

ter; shrill cries from little boys; clubs pounding snow; pitchforks tossing overhead. In front came twenty peasant leaders striding along in their huge felt boots.

"The little group edged back. The twenty leaders stopped.

"Heigh! You! Out of the way! Join in behind us!"

"We will not."

"What?" yelled the leaders, starting forward.

"We must stop you," said an old man in the centre of the group. His skinny old hand shook as he pointed up over the trees to the two tall chimneys of the house of his *barin*. "Our *barin* has always been good to us. Leave him alone!"

"The peasant leaders laughed. The laugh ran back and rippled into a roar.

"Fools! Idiots! Cattle! What can you do against us? There are twenty of us for each one of you. Now get away or we will kill you all. Fall in behind us, for we are brothers. We won't kill your *barin*. All we want to do is to take all the land and everything and divide it up. Out of the way! Be quick!"

"The little group drew back and consulted in low, anxious voices.

"Look here!" sputtered the younger men, growing more and more excited. "These fellows are bound to take our *barin's* things. We can't stop them just by being killed. It's better for us to join in and get a share of the things. Why not? Look here! Perhaps these peasants are right; perhaps the land does belong to us. We do all the work on it. Why should this *barin* always eat big dinners while we starve? Suppose he is kind to the poorest of us. He is only half kind. If he were all kind he would not have eaten such big dinners this winter while five of our babies died because they had no milk

and had only black bread to suck. Come on. Let's get our sleighs to haul away his things."

"In vain the old man protested. In a few minutes they were leading the two thousand into the estate.

"There the passions that had smouldered so long in starvation, disease, and ignorance now burst into flame. Men and women rushed wildly about. Some one struck down a dog, and the sight of blood maddened the others. They rushed to the barn, locked all the cattle in, piled logs around, poured oil on the logs, and set them afire. Then men, women, and children danced round the flames, while the roasting cattle bellowed inside.

"They broke into the house, tramping mud through every room, pounding, yelling, smashing.

"The *barin's* mother, a proud old noblewoman, stood in her room under the sacred family ikon.

"Take all," she said. "I cannot resist, for I am only a weak old woman. But this I will ask you. Leave my ikon, the holy altar of my ancestors.

"You can have it!" The peasant leader laughed, and leaped on a chair which creaked under his big felt boot. He tore the Madonna from its frame on the wall, shattered the glass with one blow of his earthly fist, tore off the silver and gold, and then threw the crumpled picture at her feet.

"Take your old piece of cloth!" he shouted. "We don't need it any more! We are through with ikons!"

"He was right. The peasants are through with ikons.

"In a village where I lived eight years ago was a peasant neither starving nor prosperous, just half-way between. His name was Sergius Castierin. This Sergius began to think laboriously. And the process of his thought was as follows: