



Previously in the *Dostoevsky for Parents and Children* series:

[Varenka's Memoirs](#) (from the novel *Poor Folk*, 1846 [1883, 1887, 1897, DPC I])

[At The Select Boarding School](#) (from the novel *The Adolescent*, 1875 [1883, 1897, DPC II])

[The Peasant Marey](#) (from *The Diary Of A Writer*, January 1876 [1883, 1897, DPC III])

{In square brackets we indicate the original Anna Grigorievna Dostoevskaya anthologies in which each story appeared, followed by its order of posting in the present *Dostoevsky for Parents and Children* (DPC) collection. Thus [1883, 1897, DPC II] means the story appeared in the first (1883) and third (1897), but not in the second (1887) Anna Dostoevskaya anthology, and was the second in this series of postings. Please find

[here](#)

our brief introduction to the original *Dostoevsky for Children* anthologies, and to this English online version.}

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As many stories in this collection, "The Merchant's Story" (excerpted from the novel *The Adolescent*

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) can be profitably read and appreciated separately, or in a larger context.

At the most basic and moving level, the story illustrates the relevance of the parable of the Return of the Prodigal Son in everyday life (also see *Fyodor Dostoyevsky: A Study* By Aimee Dostoyevsky

, 1922, available

[here](#)

, o

n the parable's place in Dostoevsky's own life and household

, according to his daughter, Liubov,

esp. p. 274,

including a memorable account of our author's repose, largely accepted by his biographer Joseph Frank.

)

And it speaks to us about the meaning of suffering. About one great sinner's "turning within", prompted by the suffering he inflicted on others. Much as the repentance of some tortionaries in the lives of the Saints. It is a story for homeschoolers past the age of Disney, Hollywood, and their literary equivalents. It is for the young and old unable to look away from the

[pervasiveness](#)

of

[innocent](#)

[martyrdom](#)

. It says something about Dostoevsky's perception of the modern versus the traditional moral views

. Most importantly, perhaps, it brings home to us

the mature

vantage point of "keep thy mind in the hell of fallen human nature, and in Christ do not despair."

It is also "a story in a story", remembered and told for edifying purposes by one of Dostoevsky most memorable spiritual figures, the peasant "strannik" (wanderer) Makar Dolgoruky (tentatively drawn by the author's hand in the accompanying illustration to this post). As such, it is a dostoevskian illustration of the "revelatory narrative, parable, or story-telling technique" in spiritual warfare - an important complement to the "discriminating use of recollections"

technique, noted last week

, in

the story of Peasant Marey.

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Finally, insightful parallels can and have been drawn by industrious readers between "Merchant Skotoboinikov's Story" (the name itself suggests animal-like rage, not unlike Skotoprigoynievsk, later to name the hometown of the Karamazovs), and better known Dostoevsky narratives, such as

Crime and Punishment

"The Meek One

", and of course

The Brothers Karamazov

. Less emphasized, perhaps, have been the specific qualities of such a brief and almost forgotten gem of a story

. To name but a few: it offers a synoptic view of the relationship between many aspects otherwise perhaps too easily "compartmentalized", such as the relationship between innocent child and innocent animal suffering (a classical theme since at least the times of Mencius, in Ancient China); the connection of both with "karamazovian perplexity"

" and moral choice, later to be understood by our author and his Orthodox

[lineage](#)

in terms of "

[we are all guilty for all](#)

; and a rare

Dostoevskian account of the

long process

of repentance, as compared to only the first few steps emphasized in most other places.

F.M. Dostoevsky

The Merchant's Story

(from *A Raw Youth*, 1875, also published as *The Adolescent*, *A Raw Youth*, and *An Accidental Family* ;

Constance Garnett transl., 1916

,
part III, chap. III.4

; Russian original

[here](#)

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)

