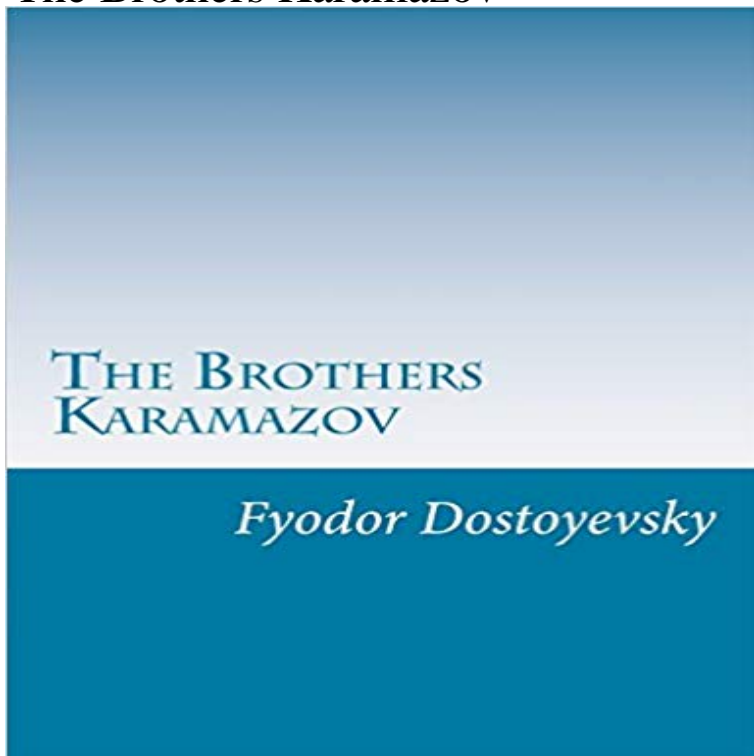


The Brothers Karamazov



Book I. The History Of A Family Chapter I. Fyodor Pavlovitch Karamazov Alexey Fyodorovitch Karamazov was the third son of Fyodor Pavlovitch Karamazov, a land owner well known in our district in his own day, and still remembered among us owing to his gloomy and tragic death, which happened thirteen years ago, and which I shall describe in its proper place. For the present I will only say that this landowner for so we used to call him, although he hardly spent a day of his life on his own estate was a strange type, yet one pretty frequently to be met with, a type abject and vicious and at the same time senseless. But he was one of those senseless persons who are very well capable of looking after their worldly affairs, and, apparently, after nothing else. Fyodor Pavlovitch, for instance, began with next to nothing; his estate was of the smallest; he ran to dine at other mens tables, and fastened on them as a toady, yet at his death it appeared that he had a hundred thousand roubles in hard cash. At the same time, he was all his life one of the most senseless, fantastical fellows in the whole district. I repeat, it was not stupidity the majority of these fantastical fellows are shrewd and intelligent enough but just senselessness, and a peculiar national form of it. He was married twice, and had three sons, the eldest, Dmitri, by his first wife, and two, Ivan and Alexey, by his second. Fyodor Pavlovitchs first wife, Adelaida Ivanovna, belonged to a fairly rich and distinguished noble family, also landowners in our district, the Miusovs. How it came to pass that an heiress, who was also a beauty, and moreover one of those vigorous, intelligent girls, so [pg 002] common in this generation, but sometimes also to be found in the last, could have married such a worthless, puny weakling, as we all called him, I wont attempt to explain. I knew a young lady of the last romantic generation

who after some years of an enigmatic passion for a gentleman, whom she might quite easily have married at any moment, invented insuperable obstacles to their union, and ended by throwing herself one stormy night into a rather deep and rapid river from a high bank, almost a precipice, and so perished, entirely to satisfy her own caprice, and to be like Shakespeares Ophelia. Indeed, if this precipice, a chosen and favorite spot of hers, had been less picturesque, if there had been a prosaic flat bank in its place, most likely the suicide would never have taken place. This is a fact, and probably there have been not a few similar instances in the last two or three generations. Adelaida Ivanovna Miusovs action was similarly, no doubt, an echo of other peoples ideas, and was due to the irritation caused by lack of mental freedom. She wanted, perhaps, to show her feminine independence, to override class distinctions and the despotism of her family. And a pliable imagination persuaded her, we must suppose, for a brief moment, that Fyodor Pavlovitch, in spite of his parasitic position, was one of the bold and ironical spirits of that progressive epoch, though he was, in fact, an ill-natured buffoon and nothing more. What gave the marriage piquancy was that it was preceded by an elopement, and this greatly captivated Adelaida Ivanovnas fancy. Fyodor Pavlovitchs position at the time made him specially eager for any such enterprise, for he was passionately anxious to make a career in one way or another. To attach himself to a good family and obtain a dowry was an alluring prospect. As for mutual love it did not exist apparently, either in the bride or in him, in spite of Adelaida Ivanovnas beauty. This was, perhaps, a unique case of the kind in the life of Fyodor Pavlovitch, who was always of a voluptuous temper, and ready to run after any petticoat on the slightest encouragement. She seems to have been the only woman who made no particular appeal to his senses.

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