

CHAPTER XXIV.

The apprehensions of Peter Gerasimovitch were justified.

On returning from the consultation-room the justiciary produced a document and read the following:

"By order of His Imperial Majesty, the Criminal Division of the ---- Circuit Court, in conformity with the finding of the jury, and in accordance with ch. 771, s. 3, and ch. 776, s. 3, and ch. 777 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, this 28th day of April, 188-, decrees that Simon Kartinkin, thirty-three years of age, and Katherine Maslova, twenty-seven years of age, be deprived of all civil rights, and sent to penal servitude, Kartinkin for eight, Maslova for the term of four years, under conditions prescribed by ch. 25 of the Code. Euphemia Bochkova is deprived of all civil and special rights and privileges, and is to be confined in jail for the period of three years under conditions prescribed by ch. 49 of the Code, with the costs of the trial to be borne by all three, and in case of their inability to pay, to be paid out of the treasury.

"The exhibits are to be sold, the ring returned, and the vials destroyed."

Kartinkin stood like a post, and with outstretched fingers held up the

sleeves of his coat, moving his jaws. Bochkova seemed to be calm. When Maslova heard the decision, she turned red in the face.

"I am innocent, I am innocent!" she suddenly cried. "It is a sin. I am innocent. I never wished; never thought. It is the truth." And sinking to the bench, she began to cry aloud.

When Kartinkin and Bochkova left the court-room she was still standing and crying, so that the gendarme had to touch the sleeve of her coat.

"She cannot be left to her fate," said Nekhludoff to himself, entirely forgetting his evil thoughts, and, without knowing why, he ran into the corridor to look at her again. He was detained at the door for a few minutes by the jostling, animated crowd of jurors and lawyers, who were glad that the case was over, so that when he reached the corridor Maslova was some distance away. Without thinking of the attention he was attracting, with quick step he overtook her, walked a little ahead of her and stopped. She had ceased to cry, only a sob escaped her now and then while she wiped her tears with a corner of her 'kerchief. She passed him without turning to look at him. He then hastily returned to see the justiciary. The latter had left his room, and Nekhludoff found him in the porter's lodge.

"Judge," said Nekhludoff, approaching him at the moment when he was putting on a light overcoat and taking a silver-handled cane which the porter handed him, "may I speak to you about the case that has just

been tried? I am a juror."

"Why, of course, Prince Nekhludoff! I am delighted to see you. We have met before," said the justiciary, pressing his hand, and recalling with pleasure that he was the jolliest fellow and best dancer of all the young men on the evening he had met him. "What can I do for you?"

"There was a mistake in the jury's finding against Maslova. She is not guilty of poisoning, and yet she is sent to penal servitude," he said, with a gloomy countenance.

"The court gave its decision in accordance with your own finding," answered the justiciary, moving toward the door, "although the answers did not seem to suit the case."

He remembered that he intended to explain to the jury that an answer of guilty without a denial of intent to kill involved an intent to kill, but, as he was hastening to terminate the proceedings, he failed to do so.

"But could not the mistake be rectified?"

"Cause for appeal can always be found. You must see a lawyer," said the justiciary, putting on his hat a little on one side and continuing to move toward the door.

"But this is terrible."

"You see, one of two things confronted Maslova," the justiciary said, evidently desiring to be as pleasant and polite with Nekhludoff as possible. Then, arranging his side-whiskers over his coat collar, and taking Nekhludoff's arm, he led him toward the door. "You are also going?" he continued.

"Yes," said Nekhludoff, hastily donning his overcoat and following him.

They came out into the bright, cheerful sunlight, where the rattling of wheels on the pavement made it necessary to raise their voices.

"The situation, you see, is a very curious one," continued the justiciary. "Maslova was confronted by one of two things: either a short term in jail, in which case her lengthy confinement would have been taken into consideration, or penal servitude; no other sentence was possible. Had you added the words, 'without intent to kill,' she would have been discharged."

"It is unpardonable neglect on my part," said Nekhludoff.

"That is the whole trouble," the justiciary said, smiling and looking at his watch.

There was only three-quarters of an hour left to the latest hour fixed in Clara's appointment.

"You can apply to a lawyer, if you wish. It is necessary to find grounds for appeal. But that can always be found. To the Dvorienskaia," he said to the cab-driver. "Thirty kopecks--I never pay more."

"All right, Your Excellency."

"Good-day. If I can be of any service to you, please let me know. You will easily remember my address: Dvornikoff's house, on the Dvorinskaia."

And, making a graceful bow, he rode off.