

What to do?

Leo Tolstoy

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What to do?

Leo Tolstoy

Translated by Isabel F. Hapgood

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

Books which are prohibited by the Russian Censor are not always inaccessible. An enterprising publishing-house in Geneva makes a specialty of supplying the natural craving of man for forbidden fruit, under which heading some of Count L. N. Tolstoi's essays belong. These essays circulate in Russia in manuscript; and it is from one of these manuscripts, which fell into the hands of the Geneva firm, that the first half of the present translation has been made. It is thus that the Censor's omissions have been noted, even in cases where such omissions are in no way indicated in the twelfth volume of Count Tolstoi's collected works, published in Moscow. As an interesting detail in this connection, I may mention that this twelfth volume contains all that the censor allows of "My Religion," amounting to a very much abridged scrap of Chapter X. in the last-named volume as known to the public outside of Russia. The last half of the present book has not been published by the Geneva house, and omissions cannot be marked.

ISABEL F. HAPGOOD
BOSTON, Sept. 1, 1887

ON LABOR AND LUXURY.

I concluded, after having said every thing that concerned myself; but I cannot refrain, from a desire to say something more which concerns everybody, from verifying the deductions which I have drawn, by comparisons. I wish to say why it seems to me that a very large number of our social class ought to come to the same thing to which I have come; and also to state what will be the result if a number of people should come to the same conclusion.

I think that many will come to the point which I have attained: because if the people of our sphere, of our caste, will only take a serious look at themselves, then young persons, who are in search of personal happiness, will stand aghast at the ever-increasing wretchedness of their life, which is plainly leading them to destruction; conscientious people will be shocked at the cruelty and the illegality of their life; and timid people will be terrified by the danger of their mode of life.

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The Wretchedness of our Life: —However much we rich people may reform, however much we may bolster up this delusive life of ours with the aid of our science and art, this life will become, with every year, both weaker and more diseased; with every year the number of suicides, and the refusals to bear children, will increase; with every year we shall feel the growing sadness of our life; with every generation, the new generations of people of this sphere of society will become more puny.

It is obvious that in this path of the augmentation of the comforts and the pleasures of life, in the path of every sort of cure, and of artificial preparations for the improvements of the sight, the hearing, the appetite, false teeth, false hair, respiration, massage, and so on, there can be no salvation. That people who do not make use of these perfected preparations are stronger and healthier, has become such a truism, that advertisements are printed in the newspapers of stomach-powders for the wealthy, under the heading, "Blessings for the poor," { 1 } in which it is stated that only the poor are possessed of proper digestive powers, and that the rich require assistance, and, among other various sorts of assistance, these powders. It is impossible to set the matter right by any diversions, comforts, and powders, whatever; only a change of life can rectify it.

The Inconsistency of our Life with our Conscience: —however we may seek to justify our betrayal of humanity to ourselves, all our justifications will crumble into dust in the presence of the evidence. All around us, people are dying of excessive labor and of privation; we ruin the labor of others, the food and clothing which are indispensable to them, merely with the object of procuring diversion and variety for our wearisome lives. And, therefore, the conscience of a man of our circle, if even a spark of it be left in him, cannot be lulled to sleep, and it poisons all these comforts and those pleasures of life which our brethren, suffering and perishing in their toil, procure for us. But not only does every conscientious man feel this himself,—he would be glad to forget it, but this he cannot do.

The new, ephemeral justifications of science for science, of art for art, do not exclude the light of a simple, healthy judgment. The conscience of man cannot be quieted by fresh devices; and it can only be calmed by a change of life, for which and in which no justification will be required.

Two causes prove to the people of the wealthy classes the necessity for a change of life: the requirements of their individual welfare, and of the welfare of those most nearly connected with them, which cannot be satisfied in the path in which they now stand; and the necessity of satisfying the voice of conscience, the impossibility of accomplishing which is obvious in their present course. These causes, taken together, should lead people of the wealthy classes to alter their mode of life, to such a change as shall satisfy their well-being and their conscience.

And there is only one such change possible: they must cease to deceive, they must repent, they must acknowledge that labor is not a curse, but the glad business of life. "But what will be the result if I do toil for ten, or eight, or five hours at physical work, which thousands of peasants will gladly perform for the money which I possess?" people say to this.

