A SPARK NEGLECTED BURNS THE HOUSE

'Then came Peter, and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would make a reckoning with his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not wherewith to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.'—Matt. xviii. 21-35.

THERE once lived in a village a peasant named Iván Shcherbakóv. He was comfortably off, in the
prime of life, the best worker in the village, and had three sons all able to work. The eldest was married, the second about to marry, and the third was a big lad who could mind the horses and was already beginning to plough. Iván's wife was an able and thrifty woman, and they were fortunate in having a quiet, hard-working daughter-in-law. There was nothing to prevent Iván and his family from living happily. They had only one idle mouth to feed; that was Iván's old father, who suffered from asthma and had been lying ill on the top of the brick stove for seven years. Iván had all he needed: three horses and a colt, a cow with a calf, and fifteen sheep. The women made all the clothing for the family, besides helping in the fields, and the men tilled the land. They always had grain enough of their own to last over beyond the next harvest, and sold enough oats to pay the taxes and meet their other needs. So Iván and his children might have lived quite comfortably had it not been for a feud between him and his next-door neighbour, Limping Gabriel, the son of Gordéy Ivánov.

As long as old Gordéy was alive and Iván's father was still able to manage his household, the peasants lived as neighbours should. If the women of either house happened to want a sieve or a tub, or the men required a sack, or if a cart-wheel got broken and could not be mended at once, they used to send to the other house and helped each other in neighbourly fashion. When a calf strayed into the neighbour's thrashing-ground they would just drive it out, and only say, 'Don't let it get in again; our grain is lying there.' And such things as locking up the barns and outhouses, hiding things from one another, or backbiting, were never thought of in those days.

That was in the fathers' time. When the sons
came to be at the head of the families, everything changed.

It all began about a trifle.

Iván's daughter-in-law had a hen that began laying rather early in the season, and she started collecting its eggs for Easter. Every day she went to the cart-shed and found an egg in the cart; but one day the hen, probably frightened by the children, flew across the fence into the neighbour's yard and laid its egg there. The woman heard the cackling, but said to herself: 'I have no time now; I must tidy up for Sunday. I'll fetch the egg later on.' In the evening she went to the cart, but found no egg there. She went and asked her mother-in-law and brother-in-law whether they had taken the egg. 'No,' they had not; but her youngest brother-in-law, Tarás, said: 'Your Biddy laid its egg in the neighbour's yard. It was there she was cackling, and she flew back across the fence from there.'

The woman went and looked at the hen. There she was on the perch with the other birds, her eyes just closing ready to go to sleep. The woman wished she could have asked the hen and got an answer from her.

Then she went to the neighbour's and Gabriel's mother came out to meet her.

'What do you want, young woman?'

'Why, Granny, you see, my hen flew across this morning. Did she not lay an egg here?'

'We never saw anything of it. The Lord be thanked, our own hens started laying long ago. We collect our own eggs and have no need of other people's! And we don't go looking for eggs in other people's yards, lass!'

The young woman was offended and said more than she should have done. Her neighbour an-
swered back with interest, and the women began abusing each other. Iván's wife, who had been to fetch water, happening to pass just then, joined in too. Gabriel's wife rushed out, and began reproaching the young woman with things that had really happened and with other things that never had happened at all. Then a general uproar commenced, all shouting at once, trying to get out two words at a time, and not choice words either.

'You're this!' and 'You're that!' 'You're a thief!' and 'You're a slut!' and 'You're starving your old father-in-law to death!' and 'You're a good-for-nothing!' and so on.

'And you made a hole in the sieve I lent you, you jade! And it's our yoke you're carrying your pails on—you just give back our yoke!'

Then they caught hold of the yoke and spilt the water, snatched one another's shawls off, and began fighting. Gabriel, returning from the fields, stopped to take his wife's part. Out rushed Iván and his son, and joined in with the rest. Iván was a strong fellow; he scattered the whole lot of them, and pulled a handful of hair out of Gabriel's beard. People came to see what was the matter, and the fighters were separated with difficulty.

That was how it all began.

Gabriel wrapped the hair torn from his beard in a paper, and went to the District Court to have the law of Iván. 'I didn't grow my beard,' said he, 'for pockmarked Iván to pull it out!' And his wife went bragging to the neighbours, saying they'd have Iván condemned and sent to Siberia. And so the feud grew.

The old man, from where he lay on the top of the stove, tried from the very first to persuade them to make peace, but they would not listen. He told them, 'It's a stupid thing you are after, children,
picking quarrels about such a paltry matter. Just think! The whole thing began about an egg. The children may have taken it—well, what matter? What’s the value of one egg? God sends enough for all! And suppose your neighbour did say an unkind word—put it right; show her how to say a better one! If there has been a fight—well, such things will happen; we’re all sinners, but make it up and let there be an end of it! If you nurse your anger it will be worse for you yourselves.’

But the younger folk would not listen to the old man. They thought his words were mere senseless dotage. Iván would not humble himself before his neighbour.

‘I never pulled his beard,’ he said, ‘he pulled the hair out himself. But his son has burst all the fastenings on my shirt and torn it. . . . Look at it!’

And Iván also went to law. They were tried by the Justice of the Peace and by the District Court. While all this was going on the coupling-pin of Gabriel’s cart disappeared. Gabriel’s womenfolk accused Iván’s son of having taken it. They said: ‘We saw him in the night go past our window towards the cart; and a neighbour says he saw him at the pub. offering the pin to the landlord.’

So they went to law about that. And at home not a day passed without a quarrel or even a fight. The children, too, abused one another, having learnt to do so from their elders; and when the women happened to meet by the river-side, where they went to rinse the clothes, their arms did not do as much wringing as their tongues did nagging, and every word was a bad one.

At first the peasants only slandered one another; but afterwards they began in real earnest to snatch anything that lay handy, and the children followed their example. Life became harder and harder for
them. Iván Shcherbakóv and Limping Gabriel kept suing one another at the Village Assembly, and at the District Court, and before the Justice of the Peace, until all the judges were tired of them. Now Gabriel got Iván fined or imprisoned; then Iván did as much to Gabriel; and the more they spited each other the angrier they grew—like dogs that attack one another and get more and more furious the longer they fight. You strike one dog from behind and it thinks it’s the other dog biting him, and gets still fiercer. So these peasants: they went to law, and one or other of them was fined or locked up, but that only made them more and more angry with one another. ‘Wait a bit,’ they said, ‘and I’ll make you pay for it.’ And so it went on for six years. Only the old man lying on the top of the stove kept telling them again and again: ‘Children, what are you doing? Stop all this paying back; keep to your work, and don’t bear malice—it will be better for you. The more you bear malice the worse it will be.’

But they would not listen to him.

In the seventh year, at a wedding, Iván’s daughter-in-law held Gabriel up to shame, accusing him of having been caught horse-stealing. Gabriel was tipsy and, unable to contain his anger, gave the woman such a blow that she was laid up for a week; and she was pregnant at the time. Iván was delighted. He went to the magistrate to lodge a complaint. ‘Now I’ll get rid of my neighbour! He won’t escape imprisonment, or exile to Siberia.’ But Iván’s wish was not fulfilled. The magistrate dismissed the case. The woman was examined, but she was up and about and showed no sign of any injury. Then Iván went to the Justice of the Peace, but he referred the business to the District Court. Iván bestirred himself: treated
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the clerk and the Elder of the District Court to a
gallon of liquor, and got Gabriel condemned to be
flogged. The sentence was read out to Gabriel by
the clerk: 'The Court decrees that the peasant
Gabriel Gordéev shall receive twenty lashes with
a birch rod at the District Court.'

Iván too heard the sentence read and looked at
Gabriel to see how he would take it. Gabriel grew
as pale as a sheet, and turned round and went out
into the passage. Iván followed him, meaning to
see to the horse, and he overheard Gabriel say,
'Very well! He will have my back flogged: that
will make it burn; but something of his may burn
worse than that!'

Hearing these words, Iván at once went back
into the Court, and said: 'Upright judges! He
threatens to set my house on fire! Listen: he said
it in the presence of witnesses!'

Gabriel was recalled. 'Is it true that you said
this?'

'I haven't said anything. Flog me, since you
have the power. It seems that I alone am to suffer,
and all for being in the right, while he is allowed
to do as he likes.'

Gabriel wished to say something more, but his
lips and his cheeks quivered and he turned to
the wall. Even the officials were frightened by his
looks. 'He may do some mischief to himself or to
his neighbour,' thought they.

Then the old Judge said: 'Look here, my men;
you'd better be reasonable and make it up. Was
it right of you, friend Gabriel, to strike a pregnant
woman? It was lucky it passed off so well, but
think what might have happened! Was it right?
You had better confess and beg his pardon, and he
will forgive you and we will alter the sentence.'

The clerk heard these words, and remarked:
‘That’s impossible under Statute 117. An agree-
ment between the parties not having been arrived
at, a decision of the Court has been pronounced
and must be executed.’

But the Judge would not listen to the clerk.
‘Keep your tongue still, my friend,’ said he.
‘The first of all laws is to obey God, Who loves
peace.’ And the Judge began again to persuade
the peasants, but could not succeed. Gabriel would
not listen to him.

‘I shall be fifty next year,’ said he, ‘and have a
married son, and have never been flogged in my
life, and now that pockmarked Iván has had me
condemned to be flogged, and am I to go and ask
his forgiveness? No; I’ve borne enough. . . . Iván
shall have cause to remember me!’

Again Gabriel’s voice quivered and he could say
no more, but turned round and went out.

It was seven miles from the Court to the village,
and it was getting late when Iván reached home.
He unharnessed his horse, put it up for the night,
and entered the cottage. No one was there. The
women had already gone to drive the cattle in, and
the young fellows were not yet back from the fields.
Iván went in, and sat down, thinking. He remem-
bered how Gabriel had listened to the sentence,
and how pale he had gone, and how he had
turned to the wall; and Iván’s heart grew heavy.
He thought how he himself would feel if he were
sentenced, and he pitied Gabriel. Then he heard
his old father up on the stove cough and saw him
sit up, lower his legs, and scramble down. The old
man dragged himself slowly to a seat and sat down.
He was quite tired out with the exertion and
coughed a long time till he had cleared his throat.
Then, leaning against the table, he said: ‘Well, has
he been condemned?’
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‘Yes, to twenty strokes with the rods,’ answered Iván.

