

ned pride; "she is so sensible and so quick, and quite takes after her poor mother."

Here he began to copy my order for horses, whilst I amused myself looking at the prints which ornamented the walls of his humble but neat chamber. They represented the story of the Prodigal Son: in the first, a venerable old man, in a night-cap and dressing-gown, parts with the restless youth, who hastily accepts his blessing and bag of money. In the next, the dissipated conduct of the young man is portrayed in glaring colors: he is sitting at a table, surrounded by false friends and shameless women. Further on, the ruined youth, in a tattered shirt and cocked-hat, is seen feeding swine and sharing their meal; his face expresses deep sorrow and repentance. His return to his father is last represented: the good old man, in the very same night-cap and dressing-gown, rushes to meet him; and the prodigal son is on his knees; in the background, the cook is slaying the fatted calf, and the elder brother is inquiring of the servants the reason for so much rejoicing. Under each of these pictures, I read appropriate verses in German. All this has remained impressed on my memory, as have also the pots of balsam, the bed with colored curtains, and the other objects which then surrounded me. I fancy I still see the host himself, a fresh and good-natured looking man of about fifty, wearing a long green coat, with three medals suspended by faded ribbons.

I had scarcely settled with my old driver, when Dunia returned with the samovar. The little coquette had at a second glance noticed the impression she had made on me; she dropped her large blue eyes; I entered into conversation with her; she answered without the slightest timidity, like a girl accustomed to the ways of the world. I offered a glass of punch to her father, gave Dunia a cup of tea, and we three conversed as if we had always known each other.

The horses had long been ready, but I was unwilling to part from the station-master and his little daughter. At last I bade them "good-bye;" the father wished me a prosperous journey, and the daughter accompanied me to the carriage. I stopped in the lobby and asked leave to kiss her: Dunia consented. I can remember having given many kisses "since I first took to that occupation," but none have left such lasting, such pleasant recollections.

Several years passed by, and circumstances led me to the same places by the same roads. I remembered the old station-master's daughter, and rejoiced at the prospect of seeing her again. "But," thought I, "the old station-master has perhaps been removed; Dunia is probably married." The possibility of the death of the one or of the other also crossed my mind, and I neared the station of * * * with melancholy apprehensions. The horses stopped at the little post-house. On entering the room, I at once recognised the pictures representing the history of the Prodigal Son; the table and bed stood in their old places, but there were now no flowers on the sills, and every thing showed symptoms of decay and neglect. The station-master was sleeping under his sheepskin coat; my arrival awoke him; he raised himself. It was Sampson Virin, indeed; but how he had aged! Whilst he was arranging the papers to copy my order for horses, I looked at his gray hairs, at the deep wrinkles on a long-unshaven face, on his bent form, and could not help wondering how it was possible that three or four years had changed him, hale as he used to be, into a feeble old man.

"Dost thou recognise me?" asked I; "we are old friends."

"May be," answered he, gruffly; "this is the high road, many travellers have halted here."

"Is thy Dunia well?" I continued.

The old man frowned. "God knows," answered he.

"Then she is married, I suppose," said I. The old man feigned not to hear me, and continued reading my *padarofnaya* (*) in a whisper. I ceased interrogating him, and asked for some tea. A feeling of curiosity disquieted me, and I was hoping that some punch would loosen the tongue of my old acquaintance.

I was not mistaken; the old man did not refuse the proffered glass. I observed that the rum was dispelling his moroseness. He became talkative at the second glass, remembered, or pretended to remember me, and I learned from him the story, which at that time interested and touched me deeply.

"And so you knew my Dunia?" he began. "Who did not know her? Oh! Dunia, Dunia! what a girl she was. All who came here praised her; never a word of complaint. Ladies used to give her now a neckerchief, then a pair of earrings. Travellers would stop purposely, as it were, to dine or to sup; but, in truth only to look at my Dunia a little longer. The gentlemen, however choleric, would calm down in her presence and talk kindly to me. Will you believe it sir? Couriers, state messengers, used to converse with her for half an hour at a time. She kept the house; she cleaned up, she got things ready, she used to find time for everything. And I, old fool that I am, could not admire her sufficiently, could not appreciate her enough! Did not I love my Dunia? did not I pet my child? Was not her life happiness itself? But no, one cannot flee misfortunes; what is ordained must come to pass." Here he recounted his troubles in detail. Three years had passed since one winter evening, whilst the station-master was ruing out a new book, and his daughter was working at a new dress behind the partition, a troika pulled up, and a traveller, wearing a Cir-

