DEMONS

THE POSSESSED: ABRIDGED, ANNOTATED, AND EDITED FOR A NEW GENERATION, REVISED

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

Translated by

CONSTANCE GARNETT

Edited by

THOMAS AND DYANNE MARTIN

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"Strike me dead, the track has vanished,
Well, what now? We've lost the way,
Demons have bewitched our horses,
Led us in the wilds astray.
What a number! Whither drift they?
What's the mournful dirge they sing?
Do they hail a witch's marriage
Or a goblin's burying?"
—A. Pushkin

"And there was one herd of many swine feeding on this mountain; and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

"Then went the devils out of the man and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake and were choked.

"When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

"Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid."

—Luke 8:32–37

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Of all Dostoevsky's far-seeing fictions, none is more prophetic than his 1872 novel *Demons*. Here in nascent form is an outline of the modern world to come after him. *Demons* is Dostoevsky's great novel of ideas and the people who pursue them—or ideas and the people they pursue. Dostoevsky writes no philosopher's parlor game in *Demons*, a story in which abstractions played by mummers express textbook generalities in service of idle speculations. The living interaction he creates between ideas and people—intellectual movements and social change—makes for a gripping story of nothing less than life and death.

Dostoevsky draws inspiration for *Demons* from the pages of Russian history. In his time, radicalism and nihilism had gained popularity with students, and those ideas circulating in their midst exerted a significant influence on society at large. Among those students was Sergey Nechayev, responsible for forming a number of revolutionary circles and launching a nationwide movement to spread his brand of radicalism. The religious ardor that spurred Nechayev's revolutionary aspirations—along with the incendiary rhetoric with which he expressed them—can be seen in his 1869 "The Revolutionary Catechism." Among the declarations readers will find there is his statement, "To weld the people into one single unconquerable and all-destructive force—this is our aim, our conspiracy, and our task." And, "Our task is terrible, total, universal, and merciless destruction." While his catechism is available online for those who wish to read it in our time, Nechayev's writings were scandalous in his.

It is hardly surprising, then, that to print and circulate a manifest program of political destruction attracted the scrutiny of authorities. Whether the government and its officials across Russia responded appropriately, or perhaps could have given rising social pressures and changing attitudes, is another matter. For before long, scandalous ideas led to scan-

dalous actions. Nechayev suspected a fellow student by the name of I. I. Ivanov of planning to betray their secret circle. The young revolutionary leader, with the aid of other members, beat, strangled, and shot Ivanov to death. Details of the death included vicious bite marks on the hands of the deceased. The scandal of Nechayev's crimes filled Russian newspapers .

And so the question *Why* we feature on this book's cover burned in the minds of concerned Russians like Dostoevsky—why and where do such outrageous ideas lead? And indeed what could possess young people in the prime of their lives to pursue such a course of death and destruction? While many of Dostoevsky's contemporaries doubtless asked such questions, no one ever answered them as he does in this novel. His narrative probes the wherefores of the human condition and extrapolates from them a warning for the future. As he does so, Dostoevsky turns this turbulent history into unforgettable characters who tell a story for the ages.

That story begins in a drawing room, the place where ideas are often incubated. But in this setting, the search for truth takes a backseat to a teeming world of psychological motivations as personalities and the ideas they entertain come into sharp focus. Perhaps entertainment is the point of the ideas, as those who conceive them seek affirmation in the midst of doubt, pleasure in the midst of boredom, and fame in the midst of insignificance. Dostoevsky sets all his powers across these pages to explore the question, if we can slightly adapt Shakespeare's words, "Tell me where are ideas bred, in the heart or in the head?" If we ask with Dostoevsky not only how are ideas nourished, but also how are they conceived, begot, even conjured, this trip into the human heart will startle us as much as it disturbs us.

Into our deep interiors Dostoevsky draws us, but he also takes us back out again into our public exteriors where our ideas and their motivations play out across a human drama in which they are ultimately tested and history is made. Heightening that drama in this story, finally, is the consequential moment when one generation hands off the burden of civilization to the next. While Joyce Carol Oates called *Demons* Dostoevsky's most violent novel, others have called it his most humorous. The strangely moving combinations he creates as well as the compelling issues his characters raise make the novel profoundly relevant. In truth, the range that Dostoevsky achieves in taking us to the limit of both leaves this novel few peers in the realm of narrative art.

So has Dostoevsky written a realist novel? Has he written a psychological novel? His thoroughly modern yet classically educated narrator "G—v" calls his task an "undertaking to describe the recent and strange incidents in our town, till lately wrapped in uneventful obscurity. . . ." G—v goes to great lengths both to investigate and relate the story in exacting detail. But as he endeavors among those "strange incidents" to relate acts that beggar belief, he also signals other literary forms in order to come to terms with what he must tell. Among those explanations comes the first epigraph from Pushkin, which signals the marvelous in which truth reminds us it is often

stranger than fiction. The second epigraph from the Gospel of Luke signals a spiritual tale. The early mention of Gulliver in the novel, moreover, signals social satire. To be sure, in this story elements of all these literary forms and more combine. The attentive reader will see how the novel blends modes and moods to take readers from the ridiculousness of human behavior to its most sublime persuasions, from the darkest places of humor to the brightest spots of inspiration, from the depths of human depravity to the heights of nobility.

