

## WHAT SHALL WE DO by Leo Tolstoy

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CHAPTER 39 I have now finished, having said all that concerns myself; but I cannot restrain my desire to say that which concerns every one, and to verify my own deductions by several considerations. I wish to explain why I think that a great many of my own class must arrive where I myself am, and I must also speak of what will result if even a few men arrive there; in the first place, if men of our circle, our caste, will only seriously think the matter out themselves, the younger generation, who seek their own personal happiness, will become afraid of the ever-increasing misery of lives which obviously lead them to ruin; scrupulous persons among us (if they would examine themselves more closely) will be terrified at the cruelty and unlawfulness of their own lives, and timid persons will be frightened at the danger of their mode of life. The misery of our lives!

However we, rich men, may try to mend and to support, with the assistance of science and art, this our false life, it must become weaker every day, unhealthier, and more and more painful: with each year, suicide, and the sin against the unborn babe, increase; with each year the new generations of our class grow weaker, with each year we feel more and more the increasing misery of our lives. It is obvious that on this road, with all its increase of the comforts and delights of life, of cures, artificial teeth and hair, and so on, there can be no salvation. This truth has become such a truism, that in newspapers advertisements are printed about stomach powder for rich people, under

the title "Blessings of the poor," where they say that only poor people have a good digestion, and the rich need help, and among other things this powder. You cannot ameliorate this matter by any kind of amusements, comforts, powders, but only by turning over a new leaf. The contradiction of our life with our conscience. However we may try to justify to ourselves our treason against mankind, all our justification falls to pieces before evidence: around us, people are dying from overwork and want; and we destroy the food, clothes, and labour of men merely to amuse ourselves. Therefore the conscience of a man of our circle, though he may have but a small remainder of it in his breast, cannot be stifled, and poisons all these comforts and charms of life which our suffering and perishing brethren procure for us. Not only does every conscientious man feel this himself, but he must feel it more acutely at present, because the best part of art and science, that part which still retains a sense of its high calling, constantly reminds him of his cruelty, and of the unlawfulness of his position. The old secure justifications are all destroyed; and the new ephemeral justifications of the progress of science for science's sake, and art for art's sake, will not bear the light of plain common sense. The conscience of men cannot be calmed by new devices: it can be calmed only by turning over a new leaf, when there will be no longer any need for justification. The danger to our lives! However much we may try to hide from ourselves the plain and obvious danger of exhausting the patience of those whom we oppress; however much we may try to counteract this danger by all sorts of deceit, violence and flattery—it grows day by day, hour by hour—it has long been threatening us, but now it is so ready that we are scarcely able to hold our course—as in a vessel tossed by a roaring and overflowing sea—a sea which will presently swallow us up in wrath. The workman's revolution, with its terrors of destruction and murder, not only threatens us, but we have already lived

above it for the last thirty years, and it is only by various cunning devices that we have postponed the explosion. Such is the state in Europe: such is the state in Russia, and still worse there, because we have no safety-valves. The classes who oppress the people, with the exception of the Tsar, have no longer any justification in the eyes of our people; they all keep up their position merely by violence, cunning, and expediency, i.e., skill; but the hatred towards us of the worst representatives of the people, and the contempt of us from the best, increases every hour. Among the Russian people a new word full of significance has been circulating during the last three or four years: by this word, which I never heard before, people are swearing in the streets, and by it they give us a definition—"parasites." The hatred and contempt of the oppressed people are increasing, and the physical and moral strength of the richer classes are decreasing: the deceit which supports all is wearing out, and the rich classes have nothing wherewith to comfort themselves in this mortal danger. To return to the old order of things is impossible, to restore the old prestige is impossible. It only remains for those who are not willing to change the course of their lives, and to turn over a new leaf—to hope that, during their lives, they may fare well enough, after which the people may do as they like. So think the blind crowd of the rich; but the danger ever increases, and the awful catastrophe comes nearer and nearer. There are three reasons which should prove to rich people the necessity of turning over a new leaf: First, desire for their own personal welfare and that of their families, which is not secured by the way in which rich people are living; secondly, the inability to satisfy the voice of conscience, which is obviously impossible in the present condition of things; and thirdly, the threatening and constantly increasing danger to life, which cannot be met by any outward means. All these together ought to induce rich people to change their mode of life. This

change alone would satisfy the desire of welfare and conscience, and would remove the danger. There is but one means of making such change—to leave off deceiving ourselves, to repent, and to acknowledge labour to be, not a curse, but the joyful business of life. To this it is replied, “What will come out of the fact of my physical labour during ten, eight, or five hours, while thousands of peasants would gladly do it for the money which I have?” The first good result would be, that you will become livelier, healthier, sounder, kinder; and you will learn that real life from which you have hidden yourself, or which was hidden from you. The second good result will be, that, if you have a conscience, it will not only cease to suffer as it now suffers when looking at the labour of men—the importance of which we always, from our ignorance, either increase or diminish—but you will constantly experience a joyful acknowledgment that with each day you are satisfying more and more the demands of your conscience, and are leaving behind you that awful state in which so much evil is accumulated in our lives that we feel that we cannot possibly do any good in the world; you will experience the joy of free life, with the possibility of doing good to others; you will open for yourself a way into regions of the world of morality which have hitherto been shut to you. The third good result will be this, that, instead of constant fear of revenge upon your evil deeds, you will feel that you are saving others from this revenge, and are principally saving the oppressed from the cruel feeling of rancour and resentment. But it is generally said, that it would be ridiculous if we, men of our stamp, with deep philosophical, scientific, political, artistic, ecclesiastical, social questions before us, we, state ministers, senators, academists, professors, artists, singers, we, whose quarter-hours are valued so highly by men, should spend our time in doing—what? Cleaning our boots, washing our shirts, digging, planting potatoes, or feeding our chickens and

