

CHAPTER X.

Nekhludoff, after parting with the Englishman, went straight to his hotel, and walked about his room for a long time. The affair with Katiousha was at an end. There was something ugly in the very memory of it. But it was not that which grieved him. Some other affair of his was yet unsettled--an affair which tortured him and required his attention. In his imagination rose the gloomy scenes of the hundreds and thousands of human beings pent up in the pestiferous air. The laughter of the prisoners resounded in his ears. He saw again among the dead bodies the beautiful, angry, waxen face of the dead Kryltzoff; and the question whether he was mad, or all those who commit those evils and think themselves wise were mad, bore in upon his mind with renewed power, and he found no answer to it. The principal difficulty consisted in finding an answer to the principal question, which was: What should be done with those who became brutalized in the struggle for life?

When he became tired walking about the room he sat down on the lounge, close by the lamp, and mechanically opened the Bible which the Englishman had presented him, and which he had thrown on the table while emptying his pockets. They say, he thought, that this Bible contains the solution to all questions. So, opening it, he began to read at the place at which it opened itself--Matt. x., 8. After a while he inclined close to the lamp and became like one petrified. An

exultation, the like of which he had not experienced for a long time, took possession of his soul, as though, after long suffering and weariness, he found at last liberty and rest. He did not sleep the whole night. As is the case with many who read the Bible for the first time, he now, on reading it again, grasped the full meaning of words which he had known long ago, but which he had not understood before. Like a sponge that absorbs everything, so he absorbed everything that was important, necessary and joyful.

"That is the principal thing," thought Nekhludoff. "We all live in the silly belief that we ourselves are the lords of our world, that this world has been given us for our enjoyment. But this is evidently untrue. Somebody must have sent us here for some reason. And for this reason it is plain that we will suffer like those laborers suffer who do not fulfill the wishes of their Master. The will of the Lord is expressed in the teachings of Christ. Let man obey Him, and the Kingdom of the Lord will come on earth, and man will derive the greatest possible good.

"_Seek the truth and the Kingdom of God, and the rest will come of itself._ We seek that which is to come, and do not find it, and not only do we not build the Kingdom of God, but we destroy it.

"So this will henceforth be the task of my life!"

And indeed, from that night a new life began for Nekhludoff; not so

much because he had risen into a new stage of existence, but because all that had happened to him till then assumed for him an altogether new meaning.

THE END.