

AN IDYLL FROM VILLAGE LIFE

by Leo Tolstoy

Do not play with fire - you'll get burnt.

CHAPTER I

Pyotr Yevstratevich is now a big man - a superintendent. It is easy to say: as chief over two villages, he rules like a nobleman. One son a merchant, a second a government official; it is said he gave five thousand to his daughter for her dowry; yes, and he himself lives in luxury like a baron and sends money to Moscow every year.

And one such as our friend is he of peasant-stock, the son of Yevstrat Tregubov. Yet he was not the son of Yevstrat, he was commonly regarded as Yevstrat's son but this was the real state of things: As the saying goes, whosoever the bull, the calf is ours.

And it's a strange piece of work, how this sin came about. It caused great wonderment at the time. Then the people lived more simply and such things were remarkable.

Babushka Malanya, Pyotr's mother, and still living, makes her home with her brother Romasha. Her son would have gladly taken her-she wouldn't hear to it. "I," says she, "was born a peasant and I will die a peasant-so much the less sin. As long as I have any strength I will help my brother, look after his grand children, bring something to make the wheels run easier: but Petrusha has grown strong: the strong have the greater sin."

And that's the way she lives, getting presents from her son, sending him her thanks in her letters, and she has great joy when on a holiday she puts on her white kerchief, dresses herself all clean, takes her cane, goes to early mass and in the afternoon gets hold of someone who knows how to read and write and asks them to read the book. In the book is printed "The Dream of the All-holy Virgin Mother of God," a passing pilgrim woman had given it to her; but more often than anything else she liked to have the Psalms read to her. Moreover where she was, no appeal for charity was ever refused: she always let anyone stay over night and she went without being summoned where there was a death in any house. Everybody, young and old, in the village has the highest respect for Malanya not because of her son but because of her goodness.

What does youth mean? Now Babushka Malanya would not know herself as she was forty years earlier. At that time they did not call her babushka- granny- but Malanka affectionately, because she the lead among folk dancers, and leader in all games in the village. Then, up to the time of that happening there was none like her, she was just the wildest tomboy that ever was. She did not come from our

village but from Mayevka. Father Yevstratov betrothed her to his son out of old friendship or because there were no marriageable girls to suit him at home; only she was an outsider. The old man was still in the prime of life and he took for his son another piece of land and lived excellently: had eight horses and stallions, two cows, had beehives (even now theirs are the best), the farming was under God's blessing and there were no troubles; the husband's mother had charge of the house, one doing the work for three; moreover, their sister, a soldier's wife, lived with them and helped. So the young wife didn't see much that needed doing.

According to old custom she was married at fifteen.

She was nothing but a young girl. At first when she used to help the soldier's wife carry the bucket of water she would sway like a reed. And she had no love for her husband at all; just simply was afraid of him. Whenever he came near her she would begin to cry, pinch him and even bite him. So that the first part of the time, his shoulders and his arms were all black and blue. In this way for two years she did not love him at all. But still as she was a pretty little woman and gentle and from the house of good people she was not put to doing any hard work and little by little after three or four years she began to improve: she grew taller and filled out, got a good color; she ceased to be afraid, began to get used to him and so finally got so used to him that she would cry when his father sent him off to the city.

One time there came into their hut the joker Pyotra and said :-"There, bawl for someone, mourning for that freckled devil."

And he wanted to have some sport with her. "Freckled or not, it would be better for you if you were decent. And here's something for you," said she and slapped him under the nose.

In fact there was no getting ahead of her: everyone wanted to sport with her; even the old men pursued her. She jested with them all but was faithful to her husband, even though her husband was often away from home. As for work there was no other woman like her: in the haying field, in crop-gathering she had a way with her that got her ahead of all the rest, she would tire them out and then go home and sing songs and dance, leading the folk dancers.

"Why don't you have a baby instead of gallivanting round so," the old woman used to say-"I'd be glad enough even if I had to rock a grandchild, truly, I would."

"And why should I be glad," she'd say, "one feels ashamed so before folks. The other day the young girls were coming from church and they prayed that they might be married in a year and then have children. Such kinds I guess have husbands that live at home."

When she thinks of her husband she howls again and begins to reckon. Of course for women to gallivant for a year or two isn't a crime; well, but when a woman gets stout and doesn't have a baby, why, people begin to make fun of her.

This was the reason Malanka kept getting more and more disgusted when her

father-in-law sent her husband off. The old man was a clever wheelwright of the old school and knew good people. 'When Yevstratka got hold of it, his father began to send him out to earn money. And that very summer when the sin happened, the old man hired him out more than a hundred versts away till Intercession Day and took a hired man himself. He hired his son out for one hundred and twenty rubles and paid his hired man thirty-two rubles and mittens to boot -so of course it paid.

She was homesick for her husband. Young thing, full of red blood, a woman in the prime of life, living well and eating meat; one was after her, then another and she wouldn't see her husband for six months.

She'd come in at evening, have supper, clutch the bed and go to the soldier's wife in the lumber-room. "It's terrible, Nastasyushka," she'd say, "to be alone." And again she'd keep complaining to the wall: "It seems to me all the time," she'd say, "that someone is trying to get hold of my legs."

CHAPTER II

THEY had been celebrating the Festival of Peter and Paul; the women had put away in chests their fine kerchiefs, sarafans and shirtwaists and then they had gone to the pond again to thump clothes with sticks; all the guests had scattered; only the bartender was left in the tavern; the peasants had taken their eye-openers, as it might happen; some in the afternoon, some in the morning had whetted the scythes, tied up the blueberries on stakes and gone out over the meadows like bees from a hive. Everywhere over the dells, along the roads, the bright sun glittered on the scythes. The weather continued simply great. Three days before the holiday there had been a serene new moon-a keen sickle. The moon washed himself-and there followed beautiful days. Haying season, a jolly time; even now it is merry but in the olden time it was still better. The women dressed up in their best, went to work with songs, came home again with songs. Then again the nights were short; plenty of wine; they reveled all night long.