The old man shook his head.

‘A bad business,’ said he. ‘You are doing wrong, Iván! Ah! it’s very bad—not for him so much as for yourself! . . . Well, they’ll flog him, but will that do you any good?’

‘He’ll not do it again,’ said Iván.

‘What is it he’ll not do again? What has he done worse than you?’

‘Why, think of the harm he has done me!’ said Iván. ‘He nearly killed my wife, and now he’s threatening to burn us up. Am I to thank him for it?’

The old man sighed and said: ‘You go about the wide world, Iván, while I am lying on the stove all these years, so you think you see everything and that I see nothing. . . . Ah, lad! It’s you that don’t see; malice blinds you. Others’ sins are before your eyes, but your own are behind your back. “He’s acted badly!” What a thing to say! If he were the only one to act badly, how could strife exist? Is strife among men ever bred by one alone? Strife is always between two. His badness you see, but your own you don’t. If he were bad, but you were good, there would be no strife. Who pulled the hair out of his beard? Who spoilt his haystack? Who dragged him to the law court? Yet you put it all on him! You live a bad life yourself, that’s what is wrong! It’s not the way I used to live, lad, and it’s not the way I taught you. Is that the way his old father and I used to live? How did we live? Why, as neighbours should! If he happened to run out of flour, one of the women would come across: “Uncle Trol, we want some flour.” “Go to the barn, dear,” I’d say: “take what you need.” If he’d no one to take his horses to pasture, “Go, Iván,” I’d say, “and look after his horses.” And
if I was short of anything, I'd go to him. "Uncle Gordéy," I'd say, "I want so-and-so!" "Take it, Uncle Trol!" That's how it was between us, and we had an easy time of it. But now? . . . That soldier the other day was telling us about the fight at Plevna.¹ Why, there's war between you worse than at Plevna! Is that living? . . . What a sin it is! You are a man, and master of the house; it's you who will have to answer. What are you teaching the women and the children? To snarl and snap? Why, the other day your Taráska—that greenhorn—was swearing at neighbour Irena, calling her names; and his mother listened and laughed. Is that right? It is you will have to answer. Think of your soul. Is this all as it should be? You throw a word at me, and I give you two in return; you give me a blow, and I give you two. No, lad! Christ, when He walked on earth, taught us fools something very different. . . . If you get a hard word from any one, keep silent, and his own conscience will accuse him. That is what our Lord taught. If you get a slap, turn the other cheek. "Here, beat me, if that's what I deserve!" And his own conscience will rebuke him. He will soften, and will listen to you. That's the way He taught us, not to be proud! . . . Why don't you speak? Isn't it as I say?"

Iván sat silent and listened.

The old man coughed, and having with difficulty cleared his throat, began again: 'You think Christ taught us wrong? Why, it's all for our own good. Just think of your earthly life; are you better off, or worse, since this Plevna began among you? Just reckon up what you've spent on all this law

¹ A town in Bulgaria, the scene of fierce and prolonged fighting between the Turks and the Russians in the war of 1877.
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business—what the driving backwards and forwards and your food on the way have cost you! What fine fellows your sons have grown; you might live and get on well; but now your means are lessening. And why? All because of this folly; because of your pride. You ought to be ploughing with your lads and do the sowing yourself; but the fiend carries you off to the judge, or to some petitifogger or other. The ploughing is not done in time, nor the sowing, and mother earth can’t bear properly. Why did the oats fail this year? When did you sow them? When you came back from town! And what did you gain? A burden for your own shoulders. . . . Eh, lad, think of your own business! Work with your boys in the field and at home, and if some one offends you, forgive him, as God wishes you to. Then life will be easy and your heart will always be light.’

Iván remained silent.

‘Iván, my boy, hear your old father! Go and harness the roan, and go at once to the Government office; put an end to all this affair there; and in the morning go and make it up with Gabriel in God’s name, and invite him to your house for to-morrow’s holiday’ (it was the eve of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin). ‘Have tea ready, and get a bottle of vodka and put an end to this wicked business, so that there should not be any more of it in future, and tell the women and children to do the same.’

Iván sighed, and thought, ‘What he says is true,’ and his heart grew lighter. Only he did not know how to begin to put matters right now.

But again the old man began, as if he had guessed what was in Iván’s mind.

‘Go, Iván, don’t put it off! Put out the fire before it spreads, or it will be too late.’
The old man was going to say more, but before he could do so the women came in, chattering like magpies. The news that Gabriel was sentenced to be flogged and of his threat to set fire to the house, had already reached them. They had heard all about it and added to it something of their own, and had again had a row, in the pasture, with the women of Gabriel’s household. They began telling how Gabriel’s daughter-in-law threatened a fresh action; Gabriel had got the right side of the examining magistrate who would now turn the whole affair upside down; and the schoolmaster was writing out another petition, to the Tsar himself this time, about Iván; and everything was in the petition—all about the coupling-pin and the kitchen-garden—so that half of Iván’s homestead would be theirs soon. Iván heard what they were saying, and his heart grew cold again and he gave up the thought of making peace with Gabriel.

In a farmstead there is always plenty for the master to do. Iván did not stop to talk to the women, but went out to the threshing-floor and to the barn. By the time he had tidied up there the sun had set and the young fellows had returned from the field. They had been ploughing the field for the winter crops with two horses. Iván met them, questioned them about their work, helped to put everything in its place, set a torn horse-collar aside to be mended, and was going to put away some stakes under the barn, but it had grown quite dusk, so he decided to leave them where they were till next day. Then he gave the cattle their food, opened the gate, let out the horses Tarás was to take to pasture for the night, and again closed the gate and barred it. ‘Now,’ thought he, ‘I’ll have my supper and then to bed.’ He took the horse-collar and entered the hut. By this time he
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had forgotten about Gabriel and about what his old father had been saying to him. But just as he took hold of the door-handle to enter the passage, he heard his neighbour on the other side of the fence cursing somebody in a hoarse voice: 'What the devil is he good for?' Gabriel was saying. 'He's only fit to be killed!' At these words all Iván's former bitterness towards his neighbour reawoke. He stood listening while Gabriel scolded, and when he stopped, Iván went into the hut.

There was a light inside; his daughter-in-law sat spinning, his wife was getting supper ready, his eldest son was making strips for bark shoes, his second sat near the table with a book, and Tarás was getting ready to go out to pasture the horses for the night. Everything in the hut would have been pleasant and bright, but for that plague—a bad neighbour!

Iván entered, sullen and cross; threw the cat down from the bench and scolded the women for putting the slop-pail in the wrong place. He felt despondent, and sat down, frowning, to mend the horse-collars. Gabriel's words kept ringing in his ears: his threat at the law court, and what he had just been shouting in a hoarse voice about some one who was 'only fit to be killed.'

His wife gave Tarás his supper, and, having eaten it, Tarás put on an old sheepskin and another coat, tied a sash round his waist, took some bread with him, and went out to the horses. His eldest brother was going to see him off, but Iván himself rose instead, and went out into the porch. It had grown quite dark outside, clouds had gathered, and the wind had risen. Iván went down the steps, helped his boy to mount, started the foal after him, and stood listening while Tarás rode down the village and was there joined by other lads with
their horses. Iván waited until they were all out of hearing. As he stood there by the gate he could not get Gabriel's words out of his head: 'Mind that something of yours does not burn worse!'

'He is desperate,' thought Iván. 'Everything is dry, and it's windy weather besides. He'll come up at the back somewhere, set fire to something, and be off. He'll burn the place and escape scot free, the villain! . . . There now, if one could but catch him in the act, he'd not get off then!' And the thought fixed itself so firmly in his mind that he did not go up the steps, but went out into the street and round the corner. 'I'll just walk round the buildings: who can tell what he's after?' And Iván, stepping softly, passed out of the gate. As soon as he reached the corner, he looked round along the fence and seemed to see something suddenly move at the opposite corner, as if someone had come out and disappeared again. Iván stopped and stood quietly, listening and looking. Everything was still; only the leaves of the willows fluttered in the wind and the straws of the thatch rustled. At first it seemed pitch dark, but, when his eyes had grown used to the darkness, he could see the far corner, and a plough that lay there, and the eaves. He looked a while, but saw no one.

'I suppose it was a mistake,' thought Iván; 'but still I will go round,' and Iván went stealthily along by the shed. Iván stepped so softly in his bark shoes that he did not hear his own footsteps. As he reached the far corner something seemed to flare up for a moment near the plough and to vanish again. Ivan felt as if struck to the heart; and he stopped. Hardly had he stopped when something flared up more brightly in the same place, and he clearly saw a man with a cap on his head, crouching down with his back towards him,
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lighting a bunch of straw he held in his hand. Iván’s heart fluttered within him like a bird. Straining every nerve, he approached with great strides, hardly feeling his legs under him. ‘Ah,’ thought Iván, ‘now he won’t escape! I’ll catch him in the act!’

Iván was still some distance off when suddenly he saw a bright light, but not in the same place as before, and not a small flame. The thatch had flared up at the eaves, the flames were reaching up to the roof, and, standing beneath it, Gabriel’s whole figure was clearly visible.

Like a hawk swooping down on a lark, Iván rushed at Limping Gabriel. ‘Now I’ll have him; he shan’t escape me!’ thought Iván. But Gabriel must have heard his steps, and (however he managed it) glancing round he scuttled away past the barn like a hare.

‘You shan’t escape!’ shouted Iván, darting after him.

Just as he was going to seize Gabriel, the latter dodged him; but Iván managed to catch the skirt of Gabriel’s coat. It tore right off, and Iván fell down. He recovered his feet, and shouting, ‘Help! Seize him! Thieves! Murder!’ ran on again. But meanwhile Gabriel had reached his own gate. There Iván overtook him and was about to seize him, when something struck Iván a stunning blow, as though a stone had hit his temple, quite deafening him. It was Gabriel who, seizing an oak wedge that lay near the gate, had struck out with all his might.

