The Petersburg Corners

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From the Notes of a Certain Young Man

FER RENT: KORNER TO LET, SECOND YARD,
CELLAR; PRICE, ASK FOR APERT'MENT
LADY, AKULINA FEDOTOVNA.

(From a notice on the gate of an apartment house)

I entered a yard and came across a building that was extremely large but quite tumbledown and unsightly. I was overwhelmed by the unbearable smells as well as by all kinds of crying and banging. The house, you see, was filled with men who worked and sang at every window. My eyes lighted upon various dog-eared inscriptions. They read: COFFINS AND WIDOW'S WEEDS FOR SALE OR HIRE; COPPER TINNER HERE; LOOKING FOR FOREIGNERS, TROFIMOV; KATERINA BRAGADINI, LICENSED RUSSIAN MIDWIFE; BOARDING SCHOOL; PRIVATE: ALEKANDROV, KUPRIANOV. Each sign had a hand which pointed to the entrance of a ship or an apartment, along with a picture that helped explain the sign itself, such as uniforms, shoes, scissors, sausage, a samovar with a broken handle, and a ham surrounded by laurel leaves. (Pictures to illustrate texts were used much earlier than we think; they entered literature directly from the signs posted on streets.) I also came across a rouged (one could say reddened) figure of a woman, about thirty years old, poking her head out of a corner window on the fourth floor. At first, I also took her for a sign, and to tell the truth, I was not that far off. The yard itself was absolutely filthy. A puddle had gathered at the gate. It had spilled into the yard, joined forces with the puddles that were standing at each and every door, and now, replete with

gurgling and noises of all kinds, was flowing majestically into a cesspit. There, two pigs and a dog were busy digging holes, while a group of clothes dealers loudly took up this song:

> Enough, my lady, don't get smug!
> Get a move on, wash your mug!

What I saw now, though, was nothing compared to what awaited me. The notice had said that the corner for rent was located in a rear court. So I went through a second gate and came upon a courtyard that was smaller than the first but a thousand times more untidy. This time entire seas of mud and dirt opened up before me. Looking at my shoes in horror, I wanted to turn back. It seemed that I could not step anywhere without getting stuck up to my ears in mud. I clung as close to the wall as possible, if only because the periphery of the yard seemed higher than the middle. Such height proved illusory, however, since it was made up of mounds of garbage, poured (or thrown down) from the windows by the residents who live there.

Having stepped on one such mound, my leg sank up to my knee, while my nose was assaulted by a most sharp and unpleasant smell. I decided to take the advice of a well-known proverb, and leaving the periphery of the yard in peace, I set out for its middle. I followed my instinct for about twenty steps or so and came upon a door with an awning that was right across from the gate. I noticed that my leg, with each step, got stuck less and less. A few steps more and I found myself in front of another door leading to a cellar. I slipped and flew headlong—more accurately, I sailed through the air—downward, it seemed, much like sledders who take to the hills during Mardi Gras.

My shoes struck the steps of the staircase like a drum. I did not sail downward for long because I soon knocked up against something with my foot. I jumped up and took a good look around. It was dark, and the air smelled of rancid water and cabbage. I suddenly realized that here was the vestibule. I looked for the door and stumbled up against a washtub, spilling some water in the process. I then crashed into a pile of wood and almost fell. Something creaked. Something else bumped me on the forehead, but the foyer suddenly became lighter. A woman's figure appeared behind the half-opened door. An old, twisted hag asked me what I was doing. Then,

without waiting for an answer, she announced that she had seen many rogues in her time, that she had nothing for anyone to steal, and that she herself would go and rob someone if it were not a sin and would cause her shame. (You do not as yet know me, dear readers, but if you examine me thoroughly, you will see that I am a most refined man, and that to take me for a thief is a mortal insult to my dress and physiognomy.) I thus could not restrain myself and called the old lady a fool. Now, there are many people in this world, dear readers, who can tolerate being called a "scoundrel" better than being called a "fool." My old lady was apparently one such type. At the very sound of the word, she shuddered terribly and let out a ghastly cry. The dimples of her pitted cheeks became filled with blood.

"A fool, you say?" she exclaimed in a fit of temper. "Me, a fool? No, my dear sir, you are still a bit wet behind the ears to call someone a fool. . . . Why, when I lived in Danilov,[1] the entire province there knew that I was no fool. . . . The sexton's wife herself often came and visited me. . . . Me, a fool, you say? Me, a fool?"

The old lady then set out to prove that she was no fool, not forgetting, in the interim, to call me both a fool and a swindler. Saliva flew from her mouth, splashing my clothes and face and making her look very much like a mad dog.

At first I thought to calm the old woman down, but then I weighed several things in my mind: Time was dear to me, and she might go and complain to my supervisor. I would then have to wait in somebody's office (and perhaps in the clinker itself) until the matter was resolved. So I thought that, for peace of body as well as of mind, I should leave as quickly as possible.

I had already gotten halfway across the yard when the old lady suddenly called out after me and forced me to turn around.

"Well . . . Why have you come? If you're not a thief, tell me why you have come, and to a fool like me, no less! Have you come to visit? I didn't invite you here, after all . . . So, tell me, why have you come?"

I explained to the old woman the reason for my presence, and she immediately became quite sympathetic. What's more, she even fished a copper five-spot out of her pocket and told me to rub it against the bruise

1. Danilov is a town near Yaroslavl, about two hundred miles northeast of Moscow.

on my forehead. I could hardly refuse, if from gratitude alone. (My heart is such, dear readers, that I cannot nurture hatred for long.) I thus forgave the old lady for her fit of temper and set out with her to look at the apartment (the entrance to which, by the way, was through a door right across from the one that had struck me on the forehead).

