp blades layered and tempered like Toledo steel. Pistols and muskets of the time had only a short range and were inaccurate from a moving horse. Swords and knives were important emblems for men.

[^^^]

probably invented by Lermontov, and his lie about its being in prose first is just piling fiction upon preposterous fiction. Lermontov wrote surpassingly good verse still memorized by Russians, but pretty much unknown in English.

*Author's note:* I apologize to my readers for having put Kazbich's song, which of course was told in prose, into verse; but habit is second nature.

[^^^]

Nabokov lists a whole page of these stock phrases Lermontov uses to indicate emotion in various Romantic ways.

[^^^]

mountain mammal like an antelope or goat.

[^^^]

bride-money, dowry. Many tribes regulate marriages by requiring the husband to pay for the wife before marriage – if she returns to her family he doesn't always get his money back; alternatively, her family gives money which is often retained by her no matter what happens.

[^^^]

# 50

the narrator (can you figure out which one here?) has already forgotten that this courser never needed to be tethered.

[^^^]



Nabokov states something apparently is wrong with the text here.

[^^^]

"I once witnessed...", etc.: Nabokov emphasizes the role of eavesdropping in the novel as a literary device to advance the plot, since the exchange of letters as in the Romantic epistolary novel had been worn out by this time. Psychoanalytic critics point out the social isolation involved in this behavior. It also brings in the element of chance vs. fate that runs through the text. Furthermore, it fits right in with the strange texture of the text where fictional characters seem to invent and imitate one another and listen in to what each other says – amazing when you think of it – what is really the truth in this novel?

[^^^]

i.e., Muslims on the south side of the mountains.

[^^^]

the Russian word is the same for heaven, sky, or firmament.

[^^^]

Gamba, French diplomat to Georgia, travel writer (1826), misinterpreted Mount Krestovaya (Mount of the Cross, from Russian "krest" or cross) as "Mount Saint Christopher."

[^^^]

prosaic central Russian provincial cities.

[^^^]

the whistling highway robber of Russian folklore who could frighten by imitating wild animals.

[^^^]

(1672-1725) occupied Derbent in 1702 and Baku in 1723 and traveled through East Caucasus but there is no record he went as far as this part of the mountains.

[^^^]



*polyana*, which really means clearing.

[^^^]

**60**

so much for the blood-brother.

[^^^]

did Kazbich want to carry her off?: The previous motivation seems to have been forgotten – why didn't he take off after his beloved courser instead of the girl?

[^^^]

we couldn't bring ourselves to use the word "poultice" here.

[^^^]

or Shapsugi, a tribe of the Circassians in the northwest Caucasus.

[^^^]

now Krasnodar, North Caucasus, spa town perhaps 60 miles northwest of Vladikavkaz.

[^^^]

the dry steppes, or rolling upland prairie hills north of the Caucasus, were crossed by (Bactrian) camel caravans.

[^^^]

comic character from 1785 and later operas.

[^^^]



Nabokov uses the term "bags" here because the local people were known to collect honey in goat-skins.

[^^^]

or coy woman: from his short novel, *La femme de trente ans* (1834)

[^^^]

all-too-revealing Romantic so-called autobiography of 1782. See on-line version.

[^^^]

*nechisto*, just unclean, but there are overtones of haunted or evil, perhaps influenced by Undina.

[^^^]

Black Sea port near Caucasus, south of Taman.

[^^^]

"On that day shall the mute sing out and the blind shall see:" Isaiah 35:5-6, 29:18.

[^^^]

Nabokov insists the word used means "boulders" and goes into a long explanation of why it should be translated "billows".

[^^^]

as the name indicates, this is what is left of an ancient Greek colony on the Black Sea.

[^^^]



actually, "undine," as in Zhukovsky's poem Undina and an 1811 French romance.

[^^^]

changed here from "gloaming".

[^^^]

not to be confused with the political movement a little later, this was a foolish group of dandies in Paris who ineffectually looked down on the solid middle class and posed such ridiculous propositions as this one.

[^^^]

pseudo-science such as phrenology and diagnosis by facial features was common at the time. It would not be surprising to see Roman features in people living in Black Sea towns.

[^^^]

heroine from Goethe's Wilhelm Meister.

