

**Thoughts Evoked By The Census Of Moscow**

**By**

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THOUGHTS EVOKED BY THE CENSUS OF MOSCOW. [1884-1885.]

And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?

He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise--LUKE iii. 10. 11.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and

love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?--MATT. vi. 19-25.

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.--MATT. vi. 31-34.

For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.--MATT. xix. 24; MARK x. 25; LUKE xviii. 25.

## CHAPTER I.

I had lived all my life out of town. When, in 1881, I went to live in Moscow, the poverty of the town greatly surprised me. I am familiar with poverty in the country; but city poverty was new and incomprehensible to me. In Moscow it was impossible to pass along the street without encountering beggars, and especially beggars who are unlike those in the country. These beggars do not go about with their pouches in the name of Christ, as country beggars are accustomed to do, but these beggars are without the pouch and the name of Christ. The Moscow beggars carry no pouches, and do not ask for alms. Generally, when they meet or pass you, they merely try to catch your eye; and, according to your look, they beg or refrain from it. I know one such beggar who belongs to the gentry. The old man walks slowly along, bending forward every time he sets his foot down. When he meets you, he rests on one foot and makes you a kind of salute. If you stop, he pulls off his hat with its cockade, and bows and begs: if you do not halt, he pretends that that is merely his way of walking, and he passes on, bending forward in like manner on the other foot. He is a real Moscow beggar, a cultivated man. At first I did not know why the Moscow beggars do not ask alms directly; afterwards I came to understand why they do not beg, but still I did not understand their position.

Once, as I was passing through Afanasievskaya Lane, I saw a policeman putting a ragged peasant, all swollen with dropsy, into a cab. I inquired: "What is that for?"

The policeman answered: "For asking alms."

"Is that forbidden?"

"Of course it is forbidden," replied the policeman.

The sufferer from dropsy was driven off. I took another cab, and followed him. I wanted to know whether it was true that begging alms was prohibited and how it was prohibited. I could in no wise understand how one man could be forbidden to ask alms of any other man; and besides, I did not believe that it was prohibited, when Moscow is full of beggars. I went to the station-house whither the beggar had been taken. At a table in the station-house sat a man with a sword and a pistol. I inquired:

"For what was this peasant arrested?"

The man with the sword and pistol gazed sternly at me, and said:

"What business is it of yours?"

But feeling conscious that it was necessary to offer me some

explanation, he added:

"The authorities have ordered that all such persons are to be arrested; of course it had to be done."

I went out. The policeman who had brought the beggar was seated on the window-sill in the ante-chamber, staring gloomily at a note-book.

I asked him:

"Is it true that the poor are forbidden to ask alms in Christ's name?"

The policeman came to himself, stared at me, then did not exactly frown, but apparently fell into a doze again, and said, as he sat on the window-sill:-

"The authorities have so ordered, which shows that it is necessary," and betook himself once more to his note-book. I went out on the porch, to the cab.

"Well, how did it turn out? Have they arrested him?" asked the cabman. The man was evidently interested in this affair also.

"Yes," I answered. The cabman shook his head. "Why is it forbidden here in Moscow to ask alms in Christ's name?" I inquired.

"Who knows?" said the cabman.

"How is this?" said I, "he is Christ's poor, and he is taken to the station-house."

"A stop has been put to that now, it is not allowed," said the cab-driver.

On several occasions afterwards, I saw policemen conducting beggars to the station house, and then to the Yusupoff house of correction. Once I encountered on the Myasnitzkaya a company of these beggars, about thirty in number. In front of them and behind them marched policemen. I inquired: "What for?"--"For asking alms."

It turned out that all these beggars, several of whom you meet with in every street in Moscow, and who stand in files near every church during services, and especially during funeral services, are forbidden to ask alms.

But why are some of them caught and locked up somewhere, while others are left alone?

This I could not understand. Either there are among them legal and illegal beggars, or there are so many of them that it is impossible to apprehend them all; or do others assemble afresh when some are removed?

There are many varieties of beggars in Moscow: there are some who live by this profession; there are also genuine poor people, who have chanced upon Moscow in some manner or other, and who are really in want.

Among these poor people, there are many simple, common peasants, and women in their peasant costume. I often met such people. Some of them have fallen ill here, and on leaving the hospital they can neither support themselves here, nor get away from Moscow. Some of them, moreover, have indulged in dissipation (such was probably the case of the dropsical man); some have not been ill, but are people who have been burnt out of their houses, or old people, or women with children; some, too, were perfectly healthy and able to work. These perfectly healthy peasants who were engaged in begging, particularly interested me. These healthy, peasant beggars, who were fit for work, also interested me, because, from the date of my arrival in Moscow, I had been in the habit of going to the Sparrow Hills with two peasants, and sawing wood there for the sake of exercise. These two peasants were just as poor as those whom I encountered on the streets. One was Piotr, a soldier from Kaluga; the other Semyon, a peasant from Vladimir. They possessed nothing except the wages of their body and hands. And with these hands they earned, by dint of very hard labor, from forty to forty-five kopeks a day, out of which each of them was laying by savings, the Kaluga man for a fur coat, the Vladimir man in order to get enough to return to his village.



Therefore, on meeting precisely such men in the streets, I took an especial interest in them.

Why did these men toil, while those others begged?

On encountering a peasant of this stamp, I usually asked him how he had come to that situation. Once I met a peasant with some gray in his beard, but healthy. He begs. I ask him who is he, whence comes he? He says that he came from Kaluga to get work. At first he found employment chopping up old wood for use in stoves. He and his comrade finished all the chopping which one householder had; then they sought other work, but found none; his comrade had parted from him, and for two weeks he himself had been struggling along; he had spent all his money, he had no saw, and no axe, and no money to buy anything. I gave him money for a saw, and told him of a place where he could find work. I had already made arrangements with Piotr and Semyon, that they should take an assistant, and they looked up a mate for him.

"See that you come. There is a great deal of work there."

"I will come; why should I not come? Do you suppose I like to beg? I can work."

The peasant declares that he will come, and it seems to me that he is not deceiving me, and that he intends to come.

On the following day I go to my peasants, and inquire whether that man has arrived. He has not been there; and in this way several men deceived me. And those also deceived me who said that they only required money for a ticket in order to return home, and who chanced upon me again in the street a week later. Many of these I recognized, and they recognized me, and sometimes, having forgotten me, they repeated the same trick on me; and others, on catching sight of me, beat a retreat. Thus I perceived, that in the ranks of this class also deceivers existed. But these cheats were very pitiable creatures: all of them were but half-clad, poverty-stricken, gaunt, sickly men; they were the very people who really freeze to death, or hang themselves, as we learn from the newspapers.