

# Clara Militch

*A Tale*

By Iván Turgéniéff

## I

In the spring of 1878 there lived in Moscow, in a small wooden house on Shabólovka Street, a young man five-and-twenty years of age, Yákovf Arátóff by name. With him lived his aunt, an old maid, over fifty years of age, his father's sister, Platonída Ivánovna. She managed his housekeeping and took charge of his expenditures, of which Arátóff was utterly incapable. He had no other relations. Several years before, his father, a petty and not wealthy noble of the T\*\*\* government, had removed to Moscow, together with him and Platonída Ivánovna who, by the way, was always called Platósha; and her nephew called her so too. When he quitted the country where all of them had constantly dwelt hitherto, old Arátóff had settled in the capital with the object of placing his son in the university, for which he had himself prepared him; he purchased for a trifling sum a small house on one of the remote streets, and installed himself therein with all his books and "preparations."

And of books and preparations he had many, for he was a man not devoid of learning . . . . "a supernatural eccentric," according to the words of his neighbours. He even bore among them the reputation of a magician: he had even received the nickname of "the insect-observer." He busied himself with chemistry, mineralogy, entomology, botany, and medicine; he treated voluntary patients with herbs and metallic powders of his own concoction, after the method of Paracelsus. With those same powders he had sent into the grave his young, pretty, but already too delicate wife, whom he had passionately loved, and by whom he had had an only son. With those same metallic powders he had wrought considerable havoc with the health of his son also, which, on the contrary, he had wished to reinforce, as he detected in his organisation anæmia and a tendency to consumption inherited from his mother. The title of "magician" he had acquired, among other things, from the fact that he considered himself a great-grandson—not in the direct line, of course—of the famous Bruce, in whose honour he had named his son Yákovf. He was the sort of man who is called "very good-natured," but of a melancholy temperament, fussy, and timid, with a predilection for everything that was mysterious or mystical. . . . "Ah!" uttered in a half-whisper was his customary exclamation; and he died with that exclamation on his lips, two years after his removal to Moscow.

His son Yákovf did not, in outward appearance, resemble his father, who had been homely in person, clumsy and awkward; he reminded one rather of his mother. There were the same delicate, pretty features, the same soft hair of ash-blond hue, the same plump, childish lips, and large, languishing, greenish-grey eyes, and feathery eyelashes. On the other hand in disposition he resembled his father; and his face, which did not resemble his father's, bore the stamp of his father's expression; and he had angular arms, and a sunken chest, like old Arátóff, who, by the way, should hardly be called an old man, since he did not last to the age of fifty. During the latter's lifetime Yákovf had already entered the university, in the physico-mathematical faculty; but he did not finish his course,—not out of idleness, but because, according to his ideas, a person can learn no more in the university than he can teach himself at home; and he did not aspire to a diploma, as he was not intending to enter the government service. He avoided his

comrades, made acquaintance with hardly any one, was especially shy of women, and lived a very isolated life, immersed in his books. He was shy of women, although he had a very tender heart, and was captivated by beauty. . . . He even acquired the luxury of an English keepsake, and (Oh, for shame!) admired the portraits of divers, bewitching Gulnares and Medoras which “adorned” it.

But his inborn modesty constantly restrained him. At home he occupied his late father’s study, which had also been his bedroom; and his bed was the same on which his father had died.

The great support of his whole existence, his unfailing comrade and friend, was his aunt, that Platósha, with whom he exchanged barely ten words a day, but without whom he could not take a step. She was a long-visaged, long-toothed being, with pale eyes in a pale face, and an unvarying expression partly of sadness, partly of anxious alarm. Eternally attired in a grey gown, and a grey shawl which was redolent of camphor, she wandered about the house like a shadow, with noiseless footsteps; she sighed, whispered prayers—especially one, her favourite, which consisted of two words: “Lord, help!”—and managed the housekeeping very vigorously, hoarding every kopék and buying everything herself. She worshipped her nephew; she was constantly fretting about his health, was constantly in a state of alarm, not about herself but about him, and as soon as she thought there was anything the matter with him, she would quietly approach and place on his writing-table a cup of herb-tea, or stroke his back with her hands, which were as soft as wadding.

This coddling did not annoy Yákovff, but he did not drink the herb-tea, and only nodded approvingly. But neither could he boast of his health. He was extremely sensitive, nervous, suspicious; he suffered from palpitation of the heart, and sometimes from asthma. Like his father, he believed that there existed in nature and in the soul of man secrets, of which glimpses may sometimes be caught, though they cannot be understood; he believed in the presence of certain forces and influences, sometimes well-disposed but more frequently hostile . . . . and he also believed in science,—in its dignity and worth. Of late he had conceived a passion for photography. The odour of the ingredients used in that connection greatly disturbed his old aunt,—again not on her own behalf, but for Ydsha’s sake, on account of his chest. But with all his gentleness of disposition he possessed no small portion of stubbornness, and he diligently pursued his favourite occupation. “Platósha” submitted, and merely sighed more frequently than ever, and whispered “Lord, help!” as she gazed at his fingers stained with iodine.

Yákovff, as has already been stated, shunned his comrades; but with one of them he struck up a rather close friendship, and saw him frequently, even after that comrade, on leaving the university, entered the government service, which, however, was not very exacting: to use his own words, he had “tacked himself on” to the building of the Church of the Saviour’ without, of course, knowing anything whatever about architecture. Strange to say, that solitary friend of Arátovff’s, Kupfer by name, a German who was Russified to the extent of not knowing a single word of German, and even used the epithet “German” as a term of opprobrium,—that friend had, to all appearance, nothing in common with him. He was a jolly, rosy-cheeked young fellow with black, curly hair, loquacious, and very fond of that feminine society which Arátovff so shunned. Truth to tell, Kupfer breakfasted and dined with him rather often, and even—as he was not a rich man—borrowed small sums of money from him; but it was not that which made the free-and-easy German so diligently frequent the little house on Shabólovka Street. He had taken a liking to Yákovff’s spiritual purity, his “ideality,”—possibly as a contrast to what he daily encountered and beheld;—or, perhaps, in that same attraction toward “ideality” the young man’s German blood revealed itself. And Yákovff liked Kupfer’s good-natured frankness; and in addition to this,

his tales of the theatres, concerts, and balls which he constantly attended—in general of that alien world into which Yákovf could not bring himself to penetrate—secretly interested and even excited the young recluse, yet without arousing in him a desire to test all this in his own experience. And Platósha liked Kupfer; she sometimes thought him too unceremonious, it is true; but instinctively feeling and understanding that he was sincerely attached to her beloved Yásha, she not only tolerated the noisy visitor, but even felt a kindness for him.

## II

At the time of which we are speaking, there was in Moscow a certain widow, a Georgian Princess,—a person of ill-defined standing and almost a suspicious character. She was about forty years of age; in her youth she had, probably, bloomed with that peculiar oriental beauty, which so quickly fades; now she powdered and painted herself, and dyed her hair a yellow hue. Various, not altogether favourable, and not quite definite, rumours were in circulation about her; no one had known her husband—and in no one city had she lived for any length of time. She had neither children nor property; but she lived on a lavish scale,—on credit or otherwise. She held a salon, as the saying is, and received a decidedly mixed company—chiefly composed of young men. Her whole establishment, beginning with her own toilette, furniture, and table, and ending with her equipage and staff of servants, bore a certain stamp of inferiority, artificiality, transitoriness . . . but neither the Princess herself nor her guests, apparently, demanded anything better. The Princess was reputed to be fond of music and literature, to be a patroness of actors and artists; and she really did take an ‘interest in these “questions,” even to an enthusiastic degree—and even to a pitch of rapture which was not altogether simulated. She indubitably did possess the esthetic chord. Moreover, she was very accessible, amiable, devoid of pretensions, of affectation, and—a fact which many did not suspect—in reality extremely kind, tenderhearted and obliging. . . . Rare qualities, and therefore all the more precious, precisely in individuals of that stamp.

“A frivolous woman!” one clever person said concerning her, “and she will infallibly get into paradise! For she forgives everything—and everything will be forgiven her!”—It was also said concerning her that when she disappeared from any town, she always left behind her as many creditors as persons whom she had loaded with benefits. A soft heart can be pressed in any direction you like.

Kupfer, as was to be expected, was a visitor at her house, and became very intimate with her. . . altogether too intimate, so malicious tongues asserted. But he always spoke of her not only in a friendly manner, but also with respect; he lauded her as a woman of gold—interpret that as you please!—and was a firm believer in her love for art, and in her comprehension of art!—So then, one day after dinner, at the Arátoff’s’, after having discussed the Princess and her evening gatherings, he began to urge Yákovf to break in upon his life of an anchorite for once, and permit him, Kupfer, to introduce him to his friend. At first Yákovf would not hear to anything of the sort.

“Why, what idea hast thou got into thy head?” exclaimed Kupfer at last. “What sort of a presentation is in question? I shall simply take thee, just as thou art now sitting there, in thy frock-coat, and conduct thee to her evening. They do not stand on ceremony in the least there, brother! Here now, thou art learned, and thou art fond of music” (there actually was in Arátoff’s study a small piano, on which he occasionally struck a few chords in diminished sevenths)—“and in her house there is any quantity of that sort of thing! . . . And there thou wilt meet

sympathetic people, without any airs! And, in conclusion, it is not right that at thy age, with thy personal appearance” (Arátóff dropped his eyes and waved his hand)—“yes, yes, with thy personal appearance, thou shouldst shun society, the world, in this manner! I’m not going to take thee to call on generals, seest thou! Moreover, I don’t know any generals myself! . . . Don’t be stubborn, my dear fellow! Morality is a good thing, a thing worthy of respect. . . . But why give thyself up to asceticism? Assuredly, thou art not preparing to become a monk!”

Arátóff continued, nevertheless, to resist; but Platonída Ivánovna unexpectedly came to Kupfer’s assistance. Although she did not quite understand the meaning of the word “asceticism,” still she also thought that it would not be a bad idea for Yáshenka to divert himself, to take a look at people,—and show himself.—“The more so,” she added, “that I have confidence in Feódor Feódoritch! He will not take thee to any bad place’

“I’ll restore him to thee in all his pristine purity!” cried Kupfer, at whom Platonída Ivánovna, in spite of her confidence, kept casting uneasy glances; Arátóff blushed to his very ears—but he ceased to object.

It ended in Kupfer taking him, on the following day, to the Princess’s evening assembly. But Arátóff did not remain there long. In the first place, he found at her house about twenty guests, men and women, who were, presumably, sympathetic, but who were strangers to him, nevertheless; and this embarrassed him, although he was obliged to talk very little: but he feared this most of all. In the second place, he did not like the hostess herself, although she welcomed him very cordially and unaffectedly. Everything about her displeased him; her painted face, and her churned-up curls, and her hoarsely-mellifluous voice, her shrill laugh, her way of rolling up her eyes, her too *décolleté* bodice—and those plump, shiny fingers with a multitude of rings! .

Slinking off into a corner, he now swiftly ran his eyes over the faces of all the guests, as though he did not even distinguish one from another; again he stared persistently at his own feet. But when, at last, an artist who had just come to town, with a drink-sodden countenance, extremely long hair, and a bit of glass under his puckered brow, seated himself at the piano, and bringing down his hands on the keys and his feet on the pedals, with a flourish, began to bang out a fantasia by Liszt on a Wagnerian theme, Arátóff could stand it no longer, and slipped away, bearing in his soul a confused and oppressive impression, athwart which, nevertheless, there pierced something which he did not understand, but which was significant and even agitating.

### III

Kupfer came on the following day to dinner; but he did not enlarge upon the preceding evening, he did not even reproach Arátóff for his hasty flight, and merely expressed regret that he had not waited for supper, at which champagne had been served! (of Nizhegorod fabrication, we may remark in parenthesis).

Kupfer probably understood that he had made a mistake in trying to rouse his friend, and that Arátóff was a man who positively was not adapted to that sort of society and manner of life. On his side, Arátóff also did not allude to the Princess or to the night before. Platonída Ivánovna did not know whether to rejoice at the failure of this first attempt or to regret it. She decided, at last, that Yásha’s health might suffer from such expeditions, and regained her complacency. Kupfer went away directly after dinner, and did not show himself again for a whole week. And that not because he was sulking at Arátóff for the failure of his introduction,—the good-natured fellow was incapable of such a thing,—but he had, evidently, found some occupation which engrossed

all his time, all his thoughts;—for thereafter he rarely came to the Arátoffs', wore an abstracted aspect, and soon vanished.

Arátoff continued to live on as before; but some hitch, if we may so express ourselves, had secured lodgment in his soul. He still recalled something or other, without himself being quite aware what it was precisely,—and that “something” referred to the evening which he had spent at the Princess's house. Nevertheless, he had not the slightest desire to return to it; and society, a section of which he had inspected in her house, repelled him more than ever. Thus passed six weeks.

And lo! one morning, Kupfer again presented himself to him, this time with a somewhat embarrassed visage.

“I know,” he began, with a forced laugh, “that thy visit that evening was not to thy taste; but I hope that thou wilt consent to my proposal nevertheless . . . and wilt not refuse my request.”

“What art thou talking about?” inquired Arátoff.

