

“GREASY” The Robber.....conclusion: Part 4.

Turning into one of the streets, they asked the people. “Are there any believers?” A neat little house among the tall pines was pointed out to them. Nearing the place, they noticed two children playing at the door of the house and in the yard a young, well dressed lady, who was quite busy. She greeted them kindly, however.

The men told her that they were believers and asked for lodging. The young woman led them graciously into the house, saying, “For the brethren in the Lord there will always be a place.”

At that time she called her husband, who was working in the garden. He came at once, greeted the guests cordially, and conversed with them while his wife hastened to prepare the tea.

Before the water in the samovar [Russian teakettle] came to a boil, she had milked two cows and set the table. What a feast: large pieces of fresh butter, cream, a large pitcher of rich milk, two or three kinds of cake, boiled eggs, and wonderful white bread. It was a quite a sight for the eyes of the hungry wanderers. The large lamp threw a bright light on the snow-white tablecloth, and the shining samovar hummed cheerfully.

The friendly lady of the house entered in her white embroidered apron and said to her husband; “Ask the brethren to come to the table.”

They sat down to the well laden table, and the head of the home asked the blessing. He thanked the Lord for His love and care and for the guests and asked Him to keep them in faith and bless the food. It was the first time in his life that Tichomirov had sat down to such a richly laden table amid so hospitable and kind a family. His heart overflowed with joy and delight.

The children, a boy and a girl, also occupied places at the table and listened attentively to the conversation.

Tichomirov, at the call to supper, had to stop relating the story of his experience at the point where the robbers in the thick woods began to read the New Testament that they had taken off the persons of the murdered travellers. At the request of the head of the house, Tichomirov continued his story.

In vivid words he pictured how the gospel entered into his own and his comrade’s heart; how they regretted their evil deeds and decided to change their way of living and deliver themselves to justice, how the district attorney was converted; and how they were sentenced.

Further he told them of his stay in the transfer prisons and of the years he spent in compulsory work until he received amnesty. The hosts could not take their eyes from the narrator, and the lady of the house often wiped the flowing tears from her cheeks as if she wanted to hide them from the others.

During this narration the time passed unnoticed until the large clock loudly announced the midnight hour: then they all knelt and thanked God for His wonderful grace in the salvation of the lost sinners. When the lady of the house arose, greatly moved, she said;

“But where do you want to go now?”

“We have determined to return to our former homes,” answered Tichomirov.

“Do you still have relatives there?” she continued.

“Solojev still has a mother, who is a believer and lives in the government of Kiev. I have nobody — neither father nor mother. I am simply going to look up my childhood place, my home village in the government of Mogilev. First of all, however, I have the great desire to tell my countrymen of Christ and His love for them.”

“Are you an orphan a long time already?” resumed the hostess.

“I lost my parents when I was eight years old, I lost them in Siberia on our migration trip. My father died two days before the passing away of my mother.”

The lady grabbed the table with both hands and stood leaning forward, looking Tichomirov deep in the eyes.

Her husband looked at her surprised, and could not understand the reason she questioned the guest so thoroughly instead of preparing the beds for the night.

Tichomirov continued. “We — my sister and I — remained as orphans she was somewhat older than I. The day after the death of our mother I lost her out of sight. Up to this moment I do not know what has become of her. Surely she must have perished like so many orphan children of the

immigrants, on account of the impossible living conditions, She was a good girl and cared for me as my own mother.”

At this point Tichomirov began to cry.

Pale as death, with tears streaming down her face, the hostess exclaimed,

“Is it possible that it is you, my beloved brother? Pasha? Tell me quickly; my heart tells me it is you.”

“Shura! Do my eyes really see you? You, my angel, my beloved!” he cried, weeping like a child.

“Yes, it is I: I am your sister; you, my beloved! How my heart cried out for you!”

The brother and sister threw themselves into each other’s arms, kissing and weeping. Then Tichomirov reached out for the children, who, crying, looked at the mother.

Presently he kissed the children and the husband of his sister.

Even Solojev took part in the general joy and was greatly touched by the unexpected reunion of the brother and sister.