cows, and so on—in business which not only our house-porter, or our cook, but thousands of men besides who value our time, would be very glad to do for us. But why do we dress, wash, and comb our hair ourselves? Why do we walk, hand chairs to ladies, to our guests, open and shut the door, help people into carriages, and perform hundreds of actions which were formerly performed for us by our slaves? Because we consider that such may be done by ourselves; that they are compatible with human dignity; that is, human duty. The same holds good with physical labour. Man's dignity, his sacred duty, is to use his hands, his feet, for the purpose for which they were given him, to spend the swallowed food in work, which produces the food, and not to be wasted by disuse, not merely that he may wash and clean them and use them only for the purpose of stuffing food and cigarettes into his mouth. Such is the meaning of physical labour for every man in every society. But in our class, with the divergence from this law of nature came the misery of a whole circle of men; and for us, physical labour receives another meaning—the meaning of a preaching and a propaganda which divert the terrible evil which threatens mankind. To say that for an educated man, physical labour is a trifling occupation, is the same as to say, in the building of a temple, “What importance can there be in putting each stone exactly in its place?” Every great act is done under the conditions of quietness, modesty, and simplicity. One can neither plough, nor feed cattle, nor think, during a great illumination, or amid thundering of guns, nor while in uniform. Illumination, the roar of cannon, music, uniforms, cleanliness, brilliancy, which we usually connect with the idea of the importance of any act, are, on the contrary, tokens of the absence of importance in that act. Great, true deeds are always simple and modest. Such is also the greatest deed which is left to us to do—the solution of those awful contradictions in which we are living. The acts which

solve these contradictions are modest, imperceptible, seemingly ridiculous acts, such as helping ourselves by physical labour, and, if possible, helping others too: this is what we rich people have to do, if we understand the misery, wrong, and danger of the position in which we live. What will result from the circumstance that I, and another, and a third, and a tenth man, do not despise physical labour, but consider it necessary for our happiness, for the calming of our consciences, and for our safety? This will result from it—that one, two, three, ten men, coming into conflict with no one, without violence either of government or of revolution, will solve for themselves the problem which is before all the world, and which has appeared unsolvable; and they will solve it in such a way that life will become for them a good thing: their consciences will be calm, and the evil which oppresses them will cease to be dreadful to them. Another effect will be this: other men, too, will see that the welfare, which they have been looking for everywhere, is quite near them, that seemingly unsolvable contradictions between conscience and the order of the world are solved in the easiest and pleasantest way, and that, instead of being afraid of the men surrounding them, they must have intercourse with them, and love them. The seemingly unsolvable economical and social questions are like the problem of Krilof's casket. The casket opened of itself, without any difficulty: but it will not open until men do the simplest and most natural thing; that is, open it. The seemingly unsolvable question is the old question of the utilizing some men's labour by others: this question, in our time, has found its expression in property. Formerly, other men's labour was used simply by violence, by slavery: in our time it is being done by the means of property. In our time, property is the root of all evil and of the sufferings of men who possess it, or are without it, and of all the remorse of conscience of those who misuse it, and of the danger from the collision between those who have it,

and those who have it not. Property is the root of all evil, and, at the same time, property is that towards which all the activity of our modern society is directed, and that which directs the activity of the world. States and governments intrigue, make wars, for the sake of property, for the possession of the banks of the Rhine, of land in Africa, China, the Balkan Peninsula. Bankers, merchants, manufacturers, land-owners, labourers, use cunning, torment themselves, torment others, for the sake of property; government functionaries, artisans, struggle, deceive, oppress, suffer, for the sake of property; courts of justice and police protect property; penal servitude, prisons, all the terrors of so-called punishments—all is done for the sake of property. Property is the root of all evil; and now all the world is busy with the distribution and protecting of wealth. What, then, is property? Men are accustomed to think that property is something really belonging to man, and for this reason they have called it property. We speak indiscriminately of our own house and our own land. But this is obviously an error and a superstition. We know, and if we do not, it is easy to perceive, that property is only the means of utilizing other men's labour. And another's labour can by no means belong to me. It has nothing in common with the conception of property—a conception very exact and precise. Man has been, and will always call his own that which is subject to his own will and joined with his own consciousness. As soon as a man calls his own something which is not his body, but which he should like to be subject to his will as his body is, then he makes a mistake, and gets disappointment, and suffering, and compels other people to suffer as well. Man calls his wife his own, his children, his slaves, his belongings, his own too; but the reality always shows him his error: and he must either get rid of this superstition, or suffer, and make others suffer. Now we, having nominally renounced the possessing of slaves, owing to money (and to