“See here,” pursued Kupfer, becoming more and more animated; “there exists here a certain society of amateurs and artists, which from time to time organises readings, concerts, even theatrical representations, for philanthropic objects. . . .”

“And the Princess takes part?” interrupted Arátoff.

“The Princess always takes part in good works—but that is of no consequence. We have got up a literary and musical morning. . . , and at that performance thou mayest hear a young girl . . . . a remarkable young girl!—We do not quite know, as yet, whether she, will turn out a Rachel or a Viardot . for she sings splendidly, and declaims and acts. . . She has talent of the first class, my dear fellow! I am not exaggerating.—So here now . . . wilt not thou take a ticket?—Five rubles if thou wishest the first row.

“And where did this wonderful young girl come from?” asked Arátoff.

Kupfer grinned.—“That I cannot say. Of late she has found an asylum with the Princess. The Princess, as thou knowest, is a patron of all such people. . . . And it is probable that thou sawest her that evening.”

Arátoff started inwardly, faintly . . . . but made no answer.

“She has even acted somewhere in country districts,” went on Kupfer, “and, on the whole, she was created for the theatre. Thou shalt see for thyself!”

“Is her name Clara?” asked Arátoff.

“Yes, Clara . . . .”

“Clara!” interrupted Arátoff again.—“It cannot be!”

“Why not?—Clara it is, . . . Clara Mílitch; that is not her real name . . . . but that is what she is called. She is to sing a romance by Glinka and one by Tchaikóvsky, and then she will recite the letter from ‘Evgény Onyégín’ Come now! Wilt thou take a ticket?”

“But when is it to be?”

“To-morrow . . . . to-morrow, at half-past one, in a private hail, on Ostozhyónka Street. . . . I will come for thee. A ticket at five rubles?”

Here it is. . . . No, this is a three-ruble ticket.—Here it is.—And here is the affiche.<sup>1</sup>—I am one of the managers.

Arátoff reflected. Platonída Ivánovna entered the room at that moment and, glancing at his face, was suddenly seized with agitation.—“Yásha,” she exclaimed, “what ails thee? Why art thou so excited? Feódor Feódorovitch, what hast thou been saying to him?”

But Arátóff did not give his friend a chance to answer his aunt's question, and hastily seizing the ticket which was held out to him, he ordered Platonída Ivánovna to give Kupfer five rubles on the instant.

She was amazed, and began to blink her eyes. Nevertheless, she handed Kupfer the money in silence. Yáshenka had shouted at her in a very severe manner.

"She's a marvel of marvels, I tell thee!" cried Kupfer, darting toward the door.—"Expect me to-morrow!"

"Has she black eyes?" called Arátóff after him.

"As black as coal!" merrily roared Kupfer, and disappeared.

Arátóff went off to his own room, while Platonída Ivánovna remained rooted to the spot, repeating: "Help, Lord! Lord, help!"

#### IV

The large hall in a private house on Ostozhyónka Street was already half filled with spectators when Arátóff and Kupfer arrived. Theatrical representations were sometimes given in that hall, but on this occasion neither stage-scenery nor curtain were visible. Those who had organised the "morning" had confined themselves to erecting a platform at one end, placing thereon a piano and a couple of music-racks, a few chairs, a table with a carafe of water and a glass, and hanging a curtain of red cloth over the door which led to the room set apart for the artists. In the first row the Princess was already seated, clad in a bright green gown; Arátóff placed himself at some distance from her, after barely exchanging a bow with her. The audience was what is called motley; it consisted chiefly of young men from various institutions of learning. Kupfer, in his quality of a manager, with a white ribbon on the lapel of his dress-coat, bustled and fussed about with all his might; the Princess was visibly excited, kept looking about her, launching smiles in all directions, and chatting with her neighbours there were only men in her immediate vicinity.

The first to make his appearance on the platform was a flute-player of consumptive aspect, who spat out . . . that is to say, piped out a piece which was consumptive like himself. Two persons shouted "Bravo!" Then a fat gentleman in spectacles, very sedate and even grim of aspect, recited in a bass voice a sketch by Shtchedrín; the audience applauded the sketch, not him.—Then the pianist, who was already known to Arátóff, presented himself, and pounded out the same Liszt fantasia; the pianist was favoured with a recall. He bowed, with his hand resting on the back of a chair, and after each bow he tossed back his hair exactly like Liszt! At last, after a decidedly long intermission, the red cloth over the door at the rear of the platform moved, was drawn widely apart, and Clara Mílitch made her appearance. The hall rang with applause. With unsteady steps she approached the front of the platform, came to a halt, and stood motionless, with her large, red, ungloved hands crossed in front of her, making no curtsey, neither bending her head nor smiling.

She was a girl of nineteen, tall, rather broad-shouldered, but well built. Her face was swarthy, partly Hebrew, partly Gipsy in type; her eyes were small and black beneath thick brows which almost met, her nose was straight, slightly upturned, her lips were thin with a beautiful but sharp curve; she had a huge braid of black hair, which was heavy even to the eye, a low, impassive, stony brow, tiny ears . . . her whole countenance was thoughtful, almost surly. A passionate, self-willed nature,—not likely to be either kindly or even intelligent,—but gifted, was manifested by everything about her.

For a while she did not raise her eyes, but suddenly gave a start and sent her intent but not attentive glance, which seemed to be buried in herself, along the rows of spectators.

“What tragic eyes!” remarked a certain grey-haired fop, who sat behind Arátoff, with the face of a courtesan from Revel,—one of Moscow’s well-known first-nighters and rounders. The fop was stupid and intended to utter a bit of nonsense . . . but he had spoken the truth! Arátoff, who had never taken his eyes from Clara since she had made her appearance, only then recalled that he actually had seen her at the Princess’s; and had not only seen her, but had even noticed that she had several times looked at him with particular intentness out of her dark, watchful eyes. And on this occasion also . . . or did he merely fancy that it was so?—on catching sight of him in the first row, she seemed to be delighted, seemed to blush—and again she gazed intently at him. Then, without turning round, she retreated a couple of paces in the direction of the piano, at which the accompanist, the long-haired foreigner, was already seated. She was to execute Glinka’s romance, “As soon as I recognised thee . . .” She immediately began to sing, without altering the position of her hands and without glancing at the notes. Her voice was soft and resonant,—a contralto,—she pronounced her words distinctly and forcibly, and sang monotonously, without shading but with strong expression.

“The lass sings with conviction,” remarked the same fop who sat behind Arátoff,—and again he spoke the truth.

Shouts of “Bis!” “Bravo!” resounded all about, but she merely darted a swift glance at Arátoff, who was neither shouting nor clapping,—he had not been particularly pleased by her singing,—made a slight bow and withdrew, without taking the arm of the hairy pianist which he had crooked out like a cracknel. She was recalled . . . but it was some time before she made her appearance, advanced to the piano with the same uncertain tread as before, and after whispering a couple of words to her accompanist, who was obliged to get and place on the rack before him not the music he had prepared but something else,—she began Tchaikóvsky’s romance: “No, only he who hath felt the thirst of meeting” . . . This romance she sang in a different way from the first—in an undertone, as though she were weary . . . and only in the line before the last, “He will understand how I have suffered,”—did a ringing, burning cry burst from her. The last line, “And how I suffer . . .” she almost whispered, sadly prolonging the final word. This romance produced a slighter impression on the audience than Glinka’s; but there was a great deal of applause. . . . Kupfer, in particular, distinguished himself: he brought his hands together in a peculiar manner, in the form of a cask, when he clapped, thereby producing a remarkably sonorous noise. The Princess gave him a large, dishevelled bouquet, which he was to present to the songstress; but the latter did not appear to perceive Kupfer’s bowed figure, and his hand outstretched with the bouquet, and she turned and withdrew, again without waiting for the pianist, who had sprung to his feet with still greater alacrity than before to escort her, and who, being thus left in the lurch, shook his hair as Liszt himself, in all probability, never shook his!

During the whole time she was singing Arátoff had been scanning Clara’s face. It seemed to him that her eyes, athwart her contracted lashes, were again turned on him. But he was particularly struck by the impassiveness of that face, that forehead, those brows, and only when she uttered her passionate cry did he notice a row of white, closely-set teeth gleaming warmly from between her barely parted lips. Kupfer stepped up to him.

“Well, brother, what dost thou think of her?” he asked, all beaming with satisfaction.

“She has a fine voice,” replied Arátoff, “but she does not know how to sing yet, she has had no real school.” (Why he said this and what he meant by “school” the Lord only knows!)

Kupfer was surprised.—“She has no school,” he repeated slowly . . . . “Well, now. . . . She can still study. But on the other hand, what soul! But just wait until thou hast heard her recite Tatyána’s letter.”

He ran away from Arátoff, and the latter thought: “Soul! With that impassive face!”—He thought that she bore herself and moved like a hypnotised person, like a somnambulist. .

And, at the same time, she was indubitably. . . Yes! she was indubitably staring at him.

Meanwhile the “morning” went on. The fat man in spectacles presented himself again; despite his serious appearance he imagined that he was a comic artist and read a scene from Gógol, this time without evoking a single token of approbation. The flute-player flitted past once more; again the pianist thundered; a young fellow of twenty, pomaded and curled, but with traces of tears on his cheeks, sawed out some variations on his fiddle. It might have appeared strange that in the intervals between the recitations and the music the abrupt notes of a French horn were wafted, now and then, from the artists’ room; but this instrument was not used, nevertheless. It afterward came out that the amateur who had offered to perform on it had been seized with a panic at the moment when he should have made his appearance before the audience. So at last, Clara Mílitch appeared again.

She held in her hand a small volume of Posh-kin; but during her reading she never once glanced at it. . . . She was obviously frightened; the little book shook slightly in her fingers. Arátoff also observed the expression of dejection which *now* overspread her stern features. The first line: “I write to you . . . what would you more?” she uttered with extreme simplicity, almost ingenuously,—stretching both arms out in front of her with an ingenuous, sincere, helpless gesture. Then she began to hurry a little; but beginning with the line: “Another! Nay! to none on earth could I have given e’er my heart!” she regained her self-possession, and grew animated; and when she reached the words: “All, all life hath been a pledge of faithful meeting thus with thee,”—her hitherto rather dull voice rang out enthusiastically and boldly, and her eyes riveted themselves on Arátoff with a boldness and directness to match. She went on with the same enthusiasm, and only toward the close did her voice again fall, and in it and in her face her previous dejection was again depicted. She made a complete muddle, as the saying is, of the last four lines,—the little volume of Púshkin suddenly slipped from her hands, and she beat a hasty retreat.

The audience set to applauding and recalling her in desperate fashion. . . . One theological student,—a Little Russian,—among others, bellowed so loudly: “Mufluitch! Mufluitch!” that his neighbour politely and sympathetically begged him to “spare himself, as a future proto-deacon!” But Arátoff immediately rose and betook himself to the entrance. Kupfer overtook him. . . .

“Good gracious, whither art thou going?” he yelled:—“I’ll introduce thee to Clara if thou wishest—shall I?”

“No, thanks,” hastily replied Arátoff, and set off homeward almost at a run.

## V

Strange emotions, which were not clear even to himself, agitated him. In reality, Clara’s recitation had not altogether pleased him either . . . . altogether he could not tell precisely why. It had troubled him, that recitation, it had seemed to him harsh, unmelodious. . . . Somehow it seemed to have broken something within him, to have exerted some sort of violence. And those importunate, persistent, almost insolent glances—what had caused them? What did they signify?

Arátóff's modesty did permit him even a momentary thought that he might have pleased that strange young girl, that he might have inspired her with a sentiment akin to love, to passion!

And he had imagined to himself quite otherwise that as yet unknown woman, that young girl, to whom he would surrender himself wholly, and who would love him, become his bride, his wife.

He rarely dreamed of this: he was chaste both in body and soul;—but the pure image which rose up in his imagination at such times was evoked under another form,—the form of his dead mother, whom he barely remembered, though he cherished her portrait like a sacred treasure. That portrait had been painted in water-colours, in a rather inartistic manner, by a friendly neighbour, but the likeness was striking, as every one averred. The woman, the young girl, whom as yet he did not so much as venture to expect, must possess just such a tender profile, just such kind, bright eyes, just such silky hair, just such a smile, just such a clear understanding . . . .

But this was a black-visaged, swarthy creature, with coarse hair, and a moustache on her lip; she must certainly be bad-tempered, giddy. . . . “A gipsy” (Arátóff could not devise a worse expression)—what was she to him?

And in the meantime, Arátóff was unable to banish from his mind that black-visaged gipsy, whose singing and recitation and even whose personal appearance were disagreeable to him. He was perplexed, he was angry with himself. Not long before this he had read Walter Scott's romance “Saint Ronan's Well” (there was a complete edition of Walter Scott's works in the library of his father, who revered the English romance-writer as a serious, almost a learned author). The heroine of that romance is named Clara Mowbray. A poet of the '40's, Krásóff, wrote a poem about her, which wound up with the words:

“Unhappy Clara! foolish Clara!  
Unhappy Clara Mowbray!”

