

## Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861)



Taras Shevchenko  
*Self-Portrait. 1843*

## THE ARTIST

The great Thorvaldsen<sup>1</sup> embarked on his brilliant career by carving ornaments and tritons for blunt-nosed Copenhagen ships. My hero also began, not a brilliant but nonetheless artistic pursuit, by grinding ochre and mummy and painting floors, roofs, and fences – a cheerless, hopeless start indeed. But are there really many of you, lucky artists of genius, who started differently? Only a miserable few. In Holland, for instance, during its most brilliant golden period, Ostade, Berghem, Teniers and a multitude of noted artists (except for Rubens and Van Dyck) started and ended their careers in tatters<sup>2</sup>.

It would not be fair to refer to mercantile Holland alone. Go over Vasari<sup>3</sup> and you will see exactly the same, or worse. I say “worse” because at that time the policy of St. Peter’s heirs demanded refined decorations for dazzling the multitudes and outshining the heretical teachings of Wycliffe and Hus which had already started rearing that undaunted Dominican Luther<sup>4</sup>. And it

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<sup>1</sup> Bertel Thorvaldsen (1768-1844) – Danish sculptor, representative of Classicism

<sup>2</sup> Brothers Adriaan (1610-1685) and Isaak (1621-1649) van Ostade Claes Berghem (1620-1683) – Dutch painters; David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690), Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641) – Flemish painters.

<sup>3</sup> Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) – Italian artist, architect and art historian, author of the *Vite de più eccellenti Pittori, Scultori, e Architettori* (Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Architects and Sculptors, 1550)

<sup>4</sup> John Wycliffe (c.1329-1384) – English religious and political reformer; John Huss (c.1369-1415) – Bohemian religious reformer; Martin Luther (1483-1546) – German religious reformer and founder of the Reformation, he was actually an Augustinian, not a Dominican, monk.

was then, as I say, that it suddenly occurred to Leo X and Julius II<sup>5</sup> to lavish gold on every painter and mason they came across, and when, at that golden time, great artists died of hunger as, for instance, Correggio and Zampieri<sup>6</sup>. It happened thus (quite often, unfortunately), always and wherever the divine vivifying art made its way.

And it is so in our enlightened nineteenth century, a century of philanthropy and of everything disposed for the benefit of mankind, with its entire means to fend off and give refuge to the victims of the "punishing goddess consigned to doom."

For what reason, I ask, does such a cheerless, such a bitter lot fall to these angels incarnate, to these representatives of living virtue on earth? Probably it is because they are angels embodied in flesh.

Such a discourse only leads to the reader being distracted from the subject I intend to present to him in full clarity.

The summer nights in St. Petersburg I almost always spent on the street or somewhere on the islands, but most frequently on the Academy Quay. I liked this place especially when the Neva River was calm and, like a gigantic mirror, reflected the grand portico of the Rumyantsev Museum, the corner of the Senate, and the red curtains in the house of Countess Laval<sup>7</sup> in all their details.

During the long winter nights her house was illuminated from within, and the red curtains flashed like fire against the dark background; it always annoyed me that the Neva was covered with ice and snow and the decoration lost its true effect.

I also liked to behold the sunrise from the Troitsky Bridge. A wonderful, majestic view!

In a truly artistic work there is something charming that is more beautiful than nature itself – it is the sublime soul of the artist, it is divine creativity. But in nature there are such marvelous phenomena, before which the poet-artist prostrates himself and only blesses the Creator for such sweet, soul-bewitching moments.

I frequently admired Shchedrin's<sup>8</sup> landscapes, and I was especially fascinated by his small painting *Portici Before Sunset*. A fascinating work! But it never fascinated me as much as the view from the Troitsky Bridge onto the Vyborg side before the appearance of the sun.

Once, after having had my fill of delight in a scene no human hand could have created, I walked to the Summer Garden for a rest. Whenever I happened to be in the Summer Garden, I never stopped on any of the alleys adorned with marble statues: these statues produced a bad impression on me, especially the ugly Saturn gobbling up his own child that was as ugly as he was himself. I passed by these clumsy gods and goddesses, sat down beside a pond for a rest, and admired the wonderful granite vase and the grand architecture of the Mikhailovsky Castle<sup>9</sup>.

Approaching the point where the large alley is crossed by a transversal alley and where, in the surroundings of the gods and goddesses, Saturn gobbled up his own child, I almost bumped into a living man in a dirty smock frock of ticking who sat on a pail just opposite Saturn.

I stopped in my tracks. The boy (a boy he really was of fourteen to fifteen years of age<sup>10</sup>)

<sup>5</sup> Leo X (1513-1521) and Julius II (1503-1513) – Roman popes.

<sup>6</sup> Antonio Allegri da Correggio (c.1489-1534) – Italian painter of the High Renaissance (religious and mythological paintings). Domenichino Zampieri (1581-1641) – Italian painter of the Bolognese school

<sup>7</sup> Alexandra Laval (1772-1850) – home of the Countess, wife of Court Steward of the Imperial Household Ivan Laval; one of St.Petersburg's most famous aristocratic literary salons.

<sup>8</sup> Silvestr Shchedrin (1791-1830) – Russian landscapist, one of the founders of Russian realistic landscape painting.

<sup>9</sup> Built by the architect Vikentiy Brennat in 1797-1800 to the design of Vasilii Bazhenov. Consecrated on September 8, St.Michael's Day, hence its name.

<sup>10</sup> Actually, when Ivan Soshenko, the narrator of the story, met Shevchenko, the latter was about twenty years old.

looked round and started to hide something in his bosom. I came up closer to him, and asked what he was doing here.

"Nothing," he replied shyly. "I was going to work, and so turned into the garden on my way." After a moment's pause, he added: "I was drawing."

"Show me what you were drawing."

He took a quartern of gray writing paper from his bosom and timidly handed it to me. The quartern bore a fairly accurately traced outline of Saturn.

I held the drawing for a long time and admired the soiled face of the artist. There was something attractive in the irregular features of his lean face, especially in his eyes, as clever and humble as a girl's.

"Do you come often to draw here?" I asked him.

"Every Sunday," he replied. "And if we work close by, I come here on workdays, too."

"Are you learning the house painting trade?"

"And decorative painting, too," he added.

"Under whose apprenticeship are you?"

"Shiryayev the house painter's."

I wanted to question him in greater detail, but he picked up the pail of yellow paint with one hand, took a big wiped-off yellow brush with the other and made to leave.

"Where are you in such a hurry?"

"To work. I'm already late as it is, and when the master comes, I'll be in trouble."

"Come and see me on Sunday morning, and if you have any of your drawings, bring them along for me to have a look at."

"All right, I will come. Where do you live, though?"

I wrote down my address on his drawing, and we parted.

Early in the morning on Sunday I returned from my night stroll, and in the corridor, in front of my apartment, I was met by my new acquaintance, who this time was dressed not in a dirty smock frock of ticking, but in what looked like a frock coat of brown color, and held a large roll of paper in his hand. I greeted him and held out my hand: he rushed over and wanted to kiss it. I pulled my hand back: his servility embarrassed me. Without saying a word, I entered the apartment, while he remained standing in the corridor. I took off my frock coat, put on a smock frock, but he still had not entered the room. I went out into the corridor and looked – my acquaintance had vanished. So I went downstairs and asked the janitor whether he had seen him. "I did see a lad with papers in his hands," he said. "He ran out into the street." I went outside – there was not a single trace of him. I felt as sad as if I had lost something that was dear to me. My sadness prevailed until the next Sunday and I could not think of anything to explain the sudden flight of my friend. After waiting till Sunday, I went to the Troitsky Bridge at two o'clock in the morning and, having admired the sunrise, walked to the Summer Garden, went around all the alleys – but my friend was not there. Just when I was about to go home, I remembered Belvedere Apollo, that is, a parody on the Belvedere god, standing all by itself right near the Moika Quay. There I directed my steps, and there was my friend. On seeing me, he stopped drawing, and flushed to the roots of his hair like a child that had been caught red-handed in the act of stealing jam. I took his trembling hand and led him off to a tavern where, in passing, I ordered the sleepy waiter to bring us some tea.

I bestowed as much kindness as I could upon my friend, and when he regained his composure, I asked why he had fled from the corridor.

"You got angry with me, and so it made me afraid," he replied.

"I didn't even think of getting angry with you," I told him. "But your humiliation was unpleasant to me. Only a dog licks a hand, a man should not do that." This strongly expressed idea had such an effect on him that he was about to seize my hand again.

I broke into laughter, a flood of carmine spilled across his face, as he stood there with hanging head. After the tea we took leave of each other. On parting, I told him to see me by all means either that day or the following Sunday. I do not possess the happy ability of getting to the bottom of a person right away, but I do have the unhappy ability to form a close friendship with a person quickly. I say unhappy, because rarely did a quick rapprochement result in anything good for me. It had been especially true with the one-eyed and squint-eyed: they showed me their real worth. Many a time when I met them there turned out to be not a single decent man among them – just trash. Or I must have simply suffered the frowns of luck. I was seeing my new acquaintance only for the third time, but we had already become close friends. I had developed a fondness and liking of him. Indeed, there was something in his face which could not but be liked. His countenance, at first not very beautiful, became ever more attractive to me. After all, there are happy faces in this world.

I went straight home, afraid lest I make my friend wait for me in the corridor. And what do you think? No sooner had I walked up the stairs than I saw him. Dressed in the same brown frock coat, he had washed himself, combed his hair, and was smiling.

"You are a remarkably fast runner," I said. "Looks like you went home first, didn't you? How did you manage to make it so fast?"

"You see, I was in a hurry to be home when the master would be back from mass."

"Is your master so strict?" I asked.

"Strict and. . ."

". . . and cruel, you wanted to say."

"No, stingy – that's what I wanted to say. He'd give me a lashing, while he'd actually be glad I had been late for dinner."

We entered my apartment. On the easel that day was a copy of Velasquez's *The Old Man* that hangs in the Stroganov Gallery<sup>11</sup>, and his eyes drank it in. I took the roll of papers out of his hand, unrolled it, and started looking at the drawings. Here was everything that marred the appearance of the Summer Garden – from the frivolous, sweetly smiling goddesses to the ugly Phraclitus and Heraclitus. And, finally, there were several drawings of bas-reliefs adorning the facades of some buildings, including the bas-relief cupids on the house by architect Montferrand<sup>12</sup> on the corner of the Moika Quay and Fonarny Lane.

But what surprised me in these more than vague outlines was their remarkable resemblance to the originals, especially the outlines of Phraclitus and Heraclitus. They were more expressive than the originals and, truth to tell, more ugly as well, but nonetheless I could not look indifferently at these drawings. My discovery made me happy at heart. But it did not enter my mind to ask myself then what I would be able to do with this rough diamond, given my more than inadequate means. To tell the truth, this thought had crossed my mind even then and was immediately absorbed by the proverb: "God is not without mercy, and a Cossack not without fortune."

"Why don't you have a single shaded-off drawing?" I asked, handing him the roll back.

<sup>11</sup> Sergei Stroganov (1707-1756) – baron, Lieutenant-General, founded the picture gallery in his palace built by the Italian architect Bartolomeo Rastrelli

<sup>12</sup> August Montferrand (1786-1858) – Russian architect, representative of Classicism, to his design were built the St. Isaac's Cathedral and the monument to Czar Alexandr I (Alexandr Column)

"I made them early in the morning, before sunrise."

"So you didn't see how they were illuminated?"

"I went to have a look at them in the daytime, but I could not draw them: there were people walking around."

"What do you intend to do now: stay with me for dinner or go home?"

He was silent for a minute or so and, without raising his eyes, said in a faint whisper:

"I'd stay, if you permit me."

"How will you deal with your master then?"

"I'll tell him I've been sleeping in the loft."

"All right, let's go and have dinner."

Madame Jurgens' eating-house had no visitors when we arrived, and I was very glad. It would have been unpleasant for me to meet some official's smooth face smiling senselessly at the sight of my ill-clad friend.

After dinner I had a mind to take him to the Academy and show him *The Last Day of Pompeii*. But not everything should happen at once. So I offered either to take him for a stroll down a boulevard or to read a book. He chose the latter. I, for my part, made him read aloud to examine him on this subject as well. I fell asleep on the first page of Dickens' famous novel *Nicholas Nickleby*. But this was neither the writer's nor the reader's fault: I simply wanted to sleep, because I had not slept all the night.

When I awoke and went into the other room, my awful studio struck my eye somewhat pleasantly. There were no cigar butts, no tobacco ash anywhere in sight, everything was clean and swept, even the palette that had been hanging on a nail with dried-up paints – it, too, was cleaned and glistened like a piece of glass; while the architect of this harmony was sitting by the window and drawing the mask of Thorvaldsen's famous model Fortunata.

All this was extremely pleasant to me. This service clearly spoke in his favor. But, for reasons unbeknown to me, I did not let him notice my satisfaction. I corrected an outline in his drawing, put in the shadows, and we went to the Kapernaum for tea. Kapernaum is a tavern actually called Berlin on the corner of Sixth Line and Academy Lane. That is how Pimenov<sup>13</sup>, it seems, christened it during his heady student years.

During tea he told me about his life and fortune. It was a sad, distressing story, told with naive simplicity, without a shade of discontent or reproach. Before this confession I thought about ways of improving his education, but on hearing his life story, I stopped thinking. He was a serf.

This sad discovery perplexed me to such an extent that I lost all hope of his reeducation. Silence reigned for at least half an hour. His sobs roused me from my torpor. I looked at him and asked what had made him cry. "It's unpleasant for you that I . . ." He did not finish his thought and burst into tears. I reassured him as best as I could and we returned to my quarters.

On the way we came upon old Venetsianov<sup>14</sup>. After the first exchange of greetings he looked closely at my companion and asked, smiling good-naturedly:

"A future artist, I suppose?"

To which I replied:

"Yes, and no."

He asked me the reason why. I explained him in a whisper. The old man became thoughtful, shook my hand strongly, and we parted.

<sup>13</sup> Nikolai Pimenov (1812-1864) – Russian sculptor, representative of late classicism.

<sup>14</sup> Alexei Venetsianov (1780-1847) – Russian artist; founded a private school of drawing where he taught gifted students, among them quite a few serfs; took part in Shevchenko's release from serfdom.

I took the way Venetsianov had looked and shaken my hand as a reproach for me having succumbed to hopelessness. I cheered up and remembered some of the artists, students and wards of Venetsianov, and saw, unclearly, to tell the truth, something like a glimmer of hope on the horizon.

On parting with me in the evening, my protégé asked me to give him a little print for copying. I happened to have a freshly printed copy of *Farnese Hercules*<sup>15</sup>, engraved by Sliudzhinsky after the drawing of Zavyalov, and Losenko's *Apollino*. I wrapped the originals in a piece of Peterhof paper, provided him with Italian pencils, instructed him how to keep them from becoming hard, and we went out into the street. He went home, while I made for old Venetsianov's home.

This is not the occasion, and it is *mal a propos* besides, to dilate on this humanitarian artist; let it be done by one of his numerous students who knows in greater detail his magnanimous deeds in the field of arts.

I told the old man everything I knew about my find and sought his advice on my future actions in order to bring the matter to a desired result. He, a man experienced in matters of this sort, neither promised nor advised anything positive. He only advised that I get acquainted with the young man's taskmaster, and alleviate his lot as much as I could at the present time.

I did so. Without waiting for Sunday, I went to the Summer Garden the next day before sunrise, but alas! I did not find my friend; neither did I see him the day after or on the third day. So I decided to see what Sunday would bring.

On Sunday morning my friend appeared. Asked why he had not been in the Summer Garden, he told me that they started work on the Bolshoi Theater (at that time Kavoss was redoing its interior), for which reason he could not now visit the Summer Garden. That Sunday we spent in the same manner as the previous one. In the evening, as we parted, I asked the name of his taskmaster and the hours I could find him at work.

The next day I went to the Bolshoi Theater and made the acquaintance of his master. I praised his stencils effusively and the ceiling patterns he himself had composed, thus laying a firm foundation for our acquaintance. He was the master of a house decoration and painting guild. He permanently kept three, at times even more smock-frocked slovens as his apprentices, and depending on necessity, hired from one to ten Kostroma peasants – painters and glaziers – by the day or by the month, which, consequently, made him by his art and resources a master of a better standing within his guild. Apart from these financial qualities, I saw several engravings by Audran and Volpato<sup>16</sup> on his walls, and on the chest of drawers several volumes of books, including *The Travels of Anacharsis the Younger*<sup>17</sup>. This cheered me up. But alas! when I hinted

<sup>15</sup> *Farnese Hercules* – marble copy of the lost bronze original made by Greek sculptor Lyssippus (kept in the Museum of Naples).

Franz Sliudzhinsky (died 1864) – engraver. Met Shevchenko after his exile and helped him print the etchings for his *Picturesque Ukraine* album.

Fiodor Zavyalov (1810-1856) – painter, excelled in drawing and composition, taught at the Academy of Fine Arts in St.Petersburg and at the School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in Moscow; was married to the daughter of Fiodor Brüllow, the brother of Karl Brüllow.

*Apollino* (Little Apollo) – antique marble statue from the Museum of Florence. Here an engraving by Vasiliy Osipov (1780-?) , (former serf who studied at the Academy of Fine Arts from 1805) after the drawing of Anton Losenko (1737-1773) – painter, Professor of Painting, Director of the Academy of Fine Arts (1773).

<sup>16</sup> Audran – family name of French engravers of the 17th-18 centuries, probably Shevchenko has in mind Gérard Audran (1640-1703).

Giovanni Volpato (1738-1803) – Italian engraver famous for his engravings after the works of Raphael as well as Leonardo da Vinci, Correggio, Poussin, Laude Lorrain, Caravaggio and Guercino.

<sup>17</sup> Title of the novel by Jean Jacques Barthelemy (1716-1795) – French writer, scholar, member of the French

vaguely about improving the lot of his smock-frocked apprentices, he was surprised at such a wild idea and began to prove to me that this would not lead to anything more than to their own ruin.

I did not argue with him at this first meeting. Besides, it would have been to no purpose to convince him of the contrary. People who are financially well off and intellectually backward do not believe in any theory whatsoever, after living through a meager youth in dirt and trials and then somehow making it in this godly world. For them there exists no other way to prosperity than the one they themselves covered. And frequently these crude convictions are intermixed with a still cruder feeling: I was not patted on the back, as it were, so why should I pat others? The guild master, it seemed, was not devoid of this anti-human feeling. Eventually I managed, however, to persuade him not to hinder my protégé from visiting me on holidays and workdays, when there was no work – say, in winter. Although he agreed, he nonetheless regarded it as indulgence that would lead to nothing but ruin. He almost guessed right.

Summer and autumn passed, winter set in. The work in the Bolshoi was finished, the theater opened, and the sorceress Taglioni started exercising her magic. Young people exalted in dizzy raptures, while the more mature raved about it. Only strict matrons and desperate lionesses grumbled persistently, and during the delirious applause uttered with contempt: "*Mauvais genre*," while unapproachable puritanical ladies exclaimed as one: "Obscenity! Obscenity! Open public obscenity!" All these bigots and female hypocrites did not miss a single performance of Taglioni, however. And when the famous actress agreed to become Princess Trubetskoy<sup>18</sup>, they were the first to bewail the great loss and censured the woman for what they themselves could not have achieved with every available cosmetic resource.

Karl the Great (as the late Vasiliy Andreyevich Zhukovsky called the also late Karl Pavlovich Brüllow) was extremely fond of the fine arts, whatever their expression, but with regard to modern ballet he was next to indifferent; he spoke of ballet as of a sugar confection. To climax her triumph, Taglioni danced the cachucha (in the ballet *La Gitana*). That same evening the cachucha spread all over our Palmyra<sup>19</sup>. The next day it already held sway both in the palatial chambers of an aristocrat and in the modest quarters of a Kolomna clerk. The cachucha was everywhere: in the home, on the street, at an office desk, in the tavern, and . . . at dinner, at supper – in a word, always and everywhere there was the cachucha. I do not mention here the soirees and little evening parties, at which the cachucha was an indispensable element. It was all tolerable as far as beauty and youth were concerned. But then respectable mothers and even *pater familias* joined in the craze. It was simply a St. Vitus dance in the form of cachucha. Soon mothers and fathers came to their senses and started arraying their barely toddling cherubs in *a la Gitana* tunics. Poor babies, how many tears you shed because of that accursed cachucha! But it made the effect complete, an effect that reached the proportions of speculation. If, for instance, the amphytrion had no cherub of its own, an evening party was adorned with a cherub taken on hire. 'Tis hard to credit now, though fresh is its renown.

At the height of the cachucha mania I was visited by Karl the Great (he loved visiting his students); he sat down on a couch and became thoughtful. Silently I admired his intelligent curly head. After a minute he quickly raised his eyes, and asked with a laugh:

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Academy. In the novel he introduced the reader to the culture and political system of ancient Greece.

<sup>18</sup> Maria Taglioni (1804-1884) – Italian ballerina. Performed in the Grand Opéra in Paris. During 1837-1842 she annually performed in St. Petersburg. In fact, she married Count Gilbert de Voisins in 1832, while her daughter married Prince Trubetskoy.

<sup>19</sup> Palmyra – capital city of an ancient kingdom in Syria. In Shevchenko's times St. Petersburg was referred to as Northern Palmyra.

"Know what?"

"I don't," I replied.

"Today Huber (translator of *Faust*) promised to get me a ticket for *La Gitana*. Let's go see it."

"So send your Lukyan over to Huber for the tickets."

"Won't this lad run over?" he said, pointing at my protégé.

"He'll do it fast. Write the note."

On a shred of gray paper he wrote with an Italian pencil:

"Get me two tickets. K. Brüllow." To this laconic message I added an address, and my Mercury flew away.

"What is he, your model or some servant?" he asked, gesturing at the closing door.

"Neither the former nor the latter," I replied.

"I like his face: it is not a serf's."

"Far from a serfs, but on the other hand –" I stopped in mid-sentence.

"But on the other hand, he is a serf, isn't he?" he picked up the thread of my thought.

"Unfortunately, yes," I added.

"Barbarism," he said in a whisper and became thoughtful.

After a minute in this mood he flung the cigar on the floor, took his hat and left. But the next moment he was back, and said: "I'll wait till he returns to have a look at his face once more." Then, lighting a cigar, he said: "Show me his work."

"Who told you I had any?"

"There must be some," he said with determination. I showed him the finished drawing of the mask of Laokoon and the traced outline of a foot by Michelangelo. He regarded the drawings for a long time, that is, held them in his hands, and looked – God knows what he was looking at by then.

"Who is his master?" he asked, raising his head. I told him the name of the landowner. "Your pupil must be given some serious thought. Lukyan promised to treat me to roast beef, so come for dinner." After saying this, he went up to the door, and stopped again. "Bring him to my place sometime. Goodbye."

And he left.

A quarter of an hour later my Mercury returned and announced that he, that is, Huber, wished to call on Karl Pavlovich himself.

"And do you know who Karl Pavlovich is? "I asked him.

"I do," he said, "but I never saw him face to face."

"What about today?"

"Was that really him?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you tell me, I would have looked at him closer at least. I thought it was just some gentleman. Will he be visiting you again?" he asked after a brief silence.

"I don't know," I said, and began to dress.

"Oh, my God! Oh, my God! How I would like to look at him from the distance at least. You know," he continued, "whenever I walk down the street, I always think of him and look at the passersby, trying to find him among them. So you say his portrait in *The Last Day of Pompeii* is very lifelike?"

"Yes, it is, but still you did not recognize him when he had been here. Oh well, don't you grieve; if he does not visit me before Sunday, we will pay him a call then. For the time being,



here is a ticket for you to Madame Jurgens'. I'm dining out tonight." After giving these instructions, I left.

At Brüllow's studio I met Vasilii Zhukovsky and Count Mikhail Vielgorsky<sup>20</sup>. They were admiring the still unfinished painting *The Crucifixion of Christ* commissioned by the Lutheran Church of Sts. Peter and Paul. The head of the weeping Mary Magdalene was already finished. As Zhukovsky looked at this marvelous weeping beauty of a woman, he burst into tears himself, embraced Karl the Great, and kissed him as if he were the beauty he had created.

I often visited the Hermitage with Brüllow. The visits were accompanied by splendid lectures on the theory of painting. Every time the lecture concluded with Teniers<sup>21</sup> and especially with his *The Barracks*. He used to stop for long in front of the painting, and after an exuberant, heartfelt panegyric to the famous Fleming, he would say:

"It is worth coming from America for this one painting alone."

The same could be said today of his *Crucifixion* and, especially, the head of the weeping Mary Magdalene. After the embraces and kisses, Zhukovsky went out into the other room; Brüllow, on seeing me, gave me a smile and followed Zhukovsky. Half an hour later they returned to the studio, and Brüllow, coming up to me, said with a smile: "The foundation has been laid." At that moment the door opened, and Huber came in, this time not in a casual uniform but in a black dandyish tailcoat. No sooner had he bowed than Zhukovsky approached him and, shaking his hand in a friendly way, asked him to read the final scene from *Faust*, which Huber did. The impression he produced was tremendous, and the poet awarded him with a sincere kiss.

Shortly after Zhukovsky and Count Veliegorsky left the studio, and with fewer people around Huber recited to us his latest creation, *Terpsichore*.

"I'm definitely against going to see *La Gitana*," Brüllow said.

"Why?" Huber asked.

"So as to preserve my faith in your *Terpsichore*"

"How is that?"

"It is better to believe in a wonderful fantasy than..."

"Is this to mean," Huber interrupted him, "that my verse is superior to the divine Taglioni? It's not worth the little finger, not a nail on her little finger, I swear to God. Oh, I nearly forgot: at Alexander's today we will be eating macaroni and stofatto with *Lachryma Christi*! Nestor will be there, Misha et cetera, et cetera . . . and, lastly, there'll be Pyanenko<sup>22</sup>."

