

**A Short
Anthology of
Georgian Literature**

(IX-XXc.c.)

2022

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A Traveller's Letters

Travelling from the town of Vladikavkaz to the city of Tbilisi

It was about six o'clock when a Russian dirty, disheveled 'yamshchik' _a cabman – drove a post cab nearby the hotel, where I had stayed the night before, and parked it there. It happened in the town of Vladikavkaz. It's astonishing! How beautifully the Russian artists used to draw such thick-necked 'yamshchik's' stupid face, his lunky (laggy) appearance, his clumsy-weakened linger, with his inhuman, brutal carriage. As much as the scene is good, so two times nasty is the reality. But as they say: 'even the smoke of the native country is sweet and pleasant.' I can't say anything about sweetness of the smoke, but as for the pleasure, I can say that it is quite pleasant, - first, because it cloaks our sight and prevents us from foreseeing the truth, secondly, it used to make us drip with tears. Oh, dear smoke of my native country, you are really sweet and pleasant: sometimes you cloak our sight so that we can't even see our misfortune.

When I removed, i.e. I took my leather 'khourjini,' * put it in the cab and turned to my just acquainted Frenchman to say farewell.

'Who had invented this cab?' – he asked me and pointed to the post-cab, where the 'yamshchik' wasn't awoken yet, he was dozing awkwardly.

'A Russian man.' – I answered.

'I think no people will compete with it. I am pity with you that you are compelled to make your brain and stomach be churned.'

'Never mind, the whole Russia travels by it; they do and what will happen to me?'

'Do the?! That's why they can't move farther!.. May God let you travel peacefully. As for me, I would never dare. Good-bye! If we meet some time, we'll be familiar to each other.'

After these words, we shook hands saying good-bye; he clunched my hand so firmly that only Europeans are used to.

I got on the carriage.

— —

*a sack with two parts on both sides.

The carriage stirred when I got on it. The ‘yamshchik’ opened his eyes and frowned at me. Then he gathered the reins and shouted:

‘Mtsu, mtsu’ to the horses that were so lean, with their ears down dolefully; cheer head with hunger. He put the whip up in the air. The horses thrashed but they didn’t move. ‘Damn you, mo-ve!’ – Shouted the ‘yamshchik’ to the horses, he swang the reins and splashed his feet. Nevertheless, the horses didn’t even stir. My familiar French friend was watching all this from the window and burst into laughter. What made that stupid man so glad?

‘They travel by that!.. ha, ha, ha,!’ – He was giggling, - ‘who could ever overtake it!’

Though there was nothing for me to be glad about, but I laughed, too. The ‘yamshchik’ turned his cowish eyes warthfully to me and frowned at me so furiously as if he was threatening: you laugh at me, too!. Then he turned to the horses and thrashed them with his whip. The horses kicked double times their heels and at last our carriage started and they went trotting. The rusty bell began to tinkle awkwardly, the carriage leaped on the stones and I was shaken to different sides.

II

So, I departed from the town of Vladikavkaz and turned to the direction of my native-country. We crossed the bridge of the river Thergi so that I didn’t drink the water from the river. I didn’t even open my eyes. I was scared not to be called the ‘Thergi-drunk.’ To be called the ‘Thergi-drunk’ is somehow unpleasant for a Georgian man, as he doesn’t like it. There is a quite well-grounded argument for that: first, they don’t like, because they are really the Thergi-drunk, secondly, because... because... they are secondly, too, really the Thergi-drunk, and thirdly, because... because... because... and thirdly they are the Thergi-drunk. Now, one can’t destroy such argument with the help of any other reasonable argument to our destroyed Georgians.

That damned Thergi! How double-dealer it is! Look, how it is dying when it is with its back to Georgia and its face towards Russia; as it passes along the valley on the plain, its voice is somehow broken. Our crazy river Thergi became quite different nearby the town of Vladikavkaz from that what our poet wrote:

‘Thergi springs, Thergi roars,

And the cliffs join it with bass...’

It is so slow there, so silent as if either it's been lashed, or been awarded by some rank. But the Thergi may be so silent because there is no cliff around to join it with bass:

'Black clouds of those cliffs

Lie on their heart

And threaten the world angrily

To overflow with flood.'

But, nevertheless, my poor Thergi! My dear friend, there, where you pass, you change your manner, like some men do. It's such a pity that your thunder-storm, your ringing noise, your alarm and disturbance, your interminable fight against the stones and rocks and your wide will as if can't be located in your narrow bed. There is much in you that should be paid attention, our unbootable Thergi, that is in your powerful and obstinate stream. But here, you are like a drowned, defeated and drawn lion. You are pitiful and you are a sinner!..

'Hey, the world, what are you, why do you rotate us, what temper is that.'

It was afternoon when I arrived in the Larsi station. My heart hadn't felt any pleasure before arriving to Larsi, except when more nearer I was approaching my native-country, more the nature of my country was becoming colorful and the river Thergi was more troubled and excited.

I entered the empty room of the station, I wanted to have tea and asked a lamping soldier to make tea for me, who appeared to be a sentry of the station. Before he brought in the 'samovar' to boil water, I laid down on the plank ottoman and went deep in my thoughts.

I had been to Russia for four years and hadn't seen my country; four years!.. Do you know, my reader, what those four years are! First, it's the whole century for him who is far away from his native-land. Secondly, those four years are the basis of life, a source of some stream, a narrow bridge that lies among the darkness and the light, that was laid by the fate. But not for anybody, only for those who had gone to Russia to train their mind, give the motion to the brain and heart, - make start to go. Those are the four years, that blooms the bud in the brain and heart of a young man. This is that very bud from which grows either a beautiful and brilliant bunch of grapes or wild ones. Oh, dear four years! If only I were him whose narrow bridge laid by you was not broken underneath the feet, I envy him who has passed the whole of you perfectly.

III

As I left the town of Vladikavkaz and felt the breeze of my native-country, my heart began to beat quite differently. The cab, leaping on the stones, used to scatter my best thoughts. But now, when I'm stretched quietly on the station ottoman, God willing, that I'm sunk into my thoughts with my whole heart and attention. Everything is gathered in my mind, all that I had left in my country which was decorated like a bride, all that I had seen, practiced and understood, is in the foreign country. All my thoughts were mixed together and appeared in my mental sight, but one thought was changed with the lightning speed into another one, so that my mental sight didn't stay on one and the same thing more than a minute – shortly speaking, there was a real revolution in my mind: the thoughts that lay on the foundation went upward and those, that were upward, went down and then they were mixed up together. Don't be afraid of the word 'revolution,' my reader! Revolution exists because it brings peace. First, there must be fermentation of the wine, it must be mixed up and then it will clear down itself. So does everything in the world.

Being in such condition, at last, my thoughts, one after another, took their proper places in my mind. One of them was the clearest. After that one came another one, then the other and at last it became infinitely tied together one after another. How I'll meet my country and how it'll meet me, I thought. What will it tell me? Who knows: maybe my native-country will show me its back, as I have been transplanted and grown in the foreign soil?! Or it may not show me its back, or it may accept me, because a real grain of my native-country is sown in me. But what shall I do when my country tells me about its grief, its covert reason of grief, its hope and hopelessness, and I, having grown out of the habit of its language, won't be able to understand its language, its word? Or it may accept me as a real son, press to the heart and listen to me wholeheartedly, and shall I be able to tell my native word and cure it with my word from the heartache, recover the sick, console inconsolable, clean a weeper's tears, make easier a worker's labor, make it aware by my word that there exist many misfortune countries like ours, but they live happier; and collect every sparkle, that glimmers in any man, in a great fire to warm the heart of my native-country. Can I? Will I be able to tell a native word and let you understand? I decided that my native-country will accept me by all means, because I'm the relation by blood; I can understand its word and language, because a patriot listens to the language of the fatherland not only with ears but with his heart, too, for which even silence is intelligible, and I'll try to let it understand, because the parent can always understand the son. But it's just a talk, and the affair must be done. If your native country requires the affair from you, what will you do then? – I asked to myself and stopped at once. I felt that this question ceased my colorful, mixed thoughts.

'And really, what shall I do?' – I asked loudly to myself.

‘You should have your tea.’ – answered the guard of the station, who at that time brought in the ‘Samovar’ and put it on the table.

‘Tea?!’

‘Haven’t you asked me for a ‘Samovar’?’ – Answered the stupid guard and left the room. It had hardly passed several minutes, that the door was opened again and a Russian military officer peeped in. His appearance said that he was in close connection with wine and vodka. At first sight, he looked like a thirty-year-old man, he seemed not to be a passenger.

‘Let me introduce myself to you,’ – he said in Russian, - ‘I’m ‘podporuchik’ N. I’m staying here, in the province of Larsi as a head of the troop.

‘Glad to meet you,’ – I answered, stood up and shook his stretched hand.

‘Where are you coming from?’

‘From the town of Petersburg.’

‘It’s great pleasure. There is only one pleasure in this uninhabited and neglected place that I meet a passenger from the educated country. The man who lives with his brain is in debt with the God and the native country to meet an educated man and talk with him in order to awake the brain. I’m greatly glad, any talk can feed the mind.’

He said and stretched the hand again and I, too, shook hands with him.

‘Who are you?’ – He asked me.

‘I’m an Armenian merchant’s counterman.’

‘A counterman!.. – He said and grimaced his lips.

‘Yes, sir!’

Hearing this, at once, my new acquaintance became conceited: pt up his shoulders and changed his first modest tone of speaking into quite a different one.

‘Hey, where are you coming from?!.’ – He asked with surprise and mockingly, too.

‘From the town of Petersburg.’

‘Hm,’ – grinned the military officer, - ‘from Petersburg. Good, you’ve deserved to see Petersburg!.. It’s a wonderful town,’ – he said and sat down on the chair freely: - ‘Petersburg!.. Oh, oh, it’s really a big city, Petersburg!.. a large city!.. It is quite different from your insignificant, little town. Well, what kind of a town is your town? If one even splits out from one end of the town, it reaches the other end of it. But Petersburg... have you seen Petersburg? It’s

the heart of Russia. It's true, the whole Russia thinks, so far, that the heart of it is Moscow, but I cleared all those false and imprudent ideas: I am a writer. Please be acquainted with me. Don't look like this at me. I proved that Petersburg is the heart of the whole Russia. Have you seen Izler Park?'

I was listening to this military-officer and I thought to myself, is he mad? But I couldn't make head or tail of this stupid talk.

'So, have you seen the Izler park or not?' - he asked again.

'How can you prove Petersburg being the heart?' - I asked and didn't answer his last question.

'No, first you tell me, whether you've seen the Izler park or not. You, locals, i. e. Georgians or Armenians, are not used to scientific talk, because of that you jump from one thing to another. You don't know successive and right discussion. That, of course, comes from the lack of education. I suppose you don't know what is the civilization, association, argumentations, intellectuals, 'kassatia' and Philology. But, never mind, that's fleeting. You'll be trained to. Thank God, many of the military-officers and common officers arrive from Russia to educate you. But, first, you tell me, have you seen the Izler park or not? If you have not seen it, so you haven't seen the town of Petersburg.'

'Yes, I have.'

'Have you? So you've joined the intellectuals. I'm pretty glad, pretty glad. And what can you say about the Izler park? What kind of the park is it? That's the real paradise of fairs, you see! Do you know what are the fairs? It's a scientific word, you may not know it, if I translate it into a simple language, that means that the park is full of the women with twinkling eyes. You may seize any of them. That's what education can do. But your women hide at once when they see a man. No, Petersburg...is a grand town, extremely educated, and the Izler park is a crown of education, it's such kind of park, 'mpa', and at these words the scientist-officer joined his three fingers and kissed on their top.

'I hope his 'samovar' is for you here on the table.'

'Your hope doesn't deceive you.'

'And I hope, you, as a man having come from the educated country, will offer it to me.'

'Neither that hope will disappoint you.'

'And, we'll have some Rome, surely.'

'Beg your pardon for that.'

‘That’s bad. Are you Armenian or Georgian?’

‘Georgian.’

It’s great pleasure that you are a Georgian man. Though our poet Lermontov says that: ‘Coward Georgians were escaping,’ but the Georgians are better than those Armenians. And you must have got some cigarettes.’

‘Yes, of course.’

I hope, you’ll offer it to me.’

‘With great pleasure. Here you are.’

‘You pour the tea and then we’ll have scientific talks. Though it will be difficult for you to understand a scientific words into a poor, simple language and so I’ll make it easier for you to understand.

I poured tea and gave him one glass. When he took a sip of the tea, he gave a smoke and began to talk.

‘Your country, scientifically saying, is not educated, i.e. saying in simple language, is uneducated, you see.’

‘I see.’

‘I say, I’ll make it easier for you to understand scientific words. Now let’s began with that, that your country is not educated, i.e. uneducated. This tea must be from Moscow.’

‘No, I’ve bought it in the town of Stavropol.’

‘Never mind. Now, let’s begin with that your country is not educated, as we’ve said. That means, that your country is retarded, you see?’

‘Yes, of course.’

So, as we’ve begun with that, your country is not educated, we must say what the education is. I’ll explain it by some examples: imagine a dark room. Have you imagined?’

‘Yes, I have.’

‘No, you may have left one window open, close it, too.’

‘I’ve closed,’ – I answered and burst out laughing.

‘As you’ve closed the curtains, then the room is dark, you can’t see anything. Suddenly a candle is brought in and the room is lightened. That is the education. Frankly speaking, this cigarette isn’t bad. It must be from Petersburg.’

‘No, I bought it in the town of Vladikavkaz.’

‘It doesn’t matter. Can you now understand the importance of education?’

‘Quite well.’

‘Now, as I explained the importance of education, I must ask you one thing: how is going the process of civilization in your country?’

‘I can’t say anything about that: I left my country long ago.’

‘Never mind, I’ll find out how it is going; how many generals do you, Georgians, have?’

‘About twenty.’

‘What! About twenty!.. O-oh, it’s great, – said our scientist-officer with great surprise, - ‘about twenty!.. so few people and twenty generals!.. You, sir, seem to have a great civilization. Look at them, about twenty! I can’t believe. You may, scientifically saying, consider ‘deystvitelni statski sovetnik’ to be real generals, i.e. simply speaking in poor language – ‘statski generals’, or more simply speaking – generals without ranks, i.e. more simply speaking – too young generals without beard are considered to be generals. It must be like this.’

‘No, I swear,’ – I took oath, - ‘No, I swear, I mean real generals.’

‘Twenty real generals! Good for Orthodox Russia! Fame and glory! Where it steps in, it establishes the civilization. How long has Russia been here?’

‘About seventy.’

‘Two generals in seven years? It’s great, that’s a great civilization. And then, what a general?! A real general! If God willing this civilization will go on this way, in seventy years twenty more generals will appear and they’ll become forty in all. It’s great. I didn’t know. And how did I know? It has hardly passed three years that I’m in this country. Frankly speaking, I had no time to watch your country scientifically. I followed one of the great mastering subjects. I searched much, I read histories and my time was spent on this scientific affair. But not in vain, the future generation will remember my desert and my fame.’

‘What did you do?’

‘What I did! It’s easy to say. So, sir, in Russia, in times of supremacy, misters were confiscated of slaves. A mister had no boy-assistant any more. He stayed with only a servant. The country was disturbed, the servants began to steal everything in the house. And I, as a pitiful

son of my country, began to think deep in this grief and said: my country needs my help. Thank God, I helped; So, I fabricated such thing that a servant can't steal any more. A simple case made me find the treatment. My servant was a great thief, he would never leave sugar in the sugar basin. I thought much what to do. I began to lock the box. But I used to either believe to lock it, or leave the key on the table, and when I left the room the servant used to steal the sugar. Then I caught two flies and put them into the sugar-basin, covered it, but didn't lock. Now you ask me – why? Because, when the servant tried to steal again, he would open the box. After he opened the box, the flies would fly away! Then, when I returned, I would uncover the box and when I didn't see the fly there, it was clear that somebody had uncovered it. Who would uncover it if not my servant; when I fabricated it, he would never steal my sugar. Now, every morning, as soon as I have my tea, I catch flies in the room, put them into the sugar-basin, and I'll be calm the whole day: I know nobody will steal it. How do you like my idea? It's an indispensable 'treatment'. That 'treatment' is used in everything that is kept in the box in our house. I didn't say it to anybody, but I love your country so much that I've opened it to you, and, please, inform your uneducated gentlemen. There is one thing, I can't do anything to those who steal vodka. I tried to put flies into the bottle, but those damned drowned into it, fools. But I'll invent something for them, too. So, how do you like my mastery? French people, too, know how to invent cunning things, but their machines are expensive. And this my mastery doesn't worth a penny. What is to catch one or two flies and put them into the box will give my invented thing: when this mastering is spread, then people will begin to buy flies. So, the barter will appear in our country, you may walk, in one morning, in your town and see a fly-shop. Isn't it great? How many hungry man will earn money with the help of flies. But what are flies now? Nothing. What are they for? Nothing. Look, how of great importance is the activity and work of scientist and a clever man for the country. I didn't intend to arrive here, though I was asked much. I thought for myself: as the God gave me intelligence, it's better to use it for my country, but this just-accepted countries need more education; here, intellectual people are in need. Now wait a little what'll happen. I've told, above, what I've invented, the other will invent another one, there may appear a man who will establish another Izler park: scientist can do everything. So, the whole intellectuals will move to this country. Then you will see, one day there will be a walking-day in the Izler park, your women will begin to walk without embarrassment, you may say to one of them or to another 'daringly', they will say nothing. Just then people will see their paradise, as scientists say; i.e. a paradise, simply speaking... but how to say, simply speaking, a paradise is a paradise. Do you understand?'

'Quite well.'

That evening I arrived in the town of Stepantsminda. It was a pleasant evening, so that, I spent the night there to get great pleasure with that brilliant sights. Oh, Georgia!

‘Where is another Georgia,

In which part of the area?’

I left the room and looked at the Glacier raised in front of it high above the town of Stepantsminda, which is called the mountain of Kazbegi. That Glacier is a great one. So, it can say: ‘The sky is my hat and the earth is my bast shoe.’ It was seen in the azure sky, white and clear. Not a piece of cloud cloaked its high forehead, its head grey of freeze. Only a blinking star lit it from above, which stood on one place immobile as if had been astonished by the Glacier’s glory. Glacier!.. It’s glorious, calm and peaceful, but cold and white. While looking at it I’m astonished, but excited, it makes me cold and not warm, - in one word, it is the Glacier. The Glacier is astonishing with its glory and doesn’t let you be fallen in love with it. Then why do I need its glory? Hubbub of the country, storm or blowing of the country, its malignant or goodness won’t stir a nerve on its forehead. Though the bottom of it is on the earth and the head sets high against the sky, it has stepped aside and it is so inaccessible, I like neither such height, nor such being aside or inaccessible. God bless the desperate, crazy, mad, obstinate and free turbid river Thergi: It burst into flows from the heart of the black cliff and roars and makes the area roar. I love the ringing sound of flow of the river Thergi, its rapid fight, activity and torment. The river Thergi is the face of the awoken man’s life, its exciting and worthy face: there, in its water, all the remains of the misfortune of the whole country can be seen. And the Glacier is a glorious face of immortality and relax: cold – as immortality and quiet – as relax. No, I don’t love Glacier, moreover, than it is so inaccessibly high. And the foundation of happiness of the country is put on the base, every construction is raised from the bottom, and it has nowhere begun above. That’s why, as I’m the son of this country, I like the face of the river Thergi more and I love it more. No, I don’t like Glacier: its coldness is freezing and the whiteness makes older! They say: it’s high! I don’t need its highness if I can’t reach it and it can’t reach down to me. No, I don’t like Glacier. The Glacier reminds me great Gete and the river Thergi – anxious and stubborn Biron. Dear Thergi! You are so good because you are happy. Now, try to stop for a while and see how you’ll become row puddle and your horrible noise will change into the quack of frogs. Movement and just movement, my Thergi, gives power and life.

V

It grew dark. Staying deep in my thoughts and looking at the river Thergi and the Glacier, time passed so fast that I couldn’t feel how the sun said farewell to the warm world, That was

basked by it, and hilt behind the mountains. It set dark, everything was out of sight, the noise of the world calmed down, everything was quiet.

It grew dark, but I don't know what I would do if I had no hope that the daybreak would set again. Would life be worth living?.. I love, nature, your order of existence, that every night is changed into dawn.

It grew dark, but I'm still out of the station and watch persistently with my mind that desperate, uproar flowing of the river Thergi. Everything is calm, but you aren't, Thergi! Believe me, I can hear the noisy complaint of the river Thergi in silent country. There are such minutes of solitude in a man's life, when you make the nature comprehend yours, in your turn, and it makes you comprehend its own. So you can say that you are never alone even in solitude, hei, the animal with two feet, who is called a man. This night I feel that, among my thoughts and the complaints of the river Thergi, there is some secret union, there is some consent. My heart is beating and my hand is shivering, why? Let the time answer it.

It grew dark. Even the footsteps weren't heard and a man's merry noise was ceased, you can't hear his tiresome care and buzzing of desire, the pain of the country was slept, there is no human being around me. Oh, how empty is this country without a man!.. No, take this dark and peaceful night with its dozing and dreams and give me my light and restless day with its torture, trouble, fight and misfortune! Oh, dark night, I hate you! If only you didn't exist on the earth, I think half of the misfortune of a man wouldn't appear in the world. Your appearance was the first shock for a man's mind and he was scared. From that day on he hasn't found his way out in fears, - and so, a man is fighting and can't grow out of the habit of his one frightened mind from the fear among thousands of cases so far. This is the reason of misfortune of the country. Oh, dark night! I hate you. Who knows how many envious enemies of a man is hidden under your lap now? Who knows how many blacksmith or enemy of the country creates shackles for a man's fate under this dark curtain, which you hang before my sight? You are the assistant of that mastering which is called sorcerer that makes the frightened brain consider misfortune as happiness; you are the time and the period of humpbacked festive, where there is heard a toast to darkness and ignorance. Oh, you wicked, go away, the light day, set in!..

V I

I realized in the station that there were some difficulties with the post-cabs in the mountains, as there used to be a lack of horses in the station. I was advised to hire a horse to the town of Pasanauri and pass the way riding. I liked this idea. I fell asleep with the thoughts that I would hire a riding horse the next day and pass over the mountains.

It was daybreak. How wonderful you are, dawn! How wonderful you are with your face washed by the morning dew, my country! I think, that all the pains of our country must be cured this morning, but the river Thergi roars and fights. It seems the pain of our country is not calmed.

In the daybreak people's voice made noise all over the country. The day began with its restless bustle. Just awoken man is good!.. But the man, who doesn't sleep while sleeping, is better, because he is distressed by the misfortune of the native-land. My beautiful country, is there any man of this kind? I'll search and if I find, I'll adore him.

I went outside of the station and met one of the local man 'mokheve' who lived nearby the revine. I hired his horse on the condition that he would accompany me in riding, too. At last, I not only regretted, but was satisfied greatly that everything went on this way. My 'mokheve' seemed to be a good man. He was a middle-aged man with his hair just going grey. And it appeared that he was a good watcher of the little country that was outlined around him by his fortune and was appointed to look at its colorless life.

We took up the horses and left the town of Stepantsminda, I looked at the Glacier for the last time. It somehow frowned proudly down from its height. That made my relaxed mind be mixed up this morning. My heart began to beat firmly again and my hand – to stir. I removed my sight with hate from the glory of Glacier and said good-bye with great respect to the river Thergi running madly by its base.

My 'mokheve' was a man of good appearance, a robust man, sitting on a small mountain horse that was trotting the whole way as a wolf, it was funny. My 'mokheve's' peltry hat was pulled over his eyes and he was settled on the wide saddle so calmly, and was joining with his body in trotting of his horse so quietly and so patiently and was smoking his pipe so calmly and peacefully, that one may think that there was not such light-hearted man in the world like him.

'What's your name, my friend?' – I asked.

'I'm called Lelth Ghunia,' – He answered.

'Where are you from?'

'From where? From the Gaibatni village, nearby here, on the river Thergi bank.'

'Are you Georgian or Osetinian?'

'Why should I be Osetinian?! I'm Georgian, from the revine village (mokheve).'

'That's very nice place.'

'Not bad: it is fitted to our poverty.'

‘This water, this air is a real happiness.’

‘Hm!..’ – smiled my ‘mokheve’.

‘Why are you smiling?’

‘It’s really funny thing, one can’t fill his stomach with it.’

‘The food must be much here?!’

‘Why not! It’s not a bad place, but we have a little of it: by two pieces of field per each man, we are in difficulties.’

‘This long road will help you much.’

‘What’s of that road? It is good for that who has something to take anywhere to sell.’

‘Aren’t you hired then?’

Why not, I am.’

‘Then you may earn some money.’

‘Yes, I do. But it doesn’t stay long enough in the pocket: a ‘mokheve’ is a sharer of an Armenian who has a shop. He doesn’t have dinner at home, but goes and spends his money at Armenian’s.’

‘Then, the plain seems to be better. There the people must be more satisfied.’

‘Who knows? There is quite difficult to live, too. The place is swampy. The people there are pale, they are not healthy; but here people are healthy, God willing;: there are replete people and here – healthy.’

‘Which country is better,: replete or healthy?’

‘Both. The country is bad without any of them.’

‘If you are to choose one of them?’

‘One of them? To choose? I’d choose these rocky cliffs, it’s healthier. Adam’s son can be satisfied with grass if he is in trouble, but what can you do with pain?’

Suddenly my ‘mokheve’s’ saddle rope was torn, he couldn’t stay on the saddle and fell over the other side of the horse. Then he jumped down from the horse and began to repair the saddle.

‘Equipped horse is a trouble.’ – cried out the smiling ‘mokheve’, - ‘bless the bare horse: you could set up its back freely!’

‘I didn’t wait for ‘mokheve’ any more and went ahead.’

V I I

‘Now tell me, for God’s sake,’ – I said to ‘mokheve’ when he caught up with me, - ‘What cloister is there just opposite the town of Stephantsminda?’

‘On the other side of the river Thergi?’

‘Yes.’

‘God bless the alive, let the dead forgive you, it’s the church of St. Tinity, it’s a storehouse of the ancient treasure, the council of nations.’

‘How is that? A storehouse of the ancient treasure and the council of nation?’

‘The treasure of the Georgian kings were hidden here from the enemies, the treasure was carried here many times from the town of Mtskhetha and hidden.’

‘What does the council mean?’

‘Council? There is a cell, where the justice is discussed by the discussors, whatever trouble sets up in ‘khevi’ villages, they would discuss it at once.’

‘Can you tell me what kind of discussion was that and what did they discuss about?’

‘Why not? I’ll tell you everything I know. When there was much dispute or any difficulties in the nation and there must be done a great choice, the council was carried out, and there were chosen a wise priest and some men, famous with their wit, they were gathered here in that cell to hold a council. And that what the discussors would say and decide in the name of the St.Tinity, according to the God’s blessed willing, so that nobody would be mistaken, no one would change his mind.’

‘Have you ever attended it such council?’

‘How could I attend it? I told you about the old saying.’

‘Why is there no council now?’

‘Now?’..

My ‘mokheve’ fell deep into his thoughts and couldn’t answer i.e. After awhile he asked me himself:

‘Where are you from?’

‘I’m a Georgian, can’t you notice?’

‘How can it be noticeable? Your clothing is not Georgian. You are dressed like a Russian.’

‘Does a man look like a Georgian only by its clothing?’

‘Eyes see the clothing.’

‘What about the language and talk?’

‘Many people can speak Georgian language: Armenians, Osetinians, Thathars and many others.’

But, is Georgian clothing dressed by many people?’

‘Georgian clothing is different. But a Georgian man in Russian clothing looks strange.’

‘A Georgian should be a real Georgian by his heart, the clothing doesn’t matter.’

‘You are right, but who could look into one’s heart? The heart is inside, invisible and the clothing is outside, visible.’

‘Though I’m dressed in Russian, can you believe me that I’m a Georgian.’

‘You may be.’

I don’t know whether my ‘mokheve’ believed me or not, but after that our talk went this way.’

‘You haven’t answered my question.’ – I began again, - ‘I asked you why they don’t hold a council any more in the St.Tinity cell.’

‘Now?.. Where is the nation now? We are in Russia. Now, everybody is bad, everything is concealed. There is a village of Gergethi by the foundation of the St.Tinity cloister. The kings ordered to the local people to watch the cloister. In return the kings awarded the whole villagers the land with freedom and gave the order of firming for the posterity. Every night three men from the village of Gergethi are sent there now. Gergethians even now are guarantors to watch the cloister, but Russians abolished this firming, Russia didn’t pay attention to the king’s order of firming the cloister. The village of Gergethi is now duty on another one. That order is abolished, there is no asking for the God’s blessed holding of a council in the St.Tinity cloister.’

‘So, the order and time was better before?’

‘Why not?’

‘What was it so better with?’

‘Before, well or badly, we owned ourselves and we lived better. Before, the nation was a real nation, with all his heart and soul, a man was like a real man, a woman was like a real woman. And, before?! We were side by side, we took care of one another. And before?! We protected widows and orphans, here, at home we talk to a dodger and there, outside – to any evil man, we tried a policeman who was sent by the God and the mister not to touch their family, defended each other when any impudent appeared, we looked after the sick, calm any weeping and that was the obligation of a man, care relationship. But now the nation is dismissed, prostitution and libertinism is established, greediness, self-interest vanquished us, hostility and fighting became frequent. Who will take care of widows and orphans now? Who will make laugh a weeping woman, who will cure the sick? Now, there is no man there and, if there is, they are ugly by their appearance or heart. The nation is diminished, it is beaten, weakened and confused. The fame of a Georgian man is destroyed, the tradition of Georgians is ruined. And before, Georgians lived together. The country has been ruined, smashed, what comes out of our being now? Food – to buy, our justice – to buy, what is left for a poor ‘mokheve’?

‘But isn’t there peace now?’

‘What for is the only peace when our stomach is empty? What is peace? The sabre and dagger is rusty; frogs, worms and snakes are increased in the swamp. And there is trout in the restless and uneasy river Therghi! What is peace for living men? What can the hostility commit if the nation holds council? There is enough peace underneath the ground.’

‘But, what about when the enemy attacked you, smashed you and your family had no peace?’

‘But nowadays we are more smashed by an Armenian, our house is more smashed. Before, we could fight against the enemy with shield and sword, repulse them, but what can we say to an Armenian, can I repulse or fight against him? Before, we gained our name in fighting with an enemy, in surpassing an equal one, made ourselves famous, how can a boy make himself famous against a foreigner? Before, you are right, there was an enemy. Often faithful youths were awarded greatly: while greatly fighting for landed property, giving freedom to slaves. Over there, by the bank of the river Therghi, a natural fortress is seen. That fortress is called Arch fortress.’

‘How is that natural?’

‘By God’s willing, untouched, unreachd.’

‘Then, what were you going to say?’

‘Before, that fortress was attacked by the warriors from the region of Kakheti and they captured it. The terrified inhabitants of the region nearby the ravine (khevi) intended to ask for help to their master. He didn’t promise his help. The unprotected people were in trouble. Many of mokhevan youths were killed, they went into the fortress, they hoisted the flag there. There was an upstart monk, a ‘makheve.’ He had an unmarried girl, the prettiest girl. That ‘makheve’ decided to make the warriors dizzy. He carried wine there and sent it into the fortress. He made his prettiest girl pour them the wine according to his testament. The Kakhetians, who loved wine greatly, looking at this wonderful girl, began to drink greedily and became fully drunk. The girl opened the door of the fortress and informed the whole ‘mokheves’ about the greediness of the Kakhetian warriors. The ‘mokheves’ were gathered, they went into the fortress secretly and with whooping killed all the drunk Kakhetian warriors. The ‘mokheves’ captured the region of the river Aragvi and he gave this fortress by his grace, in return, to that girl’s father, and in addition the order of firming the fortress, too...’

‘What kind of bravery is that?’

‘Why not? That is the clever fortitude: where there the force couldn’t work, another method must be used.’

‘What did you mean by killing those Kakhetians?’