I'll tell you now of a wonderful thing that happened in our town, Afimyevsk. There was a merchant living there, his name was Skotoboynikov, Maxim Ivanovitch, and there was no one richer than he in all the countryside. He built a cotton factory, and he kept some hundreds of hands, and he exalted himself exceedingly. And everything, one may say, was at his beck and call, and even those in authority hindered him in nothing, and the archimandrite thanked him for his zeal: he gave freely of his substance to the monastery, and when the fit came upon him he sighed and groaned over his soul and was troubled not a little over the life to come. A widower he was and childless; of his wife there were tales that he had beaten her from the first year of their marriage, and that from his youth up he had been apt to be too free with his hands. Only all that had happened long ago; he had no desire to enter into the bonds of another marriage. He had a weakness for strong drink, too, and when the time came he would run drunk about the town, naked and shouting; the town was of little account and was full of iniquity. And when the time was ended he was moved to anger, and all that he thought fit was good, and all he bade them do was right. He paid his people according to his pleasure, he brings out his reckoning beads, puts on his spectacles: "How much for you, Foma?" "I've had nothing since Christmas, Maxim Ivanovitch; thirty-nine roubles is my due." "Ough! what a sum of money! That's too much

for you! It's more than you're worth altogether; it would not be fitting for you; ten roubles off the beads and you take twenty-nine." And the man says nothing; no one dares open his lips; all are dumb before him.

"I know how much I ought to give him," he says. "It's the only way to deal with the folk here. The folk here are corrupt. But for me they would have perished of hunger, all that are here. The folk here are thieves again. They covet all that they behold, there is no courage in them. They are drunkards too; if you pay a man his money he'll take it to the tavern and will sit in the tavern till he's naked--not a thread on him, he will come out as bare as your hand. They are mean wretches. A man will sit on a stone facing the tavern and begin wailing: 'Oh mother, my dear mother, why did you bring me into the world a hopeless drunkard? Better you had strangled me at birth, a hopeless drunkard like me!' Can you call that a man? That's a beast, not a man. One must first teach him better, and then give him money. I know when to give it him."

That's how Maxim Ivanovitch used to talk of the folk of Afimyevsk. Though he spoke evil of them, yet it was the truth. The folk were froward and unstable.

There lived in the same town another merchant, and he died. He was a young man and light-minded. He came to ruin and lost all his fortune. For the last year he struggled like a fish on the sand, and his life drew near its end. He was on bad terms with Maxim Ivanovitch all the time, and was heavily in debt to him. And he left behind a widow, still young, and five children. And for a young widow to be left alone without a husband, like a swallow without a refuge, is a great ordeal, to say nothing of five little children, and nothing to give them to eat. Their last possession, a wooden house, Maxim Ivanovitch had taken for a debt. She set them all in a row at the church porch, the eldest a boy of seven, and the others all girls, one smaller than another, the biggest of them four, and the youngest babe at the breast. When Mass was over Maxim Ivanovitch came out of church, and all the little ones, all in a row, knelt down before him--she had told them to do this beforehand--and they clasped their little hands before them, and she behind them, with the fifth child in her arms, bowed down to the earth before him in the sight of all the congregation: "Maxim Ivanovitch, have mercy on the orphans! Do not take away their last crust! Do not drive them out of their home!" And all who were present were moved to tears, so well had she taught them. She thought that he would be proud before the people and would forgive the debt, and give back the house to the orphans. But it did not fall out so. Maxim Ivanovitch stood still. "You're a young widow," said he, "you want a husband, you are not weeping over your orphans. Your husband cursed me on his deathbed." And he passed by and did not give up the house. "Why follow their foolishness (that is, connive at it)? If I show her benevolence they'll abuse me more than ever. All that nonsense will be revived and the slander will only be confirmed."

For there was a story that ten years before he had sent to that widow before she was married, and had offered her a great sum of money (she was very beautiful), forgetting that that sin is no less than defiling the temple of God. But he did not succeed then in his evil design. Of such abominations he had committed not a few, both in the town and all over the province, and indeed had gone beyond all bounds in such doings.

The mother wailed with her nurselings. He turned the orphans out of the house, and not from spite only, for, indeed, a man sometimes does not know himself what drives him to carry out his will. Well, people helped her at first and then she went out to work for hire. But there was little to be earned, save at the factory; she scrubs floors, weeds in the garden, heats the bath-house, and she carries the babe in her arms, and the other four run about the streets in their little shirts. When she made them kneel down at the church porch they still had little shoes, and little jackets of a sort, for they were merchant's children but now they began to run barefoot. A child soon gets through its little clothes we know. Well, the children didn't care: so long as there was sunshine they rejoiced, like birds, did not feel their ruin, and their voices were like little bells. The widow thought "the winter will come and what shall I do with you then? If God would only take you to Him before then!" But she had not to wait for the winter. About our parts the children have a cough, the whooping-cough, which goes from one to the other. First of all the baby died, and after her the others fell ill, and all four little girls she buried that autumn one after the other; one of them, it's true, was trampled by the horses in the street. And what do you think? She buried them and she wailed. Though she had cursed them, yet when God took them she was sorry. A mother's heart!

