

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Rising the next morning Nekhludoff recalled the events of the previous day and was seized with fear.

But, notwithstanding this fear, he was even more determined than before to carry out his plan already begun.

With this consciousness of the duty that lay upon him he drove to Maslenikoff for permission to visit in jail, besides Maslova, the old woman Menshova and her son, of whom Maslova had spoken to him. Besides, he also wished to see Bogodukhovskaia, who might be useful to Maslova.

Nekhludoff had known Maslenikoff since they together served in the army. Maslenikoff was the treasurer of the regiment. He was the most kind-hearted officer, and possessed executive ability. Nothing in society was of any interest to him, and he was entirely absorbed in the affairs of the regiment. Nekhludoff now found him an administrator in the civil government. He was married to a rich and energetic woman to whom was due his change of occupation.

She laughed at him and patted him as she would a tamed animal. Nekhludoff had visited them once the previous winter, but the couple seemed so uninteresting to him that he never called again.

Maslenikoff's face became radiant when he saw Nekhludoff. His face was as fat and red, his dress as excellent as when he served in the army. As an army officer he was always neat, dressed in a tight uniform made according to the latest style; now his dress fitted his well-fed body as perfectly. He wore a uniform. Notwithstanding the difference in their age--Maslenikoff was about forty--they familiarly "thoued" each other.

"Very glad you remembered me. Come to my wife. I have just ten minutes to spare, and then I must to the session. My chief, you know, is away. I am directing the affairs of the district," he said, with joy which he could not conceal.

"I came to you on business."

"What's that?" Maslenikoff said in a frightened and somewhat stern voice, suddenly pricking his ears.

"There is a person in jail in whom I am very much interested;" at the word "jail" Maslenikoff's face became even more stern, "and I would like to have the right of interview in the office instead of the common reception room, and oftener than on the appointed days. I was told that it depended on you."

"Of course, mon cher, I am always ready to do anything for you,"

Maslenikoff said, touching his knees with both hands, as if desiring to soften his own greatness. "I can do it, but you know I am caliph only for an hour."

"So you can give me a pass that will enable me to see her?"

"It is a woman?"

"Yes."

"What is the charge against her?"

"Poisoning. But she was irregularly convicted."

"Yes, there is justice for you! Ils n'en font point d'autres," he said, for some reason in French. "I know that you do not agree with me, but c'est mon opinion bien arretee," he added, repeating the opinion that had been reiterated during the past year by a retrograde, conservative newspaper. "I know you are a liberal."

"I don't know whether I am a liberal or something else," smilingly said Nekhludoff, who always wondered at being joined to some party, or called a liberal only because he held that a man must not be judged without being heard; that all are equal before the law; that it is wrong to torture and beat people generally, especially those that are not convicted. "I don't know whether I am a liberal or not, but I do

know that our present courts, bad as they are, are nevertheless better than those that preceded them."

"And what lawyer have you retained?"

"I have retained Fanarin."

"Ah, Fanarin!" Maslenikoff said, frowning as he recalled how Fanarin, examining him as a witness the year before, in the most polite manner made him the butt of ridicule.

"I would not advise you to have anything to do with him. Fanarin est un homme tare."

"I have another request to make of you," Nekhludoff said, without answering him. "A long time ago I made the acquaintance of a girl teacher, a very wretched creature. She is now in jail and desires to see me. Can you give me a pass to her?"

Maslenikoff leaned his head to one side and began to reflect.

"She is a political."

"Yes, I was told so."

"You know politicals can only be seen by their relatives, but I will

give you a general pass. Je sais que vous n'abuserez pas----"

"What is the name of this your protege? Bogodukhovskaia? Elle est jolie?"

"Hideuse."

Maslenikoff disapprovingly shook his head, went to the table and on a sheet of paper with a printed letter-head wrote in a bold hand: "The bearer, Prince Dmitri Ivanovich Nekhludoff, is hereby permitted to visit the prisoners, Maslova and Bogodukhovskaia, now detained in the prison," and signed his name to it with a broad flourish.

"You will see now what order there is in prison. And to keep order there is very difficult, because it is overcrowded, especially by those to be transported. But I watch over them, and like the occupation. You will see there are very many there, but they are content, and are faring well. It is necessary to know how to deal with them. Some unpleasantness occurred there a few days ago--disobedience. Another man in my place would have treated it as a riot and made many people miserable, but we arranged it all pleasantly. What is necessary is solicitude on the one hand, and prompt and vigorous dealing on the other," he said, clenching his soft, white fist projecting from under a white, starched cuff and adorned with a turquoise ring--"solicitude and vigorous dealing."

"Well, I don't know about that," said Nekhludoff. "I was there twice, and I was very much distressed by the sight."

"You know what I will tell you? You ought to get acquainted with Princess Passek," continued Maslenikoff, who had become talkative; "she has entirely devoted herself to this cause. Elle fait beaucoup de bien. Thanks to her and, without false modesty, to myself, everything has been changed, and changed so that none of the old horrors can be found there, and they are decidedly well off there. You will see it. There is Fanarin. I am not personally acquainted with him; besides, our roads do not meet because of my position in society, but he is decidedly a bad man, and allows himself to state in court such things, such things!"

"Well, thank you," said Nekhludoff, taking the document, and took leave of his old comrade.

"Would you not like to see my wife?"

"No, thank you; I have no time now."

"Well, now, she will never forgive me," said Maslenikoff, conducting his old comrade to the first landing, as he did with people of secondary importance, among whom he reckoned Nekhludoff. "Do come but for a moment."

But Nekhludoff was firm, and while the footman and porter sprang toward him, handing him his overcoat and cane, and opening the door, before which a policeman stood, he excused himself, pleading want of time.

"Well, then, Thursday, please. That is her reception day. I will tell her!" Maslenikoff shouted from the top of the stairs.