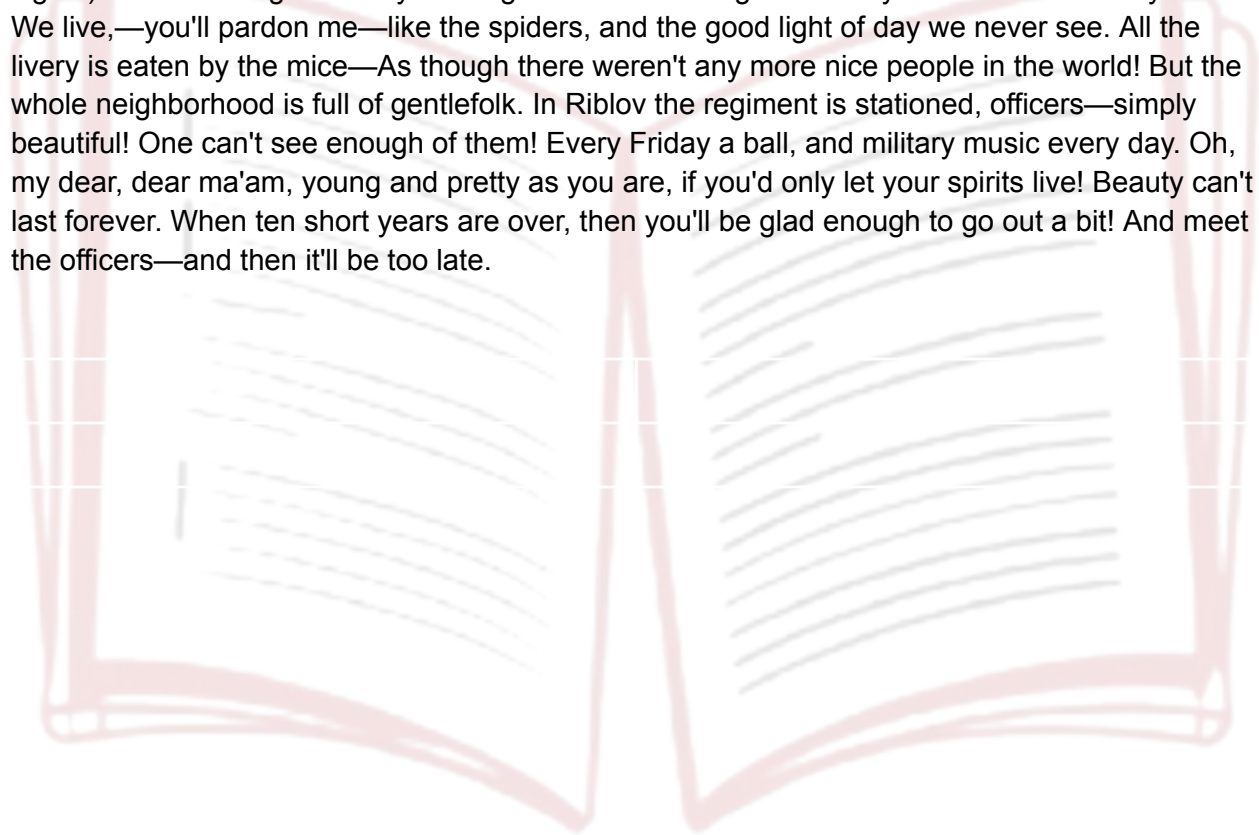


LUKA

There you are again! It's too awful to listen to, so it is! Nikolai Michailovitch is dead, it was the will of the Lord and the Lord has given him eternal peace. You have grieved over it and that ought to be enough. Now it's time to stop. One can't weep and wear mourning forever! My wife died a few years ago, too. I grieved for her, I wept a whole month—and then it was over. Must one be forever singing lamentations? That would be more than your husband was worth! (He sighs.) You have forgotten all your neighbors. You don't go out and you won't receive any one. We live,—you'll pardon me—like the spiders, and the good light of day we never see. All the livery is eaten by the mice—As though there weren't any more nice people in the world! But the whole neighborhood is full of gentlefolk. In Riblov the regiment is stationed, officers—simply beautiful! One can't see enough of them! Every Friday a ball, and military music every day. Oh, my dear, dear ma'am, young and pretty as you are, if you'd only let your spirits live! Beauty can't last forever. When ten short years are over, then you'll be glad enough to go out a bit! And meet the officers—and then it'll be too late.



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