

## CHAPTER XLII.

Nekhludoff expected that at the first meeting Katiousha, learning of his intention to serve her, and of his repentance, would be moved to rejoicing, would become again Katiousha, but to his surprise and horror, he saw that Katiousha was no more; that only Maslova remained.

It surprised him particularly that not only was Maslova not ashamed of her condition, but, on the contrary, she seemed to be content with, and even took pride in it. And yet it could not be different.

It is usually thought that a thief or murderer, acknowledging the harmfulness of his occupation, ought to be ashamed of it. The truth is just the contrary. People, whom fate and their sinful mistakes have placed in a given condition, form such views of life generally that they are enabled to consider their condition useful and morally tenable. In order, however, to maintain such views they instinctively cling to such circles in which the same views are held. We are surprised when we hear thieves boasting of their cleverness, or murderers boasting of their cruelty, but that is only because their circle is limited, and because we are outside of it.

This was the case also with Maslova. She was sentenced to penal servitude, and yet she formed such views of life and her place in it that she could find reasons for self-approval and even boast before

people of her condition.

The substance of this view was that the greatest welfare of all men, without exception--young, old, students, generals, educated and uneducated--consisted in associating with attractive women, and that therefore all men, while pretending to occupy themselves with other business, in reality desire nothing else. Now, she is an attractive woman, and can satisfy that desire of theirs, or not, as she wishes, hence she is a necessary and important person. All her life, past and present, attested the justice of this view.

Whomever she met during ten years, beginning with Nekhludoff and the old commissary of police, and ending with the jailers, all wanted her. She had not met any one who did not want her. Hence the world appeared to her as an aggregation of people who watched her from all sides and by all possible means--deceit, violence, gold or craftiness--strewn to possess her.

With such an idea of life, Maslova considered herself a most important person. And she cherished this view above all else in the world, because to change it would be to lose that standing among people which it assured her. And in order not to lose her standing she instinctively clung to that circle which held the same views of life. Seeing, however, that Nekhludoff wished to lead her into another world, she resisted it, feeling that in that other world into which he was luring her she would lose her present standing which gave her

confidence and self-respect. For the same reason she drove from her mind all recollection of her first youth and her first relations to Nekhludoff. These recollections clashed with her present views of life, and for that reason were entirely effaced from her memory, or, rather, were preserved somewhere in her memory, but were covered up, as it were, with a thick plastering, to prevent any access to them. Nekhludoff was, therefore, to her not that man whom she had loved with a pure love, but merely a rich gentleman by whom one may and ought to profit, and who was to be treated like any other man.

"I did not tell her the most important thing," thought Nekhludoff, as with the other people he walked toward the door. "I did not tell her that I would marry her, but I will do it."

The inspectors at the doors counted the visitors each with one hand slapping every visitor on the back. But Nekhludoff was not offended by it now; he even took no notice of it.