its exactment by the government), claim our right also to money; that is, to the labour of other men. But as to our claiming our wives as our property, or our sons, our slaves, our horses—this is pure fiction contradicted by reality, and which only makes those suffer who believe in it; because a wife or a son will never be so subject to my will as my body is; therefore my own body will always remain the only thing I can call my true property; so also money, property—will never be real property, but only a self-deception and a source of suffering, and it is only my own body which will be my property, that which always obeys me, and is connected with my consciousness. It is only to us, who are so accustomed to call other things than our body our own, that such a wild superstition can appear to be useful for us, and without evil results; but we have only to reflect upon the nature of the matter to see how this, like every other superstition, brings with it only dreadful consequences. Let us take the most simple example. I consider myself my own, and another man like myself I consider my own too. I must understand how to cook my dinner: if I were free from the superstition of considering another man as my property, I should have been taught this art as well as every other necessary to my real property (that is, my body); but now I have it taught to my imaginary property, and the result is that my cook does not obey me, does not wish to humour me, and even runs away from me, or dies, and I remain with an unsatisfied want, and have lost the habit of learning, and recognize that I have spent as much time in worry about this cook as I should have spent in learning the art of cooking for myself. The same is the case with property in buildings, clothes, wares; with property in the land; with property in money. Every imaginary property calls forth in me a non-corresponding want which cannot always be gratified, and deprives me of the possibility of acquiring for my true and sure property—my own body—that information, that skill, those habits, improvements,



which I might have acquired. The result is always that I have spent (without gain to myself—to my true property) strength, sometimes my whole life, on that which never has been, and never could be, my property. I provide myself with an imaginary “private” library, a “private” picture gallery, “private” apartments, clothes; acquire my “own” money in order to purchase with it every thing I want, and the matter stands thus—that I, being busy about this imaginary property, which is not, and cannot be my property, however I may call it, and which is no object for activity, leave quite out of sight that which is my true property, upon which I may really labour, and which really may serve me, and which always remains in my power. Words have always a definite meaning until we purposely give them a false signification. What does property mean? Property means that which is given to me alone, which belongs to me alone, exclusively; that with which I may always do everything I like, which nobody can take away from me, which remains mine to the end of my life, and which I ought to use in order to increase and to improve it. For every man such property is only himself. It is in this very sense that imaginary property is understood, that very property for sake of which (making it impossible for this imaginary property to become a real one) all the sufferings of this world exist—wars, executions, judgments, prisons, luxury, depravity, murders, and the ruin of mankind. What, then, will result from the circumstance that ten men plough, hew wood, make boots, not from necessity, but in acknowledgment that man needs work, and that the more he works, the better it will be for him? This will come out of it: that ten men, or even one single man, by thought and in deed, will show men that this fearful evil from which they are suffering, is not the law of their destiny, nor the will of God, nor any historical necessity, but is a superstition not at all strong or overpowering, but weak and null, which one need only leave off believing in, as in idols, in order to get

rid of, and to destroy it even as a frail cobweb is swept away. Men who begin to work in order to fulfil the pleasant law of their lives, who work for the fulfilment of the law of labour, will free themselves from this superstition of property which is so full of misery, and then all these worldly establishments which exist in order to protect this imaginary property outside of one's own body, will become not only unnecessary for them, but burdensome; and it will become clear to all that these institutions are not necessary, but pernicious, imaginary, and false conditions of life. For a man who considers labour not a curse, but a joy, property outside his own body—that is, the right or possibility of utilizing other men's labour—will be not only useless, but an impediment. If I am fond of cooking my dinner, and accustomed to do it, then the fact that another man will do it for me, will deprive me of my usual business, and will not satisfy me so well as I have satisfied myself; and further, the acquirement of imaginary property will not be necessary for such a man: a man who considers labour to be his very life, fills up all his life with it, and therefore requires less and less the labour of others—in other words, as property to fill up his unoccupied time, and to embellish his life. If the life of a man is occupied by labour, he does not require many rooms, much furniture, various fine clothes: he does not require so much expensive food, or locomotion, or amusements. Especially a man who considers labour to be the business and the joy of his life, will not seek to ease his own labour by utilizing that of others. A man who considers life to consist in labour, will aim, in proportion as he acquires more skill, craft, and endurance, at having more and more work to do, to occupy all his time. For such a man, who sees the object of his life in labour, and not in the results of his labour in acquirement of property, there cannot be even a question about the instruments of labour. Though such a man will always choose the most productive instrument of labour, he

will have the same satisfaction in working with the most unproductive. If he has a steam-plough, he will plough with it; if he has not such, he will plough with a horse-plough; if he has not this, he will plough with the plain Russian sokhá; if he has not even this, he will use a spade: and under any circumstances, he will attain his aim; that is, will pass his life in labour useful to man, and therefore will have fullest satisfaction. The position of such a man, in exterior and interior circumstances, will be happier than the condition of a man who gives his life away to acquire property. According to exterior circumstances, he will never want, because men, seeing that he does not shirk work, will always try to make his labour most productive to them, as they arrange a mill by running water; and that his labour may be more productive, they will provide for his material existence, which they will never do for men who aim at acquiring property. The providing for material wants, is all that a man requires. According to interior conditions, such a man will be always happier than he who seeks for property, because the latter will never get what he is aiming at, and the former in proportion to his strength (even the weak, old, dying, according to the proverb, with a Kored in his hands), will always receive full satisfaction, and the love and sympathy of men. One of the consequences of this will be, that certain odd, half-insane persons will plough, make boots, and so on, instead of smoking, playing cards, and riding about, carrying their dulness with them, from one place to another, during the ten hours which every brain worker has at his command. Another result will be, that these silly people will demonstrate in deed, that that imaginary property for the sake of which men suffer, and torment themselves and others, is not necessary for happiness, and even impedes it, and is but a superstition; and that true property is only one's own head, hands, feet; and that, in order to utilize this true property usefully and joyfully, it is necessary to