‘Now, all the Georgians are brothers. I didn’t talk by hostility about Kakhetians. I wanted to inform you that before, we did everything ourselves, presents were quite great; we got much food by our fames, our bravery, a man can’t fail simply. Now we must deceive, become libertine by breaking the oath, betray each other and get food.’

V I I I

Whether my ‘mokheve’ is right or not, I won’t try to discuss it. And that’s not my business. I can remember fluently, as a traveler, that I’ve heard from him. My aim is only to maintain the color of his idea and the dialect of his talk. If I managed to do it, that means I’ve accomplished my aim.

My ‘mokheve’ told me something more, but the whole tale is not worth writing for some circumstances... I can only say that he himself told about his trouble.

I’ve got it, my ‘mokheve’, what kind of sting has pricked you ‘We must own ourselves’ _ you said and I’ve got it. But, as soon as I heard it, some sudden pain ran down from my brain to my heart, there it dug a grave and was buried there. How long will that pain stay in my heart, how long? Oh, how long, how long?.. My favorite native land, give me the answer!..

1861

(the last correction in 1871)

Translated from Georgian by Eter Moistsrapishvili

AKAKI TSERETELI

MY ADVENTURE

TBILISI

2016

Every Living being, be it animated or unanimated, visible or invisible, submit to one and the same order: it is born, grows up, grows old _ dies!.. Even water... water!.. Even any simple water couldn't avoid this general order: at the very moment it is born, that is to say, it appears somewhere in the mountain slope, it begins to drip slowly trying to step like a baby, goes down the slope growing little by little, gains a foothold till it springs into some ravine, where, as an unbridled, full-blooded, proud and obstinate youth, who wishes to gallop without any veneration or esteem: runs and springs roaring and rumbling! Jumps over some immovable stones and attacks against the edges of the rocks selflessly to different sides as if willing to tear it to pieces and overdo its antagonism!..But, that one, which is not able to do it, goes down the grove merrily. And, here becoming brave, having settled down in a deep river-bed, filled with water and brave pride, rolls waves after waves peacefully! goes down, flows soundly to the direction of the sea, to a long distance away, and, as soon as it approaches the inevitable refuge, it becomes slower like an old man, and, at last, it would stop once more for a while... then makes a puddle as if willing to look back for the last time in order to have a look at its past time, the remote road that was passed colorfully, and then it would fall fully into the sea gulf forever!..

Generally I love a child, I respect the old aged man with all my whole heart, I appreciate fortitude suitably, but I set my heart on the youth and I admire it most wholeheartedly!..

Maybe, the reason of it is that, among waters, I prefer lively ravine water more than any other river and the most preferable of them for me is the river Chikhura, that was my own font and my first mirror.

Just at the bank of the river Chikhura, on the height, there stood a two- storied stony house. This ugly building resembles a tower with its height, with the length - to a hall and with its thickness – to a stronghold, but it really doesn't look like any of them!.. It was the very house where I was born on June 9, 1840, at dawn. Though, there is written 1841 in my christening-certificate.

It says: “ A son of Adam, as soon as he is born his fortune star is forged, too, on the heaven with the prediction written on it!” If it is true, no doubt is that there must be written such prediction on my star:

There is some animal,
The voice of which goes far away,
That makes a 'foal' himself
And a ' mule' on his way.

Just at the very beginning, as soon as I was born, my father was glad of his son's birth, that he reconciled his former manor serf, who had been excluded and cast out of the palace; but, as for me, it appeared that I was beaten by my grandma at once. Here is how my nurse, she has already died, used to retell this story like a prayer that she had learnt by heart: "My dear Kako! (I was called Kako in my childhood) Even his birth was special. He looked like a bear-cub, a cotton-ball, when he was born and was so mute that couldn't say anything! He might have thought, where have I come here from? But his grandma thought that he had fainted and began to pinch him! Once or twice, she even beat him slightly and made him cry! Who had ever heard him crying, he always laughed."

Others say the same. Yes, I used to laugh, and this laugh caused one great trouble: once a nurse of our neighbors came to us and, when she saw me smiling, said: "Woe is me! I swear my pupil, this child smiles so strangely that he is sure to be a fool!" My nurse got so angry that she told her: "Who says he is fool?! He is an angel and smiles to the angels!..Plays with them! Fools can be found at your side". And so on" ... They quarreled and attacked each other. Our nurse was helped by our servants and our neighbors' nurse - by theirs; at last ladies interfered into it (of course, only by words of mouth and threat, but not by activity). When the gentlemen became aware of this fact, a great trouble set among these two families. They neither related to each other after that accident, nor – spoke! Just in Theodor's week, before receiving the Eucharist, according to the advice of the priest – Oqropiri, they reconciled with each other, and at that time my father sent a man to the village with the message to my nurse: "Send me here my giggling boy to show my neighbors and make my enemies vex!" I was taken to the palace but everybody was surprised that this "giggling boy" didn't even smile a bit, against my habit, so I seemed to be stupefied.

Here, it was evident that, for the baby of ten-months-old, who had lived in the country before, everything was strange in the palace and I was dumbfounded, but my family didn't understand or guess it so!.. They might think that: it is because of just envy and greediness of the others and because of a weak eye that made me tired, and thus, I was taken to the country in haste. My nurse, on our way, dropped into a fortune-teller to do blessings... she hung a bead and a wild cherry on my neck and took me home to the village. There, of course, I brightened and began to laugh again. My nurse was assured that the blessings worked right, 'the boy recovered, he will be all right', and sent a herald to my house hastily.

"Nursing" and sending a child to the village was historically accepted habit in our country: kings and sovereigns used to give their children to their subjects to have them brought up, but the subjects and high borns gave to aznauries, and aznauries _ to peasants; more often the princes gave their children to the peasants to be brought up. It mustn't be considered that the parents of that time were heartless and love their children less than today's mothers!..There were quite different reasons and foundations: this baby-nursing got into closer contact with people of different estates. Besides christening – they appreciate baby-

nursing and considered to be connected more closely with each other than with relations. Not only foster-children and their close relatives, even their distant relations, in any way, were ready to be self-sacrificed for their baby's sake, and the babies always intercede these people for the latest century and it was their deserts that there was more manly and kind feelings between the low and the high estates in our country than in any other countries. Of course, the motive of this intelligible habit was to send me to the country and may this habit be blessed!.. I can't help confessing that if anything good and kind is left in me, it's only because I was sent to the village and grew up among the peasant's sons.

In the village of Satsretlo /where only the Tseretelis live/, in the upper region of Imereti, there are many good villages, and among them 'Savane' is the best, where my nurse lived and where I was brought up. It is a ravishing place with good, fresh air and it is so remarkable; that's why it was called 'Savane', i.e. the place where you can rest well. It is not farther from our house to the town of Sachkere: it is about half of an hour's walk from our house. I made my first steps there; here I uttered my first words and my memory begins from here, too. I can imagine visually a wooden house covered with sedge, with the front and back doors, without any window, with only two chimneys or a cut in the roof from where the smoke went out and the light came in. There was a big, enormous stump lying on its side like a giant in the middle of the hearth and the fire was blazing continuously all the year round. A peasant family is constantly in movement from morning till night, the work is never exhausted there and because of that the children's sense and mind is always busy. Men go to work in the fields or woods from the early morning, dinner and lunch meals are taken there to them and they seldom come back home until it gets dark. And the women do their house work. They take care of the domestic animals and birds, clean the house, do cooking and many other trivial things. When a child takes notice of their work, he himself involuntarily becomes a participator of it and studies everything. In my five or six years I knew well how to look after the domestic animals and birds, to cook food, to sift, to bake, to cook different dishes and etc. I studied how and when it was time of tillage, hoeing, reaping, to chop off and etc., so, if I had the proper instrument, I would manage everything. I didn't only know knitting socks and gaiters and sewing, and it was because, that they used to say: 'doing a woman's needlework is a great sin for a man.' And I believed it. I believed, but I broke that sin in secret and learnt scutching wool and swingling of the cotton. That's how it happened: my foster brother who had been sucking with me and was of the same age, had never parted from me, he was always with me. Once it was bad weather and, when the women took the lunch to the peasants in the field, we were left home alone, they never took us with them. We were sorry, but what could we do? We stayed at home alone, we were sad. At first we played with a pen-knife, then with stones, but we didn't enjoy any of them, because we were bored with such playing. My foster brother told me: 'let's scutch grandpa's beard!' He took down a combing machine, brought some wool and began scutching and saying: 'may the grandpa's beard be scutched so!' I liked it very much and I imitated him. I couldn't manage to scutch for a long time, two or three times I pricked sticks in my finger, but I didn't even leave it.

Who was that grandpa or what we wanted of him. Neither of us could imagine it, but we were admired by scutching that grandpa's beard, so that, we almost got tired of it... at last my foster brother said: 'That'll do with our scutching thus much, now let's fluff up and let grandpa's beard fly with the wind.' He took down a string, brought some cotton and began to scutch it. He was scutching and, at the same time, while beating the string, he was jumping up and down. I, of course, imitated him and we liked this playing of 'grandpa's beard,' so that, afterwards, when we were assured that the women had gone out somewhere, we used to play this game and learnt scutching thus much and used the string so, that we excelled in it even the women. We were very careful as much as we could, but once they came earlier and my nurse scratched her cheeks: 'woe is me, what have you done, my sons? Isn't it a great sin? Women's needlework is on your duty... and then, if masters know about it in the palace, what will they say?' From that day on, they hid the string and the scutch, too, away from us but, in vain, it was late. The brain and the feelings of the boys are restive, they are in movement continuously all the time, but they are not constant, they don't stay on one and the same thing. Uniformity and monotony soon becomes boring and he moves from one thing to another. That's why he hates to stay in the room, as everything that is in the room, is well known to him, his eyes are used to it and they doesn't enjoy his feelings and brain any more: he runs out to the valleys, that are between the sky and the earth, where the sights are various and enormous for him. Staying at home, of course, was a kind of punishment for me, too. I liked to walk in the cornfields, where the peasants used to sing, but I couldn't stay there for a long time, for I was not paid almost any attention. They had their affairs to do. Who doesn't know that the fellow is sincere, he always wants to share his inmost to the others, as well, to make others know about it; and this he can do only with his friends. Often, when a fellow doesn't meet his friends, he would speak to some inanimated objects, to a stone, a tree, a flower, grass and so on...- and to animals! He always talks to them with so great pleasure, that one can't imagine more!.. The youth can't manage to talk only with adults and can't talk wholeheartedly with them!.. and the reason of it is the adults' haughtiness and their not being accompanied with them. It's obvious why I didn't stay for a long time in the cornfield, with the peasants. I preferred going to the pasture and to the valleys or woods, and staying there was like entering in the paradise. At daybreak I would run bare-hearted, bare-foot to the herdsmen and stayed there till the darkness .The fellow, who had never grown up in the village, is quite torn away of the nature. He is diminished of the first happiness. To a child brought up in town, be he even a genius, his teacher can't explain him, either by means of words or pictures, the nature thus, that it knows a village boy who always sees everything himself. A village boy has the nature before him visually with its diversity, he knows every animal or bird; any raptil, insect, plant and he knows their temper and habits: he watches their birth, how they grow up, bloom or blossom, how they yield fruit and then die, - he is the participator of their plague and happiness and that's why they adapt so to them. Which art can give a child that what the boy can see himself in the village? For example, let's look through the latest case: here it is, the granting mother-pig is coming and the screaming little piglets would run vivifying after her. They ask for sucking... the mother- pig would go somewhere in the shade and roll down on the ground: and the piglets would run up to her and stick there like a funnel, enjoy sucking with their tails turned up wagging and the mother, with her eyes closed, is grunting happily at them... Here the lambs are leaping and kids – springing... the piglets – struggling, foals – rolling over, and many others... all around various and different sights... A child watches it and he himself wants to jump and play! But a town-child is lack of all these. What about 'Gymnastics'- you may say!.. But gymnastics is just a torment of a child and his body's torture. Does the different parts of body have one and the same demands?.. I may want to exercise only my foot and have my hand rested. Everything must be done on its time and that time will be felt

trustworthy by the nature itself. And, while doing the 'gymnastics' I must act according to another's order against my will, e.g. when I wish to run, he will stop me immediately, give me a heavy iron in my hand and order me to do the exercise against my wish... The art can subordinate him. i.e. mangle his nature, but if he changes it and tries as if to improve it according to his wish, it is impossible, I think. Now, imagine a village boy on one side, free, leaping like a deer and a clumsy town boy from another side!.. Tightened in his shoes and torturing with the sores... equipped himself in the clothing unable to move in it and he is ordered : be careful, do only that what we advised you!.. but that poor boy is keen on rolling down, but how can he dare to make his clothing dirty?.. and so grows up the future consumption and mummy under the orders.

So many different toys that Georgians had always had, no nation may have ever had, and any kind of toy must train and practice the mind and the body. I won't enumerate all of them here, because I will discuss them again: especially I can name only a 'playing ball'. Now, think which 'gymnastics' can be compared to it? While playing ball: eyes, feet, hands, head, body and everything equally get used to quickness. Georgian toys are made by the children themselves, e.g. they always cut out a 'taparik' stick themselves to play with it, make a bow and an arrow themselves, make a ball themselves, and this work makes the owner loves his property more! The toys bought in the shop and the dolls gotten for nothing in towns make children be used to being idler and spoil their character. I've experienced this myself! I didn't care about the toys made by others or bought toys and took always care only about mine. Children like to imitate the grown-ups and when I built the houses of cards and used to build the granaries, barns (for the maize) and mills, I enjoyed it most of all. I was proud that I made them myself. Now, imagine a village boy, who has a ball in his hand that he has made himself and blows to and fro freely jumping and running, and compare him with a town-dweller! That poor boy holds a string of balloon and can't even move for fear in order not to be flown it away...not to be long in speaking, I'll put it into a few words, that among boys brought up in town and the boys grown in the village is such a difference that it is between a real and its shadow. This misfortune was avoided from me, by the fortune, and I was a real son of nature in my six or seven years: healthy, lively, kind, affectionate to everyone and free as a son of the paradise. Yes, until I had been growing in the village. I was quite happy, too, though sometimes, once or twice a week, my happiness was always hindered by the people coming from the palace to see me!

'Today the masters will visit us!'- My nurse used to say: she would clean me, wash me, adorn as if for the festive occasion and would never let me go out. And it was really that very day, when my parents were to arrive with their retainers just as it was worth in times of serfdom, all the villagers were watching them. Their visit was amusing and playful for me. I knew, they were the masters and I was their son. As they, and thus their retinue, too, treated me with respect and caress, kissed me, took me in their hands, gave me presents and petted me, but I didn't enjoy much their visit, because my heart was in the woods and valleys and pasture. I was fortunate that they didn't stay for a long time in the village and I, having been assured that they went a bit farther away, would run to the pasture again. There, village boys, my friends would ask me: 'What have they brought you? What the masters told you? How were they?' and etc. After making requires,

we would, at once, begin playing ‘masters’: one performed a lady, another pretended to be a gentleman, the rest were retinues!..We used to take a seat on a wooden horse and had a great fun.

I have already mentioned above that we, Georgians, have an enormous amount of toys. One of them has remained in my mind and sense forever, though that playing itself is not so entertaining. That was called ‘corobia’ (hawk playing). One of the eldest boy - a broad-hen and we, the rest were chickens; we would make a circle around it dancing. The hawk would come to steal the chickens; the hawk repulsed the attack with all his might. At the end the hawk would attack now here, now there, tear the circle, steal the chicken; then the chicken would scatter, hide themselves to different sides and the grieved broad-hen, while been assured that the chickens were hidden and migrated to different sides, the hen would run after the hawk, make it throw down the stolen chicken and got it back. Then the hen would start to turmoil again, collect the chicken and make a circle. It’s the truth that the winner was always the broad-hen, but that poor thing had no rest from the hawk and she always tortured. I didn’t like this game though we finished any playing with this game every time. I was sorry for the broad-hen and always asked my nurse: ‘what did the broad-hen do wrong to the hawk that it steals the chickens and doesn’t give her a rest?’ – ‘It wants to eat, too!’ –My nurse used to answer and laughed. I don’t know, whether this playing, that is not of much exercising, was invented for some reason or by an accident, simply, but today, when I think about it, it resembles to the fate of our country. Our life, our history was always like a ‘hawk playing’. Georgia was an exhausted broad-hen and its regions were chickens! The enemies attacked it like hawks... stole now one region, then another, but at last Georgia got back its lost region and thus united, being in the round dance was circled and swang the end firmly. Certainly, at that time, I couldn’t understand it, but my heart was pained somehow and I hated playing ‘hawk’. Anyway, everybody wanted to play it, but nobody loved it. Once, when I came back home, my nurse noticed that I was sad and told me: ‘what’s up, have you played ‘hawk’ game?’

‘Yes, we have, and the hawk stole me!’ – I said laughing. My nurse pressed me to her bosom and began to cry. I was surprised and asked her: ‘why are you crying?’ – ‘I’m crying, because my chicken will be taken away tomorrow!.. It will get out of difficulty for the chicken, but how will the broad-hen suffer and how can she live without him?’ Saying this, she burst out weeping, then more and more, and pressed me firmly to her heart. Though I couldn’t understand anything, but I guessed that something wrong had happened and I began to cry, too... I cried and cried and fell asleep in my nurse’s hem. The next day I learned everything; I had to say good-bye to my village forever and was taken to the palace, where I was to begin quite a new life.

I had been many times to that palace before, but now, when I was brought there, much was strange for me. I knew almost everybody in my family, but the visitors surprised me greatly. I was taken now to one and then to another’s hand, they caressed me and kissed me. They surrounded me like some jays around the owl. ‘Hei, village- boy!’ – shouted my father. – ‘Now you must learn to be a master and be used to being a prince; what you’ll be told, you must

believe it, otherwise, if you are indocile, I'll take you and lock you just like that little boy', he held my hand and took me to the mirror, where I saw myself clearly from head to feet, and began to laugh.

'Do you see?' – My father asked me.

'Why not!.. am I blind?'

'Do you know him?' – asked my father.

'It's not difficult to know him'.

'Don't you want to fight with him?'

'With whom?'

'With this little boy'.

'What boy! That's my spectre.'

'How do you know?'

'Why shouldn't I know? Haven't I seen him many times in the water?''

These words made everybody laugh and they were surprised, - 'God bless you', - exclaimed the manager. – 'God bless you; as the saying goes: 'a sheep of the old flock' is indeed real. If he were a country boy, he would never guess!.. When I first looked into the mirror my hair had already gone grey, but I was so surprised that I almost went mad!' - The manager seemed to want to say much more, but my mother interrupted him; she called me and asked me: 'In the water? How's that?'

'Well, when I used to go fishing either to the river Kvirila or Izvara, I was always seen in the holy water.

'Only you?'

'Why, only me? Anything can be seen in the water: an ox, a cow, a horse; in the daytime everything is seen, but at night, only the stars and the moon can be seen, too'.

'How were you fishing?'

'Small fish can be caught by a manual fishing-tackle 'chkiphi', but big ones – with the hands. I put my hands into the hole or under the stones and if I found there a fish, I would catch and take it.'

'If there were a snake?'

‘Why, it didn’t matter. I did find it. You put your hand into a hole, you think you’ve found many bullheads gathered together, took it out and it turned out to be a wound snake. It would unfurl and wound around your arm.

‘Then... aren’t you afraid of it?’ - cried my mother.

‘No! I would dash it down on the cobble-stones.’

‘If it bit you?’

‘No, mpa , not! It doesn’t bite, it doesn’t have the poison in the water. When it wants to enter into the water, it pours out its poison and leaves there on the stone. After coming out of the water, it licks again and goes its way. Then, if it meets anybody and bites him, it’s very bad: If it bites at dawn, he will not live until the sunset, and if it bites in the sunset, he will never see the dawn any more, he will die.

‘ If it can’t find the poison?’

‘If anyone hides or throws the stone away, then it will begin to look for it, run and run, if it doesn’t find it, being worried it would strike its head on the stone and die.

‘How do you know it?’

‘Last year, I saw the snake on the bank of the river Kvirila died like that. Its head was neither crushed nor torn, it was dead and the fishermen said that it might have lost its poison and killed itself.’

‘Why does it torture itself, why doesn’t it take the poison into the water?’

‘It is cursed!. And then, if it takes the poison into the water, the water is used by the villagers, and wouldn’t be everybody, children and grown-ups, poisoned?’ – my talk surprised my mother and she laughed and caressed my head, and I, satisfied with being asked about my village stories, was ready to talk until evening, but we were interrupted.

‘May St. George damn it.’ – they cried from every side. – ‘pah! pah! somebody is using bad language about us.’- and they moved to another talk. Meanwhile, the dinner time came and they called the boy from the balcony to bring in the dinner.

Suddenly, twenty or thirty, or more servants rushed in and stood in the middle of the room. The master moved to the ottoman and sat down there. The noblemen sat down in front, on the other ottoman and the priest – at the head. Somebody was coughing on the stairs, they said – it was the manager and, indeed, it was him, leading the dinner; he entered and stood against the column. He was followed by others. The handicrafts-men brought in the bread in the baskets, and the cookers brought different dishes in the pots and coppers. They put them in the corner and stood there, too. ‘So, let’s have our hands washed’, ordered the masters. One servant took a

basin, the other- a copper jug and the third – a towel. They went round in a turn and helped everybody to wash their hands. Then two boys brought in a low and long, narrow wooden table with four legs, but one leg was fallen out. ‘Put the leg into its place’ – ordered the master. All the boys ran out and in a blink of an eye one of them brought a stone, and the others were running after them again, they turned over the low table and began to knock. They fixed the leg, but they exceeded, the leg was shortened and the table began to sway. ‘Put a chip under it’, - ordered the master. The boys ran out to fetch a chip. One of them fetched the chip, and the others followed him; they put it under the low table and it was strengthened. At last this problem was solved, but the grief for this plague was never finished, either. When hungry dogs smelled the dinner, they found time, ran into the room, climbed under the low table and lied there. – ‘Hei, save us from these dogs’, - cried the master. The boys seized the sticks and began to beat the dogs under the table. The dogs were grumbling, biting, didn’t want to come from under the table, but at last, after forcing upon them, they had to come out and ran away. One or two dogs crawled under ‘aznauries’ table’. When the boys began to beat them with sticks, one of the ‘aznauries’ cried: ‘wou is me! My shank, you’ve broken my shank, you damned! May I not be angered by my master, he takes vengeance on me and shouted: ‘may the God damn me and be angered by my master if it were not accidentally.’ This accident caused a great and loud laughter and that ‘aznauri’ overstated his ache, hold his shank and grimaced. When the dogs were driven away, some boys were stood at the door with sticks in order not to let the dogs in. This incident happened neither for the first nor the last time. Not only in our family, but in other families, too, used to happen such accidents; Nearly at every meal, at any dinner or supper, the legs of this table used to be spoilt and the repulse of the dogs was constant but nobody thought either to repair the legs of the table or order the boys to stand by the door before dinner not to let the dogs in. Adults and children were so used to such obstinacy, that they even couldn’t have dinner or supper without it; as if it was the same necessity like the priest to consecrate the meal. When everything was over and the meal was set on the table, suddenly my mother shouted to the father: ‘what are you doing!’ – He turned out to have put one big piece of bread before the priest prayed the grace and sanctified the meal. And just remembering it, he jumped up and pointed out to the priest to pray. And the priest began to pray the grace at once, sanctified the meal and after that the father swallowed his piece of bread and addressed to the priest: ‘father, you nearly suffocated me, I couldn’t swallow it for fear, being ashamed couldn’t throw it out, but you drawned praying,’ – ‘Don’t be angry with me, I’ve jumped over praying twice, as much as I could, and I hushed up.’ My mother got angry about these words and reprimanded my father: ‘It’s because of your impatience; you make the priest be sinned and condemned. Whoever heard to hush up the grace and thus deceive the God?’ The priest turned red and tried to justify himself and mumbled: ‘That’s all right, bread and wine is blessed, anyway, by the God, if it is diminished of anything, never mind!’- ‘What are you saying , priest,’ – said my mother, - ‘everything that occurs on the earth, is blessed by the God after he created everything: then why do you hold the blessing book every time?’ God knows how long this talk would go on and how it would finish, if not my

father's shout interrupting them: 'All right, now what's of it. I'm hungry.' Everybody became silent and started eating diligently.

The table was full of various kinds of meals, each had enough course before him, but my father was still given a wooden basin with a Rachian calf cut into pieces on it, which he would send now to one then to another guest. And they would say with great worship: 'May the God us have your mercy.' At this moment, suddenly among the boys lined up in the middle of the room, standing and watching us eating, with their lips moving, I saw my foster brother... he winked at me; I guessed what he meant; I crept in my hand to a big bone, seized it and threw it with lightening speed. The boy, been used to playing ball well, of course, caught it like a sparrow-hawk and hid it in his bosom. Many of them couldn't even catch an eye at our playing with meat, but my mother noticed it and told me laughing: 'My boy, you gave it only to one boy, others will be grievous! The boys of his age are two or three more there, you see! All of them will be your manor serfs and viziers! Send it to them, too!' I obeyed my mother's order with pleasure and threw the meat to them one by one. They turned out to be, too, good in playing ball. Two of them caught the rolling meat with his fingers like the sparrow-hawk with its claws; Only one of them, who was the eldest, dropping it down: 'Ah, shame on you!' They cried from every side: 'You don't seem to be a faithful to your master!' The boy was ashamed, but he clutched the meat, anyway. 'Kick him!' - ordered the master; the little boys attacked him and kicked him out. It's so strange! Neither the kickers nor the kicked ones were offended. A great laughter burst out. The little boys were thrown some bread, too, and they rushed out with pleasure to eat it nice. Nobody was given wine, only the wine-waiters held the jugs filled with wine, and, as soon as the glasses became empty, they filled them up. They didn't say toasts. When they put up the first toast, then they would cross themselves and said: 'Glory the God! Graces to nation! God bless the master and his serfs, and our lord! Forgive us, the father!' They would regard to the priest, too, and drink the wine; and then drank as much as they wished. They didn't even think about any reasonable toasts.

The longer dinner went, the merrier everybody was becoming. They were laughing, joking and saying funny stories, sometimes servants used to interfere in laughing and talking; but they behaved politely.

Dinner was over, the table was cleared, the servants served everybody to wash their hands and then they went out of the room. Only the masters stayed in the house. In those days to have a nap after dinner was a necessity for everybody and because of that my mother and father stayed in the bedroom. But I was taken to the living-room and left there: 'Stay there and if you want to have a nap, lay down on the ottoman, there is a cushion, put it under your head and sleep. You'll not be allowed to go out till it is not cool day, you surely see that the Earth is burning with the flame of heat. Even every animal is embittered: 'Don't let this angry dog tear you or the snake bite you. When it is cool, the little boys will wake up, too, and jump in the yard together with them if you wish'.

They shut my door and left me alone. This was the first time in my life that I was alone in the locked room. I became sad and began to think. My heart was still in my village. ‘It’s true, - I thought – being in the sun, when it is so hot, and stroll is not good, but what is better than to sit under a tree shade and enjoy playing penknife or pebble! But here, I don’t know what to do. ‘Sleep’ – they say, but am I a sleepyhead to roll down in the daytime?’ The thoughts like these rushed upon my heart as some kind of melancholy and felt choking.. Suddenly something rumbled, I turned to the wall and noticed (it turned out to be a clock) something like a box stirred, the door opened, a cuckoo sprang out, it cried thrice ‘cuckoo, cuckoo’ and put the head inside again, hid itself. I jumped up having forgotten my sadness and grief; I thought: ‘ how could this cuckoo fly in’, I knew that in the village cuckoos don’t make nests, but lay the eggs in other’s nest and I said: ‘there must be a swallow’s nest right here and it is sitting in it’. I tried to creep there and put the cap on it. I sneaked up to it noisily, put the chair and stood up on it, but couldn’t reach. The clock was hung high up, I put one chair on the other one and so I intended to creep to it, I tried much but suddenly my chair slipped out, I fell down and crashed down on the floor. Hearing the noise, everybody ran out of the next room and when they saw me stretched on the floor, at first they were frightened, but then, being assured I was all right, they burst out laughing! I was ashamed and began to cry, I burst into tears and nobody could stop me, until my elder sister took my hand and lead me to the servants’ room where my nurse was as a visitor.

My mother was a daughter of a big, old family. In 1820, in the times of Theophilactes, when Kutately and Gaenateli were imprisoned and there rose a rebellion; great Ivane Abashidze was considered to be the head of the rebellions, who was then killed in Akhaltsikhe. He was a son of grand Darejan, the daughter of the king Solomon I, and my mother’s father. After having subjected the rebellions and calming them (I must say that the rebel like that had never been before, where people didn’t use any violence, they just express their dissatisfaction openly, without concealing their secret). The Abashidze’s family had no piece and his wife and children were in captivity together with others. The last lord of Guria region, Mamia Gurieli , was the own brother of Ivane Abashidze’s wife: he supported his sister and nieces and nephews, he solicited for them in the government, and the captives, except only one elder son of grand Darejan, were taken back from his way. That time my mother was 12 years old and everything was as if printed on her thorax. The Abashidze family was back, but the serfs and the patrimony were confiscated, the house mashed and destroyed. When they were diminished of food and had no master, the lord of Guria region took them to his house and tried to distract there grief into the hope of future. It turned up that my mother grieved most of all: she used to remember grand Darejan, who brought her up like her child and caressed her as a pretty child. Gurieli, too, paid a special attention to my mother like grand Darejan. At that time, like in every Georgian big family, French babies were considered as the members of the whole family in Gurieli’s palace and had a great influence upon the families.

These scientists educated in European style with their foresight had a great influence on my mother: by the way, she learnt doctoring and economy with the help of them, everything, that

a Georgian woman could learn, she knew thoroughly: she was a good bibliophile, a fancy-worker, and, at the same time, a good educator. Together with her curiosity, she learnt diligence: in the morning, she woke up when the rooster was crowing and she was in her activities till the evening. Nobody could see her without any work. ‘Laziness and idleness is the mother of any evil,’ – she used to say, - and behaving well is identical to the prayer and entreaty’. She watched the servants every time in order they didn’t do anything wrong. She didn’t let anybody idling, she made them study some kind of handwork or read books; in times of serfdom the behavior like this was improbable and such behavior of my mother irritated many of them, masters. She was known as a severe and formidable woman, as she behaved gravely. ‘If the crowd recognizes themselves equal to you, if they train their language to you, they won’t appraise you, and , whatever you advise will never been convinced,’ – she used to say. Everybody was afraid of her in the palace and, at the same time, felt a great respect to her. That time I thought the same as the others, that my mother was a severe and formidable woman. But, when I became older, then I guessed the truth. She was a very soft-hearted and affectionate person, but having lived in a big family, brought up by the grand Darejan and the former student of the Patres, she covered herself specially with the veil, just because of her kind intensions. You should see her when somebody fell ill, be him even the lowest one!.. She had no rest in the daytime or at nights and took care of him like of her child. To help others, who was in need, was her habit, she always thought about others and was grieving about others, as if she didn’t care about her own personality, she was grieving all the time and on every festive occasion of transfiguration day, she used to sit crying. They say: this day she always remembered her old days.