assian cap and military cloak, and wrapped in a shawl, entered the room, calling for horses. All the relays were out. At this piece of intelligence, the traveller was about to raise his voice and his stick, but Dunia, accustomed to such scenes, ran out, and softly addressing the stranger, asked him whether he would be pleased to take some refreshment? Dunia's appearance produced its usual effect. The traveller's anger passed off; he consented to wait for the horses, and ordered supper. Upon taking off his rough cap, undoing his shawl and throwing off his cloak, the traveller turned out to be a slight young Hussar, with a small black moustache. He made himself at home, and conversed gaily with the station-master and his daughter. Supper was served. Horses had in the meanwhile returned, and the station-master ordered their being put to without being even baited; but on re-entering the room, he found the young man on a form, almost insensible: he had suddenly felt faint, his head ached, and he could not possibly proceed on his journey. What was to be done? The station-master gave up his bed to him, and it was decided that the doctor at S * * * should be sent for, should the patient not feel better in the morning.

The next day the Hussar was worse. His servant rode off to the town for the Doctor. Dunia bound his head with a handkerchief steeped in vinegar and sat down at her work, by his bedside. In the station-master's presence, the patient groaned and scarcely spoke; but he managed nevertheless to empty two cups of coffee, and, still groaning, to order his dinner. Dunia never left him. He was constantly calling for something to drink, and Dunia would hold up a mug of lemonade, which she had herself prepared. The patient would wet his lips, and whenever he returned the mug, his feeble hand pressed Dunia's in token of gratitude. The Doctor arrived towards noon. He felt the patient's pulse, had some conversation with him in German, and declared in Russian that all he required was rest, and that in a couple of days he would be able to resume his journey. The Hussar handed him twenty-five roubles as his fee, and invited him to dinner. The doctor accepted; both ate with good appetites, they drank a bottle of wine, and parted perfectly satisfied with each other.

Another day passed, and the Hussar was quite himself again. He was exceedingly cheerful, joking incessantly, now with Dunia, then with the station-master, whistling all sorts of tunes, talking to the travellers, copying their orders for horses into the post-book, and he contrived to ingratiate himself so much with the good-natured station-master, that he felt sorry to part with his amiable host when the third morning arrived. It was a Sunday. Dunia was preparing for Mass. The Hussar's carriage drove up. He took leave of the station-master, having rewarded him liberally for his board and hospitality; he also bid Dunia good-bye, and offered to drive her as far as the church, which was situated at the very extreme of the village. Dunia looked perplexed—"What art thou afraid of?" said her father: "his Excellency is not a wolf, and will not eat thee; take a drive as far as the church." Dunia took her seat in the carriage next to the Hussar, the servant jumped into the rumble, the driver whistled, the horses were off.

The poor station-master was not able to understand how he, of his own accord, should have allowed Dunia to drive off with the Hussar; how he could have been blinded to such an extent, and what could have possessed him. Half an hour had not elapsed when his heart already ached, and he felt so much anxiety, that he could contain himself no longer, and accordingly strode off to the church. On reaching it, he saw that the people were already dispersing, but Dunia was neither within the enclosure nor yet at the porch. He hurriedly entered the church; the priest was emerging from behind the altar; the clerk was extinguishing the candles; two old women were still praying in a corner; but no Dunia was to be seen. The poor father could scarcely make up his mind to ask the clerk whether she had been at Mass. The clerk answered that she had not. The station-master returned home, neither dead or alive. One hope remained. Dunia might possibly, young, thoughtless as she was, have taken it into her head to go on to the next station, where her godmother lived. He awaited in a desperate state of agitation the return of the troika which had carried them off. No driver returned. At last towards evening he appeared, but alone and tipsy, with the killing news that Dunia had gone on with the Hussar.

This disaster was too much for the old man; he immediately took to the bed where the young deceiver had lain but the day before. And he now conjectured, after pondering over all the late circumstances, that the illness had been feigned. The poor fellow was attacked by a serious fever; he was taken into the town of S * * *, and another station-master was temporarily appointed to replace him. The medical man who had seen the Hussar, attended him also. He assured him that the young man was in perfect health, and that he had, even when he visited him, a suspicion of his wicked intentions, but had observed silence for fear of his chastisement. Whether what the German, said was true, or whether he only wished to make a boast of his foresight, he did not minister any consolation to the poor sufferer. Scarcely had he recovered from his illness that the station-master at once applied to the post-master at S * * * for two months' leave of absence, and without saying a word respecting his intentions, set out on foot, in search of his daughter. He knew by his papers, that the Ca-

valry Captain Minsky was going from Smolensk to St. Petersburg. The man who had driven him had said that though she appeared to go willingly, Dunia had cried the whole way. "It is just possible," thought the station-master, "that I may bring home my little lost sheep." He arrived at St. Petersburg with this idea, and stopping at the Ismailoffsky Barracks put up at the quarters of a retired sub-officer, an old comrade; and commenced his search. He soon learnt that Minsky was at St. Petersburg, staying at Cemouth's Inn. The station-master decided upon going to him.

