

CHAPTER XXIV.

The passenger train which was to carry away Nekhludoff was to start in two hours. Nekhludoff at first thought of utilizing these two hours in visiting his sister, but after the impressions of the morning he felt so excited and exhausted that he seated himself on a sofa in the saloon for first-class passengers. But he unexpectedly felt so drowsy that he turned on his side, placed his palm under his cheek, and immediately fell asleep.

He was awakened by a servant in dress-coat holding a napkin in his hand.

"Mister, mister, are you not Prince Nekhludoff? A lady is looking for you."

Nekhludoff quickly raised himself, rubbing his eyes, and the incidents of the morning passed before his mind's eye--the procession of the convicts, the men who had died from the heat, the grated windows of the cars, and the women huddled behind them, one of whom was laboring in child-birth without aid, and another piteously smiling to him from behind the iron grating. But in reality he saw a table covered with bottles, vases, chandeliers, and fruit stands; nimble servants bustling around the table, and in the depth of the saloon, before the lunch-counter, loaded with viands and fruits, the backs of passengers

leisurely eating their luncheon.

While Nekhludoff was raising himself and shaking off the slumber, he noticed that everybody in the saloon was curiously watching the entrance. He turned his eyes in the same direction, and saw a procession of people who bore an arm-chair in which was seated a lady, her head covered with tulle. The first bearer was a lackey who seemed familiar to Nekhludoff. The one behind was also a familiar porter, with white crown lace around his cap. Behind the arm-chair came an elegantly dressed maid-servant with curly hair, carrying a round leather box and a sunshade. Further behind came the short-necked Prince Korchagin, his shoulders thrown back; then Missy, Misha, their cousin, and a diplomat Osten, unfamiliar to Nekhludoff, with his long neck and prominent Adam's apple and an ever cheerful appearance. He walked impressively, but evidently jestingly talking to the smiling Missy. Behind them came the doctor, angrily smoking a cigarette.

The Korchagins were moving from their estate to the Prince's sister, whose estate was situated on the Nijhni road.

The procession passed into the ladies' room. The old Prince, however, seating himself at the table, immediately called over a waiter and began to order something. Missy with Osten also stopped in the dining-room, and were about to sit down when they saw an acquaintance in the doorway and went to meet her. It was Natalia Ivanovna. She was escorted by Agrippina Petrovna, and as she entered the dining-room she

looked around. At almost the same moment she noticed Missy and her brother. She first approached Missy, only nodding her head to Nekhludoff. But after kissing Missy she immediately turned to him.

"At last I have found you," she said.

After greeting his sister, Nekhludoff entered into conversation with Missy, who told him that their house had burned down, necessitating their removal to her aunt's. Osten began to relate a droll anecdote anent the fire. Nekhludoff, without listening to Osten, turned to his sister:

"How glad I am that you came!"

In the course of their conversation he told her how sorry he felt for having fallen out with her husband; that he had intended to return and confess that he was at fault, but that he knew not how her husband would take it.

"I spoke improperly to him, and it tortured me," he said.

"I knew it. I was sure you didn't intend it," said his sister. "Don't you know----"

The tears welled up in her eyes, and she touched her brother's hand. It was spoken tenderly; he understood her, and was affected. The

meaning of her words was that, besides her love for her husband, her love for her brother was dear and important to her, and that any disagreement with him caused her suffering.

"Thank you, thank you. Oh, what I have seen to-day!" he said, suddenly recalling the two dead convicts. "Two convicts have been killed."

"How killed?"

"So, simply killed. They have been brought here in this heat, and two of them died from sunstroke."

"Impossible! How? To-day? Just now?"

"Yes, just now. I have seen their corpses."

"Why were they killed? Who killed them?" asked Natalia Ivanovna.

"Those who forcibly brought them here," said Nekhludoff excitedly, feeling that she took the same view of this as her husband.

"Oh, my God!" said Agrippina Petrovna, coming nearer to them.

"Yes, we have no conception of the life these unfortunates are leading, and it is necessary to know it," Nekhludoff added, looking at the old Prince, who, sitting at the table with a napkin tucked under

his chin and a large glass before him, at that moment glanced at Nekhludoff.

