

Miusov, as a man of breeding and delicacy, could not but feel some inward qualms, when he reached the Father Superior's with Ivan: he felt ashamed of having lost his temper. He felt that he ought to have disdained that despicable wretch, Fyodor Pavlovitch, too much to have been upset by him in Father Zossima's cell, and so to have forgotten himself. "The monks were not to blame, in any case," he reflected, on the steps. "And if they're decent people here (and the Father Superior, I understand, is a nobleman) why not be friendly and courteous with them? I won't argue, I'll fall in with everything, I'll win them by politeness, and show them that I've nothing to do with that Aesop, that buffoon, that Pierrot, and have merely been taken in over this affair, just as they have."

He determined to drop his litigation with the monastery, and relinquish his claims to the wood-cutting and fishery rights at once. He was the more ready to do this because the rights had become much less valuable, and he had indeed the vaguest idea where the wood and river in question were.

These excellent intentions were strengthened when he entered the Father Superior's dining-room, though, strictly speaking, it was not a dining-room, for the Father Superior had only two rooms altogether; they were, however, much larger and more comfortable than Father Zossima's. But there was no great luxury about the furnishing of these rooms either. The furniture was of mahogany, covered with leather, in the old-fashioned style of 1820 the floor was not even stained, but everything was shining with cleanliness, and there were many choice flowers in the windows; the most sumptuous thing in the room at the moment was, of course, the beautifully decorated table. The cloth was clean, the service shone; there were three kinds of well-baked bread, two bottles of wine, two of excellent mead, and a large glass jug of kvas -- both the latter made in the monastery, and famous in the neighborhood. There was no vodka. Rakitin related afterwards that there were five dishes: fish-soup made of sterlets, served with little fish patties; then boiled fish served in a special way; then salmon cutlets, ice pudding and compote, and finally, blanc-mange. Rakitin found out about all these good things, for he could not resist peeping into the kitchen, where he already had a footing. He had a footing everywhere, and got information about everything. He was of an uneasy and envious temper. He was well aware of his own considerable abilities, and nervously exaggerated them in his self-conceit. He knew he would play a prominent part of some sort, but Alyosha, who was attached to him, was distressed to see that his friend Rakitin was dishonorable, and quite unconscious of being so himself, considering, on the contrary, that because he would not steal money left on the table he was a man of the highest integrity. Neither Alyosha nor anyone else could have influenced him in that.

Rakitin, of course, was a person of too little consequence to be invited to the dinner, to which Father Iosif, Father Paissy, and one other monk were the only inmates of the monastery invited. They were already waiting when Miusov, Kalganov, and Ivan arrived. The other guest, Maximov, stood a little aside, waiting also. The Father Superior stepped into the middle of the room to receive his guests. He was a tall, thin, but still vigorous old man, with black hair streaked with grey, and a long, grave, ascetic face. He bowed to his guests in silence. But this time they

approached to receive his blessing. Miusov even tried to kiss his hand, but the Father Superior drew it back in time to avoid the salute. But Ivan and Kalganov went through the ceremony in the most simple-hearted and complete manner, kissing his hand as peasants do.

"We must apologize most humbly, your reverence," began Miusov, simpering affably, and speaking in a dignified and respectful tone. "Pardon us for having come alone without the gentleman you invited, Fyodor Pavlovitch. He felt obliged to decline the honor of your hospitality, and not without reason. In the reverend Father Zossima's cell he was carried away by the unhappy dissension with his son, and let fall words which were quite out of keeping... in fact, quite unseemly... as" -- he glanced at the monks -- "your reverence is, no doubt, already aware. And therefore, recognising that he had been to blame, he felt sincere regret and shame, and begged me, and his son Ivan Fyodorovitch, to convey to you his apologies and regrets. In brief, he hopes and desires to make amends later. He asks your blessing, and begs you to forget what has taken place."

As he uttered the last word of his tirade, Miusov completely recovered his self-complacency, and all traces of his former irritation disappeared. He fully and sincerely loved humanity again.

The Father Superior listened to him with dignity, and, with a slight bend of the head, replied:

"I sincerely deplore his absence. Perhaps at our table he might have learnt to like us, and we him. Pray be seated, gentlemen."