The old woman led me to a rather large room that was bathed in a suffused light (the kind artists love). The light came from five small windows, which were level with the ground outside but which were also quite removed from the floor inside. The room itself was about thirteen feet high, not unlike a wine cellar or a burial vault. A huge, dilapidated Russian stove stood to the left of the door. What space remained was filled up with various kinds of rubbish and trash. The floor creaked and groaned from my weight. The cracks in it were huge; several planks were so warped that if one stepped on one end, the other end jumped up at you. The walls of the room had once been plastered, and here and there one could still see the cruciform laths that accompanied such work. Some of these laths were now broken and stuck out from the wall. The chief adornment, however, was neither the decorations nor the remnants of plaster but the oblong, bloody (but innocent) stains that bore the traces of fingerprints as well as the thin and brittle shells of sacrifices that had perished long ago. Thick spiderwebs hung in curtains and garlands about the room. Their strands went out in all directions, entangling my face and even getting into my mouth. From under a middle crossbeam, a plank in the ceiling, black and covered with flies, had jumped out at one end and now stuck out at a slant—to the delight of the cellar's tenants, who hung their shirts and towels on it. There was also a rope that extended the entire length of the room. One end was secured with a hook above the door, the other by the upper loop of a wardrobe—or so one could call the oblong hollow thing with several small shelves which stood along the back wall of the room. At one time (so the old lady told me), the object in question had doors, but one of the tenants had torn them off, mounted it on two logs, and thus made himself a bed. Of course, the old lady was quite upset by such rashness but otherwise spoke quite well of the tenant.

"And what does he do?" I asked.

"Who the hell knows what he does," she replied. "But he's a good chap, and with a passport to boot. That's the way I am, like it or nor, even

if you'd give me two rubles silver. You think that ain't much 'round here? Why, there are some places where you can stay the entire night for only ten kopecks. . . . My tenant, it seems, is out for the morning. Look around you: there's his slippers; there's his shirt; there's his collar. . . . Most likely, he went off to the baths; his soap is missing. . . . He's a good tenant, really. He's rarely at home; he only comes here to sleep and to yell at the spiders, so he puts it. I say to him, 'Now look here, Kir'yanych. . . . Don't you ever wish . . . with all this rubbish about . . . don't you wish that you ever get a hold of yourself?'

"'Why should I?' he answers, 'can't make me what I ain't. . . . Just 'cause I see a spider doesn't mean I could kill it.'

"'Well, all right, Kir'yanych,' I say, 'so long as you don't bother anyone.'

"My tenants are good people, God bless them, and my house will last longer because of them. But I'm so glad that he finally got rid of all those spiders. But one will never find a ruble on him—not even for medicine! Just like he lived in a palace or something. . . . There's one thing I don't like about him, though—I can't stand all this rubbish about."

The old lady then pointed to a small, ash-colored, half-shaven mongrel, which had, in the meantime, crawled out from under Kir'yanych's bed (located in the corner to the right of the door) and which was now ruthlessly biting its dirty feet, its teeth abruptly jumping from paw to paw.

"It wouldn't be so bad if he had only one mutt," the old lady continued, "but one time he suddenly had five of them here . . . and did they ever raise a howl. You know why, don't you? They were always hungry, of course. But whether he feeds them or not, he loves them just the same. He says that he cannot live without his dogs. . . . I say to him, 'You can't be serious, Kir'yanych! You must be joking!' but that's the way I am, like it or not. . . . You yourself see what is going on here, but in my own house I see nothing . . . I know nothing. . . . It's better that way . . ."

The old lady waved her hand in such a way that I felt compelled to assure her that I did not raise dogs for a living. She continued:

"I don't know how all this will end. Everyone takes care of himself, and God takes care of all. He has a passport, so I'm not responsible for him. So I just throw up my hands. . . . 'Let him have his dogs,' I say to myself! 'I'll not turn away a good tenant because of that. . . .' And is a dog really

so bad? Such an animal, God forgive me, is just like a man. Sometimes a man is worse; his sins are greater. You yourself should know. Take a man's tongue, for example. A trained dog's got one, too. What's more, it'll hand over whatever it has in its teeth. It'll grovel, too. . . . Like I said, it'll do anything a man will do. Indeed, one's better off with a dog. Well, I see you ain't too fussy about things" (I was petting the little gray dog), "but there are other people, you know. . . . Is it true that dogs can think? . . . Now, that's rubbish as far as I'm concerned.

"I once had this hooligan here. He had been running wild and just plumb burned himself out. Then he shows up here. He takes a look at the apartment, turns around to me, and says, 'I'd really be going to the dogs if I had to live in a kennel like this!' . . . Imagine, 'a kennel,' he says! . . . It takes a real blowhard to say something like that. You know the type: Ambition by the ruble, ammunition by the kopeck. . . . A small apartment is more than it seems. It's cool in the summer, but in the winter, it's so warm that even an official could live here, and look at all the space . . ."

"How much?"

After some haggling, the old lady and I agreed on four rubles a month. She swore that no one had ever gotten off so cheaply and begged me not to tell the other tenants what I was paying.

"I admire your type, my good man," the old lady told me. "True, you have nothing . . . but then where would you get anything at your age! You're still young, true, but you have nothing just the same . . . "

I had no idea what the old lady was leading up to, but I bravely answered, "That's right, nothing."

"But you have to have some furniture. After all, only the real down-and-out sleep on the floor. I'll get you a little bed. . . . I'll bring you some water, too. . . . The bed is wide, built for two" (here the old lady grinned). ". . . So don't you worry, don't you worry at all. I think I'll put it a little farther from the wall . . . yes, yes, I'll put it there myself."

I gave the old woman a deposit and went back for my things. A cabbie charged me about ten kopecks to move it all. When I arrived back at my home—dressed in my winter coat and carrying a small parcel and all my pipes—the bed was already in its place. It stood in a corner on the left, opposite the window and the aforementioned wardrobe. The old lady had somewhat exaggerated the amenities. The bed could indeed accommodate

two people, but only if they took turns. She had also gotten hold of a recently sanded table that she had placed in front: an opening on one side had apparently held a drawer. The cellar, which had somehow lacked something in the morning, now seemed to present a full and completely furnished picture.

There are times when one unwittingly becomes pensive if only because the mind is idle and the soul secure. The new year, a birthday, a sudden funeral, the day one moves to a new apartment—such occasions, I believe, make a person reflective even if he is not accustomed to think at all. It was about nine o'clock in the evening. The Petersburg "white nights" were in full swing, but it remained dark in the cellar. Flies, like swarms of industrious bees, were flying about the ceiling, buzzing shrilly. A grasshopper was singing behind the stove. Something was crawling up my face, while something else was prickling my hand. I sat motionless on the bare boards that made up my bed . . .

The door creaked open, and the room was suddenly filled with sounds much like the clicking of castanets.

Startled, I raised my head.

A gray figure was slowly making his way to the right corner of the room, all the time clicking his fingers and tongue. With an air of complete unconcern, he nodded to me.

I remained silent, however. The gray figure reached the bed, sat down, and, having put his left leg over the thigh of his right, stared for a long time at his shoes, saying slowly and deliberately, "The shoelaces on these things have really had it. . . . I guess it's because I get around a lot. . . . And the shoes aren't much good either. . . . They've even give me corns. . . . Hey, you, you there, you from around these parts?"