But my father was of quite different nature, direction and temper. Last time the Tseretelis became more powerful but the family of the priest, being supported by the government, ruled over everybody. That time it turned out that my father was the only son, an orphan boy; his uncles were away, too; they escorted the king Solomon. Who only didn’t oppress the widow and the orphan, and, certainly, even the priest did, willing to acquire their property, he did his best. Once the manager of the priest came to my grandma and demanded: the priest wants you to let him have the wooden house that is in your yard.’ The proprietor, of course, was far off this suggestion, but the manager turned out still to drive the workers there, they destroyed the house and transferred it somewhere else. My grieving grandma wrote a letter to the priest: ‘You, grand Zurab Tsereteli! Shame on you for that swaggering behavior. You’ve found us solitude, these poor widow and the orphan, and ruined our house; who knows what the future time will bring us; if the God wishes and my brother-in-law is back, then the time will change and your affairs will go wrong.’ This is what Zurab Tsereteli wrote her in return: ‘Abashidze’s daughter, hold your tongue or else, you know, time works for me and, expenditure, too. I’ll put you in the list and you’ll find yourself on your way to the town of Mozdok in exile together with your orphan!’ Having been frightened by this menace, the widow kept silent, there was no way out, she took care of her son so much, he was beside her all the time and didn’t let him go out. It was just because of this, that my father was brought up as a home boy and knew only that, what his mother taught him. Having his hand in his mother’s hem all the time

influenced on my father thus much that his willful and obstinacy turned into his bad temper along his life. He hated hunting which was the masters' habit in those times, hated going to and fro and was sitting at home all the time; he did nothing at home; he used to say: 'A man is born for peace and rest.' Neither he worked, nor did he disturb anybody. He loved to sleep, and at the same time, he was not angry when he saw the idling servant's summer-salting at home all day long. He was a man of good sense of taste; he liked to eat well and used to say every time: 'Be quick, nobody should be hungry at home, adults and youngsters must be given enough meal.' He was very kind in his nature, he couldn't understand what was the envy or the evil, but he might suddenly get angry with any common thing, and then he couldn't show mercy upon anybody, be it a distant relation or close relation.

Such temper would burst out in him more often, when somebody woke him up, but his hot temper didn't last for a long time. I'll give you some examples: in our village, as on the Christmas Eve, thus on Easter, the singer used to go round the village singing on the 'Chona' day. Once these 'Chona' singers visited us while my father was asleep. They began to sing 'Chona': 'Alatasa, balatasa, slip your hand into the basket'... and at this moment my father woke up and rushed at them. When the singers saw the man like a lion in his shirt, bareheaded, barefoot coming to their direction with threatening, they were frightened, ran away, some here and the others there over the ashtar, trying to save themselves, but those few eggs, they had gathered in the village, were broken, the whole of them. My father turned back and ordered the manager: 'Let me know who were those singers to kill all of them.' He even made an oath to do it, but when he slept again and then woke up, he was in a good mood and laughed so much that changed his order: 'Let me know, who those poor things were, pay them for those broken eggs from the palace and, besides that, give them abundant presents.' As they knew his character, everybody was scared when he was asleep, but if he was awoken, nobody isolated from him. He didn't interfere in the house affairs, it was fully ruled by my mother, but my father's obstinacy hindered her much and these two, quite opposite persons in native often rebuked each other. My mother didn't like my father's behavior, but compromised him much. At noon, when the cuckoo cried 'cuckoo' twelve times, my father was sitting at table for dinner. If he wanted to dine earlier, he wouldn't eat. He was waiting the cuckoo and, losing his patience, he cried: 'what the hell it is, why is it so late, why isn't it crying dinner time?' My mother didn't like all these and she often said to him: 'May she be a sinner who you brought up so.' The obstinate character like this isn't praiseworthy, as a trouble-maker, but everybody liked the master more than the lady. It's strange, my mother didn't like to punish anybody, she frightened them with her words and her glance. She often forgave those who had been scared by my father's irritation, but everybody thought her to be formidable.

Once, idler servants went to fetch the wood. The forest was just nearby; it wouldn't take, of course, much time to tie the bunch of wood together, but why should they be back to the palace till it got dark? They seemed to stay there to play and, by the way, they played 'weeping': they seemed to cover the bunch of wood with their robe called 'chokha', then cover it with their

hat, one would kneel before it, two of them hold him at both sides and the others joined the lamentation, as if it was a dead body, sometimes they wept upon one another, sometimes they seemed to weep upon the manager, or handicraftsmen, cooks, now one and now another. That time it turned out that it was the manager's turn. He learned about it, got angry and told tales about it to the master: 'They are weeping upon you.' My father got angry, the weepers were made to come to him and their affair would go wrong if not my mother's protection.' 'Why do you take liberties with anger without clearing up the question? Weeping doesn't matter, who knows what the language they used. They might imagine that their master had gone, how would they live then, and they wept upon it!' Hearing this, the boys calmed down and swore: 'May your icon not be angry with us, we didn't dare to mention your name and may God not leave us alive till that day. We only wept upon the manager.' My father laughed and ordered: 'Well, I won't punish you, but repeat it right now, how you wept upon the manager.' They, of course, fetched the bunch of the wood, covered it with 'chokha' and burst out weeping: 'woe on our manager!.. And the comedy began. They all were weeping one after another. Adults, youngsters, everybody who were at home gathered there and a general joy began, you see, even my mother, sitting in the next room, tried to keep off laughing. Only the manager was in low spirits, and the next day he sent a mediator to my father saying: 'Let me go home for some time.'

Someone might think that my father, committing such affairs and being impatient, was a light-minded man. Not at all, he was a man of strong mind, witty and eloquent, though often mordant, my mother used to say: 'My children became similar to their father, exchanged in the different parts.' We were fine sisters and brothers, thank God, none of us had a light language and now one can imply what kind of unexchanged language my father had? My father was really pleasant and lovely to look at, when he was in a good mood. If he had been educated and had succeeded in his life, it would be great. But his kindness, united with his hot temper, had set quite a different mark, and, if not my mother, everything would be in mass at home. My father felt it himself the same and when he was calmed down, he was respectful by his wife's will. Besides his stubbornness, relatives loved my father very much, too, and the government respected too much for him being truthful and his straight-forwardness and compromised him much. Once he was called by the general-governor, Gagarin: 'Come at once to me, I want to congratulate you with the sovereign's mercy.' It was the day of Palm Sunday (willow). My father went. Gagarin congratulated him and told that he was sent the sovereign's 'thanks'. My father felt pleasure and sat down, he was waiting for when he would be handed the 'mercy': he was waiting over and over and, meanwhile, the dinner time passed, my father lost his patience and shouted: 'If you are going to give me that 'mercy,' or whatever it is, give it to me!' The head of the government laughed and told with the help of the interpreter: this 'mercy' is of a high quality. 'Having lost his patience, my father jumped up and shouted:

'May the God make you unthankful for I'm left without dinner!' Today is the Palm Sunday (willow), I'd like to have a fish backbone!' – he said and rushed out. It hardly passed half of an hour that the interpreter came to us, who was sent from Gagarin, and handed him a

couple of backbones: ‘it is sent for you,- the governer sent a massage,-and ‘mercy’ in addition to it.’ Certainly, my father, being quite satisfied, thanked him greatly.

In order to explain my father’s stubborn character, I can remember many funny things. Photography had just established in Russia then. My brother turned out to take a photo himself and sent it to us. We got a notification. I was in a hurry to the secondary school and left a message at home: when I’m back, I’ll take it from the post-office. My father couldn’t endure any more and he turned out to go to the post office himself, entered there and when he saw nobody paid any attention to him, he looked around, there was no chair there to sit on:so, he was standing together with the others and thought: what does it mean! Everywhere, I enter, I’m asked to sit down and they offer me a chair, and he, who knows who he is, doesn’t drop me even in a fly! The manager of the post-office had just been appointed and didn’t know my father. My father was waiting for a while and, at last, when he lost his patience, came up to him and said.

‘Will you make me keep waiting for a long time more? Give me my Iliko’s parcel whatever it is and let me free.

‘Who is Iliko?’ – asked the surprised manager of the post-office.

‘Who is Iliko?! He is my son, the official of the sovereign Emperor-canvoy.

‘I don’t know him.’

‘Oh, so, if you don’t know him, he won’t be able to eat or drink! That man is known in the Palace and it doesn’t matter you know him or not!

‘Well, who are you yourself?’

‘Who am I? I’m Rostom Tsereteli.’

‘I don’t know you, either.’

‘But now, I’m telling you who I am!;

‘That’s not enough.’

‘Shall I swear by the icon?’

‘You needn’t swear, go and fetch me your certificate.

‘Certificate? What certificate?’

‘That you are Rostom Tsereteli.’

‘Then who will give me such certificate?’

‘The official of Police.’

Here my father couldn't suffer from such offence any more, grasped his neck... the offended manager of the Post-office rushed to complain to the governor. My father was called. While entering the hall, he at once applied to the governor with the reprimand: 'You rule the whole land and can't you find the men to appoint, or how you call it, instead of those mad and jester?'

'Why! What's the matter? What have you done?' – asked the general.

'Why, what have I done? The great Emperor Alexandre I, asserted me as a prince Rostom Tsereteli and Nikoloz signed it. Alexandre II sealed it, and now, this cursed repeals and takes it away as if it was the robe 'chokha' and felt cloak sewed by him! He says it worthes nothing if I don't go to the police and let the official, Maksime Mgaloblishvili, ascertain it there again.

'Well, that's all right, but what did you answer?'

'What should I answer?! He got what he deserved.'

'So, do you recognize that you offended him?'

'What do you say? What offence?! He laughed not only at me, but I had no right to compromise the offence of the government, too.'

'Did you touch him?'

'No, I just grasped his neck.'

'And nothing more?'

'Why nothing more, I bent him and hit and beat him with a stick three times, one for scolding me and two for insulting the government.' – It was told with such a diligence, that neither the governor nor his officials could help laughing. At last when he was explained his mistake, he was sorry, he turned to the manager of the post-office standing next to him and said: 'You bad man, how do I know new order and laws! When you saw me enter, this uneducated man from Adam time, you could explain me, what new laws say; I entered politely, but you frowned at me so, as if I were your bitter enemy! Anyway, you are young, you should respect my old age.' This case ended with excuse and agreement. Then my father and his christened official became friends; on the eve of every holidays: on Christmas, New Year's day or the Easter, he used to send many presents to him as a friend and he himself was thankful: as soon as my father got the letters of his children from Russia, the manager of the Post-office used to fetch it himself to my father and never asked any more: Who is Rostom Tsereteli?'

Kulebyakin was a clever and a kind man and people liked him very much, but there was one defect in him: something would happen to him unexpectedly and began to shout. Then his anger was boundless. This governor was accustomed to go somewhere to the village, took his suite with the flag leading ahead. Once he came in the town of Sachkhere like this. Almost the

whole Tseretelians, adults and youngsters, nobles met him on his way and accompanied him. Kulebiakin became proud and made his horse dance. But, suddenly, the horse satisfied its natural requirements. One of the youngsters T.A.M. burst out laughing. The governor shouted in his own manner. The youngsters were caught for his misplaced joy and were sent to the Kutaisi jail.

Everybody was sorry for that, but nobody said a word, they followed him with their heads bent down for a long time. Suddenly they noticed a Russian man, who seemed to be from the town of Done, riding the horse far away. My father hurried ahead, demounted the horse and adored him greatly. Everybody saw it. Kulebyakin frowned and asked Rostom why he did such a shameful thing. My father answered:

‘But, he was a Russian man, wasn’t I to adore him?’

‘But you are a nobleman, how could you adore a man from the town of Done? Couldn’t you notice, he was a common man?’

‘Of course, I could, but he may become a noble in about ten years and then he’ll be thankful for me. You know, doing good things beforehand will serve me good.’

Kulebyakin was sunk in thoughts for a while, then he smiled and ordered to bring back the prisoner.

My father was a well-known chess - player in past times. Nobody could defeat him. Especially the officials of the general’s staff were trying hard to defeat him anyhow, they were not able to. Once general- governor, G. Eristavi turned out to send a message from Tbilisi: ‘A fine chess- player colonel has visited us, he wants to play chess with you and, if you have free time, come to me, he is with me. Well, now you know how to make us, Georgians , famous!’ And my father went and the game started. The colonel saw that the opposite player played in a strange way and asked him: ‘You seem, from the very beginning, not to know the theory; why should you touch the pawn from the corner?’

‘What is the theory?’ – asked my father.

‘Special playing - rules.’

‘We, Georgians, know only one rule: to play thus, to defeat the foe.’

‘That’s right, but you shouldn’t play without the theory.’

‘Won’t you explain to me what this theory is?’

‘It’s the game that different well-known players have already played and it remained as a model order.’

‘Well, that’s all right! But weren’t they the men like me or were they from the heaven? Now you watch me and, if you like it, write down and it will be a theory.’

The colonel began to play and, till it passed a long time, he was lost, he was in agitation and cried: ‘Ashibka!’(Russian for ‘mistake’). Then they played the second game, and he lost again and shouted again ‘ashibka!’ and the third, the fourth and the fifth times... The agitated colonel lost and lost and cried again: ‘ashibka! ashibka!’ My father laughed and said: ‘Colonel, don’t think that you’ll win! Till that some ‘ashibka’ incites against you, you would never win!’ This joke insulted his foe and he began to speak loudly. My father, after soothing him, said: ‘I know that playing backgammon, chess and other games enjoy us and we have a good time in our country. Joking is habitual for us while playing and I’ll follow the habits of my country, but, if playing games agitates and irritates you in your country, it’s not my fault, then shouldn’t you play in your country?’ Agitated colonel seized the hat and rushed out.

Well, he was such kind of a man, who had never changed his stubborn character as out so whatever it would be in the family, where he was an independent sovereign. He really did much of obstinacy and always prevented my mother from ordering clever things thought out beforehand.

I remember, one peasant’s family died out, nobody was left at home except one old-aged man of ninety years old, who could neither take care of the patrimony, nor he could support himself. In order not to waste the peasant’s patrimony, my father decided to move that old man to the palace. The old man, of course, conducted himself far off. He didn’t want to leave his house; he didn’t want to see the fire be put out in his hut, he wanted to die there, where his family had lived and at the end lie quite near to them. When they couldn’t persuade him to obey voluntarily, the master ordered to take him under compulsion and sent the men. This was not approved in the palace: the servants, boys, girls, all were whispering: how can it be that the man that had served his sovereign before, can be got out of his house? The man must spare even the dog that had been working for years and was faithful to him. I heard it, I ran to my father. He lied under the shade of the nut-tree; I came up to him and asked: ‘Father, sir, when our dog Mura is old and can’t do anything, neither barking nor grumbling, then what will it do?’

‘Why, that is none of your business, if it is so old, then it will be given some maize-bread and live till its last days.’

‘Then, a man is not better than a dog? When you take the old man from his patrimony, is not he pity?’ – I said.

These words made him think over thus, that he gave a new order: ‘Let that old man alone, let him stay at home and give him food to eat.’ After that he used to say this, because of my being thoughtless, I almost made a sin, but the angel disclosed me by my son, I adore the angel’s power!

My father loved to read the gospel, but with that tone of liturgy, and was so captivated by it that he began to talk with the persons mentioned in the gospel; e.g. ‘Hoe, bless your mercy,’ ‘I adore you,’ ‘knows the boy!’ and so on and so forth. He had in habit to say such words, if it was praise-worthy idea, he praised it and if blameworthy, he blamed. Once, while reading the gospel. When he reached that place where Pharisees tried to entice the Christe would order them: ‘Caesar to Caesar’s and the God to the God’s,’ my father shouted as usual: ‘Shame on you, you wanted to deceive him? Hoe, if only I have you in my hands I would tear your beard one by one! – My mother heard these words and came in from another room and asked him: ‘Sir, whom are you irritated by so much?’ – ‘By whom! By that damned Pharisees,’ - answered my father angrily.

‘You blessed man, why do you seize that Pharisee so far off’ – told my mother. – ‘don’t you have your Pharisee at home? Why don’t you tell him anything? Your manager made a mess at home, there is no border of his giving himself airs. I’ve been already asking you for a long time to make him leave our house, but he keeps you blindfold with his playing the hypocrite to you and you don’t believe me!’ – After these words my father jumped up and cried: ‘call the manager to me!’ – the sleeping manager was woken up and fetched, but till he had said a word, the master shouted to the boys: ‘I don’t want a Pharisee at home any more, roll him down the slope and kick him too, in order not to be back.

This manager was really nasty thing, but my father can’t waive him and as my mother knew my father’s nature she found time while he was reading the gospel and she almost saved her family from that bad manager.

So, with this, I finish to speak about my father, though I could tell more.

The second floor of our house was called ‘Oda,’ but the first floor – ‘palati,’ and altogether it was generally called a Palace that was surrounded by three different buildings: for servants, for serfs, bakery house, kitchen, granaries a house for straw, a barn for maize, ‘marani’ (location for storing wine in special pitchers) and other storages. And nearby them, there was a building for the members of the family around which there was a stable, goat-house, pigsty, hen-coop, goose-house, turkey-house and etc. In the house for servants, there were servants and it consisted of three parts: for nannies, for servants and the girls. The nanny, as a devoted woman, who

served well and express sympathy to the family, was greatly respected. She could interfere in the house affairs and took part in bringing up the children of a prince. The nanny had been generally a person well received in the families from the old times but my mother didn't follow that order and preferred to bring up her children herself. The servant was brought up together with the lady and she was like a dowry and her private servant. But the girl served and obeyed everyone; they were watched by the nannies and trained by them; they had much work to do: carving, sewing, knitting, embroidering, washing up, taking care of silkworms and other such needle-work was their own duty.

Men had less work to do in the palace. There were bakers in the bakery house; they heated the 'thone' (Georgian bakery) twice a day, baked the baking dough, but, besides that, they did nothing, whatever there was to do. The kitchen was ruled by the cooks and they did the same way as the bakers. 'Marani' and granaries were deposited to the handicraftsmen and the barn for the maize and the storage, as well, but stables-to the groom. The servants of the family and herdsmen were separated staff. Everyone had their own affair established and settled and resolved since old days. He didn't even touch another job and didn't interfere in other's affair, he knew only that, what his affair was and he did it and did not need to remember. That was usual for everybody, but, as doing such work took not so much time, the master's guides were idling for more time and were tired of laziness. Only servants didn't know what to do; if the master didn't give directions, anyway, they wouldn't touch anything.

There was a wide garden in front of the house, where there were huge walnuts, i.e. as it was called somewhere nut trees, they wide-opened the branches to get shade under them. In front of the house, there was built a palace church with an attached building for women. In old days, in Georgia, there was no church built without such buildings for the women. During the liturgy, men took front place and at the back, the room for women was occupied by the women. Of course, none of those men thought to stand with their back to the icons and watch the women! But today, when the churches have been built according to the Russian order, there is no room for women. Women and men enter the church together. Half bared women seize men's eye and the pillgrims change their holy prayer into terrestrial hopes, their blood streams and the innermost is bawdy.

Almost every family had its own priest in old times; Praying was permanent and the priest was more respected then, than it is today. The king and the nobles asked him for mercy and kissed his hand; only the masters didn't kiss their own priests' hands, because they were together all the time. That's why the saying goes in our country: 'One can't ask for mercy to his private priest.'

That's how big families generally look like, so do our inhabitants. Now somebody may ask why did the nobilities of that time need so enormous number of serfs in the palace when there was not much work to do? The reason of that was the order of the serfdom in those days that had been legalized as a religion in the old times and to break it, was supposed, to be a sin.

Serfdom in our country was under condition but not boundless as it was in the other countries. The serfs were aware of what they should pay and the masters - of what to be paid, and both sides accomplished their duties invisibly. The peasants of different countries and different surnames were rated differently, some were in master's debt of more amount of tax and some - less of it, some had been ceased to pay anything and became arrogant. One of our peasants, by the way, was in debt half of an egg: on the eve of the carnival he used to visit our village, fried the egg in the kitchen, cleaned it from the shell, divided it with a horse-hair and hold half of the egg to the master as a tax. The peasant was so disturbed by this tax of half of an egg, that he asked the master several times: 'Let me get out of this debt and instead I'll fetch you a cow.' But he used to answer 'If I annihilate this glorious obligation for one cow, it would be a gluttony but, if you show yourself in any other way with your devotion, then it'll may be done.' And indeed, once there was a relapsing fever in our servants' house and the sick people were migrated. Everybody was so frightened by this disease, that nobody approached the sick. Then, that peasant found time and took care of those sick. For this devoted serving he was annihilated of the tax of a half of an egg.

One peasant was in rate of the ten jugs of wine a year, one it happened so that he had no wine and the master let the peasant fetch ten jugs of water in wineskin instead of wine, and made him pour it into the pitcher: 'That he couldn't make wine, was the God's will, the peasant didn't work less than other time, and how can he pay that, what he has not got, but the water runs just nearby his house, and I let him bring the water in order not to be thought that he is free from the tax. I will not demand more than it was rated long ago by our ancestors, but what is indebted to us, it mustn't be remitted, as our ancestors transferred it to us, we should do the same to our children.' The peasants themselves didn't break their terms and they would die but didn't pay even more.

As the village of Shrosha was famous for its hens, the province of Racha – for its calves and the village of Argveta – for its sheep, so the village of Tavasa was famous for its pigs. The peasants of the village of Tavasa had to fetch a sucking pig one by one to the palace every year after Christmas fasting as an obligation. It was habitual to cut off the right leg and take it back home. They hoped it would draw a good luck.

Once one of the peasants turned out to bring it later, and when the fast broke, he fetched his sucking-pig, on the second day. The master got angry and threw that sucking-pig to the bear tied up there nearby. The bear, of course, rushed at it at once. The grieved and selfless peasant attacked the bear, seized his sucking-pig, cut off the right leg and the rest threw it again: 'No, dear me, - he shouted, - you can do me what you like as an offender, but I can't let it eat my fate and the habits of my ancestors!'

The son of Grigol Tsereteli, the father of Nestor Tsereteli, Dimitri was brought up in Russia. As soon as he returned to the village of Opishkveti, he got married with Nizharadze's daughter from Opishkveti, the rich heiress. He established there and became a good family man.

One night somebody shot him from the gun while he was sleeping and killed him. They said that this crime was committed by the relatives of his wife, by the secondary heirs; they were captured, many of them were punished, some were executed, some were imprisoned and hung, and some were sent to the region of Ciberia. Fifty years had passed. An old village man confessed publicly at his death's door the following: 'I was the serf of Dimitri Tsereteli, once the buffaloes were left outside the barrier for animals, and the master ordered us to draw them into the screen: we, of course, refused to do it as we were not herdsmen. But the master got angry and ordered: 'I don't care, you should do that what I demand'! It was strange for us, servants; we put an agreement and decided to kill him. We took a ballot and it fell upon me. That night I sneaked in to him sleeping and shot him from the widow.' From these examples the reader will obviously acknowledge how firmly the masters and the serfs attended their duties. The free peasants didn't have to pay the rate and they were like the misters' noblemen: they brought little boys one to the palace as a boy-servant and that was all their duties. That's why there were about 40 – 60 of servants idling in the big families and had nothing to do. In the times of serfdom only the members of the families were lacking common laws, order and customs. A peasant, the owner of the native-land and those serfs of the family - without it, were quite different from one another. The family serf could become only the bought boy, i.e. a captive, and he was the absolute slave of his owner. The children of those serfs were made as servants, but they never touched peasants' children, even if he were an orphan.

Siko Tsereteli's one peasant had died out and took the homeless waif to the palace as a servant. The country-men were paid and sent a middle-man: 'The land is yours, do what you like with the family belongings of the land, but don't touch the orphan and give her back to us to take care of her ourselves and then get her married. 'The master, of course, didn't pay attention to their request. One day there was heard an unaccustomed noise in Sachkhere. They looked to the direction of the bank of the river Kvirila and saw that cornfields were covered with the peasants spread all over the groves like locusts, moving to the direction of Sachkhere and laid siege around the Tsereteli house crying: 'Don't do injustice affairs, give us the girl back' When the master opposed the peasants pierced cudgels into his wooden house and made it squeak. The master got frightened and gave the girl back to them and the peasants took the girl singing Makruli(a wedding song in Georgia) and dancing with solemnity to their village. That time the great Simon Tsereteli, the son of the priest, the king's son-in-law, an aged man, was still alive; he grieved about this insult from the peasants, ordered his grey horse to be equipped (his grey pedigreed horse was famous in the whole Tseretelis' region), mounted it and cried: 'chaser!' In that time every master had his stable filled with pedigreed horses. They equipped themselves in a blink of an eye, the Tsereteli's children were equipped, too, they were accompanied by the armed gentries and pursued the peasants. They ran down then in the cornfield at the bank of the river Kvirila. When the peasants noticed the horse cavalry following them, they turned round, took the cudgels and stood in detetchments.. The older peasants stepped in the front, they met the masters, kneeled before them and addressed them: 'Don't do such injustice thing, that had never been done neither by your ancestors nor by – ours, neither make us kill you nor be killed by you in

vain. Both of sides stood firmly and who knows what would be the end! When at that moment the priest Okropir Tsereteli appeared mounted on his mare and stood as a middle-man; ‘How you take liberties with those peasants!’ – He turned to Tseretelis, - ‘Leave them alone, inform the government and it will make the answer instead of you.’ And, certainly, the peasants were punished greatly; some were imprisoned, some were moved far away. And it was very surprising, that those people, who intended to fight against the armed army, quite obeyed just one ‘Zasedatel’ (Russian: meaning judge) and two Russian men. ‘What can we do.? –They said – ‘one can plough upward by force, let the enemy do us whatever he likes, but neither our people can abrogate the order, nor let the others abrogate it!’ There were many such examples, but that’s enough for now.

Beating was very rare during the serfdom in our country! Only the youngster servants were beaten either with a hand, or a whip or a stick but never – the virils, it was enough to disgrace them by kicking and pulling up one side of his moustache; ‘rozgi’ (lash) was established lately, but Georgians didn’t know even the name of it before.

This is what I had heard from my father and my uncle: in 1830, Kutaisi, the nobilities from the whole region of Imereti were gathered to elect the marshal. It turned out that among the nobilities there was one – captain Mikeladze, whom everybody eluded. The people living in the upper part of Imereti were surprised and asked to them, who lived downwards: ‘What’s the reason of your avoiding from that staid man?’ ‘What another reason can be if not what he does!’ – answered the downwards – ‘that blessed’ man has the peasants be thrown down low, taken off and thus lashed!’ Hearing this, the uppers, for their part, turned back from that eluded gentleman.

I can remember only several cases when a man was punished in our family. And here is one of them. Once an old man came from the country and implored my father: ‘Please, my dear, do help me, my son became so impudent after he has visited the region of Kartli. Before he hadn’t gone there, he was quite a clever boy, but now, after having come from there, there is none of brain in him. He is dressed in something like a dare-devil in affection and doesn’t even think of working. Anyway, let it be everything plagued on, but he did such a thing that disgraced our family and the village, too: he slapped the woman in the face publicly... my poor daughter-in-law tried to fall into the water to drown herself, but we caught her...’

My father ordered to fetch that boy, who had been to the kartly region, to the palace; he seemed to speak somehow in a strange way to the master: ‘Hi, kniaz (Russ. Meaning master),’ – He said. The master was surprised and answered him oddly: ‘Let the God damn you and your ‘kniaz’ together with you! What do you look like? How are you dressed?’

‘What do you mean, kniaz? It’s our custom.’

‘How is it yours? Where is it from?’

‘It’s like urban. I stayed in Agha-Gheurk’s caravansarai. This is the manner of their life!’

‘ But, you have that hat on your one side and covers only half of your head, what about your another half?’

‘This is also the manner of their life and it is called ‘Anchiskhaturi.’

‘ And is that belt with polka-dots also called ‘Anchiskhaturi’? You have stood upon the boots with wooden heels of an inch height and as you aren’t satisfied with your own height, do you try to deceive the heaven and the earth?’

‘This is a custom, too, kniaz.’

‘A custom! Hm! Then, is that the custom that you have beaten the woman?’

‘Whose woman? I’ve beaten my wife.’

The servants were listening to this talk, they were surprised and smiled shaking their heads. The master smiled, too, for awhile, but, at last he suffered with that boy’s impolite talk and roared: ‘Seize this greedy man, boys! Remove his hat, take off his ‘chokha,’ take away that belt with those devilish boxes, take off his boots and tie him to the tree!’ The servants rushed at him and carried out the order with great pleasure. At last, the master ordered the girls to come out of the servant-house, come up to the boy one by one and tell him: ‘Pah, shame on your moustache(conscience) for beating the woman.’ After finishing it, he ordered to take him to the opposite bank of the river with his hands bound, unbind there his hands, kick him and drive him out.’ When my mother learned about this story, she mortified deeply and reprimanded her husband: ‘You shouldn’t scold and disgrace the man so much! He is sure to be a fool, but you can’t preach him this way, either.’ To that my father answered: ‘I don’t care about his wit, but I’ve punished him exemplarily because of the others never to play such solemn fool in the village and not to begin affectation.’

So, such was the family on the face of it, where I was taken from the village.

At the beginning, when I was driven to the palace, I was very sad. My mother noticed it. She sent me some little boys and left me with them. I was running with these boys in the valleys from morning till night; I was called only for dinner. My mother herself, as I have already told, was a hard-working woman: from morning till evening she was working without any rest; in the evening she would come in the house and at that time we were called. They used to make a fire in the fireplace, spread the skin of a roe by the fireplace and let us sit on it. And the boys sat around us and told the fairy-tales. When we were bored with it, then we began to tell charades to one another: either tell riddles or had a good time anyhow till supper. My mother was sitting with her feet folded up on the coach reading a book for herself, but she was listening to us furtively: in order not to let the boy split anything wrong in speaking to the children. There was a little boy among my friends. He was a very devilry boy in everything, but he was not attentive at all. When

the mother used to learn us the prayer by heart, that boy would lose his wits so that he couldn't even repeat a word. My mother was very astonished: 'He is smart enough and gifted but he is quite inattentive!'

'Put your three fingers on the forehead!' - She used to say to that blockhead boy: 'say 'by the name of God!' Now put them to the navel!.. Say 'and the son!' now - to the right shoulder: 'and for the holy soul!' Now to the left: 'Amen!' The boy was repeating the prayer like a parrot but he couldn't repeat it himself. At last, when she couldn't do anything with him, she left him alone, and once, when we were playing by the fire-place, the mother turned to him and told him as if in jest: 'Peter was bold!' and showed him the forehead and made him point to it with three joint fingers: 'and the beard he had up to here,' - and she made him put his fingers on the navel - 'and the moustache from here to there,' - and she moved his fingers from the right shoulder to the left one. After these words, of course, we imagined the old Peter, bold, with long beard and moustache. We began to laugh and repeated those words one by one. The result of it was that the inattentive boy learnt how to cross and the next day he knew the prayer by heart 'by the name of God.' We were glad infinitely. The mother cheered up, too, and asked me: 'do you know the prayers?' - 'Of course, I do, I was taught in the country and without saying it, I was not allowed to sleep' - and I began saying it:

'I'll lie, I'll lull,
I'll be crossed and
Nine icons and nine angels
will lie by my head.
The cross regards me favour,
No seducer will harm me ever!'

'It's a good prayer, - my mother said, - it's rural but we have quite different prayers, that are created by saint fathers and you should learn it.' I, of course, agreed with her and during a month I was learning the prayers by heart, such as: 'the Belief,' 'the Grace,' 'Dear Father,' 'The Holy God' and etc. It was so sweet for me to learn them by heart that I began to study reading and writing; but mother said: 'Till you are rude, you can't learn reading and writing; when you grow wiser and your character is better, then I'll teach you, but now you aren't worth of it!' These words touched me so much, as if I was set a fire and I tried to become wiser in order to be worthy of studying, I was thirsty to read and write as my brothers did. I was eager to know it thus well as they could and at last the fortune smiled upon me. Once my brother, who was several years older than me, helped the priest and read the prayer: 'To the mediator' on the liturgy mass. After the liturgy everybody, the old and the young, praised him.

I was avidly eager and I became sad . One peasant asked me: ‘When will you read?’ and the second answered for me: ‘When pigs will fly!’ I reckoned they were laughing at me and I was offended. That day I begged my elder sister with my whole heart: ‘Teach me reading.’ And she admonished me: ‘Don’t let the mother find it out’ and she started to teach me secretly. I knew the alphabet in a short time and even began to spell little by little. ‘If you learn so well and diligently, soon I’ll teach you the prayer ‘To the mediator’ and you’ll read it in the church,’ – my sister used to say. – the mother will be greatly astonished and she will approve it.’ I, being stimulated by this hope, thought of nothing besides of it at days and nights. How I could imagine that it was my mother’s trick to make me love reading and writing! Such providence made me love to read books and in less than a year I helped the priest to read the prayer.

