

TIKHON AND MALANYA
(A STORY FROM COUNTRY LIFE)

by **Leo Tolstoy**

The village had an idle and holiday aspect. The people were all at church. Only the little children, some of the mothers and a few peasants, who were too lazy to go to mass, stayed at home. The women were engaged in cooking; the children were crawling about the doors; the peasants were gazing at something out of doors. The streets were deserted.

It was St. Peter's Day. At the end of the street was heard the jingling of harness-bells and a troika appeared attached to a post-wagon.

One of the peasants that had stayed at home, Anisim Zhidkov, hearing the bells, threw down the wagon-box which he was working on, and opening the creaky gate went out into the street to see who was coming. The manes of the outside horses were pleated with adornments; the thill-horse, a roan well known to him, had its head fastened high under the arch. Shaking her head a little and trotting swiftly, she started up when the coachman, bracing his knee against the box, shouted to her.

The horses were well-groomed but not sweaty, although the sun was already shining fiercely from a perfectly cloudless sky. The coachman was a fine-looking fellow in a new kaftan and cap.

"Tikhon Yermilin," said Anisim to himself, as he recognized the coachman and hurried along the middle of the street in his new bast shoes.

Tikhon, as he drove past Anisim, silently lifted his cap and it was evident by the expression of his face that he was very happy and well aware that none could be envying him and his troika which he himself had matched and brought into such a fine condition and that he was endeavoring not to make others too humiliatingly conscious of his self-satisfaction.

He did not shout to his horses, and after he had taken off his new cap he put it back not askew but quite straight and only touched the off horse with the rein, and, turning not far from Anisim, began to pull in the troika carefully and rather too deliberately, bringing the horses down, which even without this were already walking (with perfect dignity) into the well-known gates. Anisim, whose affairs had not been going any too well this Summer, was filled with envy as well as with admiration and came up to Tikhon to chat with him.

The old mother, the only one left in the house; came out on the steps.

"I hear the bells; I say to myself, which one of the coachmen is it?" said she joyously-"I was just going to make some more of those cakes and I didn't hear anything. Then I heard and the bells were quite near."

"How are you, Mama?" cried the son, leaping down in his heavy boots near the head of the wagon.

"Fine, little Tikhon, and you are alive and well?"

And she went on to talk as she always did—talking about everything, as of recollections of something melancholy and long past. "I think to myself if our Tikhon was here,—and the old man's gone and the women they're at mass—" Tikhon paid no attention to her, took a bundle from the wagon, went into the hut, bowed to the ikons and passing through the entry, opened the door. He stuffed his mittens and his whip into his belt, closed the door so as it would not catch, led the outside horses by the bridle, undid the traces, snapped the whip, set the horses free, took off their collars, led them away, making no noise about it, nor twitching them; and as soon as he had finished with one, in the same way without haste but without a second's delay he attended to the other. Nothing got tangled, nothing was left lying around, nothing was left at loose ends under his hands but everything went smoothly and regularly, just as if it had been oiled.

When there was nothing more for his hands to do, his huge fingers spread out very far from his wrists as if they were trying to grasp something more and work at it.

While he was unharnessing he kept up an unceasing stream of talk with Anisim, who had come up. Anisim had come up lazily moving his feet and using his belt to scratch his belly under his clean white shirt. He kept lifting his cap and putting it on again. Tikhon also kept raising his and putting it on again.

"Well, have you got tired of your young wife yet?" asked Anisim with a little laugh but wishing to ask a quite different question.

"Not at all," replied Tikhon.

"How about our folks—how do they live—the Mitroshins?" suggested Anisim, now quite serious and shaking his head.

"What's the use? Some live well: others ill. It's the same at the stations. How do you get along yourself, Uncle Anisim?" asked Tikhon, deliberately and thinking of himself with some pride.

"Tell me, did you swap off the brown, perhaps?" Anisim could now ask the question he wanted to put—"And say, did you buy the roan?"

"The brown: if dad hadn't got mad about it I might have got rid of him long ago. ' It was worth it."