The fact is that Dostoevsky in *Demons* takes the reader to all these places and speaks in all these voices in order to tell his tale in full. The result is commonly regarded as one of his four great masterpieces, along with *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. Readers who pick up this wide-ranging and polyphonic narrative will see why it is called the greatest political novel ever written. Marc Slonim said of *Demons* that it "is not only a novel about revolution, crime, atheism, religion, strong men, underground men, and the Russian past and present. It is . . . one of the most captivating and thrilling tales of modern literature." And Ronald Hingley deemed it, "one of humanity's most impressive achievements—perhaps even its supreme achievement—in the art of prose fiction."

A word about the abridgment. Those who have read the entire novel know how many side trips the narrative takes and how many epicycles turn as characters develop across a story first serialized in *The Russian Messenger*. Our abridgment preserves the rhythms of Dostoevsky's sprawling narrative, the essence of his story, all the main characters, and most of the minor, too, without the numerous onramps and excess prolixity some readers have found in the full text. Although we have significantly economized its length in this edition by excising over one-hundred thousand words, those readers who seek an even shorter version should simply turn to the novel's third section and read it with the aid of our list of character names. There they will find the novel's "heart of hearts," to which all the earlier character development has been leading. Those characters are so distinctive and carefully redrawn in the third part that commencing reading at that central action should pose little challenge to a modern audience. Indeed, critics have commented that the work is three novels across its three parts. As for the translation, we have substantially preserved the nineteenth-century qualities of Constance Garnett's, including the peculiarities of her spelling and irregular diacritical marks, which she produced only four decades after Dostoevsky's publication and which remains the preferred English edition by some scholars. We have retained Dostoevsky's many ellipses in the dialogue, adding none of our own. All notes from Garnett's edition are marked "Translator's note"; all other notes are ours. This revised edition includes translations of all passages in French, German, and Latin.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Note on Patronymics:

A key to reading a Dostoevsky novel is understanding Russian patronymic names. *Patronymic* simply means 'father's name' or 'name based on the father.' The Slavic custom is that patronymics serve as middle names. The convention holds that in addressing one's seniors and in and other formal settings, one uses the first name with the patronymic. In informal settings and when addressing those of one's own age, one omits the patronymic.

Examples:

• Male patronymics end in *-ovich, -yevich,* and *-yich*.

• Example: Stepan Trofimovitch Verkhovensky is Stepan "son of Trofim" Verkhovensky.

• Female patronymics end in *-yevna, -ovna,* or *-ichna*.

• Example: Varvara Petrovna Stavrogin is Varvara "daughter of Petrov" Stavrogin.

Stepan Trofimovitch Verhovensky

The "celebrated leader of the last generation," "progressive patriot," "lecturer at university," and tutor at the house of Varvara Petrova Stavrogin.

Pyotr Stepanovich Verhovensky, "Petrusha," "Pierre"

Stepan's son, neglected by his father, raised by his aunts, returns after years of absence.

Varvara Petrovna Stavrogin

A "female Maecenas," wealthy patroness who financially supports

Stepan Trofimovitch and the arts in their community. She holds *salons* as literary gatherings in her town.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch Stavrogin, "Nicolas"

Varvara Petrovna's son, whose lieutenant-general father is estranged from his mother and dies of a "stomach ailment on the way to the Crimea," leaving her a widow and his son fatherless. Stepan becomes his tutor when Nikolay is eight years old. Nikolay goes out into the world, obtains a commission in the army, meets Pyotr Stepanovich abroad, and returns to his home at twenty-five after many years as well.

Anton Lavrentyevitch G—v

Narrator and confidant of Stepan Trofimovitch.

Ivan Pavlovich Shatov, "Shatushka"

Son of a former serf in Varvara Petrovna Stavrogin's house, he was a university student but expelled for some unexplained disturbance. Turning away from his radical ideas, he "rushed to the opposite extreme." He lives in extreme poverty on the outskirts of the town.

Darya Pavlovna Shatov, "Dasha" or "Dashenka"

Shatov's sister, who is twenty-years old, and protege of Varvara.

Praskovya Ivanovna Drozdov (formerly Tushin)

She is "the widow of the general and the friend of Varvara Petrovna's childhood." She is the mother of Liza.

Lizaveta Nikolaevna Tushin, "Liza"

Daughter of Praskovya Ivanovna, she is twenty-two at the time of the story and heiress of a large inheritance from her father.

Mavriky Nikolaevitch, "Maurice"

Liza's traveling companion and love interest. He is thirty-three and an artillery captain.

Ivan Ossipovitch

The old governor.

Andrey Antonovitch von Lembke

The new governor.

Yulia Mihailovna von Lembke

The new governor's wife. She also hosts young people at literary gatherings as does Varvara Petrovna and is sometimes a rival to Varvara Petrovna.

