

## CHAPTER XX.

### LIFE IN THE CITY.

Last year, in March, I was returning home late at night. As I turned from the Zubova into Khamovnitchesky Lane, I saw some black spots on the snow of the Dyevitchy Pole (field). Something was moving about in one place. I should not have paid any attention to this, if the policeman who was standing at the end of the street had not shouted in the direction of the black spots,--

"Vasily! why don't you bring her in?"

"She won't come!" answered a voice, and then the spot moved towards the policeman.

I halted and asked the police-officer, "What is it?"

He said,--"They are taking a girl from the Rzhanoff house to the station-house; and she is hanging back, she won't walk." A house-porter in a sheepskin coat was leading her. She was walking forward, and he was pushing her from behind. All of us, I and the porter and the policeman, were dressed in winter clothes, but she had nothing on over her dress. In the darkness I could make out only her brown dress, and the kerchiefs on

her head and neck. She was short in stature, as is often the case with the prematurely born, with small feet, and a comparatively broad and awkward figure.

"We're waiting for you, you carrion. Get along, what do you mean by it? I'll give it to you!" shouted the policeman. He was evidently tired, and he had had too much of her. She advanced a few paces, and again halted.

The little old porter, a good-natured fellow (I know him), tugged at her hand. "Here, I'll teach you to stop! On with you!" he repeated, as though in anger. She staggered, and began to talk in a discordant voice. At every sound there was a false note, both hoarse and whining.

"Come now, you're shoving again. I'll get there some time!"

She stopped and then went on. I followed them.

"You'll freeze," said the porters

"The likes of us don't freeze: I'm hot."

She tried to jest, but her words sounded like scolding. She halted again under the lantern which stands not far from our house, and leaned against, almost hung over, the fence, and began to fumble for something among her skirts, with benumbed and awkward hands. Again they shouted at her, but she muttered something and did something. In one hand she held

a cigarette bent into a bow, in the other a match. I paused behind her; I was ashamed to pass her, and I was ashamed to stand and look on. But I made up my mind, and stepped forward. Her shoulder was lying against the fence, and against the fence it was that she vainly struck the match and flung it away. I looked in her face. She was really a person prematurely born; but, as it seemed to me, already an old woman. I credited her with thirty years. A dirty hue of face; small, dull, tipsy eyes; a button-like nose; curved moist lips with drooping corners, and a short wisp of harsh hair escaping from beneath her kerchief; a long flat figure, stumpy hands and feet. I paused opposite her. She stared at me, and burst into a laugh, as though she knew all that was going on in my mind.

I felt that it was necessary to say something to her. I wanted to show her that I pitied her.

"Are your parents alive?" I inquired.

She laughed hoarsely, with an expression which said, "he's making up queer things to ask."

"My mother is," said she. "But what do you want?"

"And how old are you?"

"Sixteen," said she, answering promptly to a question which was evidently

customary.

"Come, march, you'll freeze, you'll perish entirely," shouted the policeman; and she swayed away from the fence, and, staggering along, she went down Khamovnitchesky Lane to the police-station; and I turned to the wicket, and entered the house, and inquired whether my daughters had returned. I was told that they had been to an evening party, had had a very merry time, had come home, and were in bed.

Next morning I wanted to go to the station-house to learn what had been done with this unfortunate woman, and I was preparing to go out very early, when there came to see me one of those unlucky noblemen, who, through weakness, have dropped from the gentlemanly life to which they are accustomed, and who alternately rise and fall. I had been acquainted with this man for three years. In the course of those three years, this man had several times made way with every thing that he had, and even with all his clothes; the same thing had just happened again, and he was passing the nights temporarily in the Rzhanoff house, in the night-lodging section, and he had come to me for the day. He met me as I was going out, at the entrance, and without listening to me he began to tell me what had taken place in the Rzhanoff house the night before. He began his narrative, and did not half finish it; all at once (he is an old man who has seen men under all sorts of aspects) he burst out sobbing, and flooded his countenance with tears, and when he had become silent, turned his face to the wall. This is what he told me. Every thing that he related to me was absolutely true. I authenticated his

story on the spot, and learned fresh particulars which I will relate separately.