Oh, what joy there was! Shura was so excited that she did not know what to do first. Again and again she drew near to Pasha, put her arms around him, and said;

“Is it truly you, my brother? Do I really see you? Oh, what joy! As you neared our house I had the impression of having found something valuable; my heart was full with an unspeakable joy. I did not know how it came. I was prepared at once to offer you refreshment and lodging. After all the distress that I have experienced, I am ready to help other needy ones also, but in this case my heart yearned especially to do so. Now I know why. It was my beloved brother who came to me; for twenty years we have not seen each other. What a joy!”

Again they fell on their knees and praised God with such a fervency as never before. Even the five year old daughter of Shura prayed, “Dear Saviour, I thank Thee that Thou hast brought Uncle Pasha to us!”

They all cried, and Alexei Vasiljevitch thanked God for the valuable gift that God had granted to his wife.

It was already three o’clock in the morning, but they had not slept; even the children had not lain down. Once more they drank tea, conversing together. Finally just before daybreak they went to bed, having commended themselves to the care of God.

On account of their recent experiences the sleep of all was restless. Pasha dreamed of how he had read the gospel to his robber pals in the woods and of how he had parted from them. He dreamed of the district attorney, the court, the transfer prisoners, and the compulsory labour. When he awoke and convinced himself that he had only been dreaming, he thanked the Lord anew for what He had done. At the breakfast tea, he again expressed the same astonishment and admiration at the wonderful grace of God in caring for orphans.

Shura asked her brother to repeat his experiences from the time of the parting at the snow fences at the railroad station. She herself had suffered much in the barracks for the girls and had remained there until late fall. With the beginning of autumn, since the barracks were not heated, an epidemic had set in and the children had died by the dozen.

Then the good people from the surrounding villages had come and taken the children with them to save the little ones from freezing. Shura had been taken by a poor but believing widow who had four children of her own. In a small hut, where the flat roof was covered with turf, Shura had spent the winter with Aunt Dunja (a pet name for Eudoxia): there she had had enough bread. Aunt Dunja used to read the New Testament and pray with the children.

In this colony was also a school which Shura had attended; she studied diligently. She enjoyed reading very much and especially liked to read in the New Testament. At the age of fourteen she had experienced the grace and knowledge of salvation and requested baptism, through which she had received the fellowship of believers.

Four more years passed. Shura had grown up to young womanhood. She was known as a diligent worker and was the best singer in the choir.

Everybody loved her. It would not have entered anybody’s mind that she was not the daughter of Aunt Dunja. They loved each other very much. The choir of the village had often visited the neighbouring villages and towns to witness for the Lord. Once the singers had decided to visit the town where Shura now lived. There the Lord had blessed their service richly. Under the influence of

the spiritual messages of the preacher, who had come with the choir, and under the effort of the wonderful singing, a number of people had turned to the Lord, among them a young bookkeeper who was employed in a business house. Within a year he had become the husband of Shura. and they had since lived together in love and harmony. They were blessed with two children.

When Shura had finished her story she reminded Pasha of how he would have thrown himself under the train after the death of the parents and of how she prevailed upon him not to take the desperate step, saying, "Despair not, my beloved: God will not forsake us." Now Pasha and Shura were constrained to think of the words of the Psalmist. "Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that ruleth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. God sitteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains" (Psalm 68:4- 6). At this they praised God anew.

Shura agreed with the intention of her brothers to return to the old home to call the relatives and acquaintances to Christ and she was also desirous of accompanying him on the trip and helping him in the work with unsaved souls. Alexei Vasiljevitch heartily agreed with the plan and promised to watch over the boy, while Shura was to take the girl along. He also gave the necessary money for the journey.

Three days later the brother and sister were on their way toward European Russia. With Solojev, they passed through Samara, Saratov, Pensa, Voronesh, Kursk, and Kiev, in the latter city Solojev parted with Pasha and Shura to go to his home village in the hope of returning to them after having seen his mother. The brother and sister continued their journey to the government of Mogilev to reach finally their home place of Sosnovka.

Upon arriving there and inquiring about the family of Tichomirov, they found two brothers of their father, two aunts, and some distant relatives still living. All were surprised at the appearance of Pasha and Shura, whom they had heard perished after the death of their parents before reaching their destination. Everybody invited them as welcome guests, soon they learned that their young relatives were evangelists who refused to celebrate the joy of meeting again by drinking because it was not becoming to Christians. "But why not?" asked the inhabitants of the village. "Are we not also Christians? Yet we drink liquor at every opportunity."