Just after this came the village elder, to notify Tikhon. The village elder at that time was Mikheyich, a young man and his first wife was still alive, but he was a terrible chaser after women, As a man he was free, full-bearded, had put on a stomach, and gallivanted round in fancy boots and hat.

He came into the hut ; Malanka was alone, not dressed yet, barefooted, busying herself about the stove; the old man was out with the workmen getting in the hay; the old woman was off driving the cattle and the soldier's wife had gone down to the pond. He began to make up to her.

"I'm not going to send you out to work."

"What's work to me?" says she. "I like to go for the farming, It's happier where

the people are. Here at home all the old man does is to order you round."

"I," says he, "will buy you a kerchief."

"My husband will bring me one."

"I'm going to put your husband at work in town for the quitrent; you see I have the job of steward and I can do what I please."

"Needn't say anything to me about the quitrent. Only poor folks are bothered with that."

"Well," says he, "it's going to be so; am I going to be bothered with you long?"

He looked around to see that there was no one in the room, then came toward her.

"Look out, Mikheyich, don't you touch me."

As he tried to clasp her she gave him a slap but she couldn't help laughing.

"It isn't possible now. Here comes the master of the house-not good, is it?"

"When then-after work?"

"Why, of course, after work; when the folks go off, then you and I'll hide in the bushes, so that your good lady'll not see us!"

And she filled the whole hut with her merriment and ha-ha-has. "Otherwise your Marfa, the wife of you, the village elder, might get mad."

And as the village elder did not know whether she was joking or not he laughed too.

And just then the old man came in to take off his footgear and she was not at all confused or ashamed before her father-in-law.

There was nothing else to do, he had to explain exactly why he had come: the women were to rake the hay for the fellows to haul it-and he went off with his cane to the other huts. If he did not follow anyone up, yet he'd send them all at last; if anyone tried to bribe him with wine, he'd show little quarter, but as for Malanka without doing any of these things she was either entirely let off by him or given a choice of work where it was easier. Only she did not in the least give in to him but always made fun of him. "I'll come," she would say. And it was the same with others. That Summer very few things of importance happened to her. She herself used to say: "There never was such a Summer." -

Strong, healthy, unwearied and perfectly happy, she'd dress herself to go out to the hayfield, just as the sun would be rising above the forest, about breakfast-time: she'd go with the soldier's wife leading in the songs.

One time she was going this way through the grove - the haying was on the Kalinin meadow. The sun was up, the day was fine and in the woods there was still a coolness, the dew was dropping. The birds were singing but she sang louder than they. She strode along in her red kerchief and embroidered smock, barefooted,

carrying her shoes on a string-how her white legs gleamed and her shoulders shook! When she came into the field the peasants were plowing the master's land. There were lots of peasants-twenty plows to each ten desyatins. Grishka Bolkhin was nearest to the road- a joker of a peasant-and he caught sight of Malanka; he threw down the reins and started to have a little fun with her; the others left off, there was much laughter. They'd have kept the nonsense up till lunch if the steward hadn't appeared on horseback.

"Here, you sons of bitches, are you out here to dance and sing?"

He galloped up to them-the plowed field smoked under his horse's hoofs-he was a heavy man.

"There, you baggage, coming out here for your lunch, I'll show you."

But as soon as he saw it was Malanka his gall subsided and he himself began to jest with her.

"Now," says he, "I'll set you to giving these peasants lessons in plowing."

"All right, let me have a plow and I'll beat any fellow."

"Well, that'll do, that'll do; go on, the women are coming. It's time to rake. Now, women, now!"

He had become quite different.

As she went along the meadow, they all fell into line: as Malanka went ahead to spread the hay, the steward though on the trot kept laughing: but the women scolded because she was tormenting them like the devil. Therefore when dinner-time came they always sent her to the steward; the others grumbled but she went straight to the boss because to be sure it was time to knock off work and the women were all sweaty or were up to some trick.

Once such a trick was played on her and the Steward. They had been raking in the hayfields, they had piled up the hay and the weather was threatening, so that they had to finish the work before evening. After dinner they worked without resting and the inside servants were there also. The steward did not leave; he sent home for his dinner. There he sat with the women under the birch-trees. As soon as he had finished eating he said:

"Tell me, Godmother Malanya"-(he and she had been godparents of the same child)-"aren't you going to sleep?"

"No, why should I sleep?"

"Come here, have some consideration for me, Malanya dear! When he lay down by her she had to laugh.*

* *Poishchi mnye f golovye* has a quite different meaning which might have made Malanya laugh. N.H.D. It literally means search through my hair, eg. for lice...

Only the women were asleep and even Malanya was sleepy. She looked, looked at him—he lay there red, sweaty—and she was sleepy. Just glanced at him and he got up, rolled his red eyes, he was rather incoherent.

"You have bewitched me, you Devil's woman."

Healthy, stout, he threw his arms around her and started to draw her into the bushes.

"What are you thinking about, Andrei Ilyich! It's no time now, the folks will wake up. Shame on you! Go home," says she, "better by and by. Let the people go earlier and I will stay."

So she agreed. And when he dismissed the people she got home first of all. A small boy declared Andrei Ilyich kept prowling round behind the hay stack.

And this was her masterpiece of sport—to give anyone hope and afterwards to make a fool of him.

Well then, there came a nobleman to Petrovki and he had with him a valet, such a sly dog, It was a shame! He himself used to boast how he stole money at his master's, how he cheated him. Well, that wouldn't have been anything but he was such a disgusting chap regarding women, it would make you sick! The peasants agreed to lambast him and would have lambasted him if he hadn't got out pretty quick, thank you. This was the way with our friend: He took a liking to Malanya and tried to make up to her; gave her a silver rouble, a pretty blue kerchief, a pretty red one.

