The Ghost in the Engineering Castle (From Cadet Memoirs)

Houses, like people, have their own reputations. There are houses where, by common opinion, things are unclean — that is, where certain manifestations of some unclean or at least incomprehensible force are noticed. Spiritists tried hard to explain phenomena of this kind, but since their theories are not held in high esteem, the matter of haunted houses remains as it was.

In St. Petersburg, in the opinion of many, the characteristic building of the former Pavlovsky Palace, now known as the Engineer's Castle, long enjoyed a similar ill fame. Mysterious phenomena attributed to spirits and ghosts were noticed here almost from the very founding of the castle. Even during Emperor Paul's lifetime, it is said, the voice of Peter the Great was heard here, and finally even Emperor Paul himself saw the shadow of his great-grandfather. The latter, without any refutation, is recorded in foreign collections, which also contain descriptions of the sudden death of Paul Petrovich, and in the recent Russian book by Mr. Kobeko. The great-grandfather supposedly left his grave to warn his great-grandson that his days were few and their end was near. The prophecy came true.

However, Peter's shadow was seen within the castle walls not only by Emperor Paul but also by people close to him. In short, the house was frightening because shadows and ghosts lived there or at least appeared there and said something frightening, and moreover something that came true. The unexpected suddenness of Emperor Paul's death, on the occasion of which society immediately remembered and spoke of the ominous shadows that had met the late emperor in the castle, further increased the gloomy and mysterious reputation of this grim house. Since then the house lost its former significance as a residential palace, and in popular parlance — "went over to the cadets."

Nowadays the junkers of the engineering department are housed in this abolished palace, but it was the former engineering cadets who began to settle in it. They were an even younger set, still not entirely free from childish superstition, and moreover frisky and mischievous, curious and daring. All of them, of course, more or less knew the fears that were told about their frightening castle. The children were very interested in the details of the frightening tales and drank in these fears, and those who had become sufficiently familiar with them very much liked to frighten others. This was much in vogue among the engineering cadets, and the

authorities could not eradicate this bad custom until an incident occurred that at once took away everyone's desire for frightening and mischief.

It is this incident that the following story will be about.