In that night-lodging house, on the lower floor, in No. 32, in which my friend had spent the night, among the various, ever-changing lodgers, men and women, who came together there for five kopeks, there was a laundress, a woman thirty years of age, light-haired, peaceable and pretty, but sickly. The mistress of the quarters had a boatman lover. In the summer her lover kept a boat, and in the winter they lived by letting accommodations to night-lodgers: three kopeks without a pillow, five kopeks with a pillow.

The laundress had lived there for several months, and was a quiet woman; but latterly they had not liked her, because she coughed and prevented the women from sleeping. An old half-crazy woman eighty years old, in particular, also a regular lodger in these quarters, hated the laundress, and imbibited the latter's life because she prevented her sleeping, and cleared her throat all night like a sheep. The laundress held her peace; she was in debt for her lodgings, and was conscious of her guilt, and therefore she was bound to be quiet. She began to go more and more rarely to her work, as her strength failed her, and therefore she could not pay her landlady; and for the last week she had not been out to work at all, and had only poisoned the existence of every one, especially of the old woman, who also did not go out, with her cough. Four days before this, the landlady had given the laundress notice to leave the quarters: the latter was already sixty kopeks in debt, and she neither paid them,

nor did the landlady foresee any possibility of getting them; and all the bunks were occupied, and the women all complained of the laundress's cough.

When the landlady gave the laundress notice, and told her that she must leave the lodgings if she did not pay up, the old woman rejoiced and thrust the laundress out of doors. The laundress departed, but returned in an hour, and the landlady had not the heart to put her out again. And the second and the third day, she did not turn her out. "Where am I to go?" said the laundress. But on the third day, the landlady's lover, a Moscow man, who knew the regulations and how to manage, sent for the police. A policeman with sword and pistol on a red cord came to the lodgings, and with courteous words he led the laundress into the street.

It was a clear, sunny, but freezing March day. The gutters were flowing, the house-porters were picking at the ice. The cabman's sleigh jolted over the icy snow, and screeched over the stones. The laundress walked up the street on the sunny side, went to the church, and seated herself at the entrance, still on the sunny side. But when the sun began to sink behind the houses, the puddles began to be skimmed over with a glass of frost, and the laundress grew cold and wretched. She rose, and dragged herself . . . whither? Home, to the only home where she had lived so long. While she was on her way, resting at times, dusk descended. She approached the gates, turned in, slipped, groaned and fell.

One man came up, and then another. "She must be drunk." Another man

came up, and stumbled over the laundress, and said to the potter: "What drunken woman is this wallowing at your gate? I came near breaking my head over her; take her away, won't you?"

The porter came. The laundress was dead. This is what my friend told me. It may be thought that I have wilfully mixed up facts,--I encounter a prostitute of fifteen, and the story of this laundress. But let no one imagine this; it is exactly what happened in the course of one night (only I do not remember which) in March, 1884. And so, after hearing my friend's tale, I went to the station-house, with the intention of proceeding thence to the Rzhanoff house to inquire more minutely into the history of the laundress. The weather was very beautiful and sunny; and again, through the stars of the night-frost, water was to be seen trickling in the shade, and in the glare of the sun on Khamovnitshesky square every thing was melting, and the water was streaming. The river emitted a humming noise. The trees of the Neskutchny garden looked blue across the river; the reddish-brown sparrows, invisible in winter, attracted attention by their sprightliness; people also seemed desirous of being merry, but all of them had too many cares. The sound of the bells was audible, and at the foundation of these mingling sounds, the sounds of shots could be heard from the barracks, the whistle of rifle-balls and their crack against the target.

I entered the station-house. In the station some armed policemen conducted me to their chief. He was similarly armed with sword and pistol, and he was engaged in taking some measures with regard to a

tattered, trembling old man, who was standing before him, and who could not answer the questions put to him, on account of his feebleness. Having finished his business with the old man, he turned to me. I inquired about the girl of the night before. At first he listened to me attentively, but afterwards he began to smile, at my ignorance of the regulations, in consequence of which she had been taken to the station-house; and particularly at my surprise at her youth.