Arátóff was acquainted with this poem also. And now these words kept incessantly recurring to his memory. . . . “Unhappy Clara! foolish Clara! . . .” (That was why he had been so surprised when Kupfer mentioned Clara Míltch to him.) Even Platósha noticed, not precisely a change in Yákoff's frame of mind—as a matter of fact, no change had taken place—but something wrong about his looks, in his remarks. She cautiously interrogated him about the literary morning at which he had been present;—she whispered, sighed, scrutinised him from in front, scrutinised him from the side, from behind—and suddenly, slapping her hands on her thighs, she exclaimed:

“Well, Yásha!—I see what the trouble is!”

“What dost thou mean?” queried Arátóff in his turn.

“Thou hast certainly met at that morning some one of those tail-draggers” (that was what Platonída Ivánovna called all ladies who wore fashionable gowns). . . . “She has a comely face—and she puts on airs like *this*,—and twists her face like *this*” (Platósha depicted all this in her face), “and she makes her eyes go round like this . . . .” (she mimicked this also, describing huge circles in the air with her forefinger). . . .

“And it made an impression on thee, because thou art not used to it. . . . But that does not signify anything, Yásha . . . . it does not signify a-any-thing! Drink a cup of herb-tea when thou goest to bed, and that will be the end of it! . . . Lord, help!”

Platósha ceased speaking and took herself off.

She probably had never made such a long and animated speech before since she was born . . . . but Arátóff thought:

I do believe my aunt is right. . . . It is all because I am not used to such things. . . .“ (He really had attracted the attention of the female sex to himself for the first time . . . . at any rate, he had never noticed it before.) “I must not indulge myself.”

So he set to work at his books, and drank some linden-flower tea when he went to bed, and even slept well all that night, and had no dreams. On the following morning he busied himself with his photography, as though nothing had happened. .

But toward evening his spiritual serenity was again disturbed.

## VI

To wit: a messenger brought him a note, written in a large, irregular feminine hand, which ran as follows:

“If you guess who is writing to you, and if it does not bore you, come to-morrow, after dinner, to the Tver boulevard—about five o’clock—and wait. You will not be detained long. But it is very important. Come.”

There was no signature. Arátóff instantly divined who his correspondent was, and that was precisely what disturbed him.—“What nonsense!” he said, almost aloud. “This is too much! Of course I shall not go.”—Nevertheless, he ordered the messenger to be summoned, and from him he learned merely that the letter had been handed to him on the street by a maid. Having dismissed him, Arátóff reread the letter, and flung it on the floor. . . . But after a while he picked it up and read it over again; a second time he cried: “Nonsense!” He did not throw the letter on the floor this time, however, but put it away in a drawer.

Arátóff went about his customary avocations, busying himself now with one, now with another; but his work did not make progress, was not a success. Suddenly he noticed that he was waiting for Kupfer, that he wanted to interrogate him, or even communicate something to him. . . . But Kupfer did not make his appearance. Then Arátóff got Púshkin and read Tatyána’s letter and again felt convinced that that “gipsy” had not in the least grasped the meaning of the letter. But there was that jester Kupfer shouting: “A Rachel! A Viardot!” Then he went to his piano, raised the cover in an abstracted sort of way, tried to search out in his memory the melody of Tchaikóvsky’s romance; but he immediately banged to the piano-lid with vexation and went to his aunt, in her own room, which was always kept very hot, and was forever redolent of mint, sage, and other medicinal herbs, and crowded with such a multitude of rugs, *étagères*, little benches, cushions and various articles of softly-stuffed furniture that it was difficult for an inexperienced person to turn round in it, and breathing was oppressive. Platonída Ivánovna was sitting by the window with her knitting-needles in her hand (she was knitting a scarf for Yáshenka—the thirty-eighth, by actual count, during the course of his existence!)—and was greatly surprised. Arátóff rarely entered her room, and if he needed anything he always shouted in a shrill voice from his study: “Aunt Platósha!”—But she made him sit down and, in anticipation of his first words, pricked up her ears, as she stared at him through her round spectacles with one eye, and above them with the other. She did not inquire after his health, and did not offer him tea, for she saw that he had not come for that. Arátóff hesitated for a while . . . . then began to talk . . . to talk about his mother, about the way she had lived with his father, and how his father had made her acquaintance. He knew all this perfectly well. . . but he wanted to talk precisely about that. Unluckily for him, Platósha did not know how to converse in the least; she made very brief replies, as though she suspected that Yásha had not come for that purpose.

“Certainly!”—she kept repeating hurriedly, as she plied her knitting-needles almost in an angry way. “Every one knows that thy mother was a dove . . . a regular dove. . . . And thy father loved her as a husband should love, faithfully and honourably, to the very grave; and he never loved any other woman,”—she added, elevating her voice and removing her spectacles.

“And was she of a timid disposition?” asked Arátoff, after a short pause.

“Certainly she was. As is fitting for the female sex. The bold ones are a recent invention.”

“And were there no bold ones in your time?”

“There were such even in our day . . . of course there were! But who were they? Some street-walker, or shameless hussy or other. She would drag her skirts about, and fling herself hither and thither at random. . . . ‘What did she care? What anxiety had she? If a young fool came along, he fell into her hands. But steady-going people despised them. Dost thou remember ever to have beheld such in our house?’”

Arátoff made no reply and returned to his study. Platonída Ivánovna gazed after him, shook her head and again donned her spectacles, again set to work on her scarf . . . but more than once she fell into thought and dropped her knitting-needles on her knee.

And Arátoff until nightfall kept again and again beginning, with the same vexation, the same ire as before, to think about “the gipsy,” the appointed tryst, to which he certainly would not go! During the night also she worried him. He kept constantly seeing her eyes, now narrowed, now widely opened, with their importunate gaze riveted directly on him, and those impassive features with their imperious expression.

On the following morning he again kept expecting Kupfer, for some reason or other; he came near writing him a letter . . . however, he did nothing . . . but spent most of his time pacing to and fro in his study. Not for one instant did he even admit to himself the thought that he would go to that stupid “rendezvous” . . . and at half-past four, after having swallowed his dinner in haste, he suddenly donned his overcoat and pulling his cap down on his brows, he stole out of the house without letting his aunt see him and wended his way to the Tver boulevard.

## VII

Aratoff found few pedestrians on the boulevard. The weather was raw and quite cold. He strove not to think of what he was doing. He forced himself to turn his attention to all the objects he came across and pretended to assure himself that he had come out to walk precisely like the other people. . . . The letter of the day before was in his side-pocket, and he was uninterruptedly conscious of its presence. He walked the length of the boulevard a couple of times, darting keen glances at every feminine form which approached him, and his heart thumped, thumped violently. . . . He began to feel tired, and sat down on a bench. And suddenly the idea occurred to him: “Come now, what if that letter was not written by her but by some one else, by some other woman?” In point of fact, that should have made no difference to him . . . and yet he was forced to admit to himself that he did not wish this. “It would be very stupid,” he thought, “still more stupid than *that!*” A nervous restlessness began to take possession of him; he began to feel chilly, not outwardly but inwardly. Several times he drew out his watch from his waistcoat pocket, glanced at the face, put it back again,—and every time forgot how many minutes were lacking to five o’clock. It seemed to him as though every one who passed him stared at him in a peculiar manner, surveying him with a certain sneering surprise and curiosity. A wretched little dog ran up, sniffed at his legs and began to wag its tail. He flourished his arms angrily at it. He was most annoyed of all by a small boy from a factory in a bed-ticking jacket, who seated

himself on the bench and first whistled, then scratched his head, dangling his legs, encased in huge, broken boots, the while, and staring at him from time to time. "His employer is certainly expecting him," thought Arátóff, "and here he is, the lazy dog, wasting his time idling about. . ."

But at that same moment it seemed to him as though some one had approached and taken up a stand close behind him . . . a warm current emanated thence. . . .

He glanced round. . . . It was she!

He recognised her immediately, although a thick, dark-blue veil concealed her features. He instantly sprang from the bench, and remained standing there, unable to utter a word. She also maintained silence. He felt greatly agitated . . . . but her agitation was as great as his: Arátóff could not help seeing even through the veil how deadly pale she grew. But she was the first to speak.

"Thank you," she began in a broken voice, "thank you for coming. I did not hope. . . ." She turned away slightly and walked along the boulevard. Arátóff followed her.

"Perhaps you condemn me," she went on, without turning her head.—"As a matter of fact, my action is very strange. . . . But I have heard a great deal about you . . . but no! I . . . . that was not the cause. . . . If you only knew. . . . I wanted to say so much to you, my God! . . . . But how am I to do it? . . . . How am I to do it!"

Arátóff walked by her side, but a little in the rear. He did not see her face; he saw only her hat and a part of her veil . . . . and her long, threadbare cloak. All his vexation against her and against himself suddenly returned to him; all the absurdity, all the awkwardness of this tryst, of these explanations between utter strangers, on a public boulevard, suddenly presented itself to him.

"I have come hither at your behest," he began in his turn, "I have come, my dear madame" (her shoulders quivered softly, she turned into a side path, and he followed her), "merely for the sake of having an explanation, of learning in consequence of what strange misunderstanding you were pleased to appeal to me, a stranger to you, who . . . . who only *guessed*, as you expressed it in your letter, that it was precisely you who had written to him . . . . because he guessed that you had tried, in the course of that literary morning to show him too much . . . . too much obvious attention."

Arátóff uttered the whole of this little speech in the same resonant but firm voice in which men who are still very young answer at examinations on questions for which they are well prepared. . . . He was indignant; he was angry. . . . And that wrath had loosed his tongue which was not very fluent on ordinary occasions.

She continued to advance along the path with somewhat lagging steps. . . . Arátóff followed her as before, and as before saw only her little old mantilla and her small hat, which was not quite new either. His vanity suffered at the thought that she must now be thinking: "All I had to do was to make a sign, and he immediately hastened to me!"

Arátóff lapsed into silence . . . . he expected that she would reply to him; but she did not utter a word.

"I am ready to listen to you," he began again, "and I shall even be very glad if I can be of service to you in any way . . . . although, I must confess, nevertheless, that I find it astonishing . . . . that considering my isolated life . . . ."

But at his last words Clara suddenly turned to him and he beheld the same startled, profoundly sorrowful visage, with the same large, bright tears in its eyes, with the same woful expression around the parted lips; and the visage was so fine thus that he involuntarily broke off short and felt within himself something akin to fright, and pity and forbearance.

“Akh, why . . . why are you like this? . . .” she said with irresistibly sincere and upright force—and what a touching ring there was to her voice!—“Is it possible that my appeal to you can have offended you? . . . Is it possible that you have understood nothing? . . . Ah, yes! You have not understood anything, you have not understood what I said to you. God knows what you have imagined about me, you have not even reflected what it cost me to write to you! . . . You have been anxious only on your own account, about your own dignity, your own peace! . . . But did I . . .” (she so tightly clenched her hands which she had raised to her lips that her fingers cracked audibly) . . . “As though I had made any demands upon you, as though explanations were requisite to begin with. . . . ‘My dear madame’ . . . . ‘I even find it astonishing’ . . . . ‘If I can be of service to you’ . . . . Akh, how foolish I have been!—I have been deceived in you, in your face! . . . When I saw you for the first time. . . . There . . . . There you stand. . . . And not one word do you utter! Have you really not a word to say?”

She had been imploring. . . . Her face suddenly flushed, and as suddenly assumed an evil and audacious expression.—“O Lord! how stupid this is!”—she cried suddenly, with a harsh laugh.—“How stupid our tryst is! How stupid I am! . . . and you, too! . . . Fie!”

She made a disdainful gesture with her hand as though sweeping him out of her path, and passing around him she ran swiftly from the boulevard and disappeared.

That gesture of the hand, that insulting laugh, that final exclamation instantly restored Arátoff to his former frame of mind and stifled in him the feeling which had risen in his soul when she turned to him with tears in her eyes. Again he waxed wroth, and came near shouting after the retreating girl: “You may turn out a good actress, but why have you taken it into your head to play a comedy on me?”

With great strides he returned home, and although he continued to be indignant and to rage all the way thither, still, at the same time, athwart all these evil, hostile feelings there forced its way the memory of that wondrous face which he had beheld only for the twinkling of an eye. . . . He even put to himself the question: “Why did not I answer her when she demanded from me at least one word?”—“I did not have time,” . . . he thought. . . . “She did not give me a chance to utter that word . . . . And what would I have uttered?”

But he immediately shook his head and said, “An actress!”

And yet, at the same time, the vanity of the inexperienced, nervous youth, which had been wounded at first, now felt rather flattered at the passion which he had inspired. .

“But on the other hand,” he pursued his reflections, “all that is at an end of course. . . . I must have appeared ridiculous to her.” . . .

This thought was disagreeable to him, and again he grew angry . . . . both at her . . . and at himself. On reaching home he locked himself in his study. He did not wish to encounter Platósha. The kind old woman came to his door a couple of times, applied her ear to the key-hole, and merely sighed and whispered her prayer.

“It has begun!” she thought. . . . “And he is only five-and-twenty Akh, it is early, early!”

## VIII

Arátoff was very much out of sorts all the following day.