"Let's go!" Brüllow took his hat. "Oh yes, one more thing I forgot," Huber continued, taking the tickets out of his pocket. "Here are your two tickets, and after the performance come to Nestor at the Exchange." (That is how Nestor Kukolnik's literary soirees were called in jest.)

"I remember," Brüllow said, and handed me a ticket, as he put on his hat.

"Are you coming with us, too?" Huber asked, turning to me.

"Yes!" I replied.

"Let's go!" Huber said, and we went out into the corridor. Lukyan grumbled, as he closed the door:

<sup>20</sup> Vasilii Zhukovsky (1783-1852) – founder of Romanticism in Russian poetry; played a personal role in organizing Shevchenko's release from serfdom.

Mikhail Vielgorsky (1788-1856) – Russian composer; in the 1830s-1840s Shevchenko attended his concerts.

<sup>21</sup> Shevchenko has in mind the painting *The Guard Room* by David Teniers the Younger.

<sup>22</sup> Nestor Kukolnik (1809-1868) – Russian writer, critic, playwright; Russian composer Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857); nickname (Pyanenko) of portraitist Yakov Yanenko (1800-1852).

"There's the roast beef for you!"

After the macaroni, stofatto and Lachryma Christi, the company proceeded to the Exchange, while we, that is, Huber, Karl the Great, and me, went to the theater. Before the overture started I admired the creations of my protégé. (He did all the ornaments and arabesques adorning the plafond of the Bolshoi Theater on the instructions of the architect Kavoss. I had been informed of this not by him, nor by his enterprising, pushing taskmaster, but by the machinist Kartashov who had always been present during the work and treated my protégé to tea in the morning). I was about to tell Brüllow of the arabesques of my pupil when the overture burst forth. Everyone, myself included, turned toward the curtain. The overture ended, the curtain lifted and the ballet began. Before the cachucha everything went smoothly, the audience behaved like any other well-mannered audience would do. With the first click of the castanets everything was a-quiver and a-tremble. The applause swept across the auditorium like peals of a distant thunder, quietly at first, then louder, and – once the cachucha was over — the thunder crashed in wild abandon. The well-mannered audience, me, its sinful member included, went crazy and howled whatever came to their mind: some shouted "*Bravo!*," others "*Da capo!*" and still others were just moaning and working with their feet and hands. After the first attack of frenzy I looked at Karl the Great and saw sweat rolling down the face of the poor chap – he was working with his hands and feet and shouting at the top of his voice: "*Da capo!*" Huber did the same. I got my wind back a little and followed suit after my teacher. By and by the hurricane began to abate; encored for the tenth time, the sorceress fluttered on stage, and after several exquisitely graceful curtsies disappeared.

Then Karl the Great got to his feet, wiped the sweat off his brow, and turning to Huber, said:

"Let us go backstage, and you'll introduce me to her."

"Let's go," Huber said enthusiastically, and we went behind the curtains.

Backstage there was already a milling crowd of admirers consisting mostly of bald pates, spectacles and opera glasses. We joined the crowd. Not without effort did we push our way to the center of this mass. Oh God, what did we see there! The fluttering sorceress, who minutes ago had been as light as Zephyr, was lying on a reclining chair, with gaping mouth and distended nostrils like an Arab steed, while ceruse and rouge mixed with sweat were running down her face like turbid rivulets in spring.

"Disgusting!" Karl the Great said and backed out. I followed him, while poor Huber – poor devil he was indeed! – had just finished delivering a well-turned compliment befitting the occasion and, after having uttered the name Brüllow, turned round, but Brüllow was gone. I don't know how he extricated himself from that mess.

There was one more act of the ballet to be seen, but we left the theater lest we spoil the dessert with cabbage, as Brüllow put it. I don't know whether he went to a ballet after *La Gitana*, but I know for sure that he never spoke of ballet anymore.

I return to my hero. After Brüllow had told me, "The foundation has been laid," hope started to take on more definite forms in my imagination. I began thinking of the best way to occupy my pupil.

My domestic resources were paltry. I thought about the Gallery of Antique Art. Andrei Grigoryevich (keeper of the gallery) would be very likely to agree, but in the gallery the statues were so poorly illuminated it was difficult to draw them. After much thinking I turned with a twenty-kopeck coin to the living Antinous, the model Taras, so that he let my pupil into the plaster classroom after classes.

That is just what I did. Throughout the week (he had his meals in the classroom as well) he drew the head of Lucius Verus, the libertine confidant of Marcus Aurelius, and the head of *The*

*Genius* by Canova. Then I made him attend the figure class and told him to begin by drawing human anatomy from four sides. During my free time I visited the class and encouraged the indefatigable toiler with a pound of sifted-flour bread and a piece of sausage. His invariable meal consisted of a hunk of black bread and water, if Taras brought the water. Occasionally, I also stopped to feast my eyes on the Belvedere torso and, unable to check the urge, would sit down and draw it myself.

A marvelous, exemplary work of antique sculpture! Small wonder the blind Michelangelo admired by touch this piece of a Hercules at rest. So it is strange that in the travelogue of a certain gentleman, Gersevanov, there is such an artistically true appreciation of Michelangelo's pedantic creation *The Last Judgment*, of the divine frescos of Raphael and many other famous works of sculpture and painting, while in the Belvedere torso he sees only a piece of marble and nothing more. Strange indeed!

After anatomical sketches he made a drawing of Germanicus and a dancing faun. Then one fine morning I introduced him to Karl the Great. His delight was beyond description when Brüllow praised his drawings kindly and condescendingly.

Never in my life had I seen a merrier and happier man than him throughout the next few days. "Is he really so sweet and kind?" he asked me several times. "Always," I replied. "And is that red room his favorite one?" "It is," I said. "Everything red! Red room, red couch. Red curtains on the window. Red dressing gown and a picture in red, everything red! Will I ever see him that closely again?" After this question he burst out crying. I did not comfort him, of course. What other concern, what comfort could be superior to these happy, heavenly, divine tears? "Everything red!" he repeated through sobs.

The red room, hung mostly with expensive Oriental weapons and illuminated by the sun through transparent red curtains, impressed me for a minute, used to the decoration that I was, but it remained imprinted on his memory to the grave. After his long and terrible trials he had forgotten everything: both art, his spiritual life, and the love that had poisoned him, and me, his sincere friend – he had forgotten everything altogether: the red decorations and Karl Pavlovich were the only things on his mind.

The next day after the visit I met Karl Pavlovich, and he asked me the address, first and second name of the young man's lord. I informed him. He took a cab and drove off, saying:

"See me in the evening!"

In the evening I visited him.

"He is the biggest swine in slippers I have ever seen!" was the first thing Karl Pavlovich said on meeting me.

"What's the matter?" I asked, having guessed whom he had in mind.

"The matter is that tomorrow you'll see that reptile and ask him to set the price for your pupil."

Karl the Great was out of humor. He was silent for a long time, pacing up and down the room, then he spat in exasperation, and said:

"Vandalism! Let's go upstairs," he added, turning to me, and we went up to his apartments where he had his bedroom and library that also served him as a dining room.

He ordered a lamp to be brought. Asking me to read him something, he sat down to finish a sepia, *A Sleeping Odalisque*, for Vladislavlev's<sup>23</sup> album, it seems.

<sup>23</sup> Vladimir Vladislavlev (1807-1856) – Russian writer, publisher, art collector, publisher of almanacs. Served in the gendarmes corps as a colonel and aide-de-camp of Alexandr Benkendorf, Chief of Police, who took part in crushing the rebellion of the Decembrists.

Our peaceful occupation did not last long, though. The swine in house shoes must have been still preying on his mind.

"Let's go outdoors," he said, covering the drawing.

We went out into the street, walked along the quay for a long time, and then came out into the Bolshoi Prospekt.

"Well, is he at your place now?" he asked me.

"No, he does not stay for the night," I said.

"Let's have supper somewhere," he said, and we went to Deli's.

I have seen quite a few Russian landowners of various sorts in my lifetime: both rich and of middling means, and crofters. I even saw some who lived permanently either in France or England and spoke in rapture about the prosperity of the local farmers and peasants, while back in their home country they robbed the muzhik of his last sheep. I saw many an eccentric of the latter type. But I never saw a Russian who in his home would have rudely received Brüllow.

My curiosity was excited to the extreme: I could not fall asleep for a long time, thinking and asking myself what that swine in slippers could look like. My curiosity flagged, however, when I was putting on my tailcoat next morning. Common sense told me that this swine was no such interesting rarity, for which I should be sacrificing my self-esteem, although the matter I had to deal with called for greater sacrifice. Still, there was the question: what if I, just like my great teacher, would be unable to stand the torture? What then?

After some thinking I took off the tailcoat, donned my casual coat, and went to the old man Venetsianov. He was experienced in such matters, and must have had not once nor twice met such eccentrics, coming out of such encounters with credit.

Venetsianov was already at his work when I called on him. He was making an India-ink drawing of his own painting, *Mother Teaches her Child to Pray*. The drawing was commissioned for Vladislavlev's almanac *The Dawn*. I explained the reason for my ill-timed visit, told him the address of the reptile; the old man interrupted his work, dressed, and we went out into the street. He took a cab and drove off, while I returned to my quarters, where I met my cheerful happy pupil. His cheerfulness and happiness seemed to have been marred by something. He resembled a person who wanted to confide a great secret in his friend, but was afraid of doing it lest the secret become public. Before I took off my coat and donned my smock frock I noticed that something was definitely wrong with my friend.

"Well, what's new?" I asked him. "What did you do yesterday evening? How's your master?"

"He is all right," he answered in a halting voice. "I read *Andre Savoyard*<sup>24</sup> before he retired to bed, and then I lit the stearin candle you gave me and drew."

"So what did you draw?" I asked. "From a print or something else?"

"Just something," he said, blushing. "Recently I read Ozerov's *Oedipus in Athens*<sup>25</sup> and I liked it, so I tried to arrange a composition."

"That's good. Did you bring the composition along? Let me have a look."

He produced a small bundle of paper from his pocket, and as he unrolled it with trembling hands and gave it to me, he said several times:

"I hadn't the time to trace it with a pen."

This was his first creation, which it took him so much effort to show to me. His modesty or,

<sup>24</sup> Novel by the French writer Paul de Kock (1794-1871), who produced a series of vivacious and piquant novels about Parisian life.

<sup>25</sup> Vladislav Ozerov (1769-1816) – Russian playwright; His *Oedipus in Athens* was a permanent fixture in the repertoire of St.Petersburg's Alexandrinsky Theater in the 1830s and 1840s.

still better to say, timidity was to my liking. It was a true sign of talent. I also liked the work itself for its simplicity: Oedipus, Antigone, and Polynices in the distance. Only three figures. The first attempts are rarely that laconic. They are always complicated. The young imagination does not contract nor concentrate on one expressive word, note, or line. It needs space, it soars and in its soaring it frequently gets tangled, falls, and shatters against what is indestructibly laconic.

I praised his choice of scene, advised that he, apart from poetry, should read history, and more than anything else, diligently copy good prints like those of Raphael, Volpato or Poussin and Audran, for instance.

"Your master has the one and the others, so draw in your spare time. I'll get the books for you." Then and there I gave him several volumes of Gillies' *History of Ancient Greece*<sup>26</sup>.

"My master has a full portfolio of prints besides, the ones that hang on his walls," he said, accepting the books. "But he does not permit me to copy them: he is afraid I will ruin them. Yes ..." he continued, smiling, "I told him you had taken me to Karl Pavlovich and showed him my drawings and that ..." he faltered at that point, "and that he ... oh, well, I don't believe it myself."

"What is it?" I picked up the thread of his thought. "He doesn't believe that Brüllow praised your drawings?"

"He doesn't believe that I saw Karl Pavlovich at all, and called me a fool when I tried to prove it to him."

He wanted to say something else when Venetsianov came into the room and, taking off his hat, said smilingly:

"Nothing out of the ordinary! A landowner just as they come. Truth is, he kept me in the entrance hall for about an hour. Oh well, it's just a habit of theirs. Nothing you can do about it: a habit is the same as a law. He received me in his study. The study was something I didn't like. To tell the truth, everything in it was luxurious, expensive and gorgeous, but it all was gorgeous in a Japanese sort of way. At first I discoursed upon enlightenment in general and philanthropy in particular. He heard me out at length and with attention, interrupting me in the end: 'Why don't you tell me straight off and simply what you and your Brüllow want from me? He threw me off my balance yesterday. That's a veritable American savage for you!' He burst into loud laughter. At first I got confused, but I soon regained my composure and told him about my business matter-of-factly and simply. 'You should have said so a long time ago, instead of dilating on philanthropy. What has philanthropy got to do with it! It's money, and nothing else!' he added, pleased with himself. 'So you want to know the final price? Did I understand you correctly?' To which I replied: 'It is so indeed.' 'All right then, here is my price: two thousand five hundred rubles! Agreed?' 'Agreed!' I replied. 'He is a craftsman,' he added, 'and necessary in my household.' Then he was about to say something else, but I bowed and left. And here I am," the old man concluded with a smile.

"Hearty thanks to you."

"And hearty thanks to you as well!" he said, shaking my hand strongly. "You gave me a chance to do at least something for the benefit of our beautiful art and to see for myself at last a crank who calls our Karl the Great an American savage." The old man laughed jovially. "I contributed my share," he said, after he ceased laughing. "Now it's up to you to do the rest. In case of failure, I will approach the English Club again. So long."

"Let us go to Karl Pavlovich together," I said.

"I won't go there and I don't advise you either. Remember the proverb: 'An untimely guest is

<sup>26</sup> John Gillies (1747-1836) – Scottish historian. Mentioned here is the Russian eight-volume edition of his work (1830-1831).

worse than a Tatar,' especially so with an artist and in the morning besides. It's much worse than an entire Tatar horde."

"You make me blush for today's morning," I said.

"Not in the least. You acted like a true Christian. For work and leisure we have determined the hours. But for a good deed there are no fixed hours. A hearty thanks again for your visit today. Goodbye! We have dinner at home today. Do come. If you see Belvedere, bring him along," he added on leaving. Belvedere was how he called Apollon Mokritsky<sup>27</sup>, a student of Brüllow and an ardent admirer of Schiller.

In the street I parted with Venetsianov and went to Karl Pavlovich to inform him of the results of my personal diplomacy. But alas! even Lukyan was out. Lipin<sup>28</sup>, thankfully, looked out of the kitchen and said that the host had gone to the Portico. I went there – but the Portico was closed (that is how we used to call the building standing behind what is now the Academy Garden, where Brüllow, Baron Klodt, Sauerweid and Bassin<sup>29</sup> had their studios). Walking through the Liteiny Dvor, I reached the street, and passing by the store of Dovizielli, saw the curly-headed profile of Karl the Great through the window. On seeing me, he went out into the street.

"Well?" he asked.

"Where are you dining today?" I inquired.

"I don't know. Why do you ask?"

"I'll tell you why," I said. "Let us go to Venetsianov for dinner; he will tell you such strange things about the reptile as you have probably never heard and will never hear."

"Good, let us go," he said, and we went to Venetsianov.

During dinner the old man told about his visit that day, and when he came to the part about the American savage, we all burst into laughter that became hysterical by the end of the dinner.

The Society for the Encouragement of Artists rented large apartments for five of its pensioners in Kastyurin's house standing on the Seventh Line between the Bolshoi Prospekt and Sredniy Prospekt. Apart from the rooms the pensioners occupied, there were two classrooms adorned with antique statues, such as Venus de Medici, Apollino, Germanicus, and a group of gladiators. I intended my pupil to live in this boarding house (instead of the plaster class under the patronage of the model Taras). Besides the statues, there was also a human skeleton, which it was necessary for him to know, the more so since he drew the anatomical statue of Fischer, without having any idea about a human skeleton.

The next day after the dinner at Venetsianov's, I paid a call on the then secretary of the Society, Vasiliy Ivanovich Grigorovich<sup>30</sup>, with such a noble purpose in mind, and asked his permission for my pupil to visit the classrooms of the boarding house.

The obliging Vasiliy Ivanovich gave me in lieu of an entrance card a message to the artist

<sup>27</sup> Apollon Mokritsky (1810-1870) – Ukrainian painter, student of Venetsianov and Brüllow, took part in the release of Shevchenko from serfdom.

<sup>28</sup> Ilya Lipin – Russian painter, student of Barlow.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Klodt von Jurgensburg (1805-1867) – sculptor, professor of the Academy of Fine Arts, created monumental decorative sculptures in the classical style. After Shevchenko's death Klodt made a death mask of him.

Alexandr Sauerweid ((1783-1844) – painter of battle scenes.

Piotr Bassin (1793-1877) – painter, professor of the Academy of Fine Arts, created paintings on historical, biblical and mythological themes.

<sup>30</sup> Vasiliy Grigorovich (1786-1865) – Russian art historian, professor, teacher of art theory and Conference-Secretary of the Society for the Encouragement of artists (1829-1854), took an active part in Shevchenko's liberation from serfdom.

Golovnya who lived with the pensioners as a foreman. I should not dwell on such a sorry character as the artist Golovnya, but since he is a rare character, the more so among artists, I will say a few words about him.

A powerfully, grotesquely drawn figure of Plyushkin<sup>31</sup> pales in comparison with this anti-artist Golovnya. Plyushkin had at least a youth to remember of and, consequently, joy, though not a full, exuberant joy, but joy nonetheless, whereas this poor devil had nothing that could resemble either youth or joy. He was a pensioner of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists, and when he had to complete the program for the second gold medal at an Academy of Arts competition (the subject of the program was Adam and Eve standing over their dead son Abel), he had to have a female model for the painting. In St. Petersburg it was not easy and, the main thing, not cheap to get one. The fellow set his wits to work and repaired to Kikin, a generous patron of artists and the then President of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists, to ask his assistance, that is, money to hire a model. After receiving a hundred-ruble bill, he sewed it up in his straw mattress, while the primary beauty he drew from a doll which painters use for draperies.

He who knows the significance of a gold medal for a young artist will understand the contemptibly petty soul of this niggardly man. Compared with him Plyushkin is a profligate. It was to this moral freak that I introduced my morally beautiful foundling with the note.

The first thing I did was take a skeleton out of the wardrobe, put it in a posture of a lusty drinker, and lightly sketching the general position of the skeleton, asked my pupil to draw the details. Two days later I compared his drawing with the anatomical lithographs of Bassin with great satisfaction, and found the details to be more distinct and accurate. Perhaps I should put the blame for such a conclusion on the magnifying glass through which I regarded my foundling. Whatever the reason, I liked his work.

He continued drawing the skeleton in various postures and, under the patronage of the model Taras, the statue of Midas, who was hanged by Apollo. All this took its course just like the passing winter and the advent of spring. My pupil was becoming noticeably leaner, paler, and more thoughtful.

"What is the matter with you?" I asked him. "Are you feeling unwell?"

"I am all right," he answered sadly.

"What makes you weep then?"

"I'm not weeping, it's nothing." Tears gushed forth from his expressive beautiful eyes.

I could not understand what was happening. I was already beginning to wonder whether it was not the arrow of a vile cupid that had pierced his chaste young heart, when one latent spring morning he informed me that he would be unable to visit me every day, since work would begin on Monday and he would have to paint fences again.

I raised his spirits as much as I could. But I did not breathe a single word about Karl Pavlovich's intentions, the more so, since I myself knew of absolutely nothing on which I could base any hope.

On Sunday I visited his taskmaster, intending to ask if my pupil could be replaced by a common house painter.

"Why not? It's possible," he replied. "The decoration work has not been started yet. But once it begins, you'll have to excuse me. He is a decorator-painter, and you know pretty well what that means in our trade. Do you really think it possible?" he continued. "Will he have the means to find a replacement for himself?"

<sup>31</sup> Plyushkin – character in Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls*, noted for his extraordinary stinginess.

"I will provide you a worker."

"You?" he asked, surprised. "For what joy and gain are you taking the trouble?"

"Just like that," I replied. "Just for nothing. For my personal pleasure."

"A fine pleasure, I'd say! You're throwing your money about for nothing! You must be rolling in money, eh?" And smiling complacently, he continued: "Tell me how much do you charge for a portrait?"

"Depends on the portrait," I replied, guessing in advance his train of thought. "It also depends on who is commissioning it. You, for instance, I'd charge no more than one hundred rubles in silver."

"Oh no, sir, you may charge a hundred anyone you wish, but with me it would be good if I'd chance ten rubles."

"All right, let's do it this way, then," I said, extending him my hand. "Release your decorator for about two months, and you'll have your portrait."

"For two months?" he said, making up his mind. "I can't agree for two – it's too much. A month will do."

"Well, let it be a month at least. I agree," I said, and we struck a bargain as if we were horse dealers.

"So when shall we start?" he asked me.

"Could as well be tomorrow," I said, putting on my hat.

"Where are you going? What about drinking a bumper to seal the bargain?"

"No, thank you. When we're through, we can do it. Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

What is a swift month of freedom within many hard, long years of bondage? It's like one seed in a sack of poppy seeds. I admired him during that happy month. His expressive young face beamed with such bright joy and happiness that I, forgive me, God, envied him. His poor but neat and clean clothes seemed dandyish to me, and even his frieze greatcoat seemed like it had been made of wool, and of the finest Riga wool for that matter. During dinners at Madame Jurgens' nobody shot sidelong glances either at me or at him. So I was not the only one to note such a happy transformation.

During one such happy day, as the two of us were walking to Madame Jurgens', we met Karl Pavlovich on the Bolshoi Prospekt.

"Where are you going?" he asked us.

"To Madame Jurgens'," I replied.

"I'm going with you. For some reason I'm hungry all of a sudden," he said and turned into the Third Line with us.

Karl the Great liked to visit the talkative Madame Jurgens once in a while. He liked not so much the obliging Madame Jurgens nor her servant Olympiada who had been the late Petrovsky's<sup>32</sup> model for Hagar. As a true artist, he liked our motley company. There he could see a poor toiler, a Senate clerk dressed in his one and only and far from brand-new uniform, and a skinny, pale university student treating himself to Madame Jurgens' meals for the money he had received from a rich, fast-living Bursch for copying Fischer's<sup>33</sup> lectures.

There he could see many and many a thing he could not have seen at the Dumet and St. George restaurants. But whenever he came, the attentive Madame Jurgens asked him to proceed to a table laid in a special room with some unusual, quickly prepared food that he, as a true

<sup>32</sup> Piotr Petrovsky (1813-1842) – Russian artist, Brüllow's student.

<sup>33</sup> Adam Fischer (1799-1861) – professor of philosophy at St.Petersbrug University.



socialist, always declined to accept. But this time he did not refuse and asked for a table to be laid in the special room for three persons, and sent Olympiada to Vochtz for a bottle of Jackson's.

The feet of Madame Jurgens did not touch the ground; she went into such a fuss and bustle she nearly pulled off her new wig along with the cap, when she remembered that the cap should have been changed for such a dear guest. For her he was really a dear guest. From the day he visited her the first time, paying guests started to multiply day after day. And what paying guests they were! Not some riff-raff artists or students or Senate clerks with no more than twenty kopecks to their name, but people who ordered a bottle of mead or some specially prepared beefsteak. It was quite to be expected. If they paid twenty-five kopecks just to have a look at a lady from Amsterdam, so why should they not pay thirty kopecks to have a look at Brüllow at close quarters? Madame Jurgens understood this quite well and exploited it as much as possible.

My pupil sat at the table without uttering a word; silently and with a deepening pallor he drank a glass of Jackson's. Silently he shook the hand of Karl the Great, and silently did he arrive at home, and there, without undressing, he fell on the floor and wept for the rest of the day and throughout the entire night.

One more week of freedom was left, but the next day after the dinner I described, he rolled up his drawings and, without saying a word to me, went out of the door. I believed that he went to the Seventh Line as usual, and so did not ask him where he was going. When dinnertime came, he did not turn up, and in the evening, he still had not returned. A day later I went to his taskmaster, but he was not there either. I got afraid, not knowing what to think. Toward the evening of the third day he showed up paler than usual and disheveled.

"Where have you been?" I asked. "What's the matter with you? Are you sick? Are you unwell?"

"I'm unwell," he replied in a barely distinguishable way.

I sent the janitor over to a private physician, Zhidovtsev<sup>34</sup>, and took to undressing and putting my pupil to bed. He obeyed me like a meek child. Zhidovtsev felt his pulse and suggested I have the young man sent to a hospital.

"The reason why," he said, "is because it is dangerous to treat fever at home with your means."

I complied, and that same evening I took my poor pupil to the St. Mary Magdalene Hospital by Tuchkov Bridge. The influence of Zhidovtsev as a private physician made it possible to have my patient accepted without any legal formalities. The following day I informed his taskmaster what had happened, and the formalities were performed with all the attendant ritual.

I visited him several times every day, and every time I left the hospital, I felt ever sadder. I had become so accustomed and used to him that I did not know what to do with myself without him. I would walk to the Petersburg side, turn into the Petrovsky Park (at that time it was only just being laid out), arrive at the Sobolevsky dachas, and go back to the hospital again, but he was still burning with fever. I would ask the nurse:

"Has he come round yet?"

"No, sir."

"Is he delirious?"

"He keeps repeating one and the same thing: red and red!"

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing else, sir."

<sup>34</sup> Alexei Zhidovtsev – former serf, graduate of the Medicosurgical Academy (1839).

I would go out into the street again, pass Tuchkov Bridge, walk to the Sobolevsky dachas, and return to the hospital. Eight days passed in this manner; on the ninth day he regained consciousness, and when I came up to him, he gave me a keen, expressive and warmhearted look such as I will never forget. He wanted to tell me something, but could not; he tried to stretch out his hand to me, tears being the only thing that followed his efforts. I left the ward.