Captain Ignat Lebyadkin, "Ignaty"

It is unclear whether he was a captain or not. Brother to Marya Timofyevna Lebyadkin.

Marya Timofyevna Lebyadkin

His "mad" sister, who is lame and emotionally frail.

Other Characters:

Kirillov (Alexey Nilitch)

The young civil engineer who comes to town in hopes of the job to build the railway bridge.

Liputin (Sergay Vassilyevitch)

An "elderly provincial official, and a great liberal, . . . reputed in the town to be an atheist." Not especially well received by others, a "scandal-monger."

Virginsky

He is thirty years old, a "clerk in the service." Self-educated, he is a man of "honest fervour."

Arina Prohorovna Virginsky

His wife, a midwife.

Pyotr Pavlovitch Gaganov, once called Pavel

An "elderly man of high rank in the service" whom Stavrogin offends.

Artemy Pavlovitch Gaganov

His thirty-three year old son who takes up his father's offense.

Karmazinov

The famous novelist.

Shigalov

Brother of Virginsky's wife, writes progressive materials and looks like he awaits "the destruction of the world."

Fedka

The "run-away convict from Siberia."

Erkel

The young officer.

Lyamshin

A Jewish post office clerk and "wonderful performer on the piano."

Marya Ignatyevna
Shatov's estranged wife.

Sofya Matveyevna Ulitin
The gospel seller.

Flibusterov
The police superintendent.

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

Some Details of the Biography of That Highly Respected Gentleman Stepan Trofimovitch Verhovensky

I

In undertaking to describe the recent and strange incidents in our town, till lately wrapped in uneventful obscurity, I find myself forced in absence of literary skill to begin my story rather far back, that is to say, with certain biographical details concerning that talented and highly esteemed gentleman, Stepan Trofimovitch Verhovensky.

I will say at once that Stepan Trofimovitch had always filled a particular role among us, that of the progressive patriot, so to say, and he was passionately fond of playing the part—so much so that I really believe he could not have existed without it.

He fondly loved, for instance, his position as a "persecuted" man and, so to speak, an "exile." There is a sort of traditional glamour about those two little words that fascinated him once for all and, exalting him gradually in his own opinion, raised him in the course of years to a lofty pedestal very gratifying to vanity.

Gulliver, returning from the land of the Lilliputians where the people were only three or four inches high, had grown so accustomed to consider himself a giant among them, that as he walked along the streets of London he could not help crying out to carriages and passers-by to be careful and get out of his way for fear he should crush them, imagining that they were little and he was still a giant. He was laughed at and abused for it, and rough coachmen even lashed at the giant with their whips.

He had at one time belonged to a certain distinguished constellation of celebrated leaders of the last generation, and at one time—though only for

the briefest moment—his name was pronounced by many hasty persons of that day almost as though it were on a level with the names of Tchaadaev, of Byelinsky, of Granovsky, and of Herzen.*

He came back from abroad and was brilliant in the capacity of lecturer at the university, towards the end of the forties. He had time to deliver only a few lectures, I believe they were about the Arabs; he maintained, too, a brilliant thesis on the political and Hanseatic importance of the German town Hanau. This dissertation was a cruel and skilful thrust at the Slavophils of the day, and at once made him numerous and irreconcilable enemies among them. Later on—after he had lost his post as lecturer, however—he published (by way of revenge, so to say, and to show them what a man they had lost) in a progressive monthly review, which translated Dickens and advocated the views of George Sand, the beginning of a very profound investigation into the causes, I believe, of the extraordinary moral nobility of certain knights at a certain epoch or something of that nature.

He cut short his lectures on the Arabs because, somehow and by someone (probably one of his reactionary enemies) a letter had been seized giving an account of certain circumstances, in consequence of which someone had demanded an explanation from him.

It was asserted that at the same time there was discovered in Petersburg a vast, unnatural, and illegal conspiracy of thirty people which almost shook society to its foundations. It was said that they were positively on the point of translating Fourier.† As though of design a poem of Stepan Trofimovitch's was seized in Moscow at that very time, though it had been written six years before in Berlin in his earliest youth, and manuscript copies had been passed round a circle consisting of two poetical amateurs and one student.

It is some sort of an allegory in lyrical dramatic form, recalling the second part of Faust. The scene opens with a chorus of women, followed by a chorus of men, then a chorus of incorporeal powers of some sort, and at the end of all a chorus of spirits not yet living but very eager to come to life.

There begins a sort of "festival of life" at which even insects sing, a tortoise comes on the scene with certain sacramental Latin words, and even, if I remember aright, a mineral sings about something that is a quite inanimate object. In fact, they all sing continually, or if they converse, it is simply to abuse one another vaguely, but again with a tinge of higher meaning. At last the scene is changed again; a wilderness appears, and among the rocks there wanders a civilized young man who picks and sucks certain herbs. Asked by a fairy why he sucks these herbs, he answers that, conscious of a superfluity of life in himself, he seeks forgetfulness, and

* Russian intellectuals known as "Westernizers" who championed new European values over those of the "Slavophils" who upheld Russian tradition and that of the Orthodox Church: Pyotr Tchaadaev, Vissarion Belinsky, Timofey Granovsky, and Alexander Herzen.

