

PART THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

The party of convicts to which Maslova belonged had gone about thirty-five hundred miles. It was not until Perm was reached that Nekhludoff succeeded in obtaining Maslova's transfer to the contingent of politicals, as he was advised to do by Bogodukhovskaia, who was among them.

The journey to Perm was very burdensome to Maslova, both physically and morally--physically because of the crowded condition of their quarters, the uncleanliness and disgusting insects, which gave her no rest; morally because of the equally loathsome men who, though they changed at every stopping place, were like the insects, always insolent, intrusive and gave her little rest. The cynicism prevailing among the convicts and their overseers was such that every woman, especially the young women, had to be on the alert. Maslova was particularly subject to these attacks because of her attractive looks and her well-known past. This condition of constant dread and struggle was very burdensome to her. The firm repulse with which she met the impertinent advances of the men was taken by them as an insult and

exasperated them. Her condition in this respect was somewhat relieved by the presence of Theodosia and Tarass, who, learning that his wife was subjected to these insults, had himself included among the prisoners, and riding as such from Nijhni, was able to protect her to some extent.

Maslova's transfer to the division of the politicals bettered her situation in every respect. Besides the improvement in the quarters, food and treatment, her condition was also made easier by the fact that the persecution of the men ceased and she was no longer reminded of her past, which she was so anxious to forget now. The principal advantage of the transfer, however, lay in the acquaintance she made of some people who exerted a decisive influence over her.

At stopping places she was permitted to mingle with the politicals, but, being a strong woman, she was compelled to walk with the other prisoners. She thus walked from Tomsk. There were two politicals who traveled on foot with her--Maria Pablovna Stchetinina, the same pretty girl with the sheepish eyes who had attracted Nekhludoff's attention when visiting Bogodukhovskaia, and one Simonson, banished to Yakoutsk--that same shaggy man with deep-set eyes whom Nekhludoff had noticed on the same occasion. Maria Pablovna walked, because she yielded her place on the wagon to a pregnant woman; Simonson, because he would not profit by class advantages. These three started on foot with the other convicts in the early morning, the politicals following them later in wagons. It was at the last stopping place, near a large

city, where the party was handed over to another convoy officer.

It was a chill September morning. Snow and rain fell alternately between cold blasts of wind. All the prisoners--400 men and 50 women--were already in the court-yard, some crowding around the chief officer of the convoy, who was paying out money to the overseers for the day's rations; others were buying food of the hucksters who had been admitted into the court-yard. There were a din of prisoners' voices counting money and the shrill conversation of the hucksters.

Katiousha and Maria Pablovna, both in boots and short fur coats and girdled with 'kerchiefs, came into the court-yard from the house and walked toward the hucksters, who were sitting under the northern wall and calling out their wares--fresh meat-pies, fish, boiled shred paste, buckwheat mush, meat, eggs, milk; one woman even offered roasted pig.

Simonson, in rubber jacket and similar galoshes, bound with whip-cord over woolen socks (he was a vegetarian and did not use the skin of animals), was also awaiting the departure of the party. He stood near the entrance of the house, writing down in a note-book a thought that occurred to him. "If," he wrote, "a bacterium were to observe and analyze the nail of a man, it would declare him an inorganic being. Similarly, from an observation of the earth's surface, we declare it to be inorganic. That is wrong."

Having bought eggs, buns, fish and fresh wheat bread, Maslova packed them away in a bag while Maria Pablovna settled for the food, when among the prisoners there arose a commotion. Every one became silent, and the prisoners began to form into ranks. An officer came forth and gave final orders.

Everything proceeded as usual--the prisoners were counted over, the chains were examined and men were handcuffed in pairs.