get rid of that false idea of property outside one's own body, on which we waste the best powers of our life. Another result will be, that these men will demonstrate, that, when a man leaves off believing in imaginary property, then only will he make real use of his true property—his own body, which will yield him fruit an hundred-fold, together with happiness such as we have no idea as yet; and he will be a useful, strong, kind man, who will everywhere stand on his own feet, will be always a brother to everybody, will be intelligible to all, desired by all, and dear to all. Then men, looking at one—at ten such “silly” men will understand what they have all to do to unfasten that dreadful knot in which they have all been tied by the superstition respecting property, and to get rid of the miserable condition under which they are now groaning, and from which they do not know how to free themselves. There is no reasoning which can so plainly demonstrate the unrighteousness of those who employ it as does this. The boatmen are dragging vessels against the stream. Is it possible that there could be found a stupid boatman who would refuse to do his part in dragging, because he alone cannot drag the boat up against the stream? He who, besides his rights of animal life—to eat and to sleep—acknowledges any human duty, knows very well wherein such duty consists: just in the same way as a boatman knows that he has only to get into his breast-collar, and to walk in the given direction. He will only seek to know what to do and how to do it after having fulfilled his duty. As with the boatmen, and with all men who do any labour in common, so with the labour of all mankind; each man need only keep on his breast-collar, and go in the given direction. And for this purpose one and the same reason is given to all men that this direction may always be the same. That this direction is given to us, is obvious and certain from the lives of those who surround us, as well as in the conscience of every man, and in all the previous

expressions of human wisdom; so that only he who does not want work, can say that he does not see it. What, then, will come out of this? This, that first one man, then another, will drag; looking at them, a third will join; and so one by one the best men will join, until the business will be set a-going, and will move as of itself, inducing those also to join who do not yet understand why and wherefore it is being done. First, to the number of men who conscientiously work in order to fulfil the law of God, will be added those who will accept half conscientiously and half upon faith; then to these a still greater number of men, only upon faith in the foremost men; and lastly the majority of people: and then it will come to pass that men will cease to ruin themselves, and will find out happiness. This will happen (and it will happen soon) when men of our circle, and after them all the great majority of working-people, will no longer consider it shameful to clean sewers, but will consider it shameful to fill them up in order that other men, our brethren, may carry their contents away; they will not consider it shameful to go visiting in common boots, but they will consider it shameful to walk in goloshes beside barefooted people; they will not think it shameful not to know French, nor about the last novel, but they will consider it shameful to eat bread, and not to know how it is prepared; they will not consider it shameful not to have a starched shirt or a clean dress, but that it is shameful to wear a clean coat as a token of one's idleness; they will not consider it shameful to have dirty hands, but shameful not to have callouses on their hands. All this will come to pass when public opinion demands it. Public opinion will demand it, when men get rid of those snares which hide the truth from them. Great changes in this direction have taken place within my memory. These changes occurred only as public opinion changed. Within my memory has happened this, that whereas rich men were ashamed if they could not drive out with a team of four horses, with two men-

servants, and that it was considered shameful not to have a man-servant or a maid, to dress one, wash one, attend the chamber, and so on; now of a sudden it has become shameful not to dress and to wash oneself, without help, or to drive out with men-servants. All these changes have been accomplished by public opinion. Can we not see the changes which public opinion is now preparing? Twenty-five years ago it sufficed to destroy the snare which justified serfdom, and public opinion changed its attitude as to what is praiseworthy, and what is shameful, and life changed. It would suffice to destroy the snares justifying the power of money over men, and public opinion will change its view, concerning things praiseworthy and things shameful, and life will change. But the destroying of the snare justifying the power of money and the change of public opinion in this direction is already quickly taking place. This snare is already transparent and but slightly veils the truth. One needs only to look more attentively to see clearly that change of public opinion, which not only must take place, but which has been already accomplished, only not yet consciously acknowledged, not yet named. Let a slightly educated man of our time think of the consequences ensuing from those views he holds concerning the universe, and he will see, that the unconscious estimate of good and evil, of praiseworthy and shameful, by which he is guided in life, directly contradicts all his conceptions of life. Let a man of our times dismiss himself, if only for a minute, from his own inert life, and looking at it, as an outsider, subject it to that very estimate, resulting from his conception of life, and he will stand aghast before the definition of his life, which results from his conception of the world. Let us take as an example, a young man (in young people the life energy is stronger and the self-consciousness is more vague) of the wealthy classes, and of any shade of opinions. Every decent youth considers it a shame not to help an old man, a child, a

woman; he considers it a shame to risk the life and health of another in common work while avoiding the danger for himself. Everybody considers it shameful and barbarous to do what Skyler tells about the Kirghiz: who during storms sent out their wives and old women to hold the corners of the tent, while they remained inside drinking their koumis; everybody considers it a shame to force a weak man to work for him and still more shameful when in such danger, as, say, on a ship on fire, for the strongest to push aside the weak and go first into the life-boat, and so on. Men consider all this shameful and would by no means act so under certain exceptional circumstances; but in everyday life the same actions and even worse—being hidden by snares—are constantly committed by them. One need only think of it earnestly to recognize the horror of it. A young man changes his shirts daily. Who washes them? A woman, whatever her state may be, very often old enough to be his mother or grandmother, often unwell. How would this young man call another who out of whim, changes his clean shirt and sends it to be washed by a woman old enough to be his mother? A young man, that he may be smart, provides himself with horses and an old man, fit to be his father or grandfather, is set to training them, thus endangering his very life, and the young man rides on the horse when danger is over. What would the young man say about a man who, avoiding a dangerous situation for himself, puts another into it and for his pleasure allows such a risk? Yet the whole life of the well-to-do classes consists of a chain of such actions. The overtaxing labour of old men, children and women, and work connected with danger to life done by others, not to help us to work but to satisfy our whims—these fill up our life. The fisherman gets drowned while catching fish for us, the washerwomen catch colds and die, the smith grows blind, those who work in factories get ill and injured by machinery, woodcutters are crushed by falling trees, workmen fall from roofs and

