

CHAPTER X.

The indictment read as follows:

"On the 17th of January, 18--, suddenly died in the Hotel Mauritania, merchant of the second guild, Therapont Emelianovich Smelkoff.

"The local police physician certified that the cause of death of said Smelkoff was rupture of the heart, caused by excessive use of liquor.

"The body of Smelkoff was interred.

"On the 21st day of January, a townsman and comrade of Smelkoff, on returning from St. Petersburg, and hearing of the circumstances of his death, declared his suspicion that Smelkoff was poisoned with a view of robbing him of the money he carried about his person.

"This suspicion was confirmed at the preliminary inquest, by which it was established: 1. That Smelkoff had drawn from the bank, some time before his death, three thousand eight hundred rubles; that, after a due and careful inventory of the money of the deceased, only three hundred and twelve rubles and sixteen kopecks were found. 2. That the entire day and evening preceding his death deceased passed in the company of a girl named Lubka (Katherine Maslova) in the Hotel Mauritania, whither said Maslova came at the request of Smelkoff for

money; that she obtained the money from Smelkoff's trunk, first unlocking it with a key intrusted to her by Smelkoff; that the money was thus taken in the presence of two servants of the said hotel--Euphemia Bochkova and Simon Kartinkin; that at the opening of said trunk by the said Maslova in the presence of the aforementioned Bochkova and Kartinkin, there were rolls of hundred ruble bills. 3. That on the return of said Smelkoff and Maslova to the said hotel, the said Maslova, on the advice of the said servant Kartinkin, administered to the deceased a glass of brandy, in which she put a white powder given her by said Kartinkin. 4. That on the following morning Lubka (Katherine Maslova) sold to her mistress, Rosanova, a diamond ring belonging to Smelkoff, said ring she alleged to have been presented to her by said Smelkoff. 5. That the servant of said Hotel Mauritania, Euphemia Bochkova, deposited in her name in the local Bank of Commerce the sum of eighteen hundred rubles.

"At the autopsy held on the body of Smelkoff, and after the removal of the intestines, the presence of poison was readily discovered, leaving no doubt that death was caused by poisoning.

"The prisoners, Maslova, Bochkova and Kartinkin pleaded not guilty. Maslova declared that she did go to the Hotel Mauritania, as stated, for the purpose of fetching some money for the merchant, and that opening the trunk with the key given to her by the merchant, she took only forty rubles, as she was directed, but took no more, which fact can be substantiated by Bochkova and Kartinkin, in whose presence she

took the money and locked the trunk. She further testified that during her second visit to the room of the merchant she gave him, at the instigation of Kartinkin, several powders in a glass of brandy, which she considered to be narcotic, in order that she might get away from him. The ring was presented to her by Smelkoff when she cried and was about to leave him after he had beaten her.

"Euphemia Bochkova testified that she knew nothing about the missing money, never entered the merchant's room, which Lubka herself kept in order, and that if anything was stolen from the merchant, it was done by Lubka when she came to the room for the money."

At this point Maslova shuddered, and with open mouth looked at Bochkova.

"And when Euphemia Bochkova was shown her bank account of eighteen hundred rubles," continued the secretary, "and asked how she came by the money, she testified that the money was saved from their earnings by herself and Simon Kartinkin, whom she intended to marry.

"Simon Kartinkin, on his part, at the first examination, confessed that, at the instigation of Maslova, who brought the key to the trunk, he and Bochkova stole the money, which was afterwards divided between the three."

At this Maslova shuddered again, sprang to her feet, turned red in

the face, and began to say something, but the usher bade her be quiet.

"Finally," continued the secretary, "Kartinkin also confessed to giving Maslova the powders to put the merchant to sleep. On the second examination, however, he denied having either stolen the money, or given Maslova the powders, but charged Maslova with both. As to the money placed by Bochkova in the bank, he declared, in accordance with Bochkova's testimony, that they had saved it during their twelve years' service in the hotel."

The indictment wound up as follows:

"In view of the aforesaid the defendants, Simon Kartinkin, peasant of the village of Borkoff, thirty-three years of age; burgess Euphemia Ivanova Bochkova, forty-two years of age, and burgess Katherine Maslova, twenty-seven years of age, conspired on the 17th day of January, 188-, to administer poison to merchant Smelkoff with intent to kill and rob him, and did on said day administer to said Smelkoff poison, from which poison the said Smelkoff died, and did thereafter rob him of a diamond ring and twenty-five hundred rubles, contrary to the laws in such cases made and provided. Chapter 1453, sections 4 and 5, Penal Code.

"Wherefore, in accordance with chapter 201 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the said peasant, Simon Kartinkin, burgess Euphemia Bochkova and burgess Katherine Maslova are subject to trial by jury,

the case being within the jurisdiction of the Circuit Court."

The clerk having finished the reading of the long indictment, folded the papers, seated himself at his desk and began to arrange his long hair. Every one present gave a sigh of relief, and with the consciousness that the trial had already begun, everything would be cleared up and justice would finally be done, leaned back on their chairs.

Nekhludoff alone did not experience this feeling. He was absorbed in the horrible thought that the same Maslova, whom he knew as an innocent and beautiful girl ten years ago, could be guilty of such a crime.