ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

FOUNDER OF MODERN RUSSIAN LITERATURE

ESSENTIAL NOVELISTS

TACET BOOKS

ESSENTIAL NOVELISTS

Alexander Pushkin

EDITED BY

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Author

ALEXANDER PUSHKIN PUBLISHED his first poem at the age of fifteen and was widely recognized in literary circles even before his graduation at Imperial Lyceum, located in the Tsarskoye Selo, the then royal village. Considered the greatest of Russian poets and the founder of modern Russian literature, he pioneered the use of colloquial language in his poems and plays, creating a narrative style - a mixture of drama, romance and satire - as a poet, using popular expressions and legends , marking his verses with the richness and diversity of the Russian language. It influenced authors like Gogol, Liermontov and Turgeniev forming with them the famous Russian pleiad of authors. To Gogol, for the friendship and mutual project of development of an authentically Russian literature, Pushkin bequeaths some ideas like the one of the theatrical play The inspector general.

Due to his progressive ideas, having been friends with a few Decembrists, responsible for an attempted coup against Tsar Alexander I, he was banished, wandering between 1820 and 1824, through the south of the Russian Empire. Under severe surveillance of state censors and barred from traveling as well as publishing, he writes his most famous play, Boris Godunov, with the obvious influence of William Shakespeare. The piece can only be published years later. He wrote the novel in verse, Eugene Onegin, a panoramic portrait of Russian life, in which he introduced elements that led to the designation of his style as Russian "romanticism" of the nineteenth century. The novel was published in serials from 1825 to 1832, and was the basis of Tchaikovsky's homonymous opera.

In 1826, the writer received the czar's pardon, returning to Moscow. Two years later, Poltav wrote, an epic that tells the love story of Cossack Mazeppa. Growing increasingly prose, he achieved great success with works such as Belkin's Tales, The Lady of Spades and The Captain's Daughter.

Because of his liberal political ideals and his influence on generations of Russian rebels, Pushkin was portrayed by the Bolsheviks as an opponent of bourgeois literature and culture and a forerunner of Soviet literature and poetry.

Marie

A STORY OF RUSSIAN love

I. THE SERGEANT OF THE GUARDS.

MY FATHER, ANDREW PETER Grineff, having served in his youth under Count Munich, left the army in 17—, with the grade of First Major. From that time he lived on his estate in the Principality of Simbirsk, where he married Avoditia, daughter of a poor noble in the neighborhood. Of nine children, the issue of this marriage, I was the only survivor. My brothers and sisters died in childhood.

Through the favor of a near relative of ours, Prince B—-, himself a Major in the Guards, I was enrolled Sergeant of the Guards in the regiment of Semenofski. It was understood that I was on furlough till my education should be finished. From my fifth year I was confided to the care of an old servant Saveliitch, whose steadiness promoted him to the rank of my personal attendant. Thanks to his care, when I was twelve years of age I knew how to read and write, and could make a correct estimate of the points of a hunting dog.

At this time, to complete my education, my father engaged upon a salary a Frenchman, M. Beaupre, who was brought from Moscow with one year’s provision of wine and oil from Provence. His arrival of course displeased Saveliitch.

Beaupre had been in his own country a valet, in Prussia a soldier, then he came to Russia to be a tutor, not knowing very well what the word meant in our language. He was a good fellow, astonishingly gay and absent-minded. His chief foible was a passion for the fair sex. Nor was he, to use his own expression, an enemy to the bottle—that is to say, *a la Russe*, he loved drink. But as at home wine was offered only at table, and then in small glasses, and as, moreover, on these occasions, the servants passed by the pedagogue, Beaupre soon accustomed himself to Russian brandy, and, in time, preferred it, as a better tonic, to the wines of his native country. We became great friends, and although according to contract he was engaged to teach me French, German, and *all the sciences*, yet he was content that I should teach him to chatter Russian. But as each of us minded his own business, our friendship was constant, and I desired no mentor. However, destiny very soon separated us, in consequence of an event which I will relate.