“What is the matter, Yásha?” Platonída Ivánovna said to him. “Thou seemest to be touselled to-day, somehow.”. . . In the old woman’s peculiar language this quite accurately defined Arátoff’s moral condition. He could not work, but even he himself did not know what he wanted. Now he was expecting Kupfer again (he suspected that it was precisely from Kupfer that Clara had

obtained his address . . . and who else could have “talked a great deal” about him?); again he wondered whether his acquaintance with her was to end in that way again he imagined that she would write him another letter; again he asked himself whether he ought not to write her a letter, in which he might explain everything to her,—as he did not wish to leave an unpleasant impression of himself. . . . But, in point of fact, *what* was he to explain?—Now he aroused in himself something very like disgust for her, for her persistence, her boldness; again that indescribably touching face presented itself to him and her irresistible voice made itself heard; and yet again he recalled her singing, her recitation—and did not know whether he was right in his wholesale condemnation.—In one word: he was a tousled man! At last he became bored with all this and decided, as the saying is, “to take it upon himself” and erase all that affair, as it undoubtedly was interfering with his avocations and disturbing his peace of mind.—He did not find it so easy to put his resolution into effect. . . . More than a week elapsed before he got back again into his ordinary rut. Fortunately, Kupfer did not present himself at all, any more than if he had not been in Moscow. Not long before the “affair” Arátóff had begun to busy himself with painting for photographic ends; he devoted himself to this with redoubled zeal.

Thus, imperceptibly, with a few “relapses” as the doctors express it, consisting, for example in the fact that he once came very near going to call on the Princess, two weeks . . . three weeks passed . . . and Arátóff became once more the Arátóff of old. Only deep down, under the surface of his life, something heavy and dark secretly accompanied him in all his comings and goings. Thus does a large fish which has just been hooked, but has not yet been drawn out, swim along the bottom of a deep river under the very boat wherein sits the fisherman with his stout rod in hand.

And lo! one day as he was skimming over some not quite fresh numbers of the *Moscow News*, Arátóff hit upon the following correspondence:

“With great sorrow,” wrote a certain local literary man from Kazán, “we insert in our theatrical chronicle the news of the sudden death of our gifted actress, Clara Mílitch, who had succeeded in the brief space of her engagement in becoming the favourite of our discriminating public. Our sorrow is all the greater because Miss Mílitch herself put an end to her young life, which held so much of promise, by means of poison. And this poisoning is all the more dreadful because the actress took the poison on the stage itself! They barely got her home, where, to universal regret, she died. Rumours are current in the town to the effect that unrequited love led her to that terrible deed.”

Arátóff softly laid the newspaper on the table. To all appearances he remained perfectly composed . . . but something smote him simultaneously in his breast and in his head, and then slowly diffused itself through all his members. He rose to his feet, stood for a while on one spot, and again seated himself, and again perused the letter. Then he rose once more, lay down on his bed and placing his hands under his head, he stared for a long time at the wall like one dazed. Little by little that wall seemed to recede . . . to vanish . . . and he beheld before him the boulevard beneath grey skies and *her* in her black mantilla . . . then her again on the platform . . . he even beheld himself by her side.—That which had smitten him so forcibly in the breast at the first moment, now began to rise up . . . to rise up in his throat . . . He tried to cough, to call some one, but his voice failed him, and to his own amazement, tears which he could not restrain gushed from his eyes. . . . What had evoked those tears? Pity? Regret? Or was it simply that his nerves had been unable to withstand the sudden shock? Surely, she was nothing to him? Was not that the fact?

“But perhaps that is not true,” the thought suddenly occurred to him. “I must find out! But from whom? From the Princess?—No, from Kupfer . . . from Kupfer? But they say he is not in Moscow.—Never mind! I must apply to him first!”

With these ideas in his head Arátóff hastily dressed himself, summoned a cab and dashed off to Kupfer.

## IX

He had not hoped to find him . . . but he did. Kupfer actually had been absent from Moscow for a time, but had returned about a week previously and was even preparing to call on Arátóff again. He welcomed him with his customary cordiality, and began to explain something to him but Arátóff immediately interrupted him with the impatient question:

“Hast thou read it?—Is it true?”

“Is what true?” replied the astounded Kupfer.

“About Clara Mílich?”

Kupfer’s face expressed compassion.—“Yes, yes, brother, it is true; she has poisoned herself. It is such a misfortune!”

Arátóff held his peace for a space.—“But hast thou also read it in the newspaper?” he asked:—“Or perhaps thou hast been to Kazán thyself?”

“I have been to Kazán, in fact; the Princess and I conducted her thither. She went on the stage there, and had great success. Only I did not remain there until the catastrophe. . . . I was in Yaroslávl.”

“In Yaroslávl?”

“Yes; I escorted the Princess thither. . . . She has settled in Yaroslávl now.”

“But hast thou trustworthy information?”

“The most trustworthy sort . . . at first hand! I made acquaintance in Kazán with her family.—But stay, my dear fellow . . . this news seems to agitate thee greatly.—But I remember that Clara did not please thee that time! Thou wert wrong! She was a splendid girl—only her head! She had an ungovernable head! I was greatly distressed about her!”

Arátóff did not utter a word, but dropped down on a chair, and after waiting a while he asked Kupfer to tell him . . . he hesitated.

“What?” asked Kupfer.

“*Why* . . . everything,” replied Arátóff slowly.—“About her family, for instance . . . and so forth. Everything thou knowest!”

“But does that interest thee?—Certainly!”

Kupfer, from whose face it was impossible to discern that he had grieved so greatly over Clara, began his tale.

From his words Arátóff learned that Clara Mílich’s real name had been Katerína Milovídoff; that her father, now dead, had been an official teacher of drawing in Kazán, had painted bad portraits and official images, and moreover had borne the reputation of being a drunkard and a domestic tyrant . . . “and a *cultured* man into the bargain!” . . . (Here Kupfer laughed in a self-satisfied manner, by way of hinting at the pun he had made);—that he had left at his death, in the first place, a widow of the merchant class, a thoroughly stupid female, straight out of one of Ostróvsky’s comedies; and in the second place, a daughter much older than Clara and bearing no resemblance to her—a very clever girl and “greatly developed, my dear fellow!” That the two—widow and daughter—lived in easy circumstances, in a decent little house which had been

acquired by the sale of those wretched portraits and holy pictures; that Clara . . . or Kátya, whichever you choose to call her, had astonished every one ever since her childhood by her talent, but was of an insubordinate, capricious disposition, and was constantly quarrelling with her f a-flier; that having an inborn passion for the theatre, she had run away from the parental house at the age of sixteen with an actress. .

“With an actor?” interjected Arátóff.

“No, not with an actor, but an actress; to whom she had become attached. . . . This actress had a protector, it is true, a wealthy gentleman already elderly, who only refrained from marrying her because he was already married—while the actress, it appeared, was married also.”

Further, Kupfer informed Arátóff that, prior to her arrival in Moscow, Clara had acted and sung in provincial theatres; that on losing her friend the actress (the gentleman had died also, it seems, or had made it up with his wife—precisely which Kupfer did not quite remember . . . she had made the acquaintance of the Princess, “that woman of gold, whom thou, my friend Yákoff Andréitch,” the narrator added with feeling, “wert not able to appreciate at her true worth”; that finally Clara had been offered an engagement in Kazán, and had accepted it, although she had previously declared that she would never leave Moscow!—But how the people of Kazán had loved her—it was fairly amazing! At every representation she received bouquets and gifts! bouquets and gifts!—A flour merchant, the greatest bigwig in the government, had even presented her with a golden inkstand!—Kupfer narrated all this with great animation, but without, however, displaying any special sentimentality, and interrupting his speech with the question:—“Why dost thou want to know that?” . . . or “To what end is that?” when Arátóff, after listening to him with devouring attention, demanded more and still more details. Everything was said at last, and Kupfer ceased speaking, rewarding himself for his toil with a cigar.

“But why did she poison herself?” asked Arátóff. “The newspaper stated. . . .”

Kupfer waved his hands.—“Well. . . . That I cannot say. . . . I don’t know. But the newspaper lies. Clara behaved in an exemplary manner . . . . she had no love-affairs. . . . And how could she, with her pride! She was as proud as Satan himself, and inaccessible! An insubordinate head! Firm as a rock! If thou wilt believe me,—I knew her pretty intimately, seest thou,—I never beheld a tear in her eyes!”

“But I did,” thought Arátóff to himself.

“Only there is this to be said,” went on Kupfer :—“ I noticed a great change in her of late: she became so depressed, she would remain silent for hours at a time; you could n’t get a word out of her. I once asked her: ‘Has any one offended you, Katerina Senmyónovna?’ Because I knew her disposition: she could not endure an insult. She held her peace, and that was the end of it! Even her success on the stage did not cheer her up; they would shower her with bouquets and she would not smile! She gave one glance at the gold inkstand,—and put it aside!—She complained that no one would write her a genuine part, as she conceived it. And she gave up singing entirely. I am to blame, brother! . . . I repeated to her that thou didst not think she had any *school*. But nevertheless . . . . why she poisoned herself is incomprehensible! And the way she did it too. . . .”

“In what part did she have the greatest success?” . . . Arátóff wanted to find out what part she had played that last time, but for some reason or other he asked something else.

“In Ostróvsky’s ‘Grónya’ I believe. But I repeat to thee: she had no love-affairs! Judge for thyself by one thing: she lived in her mother’s house. . . . Thou knowest what some of those merchants’ houses are like; a glass case filled with holy images in every corner and a shrine lamp in front of the case; deadly, stifling heat; a sour odour; in the drawing-room nothing but chairs ranged along the wall, and geraniums in the windows;—and when a visitor arrives, the hostess

begins to groan as though an enemy were approaching. What chance is there for love-making, and amours in such a place? Sometimes it happened that they would not even admit me. Their maidservant, a robust peasant-woman, in a Turkey red cotton sarafan, and pendulous breasts, would place herself across the path in the anteroom and roar: 'Whither away?' No, I positively cannot understand what made her poison herself. She must have grown tired of life," Kupfer philosophically wound up his remarks.

Arátóff sat with drooping head.—"Canst thou give me the address of that house in Kazán?" he said at last.

"I can; but what dost thou want of it?—Dost thou wish to send a letter thither?"

"Perhaps so."

"Well, as thou wilt. Only the old woman will not answer thee. Her sister might the clever sister!—But again, brother, I marvel at thee! Such indifference formerly . . . and now so much attention! All that comes of living a solitary life, my dear fellow!"

Arátóff made no reply to this remark and went away, after having procured the address in Kazán.

Agitation, surprise, expectation had been depicted on his face when he went to Kupfer. . . . Now he advanced with an even gait, downcast eyes, and hat pulled low down over his brows; almost every one he met followed him with a searching gaze . . . but he paid no heed to the passers-by . . . it was quite different from what it had been on the boulevard! .

"Unhappy Clara! Foolish Clara!" resounded in his soul.

## X

Nevertheless, Arátóff passed the following day in a fairly tranquil manner. He was even able to devote himself to his customary occupations. There was only one thing: both during his busy time and in his leisure moments he thought incessantly of Clara, of what Kupfer had told him the day before. Truth to tell, his thoughts were also of a decidedly pacific nature. It seemed to him that that strange young girl interested him from a psychological point of view, as something in the nature of a puzzle, over whose solution it was worth while to cudgel one's brains.—"She ran away from home with a kept actress," he thought, "she placed herself under the protection of that Princess, in whose house she lived,—and had no love-affairs? It is improbable! . Kupfer says it was pride! But, in the first place, we know" (Arátóff should have said: "we have read in books") . . . . "that pride is compatible with light-minded conduct; and in the second place, did not she, such a proud person, appoint a meeting with a man who might show her scorn . . . and appoint it in a public place, into the bargain . . . on the boulevard!"—At this point there recurred to Arátóff's mind the whole scene on the boulevard, and he asked himself: "Had he really shown scorn for Clara?"—"No," he decided. . . . That was another feeling . . . a feeling of perplexity . . . of distrust, in short!"—"Unhappy Clara!" again rang through his brain.—"Yes, she was unhappy," he decided again . . . that was the most fitting word.

"But if that is so, I was unjust. She spoke truly when she said that I did not understand her. 'T is a pity!—It may be that a very remarkable being has passed so close to me . . . and I did not lake advantage of the opportunity, but repulsed her. . . . Well, never mind! My life is still before me. I shall probably have other encounters of a different sort!

"But what prompted her to pick out *me*, in particular?"—He cast a glance at a mirror which he was passing at the moment. "What is there peculiar about me? And what sort of a beauty am I?—My face is like everybody else's face. . . . However, she was not a beauty either.

“She was not a beauty . . . but what an expressive face she had! Impassive . . . but expressive! I have never before seen such a face.—And she has talent . . . that is to say, she had talent, undoubted talent. Wild, untrained, even coarse . . . but undoubted.—And in that case also I was unjust to her.”—Arátoff mentally transported himself to the musical morning . . . and noticed that he remembered with remarkable distinctness every word she had sung or recited, every intonation. . . . That would not have been the case had she been devoid of talent.