In the corridor I met the doctor on duty, who told me that the danger had passed and the vigor of youth had triumphed. Reassured by the kindly doctor, I went to my quarters. I lit a cigar, it burned badly, so I threw it away. I went out into the boulevard. Still, something was amiss, something was lacking to complete my happiness. I walked to the Academy and dropped in on Karl Pavlovich – he was not at home. I went out onto the quay, and there he stood by a huge sphinx, watching a yawl with a merry group of passengers skim down the ice-clear river, leaving a long silvery streak in her wake.

"Have you been at my studio?" he asked, without greeting me.

"I wasn't," I replied.

"Let us go."

We went silently to his studio. There we met Lipin. He had brought a palette with fresh paints, and having made himself comfortable in an easy chair, was admiring the still damp underpainting of the portrait of Vasiliy Andreyevich Zhukovsky<sup>35</sup>. On our entry, the poor Lipin jumped to his feet and was thrown into confusion like a schoolboy who had been caught red-handed.

"Put away the palette. I won't work today," Karl Pavlovich said to Lipin. He sat down on the easy chair. For half an hour at least he looked at his work and, turning to me, said: "The expression of his eyes must be softer. His verse is soft and sweet, after all. Isn't that so?" Without giving me a chance to answer he continued: "Do you know the purpose of this portrait?"

"I don't," I replied.

Another ten minutes of silence followed. Then he got to his feet, took his hat, and said:

"Let us go out into the street, and I will tell you the purpose of that portrait." When we were on the street, he said: "I changed my mind. Such things cannot be spoken about beforehand. Besides, I am pretty sure that you are not curious," he added as a joke.

"If you want it that way, let it remain mystery to me," I said.

"It will be so only till the next sitting. Well, how is your protégé getting along? Does he feel any better?"

"He is recovering."

"Which means that the danger is over?"

"At least that is what the doctor tells me."

"Goodbye," he said, extending his hand. "I will drop in on Halberg<sup>36</sup>. I doubt whether the poor chap will get on his feet," he added sadly, and we parted.

That mysterious portrait extraordinarily intrigued me. Its purpose could perhaps be guessed, but however much I wanted to prove my guess correct, I nonetheless had enough courage not to hint to Karl the Great about it. The truth is, I paid a call on Zhukovsky one fine morning under the pretext of admiring the austere outlines of Cornelius and Peter Hesse<sup>37</sup>, while actually I

<sup>35</sup> Brüllow painted Zhukovsky's portrait throughout 1837 and 1838.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Halberg (1787-1839) – Professor of the Academy of Fine Arts, sculptor, Brüllow's friend.

<sup>37</sup> Peter von Cornelius (1783-1867) – German painter, student of the Düsseldorf Academy; in 1812 joined the Nazarenes, a group of German painters in Rome seeking to restore Christian art in its medieval purity.

Peter von Hess (1792-1871) – painter of battle-pieces, one of the founders of the Munich genre painting.

<sup>38</sup> Franz Karl Leon von Klenze (1784-1864) – German architect, representative of classicism, worked mainly in

wanted to find out something about that mysterious portrait. I failed, however.

Klenze<sup>38</sup>, Walhalla, Pinakothek, and Munich generally dominated the conversation the entire morning, so that even Diisseldorf had not been mentioned by a single word, while the portrait simply did not exist in this world at all.

The enthusiastic praise of German art by the unforgettable Vasiliy Andreyevich was interrupted by the appearance of Count Veliegorsky.

"Here is the cause and reason of your current troubles," Vasiliy Andreyevich said to the count, pointing at me. The count shook my hand with feeling. I had already framed a question in my mind, when the servant entered and announced the name of some notable. I found my unasked question inconvenient, took my leave, and was let out in the cold, as it were.

In the meantime, the health of the young man improved. My pupil was gaining in spirits and strength not by the day but by the hour, like the famous knight in the fairy tale. Within a week or so, after two weeks of fever, he was on his feet, although he had to hold on to his bed. Still, he looked so sad and unhappy that, disregarding the doctor's instructions not to engage the patient in any conversations impeding his recuperation, I asked him one day:

"You are getting better and should be more cheerful, so what makes you sad?"

"I'm not sad, I'm happy, but I don't know what I want... I'd like to read."

I asked the doctor whether I could give the patient something to read.

"Don't, the more so if it's serious reading."

"What am I to do then? I cannot be his sick-nurse, and there is nothing else I can help him with."

During these agitating reflections there surfaced in my mind the Russian rendition of Albrecht Dürer's *On Perspective*<sup>39</sup>, which I had once studied assiduously and then given up, without having understood it. And strange enough, I recalled the muddle of Albrecht Dürer, but had completely forgotten about the clear and wonderful course on linear perspective by our Professor Vorobyov<sup>40</sup>. The drawings for the course on perspective were in my portfolio (in disarray, to tell the truth). I collected them and, consulting the doctor at first, gave them to my pupil along with compasses and a triangle; then and there I gave him the first lesson in linear perspective. I did not have to explain the second and third lesson to him: he was just as quick in recuperating as in grasping this mathematical science, without knowing, incidentally, the four rules of arithmetic. The lessons in perspective ended. I asked the senior doctor to discharge my patient from hospital, but he gave me an explanation on hygiene to the effect that for a complete recovery the patient had still to be under medical supervision for a month at least. I agreed reluctantly.

Throughout this time I frequently met with Karl Pavlovich, and saw Vasiliy Andreyevich's portrait about two or three times after the second sitting. During the conversations with Karl Pavlovich I caught unintentional hints about some secret, but without knowing why, I kept myself aloof from his candor. I seemed to be afraid of something, although unwittingly I had almost guessed the secret.

The mystery was soon dispelled. On April 22, 1838, in the morning, I received a note by Zhukovsky written in his own hand, with the following message:

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Munich. The new building of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg was built to his design (1839-1852). Also built to his design were the Walhalla at Regensburg (1830-1842) and the Pinakothek art gallery in Munich (1826-1836).

<sup>39</sup> Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) – German painter and engraver.

<sup>40</sup> Maxim Vorobyov (1787-1855) – Merited Professor of the Academy of Fine Arts, at which he taught a course in perspective since 1815.

Dear Sir,

Come tomorrow to Karl Pavlovich at eleven o'clock and wait for me, wait for me by all means, however late I shall be.

V. Zhukovsky.

P. S. Bring him along with you.

I watered this divine note with my tears and, not trusting it to my pocket, clenched it in my fist and ran off to the hospital. The doorkeeper, though he had instructions to let me in at any time of the day, did not let me in this time, saying: "It's too early, sir. The patients are still asleep." This made me cool down a bit. I unclenched my fist, smoothed out the note, read it almost syllable by syllable, folded it neatly, put it into my pocket, and returned to my quarters at a staid gait, thanking at heart the doorkeeper for stopping me.

Long, very long ago, when I was still a student at a parish school, I read stealthily from the teacher Ivan Kotliarevsky's<sup>42</sup> famous imitation of *The Aeneid*. Two of its lines

*If something in your hands  
you do not have,  
So do not say it's yours already. . .*

had deeply imprinted on my memory and I frequently applied them in practice. Precisely these two lines surfaced in my mind when I was returning to my quarters. Indeed, did I know for sure whether this blessed note was related to his affair? I did not know, only sensed it, and sensing something is more often than not deceptive. And what if it would have deceived me this time as well? What horrible evil I would have committed and – just to think of it – to whom? To the person I loved most of all. I got frightened at the very thought.

Throughout that interminably long day I walked up to Karl Pavlovich's door about twenty times and backed away with some inexplicable fear. What I was afraid of I did not know myself. On the twenty-first attempt I plucked up enough courage to ring the bell, and Lukyan, looking out of the window, said: "He is not at home." It took a load off my shoulders, as if I had performed a tremendous feat and regained my breath at long last.

I walked quickly out of the Academy onto the Third Line, when I saw Karl Pavlovich coming my way. I was at a complete loss and was about to run from him, but he stopped me with a question:

"Did you get Zhukovsky's note?"

"I did," I muttered.

"See me tomorrow at eleven o'clock. Oh yes . . . if he can, ask him to come over, too," he added, retreating. Well, thought I, there was not the slightest doubt now, but still

*If something in your hands  
you do not have,  
So do not say it's yours already. . .*

Several minutes passed and this wise maxim fled from my rather unpractical mind. I had an unconquerable urge to bring him to Karl Pavlovich the very next day. But would the doctor

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<sup>41</sup> Inaccurately quoted lines from a highly distinctive burlesque of Virgil's *Aeneid* by Ivan Kotliarevsky (1769-1833), one of the first Ukrainian writers to write in the Ukrainian language; the burlesque portrays the customs and mores in 18th-century Ukraine.

permit it? That was the question. To solve it, I went to the doctor's home and told him the reason for my unexpected call. He told me a number of cases of mental derangement caused by incidents of sudden joy or grief. "It is the more relevant to bear this in mind, since your protégé has not fully recovered from the fever," he concluded. Such an argument could not be countered by anything, so I, thanking the doctor for his kind advice, took my leave. I beat the pavement for a long time; I wanted to go to old Venetsianov to hear him say something definite, but it was already past midnight, he was no bachelor like us – so such a visit was out of the question. Why not go to the Troitsky Bridge and watch the sunrise, I thought. The Troitsky Bridge was, however, a long way off and I was beginning to feel tired. Should I not just limit myself to sitting serenely by these huge sphinxes? It would be the Neva just the same. The same, but not the same. After some thought I made for the sphinxes. Sitting down on the granite bench and leaning against a bronze griffin, I admired for a long time the quietly flowing beauty Neva.

At sunrise the Academy's doorkeeper came to the Neva for water and roused me with what sounded like an admonition:

"Good thing there are no people around, because otherwise you'd be taken for a reveler."

Rewarding the doorkeeper with ten kopecks for his services, I went to my quarters and fell asleep like a real master of the situation, as it were.

At eleven o'clock, on the hour, I was at Karl Pavlovich's home. Lukyan opened the door, and said: "He asked you to wait." In the studio my eye caught Zampieri's famous painting *St. John the Divine*, which I knew from hearsay and from Müller's print. Here was another puzzle! Was the painting the reason Vasiliy Andreyevich had written me the note? Why did he write "Bring him along with you" then? I took the note out of my pocket, reread the post scriptum several times, calmed down a bit, and came closer to the painting, but cursed doubts prevented me from beholding this supremely refined work of art with full delight. Beset with doubts, I did not notice Karl Pavlovich entering the studio in the company of Count Veliegorsky and Zhukovsky. I backed away from the painting with a bow and walked over to the portrait of Zhukovsky. They admired the great work of the poor martyr Zampieri at length, while I was dying from expectation. At long last Zhukovsky produced a formally folded paper from his pocket, and handing it to me, said:

"Pass it on to your pupil."

I unfolded the paper. It was a leave of manumission certified by Count Veliegorsky, Zhukovsky and Brüllow.

I piously crossed myself and kissed these famous signatures three times.

Thanking the great and philanthropic trio in whatever way I could, I took leave of them awkwardly, and rushed away straight to Venetsianov.

The old man met me with a joyous question:

"What's new?"

I took the treasured document out of my pocket, without saying a word, and handed it to him.

"I know, I know," he said, returning me the paper.

"But I do not know anything. For God's sake, tell me how it all happened?"

"Thank God that it did happen, but we will have dinner first, and then I will get down to the story. It is a long and, the main thing, a remarkable story."

He raised his voice and read a line from Zhukovsky's translation<sup>42</sup>:

*Children, the oat pap is on the table,*

<sup>42</sup> First lines from *Oat Pap* by the German poet Johann Peter Hebel (1760-1826).

*so offer your prayer.*

"We are doing it, daddy," came a female voice, as Venetsianov's daughters, accompanied by Mokritsky, came out of the drawing room; we sat at the table. Dinner was noisier and merrier than usual. The old man became animated and told the story of Zhukovsky's portrait. He hardly mentioned his personal part in this noble event, only adding in conclusion:

"I was no more than a simple broker in this magnanimous act."

This is how it evolved.

Karl Brüllow painted a portrait of Zhukovsky; the latter and Count Veliegorsky offered it to the august family for 2,500 rubles in cash, for which money my pupil was freed from serfdom. Venetsianov, as he himself had put it, played the part of a diligent and noble broker in this kind deed.

What was I to do now? When and how was I to inform my pupil of this happiness? Venetsianov repeated the same thing the doctor had said, and I was absolutely convinced in the necessity of precaution. But I would not be able to help myself breaking the news! Should I terminate my visits for a time? I could not, because he would think I had fallen ill as well or forsaken him, and it would make him suffer. After much thought I summoned all my will power and went to the St. Mary Magdalene Hospital. I stood the test of the first visit with flying colors; during the second and third visits I started preparing him. I asked the doctor when the patient could be discharged from hospital. He advised caution, and again I was in the tormenting grip of impatience.

One morning I was visited by his former employer who, without beating around the bush, began to reproach me for having plundered him in the most barbaric way and stolen his best worker, which incurred losses running into thousands of rubles. For a long time I could not understand what he was talking about. In what manner had I landed in the category of plunderers? In the end, he told me that the day before he had been summoned by my protégé's master who informed him on the entire course of events, and demanded that the contract be annulled. In the evening he had been at the hospital and learned that the young man did not know anything about the whole affair. My precaution had been all for naught, I thought.

"So what do you want from me now?" I asked him.

"Nothing, I was just curious whether it's true or not?"

"It's true," I replied, and we parted.

I was satisfied at such a turn of events. My pupil was now prepared to accept the news more calmly than before.

"Is it true? Can I believe in what I heard?" he asked on meeting me in the door of his ward.

"But I don't know what you heard."

"My taskmaster told me yesterday that I—" he stopped as if afraid to end the phrase. After a moment's pause he uttered barely audible: ". . . that I am free. . . that you. . ." and he burst into tears.

"Calm down," I told him. "It only looks like the truth." But he did not hear anything and continued to weep.

Several days later he was discharged from hospital and moved to my quarters, a completely happy man.

There is a vast immensity of the beautiful in divine immortal nature, but the triumph and crown of immortal beauty is the face of a man enlivened by happiness. I do not know anything loftier and more beautiful in nature. I had my fill of delight in seeing this beauty once in my

lifetime. For several days he was so happy, so beautiful I could not look at him without tender emotion. He transfused his boundless happiness into my soul.

His raptures were alternated by quiet, smiling happiness. Throughout all these days he tried and failed to work. He would put down his drawing, take the leave of manumission out of his pocket, read it almost syllable by syllable, cross himself, kiss it, and burst out crying.

To distract him from the object of his happiness, I took the document from him on the pretext of having to register it at the Chamber of Civil Affairs, and every day I took him to the Academy Gallery. When his new suit was ready, I dressed him as if I was a nanny, and we went to the gubernial office. After registering the treasured document, I took him to the Stroganov Gallery and showed him the original of Velasquez. And that was the end of our adventures that day.

At about ten o'clock the next day I dressed him again and took him to Karl Pavlovich; like a father giving his beloved son to the care of a teacher, I handed him over to Karl Pavlovich Brüllow.

From that day on he attended classes at the Academy and became a pensioner of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists.

For a long time I had intended leaving our Northern Palmyra for some modest nook in the hospitable provinces. That year such a desirable place appeared at one of the provincial universities, and I did not fail to avail myself of this opportunity. Had anyone offered me the place of a teacher of drawing at a university back at the time I attended the plaster class and dreamed of a fairyland, of a world capital crowned by the dome created by Buonarroti<sup>43</sup>, I would have flung my pencil aside and exclaimed: "Is it worthwhile studying divine art then!" But now, after imagination and common sense reached a balance, when I looked simply at the future and not through a rosy prism, a proverb came unwittingly to my mind: "A sparrow in hand is better than the pigeon in the sky."

I should have left during the winter, but personal affairs, especially those related to what was now not mine but Brüllow's pupil, delayed me in the capital; then there was his illness and lengthy recovery, and, finally, my financial problems. When all that came to an adequate end, and, as I said, I put my protégé under the wing of Karl the Great, I left the capital for a long time, early in May.

On leaving my dear charge, I passed on to him my quarters with the easel, scanty furniture, and all the plaster casts that I could not take along with me as well. I advised him to invite a friend to share the quarters with him until next winter. In winter he would be joined by Sternberg\* who was in Ukraine at that time and with whom I had agreed to meet at the home of a common acquaintance in Priluky District, where I intended to ask that the kindly Vilya settle in my quarters on his return to the capital. That is exactly what happened, to my great joy. I also advised my protégé that he visit Karl Pavlovich, but do it unobtrusively lest he bother him with frequent visits; also, not to shirk classes and read as much as possible. In conclusion, I asked him to write me letters as frequently as he would to his dear father.

Thus leaving him to the protection of Our Lady, I parted with him – alas! forever.

His first letters lacked variety and resembled the detailed and monotonous diary of a schoolboy. They were interesting only for me and nobody else. His subsequent letters began to reveal both smoothness, competence, and, occasionally, substance, as his ninth letter, for

<sup>43</sup> Reference to the cupola of the St. Peter's Cathedral built to the design of Michelangelo Buonarroti in Rome, to which the St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts sent its best students for upgrading their skills.

\* Vasilii Sternberg (1818-1845) – Russian artist, perhaps Shevchenko's best friend of that time.

instance:

Today at ten o'clock in the morning we wound the canvas with *The Crucifixion* on a roller and had it taken by the models to the Lutheran Sts. Peter and Paul's Church. Karl Pavlovich entrusted me with accompanying it right to the church. Fifteen minutes later he himself arrived, willed the canvas to be stretched on the frame again and put in place. Since it had not been varnished yet, it did not show anything but a dark mat spot from the distance. After the midday meal Mikhailov<sup>44</sup> and I went and varnished it. Shortly after Karl Pavlovich arrived; at first he sat down in the front pew, and after staying there for a while went to the very last pew. We also came up to him and sat at his side. He sat there silently for a long time, saying occasionally: "Vandal! There isn't a single ray of light falling on the sanctuary. What do they need that painting for? Now if it be this way!" he said, turning to us and pointing at the arch dividing the church. "If *The Crucifixion of Christ* were to be painted on the entire length of this arch, it would have been a painting worthy of the Son of Man."

Oh, if only I could convey to you at least a hundredth, a thousandth part of what I heard from him then! But you yourself know how he speaks. It is impossible to commit his words to paper – they turn to stone.

Right then and there he created this colossal painting, with all the minutest details, in his imagination and put it in place. And what a painting it was! Nicholas Poussin's *Crucifixion* is no more than an artifact of provincial craftsmanship from Suzdal in comparison, and Martin is nothing to talk about.

He kept indulging in these fantasies, while I listened with reverence; then he put on his hat and left the church, Mikhailov and I following him. Walking past the statues of the Apostles Peter and Paul, he said: "Dummies in wet rags! Just to think of it – they are replicas from Thorvaldsen!" On our way past the store of Dazziaro, he mingled with the crowd of gapers and stopped at the window hung with colored French lithographs. My God, thought I, looking at him. And this is the very same genius who just recently had soared so high in the realm of the fine arts and now was admiring the sickly sweet beauties of Grevedon!<sup>45</sup> Incomprehensible! But, incidentally, it is true.

Today I did not attend classes for the first time, because Karl Pavlovich did not let me; he sat Mikhailov and me at a checkers board for the two of us to play against him, and lost to us a ride in his carriage for three hours. We went on a ride to the islands, while he stayed at home, waiting us for supper.

P. S. I do not remember whether I wrote you in my last letter that during my third quarterly examination in September I was transferred to the nature class as a top student for my *Warrior*. Had it not been for you, my unforgettable friend, I would not have been advanced to the nature class even after a year. I began attending Professor Buyalsky's<sup>46</sup> lectures on anatomy. He is now reading on the skeleton. In this case, too, you are the reason why I know the skeleton by heart. In everything and everywhere, you are my only, my unforgettable benefactor. Farewell.

*Devoted to you with all my being. Yours, N.N.*

<sup>44</sup> Grigoriy Mikhailov (1814-1867) – Russian artist, Brullov's student, Shevchenko's Academy friend.

<sup>45</sup> Pier Louis Grevedon (1776-1860) – French painter and lithographer, lived in Russia from 1804 to 1812.

<sup>46</sup> Ilya Buyalsky (1789-1866) – professor of the Medicosurgical Academy, at which he read a course in anatomy attended by Shevchenko since January 1841.



The rest of the story I intend telling by means of his own letters. It will be the more interesting, since in them he frequently describes the pursuits and almost day-to-day domestic life of Karl Pavlovich, whose favorite pupil and comrade he was. For the future biographer of Brüllow I will eventually publish all the letters, but now I will offer only those that are directly related to his studies and development in the field of the fine arts and the evolution of his inner highly moral life.

October is already coming to an end, but there is still no trace of Sternberg. I do not know what to do with the quarters. It is no burden for me, and I share the rent with Mikhailov. I stay almost uninterruptedly at Karl Pavlovich's place, only occasionally returning to my quarters for the night and sometimes staying the night at his home. As for Mikhailov, he does not come home for the night at all. God knows where and how he lives. I see him only at Karl Pavlovich's or occasionally during classes. He is a very original person and kind at heart. Karl Pavlovich suggests I move over to his home for good, but I am ashamed and, I am afraid to tell you, it seems to me that I feel more free having quarters of my own, and secondly, I'd terribly like to live together with Sternberg for several months at least, primarily because you had advised so. You would not give me bad advice.

Karl Pavlovich is working industriously on a copy from Domenichino's painting *St. John the Divine*. The copy was commissioned by the Academy of Arts. While he works, I read. He has a large library, but it is absolutely without order; several times we tried to impart a semblance of order to it, but it all ended in failure. However, there is no lack of things to read. Karl Pavlovich promised Smirdin<sup>47</sup> to make a drawing for his *One Hundred Litterateurs*, for which he has Smirdin's entire library at his service. I read almost all the novels by Walter Scott and am now reading Michaud's<sup>48</sup> *History of the Crusades*. I like it much more than the novels, and Karl Pavlovich says the same. I made a sketch of Peter the Hermit leading a crowd of crusaders through a German town, abiding in my drawing by the manner and costumes of Retzsch<sup>50</sup>. I showed it to Karl Pavlovich; he strictly forbade me to take subjects from anything but the Bible and ancient Greek and Roman history. "Everything in it is simplicity and finesse," he said. "But in medieval history, there is immorality and ugliness." So now I have no other books but the Bible at my home. *The Travels of Anacharsis* and Gillies' *History of Greece* I am reading for Karl Pavlovich at his home, and he always listens with equal pleasure.

Oh, if only you could see with what attention, with what deep-rooted love he is finishing his copy! I simply revere him, and it cannot be otherwise. But still what an enchanting, magical effect of the original! Either it is no more than my prejudice, or time has so charmingly shaded off those colors, or it is Domenichino . . . But no, that is a sinful thought. Domenichino could never be superior to our divine Karl Pavlovich. At times I want the original to be taken away as fast as possible.

Once during supper the conversation revolved around copies, and he said that neither in painting nor in sculpture does he admit the existence of true copies, that is, recreations. In verbal poetry he knows but one and only one imitation – that is Zhukovsky's rendition of *The Prisoner*

<sup>47</sup> Alexandr Smirdin (1795-1857) – St.Petersburg publisher and bibliographer; the referred to three-volume collection also included Shevchenko's illustration (*A Catholic Monk*, an engraving after his drawing).

<sup>48</sup> Josef François Michaud (1767-1839) – French historian, author of the *History of the Crusades* in a four-volume Russian translation of 1841.

<sup>50</sup> Moritz Friedrich August Retzsch (1779-1857) – German painter and etcher; author of paintings on biblical themes, portraits, and illustrations to the works by Goethe, Schiller and Shakespeare.

of *Chillon*<sup>51</sup>, which he recited by heart on the spur of the moment. How marvelously he recites poetry. Really and truly, far better than Bryansky and Karatygin<sup>52</sup>.

About Karatygin, by the way. The other day we went to the Mikhailovsky Theater, which staged *Thirty Years, or the Life of a Gambler*<sup>53</sup> – a brackishly briny drama, as he put it. Between the second and the third acts he went backstage and dressed up Karatygin for the part of the beggar. The audience went wild, not knowing why. What a lot a costume means for a good actor.

Taglioni has already arrived in St. Petersburg and will soon sally forth in her magic flights. He, however, does not like her overmuch. Oh, if Sternberg would arrive sooner. Without having seen him, I have come to like him. Karl Pavlovich is too enormous for me, and for all his goodness and kindness, it occasionally seems to me that I am alone. Mikhailov is a wonderful and noble comrade, but he is not keen on anything and no beauty seems to fascinate him, or it might be that I do not understand him.

*Goodbye, my unforgettable benefactor.*

I am filled with delight! Sternberg whom I had been expecting so long and impatiently has arrived at last. And how unexpectedly! I got afraid and could not believe my eyes for a long time, taking him for something like an apparition. At that time I was working on the composition for the sketch *Ezekiel on a Field Strewn with Bones*. It was around two o'clock in the morning. Suddenly the door opened – I was engrossed in the sketch and had forgotten to lock the door – and there appeared a human figure dressed in a fur coat and warm cap. Thrown into fright at first, I did not know how I uttered:

“Sternberg!”

“Sternberg,” he replied, and without giving him a chance to take his coat off, I started kissing him and he reciprocated.

After admiring each other at length, he remembered at last that the cabman was waiting for him outdoors; he went to the cabman, while I made off to the janitor to ask his help in taking in Sternberg's luggage. When all this was done, we had a chance to draw breath. It was strange, but it seemed to me that I had met an old acquaintance or, still better, was seeing you before me. While I plied him with questions and he told me where and how he met you, what you had been talking about, and how you parted, the night had passed. We realized it was dawn, when we saw the candlestick casting a bright-blue shadow.