"Nekhludoff," he shouted. "Won't you take sauce to cool off? It is excellent stuff."

Nekhludoff refused and turned away.

"But what will you do?" continued Natalia Ivanovna.

"I will do what I can. I do not know what, but I feel that I must do something. And I will do what I can."

"Yes, yes, I understand that. And what about him?" she said, smiling and nodding in the direction of Korchagin. "Is it really all over?"

"Yes, it is and I think without regret on either side."

"I am very sorry. I like her. But I suppose it must be so. But why should you bind yourself? Why are you following her?"

"Because it is proper that I should," Nekhludoff said dryly, as though desiring to change the subject.

But he immediately felt ashamed of his coldness to his sister. "Why should I not tell her what I think?" he thought; "and let Agrippina

Petrovna also know it," he said to himself, looking at the old servant.

The presence of Agrippina Petrovna only encouraged him to repeat his decision to his sister.

"You are speaking of my intention to marry Katiusha. You see, I have decided to do it, but she firmly and decidedly refused me," he said, and his voice trembled, as it always did when he spoke of it. "She does not desire my sacrifice, and in her position she sacrifices very much, and I could not accept her sacrifice, even if it were only momentary. That is why I am following her, and I will be near her, and will endeavor to relieve her condition as far as I am able."

Natalia Ivanovna was silent. Agrippina Petrovna looked inquiringly at Natalia Ivanovna, shaking her head. At that moment the procession started again from the ladies' room. The same handsome Phillip and the porter were bearing the Princess. She stopped the bearers, beckoned Nekhludoff to her side, and in a piteously languid manner extended her white, ring-bedecked hand, with horror anticipating the hard pressure of his.

"_Epouvantable!_" she said of the heat. "It is unbearable. _Ce climat me tue._" And having said a few words of the horrors of the Russian climate, and invited Nekhludoff to visit them, she gave a sign to the bearers. "Don't fail to come, now," she added, turning her long face

to Nekhludoff.

Nekhludoff went out on the platform. The procession turned to the right, toward the first-class coaches. Nekhludoff, with a porter who carried his baggage, and Tarass, with his bags, turned to the left.

"That is my comrade," Nekhludoff said to his sister, pointing to Tarass, whose story he had told her before.

"What, are you taking the third class?" asked Natalia Ivanovna, when Nekhludoff stopped before a third-class car and the porter, with Tarass, entered it.

"Yes, I will have it more convenient then. Tarass is with me. Another thing," he added. "I have not yet given the Kusminskoie land to the peasants. So that, in case of my death, your children will inherit it."

"Dmitri, don't talk that way," said Natalia Ivanovna.

"And if I do give it away, then all I have to tell you is that the remainder will be theirs, for I shall hardly marry. And if I do, there will be no children--so that----"

"Dmitri, please stop it," said Natalia Ivanovna; but Nekhludoff saw that she was glad to hear what he was saying.

The time for parting had come. The conductors were closing the doors, inviting the passengers to take seats, others to leave the cars.

Nekhludoff entered the heated and ill-smelling car and immediately appeared on its platform. Natalia Ivanovna was standing opposite, and evidently wished to say something, but could not find words. She could not say " _crivez_," because they had long been ridiculing the customary phrase of parting friends. The conversation about financial affairs and the inheritance at once destroyed the tender relations they had resumed. They now felt themselves estranged from each other. So that Natalia Ivanovna was glad when the train began to move and she could say, with a smile: "Well, Dmitri, good-by!" As soon as the train left she began to think how to tell her husband of her conversation with her brother, and her face became grave and worried.

And though Nekhludoff entertained the best sentiments toward his sister, and he concealed nothing from her, he now felt estranged from her, and was glad to be rid of her. He felt that the Natasha of old was no more; that there was only a slave of an unpleasant, dark, hairy man with whom he had nothing in common. He plainly saw this, because her face became illumined with peculiar animation only when he spoke of that which interested her husband--of the distribution of the land among the peasants, and of the inheritance. This made him sad.