“And now all that is in the grave, where she has thrust herself. . . . But I have nothing to do with that. . . . I am not to blame! It would even be absurd to think that I am to blame.”—Again it flashed into Arátoff’s mind that even had she had “anything of that sort” about her, his conduct during the interview would indubitably have disenchanted her. That was why she had broken into such harsh laughter at parting.—And where was the proof that she had poisoned herself on account of an unhappy love? It is only newspaper correspondents who attribute every such death to unhappy love!—But life easily becomes repulsive to people with character, like Clara . . . and tiresome. Yes, tiresome. Kupfer was right: living simply bored her.

“In spite of her success, of her ovations?”—Arátoff meditated.—The psychological analysis to which he surrendered himself was even agreeable to him. Unaccustomed as he had been, up to this time, to all contact with women, he did not suspect how significant for him was this tense examination of a woman’s soul.

“Consequently,” he pursued his meditations, “art did not satisfy her, did not fill the void of her life. Genuine artists exist only for art, for the theatre. . . . Everything else pales before that which they regard as their vocation. . . . She was a dilettante!”

Here Arátoff again became thoughtful.—No, the word “dilettante” did not consort with that face, with the expression of that face, of those eyes . . .

And again there rose up before him the image of Clara with her tear-filled eyes riveted upon him, and her clenched hands raised to her lips. . . .

“Akh, I won’t think of it, I won’t think of it . . .” he whispered. . . . “What is the use?” In this manner the whole day passed. During dinner Arátoff chatted a great deal with Platósha, questioned her about old times, which, by the way, she recalled and transmitted badly, as she was not possessed of a very glib tongue, and had noticed hardly anything in the course of her life save her Yáshka. She merely rejoiced that he was so good-natured and affectionate that day!—Toward evening Arátoff quieted down to such a degree that he played several games of trumps with his aunt.

Thus passed the day . . . but the night was quite another matter!

## XI

It began well; he promptly fell asleep, and when his aunt entered his room on tiptoe for the purpose of making the sign of the cross over him thrice as he slept—she did this every night—he was lying and breathing as quietly as a child.—But before daybreak he had a vision.

He dreamed that he was walking over the bare steppes, sown with stones, beneath a low-hanging sky. Between the stones wound a path; he was advancing along it.

Suddenly there rose up in front of him something in the nature of a delicate cloud. He looked intently at it; the little cloud turned into a woman in a white gown, with a bright girdle about her waist. She was hurrying away from him. He did not see either her face or her hair . . . a long piece of tissue concealed them. But he felt bound to overtake her and look into her eyes. Only, no matter how much haste he made, she still walked more quickly than he.

On the path lay a broad, flat stone, resembling a tomb-stone. It barred her way. The woman came to a halt. Arátóff ran up to her. She turned toward him—but still he could not see her eyes . . . they were closed. Her face was white,—white as snow; her arms hung motionless. She resembled a statue.

Slowly, without bending a single limb, she leaned backward and sank down on that stone. . . And now Arátóff was lying beside her, outstretched like a mortuary statue,—and his hands were folded like those of a corpse.

But at this point the woman suddenly rose to her feet and went away. Arátóff tried to rise also . . . but he could not stir, he could not unclasp his hands, and could only gaze after her in despair.

Then the woman suddenly turned round, and he beheld bright, vivacious eyes in a living face, which was strange to him, however. She was laughing, beckoning to him with her hand . . . and still he was unable to move.

She laughed yet once again, and swiftly retreated, merrily nodding her head, on which a garland of tiny roses gleamed crimson.

Arátóff strove to shout, strove to break that frightful nightmare. . . . Suddenly everything grew dark round about . . . and the woman returned to him.

But she was no longer a statue whom he knew not . . . she was Clara. She halted in front of him, folded her arms, and gazed sternly and attentively at him. Her lips were tightly compressed, but it seemed to Arátóff that he heard the words:

“If thou wishest to know who I am, go thither!”

“Whither?” he asked.

“Thither!”—the moaning answer made itself audible.—“Thither!”

Arátóff awoke.

He sat up in bed, lighted a candle which stood on his night-stand, but did not rise, and sat there for a long time slowly gazing about him. It seemed to him that something had taken place within him since he went to bed; that something had taken root within him . . . something had taken possession of him. “But can that be possible?” he whispered unconsciously. “Can it be that such a power exists?”

He could not remain in bed. He softly dressed himself and paced his chamber until daylight. And strange to say! He did not think about Clara for a single minute,—and he did not think about her because he had made up his mind to set off for Kazán that very day!

He thought only of that journey, of how it was to be made, and what he ought to take with him,—and how he would there ferret out and find out everything,—and regain his composure.

“If thou dost not go,” he argued with himself, “thou wilt surely lose thy reason!” He was afraid of that; he was afraid of his nerves. He was convinced that as soon as he should see all that with his own eyes, all obsessions would flee like a nocturnal nightmare.—“And the journey will occupy not more than a week in all,” he thought. . . . “What is a week? And there is no other way of ridding myself of it.”

The rising sun illuminated his room; but the light of day did not disperse the shades of night which weighed upon him, did not alter his decision.

Platósha came near having an apoplectic stroke when he communicated his decision to her. She even squatted down on her heels . . . her legs gave way under her. “To Kazán? Why to Kazán?” she whispered, protruding her eyes which were already blind enough without that. She would not have been any more astounded had she learned that her Yásha was going to marry the neighbouring baker’s daughter, or depart to America.—“And shalt thou stay long in Kazán?”

"I shall return at the end of a week," replied Arátóff, as he stood half-turned away from his aunt, who was still sitting on the floor.

Platósha tried to remonstrate again, but Arátóff shouted at her in an utterly unexpected and unusual manner:

"I am not a baby," he yelled, turning pale all over, while his lips quivered and his eyes flashed viciously.—"I am six-and-twenty years of age. I know what I am about,—I am free to do as I please!—I will not permit any one. . . . Give me money for the journey; prepare a trunk with linen and clothing . . . and do not bother me! I shall return at the end of a week, Platósha," he added, in a softer tone.

Platósha rose to her feet, grunting, and, making no further opposition, wended her way to her chamber. Yásha had frightened her.—"I have not a head on my shoulders," she remarked to the cook, who was helping her to pack Yásha's things,—"not a head—but a bee-hive . . . and what bees are buzzing there I do not know! He is going away to Kazán, my mother, to Ka-zá-án!"

The cook, who had noticed their yard-porter talking for a long time to the policeman about something, wanted to report this circumstance to her mistress, but she did not dare, and merely thought to herself: "To Kazán? If only it is n't some place further away!"—And Platonída Ivánovna was so distracted that she did not even utter her customary prayer.—In such a catastrophe as this even the Lord God could be of no assistance!

That same day Arátóff set off for Kazán.

## XII

No sooner had he arrived in that town and engaged a room at the hotel, than he dashed off in search of the widow Milovíoff's house. During the whole course of his journey he had been in a sort of stupor, which, nevertheless, did not in the least prevent his taking all proper measures,—transferring himself at Nizhni Nóvgorod from the railway to the steamer, eating at the stations, and so forth. As before, he was convinced that everything would be cleared up *there*, and accordingly he banished from his thoughts all memories and speculations, contenting himself with one thing,—the mental preparation of the speech in which he was to set forth to Clara Mílitch's family the real reason of his trip.—And now, at last, he had attained to the goal of his yearning, and ordered the servant to announce him. He was admitted—with surprise and alarm—but he was admitted.

The widow Milovíoff's house proved to be in fact just as Kupfer had described it; and the widow herself really did resemble one of Ostróvsky's women of the merchant class, although she was of official rank; her husband had been a Collegiate Assessor. Not without some difficulty did Arátóff, after having preliminarily excused himself for his boldness, and the strangeness of his visit, make the speech which he had prepared, to the effect that he wished to collect all the necessary information concerning the gifted actress who had perished at such an early age; that he was actuated not by idle curiosity, but by a profound sympathy for her talent, of which he was a worshipper (he said exactly that—"a worshipper"); that, in conclusion, it would be a sin to leave the public in ignorance of the loss it had sustained,—and why its hopes had not been realized!

Madame Milovíoff did not interrupt Arátóff; it is hardly probable that she understood very clearly what this strange visitor was saying to her, and she merely swelled a little with pride, and opened her eyes widely at him on perceiving that he had a peaceable aspect, and was decently clad, and was not some sort of swindler . . . and was not asking for any money.

“Are you saying that about Kátya?” she asked, as soon as Arátóff ceased speaking.

“Exactly so . . . . about your daughter.”

“And you have come from Moscow for that purpose?”

Yes, from Moscow.”

“Merely for that?”

“Merely for that.”

Madame Milovíoff suddenly took fright.—“Why, you—are an author? Do you write in the newspapers?”

“No, I am not an author,—and up to the present time, I have never written for the newspapers.”

The widow bent her head. She was perplexed. “Consequently . . . . it is for your own pleasure?” she suddenly inquired. Arátóff did not immediately hit upon the proper answer.

“Out of sympathy, out of reverence for talent,” he said at last.

The word “reverence” pleased Madame Milovíoff. “Very well!” she ejaculated with a sigh.

“Although I am her mother, and grieved very greatly over her. . . . It was such a catastrophe, you know. . . . Still, I must say, that she was always a crazy sort of girl, and ended up in the same way! Such a disgrace. . . . Judge for yourself: what sort of a thing is that for a mother? We may be thankful that they even buried her in Christian fashion. . . .” Madame Milovíoff crossed herself.—“From the time she was a small child she submitted to no one,—she abandoned the paternal roof . . . . and finally, it is enough to say that she became an actress! Every one knows that I did not turn her out of the house; for I loved her! For I am her mother, all the same! She did not have to live with strangers,—and beg alms! . . . “Here the widow melted into tears.—“But if you, sir,” she began afresh, wiping her eyes with the ends of her kerchief, “really have that intention, and if you will not concoct anything dishonourable about us,—but if, on the contrary, you wish to show us a favour,—then you had better talk with my other daughter. She will tell you everything better than I can. . . . “Ánnotchka!” called Madame Milovíoff:—“Ánnotchka, come hither! There’s some gentleman or other from Moscow who wants to talk about Kátya!”

There was a crash in the adjoining room, but no one appeared.—“Ánnotchka!” cried the widow again—“Anna Semyónovna! come hither, I tell thee!”

The door opened softly and on the threshold appeared a girl no longer young, of sickly aspect, and homely, but with very gentle and sorrowful eyes. Arátóff rose from his seat to greet her, and introduced himself, at the same time mentioning his friend Kupfer.—“Ah! Feódor Feódoritch!” ejaculated the girl softly, as she softly sank down on a chair.

“Come, now, talk with the gentleman,” said Madame Milovíoff, rising ponderously from her seat: “He has taken the trouble to come expressly from Moscow,—he wishes to collect information about Kátya. But you must excuse me, sir,” she added, turning to Arátóff. . . . “I shall go away, to attend to domestic affairs. You can have a good explanation with Ánnotchka—she will tell you about the theatre . . . . and all that sort of thing. She’s my clever, well-educated girl: she speaks French and reads books quite equal to her dead sister. And she educated her sister, I may say. . . . She was the elder—well, and so she taught her.”

Madame Milovíoff withdrew. When Arátóff was left alone with Anna Semyónovna he repeated his speech; but from the first glance he understood that he had to deal with a girl who really was cultured, not with a merchant’s daughter,—and so he enlarged somewhat, and employed different expressions;—and toward the end he became agitated, flushed, and felt conscious that his heart was beating hard. Anna Semyónovna listened to him in silence, with her hands folded; the sad smile did not leave her face . . . bitter woe which had not ceased to cause pain, was expressed in that smile.

“Did you know my sister?” she asked Arátoff.

“No; properly speaking, I did not know her,” he replied. “I saw and heard your sister once . . . . but all that was needed was to hear and see your sister once, in order to . . . .”

“Do you mean to write her biography?” Anna put another question.

Arátoff had not expected that word; nevertheless, he immediately answered “Why not?” But the chief point was that he wished to acquaint the public . . . .

Anna stopped him with a gesture of her hand.

“To what end? The public caused her much grief without that; and Kátya had only just begun to live. But if you yourself” (Anna looked at him and again smiled that same sad smile, only now it was more cordial . . . . apparently she was thinking: “Yes, thou dost inspire me with confidence”) . . . . “if you yourself cherish such sympathy for her, then permit me to request that you come to us this evening . . . . after dinner. I cannot now . . . . so suddenly. . . . I will collect my forces. . . . I will make an effort Akh, I loved her too greatly!”

Anna turned away; she was on the point of bursting into sobs.

Arátoff rose alertly from his chair, thanked her for her proposal, said that he would come without fail . . . . without fail! and went away, bearing in his soul an impression of a quiet voice, of gentle and sorrowful eyes—and burning with the languor of anticipation.

### XIII

Arátoff returned to the Milovíoff’s house that same day, and conversed for three whole hours with Anna Semyónovna. Madame Milovíoff went to bed immediately after dinner—at two o’clock—and “rested” until evening tea, at seven o’clock. Arátoff’s conversation with Clara’s sister was not, properly speaking, a conversation: she did almost the whole of the talking, at first with hesitation, with confusion, but afterward with uncontrollable fervour. She had, evidently, idolised her sister. The confidence wherewith Arátoff had inspired her waxed and strengthened; she was no longer embarrassed; she even fell to weeping softly, twice, in his presence. He seemed to her worthy of her frank revelations and effusions. Nothing of that sort had ever before come into her own dull life! . . . And he . . . . he drank in her every word.

