

Tolstoy Leo

What Shall We Do?



Leo Tolstoy
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Tolstoy Leo, graf

What Shall We Do?

CHAPTER I

After having passed the greater part of my life in the country, I came at length, in the year 1881, to reside in Moscow, where I was immediately struck with the extreme state of pauperism in that city. Though well acquainted with the privations of the poor in rural districts, I had not the faintest conception of their actual condition in towns.

In Moscow it is impossible to pass a street without meeting beggars of a peculiar kind, quite unlike those in the country, who go about there, as the saying is, “with a bag and the name of Christ.”

The Moscow beggars neither carry a bag nor ask for alms. In most cases when they meet you, they try to catch your eye, and then act according to the expression of your face.

I know of one such, a bankrupt gentleman. He is an old man who advances slowly, limping painfully with each leg. When he meets you, he limps, and makes a bow. If you stop, he takes off his cap, ornamented with a cockade, bows again, and begs. If you do not stop, he pretends to be only lame, and continues limping along.

That is a specimen of a genuine Moscow beggar, an experienced one.

At first I did not know why such mendicants did not ask openly; but afterwards I learned why, without understanding the reason.

One day I saw a policeman push a ragged peasant swollen with dropsy, into a cab. I asked what he had been doing, and the policeman replied, —

“Begging.”

“Is begging, then, forbidden?”

“So it seems,” he answered. As the man was being driven away, I took another cab, and followed. I wished to find out whether begging was really forbidden, and if so, why? I could not at all understand how it was possible to forbid one man asking something from another; and, moreover, I had my doubts whether it could be illegal in a city where it flourished to such an extent.

I entered the police-station where the pauper had been taken, and asked an official armed with sword and pistol, and seated at a table, what he had been arrested for.

The man looked up at me sharply, and said, “What business is that of yours?”

However, feeling the necessity of some explanation, he added, “The authorities order such fellows to be arrested, so I suppose it is necessary.”

I went away. The policeman who had brought the man was

sitting in the window of the ante-room, studying his note-book. I said to him, —

“Is it really true that poor people are not allowed to ask for alms in Christ's name?”

The man started, as if waking up from a sleep, stared at me, then relapsed again into a state of stolid indifference, and, reseating himself on the window-sill, said, —

“The authorities require it, so you see it is necessary.”

As he became again absorbed in his note-book, I went down the steps towards my cab.

“Well! have they locked him up?” asked the cabman. He had evidently become interested in the matter.

“They have,” I answered. He shook his head.

“Is begging forbidden in Moscow, then?” I asked.

“I can't tell you,” he said.

“But how can a man be locked up,” I said, “for begging in the name of Christ?”

“Nowadays things have changed, and you see it is forbidden,” he answered.

Since then, I have often seen policemen taking paupers to the police-station and thence to the work-house. Indeed, I once met a whole crowd of these poor creatures, about thirty, escorted before and behind by policemen. I asked what they had been doing.

“Begging,” was the reply.

It appears that, according to law, begging is forbidden in

Moscow, notwithstanding the great number of beggars one meets there in every street, notwithstanding the rows of them near the churches during service-time, and especially at funerals. But why are some caught and locked up, while others are let alone? This I have not been able to find out. Either there are lawful and unlawful beggars amongst them, or else there are so many that it is impossible to catch them all; or, perhaps, though some are taken up, others fill their places.

There is a great variety of such beggars in Moscow. There are those who live by begging. There are also entirely honest destitute people who have somehow chanced to reach Moscow and are really in extreme need.

Amongst the latter are men and women evidently from the country. I have often met these. Some of them, who had fallen ill and afterwards recovered and left the hospital, could now find no means, either of feeding themselves, or of getting away from Moscow; some of them, besides, had taken to drink (this was probably the case with the man with dropsy whom I met); some were in good health, but had been burned out of house and home, or else were very old, or were widowed or deserted women with children; and some others had sound health, and were quite capable of working.

These robust people especially interested me, – the more so, because, since my arrival in Moscow, I had contracted the habit of going to the Sparrow Hills for the sake of exercise, and working there with two peasants who sawed wood. These men

were exactly like the beggars whom I often met in the streets. One, called Peter, was an ex-soldier from Kaluga; the other, Simon, was from Vladímir. They possessed nothing save the clothes on their backs: and they earned, by working very hard, from forty to forty-five kopeks (8d. to 9d.) a day; out of this they both put a little aside, – the Kaluga soldier, to buy a fur coat; the Vladímir peasant, to get money enough to return to his home in the country.

Meeting in the streets similar men, I was therefore particularly interested in them, and could not understand why some begged whilst others worked.

Whenever I met a beggar of this description, I used to ask him how it was that he had come to such a state. Once I met a strong, healthy-looking peasant who asked alms. I questioned him as to who he was, and whence he had come.

He told me he had come from Kaluga, in search of work. He had at first found some, such as sawing old timber into fire-wood; but after he and his companion had finished that job, though they had continually looked for it, they had not found any more work, his mate had left him, and he himself had passed a fortnight in the utmost need, and having sold all he had to get food, now had not enough even to buy the necessary tools for sawing.

I gave him money to get a saw, and told him where to go for work. I had previously arranged with Peter and Simon that they should accept a new fellow-worker, and find him a mate.

“Be sure you come! There is plenty of work to be done,” I

said on parting.

“You can reckon on me,” he answered. “Do you think there is any pleasure in knocking about, begging, if I can work?”

The man solemnly promised that he would come; and he seemed honest, and really meaning to work.

Next day, on coming to my friends, Peter and Simon, I asked them whether the man had arrived. They said he had not; and, indeed, he never came at all. In this way I was frequently deceived.

I have also been deceived by those who said that they only wanted a little money to buy a ticket to return home, and whom I met in the streets again a few days later. Many of them I came to know well, and they knew me; though occasionally having forgotten me, they would repeat the same false tale; but sometimes they would turn away on recognizing me.

In this way I discovered, that, even in this class of men, there are many rogues.

Still, these poor rogues were also very much to be pitied: they were all ragged and hungry; they were of the sort who die of cold in the streets, or hang themselves to escape life, as the papers frequently tell us.

CHAPTER II

When I talked to my town friends about this pauperism which surrounded them, they always replied, “Oh! you have seen nothing yet! You should go to the Khitrof Market, and visit the lodging-houses there, if you want to see the genuine ‘Golden Company.’”

One jovial friend of mine added, that the number of these paupers had so increased, that they already formed not a “Golden Company,” but a “Golden Regiment.”

My witty friend was right; but he would have been yet nearer the truth had he said that these men formed, in Moscow, not a company, nor a regiment, but a whole army, – an army, I should judge, of about fifty thousand.

The regular townspeople, when they spoke to me about the pauperism of the city, always seemed to feel a certain pleasure or pride in being able to give me such precise information.

I remember I noticed, when visiting London, that the citizens there seemed also to find a certain satisfaction in telling me about London destitution, as though it were something to be proud of.

However, wishing to inspect this poverty about which I had heard so much, I had turned my steps very often towards the Khitrof Market, – but on each occasion I felt a sensation of pain and shame. “Why should you go to look at the suffering of human beings whom you cannot help?” said one voice within me. “If

you live here, and see all that is pleasant in town life, go and see also what is wretched," replied another.

And so, one cold, windy day in December, two years ago (1883), I went to the Khitrof Market, the centre of the town pauperism.

It was on a week-day, about four in the afternoon. While still a good distance off I noticed greater and greater numbers of men in strange clothes, – evidently not originally meant for them, – and in yet stranger foot-wear; men of a peculiar unhealthy complexion, and all apparently showing a remarkable indifference to everything that surrounded them.

Men in the strangest, most incongruous costumes sauntered along, evidently without the least thought as to how they might look in the eyes of others. They were all going in the same direction. Without asking the way, which was unknown to me, I followed them, and came to the Khitrof Market.

There I found women likewise in ragged capes, rough cloaks, jackets, boots, and goloshes. Perfectly free and easy in their manner, notwithstanding the grotesque monstrosity of their attire, these women, old and young, were sitting, bargaining, strolling about, and abusing one another.

Market-time having evidently passed, there were not many people there; and as most of them were going up-hill, through the market-place, and all in the same direction, I followed them.

The farther I went, the greater became the stream of people flowing into the one road. Having passed the market, and gone

up the street, I found that I was following two women, one old, the other young. Both were clothed in some grey ragged stuff. They were talking, as they walked, about some kind of business.

Every expression was unflinchingly accompanied by some obscene word. Neither was drunk, but each absorbed with her own affairs; and the passing men, and those about them, paid not the slightest attention to their language, which sounded so strange to me. It appeared to be the generally accepted manner of speech in those parts. On the left we passed some private night-lodging-houses, and some of the crowd entered these; others continued to ascend the hill towards a large corner house. The majority of the people walking along with me went into this house. Before it, people all of the same sort were standing and sitting, on the sidewalk and in the snow.

At the right of the entrance were women; at the left, men. I passed by the men: I passed by the women (there were several hundreds in all), and stopped where the crowd ceased.

This building was the "Liapin free night-lodging-house" ("doss-house"). The crowd was composed of night-lodgers, waiting to be let in. At five o'clock in the evening this house is opened and the crowd admitted. Hither came almost all the people whom I followed.

I remained standing where the file of men ended. Those nearest stared at me till I had to look at them. The remnants of garments covering their bodies were very various; but the one expression of the eyes of all alike seemed to be, "Why are you, a

man from another world, stopping here with us? Who are you? Are you a self-satisfied man of wealth, desiring to be gladdened by the sight of our need, to divert yourself in your idleness, and to mock at us? or are you that which does not and can not exist, – a man who pities us?”

On all their faces the same question was written. Each would look at me, meet my eyes, and turn away again.

I wanted to speak to some of them, but for a long time I could not summon up courage. However, eventually our mutual exchange of glances introduced us to each other; and we felt that, however widely separated might be our social positions in life, we were still fellow-men, and so we ceased to be afraid of one another.

Next to me stood a peasant with a swollen face and red beard, in a ragged jacket, with worn-out goloshes on his naked feet, though there were eight degrees of frost.¹ For the third or fourth time our eyes met; and I felt so drawn to him that I was no longer ashamed to address him (to have refrained from doing so would have been the only real shame), and I asked him where he came from.

He answered eagerly, while a crowd began to collect round us, that he had come from Smolensk in search of work, to be able to buy bread and pay his taxes.

“There is no work to be had nowadays,” he said: “the soldiers have got hold of it all. So here am I knocking about; and God is

¹ Réaumur.

my witness, I have not had any thing to eat for two days.”

He said this shyly, with an attempt at a smile. A seller² of warm drinks, an old soldier, was standing near. I called him, and made him pour out a glass. The peasant took the warm vessel in his hands, and, before drinking, warmed them against the glass, trying not to lose any of the precious heat; and whilst doing this he related to me his story.

The adventures of these people, or at least the stories which they tell, are almost always the same: He had had a little work; then it had ceased: and here, in the night-lodging-house, his purse, containing his money and passport, had been stolen from him. Now he could not leave Moscow.

He told me that during the day he warmed himself in public-houses, eating any stale crust of bread which might be given him. His night's lodging here in Liapin's house cost him nothing.

He was only waiting for the round of the police-sergeant to lock him up for being without his passport, when he would be sent on foot, with a party of men similarly situated, to the place of his birth.

“They say the inspection will take place on Thursday, when I shall be taken up; so I must try and keep on until then.” (The prison and his compulsory journey appeared to him as the “promised land.”) While he was speaking, two or three men in the crowd said they were also in exactly the same situation.

A thin, pale youth, with a long nose, only a shirt upon his

² A sbiten-seller: *sbiten* is a hot drink made of herbs or spices and molasses

back, and that torn about the shoulders, and a tattered cap on his head, edged his way to me through the crowd. He was shivering violently all the time, but tried, as he caught my eye, to smile scornfully at the peasant's conversation, thinking thus to show his superiority.

I offered him some drink.

He warmed his hands on the tumbler as the other had done; but just as he began to speak, he was shouldered aside by a big, black, hook-nosed, bare-headed fellow, in a thin shirt and waistcoat, who also asked for some drink.

Then a tall old man, with a thin beard, in an overcoat fastened round the waist with a cord, and in bark shoes, had some. He was drunk.

Then came a little man, with a swollen face and wet eyes, in a coarse brown jacket, with his knees protruding through his torn trousers and knocking against each other with cold. He shivered so that he could not hold the glass, and spilled the contents over his clothes: the others began to abuse him, but he only grinned miserably, and shivered.

After him came an ugly, deformed man in rags, and with bare feet. Then an individual of the officer type; another belonging to the church class; then a strange-looking being without a nose, – all of them hungry, cold, suppliant, and humble, – crowded round me, and stretched out their hands for the glass; but the drink was exhausted. Then one man asked for money: I gave him some. A second and a third followed, till the whole crowd pressed on

me. In the general confusion the gatekeeper of the neighbouring house shouted to the crowd to clear the pavement before his house, and the people submissively obeyed.

Some of them undertook to control the tumult, and took me under their protection. They attempted to drag me out of the crush. But the crowd that formerly had lined the pavement in a long file, had now become condensed about me. Every one looked at me and begged; and it seemed as if each face were more pitiful, harassed, and degraded than the other. I distributed all the money I had, – only about twenty rubles, – and entered the lodging-house with the crowd. The house was an enormous one, and consisted of four parts. In the upper storeys were the men's rooms; on the ground-floor the women's. I went first into the women's dormitory, – a large room, filled with beds resembling the berths in a third-class railway-carriage. They were arranged in two tiers, one above the other.

