"Dear grandfather, Konstantin Makaritch," he wrote, "I am writing you a letter. I wish

you a happy Christmas, and all blessings from God Almighty. I have neither father

nor mother, you are the only one left me."

Vanka raised his eyes to the dark ikon on which the light of his candle was reflected,

and vividly recalled his grandfather, Konstantin Makaritch, who was night watchman

to a family called Zhivarev. He was a thin but extraordinarily nimble and lively little

old man of sixty-five, with an everlastingly laughing face and drunken eyes. By day

he slept in the servants' kitchen, or made jokes with the cooks; at night, wrapped in an

ample sheepskin, he walked round the grounds and tapped with his little mallet. O