All she had left was the eldest, the boy, and she hung over him trembling. He was weak and tender, with a pretty little face like a girl's, and she took him to the factory to the foreman who was his godfather, and she herself took a place as nurse.

But one day the boy was running in the yard, and Maxim Ivanovitch suddenly drove up with a pair of horses, and he had just been drinking; and the boy came rushing down the steps straight at him, and slipped and stumbled right against him as he was getting out of the droshky, and hit him with both hands in the stomach. He seized the boy by the hair and yelled, "Whose boy is it? A birch! Thrash him before me, this minute." The boy was half-dead with fright. They began thrashing him; he screamed. "So you scream, too, do you? Thrash him till he leaves off screaming." Whether they thrashed him hard or not, he didn't give up screaming till he fainted altogether. Then they left off thrashing him, they were frightened. The boy lay senseless, hardly breathing. They did say afterwards they had not beaten him much, but the boy was terrified. Maxim Ivanovitch was frightened! "Whose boy is he?" he asked. When they told him, "Upon my word! Take him to his mother. Why is he hanging about the factory here?" For two days afterwards he said nothing. Then he asked again: "How's the boy?" And it had gone hard with the boy. He had fallen ill, and lay in the corner at his mother's, and she had given up her job to

look after him, and inflammation of the lungs had set in.

"Upon my word!" said Maxim Ivanovitch, "and for so little. It's not as though he were badly beaten. They only gave him a bit of a fright. I've given all the others just as sound a thrashing and never had this nonsense." He expected the mother to come and complain, and in his pride he said nothing. As though that were likely! The mother didn't dare to complain. And then he sent her fifteen roubles from himself, and a doctor; and not because he was afraid, but because he thought better of it. And then soon his time came and he drank for three weeks.

Winter passed, and at the Holy Ascension of Our Lord, Maxim Ivanovitch asks again: "And how's that same boy?" And all the winter he'd been silent and not asked. And they told him, "He's better and living with his mother, and she goes out by the day." And Maxim Ivanovitch went that day to the widow. He didn't go into the house, but called her out to the gate while he sat in his droszky. "See now, honest widow," says he. "I want to be a real benefactor to your son, and to show him the utmost favour. I will take him from here into my house. And if the boy pleases me I'll settle a decent fortune on him; and if I'm completely satisfied with him I may at my death make him the heir of my whole property as though he were my own son, on condition, however, that you do not come to the house except on great holidays. If this suits you, bring the boy to-morrow morning, he can't always be playing knuckle-bones." And saying this, he drove away, leaving the mother dazed. People had overheard and said to her, "When the boy grows up he'll reproach you himself for having deprived him of such good fortune." In the night she cried over him, but in the morning she took the child. And the lad was more dead than alive.

Maxim Ivanovitch dressed him like a little gentleman, and hired a teacher for him, and sat him at his book from that hour forward; and it came to his never leaving him out of his sight, always keeping him with him. The boy could scarcely begin to yawn before he'd shout at him, "Mind your book! Study! I want to make a man of you." And the boy was frail; ever since the time of that beating he'd had a cough. "As though we didn't live well in my house!" said Maxim Ivanovitch, wondering; "at his mother's he used to run barefoot and gnaw crusts; why is he more puny than before?" And the teacher said, "Every boy," says he, "needs to play about, not to be studying all the time; he needs exercise," and he explained it all to him reasonably. Maxim Ivanovitch reflected. "That's true," he said. And that teacher's name was Pyotr Stepanovitch; the Kingdom of Heaven be his! He was almost like a crazy saint, he drank much, too much indeed, and that was the reason he had been turned out of so many places, and he lived in the town on alms one may say, but he was of great intelligence and strong in science. "This is not the place for me," he thought to himself, "I ought to be a professor in the university; here I'm buried in the mud, my very garments loathe me." Maxim Ivanovitch sits and shouts to the child, "Play!" and he scarcely dares to breathe before him. And it came to such a pass that the boy could not hear the sound of his voice without trembling all over. And Maxim Ivanovitch wondered more and more. "He's neither one thing nor the other; I picked him out of the mud, I dressed him in drap

de dames with little boots of good material, he has embroidered shirts like a general's son, why has he not grown attached to me? Why is he as dumb as a little wolf?" And though people had long given up being surprised at Maxim Ivanovitch, they began to be surprised at him again--the man was beside himself: he pestered the little child and would never let him alone. "As sure as I'm alive I'll root up his character. His father cursed me on his deathbed after he'd taken the last sacrament. It's his father's character." And yet he didn't once use the birch to him (after that time he was afraid to). He frightened him, that's what he did. He frightened him without a birch.