Strange-looking women in ragged dresses, without jackets, old and young, kept coming in and occupying places, some below, others climbing above. Some of the elder ones crossed themselves, pronouncing the name of the founder of the refuge. Some laughed and swore.

I went up-stairs. There, in a similar way, the men had taken their places. Amongst them I recognized one of those to whom I had given money. On seeing him I suddenly felt horribly ashamed, and made haste to leave.

With a sense of having committed some crime, I returned

home. There I entered along the carpeted steps into the rug-covered hall, and, having taken off my fur coat, sat down to a meal of five courses, served by two footmen in livery, with white ties and white gloves. A scene of the past came suddenly before me. Thirty years ago I saw a man's head cut off under the guillotine in Paris before a crowd of thousands of spectators. I was aware that the man had been a great criminal: I was acquainted with all the arguments in justification of capital punishment for such offences. I saw this execution carried out deliberately: but at the moment that the head and body were severed from each other by the keen blade, I gasped, and realized in every fibre of my being, that all the arguments which I had hitherto heard in favour of capital punishment were wickedly false; that, no matter how many might agree that it was a lawful act, it was literally murder; whatever other title men might give it, they thus had virtually committed murder, that worst of all crimes: and there was I, both by my silence and my non-interference, an aider, an abetter, and participator in the sin.

Similar convictions were again forced upon me when I now beheld the misery, cold, hunger, and humiliation of thousands of my fellow-men. I realized not only with my brain, but in every pulse of my soul, that, whilst there were thousands of such sufferers in Moscow, I, with tens of thousands of others, daily filled myself to repletion with luxurious dainties of every description, took the tenderest care of my horses, and clothed my very floors with velvet carpets!

Whatever the wise and learned of the world might say about it, however unalterable the course of life might seem to be, the same evil was continually being enacted, and I, by my own personal habits of luxury, was a promoter of that evil.

The difference between the two cases was only this: that in the first, all I could have done would have been to shout out to the murderers standing near the guillotine, who were accomplishing the deed, that they were committing a murder, and by every means to try to hinder them, – while, of course, knowing that my interference would be in vain. Whereas, in this second case, I might have given away, not only the drink and the small sum of money I had with me, but also the coat from off my shoulders, and all that I possessed at home. Yet I had not done so, and therefore felt, and feel, and can never cease to feel, that I myself am a partaker in a crime which is continually being committed, so long as I have superfluous food whilst others have none, so long as I have two coats whilst there exists one man without any.

CHAPTER III

On the same evening that I returned from Liapin's house, I imparted my impressions to a friend: and he, a resident of the town, began to explain to me, not without a certain satisfaction, that this was the most natural state of things in a town; that it was only owing to my provincialism that I found anything remarkable in it; and that it had always been, and always would be so, such being one of the inevitable conditions of civilization. In London it was yet worse, etc., etc., therefore there could be nothing wrong about it, and there was nothing to be disturbed or troubled about.

I began to argue with my friend, but with such warmth and so angrily, that my wife rushed in from the adjoining room to ask what had happened. It appeared that, without being aware of it, I had shouted out in an agonized voice, gesticulating wildly, "We should not go on living in this way! we must not live so! we have no right!" I was rebuked for my unnecessary excitement; I was told that I could not talk quietly upon any question, that I was irritable; and it was pointed out to me that the existence of such misery as I had witnessed was in no way a reason for embittering the life of my home-circle.

I felt that this was perfectly just, and held my tongue; but in the depth of my soul I knew that I was right, and I could not quiet my conscience.

The town life, which had previously seemed alien and strange

to me, now became so hateful that all the indulgencies of a luxurious existence, in which I had formerly delighted, began to torment me.

However much I tried to find some kind of excuse for my mode of life, I could not contemplate without irritation either my own or other people's drawing-rooms, nor a clean, richly served dinner-table, nor a carriage with well-fed coachman and horses, nor the shops, theatres, and entertainments. I could not help seeing, in contrast to all this, those hungry, shivering, and degraded inhabitants of the night-lodging-house. I could never free myself from the thought that these conditions were inseparable – that the one proceeded from the other. I remember that the sense of culpability which I had felt from the first moment never left me; but with this feeling another soon mingled, which lessened the first.

When I talked to my intimate friends and acquaintances about my impressions in Liapin's house, they all answered in the same way, and expressed besides their appreciation of my kindness and tender-heartedness, and gave me to understand that the sight had impressed me so because I, Leo Tolstoy, was kind-hearted and good. And I willingly allowed myself to believe this.

The natural consequence of this was, that the first keen sense of self-reproach and shame became blunted, and was replaced by a sense of satisfaction at my own virtue, and a desire to make it known to others. "It is, in truth," I said to myself, "probably not my connection with a luxurious life which is at fault, but the

unavoidable circumstances of existence. Therefore a change in my particular life would not alter the evil I had seen.”

In changing my own life, I thought, I should only render myself and those nearest and dearest to me miserable, whilst the other misery would remain; therefore my object should be, not to alter my own way of living, as I had at first imagined, but to try as much as was in my power to *ameliorate* the position of those unfortunate ones who had excited my compassion. The whole matter, I reasoned, lies in the fact that I, being an extremely kind and good man, wish to do good to my fellow-men.

So I began to arrange a plan of philanthropic activity in which I might exhibit all my virtues. I must, however, remark here, that, while planning this charitable effort, in the depth of my heart I felt that I was not doing the right thing; but, as too often happens, reason and imagination stifled the voice of conscience.

About this time the census was being taken, and this seemed to me a good opportunity for instituting that charitable organization in which I wanted to shine.

I was acquainted with many philanthropic institutions and societies already existing in Moscow, but all their activity seemed to me both insignificant and wrongly directed in comparison with what I myself wished to do.

This was what I invented to excite sympathy amongst the rich for the poor: I began to collect money, and to enlist men who wished to help in the work, and who would, in company with the census officers, visit all the nests of pauperism, entering into

relations with the poor, finding out the details of their needs, aiding them with money and work, sending them out of Moscow, placing their children in schools, and their old men and women in homes and houses of refuge.

I thought, moreover, that from those who undertook this work a permanent society could be formed, which, by dividing between its members the various districts of Moscow, could take care that new cases of want and misery should be averted, and so by degrees pauperism might be stifled at its very beginning, not so much by cure, as by prevention.

Already I saw in the future the entire disappearance of begging and poverty, I having been the means of its accomplishment. Then we who were rich could go on living in all our luxury as before, dwelling in fine houses, eating dinners of five courses, driving in our carriages to theatres and entertainments, no longer being harassed by such sights as I had witnessed at Liapin's house.

Having invented this plan, I wrote an article about it; and, before even giving it to the printers, I went to those acquaintances from whom I hoped to obtain co-operation, and expounded to all whom I visited that day (chiefly the rich) the ideas I afterwards published in my article.

I proposed to profit by the census in order to study the state of pauperism in Moscow, and to help exterminate it by personal effort and money, after which we might all with a quiet conscience enjoy our usual pleasures. Everyone listened

to me attentively and seriously; but, in every case, I remarked that the moment my hearers came to understand what I was driving at, they seemed to become uncomfortable and somewhat embarrassed. It was principally, I feel sure, on my own account; because they considered all that I said to be folly. It seemed as though some outside motive compelled my listeners to agree for the moment with my foolishness. – “Oh, yes! Certainly. It would be delightful,” they said: “of course it is impossible not to sympathize with you. Your idea is splendid. I myself have had the same; but ... people here are so indifferent, that it is hardly reasonable to expect a great success. However, as far as I am concerned, I am, of course, ready to share in the enterprise.”

Similar answers I received from all. They consented, as it appeared to me, not because they were persuaded by my arguments, nor yet in compliance with their own desire, but because of some exterior reason which rendered it impossible for them to refuse.

I remarked this partly because none of those who promised me their help in the form of money, defined the sum they meant to give; so that I had to name the amount by asking, “May I count upon you for twenty-five, or one hundred, or two hundred, or three hundred, rubles?” And not one of them paid the money. I draw attention to this fact, because, when people are going to pay for what they are anxious to have, they are generally in haste to give it. If it is to secure a box to see Sarah Bernhardt, the money is immediately produced; here, however, of all who agreed to give,

and expressed their sympathy, not one produced the amount, but merely silently acquiesced in the sum I happened to name.

In the last house I visited that day there was a large party. The mistress of the house had for some years been employed in works of charity. Several carriages were waiting at the door. Footmen in expensive liveries were seated in the hall. In the spacious drawing-room, ladies, old and young, wearing rich dresses and ornaments, were talking to some young men, and dressing up small dolls, intended for a lottery in aid of the poor.

The sight of this drawing-room and of the people assembled there struck me very painfully. For not only was their property worth several million rubles; not only would the interest on the capital spent here on dresses, laces, bronzes, jewels, carriages, horses, liveries, footmen, exceed a hundred times the value of these ladies' work, – but even the expenses caused by this very party of ladies and gentlemen, the gloves, the linen, candles, tea, sugar, cakes, all this represented a sum a hundred times greater than the value of the work done.

I saw all this, and therefore might have understood that here, at all events, I should not find sympathy with my plan, but I had come in order to give a proposal, and, however painful it was, I said what I wished to say, repeating almost the words of my article.

One lady present offered me some money, adding that, owing to her sensibilities, she did not feel strong enough to visit the poor herself, but that she would give help in this form. How much

money, and when she would give it, she did not say. Another lady and a young man offered their services in visiting the poor, but I did not profit by their offer. The principal person I addressed told me that it would be impossible to do much, because the means were not forthcoming. The means were scarce, because all the rich men in Moscow who were known and could be counted upon had already given all it was possible to get from them, their charities had already been rewarded with titles, medals, and other distinctions, – which was the only effectual way to ensure success in the collection of money; and to obtain new honors from the authorities was very difficult.

When I returned home I went to bed, not only with a presentiment that nothing would result from my idea, but also with the shameful consciousness of having been doing something vile and contemptible the whole day. However, I did not desist.

First, the work had been begun, and false shame prevented my giving it up; second, not only the success of the enterprise itself, but even my part in it, afforded me the possibility of continuing to live in my usual way; whereas the failure of this enterprise would have put me under the constraint of giving up my present mode of life and of seeking another. Of this, I was unconsciously afraid; and therefore I refused to listen to my inner voice, and continued what I had begun.

Having sent my article to be printed, I read a proof-copy at a census-meeting in the town hall, hesitatingly, and blushing till my cheeks burned again. I felt very uncomfortable, and I saw that

all my hearers were equally uncomfortable.

On my question, whether the managers of the census would accept my proposal that they should remain at their posts in order to form a link between society and those in need, an awkward silence ensued.

Then two of those present made speeches, which seemed to mend the awkwardness of my suggestions. Sympathy for me was expressed along with their general approbation, but they pointed out the impracticability of my scheme. Everyone immediately seemed more at ease; but afterwards, still wishing to succeed, I asked each district manager separately, whether during the census he was willing to investigate the needs of the poor and afterwards remain at his post in order to form this link between the poor and the rich, all were again confounded; it seemed as though their looks said, "Why, we have listened to your silly proposition out of personal regard for you; but here you come with it again!" This was the expression of their faces, but in words they told me that they consented; and two of them, separately, but as though they had agreed together, said in the same words, "We regard it as our moral duty to do so." The same impression was produced by my words upon the students who had volunteered to act as clerks during the census, when I told them that they might accomplish a charitable work besides their scientific pursuits.

When we talked the matter over I noticed that they were shy of looking me straight in the face, as one often hesitates to look into the face of a good-natured man who is talking

nonsense. The same impression was produced upon the editor of the paper when I handed my article to him; also upon my son, my wife, and various other people. Every one seemed embarrassed, but all found it necessary to approve of the idea itself; and all, immediately after this approbation, began to express their doubts as to the success of the plan, and, for some reason or other, all without exception took to condemning the indifference and coldness of society and of the world, though they evidently excluded themselves.

CHAPTER IV

By my request I was appointed to make the census of the section of Khamovnitchesky police district, near the Smolensky Market in the Prototchni Lane between the Shore Drive and Nicolsky Lane. In this district are the houses known under the name of Rzhanoff House or Rzhanoff Fortress. In bygone times these houses belonged to the merchant Rzhanoff, and are now the property of the merchants Zeemin. I had long before heard that this was considered the lowest circle of poverty and vice, which was the reason why I asked the officers of the census to assign this district to me.

My desire was gratified.

Having received the appointment from the Town Council, I went alone, a few days before the census, to inspect my district. With the help of a plan I soon found the Rzhanoff Houses, – approached by a street which terminated on the left-hand side of Nicolsky Lane – a gloomy building without any apparent entrance. From the aspect of this house I guessed it was the one I was in search of. Descending the street, I came across some boys, from ten to fourteen years old, in short coats, who were sliding down the frozen gutter, some on their feet, others upon a single skate.

The boys were ragged, and, like all town boys, sharp and bold. I stopped to look at them. An old woman in torn clothes, with

hanging yellow cheeks, came round the corner. She was going up-hill to Smolensky Market, gasping painfully at every step, like a horse out of wind; and when abreast of me, stopped with hoarse, choking breath. In any other place, this old woman would have asked alms, but here she only began to talk.

