

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

When at five o'clock the following morning, which was Sunday, the customary whistle blew, Korableva, who was already awake, roused Maslova.

"A convict," Maslova thought with horror, rubbing her eyes and involuntarily inhaling the foul morning air. She wished to fall asleep again, to transfer herself into a state of unconsciousness, but fear overcame her drowsiness. She raised herself, crossed her legs under her, and looked around. The women were already up, only the children were still sleeping. The moonshining woman with bulging eyes was carefully removing her coat from under them. The rioter was drying near the oven some rags which served for swaddling cloths, while the child, in the hands of the blue-eyed Theodosia, was crying at the top of its lungs, the woman lulling it in a gentle voice. The consumptive, seizing her breast, coughed violently, and, sighing at intervals, almost screamed. The red-headed woman lay prone on her back relating a dream she had had. The old incendiary stood before the image, whispering the same words, crossing herself and bowing. The chanter's daughter sat motionless on her cot, and with dull, half-open eyes was looking into space. Miss Dandy was curling on her finger her oily, rough, black hair.

Presently resounding steps were heard in the corridor, the lock

creaked open, and two prisoners in short jackets and gray trousers scarcely reaching their ankles entered, and, raising the ill-smelling vat on a yoke, carried it away. The women went to the faucets in the corridor to wash themselves. The red-headed woman got into a quarrel with a woman from the adjoining cell. Again there were cursing, shouting and complaints.

"You will get into the dark-room yet," shouted the warden, and he slapped the red-headed woman on her fat, bare back, so that it resounded through the entire corridor. "Don't let me hear you again."

"Fooling again, you old man?" she said, treating it as a caress.

"Hurry up! It is time for mass."

Scarcely had Maslova arranged her hair when the inspector entered with his attendants.

"Make ready for inspection!" shouted the warden.

The women of the two cells formed in two rows along the corridor, those of the back row placing their hands on the shoulders of the women in the front row. Then they were counted.

After the count came the woman inspector and led the prisoners to the church. Maslova and Theodosia were in the middle of the column, which

consisted of over a hundred women from all the cells. They all had white kerchiefs on their heads, and some few wore their own colored dresses. These were the wives and children of convicts. The procession covered the whole stairway. A soft clatter of prison shoes was heard, here and there some conversation, and sometimes laughter. At a turn Maslova noticed the malicious face of her enemy, Bochkova, who was walking in the front row, and pointed her out to Theodosia. At the foot of the stairs the women became silent, and, making the sign of the cross and bowing, they filed into the open door of the empty, gold-bedecked chapel. Their place was on the right, where, crowding each other, they began to arrange themselves in rows, standing. Behind the women came the male convicts who were serving terms or detained for transportation under sentence by the communities. Loudly clearing their throats, they formed a dense crowd on the left and the middle of the chapel. Above, on the gallery, were other convicts with heads half shaven, whose presence was manifested by a clanking of chains.

This prison chapel had been rebuilt and remodeled by a rich merchant, who had spent about thirty thousand rubles on it, and it was all ornamented with gilt and bright colors.

For a few seconds there was silence, which was broken only by the blowing of noses, coughing, and clanking of chains. Suddenly the prisoners who stood in the middle began to press back, making a passage for the inspector, who walked to the middle of the chapel, and the services commenced.