

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Nekhludoff rose the following morning with a consciousness that some change had taken place within him, and before he could recall what it was he already knew that it was good and important.

"Katiousha--the trial. Yes, and I must stop lying, and tell all the truth." And what a remarkable coincidence! That very morning finally came the long-expected letter of Maria Vasilievna, the wife of the marshal of the nobility--that same letter that he wanted so badly now. She gave him his liberty and wished him happiness in his proposed marriage.

"Marriage!" he repeated ironically. "How far I am from it!"

And his determination of the day before to tell everything to her husband, to confess his sin before him, and to hold himself ready for any satisfaction he might demand, came to his mind. But this morning it did not seem to him so easy as it had yesterday. "And then, what is the good of making a man miserable? If he asks me, I will tell him; but to call on him specially for that purpose---- No, it is not necessary."

It seemed to him equally difficult this morning to tell all the truth to Missy. He thought it would be offering an insult. It was

inevitable, as in all worldly affairs, that there should remain something unexpressed but understood. One thing, however, he decided upon this morning--that he would not go there, and would tell the truth when asked. But in his relations toward Katiousha there was to be nothing unsaid.

"I will go to the jail--will tell her, beg of her to forgive me. And, if necessary--yes, if necessary--I will marry her," he thought.

The idea that for the sake of moral satisfaction he would sacrifice everything and marry her this morning particularly affected him.

It was a long time since he had risen with so much energy in him. When Agrippina Petrovna entered his room he declared to her with a determination which he himself did not expect, that he had no further need of the house, and that he would dispense with her services. There was a tacit understanding that the large house was kept up for his contemplated marriage. The closing up of the house consequently had some particular significance. Agrippina Petrovna looked at him with surprise.

"I thank you very much, Agrippina Petrovna, for your solicitude in my behalf, but I do not now need such a large house, or any of the servants. If you wish to help me, then be so kind as to pack away the things as you used to do in mamma's lifetime. Natasha will dispose of them when she arrives." Natasha was Nekhludoff's sister.

Agrippina Petrovna shook her head.

"Dispose of them? Why, they will be needed," she said.

"No, they will not, Agrippina Petrovna--they will positively not be needed," said Nekhludoff, answering what she meant by shaking his head. "Please tell Kornei that his salary will be paid for two months in advance, but that I do not need him."

"You are wrong in doing this, Dmitri Ivanovich," she said. "You will need a house even if you go abroad."

"You misunderstand me, Agrippina Petrovna. I will not go abroad, and if I do go, it will be to an entirely different place."

His face suddenly turned a purple color.

"Yes, it is necessary to tell her," he thought. "I must tell all to everybody."

"A very strange and important thing has happened to me. Do you remember Katiousha, who lived with Aunt Maria Ivanovna?"

"Of course; I taught her to sew."

"Well, then, she was tried in court yesterday, and I was one of the jury."

"Ah, good Lord! what a pity!" said Agrippina Petrovna. "What was she tried for?"

"Murder, and it was all caused by me."

"How could you have caused it? You are talking very strangely," said Agrippina Petrovna, and fire sparkled in her old eyes.

She knew of the incident with Katiousha.

"Yes, it is my fault. And this causes me to change my plans."

"What change can this cause in your plans?" said Agrippina Petrovna, suppressing a smile.

"This: That since it was through my fault that she is in her present condition, I consider it my duty to help her to the extent of my ability."

"That is your affair, but I cannot see that you are so much in fault. It happens to everybody, and if one is guided by common sense the matter is usually arranged and forgotten, and one lives on like the rest of the world," said Agrippina Petrovna, sternly and seriously.

"There is no reason why you should take it so much to heart. I heard long ago that she had gone to the bad, so whose fault is it?"

"It is my fault, and that is why I wish to make amends."

"Well, it is hard to set that right."

"That is my affair. If you are thinking of yourself, then that which mother wished----"

"I am not thinking of myself. Your deceased mother showed me so many favors that I do not desire anything. My niece, Lizauka, wishes me to come to her, so I will go as soon as you need me no longer. Only you are taking it too much to heart; it happens with everybody."

"Well, I do not think so. I still ask you to help me rent the house and pack away the things. And do not be angry with me. I am very, very thankful to you for everything."

It is remarkable that since Nekhludoff understood that he was disgusted with himself, others ceased to be repulsive to him. On the contrary, he had a kindly and respectful feeling for Agrippina Petrovna and Kornei. He wished to confess also before Kornei, but the latter was so impressively respectful that he could not make up his mind to do it.

On his way to the court, passing along the familiar streets and in the same carriage, Nekhludoff was himself surprised what a different man he felt himself to-day.

His marriage to Missy, which but yesterday seemed to be so near, to-day appeared to him absolutely impossible. Yesterday he understood his position to be such that there could be no doubt that she would be happy to marry him; to-day he felt himself unworthy not only of marrying her, but of being her friend. "If she only knew who I was, she would never receive me, and yet I taunted her with coquetting with that gentleman. But no, even if she married me I should never have peace, even though I were happy, while that one is in jail, and may any day be sent under escort to Siberia. While the woman whom I have ruined is tramping the weary road to penal servitude, I will be receiving congratulations, and paying visits with my young wife. Or I will be counting the votes for and against school inspection, etc., with the marshal, whom I have shamefully deceived, and afterward make appointments with his wife (what abomination!). Or I will work on my picture, which will, evidently, never be finished, for I had no business to occupy myself with such trifles. And I can do neither of these things now," he said to himself, happy at the inward change which he felt.

"First of all," he thought, "I must see the lawyer, and then--then see her in jail--the convict of yesterday--and tell her everything."

And when he thought how he would see her, confess his guilt before her, how he would declare to her that he would do everything in his power, marry her in order to wipe out his guilt, he became enraptured, and tears filled his eyes.