Says she, "I don't want anything."

He tried his hand at cunning. He entertained the elder and, don't you see, she made an agreement with him. It was still Spring time; they were threshing corn, begun while it was dark. "I," says he, "will slip into the corn-crib and you come up to work alone."

"All right."

She had only just got to the crib when he came to her. "Wait," says she, "it's awkward here."

She took off the sheaves, scattered them about, made a hole and pushed him into it and then off she went: she took away the ladder and went to another cornstack; she was opening it up, working at it. By now it was growing light; so she told; it was too funny. The women came hurrying up; they pulled off his drawers, filled them with chaff and gave them back again. As this didn't succeed, he got the village elder to send her into the garden to sweep the paths. And there the master himself ran across her. And nothing like this was heard of before. Evidently she must have been a pretty woman.

She used to tell the story herself : "I happened to look and there came the master, such an ill-favored scrawny creature, it was a marvel to see. He comes along, I keep on with my work, raking, only I had to stop to rest and I look and there he comes along the path again. The paths there are bushy, shady. Well, thinks I to myself, he's out walking on his own business. Only whenever I turn toward him he's looking at me with all his eyes. And he gave me no peace till dinner-time, kept coming back and staring. It was such a nuisance-! It was easier on the mowing-field. But he didn't address me."

The master of course looks at her so; why, he was a gentleman, nothing to bed one, but she thinks he's looking after her work and so she did her best to get the whole path swept.

All right, that same valet came again to her:

"The master," says he, has fallen dead in love with you; he bids you come this evening to the orangery."

"All right," she thinks, "this is one of your little tricks: I'll come; you just wait !"

"Look out!"

"I said I'll come."

Toward evening she took her rake and went home; only she says to herself perhaps after all the master did summon me. She asked the soldier's wife, they hurried back to the orangery; See! There he is walking. The soldier's wife screams like a man-she knew how to change her voice to sound that way:

"Who's there?"

The master ran off. The women laughed and went home, they kept doubling up with laughing; they tell everyone.

The next day she is sent to the garden again. Only the cook came. "For some reason or other," says he, "you didn't believe the valet and so he sent me to assure you that he really wants you and orders you to be sure to come."

"All right," says she, "I thought it was the valet, so I wanted to play a joke on him and scare him a little, but now I'll come for sure."

As soon as she had done her work she went straight into the house and by the maidservants' entrance.

"What do you want, pray?" "The master summoned me." The master's wife herself came.

"Who are you?" says she-"Whoever you are, you're very pretty. Why did my husband summon you ?"

"How do I know?"

They sent for the master; he came all red in the face. "Go home," says he. "I'll talk with your father by and by, I can't bother now."

And then one day he came to see her and began to say such things to her that she

didn't understand a word. Only he tried to take her hand but she started to run away and left him.

Thus she got rid of some by cleverness, of others by fooling them and then again by sheer strength.

One time a soldier was quartered in their hut. Of course they all slept in the same room. Almost side by side. In the evening the yunker-he had a title-got the father-in-law drunk. When the lights were put out, he crept over to her. But she gave him such a slap that he made a fuss about it, she almost put out his eye.

And then another time when an officer was after her, she promised indeed, but when night came she got the soldier's wife to go to him in her place.

CHAPTER III

So she never gave any man any quarter. Not only that: whoever made up to her, she'd meet him half way, then get his goat and turn him into ridicule.

"You'll get into trouble next, you crazy loon, you'll get caught," you'd say to her.

"Well now," she'd reply, "if they fall in love with me, is it my fault? Ought I to cry over it? Why shouldn't I get some fun out of them?"

Now that Summer they had a hired man; his name was Andrei; he was one of the Telyatenoks, son of Matryushka Karavaikha. He is now become a big man; but then theirs was the most poverty-stricken farm in the whole region. They were so poor they had to hire the little fellow out and they somehow managed to live from hand to mouth.

Andryushka then was a mere boy of sixteen-seventeen.

Tall, lean, stretched up like a house; if you looked for escapades in him, that wasn't what his strength was for. But how he worked! God knows he put out his last bit of energy. The young fellow was diligent and gentle. He was more afraid of the master than of the policeman. Yes and he was respectful to every old peasant. Sometimes of a holiday a stranger would send him for drink, he'd go, he'd do his best.

As for fooling around with the women and girls-and we did have some fine girls among us-he was never known to do it at all. He'd turn as red as a girl and be at his wits' ends to make any reply if one of the women joked him. He was good-looking and regular-featured to be sure; he had bright eyes, reddish hair-indeed he was a handsome young chap-though a laborer, a hired boy with a patched old coat, a hempen old shirt in holes, wearing a hat some coachman had discarded, barefooted, or in wretched old sandals and those he had made himself and it was all he had to wear on his feet.

Well you can imagine how she had no mercy on the wretched hired man, picked on the poor fellow all the time. He himself told about it:

"I came into the house," says he, "oh how scared I was! The master, well, he showed what he wanted done, ordered it done; sometimes he sent me out to the field, sometimes took me; if it was mowing or anything needed to be done, he was always easy on me; whatever he had to eat he shared with me; the old woman also used to give me a little milk. I got used to them, but the younger one I was dead-afraid of. God knows what she had against me. If I went out to harness up or go to the barn to feed the cattle, I'd have to jump to get out of her hands. 'There!' she'd say, 'you calf of a lubber, make haste.' * And she herself would take hold so quick and lively she'd have it all done and then laugh and run off. And then after dinner or lunch I'd always be expecting some trick; didn't dare raise my eyes. If I happened to look at her she was always squinting at me or else winking and laughing. Or then she'd come up and pinch me and all the time pretend she hadn't done anything. She and the soldier's wife went to sleep in the cornloft.