And Tikhon, not without satisfaction told how he had swapped and acquired, how much he had made and how much less others had made than he had. Anisim, jokingly and seriously proposed to set up the vodka. Tikhon quietly but firmly refused.

During all the talk he kept on with his work The horses were unharnessed and he

led them into the shed.

Anisim, having learnt all that he wanted to know, began scratching himself silently with both hands and after he had scratched himself a while, went off.

After pulling down the hay for the horses from the bin Tikhon settled his hat on his forehead and, spreading out his fingers still more, went into the hut. But there was nothing for him to do there and his fingers stayed as they were. He merely shook his hat a little and hung it on a nail, brushed off a place to lay his coat, stowed it away, and in his new Alexandrinsky shirt, which his mother had never seen him wear, sat down on the bench.

His drawers were of domestic make, the work of his mother but quite new; his boots the usual kind worn by drivers, with nails, he had taken them off in the vestibule and smeared them with tar. There was really nothing for him to do; he smoothed out his cuffs which had been rumped under his kaftan and then began to take out of the package the presents he had brought. For his wife there was a pattern of chintz with big flowers; for his mother a white handkerchief with narrow border; and crackers for all the rest of the household.

"Thanks, Little Tikhon, that would be too much for me," said the old woman, spreading her handkerchief out on the table and running her finger-nail over it. "Just what I was wanting. The old man has been in Popovka since early mass but I came home. The young women wanted to go to the later service; they helped me get things ready and started, and here I am alone."

And the old woman, laying the handkerchief in a little box, resumed her work about the stove and while working kept up a steady stream of talk :

"Glory be to thee, O Lord," said she, "only my old man is dying of his leg; when it's wet he simply yells. Grishka (Grishka was Tikhon's younger bachelor brother) has to keep doing more and more of the master's work for him. Thank goodness the Government don't send him off. Mikheyich always goes for the village elder. Well, there's nothing to complain about; it brings in steady orders. Only says he, don't send Grishka to the mowing field; he couldn't stand it, he's too small yet. The other day they tended the master's gardens, so the old man sent Grishka: he mended the scythe for him and Gerasim,-my daughter-in-law's father,-asked to take his place; he's so worn out, dear heart. 'Mama,' says he, 'I can't stand it, my poor arms and legs all ache so!' But where is the trouble with him? His body's sound, and strong like a young man. So we don't know what to do: either you must stay for the mowing or we'll have to hire a helper."

"Well, what's the news about the gentry?" exclaimed Tikhon, evidently not caring to talk about such an important matter with a woman, even though it was his own mother.

"It was said the other day that they'd all be here, and then nothing more was said about it. The young one is living here but we don't hear much of him. Andreyi

Ilyitch manages everything. The peasants say nothing; only there was some trouble with him over the meadow, the old man knows; he was at the meeting; he'll tell the whole story. They brought the manure, God be praised, and spread it all over the ground. A bushel or so was left. The old man knows. The enforced labor didn't amount to anything either. They kept postponing it for the peasants. But this was very hard for the women. They always had it all-had it all. It tormented them by keeping them in. One woman (what was her name?) -had to spend all her time weeding the beets. I was home always and struggling on alone. Your wife and the soldier's wife had to be away at the big house. Making bread, milking the cows, and I have to make the beds. How long my legs will serve me I don't know whether God 'll let me go on. But your woman's young, she may work hard all day but when she gets home she's ready to sing and dance, she's such a good singer. Once in a while some one asks after her: a young man, courageous; but the folks praise her: very quick at her work and nothing bad to say of her. Well, once in a while she has a squabble with the soldier's wife-it's nothing. The old man yells at them; it's all over. Mostly, she's happy, bless her heart ! We've been hoping and expecting you'd come. Yesterday I made some pies:

I says to myself, Who'll be eating my pies ... If I'd known for sure I'd killed a rooster for my dear son. Glory be, the hen's been hatchin',-we sold three ... "

The old woman kept on talking and told her son many other things-about the weaving, about the threshing- floor, about the live-stock, about the neighbors; about the soldiers that passed through, and all the time she was busy at her work either at the stove or at the table or in the pantry.