Iván was stunned; sparks flew before his eyes, then all grew dark and he staggered. When he came to his senses Gabriel was no longer there: it was as light as day, and from the side where his homestead was, something roared and crackled
like an engine at work. Iván turned round and saw that his back shed was all ablaze and the side shed had also caught fire, and flames and smoke and bits of burning straw mixed with the smoke were being driven towards his hut.

'What is this, friends? . . . ' cried Iván, lifting his arms and striking his thighs. 'Why, all I had to do was just to snatch it out from under the eaves and trample on it! What is this, friends? . . . ' he kept repeating. He wished to shout, but his breath failed him; his voice was gone. He wanted to run, but his legs would not obey him and got in each other's way. He moved slowly, but again staggered and again his breath failed. He stood still till he had regained breath, and then went on. Before he had got round the back shed to reach the fire, the side shed was also all ablaze; and the corner of the hut and the covered gateway had caught fire as well. The flames were leaping out of the hut and it was impossible to get into the yard. A large crowd had collected, but nothing could be done. The neighbours were carrying their belongings out of their own houses, and driving the cattle out of their own sheds. After Iván's house, Gabriel's also caught fire, then, the wind rising, the flames spread to the other side of the street and half the village was burnt down.

At Iván's house they barely managed to save his old father; and the family escaped in what they had on; everything else, except the horses that had been driven out to pasture for the night, was lost; all the cattle, the fowls on their perches, the carts, ploughs, and harrows, the women's chests with their clothes, and the grain in the granaries—all were burnt up!

At Gabriel's, the cattle were driven out, and a few things saved from his house,
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The fire lasted all night. Iván stood in front of his homestead and kept repeating, 'What is this? . . . Friends! . . . One need only have pulled it out and trampled on it!' But when the roof fell in, Iván rushed into the burning place, and seizing a charred beam, tried to drag it out. The women saw him and called him back; but he pulled out the beam, and was going in again for another when he lost his footing and fell among the flames. Then his son made his way in after him and dragged him out. Iván had singed his hair and beard and burnt his clothes and scorched his hands, but he felt nothing. 'His grief has stupefied him,' said the people. The fire was burning itself out, but Iván still stood repeating: 'Friends! . . . What is this? . . . One need only have pulled it out!'

In the morning the village Elder's son came to fetch Iván.

'Daddy Iván, your father is dying! He has sent for you to say good-bye.'

Iván had forgotten about his father, and did not understand what was being said to him.

'What father?' he said. 'Whom has he sent for?'

'He sent for you, to say good-bye; he is dying in our cottage! Come along, daddy Iván,' said the Elder's son, pulling him by the arm, and Iván followed the lad.

When he was being carried out of the hut some burning straw had fallen on to the old man and burnt him, and he had been taken to the village Elder's in the farther part of the village, which the fire did not reach.

When Iván came to his father, there was only the Elder's wife in the hut, besides some little children on the top of the stove. All the rest were still at the fire. The old man, who was lying on a
bench holding a wax candle in his hand, kept turning his eyes towards the door. When his son entered, he moved a little. The old woman went up to him and told him that his son had come. He asked to have him brought nearer. Iván came closer.

'What did I tell you, Iván?' began the old man. 'Who has burnt down the village?'

'It was he, father!' Iván answered. 'I caught him in the act. I saw him shove the firebrand into the thatch. I might have pulled away the burning straw and stamped it out, and then nothing would have happened.'

'Iván,' said the old man, 'I am dying, and you in your turn will have to face death. Whose is the sin?'

Iván gazed at his father in silence, unable to utter a word.

'Now, before God, say whose is the sin? What did I tell you?'

Only then Iván came to his senses and understood it all. He sniffed and said, 'Mine, father!' And he fell on his knees before his father, saying, 'Forgive me, father; I am guilty before you and before God.'

The old man moved his hands, changed the candle from his right hand to his left, and tried to lift his right hand to his forehead to cross himself, but could not do it, and stopped.

'Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!' said he, and again he turned his eyes towards his son.

'Iván! I say, Iván!'

'What, father?'

'What must you do now?'

* Wax candles are much used in the services of the Russian Church, and it is usual to place one in the hand of a dying man, especially when he receives Unction.
Iván was weeping.
'I don’t know how we are to live now, father!' he said.

The old man closed his eyes, moved his lips as if to gather strength, and opening his eyes again, said: 'You'll manage. If you obey God's will, you'll manage!' He paused, then smiled, and said: 'Mind, Iván! Don't tell who started the fire! Hide another man's sin and God will forgive two of yours!' And the old man took the candle in both hands and, folding them on his breast, sighed, stretched out, and died.

Iván did not say anything against Gabriel, and no one knew what had caused the fire.

And Iván's anger against Gabriel passed away, and Gabriel wondered that Iván did not tell anybody. At first Gabriel felt afraid, but after awhile he got used to it. The men left off quarrelling, and then their families left off also. While rebuilding their huts, both families lived in one house; and when the village was rebuilt and they might have moved farther apart, Iván and Gabriel built next to each other and remained neighbours as before.

They lived as good neighbours should. Iván Shcherbakóv remembered his old father's command to obey God's law, and quench a fire at the first spark; and if any one does him an injury he now tries not to revenge himself, but rather to set matters right again; and if any one gives him a bad word, instead of giving a worse in return, he tries to teach the other not to use evil words, and so he teaches his womenfolk and children. And Iván Shcherbakóv has got on his feet again and now lives better even than he did before.

1885.
TWO OLD MEN

1

'The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers.'—John iv. 19–21, 23.

THERE were once two old men who decided to go on a pilgrimage to worship God at Jerusalem. One of them was a well-to-do peasant named Efim Tarásich Shevélev. The other, Elisha Bódrov, was not so well off.

Efím was a staid man, serious and firm. He neither drank nor smoked nor took snuff, and had never used bad language in his life. He had twice served as village Elder, and when he left office his accounts were in good order. He had a large family: two sons and a married grandson, all living with him. He was hale, long-bearded, and erect, and it was only when he was past sixty that a little grey began to show itself in his beard.

Elisha was neither rich nor poor. He had formerly gone out carpentering, but now that he was growing old he stayed at home and kept bees. One of his sons had gone away to find work, the other was living at home. Elisha was a kindly and cheerful old man. It is true he drank sometimes, and he took snuff, and was fond of singing; but he was a
peaceable man and lived on good terms with his family and with his neighbours. He was short and dark, with a curly beard, and, like his patron saint Elisha, he was quite bald-headed.

The two old men had taken a vow long since and had arranged to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem together: but Efim could never spare the time; he always had so much business on hand: as soon as one thing was finished he started another. First he had to arrange his grandson's marriage; then to wait for his youngest son's return from the army, and after that he began building a new hut.

One holiday the two old men met outside the hut and, sitting down on some timber, began to talk.

'Well,' asked Elisha, 'when are we to fulfil our vow?'

Efim made a wry face.

'We must wait,' he said. 'This year has turned out a hard one for me. I started building this hut thinking it would cost me something over a hundred roubles, but now it's getting on for three hundred and it's still not finished. We shall have to wait till the summer. In summer, God willing, we will go without fail.'

'It seems to me we ought not to put it off, but should go at once,' said Elisha. 'Spring is the best time.'

'The time's right enough, but what about my building? How can I leave that?'

'As if you had no one to leave in charge! Your son can look after it.'

'But how? My eldest son is not trustworthy—he sometimes takes a glass too much.'

'Ah, neighbour, when we die they'll get on without us. Let your son begin now to get some experience.'
That's true enough; but somehow when one begins a thing one likes to see it done.'

'Oh, friend, we can never get through all we have to do. The other day the women-folk at home were washing and house-cleaning for Easter. Here something needed doing, there something else, and they could not get everything done. So my eldest daughter-in-law, who's a sensible woman, says: 'We may be thankful the holiday comes without waiting for us, or however hard we worked we should never be ready for it.'

Efim became thoughtful.

'I've spent a lot of money on this building,' he said, 'and one can't start on the journey with empty pockets. We shall want a hundred rubles apiece—and it's no small sum.'

Elisha laughed.

'Now, come, come, old friend!' he said, 'you have ten times as much as I, and yet you talk about money. Only say when we are to start, and though I have nothing now I shall have enough by then.'

Efim also smiled.

'Dear me, I did not know you were so rich!' said he. 'Why, where will you get it from?'

'I can scrape some together at home, and if that's not enough, I'll sell half a score of hives to my neighbour. He's long been wanting to buy them.'

'If they swarm well this year, you'll regret it.'

'Regret it! Not I, neighbour! I never regretted anything in my life, except my sins. There's nothing more precious than the soul.'

'That's so; still it's not right to neglect things at home.'

'But what if our souls are neglected? That's worse. We took the vow, so let us go! Now, seriously, let us go!'
Elisha succeeded in persuading his comrade. In the morning after thinking it well over, Efim came to Elisha.

'You are right,' said he, 'let us go. Life and death are in God's hands. We must go now, while we are still alive and have the strength.'

A week later the old men were ready to start. Efim had money enough at hand. He took a hundred rubles himself, and left two hundred with his wife.

Elisha, too, got ready. He sold ten hives to his neighbour, with any new swarms that might come from them before the summer. He took seventy rubles for the lot. The rest of the hundred rubles he scraped together from the other members of his household, fairly clearing them all out. His wife gave him all she had been saving up for her funeral, and his daughter-in-law also gave him what she had.

Efim gave his eldest son definite orders about everything: when and how much grass to mow, where to cart the manure, and how to finish off and roof the cottage. He thought out everything, and gave his orders accordingly. Elisha, on the other hand, only explained to his wife that she was to keep separate the swarms from the hives he had sold and to be sure to let the neighbour have them all, without any tricks. As to household affairs, he did not even mention them.

'You will see what to do and how to do it as the needs arise,' he said. 'You are the masters and will know how to do what's best for yourselves.'