"I am."

"Is that so? Your name?"

"Trostnikov."

"I know that name. Beat me, he would, this Trostnikov.[2] Every day we'd go hunting with the master. Sometimes you got unlucky with the

2. The individual is picking up on the word *trost'*, or "cane" in Russian. Nekrasov is also echoing a similar event in Gogol's 1842 play *The Marriage* (*Zhenit'ba*), in which the character Zhevakin (Chew-Man), having heard the name of the administrator, Yaichnitsa (Omelet), replies without thinking, "Yes, I also have had a snack."

rabbit, or you unleashed the dogs too late. Yes sir, he'd go straight up to you, he would. He galloped on his horse once too many times, though. He died right on the spot, that he did. . . . After his death, people said he died before his time! . . . Ha! Served him right! You don't get into fights with people you don't know. Yes sir, Estafy Fomich Trostnikov . . . How could I forget him? Hot-tempered, he was. No doubt you got something from him after he died?"

"I don't know any Trostnikov other than myself."

"Well, now . . . then excuse me, my good sir. . . . And here I thought that you were one of the gentry. . . . Stupidity on my part, sheer stupidity . . . You see, I left the village only three weeks ago. . . . I wouldn't be here at all if it weren't for a certain young lass. . . . 'Dogs and people are bringing us to ruin, dear boy,' she says. 'Don't expect any love from me, dear boy, so long as you've got all these dogs runnin' 'round this house.' We argued and argued. Finally, we decided to hang all the dogs and get out from under our debts." The house serf began to whistle. "And so for about a year afterward, I roamed the towns and villages of our Rissian Empire. . . . And now I've washed up here. . . . One time I was on this big boat. . . . Eighteen days we were at sea. . . . People sang all the time. . . . We even took turns at the oars. . . . What else was there to do, I ask you? . . . And now here I sit like a crab on a pile. But you've got to have a place to call home, I guess. I'm sick of my own grub, but I got to pay for this here 'partment, you see. My shoes are completely worn out; the left one has really fallen apart."

The house serf lit a wick that stood in a pomade jar filled with tallow. Then, from under his bed, he dragged out a small wooden box from which he took out some thread, a small awl, and a hammer. He next took off his left shoe, and commenced repairing it, all the while humming something to himself.

A half hour later, the door opened again. A tall, strapping peasant walked in, carrying a little dog in his hands. He was about fifty years old, with a gloomy face and thick beard, and dressed in a weather-beaten fur half coat. His countenance, movements, and gait revealed that he was an angry man and highly irritable by nature. The peasant went straight to his corner (to the right of the door) and angrily threw down the dog, which had begun to howl. Having crossed himself before the icon that hung over his bed, the peasant sat down, stretched, and yawned. He yelled to

the dog, "Quiet down, or I'll break your neck!" But then he picked it up to pet it. The dog, though, scratched the peasant on the hand, jumped down from the bed, and scratched at the door. The peasant threw the dog a piece of bread, but the latter only sniffed at it. He then called for the dog with all the usual canine names but for some reason distorted them terribly in the process. With each name, the peasant stopped and looked fixedly at the dog. The dog did not quiet down, though, causing the peasant to lose patience. He stamped his foot and soundly cursed the dog for over a half hour (observing no proprieties whatsoever in expressing his indignation). Finally, the dog quieted down and took refuge under the bed. The peasant sprawled out, yawning terribly and repeating in a greatly drawn-out voice, "Lord have mercy! Lord have mer-r-cy!"

"Tell me, Kir'yanych," the house-serf said, "tell me, if you suddenly got hold of, say, ten thousand rubles . . . what would you be doing now?"

"And what would you do with such a sum, may I ask?"

"With ten thousand rubles?! Why, ten thousand rubles is an awful lot of money. You'd probably drink yourself silly, but any house serf worth his salt would want to be wined and dined till his eyes pop out. Everything else could go to hell as far as he'd be concerned! But, then, why talk such nonsense? Only innkeepers take credit these days."

"And your master? Does he take credit, too?"

"Master, what master? He let me off my debts; beyond that, I don't want to know any more about him. . . . And if he didn't let me off, well, what can I say? God be with him. He'd only beat me and then load up my wagon anyway. . . . Ten thousand rubles! Now that would suit me just right. . . . Ten thousand rubles! But, again, why talk such nonsense? Twenty-five kopecks would do splendidly right now. . . . Boy, would they do splendidly . . . if only for a half-pint to chase away the blues."

"Well, then" (the house-serf yawned), "go-o-o buy-y-y some, for God's s-a-ake, go buy some."

"'Buy some,' you say? And just where should I go out and buy some? And with what, may I ask? One pocket is empty, the other has nothing in it. . . . Well, that's not quite true. I've got these here fifty kopecks. . . . (Some poor orphan got a bit close, you see.) . . . You know how it is, after all. You've got to have something to eat. You don't want to die from hunger.

It would be another thing altogether if I could find a job. . . . But, just today alone, I went to five places, and there was nothing. . . . Beggars beware only when masters appear, as the saying goes . . .

"For instance, at one place, this guy comes out, all sickly and thin . . . and looking like he could use a good meal. The room's got these three chairs, with this wretched robe on one of them, one hole on top of another. . . . 'The only thing I ask, my dear sir,' he says to me, 'is that my man be honest, punctual, and polite, and that he neither drink nor steal.' . . . 'Now then, sir, why should I steal?' I says to him. . . . 'You think that I think that it's all right to steal, my good sir? . . . God forbid that one does not look after his own, but he'll not be happy with another's.' I then says to him, 'Is the pay any good?' . . . 'Fifteen rubles,' he says.

"Why, I got so damn mad. . . . 'Fifteen rubles! Is that so, my kind sir,' I says. . . . (Imagine! He has the nerve to tell me, 'don't drink, don't steal.' . . . 'What could I steal from you,' I says to myself, 'it'd be slim pickings for sure!') . . . So, hat in hand, I says to him, 'Much obliged . . . but I'm not going to be kicked around anymore than I am now!' . . . I got out of there as fast as I could. . . . I just bowed and left . . .