And Tikhon sat on the bench, now asking some question, now telling some story himself and then picking up the comb where it was always kept, he ran it through his thick curly hair and his small reddish beard. And he felt a sense of contentment as he looked around the hut and saw his wife's shirt lying in the loft and then the cat sitting on the stove and washing herself for the holiday; and then the spinning-wheel standing broken in the corner; and then at the hen which, paying no attention to him, was minding her own business and wandering about the room with her big chickens; and then at the whip which he used to take when he went out to watch the horses by night and which Grishka had tossed *into* a corner.

Not merely his extended fingers but also his eyes watching everything and studying everything demanded work; it was irksome to him to sit down and do nothing. He would have taken the scythe, he would have threshed, he would have swept the floor of the loft or done anything, but there was no time for any real work before dinner would be ready. While he and the old mother were still talking he picked up the whip which needed mending, got some hemp, went out on the steps, hung the skein from a nail and began to twist it in the door with his healthy strong hands meant only for dealing with big weights: and all

the time he kept looking up the street where the people would be coming home from church. But still there was no one to be seen only small boys in clean-washed shirts were playing around the thresholds. A five-year-old-urchin still wearing a dirty shirt, came up to the doorstep and stopped when he saw Tikhon. This was the soldier's son, Tikhon's nephew.

"Syemka. O Syemka, whose boy are you?" asked Tikhon smiling at himself at the idea of his taking any notice of such a boy.

"The soldier's," answered the boy. "Where's your mother?"

"She goed to mass and granddaddy goed to mass too," said the boy proud of his ability to talk.

"Can't you say who I am?"

He took a cookie out of his pocket and gave it to him.

"There she comes, mass's out," said the boy drawlingly, pointing up the street and instinctively clutching his cookie.

"But who 'm I?" asked Tikhon. "You? .. You're uncle." "Whose uncle?"

"Aunt Malanka's."

"Do you know Aunt Malanka ?"

"Syemka!" cried the old woman from within the hut, hearing the little chap's voice, "Where did you come from? Come here you Devil's kid, come here till I wash your face and hands and put on a clean shirt."

The "kid" slipped through the door to his grandmother and Tikhon stood up, snapped the mended whip two or three times to see if it was all right. The whip cracked finely.

The "kid" was stripped to the skin and well doused with water. His screams could be heard all over the hut. Tikhon stood on the steps and gazed into the street.

The day was beautiful; the larks were soaring above the rye-fields. The rice-fields were all a-glitter. In the forest the dew was dried off on the sunny side and the birds were singing. The people were coming from church. The old men marched along with great long steps (the steps of laboring men) in their white newly-washed leg-wrappers and their new bast shoes, some had canes, some walked alone or two and two: young peasants appeared in boots: the village elder Mikhevich marched along in a black kaftan made of mill-cloth: tall, thin and feeble as a rush came Rvezun, the lame Fokanuich, the greatly-bearded Osip Naumich. There came house servants, artisans in their coats, lackeys in German clothes, women and girls from the big houses, in sundresses with parasols. They were the only ones at whom the peasant dogs barked. Girls came in droves in yellow and red sarafans; children in belted coats, bent old women in clean white kerchiefs with canes and without canes, babies in white swaddling-cloths, and old maids in a motley throng in red kerchiefs and in white sleeveless cloaks with gold lace on their skirts. They came along merrily, chatting, overtaking one another, greeting,

scrutinizing the new clothes, glass pearls, sewed shoes.

(Yermila's womenfolk—all very elegant came along not mingling with the others, not because they had better clothes and sarafans than anyone else but because the old man Yermila himself was near them and had his eye on them. There's trouble if he sees them stop to play with the children or the like. The boys walked on one side at a little distance from Yermila and laughed at his portly stomach. Osip Naumich walks along by himself in his bast sandals and miserable old *kaftan* but everyone knows that he had money enough to buy out the whole village.