The first, simplest, and indubitable result will be, that you will become a more cheerful, a healthier, a more alert, and a better man, and that you will learn to know the real life, from which you have hidden yourself, or which has been hidden from you.

The second result will be, that, if you possess a conscience, it will not only cease to suffer as it now suffers when it gazes upon the toil of others, the significance of which we, through ignorance, either always exaggerate or depreciate, but you will constantly experience a glad consciousness that, with every day, you are doing more and more to satisfy the demands of your conscience, and you will escape from that fearful position of such an accumulation of evil heaped upon your life that there exists no possibility of doing good to people; you will experience the joy of living in freedom, with the possibility of good; you will break a window,—an opening into the domain of the moral world which has been closed to you.

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"But this is absurd," people usually say to you, for people of our sphere, with profound problems standing before us,—problems philosophical, scientific, artistic, ecclesiastical and social. It would be absurd for us ministers, senators, academicians professors, artists, a quarter of an hour of whose time is so prized by people, to waste our time on any thing of that sort, would it not?—on the cleaning of our boots, the washing of our shirts, in hoeing, in planting potatoes, or in feeding our chickens and our cows, and so on; in those things which are gladly done for us, not only by our porter or our cook, but by thousands of people who value our time?

But why should we dress ourselves, wash and comb our hair? why should we hand chairs to ladies, to guests? why should we open and shut doors, hand ladies, into carriages, and do a hundred other things which serfs formerly did for us? Because we think that it is necessary so to do; that human dignity demands it; that it is the duty, the obligation, of man.

And the same is the case with physical labor. The dignity of man, his sacred duty and obligation, consists in using the hands and feet which have been given to him, for that for which they were given to him, and that which consumes food on the labor which produces that food; and that they should be used, not on that which shall cause them to pine away, not as objects to wash and clean, and merely for the purpose of stuffing into one's mouth food, drink, and cigarettes. This is the significance that physical labor possesses for man in every community; but in our community, where the avoidance of this law of labor has occasioned the unhappiness of a whole class of people, employment in physical labor acquires still another significance,—the significance of a sermon, and of an occupation which removes a terrible misfortune that is threatening mankind.

To say that physical labor is an insignificant occupation for a man of education, is equivalent to saying, in connection with the erection of a temple: "What does it matter whether one stone is laid accurately in its place?" Surely, it is precisely under conditions of modesty, simplicity, and imperceptibility, that every magnificent thing is accomplished; it is impossible to plough, to build, to pasture cattle, or even to think, amid glare, thunder, and illumination. Grand and genuine deeds are always simple and modest. And such is the grandest of all deeds which we have to deal with,— the reconciliation of those fearful contradictions amid which we are living. And the deeds which will reconcile these contradictions are those modest, imperceptible, apparently ridiculous ones, the serving one's self, physical labor for one's self, and, if possible, for others also, which we rich people must do, if we understand the wretchedness, the unscrupulousness, and the danger of the position into which we have drifted.

What will be the result if I, or some other man, or a handful of men, do not despise physical labor, but regard it as indispensable to our happiness and to the appeasement of our conscience? This will be the result, that there will be one man, two men, or a handful of men, who, coming into conflict with no one, without governmental or revolutionary violence, will decide for ourselves the terrible question which stands before all the world, and which sets people at variance, and that we shall settle it in such wise that life will be better to them, that their conscience will be more at peace, and that they will have nothing to fear; the result will be, that other people will see that the happiness which they are seeking everywhere, lies there around them; that the apparently unreconcilable contradictions of conscience and of the constitution of this world will be reconciled in the easiest and most joyful manner; and that, instead of fearing the people who surround us, it will become necessary for us to draw near to them and to love them.

The apparently insoluble economical and social problem is merely the problem of Kriloff's casket. {2} The casket will simply open. And it will not open, so long as people do not do simply that first and simple thing—open it.

