

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was six o'clock when Maslova returned to her cell, weary and foot-sore from the long tramp over the stone pavement. Besides, she was crushed by the unexpectedly severe sentence, and was also hungry.

When, during a recess, her guards had lunched on bread and hard-boiled eggs her mouth watered and she felt that she was hungry, but considered it humiliating to ask them for some food. Three hours after that her hunger had passed, and she only felt weak. In this condition she heard the sentence. At first she thought that she misunderstood it; she could not believe what she heard, and could not reconcile herself to the idea that she was a convict. But, seeing the calm, serious faces of the judges and the jury, who received the verdict as something quite natural, she revolted and cried out that she was innocent. And when she saw also that her outcry, too, was taken as something natural and anticipated, and which could not alter the case, she began to weep. She felt that she must submit to the cruel injustice which was perpetrated on her. What surprised her most was that she should be so cruelly condemned by men--not old men, but those same young men who looked at her so kindly.

The prosecuting attorney was the only man whose glances were other than kind. While she was sitting in the prisoners' room, and during recesses she saw these men passing by her and entering the room under

various pretexts, but with the obvious intention of looking at her. And now these same men, for some reason, sentenced her to hard labor, although she was innocent of the crime. For some time she wept, then became calm, and in a condition of complete exhaustion she waited to be taken away. She desired but one thing now--a cigarette. She was in this frame of mind when Bochkova and Kartinkin were brought into the room. Bochkova immediately began to curse her.

"You are innocent, aren't you? Why weren't you discharged, you vile thing? You got your deserts! You will drop your fineries in Siberia!"

Maslova sat with lowered head, her hands folded in the sleeves of her coat, and gazed on the smoothly trampled ground.

"I am not interfering with you, so leave me in peace," she repeated several times, then became silent. She became enlivened again when, after Bochkova and Kartinkin had been removed from the room, the guard entered, bringing her three rubles.

"Are you Maslova?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Here is some money which a lady sent you," he said.

"What lady?"

"Take it, and ask no questions."

The money was sent by Kitaeva. When leaving the court she asked the usher if she could send some money to Maslova, and, receiving an affirmative answer, she removed a chamois glove, and, from the back folds of her silk dress, produced a stylish pocket-book, and counted out the money into the hands of the usher who, in her presence, handed it to the guard.

"Please be sure to give it to her," said Karolina Albertoona to the guard.

The guard was offended by this distrust shown to him, which was the cause of his speaking angrily to Maslova.

Maslova was overjoyed by the receipt of the money, for it could give her the one thing she wished for now.

All her thoughts were now centered on her desire to inhale the smoke of a cigarette. So strong was this desire that she greedily inhaled the smoke-laden air which was wafted in from the corridor and through the cabinet door. But there was a long wait before her, for the secretary, who was to deliver to the guard the order for her removal, forgetting the prisoners, engaged one of the lawyers in the discussion of an editorial that had appeared in a newspaper.

At five o'clock she was finally led down through the rear door. While in the waiting-room she gave one of the guards twenty kopecks, asking him to buy for her two lunch rolls and some cigarettes. The guard laughed, took the money, honestly made the purchase and returned the change to her. She could not smoke on the road, so Maslova arrived at the jail with the same unsatisfied craving for a cigarette. At that moment about a hundred prisoners were brought from the railroad station. Maslova met them in the passageway.

The prisoners, bearded, clean-shaven, old, young, Russians and foreigners--some with half-shaved heads, and with a clinking of iron fetters, filled the passage with dust, tramping of feet, conversation and a sharp odor of perspiration. The prisoners, as they passed Maslova, scanned her from head to foot; some approached and teased her.

"Fine girl, that!" said one. "My compliments, auntie," said another, winking one eye. A dark man with a shaven, blue neck and long mustache, tangling in his fetters, sprang toward her and embraced her.

"Don't you recognize your friend? Come, don't put on such style!" he exclaimed, grinning as she pushed him away.

"What are you doing, you rascal?" shouted the officer in charge of the prisoners.

The prisoner hastily hid himself in the crowd. The officer fell upon Maslova.

"What are you doing here?"

Maslova was going to say that she had been brought from the court, but she was very tired and too lazy to speak.

"She is just from the court, sir," said one of the guards, elbowing his way through the passing crowd, and raising his hand to his cap.

"Then take her to the warden. What indecencies!"

"Very well, sir!"

"Sokoloff! Take her away!" shouted the officer.

Sokoloff came and angrily pushed Maslova by the shoulder, and, motioning to her to follow him, he led her into the woman's corridor. There she was thoroughly searched, and as nothing was found upon her (the box of cigarettes was hidden in the lunch roll), she was admitted into the same cell from which she had emerged in the morning.