

sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me; I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him a hundred pence; and he laid hold on him and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying, Have patience with me and I will pay thee. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he should pay that which was due. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him unto him and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou besought me; shouldst not thou also have mercy on thy fellow-servant as I had mercy on thee?"

"And is this all?" NekhlúdoFF suddenly exclaimed aloud, and the inner voice of the whole of his being said, "Yes, it is all." And it happened to NekhlúdoFF, as it often happens to men who are living a spiritual life. The thought that seemed strange at first and paradoxical or even to be only a joke, being confirmed more and more often by life's experience, suddenly appeared as the simplest, truest certainty. In this way the idea that the only certain means of salvation from the terrible evil from which men were suffering was that they should always acknowledge themselves to be sinning against God, and therefore unable to punish or correct others, because they were dear to Him. It became clear to him that all the dreadful evil he had been witnessing in prisons and jails and the quiet self-satisfaction of the perpetrators of this evil were the consequences of men trying to do what was impossible; trying to correct evil while being evil themselves; vicious men were trying to correct other vicious men, and thought they could do it by using mechanical means, and the only consequence of all this was that the needs and the cupidity of some men induced them to take up this so-called punishment and correction as a profession, and have themselves become utterly corrupt, and go on unceasingly depraving those whom they torment. Now he saw clearly what all the terrors he had seen came from, and what ought to be done to put a stop to them. The answer he could not find was the same that Christ gave to Peter. It was that we