He stood before the holy image, and began to say grace, aloud. All bent their heads reverently, and Maximov clasped his hands before him, with peculiar fervor.

It was at this moment that Fyodor Pavlovitch played his last prank. It must be noted that he really had meant to go home, and really had felt the impossibility of going to dine with the Father Superior as though nothing had happened, after his disgraceful behavior in the elder's cell. Not that he was so very much ashamed of himself -- quite the contrary perhaps. But still he felt it would be unseemly to go to dinner. Yet his creaking carriage had hardly been brought to the steps of the hotel, and he had hardly got into it, when he suddenly stopped short. He remembered his own words at the elder's: "I always feel when I meet people that I am lower than all, and that they all take me for a buffon; so I say let me play the buffon, for you are, every one of you, stupider and lower than I." He longed to revenge himself on everyone for his own unseemliness. He suddenly recalled how he had once in the past been asked, "Why do you hate so and so, so much?" And he had answered them, with his shameless impudence, "I'll tell you. He has done me no harm. But I played him a dirty trick, and ever since I have hated him."

Remembering that now, he smiled quietly and malignantly, hesitating for a moment. His eyes gleamed, and his lips positively quivered.

"Well, since I have begun, I may as well go on," he decided. His predominant sensation at that moment might be expressed in the following words, "Well, there is no rehabilitating myself now. So let me shame them for all I am worth. I will show them I don't care what they think -- that's all!"

He told the coachman to wait, while with rapid steps he returned to the monastery and straight to the Father Superior's. He had no clear idea what he would do, but he knew that he could not control himself, and that a touch might drive him to the utmost limits of obscenity, but only to obscenity, to nothing criminal, nothing for which he could be legally punished. In the last resort, he could always restrain himself, and had marvelled indeed at himself, on that score, sometimes. He appeared in the Father Superior's dining-room, at the moment when the prayer was over, and all were moving to the table. Standing in the doorway, he scanned the company, and laughing his prolonged, impudent, malicious chuckle, looked them all boldly in the face. "They thought I had gone, and here I am again," he cried to the whole room.

For one moment everyone stared at him without a word; and at once everyone felt that something revolting, grotesque, positively scandalous, was about to happen. Miusov passed immediately from the most benevolent frame of mind to the most savage. All the feelings that had subsided and died down in his heart revived instantly.

"No! this I cannot endure!" he cried. "I absolutely cannot! and... I certainly cannot!"

The blood rushed to his head. He positively stammered; but he was beyond thinking of style, and he seized his hat.

"What is it he cannot?" cried Fyodor Pavlovitch, "that he absolutely cannot and certainly cannot? Your reverence, am I to come in or not? Will you receive me as your guest?"

"You are welcome with all my heart," answered the Superior. "Gentlemen!" he added, "I venture to beg you most earnestly to lay aside your dissensions, and to be united in love and family harmony- with prayer to the Lord at our humble table."

"No, no, it is impossible!" cried Miusov, beside himself.

"Well, if it is impossible for Pyotr Alexandrovitch, it is impossible for me, and I won't stop. That is why I came. I will keep with Pyotr Alexandrovitch everywhere now. If you will go away, Pyotr Alexandrovitch, I will go away too, if you remain, I will remain. You stung him by what you said about family harmony, Father Superior, he does not admit he is my relation. That's right, isn't it, von Sohn? Here's von Sohn. How are you, von Sohn?"

"Do you mean me?" muttered Maximov, puzzled.

"Of course I mean you," cried Fyodor Pavlovitch. "Who else? The Father Superior could not be von Sohn."

"But I am not von Sohn either. I am Maximov."

"No, you are von Sohn. Your reverence, do you know who von Sohn was? It was a famous murder case. He was killed in a house of harlotry -- I believe that is what such places are called among you- he was killed and robbed, and in spite of his venerable age, he was nailed up in a box and sent from Petersburg to Moscow in the luggage van, and while they were nailing him up, the harlots sang songs and played the harp, that is to say, the piano. So this is that very von Solin. He has risen from the dead, hasn't he, von Sohn?"

"What is happening? What's this?" voices were heard in the group of monks.

"Let us go," cried Miusov, addressing Kalganov.

