

CHAPTER XIV.

"It is awful!" said Nekhludoff to the lawyer, as they entered the waiting-room. "In the plainest possible case they cavil at idle forms. It is awful!"

"The case was spoiled at the trial," said Fanirin.

"Selenin, too, was against reversal. It is awful, awful!" Nekhludoff continued to repeat. "What is to be done now?"

"We will petition the Emperor. Head it yourself while you are here. I will prepare the petition."

At that moment Wolf in his uniform and stars hung on his breast entered the waiting-room and approached Nekhludoff.

"I am sorry, my dear Prince, but the grounds were insufficient," he said, shrugging his narrow shoulders; and, closing his eyes, he proceeded on his way.

After Wolf came Selenin, who had learned from the Senators that Nekhludoff, his former friend, was present.

"I did not expect to meet you here," he said, approaching Nekhludoff

and smiling with his lips, while his eyes remained sad.

"And I did not know that you were the Attorney General."

"Associate," Selenin corrected him. "But what brought you to the Senate?"

"I came here hoping to find justice, and to save an innocent woman."

"What woman?"

"The case that has just been decided."

"Oh, the Maslova case!" said Selenin. "An entirely groundless appeal."

"The question is not of the appeal, but of the woman, who is innocent and undergoing punishment."

Selenin sighed.

"Quite possible, but----"

"It is not merely possible, but certain."

"How do you know?"

"I know because I was on the jury. I know wherein we made the mistake."

Selenin became thoughtful.

"It should have been declared on the trial," he said.

"I did so."

"It should have been made part of the record. If that had appeared in the appeal----"

Selenin, who was always busy, and did not mingle in society, had evidently not heard of Nekhludoff's romance. Nekhludoff, however, decided not to speak to him of his relations to Maslova.

"But it is evident even now that the verdict was preposterous," he said.

"The Senate has no right to say so. If the Senate attempted to interfere with the verdicts of the courts upon its own view of the justness of the verdicts themselves, there would be greater risks of justice being miscarried than established," he said, recalling the preceding case. "Besides, the verdicts of juries would lose their significance."

"I only know one thing, and that is that the woman is entirely innocent, and the last hope of saving her from an undeserved punishment is gone. The highest judicial institution has affirmed what was absolutely unjust."

"It has not affirmed because it has not and could not consider the merits of the case," said Selenin, blinking his eyes. "You have probably stopped at your aunts," he added, evidently wishing to change the subject of conversation. "I learned yesterday that you were in St. Petersburg. Countess Catherine Ivanovna had invited me and you to be present at the meeting of the English preacher," said Selenin, smiling only with his lips.

"Yes, I was present, but left with disgust," Nekhludoff said angrily, vexed at Selenin's leading away from the conversation.

"Why should you be disgusted? At all events it is a manifestation of religious feeling, although one-sided and sectarian," said Selenin.

"It is such strange nonsense," said Nekhludoff.

"Well, no. The only strange thing here is that we know so little of the teachings of our church that we receive an exposition of its fundamental dogmas as a new revelation," said Selenin, as though hastening to tell his former friends his new views.

Nekhludoff gazed at Selenin with wonder. Selenin did not lower his eyes, in which there was an expression not only of sadness, but of ill-will.

"But we will discuss it later," said Selenin. "I am coming," he turned to the usher who approached him deferentially. "We must meet again," he added, sighing; "but you can never be found. You will always find me at home at seven. I live on Nadeghinskaia," and he mentioned the number. "It is a long time since we met," he added, again smiling with his lips.

"I will come if I have the time," said Nekhludoff, feeling that the man whom he had once loved was made strange and incomprehensible to him, if not hostile, by this short conversation.

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As student Nekhludoff knew Selenin as a dutiful son, a true friend, and, for his years, an educated, worldly man, with great tact, always elegant and handsome, and uncommonly truthful and honest withal. He studied diligently, without any difficulty and without the slightest ostentation, receiving gold medals for his compositions.

He had made it the aim of his young life, not merely by word, but in reality, to serve others, and thought he saw his chance of doing so in

government service. Systematically looking over the various activities to which he might devote his energies, he decided that he could be most useful in the legislative department, and entered it. But notwithstanding his most accurate and conscientious attention to his duties, he found nothing in them to satisfy his desire to be useful. His discontent, due to the pettiness and vanity of his immediate superiors, grew until an opportunity offered to enter the Senate. He was better off in the Senate, but the same feeling of dissatisfaction pursued him. He constantly felt that things were not what he expected them to be, and what they should be. During his service in the Senate, his relations obtained for him the post of gentleman of the Emperor's bed-chamber, and he was obliged to drive around in gorgeous uniform to thank various people. In this post he felt even more than before out of place. At the same time, on the one hand, he could not refuse the appointment, because he would not disappoint those who thought they were pleasing him by it, and, on the other hand, the appointment flattered his vanity. It pleased him to see himself in a looking-glass in a gold embroidered uniform, and to receive the tokens of respect shown him by some people on his appointment.

The same thing happened with respect to his marriage. A brilliant match was arranged for him, as it is regarded from the world's standpoint. And he married principally because to refuse would have been to offend and cause pain to the bride and those who had arranged the match. Hence the marriage to a young, pretty, distinguished girl flattered his vanity and gave him pleasure. But the marriage soon

turned out to be "not the thing, you know," more so even than Court service. After her first child, his wife did not wish to have any more, and plunged into luxurious social life, in which he was obliged to participate nolens volens. Although this poisoned the life of her husband, and brought her only exertion and fatigue, she nevertheless diligently pursued it. All his efforts to change her mode of life could not alter her confidence, supported by all her relatives and acquaintances, that it was quite proper.

The child, a girl with long, golden curls, was an entire stranger to her father, mainly because she was brought up not in accord with his desires. The result was the customary misunderstanding between the husband and wife, and even in a want of desire to understand each other, and a quiet, silent struggle, hidden from strangers and tempered by propriety, which made Selenin's life at home very burdensome. So that his family life turned out to be "not the thing, you know," in still greater degree than his service or the Court appointment.

These were the reasons why his eyes were always sad. And this was why, seeing Nekhludoff, whom he had known before all these lies had fastened themselves upon him, he thought of himself as he had been then, and more than ever felt the discord between his character and his surroundings, and he became painfully sad. The same feeling came over Nekhludoff, after the first impression of joy at meeting an old friend.

That was why, having promised that they would meet each other, neither sought that meeting, nor had they seen each other on this visit of Nekhludoff to St. Petersburg.