“Just look at them!” she said, pointing to the sliding boys; “always at mischief! They will become the same Rzhanoff good-for-nothings as their fathers.” One boy, in an overcoat and cap without a peak, overhearing her words, stopped. “You shut up!” he shouted. “You’re only an old Rzhanoff goat yourself!”

I asked the boy if he lived here. “Yes, and so does she. She stole some boots,” he called out, and, pushing himself off, slid on.

The old woman began a torrent of abuse, interrupted by coughs. During the squabble an old white-haired man, all in rags, came down the middle of the street, brandishing his arms, and carrying in one hand a bundle of small rusk rings. He seemed to have just fortified himself with a glass of liquor. He had evidently heard the old woman's abuse and took her side.

“I’ll give it you, you little devils!” he shouted, pretending to rush after them; and, passing behind me, he stepped on the pavement. If you saw this old man in the Artat, a fashionable street, you would be struck with his air of decrepitude, feebleness, and poverty. Here he appeared as a merry workman returning from his day's labor.

I followed him. He turned round the corner to the left into

Prototchni, an alley, passed the front of the house and the gate, and disappeared through the door of an inn. Into this alley opened the doors of the latter, a public-house, and several small eating-houses. It was the Rzhanoff Houses. Every thing was gray, dirty, and foul-smelling, – buildings, lodgings, courts, and people. Most of those I met here were in tattered clothes, half naked. Some were passing along, others were running from one door to another. Two were bargaining about some rags. I went round the whole building, down another lane and a court, and, having returned, stopped at the archway of the Rzhanoff Houses.

I wanted to go in and see what was going on inside, but the idea made me feel painfully awkward. If they asked me what I had come for, what should I say?

However after a little hesitation I went in. The moment I entered the court I was conscious of a most revolting stench. The court was dreadfully dirty. I turned round the corner, and at the same instant heard steps running along the boards of the gallery and down the stairs.

First a gaunt-looking woman, with tucked-up sleeves, a faded pink dress, and shoes on her stockingless feet, rushed out; after her, a rough-haired man in a red shirt, and extremely wide trousers, like a petticoat, and goloshes on his feet. The man caught her under the stairs: “You sha'n't escape me,” he said, laughing.

“Just listen to the squint-eyed devil!” began the woman, who was evidently not averse to his attentions; but, having caught sight

of me, she exclaimed angrily, "Who are you looking for?" As I did not want anyone in particular, I felt somewhat confused, and went away.

This little incident, though by no means remarkable in itself, suddenly showed me the work I was about to undertake in an entirely new light, especially after what I had seen on the other side of the courtyard, – the scolding woman, the light-hearted old man, and the sliding boys. I had meditated doing good to these people by the help of the rich men of Moscow. I now realized, for the first time, that all these poor unfortunates, whom I had been wishing to help, had, besides the time they spent suffering from cold and hunger in waiting to get a lodging, several hours daily to get through, and that they must somehow fill up the rest of the twenty-four hours of every day, – a whole life, of which I had never thought before. I realized now, for the first time, that all these people, besides the mere effort to find food and shelter from the cold, must live through the rest of every day of their life as other people have to do, must get angry at times, and be dull, and try to appear light-hearted, and be sad or merry. Now, for the first time (however strange the confession may sound), I was fully aware that the task which I was undertaking could not simply consist in feeding and clothing a thousand people (just as one might feed a thousand head of sheep, and drive them into shelter), but must develop some more essential help. When I considered that each one of these individuals was just another man like myself, possessing also a past history, with the same

passions, temptations, and errors, the same thoughts, the same questions to be answered, then suddenly the work before me appeared stupendous and I felt my own utter helplessness; – but it had begun and I was resolved to go on.

CHAPTER V

On the appointed day, the students who were to assist me started early in the morning; while I, the philanthropist, only joined them at twelve o'clock. I could not come earlier, as I did not get up till ten, after which I had to take some coffee, and then smoke for the sake of my digestion. Twelve o'clock, then, found me at the door of the Rzhanoff Houses. A policeman showed me a public-house to which the census-clerks referred all those who wished to enquire for them. I entered, and found it very dirty and unsavoury. Here, right in front of me, was a counter; to the left a small room, furnished with tables covered with soiled napkins; to the right a large room on pillars, containing similar little tables placed in the windows and along the walls; with men here and there having tea, some very ragged, others well dressed, apparently workmen or small shopkeepers. There were also several women. In spite of the dirt, it was easy to see, by the business air of the man in charge, and the ready, obliging manners of the waiters, that the eating-house was driving a good trade. I had no sooner entered than one of the waiters was already preparing to assist me in getting off my overcoat, anxious to take my orders, and showing that evidently the people here were in the habit of doing their work quickly and readily.

My enquiry for the census-clerks was answered by a call for "Ványa" from a little man dressed in foreign fashion, who was

arranging something in a cupboard behind the counter. This was the proprietor of the public-house, a peasant from Kaluga, Iván Fedotitch by name, who also rented half of the other houses, subletting the rooms to lodgers. In answer to his call, a thin, sallow-faced, hook-nosed lad, about eighteen years old, came forward hastily. The landlord said, "Take this gentleman to the clerks: they have gone to the main body of the building over the well."

The lad put down his napkin, pulled on a coat over his white shirt and trousers, picked up a large cap with a peak, and then, with quick, short steps, led the way by a back-door through the buildings. At the entrance of a greasy, malodorous kitchen, we met an old woman who was carefully carrying some putrid tripe in a rag. We descended into a court, built up all round with wooden buildings on stone foundations. The smell was most offensive, and seemed to be concentrated in a privy to which numbers of people were constantly resorting. This privy was really only the place which custom accepted as a privy. One could not avoid noticing this place as one passed through the courtyard. One suffered in entering the acrid atmosphere of the bad smells issuing from it.

The boy, taking care not to soil his white trousers, led me cautiously across frozen and unfrozen filth, and approached one of the buildings. The people crossing the yard and galleries all stopped to gaze at me. It was evident that a cleanly-dressed man was an unusual sight in the place.

The boy asked a woman whom we met, whether she had seen

where the census officials had entered, and three people at once answered his question: some said that they were over the well; others said that they had been there, but had now gone to Nikita Ivanovitch's.

An old man in the middle of the court, who had only a shirt on, said that they were at No. 30. The boy concluded that this information was the most probable and led me to No. 30, into the basement, where darkness prevailed and a bad smell, different from that which filled the court.

We continued to descend along a dark passage. As we were traversing it a door was suddenly opened, out of which came a drunken old man in a shirt, evidently not of the peasant class. A shrieking washerwoman with tucked-up sleeves and soapy arms was pushing him out of the room. "Ványa" (my guide) shoved him aside, saying, "It won't do to kick up such a row here – and you an officer too!"

When we arrived at No. 30, Ványa pulled the door, which opened with the sound of a wet slap; and we felt a gush of soapy steam and an odor of bad food and tobacco, and entered in complete darkness. The windows were on the other side; and we were in a crooked corridor, that went right and left, with doors leading at different angles into rooms separated from it by a partition of unevenly laid boards, roughly whitewashed.

In a dark room to the left we could see a woman washing at a trough. Another old woman was looking out of a door at the right. Near an open door was a hairy, red-skinned peasant in bark

shoes, sitting on a couch. His hands rested upon his knees; and he was swinging his feet and looking sadly at his shoes.

At the end of the passage a small door led into the room where the census officers had assembled. This was the room of the landlady of the whole of No. 30, who rented it from Iván Fedotitch and sub-let to ordinary or night lodgers.

In this tiny room a student sat under an image glittering with gilt paper, and, with the air of a magistrate, was putting questions to a man dressed in shirt and vest. This last was a friend of the landlady's, who was answering the questions in her stead. The landlady herself, – an old woman, – and two inquisitive lodgers, were also present.

When I entered, the room was quite filled up. I pushed through to the table, shook hands with the student, and he went on extracting his information, while I studied the inhabitants, and put questions to them for my own ends.

It appeared, however, I could find no one here upon whom to bestow my benevolence. The landlady of the rooms, notwithstanding their wretchedness and filth (which especially struck me in comparison with the mansion in which I lived), was well off, even from the point of view of town poverty; and compared with country destitution, with which I was well acquainted, she lived luxuriously. She had a feather-bed, a quilted blanket, a samovár, a fur cloak, a cupboard, with dishes, plates, etc. The landlady's friend had the same well-to-do appearance, and boasted even a watch and chain. The

lodgers were poor, but among them there was no one requiring immediate help.

Three only applied for aid, – the woman washing linen, who said she had been abandoned by her husband; an old widowed woman, without means of livelihood; and the peasant in the bark shoes, who told me he had not had anything to eat that day. But, upon gathering more precise information, it became evident that all these people were not in extreme want, and that, before one could really help, it would be necessary to make their more intimate acquaintance.

When I offered the washerwoman to place her children in a “home,” she became confused, thought over it some time, then thanked me much, but evidently did not desire it; she would rather have had some money. Her eldest daughter helped her in the washing, and the second acted as nurse to the little boy.

The old woman asked to be put into a refuge; but, examining her corner, I saw she was not in extreme distress. She had a box containing some property and a teapot, two cups, and old bon-bon boxes with tea and sugar. She knitted stockings and gloves, and received a monthly allowance from a lady benefactress.

The peasant was evidently more desirous of wetting his throat after his last day's drunkenness than of food, and anything given him would have gone to the public-house. In these rooms, therefore, there was no one whom I could have rendered in any respect happier by helping them with money.

There were only paupers there, – and paupers, it seemed, of

a questionable kind.

I put down the names of the old woman, the laundress, and the peasant, and settled in my mind that it would be necessary to do something for them, but that first I would help those other *especially* unfortunate ones whom I expected to come across in this house. I made up my mind that some system was necessary in distributing the aid which we had to give: first, we must find the most needy, and then come to such as these.

But in the next lodging, and in the next again, I found only similar cases, which would have to be looked into more closely before being helped. Of those whom pecuniary aid alone would have rendered happy, I found none.

However ashamed I feel in confessing it, I began to experience a certain disappointment at not finding in these houses anything resembling what I had expected. I thought to find very exceptional people; but, when I had gone over all the lodgings, I became convinced that their inhabitants were in no way extremely peculiar, but much like those amongst whom I lived.

As with us, so also with them, there were some more or less good and others more or less bad: there were some more or less happy and others more or less unhappy. Those who were unhappy amongst them would have been equally wretched with us, their misery being within themselves, – a misery not to be mended by any kind of bank-note.

CHAPTER VI

The inhabitants of these houses belonged to the lowest population of the town, which in Moscow amounts to perhaps more than a hundred thousand. In this house, there were representative men of all kinds, – petty employers and journeymen, shoemakers, brushmakers, joiners, hackney coachmen, jobbers carrying on business on their own account, washerwomen, second-hand dealers, money-lenders, day-laborers, and others without any definite occupation; and here also lodged beggars and unfortunate women.

Many who were like the people I had seen waiting at Liapin's house lived here, mixed up with the working-people. But those whom I saw then were in a most wretched condition, having eaten and drunk all they had, and, turned out of the public-house, were waiting, as for heavenly manna, cold and hungry, to be admitted into the free night-lodging-house, – and longing day by day to be taken to prison, in order to be sent back to their homes. Here I saw the same men among a greater number of working-people, at a time when by some means or other they had got a few farthings to pay for their night's lodging, and perhaps a ruble or two for food and drink.

However strange it may sound, I had no such feelings here as I experienced in Liapin's house; on the contrary, during my first visiting-round, I and the students had a sensation which

was rather agreeable than otherwise. Why do I say “almost agreeable?” It is not true. The sensation called forth by the companionship of these men – strange as it may seem – was simply a very agreeable one.

The first impression was, that the majority of the lodgers here were working people, and very kindly disposed. We found most of them at work, – the washerwomen at their tubs, the joiners by their benches, the bootmakers at their lasts. The tiny rooms were full of people, and the work was going on cheerfully and with energy. There was a smell of perspiration among the workmen, of leather at the bootmaker's, of chips in the carpenter's shop. We often heard songs, and saw bare, sinewy arms working briskly and skilfully.

Everywhere we were received kindly and cheerfully. Nearly everywhere our intrusion into the daily life of these people excited no desire in them to show us their importance, or to rate us soundly, which happens when such visits are paid to the lodgings of well-to-do people. On the contrary, all our questions were answered simply, without any particular importance being attached to them, – served, indeed, only as an excuse for merriment and for jokes about how they were to be enrolled on the list, how such a one was as good as two, and how two others ought to be reckoned as one.

Many we found at dinner or at tea; and each time, in answer to our greeting, “Bread and salt,” or, “Tea and sugar,” they said, “You are welcome”; and some even made room for us to sit

down. Instead of the place being the resort of an ever-shifting population, such as we expected to find, it turned out that in this house were many rooms which had been tenanted by the same people for long periods.

One carpenter, with his workmen, and a bootmaker, with his journeymen, had been living here for ten years. The bootmaker's shop was very dirty and quite choked up, but all his men were working very cheerily. I tried to talk with one of the workmen, wishing to sound him about the miseries of his lot, what he owed to the master, and so forth; but he did not understand me, and spoke of his master and of his life from a very favourable point of view.

In one lodging, there lived an old man with his old wife. They dealt in apples. Their room was warm, clean, and filled with their belongings. The floor was covered with straw-matting which they got from the apple stores. There were chests, a cupboard, a samovár, and crockery. In the corner were many holy images, before which two lamps were burning: on the wall hung fur cloaks wrapped up in a sheet. The old woman with wrinkled face, kind and talkative, was apparently quite delighted with her quiet, respectable life.