Our laundress, a fat girl all scarred by small-pox, and our dairymaid, who was blind of an eye, agreed, one fine day, to throw themselves at my mother’s feet and accuse the Frenchman of trifling with their innocence and inexperience!

My mother would have no jesting upon this point, and she in turn complained to my father, who, like a man of business, promptly ordered “that dog of a Frenchman” into his presence. The servant informed him meekly that Beaupre was at the moment engaged in giving me a lesson.

My father rushed to my room. Beaupre was sleeping upon his bed the sleep of innocence. I was deep in a most interesting occupation. They had brought from Moscow, for me, a geographical map, which hung unused against the wall; the width and strength of its paper had been to me a standing temptation. I had determined to make a kite of it, and profiting that morning by Beaupre’s sleep, I had set to

work. My father came in just as I was tying a tail to the Cape of Good Hope! Seeing my work, he seized me by the ear and shook me soundly; then rushing to Beaupre's bed, awakened him without hesitating, pouring forth a volley of abuse upon the head of the unfortunate Frenchman. In his confusion Beaupre tried in vain to rise; the poor pedagogue was dead drunk! My father caught him by the coat-collar and flung him out of the room. That day he was dismissed, to the inexpressible delight of Saveliitch.

Thus ended my education. I now lived in the family as the eldest son, not of age whose career is yet to open; amusing myself teaching pigeons to tumble on the roof, and playing leap-frog in the stable-yard with the grooms. In this way I reached my sixteenth year.

One Autumn day, my mother was preserving fruit with honey in the family room, and I, smacking my lips, was looking at the liquid boiling; my father, seated near the window, had just opened the *Court Almanac* which he received every year. This book had great influence over him; he read it with extreme attention, and reading prodigiously stirred up his bile. My mother, knowing by heart all his ways and oddities, used to try to hide the miserable book, and often whole months would pass without a sight of it. But, in revenge whenever he did happen to find it, he would sit for hours with the book before his eyes.

Well, my father was reading the *Court Almanac*, frequently shrugging his shoulders, and murmuring: "'General!' Umph, he was a sergeant in my company. 'Knight of the Orders of Russia.' Can it be so long since we—?"

Finally he flung the *Almanac* away on the sofa and plunged into deep thought; a proceeding that never presaged anything good.

“Avoditia,” said he, brusquely, to my mother, “how old is Peter?”

“His seventeenth precious year has just begun,” said my mother. “Peter was born the year Aunt Anastasia lost her eye, and that was—”

“Well, well,” said my father, “it is time he should join the army. It is high time he should give up his nurse, leap-frog and pigeon training.”

The thought of a separation so affected my poor mother that she let the spoon fall into the preserving pan, and tears rained from her eyes.

As for me, it is difficult to express my joy. The idea of army service was mingled in my head with that of liberty, and the pleasures offered by a great city like Saint Petersburg. I saw myself an officer in the Guards, which, in my opinion was the height of felicity.

As my father neither liked to change his plans, nor delay their execution, the day of my departure was instantly fixed. That evening, saying that he would give me a letter to my future chief, he called for writing materials.

“Do not forget, Andrew,” said my mother, “to salute for me Prince B. Tell him that I depend upon his favor for my darling Peter.”

“What nonsense,” said my father, frowning, “why should I write to Prince B.?”

“You have just said that you would write to Peter’s future chief.”

“Well, what then?”

“Prince B. is his chief. You know very well that Peter is enrolled in the Semenofski regiment.”

“Enrolled! what’s that to me? Enrolled or not enrolled, he shall not go to Saint Petersburg. What would he learn there? Extravagance and folly. No! let him serve in the army, let him smell powder, let him be a soldier and not a do-nothing in the Guards; let him wear the straps of his knapsack out. Where is the certificate of his birth and baptism?”

My mother brought the certificate, which she kept in a little box with my baptismal robe, and handed it to my father. He read it, placed it before him on the table, and commenced his letter.

I was devoured by curiosity. Where am I going, thought I, if not to Saint Petersburg? I did not take my eyes from the pen which my father moved slowly across the paper.

At last, the letter finished, he put it and my certificate under the same envelope, took off his spectacles, called me and said:

“This letter is addressed to Andrew Karlovitch, my old friend and comrade. You are going to Orenbourg to serve under orders.”

