

## CHAPTER XLIX.

From Maslenikoff, Nekhludoff went directly to the prison and approached the familiar apartments of the inspector. The sounds of a tuneless piano again assailed his ears, but this time it was not a rhapsody that was played, but a study by Clementi, and, as before, with unusual force, precision and rapidity. The servant with a handkerchief around one eye said that the captain was in, and showed Nekhludoff into the small reception-room, in which was a lounge, a table and a lamp, one side of the rose-colored shade of which was scorched, standing on a knitted woolen napkin. The inspector appeared with an expression of sadness and torment on his face.

"Glad to see you. What can I do for you?" he said, buttoning up the middle button of his uniform.

"I went to the vice-governor, and here is my pass," said Nekhludoff, handing him the document. "I would like to see Maslova."

"Markova?" asked the inspector, who could not hear him on account of the music.

"Maslova."

"O, yes! O, yes!"

The inspector rose and approached the door through which Clementi's roulade was heard.

"Marusia; if you would only stop for a little while," he said in a voice which showed that this music was the cross of his life; "I cannot hear anything."

The music ceased; discontented steps were heard, and some one looked through the door.

The inspector, as if relieved by the cessation of the music, lit a thick cigarette of light tobacco and offered one to Nekhludoff, which he refused.

"Can Maslova----"

"It is not convenient to see Maslova to-day," said the inspector.

"Why?"

"It is your own fault," slightly smiling, said the inspector. "Prince, you must not give her any money. If you wish to give her money, leave it with me; I will keep it for her. You see, you must have given her money yesterday, for she bought wine--it is hard to eradicate that evil--and is intoxicated to-day. In fact, she became unruly."

"Is it possible?"

"Why, I even had to employ strict measures, had her transferred to another cell. She is very tractable, but, please do not give her money. That is their failing."

Nekhludoff quickly recalled the incident of yesterday, and he was seized with fear.

"And may I see Bogodukhovskaia, the political?" Nekhludoff asked, after some silence.

"Well, yes," said the inspector. "What are you doing here?" he turned to a five-year-old girl who came into the room, walking toward her father, her eyes riveted on Nekhludoff. "Look out, or you will fall," he said, smiling, as the little girl, walking with her head turned toward Nekhludoff, tripped on the carpet and ran to her father.

"If she may be seen, I would go now."

"Oh yes; she may be seen, of course," said the inspector, embracing the little girl, who was still looking at Nekhludoff. "All right----"

The inspector rose and gently turning the girl aside, walked into the vestibule.

He had scarcely donned the overcoat handed him by the girl with the bandaged eye and crossed the threshold when the distinct sounds of Clementi's roulade broke out.

"She was at the Conservatory, but there is disorder in that institution. But she is very gifted," said the inspector, walking down the stairs. "She intends to appear at concerts."

The inspector and Nekhludoff neared the prison. The wicket immediately opened at the approach of the inspector. The wardens standing to attention followed him with their eyes. Four men with heads half shaved, carrying large vessels, met him in the vestibule, and as they spied him slunk back. One of them, in a particularly gloomy way, knit his brow, his black eyes flashing fire.

"Of course, her talent must be perfected; it cannot be neglected. But in a small apartment it is hard, you know," the inspector continued the conversation without paying any attention to the prisoners, and dragging his tired legs passed into the meeting-room, followed by Nekhludoff.

"Whom do you wish to see?" asked the inspector.

"Bogodukhovskaia."

"That is from the tower. You will have to wait a little," he turned to Nekhludoff.

"Couldn't you let me see, meantime, the prisoners Menshov--mother and son--who are charged with incendiarism?"

"That is from cell 21. Why, yes; they may be called out."

"Would you allow me to see the son in his cell?"

"It is quieter in the meeting-room."

"But it is interesting to see him there."

"Interesting!"

At that moment a dashing officer, the inspector's assistant, appeared at a side door.

"Conduct the Prince to Menshov's cell--No. 21," said the inspector to his assistant. "Then show him to the office. And I will call--what is her name?"

"Vera Bogodukhovskaia," said Nekhludoff.

The inspector's assistant was a light-haired young officer with dyed

mustache, who spread around him the odor of perfume.

"Follow me, please." He turned to Nekhludoff with a pleasant smile.

"Does our institution interest you?"

"Yes. And I am also interested in that man who, I was told, is innocent." The assistant shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, that may be," he said calmly, courteously admitting the guest into the ill-smelling corridor. "But they also lie often. Walk in, please."

The doors of the cells were open, and some prisoners stood in the corridor. Slightly nodding to the wardens and looking askance at the prisoners, who either pressed against the walls, entered their cells, or, stopping at the doors, stood erect like soldiers, the assistant escorted Nekhludoff through one corridor into another, on the left, which was iron-bolted.

This corridor was darker and more ill-smelling than the first. There was a row of cells on each side, the doors of which were locked. There was a hole in each door--eyelet, so called--of about an inch in diameter. There was no one in this corridor except an old warden with a wrinkled, sad face.

"Where is Menshov's cell?" asked the assistant.

"The eighth one on the left."

"Are these occupied?" asked Nekhludoff.

"All but one."