"Why, there are plenty of them of twelve, thirteen, or fourteen years of age," he said cheerfully.

But in answer to my question about the girl whom I had seen on the preceding evening, he explained to me that she must have been sent to the committee (so it appeared). To my question where she had passed the night, he replied in an undecided manner. He did not recall the one to whom I referred. There were so many of them every day.

In No. 32 of the Rzhanoff house I found the sacristan already reading prayers over the dead woman. They had taken her to the bunk which she had formerly occupied; and the lodgers, all miserable beings, had collected money for the masses for her soul, a coffin and a shroud, and the old women had dressed her and laid her out. The sacristan was reading something in the gloom; a woman in a long wadded cloak was standing there with a wax candle; and a man (a gentleman, I must state) in a clean coat with a lamb's-skin collar, polished overshoes, and a starched shirt, was holding one like it. This was her brother. They had



hunted him up.

I went past the dead woman to the landlady's nook, and questioned her about the whole business.

She was alarmed at my queries; she was evidently afraid that she would be blamed for something; but afterwards she began to talk freely, and told me every thing. As I passed back, I glanced at the dead woman. All dead people are handsome, but this dead woman was particularly beautiful and touching in her coffin; her pure, pale face, with closed swollen eyes, sunken cheeks, and soft reddish hair above the lofty brow,--a weary and kind and not a sad but a surprised face. And in fact, if the living do not see, the dead are surprised.

On the same day that I wrote the above, there was a great ball in Moscow.

That night I left the house at nine o'clock. I live in a locality which is surrounded by factories, and I left the house after the factory-whistles had sounded, releasing the people for a day of freedom after a week of unremitting toil.

Factory-hands overtook me, and I overtook others of them, directing their steps to the drinking-shops and taverns. Many were already intoxicated, many were women. Every morning at five o'clock we can hear one whistle, a second, a third, a tenth, and so forth, and so forth. That means that the toil of women, children, and of old men has begun. At eight o'clock

another whistle, which signifies a breathing-spell of half an hour. At twelve, a third: this means an hour for dinner. And a fourth at eight, which denotes the end of the day.

By an odd coincidence, all three of the factories which are situated near me produce only articles which are in demand for balls.

In one factory, the nearest, only stockings are made; in another opposite, silken fabrics; in the third, perfumes and pomades.

It is possible to listen to these whistles, and connect no other idea with them than as denoting the time: "There's the whistle already, it is time to go to work." But one can also connect with those whistles that which they signify in reality; that first whistle, at five o'clock, means that people, often all without exception, both men and women, sleeping in a damp cellar, must rise, and hasten to that building buzzing with machines, and must take their places at their work, whose end and use for themselves they do not see, and thus toil, often in heat and a stifling atmosphere, in the midst of dirt, and with the very briefest breathing-spells, an hour, two hours, three hours, twelve, and even more hours in succession. They fall into a doze, and again they rise. And this, for them, senseless work, to which they are driven only by necessity, is continued over and over again.

And thus one week succeeds another with the breaks of holidays; and I see these work-people released on one of these holidays. They emerge into

the street. Everywhere there are drinking-shops, taverns, and loose girls. And they, in their drunken state, drag by the hand each other, and girls like the one whom I saw taken to the station-house; they drag with them cabmen, and they ride and they walk from one tavern to another; and they curse and stagger, and say they themselves know not what. I had previously seen such unsteady gait on the part of factory-hands, and had turned aside in disgust, and had been on the point of rebuking them; but ever since I have been in the habit of hearing those whistles every day, and understand their meaning, I am only amazed that they, all the men, do not come to the condition of the "golden squad," of which Moscow is full, {152a} [and the women to the state of the one whom I had seen near my house]. {152b}

Thus I walked along, and scrutinized these factory-hands, as long as they roamed the streets, which was until eleven o'clock. Then their movements began to calm down. Some drunken men remained here and there, and here and there I encountered men who were being taken to the station-house. And then carriages began to make their appearance on all sides, directing their course toward one point.