All my brilliant dreams vanished. In place of the gay life of Saint Petersburg, ennui awaited me in a wild and distant province of the empire. Military life seemed now a calamity.

The next morning a kibitka was at the door; my trunk was placed on it, and also a case holding tea and a tea-service, with some napkins full of rolls and pastry, the last sweet bits of the paternal home. Both my parents gave me their solemn benediction. My father said, “Adieu, Peter. Serve faithfully him to whom your oath is given; obey your chiefs; neither seek favor, nor solicit service, but do not reject

them; and remember the proverb: ‘Take care of thy coat whilst it is new, and thy honor whilst it is fresh.’”

My darling mother, all in tears, told me to take care of my health; and counseled Saveliitch to guard her child from danger.

I was wrapped up in a short touloup lined with hare-skin, and over that a pelisse lined fox-skin. I took my seat in the kibitka with Saveliitch, and shedding bitter tears, set out for my destination.

That night I arrived at Simbirsk, where I was to stay twenty-four hours, in order that Saveliitch might make various purchases entrusted to him. Early in the morning Saveliitch went to the shops, whilst I stayed in the inn. Tired of gazing out of the window upon a dirty little street, I rambled about the inn, and at last entered the billiard-room. I found there a tall gentleman, some forty years of age, with heavy black moustaches, in his dressing-gown, holding a cue and smoking his pipe. He was playing with the marker, who was to drink a glass of brandy and water if he gained, and if he lost was to pass, on all-fours, under the billiard table. I watched them playing. The more they played the more frequent became the promenades on all-fours, so that finally the marker stayed under the table. The gentleman pronounced over him some energetic expression, as a funeral oration, and then proposed that I should play a game with him. I declared that I did not know how to play billiards. That seemed strange to him. He looked at me with commiseration.

However, we opened a conversation. I learned that his name was Ivan Zourine; that he was a chief of a squadron of Hussars stationed then at Simbirsk recruiting soldiers, and that his quarters were at my inn. He invited me to mess with him, soldier-fashion, pot-luck. I accepted with pleasure, and

we sat down to dinner. Zourine drank deeply, and invited me to drink also, saying that I must become accustomed to the service. He told stories of garrison life which made me laugh till I held my sides, and we rose from the table intimate friends. He then proposed to teach me how to play billiards. “It is,” said he, “indispensable for soldiers like ourselves. For example, suppose we arrive in a town, what’s to be done? We can not always make sport of the Jews. As a last resort there is the inn and the billiard-room; but to play billiards, one must know how.” These reasons convinced me, and I set about learning with enthusiasm.

Zourine encouraged me in a loud tone; he was astonished at my rapid progress, and after a few lesson he proposed to play for money, were it only two kopecks, not for the gain, merely to avoid playing for nothing, which was, according to him, a very bad habit. I agreed. Zourine ordered punch, which he advised me to taste in order to become used to the service, “for,” said he, “what kind of service would that be without punch?”

I took his advice, and we continued to play; the more I tasted of my glass the bolder I grew. I made the balls fly over the cushions; I was angry with the marker who was counting. Heaven knows why. I increased the stake, and behaved, altogether, like a boy just cut free, for the first time, from his mother’s apron-strings. The time passed quickly. At last, Zourine glanced at the clock, laid down his cue, and said that I had lost a hundred roubles to him.

I was in great confusion, because my money was all in the hands of Saveliitch. I began to mumble excuses, when Zourine exclaimed, “Oh! well! Good God! I can wait till morning; don’t be distressed about it. Now let us go to supper.” What could I do? I finished the day as foolishly as I began it.

Zourine never ceased pouring out drinks for me; advising me to become accustomed to the service. Rising from table, I could scarcely stand. At midnight Zourine brought me back to the inn.

Saveliitch met us at the door, and uttered a cry of horror when he saw the unmistakable signs of my “zeal for the service.”

“What has happened to thee?” said he, in heart-broken accents; “where have you been filling yourself like a sack? Oh! heavenly father! a misfortune like this never came before.”

