

THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN, OR THREE MORE DEATHS

BY LEO TOLSTOY.

(Continued from Last Sunday.)

ONE of the leaders of the revolution, a terrorist party, Ignatius Mejenetsky, the one who attracted Svetlogoub into this activity, was being transferred from the province where he was arrested to St. Petersburg. In the same provincial prison in which he halted was also held the old sectarian who had witnessed Svetlogoub's departure for his execution. He was shortly being sent to Siberia. He never ceased thinking of the true faith and how and from where he could learn all about it, and sometimes he recalled to mind the bright youth who had gone to his death with a joyful smile.

Hearing that in the same place there was confined a comrade of this youth, a man who shared his faith, the sectarian was delighted and persuaded the chief warden to let him have an interview with him.

Mejenetsky, notwithstanding the strictness of prison discipline, had not ceased to maintain communication with his warty, and was from day to day awaiting news about a mine he had invented and prepared for the blowing up of the czar's train. Now, recollecting some details he had overlooked, he was arranging the means of transmitting them to his co-workers. When the chief warden came to his cell and, cautiously and in a low voice, told him that one of the prisoners wished to see him, he was glad, hoping that this interview would be the means of facilitating intercourse with his friends.

"Who is he?"

"A peasant."

"What does he want?"

"He wishes to speak about faith."

"Well, send him in," he said. "These sectarians also detest the government. Perhaps he may be of use," thought he.

The warden went out, and in a few minutes opened the door and let in a little shrunken old man with thick hair, a thin, grayish beard and with kind, weary-looking blue eyes.

"What do you want?" asked Mejenetsky.

"The old man glanced at him and quickly dropping his eyes stretched out a small, active, dry-looking hand."

"What do you want?" repeated Mejenetsky.

"I would like to have a word with you."

"What about?"

"About faith."

"What faith?"

"They say you are of the same belief as the youth whom the servants of Anti-Christ strangled with a rope at Odessa."

"What youth?"

"Why the one who was strangled at Odessa last Autumn."

"You probably mean Svetlogoub?"

"That's the one. Was he your friend?"

The old man with every question keenly searched Mejenetsky's face with his kind eyes and immediately looked down again.

"Yes, he was very near to me."

"And of the same faith?"

"Apparently so," said Mejenetsky, smiling.

"It is about this I wish to speak to you."

"What is it exactly you require?"

"To ascertain your faith."

"Our faith—well, all that," said Mejenetsky, shrugging his shoulders. "Our faith consists in this: We believe that the power has been usurped by some who torment and deceive the people, and that one should, without sparing one's self, struggle with these men in order to deliver the people whom they exploit."

"Mejenetsky, frankly and without disguise, word—'torment,' he added, correcting himself. "Therefore it is necessary to destroy them. They kill, and they should be killed until they think themselves."

The old sectarian, with his eyes on the ground, kept sighing.

"Our faith consists in overthrowing the despotic government without sparing ourselves, and in establishing a free representative national one."

The old man sighed heavily, got up and, smoothing his coat, went down on his knees and stretched himself out at Mejenetsky's feet, striking his forehead against the dirty floor.

"Why are you bowing?"

"Do not deceive me. Tell me what your faith is," said the old man without rising or lifting his head.

"I have told you what it is. But get up or else I won't talk with you."

The old man got up.

"And this was the faith of that youth?"

He said, standing in front of Mejenetsky and from time to time looking into his face with his kind eyes and again dropping them.

"This was his faith, and for that he was hanged, and I am now being sent to solitary confinement for the same cause."

The old man made a low bow from his waist, and silently withdrew.

"No, that was not his faith," thought he. "He knew the true faith, whereas this one either boasts of being of the same belief or else does not wish to disclose it. Well, then, I will have to try to search. Both here and in Siberia. God is everywhere, and there are men everywhere. Once on the road, ask your way."

He thought the old man and again took up his Testament, which opened of itself at Revelation, and putting on his spectacles he seated himself at the window and began to read.

IX.

Another seven years passed. Mejenetsky had concluded his solitary confinement in the Petropavlovsky fortress and was being transferred to penal labor.

He had undergone much during those seven years, but his opinions had not changed or his energy abated. During the examinations before his confinement in the fortress he astonished the prosecutors and judges by his firm and contemptuous attitude toward those in whose power he was. In the depth of his soul he imprisoned and his inability to complete the task he had commenced caused him much suffering, but he did not show this. As soon as he came in touch with others a fierce defiance arose in him. To the questions put to him he was silent, and only answered when there was an opportunity of spitting those who cross-examined him—the gendarme officer or the prosecutor.