Our mother didn’t let us to be cowardice. ‘Too much caress spoils a boy,’ – she used to say and indeed, though she never beat us, however, we were afraid of her. None of our victims were forgiven to us without punishing: but the punishment was quite queer! For example, she wouldn’t allow us to read a book: ‘As you are guilty, you are not worthy of it!’ - and then you should see our grief!.. ‘iii..!’ – So laughed at us the boys and girls in the palace: ‘You are left without a book, stayed without a book!’ And, indeed, our shame and grief was enormous. In several years I knew the church language of ‘Khutsuri’ thoroughly; the written language of ‘Mkhedruli’ I studied myself; I began to write the alphabet on the shoulder bone of a cow. The mother taught me to read in Russian, but even my mother couldn’t understand every word, of course, neither could I. She had an old book of conversation published in Moscow and she gave it to me to learn by heart. She thought every time about how to prevent us from idling and she really brought up severely. We used to run in the valley quite bareheaded and barefoot. We were afraid of neither catching cold nore of being hungry. ‘A man should be accustomed to suffer from his childhood so that to be able to overtake everything in life,’ – my mother used to say, and indeed, her advice was of great use after all. In order to inform the reader thoroughly how we were brought up in the village, I’ll describe what we were doing year after year and how we finished the day!

In the morning, as soon as we were awoken, just still in the bed, we were to say this prayer: ‘Thank you, God, with whole heart!’ and so on, than we would wash our hands and face, dress, stand before the icons, say the prayers that we knew by heart and then it was followed by the main prayer called ‘Daujdomeli.’ After praying we took a snack, i.e. to have a bit breakfast, so that a bird couldn’t pass ahead of us and excel us while coming out on that day; Then we would sit at the books, read for a while, learn and then we were free until the evening; We would be called for dinner, but sometimes, when we would begin to play ‘guests,’ we stayed outside and laid the table under the shade of a tree together with the little serfs. There, besides our meal, we were given some food as a present. We, guys were generally like hosts, but the little serfs played guests. I must confess that our guests behaved offhanded and made us fool: they used to say: ‘Suffocate us!’ They would open their mouths and we stuffed them with whatever we had, especially with hot cheesecake. They would cry long: ‘Woe is me, I’m suffocated, I’m

suffocating!’ They pretended to be coughing and began floundering. We were quite sure that they pretended everything, but we liked this hypocrisy either, we were glad. In the evening, when we returned home, the mother would ask us: ‘What were you doing? What have you done? What did you play? What did you talk about?’ And so on and so forth... Generally, I should say, we were brought up like Spartans, we were eluded either of the heat or the cold, good or bad weather. In the morning we were to run barefoot along the dewy valley, in the first snow-fall, we were to run on the flake of snow back and forth; And we were to dry our wet feet flushed of cold. We were sure that it would make us healthier. In the fresh spring rain, we offered to the rain-water coming down the roof of our house, in order to have then golden curly hair. But our attention was paid mainly to the liturgy and keeping the fast. The great fast became sorrowful for us: we weren’t allowed to taste anything until the evening, when the liturgy was over, except some water; And, in the evening, we were given only a slice of dry bread. Not only meal, but even wine, salt and oil was forbidden. We were not allowed even to play. How could we miss the matins? All these were like the hell for us and, of course, when the great fast sets in, I became agitated and won’t be able to get rid of that grief until my death, that had been following me since my childhood. Generally in big families, everywhere superstitious belief was extended: all the boys believed that the demons, wood-goblins, witches frightened the people. This prejudice was extended in our family, too. Now, as I think, it was all the servants fault: they, generally boys and girls, weren’t allowed to go back and forth to one another and play: they couldn’t dare to move in daytimes and, in order to have a chance at nights and be free so that nobody could catch a glimpse of them, they frightened the children of their master with such demons and so they couldn’t go out as soon as it got dark. I don’t remember the day, when I entered the serf-house or servants’ house and they didn’t speak to me about something strange and fearful things. When I told my mother these stories, she smiled and answered: ‘No, my son, it’s a lie! Who does nothing bad and is not guilty, it won’t occur to him.’

Having been hoped by these words, I was calm and fearless, but two cases broke my heart and changed my temper: once, at daybreak, I stole into the kitchen-garden and was going to steal a melon; I began to search it, moved aside the burrs and found a ripe melon. Before I tried to tear it away, I had thought a little: somebody may have seen me and I left it, I stood up and looked around. When I tried to tear it away the second time, I seemed to miss the burrs and stretched my hand to another direction; and the cat turned out to be there. It jumped up sniffing and ran away. I, at once, remembered our servants’ words, that ‘witches can turn into what they like;’ besides this I remembered my mother’s words, too: ‘who is not guilty, it won’t occur to him,’ I said in my frame of mind: ‘What is worser of guiltiness than that I wanted to steal a melon stealthily? Maybe a witch was lying there, pretended being a melon and turned into a cat.’ I cried once or twice and fainted. It had hardly passed a week that another case was added to it: there were some bunches of grapes hung in the summer-house. I was so little that couldn’t touch them, but my elder sister used to pick them; once in the moonlight I noticed that my sister was standing in the summer-house and was picking the grapes. I ran up to her and asked: ‘Ana, please, pick me one bunch!’ At first she didn’t answer, but when I didn’t admit, she turned to me

and murmured something and grimaced at me. It was such an extraordinary thing that, may nobody see the same! It turned up that my elder brother, Davit, who suffered from the indigestion and he was not allowed to eat the grapes, had put on his sister's clothing and so went to steal the grapes. I didn't know all these, I considered him being a devil and fainted. Though in both cases my mistakes were proved clearly, but my temper was so bad, that I could neither come out in the darkness now, even, stay alone in the room, despite of my eighth year.

Once when winter came, I and my little serfs began to make bows. When we were cutting out the wood of a 'Korapi' tree, I failed to hit the elongated axe, hurt my real and split it. The ache was not so terrible, as the fear: 'woe is me, if I am punished' I gathered some cobweb, put it thick on the wound, then put some cotton upon it and tied it firmly. I didn't want others to know anything about it, but that night it turned out to be untied in the bed and there was left a pool of blood. Certainly, they learned about it, I was treated medically and it had been aching for half a year. At last I was cured. But my veins were so weak that my knee was bent and I became lame. I was treated medically much but it didn't give me help. In those times my father was nominated as a deputy in the Kutaisi nobility commission. My mother advised him to take me to Kutaisi and see me to the doctors. As I couldn't stretch the foot, I was sat on the woman saddle, I was put with my cramped foot on the horse like a woman and so was taken there. It was two days ride to Kutaisi. On my way it turned up that my foot was rubbed and the benumbed vein loosened as soon as I arrived in Kutaisi, my leg spread, I needed neither any doctor nor any medicine.

I was eight years old, when I was taken from the village and moved to the town of Kutaisi. Here the first period of my childhood, full of with happiness, fertile and unforgettable, ends and at the same time begins the second: torturing, oppressing and making wrong of me! But, until I tell you something about this second period, I'll return to our village again and remember several kinds of cases of those days. I've already told that we were brought up Spartanly, and indeed, more we were growing up, more and more it was noticeable, year by year, such kind of upbringing. We seemed not to be paid much attention any more, as it was in our early years and we were more abandoned. Very often, by the end of spring, during the period when fish came out of their holes and followed the big river up in groups, in order to enter then some little river to spread their roe on the bank of the river Gonjuri, I used to spend the nights together with the others there; I lay on the fishing-tackle for several times, but no one said that it was a fearful, dangerous and a wrong thing. While spending the night, in order not to have a nap, the boys told fairy-tales one after another: sometimes – jokes in rhymes, sometimes – proverbs, sometimes – riddles, and that's why we were glad to go to such places. We didn't pay much attention to eating: sometimes we ate much, sometimes we were even hungry, now so and then in another way: sometimes we used to be dressed in the best way, sometimes – quite simply; Now we were lying in the downy mattress and then – rolling on the ground. There was no equality. Who would follow the term or the order? We could suffer equally from the evil or good; neither we care about it nor our parents asked anything, but there was one thing, we were not allowed to dare something wrong: e.g. if we broke our heads, they would say: 'Oh, shame on you! How couldn't

a boy of your age know to take care of his head! Go, go, when you grow up then you'll forget it!' So they would let us go with such consolations but if we even gave a fillip to anybody unfairly, we wouldn't be excused, we would be paid in return for it. Once, when I heard the sound of crack, I ran up to the bakery's and to a hot thone-bread from the baker. Our greedy, red pig turned out to have come up to that door before me and was grunting, but who would say a word! When it saw me with the maize-bread in my hand, followed me with squealing, I ran, the pig ran after me, I stumbled over the stone and rolled down on the ground; and the pig found time, ran into me and tore off the maize-bread. I began to cry and hurried to my mother. The mother listened to my complaint, frowned and said: 'Aren't you ashamed, you, lazy-bones? Your grandfather caught a wild pig by the ears, and you couldn't get rid of a domestic greedy pig! Why didn't you take a stick and hit it in the head! You aren't a little boy any more: this June you have already become six years old,' I was so ashamed after these words that I forgot about my maize-bread and even crying. I was out of humour all day long, even little boys and girls passing me, as though for themselves, would say laughing at me: 'Fallen down by a pig.' This mockery tortured me so much and I became so brave that the next day I had a maize-bread in one hand and a stick - in the other, went up and down in purpose to see my enemy. The pig, having in habit to take away something, attacked me but I stood bravely and hit the stick on the head. My enemy was so disappointed that it stopped and grumbled at me. But when I hit again and again, then the pig ran away. Now I ran after it becoming brave. The pig ahead and I - after the pig! The pig was screeching with all its might and I whooping after it with all my might crying: 'You can't run, you, greedy pig, you, coward!' That time I considered myself to be like my grandfather: I made the pig run two or three times around the servants' house, serfs' house, even our palace and never admitted until it ran into the pigsty. Don't think I needed its enmity or take revenge on it! I fought this war in order to let everybody know that I was not afraid of the pig any more.

This victory upon the pig made me so brave and fearless, that if I had a stick in my hand, I wouldn't be afraid of anything. I was so animated with those heroic fairy-tales, courageous rhyming jokes and tales by and by that I considered myself to be a hero. Once I climbed a cornel tree, which I imagined to be a fantastic poplar and began to look around in order to see the Eastern and Western kings' houses, but I fell down, dashed down on the ground and my backache remembered me what kind of fabulous 'the hero Khvtisavar' I was! It's astonishing, I used to be awoken by such kind of fails, but then those dreams overcame again and made me be an idle fairy-tale man. Once I played a 'rabbit' game. Those boys, who had a good voice and could bark, pretended to be tracking dogs, who were quick, they were greyhounds, and others, slowers - dog trainers and hunters, but a rabbit was someone else. Though that time I was a good tracking dog, but sometimes it fall to my lot to be a greyhound together with the others. The rabbit hid himself, we unfastened the dogs, they spread over the area, the dog trainers began wheeping; the encouraged tracking dogs, as if smelled the track, and began barking; ten or fifteen children were barking in different voices. Any hearing was out of order; the greyhounds pricked up their ears and set up an alarm. At that moment a real rabbit turned out to have stolen

in the garden and ran out. We forgot our playing and all, grown-ups and children ran after that rabbit. The rabbit lost its eye: it hurled itself now here, then – there, but our four-foot tracking dogs were barking at it from every side and the rabbit lost its way and track so that it went into the shrubs; I advanced and seized its back feet, if not being firmly stuck between the shrubs, of course, I wouldn't be able to catch it, but, despite of it, I began to cry: 'Help me, I've caught it!' Everybody ran up to me, big boys helped us, too, and we took the alive rabbit to the master. From that day on I was famous with my bravery and I was quite assured that while chasing the rabbit I was able to catch it. After that I was often waiting for the rabbit by the edge of the kitchen-garden in the evening: if the rabbit came out, I would catch it, I hoped so. My mother seemed to notice it and once called me and said: 'As you are the matchless in such affairs, catch me one of our domestic rabbits, I want to send it to somebody,' I, of course, obeyed. There was a rabbit-house near the church attached to the women's house and there lived several white domestic rabbits. I had been running first after one and then after another since morning till night but couldn't catch any of them, and in the evening, when mother asked me about it, I tried to justify myself saying that my feet were aching. My mother began to laugh and said: 'You aren't a little boy any more, why don't you know that you can't catch the rabbit chasing it, no one can it! You were not able to catch a domestic rabbit, how could you catch a wild one, if it were not pierced accidentally into the fence!' These words, somehow, made me look into my heart, I felt as if to be an idle boy, I was ashamed of myself and turned red.

In those days, generally, tea was not drunk in the palace, it was prepared only for the guests, but the children weren't allowed to drink it, anyway: hot water will spoil the interstines and sugar – the teeth, they said. I was, of course, eager to have some sugar, but who would let me eat? In return, when they used to chop the lumps of sugar into pieces, I crept by side the chopper and watched the pieces spread over to and fro as a hawk. But to take them was very unskillful; my wet fingers were ready, I stuck them in the sugar and whirled up into my mouth with lightning speed. Once my elder sister noticed it and told me: 'Don't do it, it's glittering!' Then she used to give me one lump secretly. I liked it and asked the God: God, may the guests be unexhausted in our house,' as I knew, if not their visit, nobody would chop the lump: I used to step in front of the leaving guests asking stealthily: 'Please, come more often to us.' They thought that it was because of my hospitality, they praised me for it and said: 'How kind this boy is, he'll be very hospitable!' How could they know that I thought only about a lump of sugar.

I can't say anything about the hospitality, how could one guess my hospitality then, but I was really a kind boy. If anybody beat an animal, I would cry, though once I had beaten the pig myself, but it was a different case, I wanted to defend myself and requested it. Once a pig was killed in the cornfield and I couldn't eat anything; I had pity on it so much that I couldn't approach it to look at and the most surprising was that, when the cattle was to be slaughtered, I would go around it with pleasure and none of pitiness was in me. When on the eve of religious days, e.g. on the Christmas feast and such festive occasions, the cattle used to be slaughtered, I was full of with joy! I would take a blander from the cooker, rubbed with ashes, stripped the

upper skin off and inflated it. Then I presented it to a woman and nanny for the ceruse, as I had heard that it was good to keep the ceruse in it. Only once I didn't watch the cattle to keep the ceruse in it. Only once I didn't watch the cattle-slaughtering, as there was another more joyful case and I'd forgotten just about customs: that very evening, a man sent by my father came and brought me boots from my father. Until that day my feet had never touched boots, I used to wear only slippers. Of course, I was so delighted that I could remember neither the cow nor even myself..By the way, my father wrote: 'Don't let my Kako spoil these boots in vain! Don't let him run in order not to destroy the heels and outwear the boots in vain!' This order was carried out exageratively; I was allowed to put them only on the Christmas and New Year's day, then they were kept; I was made to put on my slippers again and I wouldn't be allowed to wear them until Easter.

I was, of course, waiting for the coming Easter with redoubled gladness. When the matins' bells rang and everybody began to dress as usual, I was given my desired boots, , but imagine my misfortune: the boots had dried up, my feet had been grown and I couldn't put them in! I was tortured much, I was stripped the skin off the heels, the reel was nearly slipped out, but nothing helped. Easter was spoilt. It was late by that day, but until a week passed, a new pair was fetched for me and from that day on, till I went to Kutaisi, for about a year and a half, I had never gone out without the boots. Last year I fit those boots better, as I didn't run much, because all the playing that I had played before, bored me and began to think about other things. The reason of it was the poem by Shota Rustaveli 'The knight in the Panter's skin.' I read it from the very beginning up to the end, and, though I understood nothing but the fairyland, nevertheless, I was very captivated. It was followed by other issues and the text-book too, published by Chubinashvili in St. Petersburg, which I read several times. Besides it, once a story reached us from town, that 'Glukharich' had written a comedy and was played in the Vorontsov Palace. I was listening this story very attentively and at last I tried to write something like that myself, and I really described all my people at home, e.g. how our manage tortured the people, then spied to the master; and the master, of course, lost his patience and got irritated and so on and so forth. Everybody liked those childish scenes in the palace except the manager who was saying angrily: 'My mocking doesn't matter, but I'll see whether this boy doesn't make enemies, don't encourage him.' My mother appeared to keep my first writing and, when I came back from Russia, she showed it to me. Being fool, swaggering, I took it from her, tore it and threw it into the fire. My mother grieved about it and reprimanded me for my behavior, but I was not able to restore it any more!

I can remember many stories like this from my youth, but I don't want to bother the reader more, so I'll finish with it.

When I entered the secondary school, I was dumbfounded, I had never seen so many children together. Juveniles were sitting still on the chairs and newly comers were standing in groups at the wall. There were several paper- boards hung on the walls with the alphabets and spelling examples and the pupils were to read them. Every group had a tutor and he taught them: he had a switch in his hand and as soon as anybody made mistakes he would hit and hit him. They moved from one place to another around the wall, only then they were allowed to sit down on the chair together with the others. They were in such condition, until they learnt to read, it took him sometimes a year. I imagined a boy of 7-8 years old, having been hungry and thirsty since seven o'clock in the morning till 2 o'clock in the afternoon, then you can feel how those poor thing tortured. Somebody fainted, some felt giddy and fell down, but nobody paid attention to them.

Entering the room I was told to stand at the first wall by the 'alphabet,' but as I knew the church literacy language of 'Khutsuri' and I had learnt the literacy of 'Mkhedruli,' and Russian spelling was known to me, that was my mother's desert, it took me a day to go around the wall. The teacher caressed me, approved it and let me sit down with the juveniles. I could read well, but my misfortune was that I couldn't understand Russian. That time there was generally established a tin-plate at school which was called 'a mark.' Who would utter a word in Georgian, he was put it into his hand and hit with a long plank – a ruller on the palm. Then he had to hand it to another one in the same way, i. e. while answering the lesson let the teacher hit with that 'lineika'(Russ.) on the palm. So, that misfortune tin-plate moved from one to another hand. Who couldn't get rid of that tin-plate and it was left in his hand until the lessons were over, he had to stay at school all day long without dinner. The newcomers, who didn't know Russian at the beginning, they couldn't dare to say a word and became dumb. This custom caused to spoil the boys: the youth tried to deceive each other, and make a fool of one another and were accustomed to be cunning and hypocrisy. It had hardly passed a week after I entered school, that a little boy came up to me, with his face like an angel and a sweet smile asking me something friendly in Georgian. And, of course, as I didn't know any other language, I answered in Georgian. The youth's peaceful face changed and he put the tin-plate into my hand with great joy. I took it, what could I do? But I didn't obey with the 'lineika.' Why do you care if I am hit by the 'lineika,' we are alone, and who will learn about it?' – I begged him. My antagonist behaved as if he didn't care about it: 'if I was hit, what a motley butterfly you are that you should be so distinguished!' But I didn't obey, all the same, and he began whining. When the teacher came in, he went up to him and peached against me. I was called to the blackboard, I went up trembling with fear. The teacher frowned and asked: 'How do you dare to be indocile? It's not your house!' I began to warrant myself but it didn't work! – 'Well, I'll give you a lecture!' He called the 'storozhs'(guards) and ordered: 'lashes!' Hearing this I felt as if my blood ran up to the head and I started to run. – 'Don't let him go, catch him!' –The teacher shouted. The pupils rumbled to catch me and blocked my way... I ran into another room where there was

the third grade, and here I set up an alarm, too, then I ran up on the window-sill, broke the window-panes, jumped over and took to flight home. The 'storozhs'(guards) rushed after me. I was running ahead as a rabbit and they followed me shouting. I ran into the palace scared; when my parents were aware of everything, they were disturbed and gave me advices: 'Go, it doesn't matter, let them lash you, you are not the exception – everybody is lashed. Learn to be patient, endure it, train yourself to be orderly and at the end you'll become a man. Another way out is impossible!' But I didn't pay attention at it and told decidedly to my mother: - 'If you send me again to that damned school, I'll drown myself!' They were scared and left me at home. I didn't go to school for a week. By that time the director of the secondary school was Kotsebu, he had just been given a new assignment. He seemed to learn the Georgian language when he had been a head of this province, he knew it well and liked Georgians very much. He visited us and questioned me. I answered without making any secret what had happened and what I felt. He was astonished, shook his head, fondled me and told: - 'You mention my name and don't be afraid of anything! Come right to me tomorrow in the office and I'll lead you to the classroom.' The next day he really took me to the classroom. He held an inquiry of everything and when he learned the story of the 'mark,' he was astonished. He called up the inspector, the usher, the teachers and announced to everybody not to behave like that any more! 'Do away with that 'mark' and leave causeless hitting and beating!' Then turned to my teacher and told him: - 'Especially pay attention to this youth!' And from that day on that damned tin-plate was really thrown away, but they couldn't leave hitting or beating so soon anyway. They couldn't help without doing it. It's not said in vain: 'Habit is stronger than origin!' The whole Russian was answered, then, that the wit and the goodness is the result of a thrash. Of course, it took the first place at the secondary schools... not a dog was passed without deafening scream and crying of the youths. There wouldn't be used many switches in the 'rota'(Russ. Army) as it was in every class. The 'Storozhs(guards) used to fetch new ones every day on a bullock-cart. Anyone could beat a pupil, beginning with the director of school to the 'storozh'(guard). No reason was needed. Who knows how many of them fell ill. It used to be happen quite often one and the same boy who was thrashed three or four times a day by different chiefs, I remember and can never forget in my life: there was a Russian boy – Kruzhanovski, a very restive one, but, on the other hand, he was a good boy. Once he was late for half of an hour and the headmaster ordered him to be thrashed; That day he didn't know the lesson and the teacher ordered to thrash him; When the classes were over the guard ordered him to be thrashed: 'You had been floricsome at home and threw a stone to a neighbor's child – they have made complaint against you!' And he couldn't avoid it. All of them told tales to the inspector and he himself wanted to thrash him, too. That inspector was an inhuman one and everybody was so afraid of him like a murderer. When Krizhanovski could not suffer this torture any more, he raised his foot and ran into the river Rioni. If not a megrelian pupil, being there occasionally, who was a good swimmer, he would die. You couldn't count beatings there. Woe is him who had curly hair! One boy, whose surname was Chachiashvili, had big ears. All, the old and the young, seized his ears. Once a brutal guard tore his ear up to the middle of it; It swelled up and just in several days it cicatrized. But who on

earth would let it be cicatrized! It was seized again and torn again... so he left school. One pupil – Kldiashvili – was hit with a ‘lineika’ (rullar – Russ.) by its edge on the forehead, it began bleeding, even the bone was broken. The fainted boy was taken home. Nobody paid attention to that circumstance. Such cases were uncountable. Thank God, I avoided the tortures like those, only once I was beaten, and even it was enough for me to feel tortured all my life. When the director took me back to school, from that day on, my teacher was irritated with me and as soon as he had a chance, of course, he wouldn’t spare it. Once a pupil brought cheesecakes at school and put it in the lottery each by one ‘kopeek’, everybody signed for it. I was eager to do the same and signed, too. At that time the teacher entered and got angry: how did you dare to sign! He took a big, enormous ‘lineika’. He called the signer one by one and asked: ‘Which hand did you sign with?’ When he was answered, he hit on it with all his might. ‘Will you sign again?’ – He asked moking. I was the last in the list, as my surname begins with T..., and the list began with the letter A. That time I had already read the fables by Saba Orbeliani and I remembered a hoopoe’s trick that wanted to save itself and made a fool of the fox. At that lesson we were to write. I thought, if he hurt my right-hand, I wouldn’t be able to write, and I decided to show him my left hand. And, of course, he said: ‘Now, show me your guilty hand!’ I stretched the left hand, first he hit me, but then he began to doubt, of course: ‘How could you sign with the left hand?’ When I confessed he hit me on the right hand, too, and let me go. The injury was torturous itself, but more torturous was that I nearly became narrow-minded and I was hit with the ‘lineika’ twice, while others saved themselves with only one! I was crying, my hand was trembling and, of course, I wouldn’t be able to write well! When the teacher looked through my writing, it was rejected and I was hit again with the ‘lineika’: ‘Write better!’ I was hit again four times till the end of the classes! From that day on I couldn’t recover. I couldn’t throw it away from my heart anyway. My handwriting was spoilt, even now I can’t write clearly: who looks at my writing, is surprised that here is good writing and there is scrawled and obscure. It happens while I remember my tortures in those days instinctly. This case doesn’t worth remembering but I’m telling you about it because the parents and the teachers guess how it is intolerable to treat a tender child roughly and what outcome would be gotten.

Our director learned the story of my beating and reproved the teacher. And from that day on, my teacher harped on my string and paid no attention, as if I were a log laid there. He neither taught me something, nor he asked me anything. I, all the same, did my best to study sometimes with the help of my friends, sometimes – myself. I didn’t have so much wit as my wish and studiousness was. I was trying hard day and night and I knew more than others, not less. The exams were coming, it was spread that ‘Popechitel’s’ (tutor’s) assistant, Maksimovich, was coming and he was going to exam the pupils. Many improbable stories were talked about his hot temper and cruelty. All, the teachers and the pupils, were frightened.

As soon as Maksimovich arrived, he made an order: ‘as I cannot advance in asking everybody, send me three pupils from each group: the first, the middle one and the last one; I’ll examine them and acknowledge the whole circumstance and appraise it. The exams didn’t pass

well. The youths had been frightened beforehand and were confused. At first he questioned those three pupils and when they couldn't answer, then he turned to the group and asked if there was anyone who could answer, if not then the teacher would have to explain it to them. It often happened so that even the teacher couldn't explain well, then the examiner would explain it himself and let the pupils repeat it. It was a new method he had established. In those days a wonderful and a well-known young man Besarion Ghogheridze studied at the secondary school. The teachers respected him greatly and cherished hopes: 'If only anyone can save us and make us famous, it's him.' Their expectations were justified, but not so quite, as they hoped. They said: 'Besarion did his best, but he was all of sweat.' Anyway, Maximovich would never set his heart on the Kutaisi secondary school and its teachers any more. Some pupils from the middle group did their best. Then it was the turn of the lower groups. When the day of judging came (We called generally so the day of Maksimovich's exams), three pupils from our group were called and taken as if into the 'thone'(a Georgian bakery). The third one, i.e. the last backward, was me, following them. My friends were trembling with fear and I went just to watch an amusement as I knew, I wouldn't be asked much for being the last and wouldn't be paid much attention. At the beginning the pupils answered well. When they were asked the lessons by heart they could read fast, but at last, when it was the turn of understanding the content, they were confused. It was strange: the texts of the 'Popechitel's' assistant remembered me those very games that we knew in the palace in my childhood: 'The priest sprang down,' 'Achat'i', 'Whose serf is on the letter A ?' and etc. I've just remembered them! I was surprised: 'They aren't adequate to the secondary school'- I thought. But I remembered my house, my mother and so encouraged myself, as if I was at home when my friends made mistakes two or three times, I shook my head with dissatisfaction. Maksimovich caught an eye to me and shouted at me: 'Why are you shaking your head like a scabby horse!' I was scared and my tongue failed me. The teacher helped me and addressed to him: 'He might be disturbed by a fly and can't help with the hand'...

'What's the time for the flies!' – He turned to the teacher with displeasure – 'and who had ever told him not to move a hand if it is in need! He is forbidden to wave hands to and fro only. No, here is another reason! – He called me to the table.'

'I noticed that you shook your head when they were making mistakes, is that right or not? Don't be afraid, tell me!'

'Yes, involuntarily!..'

'For example, what was the mistake?'

'It was when they told that a camel will fly. They seem not to have seen camel.'

'And you? Where have you seen a camel?'

'Last year Thatars drove them on the square; they were mumbling hardly.'

‘Then, how do you know they can’t fly?’

‘They have no wings.’

‘And what has no wings, can’t it fly? For example, can a man fly?’

‘No, he can’t.’

‘Haven’t you heard that in old days anybody had ever flown?’

‘In old days...Enock and Ilya had, but they flew in the cart by the power of the God’ – the examiner stared at me and asked me:

‘Who told you that?’

‘My mother.’

‘When the witches fly, do they have got the wings?’

‘The witches don’t fly.’

‘Then how can they be everywhere if they don’t fly?’

‘They sit on the wolf and so they can move fast.’ – He laughed and caressed my head. He asked me such things and by and by became amused. And when I noticed that he was not angry any more, I became brave. At last he began to examine me. He asked me what I had learnt by heart, - and I answered well.

‘Do you understand the content?’

‘Of course, I do!’

‘Can you translate these prayers in Georgian?’

‘Why should I translate, I knew it in Georgian before.’

‘Where did you learn it?’

‘At home.’

‘You may have learnt it in Russian there?’

‘No, here.’ – He turned to the teacher and asked:

‘Haven’t you been mistaken to present him as the last pupil?’

‘No, your highness! First – he is a little boy, then – it has not been passed so long time that he entered school and he hasn’t been paid so much attention yet, nothing was asked to him, no

lesson has been given to him: we let him be used to school,’ – answered the teacher looking a bit pale.

‘If you weren’t asked, how did you study? – asked me the examiner.

‘When others were reading and were explained by the teachers, wasn’t I right here? I was listening.’

Hearing this he exclaimed: ‘Do you see?’ – He asked my friends: ‘if you have tried more, you would learn, too. It is evident that the teacher explains you well.’ He shook hand with the teacher and thanked him. Then he kissed me on the forehead, raised and the class was over. I can’t remember whether I walked or flew home, I was so happy that I couldn’t recover as if been drunk. When I came home, there were guests in the house and my father shouted at me: ‘So, what has happened, my boy, at school?’ And I told everything that had happened. ‘Didn’t I know that the saying: ‘A sheep of the old flock,’ is right?! – Shouted my father. – ‘When I was sent to Petre the bishop to the cloister in my childhood, I was the best of all, I passed the programme in two or three years while it took to others ten years to study. I learnt Grammar, to count, history, Geography and so on. The greeze didn’t let me study, they disturbed me with their crooking, otherwise, if I stayed there, I’d hung out, read quickly all the Aristotele’s Category and Logics. As you are a son of the family, my boy, you should study more than others and don’t be equalized with any of riff-raff!’ The guests gave me the same advice. But the mother was sitting for herself with her head hung down, as if she doesn’t care about anything and even didn’t notice me. In the evening, when I went to bed, my mother came to me and put her hand on my forehead. She sat down on my bed. I thought: ‘Woe on me if I’m ill and she noticed it, or otherwise she had never come like this.’ I’ve told before and I’m repeating now that she had a strange character: she wouldn’t kiss us, children, except while saying farewell when I was going somewhere or after a long time of separation and then, even so, as if her heart didn’t permit her. I was surprised, too, and couldn’t explain it. This character followed her all her life. She treated her grandchildren the same way. Once, when I had already had my family, I noticed my mother sitting by the side of my sleeping baby cautiously, so that not to make him wake up, was kissing and fondling. Then I guessed that she might have fondled us the same way, too. Who could ever prevent her from doing it openly, anyone may think, but she was of such character, and once she declared in speaking that to caress a child spoils him and kissing every time loses its price in him. I don’t know if generally it’s right or wrong, but as I experienced it on myself, I considered her kiss to be as if a state of felicity of the paradise. That evening I was excited when she sat down beside me and told me tenderly: ‘Have you read a prayer?’

‘Sure, I have.’

‘This morning, before you have gone to school, have you forgotten to read the public prayer?’

‘How could I forget! Moreover, I was going to be in danger.’

‘Well, that’s why the God turned out to save you and you won. But without the help of the God, whatever you know, you can’t do anything, anyway! That your father told you today, don’t think that it was right, he used to joke so.’

‘What?’

‘That it’s a shame others be better than you. Well, how is it the shame if others were better? The shame is that you yourself are bad and don’t try to study. You shouldn’t compete with anyone! You should generally try to do well and if others become good like you and even better, what will you lose of it? You should be glad if they are good! And they, your friends, who knows how sad they are now!’

‘They were crying, mum!’

‘Then, weren’t you sorry for them?’

‘Not only I was sorry, but I nearly began crying myself.’

‘Well, if they won like you, you would be glad, wouldn’t you?’

‘I wish they did!’