“Silence! old owl,” said I, stammering, “I am sure you are drunk yourself; go to bed, but first put me there.”

I awoke next morning with a severe headache; the events of the evening I recalled vaguely, but my recollections became vivid at the sight of Saveliitch who came to me with a cup of tea.

“You begin young, Peter Grineff,” said the old men, shaking his head. “Eh! from whom do you inherit it? Neither your father nor grandfather were drunkards. Your mother’s name can not be mentioned; she never deigned to taste any thing but cider. Whose fault is it then? That cursed Frenchman’s; he taught three fine things, that miserable dog—that pagan—for thy teacher, as if his lordship, thy father, had not people of his own.”

I was ashamed before the old man; I turned my face away saying, “I do not want any tea, go away, Saveliitch.” It was not easy to stop Saveliitch, once he began to preach.

“Now, Peter, you see what it is to play the fool. You have a headache, you have no appetite, a drunkard is good for nothing. Here, take some of this decoction of cucumber and

honey, or half a glass of brandy to sober you. What do you say to that?”

At that instant a boy entered the room with a note for me from Zourine. I unfolded it and read as follows:

“Do me the favor, my dear Peter, to send me by my servant the hundred roubles that you lost to me yesterday. I am horribly in want of money. Your devoted. ZOURINE.”

As I was perfectly in his power, I assumed an air of indifference, and ordered Saveliitch to give a hundred roubles to the boy.

“What? why?” said the old man, surprised.

“I owe that sum,” said I, coolly.

“You owe it? When had you time enough to contract such a debt?” said he, with redoubled astonishment. “No, no, that’s impossible. Do what you like, my lord, but I can not give the money.”

I reflected that if in this decisive moment I did not oblige the obstinate old fellow to obey me, it would be impossible in the future to escape from his tutelage. Looking at him therefore, haughtily, I said, “I am thy master; thou art my servant. The money is mine, and I lost because I chose to lose it; I advise thee to obey when ordered, and not assume the airs of a master.”

My words affected Saveliitch so much that he clasped his hands and stood bowed down mute and motionless.

“What are you doing there like a post?” I cried out, angrily.

Saveliitch was in tears.

“Oh! my dear master Peter,” stammered he, with trembling voice, “do not kill me with grief. Oh my light, listen to me, an old man; write to that brigand that you were jesting, that we never had so much money. A hundred roubles! God of goodness! Tell him thy parents strictly forbade thee to play for any thing but nuts.”

“Silence,” said I, with severity, “give the money or I’ll chase you out of the room.”

Saveliitch looked at me with agony, and went for the money. I pitied the good old man, but I wanted to emancipate myself, and prove that I was no longer a child. Saveliitch sent the money to Zourine, and then hastened our departure from that cursed inn.

I left Simbirsk with a troubled conscience; a secret remorse oppressed me. I took no leave of my teacher, not dreaming that I should ever meet him again.

II. THE GUIDE.

MY REFLECTIONS DURING the journey were not very agreeable. According to the value of money at that time my loss was of some importance. I could not but admit to myself that my conduct at the inn at Simbirsk had been very silly, and I felt guilty toward Saveliitch. The old man was seated on the front of the vehicle in dull silence; from time to time turning his head and coughing a cough of ill humor. I had firmly resolved to make friends with him, but I did not know which way to begin. At last I said to him, “Come, come Saveliitch, let us put an end to this; I know I was wrong; I was a fool yesterday, and offended you without cause, but I promise to listen to you in future. Come, do not be angry, let us make friends!”

“Ah! My dear Peter,” said he with a sigh, “I am angry with myself. It’s I who was wrong in every thing. How could I have left you alone at the inn? How could it have been avoided? The devil had a hand in it! I wanted to go and see the deacon’s wife, who is my god-mother, and as the proverb says: ‘I left the house and fell into the prison.’”

What a misfortune! what a misfortune! How can I appear before the eyes of my masters? What will they say, when they shall hear that their child is a drunkard and a gambler. To console dear old Saveliitch, I gave him my word, that for the future I would not dispose of single kopeck without his consent. Little by little he became calm, which did not, however, prevent him from grumbling out, now and then shaking his head: “A hundred roubles! It is easy to talk!”