are killed, needlewomen pine away. All real work is done with waste and danger to life. To hide this and refuse to see it is impossible. There is one salvation, one issue out of this situation, to wit—that if a man of our time is not to be obliged—according to his own principles—to call himself a scoundrel and a coward, who burdens others with work and danger to life—he must take from men only what is necessary for his life, and submit himself also to true labour associated with waste and danger to life. Within my memory, more striking changes have taken place. I remember that at table, a servant stood with a plate, behind each chair. Men made visits accompanied by two footmen. A Cossack boy and a girl stood in a room to give people their pipes, and to clean them, and so on. Now this seems to us strange and remarkable. But is it not equally strange that a young man or woman, or even an elderly man, that he may visit a friend, should order his horses to be harnessed, and that well-fed horses are kept only for this purpose? Is it not as strange that one man lives in five rooms, or that a woman spends tens, hundreds, thousands of rubles for her dress when she only needs some flax and wool wherewith to spin dresses for herself, and clothes for her husband and children? Is it not strange that men live doing nothing, riding to and fro, smoking and playing, and that a battalion of people are busy feeding and warming them? Is it not strange that old people quite gravely talk and write in newspapers about theatres and music, and other insane people drive to look at musicians or actors? Is it not strange that tens of thousands of boys and girls are brought up so as to make them unfit for every work (they return home from school, and their two books are carried for them by a servant)? There will soon come a time—and it is already drawing near—when it will be shameful to dine on five courses served by footmen, and cooked by any but the masters themselves; it will be shameful not only to ride thoroughbreds or to drive in a coach when one has feet to



walk on; to wear on week-days dress, shoes, gloves, in which it is impossible to work; it will be shameful to play on a piano which costs one hundred and fifty pounds, or even ten pounds, while others work for one; to feed dogs upon milk and white bread, when there are men who have neither milk nor bread, and to burn lamps and candles without working by their light; to heat stoves in which no meal is cooked, while there are men who have neither light nor fuel. Then it will be impossible to think about giving openly not merely one pound, but even six pence, for a place in a concert or in a theatre. All this will be when the law of labour becomes public opinion.

CHAPTER 40 As it is said in the Bible, there is a law given unto man and woman—to man, the law of labour; to woman, the law of child-bearing. Although with our science, “*nous avons changé tout ça,*” the law of man as well as of woman remains as immutable as the liver in its place; and the breach of it is inevitably punished by death. The only difference is, that for man, the breach of law is punished by death in such a near future that it can almost be called present; but for woman, the breach of law is punished in a more distant future. A general breach, by all men, of the law, destroys men immediately: the breach by women destroys the men of the following generation. The evasion of the law by a few men and women does not destroy the human race, but deprives the offender of rational human nature. The breach of this law by men began years ago in the classes which could use violence with others; and, spreading on its way, it has reached our day, and has now attained madness, the ideal contained in a breach of the law, the ideal expressed by Prince Blokhin, and shared by Renan and the whole educated world: work will be done by machines, and men will be bundles of nerves enjoying themselves. There has been scarcely any breach of the law by women. It has only manifested itself in

prostitution, and in private cases of crime destroying progeny. Women of the wealthy classes have fulfilled their law, while men did not fulfil theirs; and therefore women have grown stronger, and have continued to govern, and will govern, men, who have deviated from their law, and who, consequently, have lost their reason. It is generally said that women (the women of Paris, especially those who are childless) have become so bewitching, using all the means of civilization, that they have mastered man by their charms. This is not only wrong, but it is just the reverse of the truth. It is not the childless woman who has mastered man, it is the mother, the one who has fulfilled her duty, while man has not fulfilled his. As to the woman who artificially remains childless, and bewitches man by her shoulders and curls, she is not a woman, mastering man, but a woman corrupted by him, reduced to the level of the corrupted man, who, as well as he, has deviated from her duty, who, as well as he, has lost every reasonable sense of life. This mistake also produces the astounding nonsense which is called "woman's rights." The formula of these rights is as follows: "You men," says woman, "have deviated from your law of true labour, and want us to carry the load of ours. No: if so, we also, as well as you, will make a pretence of labour, as you do in banks, ministries, universities, and academies; we wish, as well as you, by the pretence of division of work, to profit by other people's work, and to live, only to satisfy our lust." They say so, and in deed show that they can make that pretence of labour not at all worse, but even better, than men do it. The so-called question of women's rights arose, and could only arise, among men who had deviated from the law of real labour. One has only to return to it, and that question must cease to exist. A woman who has her own particular, inevitable labour will never claim the right of sharing man's labour—in mines, or in ploughing fields. She claims her share only in the sham labour of the wealthy classes. The