A man sets up what he imagines to be his own peculiar library, his own private picture-gallery, his own apartments and clothing, he accumulates his own money in order therewith to purchase every thing that he needs; and the end of it all is, that engaged with this fancied property of his, as though it were real, he utterly loses his sense of that which actually constitutes his property, on which he can really labor, which can really serve him, and which will always remain in his power, and of that which is not and cannot be his own property, whatever he may

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call it, and which cannot serve as the object of his occupation.

Words always possess a clear significance until we deliberately attribute to them a false sense.

What does property signify?

Property signifies that which has been given to me, which belongs to me exclusively; that with which I can always do any thing I like; that which no one can take away from me; that which will remain mine to the end of my life, and precisely that which I am bound to use, increase, and improve. Now, there exists but one such piece of property for any man,—himself.

Hence it results that half a score of men may till the soil, hew wood, and make shoes, not from necessity, but in consequence of an acknowledgment of the fact that man should work, and that the more he works the better it will be for him. It results, that half a score of men,—or even one man, may demonstrate to people, both by his confession and by his actions, that the terrible evil from which they are suffering is not a law of fate, the will of God, or any historical necessity; but that it is merely a superstition, which is not in the least powerful or terrible, but weak and insignificant, in which we must simply cease to believe, as in idols, in order to rid ourselves of it, and in order to rend it like a paltry spider's web. Men who will labor to fulfil the glad law of their existence, that is to say, those who work in order to fulfil the law of toil, will rid themselves of that frightful superstition of property for themselves.

If the life of a man is filled with toil, and if he knows the delights of rest, he requires no chambers, furniture, and rich and varied clothing; he requires less costly food; he needs no means of locomotion, or of diversion. But the principal thing is, that the man who regards labor as the business and the joy of his life will not seek that relief from his labor which the labors of others might afford him. The man who regards life as a matter of labor will propose to himself as his object, in proportion as he acquires understanding, skill, and endurance, greater and greater toil, which shall constantly fill his life to a greater and greater degree. For such a man, who sees the meaning of his life in work itself, and not in its results, for the acquisition of property, there can be no question as to the implements of labor. Although such a man will always select the most suitable implements, that man will receive the same satisfaction from work and rest, when he employs the most unsuitable implements. If there be a steam-plough, he will use it; if there is none, he will till the soil with a horse-plough, and, if there is none, with a primitive curved bit of wood shod with iron, or he will use a rake; and, under all conditions, he will equally attain his object. He will pass his life in work that is useful to men, and he will therefore win complete satisfaction.

And the position of such a man, both in his external and internal conditions, will be more happy than that of the man who devotes his life to the acquisition of property. Such a man will never suffer need in his outward circumstances, because people, perceiving his desire to work, will always try to provide him with the most productive work, as they proportion a mill to the water-power. And they will render his material existence free from care, which they will not do for people who are striving to acquire property. And freedom from anxiety in his material conditions is all that a man needs. Such a man will always be happier in his internal conditions, than the one who seeks wealth, because the first will never gain that which he is striving for, while the latter always will, in proportion to his powers. The feeble, the aged, the dying, according to the proverb, "With the written absolution in his hands," will receive full satisfaction, and the love and sympathy of men.

What, then, will be the outcome of a few eccentric individuals, or madmen, tilling the soil, making shoes, and so on, instead of smoking cigarettes, playing whist, and roaming about everywhere to relieve their tedium, during the space of the ten leisure hours a day which every intellectual worker enjoys? This will be the outcome: that these madmen will show in action, that that imaginary property for which men suffer, and for which they torment themselves and others, is not necessary for happiness; that it is oppressive, and that it is mere superstition; that property, true property, consists only in one's own head and hands; and that, in order to actually exploit this real property with profit and pleasure, it is necessary to reject the false conception of property outside one's own body,

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upon which we expend the best efforts of our lives. The outcome us, that these men will show, that only when a man ceases to believe in imaginary property, only when he brings into play his real property, his capacities, his body, so that they will yield him fruit a hundred—fold, and happiness of which we have no idea,—only then will he be so strong, useful, and good a man, that, wherever you may fling him, he will always land on his feet; that he will everywhere and always be a brother to everybody; that he will be intelligible to everybody, and necessary, and good. And men looking on one, on ten such madmen, will understand what they must all do in order to loose that terrible knot in which the superstition regarding property has entangled them, in order to free themselves from the unfortunate position in which they are all now groaning with one voice, not knowing whence to find an issue from it.