" 'Andryushka, oh Andryushka,' I'd hear them call. I go out.

" 'What is it?'

" 'Who called you?'

"And they tumble over each other laughing.

"One time I woke up; I slept in the sledge outdoors; why was it the women died a-laughing when they looked at me?

" 'You've overslept,' they said, 'hurry, the master is calling .'

"I went.

" 'What do you want,' says he, 'you're all grease, you'd better wash up; you've been among the horses, you regular devil; there, look in the glass.'

"I was all covered with filth.

One time we went to Kochak after hay; the master sent us with the women. As soon as we had raked it into piles we began to pile it into haystacks. The women just swarm, skipping along with their forks and grabbing up as much as three puds on a rake and Andryukha with them. Soon the last hay stack is made, it's hot, no water, they were sweaty. Andrei put up his last bundle of hay, got up on the haystack and began to tread it down.

"Say, you," says she, "why don't you ever fool with the women?"

"Can't stop to fool with them; have to tread the hay." "Don't you know how?"

"No, I don't."

"Don't you want me to show you how?"

He made no answer. She grabbed him, rolled him over under her and began to

* His family name was Telyatenok, which means calf.

tumble him while the soldier's wife tumbled hay on them and rolled over them too. "A fine heap," she cried.

Andrei rolled out from under her, seized her behind the head and kissed her, so bold had he become. She was some mad!

"Look here, you trash, you vulgar laborer, how do you dare to kiss me with your dirty mouth?"

She ran off; she was so ashamed; it was a pity! The young fellow was perfectly overwhelmed with confusion. He went home, didn't heed anything the master said. The master liked him, he was such a quiet young fellow, assiduous, hard to find his like.

"Say, what's happened to Andrei? He isn't going to die, is he?"

"What do you mean, 'die'? He's always fooling with the women. It's time to die when the work-time is as easy as it is. I think I'm going to die of it too!"

She was more ashamed than the young fellow was to run away, while he simply couldn't.

She entirely bewitched him after this. He would just cast a look at her and then he dreaded her more than any boss. He was afraid but at night he couldn't sleep; by day he couldn't sleep; he was forever thinking of her.

One time on the hayfield at Voronka the peasant men and women were altogether; the men were mowing and the women were raking the Kalinof meadow. The women went to bathe for dinner and the peasant fellows also; the fellows on one side of the river, the women on the other. Tishka the six-fingered, though he was married, he was a sly fellow; he swam over to the women, began to pull them under.

"Quit it, you devil, I almost choked."

When he got back Andrushka said to Tishka:

"Why did you pull her under?" They came to blows.

When he saw Malanya was going to bathe, he sneaked into the reeds to look. The women caught him, hauled him out of the water, just as he was, in his shirt, they dragged him in the water. The young fellow was made a fool of, only the food was not very nourishing; his tea was not watered, yes and work all day long, but at evening when he was out with the old man watching the horses he did not think of such trifles. Especially from that time; after the haying, she put him to shame; he had not spoken a single word to her.

"Whatever you have done, I will not speak or show my face." Good. The weather for haying all that year continued splendid to the last degree. They harvested not hay but tea; on one day they mow and the next day they rake it into piles. They harvested all the hay on the big estate and then the peasants got in their own- at that time there was a good deal of land-each brought in six cart-loads and a lot was left in the woodland, a couple of loads and, moreover, the caretaker hired us on

halves to get in the hay on the crown meadows which he had taken over.

The crop with us was great and many were free of compulsory service. Such were hired and among them were the superfluous people. The old man Yevstratof had the hired man and the soldier's wife while he and the old woman went for the harvest, but he sent Andrei and Malanya to the caretaker.

The haying field of the caretaker was ten versts from the village. One day the peasant men went and mowed; the next day the women went. Twenty scythes were collected, the carts were loaded up, they took bread, beer, cucumbers, kettles, oatmeal and went off for a week. All the way, songs, jokes, ten peasant men and women in each cart. Andrei astride his boss's piebald gelding, it was the first horse in the village (even now this breed holds its own among them)-appointed the scythes, took the children down, helped out the women-the rakes, the kettles, sat with the women and they rode like a prince and princess. Even the people had to laugh. They took the highway. They started to race. Malanya cries:

"Let her go!"

"The master forbade it."

"Who cares? Come on!"

"Look here, I am responsible and not you !"

"Come on now!"

She snatched the reins from him. "All right, you drive !"

He jumped off, walked. Such an angry face he put on.

When the peasants arrived, they chose their own village elder, appointed the stations, unhitched the horses lively, hobbled them, took off the boxes, piled them up, drove nails into the trees, made shelters, threw down the hay; the work hummed. Andrei came up.

"Where," says he, "is the gelding?"

"But how should I know? Do you take me for a workwoman? Oh, make up faces!"

"No use talking with women!"

Wringing his hands he went off to ask the peasants.

Malanya was offended, said nothing. "Just wait, I'll get even with you," she said to herself. The work went on; the women raked rows, they sang together; the peasants followed them, heaping it up with their forks. The old caretaker rode up; he jested with the people.

"Please, friends, do your level best," says he, "the weather may change, it will be harder for you."

"Set up a few jugs of liquor."

"All right," says he.

It was such fun to see how the work went. We rested for half an hour at lunch; then at it again. It would have taken three days to do the same work on the master's

land. Merrily, with a will. Andrei was the only one who was disgusted with the day. "I'll draw my pay," he says to himself. "I'll go home to dear mother; I'll hire out somewhere else."