And something happened. One day, as soon as he'd gone out, the boy left his book and jumped on to a chair. He had thrown his ball on to the top of the sideboard, and now he wanted to get it, and his sleeve caught in a china lamp on the sideboard, the lamp fell to the floor and was smashed to pieces, and the crash was heard all over the house, and it was an expensive thing, made of Saxony china. And Maxim Ivanovitch heard at once, though he was two rooms away, and he yelled. The boy rushed away in terror. He ran out on the verandah, across the garden, and through the back gate on to the river-bank. And there was a boulevard running along the river-bank, there were old willows there, it was a pleasant place. He ran down to the water, people saw, and clasped his hands at the very place where the ferry-boat comes in, but seemed frightened of the water, and stood as though turned to stone. And it's a broad open space, the river is swift there, and boats pass by; on the other side there are shops, a square, a temple of God, shining with golden domes. And just then Mme. Ferzing, the colonel's wife, came hurrying down to the ferry with her little daughter. The daughter, who was also a child of eight, was wearing a little white frock; she looked at the boy and laughed, and she was carrying a little country basket, and in it a hedgehog. "Look, mother," said she, "how the boy is looking at my hedgehog!" "No," said the lady, "he's frightened of something. What are you afraid of, pretty boy?" (All this was told afterwards.) "And what a pretty boy," she said; "and how nicely he's dressed. Whose boy are you?" she asked. And he'd never seen a hedgehog before, he went up and looked, and forgot everything at once--such is childhood! "What is it you have got there?" he asked. "It's a hedgehog," said the little lady, "we've just bought it from a peasant, he found it in the woods." "What's that," he asked, "what is a hedgehog?" and he began laughing and poking it with his finger, and the hedgehog put up its bristles, and the little girl was delighted with the boy. "We'll take it home with us and tame it," she said. "Ach," said he, "do give me your hedgehog!" And he asked her this so pleadingly, and he'd hardly uttered the words, when Maxim Ivanovitch came running down upon him. "Ah, there you are! Hold him!" (He was in such a rage, that he'd run out of the house after him, without a hat.) Then the boy remembered everything, he screamed, and ran to the water, pressed his little fists against his breast, looked up at the sky (they saw it, they saw it!) and leapt into the water. Well, people cried out, and jumped from the ferry, tried to get him out, but the current carried him away. The river was rapid, and when they got him out, the little thing was dead. His chest was weak, he couldn't stand being in the water, his hold on life was weak. And such a thing had never been known in those parts, a little child like that to take its life! What a sin! And what could such a little soul say to our Lord God in the world beyond?

And Maxim Ivanovitch brooded over it ever after. The man became so changed one would hardly have known him. He sorrowed grievously. He tried drinking, and drank heavily, but gave it up--it was no help. He gave up going to the factory too, he would listen to no one. If anyone spoke to him, he would be silent, or wave his hand. So he spent two months, and then he began talking to himself. He would walk about talking to himself. Vaskovo, the little village down the hill, caught fire, and nine houses were burnt; Maxim Ivanovitch drove up to look. The peasants whose cottages were burnt came round him wailing; he promised to help them and gave orders, and then he called his steward again and took it back. "There's no need," said he, "don't give them anything," and he never said why. "God has sent me to be a scorn unto all men," said he, "like some monster, and therefore so be it. Like the wind," said he, "has my fame gone abroad." The archimandrite himself came to him. He was a stern man, the head of the community of the monastery. "What are you doing?" he asked sternly.

"I will tell you." And Maxim Ivanovitch opened the Bible and pointed to the passage:

"Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."
(Math. xviii, 6.)

"Yes," said the archimandrite, "though it was not said directly of this, yet it fits it well. It is sad when a man loses his measure-- the man is lost. And thou hast exalted thyself."