On the box sits a coachman, sometimes in a sheepskin coat; and a footman, a dandy, with a cockade. Well-fed horses in saddle-cloths fly through the frost at the rate of twenty versts an hour; in the carriages sit ladies muffled in round cloaks, and carefully tending their flowers and head-dresses. Every thing from the horse-trappings, the carriages, the gutta-percha wheels, the cloth of the coachman's coat, to the stockings,

shoes, flowers, velvet, gloves, and perfumes,--every thing is made by those people, some of whom often roll drunk into their dens or sleeping-rooms, and some stay with disreputable women in the night-lodging houses, while still others are put in jail. Thus past them in all their work, and over them all, ride the frequenters of balls; and it never enters their heads, that there is any connection between these balls to which they make ready to go, and these drunkards at whom their coachman shouts so roughly.

These people enjoy themselves at the ball with the utmost composure of spirit, and assurance that they are doing nothing wrong, but something very good. Enjoy themselves! Enjoy themselves from eleven o'clock until six in the morning, in the very dead of night, at the very hour when people are tossing and turning with empty stomachs in the night-lodging houses, and while some are dying, as did the laundress.

Their enjoyment consists in this,--that the women and young girls, having bared their necks and arms, and applied bustles behind, place themselves in a situation in which no uncorrupted woman or maiden would care to display herself to a man, on any consideration in the world; and in this half-naked condition, with their uncovered bosoms exposed to view, with arms bare to the shoulder, with a bustle behind and tightly swathed hips, under the most brilliant light, women and maidens, whose chief virtue has always been modesty, exhibit themselves in the midst of strange men, who are also clad in improperly tight-fitting garments; and to the sound of maddening music, they embrace and whirl. Old women, often as naked as

the young ones, sit and look on, and eat and drink savory things; old men do the same. It is not to be wondered at that this should take place at night, when all the common people are asleep, so that no one may see them. But this is not done with the object of concealment: it seems to them that there is nothing to conceal; that it is a very good thing; that by this merry-making, in which the labor of thousands of toiling people is destroyed, they not only do not injure any one, but that by this very act they furnish the poor with the means of subsistence. Possibly it is very merry at balls. But how does this come about? When we see that there is a man in the community, in our midst, who has had no food, or who is freezing, we regret our mirth, and we cannot be cheerful until he is fed and warmed, not to mention the impossibility of imagining people who can indulge in such mirth as causes suffering to others. The mirth of wicked little boys, who pitch a dog's tail in a split stick, and make merry over it, is repulsive and incomprehensible to us.

In the same manner here, in these diversions of ours, blindness has fallen upon us, and we do not see the split stick with which we have pitched all those people who suffer for our amusement.

[We live as though there were no connection between the dying laundress, the prostitute of fourteen, and our own life; and yet the connection between them strikes us in the face.

We may say: "But we personally have not pinched any tail in a stick;" but we have no right, to deny that had the tail not been pitched, our merry-

making would not have taken place. We do not see what connection exists between the laundress and our luxury; but that is not because no such connection does exist, but because we have placed a screen in front of us, so that we may not see.

If there were no screen, we should see that which it is impossible not to see.] {154}

Surely all the women who attended that ball in dresses worth a hundred and fifty rubles each were born not in a ballroom, or at Madame Minanguoit's; but they have lived in the country, and have seen the peasants; they know their own nurse and maid, whose father and brother are poor, for whom the earning of a hundred and fifty rubles for a cottage is the object of a long, laborious life. Each woman knows this. How could she enjoy herself, when she knew that she wore on her bared body at that ball the cottage which is the dream of her good maid's father and brother? But let us suppose that she could not make this reflection; but since velvet and silk and flowers and lace and dresses do not grow of themselves, but are made by people, it would seem that she could not help knowing what sort of people make all these things, and under what conditions, and why they do it. She cannot fail to know that the seamstress, with whom she has already quarrelled, did not make her dress in the least out of love for her; therefore, she cannot help knowing that all these things were made for her as a matter of necessity, that her laces, flowers, and velvet have been made in the same way as her dress.