Such questions usually started a discussion which later turned to the reading of God's Word. Pasha's narration of how he came to the new life made a great impression upon all.

Almost every evening the inhabitants of Sosnovka gathered at Tichomirovs' to hear the Word of God. Very gradually the truth of the gospel broke down the barriers of the old prejudices of their purely outward form of religion.

Many found Christ as their personal Saviour and decided to devote their lives to Him wholly.

Then came a new testing time. The priests were stirred up and aroused the police of the whole district, insisting that the convict had come and ruined the foundation of the orthodox faith of the people and that if the authorities did not capture him even the foundations of the state would be endangered by the new teaching.

At night a policeman appeared in the dwelling of the Tichomirovs' and led Paul to the president of the country police, where the next morning the examining magistrate and the priest appeared. After the investigation, a bill charging seduction was filed. While awaiting the court trial, Tichomirov was taken to the country prison under police guard.

Shura sorrowed very much for her brother. She had to return to Siberia without being able to see him again, because visiting the arrested ones was forbidden before the trial. After a few days, Pasha wrote the following letter to his sister:

"My dear sister Shura,

"I beg you not to be sorrowful about me. I am very glad to be in the prison no longer as a thief and robber, but as a Christian to take part in the sufferings of my Saviour. I rejoice therein indescribably because in the prison many lost souls thirst after salvation, to whom I am permitted to bring Christ.

Be not dismayed, but pray for me. I greet you and your husband and children with a kiss."

A whole year passed before the court trial; by that time Paul had been in three prisons. Everywhere he preached Christ, and everywhere the sinners decided to follow the way of salvation.

The prison chaplains, however, asked the authorities to deliver them from this heretic with whom they could not live peaceably. The court condemned Tichomirov to banishment for two years in the government of Jenisejek on the charge of seduction of the orthodox believers to “Stundism” (gospel belief). Investigation brought to light that in Sosnovka alone about a hundred ceased to go to the priest and to worship holy pictures.

Soon after his condemnation Paul was carried again, by the way of the transport prisons, to the country so well known to him — Siberia. He succeeded in notifying Shura and her husband of the train in which he would pass the nearest railroad station, and they went there to see him once more. They were permitted only to greet him through the bars of the prison wagons. Shura cried because she felt sorry for her brother, but he looked at her, smiling, and let her know thereby that he was glad to be permitted to suffer for Christ’s sake.

Two years passed.

The life of Tichomirov during this banishment reflected everywhere that pure and holy life of Christ, which was the cause of the success of his testimony. During those two years he was in continual communication by letter with Shura and also with Solojev. The latter informed him that he remained in his native village, where a small group of gospel Christians gave him a brotherly welcome, and that he was permitted to work among them with a great blessing. His mother was still alive and very happy because God had answered her prayers and saved her son. She was concluding the last days of her life with her son, who was now an honest and chaste Christian.

After finishing the time of his banishment, Pasha went to his sister fully determined to devote his whole life to the salvation of lost sinners. He would not be bound in marriage because he wanted nothing to hinder him in the proclamation of that gospel that had changed him and many others completely. He worked in the congregation of that town in which Shura lived and also in other towns in Siberia, but his permanent dwelling was with his sister, to the joy of his brother-in-law also. Shura often accompanied her brother on his trips into the villages as his co-worker in the vineyard of the Lord. The spiritual life of the congregation progressed.

Paul Tichomirov wrote the following words on the first page of the New Testament that he had taken from the brother whom he slew:

“Forgive me for Christ’s sake, beloved brother,
I put you to death while I myself was dead in my sins.
The Lord hath forgiven me and raised me to a new life.
Thy untimely bodily death was the means of leading not
only me, but also many other sinners and murderers to eternal life.
Thy New Testament softened my hard heart as a living stream,
stilled my thirst, and continues to flow further, quickening and giving
life to other souls also. For this I praise thy and my God.

Amen!”



In thankfulness for blessing obtained by the reading of this life story, this effort has been made by the means of this translation to enable others to be partakers of the blessing that comes from a sincere and serious acceptance of the Word of God.

It is recommended by repeated reading not only to gain more thorough knowledge concerning the incidents described, but also a more correct appreciation of one’s own condition as it is in the sight of God. This effort is made with prayer that the reader may search his own heart to see if he can measure up to the standard of God.

—Charles Lukes