‘Yes, my son! You shouldn’t put envy and greediness into your heart. Both of them are the steps of the devil’s staircase. The devil first entices you to the steps by and by and then pushes you and makes you fall down.’ – I crossed myself, the mother kissed me hotly two or three times, strained me to her breast, crossed me and moved off away: ‘Sleep!’ I was blissfully happy. I couldn’t close my eyes for a long time, and when I fell asleep, dreams carried me: I was flying and playing with angels all the time.

Examinations were over. Maximovich left school. Everything became quiet and I was transferred to the second grade with a present. My friends and the teachers changed fully their mind about me. I knew well and tried not to be disgraced. I did my best in studying at day and night, and if I had more protection and be given the righter way, in addition to my hard work and my intelligence, I would become really a good one, but it was very pitiful that the Pedagogics was quite on a low level. Children were trained as magpies but not as human beings! Every subject was to be studied only by heart and whether they could get out the idea or not, nobody asked them. There was one Russian boy – Volkov – and he was asked a lesson from the gospel. Poor boy didn’t know but he explained it with his words well. The teacher listened for a while and then smiled: ‘You are telling it by your words, do you reject those written words?!’ – He got angry, drove him out and gave him a bad mark. Then he called him the second time when he learnt it by heart and pattered all of it in one breath, though he didn’t understand what he was saying. He liked it: ‘That’s how you must learn!’ And gave him a good mark. All teachers did the same in those times. Only one was among them quite different from them whose name was Troe. He took Maksimovich’s method. He gave us little to learn by heart, just several lines, but

instead we were to know not only the idea, but the meaning of every word and explain it. In his class, all – youths and the children – were equally converted into listening. Even a sound of flying fly could be heard. In those times pupils knew, and the same is today, when the teacher would ask them a lesson, so that they knew when their turn was and they were prepared better for that day than for the other days and their knowledge was unequal. But in Troe's class everybody had to be prepared. When he asked one of them, suddenly he would ask another one: 'Go on, - and turned to him. And he didn't differ an old lesson to the new one, he unexpectedly asked a lesson from the old one. He bound an elder apprentice one by one to every chair. They asked the lessons to the pupils and put marks. Then I had to ask those grown-up learners and put marks to them. Some of their apprentices were to be examined by me and I would give their mark to the teacher. When the teacher came in, he would check it and call some of them to verify the results. There was one Gabashvili in our group who used to come to school from the village and, of course, he was always late. For that the poor boy used to be kneeled in the corner till the end of the classes. So we seldom saw him standing during the lessons. Once he had spent the night at his relatives in Kutaisi. He seemed to get a text-book (in those days as the reading books so even the text-books were rare. There were just several of them and we lent them from each other) and he learnt the lesson well. He came early, but as he was used to kneeling, he went to the corner and kneeled, nobody paid any attention to him, his head-learner turned out to put him a good mark. I examined him and he was right. When Troe looked through all the marks, he noticed Gabashvili's 'good' mark. He might be surprised and called him. He asked the lesson and woe was on him! He couldn't answer a word. He shook his head and called me:

'Have you put this mark?' – He asked.

'Yes, I have.' – I answered.

'Then, Why? He doesn't know anything'

'When I asked, he knew it.'

'Did he know?! How could he forget so soon, in two minutes? Something is strange here!' – He cried irritated. – 'I'll find out what it is, but I have no time now. Gabashvili, go and kneel there again where you were and you, Tsereteli, go there together with him till my classes are over! Then I'll verify both of you.' – Though we were afraid of Troe best of all, but we had never seen anybody punished by him and now he thought: 'How they dared to deceive me, it's over the limit.'

'You damned, what have you done, didn't you know?' – I asked in a low voice when we were in the corner.

'Now I know,' – he answered.

'Then why didn't you answer him?!'

‘When I was standing, I couldn’t. I have been learning for a long time knelt down and answered the lessons so. Now listen if I don’t know!’ – And he told me everything by heart. – ‘If I stand up, I’ll be confused!’ – The teacher heard us whispering and listened to us. ‘What are you whispering about?’ – I went and reported everything. He called Gabashvili, made him kneel and asked the lesson. He answered well. The teacher repeated it several times and was so surprised, that he raised, left the class and went to the office. Nobody knew what happened there, but from that day on nobody saw Gabashvili kneeling in the corner any more.

Once when the lessons were over and we had a break, as I hadn’t eaten in the morning, I ran home, seized a hot maize-bread, put it in my ‘chokha’ pocket and so rushed to school: not to be late. Troe’s lesson was beginning. He had just entered before me and had even called five pupils and had them lined up. As soon as I pushed in the room, he shouted at me: ‘You, come here and stand beside them!’ I went up and stood there. The hot maize-bread touched my thigh and heated it. I was disturbed, I put my hand on it and so I felt uneasily. The teacher noticed it and asked: ‘What’s happening?’ I couldn’t conceal it any more... the maize-bread was put up a bit from the pocket... the apprentices burst out laughing. The teacher smiled ironically, took my maize-bread and put it before him on the table. I was dripping with sweat of shame. He began to ask us the lessons. At that moment, it was my misfortune that the inspector came in. My knees really began to shudder. He was so merciless one that he was eager ‘to flog’ a pupil. It was enough to find a simple reason to beat bitterly. Once he flogged two boys one and the same time. One for having the hair grown long and the second because he had cut too short! I thought: ‘This maize-bread will not serve me good!’ And, as soon as he noticed the maize-bread he roared: ‘What is this maize-bread for here, who brought it!.. One pupil, who used to be rivalry on me, jumped up and reported :’It was taken from Tsereteli’s pocket. ’Why have you brought it?’ – He asked me angrily. My tongue failed me. But then the teacher reported: ‘You’ll know just now’ and he asked me: ‘What is this?’ – ‘A maize-bread’ – I answered shivering.

‘What is it made of?’

‘It is made of maize.’

‘When is the maize sown? How does it grow? How is it worked by? When is it cooked as a maize-bread? And etc. He asked me everything and I answered. He questioned me for several minutes and at the end he said: ‘All right! Don’t forget to bring the rice tomorrow: Tomorrow we’ll speak about it.’ The inspector thought: ‘He seemed to bring it according to his teacher’s will’ and left the class without saying a word. The teacher called the informer and asked: ‘Don’t you have anything in your pocket?’ He checked his pocket and found a bobbin. ‘What is this? Isn’t it a playing thing that is quite worthless for anything and you have it in your pocket?!..And Tsereteli brought the maize-bread because he was hungry and couldn’t advanced in eating, but you come here to play! Well, stand there till the classes are over! I’ll present you with this bobbin to the inspector. That pupil turned pale and began to cry. When the classes were over, the

teacher turned to the crying boy and told: 'Well, I'll forgive you, but, afterwards, be careful: don't do the things to the others that you don't want for yourself!'

Our favourite confessor taught us just up to the fourth grade; he was not allowed to teach the higher classes, as he hadn't been graduated from the University. All, we knew in Russian, was taught by him; but then, in those higher grades, beginning with the fourth grade, we were decreased of much things but not acquired. The fourth grade was too difficult one: quite new teachers and subjects were added: History, Geometry, Trigonometry, Botantics, Zoology, Latin, Religion, Agriculture, Mineralogy and etc. – all were thrown to us! As we couldn't make out head or tail of them, we started to learn them by heart and, at last, we got in with it easily, though we didn't understand anything of those subjects. I can't say about others, but I did so, anyway, I was considered to be a good pupil and my name was written on the golden board. In that high grade I was, somehow, confused. We were appointed a teacher of Russian by name Sapega. One couldn't find anywhere such a stubborn man! He was angry all the time. There was always gloom on his face and if he saw anybody smiling, he would go mad. And I, on my misfortune, had so a smiling face that even when I was crying, my face was smiling! He had no sympathy on me and I had no scope from him. He moved me from the front chair to the very last one saying: 'Don't stick in my eyes! 'Once he was on high temper, called me and asked the lesson. I answered well. He approved me: 'You really know well but what is the reason of your smiling all the time? Don't smile so brutally!' I thought he was examining me and answered: 'Cattle doesn't smile or laugh.' As I said it, he jumped up, seized my collar and pushed me outside.

When I was sitting on the back chair, the pupils used to turn their hands back and stretch out their fingers to me. Imagine forty or fifty fingers stretched to me, then you'll agree with me that it was impossible to keep off smiling. And I would burst into laughter. I couldn't start to make a row. And the pupils were happy. At last he forbade me to enter his class and demanded: 'Either I'll go or drive that pupil out of here.' All the teachers loved me except him, they considered me to be the first pupil and they didn't agree with him. I was called and asked: 'What has happened that you made him so angry?' I began to cry and smiled just till they finished the last word. The director stood up and went to Sapega's class to make inquiries and learn the real reason. And, fortunately he entered at the moment that worked on me. There was a pupil in our class K.L., a model pupil, he didn't like to be in a hurry. But Sapega, while asking the lesson, used to say: 'Don't think, tell me without thinking.' So, he had called K.L. to the blackboard, asked him to write something on the board and was waiting the answer, K.L. was thinking to give the right answer. The impatient teacher sneaked up to him from the back, hit him on his head and struck his face on the board: 'What are you waiting for?' Frightened and stupefied boy's nose began bleeding, and just at that moment the director entered. The next day nobody saw Sapega, another teacher was appointed instead of him – Panizovski. But

neither he was better. Never better, but he even didn't say a word; he flushed. He used to bring Koshanski's Rhetorics and pointed to it with his finger without a sound meaning to learn it by heart from here up to there, and we did. We called him 'a gay,' laughed at him, but he eluded his eye. There was no other book to read and even if we got it somewhere, we wouldn't be allowed to read it: 'Whatever there is good, it is written in the Rhetorics, it's enough for you.' Once a brave pupil asked the teacher: Hasn't Pushkin written anything else than those that are given in this book?' – 'That's not of your business,' – answered the teacher. The boy didn't admit and asked again: 'Who is better writer Pushkin or Gertsen?' The teacher jumped up frightened, put his fingers into his ears and cried out: 'I was not here, I didn't hear anything and neither you told anything...' And so he went out.

The teacher of the Latin language was not less stubborn – a very good, peaceful and diligent teacher; he was afraid of flies, if one of them buzzed, he fainted. As the pupils knew about it, if anyone didn't know the lesson, he would fetch the fly stealthily and let it fly in the class-room. The teacher would be frightened, the pupils would jump up, some would jump on the table, some – as if tried to drive the fly away from the class-room: It was pushed either to one or to the other one and, meanwhile, the classes were over.

It's obvious that young generation, being in such condition, wouldn't take much from the secondary school, if there was not one light that appeared in this dreadful darkness. He was Polish Podzievich, who seemed to be a professor, but because of the strong drink, he was discharged from the office and got a position of an inspector in the town of Stavropol. Then he was discharged from there, too, and was moved to our country as a teacher of Mathematics. This drunkard teacher didn't pay attention to his subjects, neither to Algebra nor to Geometry or Trigonometry and Physics; he allowed us to approach our will to learn any subject we liked and, when we were in difficulties to understand anything, then we would ask him and he would explain us perfectly. It's strange that we knew his subject best of all. As he guessed that we were narrow-minded and backward, he used to talk about different things and tried to sober us. In those days, it was announced that who wanted to go to Russia and enter the high school, he had to learn Latin and who wanted to finish only the secondary school, he had to learn gospel, and if he became only the first apprentice, he would even get a rank. The rank was of a very fascinating importance. But all my friends, though not everybody could go to Russia because of the poverty, chose Latin. Only one of the pupils and me, too, decided to learn gospel, fascinated by the rank. In those days our teacher of the Russian language ordered us: 'choose whatever you like and write a composition yourself, but in dialogues.' And I wrote an odd one. When the teacher read it, handed it to the inspector and he presented it to the pedagogical council and said: 'If he, who wrote this, is not restrained, it will not be good at all!' Rodzievich protected me on the council: 'He, who wrote this, will become a good one and he needs to be fondled but not to be angry with him. I demand to make him study Latin and enter the high school somewhere.' He was captivated by oratory, he won some others over and the director joined him. So I was called.

‘Is it written by you?’ –The director asked me.

‘Yes, it is.’ – I answered a bit startled.

‘Then how do you dare to mention the government attendant persons so badly?’

‘He is a retired official.’

‘It doesn’t matter, you shouldn’t mention him disrespectfully! He might be honoured and had a pension, too,’ – added the irritated inspector, - ‘take it and change it!’

‘If only it is the defect, it’s easy: I’ll cross out the word ‘retired’ and write ‘given the sack.’ If given a sack were good, he would be at work.’ – The director laughed and let me go. From that day on, I moved to the Latin classes. After that Rozdevich loved me more and paid peculiar attention at me. His affair was astonishing: his body was so soaked with ‘vodka’, that sometimes even if he didn’t drink, drunkenness would start unexpectedly and was drawing geometrical figures, he shouted at him: ‘Now, dance ‘Lekuri’ and he clapped his hands. The pupil froze with fear. We were disturbed, too, but he didn’t stop: ‘What! Do you hate the folk dance? Don’t you know that the folk songs and dances express the soul and the heart of the nation? So, Lecuri’ dancing is a Georgian dance too, it’s alive thing!’ He, as if played himself ‘Lekuri,’ then he played ‘Mazurka’: ‘That is our invented dance and obstinate ‘Mazurka’, and now see, how it is drawing’ and he danced a Trepaka’, seasoned with indigent bad-languages. At last he stopped. Seized his hat and took to flight. We thanked the God that neither the director nor the inspector or any other entered before it. We were so sorry for him, that we didn’t know to laugh or to weep! On the third day, he came in very confounded. He couldn’t say a word for a long time and at last he began:

‘Children, in old days in Greece serfs were specially drunk and made children look at their ill-breeding in order to let them see themselves visually how it was nasty thing when a man was drunk, lost his brains and became brutal. The day before yesterday, I showed you the same. Try to be strong to the life, suffer from the difficulties and don’t be corrupted like me,. What am I now? How do you think, don’t I feel that I’m disfigured physically? But, anyway, thank God, this physical mangliness maintained my soul and heart stainless and sacred.’ He was talking such things till the classes were over and went away. Nearly all of us were crying and from that day on we were stirred the pity for him more than before.

When we moved to the last grade, I was staying at my teacher of the French language, monsieur Turess’s house. This monsieur Turess was called ‘Mose Tura’ (meaning – jakal Mose) by our youths. Once in the evening he was accompanied by Rozdievich, they both sat and began to drink tea. The guest asked for Rome, he poured for himself and poured it to his host. By and by they began to talk heart-to-heart. Been drunk, the Frenchman remembered the great revolution and went on speaking with admiration. The guest remembered Poland, and they declined all prudence, moreover that there was nobody except two of them and me! I was sitting

in the corner for myself, so I think they didn't even notice me. Their talking noncenses captivated me so that I felt somehow strange paradise, I turned to be hearing with my whole existence. At the end Rozdevich said sighing: 'It doesn't matter now, I'm sorry I don't join the military service to become a commander and to serve my country on time, as it did Konrad!..

As soon as I knot it, I couldn't recognize even myself! That night I couldn't sleep. I said what have I to do in the University? How nice it would be to serve in the military service. Some day I'll become a commander! The earlier I got to work, the better it would be, and this one year anyway, in the last grade, they will teach us nothing, we are being repeated the old lessons, - and I'll leave school, I won't go anywhere.' I decided so and declared my wish to my father. The father was too pleased: 'It's up to you, my son! In your age I was already married and set about the family.' I left school at once, that surprised everybody and from morning till night I was beside Rodzievich. I stayed with him for four months, and these four months were more fruitful for me than being those eight years at the secondary school. At the beginning of May I said farewell to my parents and Imereti and chose my way. Being quite inexperienced in the life, having known not so much and having seen quite nothing, I was to travel by sea, go along the land and arrive in Moscow just accompanied by a boy where there was my brother who served in the 'Convoy.'

III

At the end of April, being unenlightened in the world and inexperienced with life, inflated with dreams, I chose the way to Russia. I was riding on the horseback up to the village of Orpiri (now Marani); there I took a boat and entrusted myself to the crazy river Rioni. It took me two days to reach the town of Poti; and stayed there for three days, I attended sanctifying of the town of Poti and then hurried away to a military fire ship to the town of Odessa. It was more comfortable to travel, of course, by a through-train on the land to the town of St. Petersburg and it was not so fearful as it was by sea, but they sent me by this way because Vorontsov's widow was to be there and I was ordered to see her. In those days Georgians were generally so in love with Vorontsov and respected his memory so much, that nobody could imagine if any Georgian going to Russia wouldn't call on Vorontsov's widow to see her. My parents, too, ordered me to go to that lady by all means and give their regards to her; they gave me a big black agate cross with crucifixion on it as a present. In my dreams I imagined the sea and the land wider than a real ones and that's why I was not so astonished by seeing them!...And, I was so entertained with new, unknown sights that time flew. My poetic dreams grew so much during my journey, became so motley and colorful that being stupified by the sky and the earth, the sea and the land, that I considered them to be a chess-board and I made the king and the other figure jumped

according to my will. How could I guess then that being unexperienced in life is like a false stone of wonder!.

Vorontsov's lady received me and treated me like a mother to her son. She inquired me about everybody and at last, when I handled the agate cross, she felt very pleased: 'Georgians remember me and it seems they will not forget my husband for a long time!'

'Till Georgia lives, the name of Vorontsov won't be forgotten,' - I remembered the words that were said many times by ancestors, heard by me and remained in my heart.

The eyes of the old lady were tearful; she looked at me smiling and kissed me. My presented thing was moving from one guest's hand to another. They examined it with great interest; They thought that the agate was an amber and liked it, but the face of the Christe carved on the cross didn't seem to satisfy their aesthetic demands. The lady turned to one of the women guest and told: 'Do you think you are in Italy? Don't forget that such things are made by a common agate-maker in the province of Imereti! They are peasants and have never seen anything except crucifix and icons in the churches; their art gallery, their classes are just their nature of Georgia, but the nature is wonderful and amazing. Doesn't this simple art prove that, if the circumstances weren't with difficulties, they would have their own Raphael and Michael-Angelo? The diseased prince loved Georgians with admiration, respected their past and hoped on their future. He used to say every time: 'This little Georgia would be the most wonderful, colorful and the firmest golden-string in the lace-frame of great Russia! And we should just let it free, lead and help them from outside.'

She had been talking for an hour about Georgians and Georgia. When I was going to leave, while saying farewell, she said smiling: 'Now you, the young Georgians should justify the hopes of my husband!' Then she asked me: 'How long are you going to stay in the town of Odessa?' and when I answered: 'For several days,' she invited me home at dinner for the next day. It has been passed almost more than forty years since then, but I think has happened just the other days, because her kind face is left so obvious in my heart and even the words are squealing sweetly in my ears.

After coming back from the palace, I spent all day long doing sightseeing in the town of Odessa. I saw many wonderful things, but didn't notice at all any many-storeyed buildings, or the wide streets or the people walking along them captivated. I only was astonished by the ships gathered in the harbor!.. 'I wonder, what are they carrying so much and what load do they have to take away so much that they are hardly finding room to stand?' - I thought and was enjoying the sea motion. Next day, when I was going to visit lady Vorontsov, just at that moment, the hotel servant fetched in a letter. It was from the doctor Andrievski: 'The lady has fallen ill, she can't receive anybody today, instead I ask you to visit me for dinner. Moreover, I must deliver you something according to the lady;s will!' I didn't know his address and was in trouble, but it appeared that he had sent me his coach. I got into it and visited him.

Andrievski was the personal doctor in the Vorontsov Palace, their family man, and wherever Vorontsov was to go, he accompanied him everywhere, his wife was Georgian, a daughter of the prince Tumanishvili. Georgians respected him very much and he himself expressed his favor to them. It's obvious that in Vorontsov times there would be the Russians who hated Georgians, but they wouldn't dare to announce it!.. Generally subordinates assent their feelings and minds to their directors' wills... used to hold hypocritically both of them like a game of 'riktaphela' and, following the time, they threw it buzzing, first to the right, then – to the left. But Andrievski didn't belong to the subordinates like these...

Andrievski was an affectionate and caressing to his family; as in everywhere, so in Odessa, too, he lived generously. That day, when I visited him, the house was filled with guests. After common greetings, Andrievski's wife apologized for Vorontsov's lady and handed me something wrapped in a paper like a dried fig: 'This is sent from her!' When I took it, it seemed to be a bit heavy. I saw they were of quite pure gold things, I turned red, I was covered with cold sweat of plague but others might think it was in a whirl with happiness. After some time's silence, I thanked her and gave the present back. 'Do you reject it?' – asked me a bit stirred Andrievski's wife: 'Who had ever heard the inacceptability of the gift? It's sent for you by the lady in memory.' 'How can I reject it?' – I answered – 'If she granted me with any different thing in memory, I would take it with great esteem and gratitude, but as for money, I am not used to accept them.' I said. Both, guests and hosts, looked at me with great amazement. It was obvious, they thought of me being foolish stupidity, but Andrievski himself told his wife laughing: 'Babale, haven't I told you he wouldn't take them?!'

'He thinks that he is still in Georgia, he couldn't grow out of his ancients' orders.' Then he came up to me, put his hand on my shoulder and told me smiling: 'My young friend! Don't be so abashed by that in vain, no offence is meant! It's obtained in our country and you may have heard the saying in your country: 'Put on the hat of that country where you go.' Who has presented it to you is right and you are right, too, that couldn't accept it. I'll give it back to the lady; I'll retell her everything and make her laugh much, only under the condition that: in less than a year you'll change your mind about the life; you'll feel your today's mistake and then, give me a word, write to me and inform me about it!.. 'And really, hardly it passed even four months, but not a year, that I remembered that occasion and said to myself: 'How inexperienced I was!' I was sorry but never wrote to Andrievski.

There was a young, grimacing man among the guests who was passing his finger on the moustache. He came up to me, sat down beside me and asked:

'You seem, Prince, to be carrying much money?'

'Why not?!'

'How much? Five hundred thousands?' – After he had said it I thought he was mad and pushed my chair backwards and cried after him hurriedly, - 'five hundreds.'

‘Five hundreds?’ – He laughed at me. – ‘Then, is it enough for you?’

‘I won’t need more on my way and then my family will send me every month.’

‘How much is it?’

‘Fifty a month.’

‘Is it enough, then?’

‘But I’m not going there to have feast!..’

‘Then you won’t be able to spend all of them!’ – He said laughing at me and looked around. Some began to grimace. I guessed that they were laughing at me and I got angry. I couldn’t do anything more but say laughing at him:

‘I’m going there on my business, I won’t have any time for feasting and, of course, fifty a month will be enough for me. It is said: ‘Tastes differ!’ Don’t compare yourself to me!.. You seem to be quite different from me! As I see, you need fifty only for your moustaches!’ – Saying this I heard some women laughing loudly!.. My collocutor became red, he moved off his hand from his moustache, rose, intended to say something but the host didn’t let him, he interrupted us: ‘Well, count, count! Generally, it’s inappropriate to talk about money to Georgians. They consider the money differently than we do, they consider money is of no worth. They live light-heartedly and their demands are satisfied even without money. Everything they need they have at home, they didn’t need even to step out for anything: food, drink, clothing or shoes, gun, animal, things and etc.., even the colonial articles, they got everything free of charge! High-borns have their merchants as serfs, Armenians and Jews, and they pay for whatever the princes need: tea, sugar coffee, rice, candle, oil and other different drinks and so on... Though I haven’t been to their town of Sachkhere, but I know that the Tseretelis have their own market. A Georgian needs money only as a gift for ‘Sazandary’ player or for donation to the churches, otherwise why should he need it? How could they learn the uses of the money? Now I’ll tell you a funny story, but it’s a real story, listen to me.

One Georgian distinguished man of famous highborn, who had been to the town of Tegeran many times and had also travelled around the town of Istanbul for several times, when he died, certainly, he left everything to his children. He had left two children. The elder was unmarried, he had to stay without any heir and during dividing all their belongings, he talked his younger brother: ‘I’m a lonely man, leave all the serfs and patrimony in your consumption and may the God help you. I’ll take the caravanserai that is in town, and it will be enough for me, if you let me appropriate the money that is left. The younger brother, of course, agreed with great pleasure. Their division went with fascination and peacefully. The older brother moved to Tbilisi, lived in his caravanserai, opened the chest full of gold and silver and got down to his life. He used to open his chest every morning and evening, watch down the money and said

laughing: ‘Whoever spends these devil’s forget things!.. How could it be spent? Town dweller merchants learned about it, visited him and asked: ‘Give a helping hand.’ Of course, he wouldn’t refuse anybody... They took the amount of money they needed. When the merchants used to come back from the market, they brought some presents to the count and he thought in his mind: ‘Isn’t it better? I’m thanked and presented and they are helped. When they have their own and don’t need mine, then they will return mine with thanks.’ Don’t forget that when he was giving money, he trusted only with honesty, without any document made up or even without anybody’s presence!.. ‘Whoever can dare to refuse me?’ and really whoever would refuse him? In those days, if a Georgian withdrew and beat awfully a merchant, whoever would say anything?.. At last, when Georgian’s fortune moved to our hands and the system was changed, the merchants were the first to open their eyes and the debtors of Georgian counts refused to pay debts to the owners of money: ‘We don’t know anything, and if anybody had lent the money from you, you may have the document in hand and show it to us!’ The count got angry, it was unusual for him. But he didn’t care for losing money, he thought how the merchant dared to refuse him. He applied to the government, but the answer was the same! ‘Damn it!’ – He said. ‘Who would ever think that such unreliability would be settled in our country? Nevertheless, thank God that I’ve got the Danibegashvili’s document at hand... he was a bit of an untrustworthy man and I couldn’t trust him a thousand of gold without any guarantee!’ He made a complaint about Danibegashvili in the court. The loaner himself was not alive any more and, when the children saw the count putting his hand in his pocket to take the document, they turned deathly pale!.. The Georgian took a small paper rumped in hundred times and put it on the table. They opened it, looked at it and what was it? A hair of moustache!.. ‘This is your father’s piece of moustache and I have it as a guarantee.’ The judges and the defendants, of course, began to laugh but that Georgian cursed his fate: ‘Oh, woe is such time! such new law, justice, conscience and integrity!!’ Town merchants are still laughing and saying: ‘There have never been the dearest man in the world like Danibegashvili: a hair of his moustache sold by a thousand of gold!’

That’s all right’ – the count interrupted. – ‘But doesn’t that prove that in those days Georgians were in wild condition and didn’t know anything about life?’

‘That’s right, Count,’ – answered Andrievski sadly. – ‘But the civilization that was brought soon, carried them out from that condition and made to step forward in order to go farther. Just the son of that funny Georgian’s grandchild appeared to be a son of civilization and when the robbers broke the post-office, he was among them!! The diseased Vorontsov’s tears were dripping: ‘Who has ever heard of a Georgian do such an odd and unparalleled affair?.. ‘And the criminals were examplarily punished: they were sentenced to work in the mine forever, everyone, both the old and the young ones.

Generally Geogians were disconcerted greatly and the women were dressed almost in black clothings. The wives of nobilities were sitting in mourning for awhile, they go out as it was very odd from Georgians to behave this way. ‘How can it be that a Georgian is a robber?’

Who has ever heard such thing in our country so far?’ – They say generally – ‘Woe is disgraced, woe is defiant!! We are capless and dishonored!’ – And so on... The count once asked the women: ‘Are you so sorry for those several men sent to Siberia?’ – and lady Manana Orbeliani answered instead of Georgian women, generally: ‘It would be better if they were not born by the God to disgrace us, but we feel sorry for that those damned creature disgraced us, Georgians and apostatized our religion and imitate others!’..Vorontsov kissed Manana’s hand and told smiling: ‘Dear lady, don’t worry, there are one or two bad men in every nation. Even our Saviour couldn’t chose twelve mediators without one Judas among them!..He betrayed the Christe, but the Christianity was never touched by any pus!.. I hope that generally Georgians will strengthen their Christian customs in future’. Then he turned to me and ordered: ‘Erast Ivanich! Georgia is quite a different garden and its flowers need a special gardening!’

The host was talking calmly. Everybody was listening to the story that he was telling and I fell in love with him from the first sight so that I didn’t want to leave him. And really as much time I stayed in Odessa, I was with him every day. As I was an inexperienced man in the life, he used to give me advices: ‘When you arrive in St. Petersburg, behave so and so.’ In order not to go alone with only such inexperienced servant like me, he had got a companion for me. One of his friends was going to Moscow right in those days and he made us friends, as he was experienced, he passed me to him, and sent me. My servant, who was like a nurse for me in Russia, at the beginning was enjoying new sightseeings, but then, like me, he was not surprised by anything!.. Once or twice he startled at some common things on our way, but at last he became used to it and never told anything. The railway, then, was only between Moscow and St. Petersburg, but to other towns they travelled by the post road. We, certainly, travelled on the post horses. Once we heard a strange squeal: as if there was animals’ pack somewhere. When we approached, there was a valley where Russian women appeared to be mowing down the grass with scythes and were screaming strangely... It turned out to be their working song!.. Their women are dressed quite strangely: with their breast open, and in short dresses, that hardly touched their knees, and lower the knees – quite barefooted. Seeing this my Ivane cried out: ‘Quick, sir, close your eyes!’ He himself covered his eyes with his hands and began grumbling: ‘May the God damn such country! Where we have come here, such dishonest country!’ and so on. Frankly speaking, such unusual clothing was strange for me, too, but I didn’t cover my eyes with my hand. When my companion asked me : ‘What’s happening with your servant?’ When he got my answer, he nearly died of laughter; he insisted on my Ivane: ‘Don’t you want to have the wife dressed like them?.. Soon the order will be out that your women be dressed like this!.. ‘Don’t may the God live you alive till that day,’ – he cursed in Georgian and then asked in Russian: ‘Do your ladies dress like this?’ – ‘Sometimes!’ – He answered laughing and then he told me: ‘Every country has its habits and order, who had never seen or been experienced in it, of course, he is surprised!’ He considered himself to be greatly experienced, but in one thing even he didn’t seem to be very experienced. When we arrived in the town of Tula, he went to an iron factory to buy a bed and made me buy it too, as if it wouldn’t be in St.Petersburg, and disturbed us with carrying it during our trip. Besides women my servant was fallen to thinking by their

birds: 'There is no tree here, where do these birds sit or sleep?' – He said astonishing. When we arrived in St. Petersburg and it never got dark, even that made him very sad. We had been travelling for a month to St.Petersburg. My brother was not in St.Petersburg. Convoys were moved to the province of 'Tsarskoe Selo' and just next day I went to see him.

My brother seemed to be waiting earlier and, when I was late on my way, he was frightened: 'Oh! Maybe something has happened to him!' – When I arrived, he was greatly glad. There were many Imeretians that I knew and I was surrounded by them asking me some news about something and the other - about another one.

At last everybody advised me: 'As you are going to the military service, stay here, there is nothing better to be a convoy! Our service is not a real service, it's feasting and a carouse!' And that was right, generally the affairs of convoys and especially the circumstance of Georgian convoys was desired for an idler man. They drank much, ate well, were dressed well, were riding horses several times a day; They were playing and the rest of the time they spent feasting here or there. As Caucasians, generally, they were respected greatly, especially, by women, Georgians were much more acceptable as sons of high-borns and chosen by stateliness.

I confessed to my brother, that it was true, that I wanted to serve in the military service, but I wanted the place, where I could continue my studying and then move to the army headquarters of a general, but being convoy, wouldn't suit me. My brother approved it and told: 'When we return today from Shadlugh, I'll take you to our commander, Petre Bagrationi, and he'll give you an advice.'