Iván Fedotitch, the owner of the inn and of the lodgings, came out and walked with us. He joked kindly with many of the lodgers, calling them all by their names, and giving us short sketches of their characters. They were as other men, did not consider themselves unhappy, but believed they were like

everyone else, as in reality they were. We were prepared to see only dreadful things, and we met instead objects not only not repulsive, but estimable. There were so many of these, compared with the ragged, ruined, unoccupied people we met now and then among them, that the latter did not in the least destroy the general impression. To the students it did not appear so remarkable as it did to me. They were merely performing an act useful to science, as they thought; and, in passing, made casual observations: but I was a benefactor; my object in going there was to help the unhappy, ruined, depraved men and women whom I had expected to meet in this house. Suddenly, instead of unhappy, ruined, depraved beings, I found the majority to be workmen: quiet, satisfied, cheerful, kind, and very good.

I was still more strongly impressed when I found that in these lodgings the crying want I wished to relieve had already been relieved before I came. But by whom? By these same unhappy, depraved beings whom I was prepared to save! And this help was given in a way not open to me.

In one cellar lay a lonely old man suffering from typhus-fever. He had no connections in the world; yet a woman, – a widow with a little girl, – quite a stranger to him, but living in the corner next to him, nursed him, gave him tea, and bought him medicine with her own money.

In another lodging lay a woman in puerperal fever. A woman of the town was nursing her child, and had prepared a sucking-bottle for him, and had not gone out to ply her sad trade for two

days.

An orphan girl was taken into the family of a tailor, who had three children of his own. Thus, there remained only such miserable unoccupied men as retired officials, clerks, men-servants out of situations, beggars, tipsy people, prostitutes, children, whom it was not possible to help all at once by means of money, but whose cases it was necessary to consider carefully before assisting them. I had been seeking for men suffering immediately from want of means, whom one might be able to help by sharing one's superfluities with them. I had not found them. All whom I had seen, it would have been very difficult to assist materially without devoting time and care to their cases.

CHAPTER VII

These unfortunate necessitous ones ranged themselves in my mind under three heads: First, those who had lost former advantageous positions, and who were waiting to return to them (such men belonged to the lowest as well as to the highest classes of society); Secondly, women of the town, who are very numerous in these houses; and Thirdly, children.

The majority of those I found, and noted down, were men who had lost former places, and were desirous of returning to them, chiefly of the better class, and government officials. In almost all the lodgings we entered with the landlord, we were told, "Here we need not trouble to fill up the card ourselves: the man here is able to do it, provided he is not tipsy."

Thus summoned by Iván Fedotitch, there would appear, from some dark corner, the once rich nobleman or official, mostly drunk, and always half-dressed. If he were not drunk, he willingly undertook the task: he kept nodding his head with a sense of importance, knitted his brows, inserted now and then learned terms in his remarks, and carefully holding in his dirty, trembling hands the neat pink card, looked round at his fellow-lodgers with pride and contempt, as if he were now, by the superiority of his education, triumphing over those who had been continually humbling him.

He was evidently pleased to have intercourse with the world

which used pink cards, with a world of which he himself had once been a member.

To my questions about his life, this kind of man not only replied willingly, but with enthusiasm, – beginning to tell a story, fixed in his mind like a prayer, about all kinds of misfortunes which had happened to him, and chiefly about his former position, in which, considering his education, he ought to have remained.

Many such people are scattered about in all the tenements of the Rzhanoﬀ Houses. One lodging-house was tenanted exclusively by them, women and men. As we approached them, Iván Fedotitch said, “Now, here's where the nobility live.”

The lodging was full. Almost all the lodgers – about forty persons – were at home. In the whole house, there were no faces so ruined and degraded-looking as these, – if old, flabby; if young, pale and haggard.

I talked with several of them. Almost always the same story was told, differing only in degree of development. One and all had been once rich, or had still a rich father or brother or uncle; or either his father or his unfortunate self had held a high office. Then came some misfortune caused by envious enemies, or his own imprudent kindness, or some out-of-the-way occurrence; and, having lost everything, he was obliged to descend to these strange and hateful surroundings, among lice and rags, in company with drunkards and loose characters, feeding upon bread and liver, and subsisting by beggary.

All the thoughts, desires, and recollections of these men are turned toward the past. The present appears to them as something unnatural, hideous, and unworthy of attention. It does not exist for them. They have only recollections of the past, and expectations of the future which may be realized at any moment, and for the attainment of which but very little is needed; but, unfortunately, this little is out of their reach; it cannot be got anywhere: and so one has wasted one year, another five, and a third thirty years.

One needs only to be dressed respectably in order to call on a well-known person who is kindly disposed toward him; another requires only to be dressed, have his debts paid, and go to some town or other; a third wants to take his effects out of pawn, and get a small sum to carry on a law-suit, which must be decided in his favour, and then all will be well again. All say that they have need of some external circumstance in order to regain that position which they think natural and happy.

If I had not been blinded by my pride in being a benefactor, I should have needed only to look a little closer into their faces, young and old, which were generally weak, sensual, but kind, in order to understand that their misfortunes could not be met by external means; that they could be happy in no position while their present conception of life remained the same; that they were by no means peculiar people in peculiarly unhappy circumstances, but that they were like all other men, ourselves included.

I remember well how my intercourse with men of this class was particularly trying to me. I now understand why it was so. In them I saw my own self as in a mirror. If I had considered carefully my own life and the lives of people of my own class, I should have seen that between us and these unfortunate men there existed no essential difference.

Those who live around me in expensive suites of apartments and houses of their own in the best streets of the city, eating something better than liver or herring with their bread, are none the less unhappy. They also are discontented with their lot, regret the past, and desire a happier future, precisely as did the wretched tenants of the Rzhanoff Houses. Both wished to be worked less and to be worked for more, the difference between them being only in degrees of idleness.

Unfortunately, I did not see this at first, nor did I understand that such people needed to be relieved, not by my charity, but from their own false views of the world; and that to change a man's estimate of life he must be given one more accurate than his own, which, unhappily, not possessing myself, I could not communicate to others.

These men were unhappy not because, to use an illustration, they were without nourishing food, but because their stomachs were spoiled; and they required, not nourishment, but a tonic. I did not see that in order to help them, it was not necessary to give them food but to teach them how to eat. Though I am anticipating, I must say that of all these people whose names

I put down I did not in reality help one, notwithstanding that everything some of them had desired was done to relieve them. Of these I became acquainted with three men in particular. All three, after many failures and much assistance, are now in the same position they were in three years ago.

CHAPTER VIII

The second class of unfortunates, whom I hoped afterwards to be able to help, were women of the town. These women were very numerous in the Rzhanoff Houses; and they were of every kind, from young girls still bearing some likeness to women, to old and fearful-looking creatures without a vestige of humanity. The hope of helping these women, whom I had not at first in view, was aroused by the following circumstances.

When we had finished half of our tour, we had already acquired a somewhat mechanical method. On entering a new lodging we at once asked for the landlord. One of us sat down, clearing a space to write; and the other went from one to another, questioning each man and woman in the room, and reporting the information obtained to him who was writing.

On our entering one of the basement lodgings, the student went to look for the landlord; and I began to question all who were in the place. This place was divided thus: In the middle of the room, which was four yards square, there stood a stove. From the stove four partitions or screens radiated, making a similar number of small compartments. In the first of these, which had two doors in it opposite each other, and four pallets, were an old man and a woman. Next to this was a rather long but narrow room, in which was the landlord, a young, pale, good-looking man dressed in a gray woollen coat. To the left of the

first division was a third small room where a man was sleeping, seemingly tipsy, and a woman in a pink dressing-gown. The fourth compartment was behind a partition, access to it being through the landlord's room.

The student entered the latter, while I remained in the first, questioning the old man and the woman. The former had been a compositor, but now had no means of livelihood whatever.

The woman was a cook's wife.

I went into the third compartment, and asked the woman in the dressing-gown about the man who was asleep.

She answered that he was a visitor.

I asked her who she was.

She replied that she was a peasant girl from the county of Moscow.

“What is your occupation?” She laughed, and made no answer.

“What do you do for your living?” I repeated, thinking she had not understood the question.

“I sit in the inn,” she said.

I did not understand her, and asked again, —

“What are your means of living?”

She gave me no answer, but continued to giggle. In the fourth room, where we had not yet been, I heard the voices of women also giggling.

The landlord came out of his room, and approached us. He had evidently heard my questions and the woman's answers. He glanced sternly at her, and, turning to me, said, “She is a

prostitute”; and it was evident that he was pleased that he knew this word, – which is the one used in official circles, – and at having pronounced it correctly. And having said this with a respectful smile of satisfaction towards me, he turned to the woman. As he did so, the expression of his face changed. In a peculiarly contemptuous manner, and with rapid utterance as one would speak to a dog, he said, without looking at her, “Don't be a fool! instead of saying you sit in the inn, speak plainly, and say you are a prostitute. – She does not even yet know her proper name,” he said, turning to me.

This manner of speaking shocked me.

“It is not for us to shame her,” I said. “If we were all living according to God's commandment, there would be no such persons.”

“There are such doings,” said the landlord, with an artificial smile.

“Therefore we must pity them, and not reproach them. Is it their fault?”

I do not remember exactly what I said. I remember only that I was disgusted by the disdainful tone of this young landlord, in a lodging filled with females whom he termed prostitutes; and I pitied the woman, and expressed both feelings.

No sooner had I said this, than I heard from the small compartment where the giggling had been, the noise of creaking bed-boards; and over the partition, which did not reach to the ceiling, appeared the dishevelled curly head of a female with

small swollen eyes, and a shining red face; a second, and then a third, head followed. They were evidently standing on their beds; and all three were stretching their necks and holding their breath, and looking silently at me with strained attention.

A painful silence followed.

The student, who had been smiling before this happened, now became grave; the landlord became confused, and cast down his eyes; and the women continued to look at me in expectation.

I felt more disconcerted than all the rest. I had certainly not expected that a casual word would produce such an effect. It was like the field of battle covered with dead bones seen by the prophet Ezekiel, on which, trembling from contact with the spirit, the dead bones began to move. I had casually uttered a word of love and pity, which produced upon all such an effect that it seemed as if they had been only waiting for it, to cease to be corpses, and to become alive again.

They continued to look at me, as if wondering what would come next, as if waiting for me to say those words and do those acts by which these dry bones would begin to come together, – be covered with flesh and receive life.

But I felt, alas! that I had no such words or deeds to give, or to continue as I had begun. In the depth of my soul I felt that I had told a lie, that I myself was like them, that I had nothing more to say; and I began to write down on the card the names and the occupations of all the lodgers there.

This occurrence led me into a new kind of error. I began to

think that these unhappy creatures also could be helped. This, in my self deception, it seemed to me would be very easily done. I said to myself, "Now we shall put down the names of these women too; and afterwards, when we (though it never occurred to me to ask who were the *we*) have written everything down, we can occupy ourselves with their affairs." I imagined that *we*, the very persons who, during many generations, have been leading such women into such a condition, and still continue to do so, could one fine morning wake up and remedy it all. And yet, if I could have recollected my conversation with the lost woman who was nursing the baby for the sick mother, I should have understood the folly of such an idea.

When we first saw this woman nursing the child, we thought that it was hers; but upon our asking her what she was, she answered us plainly that she was a wench. She did not say "prostitute." It was left for the proprietor of the lodgings to make use of that terrible word.

The supposition that she had a child gave me the idea of helping her out of her present position.

"Is this child yours?" I asked.

"No: it is that woman's there."

"Why do you nurse him?"

"She asked me to. She is dying."

Though my surmise turned out to be wrong, I continued to speak with her in the same spirit. I began to question her as to who she was, and how she came to be in such a position. She

told me her story willingly, and very plainly. She belonged to the artisan class of Moscow, the daughter of a factory workman. She was left an orphan, and adopted by her aunt, from whose house she began to visit the inns. The aunt was now dead.

When I asked her whether she wished to change her course of life, my question did not even interest her. How can a supposition about something quite impossible awaken an interest in any one? She smiled and said, —

“Who would take me with a yellow ticket?”³

“But,” said I, “if it were possible to find you a situation as a cook or something else?” I said this because she looked like a strong woman, with a kind, dull, round face, not unlike many cooks I had seen.

Evidently my words did not please her. She repeated, “Cook! but I do not understand how to bake bread.”

She spoke jestingly; but, by the expression of her face, I saw that she was unwilling; that she even considered the position and rank of a cook beneath her.

This woman, who, in the most simple manner, like the widow in the gospel, had sacrificed all that she had for a sick person, at the same time, like other women of the same profession, considered the position of a workman or workwoman low and despicable. She had been educated to live without work, — a life which all her friends considered quite natural. This was her misfortune. And by this she came into her present position, and

³ The police certificate of registration as a prostitute. — Ed.

is kept in it. This brought her to the inns. Who of us men and women will cure her of this false view of life? Are there among us any men convinced that a laborious life is more respectable than an idle one, and who are living according to this conviction, and who make this the test of their esteem and respect?

If I had thought about it I should have understood that neither I nor anybody else I know, was able to cure a person of this disease.

I should have understood that those wondering and awakened faces that looked over the partition expressed merely astonishment at the pity shown to them, but no wish to reform their lives. They did not see the immorality. They knew that they were despised and condemned, but the reason for this they could not understand. They had lived in this manner from their infancy among women like themselves, who, they know very well, have always existed, do exist, and are necessary to society, that there are officials deputed by government to see that they conform to regulations.