When the usual statement was made to him, "You may alleviate your position by a sincere confession," he smiled contemptuously, and after a silence said:

"If you hope to force me by advantage or fear to betray my comrades, you are judging me according to your own measure. Can you really imagine that in undertaking the work for which you are judging me I had not prepared myself for the worst? You, chief officer, astonish or intimidate me by anything. Do with me what you may, what you like, but I will not speak."

And it was pleasant to him to see the way they looked at each other in confusion.

When he was taken to the Petropavlovsky fortress and placed in a small, damp cell with a dark pane of glass in a window high up, he understood that it was not for months but for years, and was overcome with horror. Dreadful was the regulated, lifeless silence of this place and the consciousness that it was not him alone, but that here, behind these impenetrable walls, other prisoners were imprisoned—condemned to 20 years, committing suicide, being executed, going mad and gradually dying from consumption. Here were both women and men and perhaps friends.

"Years will pass and thou also will go mad or hang thyself or die, and no one will know about it," thought he.

And in his heart there arose hatred against all men and especially those who were the cause of his incarceration. This hatred demanded the presence of his ob-



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jects, demanded motion, noise. But here was lifeless silence and the soft steps of silent men who did not answer questions, the sound of doors opening and shutting, the arrival of food at regular intervals, the visits of silent individuals, and through the dim gleams of light, the rising sun; darkness and the same silence, the same soft steps and the same sounds. Thus it was today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow, finding an outlet for his heart.

He tried to communicate by knocks, but received no answer, and his knocks elicited again the same soft steps and the even voice of a man threatening him with the dark cell.

His only period of rest and refreshment was the time of sleep, but after this the awakening was dreadful. In his dreams he always saw himself at liberty and mostly absorbed with interests which he considered as insignificant when he was in the cell. He played on some kind of strange fiddle, paid court to young ladies, rowed in boats, went shooting, or else for some strange reason, in his dream, he was endowed with a doctor's degree by a foreign university, and in return made speeches of thanks at dinner.

These dreams were so vivid, while the reality was so dull and monotonous, that the memories of them were with difficulty distinguished from actuality.

The painful feature of the dreams was that for the most part he awoke at the very moment when something was just going to happen toward which he was striving, while he desired to add to the shock in the heart and all the pleasant environment disappeared; there remained only the painful, unsatisfied longing, and again this gray wall, with damp spots, lighted with a little lamp, and under his body the hard planks with the straw bed, pressed up on one side.

Sleep was his best time. But as his confinement went on he was less and less able to sleep. He sought sleep as the greatest happiness, and the more he desired it the more wakeful he became. It was enough for him to say, "Am I falling asleep?" for sleep to be dispelled.

Running and jumping about in his little cell gave him no relief. From this effort he only became weak, and excited his nerves more and more. A pain came in the crown of his head and if he closed his eyes there would appear on a dark speckled background weird faces, bald, bald, big-mouthed, crooked-mouthed, each one more awful than the others, all making the most horrible grimaces. Afterward they appeared to him even when his eyes were open, and then faces alone, but whole figures, and they began to talk and to dance. He would be filled with terror, would jump up, hit his head against the wall and scream, then the little slide in the door would open and a slow, even voice would say:

"Screaming is not allowed."

"Call the Governor!" shrieked Mejenetsky. He would get no answer, and the slide would close.

And such a despair would seize him that he desired only one thing—death.

Once when in such a state he decided to take his life. In the cell there was an axe, a regulator, to which one might fix a rope with a noose, and mounting on the bed hang oneself. But there was no rope. He began to tear his sheet into narrow strips, but they proved to be too few. Then he decided to strangle himself to death and for two days he ate nothing, but became so weak on the third that a severe fit of delirium took hold of him. When his food was brought in he was lying on the floor, with open eyes, unconscious.

The doctor came, put him on the bed, gave him some rum and morphine, and he fell asleep.

When he awoke next day and found the doctor standing over him shaking his head the familiar exhilarating feeling of hatred which he for long had not experienced suddenly surged up in Mejenetsky.

"How is it you are not ashamed," he said to the doctor while the latter, with a bent head was listening to his pulse, "of serving here? Why are you treating me in order to torture me again? Why, if the same as being feeling at the flogging and allowing the operation to be repeated."

"Be good enough to turn over on your back," said the doctor while the latter, looking at him and getting his stethoscope out of a side pocket.