But what can one man do amid a throng which does not agree with him? There is no argument which could more clearly demonstrate the terror of those who make use of it than this. The burlaki {3} drag their bark against the current. There cannot be found a burlak so stupid that he will refuse to pull away at his towing—rope because he alone is not able to drag the bark against the current. He who, in addition to his rights to an animal life, to eat and sleep, recognizes any sort of human obligation, knows very well in what that human obligation lies, just as the boatman knows it when the tow—rope is attached to him. The boatman knows very well that all he has to do is to pull at the rope, and proceed in the given direction. He will seek what he is to do, and how he is to do it, only when the tow—rope is removed from him. And as it is with these boatmen and with all people who perform ordinary work, so it is with the affairs of all humanity. All that each man needs is not to remove the tow—rope, but to pull away on it in the direction which his master orders. And, for this purpose, one sort of reason is bestowed on all men, in order that the direction may be always the same. And this direction has obviously been so plainly indicated, that both in the life of all the people about us, and in the conscience of each individual man, only he who does not wish to work can say that he does not see it. Then, what is the outcome of this?

This: that one, perhaps two men, will pull; a third will look on, and will join them; and in this manner the best people will unite until the affair begins to start, and make progress, as though itself inspiring and bidding thereto even those who do not understand what is being done, and why it is being done. First, to the contingent of men who are consciously laboring in order to comply with the law of God, there will be added the people who only half understand and who only half confess the faith; then a still greater number of people who admit the same doctrine will join them, merely on the faith of the originators; and finally the majority of mankind will recognize this, and then it will come to pass, that men will cease to ruin themselves, and will find happiness.

This will happen,—and it will be very speedily,—when people of our set, and after them a vast majority, shall cease to think it disgraceful to pay visits in untanned boots, and not disgraceful to walk in overshoes past people who have no shoes at all; that it is disgraceful not to understand French, and not disgraceful to eat bread and not to know how to set it; that it is disgraceful not to have a starched shirt and clean clothes, and not disgraceful to go about in clean garments thereby showing one's idleness; that it is disgraceful to have dirty hands, and not disgraceful not to have hands with callouses.

All this will come to pass when the sense of the community shall demand it. But the sense of the community will demand this when those delusions in the imagination of men, which have concealed the truth from them, shall have been abolished. Within my own recollection, great changes have taken place in this respect. And these changes have taken place only because the general opinion has undergone an alteration. Within my memory, it has come to pass, that whereas it used to be disgraceful for wealthy people not to drive out with four horses and two footmen, and not to keep a valet or a maid to dress them, wash them, put on their shoes, and so forth; it has now suddenly become discreditable for one not to put on one's own clothes and shoes for one's self, and to drive with footmen. Public opinion has effected all these changes. Are not the changes which public opinion is now preparing clear?

All that was necessary five and twenty years ago was to abolish the delusion which justified the right of serfdom, and public opinion as to what was praiseworthy and what was discreditable changed, and life changed also. All

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that is now requisite is to annihilate the delusion which justifies the power of money over men, and public opinion will undergo a change as to what is creditable and what is disgraceful, and life will be changed also; and the annihilation of the delusion, of the justification of the moneyed power, and the change in public opinion in this respect, will be promptly accomplished. This delusion is already flickering, and the truth will very shortly be disclosed. All that is required is to gaze steadfastly, in order to perceive clearly that change in public opinion which has already taken place, and which is simply not recognized, not fitted with a word. The educated man of our day has but to reflect ever so little on what will be the outcome of those views of the world which he professes, in order to convince himself that the estimate of good and bad, by which, by virtue of his inertia, he is guided in life, directly contradict his views of the world.

All that the man of our century has to do is to break away for a moment from the life which runs on by force of inertia, to survey it from the one side, and subject it to that same standard which arises from his whole view of the world, in order to be horrified at the definition of his whole life, which follows from his views of the world. Let us take, for instance, a young man (the energy of life is greater in the young, and self-consciousness is more obscured). Let us take, for instance, a young man belonging to the wealthy classes, whatever his tendencies may chance to be.