"Then I go to this other place. . . . The guy is so fat, you'd think that his mug would burst, that's how red it was. . . . 'I pretty well do everything myself,' he says. 'I don't need no help. . . . Mornings, it's vodka to the clerks, then a run to the cook's for a quick bite to eat. Afternoons, it's vodka to the merchants. After that, I go to bed. . . . As I always say, "off with the shoes, but still pushing the booze." . . . That's about it. That's my life 'round here!' And then he says, 'See what I got here?' and shows me this devil that he's got here right on his shoulders. . . . A devil, a real devil, I tell you . . . but it's not all that strange, I guess. . . . Who's a man, who's a devil, who the hell knows these days? . . . Now this devil, it just sits there, staring into space and smacking its lips. 'Take a good look at him,' the guy says. Then he starts prancing up and down the room, this scarecrow-looking thing all the time on his shoulders. . . . Why, it even made faces and flipped me off, would you believe it? . . . 'Look how much he loves me,' the guy says. . . . 'You'd do well to go get yourself one,' he says. 'They're a lot of fun to have around,' he says. . . . 'But they get sick awfully easy or hurt themselves somehow. . . . But as for a salary, you won't get a penny here, and besides, I have friends and neighbors to help me.' 'Thank you most humbly,' I say. . . . 'Much obliged

to you . . . but I'm not about to kowtow before highbrows or anybody else for that matter, and as for devils like the one you got there, there's nothing to say 'cept I ain't gettin' one.' 'This, my good man,' he says, 'is no devil; it's a munkey.' "

Kir'yanych yawned loudly.

"Hey there, hedgehog head! You sleep all day, but I got some money. . . . I'll give you some, no strings attached. Untie that purse over there. Someday we'll settle accounts in the poorhouse."

"That's just where we'll wind up," Kir'yanych said with a sigh. "I'm ashamed to say we're all sinners, we've angered the Lord God. . . . It's a rotten business, to be sure! Not a penny for tobacco. . . . I'm really in a bind this time. I ate up my last penny in the eating house across the way. . . . It was so long ago that it would hurt my nose just to smell food now . . ."

"No tobacco nowhere!" repeated the house serf sadly. After some silence, he added, "But then, I ask you, who among our kind ever has any money? Everybody knows how much we've got. It's not worth even sewing a purse for—we just roam the world. Now I'm sure it's another thing altogether with the *master* over there."

Apparently, the last remark was meant for me. My suspicion proved correct. The house serf had wound up in these unhappy depths quite unwillingly. Full of hope, he had just arrived from the village and had rented a "corner" before he started looking for work. The day was solemn in the full sense of the word: Seven bottles were polished off at his housewarming.

"We drank only five," said Kir'yanych.

"Seven, hedgehog head!"

"I said five! I remember it as though it was yesterday. The flies and mosquitoes were biting like mad!"

Kir'yanych and the house serf argued hotly about the number of bottles.

"Well, no matter how many bottles there were," the house serf concluded, "I only want to say that we Russians have this custom: We'll spend our last kopeck to celebrate a housewarming; otherwise, a new apartment will not be a happy one."

"And the Good Lord will not forget who does what is proper," remarked Kir'yanych.

"Listen here, pal," I said.

The house serf jumped up and bowed respectfully.

"What can I do for you, my good sir?"

"Here's some money, my man. Go buy me some wine."

"Yes, sir. Now that's a fifth you'd want to be ordering, sir?"

"Get a fifth."

The house serf wound some thread about the shoe that was falling apart. He put it on his left foot, seized his cap, and took off at a run. Within five minutes, the table in front of my bed held wine, two herrings, half a dozen cucumbers, three pounds of black bread, and four packages of snuff. The house serf gave me back the change, respectfully excusing himself that he had incurred some additional expenses along the way. Kir'yanych meanwhile went to the landlady to get some glasses.

"First, the host," said the house serf, pouring the wine.

I refused, however.

"Now you're not going to say no!" exclaimed the house serf with a mock horrified air. "What kind of a guy are you who don't drink? . . . As the proverb says, 'Hit the tavern, smoke some tobacco, drink some wine, beat up some beggars . . . and you'll wind up either in hell or a foreign kingdom.' Don't you want to wish us well, after all!"

"Now then, you wouldn't be insinuating something, would you, now?" added the phlegmatic Kir'yanych. "Why, your face is as ashen as a scorched birch."

But I again refused.

"Well, there's nothing much you can do about him," said the house serf, smiling slyly. "After all, if he don't want to drink, he shouldn't have to." And with that, the house serf drank his wine, held his glass over his head for a moment, and said in a drawn-out voice, "God grant that my soul get to heaven, right to the pearly gates themselves! Hey there, Kir'yanych!"

Kir'yanych heard nothing, however. He was looking down at the floor, stamping his feet, hopping from place to place, and shouting, "Someone get me a light! Someone bring me a candle!"

Finally, he stamped his foot with terrible force, wheezed solemnly, and returned to the table. His face was also solemn.

"Enough of you killing spiders, Kir'yanych. Better they crawl the walls. They won't let you sleep as it is. . . . Now then, let's hold off on the vodka until it's really cold!"

"It wouldn't be a sin to drink it now," Kir'yanych said smugly. "May the Lord grant health to the kind man!" He then crossed himself and drank down his glass.

After a second round, the house serf reached for his balalaika, struck up a trepak, and began to sing:

On Monday
Savka mills the seed.
On Tuesday
Savka saddles the steed.
From Wednesday to Thursday
Savka serves his lord.
And also every Thursday
Bakes bread flat as a board.
On Friday
Savka grooms the master's dogs
But eats worse than his hogs.
On Saturday
Savka scratches his snout
Enduring the blows of the master's knout.
But on Sunday
Savka is lord and king,
Drunk as a skunk
And ready to sing!

There was a knock at the door, followed by loud grumbling.

"Well now, master, you're really in luck today," the house serf exclaimed.

"Now we'll have some fun. The teacher is coming!"

"What kind of teacher is he?"

The door flew open and banged against the wall with a deafening sound. Something akin to a whiskey bottle entered the room, swinging from side to side, a human head taking the place of a cork.[3] This is how

3. Compare Gogol's description of the departmental director in his 1835 piece *Notes of a Madman* (*Zapiski sumasshedshego*): "He was a cork, not a director. . . . A simple everyday cork, nothing more."