But all the same he keeps looking at Malanya. From down below he sees her half way up the hill going ahead, pushing the hay with her leg and her rake; she covers five or six feet and what a song she sings, or else she cackles with laughter, fills the whole place full of mirth. But not once does she look at him. This hurts him worse than anything. "No," he thinks, "I must chuck it, I'm not a man to stand it."

They came back to the carts: it was already dark; they had supper, they were drinking liquor. Malanya hadn't a word to say to Andryushka. Some of the older men lay down to take a nap. The women took turns in drinking from the tumbler and began to feel pretty husky, so that they had no wish to sleep. They began to practice choral dances. The old caretaker with them. They sent for more liquor. Andryushka felt more gloomy than ever: and this was why: everyone was rich and his own master, but he was an outsider, a mere farm hand; he wouldn't take a drink and he didn't want to get in the habit. He got his old patched coat, broke off a hunk of bread, went off to a hay stack, near a big birch-tree. The hay wasn't yet made; they had raked it up to keep it from the dew; tomorrow they would spread it again, if the weather was right. The grass was damp, still green and so fragrant!

He threw off the damp, thick, upper layers-it was forest-hay-made a pillow of his coat, lay down. He felt blue; blue enough! Further off, by the forest the women were squealing, laughing-the boys after them. Malanya's voice could be distinguished; the smoke came toward him on the breeze, and in the sky it was clear, so clear! The stars were trembling. He lay on his back, he was so tired, and kept looking up at the stars. And it was all quiet in the forest, but he couldn't go to sleep. Out of pure melancholy he tried to sing a song. But-what made the hay stack shake?

"Who's there?"

He looked-women!

"Who are you, what do you want?"

He recognized them-the soldier's wife and someone else were coming to the bushes. It is a woman-Malanya! Well, without speaking she came right up to him, sat down on the hay.

"It's I. Why did you stop? Sing, Andryusha."

Andrei felt faint-hearted; he wanted to sing-his voice as it were fell away.

"What's the matter with you? Sing !" She took his hand and held it.

"I love that song. The peasants bored me and I left them. Now sing!"

"Well ... Stop."

"What's the matter? Blue?"

He made no reply.

"What makes you blue? Here I am, and my husband gone, I have some reason to be blue, but you? Wet or dry, what do you need?"

"What do you want your husband for? You have plenty without him!"

"There's no one I care for, Andryusha. It's loathsome, it's deadly dull. I can't endure it! There's no one I care for except my husband. But why don't you fool with the women?"

"How can I? I'm out of it, you all have your own."

"Are you angry with me?"

"No, why should I be?"

"What a bitter fellow you are, to be sure! If I look at you, you are hateful-fact! But why were you mad about the gelding?"

"No, Malanka dear, I will tell you the whole truth

You hold me off; what am I to you? ... I am only a hired man And besides I have been so stupid You see, I can't help it if I .. , I hadn't looked at you before How many other women in the village Truly you keep me away But I am blue because I am homesick."

"Tell me, are you to be married soon?"

"God knows."

"I'd marry you."

Andrei made no reply. In the bushes there was a commotion and someone whistled. Andrei laughed.

"There Nastasya has found the master."

"I would marry you."

Malanya got up and sat on Andrei's knees, took him by the cheeks with both hands and kissed him.

"I care for no one, I care for no one."

There was a stirring from the bushes; she jumped up and started to run to the soldier's wife.

"What are you doing to me, what are you doing to me?" cried Andrei and tried to seize her hand. But she snatched it away.

"Quit it, someone's coming, we shall be seen."

Andrei did sleep that night, but she went with the soldier's wife to the carts and lay down to sleep among the other women and fell sound asleep and heard nothing, saw nothing.

Andrei: sat a long time on the hay stack, listened, prowled around the carts, but Malanya did not show herself. He heard nothing except the dogs at the station barking, the roosters crowing, the birds beginning to wake up, the peasants coming in, changing the horses, watching, and he saw how the cool dew covered the earth and the hay. He himself did not understand how he fell asleep at last.

At sunrise they woke him up.

Malanya was just the same as always, just as if nothing at all had happened.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN the dew had gone and breakfast was done with, the people again took up their work. The jolliest kind of work ensued-carrying, piling the hay into stacks; some went to cut trees for the floor; some put the horses to the carts, some scattered the pile, some cast lots.

The day was fine and the old men declared that signs pointed to its not lasting: there was little dew, the tobacco in the caretaker's box stuck to the lid, the swallows flew low and there was a haze in the atmosphere; it was purplish on the horizon; one sweat so that it took away the strength.

By dinner-time they had the big stack well built up, they had to stand on the cart to reach it up and used big forks-they did not reach. On the stack stood three handlers, two on each side, one to tread it down. At first they spared the caretaker. He himself let out his belt, helped hand up the hay; he was stout, sweat poured from him in streams.

They set the women to driving. Malanya and the soldier's wife drove. As soon as she drove up, sitting on the load, the peasants grabbed at her, so as to roll her, only she was quick enough to jump down; if she had not they'd have rolled her in the hay and there would have been a great laugh. Once she didn't succeed and they did roll her. Andrei and I were the handlers. Though our side was easier, in the shade, yet the young fellow worked himself half to death without any reason for it; it was a shame. Well, of course, before folks one tries not to be a slacker, keeps at it, keeps at it in the hay-and especially when the women are looking-he bends over, picks it up, twice as much as he ought, well, you get it up. He starts off, his legs bend under it-the bundle on his head, the dry grass falling down on his sweaty face and sticks to it. There's such rivalry as to which can fork it up the quickest. "We've got most." And bustle and laughter and work and smell,-it's enough to make one crazy.

But the caretaker keeps urging: clouds are gathering.

Let him urge-it's his affair; they put in with all their might. By dinner-time we'd got one stack done: topped, tied down; they slid off. Andrei went off and sulked. Just a bit of rest-then start on another. At first they threw great armfuls over the green leaves of the floor; then our women built it higher, higher-my! And the clouds kept coming up.