So the old men got ready. Their people baked them cakes, and made bags for them, and cut them linen for leg-bands. They put on new leather

1 Worn by Russian peasants instead of stockings.
shoes and took with them spare shoes of platted bark. Their families went with them to the end of the village and there took leave of them, and the old men started on their pilgrimage.

Elisha left home in a cheerful mood and as soon as he was out of the village forgot all his home affairs. His only care was how to please his comrade, how to avoid saying a rude word to any one, how to get to his destination and home again in peace and love. Walking along the road, Elisha would either whisper some prayer to himself or go over in his mind such of the lives of the saints as he was able to remember. When he came across any one on the road, or turned in anywhere for the night, he tried to behave as gently as possible and to say a godly word. So he journeyed on, rejoicing. One thing only he could not do, he could not give up taking snuff. Though he had left his snuff-box behind, he hankered after it. Then a man he met on the road gave him some snuff, and every now and then he would lag behind (not to lead his comrade into temptation) and would take a pinch of snuff.

Efim too walked well and firmly, doing no wrong and speaking no vain words, but his heart was not so light. Household cares weighed on his mind. He kept worrying about what was going on at home. Had he not forgotten to give his son this or that order? Would his son do things properly? If he happened to see potatoes being planted or manure carted as he went along, he wondered if his son was doing as he had been told. And he almost wanted to turn back and show him how to do things, or even do them himself.
III

The old men had been walking for five weeks, they had worn out their home-made bark shoes and had to begin buying new ones when they reached Little Russia.¹ From the time they left home they had had to pay for their food and for their night's lodging, but when they reached Little Russia the people vied with one another in asking them into their huts. They took them in and fed them, and would accept no payment; and more than that, they put bread or even cakes into their bags for them to eat on the road.

The old men travelled some five hundred miles in this manner free of expense, but after they had crossed the next province, they came to a district where the harvest had failed. The peasants still gave them free lodging at night, but no longer fed them for nothing. Sometimes even they could get no bread: they offered to pay for it, but there was none to be had. The people said the harvest had completely failed the year before. Those who had been rich were ruined and had had to sell all they possessed; those of moderate means were left destitute, and those of the poor who had not left those parts, wandered about begging, or starved at home in utter want. In the winter they had had to eat husks and goosefoot.

One night the old men stopped in a small village; they bought fifteen pounds of bread, slept there, and started before sunrise to get well on their way before the heat of the day. When they had gone some eight miles, on coming to a stream they sat

¹ Little Russia is situated in the south-western part of Russia, and consists of the Governments of Kiyev, Poltáva, Chernígov, and part of Kharkov and Kherson; it is now generally called the Ukraine.
down, and, filling a bowl with water, they steeped some bread in it and ate it. Then they changed their leg-bands and rested for a while. Elisha took out his snuff-box. Efim shook his head at him.

'How is it you don't give up that nasty habit?' said he.

Elisha waved his hand. 'The evil habit is stronger than I,' he said.

Presently they got up and went on. After walking for nearly another eight miles, they came to a large village and passed right through it. It had now grown hot. Elisha was tired out and wanted to rest and have a drink, but Efim did not stop. Efim was the better walker of the two and Elisha found it hard to keep up with him.

'If I could only have a drink,' said he.

'Well, have a drink,' said Efim. 'I don't want any.'

Elisha stopped.

'You go on,' he said, 'but I'll just run in to the little hut there. I will catch you up in a moment.'

'All right,' said Efim, and he went on along the high road alone while Elisha turned back to the hut.

It was a small hut plastered with clay, the bottom a dark colour, the top whitewashed; but the clay had crumbled away. Evidently it was long since it had been replastered, and the thatch was off the roof on one side. The entrance to the hut was through the yard. Elisha entered the yard, and saw, lying close to a bank of earth that ran round the hut, a gaunt, beardless man with his shirt tucked into his trousers, as is the custom in Little Russia. The man must have lain down in the shade, but the sun had come round and now shone full on him. Though not asleep, he still lay there. Elisha called

1 In Great Russia the peasants let their shirt hang outside their trousers.
to him and asked for a drink, but the man gave no answer.

'He is either ill or unfriendly,' thought Elisha; and going to the door he heard a child crying in the hut. He took hold of the ring that served as a door-handle and knocked with it.

'Hey, masters!' he called. No answer. He knocked again with his staff.

'Hey, Christians!' Nothing stirred.

'Hey, servants of God!' Still no reply.

Elisha was about to turn away, when he thought he heard a groan the other side of the door.

'Dear me, some misfortune must have happened to the people? I had better have a look.'

And Elisha entered the hut.

IV

Elisha turned the ring, the door was not fastened. He opened it and went along up the narrow passage. The door into the dwelling-room was open. To the left was a brick stove; in front against the wall was an icon-shelf and a table before it; by the table was a bench on which sat an old woman, bare-headed and wearing only a single garment. There she sat with her head resting on the table, and near her was a thin, wax-coloured boy, with a protruding stomach. He was asking for something, pulling at her sleeve and crying bitterly. Elisha entered. The air in the hut was very foul. He looked round, and saw a woman lying on the floor behind the stove: she lay flat on the ground with her eyes closed and her throat rattling, now stretching out a leg, now dragging it in, tossing from side to side; and the foul smell came from her. Evidently she

* An icon (properly ikôn) is a representation of God, Christ, an angel, or a saint, or of a sacred event, usually painted, enamelled, or embossed.
could do nothing for herself and no one had been attending to her needs. The old woman lifted her head and saw the stranger.

‘What do you want?’ said she. ‘What do you want, man? We have nothing.’

Elisha understood her, though she spoke in the Little-Russian dialect.

‘I came in for a drink of water, servant of God,’ he said.

‘There’s no one—no one—we have nothing to fetch it in. Go your way.’

Then Elisha asked:

‘Is there no one among you, then, well enough to attend to that woman?’

‘No, we have no one. My son is dying outside, and we are dying in here.’

The little boy had ceased crying when he saw the stranger, but when the old woman began to speak, he began again, and clutching hold of her sleeve cried:

‘Bread, Granny, bread.’

Elisha was about to question the old woman, when the man staggered into the hut. He came along the passage clinging to the wall, but as he was entering the dwelling-room he fell in the corner near the threshold, and without trying to get up again to reach the bench, he began to speak in broken words. He brought out a word at a time, stopping to draw breath, and gasping.

‘Illness has seized us . . . ,’ said he, ‘and famino. He is dying . . . of hunger.’

And he motioned towards the boy and began to sob.

Elisha jerked up the sack behind his shoulder and, pulling the straps off his arms, put it on the floor. Then he lifted it on to the bench and untied the strings. Having opened the sack, he took out a loaf of bread and, cutting off a piece with his
knife, handed it to the man. The man would not take it, but pointed to the little boy and to a little girl crouching behind the stove, as if to say:

'Give it to them.'

Elisha held it out to the boy. When the boy smelt bread, he stretched out his arms, and seizing the slice with both his little hands, bit into it so that his nose disappeared in the chunk. The little girl came out from behind the stove and fixed her eyes on the bread. Elisha gave her also a slice. Then he cut off another piece and gave it to the old woman, and she too began munching it.

'If only some water could be brought,' she said, 'their mouths are parched. I tried to fetch some water yesterday—or was it to-day—I can't remember, but I fell down and could go no further, and the pail has remained there, unless someone has taken it.'

Elisha asked where the well was. The old woman told him. Elisha went out, found the pail, brought some water, and gave the people a drink. The children and the old woman ate some more bread with the water, but the man would not eat.

'I cannot eat,' he said.

All this time the younger woman did not show any consciousness, but continued to toss from side to side. Presently Elisha went to the village shop and bought some millet, salt, flour, and oil. He found an axe, chopped some wood, and made a fire. The little girl came and helped him. Then he boiled some soup and gave the starving people a meal.

v

The man ate a little, the old woman had some too, and the little girl and boy licked the bowl clean and then curled up and fell fast asleep in one another's arms.

The man and the old woman then began tell-
the fast with his friends at the hut. That day the wife got up and managed to move about a bit. The husband had shaved and put on a clean shirt which the old woman had washed for him; and he went to beg for mercy of a rich peasant in the village to whom his ploughland and meadow were mortgaged. He went to beg the rich peasant to grant him the use of the meadow and field till after the harvest; but in the evening he came back very sad and began to weep. The rich peasant had shown no mercy, but had said: 'Bring me the money.'

Elisha again grew thoughtful. 'How are they to live now?' thought he to himself. 'Other people will go haymaking, but there will be nothing for these to mow, their grass land is mortgaged. The rye will ripen. Others will reap (and what a fine crop mother-earth is giving this year), but they have nothing to look forward to. Their three acres are pledged to the rich peasant. When I am gone they'll drift back into the state I found them in.'

Elisha was in two minds, but finally decided not to leave that evening, but to wait until the morrow. He went out into the yard to sleep. He said his prayers and lay down; but he could not sleep. On the one hand he felt he ought to be going, for he had spent too much time and money as it was; on the other hand he felt sorry for the people.

'There seems to be no end to it,' he said. 'First I only meant to bring them a little water and give them each a slice of bread, and just see where it has landed me. It's a case of redeeming the meadow and the cornfield. And when I have done that I shall have to buy a cow for them, and a horse for the man to cart his sheaves. A nice coil you've got yourself into, brother Elisha! You've slipped your cables and lost your reckoning!'

Elisha got up, lifted his coat which he had been
using for a pillow, unfolded it, got out his snuff and took a pinch, thinking that it might perhaps clear his thoughts.

But no! He thought and thought, and came to no conclusion. He ought to be going; and yet pity held him back. He did not know what to do. He refolded his coat and put it under his head again. He lay thus for a long time, till the cocks had already crowed once: then he was quite drowsy. And suddenly it seemed as if some one had roused him. He saw that he was dressed for the journey, with the sack on his back and the staff in his hand, and the gate stood ajar so that he could just squeeze through. He was about to pass out when his sack caught against the fence on one side: he tried to free it, but then his leg-band caught on the other side and came undone. He pulled at the sack and saw that it had not caught on the fence, but that the little girl was holding it and crying,

' прим. дядя, братец, хлеб!'