[^^^]

spa town on river about 60 miles west of Yekateringrad and north of the Caucasus and its highest peak, Mt. Elbrus. Lermontov was killed in a duel here. A spa is a place with mineral water springs thought to have healing properties and thus frequented by wounded soldiers or other sick or old people. It was a good place to mix and form new social relationships and so a suitable place for a novel. Finally, this type of society gathering was usual in the society novels that Lermontov effectively puts paid to in this segment (the Encyclopædia Britannica article on Lermontov seems to miss the point of its irony entirely).

[^^^]

"the last cloud...": from Pushkin's *The Storm*  
Cloud, 1835.

[^^^]

swelling of the glands.

[^^^]



we couldn't bear to use the term "lorgnette," a sort of magnifying spectacle often with a little handle, used to see at a distance, as at the opera or to make an impression on someone.

[^^^]

Nabokov notes the tendency as here to veer into the past tense as if someone – maybe Pechorin? – is trying out this character for a role in a play or a book.

[^^^]

French for love-letters.

[^^^]

cut very short.

[^^^]

"My friend, I hate men in order not to despise them – otherwise life would be too disgusting a farce."

[^^^]

"My friend, I despise women in order not to love them – otherwise life would be too ridiculous a melodrama."

[^^^]

handsome young man loved by Aphrodite in Greek legend.

[^^^]

a stock allusion to an old report that the Roman fortune-tellers who worked by examining animals' guts used to laugh in secret reference to their play-acting of predictions whenever two of them met.

[^^^]



this whole speech is one of the most revealing of Pechorin's character, according to psychoanalytic critics, who point out the obvious determination by Pechorin to hide as much of his true character as possible at the same time he claims that all is known.

[^^^]

the word is missing in Parker's text but we agree with Nabokov in replacing it here.

[^^^]

*cherkeska*, i.e., from the Cherkes.

[^^^]

*balki*, Turkic, like the Spanish *barranco*.

[^^^]

another reference to Chatsky, see below.

[^^^]

"My God, a Circassian (bandit)." "Fear not, ma'am, I am no more dangerous than your companion" (cavalier, gallant knight, meaning Grushnitsky). More polite French phrases follow in this story, such as "That's impossible," "Permit me," and so forth. Upper class Russians spoke French in formal society.

[^^^]

another spa to the west some ten miles.

[^^^]

since the Jews were not accepted in Russian society they had to work in such jobs as tailors.

[^^^]



a magazine meant to be taken seriously, edited by Osip Senkovsky, who, by the way, first reviewed this book rather favorably, but, after Lermontov's death, retracted his judgment and called it infantile.

[^^^]

economically too small a feudal estate with that many serfs or as they were called "souls".

[^^^]

famous Caucasian mineral water. In the Kabardian language, nart-sane means drink of the Narts, mythical giants or heroes.

[^^^]

actually, the imported American black locust tree, which has beautiful white flowers this time of year.

[^^^]

loosely from *Chatsky*, or *Woe from Wit* (1824, 1833), a comedy by Griboyedov that was banned by the censors for political reasons. This work seems to have begun the theme of the Russian "superfluous man" that is continued here and later by many others, including Turgenev and Dostoyevsky.

[^^^]

from Eugene Onegin, appeared in 1828.

[^^^]

1581 Italian poem read in French versions in Russia. See online version.

[^^^]

the Russians had read a French version of *The Vampire: A Tale*, by John Polidori (1819).

[^^^]



read in French translation (though Lermontov knew some English).

[^^^]

whose fate the Roman augurs, or fortune-tellers, had fully predicted, as in "the ides of March".

[^^^]

the comedy (play) is over.

[^^^]

card game like bridge.

[^^^]

gambling card games.

[^^^]

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*chirir'*, Caucasian new wine.

[^^^]

we've added "big book" here – it's our predestined fate, the mythical story that the author God has already assigned every detail to our mortal lives, and supposedly written it in a book available for consultation in heaven. Note the parallel to a similar expression at the start of this novel.

[^^^]

Another online edition of this work can be found at the University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center. That English translation, entitled "The Heart of a Russian," by J. H. Wisdom Marr Murray, N.Y.: Knopf, 1916, has a different order to the chapters and has heavy Victorian prose and sketchy footnotes. However, the edition, by Judy Boss, Carolyn Fay, and David Seaman, does have page numbers and a few color illustrations. We did not refer to it when doing this edition. A text-only version of that translation was released in Project Gutenberg in May, 1997.

For further references, please see the books by Cornwell and Nabokov previously cited, as they contain notes, a map, chronologies, excerpts from critical material, and everything you need.

[^^^]