† Charles Fourier, French socialist thinker of the early nineteenth century.

finds it in the juice of these herbs, but that his great desire is to lose his reason at once (a desire possibly superfluous). Then a youth of indescribable beauty rides in on a black steed, and an immense multitude of all nations follow him. The youth represents death, for whom all the peoples are yearning. And finally, in the last scene we are suddenly shown the Tower of Babel, and certain athletes at last finish building it with a song of new hope, and when at length they complete the topmost pinnacle, the lord (of Olympia, let us say) takes flight in a comic fashion, and man, grasping the situation and seizing his place, at once begins a new life with new insight into things. Well, this poem was thought at that time to be dangerous.

And what do you think? Suddenly, almost at the time I proposed printing it here, our poem was published abroad in a collection of revolutionary verse, without the knowledge of Stepan Trofimovitch.

II

Of course I don't assert that he had never suffered for his convictions at all, but I am fully convinced that he might have gone on lecturing on his Arabs as long as he liked, if he had only given the necessary explanations. But he was too lofty, and he proceeded with peculiar haste to assure himself that his career was ruined forever "by the vortex of circumstance." And if the whole truth is to be told the real cause of the change in his career was the very delicate proposition which had been made before and was then renewed by Varvara Petrovna Stavrogin, a lady of great wealth, the wife of a lieutenant-general, that he should undertake the education and the whole intellectual development of her only son in the capacity of a superior sort of teacher and friend, to say nothing of a magnificent salary. This proposal had been made to him the first time in Berlin, at the moment when he was first left a widower. His first wife was a frivolous girl from our province, whom he married in his early and unthinking youth, and apparently he had had a great deal of trouble with this young person, charming as she was, owing to the lack of means for her support; and also from other, more delicate, reasons. She died in Paris after three years' separation from him, leaving him a son of five years old; "the fruit of our first, joyous, and unclouded love," were the words the sorrowing father once let fall in my presence.

The child had, from the first, been sent back to Russia, where he was brought up in the charge of distant cousins in some remote region. Stepan Trofimovitch had declined Varvara Petrovna's proposal on that occasion and had quickly married again, before the year was over, a taciturn Berlin girl, and, what makes it more strange, there was no particular necessity for him to do so.

The sudden death of his second wife, who did not live a year with him, settled the matter decisively. To put it plainly it was all brought about by the passionate sympathy and priceless, so to speak, classic friendship of

Varvara Petrovna, if one may use such an expression of friendship. He flung himself into the arms of this friendship, and his position was settled for more than twenty years.

The post of tutor was the more readily accepted too, as the property—a very small one—left to Stepan Trofimovitch by his first wife was close to Skvoreshniki, the Stavrogins' magnificent estate on the outskirts of our provincial town. It did appear possible to spend the rest of his life, more than twenty years, "a reproach incarnate," so to speak, to his native country, in the words of a popular poet:

> Reproach incarnate thou didst stand
> Erect before thy Fatherland,
> O Liberal idealist!

Our Stepan Trofimovitch was, to tell the truth, only an imitator compared with such people.

You should have seen him at our club when he sat down to cards. His whole figure seemed to exclaim "Cards! Me sit down to whist* with you! Is it consistent? Who is responsible for it? Who has shattered my energies and turned them to whist? Ah, perish, Russia!" and he would majestically trump with a heart. He was a man of tender conscience (that is, sometimes) and so was often depressed.

Every summer he used to move into Varvara Petrovna's little lodge which stood adjoining the huge seignorial house of Skvoreshniki. In the course of his twenty years' friendship with her, he used regularly, three or four times a year, to sink into a state of "patriotic grief," as it was called among us. Varvara Petrovna's alertness succeeded in keeping him all his life from trivial inclinations. She was a woman of the classic type, a female Maecenas,† invariably guided only by the highest considerations.

III-IV

There are strange friendships. No doubt Varvara Petrovna did very often hate him. But there was one thing he had not discerned up to the end: that was that he had become for her a son, her creation, even, one may say, her invention; he had become flesh of her flesh, and she kept and supported him not simply from "envy of his talents." And how wounded she must have been by such suppositions! An inexhaustible love for him lay concealed in her heart in the midst of continual hatred, jealousy, and contempt. She would not let a speck of dust fall upon him, coddled him up for twenty-two years.

On one occasion, just at the time when the first rumours of the emancipation of the serfs were in the air, when all Russia was exulting and making

* A card game.
† Patron of Virgil and Horace.

ready for a complete regeneration, Varvara Petrovna was visited by a baron from Petersburg, a man of the highest connections, and very closely associated with the new reform.

When the baron positively asserted the absolute truth of the rumours of the great reform, which were then only just beginning to be heard, Stepan Trofimovitch could not contain himself, and suddenly shouted "Hurrah!" and even made some gesticulation indicative of delight.