This, then, is what he learned . . . . much of it, as a matter of course, from what she refrained from saying . . . . and much he filled out for himself.

In her youth Clara had been, without doubt, a disagreeable child; and as a young girl she had been only a little softer: self-willed, hot-tempered, vain, she had not got on particularly well with her father, whom she despised for his drunkenness and incapacity. He was conscious of this and did not pardon it in her. Her musical faculties showed themselves at an early age; her father repressed them, recognising painting as the sole art,—wherein he himself had had so little success, but which had nourished him and his family. Clara had loved her mother . . . in a careless way, as she would have loved a nurse; she worshipped her sister, although she squabbled with her, and bit her. . . . It is true that afterward she had been wont to go down on her knees before her and kiss the bitten places. She was all fire, all passion, and all contradiction: vengeful and kind-hearted, magnanimous and rancorous; “she believed in Fate, and did not believe in God” (these words Anna whispered with terror); she loved everything that was beautiful, and dressed herself at haphazard; she could not endure to have young men pay court to her, but in books she read only those pages where love was the theme; she did not care to please, she did not like petting and never forgot caresses as she never forgot offences; she was afraid of death, and she had killed herself! She had been wont to say sometimes, “I do not meet the sort of

man I want—and the others I will not have!”—“Well, and what if you should meet the right sort?” Anna had asked her.—“If I do . . . I shall take him.”—“But what if he will not give himself?”—“Well, then . . . I will make an end of myself. It will mean that I am good for nothing.”

Clara’s father (he sometimes asked his wife when he was drunk: “Who was the father of that black-visaged little devil of thine?—I was not!”)—Clara’s father, in the endeavour to get her off his hands as promptly as possible, undertook to betroth her to a wealthy young merchant, a very stupid fellow,—one of the “cultured” sort. Two weeks before the wedding (she was only sixteen years of age), she walked up to her betrothed, folded her arms, and drumming with her fingers on her elbows (her favourite pose), she suddenly dealt him a blow, bang! on his rosy cheek with her big, strong hand! He sprang to his feet, and merely gasped,—it must be stated that he was dead in love with her. . . . He asked: “What is that for?” She laughed and left the room.—“I was present in the room, narrated Anna, “and was a witness. I ran after her and said to her: ‘Good gracious, Kátya, why didst thou do that?’—But she answered me: ‘If he were a real man he would have thrashed me, but as it is, he is a wet hen! And he asks what it is for, to boot. If he loved me and did not avenge himself, then let him bear it and not ask: “what is that for?” He’ll never get anything of me, unto ages of ages!’ And so she did not marry him. Soon afterward she made the acquaintance of that actress, and left our house. My mother wept, but my father only said: ‘Away with the refractory goat from the flock!’ and would take no trouble, or try to hunt her up. Father did not understand Clara. On the eve of her flight,” added Anna, “she almost strangled me in her embrace, and kept repeating: ‘I cannot! I cannot do otherwise! . . . My heart may break in two, but I cannot! our cage is too small . . . it is not large enough for my wings! And one cannot escape his fate’ ” . . .

“After that,” remarked Anna, “we rarely saw each other. . . . When father died she came to us for a couple of days, took nothing from the inheritance, and again disappeared. She found it oppressive with us. . . . I saw that. Then she returned to Kazán as an actress.”

Arátóff began to interrogate Anna concerning the theatre, the parts in which Clara had appeared, her success. . . . Anna answered in detail, but with the same sad, although animated enthusiasm. She even showed Arátóff a photographic portrait, which represented Clara in the costume of one of her parts. In the portrait she was looking to one side, as though turning away from the spectators; the ribbon intertwined with her thick hair fell like a serpent on her bare arm. Arátóff gazed long at that portrait, thought it a good likeness, inquired whether Clara had not taken part in public readings, and learned that she had not; that she required the excitement of the theatre, of the stage . . . but another question was burning on his lips.

“Anna Semyónovna!” he exclaimed at last, not loudly, but with peculiar force, “tell me, I entreat you, why she . . . why she made up her mind to that frightful step?”

Anna dropped her eyes.—“I do not know!” she said, after the lapse of several minutes.—“God is my witness, I do not know!” she continued impetuously, perceiving that Arátóff had flung his hands apart as though he did not believe her. . . . “From the very time she arrived here she seemed to be thoughtful, gloomy. Something must infallibly have happened to her in Moscow, which I was not able to divine! But, on the contrary, on that fatal day, she seemed . . . if not more cheerful, at any rate more tranquil than usual. I did not even have any forebodings,” added Anna with a bitter smile, as though reproaching herself for that.

“You see,” she began again, “it seemed to have been written in Kátya’s fate, that she should be unhappy. She was convinced of it herself from her early youth. She would prop her head on her hand, meditate, and say: ‘I shall not live long!’ She had forebodings. Just imagine, she even saw

beforehand,—sometimes in a dream, sometimes in ordinary wise,—what was going to happen to her! ‘I cannot live as I wish, so I will not live at all,’ . . . . was her adage.—‘Our life is in our own hands, you know!’ And she proved it.”

Anna covered her face with her hands and ceased speaking.

“Anna Semyónovna,” began Arátóff, after waiting a little: “perhaps you have heard to what the newspapers attributed . . . .”

“To unhappy love?” interrupted Anna, removing her hands from her face with a jerk. “That is a calumny, a calumny, a lie! . . . My unsullied, unapproachable Kátya . . . . Kátya! and an unhappy, rejected love? And would not I have known about that? . . . Everybody, everybody fell in love with her . . . . but she. . . . And whom could she have fallen in love with here? Who, out of all these men, was worthy of her? Who had attained to that ideal of honour, uprightness, purity,—most of all, purity,—which she constantly held before her, in spite of all her defects? . . . Reject her . . . her . . . .”

Anna’s voice broke. . . . Her fingers trembled slightly. Suddenly she flushed scarlet all over . . . flushed with indignation, and at that moment—and only at that moment—did she resemble her sister.

Arátóff attempted to apologise.

“Listen,” broke in Anna once more:—“I insist upon it that you shall not believe that calumny yourself, and that you shall dissipate it, if possible! Here, you wish to write an article about her, or something of that sort:—here is an opportunity for you to defend her memory! That is why I am talking so frankly with you. Listen: Kátya left a diary. . . .”

Arátóff started.—“A diary,” he whispered.

“Yes, a diary . . . . that is to say, a few pages only.—Kátya was not fond of writing. . . . for whole months together she did not write at all and her letters were so short! But she was always, always truthful, she never lied. . . . Lie, forsooth, with her vanity! I . . . . I will show you that diary! You shall see for yourself whether it contains a single hint of any such unhappy love!”

Anna hastily drew from the table-drawer a thin copy-book, about ten pages in length, no more, and offered it to Arátóff. The latter grasped it eagerly, recognised the irregular, bold handwriting,—the handwriting of that anonymous letter,—opened it at random, and began at the following lines:

“Moscow—Tuesday . . . . June. I sang and recited at a literary morning. To-day is a significant day for me. *It must decide my fate.*” (These words were doubly underlined.) “Once more I have seen . . . .” Here followed several lines which had been carefully blotted out.—And then: “No! no! no! . . . . I must return to my former idea, if only . . . .”

Arátóff dropped the hand in which he held the book, and his head sank quietly on his breast.

“Read!” cried Anna.—“Why don’t you read? Read from the beginning. . . . You can read the whole of it in five minutes, though this diary extends over two whole years. In Kazán she wrote nothing. . . .”

Arátóff slowly rose from his chair, and fairly crashed down on his knees before Anna!

She was simply petrified with amazement and terror.

“Give . . . . give me this diary,” said Arátóff in a fainting voice.—“Give it to me . . . and the photograph on must certainly have another—but I will return the diary to you. . . . But I must, I must . . . .”

In his entreaty, in the distorted features of his face there was something so despairing that it even resembled wrath, suffering. . . . And in reality he was suffering. It seemed as though he had

not been able to foresee that such a calamity would descend upon him, and was excitedly begging to be spared, to be saved. . . .

“Give it to me,” he repeated.

“But . . . you . . . you were not in love with my sister?” said Anna at last.

Arátóff continued to kneel.

“I saw her twice in all . . . believe me! . . . and if I had not been impelled by causes which I myself cannot clearly either understand or explain . . . if some power that is stronger than I were not upon me . . . I would not have asked you. . . . I would not have come hither . . . I must . . . I ought . . . why, you said yourself that I was bound to restore her image!”

“And you were not in love with my sister?” asked Anna for the second time.

Arátóff did not reply at once, and turned away slightly, as though with pain.

“Well, yes! I was! I was!—And I am in love with her now . . .” he exclaimed with the same desperation as before.

Footsteps became audible in the adjoining room.

“Rise . . . rise . . .” said Anna hastily. “My mother is coming.”

Arátóff rose.

“And take the diary and the picture. God be with you!—Poor, poor Kátya! . . . But you must return the diary to me,” she added with animation.—“And if you write anything, you must be sure to send it to me. . . . Do you hear?”

The appearance of Madame Milovídoﬀ released Arátóff from the necessity of replying.—He succeeded, nevertheless, in whispering:—“You are an angel! Thanks! I will send all that I write. . . .”

Madame Milovídoﬀ was too drowsy to divine anything. And so Arátóff left Kazán with the photographic portrait in the side-pocket of his coat. He had returned the copy-book to Anna, but without her having detected it, he had cut out the page on which stood the underlined words.

On his way back to Moscow he was again seized with a sort of stupor. Although he secretly rejoiced that he had got what he went for, yet he repelled all thoughts of Clara until he should reach home again. He meditated a great deal more about her sister Anna.—“Here now,” he said to himself, “is a wonderful, sympathetic king! What a delicate comprehension of everything, what a loving heart, what absence of egoism! And how comes it that such girls bloom with us, and in the provinces,—and in such surroundings into the bargain! She is both sickly, and ill-favoured, and not young,—but what a capital wife she would make for an honest, well-educated man! That is the person with whom one ought to fall in love! . . .” Arátóff meditated thus . . . but on his arrival in Moscow the matter took quite another turn.

#### XIV

Platonída Ivánovna was unspeakably delighted at the return of her nephew. She had thought all sorts of things during his absence!—“At the very least he has gone to Siberia!” she whispered, as she sat motionless in her little chamber: “for a year at the very least!”—Moreover the cook had frightened her by imparting the most authentic news concerning the disappearance of first one, then another young man from the neighbourhood. Yásha’s complete innocence and trustworthiness did not in the least serve to calm the old woman.—“Because . . . much that signifies!—he busies himself with photography . . . well, and that is enough! Seize him!” And now here was her Yáshenka come back to her safe and sound! She did notice, it is true, that he appeared to have grown thin, and his face seemed to be sunken—that was comprehensible . . .

he had had no one to look after him. But she did not dare to question him concerning his trip. At dinner she inquired:

“And is Kazán a nice town?”

“Yes,” replied Arátóff.

“Tatárs live there, I believe?”

“Not Tatárs only.”

“And hast not thou brought a khalát thence?”

“No, I have not.”

And there the conversation ended.

But as soon as Arátóff found himself alone in his study he immediately felt as though something were embracing him round about, as though he were again in *the power*,—precisely that, in the power of another life, of another being. Although he had told Anna—in that outburst of sudden frenzy—that he was in love with Clara, that word now seemed to him devoid of sense and whimsical.—No, he was not in love; and how could he fall in love with a dead woman, whom even during her lifetime he had not liked, whom he had almost forgotten?—No! But he was in the power of . . . in *her power* . . . he no longer belonged to himself. He had been *taken possession of*. Taken possession of to such a point that he was no longer trying to free himself either by ridiculing his own stupidity, or by arousing in himself if not confidence, at least hope that all this would pass over, that it was nothing but nerves,—or by seeking proofs of it,—or in any other way!—“If I meet him I shall take him” he recalled Clara’s words reported by Anna . . . and so now he had been taken.

But was not she dead? Yes; her body was dead . . . but how about her soul?—Was not that immortal . . . did it require bodily organs to manifest its power? Magnetism has demonstrated to us the influence of the living human soul upon another living human soul. . . . Why should not that influence be continued after death, if the soul remains alive?—But with what object? What might be the result of this?—But do we, in general, realise the object of everything which goes on around us?

These reflections occupied Arátóff to such a degree that at tea he suddenly asked Platósha whether she believed in the immortality of the soul. She did not understand at first what it was he had asked; but afterward she crossed herself and replied, “of course. How could the soul be otherwise than immortal?”

“But if that is so, can it act after death?” Arátóff put a second question.

The old woman replied that it could . . . that is to say, it can pray for us; when it shall have passed through all sorts of tribulations, and is awaiting the Last Judgment. But during the first forty days it only hovers around the spot where its death occurred.

“During the first forty days?”

“Yes; and after that come its tribulations.”