Here came a lean, handsomely-attired woman, what is called a regular type of rich peasant woman. She had put on such glass pearls and gold lace but this pink of fashion was the very worst and most slatternly of women, so that her husband had left off beating her.

There came along the wife of a clerk with a parasol, very showily dressed, but their working woman, Vasilisa, had dressed herself up still more extravagantly and was her rival in the dispute as to which was most like a real lady. And there came Matryoshkin, a household servant who had bought in town the day before a red fustian shirt and was wearing it but did not get so much enjoyment from it as the other people who marvelled at it. Then came Fokanich's girl with the house-servants, talking animatedly with Mavra Andreyevna on the question why, being well-educated, she wanted to go into a nunnery. Behind them came the Minayev women and the mother was sobbing—that very day she had carried her child to the graveyard. And there Ryezun's young wife stepped along decked out like a merchant's lady and hid her face in swaddling clothes; it was the first time since her first baby was born that she had been to church and had given the child its first communion. And there came a soldier in a new overcoat, already drunk; he had got it somewhere and was playing up to the women. But Bolkhin's old wife found her strength giving out; she sat down and prayed to God and told those passing that it was the last time she should ever go to church, that death was on her track; anyone looking at her could see that she was probably right. And there was Tikhon's old father, striding along with big steps and his whole figure showed what he was. And there was she ...

A beauty, whoever she was, whether peasant woman or high-born lady, it could be seen from afar. And she moved in a different way, sailed along as it were and carried her head and swung her arms differently from the other women; and her color was brighter, her shirtwaist was whiter and her kerchief redder. And if such a beauty is your own, you recognize her even farther off. So Tikhon from the other end of the street recognized his woman.

Malanya was coming along with the soldier's wife and two other women and with them came the soldier and he was saying something, gesticulating with his hands. And Tikhon could see that the color in her cheeks burned brighter than in

the others.

Malanya, wherever she was, always attracted to her and surrounded herself with other young folks, peasants and children, and as they passed by her they ceased talking among themselves and gazed at her. Even the sour old man went in such a way as not to attract her ridicule. The children and young girls swept by her, looked at her askance and said "There, see how Malanya walks."

But Malanya walked just exactly like the other married women, no better attired or more startling or merrier than the others. She wore a checkered skirt bound with gold galoon, a white shirt-waist embroidered in red, a similar apron and a red kerchief on her head and new shoes with woolen stockings. The others wore sarafans and sleeveless cloaks and colored shirt-waists and embroidered shoes. Just exactly like the others she walked along with a strong easy stride, with her arms, her breasts shaking and her black eyes glancing in every direction. Yes there was something about her which made her noticeable from a long distance and which made those near by find it difficult to take their eyes from her.

She came along, exchanging jokes with the soldier and not thinking of her husband at all.

"By God, I'll be elected one of the elders" the soldier was saying, "'cause of course I know how to boss the women, Andrey Ilyich knows me. Then Malanya I'll give it to you some!"

"Yes, you will" replied Malanya, "That's the way we got it last year in the Zemsky's barn:, beating flax, we loaded it on him, we pulled off his drawers and tormented him so that he ran away and he didn't stop to get his drawers he was that confused. You'd have had to laugh."

And the women all burst out laughing so that they couldn't even walk and the soldier's wife, always quick to laugh at anything, squatted down and banged her knees with her palms and squeaked with her laughter.

"So it'll be with you" said Malanya, thumping her friend with her elbow and somewhat recovering from her laughing.

"Come on, by God," said the soldier, repeating what he had said before "I'll buy some sweet vodka, I'll treat."

"Her husband 'll be sweeter than your vodka" said the soldier's wife, "he was expecting to get home to-day."

"Sweeter, may be, but as he ain't here one's got to have some fun on a holiday," said the soldier.

"Why do you take the joy out of my life?" said Malanya, "Buy some more vodka, Barshev, we will certainly come."