"The other doctors healed the wounds in order that the remaining 300 blows could be inflicted. Go to the doctor, to the devil!" he suddenly shouted, flinging his legs off the bed. "Get away! I'll manage to die without you!"

"This is not well, young man; we have answers of our own for impertinence."

"To the devil with you, to the devil!"

And Mejenetsky was so terrible that the doctor made haste to leave.

X.

Whether it was the result of the medicine or that he had passed the crisis, or perhaps the wrath aroused in him against the doctor had cured him, however, from this time he took hold of himself and began quite another life.

They cannot and will not keep me here forever," he said. "They will set me free some day. Perhaps, and this is the most likely, the form of government will change (ours are continuing their work), and therefore one should preserve one's life in order to come out healthy and be able to take up the work again."

He considered for a long time as to the kind of life best suited for his purpose, and this was what he decided upon. He went to bed at 9 o'clock and compelled himself to stay there whether asleep or not until 5 in the morning. Then he got up, washed and dressed, did some physical

meal, which was brought to him, and always ate in moderation. Then he remained at home and studied either history or mathematics and sometimes, on Sundays, literature. His historical studies consisted in first selecting a particular epoch and nation and recalling to mind the facts and chronology. For his mathematical lessons he solved in his mind calculations and geometrical problems (this was his favorite occupation). On Sundays he recalled Pushkin, Gogol, Shakespeare, and composed a little himself.

Before bed he made another little excursion in his imagination, having with him comrades, men and women, merry, humorous and sometimes serious conversations, which had either actually taken place or else were invented by him for the occasion. And so it went on until night. Before going to bed he made in reality 300 steps, for the sake of exercise, in his cage; then lay down on his back and generally went to sleep.

On the next day it was the same.

By, but to his astonishment and annoyance these young people not only failed to regard him as their forerunner and teacher, but treated him, as it were, with a condescension, passing over and excluding his views as obsolete.

According to them these new revolutionists—all that Mejenetsky and his friends had done, all their attempts to raise the peasants, and above all, their system of terrorizing and the assassinations of the Governor Kuropatkin, of Mezentsev and of Alexander II himself—all this was a series of mistakes. All this led only to that reaction which triumphed during the reign of Alexander III, and caused the country to relapse almost to its condition during serfdom. The people's salvation, according to the new teachers, was in quite another direction.

For nearly two days and nights the disputations between Mejenetsky and his new acquaintances continued. One, the leader of the rest, Roman, as they called him, using his Christian name, specially irritated Mejenetsky by his determined assurance in his rightness of his views and by his condescending and even sarcastic condemnation of all the past activity of Mejenetsky and his comrades.

The people, according to Roman, are a coarse crowd, and with the populace in their present state of development nothing can be done. All attempts to raise the Russian peasant population were endeavoring to set fire to a stone or to ice. The people must be educated, taught solidarity, and this can be attained by the growth of vast industries, and as the outcome of this, a socialistic organization of the people. The land is not only unnecessary to the people, but it is the land that makes them conservative and servile. This is the case not only with us, but also in Europe. And he cited from memory opinions of authoritative and statistical data. The people should be liberated from the land, and the quicker the better; the more they take up factory life and the more their hands be seized by the capitalist and the more they are oppressed the better. Despotism, and above all, capitalism, can be vanquished only by the solidarity of the working people, and this solidarity can be secured by unions, labor associations, i. e., only when the masses of the people wage a ceaseless war on death. And he felt that this was already being accomplished—accomplished in the whole world because it was being realized in his soul enlightened by the approach of death.

"Yes, come quickly! Amen! Yes, come, Lord Jesus! Come!" he murmured, with a slight, significant, and as it appeared to Mejenetsky, insane smile.

XIII.

"There he is, a representative of the people," thought Mejenetsky, coming out from the old man. "This is one of the best of them, and what darkness! They (the implied Roman and his friends) say with such a people as they are now nothing can be done."

Mejenetsky at one time was occupied with revolutionary work among the people and knew all the "inertia," as he called it, of the Russian peasant. He also associated with soldiers, on active service and discharged, and knew all their obstinate faith in the end, in the necessity of obedience, and knew the impossibility of influencing them by argument. He was aware of all this, but had never drawn from it the natural conclusion. The discussion with the new revolutionists upset and angered him.

"They say that all that we did, which the revolutionaries took among the people, was unnecessary, even harmful! That it was this which called forth the reaction of Alexander III; that thanks to them the people are persuaded that the revolutionary activities betrays them to the lords who have killed the Tsar because he deprived them of the serfs. How absurd! What a want of comprehension, and how ignorant of the natural conclusion, continuing to pace the corridor."