woman of our class was stronger than man, and is now still stronger, not through her charms, not through her skill in performing the same pharisaic similitude of work as man, but because she has not stepped outside of the law; because she has borne that true labour with danger of life, with uttermost effort; true labour, from which the man of the wealthy classes has freed himself. But within my memory has begun also the deviation from the law by woman—that is to say, her fall; and within my memory, it has proceeded farther and farther. A woman who has lost the law, believes that her power consists in the charms of her witchery, or in her skill at a pharisaic pretence of intellectual labour. Children hinder the one and the other. Therefore, with the help of science (science is always helpful to everything wicked) within my memory it has come to pass that among the wealthy classes, scores of means of destroying progeny have appeared, and these means become a common attribute of the toilet. And behold—women, mothers, some of them of the wealthy classes, who held their power in their hands, let it slip away, and place themselves on a level with women of the street. The evil has spread far, and spreads farther every day, and will soon grasp all the women of the wealthy classes; and then they will be on a level with the men, and together with them will lose every reasonable sense of life. There will be no return for this class then. But there is yet time. For there still remain more women than men who accomplish the law of their life, therefore there are still reasonable beings among them—and thus some of the women of our class hold in their hands the possibility of salvation. If only women would understand their worth, their power, and would use these for the work of salvation of their husbands, brothers, and children—the salvation of all men! Women, mothers of the wealthy classes, in your hands is the salvation of men of our world from the evils from which it suffers. Not those women who are occupied by their

figures, bustles, head-dresses, and their charms for men, and who, against their will, by accident and in despair, bear children, and then give them over to wet-nurses; nor yet those who go to different lectures, and talk of psychometrical centres of differentiation, and who also try to free themselves from bearing children not to hinder their folly, which they call development—but those women and mothers who, having the power of freeing themselves from child-bearing, hold strictly and consciously to that eternal, immutable law, knowing that the weight and labour of that submission is the aim of their life. These women and mothers of our wealthy classes are those in whose hands, more than in any others, lies the salvation of the men of our sphere in life, from the calamities which oppress them. You women and mothers who submit consciously to the law of God, you are the only ones who—in our miserable, mutilated circle, which has lost all semblance of humanity—know the whole true meaning of life according to the law of God; and you are the only ones who, by your example, can show men the happiness of that submission to God's law, of which they rob themselves. You are the only ones who know the joy and happiness which takes possession of one's whole being—the bliss which is the share of every man who does not deviate from God's law. You know the joy of love to your husband—a joy never ending, never destroyed, like all other joys, but forming the beginning of another new joy—love to your child. You are the only ones, when you are simple and submissive to God's law, who know, not the farcical pretence of labour, which men of your world call labour, but that true labour which is imposed by God upon men, and you know the rewards for it—the bliss which it gives. You know it, when after the joys of love, you expect with emotion, fear, and hope, the torturing state of pregnancy, which makes you ill for nine months, and brings you to the brink of death and to unbearable sufferings and pains: you know the conditions of true labour, when with

joy you expect the approach and increase of the most dreadful sufferings, after which comes the bliss, known to you only. You know it when, directly after those sufferings, without rest, without interruption, you undertake another series of labours and sufferings—those of nursing; for the sake of which you subjugate to your feeling, and renounce, the strongest human necessity—that of sleep, which, according to the saying, is sweeter than father and mother. For months and years you do not sleep two nights running, and often you do not sleep whole nights; walking alone to and fro, rocking in your wearied arms an ailing baby, whose sufferings tear your heart. When you do all this, unapproved and unseen by anybody, not expecting any praise or reward for it; when you do this, not as a great deed, but as the labourer of the gospel parable, who came from the field, considering that you are only doing your duty—you know then what is false, fictitious labour—for human fame; and what is true labour—the fulfilment of God's will, the indication of which you feel in your heart. You know, if you are a true mother, that not only has nobody seen and praised your labour, considering that it is only what ought to be, but even those for whom you toiled are not only ungrateful to you, but often torment and reproach you. With the next child you do the same—again you suffer, again you bear unseen, terrible toil, and again you do not expect any reward from anybody, and feel the same satisfaction. If you are such, in your hands must lie the power over men, and in your hands lies the salvation. Your number is decreasing every day: some busy with practising their charms over men, become prostitutes; others are engaged in competition with men in their artificial, ludicrous occupations; the third, who have not yet renounced their vocation, begin to repudiate it in their minds: they perform all the deeds of women and mothers, but accidentally, with grumblings and envy of the free women, not bearing children—and so deprive themselves of

the only reward for them—the inner consciousness of the fulfilment of God's will—and instead of being satisfied they suffer from what is really their happiness. We are so confused by our false life, we, men of our circle, have all of us so utterly lost the sense of life, that we do not differ from one another. Having loaded others with all the burdens and dangers of life, we dare not call ourselves by the true names deserved by those who force others to perish in providing life for them—scoundrels, cowards. But among women a distinction still exists. There are women—human beings, women—presenting the highest manifestation of a human being; and there are women—prostitutes. This discrimination will be made by succeeding generations, and we, too, cannot help making it. Every woman, however she dresses, however she calls herself, however refined she may be, if being married she abstains from bearing children, is a prostitute. However low a lost woman may be, if she consciously devotes herself to bearing children, she does the best and highest work of life in fulfilling the will of God, and she has no superior. If you are such, you will not say, after two or after twenty children, that you have borne children enough; as a fifty-year old workman will not say that he has worked enough, while he still eats and sleeps, and his muscles demand work. If you are such, you will not cast the trouble of nursing and care on a strange mother—any more than a workman will give the work which he has begun, and nearly finished, to another man—because in that work you put your life, and because, the more you have of that work, the fuller and happier is your life. But when you are like this—and, happily for men, there are yet such women—the same law of fulfilment of God's will, by which you guide your own life, you will also apply to the life of your husband, of your children, and of men near to you. If you are such, and if you know by experience that only self-denied, unseen, unrewarded labour with danger of life, and