He appeared at his door early the following morning, and asked to be announced as an old soldier who wished to see his Excellency. The military servant, who was cleaning a boot on a last, declared that his master was asleep, and that he saw no one before eleven o'clock. The station-master went away and returned at the appointed hour. Minsky himself came to him, in his dressing-gown and a red smoking cap. "What is it thou wastest, my friend?" he asked. The old man's heart beat fast, tears gushed to his eyes, and he could only utter in a trembling voice: "Your Excellency!—for God's sake do me the favour!"—Minsky threw a quick glance at him, bridled up, took him by the hand, led him into his study, and closed the door. "Your Excellency!" the old man continued, "what is fallen is lost; give me back my poor Dunia. You have trifled sufficiently with her; do not ruin her uselessly." "What is done cannot be undone," said the young man in extreme confusion. "I am guilty before thee and ready to ask thy forgiveness; but do not, imagine I can abandon Dunia; she will be happy, I give thee my word for it. What dost thou want her for? She loves me, she is no longer accustomed to her former mode of living. Neither of you will be able to forget the past." Here he slipped something into the old man's sleeve, opened the door, and the station-master found himself in the street, he scarcely knew how.

For a long time he stood motionless; at last he noticed a roll of paper in the cuff of his sleeve; he drew it out, and unrolled several bank-notes of the value of five and ten roubles. Tears came to his eyes again—tears of indignation! He crushed the notes, threw them from him, trampled them underfoot, and walked away.—Having proceeded a few paces, he stopped, reflected,—and retraced his steps—but no bank-notes were there. A well-dressed young man on seeing him rushed up to a *droshky* into which he hastily threw himself and shouted out: "Go on!" The station-master did not follow him. He had made up his mind to return home, but he wished to see his poor Dunia once again before leaving. With this end in view he returned to Minsky two days later; but the soldier-servant roughly told him that his master received no one, and pushing him out of the hall, slammed the door in his face. The station-master waited, and still waited, and then went his way.

He was walking along the *Letynaya* that same evening, having listened to a *Te Deum* at the Church of *Vseh Skarbiastchech*. * A smart *droshky* suddenly dashed past him, and he recognised Minsky. The *droshky* stopped at the entrance of a three-storied house and the Hussar ran up the steps. A happy thought flashed across the station-master. He turned back, and approaching the coachman: "Whose horse is this, my friend?" asked he; "not Minsky's?"—"Yes, Minsky's," answered the coachman: "what dost thou want?"—"Why, this; thy master ordered me to take a note to his Dunia, and I have forgotten where his Dunia lives."—"It is here she lives, on the second floor. Thou art too late with thy note, my friend; he is with her himself now."—"No matter," said the station-master, with a violent beating at the heart; "thanks for directing me; I shall know how to manage my business." And with these words he walked up the flight of stairs.

The doors were closed; he rang. For several seconds he stood in uneasy expectation. The key rustled; the doors were opened. "Dost Avdotia Samsonovna live here?" asked he. "Yes," answered the young servant. "What dost thou want her for?" The station-master, without saying a word, entered the ante-room. "You cannot come in, you cannot come in," shouted the girl after him—"Avdotia Samsonovna has visitors." But the station-master walked on without heeding her. The first two rooms were dark, there were lights in the third. He approached the open door and stopped; Minsky was seated thoughtfully in this richly furnished apartment. Dunia, dressed in all the luxury of fashion, was sitting on the arm of his easy-chair, like a horsewoman in her English saddle-looking tenderly down upon Minsky, and twisting his dark curls with her jewelled fingers. Poor station-master! Never had he seen his daughter looking so beautiful! He could not help admiring her. "Who is there?" asked she without raising her head. He remained silent. Not receiving any reply, Dunia looked up—and uttered a cry, fell to the floor. The alarmed Minsky rushed to raise her, but on becoming aware of the old station-master's presence, he left Dunia and approached him, quivering with rage: "What dost thou want?" said he, clenching his teeth. "Why dost thou track me, as if I were a brigand? Dost thou want to murder me? Be off!" And seizing the old man by the collar, with a strong arm he pushed him down the stairs.