She turned to Stepan Trofimovitch, and with pale face and flashing eyes she hissed in a whisper: "I shall never forgive you for that!"

Next day she met her friend as though nothing had happened.

A strange idea suddenly came over Stepan Trofimovitch: "Was not the inconsolable widow reckoning upon him, and expecting from him, when her mourning was over, the offer of his hand?" A cynical idea, but the very loftiness of a man's nature sometimes increases a disposition to cynical ideas if only from the many-sidedness of his culture. He began to look more deeply into it, and thought it seemed like it. He pondered: "Her fortune is immense, of course, but . . . " Varvara Petrovna certainly could not be called a beauty. She was a tall, yellow, bony woman with an extremely long face, suggestive of a horse. Stepan Trofimovitch hesitated more and more, he was tortured by doubts, he positively shed tears of indecision once or twice (he wept not infrequently). It is to be supposed that she soon inwardly guessed the significance of her friend's strange expression; she was quick and observant, and he was sometimes extremely guileless.

V

She had herself designed the costume for him, which he wore for the rest of his life. It was elegant and characteristic; a long black frock-coat, buttoned almost to the top, but stylishly cut; a soft hat (in summer a straw hat) with a wide brim, a white batiste cravat with a full bow and hanging ends, a cane with a silver knob; his hair flowed on to his shoulders. It was dark brown, and only lately had begun to get a little grey. He was clean-shaven. He was said to have been very handsome in his youth. And, to my mind, he was still an exceptionally impressive figure even in old age. Besides, who can talk of old age at fifty-three?

For the first years or, more accurately, for the first half of the time he spent with Varvara Petrovna, Stepan Trofimovitch was still planning a book and every day seriously prepared to write it. But during the later period he must have forgotten even what he had done. More and more frequently he used to say to us: "I seem to be ready for work, my materials are collected, yet the work doesn't get done! Nothing is done!"

The revolutionary manifestoes were just beginning to appear at the time (she was able to procure them all); but this only set her head in a whirl. She fell to writing letters; she got few answers, and they grew more incomprehensible as time went on. Stepan Trofimovitch was solemnly called

upon to explain "these ideas" to her once for all, but she remained distinctly dissatisfied with his explanations.

Stepan Trofimovitch's view of the general movement was supercilious in the extreme. In his eyes all it amounted to was that he was forgotten and of no use. At last his name was mentioned, at first in periodicals published abroad as that of an exiled martyr and immediately afterwards in Petersburg as that of a former star in a celebrated constellation. He was even for some reason compared with Radishtchev.* Then someone printed the statement that he was dead and promised an obituary notice of him. Stepan Trofimovitch instantly perked up and assumed an air of immense dignity. All his disdain for his contemporaries evaporated and he began to cherish the dream of joining the movement and showing his powers. Varvara Petrovna's faith in everything instantly revived and she was thrown into a violent ferment. It was decided to go to Petersburg without a moment's delay, to find out everything on the spot, to go into everything personally, and, if possible, to throw themselves heart and soul into the new movement. Among other things she announced that she was prepared to found a magazine of her own and henceforward to devote her whole life to it.

The ostensible object of the journey was to see her only son, who was just finishing his studies at a Petersburg lyceum.

VI

They spent almost the whole winter season in Petersburg. But by Lent everything burst like a rainbow-coloured soap-bubble. Varvara Petrovna threw herself heart and soul into the "new ideas," and began giving evening receptions. She invited literary people, and they were brought to her at once in multitudes.

They were incredibly vain, but quite open in their vanity, as though they were performing a duty by the display of it. On every face was written that they had only just discovered some extremely important secret. They abused one another and took credit to themselves for it.

When Varvara Petrovna announced her idea of founding a magazine, people flocked to her in even larger numbers, but charges of being a capitalist and an exploiter of labour were showered upon her to her face. The rudeness of these accusations was equalled only by their unexpectedness.

At his last lecture Stepan Trofimovitch thought to impress them with patriotic eloquence, hoping to touch their hearts, and reckoning on the respect inspired by his "persecution." He did not attempt to dispute the uselessness and absurdity of the word "fatherland," acknowledged the pernicious influence of religion, but firmly and loudly declared that boots were of less consequence than Pushkin; of much less, indeed. He was hissed so mercilessly that he burst into tears, there and then, on the platform.

* Alexander Radishtchev, the early radical author whose writings in the time of Catherine the Great brought him serious legal trouble and ultimately exile.

Varvara Petrovna took him home more dead than alive. *"On m'a traité, comme un vieux bonnet de coton,"** he babbled senselessly. She was looking after him all night, giving him laurel-drops and repeating to him till daybreak, "You will still be of use; you will still make your mark; you will be appreciated . . . in another place."

Early next morning, five literary men called on Varvara Petrovna, three of them complete strangers. Their decision was that, having founded the magazine, she should at once hand it over to them with the capital to run it, on the basis of a co-operative society. She herself was to go back to Skvoreshniki, not forgetting to take with her Stepan Trofimovitch, who was "out of date." What was most touching about it was that of these five men, four certainly were not actuated by any mercenary motive and were simply acting in the interests of the "cause."