Besides, they know that they have power over men, and subdue them, and often influence them more than any other women. They see that their position in society, notwithstanding the fact that they are always blamed, is recognised by men as well as by women and by the government; and therefore they cannot even understand of what they have to repent, and wherein they should reform.

During one of our tours the student told me that in one of the lodgings there was a woman who sends out her daughter, thirteen

years old, to walk the streets. Wishing to save this little girl I went on purpose to their lodging.

Mother and daughter were living in great poverty. The mother, a small, dark-complexioned prostitute of forty years of age, was not simply ugly, but disagreeably ugly. The daughter was also bad-looking. To all my indirect questions about their mode of life, the mother replied curtly, with a look of suspicion and animosity, apparently feeling that I was an enemy with bad intentions: the daughter said nothing without looking first at the mother, in whom she evidently had entire confidence.

They did not awaken pity in my heart, but rather disgust. Still I decided that it was necessary to save the daughter, to awaken an interest in ladies who might sympathize with the miserable condition of these women and might so be brought here.

Yet if I had thought about the antecedents of the mother, how she had given birth to her daughter, how she had fed and brought her up, certainly without any outside help, and with great sacrifices to herself; if I had thought of the view of life which had formed itself in her mind, – I should have understood, that, in the mother's conduct, there was nothing at all bad or immoral, seeing she had been doing for her daughter all she could; i.e., what she considered best for herself.

It was possible to take this girl away from her mother by force; but to convince her that she was doing wrong in selling her daughter was not possible. It would first be necessary to save this woman – this mother – from a condition of life approved by every

one, and according to which a woman may live without marrying and without working, serving exclusively as a gratification to the passions. If I had thought about this, I should have understood that the majority of those ladies whom I wished to send here for saving this girl were not only themselves avoiding family duties, and leading idle and sensuous lives, but were consciously educating their daughters for this very same mode of existence. One mother leads her daughter to the inn, and another to court and to balls. Both the views of the world held by both mothers are the same; viz., that a woman must gratify the passions of men, and for that she must be fed, dressed, and taken care of.

How, then, are our ladies to reform this woman and her daughter?

CHAPTER IX

Still more strange were my dealings with the children. In my *rôle* as benefactor I paid attention to the children too, wishing to save innocent beings from going to ruin in this den; and I wrote down their names in order to attend to them myself *afterwards*.

Among these children my attention was particularly drawn to Serozha, a boy twelve years old. I sincerely pitied this clever, intelligent lad, who had been living with a bootmaker, and who was left without any place of refuge when his master was put into prison. I wished to do something for him.

I will now give the result of my benevolence in his case, because this boy's story will show my false position as a benefactor better than anything else.

I took the boy into my house, and lodged him in the kitchen. Could I possibly bring a lousy boy out of a den of depravity to my children? I considered that I had been very kind in having put him where he was, amongst my servants. I thought myself a great benefactor for having given him some of my old clothes and fed him; though it was properly my cook who did it, not I. The boy remained in my house about a week.

During this week I saw him twice, and, passing him, spoke some words to him, and, when out walking, called on a bootmaker whom I knew and proposed the boy as an apprentice. A peasant who was on a visit at my house invited him to go to

his village and work in a family. The boy refused to accept it and disappeared within a week.

I went to Rzhanoﬀ's house to enquire after him. He had returned there; but when I called, he was not at home. He had already been two days in a menagerie in Presnem Ponds, where he hired himself for 6d. a day to appear in a procession of savages in costume, leading an elephant. There was some public show on at the time.

I went to see him again, but he was so ungrateful, he evidently avoided me. Had I reflected upon the life of this boy and on my own, I should have understood that the boy had been spoiled by the fact of his having tasted the sweets of a merry and idle life, and that he had lost the habit of working. And I, in order to confer on him a benefit and reform him, took him into my own house. And what did he see there? He saw my children, some older than he, some younger, and some of the same age, who not only never did anything for themselves, but gave as much work to others as they could. They dirtied and spoiled everything about them, surfeited themselves with all sorts of dainties, broke the china, upset and threw to the dogs food which would have been a treat to him. If I took him out of a den and brought him to a respectable place, he could not but assimilate the views of life which existed there; and, according to these views, he understood that in a respectable position one must live without working, eat and drink well, and lead a merry life.

True, he did not know that my children had much labour

in learning the exceptions in Latin and Greek grammars; nor would he have been able to understand the object of such work. But one cannot help seeing that even had he understood it the influence upon him of the example of my children would have been still stronger. He would have then understood that they were being educated in such a way, that, not working now, they might afterwards also work as little as possible, and enjoy the good things of life by virtue of their diplomas.

But what he did understand of it made him go, not to the peasant to take care of cattle and feed on potatoes and kvas,⁴ but to the menagerie in the costume of a savage to lead an elephant for 6d. a day. I ought to have understood how foolish it was of one who was educating his own children in complete idleness and luxury to try to reform other men and their children, and save them from going to ruin and idleness in what I called the *dens* in Rzhanoff's house; where, however, three-fourths of the men were working for themselves and for others. But then I understood nothing of all this.

In Rzhanoff's house there were a great many children in the most miserable condition. There were children of prostitutes, orphans, and children carried about the streets by beggars. They were all very wretched. But my experience with Serozha showed me that so long as I continued living the life I did I was not able to help them.

While the boy was living with us I remember I took pains to

⁴ An unfermented home-made liquor used by Russian peasants. – Ed.

hide from him our way of life, particularly that of my children. I felt that all my endeavours to lead him to a good and laborious life were frustrated by my example and that of my children. It is very easy to take away a child from a prostitute or a beggar. It is very easy, when one has money, to wash him, dress him in new clothes, feed him well, and even teach him different accomplishments; but to teach him how to earn his living, is, for us who have not been earning ours but doing just the contrary, not only difficult but quite impossible, because by our example and by the very improvements of his mode of life effected by us without any cost on our part, we teach him the very opposite.

You may take a puppy, pet him, feed him, teach him to carry things after you, and be pleased with looking at him: but it is not enough to feed a man, dress him, and teach him Greek; you must teach him how to live; i.e., how to take less from others and give them more in return: and yet through our own mode of life we cannot help teaching him the very opposite whether we take him into our house or put him into a home to bring up.

CHAPTER X

I have never since experienced such a feeling of compassion towards men and of aversion towards myself, as I felt in Liapin's house. I was now filled with the desire to carry out the scheme I had already begun and to do good to the men whom I had met.

And, strange to say, though it might seem that to do good and to give money to those in want of it was a good deed, and ought to dispose men to universal love, it turned out quite the reverse; calling up in me bitter feelings and disposition to censure them. Even during our first tour a scene occurred similar to that in Liapin's house; but it failed to produce again the same effect and created a very different impression.

It began with my finding in one of the lodgings a miserable person who required immediate help, – a woman who had not eaten food for two days.

It happened thus: In one very large and almost empty night-lodging, I asked an old woman whether there were any poor people who had nothing to eat. She hesitated a moment and then named two; then suddenly, as if recollecting herself, she said, "Yes, there lies one of them," pointing to a pallet. "This one," she added, "indeed, has nothing to eat."

"You don't say so! Who is she?"

"She has been a lost woman; but as nobody takes her now, she can't earn anything. The landlady has had pity on her, but now

she wants to turn her out. – Agafia! I say, Agafia!” cried the old woman.

We went a little nearer, and saw something rise from the pallet. This was a grey-haired, dishevelled woman, thin as a skeleton, in a dirty, torn chemise, and with peculiarly glittering, immovable eyes. She looked fixedly beyond us, tried to snatch up her jacket behind her in order to cover her bony chest, and growled out like a dog, “What? what?”

I asked her how she managed to live. For some time she was unable to see the drift of my words and said, “I don't know myself; they are going to turn me out.”

I asked again; and oh, how ashamed of myself I feel! my hand can scarcely write it! I asked her whether it was true that she was starving. She replied in the same feverish, excited manner, “I had nothing to eat yesterday; I have had nothing to eat to-day.”

The miserable aspect of this woman impressed me deeply, but quite differently from those in Liapin's house: there, out of pity for them, I felt embarrassed and ashamed of myself; but here, I rejoiced that I had at last found what I had been looking for, – a hungry being.

I gave her a ruble and I remember how glad I felt that the others had seen it.

The old woman forthwith asked me also for money. It was so pleasant to me to give that I handed her some also, without thinking whether it was necessary or not. She accompanied me to the door, and those who were in the corridor heard

how she thanked me. Probably my questions about the poor provoked expectations, for some of the inmates began to follow us wherever we went.

Among those that begged, there were evidently drunkards, who gave me a most disagreeable impression; but having once given to the old woman I thought I had no right to refuse them, and I began to give away more. This only increased the number of applicants, and there was a stir throughout the whole lodging-house.

On the stairs and in the galleries, people appeared dogging my steps. When I came out of the yard, a boy ran quickly down the stairs, pushing through the people. He did not notice me and said hurriedly, —

“He gave a ruble to Agafia!”

Having reached the ground, he, too, joined the crowd that was following me. I came out into the street. All sorts of people crowded round begging for money. Having given away all I had in coppers, I entered a shop and asked the proprietor to give me change for ten rubles.

Here occurred a scene similar to that which took place in Liapin's house. A dreadful confusion ensued. Old women, seedy gentlefolk, peasants, children, all crowded about the shop, stretching out their hands; I gave, and asked some of them about their position and means, and entered all in my note-book. The shopkeeper, having turned up the fur collar of his great-coat, was sitting like a statue, glancing now and then at the crowd, and again

staring beyond it. He apparently felt like everyone else, that all this was very foolish, but he dared not say so.

In Liapin's house the misery and humiliation of the people had overwhelmed me; and I felt myself to blame for it, and also the desire and the possibility of becoming a better man. But though the scene here was similar, it produced quite a different effect. In the first place, I felt angry with many of those who assailed me, and then anxious as to what the shopmen and the dvorniks might think of me. I returned home that day with a weight on my mind. I knew that what I had done was foolish and inconsistent; but, as usual when my conscience was troubled, I talked the more about my projected plan, as if I had no doubt whatever as to its success.

The next day I went alone to those whom I had noted down, and who seemed the most miserable, thinking they could be more easily helped than others.

As I have already mentioned, I was not really able to help any of these people. It turned out that to do so was more difficult than I had imagined: in short, I only tormented these men and helped no one.

Before the last visiting-tour I went several times to Rzhanoﬀ's house, and each time the same thing occurred: I was assailed by a crowd of men and women in the midst of whom I utterly lost my presence of mind.

I felt the impossibility of doing anything because there were so many of them; besides, each of them, taken separately, did not awaken any sympathy in me. I felt that every one lied, or

at least prevaricated, and regarded me only as a purse out of which money could be drawn. It often seemed to me that the very money extorted from me did not improve their position but only made it worse.

The oftener I went to these houses, the closer the intercourse which I had with the inmates, the more apparent became the impossibility of doing anything; but notwithstanding this, I did not give up my plan until after the last night tour with the census-takers.

I feel more ashamed of this visit than of any other. Formerly I had gone alone, but now twenty of us went together. At seven o'clock all who wished to take part in this last tour began to assemble in my house. They were almost all strangers to me. Some students, an officer, and two of my fashionable acquaintances, who, after having repeated the usual phrase, "C'est très intéressant!" asked me to put them into the number of the census-takers.

These fashionable friends of mine had dressed themselves in shooting-jackets and tall travelling boots, which they thought more suited to the visit than their ordinary clothes. They carried with them peculiar pocket-books and extraordinary-looking pencils. They were in that agitated state of mind which one experiences just before going to a hunt, or to a duel, or into a battle. The falseness and foolishness of our enterprise was now more apparent to me in looking at them; but were we not all in the same ridiculous position?

Before starting we had a conference, somewhat like a council of war, as to what we should begin with, how to divide ourselves, and so on. This conference was just like all other official councils, meetings, and committees: each spoke, not because he had anything to say, or to ask, but because every one tried to find something to say in order not to be behind the rest. But during the conversation no one alluded to the acts of benevolence to which I had so many times referred; and however much ashamed I felt, I found it was needful to remind them that we must carry out our charitable intentions by writing down, during the visiting-tour, the names of all whom we should find in a destitute condition.

I had always felt ashamed to speak about these matters; but here, in the midst of our hurried preparations for the expedition, I could scarcely utter a word about them. All listened to me and seemed touched, all agreed with me in words; but it was evident that each of them knew that it was folly, and that it would lead to nothing, and so they began at once to talk about other subjects, and continued doing so until it was time for us to start.

We came to the dark tavern, aroused the waiters, and began to sort out papers. When we were told that the people, having heard about this visiting-tour, had begun to leave their lodgings, we asked the landlord to shut the gate, and we ourselves went to the yard to persuade those to remain who wanted to escape, assuring them that no one would ask to see their passports.

I remember the strange and painful impression produced upon me by these frightened night-lodgers. Ragged and half-dressed,

they all appeared tall by the light of the lantern in the dark court-yard. Frightened and horrible in their terror, they stood in a small knot round the pestilential out-house, listening to our persuasions, but not believing us; and, evidently, like hunted animals, prepared to do anything to escape from us.

Gentlemen of all kinds, town and country policemen, public coroner and judges, had, all their lives, been hunting them in towns and villages, on the roads and in the streets, in the taverns and in the lodging-houses, and suddenly these gentlemen had come at night and shut the gate, only, forsooth, in order to count them! They found this as difficult to believe as it would be for hares to believe that the dogs had come out not to catch but to count them.