“Well, I think we should have some tea now,” he said.

“I agree,” I said, and we made for the Golden Anchor.

After tea I put him to bed, and then went to Karl Pavlovich to share my joy with him, but he was still sleeping. Since I had nothing to do, I walked along the quay, and no sooner had I made several steps than I met Mikhailov, who must also have stayed up all night; he was walking with a gentleman in spectacles.

“Lev Alexandrovich Elkan<sup>54</sup>,” Mikhailov said, introducing the gentleman in spectacles to me.

I told him my name, and we shook hands. Then I informed Mikhailov of Sternberg's arrival, and the gentleman in spectacles was glad as if at the arrival of a long expected friend.

“Where is he then?” Mikhailov asked.

<sup>51</sup> Reference to the poem by the English poet George Gordon Byron (1788-1824)

<sup>52</sup> Yakov Bryansky (1790-1853) and Vasilii Karatygin (1802-1853) – Russian actors.

<sup>53</sup> Play by Victor Ducange (1783-1833) – French writer and commentator on current affairs, won wide popularity for his melodramas.

<sup>54</sup> Alexandr Elkan (1802-1868) – Russian journalist, theatrical critic and feuilletonist. Shevchenko calls him erroneously Lvov.

"At our quarters," I replied.

"Sleeping?"

"Yes."

"Well, let's go to Kapernaum then; they're not sleeping there, I suppose," Mikhailov said. The gentleman in the spectacles gave a nod of agreement, and they went off arm in arm, with me following. Walking past Karl Pavlovich's house, I saw Lukyan's head in the window, from which I concluded that the maestro was up. I took leave of Mikhailov and Elkan and went to him. In the corridor I met him carrying a palette with clean brushes, greeted him and retraced my steps. Now I was in no condition to read aloud for him, let alone to myself. Walking for some time along the quay, I returned to my quarters. Sternberg was still asleep; I silently sat down on a chair opposite his bed and admired his childishly virginal face. Then I picked up a pencil and paper and took to drawing your and, consequently, my sleeping friend. His likeness and expression came out fairly well for a sketch, but no sooner had I outlined his entire figure and marked the folds on the blanket than Sternberg awoke and caught me red-handed. I got confused, he noticed it and burst into the heartiest laughter.

"Show me what you have done," he said, getting up.

I showed him the sketch; he laughed again and praised my sketch to the skies.

"I will repay you in kind some day," he said, and laughed. Jumping out of the bed, he washed himself, and after having unpacked his suitcase, he dressed. Out of the suitcase, from under his clothes, he produced a portfolio, and handing it to me, said: "Here is everything I did during the past summer in Ukraine, apart from several pictures in oils and water colors. Have a look if time permits, while I have to pay some calls. Goodbye," he said, extending me his hand. "I don't know what's at the theater, I have missed it terribly. Let's go to the theater together."

"With great pleasure," I said. "But please drop in to nature class for me.

"All right, I will," he said, over the threshold already.

Had not Lukyan come for me from Karl Pavlovich, dinner would have been the last thing on my mind and I was disappointed having left Sternberg's portfolio uninspected for the sake of Lukyan's roast beef. During dinner I told Karl Pavlovich of my happiness, and he wished to see him. I told him that we had agreed to meet each other at the theater. He desired to join us if something worthwhile was staged. Fortunately, *The Enchanted House*<sup>55</sup> was on at the Alexandrinsky Theater that day. When the lesson was over, Karl Pavlovich came into the classroom, took Sternberg and me, sat us in his carriage and we drove off to see Louis XI. Thus ended the first day.

The following day, in the morning, Sternberg took his thick portfolio and we went to Karl Pavlovich's place. He was delighted with your monotonously diverse country, as he put it, as well as with your pensive countrymen, whom Sternberg had recreated so remarkably true to life.

What a multitude of drawings, and how beautiful all of them were. On a little scrap of gray wrapping paper a horizontal line was drawn, with a windmill and a pair of oxen standing near a wagon loaded with sacks in the foreground. All of this had not been drawn but only suggested – yet what a beauty! I could not tear my eyes away. Or there was another picture, in which a white straw-thatched cottage standing in the shade of a branchy willow tree right by the water's edge was reflected in the water as in a mirror. By the cottage stood an old granny, and a flock of ducks was swimming on the pond. That's all there was in the picture, but how complete and lifelike it

<sup>55</sup> Drama by the German playwright and poet Josef von Auffenberg (1798-1857), a stage adaptation of Balzac's *Maître Cornélius* translated into Russian by P.Obodovsky (1805-1857). Karatygin performed the role of Louis XI in this drama.

was!

Sternberg's portfolio was full of such pictures or, it would be still better to say, stirring essays. The remarkable, splendid Sternberg! No wonder Karl Pavlovich kissed him.

Unwittingly I recalled the Chernetsov brothers<sup>56</sup> who had recently returned from a voyage down the Volga and brought Karl Pavlovich their drawings: a huge heap of Whatman paper with pen drawings, done with Germanic precision. Karl Pavlovich looked at several drawings, and closing the portfolio, said (understandably, not in the presence of the Chernetsov brothers): "I can't hope seeing here not the Mother Volga, but a decent big puddle." In a sketch by Sternberg, however, he sees the whole of Ukraine. He liked your country and the doleful faces of your countrymen so much that today during dinner he built himself a croft on the bank of the Dnieper near Kiev in his imagination, with adjoining lands and the most charming scenery. There is one thing, however, which he is afraid of and cannot remove from his mind – that is the landowners or, as he calls them, the feudal dog lovers.

He is a complete child, a child in all his charm.

Today, too, we ended up going to a theater; they staged Schiller's *The Robbers*. Operas almost do not exist, and rarely is there *Robert* or *Fenella*<sup>57</sup> staged. Ballet, or more exactly, Taglioni, has destroyed everything.

*Goodbye, my unforgettable benefactor.*

For over a month now I have been living together with the incomparable Sternberg and I'd wish that God grant real brothers to live as we do. What a kind, meek creature he is. A genuine artist. Everything smiles on him just as he smiles on everything. His is a happy, enviable nature! Karl Pavlovich is very fond of him. And knowing him, how can you not like him?

This is how we spend the days and evenings: in the morning, I leave for painting classes at nine o'clock. (I am already doing sketches in oils, and during the past examination I was the third best in class). Sternberg stays at home and makes watercolors or little oil paintings from his sketches. At eleven o'clock I either drop in on Karl Pavlovich or arrive at home and have breakfast with Sternberg on what God has sent us. Then it is back to classes where I stay until three o'clock, when we go to Madame Jurgens' for dinner. Occasionally Karl Pavlovich joins us, because I see him with Sternberg almost every day and frequently he refuses a sumptuous aristocratic dinner in favor of a scanty democratic soup. He is a truly unusual person!

After dinner I leave for classes. At seven o'clock Sternberg arrives at the classes and we go to the theater, or after a stroll down the quay, we return home and I read something aloud, while he works, or the other way round. Recently we read Walter Scott's *Woodstock*. I was very interested in the scene in which Charles II of the Stuarts, who is hiding under a false name in the castle of the old Baronet Lee, reveals himself to the baronet's daughter Julia Lee as the King of England and offers her the honorable place of a concubine at his court. A truly regal gratitude for hospitality! I made a sketch and showed it to Karl Pavlovich. He praised my choice and the sketch itself and willed that I study Paul Delaroche<sup>58</sup>.

Sternberg introduced me to the Schmidt family recently. He is some distant relative of his, a wonderful man, while his family is simply God's grace. We visit them frequently in the evening,

<sup>56</sup> Grigoriy Chernetsov (1801-1865) and Nikanov Chernetsov (1804-1879) whose Volga landscapes were exhibited at the Academy in 1839.

<sup>57</sup> Operas by the German composer Giacomo (Jakob Liebman Meyer Beer) Meyerbeer (1791-1864) and the French composer Daniel François Esprit Auber (1782-1871) respectively.

<sup>58</sup> Paul (Hippolyte) Delaroche (1797-1856) – French artist who specialized in romantic historical subjects.

and have dinner with them on Sundays. A wonderful family. Whenever I leave them for home I feel purer and kinder. I do not know how to thank Sternberg for this acquaintance.

He also introduced me to the family of a Ukrainian aristocrat, the same one he and you met during last summer in Ukraine. I go there rarely, and if I do, it is, in fact, only for Sternberg's sake. I dislike that condescending tone and coarse flattery of his uncouth guests whom he treats to sumptuous meals and Ukrainian plum brandy. For a long time I could not understand how Sternberg could tolerate such scenes. At long last the reason became clear. Once he returned from the Tarnovskys absolutely not his own self, that is, he was angry. After pacing up and down the room at length, he lay down on his bed, got up, and lay down again; he did that for about three times, after which he calmed down and fell asleep. Presently I heard him utter the name of one of Tarnovsky's nieces in his sleep. I started to realize what the matter was all about. The next day my Vilya was off to the Tarnovskys again and returned late at night, in tears. I pretended not to notice. He dropped on a sofa, covered his face with his hands, and sobbed like a child. He carried on like that for an hour at least. Then he got up, came up to me, embraced me, gave me a kiss, and smiled bitterly; he sat at my side and told me the story of his love. It was an altogether typical story. He fell in love with Tarnovsky's eldest niece, and although she reciprocated, she preferred some bald physician, Burtsov, in favor of him in the matter of marriage. An absolutely typical story. After this confession he calmed down somewhat and I put him to bed.

I scarcely saw him on the second and third day: he would leave early, return late, and God alone knew where he spent the day. I tried to engage him in conversation, but he barely answered me. I proposed we visit the Schmidts, but he only shook his head in the negative. On Sunday morning I suggested we should go to the conservatory of the Botanical Gardens, and he agreed, though reluctantly, it must be said. The conservatory produced a good effect on him, and he began dreaming of traveling to those magic countries where all these amazing plants are as common as the thistle in our parts.

On leaving the conservatory, I suggested we have dinner at the German tavern on Krestovsky Island, to which he agreed readily. After dinner we listened to the Tyroleans singing, watched people tobogganing down a hill, and went by cab straight to the Schmidts. The Schmidts were dining out at the home of Fitztum (the inspector of the University) that day and stayed there for the evening. When we arrived there, we were met with questions and exclamations: Where had we been all this time? At the Schmidts' we immensely enjoyed Beethoven's quintet and Mozart's sonata, with the famous Behm<sup>59</sup> performing the solo, and returned to our quarters at one o'clock in the morning. Poor Vilya became thoughtful again. I am not comforting him, and what comfort could I bring him anyway?

On Karl Pavlovich's request I went to the bookstore of Smirdin the next day and, apart from other books, picked up the two issues of *Library for Reading* which contained Dickens' novel *Nicholas Nickleby*. I intend arranging literary soirees at the Schmidts, to which I will invite Sternberg. I did as I had planned. That same day after evening classes we went to the Schmidts, the books under our arms. My idea was received with a great deal of enthusiasm, and after tea the reading commenced. The first evening I read, the second Sternberg, then me again, then he, and thus we continued until the novel was read to the end. It had a wonderful effect on Sternberg. After *Nicholas Nickleby* we read *Kenilworth* in the same manner, then *Fair Maid of Perth* and several other novels by Walter Scott. We frequently sat late past midnight and did not notice how the Christmas holidays had commenced. Sternberg has become his own self, at least he works

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<sup>59</sup> Franz Behm (1788-1846) – noted cellist and virtuoso violin player, professor of the Vienna Conservatoire, performed in St.Petersburg in 1837.

and is less sad than before. With God's help, he'll get over that, too.

Goodbye, my dear father. I do not promise to write to you soon, because the holidays are beginning and thanks to Sternberg I have, apart from the Schmidts, made several other acquaintances which must be maintained. For the holidays I had myself a new costume made and an overcoat of English wool, exactly like the one Sternberg has – the Schmidts don't call us Castor and Pollux<sup>60</sup> for nothing. For spring we intend to have ourselves overcoats of camelot made on order. I have come by some money now. I started painting watercolor portraits, at first as a favor and then for money, but I do not show them to Karl Pavlovich yet – I am afraid to do it. In my work I adhere more to Sokolov, Gau<sup>61</sup> is not to my liking – he is sickly sweet. Also, I am thinking of studying French – that is necessary. One elderly widow offered me her services in this respect, for which I would have to teach her son to draw. It is a reciprocal favor, but I don't like it: firstly, because it's far to go to her home (to Ertelev Lane), and secondly, two hours of fussing with a spoiled child is pretty much for a commission. These two hours can be used to better advantage by painting watercolor portraits and then paying for a tutor. I think you believe it to be better as well. Karl Pavlovich has Gibbon<sup>62</sup> in French, and I cannot look at him indifferently. I do not know whether you have seen his sketch or, still better, small painting *Genseric's Invasion of Rome*<sup>63</sup>. Now it is in his studio. Wonderful, just as wonderful as everything his brush been created. If you have not seen it, I will make a little drawing and send it to you. I will also send you his *Bakhchisarai Fountain*. It was started when you were still around, wasn't it?

Oh yes, I almost forgot! There is an unusual event to be: Karl Pavlovich is getting married, the wedding will be held after the holidays. His fiancée is the daughter of Timm<sup>64</sup>, an honorary citizen of Riga. I have not seen her, but they say that she is an amazing beauty. Occasionally I meet her brother at classes: he is a student of Sauerweid and an extraordinarily beautiful young man.

*After it all happens, I will describe it to you in the minutest details, but for the time being,  
goodbye, my unforgettable benefactor!*

It is two months now since I have written to you. Such a protracted silence is unpardonable. But I seemed to have been waiting until an interesting episode in Karl Pavlovich's life would come to an end. In the last letter I wrote you about a probable marriage. Now I will describe to you in detail how it happened and how it came to naught. On the day of the wedding Karl Pavlovich, dressed in the way he usually did, put on his hat, and walking through the studio, stopped before the copy of Domenichino that he had already completed. He stood there silently for a long time, and then sat in an armchair. Apart from him and me, there was nobody else in the studio. The silence hung for another several minutes. Then, turning to me, he said:

"Zampieri seems to be telling me, 'Don't get married, it'll be the ruin of you.'"

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<sup>60</sup> Castor and Pollux (also called Dioscuri) – in antique mythology Jupiter's twins sons symbolizing strong friendship.

<sup>61</sup> Russian portraitists Piotr Sokolov (1791-1848) and Vladimir Gau (1816-1895).

<sup>62</sup> Edward Gibbon (1776-1788) – English historian, author of the six-volume *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

<sup>63</sup> Genseric (Gensericus, Geiserich, Genseric) – prince of the Germanic tribe of Vandals; took Rome in July 455 A.D., delivering it up to pillage and violence for 14 days.

<sup>64</sup> Emilia Timm (1821-1877), daughter of a Riga burgomaster and sister of Vasiliy Timm (1820-1877) who studied with Shevchenko at the Academy of Fine Arts. She was a talented pianist, took lessons from Frederic Chopin and performed with Franz Liszt.

I was at a loss for words, while he took his hat and went to his fiancée. He did not return to his home that day. There were no preparations for the holiday whatsoever. Lukyan did not even make the roast beef that day. In a word, there was nothing resembling a holiday. In class I learned that he would be wed at eight o'clock in the evening at the Lutheran Church of St. Anne at Kirochnaya. After classes Sternberg and I took a cab and went there. The church was already flooded with light, and Karl Pavlovich together with Sauerweid and the fiancée's brother were inside. On seeing us, he came up, extended us his hand, and said, "I am getting married." At that instant the fiancée entered the church, and he went to meet her. In my lifetime I have not and will not ever see such a beauty. During the ritual, Karl Pavlovich stood there deep in thought. He did not glance at his beautiful bride a single time. The ritual was over, we congratulated the happy husband and wife, saw them to the carriage, and dropped in on Kley's on the way, where we had supper and drank a bottle of Clicquot to the health of the newlyweds. All this occurred on January 8, 1839. At Karl Pavlovich's home the wedding also ended with a bottle of Clicquot. There were no other celebrations that day or during the subsequent days.

A week after this event I met him in the corridor, across from Count Tolstoy's<sup>65</sup> quarters. Karl Pavlovich invited me to his apartment and made me stay for dinner. While waiting for the dinner to be served, he sketched something in his album and made me read *Quentin Durward*<sup>66</sup>. No sooner had I started to read than he stopped me and cried out rather loudly:

"Emilia!" A minute later a dazzling beauty, his wife, entered the room. I made an awkward bow, and he said: "Emilia! Where did we stop reading? But no, sit down and read yourself. Listen how skillfully she reads in Russian." At first she did not want to, but then she opened the book, read several phrases with a thick German accent, burst into laughter, threw the book aside, and ran out of the room. He called her again and, with the tenderness of a man in love, asked her to sit at the grand piano and sing the famous cavatina from *Norma*. She sat at the instrument without the least affectedness and, following a number of preludes, started to sing. Hers was neither a powerful nor effective voice, but it was so sweet and charming that I could not believe I was hearing the singing of a mortal, earthly creature rather than some ethereal fairy. Whether it was the magical effect of beauty or she was really singing well I cannot say definitely, but I seem to hear her magic voice to this day. Karl Pavlovich was also enchanted by her singing, because he sat over his album with crossed arms and did not hear how Lukyan entered and announced twice: "The meal is served."

After dinner Lukyan served fruit and a bottle of Lachryma Christi on the same board. It struck five. I left them at the table and went to classes. On parting, Karl Pavlovich shook my hand and asked me to come every day for dinner. I was delighted by such an invitation.

After classes I met them on the quay and joined their company. Soon they made for home, to which they invited me. During tea Karl Pavlovich recited *Angelo* by Pushkin and told us how the late Alexandr Sergeevich asked him to paint the portrait of his wife; Karl Pavlovich refused him without ceremony, because the wife was cross-eyed. He suggested Pushkin to paint his portrait, but Pushkin refused him spitefully. Shortly after the poet died and left us without his portrait. Kiprensky<sup>67</sup> represented him as a sort of dandy, not a poet.

After tea the young charming hostess taught us to play *Halbe Zwölf* card game and lost twenty

<sup>65</sup> Fiodor Tolstoy (1783-1873) – Russian sculptor, painter and medallionist, Vice Secretary of the Academy from 1828 to 1859, patronized Shevchenko, was instrumental in his release from exile and return to the Academy.

<sup>66</sup> Novel by Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) – Scottish novelist and poet.

<sup>67</sup> Reference to the portrait of Alexandr Pushkin (1827) by Orest Kiprensky (1782-1836), Russian portraitist and member of the Academy of Fine Arts since 1812.

kopecs to me and the cavatina from *Norma* to her husband, which she repaid right then and there at the grand piano. After such a magnificent finale I thanked the charming host and hostess and set off to my quarters. It was already long past midnight; Sternberg was still up, waiting for me. Without taking my hat off, I told him about my adventures, and he called me a happy man.

"You might as well envy me, too," he said. "I am invited by the governor-general of the Orenburg Territory<sup>68</sup> to visit him in Orenburg in the summer. I was at Vladimir Ivanovich Dahl's<sup>69</sup> today and we agreed upon the journey. Next week it'll be goodbye."

The news stunned me, I could not speak for a long time, and when I was my former self, I asked him:

"But when did you manage to arrange all that so quickly?"

"Today," he replied. "At about ten o'clock Grigorovich sent for me, I showed up at his office. He offered me this journey. I agreed, I went to Dahl – and the matter was settled."

"What shall I do without you? How shall I live without you?" I asked him through tears.

"It's the same with me. We'll study, work – and thus drive away loneliness. Now listen," he said, "tomorrow we will dine at Joachim's. He knows you and asked me to bring you along. Agreed?"

"Agreed," I replied, and we retired to bed.

The next day we had dinner at Joachim's<sup>70</sup>. He is the son of a famous coachbuilder, a merry, simple, and wonderfully educated German. After dinner he showed us his collection of prints and also several quires of the most superb lithographs of the Dresden Gallery paintings. Since it was Saturday, we stayed for the evening. During tea the conversation drifted to love and sweethearts. Poor Sternberg seemed to be sitting on needles. I tried to divert the conversation, but Joachim, as if intentionally, was nurturing it. In the end he told the following funny story about himself:

"When I was in love with my Adelheid and she did not reciprocate, I decided to commit suicide by suffocation. I prepared everything to this end, such as messages to several friends and, by the way, one to her (he pointed at his wife), produced a bottle of rum, and ordered a brazier with dead coals, chips of kindling wood, and a candle to be brought. When all this was ready, I locked the door, poured myself a glass of rum, drained it, and then Martin's *Belshazzar's Feast*<sup>71</sup> began haunting my mind. I repeated the measure of rum, after which nothing haunted me anymore. Informed about my untimely and tragic death, my friends came running, beat down the door, and found me dead drunk: the thing is that I forgot to kindle the coals, for otherwise I would have died by all means. After this incident she became more favorably disposed toward me and, in the end, decided to make me her husband."

He concluded his story with a good draught of punch. Joachim was to my great liking for his manners, and I imposed on myself the duty of visiting him as often as I could.

Sunday was spent at the Schmidts, by eleven o'clock we were back at our quarters and began to undress when Sternberg, who had to have a handkerchief for some reason, put his hand into his pocket, and instead of a handkerchief pulled out a billboard.

"Oh, I forgot! Today there is a masked ball at the Bolshoi Theater," Sternberg said, unfolding

<sup>68</sup> Shortly before the Khiva campaign (1839-1840), Vasiliy Perovsky (1794-1857), governor-general of Orenburg and commander of the Detached Orenburg Corps, invited Sternberg to take part in it as an artist.

<sup>69</sup> Vladimir Dahl (1801-1872) – Russian physician, writer, lexicologist, folklorist and ethnographer. In 1835-1841 he was a functionary for special missions with Perovsky. The Russian dictionary he compiled is still in use..

<sup>70</sup> Karl Joachim (1805-1859) – Russian painter, sculptor, caster, studied with Shevchenko at the Academy under Brüllow.

<sup>71</sup> John Martin (1789-1854) – English painter and engraver, specialized in painting biblical subjects, landscapes and book illustrations.



the billboard. "Let's go there!"

"I think we should; it's too early to retire," I said and, putting on tailcoats instead of frock coats, we went by cab first to the Police Bridge to a store selling costumes, bought ourselves cowls and black demimasks, and then went to the Bolshoi Theater. The bright hall was quickly filling with masked people, the music was blaring, and little Capuchins were squealing in the noise of the general chatter. Soon it became hot, and I got terribly tired of the mask; I took it off, Sternberg did the same. To others it probably seemed strange, but what did we care?

We went to the upper halls in the wings for a breath of air, away from the crush and heat. Not a single mask pursued us, at least for the fun of it. It was only on the stairway that we were met by Elkan, the very same gentleman in spectacles I had once met with Mikhailov. He recognized me and Sternberg, and laughing boisterously embraced us. At that moment a young midshipman came up to him, and he introduced him to us, calling him his sincerest of friends, Sasha Obolonsky. It was already past two o'clock when we reached the upper floor. In one of the side halls there was a laden table and the chewing public animated my appetite. I whispered to Sternberg about it, and he concurred out loud. Elkan and Obolonsky, however, protested, suggesting we go to the reliable Kley and have a proper meal. "You know," Elkan added, "they won't give you a satisfying meal here and charge ten times the price." We were unanimous and departed for Kley's.

I liked the young midshipman for his heady manners. Previously I had met only with humble comrades, and here I was seeing a young man of the world for the first time. He let the quips fall where they may and was tossing off vaudeville couplets without end – simply a fascinating young man. We stayed at Kley's till dawn, and since the heady midshipman had had one drink too many, we took him to our quarters, and parted with Elkan at the tavern.

That is how I live now! Gadding about at masked balls, supping in taverns, and squandering money. How long is it since that unforgettable morning surging over the Neva, when you saw me for the first time in the Summer Garden in front of the statue of Saturn. It was an unforgettable morning, my unforgettable benefactor. With what and how can I worthily repay my gratitude? I have nothing to offer besides a pure tear and a heartfelt prayer.

At nine o'clock I went to classes as usual, while Sternberg remained at home with the guest who was still sleeping. At eleven o'clock I visited Karl Pavlovich and was subjected to the sweetest reprimand from the sweetest Emilia Karlovna. We played *Halbe Zwölf* until two o'clock. She wished that I stayed for dinner with them. I was about to agree but Karl Pavlovich noted that I should not shirk my duties, and blushing with confusion up to my ears, I went to classes. I reappeared at three o'clock, left them at the table at five, and went to classes again.

All these days, apart from Saturday and Sunday, I spent at their home in the manner described above. Saturday was devoted to Joachim, and Sunday to Schmidt and Fitztum. You must have noticed that all my acquaintances are Germans. But what remarkable Germans! I am simply in love with them.

Sternberg was busy with his travel arrangements throughout the week, and he will surely forget something, which is in his nature. On Saturday we went to Joachim's where we met the old Kohlmann<sup>72</sup>, a distinguished water-colorist and Joachim's teacher.

After dinner Kohlmann made his pupil show us some sketches with trees, which the pupil agreed to do reluctantly. The sketches were made with black and white pencils on gray paper. They were done so superbly, so clearly, that I could not have my fill admiring them. He received a second silver medal for one of the sketches. The kindly Kohlmann praised the sketch to the

<sup>72</sup> Karl Kohlman (1786-1846) – Russian landscapist.

skies as a triumph of his pupil, and swore by all the saints that he himself could not draw anything as beautiful.

