

## CHAPTER XIII.

For three years afterward Nekhludoff did not see Katiousha. But when, as staff-officer, he was on his way to his army post, he paid a short visit to his aunts, but an entirely different man. Three years ago he was an honest, self-denying youth, ready to devote himself to every good cause; now he was a corrupt and refined egotist, given over to personal enjoyment. Then, the world appeared to him as a mystery which he joyfully and enthusiastically tried to solve; now, everything in this world was plain and simple, and was determined by those conditions of life in which he found himself. Then, it was necessary and important to hold communion with nature and with those people who lived, thought and felt before him (philosophers, poets); now, human institutions were the only things necessary and important, and communion he held with his comrades. Woman, then, appeared to him a mysterious and charming creature; now, he looked on woman, on every woman, except nearest relations and wives of friends, as a means of gratifying now tried pleasures. Then, he needed no money, and wanted not a third part what his mother gave him, disclaimed title to his father's land, distributing it among the peasants; now, the fifteen hundred rubles' monthly allowance he received from his mother did not suffice for his needs, and he often made it the cause of unpleasant conversation with her. His true self he then considered his spiritual being; now, his healthy, vigorous, animal self was his true ego.

And all this terrible transformation took place in him only because he ceased to have faith in himself, and began to believe in others. To live according to the faith that was in him was burdensome; every question would have to be decided almost always against his animal ego, which was seeking light pleasures; but reposing his faith in others, there remained nothing to decide, everything having been decided, and decided always against the spiritual and in favor of the animal ego. Besides, following his inner faith, he was always subject to the censure of people; in the other case he received the approval of the people that surrounded him.

Thus, when Nekhludoff was thinking, reading, speaking of God, of truth, of wealth, of poverty, everybody considered it out of place and somewhat queer, while his mother and aunt, with good-natured irony, called him *notre cher philosophe*. When, however, he was reading novels, relating indecent anecdotes or seeing droll vaudevilles in the French theatre, and afterward merrily repeated them, everybody praised and encouraged him. When he considered it necessary to curtail his needs, wore an old coat and gave up wine-drinking, everybody considered it eccentric and vain originality; but when he spent large sums in organizing a chase, or building an unusual, luxurious cabinet, everybody praised his taste and sent him valuable gifts. When he was chaste, and wished to preserve his chastity till marriage, his relatives were anxious about his health, and his mother, so far from being mortified, rather rejoiced when she learned that he had become a real man, and had enticed the French mistress of some friend of his.

As to the Katiousha episode--that the thought might occur to him of marrying her, she could not even think of without horror.

Similarly, when Nekhludoff, on reaching his majority, distributed the estate he inherited from his father among the peasants, because he considered the ownership of land unjust, this act of his horrified his mother and relatives, who constantly reproached and ridiculed him for it. He was told unceasingly that so far from enriching it only impoverished the peasants, who opened three liquor stores and stopped working entirely. When, however, Nekhludoff joined the Guards, and spent and gambled away so much money that Elena Ivanovna had to draw from her capital, she scarcely grieved, considering it quite natural and even beneficial to be thus inoculated when young and in good society.

Nekhludoff at first struggled, but the struggle was very hard, for whatever he did, following the faith that was in him, was considered wrong by others, and, contrariwise, whatever he considered wrong was approved of by his relatives. The result was that Nekhludoff ceased to have faith in himself and began to follow others. At first this renunciation of self was unpleasant, but it was short lived, and Nekhludoff, who now began to smoke and drink wine, soon ceased to experience this unpleasant feeling, and was even greatly relieved.

Passionate by nature, Nekhludoff gave himself up entirely to this new life, approved of by all those that surrounded him, and completely

stifled in himself that voice which demanded something different. It commenced with his removal to St. Petersburg, and ended with his entry upon active service.

During this period of his life Nekhludoff felt the ecstasy of freedom from all those moral impediments which he had formerly placed before himself, and continued in a chronic condition of insane egotism.

He was in this condition when, three years afterward, he visited his aunts.