I first thought to describe a man in a light green coat that was without a collar but which he wore draped about his shoulders. The collar, it seemed, had been used to repair the other parts of the coat and had been missing since 1819. There exists a vast difference between people who are drinkers and those who are genuine drunkards. The former reek of wine in well-known situations, their smell being tolerable even to those who see themselves as proper people. Such drinkers are typically the souls of discretion. They know (and do not forget to use) the tried-and-true measures by which they can dull the stinging sharpness of their breath. They choose cloves, tea (minimal strength), Hoffman drops, peppermints, violet root, and finally onions or garlic. The "drunkards," however, constantly reek of wine even though they haven't touched a drop for a week. Their smell is easily distinguished. It is not so much an odor; instead, one feels as if one's nose sniffed a wine barrel that has been plugged up for quite some time and which has suddenly been popped open. Such a reeking smell attended the green man, and I immediately sensed that he belonged to the second class of drinkers. In fact, as I looked intently into his face, I saw that he was not altogether unfamiliar to me. I had once passed a building with a sign that read PUBLIC HOUSE. A man lay outside its entrance. He was stretched out, flat on his back, and wore a dilapidated jacket with white buttons. His eyes were closed; obviously, he was asleep. The hot summer sun shone directly on his face, etching fantastic designs on his glassy but terribly haggard face. A thousand flies were strolling up and down his face, while a thousand more were circling his head, humming incessantly and waiting their turn. For a long time, I looked at the man's face with a heavy heart. (As you have already guessed, dear readers, I am a sentimental soul.) It engraved itself sharply on my memory. Now the new arrival in our room was dressed somewhat differently and seemed a little older. His coat was torn from behind, about three quarters of the way. Beyond this, his apparel included some reddish brown slippers with patches in three layers, and a dirt gray object that stuck out whenever his coat flew open. He was about sixty years old. His face had nothing special about it. It was yellow, glassy, and wrinkled. His chin had several warts, which doctors call "mouse moles." These, in turn, had red hairs crawling out of them in a circle just as sextons and noncommissioned officers sometimes grow for good luck. There was a scar on his nose, and his eyes were gray and lackluster. His hair (what a strange thing that was!) was black, thick, and almost without a

part. One could almost call it handsome, if it were not for two or three bald spots, which were the size of a penny but which had been the doing neither of Mother Nature nor of goodwill. In general, however, the green man presented a sharp picture to the eye. He was not unlike an actor who has carried some favorite and well-learned role into life. His movements were comic to the point of caricature, inevitable for a man unsteady on his legs. There was also something staid about them, though, akin to a feeling of personal dignity and worth. Even when he spoke about complete trifles, he had the stance of a person who is ready to state for all to hear that virtue is praiseworthy and that evil is vile. There was a certain incoherence in the green man that made him extremely funny.

The house serf, already laughing, hailed him with his usual greeting:

"Hello, there, red-nosed one!"

From all indications, the green man became quite angry but checked his anger right away. He gestured toward the bottle and said in an affectionate voice, "Greetings, Egorushka. Won't you pour me a little glass?"

Slyly and without raising any suspicion, the house serf poured a glass of water from a clay mug that had been standing on the table. He gave it to the green man. The green man downed it in one gulp. The house serf and Kir'yanych guffawed loudly, stamping their feet on the floor. The green man stood motionless for a moment; then, opening his mouth wide and with glass in hand, he began to rail at them.

"Now look here, pal, don't you go around joking with me! Who gave you the right to poke fun at me? Why, just today, I was at a house . . . an honest-to-god gentleman, a cavalier of some kind, he was. . . . You hear me? A real cavalier. They wouldn't let the likes of you into that house; you'd never get past the foyer. But I got into the study. This cavalier, he says to me, 'I feel for you, Grigory Andre'ich (you hear that, he called me by my patronymic!). You've turned into a real drunkard. Look out or you'll let wine ruin you completely,' he says to me. 'This I did not expect from you,' he says. . . . 'Now sit there,' he says, 'and we'll talk about the good old days.' . . . Then he ordered a small carafe to be brought . . .

"So I began to talk. . . . I know what to talk about. . . . I was acquainted with Izmailov, after all.[4] . . . I was always welcome at Gavrila Romanovich

4. Nekrasov's "green man" recalls Gogol's Khlestakov, who, in his 1836 play *The Inspector General* (*Revizor*), says, "I was acquainted with famous actors . . . and vaudevillians, I was on friendly terms with Pushkin."

[Derzhavin's]. I used to live at Yakolev's. . . . Now there was a great man, in case you didn't know! . . . Besides tea, Yakolev and I would eat together and drink some vodka. So that's where I've come from. So, brother, don't you go around playing tricks on me. . . . Why, you know what kind of students I've had? . . . I once had one. . . . Whew, was he an ace! . . . He was just a little boy when he came to me. . . . I used to call him my 'watchman,' I really did. . . . He wouldn't let anyone get away with a thing. . . . Now, when we start recalling old times, we always wind up laughing. . . . Once he says to me, 'It's about time for me to make my way in the world. . . . You've certainly whipped me enough for things.' . . . 'I,' he says, 'will never forget you,' and then he shoves twenty-five kopecks into my hand. . . . 'One fights a man when he's young,' he says, 'but thanks him when he's old.' . . . So now you know how I get my money, pal . . .

"But you . . . you who go to work everyday. What do you get? Five rubles a year, but five slaps a day, that's what.[5] . . . I once had many talents. I used to take snuff, pal, not from a thing like this (he tapped a birch snuffbox). . . . No sir, it was gold . . . indeed it was. . . . Just a pinch from it cost eight hundred rubles . . . and all that for nothing, mind you! . . . And then there was my poetry. . . . Let me tell you about the poetry I wrote, pal . . ."

I was so intrigued by the green man's story that I had to know more about him. Undoubtedly, he made up a lot as he went along, but there was an element of truth in his words. Long ago, some forty years past, the green man had graduated from the seminary and began teaching in some remote institution. He did his job well. True, he sometimes indulged in an extra glass or two, but he always smelled more of cloves than of wine. The morals of his charges were never in any danger. The school administrators were rather lenient toward him because they sensed that he was a gifted and capable man. They also tried desperately to restrain the young teacher's passion for drink. But such passion was stronger than the green man's superiors, no matter how noble and supportive they were. After some time, people noticed that when the green man appeared, the classroom was invariably filled with a smell that might serve as a bad example to the students. To complicate matters, the green man once came to class

5. The "green man" is quoting from Denis Fonvizin's 1783 play *The Minor* (*Nedorosl'*).

without a tie and hardly able to stand on his legs. Then, instead of greeting his superior, who happened to be sitting at the edge of a bench, the green man turned to him with this question: "Hey, you there, which verbs take the genitive case? . . . Aha! So you don't know! Well, then, on your knees, sir!"