"Now then, lads, with all your might! I'm going to set a bucket!"

There was some rushing. But the cloud grew nearer and nearer; the wind began to blow. The caretaker climbed up on the stack, they handed the hay up to him; his beard blew in every direction, no time to comb it, they covered him up; he crawled

out, they covered him again.

"Give some more." "Take it."

"Rake with the woman there. Make the top rounder, trample it, tread it down, tie it down. Is there much left?"

"Two piles beyond the bushes."

The women had to go,-they said they didn't know.

Andrei, standing below was all tired out, he staggered, yes, he trembled like a leaf.

"You go, you know."

But the wind grew fierce, fierce, the storm-cloud was on us; the caretaker's beard and the blouse were flapping, as on a starling's nest. He rubbed the sweat off his forehead, got into the cart.

"Give us another woman up here," he cried.

"Give her to us."

They sent the soldier's wife. They pulled the hay away from the wheels. Malanka stood up, seized the reins, only her legs and her bosom trembled. Andrei:, like the bag in the proverb, went shaking over the hillocky ground.* They came behind the bushes. They drove up; Andrei got off to load up; the woman stood on the cart to take in the hay; she only giggled from time to time, as she looked at him but she didn't speak; she took the great armfuls and laid them down; she looked at him. He tried to lift up the bundle; his legs failed under him, he fell on the hay, the strength had all gone out of him; he had overworked; he stopped making the bundles.

"What's the matter with you? Going to sleep?"

"Here I'm killing myself. You're a murderer, that's what you are! A criminal! Yes, I'm going to kill you and make an end of myself."

The young woman laughed ... then she looked, he was as white as a towel. She sprang to him.

"What's the matter, Andrei? Have you lost your wits or have they made you sick?"

He seized her by the hands.

"Don't torment me, Malanyushka, I can't stand it.

Either drive me away with your bright eyes, order me not to live in this white world, or have some pity on me. I know that I am not in any way your equal and that you have a good husband But I can't control my feelings. I am dying of love for you, you are my star of light!"

And he held her hand and burst into tears.

"Look here, you have no strength to load, but you stick like a burdock; it's no

* Papast' iz kulk v ragazhku- To fall from the sack to the mat, to go from bad to worse.

use. Let us go, there'll be talk; I shall tell my husband."

"Yes, but it was you Why did you kiss me last night ?"

"I felt like it yesterday, but to-day we must work.

Now get up, forget it! To-night'll be our night."

"You mean it, Malanyushka?"

"Why should I lie to you? It's true-wait till to-night.

See, here comes the rain!"

What else could he do? He plucked up his spirits, put on the load, tied it down, they drove off. He follows after.

"You're not deceiving me?"

But she chuckled. "Honest to goodness!"

They pulled off the load; only they had to hurry; for the shower was growing heavy. The folks crawled under the carts quick. They had got the caretaker's hay into safety, their own was left out. Nothing more to do; the folks scattered to their homes. She had planned it all out-the rogue, Andrei to stay with the cart while she herself walked with the soldier's wife. But it happened the soldier's wife went with Nikifor who was her lover. So Malanka went home alone.

The shower passed off, the sun shone out bright, her way was through the forest. Malanka took off her shoes and stockings, folded up her lined skirt over her head and walked along with her white shapely legs, her rosy face: well, if ever there was a beauty there was a beauty!

And now God was to punish her for all her tricks and for Andrei.

The caretaker had sold his hay to a wholesale dealer and it happened that the wholesaler on that very day was on his way to the meadow to inspect the hay. Malanka was walking along through the field thinking God knows what thoughts: of the soldier's wife there with Nikifor, and of Andrei. She was walking along and feeling awfully sorry for Andrei, and so it went. Suddenly she saw coming in her direction a man on horseback. A "boughten" kaftan, a cap, a red cotton shirt showing under his kaftan, goat-skin boots, the horse small but young and on the horse the rider, a lively young fellow, an eagle to express it in one word; well-built, ruddyfaced, with black eyebrows, black, curly hair, a little beard, a mustache just beginning to show; in his mouth a copper-inlaid pipe, he is smoking, occasionally he shakes the whip.

Anyone who didn't even know him would say he was a handsome young fellow. Malanka had never seen him in her life but the rest of us knew Matvei Romanovich, the wholesaler, well enough. Such another scamp, though so young, was not to be found in the whole region. For seducing women and girls, selling infected cattle, driving a sharp trade in horses, cutting off timber, speculating in anything-he was of full stature though only a little past twenty and his father was the same kind of a rotten egg.

"Hello, auntie, where is God taking you?"

And he cut off her road.

"Going home; why do you block my way? I shall have to go round." He turned his horse, rode after her. The woman looks at him: "An eagle," she says to herself, "he can't compare with Andrei."

"What's your name, young woman?"

"What's that to you?"

"So as to know who such a pretty little woman is."

"Whoever she is, she's not for you. There's nothing to laugh at."

"Yes and for such a little woman I haven't any pity at all. What's your name?"

"Malanya. What else do you want?"

He again put his horse across the path and started to dismount.

"Look out, I'll hit him with my rake."

"What's your family name?"

"Rodivonovna."

He dismounted and came alongside of her.

"Akh, Malanya Rodivonovna, if you'd just stop and rest for a little minute, you'd be falling in love with me before you knew it."

But as Malanya suspected something was wrong. Flattering and pleasant and painful as it was to her, she tried to hasten on.

"You go your way and I'll go mine. The peasants are just behind. Your road goes that way and mine this."

"Malanya Rodivonovna," says he, "it isn't so very hard for me to follow you."

He took a red handkerchief out of his pocket, handed it to her.

"I want nothing whatever from you; that'll do."

