

CHAPTER XI.

With a note from Prince Ivan Michaelovitch, Nekhludoff went to Senator Wolf--un homme très comme il faut, as the Prince had described him.

Wolf had just breakfasted and, as usual, was smoking a cigar, to aid his digestion, when Nekhludoff arrived. Vladimir Vasilievitch Wolf was really un homme très comme il faut, and this quality he placed above all else; from the height of it he looked upon all other people, and could not help valuing this quality, because, thanks to it, he had gained a brilliant career--the same career he strove for; that is to say, through marriage he obtained a fortune, which brought him a yearly income of eighteen thousand rubles, and by his own efforts he obtained a senatorship. He considered himself not only un homme très comme il faut, but a man of chivalric honesty. By honesty he understood the refusal to take bribes from private people. But to do everything in his power to obtain all sorts of traveling expenses, rents and disbursements he did not consider dishonest. Nor did he consider it dishonest to rob his wife and sister-in-law of their fortunes. On the contrary, he considered that a wise arrangement of his family affairs.

The home circle of Vladimir Vasilievitch consisted of his characterless wife, her sister, whose fortune he managed to get into his own hands by selling her property and depositing the money in his

own name, and his gentle, scared, homely daughter, who was leading a solitary, hard life, and whose only diversion consisted in visiting the religious meetings at Aline's and Countess Catherine Ivanovna's.

The son of Vladimir Vasilievitch, a good-natured, bearded boy of fifteen, who at that age had already commenced to drink and lead a depraved life which lasted till he was twenty years old, was driven from the house for the reason that he did not pass examinations in any school, and keeping bad company, and, running into debt, he had compromised his father. The father paid once for his son two hundred and thirty rubles, and paid six hundred rubles a second time, but declared that that was the last time, and if the son did not reform he would drive him from the house and have nothing to do with him. Not only did the son not reform, but contracted another debt of a thousand rubles, and told his father that he did not care if he was driven from the house, since life at home was torture to him. Then Vladimir Vasilievitch told his son that he could go where he pleased; that he was no longer his son. Since then no one in the house dared to speak of his son to him. And Vladimir Vasilievitch was quite certain that he had arranged his family affairs in the best possible manner.

Wolf, with a flattering and somewhat derisive smile--it was an involuntary expression of his consciousness of his *comme il faut* superiority--halted in his exercise long enough to greet Nekhludoff and read the note.

"Please take a seat, but you must excuse me. If you have no objection I will walk," he said, putting his hands in the pockets of his jacket, and treading lightly up and down the diagonal of the large cabinet, furnished in an austere style. "Very glad to make your acquaintance, and, of course, to please the Count Ivan Michaelovitch," emitting the fragrant, blue smoke, and carefully removing the cigar from his mouth so as not to lose the ashes.

"I would like to ask you to hasten the hearing of the appeal, because if the prisoner is to go to Siberia, it would be desirable that she go as soon as possible," said Nekhludoff.

"Yes, yes, with the first steamer from Nijhni; I know," said Wolf, with his condescending smile, who always knew everything in advance, whatever the subject mentioned to him. "What is the name of the prisoner?"

"Maslova."

Wolf walked to the table and looked into the papers.

"That's right--Maslova. Very well; I will ask my associates. We will hear the case Wednesday."

"May I wire my lawyer?"

"So you have a lawyer? What for? But if you wish it, all right."

"The grounds of appeal may be insufficient," said Nekhludoff, "but I think it may be seen from the case that the sentence was the result of a misunderstanding."

"Yes, yes; that may be so, but the Senate cannot enter into the merits of the case," said Vladimir Vasilievitch, sternly, glancing at the ashes of his cigar. "The Senate only looks after the proper interpretation and application of the law."

"This, I think, is an exceptional case."

"I know; I know. All cases are exceptional. We will do what the law requires. That is all." The ashes were still intact, but had already cracked and were in danger of collapse. "And do you often visit St. Petersburg?" asked Wolf, holding the cigar so that the ashes would not fall. The ashes were unstable, however, and Wolf carefully carried them to the ash-holder, into which they were finally precipitated.

"What an awful catastrophe Kamensky met with," said Wolf. "A fine young man, and an only son. Especially the condition of the mother"--he went on repeating almost word for word the story of a duel of which all St. Petersburg was talking at the time. After a few more words about Countess Catherine Ivanovna and her passion for the new religious tendency which Vladimir Vasilievitch neither praised nor

condemned, but which, for un homme très comme il faut, was evidently superfluous, he rang the bell.

Nekhludoff bowed himself out.

"If it is convenient for you, come to dinner," said Wolf, extending his hand, "say on Wednesday. I will then give you a definite answer."

It was already late, and Nekhludoff drove home, that is, to his aunt's.