

CHAPTER XXXV.

As soon as the first recess was taken, Nekhludoff rose and went out of the court, intending to return no more. They might do with him what they pleased, but he could no longer take part in that farce.

Having inquired where the prosecutor's room was, he directed his steps toward that dignitary. The messenger would not admit him, declaring that the prosecutor was busy, but Nekhludoff brushed past him and asked an officer who met him to announce him to the prosecutor, saying that he was on important business. His title and dress helped Nekhludoff. The officer announced him, and he was admitted. The prosecutor received him standing, evidently dissatisfied with Nekhludoff's persistence in seeking an audience with him.

"What do you wish?" the prosecutor asked, sternly.

"I am a juryman, my name is Nekhludoff, and I want to see the prisoner Maslova," he said, resolutely and quickly. He blushed, and felt that his act would have a decisive influence on his life.

The prosecutor was a tall, swarthy man with short hair just turning gray, bright eyes and a trimmed, bushy beard on the protruding lower jaw.

"Maslova? Yes, I know her. She was charged with poisoning," he said calmly. "Why do you want to see her?" And then, as if desiring to soften his harsh demeanor, he added: "I cannot give you the permission before I know what you want to see her for."

"It is very important for me to see her," Nekhludoff burst out.

"I see," said the prosecutor, and, raising his eyes, looked intently at Nekhludoff. "Has her case been tried?"

"She was tried yesterday and sentenced to four years' penal servitude. The conviction was irregular; she is innocent."

"I see. If she has only been sentenced yesterday," said the prosecutor without paying attention to Nekhludoff's declaration about her innocence, "then she will be detained until final judgment in the place where she is now. The jail is open to visitors on certain days only. I advise you to apply there."

"But I must see her as soon as possible," with trembling lower jaw Nekhludoff said, feeling that a critical moment was approaching.

"Why are you so anxious about seeing her?" the prosecutor asked, raising his eyebrows with some alarm.

"Because she is innocent of the crime for which she was sentenced to

penal servitude. The guilt is mine, not hers," Nekhludoff said in a trembling voice, feeling that he was saying what he should not.

"How so?" asked the prosecutor.

"I deceived her, and brought her to the condition in which she is now. If I had not driven her to the position in which she was, she would not have been charged here with such a crime."

"Still I fail to see what all this has to do with visiting her."

"It has, because I want to follow her and--marry her," said Nekhludoff. And, as it usually happened when he spoke of this, his eyes filled with tears.

"Ah, is that so?" said the prosecutor. "This is really an exceptional case. Are you not a member of the Krasnopersk town council?" asked the prosecutor, as if recalling that he had heard of this Nekhludoff who was now making such a strange statement.

"Excuse me, but I fail to see what this has to do with my request," fuming, Nekhludoff answered with rancor.

"Nothing, of course," the prosecutor said, with a faint smile on his face, and not in the least disturbed. "But your request is so unusual and beside all customary forms----"

"Well, can I get the permission?"

"Permission? Why, yes. I will give you a pass immediately. Please be seated."

He went to the table, sat down and began to write.

"Please be seated."

Nekhludoff stood still.

When he had made out the pass the prosecutor handed it to Nekhludoff and eyed him with curiosity.

"I must also tell you," said Nekhludoff, "that I cannot continue to serve as juror."

"As you know, satisfactory reasons must be given to the court in such cases."

"The reasons are that I consider all courts useless and immoral."

"I see," said the prosecutor, with the same faint smile which seemed to indicate that such statements were familiar to him, and belonged to an amusing class of people well known to him. "I see, but you

understand that, as public prosecutor, I cannot agree with you. I therefore advise you to state so to the court, which will either find your reasons satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and in the latter case will impose a fine on you. Apply to the court."

"I have already stated my reasons, and I will not go there," Nekhludoff said angrily.

"I have the honor to salute you," said the prosecutor, bowing, evidently desiring to rid himself of the strange visitor.

"Who was the man that just left your room?" asked one of the judges who entered the prosecutor's cabinet after Nekhludoff had left.

"Nekhludoff. You know, the one who made such strange suggestions in the Krasnopersk town council. Just imagine, he is on the jury, and among the prisoners there was a woman, or girl, who was sentenced to penal servitude, and who, he says, was deceived by him. And now he wishes to marry her."

"It is impossible!"

"That is what he told me. And how strangely excited he was!"

"There is something wrong with our young men."

"He is not so very young."

"What a bore your famous Ivasheukoff is, my dear! He wins his cases by tiring us out--there is no end to his talking."

"They must be curbed, or they become real obstructionists."