I drew near the place of my destination. Around me extended a desert, sad and wild, broken be little hills and deep ravines, all covered with snow. The sun was setting.

My kibitka followed the narrow road, or rather trace, left by peasants' sledges. Suddenly my coachman, looking at a certain point and addressing me, "My lord," said he, taking off his cap, "do you not command us to retrace our steps?"

"What for?"

"The weather is uncertain. There is some wind ahead; do you see it drive the snow on the surface?"

"What matter?"

"And do you not see what is over yonder?" pointing with his whip to the east.

"I see nothing more than the white steppes and the clear sky."

"There! there! that little cloud!"

I saw indeed upon the horizon a little white cloud that I had at first taken for a distant hill. My coachman explained to me that this little cloud foretold a *chasse-neige*—a snowdrift. I had heard of the drifting snows of this region, and I know that at times, storms swallowed up whole caravans. Saveliitch agreed with the coachman, and advised our return.

But to me the wind did not seem very strong. I hoped to arrive in time for the next relay of horses. I gave orders, therefore, to redouble our speed. The coachman put his horses to the gallop, and kept his eyes to the east.

The wind blew harder and harder. The little cloud soon became a great white mass, rising heavily, growing,

extending, and finally invading the whole sky. A fine snow began to fall, which suddenly changed to immense flakes. The wind whistled and howled. It was a *chasse-neige*—a snowdrift.

In an instant the somber sky was confounded with the sea of snow which the wind raised up from the earth. Every thing was indistinguishable.

“Woe, to us! my lord,” cried the coachman, “it is a whirlwind of snow!”

I put my head out of the kibitka—darkness and storm. The wind blew with an expression so ferocious that it seemed a living creature.

The snow fell in large flakes upon us, covering us. The horses went at a walking pace, but very soon stood still.

“Why do you not go on?” I said to the coachman.

“Go where?” he replied, as he got down from the kibitka. “God knows where we are now! There is no road; all is darkness.”

I began to scold him. Saveliitch took up his defense:

“Why did you not listen to him,” said he, angrily; “you could have returned, taken some tea and slept till morning; the storm would have been over, and we could then have set out. Why this haste? as if you were going to your wedding?”

Saveliitch was right. What was to be done? The snow continued to fall; it was heaped up around the kibitka; the horses stood motionless, now and then shivering. The coachman walked around them adjusting their harness, as if he had nothing else to do.

Saveliitch grumbled.

I strained my eyes in every direction, hoping to see signs of a dwelling, or of a road, but I could only see the whirling of the snow-drift. All at once I thought I saw some thing black. “Halloo! coachman,” I cried out, “what is that black thing yonder?”

The coachman looked attentively where I indicated. “God knows, my lord,” he replied, re-mounting to his seat; “it is not a kibitka, nor a tree; it seems to be moving. It must be a wolf or a man!”

I ordered him to go in the direction of the unknown object which was coming toward us. In two minutes we were on a line with it, and I recognized a man.

“Halloo! good man!” shouted my coachman; “tell us, do you know the road?”

“This is the road,” replied the man. “I am on solid ground, but what the devil is the good of that.”

“Listen, my good peasant,” said I; “do you know this country? Can you lead us to a shelter for the night?”

“This country! Thank God, I have been over it on foot and in carriage, from one end to the other. But one can not help losing the road in this weather. It is better to stop here and wait till the hurricane ceases: then the sky will clear, and we can find the way by the stars.”

His coolness gave me courage. I had decided to trust myself to the mercy of God and pass the night on the steppe, when the traveler, seating himself on the bench which was the coachman’s seat, said to the driver:

“Thank God, a dwelling is near. Turn to the right and go on.”

“Why should I turn to the right?” said the coachman, sulkily, “where do you see a road?”

“Must I say to you these horses, as well as the harness, belong to another? then use the whip without respite.”

I thought my coachman’s view rational.

“Why do you believe,” said I to the new-comer, “that a dwelling is not far off?”

