

WHAT SHALL WE DO by Leo Tolstoy

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CHAPTER 5 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, sub-letting 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 6 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 workingmen: 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 7 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 8 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?"

[Yellow ticket is a police certificate of registration as a prostitute.] "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 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; namely, 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 9 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 [kvas is an unfermented home-made liquor used by Russian peasants], 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 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 10 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.