The old man returned to his rooms. His friend advised him to lodge a complaint; but the station-master having reflected awhile, waved his hand, and decided upon giving it up.

Two days later, he left St. Petersburg and returned direct to his station, where he resumed his duties. "This is now the third year that I live without Dunia, and I have neither heard from her nor have I seen her. God knows whether she is alive or dead. Anything may happen. She is neither the first nor the last who has been enticed away by a scampish wayfarer, and who has first been cared for and then deserted. There are plenty of these young simpletons at St. Petersburg, who are to-day in satins and velvets, and to-morrow you see them sweeping the streets in degraded misery. When the thought crossed me that Dunia may be ruining herself in the same manner, one sins involuntarily, and wishes she were in the grave."

Such was the story of my friend the old station-master—a story more than once interrupted by tears, which he picturesquely wiped away with his coat-tails, like zealous Terentitch in Dmitrieff's beautiful ballad. Those tears were partly induced by the punch, of which he emptied five glasses during his recital; but be that as it may, they touched me deeply. Having taken my leave, it was long before I could forget the old station-master, and long did I think of poor Dunia.

Lately again, on passing through * * * I recollect my friend. I learned that the station which he had superintended had been abolished. To my inquiry, "Is the old station-master alive?" I could obtain no satisfactory answer. I made up my mind to visit the familiar locality, and, hiring a private conveyance, I left for the village of N.

It was autumn. Grey clouds obscured the sky; a cold wind swept over the reaped fields, carrying before it the red and yellow leaves that lay in its course. I entered the village at sunset and stopped before the little post-house. A fat old woman came into the lobby (where poor Dunia had once kissed me) and replied to my inquiries by saying that the old station-master had been dead about a year, that a brewer was settled in his house, and that she herself was the brewer's wife. I began to regret my useless drive and the seven roubles I had profitlessly expended.

"What did he die of?" I inquired of the brewer's wife.

"Drink, sir," answered she.

"And where is he buried?"

"Behind the enclosure, next to his late mistress."

"Could anybody conduct to me to the grave?"

"Why not? Here, Vanka; leave off pulling the cat about. Take this gentleman to the churchyard, and show him the station-master's grave."

At these words, a ragged red-haired lad who was blind of one eye, ran up to me, and set out as my guide.

"Dost thou know the dead man?" I asked him by the way.

"How was I not to know him? He taught me how to make reed whistles. Many a time have we shouted after him when on his way from the public-house (God rest his soul!) 'Daddy, daddy, give us some nuts!' And he would throw nuts at us. He always played with us."

"And do travellers ever talk of him?"

There are few travellers now. The assessor may occasionally turn in this way, but it is not the dead he cares for! In the summer, a lady actually did drive by, and she did ask after the station-master and went to see his grave."

"What lady?" asked I, with curiosity.

"A beautiful lady," answered the lad: "she drove a coach and six horses, with three little gentlemen, a wet nurse, and a black pugdog, and when told that the old station-master had died, she began to cry, and said to the children; 'Sit you here quietly, whilst I go to the churchyard.' Well, I offered to show her the way. But the lady said: 'I know the road myself,' and she gave me five kopecks in silver—such a good lady!"

We arrived at the cemetery, a bare place with nothing to mark its limits, strewn with wooden crosses, with not a tree to shade it. Never in my life had I seen such a melancholy graveyard.

"This is the grave of the old station-master," said the boy, jumping on a mound of earth, over which a black cross with a copper image was placed.

"And the lady came here?" asked I.

"Yes," answered Vanka. "I looked at her from a distance. She threw herself down here, and so she lay a long time. Then she went into the village, called the priest, gave him some money, and drove away; and to me she gave five kopecks in silver—a splendid lady!"

I also gave the lad five kopecks, and no longer regretted my journey, or the seven roubles I had spent.

(To be continued.)

SYDNEY SMITH—so Lord Houghton in his "Monographs" tells us—has written depreciatingly of all playing upon words, but his rapid apprehension could not altogether exclude a kind of wit which in its best forms takes fast hold of the memory, besides the momentary amusement it excites. His objection to the superiority of a city feast: "I cannot wholly value a dinner for the test you do;" his proposal to settle the question of the wood pavement around St. Paul's: "Let the Canons once lay their heads together, and the thing will be done;" his pretty compliment to his friends, Mrs. Tighe and Mrs. Cuff: "Ah! there you are: the cuff that every one would wear, the tie that no one would lose!"—may be cited as perfect in their way.

(*) An official order for post-horses.—Tr.