And Maxim Ivanovitch sits as though a stupor had come upon him. The archimandrite gazed upon him.

"Listen," said he, "and remember. It is said: 'the word of a desperate man flies on the wind.' And remember, also, that even the angels of God are not perfect. But perfect and sinless is one only, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Him the angels serve. Moreover, thou didst not will the death of that child, but wast only without wisdom. But this," said he, "is marvellous in my eyes. Thou hast committed many even worse iniquities. Many men thou hast ruined, many thou hast corrupted, many thou hast destroyed, no less than, if thou hadst slain them. And did not his sisters, all the four babes, die almost before thine eyes? Why has this one only confounded thee? For all these in the past thou hast not grieved, I dare say, but hast even forgotten to think of them. Why art thou so horror-stricken for this child for whom thou wast not greatly to blame?"

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"I dream at night," Maxim Ivanovitch said.

"And what?"

But he told nothing more. He sat mute. The archimandrite marvelled, but with that he went away. There was no doing anything with him.

And Maxim Ivanovitch sent for the teacher, for Pyotr Stepanovitch; they had not met since that day.

"You remember him?" says he.

"Yes."

"You painted a picture with oil colours, here in the tavern," said he, "and took a copy of the chief priest's portrait. Could you paint me a picture?"

"I can do anything, I have every talent. I can do everything."

"Paint me a very big picture, to cover the whole wall, and paint in it first of all the river, and the slope, and the ferry, and all the people who were there, the colonel's wife, and her daughter and the hedgehog. And paint me the other bank too, so that one can see the church and the square and the shops, and where the cabs stand-- paint it all just as it is. And the boy by the ferry, just above the river, at that very place, and paint him with his two little fists pressed to his little breast. Be sure to do that. And open the heavens above the church on the further side, and let all the angels of heaven be flying to meet him. Can you do it or not?"

"I can do anything."

"I needn't ask a dauber like you. I might send for the finest painter in Moscow, or even from London itself, but you remember his face. If it's not like, or little like, I'll only give you fifty roubles. But if it's just like, I'll give you two hundred. You remember his eyes were blue...And it must be made a very, very big picture."

It was prepared. Pyotr Stepanovitch began painting and then he suddenly went and said:

"No, it can't be painted like that."

"Why so?"

"Because that sin, suicide, is the greatest of all sins. And would the angels come to meet him after such a sin?"

"But he was a babe, he was not responsible."

"No, he was not a babe, he was a youth. He was eight years old when it happened. He was bound to render some account."

Maxim Ivanovitch was more terror-stricken than ever.

"But I tell you what, I've thought something," said Pyotr Stepanovitch, "we won't open the heaven, and there's no need to paint the angels, but I'll let a beam of light, one bright ray of light, come down from heaven as though to meet him. It's all the same as long as there's something."

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So he painted the ray. I saw that picture myself afterwards, and that very ray of light, and the river. It stretched right across the wall, all blue, and the sweet boy was there, both little hands pressed to his breast, and the little lady, and the hedgehog, he put it all in. Only Maxim Ivanovitch showed no one the picture at the time, but locked it up in his room, away from all eyes; and when the people trooped from all over the town to see it, he bade them drive every one away. There was a great talk about it. Pyotr Stepanovitch seemed as though he were beside himself. "I can do anything now," said he. "I've only to set up in St. Petersburg at the court." He was a very polite man, but he liked boasting beyond all measure. And his fate overtook him; when he received the full two hundred roubles, he began drinking at once, and showed his money to every one, bragging of it, and he was murdered at night, when he was drunk, and his money stolen by a workman with whom he was drinking, and it all became known in the morning.

And it all ended so that even now they remember it everywhere there. Maxim Ivanovitch suddenly drives up to the same widow. She lodged at the edge of the town in a working-woman's hut; he stood before her and bowed down to the ground. And she had been ill ever since that time and could scarcely move.

"Good mother," he wailed, "honest widow, marry me, monster as I am. Let me live again!"

She looks at him more dead than alive.

"I want us to have another boy," said he. "And if he is born, it will mean that that boy has forgiven us both, both you and me. For so the boy has bidden me."

She saw the man was out of his mind, and in a frenzy, but she could not refrain.

"That's all nonsense," she answered him, "and only cowardice. Through the same cowardice I have lost all my children. I cannot bear the sight of you before me, let alone accepting such an everlasting torture."