It was two o'clock in the afternoon when he returned and drove me to Bagrationi. The proprietor of the house greeted me in Georgian manner, I was surprised and he told me laughing: 'Do you think I'm not a Georgian any more? I've been to Russia for a long time and I've forgotten a bit, but I knew Georgian better than you do! And you, as an Imeretian, certainly, have an Imeretian dialect but I knew pure Georgian. I studied in Tbilisi noblemen school together with Tato Baratashvili, who was a poet, and it was not good to leave for Russia and move to an army service: Have you heard his rhyming sayings to the high-borns? And we, too, joined him in it, his friends: he was writing and we sent them, when the post-officer would come to our school we surrounded him, hastily lifted his roof of the bag, where there were books and put there our verse-letters. How could he imagine that there were the letters? He carried them to the address. An alarm was set up in Tbilisi! The inquest was ordered. At last we were realized, caught and Baratashvili was presented twenty-five flopping as an author's emoluments; we were sentenced the same way, but I ran away and left school. I was sent to an army corps and I've been serving here since then.' He remembered much besides this about being in Georgia. He was in a high temper. When his wife saw him so cheerful, asked: 'You are in such a high temper that Shadlugh is sure to have passed well, hasn't it?'

‘Exemplarily!’ – He answered laughing – ‘the sovereign-emperor granted us thrice with thanks!.. and it is so much pleasing for me, as it was given rise by Georgians.’

‘How’s that?’

‘Generally they showed themselves very much! And the room is left for today’s Abashidze, Amilakhvari and Andronikashvili. We know Giorgi Nakashidze what kind of rider he is, don’t we? His friends are making fun of him, but he did really a miracle. When he reached the last abutment and he was going to make his horse jump over it, his horse, like others, suddenly stopped and he himself jumped over the abutment.

‘Ah!’

‘Never mind!.. He has just turned round in the air once and then somehow suddenly sprang on his feet like a cat!.. He didn’t fall down. The onlookers thought he did it specially and clapped their hands praising!.. The sovereign ordered to draw Abashidze sitting on the horseback and hang the picture in the gallery of the palace!’

‘It’s strange, who would ever imagine, at the beginning that Georgians would be such riders! Do you remember how they fell down every time?’

‘Everything has its border and the braveness and riding of Georgians have no border and it’ll never have!’

‘In old times Georgians were famous for their riding, too, everywhere.. Today’s Georgians’ blood is inculcated with their ancients’ dignity, but the time changed and they are not under training and can’t do anything. Just now: When Tatars, Cherkezs, Gipsies and Khazakhs have come, they were at the head, good riders, but after that they couldn’t accept anything by training! They stayed what they had been before. But when Georgians began to train, they overtook them. Today, many of Georgians are better than any famous rider that was in the Tatars’ detached force, Hasry-bey; Imagine, he is not a worse rider!’ –And he pointed to my brother. ‘And you? What kind of rider you are?’ – He turned to me.

‘Not so good,’ – I answered.

‘Why?’

‘I’ve never gone in for horse-riding! I had books in my hands!’

‘Your brother told me you were at the secondary school, then why don’t you enter the University?’

‘Military service rose from the bottom of my heart.’

‘Do you want to serve together with your brother?’

‘Do you want to serve together with your brother?’

‘No!.. I can’t serve in the Convoy!..’

Here my brother delivered him all my inmost and Bagrationi told me to come the next day.

Next day he was alone in his study. He had opened Chubinashvili Dictionary and was looking through it. He let me sit down beside him and asked: ‘Yesterday, I didn’t want to inquire you: ‘Why don’t you want to join our Convoy and serve together with your brother? Why are you silent?!. Tell me frankly, as to your father!’

‘I even grieve for my brother that he is here... he almost finished school but here Convoy should join such Georgian who has not learnt anything and has no way out. I was watching it, a man cannot learn anything but loafing’... - the general laughed and put his hand on my shoulder.

‘They have much time and, who wants to study, can’t he manage it?’

‘Yes, but there, where everybody is feasting, how can one manage to study? The world is built by imitiveness and it is ruined by imitiveness.’

‘Oh, you turned out to be a philosopher, as I see, and isn’t it better you to enter the University and choose the way of science?’ – He told me in jest – ‘Military service is such thing where you won’t have much free time to follow studying and science. As for me, as an aid-de-camp, I accompanied the husband of Mariam Nikolaevna, the prince of Leikhtenberg; he was the great scientist and a chemist, too. It seemed to me that I loved the science while I was with him, but then, as I had no time for it, I lagged behind.

‘That’s all obvious, but I intended to join the Military service with quite different purpose!’.

Here I shared with him what intensions I had while joining the Military service.

After he learned everything, he embraced me and kissed me: ‘May the God realize your will. I’ll go right today to my friend the count Shekhavskoi. He is the commander of the infantry battalion. I’ll deliver you to him. He’ll take care of you like a father and then you do your best!..’ he invited me for dinner.. He inquired me much after dinner, too... and before leaving he told me: ‘Now the battalion is going to the province of ‘Krasnoe Selo’, there will be Shodlughi, there will be nothing to do until autumn!.. then come to me, I’ll show you the way... until then, during these two or three months, keep yourself anywhere else.’ And my brother, as the convoys were to go, took me to St. Petersburg to the Georgian students.

The students of those days were generally quite different and the Georgians, together with them, got their different nuances... and I, after visiting them, threw away my inmost about military wishes and involuntarily approached their social society.

Part Two

The war in the region of Crimea made Russia awaken. The window, cut out by Peter the Great, was opened just then, and at last, involuntarily, education lightened the darkness. If not the Paris treaty, serfownership might not have been thrown down even today in Russia. In those days i. e. in sixtieth years (xix century), Italy and Hungary were trying to make themselves free and were fighting against Austria. Garibaldi, Mazzini and Kossuth became the ideals for all the conscious patriots. Right by that time a student of town of Saratov seminary Chernishevski appeared and placed himself at the head of the magazine 'Sovremennik' and together with Dobrolubov, Antonevich, Nekrasov and others fell whooping upon Russia. Russia began to act, but, as just awakened and still quite in obscure, it began to stagger. It was impossible to enslave it any more! It left the old way, got to a new one and, of course, as it happens with anything new, it was followed by some mistakes: It is said in vain: 'There is no rose without a thorn.' As just awakened, it showed its back to the old one, it got rid of everything old, neither it believed in good or any useful thing from the old times, everything seemed to be evil and ahead, the future, all of it, seemed to be good without any distinction. And there appeared nihilism then that was mentioned by Turgenev. This nihilism condemned in the past time, it attacked bravely and fearlessly sacrificed itself, but it was exaggerated and, instead dirtiness, as outward so internal, was established: women noticed that mothers in old times did mainly nothing but spending time just in foppery. They protested against a foppery and got it off their hand themselves, cut their hair and, without paying attention at appearance, they reached dirtiness. Then this appearance was followed by the whole family and they 'broke their neck.' It's true you couldn't say it was general, but I mean the majority and for fear that there are more swindlers in nature than pearls, Who ever could blame the pearls? (i.e. a saying 'one should cast pearls before a swine)... some of the men, either by imitativeness or some by 'supposition' did more than women. In those days, to act according to one's own idea was dangerous and if that famous Turgenev didn't outstrip abroad, who knows what would happen to him in Russia?

During this obstinacy Chernishevski published his small critical book: 'Art for only art or for life?' It had an influence upon the readers. Many of them got rid of music and denied art and sculpturing. At that time literature was divided into two parts: most people refused quietly art in

literature and the second, who were much less, made a sacrifice for art, so that they believed nothing in literature except harmony and music. Just one Russian poet, the count Alexi Tolstoi chose the both way, didn't fall himself into extreme and because of that, condemned by both of sphere, he is not recognized suitably even today. And the rest writers haven't reconciled with them and followed the chosen way without hesitation.

When talented Pisarev and boisterous Zaitsev stood at the head of the deniers of art, the whole reading Russia was agitated and at that time there was declared a wonderful foolishness: 'Antonovich's boots are better than Shakespeare's' and at that time, of course, they tried to annihilate Pushkin to the ground!

In those times Georgian youth grew up in the University of Russia. Just in St. Petersburg there were more than thirty of them, and, if it is true that: 'One swallow doesn't make summer,' the Georgian studentship had begun since that time.

During the century, we always were fed with leavings of Russia and, certainly, despite the time and period, the direction of Russia together with its nihilism, would move to our country! G.Tsereteli said the truth: 'A Georgian man is a bit pretentious!' We like to exaggerate everything and Russifying together with its nihilism was much spread in our country. I was among those students. I expressed spinelessness in my personality and triviality through my long life, but I've never betrayed the great and social affairs in my life. Even in literature I could become famous, accompanying others, but I didn't betray my belief, and, as it was with Tolstoi, I took place in the middle... I've never been a follower of imitativeness as the majority of others. I wasn't of a high opinion about Zaitsev, though I respected the gifted Pisarev, but I didn't like much of him, neither I believed in the second party, that there should be only music and harmony in the literature and that's all. Being with both of them I've chosen my way and followed it calmly.

That was the reason of that my literature was disgraced and my friends moved away from me. One evening my friends: V.,G. and M. came in my room as the mediators and delivered me in the name of the comradeship: 'You make us ashamed by your writing and you must stop either writing or acquainting with us.' I had never felt enmity against anybody so far, neither in my youth, and this message that was sent to me, stuck my heart like an arrow. Being sympathetic in nature, I wished to be a friend of everyone and had an interrelation with them, and to move all my friends away, was like a death for me. I fell to thinking.

I was hesitating for a long time, but in those times, I received a letter from the editor of the magazine 'Tsiskari,' whom I hadn't been acquainted before; it said: 'Dear brother, Akaki Tsereteli! Don't show up your Imerelian hot temper for that I had published your exemplary verse 'A secret note' and signed your name and surname fully, and not only the insignificant two letters, without informing you. That was the reason: Our Platon, the philosopher, teaches Bariatinski the Georgian language. He showed your verse to him and he liked it very much; he

invited me and when he learned about you from me, he ordered me to sign your name and surname. What could I do ?! What is that Imerelian cautiousness like that you don't sign your poems? Everybody likes your poems very much, especially women. They even turned them into songs. Well! Now you know, help me more often with your poems. Sincerely yours Ivane.'

I'll understand such letter quite differently today, but in those days, I believed it and it influenced on me greatly, moreover, when Prof. D. Chubinashvili read my name, that I had never given away before, invited me to his house and approved Kereselidze's words. From that day on, I decided to be of use to literature; and if anyone left me, I let him go. After that I used to meet anybody very seldom and it happened just in the University. I was moved off almost from everybody, except of two of them. They didn't behave like imitating others and they considered me to be more gifted than others, but not less. But it's very strange thing to watch hypnosis of the crowd: they were not so dare and clearing up on behalf of me. One of them was Kirile Lordkipanidze and the second – Niko Nikoladze. I wrote a poem in those days. It has been passed half of a century, but it is worth reading, but my friends began whooping, then: 'There is wrong idea here and nothing more than a nonsense!' Only Kirile and N. Nikoladze said that it was quite a good thing as an art and advised me to add something that would be useful in life. That poem was called: 'The song during reaping.' And I added a stanza to the end:

‘Wheat harvest is great this year,
But I'm the whiner of my fate,
Though the sovereign will take my bread,
But I'm bathed in sweat in vain!’

When they saw this stanza added, they liked it and it was published together with that stuck and forced verse; but I, frankly speaking, didn't like it, neither while adding it nor then, that's why, I took it away afterwards.

N.Nikoladze was very young then, swift, restive, talented and of quite a different literary school than me, he wanted to be the leader in everything; of course, in poetry, she laid claim to be a critic, he wanted to be the first. He worthed me greatly, but he wanted me to follow his will; but I was following my way and I think the reason of it must be the frankness in relation between us that has not finished so far, though he has changed much. As for the second, Kirile Lordkipanidze, he was beloved and good for everybody, but strikingly capricious! So that his capriciousness was often like a madness. Well, these two young men were my inspirers during the student time, but the rest were taken away. I didn't lose much of it, on the contrary, I gained, for I didn't spend much time in mere verbiage and spent that period usefully.

One morning a young student familiar to me, Gamburstov, rushed into my room and told me that a Georgian student was to be at law that day in the literature – hall 12, they had learned that he was a spy!..

It seemed strange to me!.. I couldn't believe that any Georgian would take the liberty to do such thing. I couldn't be indifferent and went to the lecture-hall. When I came, there were more than a thousand students gathered there. But there was no Georgian among them. The tribune was occupied by Nekludov, who was then a public procurator on senate and a friend of a Minister, and next to him, Atanasiev and another one whose name I can't remember, and he was saying with laughter to the students: 'Gentlemen, this case proves us that we should be cautious!.. And even now, if we didn't know personally that man, shouldn't we have to believe and doom to failure that man? And he is Akaki Tsereteli.' He got down from the tribune, shook my hand and told me everything: it turned out that all that turmoil broke up about me. As the God saved me that day and those leaders, Nekludov and Atanasiev knew me together with others. I laughed over it and never said anything, so a year passed this way.

Once D.Kipiani entered my room and asked me: 'Come this evening to K. Aphkhazi's place by all means.' I was surprised by D.Kipiani's coming to me, who avaded me and his joining the students was more surprising to me, but I gave a word and I kept my word. That evening Georgian students were really gathered to decide Aphkhazi's home affairs and, by the way, D.B., too, made complaints against I.Ser...to the friends:'He receives my letters, opens them, reads and then tears them.' I.Ser... jumped and turned round and round!.. 'How can you believe D.W.'s saying?' – He said – 'Wasn't him who made the round of us and convinced us that Akaki Tsereteli was a spy?' All of them stared their eyes and especially D.Nikoladze himself.

'That's true, – he said – that I have warned all of you, but I didn't do it myself. N.Gh... ordered me.' Then N.Gh... rose and justified himself: 'I began to doubt and warned others.' Only D.Kipiani came up to me to apologize me and told me: 'Don't be sorry that I was avading you! How did we Georgians know it? And we believed them!.. We are glad that it turned out to be a lie!..' I'm sure even today, that N.Gh., who was influential and treated us as a father, was too cautious and because of that he ws mistaken, but he had no private problem with me, he just considered himself to be obliged to warn the youths. I paid attention neither to this case, but it poisoned my student's period a bit, that desired times, when a man thinks that even a thorn seems to be a rose. After that I had been staying at the University for three years. There was some disturbances at the University in those days. Our students took part in it and they gained a jail. I was not among them!.. Not because that I was afraid of a jail!.. But even then I believed in that I had chosen before and I appraise it now, and ca't betray it: that the student must study, first, finish his studying and then he may not pass any offering. But in our days it happens on the contrary!.. This situation made me move quietly away from my friends and, as soon as I was graduated from the University, I moved to Moscow. There I got married right that year.

Nobody should lay claim: 'I'll do this or that in future!' I had decided in my mind that I would never be married, moreover, a foreigner, but anything can happen accidentally. I was acquainted with the old countess Enikeeva at E.Eristavi's and, when she asked my name, invited me warmly: 'Come to me!' And I visited her after awhile. The old lady was very glad to see me, she acquainted me with the hostess and said: 'She is my niece: she is my foster-daughter; these two daughters are from her first husband and those three – two daughters and a son, are from this second husband. This second husband, at first, had been a region procurer in the province of Orenburge and now he moved to Moscow as a director of a metropolitan office.' During this conversation he entered and greeted me. He turned out to be a literate man and we got on well... If I missed several days and was late, he himself would rush at me and take me to his house, as if he couldn't do without me!.. I had been in this condition for three months and became their family man. The elder daughter, who hadn't been of full age yet, fell in love with me. I didn't pay generally attention to a woman's love, but, when a greatly disturbed woman made complaints about her confession, then my heart became distressed. She was engaged and was waiting for her full age to marry Kudriavtsev, the governor of town of Tveri. She didn't love him, but her family didn't want to break the word and lose such son-in-law. The fiancée complained to me she would drown herself in the water at wedding night, if I didn't rescue her!.. And so I got married with her the next day, her mother and step-father had been asking me for a long time: 'Marry the second one! She has got a fiancé.' But I persisted on mine and then they never were offended any more, as I noticed; they made me to hurry without marriage ceremony.

Next day my wife's step-father came in my room and said; 'These shares cost five hundreds of 'Tumani', though they have already been cut off the coupons of ten years, but when time expires, it would cost a fixed capital; it's your wife's, presented by her godmother when she christened her; take it and give me a receipt that you are paid off and everything has got from your wife.'

That time I didn't know much about life and didn't pay much importance to money. I thought everything as true and even a thorn seemed pink to me; of course, whatever it were, I would sign it, but at that moment a Georgian military man Ab. Attended there and shouted at me in Georgian: 'Don't sign it, for God's sake!.. Write this how it is!' And I signed under five thousands though, in reality, it didn't cost more than two thousands and nine hundreds of 'tumani.' This signature didn't please my father-in-law and before learning he demanded my promise that I would take my wife to Caucasus and never stay there.

The princess came to us the next day and I told her the story of the previous day and what had happened to me, and asked her why my father-in-law was displeased with me. She first made me swear at the sacred image and said: 'Be quiet, don't slip it in speaking anywhere,' then she told me the secret: 'The first husband of my foster-daughter, as I've told you before, was Bazilevski, the own brother of that Bazilevski who is famous for his wealthy. Your wife and her sister have half of a portion in the gold-ore and in the whole riches, but when their father died, your wife was one year old and her sister had not been born yet; then that other brother, who is

now Bazilevski, found out a procuror from the town of Orenburg, gave him a million, took a receipt and the rest riches that belonged to those sisters, misappropriated to himself; Now you must make a complaint to Bazilevski and you must return their belongings as to your wife so to her sister.

This case was divulged. The princess moved to my house, but the wife's step-father went mad. I don't know whether he really went mad or he pretended to, but he died in such madness. – So, I was left a trial with me, an Imerelian man, that demanded great expenses. Some Trubetskoi offered me two millions for that trial: 'Sell me that and then I'll do my best.' But how could I agree with him, moreover, my wife's sister was interfered in this case. Anyway, I had a great credit in Moscow: I started the process and fell into a great trouble, as that case didn't finish so soon as I supposed. I had to leave off Russia and return to my native country together with my wife and a child. I gave the case to my brother-in-law, as my wife's sister got married in those days with Zolotariev, and then he started to conduct the general case. Six months later my wife's sister became a widow and got married right the same month with a Georgian nobleman, El.Eristavi and the trial fell into his hands. Then the case was moved to the chamber; as we had gained the case in the district court, and the case was finished in the chamber in our behalf, there was only left to appeal to a court of cassation. A half of riches had to be moved to my wife and child, but imagine the occasion; the mediators appeared and El.Eristavi arranged on quite a simple thing, that was his full right according to his being a legal lawyer. When the advocates came to an argument, they gained for arranging; Pisarev – seventy-five thousands of roubles, Potekhin – a hundred thousands and the Georgian advocate V. Machabeli – thirty thousands. But my wife and child got nothing!.. It turned out that the solicitors convinced that: 'Eristavi gained his portion and : 'If your husband hadn't missed the term, you would gain, too, but you missed ten years.' I learned this occasion when the case had already been over, in two months, and hastened to my wife and child from here. As soon as they saw me, they reprimanded me: 'Why didn't you pay attention and made us lose this case?' But when I explained that it was all a lie, - from that day on, as my wife had given the right and a legal profession to her sister the sister would become a heiress and she had to give her a half that she would gain, - and then they acknowledged everything and struck their hands on the head. But, anyway, they were not fallen anything to their lot from the dowry; so, I took my wife but the dowry was taken by others. I apologise my readers that I talk so much about my family, but I'm forced: as my enemies and all their imitators, having no knack for anything, set a rumour that Akaki took the millions of his wife and peculated it!.. Though, I had not seen any of it. This calumny is considered to be true even today in our country and I don't want to lose my faith in the future after death, just because of that I've told you everything.

Now let's move to Georgia. When I left Russia and returned to Georgia together with my wife and child, there were many disturbances and vagueness: serfdom had to be emancipated, new reforms were coming, and we were so glad for that but it left something for itself. It went by the name quite well, but there was no use of it, e.g. What kind of emancipating of serfdom was

that when a boss and a serf, being joined with each other by a chain, were held by an official in his hand, suffocated and fleeced them? What result could be gotten by that law-court, where the voice of people was prohibited and, because of being ignorant in the language, people had to fall into the hands of fleecer? I saw all these and that's why those reforms didn't gain my sympathy and then I wrote: 'An Advokate,' 'A Cat and A Dog,' 'Woe is Me' and etc. No side was seen there where it could be possible to join to and stand side by side; I removed from everybody and, as a disappointed man, I stayed alone in a strange way.

From one side a wrath from above – from another side – the anger of the nobility and from the third side, I had no rest because the lengthening of the student's tongue (in those days students were called 'intelligentsia'). That time to join in voice was such a mighty thing, that you couldn't find a youth who had never told anything bad about me and didn't say slanderous words on me. If you ask anybody: 'Have you seen everything yourself that you are saying now? Have you heard it yourself?' and so on and so forth. They would say frankly: 'No, but we've heard it!' Well, it turned out, that everybody had heard but nobody attended at that moment!.. But does the crowd care for the truth?! It only roars as sheep with imitativeness and why or what for, even they don't care. Ah! Anyway, I felt into a great trouble; I shouldn't take care and join the others will, but I became obstinate and couldn't betray myself. I sent my family to the village and, stayed hungry, naked, left homeless, never reconciled with somebody and followed my chosen way. My state of those times finely expressed Bes. Ch... with anger in his writings: 'It's impossible to fight with him! What could one take away of him or decrease him that he possesses nothing on the earth?! He doesn't care to stay without any eating or bed!.. He is just barking and grumbling!'

It was true, that I was barking and grumbling, but nobody would say that I stirred for my personality! Being I was barking and grumbling, but nobody would say that I stirred for detested many times, I was suggested such good positions by the government, that I wasn't worthy, but as I had chosen another way, I didn't agree to work on official duty and stayed trashy, i.e. mad, as somebody used to assert. I spent several years in such condition, and some day it might be so, that I would compromise, but it is said truly: 'But the God will not doom the man who is doomed by a man.' And my sympathiers appeared at that time and cheered me up.

In those days Giorgi Chelidze ruled the hotel 'Kolkhida.' He came to me and said: 'I can see your condition and I want to help you! I'll give you a room with accommodations, with food and some drink. Move to my place and live here. I don't demand anything! I won't disturb till I'm alive, and when the God wishes and your status is changed, I hope, you yourself won't forget me.' I, of course, received this sympathy with great pleasure and began to live with Giorgi. At the beginning my evil-wishes were disturbing him very much. 'Why have you given him dwelling and food!' But, when they saw nothing could be done, they calmed down... So, I got subsistence and I didn't have to look for any more. But not only by bread is a man alive: spiritual subsistence, spiritual sympathy was in need and soon I gained it in the families of Iakob Nikoladze and Besarion Kheltuplishvili. These two families were those who cheered me up,

helped me, encouraged me and I became more stubborn and boldly followed my chosen way with the expectation of the future... I was fighting and there was no fact in our country that I didn't take part in ...I didn't care for my personal affairs; I had no personal affairs with anybody. I was just cheered up by the general affairs and followed my chosen way. Whatever there was anything to do, if I could, be it a big or a little affairs, I would grasp it; I was so captivated by being without distinction, that I didn't care for whether it was enemy or friend or relatives. A wise man told me then: 'You are a really stubborn man: you don't differ whether he is a relative or not. You don't select with your bitter tongue your relation and take the side of others... If anyone wants to be you and be related with you, he can't.' He was right, but neither I answered the lie: All these are true, but I can't imagine being closer to relations when there are general affairs.. I followed my chosen way, who wants to accompany me, be it an enemy or a friend, I consider him to be my relation, but who blocks my way, he is an enemy...' Well, that was my belief in my youth and I don't ignore it even now as I can.

I passed a great trouble, being so obstinate while looking forward, but, as it was God's will for me to live so long, as I thought then, my dream came true and my enemies turned to become my relations, I'll say nothing about myself and them.

Today, I'm I have such respect and affection in Georgia, that I had never deserted!.. It is true, I have enemies today, too, but I mean the majority of them and, being an aged man, I'm going to the grave blessed by my native country.

So, this is the end of my 'adventure' and then comes, 'Something that I've seen and heard.' Here I'll remember our public figures who lived during these fifty years, who had ever been and whom I, more or less, too, had personal interrelation.

II

Once the nobilities in the town of Kutaisi gathered to choose the marshals. Certainly, they, as usual, were divided into the parties, they broke up much noise and did much funny things. In the evenings, I used to call on either at Nikoladze's or at Kheltoplishvili's house and while talking I told them the stories that had happened.

The women asked me to write a newspaper satire and published it in newspaper of 'Droeba', and I accomplished their advice: I used the title 'Fresh news' and sent to the editor without signing it. They read the satire there, liked it very much and wrote to N. Nikladze, as he had arrived in those days in the town of Kutaisi for awhile: 'Who would be able to write such satire from Imereti but him?' I don't know why they were so assured that I, besides poems, was

not able to write anything?.. though neither Nikoladze's sisters nor his cousins, the daughters of Kheltuphlishvili, never had given my secret away to Nikoladze, but he himself guessed that the satire was written by me; he came to me in the hotel and, by the way, asked: 'What's the reason of your joining this bustle here and don't want to move to Tbilisi, where you can easily satisfy your intellectual demands?' – 'Maybe, - I answered, too, - but there are many of you besides me. This poor province of Imereti, that is more of the area of 'Amereti' (i.e.the other side of Georgia) but not less, everybody is avoiding it, but as for me, as an Imerelian Georgian man, I'm obliged to work here, as much as I can!..' - 'Well!.. I thought the same, too, but here a man lacks of everything 'intelligential' and, some time or other, becomes insociable!.. There is no newspaper here! No censor! And any other!.. But there we have everything like that. Believe me, it's possible to work there!.. But here, your work is lost in vain.' For now, he told me many of such things and insisted so much, that I changed my mind, and then I told that I couldn't afford to live there, that I had nothing!.. 'Well, - he said, - I haven't got much, but I can give you, from my pocket seventy and a half till my affairs are over, and be contented with this and work in the magazine of 'Droeba.' He made me agree, gave me some money for my trip and sent me to the town of Tbilisi; but he left for abroad on his affairs.

1. Ivane Kereselidze

In those times, besides the newspaper of 'Droeba, the magazine of 'Tsiskari' was published. The editor was I.Kereselidze and the cultural workers were divided into two groups: new generation, i.e. students, as it was called, were surrounding the newspaper of 'Droeba', and the old ones were moving to the magazine of 'Tsiskari'. 'Tsiskari' has a few signers, and if not A. Orbeliani with his money helping it, it wouldn't be published. Even the government gave help twice. Once I.Kereselidze pawned his house in the days of Barianovski under the order and, as a Georgian public man, the 'Namestnik' gave help for that debt and, for the second time, G.Orbeliani managed so that he was forgiven... I.Kereselidze was a real Georgian with his shortcomings and excesses. He loved money not because of that he wanted to gain riches, as it was with others, but he was looking for it only to eat; he himself ate and gave others to eat; As soon as he captured it, he used to give the dinner for the staff who were not paid. He would lay the table before him, scatter about the vegetables, cheese, fresh fish; then he would bring some food, too, and spread his hand greatfully. When he was a bit drunk, he would touch the strings of the thari(an oriental musical instrument) which was hung on the wall together with the chonguri(fourstringed musical instrument), the दौरa(tambourine), the hooter and etc. and would sing loudly in his own way. He didn't care thers liked it or not!..

'Georgian feasting is like this in our country!.. Vegetables scattered about, cheese, fish, good 'bozbashi' (soup with meat) and hot 'mtsvadi'(meat roasted on a spit)!.. If you don't like, stand up and go.' – He used to add laughing. He was a great feaster man, but each feasting cost

him much... if he didn't have A.Orbeliani from outside to help and Equitime Kheladze – at home, and then, if not the young typographic worker and the right hand man of Kereselide in everything, his affairs would go wrong.

‘Well, I’ve stood a treat to Duma the same way – he used to say – I spread the table down as usual, with food scattered about; We sat cross-legged, tucked up and started to feast; he looked once at me and sat so cross-legged as we were and began to crunch the vegetables imitating us!.. Passed his hand at everything and ate so much that I couldn’t make progress in bringing the ‘mtsvadi.’ He advanced us. ‘If he leaves us unbeaten, it wouldn’t be right.’ I thought for myself and sent him the toast of ‘Alaverdi’ with three big glasses full of wine; he took it and tossed in the blink of an eye. Then – demanded a big, enormous horn, filled it with Kakhetian wine and drank it at a draught, so that he even didn’t breath; then he moved to me the Alaverdi, too. But how we could overtake him as that horn was located in three big bottles of wine. He made us crack the finger and began to laugh at us. If he could write so, as he drank... it was very stubborn affair!.. Our Lavrenti Ardaziani turned to me and told: ‘hei, man! That is none of your business to be Georgian, moreover to him, European! What kind of such Gulbaat hero you are to propose him a toast of ‘Alaverdi?’ Really, my God!.. But who could imagine that he would drink so much and wouldn’t be drunk!.. ‘ He used to tell this story at every feasting. He was a very lovable and friendly man but he was no good at all as an editor! Aftr Eristavi some were eager to continue publishing the magazine of ‘Tsiskari’ and Kereselidze was chosen as an editor. He was a supervisor, in those days, in secondary school and he was writing poems, at the same time. His mother would say: ‘Don’t contemplate at my Ivane like this: ‘He has finished fourteen grades.’ But, first, he had finished seven grades in the theological seminary, then, he too a course at the secondary school and his mother thought that he had finished fourteen grades... he had really finished those fourteen grades, but his magazine had no direction. – Once he complained: ‘What do the students want from me that they attack me so much? As soon as they wrote me to change ‘the direction,’ didn’t I change it? I was sending it before,by land and now I’m sending it by sea through the town of Odessa!.. I spend more but I didn’t care.’ Sometimes he wrote stubborn and funny poems. Once described a journey in the region of Kakheti by rhyming it. By the way, the verse said: ‘I’m leaving, leaving, going, leaving with joy!.. I’ll arrive, arrive, arrive, arrive with joy!.. I’ll go up, go up, go up, go up with joy!’ This was told about the rout to the mountain of Gombori, its ascents and discents, sure, and he was greatly excited with these verbs. I considered it to be a joke and burst out laughing. He was offended and irritated!.. But do not think that his grief stayed in his heart for a long time. He forgot it the next day and never stopped his friendship with me...

2.Alexandre Orbeliani

He, first, took me to Orbeliani... He lived in the Egzarkhosi square in his own old houses. He received me with great respect. ‘I’ll receive you with honour and with respect, as

you, Tseretelis are worthy – he said – but as Akaki, I want to embrace you!.. I loved him at first sight. He was a real Georgian man, who had seen much, heard much and was a public man. He loved Georgia very much and he was in the hope of Imereti region more. He was a bit frightened. Once he turned out to write Shamil a letter: ‘Arrive this or that day.’ The enemies caught that letter and delivered it to the governor. The Governor in those times was Vorontsov; he called up A.Orbeliani secretly to his house and asked: ‘This letter is from some Georgian man, translate it to me!.. Orbeiani was stricken by a sudden horror, but what he could do! Then Vorontsov made him give a promise: ‘Don’t do such thing any more! If you are discontented with something, tell me and may this occasion remain among us, don’t tell about it to anybody.’ And he sent him home with his great fashion of father, with his heart tranquil. I don’t know whether it happened with him after that or it had been before, but he was quite cautious in politics. He knew much of as old cases, so of new ones, but in daytime he wouldn’t even tell anything to anyone who was frank to him; At night, when he stayed with his friend alone, he would tell different stories with trembling voice, and even then he would blow out a candle cautiously!.. ‘It’s better to be in the darkness.’ Here is what he said on my surprise: ‘It’s better to talk in the darkness, because nobody will see us and never hear us. Once the king Solomon was sitting under a plane tree, near the golden summer-house; Above, on the “Zeceda hill” two men were standing and talking something for themselves. Well, how could the voice reach them? The Imerelians reported the king: ‘These two men are talking scandal about you;’ the king caught those two men and they really turned out to be scandals. When the king made an injury: ‘How did you guess it?’ - ‘We guessed it by the waving and moving their hands, ‘ – was the answer. My grandpa, Erekle, saved the life of a Khan: ‘He guessed it by a bow, while speaking to a stranger, that he took to his heart a treason!’ Despite of his stubbornness, he was a very beloved one and he loved Georgia exceptionally; this was evident by his works... I was young when he died in his very old age. He had left many writings after him, some of them, he had read to me secretly. I wonder where those letters are.