"Mother Marya, you beauty, whatever you command I will do, only love me! Now that I have seen you, I don't know what has come over me. My gracious beauty, do love me!"

And God knows what had taken place in her, such a termagant with others. She just cast down her eyes, said not a word and didn't have a word to say.

He seized her by the hand.

"Most unexpected, most unknown of beauties, Marya Rodivonovna, I am so in love with you that the strength has all gone from me. I haven't been at home for ten months. I have grown pale as a towel; my eyes are full of fire. My strength is vanished." He put his hands this way! "I beg you in God's name"-his voice trembled -"wait just an hour, come off the road a little way, Marya Rodivonovna. Comfort my poor little body! I'm a stranger and I cast shame from me."

She was flustered and only said:

"You are a stranger, I don't know you."

Again he seized her by the hands-he was a husky man-and pulled her, angry though she was, off the path ...

After he had learned from her all about herself, where she lived and where she slept at night, he took his purse out of his breast, found a silver ruble and gave it to her. She said, sobbing:

"Have pity on me, don't insult me."

"Keep it," he said, "in memory of me, and tomorrow when it is dark I will whistle at the back of the yard."

He led her back to the path into the forest, mounted his horse and galloped off.

CHAPTER V

SHE went home-the old man, the old woman neither knew anything nor saw anything, but they realized that she was a different woman. She didn't take up with anyone but she was always running off somewhere. And it became a worse torment for Andrei. He came to her one time in the barn and began to talk to her, and she called herself a criminal, was quite exasperated and began to weep.

"And don't you dare to say anything to me," he interrupted, "you can't get any fun out of it, you devil." She was still weeping, "All my sorrow comes from you."

He couldn't understand at all and it began to be still more painful to him and he hadn't will-power to go away. His father wanted to put him in another place; they made him do too much, but "No," said he, "I don't get anything living here, but I won't go to anyone else."

Then after that mowing even the weather changed, the rains came without cease; such of the peasants' share as remained mildewed in the meadows, some was dried on poles. From morning till night you walked through there was no plowing, the plow would slip out of your hands, the puddles grew bigger and bigger; no getting in the hay, nothing.

One time Andrei went to the barn for some work, he slopped and splashed through the puddles; suddenly he sees a woman with her head covered with a handkerchief, with a stick stepping with bare legs through the mire'- it was Malanka after the cow. The rain had been pouring as from a bucket all day; the herdsmen don't keep the cattle in the field. He looked-there came the wholesaler; he stopped and spoke to her. "Today," he said. Malanka bent her head.

"So that's the one!" thought Andrei.

Andrei went home: couldn't sleep, kept listening.

Then he heard someone whistle beyond the barn, Malanka jumps up and runs out.

Andrei follows to the corn-kiln, sees a strange peasant.

"Who are you?"

"The hired man."

"Hold your tongue, I'll give you two grivenniks not to tell what's doing."

Only Andrei wasn't the only one who knew: it began to be talked about in the village: that Matvei, the wholesaler, came frequently-was seen running from the soldier's wife's hut. Well, little was said about it, for no one knew definitely.

One time Yevstrat came home late at night. Whether he had heard or not-his wife was out. He was told, "She went to the barn." He went to the corn-kiln. Voices He trembled all over. In the barn-look! Boots.

"Hey! Who's there?"

And with his cudgel he gives a smashing blow. The wholesaler escaped out of the door.

Malanka came running out in nothing but her shift and with bare legs.

"Whose boots?"

"I confess."

"All right, go into the hut."

He picked up the boots and carried them in. He went and slept alone. In the morning he took a strap, a thick stick, Andrei sees him; called his woman into the lumber-room; now what a scolding; the more he beats her the more his anger rises. "Don't you betray me, don't you betray me!" He grabbed her by the hair, flung her on the ground; he struck her in the eyes. And she thought to herself: "What sits under my heart you don't strike."

His mother began to plead with him. When he cried "Who teaches me how to treat my wife," so that his mother blushed with shame, she began to beg for forgiveness.

He harnessed the horse, went with Andrei to plow. He began to ask questions. "I know nothing about it." He went home, unhitched; his woman was getting dinner ready-she flew, she didn't walk; she washed herself, she combed her hair, black and blue spots were visible and she didn't dare look. They sat down to dinner. The old men went into the lumber-room. Yevstrat lay down in the loft, at the edge, he said nothing.

"Put out the splinter." .

She extinguished it. "What's she going to do?" he wondered. He heard her take off her shoes. All right. He saw her pass by the window.

You see he hadn't been at home for six months, yes and he had beaten her. That showed he loved her. She silently snuggled down by him. She lifted his coat and in her single shift snuggled close to him like a little goat, threw her arms around him, almost choked.

"You won't do it again?"

"Don't speak of it!"

From that time she never thought of the wholesaler again. But Yevstrat sold the boots for five rubles and often laughed:

"If he hadn't got away I'd have got his coat too." And Andrei lived on there till

Intercession-day and then went home and for a long time could not forget anything, but then they got some land for him and married him off. At the end of nine months Malanya had her baby, the image of the wholesaler and this beloved first born son of hers was this same Petrushka.

Written earlier than 1862.

SUPPLEMENATRY NOTE TO "AN IDYLL"

A variant of the "Idyll of Country Life," is entitled "Tikhon and Malanya," consisting of two chapters and ending with the trick Malanya plays on the steward. A good many paragraphs are the same as those in the version presented and it seems hardly worth while to give it complete, especially as any translation must necessarily fail to convey the spirit of the original: to translate it literally would make utter nonsense, to put it into any English dialect would be as impossible as to represent in type the guttural grunts of a Lancashire yokel expressing his feelings with his teeth shut and his lips scarcely moving.