He looked at his foot, and there was the tiny boy holding him by the leg-band, while the master of the hut and the old woman were looking at him through the window.

Elisha awoke and said to himself in an audible voice:

'To-morrow I will redeem their cornfield, and will buy them a horse, and flour to last till the harvest, and a cow for the little ones; or else while I go to seek the Lord beyond the sea I may lose Him in myself.'

Then Elisha fell asleep and slept till morning. He awoke early, and going to the rich peasant, redeemed both the cornfield and the meadow land. He bought a scythe (for that also had been sold) and brought it back with him. Then he sent the man to mow, and himself went into the village. He
heard that there was a horse and cart for sale at the public-house, and he struck a bargain with the owner and bought them. Then he bought a sack of flour, put it in the cart, and went to see about a cow. As he was going along he overtook two women talking as they went. Though they spoke the Little-Russian dialect, he understood what they were saying.

'At first, it seems, they did not know him; they thought he was just an ordinary man. He came in to ask for a drink of water, and then he remained. Just think of the things he has bought for them! Why, they say he bought a horse and cart for them at the publican's only this morning! There are not many such men in the world. It's worth while going to have a look at him.'

Elisha heard and understood that he was being praised, and he did not go to buy the cow, but returned to the inn, paid for the horse, harnessed it, drove up to the hut, and got out. The people in the hut were astonished when they saw the horse. They thought it might be for them, but dared not ask. The man came out to open the gate.

'Where did you get a horse from, grandfather?' he asked.

'Why, I bought it,' said Elisha. 'It was going cheap. Go and cut some grass and put it in the manger for it to eat during the night. And take in the sack.'

The man unharnessed the horse, and carried the sack into the barn. Then he mowed some grass and put it in the manger. Everybody lay down to sleep. Elisha went outside and lay by the roadside. That evening he took his bag out with him. When everyone was asleep, he got up, packed and fastened his bag, wrapped the linen bands round his legs, put on his shoes and coat, and set off to follow Efim.
When Elisha had walked rather more than three miles it began to grow light. He sat down under a tree, opened his bag, counted his money, and found he had only seventeen roubles and twenty kopeks left.

'Well,' thought he, 'it is no use trying to cross the sea with this. If I beg my way it may be worse than not going at all. Friend Efim will get to Jerusalem without me, and will place a candle at the shrines in my name. As for me, I'm afraid I shall never fulfil my vow in this life. I must be thankful it was made to a merciful Master and to one who pardons sinners.'

Elisha rose, jerked his bag well up on his shoulders, and turned back. Not wishing to be recognized by anyone, he made a circuit to avoid the village, and walked briskly homeward. Coming from home the way had seemed difficult to him and he had found it hard to keep up with Efim, but now on his return journey, God helped him to get over the ground so that he hardly felt fatigue. Walking seemed like child's play. He went along swinging his staff and did his forty to fifty miles a day.

When Elisha reached home the harvest was over. His family were delighted to see him again, and all wanted to know what had happened: Why and how he had been left behind? And why he had returned without reaching Jerusalem? But Elisha did not tell them.

'It was not God's will that I should get there,' said he. 'I lost my money on the way and lagged behind my companion. Forgive me, for the Lord's sake!'

Elisha gave his old wife what money he had left. Then he questioned them about home affairs. Everything was going on well; all the work had
been done, nothing neglected, and all were living in peace and concord.

Efim's family heard of his return the same day, and came for news of their old man, and to them Elisha gave the same answers.

'Efim is a fast walker. We parted three days before St. Peter's day, and I meant to catch him up again, but all sorts of things happened. I lost my money and had no means to get any further, so I turned back.'

The folks were astonished that so sensible a man should have acted so foolishly: should have started and not got to his destination, and should have squandered all his money. They wondered at it for a while and then forgot all about it; and Elisha forgot it too. He set to work again on his homestead. With his son's help he cut wood for fuel for the winter. He and the women threshed the corn. Then he mended the thatch on the outhouses, put the bees under cover, and handed over to his neighbour the ten hives he had sold him in spring and all the swarms that had come from them. His wife tried not to tell how many swarms there had been from these hives, but Elisha knew well enough from which there had been swarms and from which not. And instead of ten, he handed over seventeen swarms to his neighbour. Having got everything ready for the winter, Elisha sent his son away to find work, while he himself took to plaiting shoes of bark and hollowing out logs for hives.

VIII

All that day while Elisha stopped behind in the hut with the sick people, Efim waited for him. He only went on a little way before he sat down. He waited and waited, had a nap, woke up again, and again sat waiting, but his comrade did not come. He
gazed till his eyes ached. The sun was already sinking behind a tree and still no Elisha was to be seen.

'Perhaps he has passed me,' thought Efim, 'or perhaps some one gave him a lift and he drove by while I slept, and did not see me. But how could he help seeing me? One can see so far here in the steppe. Shall I go back? Suppose he is on in front we shall then miss each other completely and it will be still worse. I had better go on, and we shall be sure to meet where we put up for the night.'

He came to a village, and told the watchman, if an old man of a certain description came along, to bring him to the hut where Efim stopped. But Elisha did not turn up that night. Efim went on, asking all he met whether they had not seen a little, bald-headed, old man? No one had seen such a traveller. Efim wondered, but went on alone, saying:

'We shall be sure to meet in Odessa, or on board the ship,' and he did not trouble more about it.

On the way he came across a pilgrim wearing a cassock, with long hair and a skull-cap such as priests wear. This pilgrim had been to Mount Athos, and was now going to Jerusalem for the second time. They both stopped at the same place one night and, having met, they travelled on together.

They got safely to Odessa and there had to wait three days for a ship. Many pilgrims from many different parts were in the same case. Again Efim asked about Elisha, but no one had seen him.

Efim got himself a foreign passport, which cost him five roubles. He paid forty roubles for a return ticket to Jerusalem, and bought a supply of bread and herrings for the voyage.

The pilgrim began explaining to Efim how he might get on to the ship without paying his fare, but Efim would not listen. 'No, I came prepared to pay, and I shall pay,' said he.
The ship was freighted and the pilgrims went on board, Efim and his new comrade among them. The anchors were weighed and the ship put out to sea.

All day they sailed smoothly, but towards night a wind arose, rain came on, and the vessel tossed about and shipped water. The people were frightened: the women wailed and screamed and some of the weaker men ran about the ship looking for shelter. Efim too was frightened, but he would not show it, and remained at the place on deck where he had settled down when first he came on board, beside some old men from Tambóv. There they sat silent, all night and all next day, holding on to their sacks. On the third day it grew calm, and on the fifth day they anchored at Constantinople. Some of the pilgrims went on shore to visit the Church of St. Sophia, now held by the Turks. Efim remained on the ship, and only bought some white bread. They lay there for twenty-four hours and then put to sea again. At Smyrna they stopped again, and at Alexandretta; but at last they arrived safely at Jaffa, where all the pilgrims had to disembark. From there still it was more than forty miles by road to Jerusalem. When disembarking the people were again much frightened. The ship was high, and the people were dropped into boats, which rocked so much that it was easy to miss them and fall into the water. A couple of men did get a wetting, but at last all were safely landed.

They went on on foot, and at noon on the third day reached Jerusalem. They stopped outside the city, at the Russian hostel, where their passports were indorsed. Then, after dinner, Efim visited the Holy Places with his companion, the pilgrim. It was not the time when they could be admitted to the Holy Sepulchre, but they went to the Patri-
archate. All the pilgrims assembled there. The women were separated from the men, who were all told to sit in a circle, barefoot. Then a monk came in with a towel to wash their feet. He washed, wiped, and then kissed their feet, and did this to every one in the circle. Efim's feet were washed and kissed, with the rest. He stood through vespers and matins, prayed, placed candles at the shrines, handed in booklets inscribed with his parent's names, that they might be mentioned in the church prayers. Here at the Patriarchate food and wine were given them. Next morning they went to the cell of Mary of Egypt, where she had lived doing penance. Here too they placed candles and had prayers read. From there they went to the Monastery of Abraham, and saw the place where Abraham intended to slay his son as an offering to God. Then they visited the spot where Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, and the Church of James, the Lord's brother. The pilgrim showed Efim all these places, and told him how much money to give at each place. At mid-day they returned to the hostel and had dinner. As they were preparing to lie down and rest, the pilgrim cried out, and began to search his clothes, feeling them all over.

'My purse has been stolen, there were twenty-three roubles in it,' said he, 'two ten-rouble notes and the rest in change.'

He sighed and lamented a great deal, but as there was no help for it, they lay down to sleep.

IX

As Efim lay there he was assailed by temptation.

'No one has stolen any money from this pilgrim,' thought he, 'I do not believe he had any. He gave none away anywhere, though he made me give and even borrowed a rouble of me.'
This thought had no sooner crossed his mind, than Efim rebuked himself, saying: 'What right have I to judge a man? It is a sin. I will think no more about it.' But as soon as his thoughts began to wander, they turned again to the pilgrim: how interested he seemed to be in money, and how unlikely it sounded when he declared that his purse had been stolen.

'He never had any money,' thought Efim. 'It's all an invention.'

Towards evening they got up, and went to midnight Mass at the great Church of the Resurrection, where the Lord's Sepulchre is. The pilgrim kept close to Efim and went everywhere with him. They came to the Church; a great many pilgrims were there, some Russians and some of other nationalities: Greeks, Armenians, Turks, and Syrians. Efim entered the Holy Gates with the crowd. A monk led them past the Turkish sentinels, to the place where the Saviour was taken down from the cross and anointed, and where candles were burning in nine great candlesticks. The monk showed and explained everything. Efim offered a candle there. Then the monk led Efim to the right, up the steps to Golgotha, to the place where the cross had stood. Efim prayed there. Then they showed him the cleft where the ground had been rent asunder to its nethermost depths; then the place where Christ's hands and feet were nailed to the cross; then Adam's tomb, where the blood of Christ had dripped on to Adam's bones. Then they showed him the stone on which Christ sat when the crown of thorns was placed on His head; then the post to which Christ was bound when He was scourged. Then Efim saw the stone with two holes for Christ's feet. They were going to show him something else, but there was a stir in the crowd and the people all
hurried to the church of the Lord’s Sepulchre itself. The Latin Mass had just finished there and the Russian liturgy was beginning. And Efim went with the crowd to the tomb cut in the rock.