“The wind blows from that quarter,” said he, “and I have smelled smoke—proof that a dwelling is near.”

His sagacity, the delicacy of his sense of smell, filled me with admiration; I ordered my coachman to go wherever the other wished. The horses walked heavily through the deep snow. The kibitka advanced but slowly, now raised on a hillock, now descending into a hollow, swaying from side like a boat on a stormy sea.

Saveliitch, falling over on me every instant, moaned. I pulled down the hood of the kibitka, wrapped myself up in my pelisse, and fell asleep, rocked by the swaying of the vehicle, and lulled by the chant of the tempest.

The horses stopped. Saveliitch was holding my hand.

“Come out, my lord,” said he, “we have arrived.”

“Where have we arrived?” said I, rubbing my eyes.

“At the shelter. God has helped us; we have stumbled right upon the hedge of the dwelling. Come out, my lord, quick; come and warm yourself.”

I descended from the kibitka; the hurricane had not ceased, but it had moderated; sight was useless, it was so dark. The master of the house met us at the door, holding a lantern under the flaps of his long coat, the Cossack cafetan. He led us into a small, though no untidy room, lighted by a pine

torch. In the centre hung a carabine and a high Cossack cap.

Our host, a Cossack from the river Iaik, was a peasant of some sixty years, still fresh and green.

Saveliitch brought in the case containing my tea-service; he asked for fire to make me a few cups of tea, of which I never had greater need. The host hastened to serve us.

“Where is our guide?” I asked of Saveliitch.

“Here, your lordship,” replied a voice from above. I raised my eyes to the loft, and saw a black beard and two sparkling black eyes.

“Well, are you cold?”

“How could I help being cold in this little cafetan full of holes. What’s the use of concealment? I had a touloup, but I left it yesterday in pledge with the liquor-seller; then the cold did not seem so great.”

At this moment our host entered with the portable furnace and boiler, the Russian *Somovar*. I offered our guide a cup of tea. Down he came at once. As he stood in the glare of the pine torch his appearance was remarkable. A man about forty years of age, medium height, slight but with broad shoulders. His black beard was turning grey; large, quick, restless eyes, gave him an expression full of cunning, and yet not at all disagreeable. He was dressed in wide Tartar pantaloons and an old jacket. His hair was cut evenly round.

I offered him a cup of tea. He tasted it and made a grimace.

“Do me the favor, my lord, to order me a glass of brandy; tea is not the Cossack’s drink.”

I willingly granted the request. The host took from the shelf of a closet a bottle and a glass, and going up to him, looking him full in the face, said:

“Ah! ah! here you are again in our district. Whence has God brought you?”

My guide winked in the most significant fashion and replied by the well-know proverb: “‘The sparrow was in the orchard eating flax-seed; the grandmother threw a stone at it, and missed.’ And you? how are all yours?”

“How are we?” said the host, and continuing in proverbs: “‘They began to ring the bell for Vespers, but the priest’s wife forbade it. The priest went visiting, and the devils are in the graveyard.’”

“Be silent, uncle,” said the vagabond.

“‘When there shall be rain, there will be mushrooms, and when there shall be mushrooms, there will be a basket to put them in. Put thy hatchet behind thy back, the forest guard is out walking.’”

“To your lordship’s health.” Taking the glass, he made the sign of the cross, and at one gulp swallowed his brandy. He then saluted me and remounted to his loft. I did not understand a word of this thief’s slang. It was only in the sequel that I learned that they spoke of the affairs of the army of the Iaik, which had just been reduced to obedience after the revolt of 1772. Saveliitch listened and glanced suspiciously from host to guide.

The species of inn where we were sheltered was in the very heart of the steppes, far from the road and every inhabited spot, and looked very much like a rendezvous of robbers. But to set off again on our journey was impossible. The disgust of Saveliitch amused not a little; however, he finally

decided to mount upon the roof of the stove, the ordinary bed of the Russian peasant. The warm bricks of the hot-air chamber of the stove diffused a grateful heat, and soon the old man and the host, who had laid himself on the floor, were snoring. I stretched myself upon a bench, and slept like a dead. Awaking next morning quite late, I saw that the hurricane was over. The sun shone out, the snow extended in the distance like a sheet of dazzling white damask. The horses were already at the door, harnessed. I paid our host, who asked so small a pittance that even Saveliitch did not, as usual, haggle over the price. His suspicions of the evening before had entirely disappeared. I called the guide to thank him for the service he had done us, and told Saveliitch to give him half a rouble. Saveliitch frowned.