But the gates were shut, and the frightened night-lodgers returned to their places; and we, having separated into groups, began our visit. With me were my fashionable acquaintances and two students. Ványa, with a lantern, went before us in a great-coat and white trousers, and we followed. We entered lodgings well known to me. The place was familiar, some of the persons also; but the majority were new to me, and the spectacle was also a new and dreadful one, – still more dreadful than that which I had seen at Liapin's house. All the lodgings were filled, all the pallets occupied, and not only by one, but often by two persons. The sight was dreadful, because of the closeness with which these people were huddled together, and because of the indiscriminate commingling of men and women. Such of the latter as were not

dead-drunk were sleeping with men. Many women with children slept with strange men on narrow beds.

The spectacle was dreadful, owing to the misery, dirt, raggedness, and terror of these people; and chiefly because there were so many of them. One lodging, then another, then a third, a tenth, a twentieth, and so on, without end. And everywhere the same fearful stench, the same suffocating exhalation, the same confusion of sexes, men and women, drunk, or in a state of insensibility; the same terror, submissiveness, and guilt stamped on all faces, so that I felt deeply ashamed and grieved, as I had before at Liapin's. At last I understood that what I was about to do was disgusting, foolish, and therefore impossible; so I left off writing down their names and questioning them, knowing now that nothing would come of it.

I felt deeply hurt.

At Liapin's I had been like a man who sees a horrible wound on the body of another. He feels sorry for the man, ashamed of not having relieved him before, yet he can still hope to help the sufferer; but now I was like a doctor who comes with his own medicines to the patient, uncovers his wound only to mangle it, and to confess to himself that all he has done has been done in vain, and that his remedy is ineffectual.

CHAPTER XI

This visit gave the last blow to my self-deception. It became very evident to me that my aim was not only foolish, but even productive of evil. Yet, though I knew this, it seemed my duty to continue the project a little longer: first, because of the article I had written and by my visits I had raised the expectations of the poor; secondly, because what I had said and written had awakened the sympathy of some benefactors, many of whom had promised to assist me personally and with money. And I was expecting to be applied to by both, and hoped to satisfy them as well as I was able.

As regards the applications made to me by those who were in need, the following details may be given: I received more than a hundred letters, which came exclusively from the "rich poor," if I may so express myself. Some of them I visited, and some I left unanswered. In no instance did I succeed in doing any good. All the applications made to me were from persons who were once in a privileged position (I call such persons privileged who receive more from others than they give in return), had lost that position, and were desirous of regaining it. One wanted two hundred rubles in order to keep his business from going to ruin, and to enable him to finish the education of his children; another wanted to have a photographic establishment; a third wanted money to pay his debts, and take his best clothes out of pawn; a

fourth was in need of a piano, in order to perfect himself and to earn money to support his family by giving lessons. The majority did not name any particular sum of money: they simply asked for help; but when I began to investigate what was necessary, it turned out that their wants increased in proportion to the help offered, and nothing satisfactorily resulted. I repeat again, the fault may have been in my want of understanding; but in any case I helped no one, notwithstanding the fact that I made every effort to do so.

As for the philanthropists who were to co-operate with me, something very strange and quite unexpected occurred: of all who promised to assist with money, and even stated the amount they would give, not one contributed anything for distribution among the poor.

The promises of pecuniary assistance amounted to about three thousand rubles; but of all these people, not one recollected his agreement, or gave me a single kopek. The students alone gave the money which they received as payment for visiting, about twelve rubles; so that my scheme, which was to have collected tens of thousands of rubles from the rich, and to have saved hundreds and thousands of people from misery and vice, ended in my distributing at random some few rubles offered by the students, with twenty-five more sent me by the town-council for my labour as manager, which I positively did not know what to do with.

So ended the affair.

Then, before leaving Moscow for the country, on the Sunday before the Carnival, I went to the Rzhanoff house in the morning in order to distribute the thirty-seven rubles among the poor. I visited all whom I knew in the lodgings, but found only one invalid, to whom I gave something, – five rubles, I think. There was nobody else to give to. Of course, many began to beg; but, as I did not know them, I made up my mind to take the advice of Iván Fedotitch, the tavern-keeper, respecting the distribution of the remaining thirty-two rubles.

It was the first day of the carnival. Everybody was smartly dressed, all had had food, and many were drunk. In the yard near the corner of the house stood an old-clothes man, dressed in a ragged peasant's coat and bark shoes. He was still hale and hearty. Sorting his purchases, he was putting them into different heaps, – leather, iron, and other things, – and was singing a merry song at the top of his voice.

I began to talk with him. He was seventy years of age; had no relatives; earned his living by dealing in old clothes, and not only did not complain, but said he had enough to eat, drink, and to spare. I asked him who in the place were particularly in want. He became cross, and said plainly that there was no one in want but drunkards and idlers; but on learning my object in asking, he begged me five kopeks for drink, and ran to the tavern for it.

I also went to the tavern to see Iván Fedotitch, to ask him to distribute the money for me. It was full; gayly-dressed tipsy prostitutes were walking to and fro; all the tables were occupied;

many people were already drunk; and in the small room someone was playing a harmonium, and two people were dancing. Iván Fedotitch, out of respect for me, ordered them to leave off, and sat down next me at a vacant table. I asked him, as he knew his lodgers well, to point out those most in want, as I was intrusted with a little money for distribution, and wished him to direct me. The kind-hearted man (he died a year after) gave me his attention for a time in order to oblige me, although he had to wait on his customers. He began to think it over, and was evidently puzzled. One old waiter had overheard us, and took his part in the conference.

They began to go over his lodgers, some of whom were known to me, but they could not agree. "Paramonovna," suggested the waiter.

"Well; yes, she does go hungry sometimes; but she drinks."

"What difference does that make?"

"Well, Spiridon Ivanovitch, he has children; that's the man for you."

But Iván Fedotitch had doubts about Spiridon too.

"Akulina, but she has a pension. Ah, but there is the blind man!"

To him I myself objected: I had just seen him. This was an old man of eighty years of age, without any relatives. One could scarcely imagine any condition to be worse; and yet I had just seen him lying drunk on a feather bed, cursing at his comparatively young mistress in the most filthy language.

They then named a one-armed boy and his mother. I saw that Iván Fedotitch was in great difficulty owing to his conscientiousness, for he knew that every thing given away by me would be spent at his tavern. But as I had to get rid of my thirty-two rubles, I insisted, and we managed somehow or other to distribute the money. Those who received it were mostly well-dressed, and we had not far to go to find them: they were all in the tavern. The one-armed boy came in top-boots and a red shirt and waistcoat.

Thus ended all my benevolent enterprises; and I left for the country vexed with everyone, as it always happens when one does something foolish and harmful. Nothing came of it all, except the train of thoughts and feelings which it called forth in me, which not only did not cease, but doubly agitated my mind.

CHAPTER XII

What did it all mean?

I had lived in the country and had entered into relations with the country-poor. It is not out of false modesty, but that I may state the truth, which is necessary in order to understand the run of all my thoughts and feelings, that I must say that in the country I had done perhaps but little for the poor, the help which had been required of me was so small; but even the little I had done had been useful, and had formed round me an atmosphere of love and sympathy with my fellow-creatures, in the midst of whom it might yet be possible for me to quiet the gnawing of my conscience as to the unlawfulness of my life of luxury.

On going to the city I had hoped for the same happy relations with the poor, but here things were upon quite another footing. In the city, poverty was at once less truthful, more exacting, and more bitter, than in the country. It was chiefly because there was so much more of it accumulated together, that it produced upon me a most harrowing impression. What I experienced at Liapin's house made my own luxurious life seem monstrously evil. I could not doubt the sincerity and strength of this conviction; yet, notwithstanding this, I was quite incapable of carrying out a revolution which demanded an entire change in my mode of life: I was frightened at the prospect, and so I resorted to compromises. I accepted what I was told by everyone, and what

has been said by everybody since the world began, – that riches and luxury are in themselves no evil, that they are given by God, and that whilst continuing to live luxuriously it is possible to help those in need. I believed this and wanted to do so. And I wrote an article in which I called upon all rich people to help. These all admitted themselves morally obliged to agree with me, but evidently did not wish to do or give anything for the poor, or could not do so.

I then began visiting, and discovered what I had in no way expected to see. On the one hand, I saw in these dens (as I had at first called them) men whom it was impossible for me to help, because they were working-men, accustomed to labour and privation, and therefore having a much firmer hold on life than I had. On the other hand, I saw miserable men whom I could not aid because they were just such as I was myself. The majority of the poor whom I saw were wretched, merely because they had lost the capacity, desire, and habit of earning their bread; in other words, their misery consisted in the fact that they were just like myself. Whereas, of poor people to whom it was possible to give immediate assistance – those suffering from illness, cold, and hunger, – I found none, except the starving Agafia; and I became persuaded that, being so far removed from the life of those whom I wished to succour, it was almost impossible to find such need as I sought, because all real need was attended to by those amongst whom these unhappy creatures lived: and my principal conviction now was, that, with money, I could never

reform that life of misery which these people led.

I was persuaded of this: yet a feeling of shame to leave off all I had begun, and self-deception as to my own virtues, made me continue my plan for some time longer till it died a natural death; thus, only with great difficulty and the help of Iván Fedotitch, I managed to distribute in the tavern at Rzhanoff's house the thirty-seven rubles which I considered were not my own.

Of course I might have continued this style of thing and have transformed it into a kind of charity; and, by importuning those who promised to give me money, I might have obtained and distributed more, thus comforting myself with the idea of my own excellence: but I became convinced on the one hand that we rich people do not wish, – and are also unable, – to distribute to the poor a portion of our superfluities (we have so many wants ourselves), and that money should not be given to any one if we really wish to do good, instead of merely distributing it at random as I had done in the Rzhanoff tavern. So I dropped the affair entirely and in despair quitted Moscow for my own village.

I intended on returning home to write a pamphlet on my experience, and to state why my project had not succeeded. I wanted to justify myself from the imputations which resulted from my article on the census; I wanted also to denounce society and its heartless indifference; and I desired to point out the causes of this town misery, and the necessity for endeavouring to remedy it, as well as the means which I thought were requisite for this purpose. I began even then to write, and fancied I had

many very important facts to communicate. But in vain did I rack my brain: I could not manage it, notwithstanding the superabundance of material at my command, because of the irritation under which I wrote, and because I had not yet learned by experience what was necessary to grasp the question rightly; still more because I had not become fully conscious of the cause of it all, – a very simple cause, deep-rooted in myself. So the pamphlet was not finished at the commencement of the present year (1884–1885).

In the matter of moral law we witness a strange phenomenon to which men pay too little attention. If I speak to an unlearned man about geology, astronomy, history, natural philosophy, or mathematics, he receives the information as quite new to him, and never says to me, “There is nothing new in what you tell me; every one knows it, and I have known it for a long time.” But tell a man one of the highest moral truths in the simplest manner, in such a way as it has never been before formulated, and every ordinary man, particularly one who does not take any interest in moral questions, and, above all, one who dislikes them, is sure to say, “Who does not know that? It has been always known and expressed.” And he really believes this. Only those who can appreciate moral truths know how to value their elucidation and simplification by a long and laborious process, or can prize the transition from a proposition or desire at first vaguely understood to a firm and determined expression calling for a corresponding change of conduct.

We are all accustomed to consider moral doctrine to be a very insipid and dull affair in which there can be nothing new or interesting; whereas, in reality, human life, with all its complicated and varied actions which seem to have no connection with morals, – political activity, activity in the sciences, in the arts, and in commerce, – has no other object than to elucidate moral truths more and more, and to confirm, simplify, and make them accessible to all.

I recollect once while walking in a street in Moscow I saw a man come out and examine the flag-stones attentively; then, choosing one of them, he sat down by it and began to scrape and rub it vigorously.

“What is he doing with the pavement?” I wondered; and, having come up close to him, I discovered he was a young man from a butcher's shop, and was sharpening his knife on the flag-stone. He was not thinking about the stones when examining them, and still less while doing his work; he was merely sharpening his knife. It was necessary for him to do so in order to cut the meat, but to me it seemed that he was doing something to the pavement.

In the same way mankind seems to be occupied with commerce, treaties, wars, sciences, arts; and yet for them one thing only is important, and they do only that, – they are elucidating those moral laws by which they live.

Moral laws are already in existence, and mankind has been and is merely re-discovering them: this elucidation appears to

be unimportant and imperceptible to one who has no need of moral law, and who does not desire to live by it. Yet this is not only the chief but is the sole business of all men. The elucidation is imperceptible in the same way as the difference between a sharp knife and a blunt one is imperceptible. A knife remains a knife; and one who has not to cut anything with it will not notice its edge: but for one who understands that all his life depends more or less upon whether his knife is blunt or sharp, every improvement in sharpening it is important; and such a man knows that there must be no limit to this improvement, and that the knife is only really a knife when it is sharp, and when it cuts what it has to cut.

The conviction of this truth flashed upon me when I began to write my pamphlet. Previously it seemed to me that I knew everything about my subject, that I had a thorough understanding of everything connected with those questions which had been awakened in me by the impressions made in Liapin's house and during the census; but when I tried to sum them up, and to put them on paper, it turned out that the knife would not cut, and had to be sharpened: so it is only now after three years that I feel my knife is sharp enough for me to cut out what I want. It is not that I have learned new things: my thoughts are still the same; but they were blunt formerly; they kept diverging in every direction; there was no edge to them; nor was anything brought, as it is now, to one central point, to one most simple and plain conclusion.