uttermost effort for the life of others, is the mission of man which gives satisfaction, you will claim the same from others, you will encourage your husband to do the same labour, you will value and appreciate the worth of men by this same labour, and for it you will prepare your children. Only that mother who looks on child-bearing as a disagreeable accident, and upon the pleasures of love, comfort, education, sociability, as the meaning of life, will bring up her children so that they shall have as many pleasures, and enjoy them as much as possible; will feed them luxuriously, dress them smartly, will artificially divert them, and will teach them, not that which will make them capable of self-sacrificing man's and woman's labour with danger of life and uttermost effort, but that which will deliver them from that labour—which will give them diplomas and idleness. Only such a woman, who has lost the significance of her life, will sympathize with that false, sham man's labour, by means of which her husband, freeing himself from man's duty, may profit, together with her, by the labour of others. Only such a woman will choose a similar husband for her daughter, and will value men, not for what they are in themselves, but for what is attached to them—position, money, the art of profiting by the labour of others. A true mother, who really knows God's law, will prepare her children for the fulfilment of it. For such a mother it will be suffering to see her child overfed, pampered, overdressed, because all this, she knows, will hinder it in the fulfilment of God's law, experienced by herself. Such a woman will not teach that which will give her son or daughter the possibility of delivering themselves from labour, but that which will help them to bear the labour of life. She will not want to ask what to teach her children, or for what to prepare them, knowing what it is and in what consists the mission of men, and consequently knowing what to teach her children, and for what to prepare them. Such a woman will not only discourage her

husband from false, sham labour, the only aim of which is to profit by other people's work, but will view with disgust and dread an activity that will serve as a double temptation for her children. Such a woman will not choose her daughter's husband according to the whiteness of his hands, and the refinement of his manners, but, knowing thoroughly what is labour and what deceit, will always and everywhere, beginning with her husband, respect and appreciate men, in claiming from them true labour with waste and danger of life, and will scorn that false, sham labour which has for its aim the delivering of one's self from true labour. And let not those women say—who, while renouncing the vocation of women, desire to profit by its rights—that such a view of life is impossible for a mother, that a mother is too intimately connected by love to her children to deprive them of sweets, smart dresses, or entertainments, or not to fear their being unprovided for, if the husband has no fortune or secure position, or not to be afraid for the future of the marrying daughters and sons, who have not got an "education." All this is a lie, a burning lie! A true mother will never say this: "You cannot keep yourself from the desire to give them sweets, toys, to take them to the circus?" But surely you don't give them poisonous berries to eat, you do not let them go out alone in a boat, you do not take them to a café chantant? Why then can you restrain yourselves in this case and not in that? Because you do not tell the truth. You say that you love the children so much that you fear for their life, you are so afraid of hunger, and cold, and that is why you appreciate so much the security, which your husband's position provides for you, though you consider it unlawful. You are so afraid of future eventualities, calamities for your children which are very distant and doubtful—and you therefore encourage your husband to do things unjustifiable in your opinion; but what are you doing now to secure your children in their present conditions of life from



the unfortunate eventualities of the present life? Do you spend much of your time during the day with your children? You do well if you spend one-tenth of the day! The remaining time they are under the care of strangers, hired people, often taken from the street, or they are in institutions, open to the dangers of moral and physical infection. Your children eat, they are nourished. Who cooks their dinner and what from? Mostly you know nothing about it. Who instills moral principles into them? Neither do you know that! Then do not say, that you are suffering evil for the good of your children—it is not true. You do evil because you like it. A true mother, the one who in bearing and bringing up children sees her self-sacrificing vocation of life and the fulfilment of God's will—will not say it. She will not say it, because she knows it is not her business to make of her children what she herself or current opinions require. She knows that children, i.e., the following generations—are the greatest and most sacred thing which is given to men to behold in reality: and, to serve with all her being, this sacred cause is her life. She knows herself—being constantly between life and death and ever rearing the feebly flickering life—that life and death are not her business, her business is to serve life, and she will not therefore search for distant paths of this service but will only endeavour not to avoid the near one. Such a mother will bring forth and nurse her children herself, and, above all things else, will feed and provide for them, will work for them, wash and teach them, will sleep and talk with them, because she makes that her life-work. Only such a mother will not seek for her children external security through her husband's money, or her children's diplomas, but she will exercise in them the same capacity of self-sacrificing fulfilment of God's will which she knows in herself, the capacity for bearing labour with waste and danger of life, because she knows that only in that lie the security and welfare of life. Such a mother will not have to ask others

what is her duty: she will know every thing, and will fear nothing, for she will always know that she has done what she was called to do. If there can be doubts for a man or for a childless woman about the way to fulfil God's will, for a mother that way is firmly and clearly drawn; and if she fulfils it humbly, with a simple heart, standing on the highest point of good, which it is only given to a human being to attain, she becomes the guiding-star for all men, tending to the same good. Only a mother can before her death say to Him who sent her into this world, and to Him whom she has served by bearing and bringing up children, beloved by her more than herself—only she can peacefully say, after having served Him in her appointed service—“Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.” And this is that highest perfection, to which, as to the highest good, men aspire. Such women who fulfil their mission, are those who reign over reigning men, and serve as a guiding-star to humanity—those who prepare new generations of men and form public opinion: and therefore in the hands of these women lies the highest power of men's salvation from the existing and threatening evils of our time. Yes, women, mothers, in your hands, more than in those of any others, lies the salvation of the world!