He tried to get rid of the pilgrim, against whom he was still sinning in his mind, but the pilgrim would not leave him, but went with him to the Mass at the Holy Sepulchre. They tried to get to the front, but were too late. There was such a crowd that it was impossible to move either backwards or forwards. Efim stood looking in front of him, praying, and every now and then feeling for his purse. He was in two minds: sometimes he thought that the pilgrim was deceiving him, and then again he thought that if the pilgrim spoke the truth and his purse had really been stolen, the same thing might happen to himself.

 Efim stood there gazing into the little chapel in which was the Holy Sepulchre itself with thirty-six lamps burning above it. As he stood looking over the people’s heads, he saw something that surprised him. Just beneath the lamps in which the sacred fire burns, and in front of every one, Efim saw an old man in a grey coat, whose bald, shining head was just like Elisha Bódrov.

‘It is like him,’ thought Efim, ‘but it cannot be Elisha. He could not have got ahead of me. The ship before ours started a week earlier. He could not have caught that; and he was not on ours, for I saw every pilgrim on board.’

Hardly had Efim thought this, when the little old man began to pray, and bowed three times: once forwards to God, then once on each side—to the brethren. And as he turned his head to the right, Efim recognized him. It was Elisha Bódrov
himself, with his dark, curly beard turning grey at the cheeks, with his brows, his eyes and nose, and his expression of face. Yes, it was he!

Efím was very pleased to have found his comrade again and wondered how Elisha had got ahead of him.

'Well done, Elisha!' thought he. 'See how he has pushed ahead. He must have come across some one who showed him the way. When we get out I will find him, get rid of this fellow in the skull-cap, and keep to Elisha. Perhaps he will show me how to get to the front also.'

Efím kept looking out, so as not to lose sight of Elisha. But when the Mass was over the crowd began to sway, pushing forward to kiss the tomb, and pushed Efím aside. He was again seized with fear lest his purse should be stolen. Pressing it with his hand, he began elbowing through the crowd, anxious only to get out. When he reached the open he went about for a long time searching for Elisha both outside and in the Church itself. In the chapels of the Church he saw many people of all kinds, eating, and drinking wine, and reading and sleeping there. But Elisha was nowhere to be seen. So Efím returned to the inn without having found his comrade. That evening the pilgrim in the skull-cap did not turn up. He had gone off without repaying the rúble, and Efím was left alone.

The next day Efím went to the Holy Sepulchre again, with an old man from Tambóv, whom he had met on the ship. He tried to get to the front, but was again pressed back; so he stood by a pillar and prayed. He looked before him, and there in the foremost place under the lamps, close to the very Sepulchre of the Lord, stood Elisha, with his arms spread out like a priest at the altar, and with his bald head all shining.
‘Well, now,’ thought Efim, ‘I won’t lose him!’

He pushed forward to the front, but when he got there, there was no Elisha: he had evidently gone away.

Again on the third day Efim looked, and saw at the Sepulchre, in the holiest place, Elisha standing in the sight of all men, his arms outspread and his eyes gazing upwards as if he saw something above. And his bald head was all shining.

‘Well, this time,’ thought Efim, ‘he shall not escape me! I will go and stand at the door, then we can’t miss one another!’

Efim went out and stood by the door till past noon. Every one had passed out, but still Elisha did not appear.

Efim remained six weeks in Jerusalem, and went everywhere: to Bethlehem, and to Bethany, and to the Jordan. He had a new shroud stamped at the Holy Sepulchre for his burial, and he took a bottle of water from the Jordan and some holy earth, and bought candles that had been lit at the sacred flame. In eight places he inscribed names to be prayed for, and he spent all his money except just enough to get home with. Then he started home-ward. He walked to Jaffa, sailed thence to Odessa, and walked home from there on foot.

XI

Efim travelled the same road he had come by; and as he drew nearer home his former anxiety returned as to how affairs were getting on in his absence. ‘Much water flows away in a year,’ the proverb says. It takes a lifetime to build up a homestead but not long to ruin it, thought he. And he wondered how his son had managed without him, what sort of spring they were having, how the cattle had wintered, and whether the cottage was
well finished. When Efim came to the district where he had parted from Elisha the summer before, he could hardly believe that the people living there were the same. The year before they had been starving, but now they were living in comfort. The harvest had been good, and the people had recovered and had forgotten their former misery.

One evening Efim reached the very place where Elisha had remained behind; and as he entered the village a little girl in a white smock ran out of a hut.

'Daddy, daddy, come to our house!'

Efim meant to pass on, but the little girl would not let him. She took hold of his coat, laughing, and pulled him towards the hut, where a woman with a small boy came out into the porch and beckoned to him.

'Come in, grandfather,' she said. 'Have supper and spend the night with us.'

So Efim went in.

'I may as well ask about Elisha,' he thought. 'I fancy this is the very hut he went to for a drink of water.'

The woman helped him off with the bag he carried, and gave him water to wash his face. Then she made him sit down to table, and set milk, curd-cakes, and porridge, before him. Efim thanked her, and praised her for her kindness to a pilgrim. The woman shook her head.

'We have good reason to welcome pilgrims,' she said. 'It was a pilgrim who showed us what life is. We were living forgetful of God and God punished us almost to death. We reached such a pass last summer that we all lay ill and helpless with nothing to eat. And we should have died, but that God sent an old man to help us—just such a one as you. He came in one day to ask for a drink of water, saw the state we were in, took pity on us, and remained
with us. He gave us food and drink and set us on our feet again; and he redeemed our land, and bought a cart and horse and gave them to us.'

Here the old woman, entering the hut, interrupted the younger one and said:

'We don't know whether it was a man or an angel from God. He loved us all, pitied us all, and went away without telling us his name, so that we don't even know whom to pray for. I can see it all before me now! There I lay waiting for death, when in comes a bald-headed old man. He was not anything much to look at, and he asked for a drink of water. I, sinner that I am, thought to myself: 'What does he come prowling about here for?' And just think what he did! As soon as he saw us he let down his bag, on this very spot, and untied it.'

Here the little girl joined in.

'No, Granny,' said she, 'first he put it down here in the middle of the hut, and then he lifted it on to the bench.'

And they began discussing and recalling all he had said and done, where he sat and slept, and what he had said to each of them.

At night the peasant himself came home on his horse, and he too began to tell about Elisha and how he had lived with them.

'Had he not come we should all have died in our sins. We were dying in despair, murmuring against God and man. But he set us on our feet again; and through him we learned to know God and to believe that there is good in man. May the Lord bless him! We used to live like animals, he made human beings of us.'

After giving Efim food and drink, they showed him where he was to sleep; and lay down to sleep themselves.
But though Efim lay down, he could not sleep. He could not get Elisha out of his mind, but remembered how he had seen him three times at Jerusalem, standing in the foremost place.

'So that is how he got ahead of me,' thought Efim. 'God may or may not have accepted my pilgrimage, but He has certainly accepted his!'

Next morning Efim bade farewell to the people, who put some patties in his sack before they went to their work, and he continued his journey.

XII

Efim had been away just a year and it was spring again when he reached home one evening. His son was not at home, but had gone to the public-house, and when he came back he had had a drop too much. Efim began questioning him. Everything showed that the young fellow had been unsteady during his father's absence. The money had all been wrongly spent and the work had been neglected. The father began to upbraid the son, and the son answered rudely.

'Why didn't you stay and look after it yourself?' he said. 'You go off, taking the money with you, and now you demand it of me!'

The old man grew angry and struck his son.

In the morning Efim went to the village Elder to complain of his son's conduct. As he was passing Elisha's house his friend's wife greeted him from the porch.

'How do you do, neighbour?' she said. 'How do you do, dear friend? Did you get to Jerusalem safely?'

Efim stopped.

'Yes, thank God,' he said. 'I have been there. I lost sight of your old man, but I hear he got home safely.'
The old woman was fond of talking:

'Yes, neighbour, he has come back,' said she. 'He's been back a long time. Soon after Assumption, I think it was, he returned. And we were glad the Lord had sent him back to us! We were dull without him. We can't expect much work from him any more, his years for work are past; but still he is the head of the household and it's more cheerful when he's at home. And how glad our lad was! He said, "It's like being without sunlight, when father's away!" It was dull without him, dear friend. We're fond of him, and take good care of him.'

'Is he at home now?'

'He is, dear friend. He is with his bees. He is hiving the swarms. He says they are swarming well this year. The Lord has given such strength to the bees that my husband doesn't remember the like. "The Lord is not rewarding us according to our sins." he says. Come in, dear neighbour, he will be so glad to see you again.'

Efim passed through the passage into the yard and to the apiary, to see Elisha. There was Elisha in his grey coat, without any face-net or gloves, standing under the birch trees, looking upwards, his arms stretched out and his bald head shining as Efim had seen him at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem: and above him the sunlight shone through the birches as the flames of fire had done in the holy place, and the golden bees flew round his head like a halo, and did not sting him.

Efim stopped. The old woman called to her husband.

'Here's your friend come,' she cried.

Elisha looked round with a pleased face, and came towards Efim, gently picking bees out of his own beard.
'Good-day, neighbour, good-day, dear friend. Did you get there safely?'

'My feet walked there and I have brought you some water from the river Jordan. You must come to my house for it. But whether the Lord accepted my efforts....'

'Well, the Lord be thanked! May Christ bless you!' said Elisha.

Efim was silent for a while, and then added:

'My feet have been there, but whether my soul or another's has been there more truly....'

'&That's God's business, neighbour, God's business,' interrupted Elisha.

'On my return journey I stopped at the hut where you remained behind....'

Elisha was alarmed, and said hurriedly:

'God's business, neighbour, God's business! Come into the cottage, I'll give you some of our honey.' And Elisha changed the conversation, and talked of home affairs.