All the dormitories were locked except the one used by the new revolutionists. Approaching it, Mejenetsky heard the laugh of the brunette he detested and the strident, assertive voice of Roman. They were evidently speaking about him. Mejenetsky stopped to listen. Roman was saying:

"Not understanding the economic laws, they did not realize what they were doing. And there was here a deal of."

Mejenetsky could not and did not wish to hear of what there was a good deal, and he indeed did not require to know this. The tone of voice alone demonstrated the complete contempt which these people felt toward him.

The brunette, shaking her head, smiled contentedly. "Not much enjoying life," said Roman, "and if we are sitting here it is thanks to the reaction, and the reaction is the result precisely of the first of March."

Mejenetsky was silent; he felt he was choking from exasperation and went out into the passage.

"Date of the assassination of Alexander II."

XII.

Endeavoring to quiet himself, Mejenetsky began to walk up and down the corridor. The doors into the dormitories were left open until the evening roll-call. A tall, light-haired prisoner with a face the good nature of which was not spoiled by his head being half-shaven approached Mejenetsky.

"A prisoner in our dormitory has seen you sir, and asked me to call you in."

"What prisoner?"

"Tobacco Kingdom; that is his nickname. He is an old sectarian. 'Bring me that man,' he said. 'That's you, sir, he means.'"

"Well, where is he?"

"He's here in our dormitory. 'Call that gentleman,' he said."

Mejenetsky entered with the prisoner into a small dormitory with beds, on which were prisoners sitting and lying.

On bare boards, under a gray coat at the end of the row, was lying the same old

sectarian who seven years before had come to Mejenetsky to inquire about Svetlogoub. The old man's pale face had become all wrinkled up, but his hair was just as thick. The thin bit of beard was quite white and turned up. The blue eyes were kind and attentive. He was lying on his back and was evidently feverish; his cheeks there was a sickly pink color.

Mejenetsky approached him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"The old man with difficulty lifted himself onto his elbow and stretched out his little shaky dried-up hand. Attempting to speak, he began to breathe heavily, as if 'battering himself,' and, gasping for breath, he said softly:

"You did not reveal it to me, then. God forgive you, but I disclose it to all."

"What do you disclose?"

"About the Lamb . . . that youth had the Lamb; and it is said the Lamb will overcome them, will overcome all . . . and those who are with Him are the elect and faithful."

"I don't understand," said Mejenetsky. "The Lamb has received power with the beast. The Lamb shall overcome them."

"That's right," said Mejenetsky. "There are seven kings. Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must continue a short space . . . and then will be all war with him. Do you understand?"

Mejenetsky shook his head, thinking the old man was raving, and that his words were crazy. So also thought the prisoners, his roommates. The shaven prisoner who had called Mejenetsky came up to him and, touching him with his shoulder to attract his attention, winked at the old man.

"He keeps babbling and babbling, 'our Tobacco Kingdom,' he said. 'But what he says he does not himself know.' Well, thought both Mejenetsky and the old man's companions. But the old man well knew what he was saying and it had for him a clear and deep meaning. The meaning was that evil has not long to rule, that the Lamb by righteousness and meekness conquers all, that the Lamb will wipe every tear and there will be neither weeping, illness nor death. And he felt that this was already being accomplished—accomplished in the whole world because it was being realized in his soul enlightened by the approach of death.

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to it. Controlling his mind, he freed himself from involuntary hallucinations and only rarely was he beset with attacks of insomnia and visions of dreadful faces, and then he contemplated the air, regulator and decided how he would attach the rope, prepare the noose and hang himself. But he overcame these attacks and they did not last long.

Thus he passed almost seven years. When the term of his solitary confinement came to a close and he was being removed to penal labor he was quite well, fresh and in complete possession of his mental faculties.

XI.

He was being conveyed alone as an especially important criminal, and was not allowed to communicate with others. Only in the prison of Kraonoyarsk did he have an opportunity of intercourse with some other political prisoners on their way to penal labor. There were six of them—two women and four men. They were all young people, of the new school, with which Mejenetsky was not acquainted. They were revolutionists of the generation after him—his successors—and therefore of special interest to him. Mejenetsky expected to find them following in his steps, and consequently bound to highly appreciate all that had been done by their predecessors, especially by him, Mejenetsky. He was prepared to treat them affectionately and patronizingly.

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