

CHAPTER I

WELL, PRINCE, so Genoa and Lucca are now just family estates of the Buonapartes. But I warn you, if you don't tell me that this means war, if you still try to defend the infamies and horrors perpetrated by that Antichrist I really believe he is Antichrist I will have nothing more to do with you and you are no longer my friend, no longer my 'faithful slave,' as you call yourself! But how do you do? I see I have frightened you sit down and tell me all the news."

It was in July, 1805, and the speaker was the well-known Anna Pdvlovna Sch[^]rer, maid of honor and favorite of the Empress Marya Fedorovna. With these words she greeted Prince Vasili Kurdgin, a man of high rank and importance, who was the first to arrive at her reception. Anna Pdvlovna had had a cough for some days. She was, as she said, suffering from la grippe; grippe being then a new word in St.