And suddenly Malanya remembered that her husband had promised to come for the second holiday and that he had not come and a cloud flitted across her face. But this was for a second only and she began once more to joke with the soldier. The

soldier in a whisper told her to be sure to come alone. ,

"I will come, Barshev, I will come," said Malanya aloud and again burst into a laugh. (It was rather necessary for healthy young working people to be merry on a holiday.) The soldier was offended and said no more.

Anisim Zhidkov who had seen Tikhon arrive in the village, was standing at the entrance of his hut; watching the women passing by. When Malanya came opposite he suddenly poked her in the side with his finger and make a noise like a frog with his lips :-"krrr." Malanya gave a laugh and hit him with the back of her hand.

"Say, you young dancer, do you talk nonsense with the soldier when your husband's eyes are on you?" said Anisim, laughing at her; but, noticing that Malanya became all flushed and confused when she heard her husband mentioned, he added gravely so that she might see he was not joking. "By God, he came in his troika while you were at mass. Got something for you."

Malanya immediately separated from the other women and with quick steps passed along the street. As she went along the street she looked round at the soldier.

"Say, buy some more sweet vodka and I will bring Tikhon: he loves it!"

The soldier's wife and the other women laughed; the soldier scowled.

"Go along with you, you Devil's woman!" he exclaimed. Malanya, her new skirt rustling and her shoes thumping hurried home. Her neighbor had to laugh again at her, because her husband had brought her "the something" in the shape of a whip, but Malanya making no reply ran to her hut.

Tikhon was standing on the steps, and looked at his "woman," smiled and cracked the whip. Malanya became quite different as soon as she had heard of her husband and especially when she saw him. Her cheeks grew redder, her eyes and motions became gayer and her voice more ringing.

"Ah I see you've brought me a whip for a present," she cried laughing.

"Oh! Is it a poor one?" asked her husband.

"Not at all-a fine one," she said in reply and they went into the hut.

Immediately afterwards the old man came and went out with Tikhon to look at the horses. Malanya took off her apron and proceeded to help her mother-in-law prepare the dinner; she kept looking at the door. The old man came into the hut; the old woman began to help him off with his shoes and leggings. Malanya ran out into the courtyard where Tikhon was, threw both arms around him and pressed him to herself with such force that he yelled and laughed; kissing her on the mouth and the cheeks.

"Truly, I wanted to go to you," said Malanya, "the same old story, the same old story, such a bore, even the holidays, nothing to see."

And she clung to him still closer, even lifted him up a little and tried to bite him.

"Have patience and I will take you to the station," said Tikhon, "I too was lonely

without you."

Grishka came out of the hut and, laughing a little, called them into dinner. The old man, the old woman, Tikhon, Grishka and the soldier's cub, after repeating their prayer, sat down at the table; the women served and ate standing.

Tikhon had not distributed his gifts nor had he handed his father any money. All this he intended to do after dinner. The father, though he was satisfied with all the reports that Tikhon had brought, still was cross. He was always cross at home especially on a holiday, until he became drunk. Tikhon got out the money and sent the soldier's wife after vodka. The old man said not a word but silently sipped his cabbage soup, only glancing now and then over the cup at the soldier's wife and telling her where to get the bottle.

The troika was fine, the money brought was satisfactory; but the old man was vex because his son had swapped the brown gelding. The brown gelding, which had been poisoned, the old man himself had bought the previous Summer of a trader and he had never been willing to acknowledge that he had been cheated; and now he was angry because his son had got rid of a horse which in his opinion was such a good one! He ate in silence and all were silent except Malanya, who helped at table and joked at her husband and her brother-in-law. The old man himself had previously been to the station but he knew nothing about this transaction and he had disposed of two of a troika of horses, so that he came back home "with one whip." He was an industrious peasant and not stupid, only he liked to drink too much and therefore he was ruining his affairs, when he took charge of them himself. Now he had a mixed feeling of pleasure and annoyance not on account of the brown gelding only but also because his son had come out well at the station, while he himself had failed when he went out as a coach driver.

"You shouldn't have swapped the horse, it was a good horse," he muttered.