But possibly they are in such darkness that they do not consider this. One thing she cannot fail to know,--that five or six elderly and respectable, often sick, lackeys and maids have had no sleep, and have been put to trouble on her account. She has seen their weary, gloomy faces. She could not help knowing this also, that the cold that night reached twenty-eight degrees below zero, {155} and that the old coachman sat all night long in that temperature on his box. But I know that they really do not see this. And if they, these young women and girls, do not see this, on account of the hypnotic state superinduced in them by balls, it is impossible to condemn them. They, poor things, have done what is considered right by their elders; but how are their elders to explain away this their cruelty to the people?

The elders always offer the explanation: "I compel no one. I purchase my things; I hire my men, my maid-servants, and my coachman. There is nothing wrong in buying and hiring. I force no one's inclination: I hire, and what harm is there in that?"

I recently went to see an acquaintance. As I passed through one of the rooms, I was surprised to see two women seated at a table, as I knew that my friend was a bachelor. A thin, yellow, old-fashioned woman, thirty years of age, in a dress that had been carelessly thrown on, was doing something with her hands and fingers on the table, with great speed, trembling nervously the while, as though in a fit. Opposite her sat a young girl, who was also engaged in something, and who trembled in the

same manner. Both women appeared to be afflicted with St. Vitus' dance. I stepped nearer to them, and looked to see what they were doing. They raised their eyes to me, but went on with their work with the same intentness. In front of them lay scattered tobacco and paper cases. They were making cigarettes. The woman rubbed the tobacco between her hands, pushed it into the machine, slipped on the cover, thrust the tobacco through, then tossed it to the girl. The girl twisted the paper, and, making it fast, threw it aside, and took up another. All thus was done with such swiftness, with such intentness, as it is impossible to describe to a man who has never seen it done. I expressed my surprise at their quickness.

"I have been doing nothing else for fourteen years," said the woman.

"Is it hard?"

"Yes: it pains my chest, and makes my breathing hard."

It was not necessary for her to add this, however. A look at the girl sufficed. She had worked at this for three years, but any one who had not seen her at this occupation would have said that here was a strong organism which was beginning to break down.

My friend, a kind and liberal man, hires these women to fill his cigarettes at two rubles fifty kopeks the thousand. He has money, and he spends it for work. What harm is there in that? My friend rises at



twelve o'clock. He passes the evening, from six until two, at cards, or at the piano. He eats and drinks savory things; others do all his work for him. He has devised a new source of pleasure,--smoking. He has taken up smoking within my memory.

Here is a woman, and here is a girl, who can barely support themselves by turning themselves into machines, and they pass their whole lives inhaling tobacco, and thereby running their health. He has money which he never earned, and he prefers to play at whist to making his own cigarettes. He gives these women money on condition that they shall continue to live in the same wretched manner in which they are now living, that is to say, by making his cigarettes.

I love cleanliness, and I give money only on the condition that the laundress shall wash the shirt which I change twice a day; and that shirt has destroyed the laundress's last remaining strength, and she has died. What is there wrong about that? People who buy and hire will continue to force other people to make velvet and confections, and will purchase them, without me; and no matter what I may do, they will hire cigarettes made and shirts washed. Then why should I deprive myself of velvet and confections and cigarettes and clean shirts, if things are definitively settled thus? This is the argument which I often, almost always, hear. This is the very argument which makes the mob which is destroying something, lose its senses. This is the very argument by which dogs are guided when one of them has flung himself on another dog, and overthrown him, and the rest of the pack rush up also, and tear their comrade in

pieces. Other people have begun it, and have wrought mischief; then why should not I take advantage of it? Well, what will happen if I wear a soiled shirt, and make my own cigarettes? Will that make it easier for anybody else? ask people who would like to justify their course. If it were not so far from the truth, it would be a shame to answer such a question, but we have become so entangled that this question seems very natural to us; and hence, although it is a shame, it is necessary to reply to it.