Since Sternberg had only two days and no more to stay with us, Joachim and I asked him how he intended to use these days. Sternberg, it seemed, did not even think about it. So Joachim proposed that the next day, that is, Sunday, we go to the Stroganov and Yusupov galleries and on Monday to the Hermitage. The proposition was accepted. The next day we called on Joachim on the way and drove to the Yusupov Gallery. The prince was informed that some artists were asking permission to see his gallery, to which the polite host ordered that we be told that it was Sunday and wonderful weather outdoors, advising us to delight in the wonderful weather instead of in works of art. We, of course, had nothing left to do but thank the obliging host. Lest we'd have to hear out a similar advice at Stroganov's, we went to the Hermitage and enjoyed it for about three hours like genuine admirers of the fine arts. We dined at Joachim's and spent the evening at the theater.

On Monday morning Sternberg received a note from Dahl. Vladimir Ivanovich wrote him to be ready for departure by three o'clock. Sternberg left to say goodbye to his friends, while I took to packing his suitcase. By three o'clock we were already at Dahl's home, at four I kissed Sternberg goodbye at the Srednyaia Rogatka, and then returned alone to St. Petersburg on the verge of tears. I was of a mind to visit Joachim's, but I longed for solitude and did not want to go home: I was afraid of the emptiness that would strike me there. Paying off the cabman at the city gates, I walked the rest of the distance. The walk did not tire me as I had expected, and I strolled along the quay opposite the Academy for a long time. In the home of Karl Pavlovich a light was on; soon it went off; and after a minute he and his wife came out onto the quay. Rather than meet them, I went home, and without lighting a candle, undressed and went to bed. I practically never stay at home now: there is boredom and emptiness without Sternberg. Mikhailov moved in again and is away most of the time as previously. He, too, made the acquaintance of Obolonsky, probably at Elkan's. The midshipman comes to our quarters frequently at night, and when Mikhailov is not at home, he sleeps in his bed. I am beginning to like that young man less than I used to before: either he is really a bore or it seems so to me, because I am not my own self. Indeed, I attend classes diligently, but I work listlessly. Karl Pavlovich has noticed it; I am annoyed, but I do not know how to make a new start. Emilia Karlovna is polite to me as ever and plays *Halbe Zwölf* with me as before. Soon after the departure of Sternberg, Karl Pavlovich ordered that I prepare pencils and paper. He wants to draw twelve heads of his wife from different angles for a painting based on a scene from Zhukovsky's ballad *Twelve Sleeping Maidens*. The paper and pencils are ready, without having been used, however.

One day at the end of February I had dinner with them as usual. That fateful day she seemed to look especially charming: during dinner she treated me to wine and was so kind that when five o'clock struck I prepared to forget classes, but she herself reminded me about it. I had nothing left to do but stand up from the table and leave, without saying goodbye. I promised to call after classes and outplay her in *Halbe Zwölf* by all means.

Classes were over. I came to their home as I had promised, Lukyan met me at the door and said that the master had ordered not to let anyone in. I was tremendously surprised at such a change in my hosts and went to my quarters. Contrary to his ways, Mikhailov was at home together with the heady midshipman. The evening flew by in merry chatter. At about past eleven they left to have supper, while I went to bed.

The next day in the morning I went to Karl Pavlovich's after classes, entered the studio, and he met me merrily with such words: "Congratulate me; I am a single man!" At first I did not

understand what he was talking about, so he repeated what he had said. I still did not believe him, and he added, depressed, "My wife went to Madame Sauerweid's yesterday after dinner and did not return." Then he willed that Lukyan tell Lipin to bring him a palette and brushes. All that was brought in a minute, and he sat down to work. On the easel stood the unfinished portrait of Count Musin-Pushkin<sup>73</sup>. He started working on it. However much he tried to seem indifferent, the work betrayed him completely. In the end, he threw the palette and brushes aside, and said to himself: "Does it really distress me that much? I cannot work." Then he went upstairs to his apartment. When it was past one I went to classes, still unsure of what had happened. At three o'clock I walked out of the classroom and did not know what to do: see him or leave him in peace? Lukyan met me in the corridor and relieved my perplexity by saying: "The master asks you for dinner." However, it was to be only me eating, while Karl Pavlovich did not touch the food; he did not even sit down at the table, complaining of a headache and smoking a cigar. On the next day he took to bed and was laid up for two weeks; I did not leave his bedside all that time. He was seized with delirium occasionally, but he did not utter the name of his wife a single time. At long last he started to recover, and one evening invited his brother Alexandr and sought his advice on a lawyer for the formal divorce arrangements. He is going out of his apartment now and ordered a large canvas from Dovizielli's, intending to begin work on the painting *The Ascension of the Virgin Mary* for the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan. Pending the canvas and summer, he began painting a full-length portrait of Prince Alexandr Nikolayevich Golitsyn for Fiodor Ivanovich Pryanishnikov<sup>74</sup>. The old man will be represented in a sitting position, dressed in a gray tailcoat with a St. Andrew ribbon.

I am not writing you of the rumors about Karl Pavlovich that are making their rounds in town and in the Academy itself; the rumors are the most absurd and disgusting, which it would be a sin to repeat. In the Academy it is generally believed that it is Sauerweid who is manufacturing these scurrilous things, and I have reasons to be of the same opinion. Let all of this be worn away by time, and then I will inform you about my suspicions.

*While the material is accumulating and being arranged,  
goodbye, my unforgettable benefactor.*

P.S. I received Sternberg's letter from Moscow. The kindly Vilya does not forget you either. He sends you his greetings and asks that if you happen to meet Tarnovsky's niece, Madame Burtsova, in Ukraine to pass on his profoundest respects to her. Poor Vilya, he still thinks of her.

Here I leave out the letter that followed, because it has nothing substantial, apart from absurd gossip and the most abominable slander about Karl the Great, which must not be included in a story about the noblest of men. His unfortunate marriage ended in an amicable settlement, that is, a divorce, for which he paid her 13,000 rubles in cash. That is the only substance of interest in the letter.

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<sup>73</sup> Vladimir Musin-Pushkin (1789-1854), son of Alexei Musin-Pushkin, archeologist, publisher of old manuscripts (*The Laurentius Chronicle*, *The Lay of Igor's Host*), and president of the Russian Academy of Sciences (1794-1799). A captain of the Izmailovsky Life-Guards Regiment, Vladimir was a member of the Northern Society of the Decembrists, for which he was imprisoned in the Sts. Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg, then transferred to an infantry regiment and kept under surveillance of the Gendarme Department.

<sup>74</sup> The portrait of Alexandr Golitsyn (1773-1844), Chief of the Post Department, former Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Enlightenment, was commissioned by Fiodor Pryanishnikov (1793-1867), the then Director of the St. Petersburg Post Office and Vice Chairman of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists.

The leaden-hued summer in St. Petersburg did not seem to have existed at all. Outdoors there is a damp, rank autumn, but at the Academy a dazzling exhibition is being held. Why don't you come and have a look at it? I would be delighted to see you. As to the paintings the students did, there is nothing remarkable, except for Petrovsky's program work *Appearance of the Angel to the Shepherds*. The sculptors, however, have distinguished themselves – Ramazanov, and, especially, Stawasser<sup>75</sup> who made a large sculpture of a young angler in the round. You should have seen how he did it! It's simply a beauty, particularly the expression of the face – the living face of a man watching the movement of the float with bated breath. I remember when the statue was still in clay, Karl Pavlovich walked into Stawasser's studio by chance, and admiring the statue, advised him to indent the angler's lower lip. He did so, and the expression changed. Stawasser was then ready to pray to the great Brüllow.

As for painting in general, I must tell you that it is worth coming from China, let alone Ukraine for the sake of one canvas by Karl Pavlovich. This wizard of a painter dashed off his marvelous creation at one go and is now treating the greedy public to it. Great is his fame! And universal is his genius! What am I to tell you about myself? I received the first silver medal for a study from nature<sup>76</sup>. Also, I made a small painting in oils – *An Orphan Boy Sharing the Food he Begged with a Dog by a Fence*. That is all. Throughout the summer I studied in the classes all the time, and early in the morning Joachim and I went to the Smolenskoye Cemetery to draw burdocks and trees. I begin to like Joachim more and more. We see each other almost every day, and he always attends evening classes; he became quite close friends with Karl Pavlovich, and they frequently visit each other's home. Sometimes we make an outing to Petrovsky and Krestovsky islands in order to draw black pine or white birch. Twice we went by foot to Pargolovo, and there I introduced him to the Schmidts. They live at Pargolovo during the summer. Joachim is extraordinarily pleased with this acquaintance. And who would not be pleased with the Schmidts!

Here is yet another funny adventure I had recently. A clerk and his family moved into an apartment on my floor not so long ago. His family consists of a wife, two children, and a niece, a wonderful girl about fifteen years old. I will tell you how I learned of it all. You must remember your former quarters with the door of the tiny entrance hall opening into the corridor. One day I opened the door, and imagine my amazement when I saw before me a beautiful girl, confused and blushing up to her ears. I did not know what to say to her, and after a minute of silence I bowed, while she covered her face, ran away, and hid behind an adjoining door. I could not understand what it could mean, and after lengthy guesswork went to classes. My work came out badly, because the mysterious girl was haunting my mind all the time. The next day she met me on the stairway and blushed as before; I was as dumbfounded as the first time. A minute later she burst into such a childish, hearty laughter that I could not check myself and joined her. We heard somebody's footsteps on the stairs, and they stifled our laughter. She pressed a finger to her lips and ran away. I walked up the stairs quietly and went into my room, puzzled even more than the first time. She was preying on my mind for several days. Every minute I went out into the corridor in the hope of meeting my chance acquaintance, but she must have either stayed away from the corridor or hidden herself so quickly that I had no chance of giving her a nod, let alone bowing to her properly in greeting. An entire week passed in such a manner. I was already beginning to forget her. Just listen what happened next. On Sunday, at about ten o'clock in the

<sup>75</sup> Nikolai Ramazanov (1815-1867), Piotr Stawasser (1816-1850) – Russian sculptors.

<sup>76</sup> Shevchenko received the silver medal, 2nd class, on April 29, 1839, and a similar medal on September 27, 1840 for his painting *A Beggar Boy Sharing his Bread with a Dog*.

morning, Joachim visited me, and whom do you think he brought along? It was the mysterious blushing beauty.

"I caught a thief at your door," he said laughing.

At the sight of the mysterious prankster I was thrown into confusion no less than the apprehended thief. Joachim noticed it and let go of the beauty's hand, smiling cunningly at me. The beauty did not disappear as might have been expected, but remained standing; then she adjusted her kerchief and braid, looked around, and said:

"I thought you were sitting opposite the door and drawing, but actually you were in the other room."

"And if he were drawing opposite the door, what would you have done then?" Joachim asked.

"I'd be looking through the keyhole, watching him draw."

"Why through the keyhole? I am sure my friend would have been so polite as to permit you to stay in the room during his work." To sustain his words, I nodded in agreement and offered the guest a chair. Without paying attention to this politeness, she turned to the easel on which stood a portrait of Madame Solova I had recently started working on. No sooner had she gone into raptures about the painted beauty than a sharp voice came from the corridor:

"Where have you disappeared to, Pasha?"

My guest gave a start, and turned pale.

"That's my auntie," she whispered and rushed to the door, where she stopped, and pressing a finger to her lips, stood for a moment and then disappeared.

We laughed over this peculiar adventure, and then went to Karl Pavlovich's.

The adventure is banal, but it troubles me and never leaves my mind. Joachim occasionally makes fun of me for my pensive mood, and I don't like it. I even regret he was a witness to the adventure.

Today I received a letter from Sternberg. He is preparing to set out on some campaign to Khiva and writes that I should not expect him in St. Petersburg for the holidays as he had informed me before. I feel lonely without him. For me his loss is irreplaceable. Mikhailov went on a visit to his midshipman in Kronstadt, and I have not seen him for over two weeks now. He is a wonderful artist, the noblest of men, but alas! the most careless I know. For the duration of his absence I, on the recommendation of Fitztum, invited a student, Demski, to share my quarters. He is a poor Pole, modest and wonderfully educated. He spends the entire day in classes, and in the evenings he studies French with me and reads Gibbon. Twice a week I go to the hall of the Free Economic Society to listen to the lectures of a physics professor in the evening. Also, Demski and I attend the lectures of Kutorga, a professor in zoology, once a week. So as you see, I do not spend my time in vain. There is no chance of being bored, yet still I am bored. I lack something, but what it is I do not know. Karl Pavlovich does not work on anything now and hardly lives at his home. Rarely do I see him and only on the street. Goodbye my unforgettable friend, my benefactor. I am not promising to write to you soon: I am having a tedious and monotonous time – there is nothing to write about, and I would not like you to be dozing over my repetitious letters in the way I am doing now over this message.

*Goodbye once again!*

I have deceived you. I did not promise to write you soon, and here a month has not passed yet after my last message, when I take to writing another. There was an event that hurried me on to write. So it is the event that is to blame, not me. Sternberg fell ill during the Khiva campaign, and the clever, kindly Dahl advised that he leave the military camp and go back where he came

from, which he did, appearing before me quite unexpectedly in the evening on December sixteenth. Had I been alone in the room I would have taken him for an apparition and been scared, of course; but I was with Demski – we were translating the jolliest chapter from Paul de Kock's *Frere Jacques* just then. Hence, Sternberg's appearance seemed to me almost natural, although it did not diminish my surprise and joy in the least. After the first embraces and kisses I introduced him to Demski, and since it was only ten o'clock we went to the Berlin for tea. The night passed in questions and stories, of course. At dawn Sternberg got tired and fell asleep, while I, once it was morning, looked into his portfolio, which was just as full as it had been after his journey to Ukraine the year before. But this time the scenery was different and so were the people he drew. Although everything was just as wonderful and expressive, it was absolutely different, except for that melancholy which must have been the reflection of the artist's pensive soul. In all the portraits of Van Dyck there is one dominant feature – intellect and nobleness, which may be explained by Van Dyck being himself the noblest of intellectuals. That is how I, too, explain the general expressiveness of Sternberg's wonderful drawings.

Oh, if only you knew how merrily, how inexplicably quickly and jolly the days and nights fly by for me now. So merrily and so quickly that I barely have time to learn the miniature homework assignments Demski gives me, for which he threatens to give me up. But, God forbid, I will not go that far. Our acquaintances have not increased or decreased – they are the same, but they all have become merrier, so that I simply cannot stay at home. To tell the truth, though, back home there is delight and charm as well! I have in mind the neighbors' girl, the very same little thief Joachim apprehended at my door. What a darling, innocent creature! She is a real child! And a truly beautiful, unspoiled child. Every day she comes running into my room, jumps around, chatters away, and then darts off like a little bird. Sometimes she asks me to draw her portrait, but she cannot sit still for more than five minutes. She is simply like quicksilver. Not so long ago I had to draw a female hand for a woman's portrait. I asked her to hold up a hand, and she, like a good dear, agreed. And what do you think came of it? She could not hold it quietly for a second. A real child. I tried and tried to make her sit still, and in the end had to invite a model. What do you think happened then? No sooner had I sat the model on a chair and picked up the palette than the neighbors' girl, sportive and laughing as always, came darting into the room, and no sooner had she seen the model than she froze abruptly, burst out sobbing, and pounced on her like a little tiger. I did not even know what to do. Fortunately, there was a crimson velvet mantilla belonging to the lady whose portrait I was painting. I took the mantilla and threw it on the girl's shoulders. She stopped carrying-on, walked up to the mirror, admired herself for a minute or so, then she threw the mantilla on the floor, spat on it, and ran out of the room. I dismissed the model, and the hand remained unfinished.

For three days after that incident the girl did not show up in my room. Whenever she met me in the corridor, she covered her face with her hands and ran to the other side. On the fourth day, no sooner had I come home from classes and started preparing my palette, than she came in, so humble and quiet I could not recognize her. Without saying a word, she pulled her sleeve up to her elbow, sat down on a chair, and took on the posture of the lady I was to paint. I picked up the palette and brushes, and started to work as if nothing had happened. The hand was ready within an hour. I showered words of gratitude on her for such a favor. But she, without so much as giving me a smile, got to her feet, rolled down her sleeve, and left the room wordlessly. It stung me to the quick, to tell you the truth; now I am breaking my head over how to restore the harmony of our former relations. Several more days passed in such a manner, and the restoration of the harmony seemed to be in sight. She did not run away from me in the corridor anymore,

and at times even smiled. I began hoping that the door would open any moment and she would dart in like a red-feathered bird. The door, however, stayed shut, and the bird did not appear. I began getting worried and devising a snare for the crafty birdie. Just when my absent-mindedness was becoming unbearable not only to me but also to the kindest of men, Demski, Sternberg arrived from the Kirghiz steppe, like an angel from heaven.

Now I am living with only Sternberg on my mind and only for his sake, and if I were not to come across the neighbors' girl in the corridor, I would have probably forgotten her altogether. She very much wants to dart into my room, but there is one obstacle: Sternberg is always at home, and whenever he goes outdoors I join him. On the holiday, however, she could not check herself; since we left home in the evenings, she disguised herself under a mask and came to us in the daytime. I pretended not to recognize her. However much she fidgeted and tried to make me recognize her, I stood my ground. In the end, she threw off her restraint, came up to me, and said almost out loud:

"You intolerable one! It is me, after all!"

"If it's you, take off the mask – only then will I see that it is you," I replied in a whisper.

She hesitated for a moment, took off the mask, and I introduced Sternberg to her.

From that day on everything took on its usual course. She behaved without any ceremony to Sternberg as equally as toward me. We pamper her with all sorts of sweets, and treat her like kindly brothers would treat a dear sister.

"Who is she?" Sternberg asked me one day.

I did not know how to answer his sudden question. It had never entered my mind to ask her about it.

"She must be either an orphan or the daughter of an absolutely careless mother," he continued. "In any case, she looks pitiful to me. Can she read or write at least?"

"I don't know that either," I replied hesitantly.

"She must be given something to read. It would occupy her mind. By the way, ask her if she knows how to read, and I will give her a rather moralistic and well-published book. It's *The Vicar of Wakefield* by Goldsmith<sup>77</sup> – a wonderful translation and a wonderful edition." A minute later he continued, addressing me with a smile. "You see that I am in a fit of moralizing today. For instance, there is one question on my mind: what might the visits of this naive sportive character end up in?"

A slight tremor rippled through me. But I regained self-control in an instant, and replied:

"In nothing, I suppose."

"I wish to God it would be so," he said, and fell to thinking.

I have always admired his noble, childishly careless face, but this time its naive features did not seem childish to me; it was the face of a mature man of great experience and feeling. I do not know why, but Tarnovskaya involuntarily came to my mind, and he seemed to have been on the watch for this thought, as he looked at me and heaved a sigh.

"Take care of her, my friend!" he said. "Or beware of her yourself. Do as you feel. But remember and never forget that a woman is a holy, inviolable thing and at the same time so seductive that no power of will, except for the loftiest evangelical love, is capable of withstanding this seduction. It alone can defend her from dishonor, and us from eternal reproach. So arm yourself with this wonderful feeling like a knight with a coat of mail and boldly confront the enemy." He lapsed into silence for a minute. "I have aged terribly since last year," he said,

<sup>77</sup> Novel by Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) – Irish playwright, novelist and poet. *the Vicar of Wakefield*, written in 1776, secured his reputation as a novelist.

smiling. "Let us go outdoors – it's stuffy in the room."

We walked down the street silently for a long time, returning to our quarters without saying a word as well, and went to bed.

In the morning I went to classes, while Sternberg remained at home. At eleven o'clock I returned to my quarters, and what do you think I saw? Yesterday's professor of morals had dressed our neighbors' girl in a Tatar beaver cap, topped with velvet and a golden tassel, and a red silk *shugai* cloak, also of Tatar origin, and himself dressed in a peaked Bashkir cap, he strummed the *cachucha* on the guitar, while the girl was dancing the solo like your Taglioni.

Of course, I could do nothing more than throw up my hands from bewilderment, but the twosome, without so much as batting an eyelid, carried on quite unconcerned. After dancing her fill, she threw off the cap and *shugai*, and ran out into the corridor, while the moralist put the guitar aside and went off roaring with laughter like a madman. I held myself in check for a long time, but then I was fetched by such a gushing laughter that I practically outroared him. When laughter made us giddy, we sat down on chairs opposite each other, and after a minute of silence he was the first to speak:

"A most fascinating creature, she is. At first I intended to draw her as a Tatar girl, but no sooner had she donned the attire than she burst forth in the *cachucha*, and I, as you have seen, could not restrain myself, and instead of pencil and paper, I grabbed the guitar, and you know the rest. But there is one thing you do not know. Before the *cachucha* she told me her life story, briefly, of course. She hardly knows its details herself, but still, if it had not been for that dratted Tatar cap, she would not have stopped halfway in her story. Once she saw the cap, she snatched it, put it on her head – and everything was forgotten. Maybe she will be more talkative with you, so question her exhaustively. Hers must be a highly dramatic life story. As she told it, her father died last year at the Obukhovsky Hospital."

At that instant, the door opened, and in came the missing Mikhailov, followed by the daredevil of a midshipman. Without much ado, Mikhailov proposed we have breakfast at Alexander's. Sternberg and I exchanged glances and, understandably, agreed. I mentioned about classes, but Mikhailov burst into such wild laughter that I put on my hat without saying a word and took hold of the door handle.

"And you want to become an artist after that? Do you really think that truly great artists evolve in classes?" the irrepressible Mikhailov carried on.

We agreed that the best school for artists was a tavern, and left for Alexander's in perfect concord. At the Police Bridge we came across Elkan promenading with some Moldavian boyar, with whom he conversed in Moldavian. We took him along with us as well. Elkan is a strange character. There is not a tongue he cannot speak. There is no society, with which he would not be mingling, beginning with our company and ending with counts and princes. He is everywhere and nowhere, like a magician from a fairy tale: on the English Quay, in the office of the steamship line, seeing off his friend abroad, in the stage-coach office or even at Srednyaia Rogatka – seeing off some close Moscow friend, or else attending a wedding party, christening party, funeral, and all of this within one single day, which he tops by appearing at all the three theaters. A real Pinetti<sup>78</sup> the conjurer for you. Some keep away from him as if from a spy, but I don't see anything like it in him. He is actually an incessant talker, a kindly old chap, and a bad composer of satirical articles into the bargain. He is also called the Wandering Jew in jest, which he himself finds respectable enough for a sobriquet. He addresses me only in French, for which I am rather grateful to him: it's good practice for me.

<sup>78</sup> Pinetti – conjurer, performed in Russia in the 1830s and 1840s.



Instead of breakfast at Alexander's, we had a hearty dinner and soon went our way. Mikhailov and the midshipman stayed at our quarters for the night and left for Kronstadt in the morning. Yuletide was a quick and, hence, merry affair with us. Karl Pavlovich willed that I prepare myself for a competition to vie for the second gold medal. I do not know what will come out of it. I have studied so little yet. But with God's help I shall try.

*Goodbye, my unforgettable benefactor. I have nothing else to tell you.*

Shrovetide has passed already, as did Lent and, finally, the Easter holidays, but I still have not written you a single word. Do not think, my dear, unforgettable benefactor, that I am forgetting you! God forbid me for committing such a sin. In all my thoughts, in all my deeds, you are present like the brightest and most comforting being in my grateful heart. The reason for my silence, though, is very simple: there is nothing to write about, what with my monotonous life. I cannot say, however, that it has been dull. On the contrary, my days, weeks and months have been flying past imperceptibly. What a beneficent thing work is, especially when it is encouraged. And I, thank God, do not lack in encouragement: during examinations I am always among the top three in class. Karl Pavlovich is always pleased with me – so what more gratifying and substantial encouragement can there be for an artist? I am boundlessly happy. The study I entered in the competition was accepted without the slightest change, and I am already working on the program. I am fond of the subject, it is absolutely to my liking, and I abandoned myself to it with all my heart. It is a scene from the *Iliad* – Andromache over the body of Patrocles<sup>79</sup>. It is only now that I have understood completely how necessary it is to study the ancients and the life and art of Greek antiquity in general. The French language has stood me in good stead in this case. I do not know how to thank the kindly Demski.

Karl Pavlovich and I celebrated Easter in a very distinctive way. In the daytime he told me that he intended to go to matins at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan to have a look at his painting when the candles were lit and the procession was underway. At ten o'clock in the evening he ordered tea to have served so that the time would pass less tediously. I poured him and myself tea. He lit up a cigar, lay down on the couch, and began reading aloud *The Fair Maid of Perth*, while I was pacing up and down the room. That is the only thing I remember. Then I heard an indistinct sound like a peal of thunder, and opened my eyes. It was bright in the room, the lamp was barely giving off light, and Karl Pavlovich was sleeping on the couch, the book was on the floor, while I was lying in an armchair, hearing the roar of cannon. Turning off the lamp, I quietly went out of the room to my quarters. Sternberg was still sleeping. I washed myself, dressed and went outdoors. People were already coming out of St. Andrew's Church with sanctified Easter-breads. The morning was truly festive. And what do you think was on my mind at that time? I am simply ashamed to tell you. But tell you I must, because concealing from you any of my thoughts and feelings would be a sin on my part. I behaved like a real child at that time. What occupied my mind most was my new waterproof raincoat. Strange, isn't it? I enjoy new holiday attire. So on the other hand, there is nothing strange about it. Looking at the skirts of my glittering raincoat, I was thinking: only a short time ago, wearing a shabby, soiled smock frock as I did then, I dared not even dream of such glittering garb. And now! I threw one hundred rubles to the wind just for a raincoat. It is simply an Ovidian metamorphosis<sup>80</sup>. When I used to earn a paltry fifty kopecks, I took it to the theater and bought myself a ticket in "the gods,"

<sup>79</sup> Shevchenko mistook Patrocles for Hector, the appointed captain of all Trojan forces when the Greeks besieged Troy.