The son made no reply. Whether he understood or it was merely accidental Tikhon made no reply at all but began to tell stories of his peasants who worked at the station, especially about Pashka Shintyak who had sold all three of his horses and even got rid of his horsecollar.

Pashka Shintyak was the son of a peasant with whom the old man had once driven and who had cheated him. This was an old feud. The old man suddenly began to laugh so strangely that the women folks stared at him.

"There, the highbrow devil, he's just like his father - he won't get rich by lying, sure."

And after that the old man, having eaten his kasha, wiped his beard and his mustache and began to ask his son how he had been doing the last three months, how the horses ran, at what rate they paid and all with evident pride and satisfaction.

The son willingly told all about it and the conversation was growing more and more lively when the soldier's wife all out of breath came bringing a green bottle; the old woman took a cloth and polished the portly tumbler with its bottom two fingers thick and the father and son each drank their share. The old woman was especially pleased with her son's account of the Tsar's passing through.

"And a police officer came galloping up, jumped off his horse; 'they're coming,' says he, 'they'll be here in ten minutes.' By the clock of course. Immediately Mikhail Nikanorovich looked at his watch. 'Tikhon,' says he, 'see if everything's all right.' My four-in-hand of course were all curried and hitched up. All ready then."

And Tikhon thrusting his big spreading fingers into his belt, shook his locks and looked at the women. They were all listening and looking at him. Malanya with a cup was sitting on the edge of the bench, and was shaking her head just exactly as her husband was doing as if she were telling the story and smiling as if she were saying: "What fine young folks Tikhon and I are!"

The old man laid his two arms on the table and puckering his brows put his head to one side. He evidently understood the significance of the affair. The soldier's wife swinging her arms together from the very shoulders and in front of her like a pendulum came through the door but as she passed the stove, she sat down to listen to what was saying and began to fold her apron twice, then to double that, then twice again and then four times again.

The old woman who had only one way of listening to any kind of story, whether amusing or melancholy, assumed this manner which consisted in slightly wagging her head, sighing and whispering certain words that resembled a prayer. Grishka, on the contrary, listened to every kind of story as if he were waiting for the chance to burst out into a laugh. And so he did now: as soon as Tikhon repeated his reply to the policeman: "You're not driving but we are!" he burst into a horse-laugh. Tikhon did not give him a glance but it was evident enough that Grishka had good reason to laugh-he himself was convinced that his story was very entertaining.

"All of a sudden, you know, while I was looking at the horses under the light, for the night was dark-we heard a thundering noise down the street and then under the lights two six-horse teams, five double spans and six troikas. Instantly we are all at our numbers. In a second our Vaska Skomorokhninsky and the police-captain come thundering forward. I give the last polish to the troika, already the-You wouldn't say the police-captain got out of his telyega-he rolled out like a cat feet down. First word: "Samovars ready?"-All ready. "Send a couple of men to the bridge lively!" The railings were buckling! They send Shintyak with a road-officer. Then I drive straight up to the porch under the lights: Volodka drove. They told him not to go up on the bridge, but you see he couldn't hold in the horses. We

drove ours up lively. Everything was fine. I look and see Mitka had got the one of the traces between his legs so it would stop him."

"Tell us, did *he* say anything?" asked the old man.

"His first word was, 'What station?' Captain says first thing, 'Selyukovka'-says he-'Your High Imperial majesty'-Ah?" imitated Tikhon. "Ah" And then he so marvellously thrust out his chest in mimicry of Majesty that the old woman wept as if she had heard the most gruesome news.

Grishka laughed but the little soldier-cub stared down from the loft at the old granddame and waited to see what was coming next.

"They brought up the six-in-hand; our Senka sat as groom "

"If they'd have put Grishka on," interrupted the old man, he 'd of died of fright."

"I'd have blown the horn"-cried Grishka, showing all his teeth, with such an expression that it was evident that he would not have been afraid to drive with the Tsar or to bandy words with his father or with his older brother.