What difference will it make if I wear one shirt a week, and make my own cigarettes, or do not smoke at all? This difference, that some laundress and some cigarette-maker will exert their strength less, and that what I have spent for washing and for the making of cigarettes I can give to that very laundress, or even to other laundresses and toilers who are worn out with their labor, and who, instead of laboring beyond their strength, will then be able to rest, and drink tea. But to this I hear an objection. (It is so mortifying to rich and luxurious people to understand their position.) To this they say: "If I go about in a dirty shirt, and give up smoking, and hand over this money to the poor, the poor will still be deprived of every thing, and that drop in the sea of yours will help not at all."

Such an objection it is a shame to answer. It is such a common retort.

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If I had gone among savages, and they had regaled me with cutlets which

struck me as savory, and if I should learn on the following day that these savory cutlets had been made from a prisoner whom they had slain for the sake of the savory cutlets, if I do not admit that it is a good thing to eat men, then, no matter how dainty the cutlets, no matter how universal the practice of eating men may be among my fellows, however insignificant the advantage to prisoners, prepared for consumption, may be my refusal to eat of the cutlets, I will not and I can not eat any more of them. I may, possibly, eat human flesh, when hunger compels me to it; but I will not make a feast, and I will not take part in feasts, of human flesh, and I will not seek out such feasts, and pride myself on my share in them.

#### LIFE IN THE COUNTRY.

But what is to be done? Surely it is not we who have done this? And if not we, who then?

We say: "We have not done this, this has done itself;" as the children say, when they break any thing, that it broke itself. We say, that, so long as there is a city already in existence, we, by living in it, support the people, by purchasing their labor and services. But this is not so. And this is why. We only need to look ourselves, at the way we have in the country, and at the manner in which we support people there.

The winter passes in town. Easter Week passes. On the boulevards, in the gardens in the parks, on the river, there is music. There are theatres, water-trips, walks, all sorts of illuminations and fireworks. But in the country there is something even better,--there are better air, trees and meadows, and the flowers are fresher. One should go thither where all these things have unfolded and blossomed forth. And the majority of wealthy people do go to the country to breathe the superior air, to survey these superior forests and meadows. And there the wealthy settle down in the country, and the gray peasants, who nourish themselves on bread and onions, who toil eighteen hours a day, who get no sound sleep by night, and who are clad in blouses. Here no one has led these people astray. There have been no factories nor industrial establishments, and there are none of those idle hands, of which there are so many in the city. Here the whole population never succeeds, all summer long, in completing all their tasks in season; and not only are there no idle hands, but a vast quantity of property is ruined for the lack of hands, and a throng of people, children, old men, and women, will perish through overstraining their powers in work which is beyond their strength. How do the rich order their lives there? In this fashion:--

If there is an old-fashioned house, built under the serf regime, that house is repaired and embellished; if there is none, then a new one is erected, of two or three stories. The rooms, of which there are from twelve to twenty, and even more, are all six arshins in height. {161a} Wood floors are laid down. The windows consist of one sheet of glass. There are rich rugs and costly furniture. The roads around the house are

macadamized, the ground is levelled, flower-beds are laid out, croquet-grounds are prepared, swinging-rings for gymnastics are erected, reflecting globes, often orangeries, and hotbeds, and lofty stables always with complicated scroll-work on the gables and ridges.

And here, in the country, an honest educated official, or noble family dwells. All the members of the family and their guests have assembled in the middle of June, because up to June, that is to say, up to the beginning of mowing-time, they have been studying and undergoing examinations; and they live there until September, that is to say, until harvest and sowing-time. The members of this family (as is the case with nearly every one in that circle) have lived in the country from the beginning of the press of work, the suffering time, not until the end of the season of toil (for in September sowing is still in progress, as well as the digging of potatoes), but until the strain of work has relaxed a little. During the whole of their residence in the country, all around them and beside them, that summer toil of the peasantry has been going on, of whose fatigues, no matter how much we may have heard, no matter how much we may have heard about it, no matter how much we may have gazed upon it, we can form no idea, unless we have had personal experience of it. And the members of this family, about ten in number, live exactly as they do in the city.

