

CHAPTER XVIII.

On the following day the brilliant and jovial Shenbok called at the aunts for Nekhludoff, and completely charmed them with his elegance, amiability, cheerfulness, liberality, and his love for Dmitri. Though his liberality pleased the aunts, they were somewhat perplexed by the excess to which he carried it. He gave a ruble to a blind beggar; the servants received as tips fifteen rubles, and when Sophia Ivanovna's lap-dog, Suzette, hurt her leg so that it bled, he volunteered to bandage it, and without a moment's consideration tore his fine linen handkerchief (Sophia Ivanovna knew that those handkerchiefs were worth fifteen rubles a dozen) and made bandages of it for the dog. The aunts had never seen such men, nor did they know that his debts ran up to two hundred thousand rubles, which--he knew--would never be paid, and that therefore twenty-five rubles more or less made no appreciable difference in his accounts.

Shenbok remained but one day, and the following evening departed with Nekhludoff. They could remain no longer, for the time for joining their regiment had arrived.

On this last day spent at the aunts, when the events of the preceding evening were fresh in his memory, two antagonistic feelings struggled in Nekhludoff's soul; one was the burning, sensual recollection of love, although it failed to fulfill its promises, and some

satisfaction of having gained his ends; the other, a consciousness of having committed a wrong, and that that wrong must be righted--not for her sake, but for his own sake.

In that condition of insane egotism Nekhludoff thought only of himself--whether he would be condemned, and how far, if his act should be discovered, but never gave a thought to the question, "How does she feel about it, and what will become of her?"

He thought that Shenbok divined his relations to Katiousha, and his ambition was flattered.

"That's why you so suddenly began to like your aunts," Shenbok said to him when he saw Katiousha. "In your place I should stay here even longer. She is charming!"

He also thought that while it was a pity to leave now, without enjoying his love in its fullness, the necessity of going was advantageous in that he was able to break the relations which it were difficult to keep up. He further thought it was necessary to give her money, not because she might need it, but because it was customary to do so. So he gave as much money as he thought was proper, considering their respective positions.

On the day of his departure, after dinner he waited in the passage until she came by. She flushed as she saw him, and wished to pass on,

pointing with her eyes to the door of her room, but he detained her.

"I came to bid you farewell," he said, crumpling an envelope containing a hundred ruble bill. "How is----"

She suspected it, frowned, shook her head and thrust aside his hand.

"Yes, take it," he murmured, thrusting the envelope in the bosom of her waist, and, as if it had burned his fingers, he ran to his room.

For a long time he paced his room to and fro, frowning, and even jumping, and moaning aloud as if from physical pain, as he thought of the scene.

But what is to be done? It is always thus. Thus it was with Shenbok and the governess whom he had told about; it was thus with Uncle Gregory; with his father, when he lived in the country, and the illegitimate son Miteuka, who is still living, was born to him. And if everybody acts thus, consequently it ought to be so. Thus he was consoling himself, but he could not be consoled. The recollection of it stung his conscience.

In the depth of his soul he knew that his action was so base, abominable and cruel that, with that action upon his conscience, not only would he have no right to condemn others but he should not be able to look others in the face, to say nothing of considering himself

the good, noble, magnanimous man he esteemed himself. And he had to esteem himself as such in order to be able to continue to lead a valiant and joyous life. And there was but one way of doing so, and that was not to think of it. This he endeavored to do.

The life into which he had just entered--new scenes, comrades, and active service--helped him on. The more he lived, the less he thought of it, and in the end really forgot it entirely.

Only once, on his return from active service, when, in the hope of seeing her, he paid a visit to his aunts, he was told that Katiousha, soon after his departure, had left them; that she had given birth to a child, and, as the aunts were informed, had gone to the bad. As he heard it his heart was oppressed with grief. From the statement of the time when she gave birth to the child it might be his, and it might not be his. The aunts said that she was vicious and of a depraved nature, just like her mother. And this opinion of the aunts pleased him, because it exculpated him, as it were. At first he intended to find her and the child, but as it pained him very much, and he was ashamed to think of it, he did not make the necessary efforts, and gradually ceased to think of his sin.

But now, this fortuitous meeting brought everything to his mind, and compelled the acknowledgment of his heartlessness, cruelty and baseness which made it possible for him to live undisturbed by the sin which lay on his conscience. He was yet far from such acknowledgment,

and at this moment was only thinking how to avoid disclosure which might be made by her, or her attorney, and thus disgrace him before everybody.