CHAPTER XIII

I recollect that during the whole time of my unsuccessful endeavours to help the unfortunate inhabitants of Moscow, I felt I was like a man trying to help others out of a bog, who was all the time stuck fast in it himself. Every effort made me feel the instability of the ground upon which I was standing. I felt that I myself was in this bog, but the acknowledgement did not help me to look more closely under my feet to find out the nature of the ground on which I stood: I kept looking for some external means to remedy the evil.

I felt my life was a bad one, and that people ought not to live so; yet I did not come to the most natural and obvious conclusion: that I must first reform my own mode of life before I could have any conception of how to reform others. And so I began at the wrong end, as it were. I was living in town, and wished to improve the lives of the men there; but I soon became convinced that I had no power to do so; and then I began to ponder over the *nature* of town life and town misery.

I said to myself over and over again, "What is this town life and town misery? And why, while living in town, am I unable to help the town poor?" The only reply I found was, that I was powerless to do anything for them, First, because there were too many collected together in one place; Secondly, because none of them were at all like those in the country. And again I asked

myself, "Why are there so many here, and in what do they differ from the country poor?"

To both these questions the answer was the same. The poor are numerous in towns because all who have nothing to subsist on in the country are collected there round the rich; and their peculiarity is due to the fact that they have all come into the towns from the country to get a living. (If there are any town poor born there, whose fathers and grandfathers were town born, these in their turn originally came there to get a living.) But what are we to understand by the expression, "getting a living in town"? There is something strange in the expression; it sounds like a joke when we reflect on its meaning. How is it that from the country, – i.e., from places where there are woods, meadows, corn and cattle, where the earth yields the treasures of fertility – men come away, to get a living in a place where there are none of these advantages, but only stones and dust? What then, do the words, "getting a living in town," mean?

Such a phrase is constantly used, both by the employed and their employers, as if it were quite clear and intelligible. I remember now all the hundreds and thousands of town people living well or ill with whom I had spoken about their object in coming here; and all of them, without exception, told me they had quitted their villages "to get a living"; that "Moscow neither sows nor reaps, yet lives in wealth"; that in Moscow there is abundance of everything; and that, therefore, in Moscow one may get the money which is needed in the country for corn, cottages, horses,

and the other essentials of life.

But, in fact, the country is the source of all wealth; there, only, are real riches, – corn, woods, horses, and everything necessary. Why go to towns, then, to get what is to be had in the country? And why should people carry away from the country into the towns the things that are necessary for country people, – flour, oats, horses, and cattle?

Hundreds of times I have spoken thus with peasants who live in towns; and from my talks with them, and from my own observations, it became clear to me that the accumulation of country people in our cities is partly *necessary*, because they could not otherwise earn their livelihood, and partly voluntary, because they are attracted by the temptations of a town life.

It is true that the circumstances of a peasant are such, that, in order to satisfy the pecuniary demands made on him in his village, he cannot do otherwise than sell that corn and cattle which he knows very well will be necessary for himself; and he is compelled, whether he will or not, to go to town to earn back what was his own. But it is also true that he is attracted to town by the charms of a comparatively easy way of getting money, and by the luxury of life there; and, under the pretext of earning his living, he goes there in order to have easier work and better food, to drink tea three times a day, to dress himself smartly, and even to get drunk and lead a dissolute life.

The cause is a simple one; for property passing from the hands of the agriculturalists into those of non-agriculturalists

accumulates in towns. Observe towards autumn how much wealth is gathered together in the villages. Then come the demands of taxes, rents, recruiting; then the temptations of vodka, marriages, feasts, peddlers, and all sorts of other snares; so that in one way or other, this property, all in its various forms (sheep, calves, cows, horses, pigs, poultry, eggs, butter, hemp, flax, rye, oats, buckwheat, peas, hemp-seed, and flax-seed), passes into the hands of strangers, and is taken first to provincial towns, and thence to the capitals. A villager is compelled to dispose of all these things in order to satisfy the demands made upon him and the temptations offered him; and, having thus parted with his goods, he is left in want, and must follow where his wealth has been taken; and there he tries to earn back the money which is necessary for his most urgent needs at home; and so, being partly carried away by these temptations, he himself, along with others, makes use of the accumulated wealth.

Everywhere throughout Russia, and, I think, not only in Russia but all over the world, the same thing happens. The wealth of the country people who produce it passes into the hands of tradespeople, landowners, government officials, manufacturers. The men who receive this wealth want to enjoy it, and to enjoy it fully they must be in town.

In the country, in the first place, it is difficult for the rich to gratify all their desires, owing to the inhabitants being scattered: you do not find there the shops, banks, restaurants, theatres, and various kinds of public amusements.

Secondly, another of the chief pleasures procured by wealth, – vanity, the desire to astonish, to make a display before others, – cannot be gratified in the country for the same reason: its inhabitants being too scattered. There is no one in the country to appreciate luxury; there is no one to astonish. There you may have what you like to embellish your dwelling, – pictures, bronze statues, all sorts of carriages, and fine toilets, – but there is nobody to look at them or to envy you. The peasants do not understand the value of all this, and cannot make head or tail of it. Thirdly, luxury in the country is even disagreeable to a man who has a conscience, and is an anxiety to a timid person. One feels uneasy or ashamed at taking a milk bath, or in feeding puppies with milk, when there are children close by needing it; one feels the same in building pavilions and gardens among a people who live in cottages covered with stable litter, and who have no wood to burn.

There is no one in the village to prevent the stupid, uneducated peasants from spoiling our comforts.

Therefore, rich people gather together in towns, and settle near those who, in similar positions, have similar desires. In towns, the enjoyment of luxuries is carefully protected by a numerous police. The principal inhabitants of towns are government officials, round whom all the rich people, master-workmen, and artisans have settled. There, a rich man has only to think about a thing, and he can get it. It is also more agreeable for him to live there, because he can gratify his vanity; there are people with

whom he may try to compete in luxury, whom he may astonish or eclipse. But it is especially pleasant for a wealthy man to live in town, because, where his country life was uncomfortable, and even somewhat incongruous because of his luxury, in town, on the contrary, it would be uncomfortable for him *not* to live splendidly, as his equals in wealth do. What seemed out of place there, appears indispensable here.

Rich people collect together in towns, and, under the protection of the authorities, enjoy peacefully all that has been brought there by the villagers. A countryman often cannot help going to town, where a ceaseless round of feasting is going on, where what has been procured from the peasants is being spent. He comes into the town to feed on those crumbs which fall from the tables of the rich; and partly by observing the careless, luxurious, and generally approved mode of living of these men, he begins to desire to order his own affairs in such a manner that he, too, may be able to work less and avail himself more of the labour of others. At last he decides to settle down in the neighbourhood of the wealthy, trying by every means in his power to get back from them what is necessary for him, and submitting to all the conditions which the rich enforce. These country people assist in gratifying all the fancies of the wealthy: they serve them in public baths, in taverns, as coachmen, and as prostitutes. They manufacture carriages, make toys and dresses, and little by little learn from their wealthy neighbours how to live like them, not by real labour, but by all sorts of tricks, squeezing

out from others the money they have collected, – and so they become depraved, and are ruined.

It is then this same population, deprived by the wealth of towns, which forms that city misery which I wished to relieve, but could not.

Indeed, if one only reflects on the condition of these country folk coming to town to earn money to buy bread or to pay taxes, and who see everywhere thousands of rubles squandered foolishly, and hundreds very easily earned while they have to earn their pence by the hardest of labour, one cannot but be astonished that there are still many such people at work, and that they do not all have recourse to a more easy way of getting money, – trading, begging, vice, cheating, and even robbery.

It is only we who join in the ceaseless orgie going on in the towns who can get so accustomed to our own mode of life that it seems quite natural to us that one fine gentleman should occupy five large rooms heated with sufficient firewood to enable twenty families to warm their homes and cook their food with. To drive a short distance, we employ two thoroughbreds and two men; we cover our inlaid floors with carpets, and spend five or ten thousand rubles on a ball, or even twenty-five for a Christmas-tree, and so on. Yet a man who needs ten rubles to buy bread for his family, or from whom his last sheep has been taken to meet a tax of seven rubles which he cannot save by the hardest of labour, cannot get accustomed to all this which we imagine must seem quite natural to the poor. There are even people *naïve*

enough to say that the poor are thankful to us because we feed them by living so luxuriously!

But poor people do not lose their reasoning powers because they are poor: they reason quite in the same manner as we do. When we have heard that some one has lost a fortune at cards, or squandered ten or twenty thousand rubles, the first thought that comes into our minds is: "How stupid and bad this man must be to have parted with such a large sum without any equivalent; and how well *I* could have employed this money for some building I have long wanted to get done, or for the improvement of my estate," and so on.

The poor reason in the same way on seeing how foolishly we waste our wealth; all the more forcibly, because this money is needed, not to satisfy their *whims*, but for the chief necessities of life, of which they are in want. We are greatly mistaken in thinking that the poor, while able to reason thus, still look on unconcernedly at the luxury around them.

They have never acknowledged, and never will, that it is right for one man to be always idling, and for another to be continually working. At first they are astonished and offended; then, looking closer into the question, they see that this state of things is acknowledged to be legal, and they themselves try to get rid of work, and to take part in the feasting. Some succeed in so doing, and acquire similar wanton habits; others, little by little, approach such a condition; others break down before they reach their object, and, having lost the habit of working, fill the night-

houses and the haunts of vice.

The year before last we took from the village a young peasant to be our butler's assistant. He could not agree with the footman, and was sent away; he entered the service of a merchant, pleased his masters, and now wears a watch and chain, and has smart boots.

In his place we took another peasant, a married man. He turned out a drunkard, and lost money. We took a third: he began to drink, and, having drunk all he had, was for a long time in distress in a night-lodging-house. Our old cook took to drinking in the town, and fell ill. Last year a footman who used formerly to have fits of drunkenness, but who, while living in the village kept himself from it for five years, came to live in Moscow without his wife (who used to keep him in order), began again to drink, and ruined himself. A young boy of our village is living as butler's assistant at my brother's. His grandfather, a blind old man, came to me while I was living in the country, and asked me to persuade this grandson to send ten rubles for taxes, because, unless this were done, the cow would have to be sold.

“He keeps telling me that he has to dress himself respectably,” said the old man. “He got himself long boots, and that ought to be enough; but I actually believe he would like to buy a watch!”

In these words the grandfather expressed what he felt was the utmost degree of extravagance. And this was really so; for the old man could not afford a drop of oil for his food during the whole of Lent, and his wood was spoilt because he had not the

ruble and a quarter necessary for cutting it up. But the old man's irony turned out to be reality. His grandson came to me dressed in a fine black overcoat, and in long boots for which he had paid eight rubles. Recently he had got ten rubles from my brother, and spent them on his boots. And my children, who have known the boy from his infancy, told me that he really considers it necessary to buy a watch. He is a very good boy, but he considers that he will be laughed at for not having one.

This year a housemaid, eighteen years of age, formed an intimacy with the coachman, and was sent away. Our old nurse, to whom I related the case, reminded me of a girl whom I had quite forgotten. Ten years ago, during a short stay in Moscow, she formed an intimacy with a footman. She also was sent away, and drifted at last into a house of ill-fame, and died in a hospital before she was twenty years of age.

We have only to look around us to become alarmed by the infection which (to say nothing of manufactories and workshops existing only to gratify our luxury) we directly, by our luxurious town life, spread among those very people whom we desire afterwards to help.

Thus, having got at the root of that town misery which I was not able to alleviate, I saw that its first cause is in our taking from the villagers their necessaries and carrying them to town. The second cause is, that in those towns we avail ourselves of what we have gathered from the country, and, by our foolish luxury, tempt and deprave the peasants who follow us there in order to get back

something of what we have taken from them in the country.

CHAPTER XIV

From another point of view than the one stated, I also came to the same conclusion. Recollecting my connection with the town-poor during this period, I saw that one cause which prevented me from helping them was their insincerity and falseness. They all considered me, not as an individual but merely as a means to an end. I felt I could not become intimate with them; I thought I did not perhaps understand how to do so; but without truthfulness, no help was possible. How can one help a man who does not tell all his circumstances? Formerly I accused the poor of this (it is so natural to accuse others), but one word spoken by a remarkable man, Sutaief, who was then on a visit at my house, cleared up the difficulty, and showed me wherein lay the cause of my failure.

I remember that even then what he said made a deep impression on me; but I did not understand its full meaning until afterwards. It happened that while in the full ardour of my self-deception I was at my sister's house, Sutaief being also there; and my sister was questioning me about my work.

I was relating it to her; and, as is always the case when one does not fully believe in one's own enterprises, I related with great enthusiasm, ardour, and at full length, all I had been doing, and all the possible results. I was telling her how we should keep our eyes open to what went on in Moscow; how we should take care of orphans and old people; how we should afford means for

impoverished villagers to return to their homes, and pave the way to reform the depraved. I explained, that, if we succeeded in our undertaking, there would not be in Moscow a single poor man who could not find help.

My sister sympathized with me; and while speaking, I kept looking now and then at Sutaief; knowing his Christian life, and the importance attached by him to works of charity, I expected sympathy from him, and I spoke so that he might understand me; for, though I was addressing my sister, yet my conversation was really more directed to him.