Maxim Ivanovitch drove off, but he did not give in. The whole town was agog at such a marvel.

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Maxim Ivanovitch sent match-makers to her. He sent for two of his aunts, working women in the chief town of the province. Aunts they were not, but kinsfolk of some sort, decent people. They began trying to turn her, they kept persuading her and would not leave the cottage. He sent her merchants' wives of the town too, and the wife of the head priest of the cathedral, and the wives of officials; she was besieged by the whole town, and she got really sick of it.

"If my orphans had been living," she said, "but why should I now? Am I to be guilty of such a sin against my children?"

The archimandrite, too, tried to persuade her. He breathed into her ear:

"You will make a new man of him."

She was horrified, and people wondered at her.

"How can you refuse such a piece of luck?"

And this was how he overcame her in the end.

"Anyway he was a suicide," he said, "and not a babe, but a youth, and owing to his years he could not have been admitted to the Holy Communion, and so he must have been bound to give at least some account. If you enter into matrimony with me, I'll make you a solemn promise, I'll build a church of God to the eternal memory of his soul."

She could not stand out against that, and consented. So they were married.

And all were in amazement. They lived from the very first day in great and unfeigned harmony, jealously guarding their marriage vow, and like one soul in two bodies. She conceived that

winter, and they began visiting the churches, and fearing the wrath of God. They stayed in three monasteries, and consulted prophecy. He built the promised church, and also a hospital, and almshouses in the town. He founded an endowment for widows and orphans. And he remembered all whom he had injured, and desired to make them restitution; he began to give away money without stint, so that his wife and the archimandrite even had to restrain him; "for that is enough," they said. Maxim Ivanovitch listened to them. "I cheated Foma of his wages that time," said he. So they paid that back to Foma. And Foma was moved even to tears. "As it is I'm content..." says he, "you've given me so much without that." It touched every one's heart in fact, and it shows it's true what they say that a living man will be a good example. And the people are good-hearted there.

His wife began to manage the factory herself, and so well that she's remembered to this day. He did not give up drinking, but she looked after him at those times, and began to nurse him. His language became more decorous, and even his voice changed. He became merciful beyond all wont, even to animals. If he saw from the window a peasant shamelessly beating his horse on the head, he would send out at once, and buy the horse at double its value. And he received the gift of tears. If any one talked to him he melted into tears. When her time had come, God answered their prayers at last, and sent them a son, and for the first time Maxim Ivanovitch became glad; he gave alms freely, and forgave many debts, and invited the whole town to the christening. And next day he was black as night. His wife saw that something was wrong with him, and held up to him the new-born babe.

"The boy has forgiven us," she said; "he has accepted our prayers and our tears for him."

And it must be said they had neither of them said one word on that subject for the whole year, they had kept it from each other in their hearts. And Maxim Ivanovitch looked at her, black as night. "Wait a bit," said he, "consider, for a whole year he has not come to me, but last night he came in my dream."

"I was struck to the heart with terror when I heard those strange words," she said afterwards.

The boy had not come to him in his dream for nothing. Scarcely had Maxim Ivanovitch said this, when something happened to the new-born babe, it suddenly fell ill. And the child was ill for eight days; they prayed unceasingly and sent for doctors, and sent for the very best doctor in Moscow by train. The doctor came, and he flew into a rage.

"I'm the foremost doctor," said he, "all Moscow is awaiting me."

He prescribed a drop, and hurried away again. He took eight hundred roubles. And the baby died in the evening.

And what after that? Maxim Ivanovitch settled all his property on his beloved wife, gave up all his money and all his papers to her, doing it all in due form according to law, then he stood before her and bowed down to the earth.

"Let me go, my priceless spouse, save my soul while it is still possible. If I spend the time without profit to my soul, I shall not return. I have been hard and cruel, and laid heavy burdens upon men, but I believe that for the woes and wanderings that lie before me, God will not leave me without requital, seeing that to leave all this is no little cross and no little woe."

And his wife heard him with many tears.

"You are all I have now upon the earth, and to whom am I left?" said she, "I have laid up affection in my heart for you this year."

And every one in the town counselled him against it and besought him; and thought to hold him back by force. But he would not listen to them, and he went away in secret by night, and was not seen again. And the tale is that he perseveres in pilgrimage and in patience to this day, and visits his dear wife once a year.