"No, excuse me," Fyodor Pavlovitch broke in shrilly, taking another step into the room. "Allow me to finish. There in the cell you blamed me for behaving disrespectfully just because I spoke of eating gudgeon, Pyotr Alexandrovitch. Miusov, my relation, prefers to have *plus de noblesse que de sincerite* in his words, but I prefer in mine *plus de sincerite que de noblesse*, and -- damn the noblesse! That's right, isn't it, von Sohn? Allow me, Father Superior, though I am a buffoon and play the buffoon, yet I am the soul of honor, and I want to speak my mind. Yes, I am the soul of honour, while in Pyotr Alexandrovitch there is wounded vanity and nothing else. I came here perhaps to have a look and speak my mind. My son, Alexey, is here, being saved. I am his father; I care for his welfare, and it is my duty to care. While I've been playing the fool, I have been listening and having a look on the sly; and now I want to give you the last act of the performance. You know how things are with us? As a thing falls, so it lies. As a thing once has fallen, so it must lie for ever. Not a bit of it! I want to get up again. Holy Father, I am indignant with you. Confession is a great sacrament, before which I am ready to bow down reverently; but there in the cell, they all kneel down and confess aloud. Can it be right to confess aloud? It was ordained by the holy Fathers to confess in secret: then only your confession will be a mystery, and so it was of old. But how can I explain to him before everyone that I did this and that... well, you understand what -- sometimes it would not be proper to talk about it -- so it is really a scandal! No, Fathers, one might be carried along with you to the Flagellants, I dare say.... at the first opportunity I shall write to the Synod, and I shall take my son, Alexey, home."

We must note here that Fyodor Pavlovitch knew where to look for the weak spot. There had been at one time malicious rumors which had even reached the Archbishop (not only regarding our monastery, but in others where the institution of elders existed) that too much respect was paid to the elders, even to the detriment of the authority of the Superior, that the elders abused the sacrament of confession and so on and so on -- absurd charges which had died away of themselves everywhere. But the spirit of folly, which had caught up Fyodor Pavlovitch and was bearing him on the current of his own nerves into lower and lower depths of ignominy, prompted

him with this old slander. Fyodor Pavlovitch did not understand a word of it, and he could not even put it sensibly, for on this occasion no one had been kneeling and confessing aloud in the elder's cell, so that he could not have seen anything of the kind. He was only speaking from confused memory of old slanders. But as soon as he had uttered his foolish tirade, he felt he had been talking absurd nonsense, and at once longed to prove to his audience, and above all to himself, that he had not been talking nonsense. And, though he knew perfectly well that with each word he would be adding more and more absurdity, he could not restrain himself, and plunged forward blindly.

"How disgraceful!" cried Pyotr Alexandrovitch.

"Pardon me!" said the Father Superior. "It was said of old, 'Many have begun to speak against me and have uttered evil sayings about me. And hearing it I have said to myself: it is the correction of the Lord and He has sent it to heal my vain soul.' And so we humbly thank you, honored guests!" and he made Fyodor Pavlovitch a low bow.

"Tut -- tut -- tut -- sanctimoniousness and stock phrases! Old phrases and old gestures. The old lies and formal prostrations. We know all about them. A kiss on the lips and a dagger in the heart, as in Schiller's Robbers. I don't like falsehood, Fathers, I want the truth. But the truth is not to be found in eating gudgeon and that I proclaim aloud! Father monks, why do you fast? Why do you expect reward in heaven for that? Why, for reward like that I will come and fast too! No, saintly monk, you try being virtuous in the world, do good to society, without shutting yourself up in a monastery at other people's expense, and without expecting a reward up aloft for it -- you'll find that a bit harder. I can talk sense, too, Father Superior. What have they got here?" He went up to the table. "Old port wine, mead brewed by the Eliseyev Brothers. Fie, fie, fathers! That is something beyond gudgeon. Look at the bottles the fathers have brought out, he he he! And who has provided it all? The Russian peasant, the laborer, brings here the farthing earned by his horny hand, wringing it from his family and the tax-gatherer! You bleed the people, you know, holy Fathers."

"This is too disgraceful!" said Father Iosif.

Father Paissy kept obstinately silent. Miusov rushed from the room, and Kalgonov after him.