“Half a rouble,” said he; “What for? Because you yourself deigned to bring him to the inn? Your will be done, my lord, but we have not a rouble to spare. If we begin by giving drink money to every one we shall end by dying of hunger.”

It was useless to argue with him; my money, according to my promise, was entirely at his discretion. But it was very unpleasant not to be able to reward a man who had extricated me from danger, perhaps death.

“Well,” said I, coolly, “if you will not give him half a rouble, give one of my coats—he is too thinly clad; give him the hare-skin touloup.”

“Have mercy on me! My dear Peter,” said Saveliitch, “what does he want with your touloup? He will drink its price, the dog, at the first inn.”

“That, my good old man, is none of your business,” said the vagabond; “his lordship following the custom of royalty to vassals, gives me a coat from his own back, and your duty as serf is not to dispute, but to obey.”

“You have not the fear of God, brigand that you are,” said Saveliitch, angrily; “you see that the child has not yet attained to full reason, and there you are, glad to pillage him, thanks to his kind heart. You can not even wear the pelisse on your great, cursed shoulders.”

“Come,” said I, “do not play the logician; bring the touloup quickly.”

“Oh, Lord!” said the old man, moaning—“a touloup of hare-skin! Quite new,—to give it to a drunkard in rags.”

It was brought, however, and the vagabond began to get into it. It was rather tight for me, and was much too small for him. He put it on, nevertheless, but with great difficulty, bursting all the seams. Saveliitch uttered something like a smothered howl, when he heard the threads crack. As for the vagabond, he was well pleased with my present. He re-conducted me to my kibitka, and said, with a profound bow: “Thanks, my lord, may god reward you. I shall never forget your goodness.”

He went his way,—I set out on mine, paying no attention to the sullenness of Saveliitch. I soon forgot the hurricane and the guide, as well as the touloup of hare-skin.

Arrived at Orenbourg, I presented myself at once to the General. He was a tall man, bent by age, with long hair quite white. An old, worn-out uniform, recalled the soldier of the times of the Empress Anne, and his speech betrayed a strong German accent.

I gave him my father’s letter.

Reading my name, he glanced at me quickly. “Mein Gott,” said he, “it is so short a time since Andrew Grineff was your age, and now, see what a fine fellow of a son he has. Ah!

time! time!” He opened the letter and began to run it over with a commentary of remarks.

“‘Sir, I hope your Excellency,’—What is this; what is the meaning of this ceremony? discipline, of course before all, but is this the way to write to an old friend? Hum—‘Field-marshal Munich—little Caroline—brother.’ Ah! then he remembers—‘Now to business. I send you my son; hold him with porcupine gloves.’

“What does that mean?” said he, “that must be a Russian proverb.”

“It means,” said I, with an air of innocence, “to treat a person mildly, to give one liberty.”

“Hum!” said he, reading, “‘and give him no liberty.’ No,” he continued, “your proverb does not mean liberty. Well, my son,” said he, having finished the letter, “every thing shall be done for you. You shall be an officer in the —— regiment, and not to lose time, go tomorrow to the fort of Belogorsk, where you will serve under Captain Mironoff, a brave and honest man. There you will see service and learn discipline. You have nothing to do here at Orenbourg, and amusements are dangerous to a young man. Today I invite you to dine with me.”

From bad to worse, thought I. What was the use of being a Sergeant in the Guards almost from my mother’s womb? To what has it led? To the regiment of ——, and an abandoned fortress on the frontier of the steppes!

I dined at the General’s in company with his old Aid-de-camp. Severe German economy reigned at table, and I think the fear of having an occasional guest the more had something to do with sending me to a distant garrison.

The next day I took my leave of the General and set out for Belogorsk.