NOTE TO CHAPTER 40 The vocation of every man and woman is to serve other people. With this general proposition, I think all who are not immoral people will agree. The difference between men and women in the fulfilment of that vocation, is only in the means by which they attain it; that is to say, by which they serve men. Man serves others by physical work—procuring food; by intellectual work—studying the laws of nature in order to master it; and by social work—instituting forms of life, and establishing mutual relationships between people. The means of serving others are various for men. The whole activity of mankind, with the exception of bearing children

and rearing them, is open for his service to men. A woman, in addition to the possibility of serving men by all the means open to man is, by the construction of her body, called and inevitably attracted, to serve others by that which alone is excepted from the domain of the service of man. The service of mankind is divided into two parts—one, the augmentation of the welfare of mankind; the other, the continuation of the race. Men are called chiefly to the first, as they are deprived of the possibility of fulfilling the second. Women are called exclusively to the second, as they only are fitted for it. This difference one should not, one can not, forget or destroy; and it would be sinful to do so. From this difference proceed the duties of each—duties not invented by men, but which are in the nature of things. From the same difference proceeds the estimation of virtue and vice for woman and man—the estimation which has existed in every century, which exists now, and which will never cease to exist while reason exists in men. It always has been the case, and it always will be, that a man who spends a great part of his life in the various physical and mental labours which are natural to him, and a woman who spends a great part of her life in the labour of bearing, nursing, and rearing children, which is her exclusive prerogative, will alike feel that they are doing their duty, and will alike rise in the esteem and love of other people, because they both fulfil what is appointed because such is the substance of the matter. The vocation of man is broader and more varied; the vocation of woman more uniform and narrower, but more profound: and therefore it has always been, and always will be, the case, that man, having hundreds of duties, will be neither a bad nor a pernicious man, even when he has been false to one or ten out of them, if he fulfils the greater part of his vocation; while woman, as she has a smaller number of duties, if she is false to one of them, instantly falls lower than a man, who has been false to ten out of his hundreds of duties. Such

has always been the general opinion, and such it will always remain—because such is the substance of the matter. A man, in order to fulfil God's will, must serve him in the domain of physical work, thought and morality: in all these ways he can fulfil his vocation. Woman's service to God consists chiefly and almost exclusively in bearing children (because no one except herself can render it). Only by means of work, is man called to serve God and his fellow-men: only by means of her children, is a woman called to serve them. Therefore, that love to her own children which is inborn in woman, that exclusive love against which it is quite vain to strive by reasoning, will always be, and ought to be, natural to a woman and a mother. That love to a child in its infancy is not egotism, it is the love of a workman for the work which he is doing while it is in his hands. Take away that love for the object of one's work, and the work becomes impossible. While I am making a boot, I love it above everything. If I did not love it, I could not work at it. If anybody spoils it for me, I am in despair; but I only love it thus while I am working at it. When it is completed, there remains an attachment, a preference, which is weak and illegitimate. It is the same with a mother. A man is called to serve others by multifarious labours, and he loves those labours while he is accomplishing them. A woman is called to serve others by her children, and she cannot help loving those children of hers while she is rearing them to the age of three, seven, or ten years. In the general vocation of serving God and others, man and woman are entirely equal, notwithstanding the difference of the form of that service. The equality consists in the equal importance of one service and of the other—that the one is impossible without the other, that the one depends upon the other, and that for efficient service, as well for man as for woman, the knowledge of truth is equally necessary. Without this knowledge, the activity of man and woman becomes not useful but pernicious for

mankind. Man is called to fulfil his multifarious labour; but his labour is only useful, and his physical, mental, and social labour is only fruitful, when it is fulfilled in the name of truth and the welfare of others. A man can occupy himself as zealously as he will to increase his pleasures by vain reasoning and with social activity for his own advantage: his labour will not be fruitful. It will be so only when it is directed towards lessening the suffering of others through want and ignorance and from false social organization. The same with woman's vocation: her bearing, nursing, and bringing up children will only be useful to mankind when she gives birth to children not only for her own pleasure, but when she prepares future servants of mankind; when the education of those children is done in the name of truth and for the welfare of others—that is to say, when she will educate her children in such a manner that they shall be the very best men possible, and the very best labourers for others. The ideal woman, in my opinion, is the one who—appropriating the highest view of life of the time in which she lives, yet gives herself to her feminine mission, which is irresistibly placed in her—that of bringing forth, nursing and educating, the greatest possible number of children, fitted to work for people according to the view which she has of life. In order to appropriate the highest view of life, I think there is no need of visiting lectures: all that she requires is to read the gospel, and not to shut her eyes, ears, and, most of all, her heart. Well, and if you ask what those are to do who have no children, who are not married, or who are widows, I answer that those will do well to share man's multifarious labour. But one cannot help feeling sorry that such a precious tool as woman is, should be bereft of the possibility of fulfilling the great vocation which it is given to her alone to fulfil. Especially as every woman, when she has finished bearing children, if she has strength left, will have time to occupy herself with help in man's labour. Woman's help in that

labour is very precious; but it will always be a pity to see a young woman fit for child-bearing occupied by man's labour. To see such a woman, is the same as to see precious vegetable soil covered with stones as a place of parade or as a walking-ground. Still more a pity, because the earth could only produce bread, and a woman could produce that for which there cannot be any equivalent, than which there is nothing higher—man. And only she is able to do this.