Needless to say, the green man was dismissed, and his place was given to a young man who fully restored the respect due to the position of a teacher. His successor did not miss a class and was respectful to his elders. Also, he very soon rejected the disquieting characteristics of the single state by marrying the boss's sister. Although the green man had been dismissed from his post, he received a small pension, the patronage of a certain kind man who respected his previous service. What followed was not surprising, however. Idleness strengthened the green man's passion for wine and brought him to the situation we have just now seen. The green man led a most interesting life in the cellar. Several days before the first of each month, the landlady dutifully kept track of his presence, taking care that on the last day of the month, he always got drunk at home. The morning after, she set out for him and counted out the money that was due her. The green man would take what remained and disappeared—God knows where, for several days at a stretch. When he returned, he was usually battered, filthy, and penniless. For the rest of the month, the green man would, almost on a daily basis, make the rounds of his former colleagues and students (who by this time were adults). . . . Everywhere, he got a glass of wine, sometimes two. On those rare occasions when he got nothing, the green man left, raining down curses on one and all, and long thereafter, he would lie on his bed, angrily expostulating about human ingratitude.

Regarding poetry, it is true that the green man did write verse. Such a phenomenon is not at all that surprising in our Russian Empire, since almost everyone writes (or has written) poetry. No one is banned from doing such a thing, you see. The green man did not delay in proving this final part of his tale. From under his slippers, he pulled out two very thin and shiny pamphlets (each consisted of twelve pages). He put them before the eyes of the house serf and, moving his index finger down each line of the title page, said with a triumphant air, "You see, you see that there, you see it? . . . Huh? . . . Right there, see that too?"

But the house serf angrily pushed the pamphlet away from him, saying heatedly, "Don't poke that thing in front of me! What the hell are you poking it at me for?! I'm not one of the gentry, pal. I can't read. Since when can people like me read? 'Learn to read, forget your feed'. . . . that's what we say 'round here. . . . You want to show me something, fine; well, go get a ribbon or some other decoration for it! I daresay that if you ever got such a thing, you probably lost it or gave it away. . . . I doubt if you're that good, though. . . . Knowing you, if you couldn't eat it, you'd sell it. . . . By the way, while we're on the subject, who ate my loaf of bread the other day?"

"I sold it, it's as simple as that," the green man answered dolefully. "After all, do you think we take snuff from golden boxes or wear precious stones on our fingers?"

He then waved his hand, poisoning the last bit of fresh air with a prolonged sigh.

Meanwhile, I glanced at the green man's pamphlets. One of them joyfully commemorated the name day of an important person of the time; the other celebrated the marriage of the same person. Both pamphlets were written in a high-flown verse and sang the praises of the green man's patron. I read aloud the following:

> In the good old days, pamphlets such as these inundated Russian literature. Indeed, one could say that Russian literature began with eulogistic hymns for solemn occasions. At that time, the poet always had to have an official inspiration in mind. When he was successful, he was fed; and when he was not, he was beaten—often unmercifully. Everyone knows the anecdote about Tredyakovsky whom Volynsky punished with his own hand because the poet did not prepare an ode for some great holiday.[6] The poet Petrov served as the official bard for the feats of Potemkin. That is why he always

6. Most likely, Nekrasov is repeating the incident as told by Pushkin and published by Belinsky in an article in 1843. The story is not true, though. Vasily Tredyakovsky was punished by Artemy Volynsky, the cabinet minister under Anna Ivanovna, for complaining about him to Ernst Biron, a leading figure and personal favorite of the empress. Actually, the event was of minor significance because both Volynsky and Tredyakovsky opposed the so-called German yoke—the entourage of German statesmen and the like—who held sway in Anna's court. Also see Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 7 (1955), 16.

marched at the rear of the army during the general's campaigns.[7] Petty bigwigs and swaggering lackeys soon followed the example of the greats. They too had their poets. They were delighted to receive odes on their birthdays, name days, marriages, christenings of their children, the attainments of ranks or decorations, and, in general, all other solemn occasions of their lives. For such verse, they allowed the poet to sit at the far end of the table. They let him eat with the "master" and not the servants (as was customary or ordinary those days); they even let the poet kiss their hand. The powers that be also gifted the poet with a ring, a snuffbox, or money, or they made the bard drink until he got drunk and then ordered him to get up and dance. The poet, in turn, wrote to honor such individuals as benefactors, patrons, protectors, father-commanders, and even gracious well-wishers. This type of writing began to decline in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The year 1812 dealt it a mortal blow, and the romanticism that appeared in the twenties finished it completely. So-called ceremonial poetry is now considered synonymous with "versemongering." So do our customs and mores change. A pamphlet filled with doggerel, replete with pompous, senseless, and base flattery, is no longer rewarded with a ring, a snuffbox, fifty or a hundred rubles—not to mention the title of poet. Indeed, the decline of such verse is probably one reason why our old boys, those belated remnants of the good old days, are so angry at our times, and why, with rapture and melancholy, they recall their own era in which, they insist, everything was so much better than it is now.

"What a heap of nonsense!" said the house serf, noticing that I had become engrossed in my reading. "That you should even want to dirty your hands with such tripe!"

"Nonsense! You say nonsense!" shouted the green man so loudly that I dropped the pamphlet and looked him squarely in the face. "You should be as stupid as this nonsense! Why, when I presented verse like this to his

7. The enterprising poet Vasily Petrov—often the butt of ridicule, lampoon, and parody—also wrote hymns to Catherine the Great and others in her court. Additionally, he served as General Potemkin's secretary.

excellency, he kissed me on the lips, sat me down next to him on the couch, and bade me read it to him, yes he did. . . . As I was reading along, he took some snuff and said to me, 'Here, take some.' 'No, thank you,' I said, 'I don't take snuff and much less from the snuffbox of your excellency . . .' 'Take some!' he replied. 'An educated man must always have some snuff!' and then he gives me some from his own snuffbox. . . . Why, I've been taking snuff ever since. He even ordered me to be a guest at his table. . . . You should have seen how I was treated, taken in. . . . And what guests they were! . . . Even his excellency's boss came over and kissed me. . . . I wrote for him, too. . . . I used to drink myself silly. . . . I spoke to them as if we were equals; but they, for their part, did nothing but laugh. . . . I got invited everywhere. . . . So, take that for 'nonsense,' my dear sir!"