Every good young man considers it disgraceful not to help an old man, a child, or a woman; he thinks, in a general way, that it is a shame to subject the life or health of another person to danger, or to shun it himself. Every one considers that shameful and brutal which Schuyler relates of the Kirghiz in times of tempest,—to send out the women and the aged females to hold fast the corners of the kubitka [tent] during the storm, while they themselves continue to sit within the tent, over their kumis [fermented mare's-milk]. Every one thinks it shameful to make a weak man work for one; that it is still more disgraceful in time of danger—on a burning ship, for example,—being strong, to be the first to seat one's self in the lifeboat,—to thrust aside the weak and leave them in danger, and so on.

All men regard this as disgraceful, and would not do it upon any account, in certain exceptional circumstances; but in every-day life, the very same actions, and others still worse, are concealed from them by delusions, and they perpetrate them incessantly. The establishment of this new view of life is the business of public opinion. Public opinion, supporting such a view, will speedily be formed.

Women form public opinion, and women are especially powerful in our day.

TO WOMEN.

As stated in the Bible, a law was given to the man and the woman,—to the man, the law of labor; to the woman, the law of bearing children. Although we, with our science, avons change tout ca, the law for the man, as for woman, remains as unalterable as the liver in its place, and departure from it is equally punished with inevitable death. The only difference lies in this, that departure from the law, in the case of the man, is punished so immediately in the future, that it may be designated as present punishment; but departure from the law, in the case of the woman, receives its chastisement in a more distant future.

The general departure of all men from the law exterminates people immediately; the departure from it of all women annihilates it in the succeeding generation. But the evasion by some men and some women does not exterminate the human race, and only deprives those who evade it of the rational nature of man. The departure of men from this law began long ago, among those classes who were in a position to subject others, and, constantly spreading, it has continued down to our own times; and in our own day it has reached folly, the ideal consisting in evasion of the law,—the ideal expressed by Prince Blokhin, and shared in by Renan and by the whole cultivated world: "Machines will work, and people will be bundles of nerves devoted to enjoyment."

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There was hardly any departure from the law in the part of women, it was expressed only in prostitution, and in the refusal to bear children—in private cases. The women belonging to the wealthy classes fulfilled their law, while the men did not comply with theirs; and therefore the women became stronger, and continued to rule, and must rule, over men who have evaded the law, and who have, therefore, lost their senses. It is generally stated that woman (the woman of Paris in particular is childless) has become so bewitching, through making use of all the means of civilization, that she has gained the upper hand over man by this fascination of hers. This is not only unjust, but precisely the reverse of the truth. It is not the childless woman who has conquered man, but the mother, that woman who has fulfilled her law, while the man has not fulfilled his. That woman who deliberately remains childless, and who entrances man with her shoulders and her locks, is not the woman who rules over men, but the one who has been corrupted by man, who has descended to his level,—to the level of the vicious man,—who has evaded the law equally with himself, and who has lost, in company with him, every rational idea of life.

From this error springs that remarkable piece of stupidity which is called the rights of women. The formula of these rights of women is as follows: "Here! you man," says the woman, "you have departed from your law of real labor, and you want us to bear the burden of our real labor. No, if this is to be so, we understand, as well as you do, how to perform those semblances of labor which you exercise in banks, ministries, universities, and academies; we desire, like yourselves, under the pretext of the division of labor, to make use of the labor of others, and to live for the gratification of our caprices alone." They say this, and prove by their action that they understand no worse, if not better, than men, how to exercise this semblance of labor.

This so-called woman question has come up, and could only come up, among men who have departed from the law of actual labor. All that is required is, to return to that, and this question cannot exist. Woman, having her own inevitable task, will never demand the right to share the toil of men in the mines and in the fields. She could only demand to share in the fictitious labors of the men of the wealthy classes.

The woman of our circle has been, and still is, stronger than the man, not by virtue of her fascinations, not through her cleverness in performing the same pharisaical semblance of work as man, but because she has not stepped out from under the law that she should undergo that real labor, with danger to her life, with exertion to the last degree, from which the man of the wealthy classes has excused herself.