"Well, Father, I will follow Pyotr Alexandrovitch! I am not coming to see you again. You may beg me on your knees, I shan't come. I sent you a thousand roubles, so you have begun to keep your eye on me. He he he! No, I'll say no more. I am taking my revenge for my youth, for all the humiliation I endured." He thumped the table with his fist in a paroxysm of simulated feeling.

"This monastery has played a great part in my life! It has cost me many bitter tears. You used to set my wife, the crazy one, against me. You cursed me with bell and book, you spread stories about me all over the place. Enough, fathers! This is the age of Liberalism, the age of steamers and railways. Neither a thousand, nor a hundred roubles, no, nor a hundred farthings will you get out of me!"

It must be noted again that our monastery never had played any great part in his life, and he never had shed a bitter tear owing to it. But he was so carried away by his simulated emotion, that he was for one moment almost believing it himself. He was so touched he was almost weeping. But at that very instant, he felt that it was time to draw back.

The Father Superior bowed his head at his malicious lie, and again spoke impressively:

"It is written again, 'Bear circumspectly and gladly dishonor that cometh upon thee by no act of thine own, be not confounded and hate not him who hath dishonored thee.' And so will we."

"Tut, tut, tut! Bethinking thyself and the rest of the rigmarole. Bethink yourselves Fathers, I will go. But I will take my son, Alexey, away from here for ever, on my parental authority. Ivan Fyodorovitch, my most dutiful son, permit me to order you to follow me. Von Sohn, what have you to stay for? Come and see me now in the town. It is fun there. It is only one short verst; instead of lenten oil, I will give you sucking-pig and kasha. We will have dinner with some brandy and liqueur to it.... I've cloudberry wine. Hey, von Sohn, don't lose your chance." He went out, shouting and gesticulating.

It was at that moment Rakitin saw him and pointed him out to Alyosha.

"Alexey!" his father shouted, from far off, catching sight of him. "You come home to me to-day, for good, and bring your pillow and mattress, and leave no trace behind."

Alyosha stood rooted to the spot, watching the scene in silence. Meanwhile, Fyodor Pavlovitch had got into the carriage, and Ivan was about to follow him in grim silence without even turning to say good-bye to Alyosha. But at this point another almost incredible scene of grotesque buffoonery gave the finishing touch to the episode. Maximov suddenly appeared by the side of the carriage. He ran up, panting, afraid of being too late. Rakitin and Alyosha saw him running. He was in such a hurry that in his impatience he put his foot on the step on which Ivan's left foot was still resting, and clutching the carriage he kept trying to jump in. "I am going with you!" he kept shouting, laughing a thin mirthful laugh with a look of reckless glee in his face. "Take me, too."

"There!" cried Fyodor Pavlovitch, delighted. "Did I not say he was von Sohn. It is von Sohn himself, risen from the dead. Why, how did you tear yourself away? What did you von Sohn there? And how could you get away from the dinner? You must be a brazen-faced fellow! I am that myself, but I am surprised at you, brother! Jump in, jump in! Let him pass, Ivan. It will be fun. He can lie somewhere at our feet. Will you lie at our feet, von Sohn? Or perch on the box with the coachman. Skipp on to the box, von Sohn!"

But Ivan, who had by now taken his seat, without a word gave Maximov a violent punch in the breast and sent him flying. It was quite by chance he did not fall.

"Drive on!" Ivan shouted angrily to the coachman.

"Why, what are you doing, what are you about? Why did you do that?" Fyodor Pavlovitch protested.

But the carriage had already driven away. Ivan made no reply.

"Well, you are a fellow," Fyodor Pavlovitch said again.

After a pause of two minutes, looking askance at his son, "Why, it was you got up all this monastery business. You urged it, you approved of it. Why are you angry now?"

"You've talked a lot enough. You might rest a bit now," Ivan snapped sullenly.

Fyodor Pavlovitch was silent again for two minutes.

"A drop of brandy would be nice now," he observed sententiously, but Ivan made no response.

"You shall have some, too, when we get home."

Ivan was still silent.

Fyodor Pavlovitch waited another two minutes.

"But I shall take Alyosha away from the monastery, though you will dislike it so much, most honored Karl von Moor."

Ivan shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, and turning away stared at the road. And they did not speak again all the way home.