He sat immovable, dressed in his black-tanned-sheepskin coat, which he, like other peasants, wore in-doors as well as out. It seemed that he was not listening to us, but was thinking about something else. His small eyes gave no responding gleam, but seemed to be turned inwards. Having spoken out to my own satisfaction, I turned to him and asked him what he thought about it.

“The whole thing is worthless,” he replied.

“Why?”

“The plan is an empty one, and no good will come of it,” he repeated with conviction.

“But why will nothing come of it? Why is it a useless business, if we help thousands, or even hundreds, of unhappy ones? Is it a bad thing, according to the gospel, to clothe the naked, or to feed the hungry?”

“I know, I know; but what you are doing is not that. Is it

possible to help thus? You are walking in the street; somebody asks you for a few kopeks; you give them to him. Is that charity? Do him some spiritual good; teach him. What you give him merely says, 'Leave me alone.'"

"No; but that is not what we were speaking of: we wish to become acquainted with the wants, and then to help by money and by deeds. We will try to find for the poor people some work to do."

"That would be no way of helping them."

"How then? must they be left to die of starvation and cold?"

"Why left to die? How many are there of them?"

"How many?" said I, thinking that he took the matter so lightly from not knowing the great number of these men; "you are not aware, I dare say, that there are in Moscow about twenty thousand cold and hungry. And then, think of those in St. Petersburg and other towns!"

He smiled.

"Twenty thousand! And how many households are there in Russia alone? Would they amount to a million?"

"Well; but what of that?"

"What of that?" said he, with animation, and his eyes sparkled. "Let us unite them with ourselves; I am not rich myself, but will at once take two of them. Here is a fellow you settled in your kitchen; I asked him to go with me, but he refused. If there were ten times as many, we should take them all into our families. You one, I another. We shall work together; he will see how I work;

he will learn how to live, and we shall eat out of one bowl, at one table; and they will hear a good word from me, and from you also. That is charity; but all this plan of yours is no good.”

These plain words made an impression upon me. I could not help recognizing that they were true. But it seemed to me then, that, notwithstanding the justice of what he said, my proposed plan might perhaps be useful also.

But the longer I was occupied with this affair; and the closer my intercourse with the poor, the oftener I recollected these words and the greater meaning I found in them.

I, indeed, go in an expensive fur coat, or drive in my own carriage to a man who is in want of boots: he sees my house which costs two hundred rubles a month, or he notices that I give away, without thinking, five rubles, only because of a caprice; he is then aware that if I give away rubles in such a manner, it is because I have accumulated so many that I have a lot to spare which I am not only never in the habit of giving to any one, but which I have taken away from others without compunction. What can he see in me but one of those persons who have become possessed of something which should belong to him? And what other feelings can he have towards me than the desire to get back as many as possible of these rubles which were taken by me from him and from others?

I should like to become intimate with him, and complain that he is not sincere. But I am afraid to sit down upon his bed for fear of lice or some infectious disease; I am also afraid to let him

come into my room; and when he comes to me half-dressed, he has to wait, if fortunate, in the entrance-hall, but oftener in the cold porch. And then I say that it is all his fault that I cannot become intimate with him, and that he is not sincere.

Let the most hard-hearted man sit down to dine upon five courses among hungry people who have little or nothing to eat except dry bread, and no one could have the heart to eat while these hungry people are around him licking their lips.

Therefore, before one can eat well when living among half-starved men, the first thing necessary is to hide ourselves from them, and to eat so that they may not see us. This is the very thing we do in the first place.

I looked into our own mode of life without prejudice, and became aware that it was not by chance that closer intercourse with the poor is difficult for us, but that we ourselves are intentionally ordering our lives in such a way as to make this intercourse impossible. And not only this; but, on looking at our lives, or at the lives of rich people from without, I saw that all that is considered as the *happiness* of these lives consists in being separated as much as possible from the poor, or is in some way or other connected with this desired separation.

In fact, the entire aim of our lives, beginning with food, dress, dwelling and cleanliness, and ending with our education, consists in placing a gulf between us and them. And we spend nine-tenths of our wealth to erect impassable barriers in order to establish this distinction and separation.

The first thing a man who has grown rich does is to leave off eating with others out of one bowl. He arranges plates for himself and his family, and separates himself from the kitchen and the servants. He feeds his servants well so that their mouths may not water, and he dines alone. But eating alone is dull. He invents whatever he can to improve his food, embellish his table; and the very manner of taking food, as at dinner-parties, becomes a matter of vanity and pride. His manner of eating his food is a means of separating himself from other people. For a rich man it is out of the question to invite a poor person to his table. One must know how to hand a lady to table, how to bow, how to sit, to eat, to use a finger-bowl, all of which the rich alone know how to do.

The same holds good with dress.

If a rich man wore ordinary dress, – a jacket, a fur coat, felt shoes, leather boots, an undercoat, trousers, a shirt, – he would require very little to cover his body and protect it from cold; and, having two fur coats, he could not help giving one away to somebody who had none. But the wealthy man begins with wearing clothes which consist of many separate parts, of use only on particular occasions, and therefore of no use to a poor man. The man of fashion must have evening dress-coats, waistcoats, frock-coats, patent-leather shoes; his wife must have bodices, and dresses which, according to fashion, are made of many parts, high-heeled shoes, hunting and travelling jackets, and so on. All these articles can be useful only to people in a condition far

removed from poverty.

And thus dressing also becomes a means of isolation. Fashions make their appearance, and are among the chief things which separate the rich man from the poor one.

The same thing shows itself more plainly still in our dwellings. In order that one person may occupy ten rooms we must manage so that he may not be seen by the people who are living by tens in one room.

The richer a man is, the more difficult it is to get at him; the more footmen there are between him and people not rich, the more impossible it is for him to receive a poor guest, to let him walk on his carpets and sit on his satin-covered chairs.

The same thing happens in travelling. A peasant who drives in a cart or on a carrier's sledge must be very hard-hearted if he refuses to give a pedestrian a lift; he has enough room, and can do it. But the richer the carriage is, the more impossible it is to put any one in it besides the owner. Some of the most elegant carriages are so narrow as to be termed "*egotists*."

The same thing applies to all the modes of living expressed by the word "cleanliness." Cleanliness! Who does not know human beings, especially women, who make a great virtue of cleanliness? Who does not know the various phrases of this cleanliness, which have no limit whatever when it is procured by the labour of others? Who among self-made men has not experienced in his own person the pains with which he carefully accustomed himself to this cleanliness, which illustrates the

saying, "White hands are fond of another's labour"?

To-day cleanliness consists in changing one's shirt daily; to-morrow it will be changed twice a day. At first, one has to wash one's hands and neck every day, then one will have to wash one's feet every day, and afterwards it will be the whole body, and in peculiar methods. A clean table-cloth serves for two days, then it is changed every day, and afterwards two table-cloths a day are used. To-day the footman is required to have clean hands; to-morrow he must wear gloves, and clean gloves, and he must hand the letters on a clean tray.

There are no limits to this cleanliness, which is of no other use to anyone except to separate us, and to make our intercourse with others impossible while the cleanliness is obtained through the labour of others.

Not only so, but when I had deeply reflected upon this, I came to the conclusion that what we term education is a similar thing. Language cannot deceive: it gives the right name to everything. The common people call education fashionable dress, smart conversation, white hands, and a certain degree of cleanliness. Of such a man they say, when distinguishing him from others, that he is an educated man.

In a little higher circle men denote by education the same things, but add playing on the piano, the knowledge of French, good Russian spelling, and still greater cleanliness.

In the still higher circle education consists of all this, with the addition of English, and a diploma from a high educational

establishment, and a still greater degree of cleanliness. But in all these shades, education is in substance quite the same.

It consists in those forms and various kinds of information which separate a man from his fellow-creatures. Its object is the same as that of cleanliness: to separate us from the crowd, in order that they, hungry and cold, may not see how we feast. But it is impossible to hide ourselves, and our efforts are seen through.

Thus I became aware that the reason why it was impossible for us rich men to help the town poor was nothing more or less than the impossibility of our having closer intercourse with them, and that this barrier we ourselves create by our whole life and by all the uses we make of our wealth. I became persuaded that between us rich men and the poor there stood, erected by ourselves, a barrier of cleanliness and education which arose out of our wealth; and that, in order to be able to help them, we have first to break down this barrier and to render possible the realization of the means suggested by Sutaief: to take the poor into our respective homes. And so, as I have already said at the beginning of this chapter, I came to the same conclusion from a different point of view from that to which the train of thought about town misery had led me; viz., the cause of it all lay in our wealth.

CHAPTER XV

I began again to analyze the matter from a third and purely personal point of view. Among the phenomena which particularly impressed me during my benevolent activity, there was one, – a very strange one, – which I could not understand for a long time.

Whenever I happened, in the street or at home, to give a poor person a trifling sum without entering into conversation with him, I saw on his face, or imagined I saw, an expression of pleasure and gratitude, and I myself experienced an agreeable feeling at this form of charity. I saw that I had done what was expected of me. But when I stopped and began to question the man about his past and present life, entering more or less into particulars, I felt it was impossible to give him 3 or 20 kopeks; and I always began to finger the money in my purse, and, not knowing how much to give, I always gave more under these circumstances; but, nevertheless, I saw that the poor man went away from me dissatisfied. When I entered into still closer intercourse with him, my doubts as to how much I should give increased; and, no matter what I gave, the recipient seemed more and more gloomy and dissatisfied.

As a general rule, it always happens that if, upon nearer acquaintance with the poor man I gave him three rubles or even more, I always saw gloominess, dissatisfaction, even anger

depicted on his face; and sometimes, after having received from me ten rubles, he has left me without even thanking me, as if I had offended him.

In such cases I was always uncomfortable and ashamed, and felt myself guilty. When I watched the poor person during weeks, months, or years, helped him, expressed my views, and became intimate with him, then our intercourse became a torment, and I saw that the man despised me. And I felt that he was right in doing so. When in the street a beggar asks me, along with other passers-by, for three kopeks, and I give it him, then, in his estimation, I am a kind and good man who gives “one of the threads which go to make the shirt of a naked one”: he expects nothing more than a thread, and, if I give it, he sincerely blesses me.

But if I stop and speak to him as man to man, show him that I wish to be more than a mere passer-by, and, if, as it often happened, he shed tears in relating his misfortune, then he sees in me not merely a chance helper, but that which I wish him to see, – a kind man. If I am a kind man, my kindness cannot stop at twenty kopeks, or at ten rubles, or ten thousand. One cannot be a slightly kind man. Let us suppose that I give him much; that I put him straight, dress him, and set him on his legs so that he can help himself; but, from some reason or other, either from an accident or his own weakness, he again loses the great-coat and clothing and money I gave him, he is again hungry and cold, and he again comes to me, why should I refuse him assistance? For

if the cause of my benevolent activity was merely the attainment of some definite, material object, such as giving him so many rubles or a certain great-coat, then, having given them I could be easy in my mind; but the cause of my activity was not this: the cause of it was my desire to be a kind man – i.e., to see myself in everybody else. Everyone understands kindness in this way, and not otherwise.

Therefore if such a man should spend in drink all you gave him twenty times over, and be again hungry and cold, then, if you are a benevolent man, you cannot help giving him more money, you can never leave off doing so while you have more than he has; but if you draw back, you show that all you did before was done not because you are benevolent, but because you wish to appear so to others and to him. And it was because I had to back out of such cases, and to cease to give, and thus to disown the good, that I felt a painful sense of shame.

What was this feeling, then?

I had experienced it in Liapin's house and in the country, and when I happened to give money or anything else to the poor, and in my adventures among the town people. One case which occurred lately reminded me of it forcibly, and led me to discover its cause.

It happened in the country. I wanted twenty kopeks to give to a pilgrim. I sent my son to borrow it from somebody. He brought it to the man, and told me that he had borrowed it from the cook. Some days after, other pilgrims came, and I was again in need

of twenty kopeks. I had a ruble. I recollected what I owed the cook, went into the kitchen, hoping that he would have some more coppers. I said, —

“I owe you twenty kopeks: here is a ruble.”

I had not yet done speaking when the cook called to his wife from the adjoining room: “Parasha, take it,” he said.

Thinking she had understood what I wanted, I gave her the ruble. I must tell you that the cook had been living at our house about a week, and I had seen his wife, but had never spoken to her. I merely wished to tell her to give me the change, when she briskly bowed herself over my hand and was about to kiss it, evidently thinking I was giving her the ruble. I stammered out something and left the kitchen. I felt ashamed, painfully ashamed, as I had not felt for a long time. I actually trembled, and felt that I was making a wry face; and, groaning with shame, I ran away from the kitchen.

This feeling, which I fancied I had not deserved, and which came over me quite unexpectedly, impressed me particularly, because it was so long since I had felt anything like it and also because I fancied that I, an old man, had been living in a way I had no reason to be ashamed of.

This surprised me greatly. I related the case to my family, to my acquaintances, and they all agreed that they also would have felt the same. And I began to reflect: Why is it that I felt so?

The answer came from a case which had formerly occurred to me in Moscow. I reflected upon this case, and I understood

the shame which I felt concerning the incident with the cook's wife, and all the sensations of shame I had experienced during my charitable activity in Moscow, and which I always feel when I happen to give anything beyond trifling alms to beggars and pilgrims, which I am accustomed to give, and which I consider not as charity, but as politeness and good breeding. If a man asks you for a light, you must light a match if you have it. If a man begs for three or twenty kopeks, or a few rubles, you must give if you have them. It is a question of politeness, not of charity.

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