Arátóff was surprised at his aunt’s erudition, and went off to his own room.—And again he felt the same thing, that same power upon him. The power was manifested thus—that the image of Clara incessantly presented itself to him, in its most minute details,—details which he did not seem to have observed during her lifetime; he saw he saw her fingers, her nails, the bands of hair on her cheeks below her temples, a small mole under the left eye; he saw the movement of her lips, her nostrils, her eyebrows . . . and what sort of a gait she had, and how she held her head a little on the right side . . . he saw everything!—He did not admire all this at all; he simply could not help thinking about it and seeing it.—Yet he did not dream about her during the first night after his return . . . he was very weary and slept like one slain. On the other hand, no sooner did

he awake than she again entered his room, and there she remained, as though she had been its owner; just as though she had purchased for herself that right by her voluntary death, without asking him or requiring his permission.

He took her photograph; he began to reproduce it, to enlarge it. Then it occurred to him to arrange it for the stereoscope. It cost him a great deal of trouble, but at last he succeeded. He fairly started when he beheld through the glass her figure which had acquired the semblance of bodily substance. But that figure was grey, as though covered with dust . . . and moreover, the eyes . . . the eyes still gazed aside, as though they were averting themselves. He began to gaze at them for a long, long time, as though expecting that they might, at any moment, turn themselves in his direction . . . he even puckered up his eyes deliberately . . . but the eyes remained motionless, and the whole figure assumed the aspect of a doll. He went away, threw himself into an arm-chair, got out the leaf which he had torn from her diary, with the underlined words, and thought: "They say that people in love kiss the lines which have been written by a beloved hand; but I have no desire to do that—and the chirography appears to me ugly into the bargain. But in that line lies my condemnation."—At this point there flashed into his mind the promise he had made to Anna about the article. He seated himself at his table, and set about writing it; but everything he wrote turned out so rhetorical . . . worst of all, so artificial . . . just as though he did not believe in what he was writing, or in his own feelings . . . and Clara herself seemed to him unrecognisable, incomprehensible! She would not yield herself to him.

"No," he thought, throwing aside his pen, "either I have no talent for writing in general, or I must wait a while yet!"

He began to call to mind his visit to the Milovídoff's, and all the narration of Anna, of that kind, splendid Anna. . . . The word she had uttered: "unsullied!" suddenly struck him. It was exactly as though something had scorched and illuminated him.

"Yes," he said aloud, "she was unsullied and I am unsullied. . . . That is what has given her this power!"

Thoughts concerning the immortality of the soul, the life beyond the grave, again visited him. "Is it not said in the Bible: 'O death, where is thy sting?' And in Schiller: 'And the dead also shall live!' (*Auch die Todten sollen leben!*)—Or here again, in Mickiewicz, 'I shall love until life ends . . . and after life ends!'—While one English writer has said: 'Love is stronger than death!'"—The biblical sentence acted with peculiar force on Arátóff. He wanted to look up the place where those words were to be found. . . . He had no Bible; he went to borrow one from Platósha. She was astonished; but she got out an old, old book in a warped leather binding with brass clasps, all spotted with wax, and handed it to Arátóff. He carried it off to his own room, but for a long time could not find that verse. . . . but on the other hand, he hit upon another:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" . . . . (the Gospel of John, Chap. XV, verse 13).

He thought: "That is not properly expressed.—It should read: 'Greater *power* hath no man!' "

"But what if she did not set her soul on me at all? What if she killed herself merely because life had become a burden to her?—What if she, in conclusion, did not come to that tryst with the object of obtaining declarations of love at all?"

But at that moment Clara before her parting on the boulevard rose up before him. . . . He recalled that sorrowful expression on her face, and those tears, and those words:—"Akh, you have understood nothing!"

No! He could not doubt for what object and for what person she had laid down her life. . .

Thus passed that day until nightfall.

## XV

Arátoff went early to bed, without feeling particularly sleepy; but he hoped to find rest in bed. The strained condition of his nerves caused him a fatigue which was far more intolerable than the physical weariness of the journey and the road. But great as was his fatigue, he could not get to sleep. He tried to read . . . but the lines got entangled before his eyes. He extinguished his candle, and darkness took possession of his chamber.—But he continued to lie there sleepless, with closed eyes. . . . And now it seemed to him that some one was whispering in his ear. . . . “It is the beating of my heart, the rippling of the blood,” he thought. . . . But the whisper passed into coherent speech. Some one was talking Russian hurriedly, plaintively, and incomprehensibly. It was impossible to distinguish a single separate word. . . . But it was Clara’s voice!

Arátoff opened his eyes, rose up in bed, propped himself on his elbows. . . . The voice grew fainter, but continued its plaintive, hurried, unintelligible speech as before. . . .

It was indubitably Clara’s voice!

Some one’s fingers ran over the keys of the piano in light arpeggios. . . . Then the voice began to speak again. More prolonged sounds made themselves audible . . . like moans . . . always the same. And then words began to detach themselves. . . .

“Roses . . . roses . . . roses.” . . .

“Roses,” repeated Arátoff in a whisper.—

“Akh, yes! The roses which I saw on the head of that woman in my dream. . . .”

“Roses,” was audible again.

“Is it thou?” asked Arátoff, whispering as before.

The voice suddenly ceased.

Arátoff waited . . . waited—and dropped his head on his pillow. “A hallucination of hearing,” he thought. “Well, and what if . . . what if she really is here, close to me? . . . What if I were to see her, would I be frightened? But why should I be frightened? Why should I rejoice? Possibly because it would be a proof that there is another world, that the soul is immortal.—But, however, even if I were to see anything, that also might be a hallucination of the sight”. . . .

Nevertheless he lighted his candle, and shot a glance over the whole room not without some trepidation . . . and descried nothing unusual in it. He rose, approached the stereoscope . . . and there again was the same grey doll, with eyes which gazed to one side. The feeling of alarm in Arátoff was replaced by one of vexation. He had been, as it were, deceived in his expectations . . . and those same expectations appeared to him absurd.—“Well, this is downright stupid!” he muttered as he got back into bed, and blew out his light. Again profound darkness reigned in the room.

Arátoff made up his mind to go to sleep this time. . . . But a new sensation had cropped up within him. It seemed to him as though some one were standing in the middle of the room, not far from him, and breathing in a barely perceptible manner. He hastily turned round, opened his eyes. . . . But what could be seen in that impenetrable darkness?—He began to fumble for a match on his night-stand . . . and suddenly it seemed to him as though some soft, noiseless whirlwind dashed across the whole room, above him, through him—and the words: “’T is I!” rang plainly in his ears. “’T is I! ’T is I! . . .”

Several moments passed before he succeeded in lighting a match.

Again there was no one in the room, and he no longer heard anything except the violent beating of his own heart. He drank a glass of water, and remained motionless, with his head resting on his hand.

He said to himself: "I will wait. Either this is all nonsense . . . or she is here. She will not play with me like a cat with a mouse!" He waited, waited a long time . . . so long that the hand on which he was propping his head became numb . . . but not a single one of his previous sensations was repeated. A couple of times his eyes closed. . . . He immediately opened them . . . at least, it seemed to him that he opened them. Gradually they became riveted on the door and so remained. The candle burned out and the room became dark once more . . . but the door gleamed like a long, white spot in the midst of the gloom. And lo! that spot began to move, it contracted, vanished . . . and in its place, on the threshold, a female form made its appearance. Arátóff looked at it intently . . . it was Clara! And this time she was gazing straight at him, she moved toward him. . . . On her head was a wreath of red roses. . . . It kept undulating, rising. . . .

Before him stood his aunt in her nightcap, with a broad red ribbon, and in a white wrapper.

"Platósha!" he enunciated with difficulty.—"Is it you?"

"It is I," replied Platonída Ivánovna. . . . "It is I, Yashyónotchek, it is I."

"Why have you come?"

"Why, thou didst wake me. At first thou seemedst to be moaning all the while . . . and then suddenly thou didst begin to shout: 'Save me! Help me!' "

"I shouted?"

"Yes, thou didst shout, and so hoarsely: 'Save me!'—I thought: 'O Lord! Can he be ill?' So I entered. Art thou well?"

"Perfectly well."

"Come, that means that thou hast had a bad dream. I will fumigate with incense if thou wishest—shall I?"

Again Arátóff gazed intently at his aunt, and burst into a loud laugh. . . . The figure of the kind old woman in nightcap and wrapper, with her frightened, long-drawn face, really was extremely comical. All that mysterious something which had surrounded him, had stifled him, all those delusions dispersed on the instant.

"No, Platósha, my dear, it is not necessary, he said.—"Forgive me for having involuntarily alarmed you. May your rest be tranquil—and I will go to sleep also."

Platonída Ivánovna stood a little while longer on the spot where she was, pointed at the candle, grumbled: "Why dost thou not extinguish it? . . . there will be a catastrophe before long!"—and as she retired, could not refrain from making the sign of the cross over him from afar.

Arátóff fell asleep immediately, and slept until morning. He rose in a fine frame of mind . . . although he regretted something. . . . He felt light and free. "What romantic fancies one does devise," he said to himself with a smile. He did not once glance either at the stereoscope or the leaf which he had torn out. But immediately after breakfast he set off to see Kupfer.

What drew him thither . . . he dimly recognised.

## XVI

Arátóff found his sanguine friend at home. He chatted a little with him, reproached him for having quite forgotten him and his aunt, listened to fresh laudations of the golden woman, the Princess, from whom Kupfer had just received,—from Yaroslávl,—a skull-cap embroidered with

fish-scales . . . and then suddenly sitting down in front of Kupfer, and looking him straight in the eye, he announced that he had been to Kazán.

“Thou hast been to Kazán? Why so?”

“Why, because I wished to collect information about that . . . Clara Mílitch.”

“The girl who poisoned herself?”

“Yes.”

Kupfer shook his head.—“What a fellow thou art! And such a sly one! Thou hast travelled a thousand versts there and back . . . and all for what? Hey? If there had only been some feminine interest there! Then I could understand everything! every sort of folly!”—Kupfer ruffled up his hair.—“But for the sake of collecting materials, as you learned men put it. . . . No, I thank you! That’s what the committee of statistics exists for!—Well, and what about it—didst thou make acquaintance with the old woman and with her sister? She’s a splendid girl, isn’t she?”

“Splendid,” assented Arátóff.—“She communicated to me many curious things.”

“Did she tell thee precisely how Clara poisoned herself?”

“Thou meanest . . . what dost thou mean?”

“Why, in what manner?”

“No . . . She was still in such affliction. . . . I did not dare to question her too much. But was there anything peculiar about it?”

“Of course there was. Just imagine: she was to have acted that very day—and she did act. She took a phial of poison with her to the theatre, drank it before the first act, and in that condition played through the whole of that act. With the poison inside her! What dost thou think of that strength of will? what character, was n’t it? And they say that she never sustained her role with so much feeling, with so much warmth! The audience suspected nothing, applauded, recalled her. . . . But as soon as the curtain fell she dropped down where she stood on the stage. She began to writhe . . . and writhe . . . and at the end of an hour her spirit fled! But is it possible I did not tell thee that? It was mentioned in the newspapers also.”

Arátóff’s hands suddenly turned cold and his chest began to heave. “No, thou didst not tell me that,” he said at last.—“And dost thou not know what the piece was?”

Kupfer meditated.—“I was told the name of the piece . . . a young girl who has been betrayed appears in it. . . . It must be some drama or other. Clara was born for dramatic parts. Her very appearance. . . . But where art thou going?” Kupfer interrupted himself, perceiving that Arátóff was picking up his cap.

“I do not feel quite well,” replied Arátóff. “Good-bye. . . . I will drop in some other time.”

Kupfer held him back and looked him in the face.—“What a nervous fellow thou art, brother! Just look at thyself Thou hast turned as white as clay.”

“I do not feel well,” repeated Arátóff, freeing himself from Kupfer’s hands and going his way. Only at that moment did it become clear to him that he had gone to Kupfer with the sole object of talking about Clara.

“About foolish, about unhappy Clara” . . . .

But on reaching home he speedily recovered his composure to a certain extent.

The circumstances which had attended Clara’s death at first exerted a shattering impression upon him . . . . but later on that acting “with the poison inside her,” as Kupfer had expressed it, seemed to him a monstrous phrase, a piece of bravado, and he tried not to think of it, fearing to arouse within himself a feeling akin to aversion. But at dinner, as he sat opposite Platósha, he suddenly remembered her nocturnal apparition, recalled that bob-tailed wrapper, that cap with the tall ribbon (and why should there be a ribbon on a night-cap?), the whole of that ridiculous

figure, at which all his visions had dispersed into dust, as though at the whistle of the machinist in a fantastic ballet! He even made Platósha repeat the tale of how she had heard him shout, had taken fright, had leaped out of bed, had not been able at once to find either her own door or his, and so forth. In the evening he played cards with her and went off to his own room in a somewhat sad but fairly tranquil state of mind.