"We came away utterly at a loss," Stepan Trofimovitch used to say afterwards. "I couldn't make head or tail of it," and kept muttering. "Oh, my friends!" he would exclaim to us sometimes with fervour, "you cannot imagine what wrath and sadness overcome your whole soul when a great idea, which you have long cherished as holy, is caught up by the ignorant and dragged forth before fools like themselves into the street, and you suddenly meet it in the market unrecognisable, in the mud, absurdly set up, without proportion, without harmony, the plaything of foolish louts! No! In our day it was not so, and it was not this for which we strove. No, no, not this at all. I don't recognise it. . . . Our day will come again and will turn all the tottering fabric of today into a true path. If not, what will happen?"

VII

Immediately on their return from Petersburg Varvara Petrovna sent her friend abroad to "recruit"; and, indeed, it was necessary for them to part for a time. She felt that Stepan Trofimovitch was delighted to go.

"There I shall revive!" he exclaimed. "There, at last, I shall set to work!" But in the first of his letters from Berlin he struck his usual note:

"My heart is broken!" he wrote to Varvara Petrovna. "I can forget nothing! Here, in Berlin, everything brings back to me my old past. Where is she? Where are they both? Where are you two angels of whom I was never worthy? Where is my son, my beloved son? And last of all, where am I, where is my old self, strong as steel, firm as a rock"—and so on.

As for Stepan Trofimovitch's son, he had seen him only twice in his life, the first time when he was born and the second time lately in Petersburg, where the young man was preparing to enter the university. The boy had been all his life brought up by his aunts (at Varvara Petrovna's expense) in a remote province, nearly six hundred miles from Skvoreshniki.

Varvara Petrovna liberally provided her friend with funds when she sent him to Berlin. "I am working twelve hours out of the twenty-four. I sit

* "I was treated like an old cotton hat."

up talking till daybreak with the young people and we have almost Athenian evenings, Athenian, I mean, only in their intellectual subtlety and refinement. Everything is in noble style. In heart I am with you and am yours; with you alone, always, *en tout pays,* even in *le pays de Makar et de ses veaux*."*

"Come, it's all nonsense!" Varvara Petrovna commented, folding up that letter. "If he's up till daybreak with his Athenian nights, he isn't at his books for twelve hours a day. Was he drunk when he wrote it?

The phrase "*dans le pays de Makar et de ses veaux*" meant "wherever Makar may drive his calves." Stepan Trofimovitch sometimes purposely translated Russian proverbs and traditional sayings into French in the most stupid way, though no doubt he was able to understand and translate them better. But he did it from a feeling that it was chic, and thought it witty.

But he did not amuse himself for long. He could not hold out for four months and was soon flying back to Skvoreshniki. His last letters consisted of nothing but outpourings of the most sentimental love for his absent friend and were literally wet with tears. There are natures extremely attached to home like lap-dogs. The meeting of the friends was enthusiastic. Within two days everything was as before and even duller than before.

VIII

After this we had a period of stagnation which lasted nine years. By degrees a circle of friends had formed around Stepan Trofimovitch, although it was never a very large one. Though Varvara Petrovna had little to do with the circle, yet we all recognised her as our patroness.

Stepan Trofimovitch lost at cards majestically, and was everywhere treated with respect, though many people regarded him only as a "learned man." Later on, when Varvara Petrovna allowed him to live in a separate house, we enjoyed greater freedom than before. Twice a week we used to meet at his house. We were a merry party, especially when he was not sparing of the champagne. The bill was paid twice a year by Varvara Petrovna, and on the day it was paid Stepan Trofimovitch almost invariably suffered from an attack of his "summer cholera."

One of the first members of our circle was Liputin, an elderly provincial official, and a great liberal, who was reputed in the town to be an atheist. He had married for the second time a young and pretty wife with a dowry and had, besides, three grown-up daughters. He brought up his family in the fear of God and kept a tight hand over them. He was extremely stingy, and out of his salary had bought himself a house and amassed a fortune. He was an uncomfortable sort of man and had not been in the service. He was not much respected in the town and was not received in the best circles.

* "in every land, even in the land of Makar and his calves" (i.e., a fictional character from Russian folklore—n.b., the narrator's comment in the next paragraph about Stepan's misuse of French)

Moreover, he was a scandal-monger and had more than once had to smart for his back-biting.

Shatov became one of our circle during the last years of this period. He had been a student and had been expelled from the university after some disturbance. In his childhood he had been a student of Stepan Trofimovitch's and was by birth a serf of Varvara Petrovna's, the son of a former valet of hers, Pavel Fyodoritch, and was greatly indebted to her bounty. She disliked him for his pride and ingratitude and could never forgive him for not having come straight to her on his expulsion from the university. On the contrary he had not even answered the letter she had expressly sent him at the time and preferred to be a drudge in the family of a merchant of the new style, with whom he went abroad, looking after his children more in the position of a nurse than of a tutor.