Something akin to emotion flashed in the green man's eyes. He stood there (in the middle of the room) for a long time, his hand raised. Suddenly, he shook his head and said in a voice that recalled Manfred begging relief from heaven.[8] "Pour me one, Egorushka, my good fellow. Please, I beg you, just a small glass!"

The house serf poured a glass of wine and called the green man over to him, but he now embarked on a new (and cruel) farce. He brought the glass close to the lips of the green man, but when the latter extended his lips, all ready to drink, the house serf suddenly pulled the glass away and drank the wine himself. The green man did not get angry, however. The smell of raw vodka had vanquished his dignity and put to rest what little sense of self-respect he had had the moment before. Humbly, he begged the house serf "not to joke around."

"Dance a bit and I'll bring you a new glass!"

The green man began to dance without delay. The house serf, though, kept repeating, "More! More, I tell you! You're quite spirited today! Even better than yesterday! Still a little more!" The house serf then poured some salt into a glass, added some dirt from around the room, filled what space remained with wine and began to mix it altogether . . .

I begged the house serf not to give the horrid mixture to the green man, saying that he was drunk enough already.

8. Nekrasov is referring to Lord Byron's 1817 play *Manfred*, in which the hero asks the spirits for oblivion.

"Drunk, you say? Well, will you hear that now—he's drunk, you say! That's a remark I would expect to hear only from lasses or learned people," answered the house serf, all the time mixing the contents. "Just because a man falls down doesn't mean he's drunk; just because he's got a loose tongue doesn't mean he's drunk either. Now, if two people have to help a man get about, and a third has to get his legs moving, now that's what I'd call drunk!"

"And if he lies there without breathing—that too means he's drunk," Kir'yanych chimed in, having been awakened by the capering of the green man. "Whew-i—i-ee! Lor-r-r-d hav-ve mer-er-cy!" he intoned.

The green man drank down the glass the house serf had prepared and then praised its contents. Kir'yanych and the house serf did the same. Not surprisingly, the cellar was becoming noisy. The green man graciously offered to dance again, but this time he insisted on music. The house serf again reached for his balalaika, struck up a song, and, tapping his feet, even thought up a little dance for the green man to perform. Meanwhile, Kir'yanych had crushed yet another spider. He was in unusually high spirits and greeted each caper of the green man with grunting and guffaws. The green man did not need any accompaniment, however, because he was accompanying his dancing with the hiccups, curses, and cries typical of Russian burping. More interesting for the moment, was the house serf's song:

At age fifteen, not more
Little Liza made for shore
And wandering though an open grove
She met a beetle, black as a stove.
This beetle had a mustache
and black curly hair.
"I'll take him home," said Liza,
"And give him my care.
Perhaps he'll eat sugar,
Eat, eat, my beetle fair."
But when her evil aunt
Saw Liza's friend,
She grumbled at her niece,

"Just what do you intend?"
She sternly ordered Liza,
"Throw it out the door!"
"But I didn't obey her order,"
Liza later swore.
"I put it in my bed instead,
And kept it warm, content, and fed,
And by this time next fall
I'll count my beetles one and all."
. . .
And so here's the lesson, lassies,
For it has forever been said:
Never go to the shore alone,
Or put a beetle under your bed!

Suddenly, a penetrating, inhumanly savage cry was heard outside our room and put a momentary halt to our merrymaking. It was a cry the likes of which I had never heard before. It was like the caw of a raven sensing a storm; the chatter of a wood grouse running through a field; the neighing of a proud steed, escaping the lasso and sensing freedom and the field; the squeal of a piglet that is being roasted alive; and the yell of a man who is being lynched. We hardly had time to exchange glances when an old woman rushed in. Her face was so frightened that I hardly recognized her as our landlady. She was wringing her hands, crying, "Help me, my dear sirs. Help me, I beg of you!"

"What's going on?" I asked in bewilderment.

"Ah, it's nothing," the house serf answered coldly. "Is she drunk again?"

"Yes, she's done it again. . . . Boy, is she drunk this time. She's got froth around her mouth and everything. . . . She's even grabbed a knife. 'I'll kill myself!' she says, 'and stab you all to boot.' Good sir, Egor Kharitonych, what am I to do with her?!"

"She should go ahead and do it."

"I couldn't agree more. It would serve her right. One couldn't hope for a better ending, but I'm afraid it will never happen. . . . And it wouldn't be

good for the tenants. . . . The police would come. She must have drunk up whatever money she had. Her coat alone was worth fifty rubles. . . . Look around, it seems that's what she's done. She doesn't worry about her soul, that's for sure. She won't even have a shroud to bury her, if she keeps this up. My dear sir, Egor Kharitonych, she won't be buried with anything at all."

The house serf, Egor Kharitonych, and Kir'yanych left with the landlady, Fedotovna. My curiosity compelled me to follow after them. We passed through a door (the very one with which, if my readers will remember, I had become well acquainted earlier) as I entered the quarters of the landlady. Her room was exactly like ours but furnished somewhat differently and better. Beds stood in two corners of the room, while the other two corners were fenced off by screens that had been glued together with paper from an old journal. (One could still read the pages.) There were also narrow shelves that resembled those in peasant huts. They hung down about a foot from the ceiling, extended the length of the walls, and held all kinds of clay and wooden dishware. What was going on there is worthy of a precise and skillful description. A woman was rolling on the floor in the middle of the room. She bore the full and youthful bosom of a Balzac heroine. Her cheeks were puffy and as dark red as a beet. She kept crying out in a choking and shrilly penetrating voice, "A . . . a . . . a . . . oi . . . My dear sir! . . . A . . . oi . . . I'm dying! . . . Soon I will die! I will die! . . . . . a!" Foam was rushing out of her mouth as if she were a crazed horse; it fell in blobs on the floor and smeared her face. Her hands flew about wildly and were drenched in blood because she had bitten them in her frenzy. She was surrounded by three women; two were somewhat older, the other was middle-aged—all were pregnant. With every contortion of the screaming woman, they jumped back in fear; with every burst of frenzy, they cried out in one voice, "Oi!" I should also mention that from behind one of the screens (to the left of the door), I could hear a thin little voice singing, with complete unconcern, a ditty our Petersburg Germans dearly love:

Mein lieber Augustin,
Alles ist weg!

Suddenly, the hysterical woman shrieked with a deafening cry. She moaned, "Oh, I feel so sick! Oh, dear sir, I'm so sick! Lord God, let my soul go in peace. . . . A knife! . . . Get me a knife! . . ." She then got on her feet.