The variant of the Idyll begins thus:

Malanya Dunaikha was brought over from another village, Malevka. The old man Dutlov had her betrothed to his eldest son because he knew her father. There weren't any suitable "brides" at that time in the village and this girl was splendid and from a good home. When they married her to her husband she was only fourteen -nothing but an immature child. She hadn't any physical or mental character as yet. If you'd put a bodice over her breasts it was like a table-cloth on a table. You wouldn't know it wasn't a boy wearing the skirt. You wouldn't say it was a woman though she wore her kerchief po-babi as we say. If she tried to lug a bucket of water she'd bend like a reed.

For Yevstrat-that was her husband's name-she hadn't the slightest love from the first. She feared him like fire. If he came near her, she'd cry, and pinch him and bite him. His shoulders, his arms were all covered with black-and-blue spots. And this not for one month or for two but for a year and a second and a third-she didn't love him. Now by herself she was a neat and likable little woman and the Dutlovs were a god-fearing household and just, they never compelled her to do hard work or anything of the sort.

The Dutlovs at this time were not rich but they had sufficient. The old man was still in the prime of life, he kept up his establishment, married off his son, took a second lot of land; his second son, Trifon, was a good deal of a help and did the plowing: a soldier's wife was living with them: the enforced labor was not excessive; they had eight head of horses, counting colts, two cows, bees (even now

the same breed leads with them).

More profitable than anything else the old man was a boss in the livery business and Yevstratka managed it well for him, so that the profits were especially good and they didn't have to overdo in any way and they lived well and had a little money for drink on holidays. One year and two and three had passed since Malanya had come to the household. The little woman had grown up, had a fine color, had filled out.

The text goes on to tell how she excelled all the others in singing and working; how merry and brightly dressed she was on holidays and how all the men, especially the older ones, were crazy after her and yet no evil was ever seen in her; she was true to her husband to whom she had now got accustomed, so that she felt sorry to have him go away but when he came back she wouldn't let him touch her. In the same way she slaps Nikita in the nose for uttering invidious remarks about her "freckled husband," and for making impudent advances to her.

The text says Yevstratka was freckled and describes him as an incoherent, tall, unmannerly, churlish peasant, but healthy, unequalled in strength by anyone in the village and though only a young fellow his father trusted him with all his affairs. "Whether I or Yevstratka-it's all one," he would say.

In the variant, too, she is blamed for not presenting her husband with an infant, and she makes the same remark, but it is introduced with this sentence: "And Yevstratka loved his wife more than ever and was annoyed with only one thing that there were no children. Of course," it says, "it is no crime for a woman to gallivant for a year or two but if she is old enough and has no child why the people begin to make sport of her."

It becomes still worse when, as in the principal version, her father-in-law sends her husband away for the Summer. "It was good business for the master of the house, but woe to the wife. She set up a howl when they took him away as if her heart foreboded something. As for her own mother she mourned. And she kept singing the song: 'Without thee, my love, my bed is cold.' In the daytime she was happy enough and laughed with the folks, but after dinner, poor thing, she'd clutch the bed and go to the soldier's wife in the store-room." And so on.

The second chapter varies only in arrangement; it tells of her different ways of fooling the men, who think because she is lively and happy and her husband is away that she is an easy mark for their nonsense. She meets the young village elder Mikheyich:, a perfect devil with the women, and defeats him with his own weapons. In the same way when the peasants instead of working on the hayfield have stopped to sing and dance and the noise is like that of a wedding, and just then the steward comes riding up: "As soon as he sees what is going on, he raises his whip, dashes across the plowed land and up to the peasants. The horse sinks in

the plowed land up to the fetlocks; he's a rough man."

As in the regular text he calls them down for their waste of time. Here is added:

"The peasants like cockroaches from under a cup scatter over the distance and the women with their rakes over their shoulders, go on tossing up the hay as if nothing had happened. Malanka simply laughed. She was afraid of no one. 'Here,' says he to the peasants, though he applies the whip to the women, 'here I find you, ruffraff, you low down sluts, instead of working in the hayfield, dancing and singing!'

"He was mad all through but as soon as he saw Malanka his anger melted away and he began to laugh with her.

" 'Here,' says he, 'I told you I was going to make you do a peasant's job in plowing.'

" 'Well,' says she, 'give me a plow and I will match any peasant.'

" 'Well, let it go, let it go. Off with you, here come some more women. It's time, it's time to rake. Now, girls, come on.'

"He had become quite different."

As before, the steward sends home for his dinner and eats it outdoors with the women. Then he makes the indecent proposal to Malanka and as soon as he falls asleep "she takes a little birch tree, strips off the twigs -the women got it for her- she twines garlands around his head, she sticks them into his shirt and fills his nose with the leaves. How the women laugh when he wakes up and they look at him, clutching himself everywhere. There was no help for it." At this point is introduced the statement that the steward was cheating his employer, the landlord or landed proprietor for whom the peasantry were obliged to work a certain proportion of the time. The fragment ends abruptly with the characterization of the steward.

Both sketches, "Tikhon and Malanya" and the "Idyll" seem to have been parts of a projected romance of country life to be told in the staccato speech of the Tula peasant and yet they are separated by a generation and the names of the characters introduced seem not to have been definitely settled. Malanya, with the various diminutives Malanka, Malanyushka, remains, but her husband is Yevstratka in the Idyll and Tikhon in the other section.

Both give vivid pictures of the sordid lives of the peasantry, lightened only by the liveliness of the little wife, more sinned against than sinning. The cure of her "fault" is quite characteristic of the Russian family, where it used to be said that a woman felt that her husband had ceased to love her if he ceased to beat her.

Both sketches date from shortly after the liberation of the serfs, and while Tolstoy was conducting his little private magazine *Yasnaya Polyana* and was about to begin "*War and Peace*."- *N.H.D.*