

CHAPTER LVII.

One of the most popular superstitions consists in the belief that every man is endowed with definite qualities--that some men are kind, some wicked; some wise, some foolish; some energetic, some apathetic, etc. This is not true. We may say of a man that he is oftener kind than wicked; oftener wise than foolish; oftener energetic than apathetic, and vice versa. But it would not be true to say of one man that he is always kind or wise, and of another that he is always wicked or foolish. And yet we thus divide people. This is erroneous. Men are like rivers--the water in all of them, and at every point, is the same, but every one of them is now narrow, now swift, now wide, now calm, now clear, now cold, now muddy, now warm. So it is with men. Every man bears within him the germs of all human qualities, sometimes manifesting one quality, sometimes another; and often does not resemble himself at all, manifesting no change. With some people these changes are particularly sharp. And to this class Nekhludoff belonged. These changes in him had both physical and spiritual causes; and one of these changes he was now undergoing.

That feeling of solemnity and joy of rejuvenation which he had experienced after the trial and after his first meeting with Katiousha had passed away, and, after the last meeting, fear and even disgust toward her had taken its place. He was also conscious that his duty was burdensome to him. He had decided not to leave her, to carry out

his intention of marrying her, if she so desired; but this was painful and tormenting to him.

On the day following his visit to Maslenikoff he again went to the prison to see her.

The inspector permitted him to see her; not in the office, however, nor in the lawyer's room, but in the women's visiting-room.

Notwithstanding his kind-heartedness, the inspector was more reserved than formerly. Evidently Nekhludoff's conversations with Maslenikoff had resulted in instructions being given to be more careful with this visitor.

"You may see her," he said, "only please remember what I told you as to giving her money. And as to her transfer to the hospital, about which His Excellency has written, there is no objection to it, and the physician also consented. But she herself does not wish it. 'I don't care to be chambermaid to that scurvy lot,' she said. That is the kind of people they are, Prince," he added.

Nekhludoff made no answer and asked to be admitted to her. The inspector sent the warden, and Nekhludoff followed him into the empty visiting-room.

Maslova was already there, quietly and timidly emerging from behind the grating. She approached close to Nekhludoff, and, looking past

him, quietly said:

"Forgive me, Dmitri Ivanovich; I have spoken improperly the other day."

"It is not for me to forgive you----" Nekhludoff began.

"But you must leave me," she added, and in the fearfully squinting eyes with which she glanced at him Nekhludoff again saw a strained and spiteful expression.

"But why should I leave you?"

"So."

"Why so?"

She again looked at him with that spiteful glance, as it seemed to him.

"Well, then, I will tell you," she said. "You leave me--I tell you that truly. I cannot. You must drop that entirely," she said, with quivering lips, and became silent. "That is true. I would rather hang myself."

Nekhludoff felt that in this answer lurked a hatred for him, an

unforgiven wrong, but also something else--something good and important. This reiteration of her refusal in a perfectly calm state destroyed in Nekhludoff's soul all his doubts, and brought him back to his former grave, solemn and benign state of mind.

"Katiousha, I repeat what I said," he said, with particular gravity.

"I ask you to marry me. If, however, you do not wish to, and so long as you do not wish to, I will be wherever you will be, and follow you wherever you may be sent."

"That is your business. I will speak no more," she said, and again her lips quivered.

He was also silent, feeling that he had no strength to speak.

"I am now going to the country, and from there to St. Petersburg," he said finally. "I will press your--our case, and with God's help the sentence will be set aside."

"I don't care if they don't. I deserved it, if not for that, for something else," she said, and he saw what great effort she had to make to repress her tears.

"Well, have you seen Menshova?" she asked suddenly, in order to hide her agitation. "They are innocent, are they not?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Such a wonderful little woman!" she said.

He related everything he had learned from Menshova, and asked her if she needed anything. She said she needed nothing.

They were silent again.

"Well, and as to the hospital," she said suddenly, casting on him her squinting glance, "if you wish me to go, I will go; and I will stop wine drinking, too."

Nekhludoff silently looked in her eyes. They were smiling.

"That is very good," was all he could say.

"Yes, yes; she is an entirely different person," thought Nekhludoff, for the first time experiencing, after his former doubts, the to him entirely new feeling of confidence in the invincibility of love.

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Returning to her ill-smelling cell, Maslova removed her coat and sat down on her cot, her hands resting on her knees. In the cell were only the consumptive with her babe, the old woman, Menshova, and the

watch-woman with her two children. The deacon's daughter had been removed to the hospital; the others were washing. The old woman lay on the cot sleeping; the children were in the corridor, the door to which was open. The consumptive with the child in her arms and the watch-woman, who did not cease knitting a stocking with her nimble fingers, approached Maslova.

"Well, have you seen him?" they asked.

Maslova dangled her feet, which did not reach the floor, and made no answer.

"What are you whimpering about?" said the watch-woman. "Above all, keep up your spirits. Oh, Katiousha! Well?" she said, rapidly moving her fingers.

Maslova made no answer.

"The women went washing. They say that to-day's alms were larger. Many things have been brought, they say," said the consumptive.

"Finashka!" shouted the watch-woman. "Where are you, you little rogue?" She drew out one of the knitting needles, stuck it into the ball of thread and stocking, and went out into the corridor.

At this moment the inmates of the cell, with bare feet in their prison

shoes, entered, each bearing a loaf of twisted bread, some even two. Theodosia immediately approached Maslova.

"Why, anything wrong?" she asked, lovingly, looking with her bright, blue eyes at Maslova. "And here is something for our tea," and she placed the leaves on the shelf.

"Well, has he changed his mind about marrying you?" asked Korableva.

"No, he has not, but I do not wish to," answered Maslova, "and I told him so."

"What a fool!" said Korableva, in her basso voice.

"What is the good of marrying if they cannot live together?" asked Theodosia.

"Is not your husband going with you?" answered the watch-woman.

"We are legally married," said Theodosia. "But why should he marry her legally if he cannot live with her?"

"What a fool! Why, if he marries her he will make her rich!"

"He said: 'Wherever you may be, I will be with you,'" said Maslova.

"He may go if he likes; he needn't if he don't. I will not ask him. He is now going to St. Petersburg to try to get me out. All the ministers there are his relatives," she continued, "but I don't care for them."

"Sure enough," Korableva suddenly assented, reaching down into her bag, and evidently thinking of something else. "What do you say--shall we have some wine?"

"Not I," answered Maslova. "Drink yourselves."