

PIERRE had not succeeded in fixing upon a career in Petersburg, and really had been banished to Moscow for disorderly conduct. The story told about him at Count Rostov's was true. Pierre had assisted in tying the police officer to the bear. He had arrived a few days previously, stopping as he always did at his father's house. Though he had assumed that his story would be already known at Moscow, and that the ladies who were about his father, always unfavourably disposed to him, would profit by this opportunity of turning the count against him, he went on the day of his arrival to his father's part of the house. Going into the drawing-room, where the princesses usually sat, he greeted the ladies, two of whom were sitting at their embroidery frames, while one read aloud. There were three of them. The eldest, a trim, long-waisted, severe maiden-lady, the one who had come out to Anna Mihalovna, was reading. The younger ones, both rosy and pretty, were only to be distinguished by the fact that one of them had a little mole which made her much prettier. They were both working at their embroidery frames. Pierre was received like a man risen from the dead or stricken with plague. The eldest princess paused in her reading and stared at him in silence with dismay in her eyes. The second assumed precisely the same expression. The youngest, the one with the mole, who was of a mirthful and laughing disposition, bent over her frame, to conceal¹¹ a smile, probably evoked by the amusing scene she foresaw coming. She pulled her embroidery wool out below, and bent down as though examining the pattern, hardly able to suppress her laughter.

"Good morning, cousin," said Pierre. "You don't know me?"

"I know you only too well, only too well."

"How is the count? Can I see him?" Pierre asked, awkwardly as always, but not disconcerted.

"The count is suffering both physically and morally, and your only anxiety seems to be to occasion him as much suffering as possible."

"Can I see the count?" repeated Pierre.

"Hm ... if you want to kill him, to kill him outright, you can see him. Olga, go and see if uncle's broth is ready—it will soon be time for it," she added, to show Pierre they were busy, and busy in seeing after his father's comfort, while he was obviously only busy in causing him discomfort¹⁶.

Olga went out. Pierre stood still a moment, looked at the sisters and bowing said: "Then I will go to my room. When I can see him, you will tell me." He went away and heard the ringing but not loud laugh of the sister with the mole behind him.