The merchant's children had a governess too, a lively young Russian lady, who also became one of the household on the eve of their departure and had been engaged chiefly because she was so cheap. Two months later the merchant turned her out of the house for "free thinking." Shatov took himself off after her and soon afterwards married her in Geneva. They lived together about three weeks, and then parted as free people recognising no bonds, though, no doubt, also through poverty. He wandered about Europe alone for a long time afterwards.

At last, a year before, Shatov had returned to his native place among us and settled with an old aunt, whom he buried a month later. His sister Dasha, who had also been brought up by Varvara Petrovna, was a favourite of hers, and treated with respect and consideration in her house. He saw his sister rarely and was not on intimate terms with her. In our circle he was always sullen, and never talkative; but from time to time, when his convictions were touched upon, he became morbidly irritable and very unrestrained in his language. "One has to tie Shatov up and then argue with him," Stepan Trofimovitch would sometimes say in joke, but he liked him.

Shatov had radically changed some of his former socialistic convictions abroad and had rushed to the opposite extreme. He was one of those idealistic beings common in Russia, who are suddenly struck by some overmastering idea which seems, as it were, to crush them at once, and sometimes forever. They are never equal to coping with it, but put passionate faith in it, and their whole life passes afterwards, as it were, in the last agonies under the weight of the stone that has fallen upon them and half crushed them. In appearance Shatov was in complete harmony with his convictions: he was short, awkward, had a shock of flaxen hair, broad shoulders, thick lips, very thick overhanging white eyebrows, a wrinkled forehead, and a hostile, obstinately downcast, as it were shamefaced, expression in his eyes. His hair was always in a wild tangle and stood up in a shock which nothing could smooth. He was seven- or eight-and-twenty. "I no longer wonder that his wife ran away from him," Varvara Petrovna enunciated on one occasion after gazing intently at him. He lived in solitude on the outskirts of the town and did not like any of us to go and see him. He used to turn up

invariably at Stepan Trofimovitch's evenings and borrowed newspapers and books from him.

There was another young man who always came, one Virginsky, a clerk in the service here, who had something in common with Shatov, though on the surface he seemed his complete opposite in every respect. He was a "family man" too. He was a pathetic and very quiet young man though he was thirty; he had considerable education though he was chiefly self-taught. He was poor, married, and in the service and supported the aunt and sister of his wife. His wife and all the ladies of his family professed the very latest convictions, but in rather a crude form. It was a case of "an idea dragged forth into the street," as Stepan Trofimovitch had expressed it. They got it all out of books, and at the first hint coming from any of our little progressive corners in Petersburg they were prepared to throw anything overboard, so soon as they were advised to do so. Madame Virginsky practised as a midwife in the town. Virginsky himself was a man of rare single-heartedness, and I have seldom met one with more honest fervour.

"I will never, never, abandon these bright hopes," he used to say to me with shining eyes. Of these "bright hopes" he always spoke quietly, in a blissful half-whisper, as it were secretly. He was rather tall, but extremely thin and narrow shouldered, and had extraordinarily lank hair of a reddish hue.

The story was told of Virginsky, and it was unhappily only too true, that before his wife had spent a year in lawful wedlock with him she announced that he was superseded and that she preferred Lebyadkin. This Lebyadkin, a stranger to the town, turned out afterwards to be a very dubious character, and not a retired captain as he represented himself to be. He could do nothing but twist his moustache, drink, and chatter the most inept nonsense that can possibly be imagined. This fellow, who was utterly lacking in delicacy, at once settled in his house, glad to live at another man's expense, ate and slept there and came, in the end, to treating the master of the house with condescension. It was asserted that when Virginsky's wife had announced to him that he was superseded he said to her:

"My dear, hitherto I have loved only you, but now I respect you," but I doubt whether this renunciation was ever really uttered. On the contrary they say that he wept violently. A fortnight after he was superseded, all of them, in a "family party," went one day for a picnic to a wood outside the town to drink tea with their friends. Virginsky was in a feverishly lively mood and took part in the dances. But suddenly, without any preliminary quarrel, he seized the giant Lebyadkin with both hands, by the hair, just as the latter was dancing a *can-can* solo, pushed him down, and began dragging him along with shrieks, shouts, and tears. The giant was so panic-stricken that he did not attempt to defend himself, and hardly uttered a sound all the time he was being dragged along. Virginsky spent a whole night on his knees begging his wife's forgiveness. But this forgiveness was not granted, as he refused to apologise to Lebyadkin; moreover, he was

upbraided for the meanness of his ideas and his foolishness, the latter charge based on the fact that he knelt down in the interview with his wife. The captain soon disappeared and did not reappear in our town till quite lately, when he came with his sister, and with entirely different aims; but of him later.

Stray guests visited our circle too; a Jew, called Lyamshin, and a Captain Kartusov came.

IX

At one time it was reported about the town that our little circle was a hotbed of nihilism, profligacy, and godlessness, and the rumour gained more and more strength. And yet we did nothing but indulge in the most harmless, agreeable, typically Russian, light-hearted liberal chatter. "The higher liberalism" and the "higher liberal," that is, a liberal without any definite aim, is possible only in Russia.