Efim sighed, and did not speak to Elisha of the people in the hut, nor of how he had seen him in Jerusalem. But he now understood that the best way to keep one's vows to God and to do His will, is for each man while he lives to show love and do good to others.

1885.
WHERE LOVE IS, GOD IS

IN a certain town there lived a cobbler, Martin Avdéich by name. He had a tiny room in a basement, the one window of which looked out on to the street. Through it one could only see the feet of those who passed by, but Martin recognized the people by their boots. He had lived long in the place and had many acquaintances. There was hardly a pair of boots in the neighbourhood that had not been once or twice through his hands, so he often saw his own handiwork through the window. Some he had resoled, some patched, some stitched up, and to some he had even put fresh uppers. He had plenty to do, for he worked well, used good material, did not charge too much, and could be relied on. If he could do a job by the day required, he undertook it; if not, he told the truth and gave no false promises; so he was well known and never short of work.

Martin had always been a good man, but in his old age he began to think more about his soul and to draw nearer to God. While he still worked for a master, before he set up on his own account, his wife had died, leaving him with a three-year-old son. None of his elder children had lived, they had all died in infancy. At first Martin thought of sending his little son to his sister's in the country, but then he felt sorry to part with the boy, thinking: 'It would be hard for my little Kapitón to have to grow up in a strange family, I will keep him with me.'

Martin left his master and went into lodgings with his little son. But he had no luck with his
children. No sooner had the boy reached an age when he could help his father and be a support as well as a joy to him, than he fell ill and, after being laid up for a week with a burning fever, died. Martin buried his son, and gave way to despair so great and overwhelming that he murmured against God. In his sorrow he prayed again and again that he too might die, reproaching God for having taken the son he loved, his only son, while he, old as he was, remained alive. After that Martin left off going to church.

One day an old man from Martin's native village, who had been a pilgrim for the last eight years, called in on his way from the Tróitsa Monastery. Martin opened his heart to him and told him of his sorrow.

'I no longer even wish to live, holy man,' he said. 'All I ask of God is that I soon may die. I am now quite without hope in the world.'

The old man replied: 'You have no right to say such things, Martin. We cannot judge God's ways. Not our reasoning, but God's will, decides. If God willed that your son should die and you should live, it must be best so. As to your despair—that comes because you wish to live for your own happiness.'

'What else should one live for?' asked Martin.

'For God, Martin,' said the old man. 'He gives you life, and you must live for Him. When you have learnt to live for Him, you will grieve no more, and all will seem easy to you.'

Martin was silent awhile, and then asked: 'But how is one to live for God?'

The old man answered: 'How one may live for God has been shown us by Christ. Can you read? Then buy the Gospels and read them: there you will see how God would have you live. You have it all there.'
WHERE LOVE IS, GOD IS

These words sank deep into Martin’s heart, and that same day he went and bought himself a Testament in large print, and began to read.

At first he meant only to read on holidays, but having once begun he found it made his heart so light that he read every day. Sometimes he was so absorbed in his reading that the oil in his lamp burnt out before he could tear himself away from the book. He continued to read every night, and the more he read the more clearly he understood what God required of him, and how he might live for God. And his heart grew lighter and lighter. Before, when he went to bed he used to lie with a heavy heart, moaning as he thought of his little Kapitón; but now he only repeated again and again: ‘Glory to Thee, glory to Thee, O Lord! Thy will be done!’

From that time Martin’s whole life changed. Formerly, on holidays he used to go and have tea at the public-house and did not even refuse a glass or two of vóodka. Sometimes, after having had a drop with a friend, he left the public-house not drunk, but rather merry, and would say foolish things: shout at a man, or abuse him. Now all that sort of thing passed away from him. His life became peaceful and joyful. He sat down to his work in the morning, and when he had finished his day’s work he took the lamp down from the wall, stood it on the table, fetched his book from the shelf, opened it, and sat down to read. The more he read the better he understood and the clearer and happier he felt in his mind.

It happened once that Martin sat up late, absorbed in his book. He was reading Luke’s Gospel; and in the sixth chapter he came upon the verses:

‘To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy
cloke withhold not thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.’

He also read the verses where our Lord says:

‘And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth, against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.’

When Martin read these words his soul was glad within him. He took off his spectacles and laid them on the book, and leaning his elbows on the table pondered over what he had read. He tried his own life by the standard of those words, asking himself:

‘Is my house built on the rock, or on sand? If it stands on the rock, it is well. It seems easy enough while one sits here alone, and one thinks one has done all that God commands; but as soon as I cease to be on my guard, I sin again. Still I will persevere. It brings such joy. Help me, O Lord!’

He thought all this, and was about to go to bed, but was loth to leave his book. So he went on reading the seventh chapter—about the centurion, the widow’s son, and the answer to John’s disciples—and he came to the part where a rich Pharisee invited the Lord to his house; and he read how the
woman who was a sinner, anointed his feet and washed them with her tears, and how he justified her. Coming to the forty-fourth verse, he read:

'And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment.'

He read these verses and thought: 'He gave no water for his feet, gave no kiss, his head with oil he did not anoint...'. And Martin took off his spectacles once more, laid them on his book, and pondered.

'He must have been like me, that Pharisee. He too thought only of himself—how to get a cup of tea, how to keep warm and comfortable; never a thought of his guest. He took care of himself, but for his guest he cared nothing at all. Yet who was the guest? The Lord himself! If he came to me, should I behave like that?'

Then Martin laid his head upon both his arms and, before he was aware of it, he fell asleep.

'Martin!' he suddenly heard a voice, as if some one had breathed the word above his ear.

He started from his sleep. 'Who's there?' he asked.

He turned round and looked at the door; no one was there. He called again. Then he heard quite distinctly: 'Martin, Martin! Look out into the street to-morrow, for I shall come.'

Martin roused himself, rose from his chair and rubbed his eyes, but did not know whether he had heard these words in a dream or awake. He put out the lamp and lay down to sleep.
Next morning he rose before daylight and after saying his prayers he lit the fire and prepared his cabbage soup and buckwheat porridge. Then he lit the samovár, put on his apron, and sat down by the window to his work. As he sat working Martin thought over what had happened the night before. At times it seemed to him like a dream, and at times he thought that he had really heard the voice. ‘Such things have happened before now,’ thought he.

So he sat by the window, looking out into the street more than he worked, and whenever any one passed in unfamiliar boots he would stoop and look up, so as to see not the feet only but the face of the passer-by as well. A house-porter passed in new felt boots; then a water-carrier. Presently an old soldier of Nicholas' reign came near the window spade in hand. Martin knew him by his boots, which were shabby old felt ones, goloshed with leathern. The old man was called Stepánich: a neighbouring tradesman kept him in his house for charity, and his duty was to help the house-porter. He began to clear away the snow before Martin's window. Martin glanced at him and then went on with his work.

‘I must be growing crazy with age,’ said Martin, laughing at his fancy. ‘Stepánich comes to clear away the snow, and I must needs imagine it's Christ coming to visit me. Old dotard that I am!’

Yet after he had made a dozen stitches he felt drawn to look out of the window again. He saw that Stepánich had leaned his spade against the wall and was either resting himself or trying to get warm. The man was old and broken down, and had evidently not enough strength even to clear away the snow.

‘What if I called him in and gave him some tea?’ thought Martin. ‘The samovár is just on the boil.’
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He stuck his awl in its place, and rose; and putting the samovár on the table, made tea. Then he tapped the window with his fingers. Stepánich turned and came to the window. Martin beckoned to him to come in and went himself to open the door.

'Come in,' he said, 'and warm yourself a bit. I'm sure you must be cold.'

'May God bless you!' Stepánich answered. 'My bones do ache to be sure.' He came in, first shaking off the snow, and lest he should leave marks on the floor he began wiping his feet, but as he did so he tottered and nearly fell.

'Don't trouble to wipe your feet,' said Martin; 'I'll wipe up the floor—it's all in the day's work. Come, friend, sit down and have some tea.'

Filling two tumblers, he passed one to his visitor, and pouring his own out into the saucer, began to blow on it.

Stepánich emptied his glass, and, turning it upside down, put the remains of his piece of sugar on the top. He began to express his thanks, but it was plain that he would be glad of some more.

'Have another glass,' said Martin, refilling the visitor's tumbler and his own. But while he drank his tea Martin kept looking out into the street.

'Are you expecting any one?' asked the visitor.

'Am I expecting any one? Well now, I'm ashamed to tell you. It isn't that I really expect any one; but I heard something last night which I can't get out of my mind. Whether it was a vision, or only a fancy, I can't tell. You see, friend, last night I was reading the Gospel, about Christ the Lord, how he suffered and how he walked on earth. You have heard tell of it, I dare say.'

1 Turning the glass upside down was the customary way of intimating that one had had enough.
'I have heard tell of it,' answered Stepánich; 'but I'm an ignorant man and not able to read.'

'Well, you see, I was reading of how he walked on earth. I came to that part, you know, where he went to a Pharisee who did not receive him well. Well, friend, as I read about it, I thought how that man did not receive Christ the Lord with proper honour. Suppose such a thing could happen to such a man as myself, I thought, what would I not do to receive him! But that man gave him no reception at all. Well, friend, as I was thinking of this I began to doze, and as I dozed I heard some one call me by name. I got up, and thought I heard some one whispering, 'Expect me; I will come to-morrow.' This happened twice over. And to tell you the truth, it sank so into my mind that, though I am ashamed of it myself, I keep on expecting him, the dear Lord!'

Stepánich shook his head in silence, finished his tumbler and laid it on its side; but Martin stood it up again and refilled it for him.

'Here, drink another glass, bless you! And I was thinking, too, how he walked on earth and despised no one, but went mostly among common folk. He went with plain people, and chose his disciples from among the likes of us, from workmen like us, sinners that we are. 'He who raises himself,' he said, 'shall be humbled; and he who humbles himself shall be raised.' 'You call me Lord,' he said, 'and I will wash your feet.' 'He who would be first,' he said, 'let him be the servant of all; because', he said, 'blessed are the poor, the humble, the meek, and the merciful.''