<sup>80</sup> Reference to the *Metamorphoses* by Ovid, (Publius Ovidius Naso) (43 B.C.-17 A.D.) – Roman poet.

without choosing the performance. For the fifty kopecks I'd have such rib-aching fun and shed such bitter tears others never experienced in their entire lifetime. Had all that been so long ago? Yesterday, no later, and today I am living through a wonderful metamorphosis. Whenever I go to a theater now, for instance, I buy myself a ticket only in the stalls and rarely in the back seats. I do not attend just anything but try to get to a benefit performance, a repetition of a benefit play, or else I choose something of the best I saw before. To tell you the truth, I have already lost the unfeigned laughter and sincere tears of yesterday, but I almost do not regret them. Recalling all that, I am recalling you, my unforgettable benefactor, and that divine morning when God Himself directed you to me in the Summer Garden in order to pull me out of the dirt and worthlessness.

I celebrated the holiday at the home of the Uvarovs. Do not think I have the counts in mind. God forbid, but I am not flying that high yet. Theirs is a simple, modest family of merchants, but it is so kind, sincere, and concordant – God grant other families in the world to be like them. They accepted me as someone near and dear. Karl Pavlovich also sees them quite often.

We spent the holiday merrily. Throughout the week we did not have a single meal at Madame Jurgens', but always dined out at the homes of Joachim, the Schmidts, or Fitztum, and the evenings were spent at the theater or at the Schmidts'. Our neighbors' girl is still visiting us, and is as frolicsome as before. It is a pity she cannot serve me as a model for Andromache: she is too young and subtle, as it were. Her aunt surprises me. She does not seem to care for her prankish niece at all. At times the girl romps around in our room for two hours in a row, but the aunt does not so much as show up. It is strange! Sternberg told me her life story to the end. She does not remember her mother, while her father was some poor clerk and a drunkard, it seems, because when they lived in Kolomna, he used to come home from his office "brightish red" (as she put it) and angry every day, and if he had any money about him, he would send her to a tavern for vodka; if there was no money, he sent her out into the street to beg for alms. The formal uniform he wore was always torn at the elbows. Her aunt, her current guardian and her father's sister, visited their home occasionally and asked him to give Pasha for upbringing, but he just would not hear about it. Whether they lived in Kolomna for long or not she does not remember. But one winter day her father did not return to his home for the night which she spent alone, without being afraid of anything. He did not show up on the second night as well, and on the third day an attendant from the Obukhovskiy Hospital came to take her to him. On the way the attendant told her that her father had been picked up on the street by some gendarmes on duty at night and delivered to their unit. The next day he was taken to the hospital with a fever, and the following night he came to for a short spell, told his name and address, and asked that she be called to him. The sick father did not recognize her and chased her away from his bedside. So she went to her aunt to stay with her.

That is all there is to this sad story.

The other day Sternberg gave her *The Vicar of Wakefield*. She seized the book like a child seizes a nice toy, and after playing with it just like a child, she looked through the pictures, threw the book on the table; when she was leaving, she did not so much as remember the book. Sternberg is absolutely sure that she is illiterate, and I think the same, judging by her sorry childhood. I even have an idea (if she is really illiterate) to at least teach her to read. Sternberg approved and offered me his help. He was so sure about her being illiterate that he went to a bookstore and bought her an ABC with pictures that same day. But our good project did not materialize. Here is the reason: the next day, when we were about to get down to the first lesson,

Aivazovsky<sup>81</sup> arrived from the Crimea and stopped at our quarters. Sternberg received his friend with great enthusiasm. But unbeknownst why, I did not like him from the first. For all his refined manners there is something not likeable about him that does not fit an artist, but is politely chilly and repelling. He does not show us the content of his portfolio, saying that he left it with his mother at Feodosia: on his way he did not draw anything, since he was in a hurry to catch the first steamship sailing abroad. He lived at our quarters for over a month, however, and I do not know because of what circumstances. Throughout the duration of his stay our neighbors' girl did not visit us a single time: she is afraid of Aivazovsky, for which reason I am prepared to see him off abroad any day. But to my sorrow my priceless Sternberg is leaving together with him as well.

Several days later we saw Sternberg off to Kronstadt. About a dozen people gathered around him, but none around Aivazovsky. A strange thing to happen among artists! Mikhailov was also among those who came to see off Sternberg. And did Mikhailov give us a treat! After a friendly and merry dinner at Steward's, he sank into a deep sleep. We tried to rouse him, but failed, and so picking up two bottles of Clicquot, went with Sternberg on board the steamship. We downed the wine on the deck of the *Hercules*, handed our friend over to Tyrinov (the captain of the ship), said farewell, and returned to the tavern in the evening. Mikhailov had awakened by then. We told him how we had seen off Sternberg – but he was silent, then we told him what occurred on board the ship – he still kept silent, and how we had downed the two bottles of Clicquot. On hearing the word "Clicquot," he muttered: "You're scoundrels for not having roused me to see off a friend!"

I miss my dear Sternberg. I miss him so much that I am prepared to run away not only from my quarters, where everything reminds me of him, but even from the neighbors' playful girl. I do not write you anything more, because I am bored, and I do not want to drag you into boredom with my tedious message. I'd better get down to my program work.

*Goodbye.*

My summer flitted quickly by, much faster than one minute with a professional dandy. After the exhibition I barely noticed that summer had faded into oblivion. Throughout the summer, by the way, Joachim and I visited old Kohlmann several times on Krestovsky Island, and under his guidance I made three studies: two spruce trees and one birch. Kohlmann is the kindest of men I know! The Schmidts returned to town, and it was their reproaches that reminded me that summer was already over. I did not visit them a single time. They lived far away, and all my days and nights were devoted to fulfilling the program. But you should have seen how sincerely they congratulated me on my success. Yes, on success, my unforgettable benefactor! What a great thing a program work is for a student! It is his touchstone, and how great is his happiness, when he has proved on that stone to be not a sham but a genuine artist. I experienced this happiness fully. I cannot describe you this wonderful, inexplicably sweet feeling. It is a prolonged presence of everything of the world's beauty in a person. But what a bitter, tormenting state of the soul precedes this divine happiness. It is expectation. In spite of the fact that Karl Pavlovich assured me of success, I suffered as much as a criminal before his execution. No, I suffered much more. I did not know whether I would die or remain alive which, as I see it, is more distressing. The verdict had not been pronounced yet. While waiting for the horrible verdict, Mikhailov and I visited Deli's for a game of billiards, but my hands were trembling and I could not send a single

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<sup>81</sup> Ivan Aivazovsky (1817-1900) – Russian seascape painter, studied together with Shevchenko under Professor Maxim Vorobyov.

ball home, whereas he played on successfully as if nothing mattered. After all, he, too, had been arraigned for trial. His program work stood beside mine. Such indifference made me mad. I threw my cue aside and went to my quarters.

In the corridor I was met by the laughing, happy neighbors' girl.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Nothing," I replied.

"What do you mean – nothing? I cleaned up your room as if for a bright holiday, and here you come along so sad looking." She, too, wanted to take on a sad mien, but failed much as she tried.

I thanked her for her attention and asked her into the room. She started comforting me in such a childishly unfeigned way that I burst out laughing against my will.

"Nothing is certain yet; the examination is still in progress," I said.

"So why did you have to deceive me, you unscrupulous man! If I knew, I would not have cleaned up the room," she said, pouting her rosy lips.

"I didn't clean up Mikhailov's room," she continued. "Let him and his midshipman wallow in it like bears in a burrow for all I care."

I thanked her for showing a preference to me, and asked whether she would be happy if Mikhailov received a medal instead of me.

"I'll break his hands. I'll scratch out his eyes and kill him!"

"And if I'll get the medal?"

"I'll die of joy then."

"What makes me deserve such a preference?" I asked

"What. . . it's because . . . because . . . you promised to teach me to read and write in the winter."

"And I will keep my word," I said.

"Go to the Academy and find out what's going on there, and I will wait for you in the corridor."

"Why not here?" I asked.

"What will I do when the midshipman shows up?"

Indeed, thought I, and without saying a word, went out into the corridor. She locked the door and put the key in her pocket.

"I don't want them to enter your room without you, lest they spoil something there."

What made her think they would spoil something in my room? I thought. It must have simply been a childish whim of hers.

"Goodbye," I said, walking down the stairs. "Wish me luck!"

"From the bottom of my heart," she said enthusiastically and vanished. I went out into the street. At the Academy I was afraid of going in. The Academy gates seemed to me to be a horrible monster, its mouth wide agape. After rambling along the street until I was drenched with sweat, I crossed myself and ran through the horrible gates. On the first floor my impatient comrades were wandering about the corridor like the shadows at the ferry place of Charon<sup>82</sup>. I mingled in their crowd. The professors had already left the round hall and walked into the conference hall. The horrible moment was nearing. Andrei Ivanovich (the inspector) came out of the round hall. I was the first he came upon, and as he passed me, he whispered:

"Congratulations."

I have not heard and will not ever hear such a sweet, harmonious sound in my life. I rushed

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<sup>82</sup> Charon – in Greek mythology a god of hell, who conducted the souls of the dead in a boat over the rivers Styx and Acheron to the infernal regions.

headlong to my quarters and covered our neighbors' girl with kisses from rapture. It was a good thing nobody saw it, because I met her on the stairway. There was nothing wrong in what I did, but thank God nonetheless that nobody saw it.

In this manner, more or less, did this stupendous examination occur. What I have written you is only a vague outline of mortal existence, a faint shadow of the true event. It is beyond description – either by pen, brush, or even the spoken word.

Mikhailov failed the examination. God forbid, if any such misfortune had befallen me. I would have gone out of my mind, but he came into the room as if nothing had happened at all, put on his warm overcoat, and went to see his midshipman in Kronstadt. I do not know what makes him like that midshipman. I do not find anything attractive in him, but Mikhailov is simply crazy about him. At first, truth to tell, I had liked him too, but it did not last long. My poor tutor – Demski – that's a truly likeable person for you! He, poor, is sick, incurably sick, suffering from consumption at its last stage. He is on his feet yet, but barely drags them along. The other day he came by to congratulate me on the medal, and we spent the evening in the sweetest, friendly conversation. He foretold me my future with such conviction and in so a natural and vivid manner that I believed him against my will. Poor Demski, he does not even suspect he is sick. He is so sincerely carried away by his future as only a completely healthy young man can be. A happy man he is, if a dream can be called happiness. He says that the main and the most difficult part of his life, that is, poverty, has already been done away with; he does not have to stay up nights anymore in order to copy lectures for a paltry ruble; he is now absolutely free of poverty and can devote himself to the science he loves; he will, if not surpass, at least be the equal of his idol Lelewel<sup>83</sup> in Polish history; and his future dissertation will open opportunities for the attainment of his greatest hopes. In the meantime, the poor chap coughs blood and tries to conceal it from me. Dear God, what would I do to make those ardent dreams come true! But alas! There is no hope whatsoever. He probably will not live to see the day when the ice breaks on the River Neva.

At the height of Demski's effusion the door was noisily opened and the heady midshipman entered.

"Is Mishka in?" he asked, without taking his cap off.

"He went to see you yesterday," I said.

"So we missed each other. The trip will do him good. By the way, I'm staying for the night."

He went into Mikhailov's room. I gave him a candle. What else could I do? I proposed that Demski sleep in Mikhailov's bed, being absolutely sure that nobody would claim it. Demski saw that I was at a disadvantage, gave me a smile, picked up his cap, and shook my hand on parting. I, too, picked up my cap and without saying a word, went into the street with him, leaving the midshipman to his own resources. After seeing Demski off to his quarters, I reluctantly went home, and what do you think I saw there? Our neighbors' girl, not knowing I was out, had come running into my room; the half-dressed midshipman had seized her and was about to lock the door when I arrived to forestall his plan. The girl shook herself loose, spat in his face, and ran off.

"Some quicksilver for you," the midshipman said, wiping his face.

The scene left me feeling insulted. But I did not give him the pleasure of noticing my reaction, and since it was not yet late, I left him in the room and went to seek a better comrade to while away the autumn night.

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<sup>83</sup> Joachim Lelewel (1786-1861) – Polish historian and progressive politician, ideologue of the Polish liberation movement of the first half of the 19th century, one of the organizers of the Polish uprising of 1830-1831.

My visits were a failure, because all my friends were out that night. It was too late to go to the Schmidts. Karl Pavlovich was not at home either, so I did not know what to do with myself. The thought of the midshipman's behavior tormented me. I hated him. I did not know whether it was jealousy or simply disgust with this violator of the sacred sense of woman's modesty. Whatever a woman may be, we ought to treat her, if not with respect, at least with decency. The midshipman had done neither. He either was drunk or deep down a villain. For whatever reason, I am more inclined to believe in the latter.

The lights were on in Karl Pavlovich's home, and I went to him for the night. Karl Pavlovich could not help noticing my distracted mood, but was kind enough not to ask any questions. He ordered a bed for me to be made in his room and began reading aloud from a book. It was Washington Irving's *Christopher Columbus*<sup>84</sup>. As he read, he improvised the scene of the ungrateful Spaniards leading the great admiral, fettered in chains, from the long boat to the shore. What a sad, instructive scene. I proffered him a scrap of paper and a pencil, but he declined both and continued to read.

Once during supper, while recounting his travels through Greece, he sketched a wonderful picture, *Evening in Athens*, in this manner. The picture showed a street in Athens lit by the evening sun. On the horizon was the roughly finished Parthenon, scaffolding still in place. In the foreground, a pair of bullocks drew Phidias' marble statue of *The River Ilissos*<sup>85</sup> down the street. To one side Phidias himself was greeted by Pericles, Aspasia and all those who made Periclean Athens glorious – from the famous hetaera to Xanthippe. All this was illuminated by the rays of the setting sun. A splendid picture. What is the *School of Athens* compared with this marvelous painting? He did not execute it only because the *School of Athens* existed already. And how many similar paintings he finished either with an inspired word or with a rough sketch in his drab-looking album. Last winter, for instance, he made several minute sketches on one and the same theme. I could not make out anything and could only guess that my great teacher was contemplating something outstanding. I was not deceived.

This summer I noticed that every day before sunrise he began to retire in his gray smock frock to his studio, where he stayed till evening. Only Lukyan, who brought him water and dinner, knew what he was doing there. I was working on my program then and could not offer him my services as a reader, although I was convinced he would have eagerly accepted such a service, since he loved to hear books read. Three weeks passed in such a manner. I quivered with impatience. He had never before visited his studio with such unfailing regularity. Something unusual must be in the making. After all, what commonplace things does an extraordinary genius create!

Once toward evening I dismissed my model, wanting to go outdoors. In the corridor I came across Karl Pavlovich whose beard was untrimmed. He wished to see my program work. All a-tremble, I led him to my study; he made some insignificant remarks, and then said: "Let's go and have a look at my own program work." We went to his studio.

I do not know whether I should tell you what I saw there. I must tell you now, although I scarcely know how to tell something which defies description.

On opening the door of the studio, I saw a huge dark canvas stretched on a frame. On the back of it was an inscription in black paint: "Begun 17th July." Behind the canvas a music box was

<sup>84</sup> Washington Irving (1783-1859) – American man of letters. Mentioned here is his study *The History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828).

<sup>85</sup> Shevchenko erroneously called it the River Ilissos instead of the River Cephissus.

playing the chorus of the noblemen from *Les Huguenots*<sup>86</sup>. With a sinking heart I went behind the canvas, and what I saw took my breath away: in front of me was not a painting, but a live siege of Pskov in all its horror and grandeur. This explained the meaning of the tiny sketches and his trip to Pskov last summer. I knew about this, but I could have never imagined that the painting would be executed so quickly. So quickly, and so beautifully! Until I make a small sketch of this novel wonder for you, I will describe it, obviously, rather limitedly. To the observer's right, in the background, an explosion shatters a tower; a little closer is a breach in the wall, in which a hand-to-hand fighting is in progress. And what a fighting it is – just horrible to look at, and you seem to hear shouts and swords ringing against Livonian, Polish, Lithuanian and God knows what other iron helmets. On the left side of the painting, in the middle ground, there is a religious procession with gonfalons and an icon of Our Lady, ceremonially preceded by a bishop holding St. Michael's sword of the Prince of Pskov. What a remarkable contrast! In the foreground, in the middle of the painting, a pale monk astride a bay horse holds up a cross. To his right is the dying white horse of Shuisky, and Shuisky is seen running with raised arms toward the breach. On the left of the monk is a pious old woman giving her blessing to a young man, or rather a boy, setting out against the foe. Still further left a girl gives the exhausted warriors water from a pail. And in the corner of the painting is a half-naked dying warrior supported by a young woman, perhaps a future widow. What wonderful, diverse episodes! I have described but half of them. My letter would be without end and still not complete, if I took it into my head to describe all the details of this perfection of art. So be content, for the first occasion at least, with this prosaic account of a supremely poetic creation. Eventually I will send you a sketched outline of the painting, and then you will see clearer what a divine work it is.

What else can I write you about, my unforgettable benefactor? I write you so rarely and so little it makes me ashamed. Your reproaches for me being lazy to write are not exactly fair. I am not lazy; I simply do not have the gift of telling about my everyday life as absorbingly as others can do it. Not so long ago I read *Clarissa*<sup>87</sup> (primarily to learn writing letters) in Jules Janin's translation, of which I liked only the translator's preface. The letters, though, are so sweetish and long they are a horror to read. I wonder how the man had the patience to write such endless letters. I liked the letters from abroad even less: they are too pretentious and have little sense in them, being pedantic and nothing else. To tell the truth, I have a strong desire to learn how to write, but I do not know how to go about it. Teach me. Your letters are so good that I learn them by heart. Before I master your secret, I will write you as my heart prompts me. Let my heartfelt candor be a temporary substitute for art.

After that night at Karl Pavlovich's home, I went reluctantly to my quarters at around ten o'clock. Mikhailov was already at home and was pouring some wine into the glass of the barely awake midshipman, while our neighbors' frivolous girl, looking out of my room as if nothing had happened, laughed at the top of her voice. There was no pride in her, not a shade of modesty. Was this a simple, natural naiveté, or the result of the upbringing of the gutter? For me it is an insoluble question, because I am as utterly fond of her as of the sweetest child. And like a real child I made her sit down to learn her ABC. In the evenings she repeats syllables over and over again, while I sketch something or draw her portrait. Her head is simply a marvel. And do you know what is remarkable about all my efforts? From the day she began learning, she stopped laughing. I feel amused at the sight of her serious, childlike face. Since I have nothing to do for

<sup>86</sup> Meyerbeer's opera.

<sup>87</sup> The epistolary novel *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady* by the English novelist Samuel Richardson (1689-1761).

the length of the winter, I decided to make a study of her by the candlelight: precisely in the posture she sits, engrossed in her ABC, pointer in hand. It will be a nice painting *a la Greuze*<sup>88</sup>. I do not know whether I will cope with the oils. She comes out quite good in pencil.

The other day I made the acquaintance of her aunt, and in a rather distinct way. Returning from classes at eleven o'clock as usual, I was met by Pasha in the corridor, and on behalf of her auntie she invited me for a cup of coffee. The invitation amazed me. I refused to accept it. Indeed, how could I enter a home I did not know and be entertained straight off? She, however, did not give me a chance to argue and pulled me by the sleeve to her door like an obstinate calf. I resisted like a calf as well and had almost freed myself from her grip when the door opened and her auntie came to her help. Without saying a word, she grabbed me by the other hand, pushed me into the room, locked the door – and asked me to feel myself at home.

"I beg you kindly to do it without ceremony," the hostess said, out of breath. "Please forgive us our simple ways. Pasha, why are you standing there with gaping mouth? Bring the coffee quick!"

"In a minute, auntie!" Pasha responded and a minute later she appeared with a coffee pot and cups on a tray. There was a real Hebe for you. The aunt, too, slightly resembled the Thunderer<sup>89</sup>.

"I wanted to make your acquaintance a long time ago," the hostess began.

"Somehow I did not have a chance, but today, thank God, I got my way. Please do forgive us our simple ways. Would you like a cup of coffee? I haven't seen our milk woman for an age. The cream in our local shop is such rubbish – what can you do? Pasha has been long after me to make your acquaintance, but you're so unsociable, a real recluse, and you do not appear often in the corridor. Have another cup. You've made a wonder out of our Pasha. We simply don't recognize her. From morning till evening she's sitting over books, without causing any trouble – it's a delight to see. Imagine our surprise yesterday, when she produced a book with pictures, the one your friend gave her as a present, opened it and took to reading – not lively yet, but you can understand everything she reads. What's the name of the book?"

"*The Vicar of Wakefield*," Pasha said, as she appeared from around a partition.

"Oh yes, yes, the vicar. How the poor man pined in prison, and how he found his dissolute daughter. She read the book to the end just like that; sleep was the last thing on our minds then. 'Who taught you to read?' I asked. She says it was you. Truly, you've done us a great favor. My Kiril Afanasyevich, if he's not at his office, sits over his papers at home. In the evening, we play the game of silence, which makes an evening seem like a year for you. But now! I simply don't notice how it flies by. Would you care for another cup?"

I declined the treat and made to leave. But it proved impossible. My hostess seized my hand unceremoniously and sat me in my place, saying:

"I don't know how it is with you, but with us they don't just come in and then go out. No, we humbly ask you to have a chat with us and take a bit of what God has sent us."

The treat and the chat I declined nonetheless, pleading stomachache and colic in my side, of which, thank God, I have never suffered. The reason was that I had to go to classes – the first hour after midday was already running out. I was released upon my word of honor until seven o'clock in the evening. True to my word, I arrived at my hospitable neighbors' at seven in the evening. The samovar was already on the table, and she met me with a glass of tea in her hand. After the first glass of tea she introduced me to her master, as she put it. He was a bald little man

<sup>88</sup> Jean Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805) – French genre and portrait painter, representative of sentimentalism in painting.

<sup>89</sup> Zeus, the god of thunder and lightning in antique mythology.



in spectacles, sitting over a pile of papers in the next room. He got up from the chair, adjusted his spectacles, and extended me his hand, saying:

"Please do be seated."

I sat down. He removed the spectacles from his nose, wiped them with a handkerchief, put them back, sat down on his chair without saying a word, and pored over his papers as before. Thus several minutes passed. I did not know what to do. My situation was becoming ridiculous. The hostess, thanks be to her, cleared the air.

"Do not bother him," she said, looking in out of the other room. "Come to us; it's merrier here."

I wordlessly left the industrious master and went to the bustling hostess. The meek Pasha sat over *The Vicar of Wakefield* and was looking through the pictures.

"Did you see our master?" the hostess asked. "He's always like that. He's got so used to those papers he won't live a minute without them."

I delivered some compliment on industry and asked Pasha to read aloud. She read one page from *The Vicar of Wakefield* rather slowly but correctly and distinctly, and her aunt rewarded her with a glass of tea along with a torrent of panegyric which it would be impossible to fit on three pages. And I, as her tutor, apart from endless gratitude, was offered rum to go with the tea. But since the rum was still at Vocht's and Pasha had to run over there and get it, I declined the rum and tea, much to the chagrin of the hospitable hostess.

After ten o'clock we had supper, and I took my leave, promising to visit them every day.

I cannot define clearly for you what impression this new acquaintance has produced on me. First impressions, they say, are very important in the matter of acquaintance. I am pleased by it only because my acquaintance with Pasha had seemed to be blameworthy so far, but now it seems this has been removed, and our friendship has been somehow consolidated by this unexpectedly new acquaintance.

I began to frequent them every day, and after a week was already like an old acquaintance or, rather, one of the family. They offered me their board for the same price I paid Madame Jurgens'. I betrayed the kindly Madame Jurgens without any regrets: I was bored by the careless company of bachelors, and eagerly accepted my neighbors' offer. At their home I feel so well, serene and comfortable; it has an air of domesticity which is so much in my nature and so consonant with my peaceable disposition. I call Pasha my sister, the aunt I call auntie, but I do not call the uncle anything, since I only see him at the dinner table. He seems to be going to his office on holidays as well. I feel so happy there I hardly go out, except to Karl Pavlovich's. I don't remember when I last went to Joachim's, which is also true for the Schmidts and Fitztum. I realize that it is wrong on my part, but there is nothing I can do about it: I cannot lie to kind people. It must be my lack of worldly upbringing and nothing more. Next Sunday I will pay calls on them all and spend the evening with the Schmidts, because our acquaintance might really be strangled if I continue like this. It's all a trifle, and will work itself out somehow. My real trouble is of a different nature: I cannot get along with Mikhailov, or, rather, with his bosom friend, the midshipman. He stays practically every night at our quarters. This, too, would have been nothing, if he were not to bring God knows what people along, with card playing and drinking going on the whole night through. I'd hate to have to change quarters, but it seems I will have to if there is to be no end to these orgies. I wish spring would come sooner and the unbearable midshipman return to sea.

I have begun working on a study of Pasha by the candlelight. Her head is coming out nicely; the only thing I regret is the midshipman getting in my way. I'd like to have the painting finished

by the holidays and begin on something else, but I will hardly succeed. I even tried to work at my neighbors', but I find such an arrangement somewhat clumsy. I like the effect of the candlelight so much that on finishing the head, I intend to begin a second, from Pasha, of course, for the painting of *Vestal Virgin*. I pity I cannot get white roses for a wreath, which I need. But this is something to be dealt with later.