But, within my memory, a departure from this law on the part of woman, that is to say, her fall, has begun; and, within my memory, it has become more and more the case. Woman, having lost the law, has acquired the belief that her strength lies in the witchery of her charms, or in her skill in pharisaical pretences at intellectual work. And both things are bad for the children. And, within my memory, women of the wealthy classes have come to refuse to bear children. And so mothers who hold the power in their hands let it escape them, in order to make way for the dissolute women, and to put themselves on a level with them. The evil is already wide-spread, and is extending farther and farther every day; and soon it will lay hold on all the women of the wealthy classes, and then they will compare themselves with men: and in company with them, they will lose the rational meaning of life. But there is still time.

If women would but comprehend their destiny, their power, and use it for the salvation of their husbands, brothers, and children,—for the salvation of all men!

Women of the wealthy classes who are mothers, the salvation of the men of our world from the evils from which they are suffering, lies in your hands.

Not those women who are occupied with their dainty figures, with their bustles, their hair-dressing, and their attraction for men, and who bear children against their will, with despair, and hand them over to nurses; nor those who attend various courses of lectures, and discourse of psychometric centres and differentiation, and who also endeavor to escape bearing children, in order that it may not interfere with their folly which they call culture: but

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those women and mothers, who, possessing the power to refuse to bear children, consciously and in a straightforward way submit to this eternal, unchangeable law, knowing that the burden and the difficulty of such submission is their appointed lot in life,—these are the women and mothers of our wealthy classes, in whose hands, more than in those of any one else, lies the salvation of the men of our sphere in society from the miseries that oppress them.

Ye women and mothers who deliberately submit yourselves to the law of God, you alone in our wretched, deformed circle, which has lost the semblance of humanity, you alone know the whole of the real meaning of life, according to the law of God; and you alone, by your example, can demonstrate to people that happiness in life, in submission to the will of God, of which they are depriving themselves. You alone know those raptures and those joys which invade the whole being, that bliss which is appointed for the man who does not depart from the law of God. You know the happiness of love for your husbands,—a happiness which does not come to an end, which does not break off short, like all other forms of happiness, and which constitutes the beginning of a new happiness,—of love for your child. You alone, when you are simple and obedient to the will of God, know not that farcical pretence of labor which the men of our circle call work, and know that the labor imposed by God on men, and know its true rewards, the bliss which it confers. You know this, when, after the raptures of love, you await with emotion, fear, and terror that torturing state of pregnancy which renders you ailing for nine months, which brings you to the verge of death, and to intolerable suffering and pain. You know the conditions of true labor, when, with joy, you await the approach and the increase of the most terrible torture, after which to you alone comes the bliss which you well know. You know this, when, immediately after this torture, without respite, without a break, you undertake another series of toils and sufferings,—nursing,—in which process you at one and the same time deny yourselves, and subdue to your feelings the very strongest human need, that of sleep, which, as the proverb says, is dearer than father or mother; and for months and years you never get a single sound, unbroken night's rest, and sometimes, nay, often, you do not sleep at all for a period of several nights in succession, but with failing arms you walk alone, punishing the sick child who is breaking your heart. And when you do all this, applauded by no one, and expecting no praises for it from any one, nor any reward,—when you do this, not as an heroic deed, but like the laborer in the Gospel when he came from the field, considering that you have done only that which was your duty, then you know what the false, pretentious labor of men performed for glory really is, and that true labor is fulfilling the will of God, whose command you feel in your heart. You know that if you are a true mother it makes no difference that no one has seen your toil, that no one has praised you for it, but that it has only been looked upon as what must needs be so, and that even those for whom you have labored not only do not thank you, but often torture and reproach you. And with the next child you do the same: again you suffer, again you undergo the fearful, invisible labor; and again you expect no reward from any one, and yet you feel the sane satisfaction.

If you are like this, you will not say after two children, or after twenty, that you have done enough, just as the laboring man fifty years of age will not say that he has worked enough, while he still continues to eat and to sleep, and while his muscles still demand work; if you are like this, you will not cast the task of nursing and care-taking upon some other mother, just as a laboring man will not give another man the work which he has begun, and almost completed, to finish: because into this work you will throw your life. And therefore the more there is of this work, the fuller and the happier is your life.