At St. Peter's Day, {161b} a strict fast, when the people's food consists of kvas, bread, and onions, the mowing begins.

The business which is effected in mowing is one of the most important in the commune. Nearly every year, through the lack of hands and time, the hay crop may be lost by rain; and more or less strain of toil decides the question, as to whether twenty or more per cent of hay is to be added to the wealth of the people, or whether it is to rot or die where it stands. And additional hay means additional meat for the old, and additional milk for the children. Thus, in general and in particular, the question of bread for each one of the mowers, and of milk for himself and his children, in the ensuing winter, is then decided. Every one of the toilers, both male and female, knows this; even the children know that this is an important matter, and that it is necessary to strain every nerve to carry the jug of kvas to their father in the meadow at his mowing, and, shifting the heavy pitcher from hand to hand, to run barefooted as rapidly as possible, two versts from the village, in order to get there in season for dinner, and so that their fathers may not scold them.

Every one knows, that, from the mowing season until the hay is got in, there will be no break in the work, and that there will be no time to breathe. And there is not the mowing alone. Every one of them has other affairs to attend to besides the mowing: the ground must be turned up and harrowed; and the women have linen and bread and washing to attend to; and the peasants have to go to the mill, and to town, and there are communal matters to attend to, and legal matters before the judge and the commissary of police; and the wagons to see to, and the horses to feed at night: and all, old and young, and sickly, labor to the last extent of

their powers. The peasants toil so, that on every occasion, the mowers, before the end of the third stint, whether weak, young, or old, can hardly walk as they totter past the last rows, and only with difficulty are they able to rise after the breathing-spell; and the women, often pregnant, or nursing infants, work in the same way. The toil is intense and incessant. All work to the extreme bounds of their strength, and expend in this toil, not only the entire stock of their scanty nourishment, but all their previous stock. All of them--and they are not fat to begin with--grow gaunt after the "suffering" season.

Here a little association is working at the mowing; three peasants,--one an old man, the second his nephew, a young married man, and a shoemaker, a thin, sinewy man. This hay-harvest will decide the fate of all of them for the winter. They have been laboring incessantly for two weeks, without rest. The rain has delayed their work. After the rain, when the hay has dried, they have decided to stack it, and, in order to accomplish this as speedily as possible, that two women for each of them shall follow their scythes. On the part of the old man go his wife, a woman of fifty, who has become unfit for work, having borne eleven children, who is deaf, but still a tolerably stout worker; and a thirteen-year-old daughter, who is short of stature, but a strong and clever girl. On the part of his nephew go his wife, a woman as strong and well-grown as a sturdy peasant, and his daughter-in-law, a soldier's wife, who is about to become a mother. On the part of the shoemaker go his wife, a stout laborer, and her aged mother, who has reached her eightieth year, and who generally goes begging. They all stand in line, and labor from morning

till night, in the full fervor of the June sun. It is steaming hot, and rain threatens. Every hour of work is precious. It is a pity to tear one's self from work to fetch water or kvas. A tiny boy, the old woman's grandson, brings them water. The old woman, evidently only anxious lest she shall be driven away from her work, will not let the rake out of her hand, though it is evident that she can barely move, and only with difficulty. The little boy, all bent over, and stepping gently, with his tiny bare feet, drags along a jug of water, shifting it from hand to hand, for it is heavier than he. The young girl flings over her shoulder a load of hay which is also heavier than herself, advances a few steps, halts, and drops it, without the strength to carry it. The old woman of fifty rakes away without stopping, and with her kerchief awry she drags the hay, breathing heavily and tottering. The old woman of eighty only rakes the hay, but even this is beyond her strength; she slowly drags along her feet, shod with bast shoes, and, frowning, she gazes gloomily before her, like a seriously ill or dying person. The old man has intentionally sent her farther away than the rest, to rake near the cocks of hay, so that she may not keep in line with the others; but she does not fall in with this arrangement, and she toils on as long as the others do, with the same death-like, gloomy countenance. The sun is already setting behind the forest; but the cocks are not yet all heaped together, and much still remains to do. All feel that it is time to stop, but no one speaks, waiting until the others shall say it. Finally the shoemaker, conscious that his strength is exhausted, proposes to the old man, to leave the cocks until the morrow; and the old man consents, and the women instantly run for the garments, jugs, pitchforks; and the old