Pasha is beginning to read well already and likes it, which is extraordinarily pleasant to me. But I find it difficult to choose what she should read. Novels are said to be bad for girls' reading. I don't know why, really. A good novel kindles the imagination and ennobles the heart. But a dull book, apart from teaching nothing, is likely to produce an aversion to reading. First I gave her *Robinson Crusoe* to read, after which I will propose the travels of Arago or Dumont d'Urville, then another novel, to be followed by Plutarch<sup>90</sup>. It is a pity we do not have a translated Vasari – I would have introduced her to the celebrities of our fine arts. Is my plan good? How do you find it? If you have anything against it, inform me in your next letter and I will be heartily grateful to you. I am now concerned with her as with someone dear and near. Now that she is literate I regard her like an artist does his unfinished painting. I consider it a great sin to have her determine her own choice of reading, or rather, her chance of reading, because she has nowhere to choose from. It would have been better not to teach her to read at all.

I must be growing tedious with this talk of my neighbors. But what can I do about it? As the proverb goes, "What the heart thinks the tongue speaks."

To tell you the truth, I have nothing more to write you about as it is. I am not going out anywhere or doing anything. I don't know what fate has in store for me in the coming summer. I am expecting it not without alarm, and I cannot expect it otherwise. The coming summer is to lay the real foundation of the pursuit I, or rather you, have chosen for me. Karl Pavlovich tells me that shortly after the holidays a program for the first gold medal will be announced. I nearly faint at the thought of this fateful program. What if I succeed? I'll go off my head then. What about you? Won't you really come to have a look at the triennial exhibition, at my approved program work, as well as at its humble creator as your own creation? I am sure you will come. Write of your coming in the next letter, and I will have a specious excuse for refusing Mikhailov to share my quarters. The midshipman also seems to have annoyed him. It's a good thing I have some refuge at my neighbors', for otherwise I would have to run from my own quarters. Be so kind as to write that you will come. Then I will bring to the end everything altogether.

Farewell, my unforgettable benefactor. In the next letter I will inform you about the further progress of my pupil and on the results of the forthcoming competition.

*Farewell.*

P. S. Poor Demski cannot leave the room anymore. He will not live through spring.

On receipt of this letter I wrote that I would not come by the opening time of the exhibition but probably by the Holy Week, and would go direct to his quarters like Sternberg did on arrival. I wrote him for the sole reason that he get rid of the obsessive midshipman. To tell you the truth, I was afraid of his still unformed young character. Who knows, but he might turn into the

<sup>90</sup> Jacque Etienne Victor Arago (1790-1855) – French writer and traveler, took part in the voyage around the world on board the ship *Urania* in 1817-1820.

Jules Sébastien César Dumont d'Urville (1790-1842) – French explorer, circumnavigated the world twice and described his travels in *The Voyage Round the World*.

Plutarch (c.46-c127) – Greek historian, philosopher-moralist, author of biographical sketches about distinguished Greeks and Romans.

midshipman's double. Farewell to everything then – genius, art, glory, and all the charming things in life. All of that would settle on the bottom of the all-consuming vodka glass like in a grave. Examples of such a finale, unfortunately, are hardly rare, especially in Russia. What can be the reason behind it? Can a company of drunkards really nip in the bud everything that is good in a young man? Or is there something else we do not understand? Incidentally, popular wisdom concludes: "A man is known by the company he keeps." Gogol, too, must have had good reasons to note that if a Russian is a good craftsman, he is invariably a drunkard as well. What should it mean? Nothing more than our lack of overall civilization, I suppose. Thus, for instance, a scribe in the country or anywhere else is to the decent illiterate muzhiks about the same as Socrates to the Athenians. But when you look at him, you see the most immoral, drink-sodden animal for the simple reason that he is a master in his trade and the one and only literate man among hundreds of simplehearted muzhiks, at the expense of which he gets drunk and leads a dissolute life. The muzhiks only marvel at his idle ways, without finding an explanation why such a clever man is a drunkard. It never occurs to these simpletons that among them he is the only master in the scribe's or any other trade, because he has no competitors. His customers will always remain true to him, because they have no one else to turn to. And so he does his job in a slipshod manner and squanders his earnings on drink. As I see it, this is the sole reason why with us a master in his trade is by all means a hopeless drunkard to boot. It has been observed, by the way, that among the civilized nations, too, those of its citizens who stand out among ordinary people and are endowed with the highest spiritual qualities have always and everywhere more or less honored and more often than not zealously worshipped the merry god Bacchus. So it must be an essential quality of unusual people.

I was personally well acquainted with our mathematician of genius Ostrogradsky<sup>91</sup> (on the whole, mathematicians are a clearheaded lot), and happened to dine with him on several occasions. During his meals he did not drink anything but water. Once I asked him:

"Don't you really ever drink wine?" To which he replied simply: "Once in Kharkiv long ago I downed the contents of two wine cellars, after which I tied up."

Only a few, however, stop at two cellars, invariably continuing to the third. Frequently they get to the fourth, and in this fateful fourth they end their sad careers, and quite often their very lives.

But he, that is my artist, belonged to the category of people who were passionate, enthusiastic, and possessed a burning imagination. (And this is the crudest enemy of an independent, positive life. Although I am far from being an admirer of monotonous, sober-minded thoroughness and of a tedious day-to-day ox-like activity, I cannot say that I am an outright enemy of positive thoroughness. Generally in life, the middle way is the best. But in art, science, and in intellectual activity generally, the middle way will lead to nothing but an unmarked grave).

In my artist I wanted to see the greatest, unusual master, who in his domestic life would simultaneously be just an ordinary man. But these two qualities rarely coexist under one roof.

I sincerely wished to foresee and ward off everything that has a harmful effect on the youthful imagination of my protégé, but did not know how to go about it. I am simply fearful of the midshipman. Nothing good can be expected from his neighbors' girl either – it is as clear as noonday. Now, it could end in parting and tears, as the first passionate love usually ends. But with the aid of the aunt, to which he has taken such a liking from the first meeting, his

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<sup>91</sup> Mykhailo Ostrogradsky 91801-1862) – Ukrainian mathematician, member of the St.Petersburg Academy of Sciences since 1830, in 1817-1820 studied at the University of Kharkiv, since 1828 professor of St.Petersburg's higher educational establishments.

infatuation might end in Hymen's torch<sup>92</sup> and – I wish to God I were wrong – in dissipation and poverty.

He does not tell me straight off that he is head over ears in love with his pupil. What young man will disclose such a sacred secret openly? At a single word from his adored one he will jump into fire and water before he utters words of tender feeling to her. Such is a young man sincerely in love. Are there young people who love differently?

To divert him a little from his female neighbors, I intentionally did not mention them by a single word and advised that he visit Schmidt, Fitztum and Joachim as frequently as possible, for he needed them for his cultural education; also, to call on old Kohlmann whose kindly advice on landscape painting he needed; to visit Karl Pavlovich's studio every single day as a temple and source of illumination of the finest of arts; and make for me a watercolor copy of *The Bakhchisarai Fountain* during these visits. In conclusion, I explained to him the importance of the forthcoming program work, for which he must devote himself completely with all his days and nights up to the very day of the examination, that is, until October – such a schedule and sort of activity, I believed, would be enough to dampen the ardor of his first love at least a little – and if I failed to stay in the capital for the entire summer, I would come again by all means to have a look at his program work by autumn.

My letter, as I had expected, had a good effect, although my expectations were met only halfway: he was successful with his program work, but not with the neighbors' girl – alas! But why should I lift the curtain of mysterious fate prematurely? Let us read one more letter, which is his last.

Whether willingly or unwillingly – that I do not know, but the only thing I know is that you deceived me cruelly, my unforgettable benefactor. I was expecting you like the dearest guest, while you – God be your judge ... So why did you have to promise? What a fuss there was with my lodgers whom I got rid of with great difficulty. Mikhailov, to tell the truth, agreed to leave right away, but the irrepressible midshipman stayed on until spring, that is, up to the Holy Week, and on parting we almost quarreled. He wanted to stay for the Holy Week by all means, but I told him flatly that this was impossible, since I was expecting you.

"Your relative is not so important! He could as well put up in a tavern!" he said, twirling his silly mustache.

This made me so angry I was prepared for God knows what rudeness, but Mikhailov, thanks be to him, stopped me. I do not know what the midshipman likes so much about our quarters, the only explanation probably being his stay in it free of charge. In winter Mikhailov used to be away for several nights in a row and would rarely drop in during the daytime and then disappear right away. The midshipman, however, only went out to have his meals and get drunk, after which he would again lie on the sofa, either sleeping or smoking his pipe. Lately he even brought a suitcase with his underclothes. After I had denied him lodging, he still arrived several times to stay for the night. He is simply shameless. There was another strange thing. Right to the last day before his departure to Nikolayev (he was transferred to the Black Sea Fleet) I met him either in the corridor, on the stairway, or by the gate every evening when I returned from classes. I do not know whom he paid his evening visits. But never mind, I thank God I got rid of him.

You should have seen what successes my pupil achieved during the winter! It's simply marvelous! If she were to be taught from childhood, she could have become an educated person.

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<sup>92</sup> Hymen (Hymanaeus) – the god of marriage, among the antique Greeks and Romans was represented as holding a burning torch in one hand.

She has turned into such a modest and humble girl it's simply fascinating to look at her. Her childish frolics and naiveté have disappeared without leaving a trace.

To tell the truth, I even feel sorry that her literacy – if it is really literacy – has destroyed the charming childish sportiveness in her. I am glad that at least a shade of that endearing naiveté has remained in my painting. The little painting came out rather well, although I had to put in some effort to convey the candlelight successfully. Prevost offered me one hundred rubles in silver for the painting, to which I agreed eagerly, but only after the painting is displayed at the exhibition. I want to present my charming pupil to the verdict of the public by all means. I would be unutterably happy if you did not deceive me again and came for the exhibition in the end. This year it will be especially interesting. Many of the artists – both ours and those from abroad – have promised to send their works, the entrants including Horace Vernet, Gudin and Steuben<sup>93</sup>. For the sake of Apollo and his nine beautiful sisters, do come.

Work on my program is progressing slowly so far; I do not know how it will go afterward. Karl Pavlovich is pleased with the composition, and there is nothing else I can inform you about. I will get down to work on it in real earnest next week. So far I seem to be running away from it. I don't know the reason why. At this point even my pupil is already beginning to goad me. Oh, if I could tell you how I like this simple kindly family! I am like a dear son to them. It goes without saying that the aunt is constantly kind and merry. Oh yes, the gloomy and closemouthed uncle, too, occasionally leaves his papers, joins us around the hissing samovar, and stealthily cracks jokes, of the simplest kind, of course. Sometimes I afford myself the luxury, when I have an extra kopeck jingling in my pocket, of course, and treat them to tickets in a box of the third circle at the Alexandrinsky Theater. Then their general pleasure is boundless, especially if the play is made up of vaudevilles. For several days after that my pupil and model keeps on singing the vaudeville couplets even in her sleep, I suppose. I love or, it would be better to say, adore everything beautiful in a human being as such, beginning with his beautiful outward appearance, and I adore just as much if not more the sublime, refined creation of the mind and hands of a human being as well. Worldly educated women and men delight me also. Everything about them, from expression to movement, has been brought to such an even, consonant harmony. And the pulse in every one of them seems to be beating in one time. Fools, clever persons, phlegmatics and sanguine persons are a rarity among them and hardly exist in their midst at all, which I like immensely; not for long, however. It is probably because I was born and reared not among them, while the education I gained on my meager means makes it all the more impossible for me to be their equal. That is why, for all the charm of their beautiful life, I like the domestic life of common people more, as that of my neighbors, for instance. In their midst, I am completely at ease, while among the others I seem to be afraid of something all the time. Lately I have been feeling not my own self at the Schmidts as well. I do not know the reason why. I visit them almost every Sunday, but I do not stay as long as I used to before. Probably it is because the agreeable, unforgettable Sternberg is not among us. About Sternberg, by the way. Recently I received his letter from Rome. What a fantastic crank he is! Instead of his personal impressions of the Eternal City, he refers me to – who do you think? – Dupaty and Piranesi<sup>93</sup>. What a crank!

<sup>93</sup> Emile Jean Horace Vernet (1789-1863) – French battle painter, worked in Russia in 1842-1843.

Théodore Gudin (1802-1880) – French painter of marines. Charles Steuben (1788-1856) – French painter, visited St.Petersburg in 1843 to paint the murals in the St.Isaac's Cathedral

<sup>93</sup> Charles Marguerite Jean Baptiste Dupaty (1746-1788) – French lawyer and writer, author of *The Journey of Mr. Du Paty to Italy in 1785*.

Giambattista Piranesi (1720-1778) – Italian architect and copper engraver, produced innumerable etchings of Rome in ancient times and in his own day.

He writes that at Lepri's he saw a large gathering of artists, among them Ivanov, the painter of the future canvas *John the Baptist Preaching in the Wilderness*. The Russian artists make fun of him behind his back, saying that he got stuck in the Pontine marshes, without having found to this day that picturesque dry stump with exposed roots he needs for the background of his painting. The Germans, in general, go into raptures over Ivanov. Also, in the Greco Cafe he met Gogol who, dressed up to the nines, was telling the bawdiest Ukrainian anecdotes over dinner. But the main thing he saw at the entrance to the Eternal City, against the background of the dome of St. Peter's and the immortal giant Colosseum, was the cachucha. It was graceful and passionate just as it is danced among the people, and not prim and rouged as we see it on the stage. "Just imagine for yourself," he wrote, "that the famous Taglioni is a copy from the copy of the original dancing I saw free of charge on a street in Rome." But why should I quote him when I can send you his letter? In it you will find something about yourself that will be of interest to you as well. He, the poor chap, still thinks of the Tarnovsky girl. You see her frequently. Tell me, is she happy with her Aesculapius? If she is, do not tell her anything about our friend. Do not upset her unruffled family peace by barren recollections. But if she is not happy, tell her that our friend Sternberg, the noblest of creatures in this world, loves her to this day just as sincerely and tenderly as he used to. That will sweeten the sadness in her heart. However much a person would be suffering, whatever trials he has to bear, he forgets the grief that oppresses him for a short while at least, at least for an hour or a minute, when he hears a single friendly, heartfelt word, a word of sincere empathy from a distant devoted friend. He is supremely happy, and a minute of perfect happiness, it is believed, makes up for endless years of the hardest trials!

Reading these lines will make you smile, my adored friend, and who knows, you might think whether I am not bearing some trials, since I discourse on them so volubly. I swear to you that I do not undergo any trials whatsoever; it is just that I am somewhat sad. I am completely happy, what with such friends as you and the unforgettable Vilya. Few people have been blessed with such a sweet fate as mine. Had it not been for you, the blind goddess would have flown past me, but you made her stop over the poor neglected slut that I was. Oh, dear God, dear God! I am so happy, so boundlessly happy it seems I will suffocate from this abundance of happiness, suffocate and die. I have to experience some grief, a little bit at least by all means. Just judge for yourself: whatever idea I conceive, whatever I wish, I succeed in everything. Everyone likes me, everyone cares for me, beginning with our great maestro. And his love, it seems, is enough for supreme happiness.

He frequently visits me at my quarters, and sometimes even has dinner with me. Now tell me could I have dreamed of such happiness when I first saw him in these very same quarters? Many, many nobles from among the czar's courtiers have not been granted such great happiness as I, an unknown pauper. Is there such a person in the world who would not envy me at the present time? Last week he came to me in class, glanced at my study, dropped some hasty remarks, and called me out into the corridor for a couple of words. I was expecting to hear God knows what secret from him. And what do you think he said? He proposed I go with him to the Uvarovs' summerhouse for dinner. I did not want to miss classes and was about to excuse myself, but he countered my arguments by saying that they were schoolboyish and occasioned by inappropriate diligence, since one missed class meant nothing. "And the main thing," he added, "on the way I will read you such a lecture, which you will never hear from a professor of esthetics." What could I say against that? I put the palette and brushes away, changed, and went with him. On the way, however, there was not so much as a mention of esthetics. During dinner we had a merry conversation as usual, and it was only after the meal that the lecture began. Here is how it pro-

ceeded.

In the sitting room, over a cup of coffee, the old Uvarov started a conversation on how the hours fly by, and how we fail to treasure these priceless hours. "It is especially so with the young," the old man added, looking at his sons. "Here is a striking example for you," Karl Pavlovich picked up the thought, pointing at me. "He left classes today simply to fritter away his time at a summer house." What he said had the effect of boiling water having been poured all over me, but he, without paying heed to anything, read me such a lecture on the all-consuming transience of time that it is only now I feel and understand the symbolic statue of Saturn gobbling up his children. The entire lecture was read with such a great deal of paternal love that right then and there, in the presence of all the guests, I burst into tears like a child that had been caught in the act of an idle prank.

So tell me what do I still lack? It is you. Your presence is all I lack. Oh, will I ever see the great joyous moment when I can hug you, my dear, sincere friend? If you did not write you would come on the Holy Week, I would have visited you by all means during the past winter. But the saints in heaven must have envied my earthly happiness and obstructed our joyous reunion.

But for all my supreme happiness, I occasionally feel so unbearably sad that I do not know where to hide from this oppressive grief. At such horribly endless minutes it is only my charming pupil who has a beneficial effect on me. How much do I then want to open to her my suffering soul, to overflow and melt in my tears in her presence. But this might offend her virginal modesty. I would sooner dash my head against the wall than offend any woman, let alone her, the beautiful and incorruptibly chaste girl.

I seemed to have written you last autumn that I intended to paint from her a vestal virgin in addition to her portrait of a diligent pupil. But it was difficult to come by lilies or white roses in winter, and, the main thing, the unbearable midshipman interfered in my work all the time. Now these obstacles have been removed, and I think that in between my other pursuits, that is, while I am busy with my program work, I will be able to realize my cherished project. It is the more possible, because my program is not complicated – three figures in all: Joseph interpreting the dreams of his fellow prisoners, the cupbearer and the bread-provider. The subject is old and trite, and that is why I must develop it thoroughly – I mean, compose it, for there is not much mechanical work to do on it. I have still over three months left. You write about the importance of what might be my last program work, and advise that I study it as diligently as possible or, as you put it, imbue my mind with it. All this is wonderful, and I realize completely its necessity. But, my one and only friend, I am afraid to say that the *Vestal Virgin* is occupying my mind more and more. My program work is part of the background for the *Vestal Virgin*. However much I try to place it in the foreground, nothing comes out of it. It just slips away, and I do not know the reason why. I intend to finish working on the *Vestal Virgin* first (I have begun work on it long ago), and after I am through with it, I will have more time for my program work.

Program work! I have an unquiet presentiment about my program work. Where does it come from, I wonder? Or should I refuse to take part in it until the next year? But that would mean losing a year! What will this loss be rewarded with? With definite success! But who will guarantee this success? I am ill, am I not? I am really a little bit out of my mind and am beginning to resemble Khemnitzer's *Metaphysician*<sup>94</sup>. For God's sake, do come and restore my declining spirit.

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<sup>94</sup> Ivan Khemnitzer (1745-1784) – Russian poet. In the mentioned fable a philosopher devoid of any sense of reality is represented as a metaphysician.

What a shameless egoist I am. On what grounds am I almost demanding your visit? For the sake of what clever idea do you have to abandon your work and duties just to see a semi-idiot?

Begone, unworthy faint-heartedness! It's childishness, and nothing more. Thank God, I have been admitted to compete for the first gold medal. I am already a man who is ending – no, no, I am an artist who is embarking on his great career perhaps. I am ashamed with regard to you, and I am ashamed of myself. If you do not have any pressing need, so, for God's sake, do not come to the capital at least until I have finished my program work and my cherished *Vestal Virgin*. But if you do come, that is for the exhibition, my joy and happiness will have no bounds.

There is one more strange and constant wish I have; I terribly want you to have a look at the model of my *Vestal Virgin*, that is, at my pupil, in passing at least. A strange and odd wish, isn't it? I want to show her to you as the best and most beautiful creation of divine nature. Oh, pride! I behave as if I were instrumental in the moral adornment of this wonderful creature, that is, taught her to read and write in Russian. I am inordinately proud, am I not? But joking apart, her ability to read and write has lent her some particular charm. She has one little shortcoming, and I noticed this little imperfection not so long ago: she does not seem to be eager to read anymore. Her aunt has stopped going into raptures over her learned girl Pasha long since. After the holidays I gave her *Robinson Crusoe* to read. And what do you think happened? Throughout the month she barely read a half of it. To tell the truth, I was deeply distressed by such indifference. So distressed was I that I am already beginning to regret I had taught her to read. I did not tell her that, of course, but only thought about it. But she must have divined my thought. Next day she read the book to the end and retold to her indifferent auntie the immortal work of Defoe with such unfeigned enthusiasm and in such detail over evening tea that I was prepared to dot my clever pupil with kisses. In this respect, I find many things in common between her and myself. At times I am overcome by such stolid indifference it makes me absolutely incapable of doing anything. But with me, thank God, such fits do not last long, whereas she . . . There is one more strange thing. Ever since the restless midshipman left me, she has become particularly modest, pensive, and indifferent toward books. Could she really have . . . ? I cannot believe it possible: the midshipman is a completely antipathetic, brutal character, who can hardly evoke the interest of even a rude woman. No, her having taken an interest in him is an absurd thought. She is pensive and sinks into apathy simply because of her age, as psychologists assure us.

I must be getting on your nerves with my beautiful model and pupil. For all I know, you might think that I am not indifferent to her. It really looks so. I like her immensely, but I like her as someone near and dear, as a most tender, dear sister.

But enough about her. Apart from her, however, there is nothing else to write about. And there is nothing to write about the program work either, because I have barely touched it. I will not write to you about it on finishing it either. I want you to read about it in the newspapers. But what I most want is you to see it yourself. I speak of it with such self-confidence as if it were already finished and the only thing left is to take the medal out of the hands of the president and listen to the horns playing the flourish.

Do come, my unforgettable, sincere friend. Without you the triumph will be incomplete. It will be incomplete, because you and you alone are responsible for my happiness today and tomorrow.

*Farewell, my unforgettable benefactor. I do not promise to write you soon. Farewell!*

P. S. Poor Demski did not live to see the ice breaking on the Neva: he died, and did it like a genuinely righteous man, quietly and serenely as if he had fallen asleep. At the St. Mary



Magdalene Hospital I often had the chance of observing the last minutes of man's fading life. But I have not seen such a serene, indifferent parting with life. Several hours before his death I was sitting at his bedside and reading aloud a booklet of slight content. He listened, his eyes closed, and at times the corners of his mouth rose imperceptibly, making it look like a smile. I did not read for long. He opened his eyes and turning to me, said in a faint whisper: "What makes you spend precious time on such trifles?" Getting his breath back, he added: "It would have been better to draw something. From me at least." As usual, I had with me a book, or what you call an album, and a pencil. I began sketching in outline his wizened, sharp profile. He glanced at me again, and said with a sad smile: "I am a quiet model, am I not?" I continued to draw. The door opened quietly, and in it, the grimy face of the landlady, wrapped up in something dirty, caught my eye, but at the sight of me she hid behind the door and closed it. His eyes shut, Demski smiled and gestured that I bend toward him. I complied. After a lengthy silence he uttered in a barely distinct, quivering voice at last: "For God's sake, pay her the rent. God willing, I'll be quits with you." I had no money about me, and so left for my quarters right away. I don't remember exactly what delayed me at home, either the auntie's coffee or something of the sort. I just don't remember. I returned to Demski shortly before sunset. The bright orange light of the setting sun illuminated his little room. It was so bright I had to close my eyes for several minutes. When I opened my eyes and went up to his bed, I saw under the blanket but the corpse of Demski in exactly the same position I had left him when he was still alive. The folds in the blanket had not shifted, the smile had not changed by half a line, and his eyes were shut like with a sleeping man. Only righteous people die that peacefully, and Demski belonged to the assembly of the righteous. I folded his half-cold hands on his chest, kissed his cold brow, and covered him with the blanket. Then I went to look for the landlady, gave her the debt of the deceased, asked her to make arrangements for the funeral at my expense, and went to the undertaker. On the third day I invited a priest from the Church of St. Stanislaw, hired a drayman, and with the assistance of the janitor carried the modest coffin outdoors, placed it on the wagon, and set off with Demski on the long journey. Pastor Posiada, a small reader, and myself followed the coffin. There was not a single beggar accompanying us, although we came across quite a few of them. Those poor spongers sense alms like hungry curs. They did not expect any handouts from us, and rightfully so. I abhor those abominable cadgers who profit by the name of Christ. From the cemetery I invited the pastor to the home of the deceased not for a funeral feast, but to show him Demski's modest library. His entire collection of books was contained in a barely knocked together box and consisted of some 50 odd volumes, most of them on history and law in Greek, Latin, German and French. The learned pastor leafed through the rather modest editions of the Greek and Roman classics with a far from indifferent air, while I put aside only the books in French. Strange as it may seem, but apart from Lelewel, there was in Polish only a tiny volume of Mickiewicz<sup>95</sup> of the cheapest Poznan edition, and nothing else. Did he really not like his native fiction? That could not be. When the library was sorted out, I took the books in French and offered the rest to the learned pastor. The conscientious pastor would in no way agree to acquire such a treasure absolutely for nothing and proposed to pay for a granite gravestone on Demski's remains. I, for my part, proposed to foot a half of the expenses. Right then and there we agreed upon the size and shape of the gravestone and composed the inscription. It was the simplest of its kind: "Leonard Demski, mort. anno 18 . . ." When all this was finished and we took each his part of the inheritance, we parted like old friends.

<sup>95</sup> Adam Bernard Mickiewicz (1798-1855) – national poet of the Poles and one of the greatest of all Slavic poets; his epic poems glow with patriotism, *Pan Tadeusz* being his masterpiece.

It was strange, however. Did the deceased Demski really never befriend anyone and make friends with any other man except me? In his quarters I never met any visitors. But on the street we often came across his acquaintances who greeted him in a friendly way, some even shaking hands with him. All of them were respectable people. But on the other hand, does a so-called respectable person visit a poor toiler in his gloomy hovel? It's a sad realization! What a poor lot such respectable people are!