And when you are like this, for the good fortune of men, you will apply that law of fulfilling God's will, by which you guide your life, to the lives of your husband, of your children, and of those most nearly connected with you. If you are like this, and know from your own experience, that only self-sacrificing, unseen, unrewarded labor, accompanied with danger to life and to the extreme bounds of endurance, for the lives of others, is the appointed lot of man, which affords him satisfaction, then you will announce these demands to others; you will urge your husband to the same toil; and you will measure and value the dignity of men acceding to this toil; and for this toil you will also prepare your children.

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Only that mother who looks upon children as a disagreeable accident, and upon love, the comforts of life, costume, and society, as the object of life, will rear her children in such a manner that they shall have as much enjoyment as possible out of life, and that they shall make the greatest possible use of it; only she will feed them luxuriously, deck them out, amuse them artificially; only she will teach them, not that which will fit them for self-sacrificing masculine or feminine labor with danger of their lives, and to the last limits of endurance, but that which will deliver them from this labor. Only such a woman, who has lost the meaning of her life, will sympathize with that delusive and false male labor, by means of which her husband, having rid himself of the obligations of a man, is enabled to enjoy, in her company, the work of others. Only such a woman will choose a similar man for the husband of her daughter, and will estimate men, not by what they are personally, but by that which is connected with them,—position, money, or their ability to take advantage of the labor of others.

But the true mother, who actually knows the will of God, will fit her children to fulfil it also. For such a mother, to see her child overfed, enervated, decked out, will mean suffering; for all this, as she well knows, will render difficult for him the fulfilment of the law of God in which she has instructed him. Such a mother will teach, not that which will enable her son and her daughter to rid themselves of labor, but that which will help them to endure the toils of life. She will have no need to inquire what she shall teach her children, for what she shall prepare them. Such a woman will not only not encourage her husband to false and delusive labor, which has but one object, that of using the labors of others; but she will bear herself with disgust and horror towards such an employment, which serves as a double temptation to her children. Such a woman will not choose a husband for her daughter on account of the whiteness of his hands and the refinement of manner; but, well aware that labor and deceit will exist always and everywhere, she will, beginning with her husband, respect and value in men, and will require from them, real labor, with expenditure and risk of life, and she will despise that deceptive labor which has for its object the ridding one's self of all true toil.

Such a mother, who brings forth children and nurses them, and will herself, rather than any other, feed her offspring and prepare their food, and sew, and wash, and teach her children, and sleep and talk with them, because in this she grounds the business of her life,— only such a mother will not seek for her children external guaranties in the form of her husband's money, and the children's diplomas; but she will rear them to that same capacity for the self-sacrificing fulfilment of the will of God which she is conscious of herself possessing,—a capacity for enduring toil with expenditure and risk of life,—because she knows that in this lies the sole guaranty, and the only well-being in life. Such a mother will not ask other people what she ought to do; she will know every thing, and will fear nothing.

If there can exist any doubt for the man and for the childless woman, as to the path in which the fulfilment of the will of God lies, this path is firmly and clearly defined for the woman who is a mother; and if she has complied with it in submissiveness and in simplicity of spirit, she, standing on that loftiest height of bliss which the human being is permitted to attain, will become a guiding-star for all men who are seeking good. Only the mother can calmly say before her death, to Him who sent her into this world, and to Him whom she has served by bearing and rearing children more dear than herself,— only she can say calmly, having served Him who has imposed this service upon her: "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." And this is the highest perfection, towards which, as towards the highest bliss, men are striving.

Such are the women, who, having fulfilled their destiny, reign over powerful men; such are the women who prepare the new generations of people, and fix public opinion: and, therefore, in the hands of these women lies the highest power of saving men from the prevailing and threatening evils of our times.

Yes, ye women and mothers, in your hands, more than in those of all others, lies the salvation of the world!

Footnotes:

{ 1 } In English in the text.

TO WOMEN.

What to do?

{2} An excellent translation of Kriloff's Fables, by Mr. W. R. S. Ralston, is published in London.

{3} Burlak, pl. burlaki, is a boatman on the River Volga.