"Senka mounted." continued Tikhon, twisting his fingers, " "It was as light as day there were twenty lanterns: but when we drove away-couldn't see a thing."

"Tell us, did he say anything?" asked the old man.

"I was just listening: he just says 'Good,' says he, Fare well.' Then the superintendent, the captain, say, 'Look, Tikhon !'-But I say to myself, it ain't for you to look. He was saying a prayer to God. 'Sit up, Senka !'-Only at first it was painful. I looked round little by little-nothing, all right! we could go on with our work. He went off. I says to myself, how's it going now?-But when we get to the bottom of the hill, there them rascals got tangled in the traces again, but as soon as the off-horse got free she ran on the rein the whole way. At the foot of the hill the captain was all out of breath. He alighted somehow.-'Off !'-he yelled. But I was already off, had and I got there four minutes before the hour."

The old man each time after he had finished his glass asked several times for a repetition of this episode.

After they had said their prayer they got up from the table. Tikhon handed over twenty-five rubles in cash and distributed his presents.

"Well, dear father, let me go, there's very necessary work at the station and I was told to return without fail," said he.

"But how about the mowing?" asked the old man. "Well, suppose you pay a hand fifteen rubles to help till Intercession-day. I get more than that with my troika. And if I keep my place till then, God willing, I'll get another troika and take Grishka."

The old man said nothing and mounted to the loft.

After he had struggled with himself a while, he called to Tikhon :-"I might have said this before. A fine young fellow's trying to get a job as a farm hand-Andrei Aksyutkin. A good-natured young chap-doesn't know much-used to tend calves. And when Aksinya was asked. "I wouldn't let him go to a stranger' says she,

'neighbor you take him for Christ's sake. If he has already hired out, then I don't know how it would be. I won't pay twenty rubles," said the old man, as if that were an impossibility, however profitable the work of driving at the station might be.

The soldier's wife, when she heard this statement, laughed out loud.

"Andrei hasn't hired out yet; Aksinya's in the village."

"Oh!" exclaimed the old man, "you go fetch her." And immediately the soldier's wife went after her, swinging her arms. Malanya went out doors, put up the steps and crept into the barn; shortly after her Tikhon also came out and disappeared.

The old woman was putting away the pots; the old man lay on the stove, counting over the money which Tikhon had brought. Grishka went out, taking with him the small Syenka, the soldier's cub.

"Aksinya had gone with her son to take service at the Ilyukhins. She was at Kum Stepan's; I told her to come," said the soldier's wife-"yes, and the old men are gathering on the lane to do the fields."

"But where is Tikhon?" "He's out and so's Malanya."

The old man frowned for a moment but there was nothing to be done; he got down, put on his shoes and went out doors. Malanya and Tikhon could be heard talking in the granary but as the old man approached the voices became quiet.

"God bless them," he said to himself, "natural to young folks; I've been there myself." *

After talking with the peasants about the fields, the old man went to Kum Stepan's, came to an agreement with Aksinya at seventeen rubles and took his hired man back with him. By evening the old man was dead drunk. Tikhon had not been in the house all day. The people were strolling the street till late at night. Only the old woman and the new hired man, Andrei, stayed indoors. The hired man pleased the old woman; he was a quiet lean bachelor.

"Now be kind to him, Afremovna," said his mother as she left him. "He'll be lonely. He's a gentle little fellow and not lazy about his work. Only our poverty"

(*One variant of "Tikhon and Malanya" ended here.-N. H. D.)

Afremovna promised to be kind to him and at supper helped him twice to kasha. Andrei ate heartily and said not a word. When they had finished supper and his mother had gone, he sat a long time on the bench in silence and kept looking at the women, especially at Malanya.

Malanya twice drove him from his place on the pretext that she needed to get something and she and the soldier's wife made some jesting remark looking at him. Andrei reddened and still said nothing. When the old master of the house came home drunk, he felt awkward, not knowing where to go to bed. The old woman

advised him to go to the threshing-floor. He took his coat and went. On the evening of that day they quartered two passing soldiers on the Yermilins.