The knife lay on the floor. The woman rolled over it several times, but no one had the courage to pick it up. The house serf now stepped forward and, having seen the knife, knitted his brows and yelled severely, "And what do you need a knife for, you damn witch! For what? I'll give you a knife! . . . Kir'yanych! Hey there, Kir'yanych! . . . Good God! You're just as bad as she is! Get the hell over here! . . . We got to take this woman and—"

But, at that moment, Kir'yanych was jumping up and down, banging his shoes terribly and trying to catch a spider that was crawling up the wall. He heard nothing.

The house serf spit, slowly untied his belt, and, throwing the woman a savage look, yelled with all his might, "Tie her up!"

The body of the hysterical woman suddenly began to tremble. The frenzied expression on her face was now replaced by a timid and imploring look. Like a leaf falling from a tree, she fell upon the feet of the house serf and plaintively asked for mercy.

"Back to your place!" her tamer cried solemnly, with a tragic gesture of his hand. "Back now, you old piece of gingerbread!" (The poor woman was pockmarked—the Russian has a knack for words.) "Back to work!" he added, stamping his foot. "Just make a sound, one more sound, and I'll tie you up and throw you into the cesspit to boot."

The landlady sat the woman down and set her to work. The now timid soul began to sew without stopping, fearing to raise her eyes to the house serf who, by contrast, was staring at her like an owl (so the proverb goes). He repeated in various tones, "No more nonsense now, no more."

I feel that I must tell now what I myself learned subsequently. In reality, Terentievna was not a "hysterical type" (so we call a Russian woman who has fallen victim to some stupidity or other). Rather, she was prone to delirium tremens which seized her regularly, particularly after a weeklong bout of heavy drinking. The house serf had been summoned repeatedly to save the day by the same (and most inexpensive) means. He invariably returned the frenzied woman to a more docile state and, at times, even knocked the tipsiness out of her. Whether the house serf did such a thing by means of an unusually sharp voice, a fierce glance (so the landlady

thought), a special blessing of the fates, or simply by whatever the situation required—no matter how he did it, he enjoyed the endless admiration of the landlady and the women tenants for what they saw as his "magnetic powers." The house serf even thought to put his influence over Terentievna to his personal advantage. After he had calmed her down, he gave her some of his own underwear to mend. While she sewed, he repaired his shoes, standing there naked, holding his left leg quietly in its pant leg and not daring to move from the spot until she had finished.

On the way back to my quarters, I again noticed the screens from which the thin little voice had sounded. I now caught sight of a nice-looking young woman, who, like her colleagues in the cellar, was distinguished by the amplitude of her pregnancy.

"Why are they all pregnant?" I asked when we had entered the room.

"We all know why," the house serf answered. "Say you have this cook living with you . . . maid . . . some kind of a mam'selle, married or otherwise. Suddenly . . . You know how it is. . . . They can't hold off any longer. . . . So where do they go? . . . You can't march off into the street. You just don't do that. Fedotovna is a good soul too . . . an ordinary type. . . 'Come stay with me a little, my sweet! I will not hurt you!' someone says. And off to her place for a while. They would go to her place. And there—the deed was done. . . . Fedotovna liked it like that, pure and simple. . . . Now there was a woman! She'd put her heart and soul into everything she did. . . . You could search the whole wide world, but you'd never find one like her. They say there are two just like her in Moscow, but they can't be as good. . . . They'd probably bust up anybody they'd meet . . .

"One of the women died in childbirth the other day. . . . She was all in tears. She just moaned and groaned. . . . Fedotovna cleaned up everything neat as a pin. . . . She stuffed all the trash and stuff into her trunk. . . . 'What am I to do with my things,' she said, 'a deceased woman without kith or kin? They should be given to the poor. . . . Let them all pray for a dead woman. . . . I'll take nothing from them now, nothing, it will be of no use to me." Then she summoned the beggars, all of them young boys and girls . . . each one smaller than the other. . . . She asked, 'Is there any wine around?' . . . Now, there were only these two men. . . . They had already eaten . . . but they gave her something to drink, and would you believe it, off she went and stole one of their handkerchiefs. . . . Now, don't you

leave your place. . . . Hey there, Kir'yanych, what do you say to another glass?!"

The house serf went up to the table and gasped in horror—the bottle was empty. Cursing, he kicked the green man repeatedly, hoping to wake him. The latter, however, was sleeping heavily, unconcerned as a babe in the middle of the floor. He did not move. Rather, in his stupor, he responded to the house serf's kicks with verses, taken from his pamphlet commemorating someone's name day, replete with well-wishes and blessings. I think he was raving; after all, no one in his right mind could possess such magnanimity.

"Ain't much can be done for a dog who keeps licking his tail," the house serf said with touching sympathy. He had his hat in one hand and in the other the bottle. "And just when I'm ready to lend him money, the taverns are closed!"

"And where are you off to, hedgehog face? Better tomorrow you eat with that money!"

"What will be, will be! And is that a good enough reason not to drink now? . . . Well, perhaps it is."

"One should remember," Kir'yanych said with an inner joy, "that 'the naked shed their tears, but God will calm their fears.'"

After the first glass, the house serf and Kir'yanych confessed how they had felt toward each other the first time they had met. After the second, they cried, hugged, and kissed repeatedly. After the third, they quarreled, and after the fourth, this modest drama followed the natural (and inevitable) outcome, which I here relate so artlessly: Our heroes got into a fight . . .

When I woke up the next morning, I became interested in snatches of a conversation:

"You got any dogs here?"

"Yes sir, I do. A pair of them, both reddish with spots . . ."

"Are the spots gray, perhaps? . . . Are their ears torn? . . . And does one have a small black spot on its tail?"

"It just might have. Why don't you take a look?"

When a person first awakes, he is often very lazy. I surely wanted to take a look at our early visitor, but I also was not up to turning over and opening my eyes. By the way, I later met this individual face-to-face. He is

a most interesting gentleman! I'll introduce him to you when the opportunity arises.

We now bid farewell to Trostnikov's notes. (To explain precisely who this Trostnikov is would cause us to stray far from our subject; thus we do not include it here.) We have been proud, however, to have taken an excerpt from his writings and to have presented it for the gracious attention of our readers.[9]

—N. Nekrasov

9. It is of interest to note that "The Petersburg Corners," together with the novel *The Thin Man* (*Tonkii chelovek;* 1853–55), were the only two prose works that Nekrasov did not reject in later life.