Stepan Trofimovitch, like every witty man, needed a listener, and, besides that, he needed the consciousness that he was fulfilling the lofty duty of disseminating ideas. And finally he had to have someone to drink champagne with and exchange light-hearted views of a certain sort, about Russia and the "Russian spirit," about God in general, and the "Russian God" in particular, to repeat for the hundredth time the same Russian scandalous stories that everyone knew and everyone repeated. We fell into generalising about humanity, made stern reflections on the future of Europe and mankind in general, authoritatively predicted that after Caesarism France would at once sink into the position of a second-rate power. If we were very much bored, the Jew, Lyamshin (a little post-office clerk), a wonderful performer on the piano, sat down to play.

If we had drunk a great deal—and that did happen sometimes, though not often—we flew into raptures, and even on one occasion sang the "Marseillaise" in chorus to the accompaniment of Lyamshin, though I don't know how it went off. The great day, the nineteenth of February, we welcomed enthusiastically, and for a long time beforehand drank toasts in its honour. But that was long ago, before the advent of Shatov or Virginsky, when Stepan Trofimovitch was still living in the same house with Varvara Petrovna. For some time before the great day Stepan Trofimovitch fell into the habit of muttering to himself well-known, though rather far-fetched, lines, which must have been written by some liberal landowner of the past:

> *"The peasant with his axe is coming,*
> *Something terrible will happen."*

Something of that sort, I don't remember the exact words. Varvara Petrovna overheard him on one occasion, and crying, "Nonsense, nonsense!" she went out of the room in a rage. Liputin, who happened to be present, observed malignantly to Stepan Trofimovitch:

"It'll be a pity if their former serfs really do some mischief to *messieurs les* landowners* to celebrate the occasion," and he drew his forefinger round his throat.

I may observe that many people among us anticipated that something extraordinary, such as Liputin predicted, would take place on the day of the emancipation, and those who held this view were the so-called "authorities" on the peasantry and the government. I believe Stepan Trofimovitch shared this idea, so much so that almost on the eve of the great day he began asking Varvara Petrovna's leave to go abroad; in fact he began to be uneasy. "Like hasty people we have been in too great a hurry with our peasants," he said in conclusion of a series of remarkable utterances. "We have made them the fashion, and a whole section of writers have for several years treated them as though they were newly discovered curiosities.

Three years later, as everyone knows, people were beginning to talk of nationalism, and "public opinion" first came upon the scene. "My friends," Stepan Trofimovitch instructed us, "if our nationalism has 'dawned' as they keep repeating in the papers—it's still at school, at some German 'Peterschule,' sitting over a German book and repeating its everlasting German lesson, and its German teacher will make it go down on its knees when he thinks fit. But nothing has happened and nothing of the kind has dawned and everything is going on in the old way, that is, as ordained by God. All this Slavism and nationalism is too old to be new. Nationalism, if you like, has never existed among us except as a distraction for gentlemen's clubs. How is it they don't understand that before we can have an opinion of our own we must have work, our own work, our own initiative in things, our own experience. Nothing is to be gained for nothing. If we work we shall have an opinion of our own."

Our teacher believed in God: "I can't understand why they make me out an infidel here," he used to say sometimes. "I believe in God, *mais distinguons,*† I believe in Him as a Being who is conscious of Himself in me only. I cannot believe as my Nastasya (the servant) or like some country gentleman who believes 'to be on the safe side,' or like our dear Shatov—but no, Shatov doesn't come into it. Shatov believes 'on principle,' like a Moscow Slavophil. As for Christianity, for all my genuine respect for it, I'm not a Christian. I am more of an antique pagan, like the great Goethe, or like an ancient Greek. The very fact that Christianity has failed to understand woman is enough, as George Sand has so splendidly shown in one of her great novels. As for the bowings, fasting, and all the rest of it, I don't understand what they have to do with me. Could Byelinsky have sought salvation in Lenten oil, or peas with radish!"

But at this point Shatov interposed. "Those men of yours never loved the people, they didn't suffer for them, and didn't sacrifice anything for them, though they may have amused themselves by imagining it! Byelinsky,

* "gentleman landowners"
† "but let us distinguish"

like the Inquisitive Man in Krylov's fable,* did not notice the elephant in the museum of curiosities, but concentrated his whole attention on the French Socialist beetles. And he who has no people has no God. You may be sure that all who cease to understand their own people and lose their connection with them at once lose to the same extent the faith of their fathers and become atheistic or indifferent."

"Hadn't we better make it up, Shatov, after all these endearments," Stepan Trofimovitch would say, benignly holding out his hand to him from his arm-chair.

Shatov, clumsy and bashful, disliked sentimentality. Externally he was rough, but inwardly, I believe, he had great delicacy. Although he often went too far, he was the first to suffer for it. Muttering something between his teeth in response to Stepan Trofimovitch's appeal, and shuffling with his feet like a bear, he gave a sudden and unexpected smile.

* Ivan Krylov's "The Inquisitive Man," from which comes the phrase "elephant in the room."