*Farewell again. Do not forget me, my unforgettable benefactor.*

From this diffuse and florid letter I learned, first of all, that my artist was a highly noble and gentle man as a true artist should be. Ordinary people cannot get so sincerely and selflessly attached to such a wretchedly poor man as the late Demski who was abandoned by everyone. I do not see anything special in this remarkable, selfless attachment; it is the natural consequence of mutual empathy to everything that is beautiful both in learning and in man: we all should be like that by our nature and by the behest of our divine teacher. But alas! only a miserably few of us have abided by his sacred behest and preserved their divine nature in love and chastity. A miserably few! That is why we regard a man who loves selflessly and is truly noble as someone out of the ordinary. We look at such a man as at a comet. And after having had our fill looking at him and lest our dirty, selfish nature be all too strikingly apparent to ourselves, we begin to sully the good name of that clean man, first by covert, then by overt slander, and if this does not work, we condemn him to poverty and suffering. It is fortunate for him, if we incarcerate him in a lunatic asylum, because we can simply hang him like a vile criminal. Though bitter, it is alas! the truth.

I have, however, let my tongue run away with me inopportunely.

Secondly, I learned from the stilted letter of my favorite that he, poor chap, unaware of it himself, was head over heels in love with his pretty, flighty pupil. It is quite natural. It is good, even necessary, the more so for an artist, because under other conditions his heart might get encrusted with insensitivity over the academic studies. Love is a life-giving fire in the soul of man. Everything he creates under the influence of this divine feeling bears the mark of life and poesy. All that is wonderful were it not for one predicament. Those fiery souls, as Libelt<sup>96</sup> calls them, are amazingly indiscriminating in matters of love. Frequently it happens that a true and enormously rapturous worshipper of beauty is fated to adore a morally ugly idol that deserves no more than the smoke of the kitchen hearth, while he, the simpleton, offers it the purest of incense. Only a very few of these fiery souls were fated to live in harmony. From Socrates to Berghem and right to our days there was one and the same contemptible inconsonance in their daily lives. To the great sorrow these fiery souls do not fall in love like cavaliers, but much worse than the most wretched foot soldiers, that is, for life. This is what I cannot understand and what I am afraid of in my artist. It looks as if he, after the example of the world's men of genius, will tie his gentle, receptive heart in slavery to some Satan in a skirt. It will be a good thing if he, just like Socrates and Poussin, will get rid of the domestic Satan with a joke and follow his own way, because otherwise he will have to say farewell to art, learning, poesy, and to everything charming in life forever. The vessel breaks, the precious myrrh is spilled and polluted with dirt, and the poisonous breath of the domestic snake extinguishes the radiant lampion of a peaceful artistic life. Oh, if only those world luminaries could do without family happiness, how wonderful it would have been! How many great works would not have drowned in the domestic

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<sup>96</sup> Karol Libelt (1807-1875) – Polish idealist philosopher, author of *Esthetics, or the Science about the Beautiful*, which Shevchenko read while in exile and criticized in his diary (*Journal*).

slough, but would have remained in the world for the edification and enjoyment of mankind. But alas! both for the men of genius, probably for our brother as well, the hearth and family circle are necessary. It is so because a soul, feeling and loving everything lofty and beautiful in nature and in art, needs spiritual rest after it has derived supreme delight in this charming harmony. And the sweet soothing effect for the weary heart can be found only in the circle of children and a kindly, loving wife. Blessed, a hundred times blessed is the man and the artist whose life, so unjustly termed as prosaic, has been illuminated by the beautiful muse of harmony. His bliss has no bounds then just like the world of God.

In my observations on family happiness I have noticed the following. My comment refers to people in general, but especially to the inspired worshippers of everything good and beautiful in nature. Precisely these poor fellows are the wretched victims of the idol they adore – beauty, for which they cannot be blamed, because beauty, in general, and the beauty of woman, in particular, has an all-destructive effect on them. It cannot be otherwise, for this is exactly the turbid source which poisons everything beautiful and great in life.

“How is that?” the vociferous young men might exclaim. “A beautiful woman is created by God solely to delight our life that is filled with tears and trepidation.”

That is true. It is the purpose given her by God. But it is she, or rather we, who have contrived to change her highly divine purpose, making a soulless, lifeless idol out of her. In her, one feeling has absorbed all the other beautiful feelings. This is egoism, the result of woman being conscious of her all-destructive beauty. Back in her childhood we make her realize that she is a future breaker and incendiary of our hearts. Truth is, we only hint it to her, but she grasps it so quickly, understanding and sensing her future power so deeply, that from that fateful day onward she turns into an innocent coquette worshipping her own beauty to her grave; the mirror becomes the one and only companion in her pitiable, lonely life. No education in the world can change her. So deeply is implanted the seed of selfishness and incurable coquetry we let fall by accident.

Such is the result of my observations of the beauties, in general, and of the privileged beauties, in particular. A privileged beauty cannot be anything else but a beauty. Neither can she be a loving, meek wife, nor a kindly tender mother, let alone a passionate mistress. She is a wooden beauty, and nothing else. And it would be foolish for our part to demand anything more of wood.

That is why I advise admiring these beautiful statues at a distance, not courting their intimacy, the more so marrying them, which goes especially for artists and people who have dedicated themselves to the sciences or the arts. If an artist needs a beauty for his favorite art, so for this purpose there are models, dancing girls and other women skilled in their respective trades. In his home, however, he, like an ordinary mortal, needs a kind, loving woman, but by no means a privileged beauty. She, as a privileged beauty, will light up the peaceful abode of God’s favorite with bright, dazzling rays of joy only for a fleeting moment, after which the momentary joy disappears, without leaving a trace like the flash of a sudden meteor. A beauty, similarly to a true actress, needs throngs of worshippers – whether genuine or fake, it makes no difference to her – as was the case with the ancient idols: the worshippers must be there, because without them, just like an idol of long ago, she is no more than a beautiful marble statue.

As a proverb goes, “All bread is not baked in one oven” and there are exceptions among beauties as well, for nature is amazingly diverse. I believe deeply in such an exception but take it for a most unusual occurrence; that is why I am so cautious in my belief, since having lived among respectable people for over half a century, I did not happen to see such a wonderful occurrence. I cannot say that I belong to the category of misanthropes or brazen slanderers of

everything beautiful. On the contrary, I am the most over-enthusiastic admirer of the beautiful both in nature and in divine art.

Not so long ago I happened by chance to vegetate for quite some time in a place that was remote from respectable or civilized society. It was truly an uninhabited out-of-the-way place. Into it there came flying, not by chance, though, a beauty of society – at least that is what she called herself eventually. So I made her acquaintance, and, I must say, I do it rather eagerly. Well, we got acquainted; I began watching the ways of my beauty of an acquaintance, and – oh, wonder of wonders! – there was not a trace of semblance in her of the beauties I had seen before. I must have become wild in these backwoods, I thought. But no, she was a wonderful woman in every respect – clever, modest, even well read, and without the slightest shade of coquetry. I became ashamed of my watchfulness, cast all distrust to the winds, and became not so much her admirer – I fail in this pursuit – as her good, sincere companion. I do not know why, but she, too, took a liking to me, and we became almost friends. I was so carried away by the delight of my discovery that in my old heart there stirred something more than a usual simple attachment and I was on the point of playing the role of the old fool from a vaudeville. An accident saved me. It was an altogether typical accident. Once early in the morning – I was accepted in their home as one of the family and frequently invited for morning tea – I noticed her hair being plaited into small braids right over the back of her head. I did not like this discovery. I had thought that she had natural curls at the back of her head, but it proved otherwise. Precisely this discovery stopped me from my declaration of love to her. I became simply her good companion once again. Speaking with her of literature, music and other arts practically every day, I thought it unbecoming to gossip with an educated woman after all. During these conversations I noticed, and only during the second year of our acquaintance, that she was very perfunctory and spoke rather indifferently both of the beautiful in art or in nature. That shook my faith somewhat. Also, there was not a book in German or Russian in the world she had not read, but did not remember any of them. I asked the reason why. She referred to some woman's ailment which had damaged her memory back during her maidenhood. I believed her simplemindedly. Yet I noticed that some of the vulgar rhymes she had read during her maidenhood she recited by heart to this day. After that I was ashamed to discuss literature with her. Shortly after I noticed that she and her husband did not keep a single book in their home, except for a notebook for the current year. During the winter evenings she played cards, if there were enough guests to make a party. This she did to observe the proprieties, so to speak, but I did not notice that she was in a terribly bad mood whenever she failed to get a party together. Right then she would have a terrible headache. But if her husband was at a game, she would sit at the table without ceremony and look into the players' hands as if they were her own, which pleasant occupation lasted well after midnight. The moment this banal scene began I left their home right away. It is disgusting to see a young beautiful woman engaged in such a senseless pastime. I was completely disappointed by then, and she seemed to me a polyp, or rather a truly privileged beauty.

If her life in solitude had gone on for another year or two in this out-of-the-way place without bloodthirsty admirers, that is, without lions and onagers, I am sure she would have become stupid or turned into a veritable idiot. She had already reached the condition of being a semi-idiot. What a duffer I was! I had imagined that I had discovered El Dorado at last, while this El Dorado was simply a wooden doll I could not look at without disgust afterward.

Reading through this stern maxim invoked to the beauties, some may think that I am another Buonarroti. Nothing of the sort. I am exactly the same admirer as any other leopard, and probably even more untamed in comparison. But I like to express my convictions in all their

nakedness, regardless of rank and title. Besides, I am doing it now solely for the sake of my artist friend, without intending to see my opinion on beauties in print. God forbid me from committing such a stupidity. In this case my own sister would be prepared to hang me as a treacherous Judas on the first aspen tree she came across. By the way, she is no beauty, so I have nothing to fear.

Where does this evil take its root? This is where: in upbringing. If God has blessed affectionate parents with a beauty of a daughter, they themselves begin spoiling her and preferring her to other children. As regards the education of their favorite, this is what they think and even say: "Why destroy a child over a senseless book? She will achieve a brilliant career without books and even without a dowry." And the beauty really achieves a brilliant career. The forecast of the parents comes true, so what else is there to wish? That is the beginning of the evil. Its continuation (incidentally, I do not assert it, I only assume) rests in the following.

Our kind Slavic race, though being attached to the Caucasian family, is by its outward appearance not far removed from the Finnish and Mongolian races. Consequently, a beauty with us is a rather rare occurrence. And no sooner is this rare occurrence out of diapers than we begin filling it with our ridiculous raptures, selfishness, and other rubbish. In the end, we make a wooden doll on hinges out of her, like the one painters use for drapery.

In the countries where God has blessed a race with beautiful women, they must remain ordinary women. As for me, an ordinary woman is the best.

Why then have I delivered such a lengthy sermon about the breakers of human hearts, mine included? For the edification of my friend, I suppose. But I think it will be absolutely superfluous for him. Besides, I could only conclude from his description that his vestal virgin will hardly be capable of penetrating much deeper into the heart of the artist who feels so wonderfully and understands everything of the supremely beautiful in nature, as does my friend. She must be a quick-eyed, snub-nosed little rogue, very much like a seamstress or a smart housemaid. Such characters are no rarity, and they are absolutely harmless.

As regards her silky auntie, they are not rare characters either, but they are extremely dangerous. Her auntie, although he describes her sweetly, reminds me of Gogol's matchmaker, who in response to the bride seeker's question on whether she will arrange his marriage, answers: "Oh, I'll marry you off all right, my dearie! I'll make it so deftly you won't even hear when it happens." My friend, of course, has nothing in common with Gogol's hero, and in this respect I almost have no misgivings about his future. The fire of first love, though much hotter, is on the other hand briefer in duration. But on second thought, misgivings still creep over me, because these strange marriages, when one of the partners is unaware of what happens, very often involve not only clever but even cautious people. As regards my friend, I do not see much of caution in him. This virtue does not distinguish my artist. To be on the safe side, I wrote him a letter which was not of a didactic nature, of course (God forbid me from writing such moralizing messages). I wrote him in a friendly and candid way about my apprehensions and what he should be careful about. Without any ceremony I drew his attention to the nice auntie as to the principal and most dangerous trap. I did not receive any response to the letter, however: he must not have liked it. This was a bad sign. Oh well, he was busy with his program work throughout the summer, so he just might have forgotten about my letter.

Summer passed and so did September and October, but my friend had not written me a single word. Reading in the *Severnaya pchela*<sup>97</sup> newspaper the exhibition review written by Kukolnik's sprightly pen perhaps, I learned that my friend's *Vestal Virgin* was praised to the skies, whereas there was not a word about his program work. What could that mean? Could he have really

<sup>97</sup> Reactionary newspaper published in St.Petersburg.

failed? I wrote him another letter and asked him to explain his obstinate silence, but I did not write a single word about the program or his occupations, since I knew from experience how unpleasant it was to answer a friend's query "How is the work going?" when it was going badly. Two months later I received a response to my letter. It was laconic and extremely incoherent. He seemed to be ashamed or afraid of telling me frankly what was tormenting him, and there was something that tormented him terribly. In his letter he hinted at some failure by the way (probably his program) which almost brought him to his grave. If he still existed in this world, so he wrote, it was due to his kindly neighbors who displayed the liveliest and sincerest compassion to his existence; he was practically doing nothing now, suffering spiritually and physically, and did not know what would be the end of it all.

I took the entire information as an exaggeration, of course. Young people are usually unreasonably sensitive: they always make a mountain out of a molehill. I wanted to find out something in greater detail about his situation. Something made me anxious for him. But how could I find it out and from whom? I would not be able to learn anything coherent from him anyway. So I turned to Mikhailov, asking him to write me everything he knew about my friend. The obliging Mikhailov did not let me wait long for his distinct and candid message. Here is what he wrote:

*Brother, your friend is a fool. And what a fool! There has not been such a wretched fool since the creation of the world. You see, he failed in his program, so what do you think he did from despair? You won't guess it for anything: he got married. Honest to God – he got married. And do you know whom he married? His vestal virgin! Her being pregnant into the bargain! What fun! A pregnant vestal virgin. As he said himself, her pregnancy was the reason he married her. Don't think, however, that he himself was the reason of this sin – nothing of the sort. It's that rogue of a midshipman who did the dirty trick. She herself confessed it. A fine show that midshipman put up. He played the dirty trick on her and made himself scarce to Nikolayev as if nothing had happened. Your magnanimous fool, though, has a pretty kettle of fish on his hands. Where can she go now? he says. Where can she find refuge now, poor thing, if her dear aunt is chasing her out of the house? So he went and gave her refuge. Well, tell me, have you ever seen such a fool in this big wide world? That's right, you haven't even heard of a fool like him. To tell the truth, it's an unexampled magnanimity or, rather, an unexampled foolishness. But this is nothing yet. Here's the funniest point of the whole mess: he painted the Vestal Virgin of her when she was pregnant. And you should have seen how he did it! It's simply a beauty. I haven't seen such a naively chaste beauty either in a painting or in nature yet. At the exhibition the crowd could not tear itself away from it. With the public it was a rage comparable to Tyranov's<sup>98</sup> A Girl with a Tambourine, as you might well remember. A magnificent piece of art! Karl Pavlovich himself stopped many times before it. That means quite something. A rich nobleman bought it for a good price. The copies and lithographs from it are in all the stores, on every crossing. In a word, it's a booming success. And he, that fool, had to go and get married. The other day I visited him and found a somewhat unpleasant change in him. The auntie must have taken him in hand. He never visits Karl Pavlovich, probably being ashamed to. He started painting a Madonna and child from his wife and a child that is not his own. If he finishes it just as well as he has begun it, the painting will surpass the Vestal Virgin. The expressivity of the*

<sup>98</sup> Alexei Tyranov (1808-1859) – Russian painter of portraits, interiors and landscapes, studied under Venetsianov. The work mentioned here was a great success at the Academy exhibition in 1836. Because of an unhappy marriage Tyranov, just like the principal character of Shevchenko's story, became mentally disturbed, lost his ability to work as an artist and died in poverty.

*child and mother are astonishingly good. I just wonder how he failed to fulfill his program work. Neither do I know whether as a married man he will be admitted to the competition next year. I don't think he will. This is everything I can tell you about your stupid friend! Farewell. Our Karl Pavlovich is feeling unwell; in spring he intends to work in St. Isaac's Cathedral.*

*Yours M."*

An unfathomable sadness seized me on reading this simple friendly letter. I saw the brilliant future of my favorite and friend as something that had come to an end at the very height of his radiant fame. But it was already impossible to relieve his distress. As a man he acted imprudently, although in a grandly noble way. If he were simply a hack painter, this event would not have had any effect on his occupation. But for a truly ardent artist that he is, it can have a wholly disastrous effect. To lose the hope of being sent abroad on a state grant – this alone would be enough to destroy a man's most vigorous energy. Going abroad at his expense is absolutely out of the question now. If intense efforts do provide him with the means, his wife and children will take away these paltry means before he will have the opportunity to think of Rome and its immortal wonders.

And so

*Italy, the happy country,  
Whither in magic rapture flies  
The inspiration of the young  
To see its visionary paradise. . .*<sup>99</sup>

this happy, charming country is closed to my friend forever. Maybe an unusual opportunity may open to him the door to this visionary paradise. But such opportunities are incredibly rare. We have no genuine patrons willing to give an artist money so that he go abroad and study. If one of our moneybags does risk such a luxury nowadays, he does it only out of childish vanity. He takes the artist abroad with him, pays him a salary like to a hired lackey, and treats him no better than a lackey, making him draw the hotel he stays in, the seashore where his wife takes her sea baths, and similar other unartistic objects. A simpleton drums away in this case: "That's a genuine lover and connoisseur of the fine arts; see, he took an artist abroad with him!" Poor artist, just to think what goes on in your meek heart when you hear these vociferous foolish exclamations. I do not envy you, poor worshipper of the beautiful both in nature and in art. You, as they say, were in Rome and did not see the Pope. The reputation that attends you for having been abroad must seem the cruelest reproach to you. No, it is better to go abroad on foot with a knapsack over your shoulder rather than ride with a lord in a carriage, or to give up altogether the hope of seeing the visionary paradise and seek instead a secluded refuge in your prosaic homeland and worship the divine idol Apollo on the quiet.

Stupidly, how amazingly stupidly did my friend deal with his future. I have been rereading Mikhailov's candid letter every day for two weeks now, and still I cannot believe in my protégé's unforgivable stupidity. I do not believe it so much that at times I want to go to St. Petersburg and see this disgusting truth with my own eyes. If it was the vacation, I would not hesitate. But, unfortunately, the academic year is in progress. Consequently, if it were possible to leave, it would be only for twenty-eight days. What could I do for him in half those days? Absolutely nothing, except for seeing what I would not want to see in a nightmare. After giving

<sup>99</sup> Shevchenko is quoting from a poem by Heinrich Heine (1797-1835) – German poet and essayist.

it serious thought and recovering from the first emotional upset, I decided to wait what old Saturn would tell me. In the meantime, I would keep up a constant correspondence with Mikhailov. I had lost all hope of receiving any letters from my protégé. The hope of receiving Mikhailov's letters, though, was blasted. Counting on Mikhailov, I failed to realize that this man was the least capable of maintaining a constant correspondence. If I did receive his reply to my letter much faster than I had expected, I should have considered it as an eighth wonder. One swallow should not have made me expect a summer. There was nothing I could do; I had erred. Who does not make mistakes, after all? In the heat of the moment, I wrote him several letters. I did not receive a single reply, though this did not stop me. I kept on writing, each letter more persistent than the last. I did not receive a single word in reply. In the end, I lost my temper and wrote him a rude letter with the briefest message. It produced the hoped for effect on Mikhailov, and he sent me the following reply:

*It surprises me how you find the patience, the time, and finally, the paper for your tedious, if not to say silly, letters. Whom do you write about? About a fool. Is he really worth thinking about, let alone to be written about in such tedious letters as yours? Don't care a rap about him – he's finished, and that's all there is to it. To comfort you, I'll tell you something else. In league with his wife and mummy, as he calls her, he began crooking the elbow, that is, drinking. At first he copied his Vestal Virgin and kept up his pursuit to a point when they stopped buying his copies even on the flea market. Then he took to coloring lithographs for stores, and now I don't know what he is doing. Probably he paints portraits for one ruble a mug. Nobody sees him. He hid himself somewhere around the Twentieth Line. To please you, I went to find him the other week. I located his home with some difficulty right by the Smolenskoye Cemetery. He was out that day. His wife told me that he had left for a sitting at some clerk's home. I had a chance to admire his unfinished Madonna. You know, I grew sad for some reason. Just to think of it – what for did the man go to waste? Since he did not turn up, I left and did not say goodbye to his wife – she looked disgusting to me.*

*Karl Pavlovich, despite his illness, started to work in St. Isaac's Cathedral. The doctor advised him to drop the work until next year and go abroad for the summer. But he does not want to terminate what he has begun. Why don't you come to St. Petersburg for a brief stay at least to have a look at the wonders our miracle worker Karl Pavlovich is performing? At the same time you could also admire your fool. It seems you got married as well but don't confess it. Don't write to me anymore; I won't answer your letters. Farewell.*

*Yours M."*

Oh, dear God! Could just one reason, that unfortunate marriage, have destroyed the young man of genius so quickly? There is no other reason. An ill-starred marriage indeed!

I looked forward impatiently to the vacation. The examinations were over at last. I went on vacation, and left for St. Petersburg posthaste. Karl Pavlovich had already left. On the advice of the doctors he abandoned his work and left for Madeira Island. I located the whereabouts of Mikhailov with great difficulty. This eccentric man never had permanent quarters and lived like a bird soaring in the sky. I met him on the street arm in arm with the heady midshipman, who was now a lieutenant. I don't know in what sort of way he found himself in St. Petersburg again. I could not stand his sight. After exchanging greetings with Mikhailov, I took him aside and began inquiring about the address of my friend. At first Mikhailov exploded in laughter, but then, barely checking it, he turned to the midshipman, and said: "Do you know whose quarters he is



asking about? His favorite's N. N." Mikhailov burst into laughter again. The midshipman followed suit, but hollowly. Mikhailov made me mad with his inappropriate roaring. In the end, he came to his senses, and said: "Your friend lives now in the warmest quarters imaginable. It's on the seventh verst. You see, he was not admitted to take part in the competition, so without thinking much, he went balmy, and was bundled off to warm quarters. I don't know whether he is alive or not."

Without saying goodbye to Mikhailov, I took a cab and went to the Hospital of All Who Sorrow. I was not admitted to the patient, because he was in a fit of madness then. I saw him the next day, and if the keeper had not told me that patient Number So-and-So was the artist N. N., I would have never recognized him myself. Insanity had altered him so terribly. It goes without saying, he did not recognize me either. He took me for some Roman from Pinelli's<sup>100</sup> drawing, burst into laughter, and walked away from the grilled door.

Oh, dear God, what a sad sight – a man crippled by insanity! I could not look on the sad image anymore, said goodbye to the keeper, and returned to town. But my hapless friend did not give me peace anywhere, neither while I was at the Academy, nor at the Hermitage, or at the theater – in a word, anywhere. His horrible image haunted me wherever I went. Only my daily visits to the Hospital of All Who Sorrow softened the dreadful initial shock little by little. His violence declined with every day, yet his physical strength spent itself rapidly as well. In the end, he was unable to get up from bed, and I could freely enter his ward. At times he seemed to be coming to, but still he did not recognize me. Once I arrived at the hospital early in the morning, during which time he felt better. I found him to be completely serene, but he was so weak he could not stir his hand. He looked at me at length, as if recalling something. After a long thoughtful, intelligent look he uttered my name in a faint whisper. The next moment tears spilled from his lucid eyes. His quiet weeping turned into sobbing, into such a heart-rending sobbing I had never seen before, and may God preserve me from ever seeing a man sobbing as violently as he did.

I wanted to leave him alone, but he stopped me with signs. I remained in the ward. He stretched out his hand, I took it into mine, and sat down at his bedside. His sobs ebbed little by little, and only large tears rolled down from under his half-closed eyelids. Several minutes later he had calmed down completely and sank into slumber. I quietly freed my hand and left the ward, fully hopeful of his recovery. The next day, also early in the morning, I arrived at the hospital and asked his keeper whom I came across:

"How is my patient?"

To which he replied:

"Your patient, sir, is in the mortuary already. Yesterday he fell asleep in the morning, and did not wake up."

After the funeral I stayed for another few days in St. Petersburg, not knowing myself the reason why. During one of these days I came across Mikhailov. After he told me how he had seen off the midshipman to Nikolayev the day before and had a drinking bout on the occasion at the Srednyaya Rogatka, the conversation turned to the deceased, his widow, and, finally, to his unfinished *Madonna*. I asked him to see me to the widow's home, to which he agreed eagerly, since he, too, wanted to have a last look at the unfinished *Madonna*. At the home of the deceased we did not see anything to indicate that an artist had lived here, except for a palette with dried paints on it, which was now a substitute for a broken windowpane. I asked about the *Madonna*.

<sup>100</sup> Bartolomeo Pinelli (1781-1835) – Italian painter and engraver, specialized in genre scenes, architectural landscapes and book illustrations.

The widow did not understand what I had in mind. Mikhailov explained that we wanted her to show us the painting he had once seen at their home. She took us to another room, and we saw the *Madonna*, which served for a patch on an old screen. I offered her ten rubles for the painting. She agreed readily. I rolled up my precious acquisition into a tube, and we left the widow comforted by the ten rubles.

The next day I bid farewell to my acquaintances, and left Northern Palmyra forever, I believe. The unforgettable Karl the Great<sup>101</sup> was already passing away in Rome.

October 4, 1856

Translated by Anatole Bilenko

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<sup>101</sup> Karl Brüllow died on June 23, 1852 in the town of Marciano near Rome.