

CHAPTER XII.

Yes, it was Katiousha.

The relations of Nekhludoff to Katiousha were the following:

Nekhludoff first met Katiousha when he went to stay one summer out at the estate of his aunts in order that he might quietly prepare his thesis on the private ownership of land. Ordinarily he lived on the estate of his mother, near Moskow, with his mother and sister. But that year his sister married, and his mother went abroad. Nekhludoff had to write a composition in the course of his university studies, and decided to pass the summer at his aunts'. There in the woods it was quiet, and there was nothing to distract him from his studies. Besides, the aunts loved their nephew and heir, and he loved them, loved their old-fashioned way of living.

During that summer Nekhludoff experienced that exaltation which youth comes to know not by the teaching of others, but when it naturally begins to recognize the beauty and importance of life, and man's serious place in it; when it sees the possibility of infinite perfection of which the world is capable, and devotes itself to that endeavor, not only with the hope, but with a full conviction of reaching that perfection which it imagines possible. While in the university he had that year read Spencer's Social Statics, and

Spencer's reasoning bearing on private ownership of land produced a strong impression on him, especially because he was himself the son of a landed proprietress. His father was not rich, but his mother received as her marriage portion ten thousand acres of land. He then for the first time understood all the injustice of private ownership of land, and being one of those to whom any sacrifice in the name of moral duty was a lofty spiritual enjoyment, he forthwith divided the land he had inherited from his father among the peasants. On this subject he was then composing a disquisition.

His life on the estate of his aunts was ordered in the following way: He rose very early, some times at three o'clock, and till sunrise bathed in the river under a hill, often in the morning mist, and returned when the dew was yet on the grass and flowers. Some mornings he would, after partaking of coffee, sit down to write his composition, or read references bearing on the subject. But, above all, he loved to ramble in the woods. Before dinner he would lie down in the woods and sleep; then, at dinner, he made merry, jesting with his aunts; then went out riding or rowing. In the evening he read again, or joined his aunts, solving riddles for them. On moonlit nights he seldom slept, because of the immense joy of life that pervaded him, and instead of sleeping, he sometimes rambled in the garden till daylight, absorbed in his thoughts and phantasies.

Thus he lived happily the first month under the roof of his aunts' dwelling, paying no attention to the half-servant, half-ward, the

black-eyed, nimble-footed Katiousha.

Nekhludoff, raised under the protecting wing of his mother, was at nineteen a perfectly innocent youth. He dreamed of woman, but only as wife. All those women who, according to his view, could not be considered as likely to become his wife, were to him not women, but people. But it happened on Ascension Day that there was visiting his aunts a lady from the neighborhood with her two young daughters, her son and a local artist who was staying with them.

After tea had been served the entire company, as usual, repaired to the meadow, where they played blind man's buff. Katiousha went with them. After some exchanges came Nekhludoff's turn to run with Katiousha. Nekhludoff always liked to see Katiousha, but it had never occurred to him that their relations could ever be any but the most formal.

"It will be difficult to catch them now," said the cheerful artist, whose short and curved legs carried him very swiftly, "unless they stumble."

"You could not catch them."

"One, two, three!"

They clapped their hands three times. Almost bursting into laughter,

Katiousha quickly changed places with Nekhludoff, and pressing with her strong, rough little hand his large hand she ran to the left, rustling her starched skirt.

Nekhludoff was a swift runner; he wished to out-distance the artist, and ran with all his might. As he turned around he saw the artist catching up with Katiousha, but with her supple limbs she gained on him and ran to the left. In front of them was a patch of lilac bushes, behind which no one ran, but Katiousha, turning toward Nekhludoff, motioned him with her head to join her there. He understood her, and ran behind the bushes. But here was a ditch overgrown with nettles, whose presence was unknown to Nekhludoff. He stumbled and fell, stinging and wetting his hands in the evening dew that was now falling, but, laughing, he straightened himself and ran into the open.

Katiousha, her black eyes beaming with joy, ran toward him. They met and caught each others' hands.

"You were stung by the nettles, I suppose," she said, arranging with her free hand her loosened braid, breathing heavily, and looking up into his eyes.

"I did not know there was a ditch," he said, also smiling, and still keeping her hand in his.

She advanced a little, and he, without being able to account for it,

inclined his face toward hers. She did not draw back. He pressed her hand and kissed her on the lips.

She uttered an exclamation, and with a swift movement, releasing her hand, she ran in the direction of the crowd.

Plucking two lilac twigs from the lilac bush, fanning her flushed face with them, and glancing around toward him, she ran to the players, briskly waving her hands.

From this day on the relations between Nekhludoff and Katiousha were changed, and there were established between them those peculiar relations which are customary between two innocent young people who are attached to each other.

As soon as Katiousha entered the room, or even when Nekhludoff saw her white apron from afar, everything became immediately as if lit by the sun; everything became more interesting, more cheerful, more important; life became more joyful. She experienced the same feeling. But not alone the presence and proximity of Katiousha had such effect upon Nekhludoff; the very thought of her existence had the same power upon him as that of his had upon her. Whether he received an unpleasant letter from his mother, or was backward in his composition, or felt the ceaseless sadness of youth, it would suffice for him to see her and his spirit resumed its wonted good cheer.

Katiousha had to do all the housework, but she managed to do her duty and found spare time for reading. He gave her the works of Dostoievsky and Tourgenieff to read. Those descriptive of the beauties of nature she liked best. Their conversations were but momentary, when they met in the corridor, on the veranda, in the court-yard, or in the room of the aunts' old servant, Matriena Pavlovna, with whom Katiousha roomed, or in the servants' chamber, whither Nekhludoff sometimes went to drink tea. And these conversations in the presence of Matriena Pavlovna were the pleasantest. When they were alone their conversation flagged. Then the eyes would speak something different, more important, than the mouth; the lips were drawn up, they felt uncomfortable, and quickly parted.

These relations continued during the time of his first visit to his aunts. The aunts noticed them, were dismayed, and immediately wrote to the Princess Elena Ivanovna, Nekhludoff's mother. But their anxiety was unfounded; Nekhludoff, without knowing it, loved Katiousha, as innocent people love, and this very love was the principal safeguard against either his or her fall. Not only did he not desire to possess her physically, but the very thought of such relation horrified him. There was more reason in the poetical Sophia Ivanovna's fear that Nekhludoff's having fallen in love with a girl, might take a notion to marry her without regard to her birth or station.

If Nekhludoff were clearly conscious of his love for Katiousha; especially if it were sought to persuade him that he could and must

not link his fate to that of the girl, he would very likely have decided in his plumb-line mind that there was no reason why he should not marry her, no matter who she was, provided he loved her. But the aunts did not speak of their fears, and he departed without knowing that he was enamored of Katiousha.

He was certain that his feeling toward Katiousha was but a manifestation of that joy which pervaded his entire being, and which was shared by that lovely, cheerful girl. However, when he was taking leave, and Katiousha, standing on the veranda with the aunts, followed him with her black, tearful and somewhat squinting eyes, he felt that he was leaving behind him something beautiful, precious, which would never recur. And he became very sad.

"Good-by, Katiousha. I thank you for everything," he said, over the cap of Sophia Ivanovna, and seated himself in the cabriolet.

"Good-by, Dmitri Ivanovich," she said, in her pleasant, caressing voice, and holding back the tears which filled her eyes, ran into her room, where she could cry freely.