

“don't pay any attention to me. I shall feel more comfortable if I know I am not boring you. And there is no necessity for your finding me something to do. We old people have a resource which you don't know yet, and which is better than any amusement—recollection.”

The young people listened to Lavretsky with respectful, though slightly humorous politeness, just as if they were listening to a teacher who was reading them a lesson—then they all suddenly left him, and ran off to the lawn. One of them stood in the middle, the others occupied the four corners by the trees, and the game began.

But Lavretsky returned to the house, went into the dining-room, approached the piano, and touched one of the notes. It responded with a faint but clear sound, and a shudder thrilled his heart within him. With that note began the inspired melody, by means of which, on that most happy night long ago, Lemm, the dead Lemm, had thrown him into such raptures. Then Lavretsky passed into the drawing-room, and did not leave it for a long time.

In that room, in which he had seen Liza so often, her image floated more distinctly before him; the traces of her presence seemed to make themselves felt around him there. But his sorrow for her loss became painful and crushing; it bore with it none of the tranquillity which death inspires. Liza was still living somewhere, far away and lost to sight. He thought of her as he had known her in actual life; he could not recognise the girl he used to love in that pale, dim, ghostly form, half-hidden in a nun's dark robe, and surrounded by waving clouds of incense.

Nor would Lavretsky have been able to recognise himself, if he could have looked at himself as he in fancy was looking at Liza. In the course of those eight years his life had attained its final crisis—that crisis which many people never experience, but without which no man can be sure of maintaining his principles firm to the last.