2. The Staff of The Magazine ‘Tsiskari’

In those days the constant employees of ‘Tsiskari’ were the editor: I.Kereselidze, Dimitri Beriev, A.Orbeliani, a very intelligent woman Barbare Jorjadze, the sister of Raphiel Eristavi (she was writing comedies and drama plays), Dimitri Mgaloblishvili; D. Megvinetkhusishvili and a young Beka from the village of Keri, as a publicist, he was a great hope (Anton Purtseladze); sometimes they were printed as: Kolkhideli (Davit) and Bakar Kartleli (D.Kipiani), Grigol Rcheulishvili, who had a great talent in translating from a foreign language into Georgian and who wrote ‘Tamar Batonishvili,’ S. Iv. Beridze – a writer of the works ‘Khan’s Begi,’ ‘The secret of Tbilisi’ and etc.

But the most talented of all was Lavrenti Ardaziani. He worked somewhere as an office worker. He was a quiet and virtuous man. He was the boundless Georgian man. You wouldn't have sympathy at the first sight, but he was a wonderful writer. Once I was with him and Anton Purtsvanidze were walking together. At ten o'clock we said good-bye to one another, but Lavrenti insisted on accompanying me to my dwelling. He didn't say a word on our way and when we approached the door of the house, he said: 'I have a great respect to that young Anton's talent, but that he was saying some times ago, I didn't like it. Well, it mustn't be said that the world is created by accidental machines. I didn't tell him anything, but now I want to tell you, I must confess, that's why I accompanied you; I ask you as to my own son, don't imitate them like him, stand aside. If a poet has no belief in anything, what would he be? You, too, must remember two things: the God and Georgia.' – He said that with great apologize and said good-bye. I considered him to be stubborn, but then I got used to it; His critical articles were published under the name of G. Baratashvili. In the 'chatterbox' paper, where Gabo Sulxanishvili was writing, there were many of his jokes, - it's surprising that this talented man, who wrote 'Solomon Isakich Mejghanuashvili,' was respected neither in his life nor now, he isn't mentioned by anybody!.. While Daniel Chonkadze, the author of only one story, 'Surami castle,' was written almost for children, imagining to be a great person!..

4. Giorgi Tsereteli

Among the sixtieth-years' public figures, as they were closer to me, seemed to stand headmost: G. Tsereteli, S. Meskhi and N. Nikoladze. Nikoladze and Besarion Ghogoberidze, Vakhtang Thulashvili and Dimitri Bakradze decided to publish a Georgian newspaper under the name of 'Droeba,' once a week. They made young Stephane Melikishvili to join them; they made him to be responsible for the publishing house and sent him to Vienna to fetch the printing machine. A newspaper and, generally, printing books were 'fresh fruit' in our country. They got the permission and were to get down to publishing. The first step was difficult: at one side there was a printing machine and a printer, on the other - a censor and the rest; a thousand of difficulties and stubbornness surrounded them on those first days, and there was no way out for the leaders, except to invite Giorgi Tsereteli and entrust him to publish the newspaper!.. G. Tsereteli was a very talented young man and quite ready for that position. He didn't seem to be like some of those young men who studied only for the diploma, and as soon as they got off it in their hands, enter the office and do nothing except being officials. G.Tsereteli was so diligent that he even couldn't feel his weariness. As he lived in a poor family, he couldn't see anybody among us, he did everything himself: he was an editor, a publisher; he wrote, at the same time, publicistic articles, critiques, poems, proses, stories novels and comical dramas. At the same time, he worked in historic sciences, archaeology, philology and commerce at the end. I have already told above that he never felt tired; that's why his works had the sigh of two kinds: some

of talent and some of weariness. I had always warned him, but what could I do, he became obstinate. And so, when I had no way out, I began to laugh at him: I called him double-headed, though I didn't want to offend him or laugh at him. I just wanted to avoid him of much work, but what came out of it? He remained the same Giorgi till his death and was distressed on me forever.

His works must be treated as a vein of gold ore: you must clean it, wash, throw away several poods of sand and mud, in order to take out some of golden crops. In Giorgi's compositions, too, after cleaning them, many of neat things could appear which would be left forever. His straight obligation was to be a prosaist and he was to be considered the founder of the real school in our country but not any other, as he had been earlier than others. Not to mention the others, just 'Aunt Asmathi' and 'A Grey Wolf' is enough to prove it. 'The Travellar's letters' by Ilya Chavchavadze is one of the best compositions in the Georgian literature, if not the air of weariness here and there. Shortly speaking, he is one of the first public men in the sixtieth years. But, as I have to talk about it many times, afterwards I will continue with Srgei Meskhi.

5. Sergei Meskhi

A gold-smith gave an education to his son and had left him a million of roubles before. The young man knew nothing about the life, how to maintain that wealth; but he was a kind man. He expressed sympathy with general kind affairs!.. By the way, that Stephane Zarapov sent Sergei Meskhi, too, abroad on his expenditure, who had been a graduate of the University in Russia. So, Meskhi returned, then he entered in the governer's office and he was quite respected there. His advancing was not suspicious any more, but N.Nikoladze advised him to leave the work, to come out on the public society and take the responsibility on the newspaper 'Droeba' as an editor instead of G. Tsereteli, as he intended to go abroad. Sergei took that responsibility with great pleasure, as he was engaged to the publisher's – S. Melikishvili- sister and was going to marry her in some days; it had not passed much time, that the newspaper became daily published and he got to work. As they had only few to help, all the work laid upon him and at last that work made him sacrifice. According to those days he was a well-educated man, and, if there was not left anything, not because of that he was of less talent: but he got a hand-work on his turn. As a sympathizer of the general affairs, he was irreplaceable, he was always cheered up when something good happened in general and laughed with adolescent manner; he used to laugh so much and so heartedly that tears were dripping from his eyes. Though much time has passed since he died, I can't imagine any general affair without him: he seemed to be standing alive beside me and is cheereing me up. As there was no place, the youth were gathering in his editorial office and he treated everybody friendly. By the way, Alexandre Kazbegi worked here,

too; But, till I tell you about that stubbornly wonderful man, I'll move to N.Nikoladze, as I've promised.

6. Niko Nikoladze

N.Nikoladze's father, Yakob, was a pretty wise, witty and a provident man. If he had been greatly educated, it would be wonderful! But that, what he was decreased of by his father, Yakob gave it to his son, as much as he could; he had no mercy on himself in bringing up Niko. N.Nikoladze was very young when he was graduated from the Kutaisi secondary school and entered the St. Petersburg University; He couldn't fit to state system and rushed abroad, where he joined emigrants and, as a talented man, he had been getting much good features for a long time, but at the same time, he was mastered in some spoilages, - he had no right to come back, he had to stay involuntarily in Europe till his virility; and, frankly speaking, he spent that time usefully. His father knew, that his son was not permitted to be back and he was sending money there. Frequently – more than it had been decided before. Once the father wrote a very sad joke: when Niko was writing in his letter: 'Dear father,' – he answered so: 'My son, I'm not a dear but you are: I've been buying you for such a long time and can't buy so far!.. I'm sending you money, but I can't see you, and thus – I became old.' At last, somehow, I think it was with Bariatinski's help that Yakob lived till to see his son. When N.Nikoladze returned in the home-country, he wasn't quite satisfied with activity of the new generation!.. He himself tried to show the lesson, as financially, so spiritually, sacrificed himself and gained much from it, but he himself seemed not to be quite satisfied!! He was well prepared as a leader and everything assisted him, but he was diminished of something with which his father was wealthy : he didn't know our country and the people any more. He thought that, what was sowed and reaped in Europe, the same should be in our country. He thought a little for preparing the ground, as about a trifle thing... generally he did much work!.. He was fighting especially against establishing the banks in our country according to that programme as they are today, so that he sacrificed himself. It's strange, that he himself forgot he was a sower and frequently, the sowed is not seen in the dark ground, it is often covered with mud and snow, but when spring comes, suddenly it appears; But he wanted his disseminator to come out and he himself wanted to reap it; The fault of this was that, he was fallen in the extreme situation, broke his heart and abandoned everything. He was responsible or the town of Poti, though it's a main model of towns, but in vain, this man's following such trifle things, and he had buried that, he could do. Now I'll finish here talking about this man, as we'll often meet him in future, and now I'll move to Alexandre Kazbegi.

7. Alexandre Kazbegi

I had known Sandro's parents before. The father was a general and the mother – Tarkhnishvili's daughter – was brought up according to the old times. The only son, Sandro was brought up tenderly and delicately; he wouldn't lay claim to anything that his parents couldn't carry out, if they managed. He loved the common people from the beginning, from his childhood. His soul drove him nearer to the boys and I suppose the reason was the same, that after having returned from Russia, he moved to 'sheep pasturing' for a long time, - he hadn't known the worth of money since his childhood: he used to take silver coins from his father, poured them into his pocket and went his way; the country boys would follow him, and he would take out his money and throw them; they would begin to fight with one another, start a brawl tearing each other's hair and ears and little Sandro enjoyed it very much. – I've not seen him since childhood, he grew up!.. Neither have his parents!.. Once a Russian actress, Ralf, complained to me that she had occupied a quite good dwelling, but there lived such person in front of her, that she had to leave her room and move anywhere. There lived some stubborn young Georgian man, he wanted neither to leave the house, nor he had the room cleaned up, and nor he washed his face; nobody knew what he did, and heavy smell was coming from his room. There lived Luka Tarkhnishvili's family in that hotel and I visited them. Sandro's mother was Luka's sister and she was there, too. I told them what Ralf had told me and asked them: 'Who is that Georgian, do you know him?' Then Sandro's mother complained to me: 'Don't you stir the pity to me because he is my Sandro and something happens to him but he is not aware of anything. He hasn't come out from the room for a month, neither he allows anybody to come nearer, nor he goes to anybody. After his father's death, he gave the whole landed property to the peasants and made me poor, and now he is in such condition!' - I went at once to see him. When I opened the door of his room, there was such a heavy smog of cigarette, that I couldn't notice anything for a long time. He was sitting into the bed in his night-shirt, had thrown on him the blanket and was writing something. He stared at me at first with dissatisfaction, then he recognized me and told apologizing words that he was captivated by writing. He took his writings and showed me. Oh, my God! How many note-books were there on the table and what he had written there?! Dramas comedies, poems, proses and etc.; I looked through the main of them and was easily assured that the young Kazbegi had worked much, but he hadn't learnt Georgian language so well yet, he wasn't practiced in writing, but his writings had an effect of talent here and there. When I noticed that no offence was meant in my coming, inspite his stubbornness, I began to visit him after, nearly every day. In those times I managed Georgian stage and, in order to take him out of his room, I feigned that I was diminished of an actor and if he was responsible for it, it wouldn't be bad. At first he was surprised, but then I insisted so much that he took it. I promised to pay seventy-five roubles a month and took him there. He was no good at all as an actor, I

knew it beforehand, but when he joined the actors and got the work, by and by he recovered and his stubbornness used to appear rarely; not only his stubbornness, but any activity had an air of navity and, whoever he offended, nobody would stick it in the heart, - he was very diligent in acting, learnt many parts, but non of them was good, except one; He played the part of a general somehow well in the play. After the reason was over and my affair went bad, I couldn't help him any longer and transferred him to the editorial office of the 'Droeba' to Sergei Meskhi. – 'A beggar followed another beggar praying the God to make him drop something,' as the saying goes, this was the condition we were fallen in. We found a room in the editorial office, but as for the eating and drinking, how could we give him, while we had not much for ourselves? But that didn't disturb him. He ate much or little, it didn't matter for him!.. He didn't care!.. Once he sold his family gospel to our 'Community of literacy' and at the same time his mother's former cashmere shawl that was very expensive, he sold it for just 15 roubles. He collected some money and appeared in a town of Batumi. What he did there, I don't know, but when he returned, he had nothing any more, but he brought a little Jako-monkey jumped up on his shoulder. No man could love his son so much as he loved his Jako. Once, somehow, he lost it and nobody was so plaintive on the earth like him!! In those times the editorial office was situated in the Golovinski square in the Mukhanski's house. There was a hotel on the upper storey. Once G. Karangozishvili returned late in the evening in the room, and when he couldn't find a match, anywhere, he put off his clothes and went to bed. In the darkness, somebody touched his feet; he opened his eyes and sat up in the bed; he tried to take his slippers from under the bed, but at this time, when he pushed through it, somebody shook his hand; he jumped up, this frightened, bared man seized the dagger, took it off and shouted at an enemy: 'Come out of there if you are a brave man! Don't hide!' – He shutted many times, now in Russian, then in Georgian and at last it appeared to be a Jako-monkey. When he had gone away secretly from Kazbegi, he seemed to come in this room and hid himself. When Sandro found the monkey, he was infinitely glad!..But at last he fell at such loss that he sold his favourite Jako for 10 roubles. When the 'Droeba' was transferred into Machabeli's hands, Kazbegi followed it to him, Machabeli received him kindly, gave him a separate room, a bed, some food and drink, but still he used to make complaints about him: 'He has a bed, but he is still lying dressed on the floor.' After the 'Droeba' had been closed, he ran away somewhere from Tbilisi, I think – to the Kakheti region and since then I've met him once more, but at that time he was quite weak in his mind. Our society is a bit dishonest to him: when his thousands of writings were sold and as a thirsty man upon the spring, so his writings were pounced on, he was in the military hospital at a loss. After his death the society expressed great regret, many kind words were told beside his coffin, but what was of it? Even his death was odd: once I was standing by the Vorontsov statue and noticed that the society was moving to the direction of Mushtaidi garden, carriages were moving one after another in a hurry. There seemed to be a show: a donkey was being taken

upward in a balloon!.. Just at that moment Z. Chichinadze came up to me very sadden and asked me grieving: ‘Where is this society walking? It hasn’t even passed half of an hour that Kazbegi died in hospital and I’m coming from there!’ This story saddened me and I returned home grieving.

8. The Prince Grigol Orbeliani

A man of excellent posterity, of a high quality in the government, with a stick in his hand, a real talent in his nature, was G. Orbeliani!.. but neither of his dignities bear goodness to his native land: as a hystorical high-born of blood he had never left any hystorical thing for his country, as of a high quality man - he had never done anything for the country and, as a good-natured poet – he had not left his track in the Georgian literature!.. During many centuries, one in thousand cases, there might appear a sinister one in the firmament, more brilliant than any planet beaming that makes fine tail and attaches the attention of contemporaries involuntarily; it is shining for a while and then, suddenly disappears, vanishes. Many warm-hearted words were told at his coffin, by the way, it was said: that ‘The sun has sunk,’ ‘The moon has set’ and ‘The stars got dark,’ but no sun has sunk, only a sinister one has disappeared, has vanished... he has never done any good to his home-country and never left his track... and it is the fault of that he comprehended the people and the life, as a bureaucrat, lordly. He believed in Georgia so much as it was necessary and useful for him and his family, and not so, then ‘may not a stone be leftstanding!..’ As the saying goes.

Once David Eristavi, Glukharich’s son, tried to throw away Ilya Chavchavadze from the position of the manager of the bank and occupy his place. He brought the people over here on rafts, because there was no railway then. He brought the money in the bank instead of them and demanded them to be entered as constituents. – Now the voters were doubly mere than the old ones. Ilya’s supporters grieved, but Ilya, being foresight, didn’t care. He received them with great pleasure. Then he turned to the previous voters and said: ‘For the sake of the general affairs, the more friends are, the better it is, and we must thank the just entered people; but must we give them the right to vote just now, which is against the law, or for the future, according to the law?’ The old voters guessed and shouted unanimously: ‘For the future! For the future!’ and they got nothing for their pains, as new voters, so the future voters.

In those times the prince Grigol Orbeliani took the side of Chavchavadze and delivered a fine ‘crackling’ speech. The audience was listening silently (how would it be without him, that Orbeliani took the place of the main ruler?). The orator finished that speech with these words: ‘Georgia was overthrown by an envy and rivalry!.. Our today’s misfortune is that I, Kaplanishvily and some Tsalkalamanidze have been given one and

the same rights, one and the same power!.. He can do the same in these voting affairs as much as I do!’ These words don’t need any explanation!.. It means itself what was Orbeliani’s opinion about general affairs, and now I’ll move to his poetry.

He didn’t consider writing as a profession. He considered writing a poem like something joking and amusing and, that’s why during his long life he had never written anything but several heart-scratching poems!.. ‘Sorrows of Onikev,’ ‘Lopiana’s personality’ and ‘Iarali’ he thought to be an adversity of the country. He had in his thoughts only feasting!.. His misfortune was to be out of feasting. During the period of ‘barracks’ being among the rebels, when he was sent to Novgorod, there he remembers the homeland and writes to Iaral Shanshiev in Petersburg:

Dear Iarali,
I wish, if some day
We, full of feasting,
Sit on the green valley’ and etc.

He never thinks about the adversity of Georgia but remembers only feasting, he desires feasting and the breeze of a small town of Kojori cooling his forehead, sparkling piece of a bird duroch’s meat roasted on a spit and toasts, and just nearby, listening to Iarali’s old stories; remembers the king with sorrow, but not so much as it was needed and useful for the country!.. No, he diminished only that the king never ruled! He remembers riding the horse around the square... waving the spear and such amusements!.. He is looking for feasting everywhere and misses it!.. Feasting! Feasting! Feasting! And some of the singers sing ‘Mravalzhamieri’(meaning many years of life – a toast song to smb.’s health) well, but he sings ‘Lullabye’ perfectly, but as for ‘Lamentation,’ he won’t be able to manage it, of course, there is such singer who couldn’t sing any of them: neither ‘Mravalzhamieri’ nor ‘Lullabaye’ or feasting song, but he laments so well that it reaches the heart of all close relation of the dead deeply. One of them was G. Orbeliani and he considered himself as a ‘Blost-furnace’ for Georgia; as the he follower of the Vorontsov’s politics, he couldn’t imagine Georgians without Russians, moreover, that Russia was his great benefactor. But was it only his? In those times, it was Shamel invading period and generally, except one or two, they thought that what Russians did, there was his part in it. Grigol himself believed in Russians more than the Russians themselves. He realized a Russian man in Georgian man and, vice versa, Georgian – in Russian. And this explains his devoted devotion to Russia. – He couldn’t ‘smell’ the sixtieth years’ wishes and aspiration at once and attacked the generation of those days, too...

He took the field, but as a good-natured man soon he guessed his mistake and desired to shift to new generation: he turned the poem of the Russian poet Mikhailov ‘The blacksmith’ into ‘the worker Bokuladze,’ but, nevertheless, this poem has the air of compulsion! – Imitating Zhukovski, he wrote a poem ‘Sadgegrdzelo’ (a toast). He praises

Russia and the king Nikoloz I greatly that time. Till Alexandre Orbeliani was alive, this appraising of Nikoloz was omitted and then he included it into the whole poem.

In short, Grigol was a great admirer of feasting and amusement and I envy those people – it's significant – who created such a good-natured son! But even this kind of man with such nature, couldn't say more, than that his nephew, the poet N. Baratashvili foresaw: 'No man is good, who seems to be dead, though – alive, be in the world and do nothing for the world!' He had no heir after his death, he left a great wealth, but nothing had been left for a charity that would be worth of 'dried fruit' in order to mark his track of life.

9. Dimitri Kiphiani

The diseased Dimitri Kiphiani was of quite a different nature and mood than Grigol Orbeliani. A nobleman gentleman from their region of Abasha, of a common posterity, needed more talent and a hard work than any of high-borns, in order to step ahead in his life!.. No one was to lead him from his posterity!.. No one – to support him and he had to pave the way himself to the future. The first step he did to Siberia. He spent his youth time in the town of Vologda, but after returning he showed such cheerfulness and talent that he stood at the head of the officials... He captured a position of a manager in the office of a vice gerent. He became famous and more powerful. – Being a Georgian man gave him nothing except the life!.. He gained everything with the help of Russians, but despite his disappointment, he had never forgotten his motherland, he thought a little about his personal, from very beginning and so far. He needed grand and power to have more authority among the people and be more useful to Georgia. He knew well that in those times, even a genius men, if there was not put a real Russian seal upon his personal, wouldn't be listened to. There were two ways before him: one to the left, beaurocratic, the way evened up by the government, 'flowers spread before him' (i.e. without any problem) and for personal happiness, the second – to the right, the way twiddled by the sixtieths' public figures, uneven, risky and venturesome for him. Kiphiani had reached the personal happiness, moved to that trioublesome affair bravely and took on the staff of public figures with his skill of word, pen, affair, he joined them with his soul and heart: 'Two melons can't be hold in on hand' – is the saying; by and by, from day to day, he made the government be cooled off, angered with him and made them get rid of him. As Irakli Gruzinski said: 'When Kiphiani appeared on the literary show as a pipe player, then took off his uniform and put on Cherkez clothing with a star on it, would be a very funny protest from today's sight, but in those days that meant that he fought right against the beaurocracy.' It was then, when he wrote an allegoric fairy-tale: 'An Arabian horse,' where he showed himself and drew the programme of his future life. But it didn't come out just like that, how he had thought about. When the government avoided him his friends, too, showed the back to him and he stayed alone on

the struggle valley. – And then he saw that he himself could ‘go harvesting, wouldn’t live till setting the harvest and get down to sow just alone in order to make his sowing appear some time, be ripened and make others take a reaping-hook.’ It’s a struggle for the idea, which doesn’t have anything with corporal violence, and Kiphiani chose this way.

There is no Georgian office in our country that Kiphiani doesn’t rule: the bank, the society of spreading literacy, a theatre and etc., all of them have been founded by his own initiative. Once I was travelling by railway to Kutaisi and when I passed the third class, there I met D. Kiphiani. I sat beside him. He was very sad. He complained to me and, by the way, said: ‘I’m floundering, but even to flounder needs some power and I’m lack of power.’ In those times the marshal of a town of Kutaisi province was to be chosen and I asked him: ‘Will you be responsible for a position of a marshal?’

‘Why not, but I’m indigent now, I have no money for my subsistence and the lack of it, is very bad.’

‘And if we find that means of subsistence?’ ‘Well...with great pleasure!.. He gave me a word and thus he finished.

I arrived in a town of Kutaisi and hastened to G.Ghogoberidze. That time, as he was very old, he was considered to be the head of the new generation. I told him my intention. We gathered all the voters together that very night and told them the innermost of our heart. The Imerelians accepted this case with great condolence, except one or two officials, but what on earth they could do? The result was that D.Kiphiani was chosen unanimously and was granted of fourty ‘Toumanis’ as a salary. When Kiphiani arrived in Imereti, I don’t know what the Imerelians were expecting of him, but they met him with admiration. They were feasting all day long. By the way, they put him in the carriage, they sat in the carriages and crying ‘hurah’ went round the boulevard three times. The whole town went out to watch it. This encouraged the old man, it made his dreams renew and that would bring much for the region of Imereti!.. He thought, that what he couldn’t have seen in the Est Georgia, he would gain easily in the West and got down to his work cheerfully!.. But ‘Will this transient world make anybody happy for a long time?’ In those days, an irritated priest cursed Georgians for the editor’s death. That liturgy was attended by Georgians for the editor’s death. That liturgy was attended by Georgian nobilities, too, but nobody said a word; and Kiphiani wrote a formidable letter from afar full of with reprimands. This letter fell into the hands of the government, they added his previous troubles to it and the author Kiphiani was exiled to the town of Stavropol as a prisoner.

Several days before he had been sent, I went to a town of Kvishkhети, saw him and I was astonished with seeing his cheerful face. ‘First with that beginning and secondly with the other!’ – He shouted at me laughing. – I began life being imprisoned and finished with being imprisoned!..’ When he noticed me pulling a sad face, he told me laughing: ‘Don’t be envious with me for this God’s grace! I wouldn’t even think over the best gift! .It’s been a century since then that Georgians are exiled to the region of

Siberia for being bad and nobody was punished for the idea and let me be the first swallow!.. It's true, the first swallow is sometimes hit by the frost and can't live till spring, but it is still the first herald and spring will come anyway!' -he said and fills in thinking.

He really foresaw this about himself: there, in Stavtopol, he was killed in prison!.. The brain, that thought about Georgia, was 'pured' upon him. And on the heart, which was beating for his mother-land, they made him put his cold hands!

And who? And why?.. It's no use of thinking over at all, when we know for what! – This will be found out by the future 'when Kiphiani's sowed harvest will appear, give the fruit and we won't watch the offices from one side as it is today: the bank will never be supposed as a shop where to pay, the society of literacy – a beaurocratic office and the theatre – a funny amusement!.. Today's rebel, though just wrong and unequal, but still a sign of awaking people, is the guarantor of it!

So, just about such giant-hero, as deseased Dim. Kiphiani was, is said these words: 'He has come in the earth and did much for the world!'

1894 – 1908

Translated from Georgian by Eter Moistsrapishvili

VAZHA PSHAVELA

A Tale of a Fawn

I'm tiny, an orphan. My fate oppressed me: I'm left an orphan during the bad time. I have little, thin, low fur-skin with white speckles. My horn and teeth haven't grown yet, neither my hoofs are stronger.

I'm stray. Look, my foot is bleeding: it was hurt when I went down the ravine to drink water... My heart is weak... my heart... poor mother! While my mother was alive, she caressed me all the time: I was sucking, she fondled me, she warned me. What will happen now to me, miserable! I don't suck any more, I just take a sip of dew from the grass instead, in the morning and in the evening when there is dew there. As I'm derelict, I'm always scared, I'm shivering, I'm in expectation of death all the time. I am stray... Oh, my god, what a lot of enemies we have had.

Not long ago I went to the valley being in grief...I looked around. Suddenly a thunder burst out over my head. I looked up in the sky: an enormous dark grey bird was flying right in my direction with its shoulders shrunk and its beak open. I was scared and sprang aside into the forest. This damned bird was flying towards me, it couldn't stop flying and fell down on the place where I was standing a minute ago. My body shivers when I remember its crooked beak and sharpened claws. It was flying directly there and, when it couldn't find me there, it began to splash with its wings on the grass and shrubs of blackberry. It looked around with its awful yellow eyes, it was sorry that I had escaped, it rose, released from those shrubs with difficulties. I hid behind a tree and began to watch it with fear.

Dear forest! You help me so much, otherwise there won't be any fur in my fur-skin! I feel it with my heart. I'll become a victim to my enemy. I'm not experienced yet, I've been with my mother just for a week. She taught me who was my enemy or my friend. Whoever will teach me in the future? I lie in the plants of some marsh, I'm hid, I'm disturbed by midges and gnats. I was safe with my mother, I breathed freely...

I lived with my mother on the woody hill lying over there with ravines on both sides that were always darkened by a thick forest; impartial was our place. My mother used to lie on the hill and I lay too beside her.

We were surrounded by trees from three sides, but from the fourth one she was watching. Sometimes she picked up her ears, I watched her and tried to imitate her; I, too, picked up my little ears. We heard a strange noise three times: it didn't seem to be babbling of water that I always hear, neither the rustling of a blackbird, nor knocking of a woodpecker or falling down of a dry bush from the top of a tree, or any sound of leaves been rustled by breeze... I noticed that: as soon as my mother heard this noise, she would jump up and say: 'my dear! Come on, follow me!..' She would run and I followed her with all my might; I didn't know and couldn't realize who she was escaping from. Now I know...Oh, so many enemies we have had! Oh, man!.. Why aren't you pity for me, a little creature? Why don't you let me be free to walk lightheartedly, walk on the beautiful, green grass, stand on the on the hill and enjoy the breeze in the evening?!

I can't leave the forest. If I go in the valley, I have to stay at the edge of the wood, - even then I'm dying of fear! I should look round all the time, hide behind the trees, rocks, grass and eat with shiver, die of fear!..I should look round all the time, hide behind the trees, cliffs, grass and eat with shiver, die of fear!.. What do I do so bad to you, man, tell me? What did my poor mother do you so bad, what did she drink or what did she eat from you that you killed her and left me derelict and orphan?! Oh, men! You are dependent upon your skill and strength and you don't care about us...Can't you feel that we, too, love freedom, can't you feel with your unreasonable heart, that we, too, love life, nature, rustling of leaves, purling of water that I used to listen to calmly, heaving of grass and playing with the animals in the forest... And you, oh, man!.. You follow me cautiously with your eyes red, me and a thousand of others like me... you have a gun, you sneak up on us, perfidiously shoot us with the gun and kill us...

II

How can't I be scared?.. It hardly passed a week that I have seen this transient world and how much fear and trouble I've seen! It was rainy day the day before yesterday. My mother, full of life and beauty, was standing nearby the beech tree and was chewing deliciously... I, too, was standing beside her, I liked to stand beside her, I didn't think about enemy or death because I had much hope of my mother. Transparent drops of rain were dripping down the thick leaves... I put my head under those wonderful drops to make myself cooler.

'Isn't it pleasant, dear?' – My mother asked me.

I nodded and began to jump, then to play with her bosom.

A woodpecker was sitting in the dried tree right in front of us and was knocking so strongly that I was astonished, - my mother was bigger but she couldn't make so much noise in the forest like that little bird! It was going round the tree scratching with its feet, sticking its beak first in one place, then in another... I was watching the playing pranks of that woodpecker with joy; suddenly I heard 'chkhi!', 'chkhi!' I looked out and saw a jay was flying over us. 'Hide yourself behind me, - said my mother, - or else the jay will stick its beak in your eyes!..' - I hid myself. My mother was repulsing that awful bird with her head. The jay was trying to fly towards me; it tried much, then it left us, simulating, it jumped in the brunch of the beech and began mewing. The voice was the same like mine. My mother laughed and said:

'This jay is very cunning one, my dear, be careful!.. It used to begin mewing and wailing and if it meets any naïve and inexperienced fawn nearby like you, it would join in singing and mocking. Then it finds time, springs at it and pulls out the eyes!..

I began to tremble.

'I won't talk to it. I'll hide myself immediately!'

'Yes, that's right, my dear! Till I'm alive, you are safe; when I'm not alive, then you should be careful!'

Oh, I have had so poor experience yet, I'm so miserable!..

III

Once it was unbearably hot. My mother woke up and told me to go to the water. And we went; we went down the hill covered with some thin trees, we passed by the marsh bushes and went down the ravine. The ravine was deep, the rays of the sun couldn't reach there, the trees were interlaced to one another by their tops on both sides. At the bottom of the trees, just by the ravine, a raspberry bush was grown and bending its red head was looking down the current. Cold, pure spring was gurgling on the slipping rocks, flowing from one cliff to another and making a pond. My mother went and stood in the pond. I could hardly step on the rocks, my hoofs were aching.

'Come on, my dear, step in the water, it's so fine to stand in the water'.

I approached and stepped first my one foot cautiously in the water, it was very cold and I jumped back.

‘It’s cold and I can’t stay there.’

‘Never mind, you must get accustomed to it just now, my dear!’

I stayed in the water for awhile and then returned back. There was some noise over us in the forest.

‘You mustn’t be scared of those people’ – told the mother, - ‘there are just a woman and a child. Our enemy doesn’t shout so. But we should be careful anyway. Let’s go up this way, we should be seen by the valley, we mustn’t be noticed.

My mother went ahead. I couldn’t help glancing there: I hid my body, just only my head was seen. At that moment I heard some voice: ‘Oh, oh, mummy, a wolf, mummy, a wolf!’

‘Don’t be afraid, my dear, just let me see.’ – said the mother.

‘Over there, it is with its ears up, over there from the forest!’ – said the child pointing on me with the tears in his eyes.

‘Oh, dear me, that’s not a wolf, that’s a fawn, my son! Oh, how nice it is!’

‘Let’s catch it, please.’ – told the boy to his mother trying to run in my direction.

‘No, my dear, that’s pity, my son, you shouldn’t; doesn’t it have his mother? Won’t it cry about her son?!’

I was listening, silent and was glad to hear a words of pity about us. I wanted to listen more but my mother seemed to have returned, she ran up to me and told me:

‘You, poor thing, do you believe what they say? What are you looking at there? Let’s go, hurry up, come on! They will go and show the hunters our home and kill us.’

