

XVII. HATRED

Yes, it was the real feeling of hatred that was mine now--not the hatred of which one reads in novels, and in the existence of which I do not believe--the hatred which finds satisfaction in doing harm to a fellow-creature, but the hatred which consists of an unconquerable aversion to a person who may be wholly deserving of your esteem, yet whose very hair, neck, walk, voice, limbs, movements, and everything else are disgusting to you, while all the while an incomprehensible force attracts you towards him, and compels you to follow his slightest acts with anxious attention.

This was the feeling which I cherished for St. Jerome, who had lived with us now for a year and a half.

Judging coolly of the man at this time of day, I find that he was a true Frenchman, but a Frenchman in the better acceptation of the term. He was fairly well educated, and fulfilled his duties to us conscientiously, but he had the peculiar features of fickle egotism, boastfulness, impertinence, and ignorant self-assurance which are common to all his countrymen, as well as entirely opposed to the Russian character.

All this set me against him, Grandmamma had signified to him her dislike for corporal punishment, and therefore he dared not beat us, but he frequently THREATENED us, particularly myself, with the cane, and would utter the word fouetter as though it were fouatter in an expressive

and detestable way which always gave me the idea that to whip me would afford him the greatest possible satisfaction.

I was not in the least afraid of the bodily pain, for I had never experienced it. It was the mere idea that he could beat me that threw me into such paroxysms of wrath and despair.

True, Karl Ivanitch sometimes (in moments of exasperation) had recourse to a ruler or to his braces, but that I can look back upon without anger. Even if he had struck me at the time of which I am now speaking (namely, when I was fourteen years old), I should have submitted quietly to the correction, for I loved him, and had known him all my life, and looked upon him as a member of our family, but St. Jerome was a conceited, opinionated fellow for whom I felt merely the unwilling respect which I entertained for all persons older than myself. Karl Ivanitch was a comical old "Uncle" whom I loved with my whole heart, but who, according to my childish conception of social distinctions, ranked below us, whereas St. Jerome was a well-educated, handsome young dandy who was for showing himself the equal of any one.

Karl Ivanitch had always scolded and punished us coolly, as though he thought it a necessary, but extremely disagreeable, duty. St. Jerome, on the contrary, always liked to emphasise his part as JUDGE when correcting us, and clearly did it as much for his own satisfaction as for our good. He loved authority. Nevertheless, I always found his grandiloquent French phrases (which he pronounced with a strong emphasis

on all the final syllables) inexpressibly disgusting, whereas Karl, when angry, had never said anything beyond, "What a foolish puppet-comedy it is!" or "You boys are as irritating as Spanish fly!" (which he always called "Spaniard" fly). St. Jerome, however, had names for us like "mauvais sujet," "villain," "garnement," and so forth--epithets which greatly offended my self-respect. When Karl Ivanitch ordered us to kneel in the corner with our faces to the wall, the punishment consisted merely in the bodily discomfort of the position, whereas St. Jerome, in such cases, always assumed a haughty air, made a grandiose gesture with his hand, and exclaiming in a pseudo-tragic tone, "A genoux, mauvais sujet!" ordered us to kneel with our faces towards him, and to crave his pardon. His punishment consisted in humiliation.

However, on the present occasion the punishment never came, nor was the matter ever referred to again. Yet, I could not forget all that I had gone through--the shame, the fear, and the hatred of those two days. From that time forth, St. Jerome appeared to give me up in despair, and took no further trouble with me, yet I could not bring myself to treat him with indifference. Every time that our eyes met I felt that my look expressed only too plainly my dislike, and, though I tried hard to assume a careless air, he seemed to divine my hypocrisy, until I was forced to blush and turn away.

In short, it was a terrible trial to me to have anything to do with him.