Stepánich forgot his tea. He was an old man, easily moved to tears, and as he sat and listened the tears ran down his cheeks.

'Come, drink some more,' said Martin. But
Stepánich crossed himself, thanked him, moved away his tumbler, and rose.

'Thank you, Martin Avdéich,' he said, 'you have given me food and comfort both for soul and body.'

'You're very welcome. Come again another time. I am glad to have a guest,' said Martin.

Stepánich went away; and Martin poured out the last of the tea and drank it up. Then he put away the tea things and sat down to his work, stitching the back seam of a boot. And as he stitched he kept looking out of the window, waiting for Christ and thinking about him and his doings. And his head was full of Christ's sayings.

Two soldiers went by: one in Government boots, the other in boots of his own; then the master of a neighbouring house, in shining goloshes; then a baker carrying a basket. All these passed on. Then a woman came up in worsted stockings and peasant-made shoes. She passed the window, but stopped by the wall. Martin glanced up at her through the window and saw that she was a stranger, poorly dressed and with a baby in her arms. She stopped by the wall with her back to the wind, trying to wrap the baby up though she had hardly anything to wrap it in. The woman had only summer clothes on, and even they were shabby and worn. Through the window Martin heard the baby crying, and the woman trying to soothe it but unable to do so. Martin rose, and going out of the door and up the steps he called to her.

'My dear, I say, my dear!'

The woman heard and turned round.

'Why do you stand out there with the baby in the cold? Come inside. You can wrap him up better in a warm place. Come this way!'

The woman was surprised to see an old man in
an apron, with spectacles on his nose, calling to her, but she followed him in.

They went down the steps, entered the little room, and the old man led her to the bed.

"There, sit down, my dear, near the stove. Warm yourself and feed the baby."

"Haven't any milk. I have eaten nothing myself since early morning," said the woman, but still she took the baby to her breast.

Martin shook his head. He brought out a basin and some bread. Then he opened the oven door and poured some cabbage soup into the basin. He took out the porridge pot also, but the porridge was not yet ready, so he spread a cloth on the table and served only the soup and bread.

"Sit down and eat, my dear, and I'll mind the baby. Why, bless me, I've had children of my own; I know how to manage them."

The woman crossed herself, and sitting down at the table began to eat, while Martin put the baby on the bed and sat down by it. He chuckled and chucked, but having no teeth he could not do it well and the baby continued to cry. Then Martin tried poking at him with his finger; he drove his finger straight at the baby's mouth and then quickly drew it back, and did this again and again. He did not let the baby take his finger in its mouth, because it was all black with cobbler's wax. But the baby first grew quiet watching the finger, and then began to laugh. And Martin felt quite pleased.

The woman sat eating and talking, and told him who she was, and where she had been.

"I'm a soldier's wife," said she. "They sent my husband somewhere, far away, eight months ago, and I have heard nothing of him since. I had a place as cook till my baby was born, but then they would not keep me with a child. For three months
now I have been struggling, unable to find a place, and I've had to sell all I had for food. I tried to go as a wet-nurse, but no one would have me; they said I was too starved-looking and thin. Now I have just been to see a tradesman's wife (a woman from our village is in service with her) and she has promised to take me. I thought it was all settled at last, but she tells me not to come till next week. It is far to her place, and I am ragged out, and baby is quite starved, poor mite. Fortunately our landlady has pity on us, and lets us lodge free, else I don't know what we should do.'

Martin sighed. 'Haven't you any warmer clothing?' he asked.

'How could I get warm clothing?' said she. 'Why, I pawned my last shawl for sixpence yesterday.'

Then the woman came and took the child, and Martin got up. He went and looked among some things that were hanging on the wall, and brought back an old cloak.

'Here,' he said, 'though it's a worn-out old thing, it will do to wrap him up in.'

The woman looked at the cloak, then at the old man, and taking it, burst into tears. Martin turned away, and groping under the bed brought out a small trunk. He fumbled about in it, and again sat down opposite the woman. And the woman said:

'The Lord bless you, friend. Surely Christ must have sent me to your window, else the child would have frozen. It was mild when I started, but now see how cold it has turned. Surely it must have been Christ who made you look out of your window and take pity on me, poor wretch!'

Martin smiled and said, 'It is quite true; it was he made me do it. It was no mere chance made me look out.'

And he told the woman his dream, and how he
had heard the Lord's voice promising to visit him that day.

'Who knows? All things are possible,' said the woman. And she got up and threw the cloak over her shoulders, wrapping it round herself and round the baby. Then she bowed, and thanked Martin once more.

'Take this for Christ's sake,' said Martin, and gave her sixpence to get her shawl out of pawn. The woman crossed herself, and Martin did the same, and then he saw her out.

After the woman had gone, Martin ate some cabbage soup, cleared the things away, and sat down to work again. He sat and worked, but did not forget the window, and every time a shadow fell on it he looked up at once to see who was passing. People he knew and strangers passed by, but no one remarkable.

After a while Martin saw an apple-woman stop just in front of his window. She had a large basket, but there did not seem to be many apples left in it; she had evidently sold most of her stock. On her back she had a sack full of chips, which she was taking home. No doubt she had gathered them at some place where building was going on. The sack evidently hurt her and she wanted to shift it from one shoulder to the other, so she put it down on the footpath and, placing her basket on a post, began to shake down the chips in the sack. While she was doing this a boy in a tattered cap ran up, snatched an apple out of the basket and tried to slip away; but the old woman noticed it, and turning, caught the boy by his sleeve. He began to struggle, trying to free himself, but the old woman held on with both hands, knocked his cap off his head, and seized hold of his hair. The boy screamed and the old woman scolded. Martin dropped his
awl, not waiting to stick it in its place, and rushed out of the door. Stumbling up the steps, and dropping his spectacles in his hurry, he ran out into the street. The old woman was pulling the boy’s hair and scolding him, and threatening to take him to the police. The lad was struggling and protesting, saying, ‘I did not take it. What are you beating me for? Let me go!’

Martin separated them. He took the boy by the hand and said, ‘Let him go, Granny. Forgive him for Christ’s sake.’

‘I’ll pay him out, so that he won’t forget it for a year! I’ll take the rascal to the police!’

Martin began entreating the old woman.

‘Let him go, Granny. He won’t do it again. Let him go for Christ’s sake!’

The old woman let go, and the boy wished to run away, but Martin stopped him

‘Ask the Granny’s forgiveness!’ said he. ‘And don’t do it another time. I saw you take the apple.’

The boy began to cry and to beg pardon.

‘That’s right. And now here’s an apple for you,’ and Martin took an apple from the basket and gave it to the boy, saying, ‘I will pay you, Granny.’

‘You will spoil them that way, the young rascals,’ said the old woman. ‘He ought to be whipped so that he should remember it for a week.’

‘Oh, Granny, Granny,’ said Martin, ‘that’s our way—but it’s not God’s way. If he should be whipped for stealing an apple, what should be done to us for our sins?’

The old woman was silent.

And Martin told her the parable of the lord who forgave his servant a large debt, and how the servant went out and seized his debtor by the throat. The old woman listened to it all, and the boy, too, stood by and listened.
'God bids us forgive,' said Martin, 'or else we shall not be forgiven. Forgive every one, and a thoughtless youngster most of all.'

The old woman wagged her head and sighed.

'It's true enough,' said she, 'but they are getting terribly spoilt.'

'Then we old ones must show them better ways,' Martin replied.

'That's just what I say,' said the old woman. 'I have had seven of them myself, and only one daughter is left.' And the old woman began to tell how and where she was living with her daughter, and how many grandchildren she had. 'There now,' she said, 'I have but little strength left, yet I work hard for the sake of my grandchildren; and nice children they are, too. No one comes out to meet me but the children. Little Annie, now, won't leave me for any one. "It's grandmother, dear grandmother, darling grandmother."' And the old woman completely softened at the thought.

'Of course it was only his childishness, God help him,' said she, referring to the boy.

As the old woman was about to hoist her sack on her back, the lad sprang forward to her, saying, 'Let me carry it for you, Granny. I'm going that way.'

The old woman nodded her head, and put the sack on the boy's back, and they went down the street together, the old woman quite forgetting to ask Martin to pay for the apple. Martin stood and watched them as they went along talking to each other.

When they were out of sight Martin went back to the house. Having found his spectacles unbroken on the steps, he picked up his awl and sat down again to work. He worked a little, but could soon not see to pass the bristle through the holes
in the leather; and presently he noticed the lamp-lighter passing on his way to light the street lamps.

'Seems it's time to light up,' thought he. So he trimmed his lamp, hung it up, and sat down again to work. He finished off one boot and, turning it about, examined it. It was all right. Then he gathered his tools together, swept up the cuttings, put away the bristles and the thread and the awls, and, taking down the lamp placed it on the table. Then he took the Gospels from the shelf. He meant to open them at the place he had marked the day before with a bit of morocco, but the book opened at another place. As Martin opened it, his yesterday's dream came back to his mind, and no sooner had he thought of it than he seemed to hear footsteps, as though some one were moving behind him. Martin turned round, and it seemed to him as if people were standing in the dark corner, but he could not make out who they were. And a voice whispered in his ear: 'Martin, Martin, don't you know me?'

'Who is it?' muttered Martin.

'It is I,' said the voice. And out of the dark corner stepped Stepanich, who smiled and vanishing like a cloud was seen no more.

'It is I,' said the voice again. And out of the darkness stepped the woman with the baby in her arms, and the woman smiled and the baby laughed, and they too vanished.

'It is I,' said the voice once more. And the old woman and the boy with the apple stepped out and both smiled, and then they too vanished.

And Martin's soul grew glad. He crossed himself, put on his spectacles, and began reading the Gospel just where it had opened; and at the top of the page he read:

'I was an hunged, and ye gave me meat: I was
thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in.'

And at the bottom of the page he read:

'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me' (Matt. xxv).

And Martin understood that his dream had come true; and that the Saviour had really come to him that day, and he had welcomed him.

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