Arátóff did not think about the coming night, and did not fear it; he was convinced that he should pass it in the best possible manner. The thought of Clara awoke in him from time to time; but he immediately remembered that she had killed herself in a “spectacular” manner, and turned away. That “outrageous” act prevented other memories from rising in him. Giving a cursory glance at the stereoscope it seemed to him that she was looking to one side because she felt ashamed. Directly over the stereoscope on the wall, hung the portrait of his mother. Arátóff removed it from its nail, kissed it, and carefully put it away in a drawer. Why did he do this? Because that portrait must not remain in the vicinity of that woman . . . or for some other reason—Arátóff did not quite know. But his mother’s portrait evoked in him memories of his father . . . of that father whom he had seen dying in that same room, on that very bed. “What dost thou think about all this, father?” he mentally addressed him. “Thou didst understand all this; thou didst also believe in Schiller’s world of spirits.—Give me counsel!”

“My father has given me counsel to drop all these follies,” said Arátóff aloud, and took up a book. But he was not able to read long, and feeling a certain heaviness all through his body, he went to bed earlier than usual, in the firm conviction that he should fall asleep immediately.

And so it came about . . . but his hopes for a peaceful night were not realised.

## XVII

Before the clock struck midnight he had a remarkable, a menacing dream.

It seemed to him that he was in a sumptuous country-house of which he was the owner. He had recently purchased the house, and all the estates attached to it. And he kept thinking: “It is well, now it is well, but disaster is coming!” Beside him was hovering a tiny little man, his manager; this man kept making obeisances, and trying to demonstrate to Arátóff how admirably everything about his house and estate was arranged.—“Please, please look,” he kept reiterating, grinning at every word, “how everything is flourishing about you! Here are horses . . . what magnificent horses!” And Arátóff saw a row of huge horses. They were standing with their backs to him, in stalls; they had wonderful manes and tails . . . but as soon as Arátóff walked past them the horses turned their heads toward him and viciously displayed their teeth.

“It is well,” thought Arátóff, “but disaster is coming!”

“Please, please,” repeated his manager again; “please come into the garden; see what splendid apples we have!”

The apples really were splendid, red, and round; but as soon as Arátóff looked at them, they began to shrivel and fall. . . . “Disaster is coming!” he thought.

“And here is the lake,” murmurs the manager:—“how blue and smooth it is! And here is a little golden boat! . . . Would you like to have a sail in it? . . . It moves of itself.”

“I will not get into it!” thought Arátóff; “a disaster is coming!” and nevertheless he did seat himself in the boat. On the bottom, writhing, lay a little creature resembling an ape; in its paws it was holding a phial filled with a dark liquid.

“Pray do not feel alarmed,” shouted the manager from the shore. . . . “That is nothing! That is death! A prosperous journey!”

The boat darted swiftly onward . . . but suddenly a hurricane arose, not like the one of the day before, soft and noiseless—no; it is a black, terrible, howling hurricane!—Everything is in confusion round about;—and amid the swirling gloom Arátoff beholds Clara in theatrical costume: she is raising the phial to her lips, a distant “Bravo! bravo!” is audible, and a coarse voice shouts in Arátoff’s ear:

“Ah! And didst thou think that all this would end in a comedy?—No! it is a tragedy! a tragedy!”

Arátoff awoke all in a tremble. It was not dark in the room. . . . A faint and melancholy light streamed from somewhere or other, impassively illuminating all objects. Arátoff did not try to account to himself for the light. . . . He felt but one thing: Clara was there in that room . . . he felt her presence . . . he was again and forever in her power!

A shriek burst from his lips: “Clara, art thou here?”

“Yes!” rang out clearly in the middle of the room illuminated with the motionless light.

Arátoff doubly repeated his question. .

“Yes!” was audible once more.

“Then I want to see thee!” he cried, springing out of bed.

For several moments he stood in one spot, treading the cold floor with his bare feet. His eyes roved: “But where? Where?” whispered his lips. . . .

Nothing was to be seen or heard.

He looked about him, and noticed that the faint light which filled the room proceeded from a night-light, screened by a sheet of paper, and placed in one corner, probably by Platósha while he was asleep. He even detected the odour of incense also, in all probability, the work of her hands.

He hastily dressed himself. Remaining in bed, sleeping, was not to be thought of.—Then he took up his stand in the centre of the room and folded his arms. The consciousness of Clara’s presence was stronger than ever within him.

And now he began to speak, in a voice which was not loud, but with the solemn deliberation wherewith exorcisms are uttered:

“Clara,”—thus did he begin,—“if thou art really here, if thou seest me, if thou hearest me, reveal thyself!. . . If that power which I feel upon me is really thy power,—reveal thyself! If thou understandest how bitterly I repent of not having understood thee, of having repulsed thee,—reveal thyself!—If that which I have heard is really thy voice; if the feeling which has taken possession of me is love; if thou art now convinced that I love thee,—I who up to this time have not loved, and have not known a single woman;—if thou knowest that after thy death I fell passionately, irresistibly in love with thee, if thou dost not wish me to go mad—reveal thyself!”

No sooner had Arátoff uttered this last word than he suddenly felt some one swiftly approach him from behind, as on that occasion upon the boulevard—and lay a hand upon his shoulder. He wheeled round—and saw no one. But the consciousness of *her* presence became so distinct, so indubitable, that he cast another hasty glance behind him. . . .

‘What was that?! In his arm-chair, a couple of paces from him, sat a woman all in black. Her head was bent to one side, as in the stereoscope. . . . It was she! It was Clara! But what a stern, what a mournful face!

Arátoff sank down gently upon his knees.—Yes, he was right, then; neither fear, nor joy was in him, nor even surprise. . . . His heart even began to beat more quietly.—The only thing in him was the feeling: “Ah! At last! At last!”

“Clara,” he began in a faint but even tone, “why dost thou not look at me? I know it is thou . . . but I might, seest thou, think that my imagination had created an image like *that one*. . . .” (He

pointed in the direction of the stereoscope.) . . . . “Prove to me that it is thou. . . . Turn toward me, look at me, Clara!”

Clara’s hand rose slowly . . . . and fell again.

“Clara! Clara! Turn toward me!”

And Clara’s head turned slowly, her drooping lids opened, and the dark pupils of her eyes were fixed on Arátóff.

He started back, and uttered a tremulous, long-drawn: “Ah!”

Clara gazed intently at him . . . . but her eyes, her features preserved their original thoughtfully-stern, almost displeased expression. With precisely that expression she had presented herself on the platform upon the day of the literary morning, before she had caught sight of Arátóff. And now, as on that occasion also, she suddenly flushed scarlet, her face grew animated, her glance flashed, and a joyful, triumphant smile parted her lips. .

“I am forgiven!”—cried Arátóff.—“Thou hast conquered. . . . So take me! For I am thine, and thou art mine!”

He darted toward her, he tried to kiss those smiling, those triumphant lips,—and he did kiss them, he felt their burning touch, he felt even the moist chill of her teeth, and a rapturous cry rang through the half-dark room.

Platonída Ivánovna ran in and found him in a swoon. He was on his knees; his head was lying on the arm-chair; his arms, outstretched before him, hung powerless; his pale face breathed forth the intoxication of boundless happiness.

Platonída Ivánovna threw herself beside him, embraced him, stammered: “Yásha! Yáshenka! Yashenyónotchek!!” tried to lift him up with her bony arms . . . . he did not stir. Then Platonída Ivánovna set to screaming in an unrecognisable voice. The maid-servant ran in. Together they managed somehow to lift him up, seated him in a chair, and began to dash water on him—and water in which a holy image had been washed at that.

He came to himself; but merely smiled in reply to his aunt’s queries, and with such a blissful aspect that she became more perturbed than ever, and kept crossing first him and then herself.

At last Arátóff pushed away her hand, and still with the same beatific expression on his countenance, he said:—

“What is the matter with you, Platósha?”

“What ails thee, Yáshenka?”

“Me?—I am happy . . . . happy, Platósha . . . . that is what ails me. But now I want to go to bed and sleep.”

He tried to rise, but felt such a weakness in his legs and in all his body that he was not in a condition to undress and get into bed himself without the aid of his aunt and of the maid-servant. But he fell asleep very quickly, preserving on his face that same blissfully-rapturous expression. Only his face was extremely pale.

## XVIII

When Platonída Ivánovna entered his room on the following morning he was in the same condition . . . . but his weakness had not passed off, and he even preferred to remain in bed. Platonída Ivánovna did not like the pallor of his face in particular.

“What does it mean, O Lord!” she thought. “There is n’t a drop of blood in his face, he refuses his beef-tea; he lies there and laughs, and keeps asserting that he is quite well!”

He refused breakfast also.—“Why dost thou do that, Yásha?” she asked him; “dost thou intend to lie like this all day?”

“And what if I do?” replied Arátóff, affectionately.

This very affection also did not please Platonída Ivánovna. Arátóff wore the aspect of a man who has learned a great secret, which is very agreeable to him, and is jealously clinging to it and reserving it for himself. He was waiting for night, not exactly with impatience but with curiosity.

“What comes next?” he asked himself;—“what will happen?” He had ceased to be surprised, to be perplexed; he cherished no doubt as to his having entered into communication with Clara; that they loved each other . . . . he did not doubt, either. Only . . . . what can come of such a love?—He recalled that kiss . . . . and a wondrous chill coursed swiftly and sweetly through all his limbs.—“Romeo and Juliet did not exchange such a kiss as that!” he thought. “But the next time I shall hold out better. . . . I shall possess her. . . . She will come with the garland of tiny roses in her black curls . . . .

“But after that what? For we cannot live together, can we? Consequently I must die in order to be with her? ‘Was not that what she came for,—and is it not in *that* way she wishes to take me?”

“Well, and what of that? If I must die, I must. Death does not terrify me in the least now. For it cannot annihilate me, can it? On the contrary, only *thus* and *there* shall I be happy . . . . as I have never been happy in my lifetime, as she has never been in hers. . . . For we are both unsullied!—Oh, that kiss!”

Platonída Ivánovna kept entering Arátóff’s room; she did not worry him with questions, she merely took a look at him, whispered, sighed, and went out again.—But now he refused his dinner also. . . . Things were getting quite too bad. The old woman went off to her friend, the medical man of the police-district, in whom she had faith simply because he did not drink and was married to a German woman. Arátóff was astonished when she brought the man to him; but Platonída Ivánovna began so insistently to entreat her Yáshenka to permit Paramón Paramónitch (that was the medical man’s name) to examine him—come, now, just for her sake!—that Arátóff consented. Paramón Paramónitch felt his pulse, looked at his tongue, interrogated him after a fashion, and finally announced that it was indispensably necessary to “auscultate” him. Arátóff was in such a submissive frame of mind that he consented to this also. The doctor delicately laid bare his breast, delicately tapped it, listened, smiled, prescribed some drops and a potion, but chief of all, advised him to be quiet, and refrain from violent emotions.

“You don’t say so!” thought Arátóff. .

“Well, brother, thou hast bethought thyself too late!”

“What ails Yásha?” asked Platonída Ivánovna, as she handed Paramón Paramónitch a three-ruble bank-note on the threshold. The district doctor, who, like all contemporary doctors,—especially those of them who wear a uniform,—was fond of showing off his learned terminology, informed her that her nephew had all the dioptric symptoms of nervous cardialgia, and that febris was present also.

“But speak more simply, dear little father,” broke in Platonída Ivánovna; “don’t scare me with Latin; thou art not in an apothecary’s shop!”

“His heart is out of order,” explained the doctor;—“well, and he has fever also,” . . . . and he repeated his advice with regard to repose and moderation.

“But surely there is no danger?” sternly inquired Platonída Ivánovna, as much as to say:

“Look out and don’t try your Latin on me again!”

“Not at present!”

The doctor went away, and Platonída Ivánovna took to grieving. . . . Nevertheless she sent to the apothecary for the medicine, which Arátóff would not take, despite her entreaties.

He even refused herb-tea.

“What makes you worry so, dear?” he said to her. “I assure you I am now the most perfectly healthy and happy man in the whole world!”

Platonída Ivánovna merely shook her head. Toward evening he became slightly feverish; yet he still insisted upon it that she should not remain in his room, and should go away to her own to sleep. Platonída Ivánovna obeyed, but did not undress, and did not go to bed; she sat up in an arm-chair and kept listening and whispering her prayer.

She was beginning to fall into a doze, when suddenly a dreadful, piercing shriek awakened her. She sprang to her feet, rushed into Arátóff’s study, and found him lying on the floor, as upon the night before.

But he did not come to himself as he had done the night before, work over him as they would. That night he was seized with a high fever, complicated by inflammation of the heart.

A few days later he died.

A strange circumstance accompanied his second swoon. When they lifted him up and put him to bed, there proved to be a small lock of woman’s black hair clutched in his right hand. Where had that hair come from? Anna Semyónovna had such a lock, which she had kept after Clara’s death; but why should she have given to Arátóff an object which was so precious to her? Could she have laid it into the diary, and not noticed the fact when she gave him the book?

In the delirium which preceded his death Arátóff called himself Romeo . . . . after the poison; he talked about a marriage contracted, consummated;—said that now he knew the meaning of delight. Especially dreadful for Platonída Ivánovna was the moment when Arátóff, recovering consciousness, and seeing her by his bedside, said to her:

“Aunty, why art thou weeping? Is it because I must die? But dost thou not know that love is stronger than death? Death! O Death, where is thy sting? Thou must not weep, but rejoice, even as I rejoice. . . .”

And again the face of the dying man beamed with that same blissful smile which had made the poor old woman shudder so.