woman immediately sits down just where she has been standings and then lies back with the same death-like look, staring straight in front of her. But the women are going; and she rises with a groan, and drags herself after them. And this will go on in July also, when the peasants, without obtaining sufficient sleep, reap the oats by night, lest it should fall, and the women rise gloomily to thresh out the straw for the bands to tie the sheaves; when this old woman, already utterly cramped by the labor of mowing, and the woman with child, and the young children, injure themselves overworking and over-drinking; and when neither hands, nor horses, nor carts will suffice to bring to the ricks that grain with which all men are nourished, and millions of poods {165} of which are daily required in Russia to keep people from perishing.

And we live as though there were no connection between the dying laundress, the prostitute of fourteen years, the toilsome manufacture of cigarettes by women, the strained, intolerable, insufficiently fed toil of old women and children around us; we live as though there were no connection between this and our own lives.

It seems to us, that suffering stands apart by itself, and our life apart by itself. We read the description of the life of the Romans, and we marvel at the inhumanity of those soulless Luculli, who satiated themselves on viands and wines while the populace were dying with hunger. We shake our heads, and we marvel at the savagery of our grandfathers, who were serf-owners, supporters of household orchestras and theatres, and of whole villages devoted to the care of their gardens; and we

wonder, from the heights of our grandeur, at their inhumanity. We read the words of Isa. v. 8: "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! (11.) Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! (12.) And the harp and the viol, and tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. (18.) Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-ropes. (20.) Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (21.) Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight--(22.) Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink."

We read these words, and it seems to us that this has no reference to us. We read in the Gospels (Matt. iii. 10): "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."

And we are fully convinced that the good tree which bringeth forth good fruit is ourselves; and that these words are not spoken to us, but to some other and wicked people.

We read the words of Isa. vi. 10: "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their

eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed. (11.) Then said I: Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate."

We read, and are fully convinced that this marvellous deed is not performed on us, but on some other people. And because we see nothing it is, that this marvellous deed is performed, and has been performed, on us. We hear not, we see not, and we understand not with our heart. How has this happened?

Whether that God, or that natural law by virtue of which men exist in the world, has acted well or ill, yet the position of men in the world, ever since we have known it, has been such, that naked people, without any hair on their bodies, without lairs in which they could shelter themselves, without food which they could find in the fields,--like Robinson {167} on his island,--have all been reduced to the necessity of constantly and unweariedly contending with nature in order to cover their bodies, to make themselves clothing, to construct a roof over their heads, and to earn their bread, that two or three times a day they may satisfy their hunger and the hunger of their helpless children and of their old people who cannot work.

Wherever, at whatever time, in whatever numbers we may have observed people, whether in Europe, in America, in China, or in Russia, whether we regard all humanity, or any small portion of it, in ancient times, in a

nomad state, or in our own times, with steam-engines and sewing-machines, perfected agriculture, and electric lighting, we behold always one and the same thing,--that man, toiling intensely and incessantly, is not able to earn for himself and his little ones and his old people clothing, shelter, and food; and that a considerable portion of mankind, as in former times, so at the present day, perish through insufficiency of the necessaries of life, and intolerable toil in the effort to obtain them.

Wherever we have, if we draw a circle round us of a hundred thousand, a thousand, or ten versts, or of one verst, and examine into the lives of the people comprehended within the limits of our circle, we shall see within that circle prematurely-born children, old men, old women, women in labor, sick and weak persons, who toil beyond their strength, and who have not sufficient food and rest for life, and who therefore die before their time. We shall see people in the flower of their age actually slain by dangerous and injurious work.

We see that people have been struggling, ever since the world has endured, with fearful effort, privation, and suffering, against this universal want, and that they cannot overcome it . . . {168}