My poor mother felt beforehand what would happen.

My mother sprang and so did I, we leaped upward. Then I heard her voice for the last time: 'Oh, here is its mother, too!'

We went to the direction of the marsh bushes nearby the reeds. The foundation of those reeds were washed by the spring. And here and there on the mud there were some footprints of some little fawns like me, it was unbearably hot. We were in trouble, we lay down in the reed bushes. Their wide leaves prevented us from the hot sun-rays. Suddenly the clouds ran out of the tops of the mountains surrounding the environment, and they gathered together. The sky rumbled, thundered and the lightning coiled.

The rain was coming down like posts on the hills opposite, soon it began to drip on the leaves of the trees and splashed on the reeds, there was such noise as if the forest and mountains and valleys were destroying. All the beings calmed down: birds couldn't dare to chirp or play pranks... That awful jay that had frightened me before so much, now it doesn't seem so awful to me; it was in the young beech, with its eyes closed and its beak dripping, with its wings falling down poorly. And nearby, a 'beech-bird,' with red breast was sitting calm, friendly, with soft feather. Its eyes closed prettily! A little yellowish green bird came and began to chirp. The jay was scared, opened the eyes, its heart began to beat awfully, and began to fly to and fro crying awfully: 'chkhi, chkhi!' I began to laugh. Before, I thought it was the strangest of all, but now I realized what kind of a creature it was.

The thunder crashed and boomed around. The birds began to twitter unanimously. The grass and the leaves of the trees were dripping with tears of joy. My mother liked to walk after rain... She would go to the valley and take me with her. And now we went along the edges of the valleys, to the direction of the mountain. Sweet voice of the pipe was heard. By the foundation of the mountain a herd of sheep was spread there and was eating fresh dewy grass. The sun was half hidden by the hill. Its light sunrays were just saying farewell to the tops of the mountains and to the forest.

By the hill, there was a shepherd with his cloak on, sitting and playing the pipe. And nearby him a shaggy, ugly dog was sitting and watching the herd lively and time by time stared with love at the owner.

'We've come to the wrong' _ my mother told me, _ 'the shepherd has no gun, you shouldn't be afraid of him, but that dog will feel our smell and it may run after us. Turn back, watch out: if it runs towards us, I'll let it see me and then you hide into the grass.' _ Seeing us the sheep was frightened and began to look at us. I hid myself in the old plant and stared at that shabby

tail of the dog... as soon as the sheep was frightened, the dog began to yelp, put up its ears and ran to my direction...

The shepherd burst out screaming. I began to shiver. He caught my mothers and ran towards her. My mother slid and I lost her for a second. My eyes were filled with tears, my heart was aching; Oh, mum, look out, don't let that evil catch you! I heard sounds of footfalls for a long time and the rocks falling down.

Oh, if only it doesn't catch my mother and torture with its sharp teeth! It got dark. The shepherd whistled and gathered the sheep and went to the direction of home. I was impatiently watching their. He was beating poor sheep either with big stick or with some stones. One of the stones was cast to a little lamb like me, poor thing, fell down and began to wave its feet. The shepherd went up and began to call the dog by the name 'khurshia'. After awhile I saw his khurshia on the skyline, with its red tongue pulling out beside its owner.

I was scared, who knows its mouth might be covered with the blood of my mother. It grew dark, it became groom. There wasn't heard any sound from anywhere. Where is my mother? May not she find me, if she is alive?

After awhile I heard some wheeze. It seemed to be my mother's voice. I responded her. Poor creature, she rushed at me troubled.

'You are here, dear. Don't be scared, your mother is alive, neither dog, nor wolf will hurt you...are you alive? – she asked me.

'Yes, I'm alive.' – I answered.

Mother caressed me...I wonder who I should make complaints to, whom to ask for help, who is so powerful to help me to look into my mother's eyes, let me be satisfied by her pet!

How can I get over this grief? If only I was, too, killed by that blood-sucker enemy! Why have I been stayed alive?!

The day before I adored my real hope full of beauty, and how could I imagine that I would lose it forever!

V

We were walking along the valley the whole night, we were not frightened any more; we went into the field of rye and were eating it

sweetly. The daybreak set, we started to the forest. Damn setting that daybreak! The valley was covered with thick grass. There were two or three cherry- trees on the valley; the birds attacked them in groups; they were blackbirds; There was heard a great twittering all around; some were coming and some were going and carrying food to their babies. My mother warned me and told me: it's very dangerous to walk at this time, our enemy searches us after rain, be careful.

That was the last advice from my mother. My mother grieved, she seemed to feel foreboding the death. Then she bit a leaf and hushed.

Right over us, there were shrubs grown one after another. Just before it there were grown three or four thin and high birch.

Suddenly a gunshot like a thunder into the sky and the sound of it went over the mountains and cliffs. The leaves of the trees and the plants began to shiver, the smoke laid down on the dewy grass. My mother sighed and fell down. Oh! I fell down right there. My mother was rolling down. I was watching, she was leaving bloody tracks on the grass. A young boy came out of behind the birch tree, he has rolled up his dark grey lap of his 'chokha'. 'Hi!' – he cried and ran after my mother quickly with gladness. My poor mother tried to stand up, she would raise, but fall again down with her knees, she would fall and roll down. I was dead, my body was ruined when that damned hunter took out his sparkling dagger and passed it along her neck. The blood burst out and splashed all over the trees. Oh! I can remember it clearly; but how could I help her, so miserable?! There, he passed the dagger along her breast, the breast that I sucked, passed the dagger along and the milk was poured down. He put mum on the shoulder and went away. I began to cry. I fainted. From that day on, I'm half dead; I'm crying and there is no consolation; I'm walking and crying at the trees, mountains and cliffs, I'm crying at the water and grass, but my mother is not there, I can't see my mother any more, I'm orphan, and who knows, who will be my owner, who will color his hands with my blood?!

1883

Translated from Georgian by Eter Moistsrapishvili

L A K E P A L I A S T O M I

The little town of Poti is of a great importance for the villagers in the region of Western Georgia: whatever they have to sell in these villages, is sold in Poti; if they need something to buy – it is Poti where it can be bought, too. When the peasants of these villages are demanded to pay a tax and if they are in lack of money, it is Poti that is their guarantor: ‘just wait for a while, I’ll go to Poti, get the money and give it to you,’ – says the peasant to the ‘collector’ or a deputy. From morning till night Guruls permanently go along the Poti road loaded with hens, turkeys, ducks, geese, Italian millet (ghomi – in Georgian) maize, and who knows what else; and take enormous amount of timber, as well! That’s why, when bad news flies: Poti is dead and it changes the place (such news is frequent in Guria), the above mentioned peasants’ hearts are broken with grief. Anyway, besides the profit, there is one dangerous thing for Guruls with their intercourse with Poti: at the eastern gate, which the Guruls loaded with their things for sale, must enter in their small carved boats, an angry keeper, who sometimes becomes so obstinate, that, as the Guruls say, makes the travelers wait the whole week on their way to Poti; if it is summer, gnats have a repast on these poor travelers’ blood, but if it is winter, frost penetrates their bodies to the bones. Dry places are dear here (the whole area is a moor full of straw), they can’t even make a fire. The angry keeper, that I’ve mentioned, is a lake, the Paliastomi, which seems to be thrown by the Black Sea with the message: go eastward and guard the town of Poti. As if the Black Sea gave this little relative anxiety, incitement, hostility as a dowry. When the wind begins to blow the Paliastomi becomes black and dark, spout up with foam at the mouth and this little whale seems to swallow the whole world together with the heaven. Though the lake is not so wide, a sharp-sighted man can notice, from its midst, straws around the shore, but its promptness and temper looks like that of the Black Sea to which it is joined by quite a long and wide sound.

There is one legend about lake Paliastomi in Guria: there, where there is the lake now, there was a land before: and the people who lived there, were called ‘Pavlias tomi’ (meaning – Pavlia’s tribe). One day the land dipped and split; suddenly the water spilled out of the earth and covered the whole village. All, the people and living beings were drowned, only one deacon managed to pick up the archangel’s icon, took it to the mountain of Jumathi and then built a church there dedicated to that icon. The deacon, whose surname was Darchia, was sanctified as an archpriest. The church(cloister) still exists there. People with the surname of Darchia still live in the village of Jumathi and many of them are ecclesiastic; but I can’t say whether that story, which the legend tells, is real or not. Lake Paliastomi looks as if it was created by the water dripping from the mountains around it and gathered in the valley, than spilled out by the earthquake, though there is nothing impossible in this last case.

The mentioned lake belongs to the Megrelian Prince Dadiani and Megrelian fishermen fish there with their home-made angles. How lake Paliastomi became the private property of Dadiani, there is one more story like a legend among the Gurian people: because of one accident, a Megrelian prince gave his son to the owner of Guria – Gurieli- as a hostage. Gurieli, having received the hostage, still suspected Dadiani of treachery. So, on the New Year's eve he chopped off the head of Dadiani's son, the hostage, put it into a box and said: any one, who will take this box to Dadiani in the New Year morning, I'll make him a nobleman if he is a peasant, and - a prince, if he is a nobleman. One peasant dared to take it; he mounted a horse and precisely on the New Year's liturgy fetched the shut box to Dadiani saying it was from Gurieli. When Dadiani demanded the key to the box, the peasant struck his hand to his head and said: 'Oh, I spent yesterday night somewhere and I may have left it there.' Saying these words, he jumped on his horse and hastened home, as if to fetch the key. When Dadiani became assured that the peasant wouldn't return, he broke the box and saw what there was – his son's head. It gave rise to the quarrel among Gurieli and Dadiani. At last, somehow, they came to an agreement and Dadiani took lake Paliastomi in return for his son's blood.

Among the Paliastomi and the villages of Guria, in succession, there are :first, at the edge of the village arable lands and pastures, then, wide woods full of various kinds of trees and moor, and places covered with reed and straw, all in enormous lines, which the Guruls call podzol. The fascination of this podzol in spring is ravishing because of its greenness, and in autumn – of yellowness; It fascinates but deceives; there, where it seems to be carpeted with velvet, you may sink in the moor and rotten water. The podzol is good for hunters, when it snows and freezes: no pigs or roes can hide from a hunter's dogs anywhere. Innumerable small rivers line forests and podzol, and create two rivers for boats and rafts. These boat-rivers begin from the edge of the village and join the Paliastomi.

II

It was the month of Christmas... Awful weather set in. From time to time, either the wind blew, or it rained or hailed, sometimes with snow. When it cleared, it froze badly. Happy people, those, who were rich, with patrimony, and the elderly people at this time used to sit by the warm blazing fireplace and had a good time. But laboring peasants had no rest, no matter what it was; The peasant knows well, that his rest and avoiding torment would bring him more trouble, and therefore he never rests, neither in good or bad weather; he works until death closes his eyes.

Though, as we said, the weather was awful, but from the woods nearby lake Paliastomi, from time to time, sounds of axis cutting trees down and rumbling sounds of their falling down, were heard. Peasants intruded into the woods, and prepared timber to sell in Poti. They worked, despite of good or bad weather, wet to the skin, with red frozen hands and feet. They worked without rest; and returning tired at night, lay down in tents through which the wind blew fire. If anyone had a felt cloak, he was wrapped up in it; though more of them lay in wet clothes, on twig beds and had their heads on a

wooden Asian cushions. Many of them slept under the dripping tents, because they had no time to repair the top of the tents.

The woods, where the peasants worked now, had belonged to the villages nearby before; any man of any estate, all – children or grown-ups, could fish, hunt and work there. There was no plaintiff for rival except when sometimes one village argued with another saying that, this or that part of the wood belonged to them; they used to take away from one another those worked up timber, or spoilt the work, but finally, the thing often ended in agreement. Anyway, such cases were not so frequent – it took place once in twenty or ten years. But in the last case, when the noblemen, the peasants' sharers became aware of the profit the woods brought, they tried to get rid of the peasants; first, by and by, they began to grumble at them saying that the woods didn't belong to any peasant according to the law, that the woods were theirs. But the peasants didn't pay any attention to their grumbling. Then, when they saw that their grumbling didn't work, the noblemen began to take away their worked up timber. Certainly, first they tried it with a cowardly peasant, and then they dared to go round the brave ones. After that, the peasants became vigilant, began to do the same to them in return and even surpassed their antagonists. As the peasants were more in number, and the noblemen wouldn't be able to put up their resistance by force, the noblemen applied to the police.

One day, one peasant was accused and sent to police, another day – another one, the third day – still another and so on and so forth. The noblemen intended to drive the sharers out of the woods by means of the police. But the peasants found out another way, they united and went together to the woods. The Police, supporting the nobility, of course, played a trick – they began to scold the peasants. But they answered: 'We'd better commit suicide, but we won't give up our subsistence, whatever you'll do.' The Police wanted to take some of the leaders of the peasants to prison, but the peasants didn't cede the woods: 'put us into prison one by one, if you want, but we won't let you take our means of subsistence,' – they said. Here the police really couldn't do anything and the noblemen appealed to the law-court. Then the things went well for the peasants, because a kind of disorder broke up among the noblemen, they began to argue with one another and had no time for the peasants. Noblemen went on arguing and insisted that the whole woods belonged to them, but the gentry said that each noble family owned the same part of the woods as any gentry family. Everything was resulted in disorder of the affairs of the nobility. When the representatives of the exchequer and the church saw this, they held up their heads: we may as well catch a fish in this troubled waters. They broke up arguing and contended that the woods didn't belong either to the peasants or to the nobility or gentry that it belonged to the church and the exchequer. These affairs were in such disorder, that the law-court had no rest. God knows where the lawyers appeared from! The rivals were not satisfied with only one lawyer. They used two or three of them. Only self confident peasants didn't pay attention to them, saying: 'If there is any justice in the world, nobody will be able to take our part of woods away', and they went on using the woods calmly. No rival could do anything by force, and the declaration of the nobility and exchequer agents in the law-court, that if a peasant didn't buy it and had no document, then, he wouldn't be able to possess this real property – the law-court didn't agree to it: 'Ten years of possession is quite enough to own the real property of whatever rank he is,' – was the answer from the court. Being assured that the things were quite in disorder, the affairs would never go to the end, and they

would not be able to drive the peasant away so easily from the woods, the noblemen tried to play tricks: they began to widen the split among the peasants. The noble said to their former serfs: 'We are not against you, don't grieve about others, why you should lose your part in vain and make us do the same! Help us to drive away other sharers and let's divide it between us! The aznauries (gentry) said the same to their former serfs and the exchequer and church repeated the same to their peasants.

This trick worked significantly: the peasants' unanimity began to break by and by; some took the side of the noblemen, some - of the gentry and some - of the exchequer. A small part of peasants was left to themselves. But what was the use of it! Those, who betrayed them, tortured them either by talking their worked out timber, or by being false witness. No month would pass without fight. Who knows what they did to ruin each other! They set fire to each other's houses and set fire to all the subsistence that they had obtained with great difficulty, with blood and sweat. They were waiting for each other on the road with a gun, to kill them, they slandered them and gave them up to criminal law. The noblemen and gentry, who managed them, become rivals, laughed at them and at the same time did their own business, with the help of peasants that were won over and false witnesses, at last, they won the suit from the rest of peasants and then began to lodge about their harm, excise for woods and on the expenditure in the law-court; they won again, sent a police officer to the peasants, sold entirely all they possessed, without leaving anything to them. One couldn't help crying looking at those peasants, when their houses, barns, cattle and other things were taken away from them, leaving them without anything under the sky!

As the noblemen got rid of the peasants, the exchequer and church were left as sharers. In order to get rid of them, it was necessary the noblemen should come to an agreement with one another. And they did. Having reached the agreement, the things went well; they won the case of woods with the exchequer and the church. Those peasants, who were won over and when they pretended to consider to be sharers, got nothing for their pains and couldn't cut even a twig without paying excise.

This was the wood where the peasants hewed timber in order to take it to Poti. Half of the worked up timber was to be given to the owners - noblemen - as an excise-duty. At that time, when the peasants shared the woods and nobody made them pay excise, only the names of places and water were left to them, e.g. 'Mchedelai's Saghobe,' 'Sapharone" and so on.

III

There was a marquee on the bank of one river, which seemed to have been made by a dexterous and deft laborer: it was firmly fenced by good twigs with a board door, well covered with sedge, as it is possible, and two beds on opposite sides, made like a couch - shortly speaking, such marquee was rare in this woods. This marquee belonged to a peasant called Ivane - who arrived here with his sixteen-year-old son Niko and worked in the woods. Ivane was a man of forty-five years old, of middle height, broad-shouldered, with a good, pleasant face, where you could notice courage and

boldness. Ivane was a man with a large family – there were two sons and five daughters. Niko was the eldest son; then was followed by a daughter, a real bride, and other juniors, that even didn't know anything except eating. In order to support his family and children, Ivane had to work hard. It was because of his untiring work, that Ivane had a white beard and mustache, and looked like a fifty or sixty-year-old man. Though, Ivane didn't seem to feel like an old man, he looked cheerful and strong, but sometimes he would make a slip in speaking about what he then thought to himself: 'I don't admit to myself, but I'm already old.' His neighbors respected him for his wisdom, honor and dexterity. As he cared for his family quite well, neighbors thought that Ivane had earned his money in his youth and now was spending it little by little. He was skilled in using an axe, and that's why you could hear among the working peasants saying: 'Brother, the timber Ivane has got, is worked out really by a skilled joiner! There is no doubt, it must be sold profitably!' That year Ivane began to work quite early and cut down plenty of trees, because Niko helped him a bit. In the evenings he let him go earlier to prepare supper, while he stayed and worked until darkness. Then, when he returned to the marquee he sat down by the fire: the father and son would cut some maize-bread baked on the cast iron pan and eat it, if it wasn't fast they would eat it with some cheese, if – fast, then with spice; Ivane sometimes caught fish, hunted wild pigs (he was a good hunter), though he used to complain: 'this damned woods are exhausted of everything. In the past time, when we went hunting out alone (without any dog), we would kill a deer and fill up the boat with fish! Now, deer are annihilated and there is no more fish either in the water! One should follow the game nearly for a week and it'll be good luck if you get some fish or meat.'

One evening Ivane returned to the marquee early and talked with his Niko for a long time:

'You know, my boy, Niko, if the God has the mercy on us, and nothing happens, illness or anything else, we'll do much this year, we'll cut many trees! If I didn't have to buy the dowry for my girl, I would buy out the land from the landlord, I would become free. Oh, if only I could make myself free from that debt, then I wouldn't complain any more. The neighbors tell me every time: 'who is wealthier than you, why don't you make yourself free?!' They think I've got money. To make myself free and leave my family without anything! I can't do it. Only one man's labor is not enough for everything. This year I'll try to give my girl in marriage... This damned time becomes worse! Everybody has an eye only on money like a Jewish merchant, a grown-up man doesn't feel such heart-beating under his breast any more, as before. Not because Mate is my daughter but, if it were like before, no dowry would be needed, on the contrary, they would marry her without any dowry. There is no girl like her in the village of Mukhuri. Now, if I don't gather the dowry of her weight, she would be an old maid: becoming an old maid is not my complaint; but somebody will insult her, as it happened with that Osika's girl, who has got an illegitimate baby. Anyway... this year we must finish with this affair, and what would be left, we'll be spent for a tax and for the children's clothing...'

'If we didn't have the excise-duty to pay and the trees that we cut down, were fully ours...' - Niko interrupted his father.

'Hm!.. if I were not drowned by the excise-duty!.. May St. George make them pay the tax all their lives who has made us be excised!' –Ivane swore angrily, - 'Hei! My boy, where is the unity and agreement! If only our brothers hadn't betrayed us, who would have ever touched us! What treachery

and deception! Hm... If only they hadn't slipped away!.. Those poor things were deceived, they were made to betray us, but they themselves were betrayed! The poor peasant can be deceived by anyone. If peasants could be trustworthy and stand side by side, then... but a peasant is ignorant and that's why he is often deceived... You know, Niko, let's use the money we have earned this year, as we have said. Next year we'll come here earlier, then you'll be stronger and work harder and we'll try to free ourselves from that landlord. The leaseholder is like a serf. Think! If suddenly something happens to me, my orphans would be pawned! God, help me!

'We are nearly tired to death of being scattered about the woods every winter! As though we were dogs!' – Niko answered his father.

'To have a rest is great, my son, but who will let us rest! We have to meet our engagements to our landlord, priest, sovereign, our family, enemies and friends, everyone, a laborer's yoke is hard!'

Niko looked at his father and breathed sorrowfully. Niko was a fair-haired fellow, slender as a girl and, because of that he suffered from such hard work. His father felt that Niko was not so strong, that's why he desired him to study. At first, he took him to the village school, then – to a town school. And Niko showed his talents in studying, he was the best pupil among his friends. But Ivane couldn't afford to pay for his studies any more and took him away from school in the very first year, and three years had passed since he was taken from school, but his great wish to read didn't disappear. Every moment, he found any free time, his eyes were stuck into a book. Ivane grieved much for him.

'I have committed a sin by taking you away from school. Nowadays an uneducated man is like an ox in the yoke, that's it,' - Ivane would say, when he saw a book in his hand, -' But what I do? This man of middle age is not able any more to draw the hard yoke and is not able any more to draw the hard yoke and is to labor together with his elder son.' - Ivane in his thoughts intended to have his younger son to be grownup in studying, but this didn't lighten his sorrow.

'You know, Niko, such is a man's life!..' – Ivane wanted to continue speaking, but at this moment his neighbor Gogia entered the marquee and said:

'Have you heard, Ivane, what misfortune has happened? Yesterday evening the wind tore down the oak nearby Zalikia's tent, it fell on the tent and both friends, Zalikia and Simonika were crushed! If only we could find the bodies to bury! No one could! The fire kindled and both of them were burnt to ashes! What will their families do?! If only not so many orphans were left behind them. Both are full of children!'

'Oh, poor, poor things! – Ivane struck his hand on his head, - Yesterday evening, on my way, I told him to cut down that oak, or else it would harm them; what misery has happened! No one is left to take care of their families, they may starve to death! Now, who can say, our life is real life!'

'Were they sleeping? Why couldn't they run away?' – asked Niko, who looked frightened, hearing it.

'Who knows, there is nobody left who can say,' - said Gogia.

For a while, Ivane and Gogia were discussing how to inform the families of those misfortunes on the plateau, then, Gogia went to his tent.

'Hm!..' – Exclaimed Ivane bitterly, - this is a poor laborer's fate: he works, going to and fro, and one day dies somewhere like an insect! Who knows how many Zalikias, Simonikas and others will die here or there, or how many – in other places and who knows where?'

That night the father and son talked much for a long time. They remembered all, who had unfortunately died that year, locals and those from other villages nearby: one was Gogie, who, while cutting a tree, couldn't hear the falling tree and was crushed; Tedorika, in the period of maize harvest, was sleeping under granary full of maize with his family, where the granary broke and crushed them; Pavlia, who fell down while blowing a nut-tree, broke his head like an egg and, of course, died; Petriela's six-year-old girl, who was left at home alone to watch the house, suddenly her clothing caught fire and she was burnt; Masikela, a twenty-year-old fellow, who worked as a farm-labor in one priest's farm, was sent somewhere during inundation and was drowned; another Gogiela, who couldn't afford to support his family any more, committed suicide; three children were torn by a mad dog when their parents were in the cornfield; one of them (the youngest) died immediately, the second went mad and the third one survived, but is mutilated - one eye torn out, his mouth cut and a hand spoilt; one baby, who was left in the cradle, when his mother took dinner to the cornfield, a snake wound round its neck, bit him and he died in torment.

Many such stories were told until late at night; then, they fell asleep.

IV

The fate of the timber prepared to take to Poti, depended on the weather: but for the flood, the banks of the rivers, where the timber was prepared (there were no more trees on the banks of the big boat-rivers in these woods), because of the low water, the raft couldn't move along it. That's why drought years frequently followed one another, without inundation the prepared timber will rot on the ground. And laborers in the woods, who had already prepared timber, permanently watched the sky: wondering when only it will rain and the flood start. It is true that the room is not rare in Guria because of its close location to the Black Sea, but the rain and flood that the owners needed, could be two or three times a year - sometimes, as we have said, not even so many times. But that year, when we met our Ivane in the woods, it rained so heavily in February, that rivers overflowed everything. Laborers from the local villages rushed into these woods, so that no laborer was left in the village except children or women. Those who had their timber, all were there, but who had none, they were hired. Of course, Ivane with his Niko and some hired men rushed to his timber too. During fifteen days people carried their timber from the small rivers to the 'main rivers,' which they call 'Tantskali'. It is true, they worked in the cold water, frozen to the bones, but who would pay then attention to the cold! The flood of that kind, might not appear any more for three years, therefore, even if it were hell, laborers had to take

their timber to Poti, in any case. When they spread their timber in the 'Tantskali' (main river), they tied them together into big rafts and sailed to Poti one after another, waiting their turn. Ivane, too, tied together a huge raft, then set the hired laborers free, put his Niko on the raft, crossed himself and started to Poti.

When Ivane approached lake Paliastomi, it was already evening, though it cleared, but the moon hadn't appeared yet and it was dark. A slight breeze blew: 'Where has that damned westerly twilight appeared from!' – Displeased Ivane complained, he looked at the sky and added: 'Stars are flickering so, that the wind is becoming stronger. Niko, we must tie up the raft here and spend the night. In this dark night, if it takes the raft from the bank, it will be the end; we'll be lost in the water. Then, anyway, if we were not on the raft, it would be different sail... I used to sail in worse weather, but as for you... It is another thing. I can't have the faith in that swallower and let it swallow you. You are not experimented. If a wave hits the raft badly, it will throw you out!' Saying these words, Ivane pushed the raft to the shore. When he touched the land, he stuck the picket into the ground, tied his raft to it and the father and his son went to the shore. Ivane found a dry place in the straw, where he could make a fire, he struck fire with the help of a flint. Then fetched some logs from the raft and made such a blazing fire, that the flame rose up to nearly seven feet height. But it was such a cold night; it was blowing so strong (Ivane's words appeared to be true: strong wind was blowing), that the blazing fire under that holy heaven wouldn't make them warm anyway. Especially poor Niko was frozen. His chattering teeth suffered Ivane when he wrapped his son in the felt cloak, but it had got wet on the raft and couldn't warm any more. After midnight the wind turned into a breeze. At last, Niko fell asleep, Ivane put his head on the log too and, as we say, took a nap. But soon, at daybreak, he jumped up, woke Niko up too. Half asleep Niko's teeth began chattering again, he felt terribly cold. Ivane wanted to go as soon as it was possible, as he was afraid of strong wind, but he was sorry for Niko and made a good fire for him and warmed him. This circumstance delayed them, so that the red sun had already appeared from behind the mountains when they stepped on the raft. As if the river woke up, breathed deeply once or twice and stopped again. Ivane looked at the sky and frowning said: 'Niko, we'd better hurry, the western wind is rising!' The father and son crossed themselves, mentioned the God and untied the raft.

'I'd like to know, where Bezhukia and Datikelai are now. They were following us on their raft, - said Niko.

'They may be frightened by the cold and may have stayed up there, in their tent, there were others too, they are not seen, either. It's foolish of them! They should have outstripped that wind or else, if the wind rises again, it will not fall for fifteen days. Then won't they be more tired waiting in this harbor?!' – said Ivane, who was driving his raft with all his might, and was looking at the sky from time to time.

When they left the harbor, the raft moved slowly along the water called 'Pavlia's Tomi' (meaning 'Pavlia's tribe'), which was waving slowly after yesterday's wind, from where the mountain of Jumathi appeared with its archangel's cloister on its top, like an eagle's nest. As the sun had just made its appearance from the other side and hadn't risen yet, the mountain and the cloister seemed to be covered with some mysterious dim, darkness. Ivane looked towards the cloister and implored it to help them, crossed himself three times, expressing great emotions, Niko did the same. But the Paliastomi

seemed to look such a mysterious, green and dark eye that Niko was frightened and turned pale. Ivane was pulling his oars bravely and therefore didn't pay attention to Niko's pale face. Niko, in his turn, tried to help his father and didn't show that he was frightened. The sun rose and stuck its ray into the Paliastomi water like a column, so that one could be blinded looking at it, the Paliastomi became of a more frightening color after the sunrays had fallen upon it. The mountain and the cloister seemed to be still dark, as the sun hadn't risen yet. The water, air and the area became of an unpleasant, mysterious color. As if it appeared together with the sunlight, the wind rumbled over lake Paliastomi for some time and woke this whale up: 'Throw the oar away, sit down on the raft and hold on to the handle!' – Ivane shouted to Niko. But he himself was frightening like a lion to make the raft approach the shore, somehow. Fighting Ivane was unable to overcome the furious element any more. The raft was taken away far from the shore by the waves to the middle of the lake. At the end, even the oar couldn't touch the bottom of the water, as it became deeper more and more. Then Ivane decided to take Niko to the shore in the boat and 'let it be whatever would happen to that raft, damn it!' – He thought. The boat was tied to the raft, but the water was so high, that it was impossible to do it. Ivane was fighting for a long time. At last, when the foaming waves tried to overturn the raft and the physically exhausted Ivane saw his fighting was vain. He threw away his oar, lay down on the raft and clutched the log which was tied on the raft. 'Don't be afraid, hold at it firmly, now it will take us to the shore and we'll survive,' – he encouraged Niko. The wind was rumbling again and again, and it joined the noise of the rumbling water. So that, if there were a gun-fire, one wouldn't be able to hear it, the only hope for Ivane was that his raft was firmly tied, it wouldn't be destroyed, the waves might throw it anywhere to the shore, and they would survive from sinking. But only in the case, if they were so courageous as to hold the raft firmly while the waves were hitting them and wouldn't tear off their hands and throw them into the water. 'Take a firm hold of it!' – cried Ivane to Niko every moment. The latter was really clutching the pole so that nothing could make him leave it, if his hands were not cut off. But, suddenly, a wave hit them, threw up the raft and in a moment he was separated from it, crashed down into the water, so that the vine, with which the raft was bound, was torn in two or three places; this was repeated several times and the raft began to break. Now Ivane was assured that he was dying together with his son. Niko couldn't see or think about anything stupified with fear, and held to the raft senselessly. Ivane let the raft go, jumped to his feet and shouted so loudly that it would nearly ruin the firmament. Nobody was seen anywhere. But, if anyone were nearby, who on earth would dare to fall into the foaming mouth of the Paliastomi! Ivane jumped and fell at Niko's side, held his arm with one hand, with the other, he clutched the handle that Niko was holding. He had the air of selflessness. It's an unimaginably hard moment to feel one's dying or disappearing! It's more difficult for a peasant, who is so closely joined to life, who curses his fate, his birth, but is still clutching to life with all his might, loves it enormously. Ivane imagined quickly what misfortune was awaiting his orphaned family. 'Who will help them? Taxes will destroy them, the unprotected girl will be raped, the family will be lost, ruined! Who will feed them? They will starve... starve..' – these thoughts crushed Ivane like a storm, but he didn't live till another one, the broken raft crushed against the water so badly that the logs were thrown about one by one. Ivane and Niko, who were at once separated from the logs under their feet, fell into the water. Though, the father and the son could swim, they were physically so exhausted, fully dressed and in that awfully rough cold water, how would they be able to swim so far away! Ivane saw merciless water swallow his favorite son. Poor Ivane roared like a lion, wounded by a hunter, for the last time, and wanted to help

his son, but he had neither the strength to help, nor the son – to help; Niko had sunk so deeply, that he hadn't even moved his arms. After a moment, the physically exhausted Ivane went down to the bottom with the words that were returned into his mouth by the water: 'Woe to my family! Woe to my wife and children!'

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● *

The wind was rotating round and round with an awful thunderous sound. The sun rose and looked at lake Paliastomi from above, as if watching with amusement Ivane's logs playing in the water like living-beings, dancing over the waves being glad to feel freedom. Ivane's small boat, too, among the log was following the waves up and down. Some seconds later, drowned Ivane and Niko were thrown out by the water, as if to show them to the world and then took them back to that tar-dark bottom.

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Translated from Georgian by Eter Moistsrapishvili