

ARTICLES AND REPORTS ON THE FAMINE

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THE TERRIBLE QUESTION

Is there enough corn in Russia to feed all until the next harvest ? Some say there is, and others say that there is not, but nobody knows this of a certainty. But this ought to be known, and known for certain, now, before the beginning of winter, – it is just as necessary as it is necessary for men to know, when they set out on a voyage, whether there is enough fresh water and food on the boat.

It is terrible to think of what will happen to the crew and the passengers of the boat, when it turns out in the middle of the ocean that all the supplies are used up. Still more terrible is it to think of what will happen to us, if we are to believe those who assert that we shall have enough corn for all the starving, and it turns out in the spring that those who asserted so were mistaken.

It is terrible to think of the consequences of such an error. The consequences of this error will simply be dreadful: the death of starving millions and the worst of all calamities, – the bestialization and maddening of men. It is all very well to inform the St. Petersburgians by the firing of cannon alone that the water is rising, because it is impossible to do anything else. Nobody

knows, nor can know, the extent of the water's rise, – whether it will stop at what it was last year, or whether it will reach the high-water mark of the year 1824, or will rise even higher.

The famine of the present year, besides being an incomparably greater calamity than an inundation, is incomparably more universal (it threatens all of Russia), – it is a calamity, the degree of which not only can and must be foreseen, but can and must be foreseen and prevented.

" Oh, come now ! There will be enough corn in Russia, more than enough of all kinds of grain for everybody," say and write some people, and others, who love peace, are inclined to believe this. But it is impossible to believe what is said at haphazard, as a result of guesses in respect to a subject of such terrible importance.

If it is said that in a bathhouse of doubtful security, to which people go once a week, on Saturday, the beams will do for awhile yet and that it is not necessary to put in others, we may risk it and

leave the bathhouse without any alterations; but when it is said boldly of a doubtful ceiling in a theatre, where thousands sit every evening, that there is a possibility that it will not cave in to-night, it is impossible to believe and to be calm. The menacing danger is too great. But the danger which is threatening Russia, when it is going to be impossible to get the bread necessary for the support of men at any price, this danger is so terrible that the imagination refuses to present to itself what would happen if it were really so; and so not only must we not be satisfied with bold, soothing assertions that there will be enough corn in Russia, but it would even be senseless and criminal to be so.

But does such a danger exist? Is there any probability that there will not be enough corn? The following considerations may serve as answers to this question. In the first place, the famine district comprises one-third of Russia, that very third which has always fed a part of the other two-thirds. Kaluga, Tver, Moscow, all the non-black soil and northern Governments, even the nonblack soil counties of those Governments which have not suffered from the famine, never subsist on their own corn, but always buy it from those who now must themselves subsist on corn which is got elsewhere.

For this reason, if we count, say, ten puds to each person, well, let us say, of only twenty millions (when they figure them as high as forty millions) of inhabitants of the starving counties, — two hundred million puds of corn which are needed, — this does not by a good deal represent the amount of the corn necessary for feeding Russia. To this number must be added everything which is needed for those who in former years subsisted on the corn of the famine-stricken localities, which will very likely give another such figure.

The failure of the crops in the most fruitful localities effects something similar to what takes place in the shifting of a lever's point of support: not only is the force of the shorter end diminished, but the force of the longer end is increased so many times.

One-third of Russia is in the grasp of the failure of crops, — the most fruitful part, which has been feeding the other two-thirds, and so it is very likely that there will not be enough corn to go around.

This is one consideration. The second consideration is this, that the neighbouring countries are affected by a similar failure of crops and that, therefore, a great quantity of corn has already been exported and now continues to be exported; at least this is true of wheat.

The third consideration is this, that, quite contrary to what happened in the famine year, 1840, there are, and there can be, in this year no stores of old corn.

With Russia happened something similar to what happened according to

the Bible story in Egypt, only with this difference, that in Russia there was no predicting Joseph, and there were no executive persons like Joseph ; but there have been threshing-machines, railways, banks, and a great demand for money on the part of the Governments and of private individuals. In all the preceding years, – more than seven preceding years, – there was much corn, the prices were low, but the need of money grew and grew, as it regularly grows among us, and the convenience of selling, the threshing-machines, the railways, and the purchasing agents have encouraged selling and have been the cause of corn's being all sold out in the fall. If in the last years, when the corn fell particularly in price, a few sellers have kept back some corn, waiting for better prices, this holding back was such a hard matter that the moment the prices rose in the spring of the present year and reached as high as fifty to sixty kopeks per pud, the corn was all sold out, and nothing was left of the supplies of the preceding years. In the year 1840 it was not only the landed proprietors and the merchants who had supplies left, but everywhere the peasants had stores of old corn, from three to five years old. Now this custom has become obsolete, and nowhere can anything like it be found. In this does the third consideration consist as to the insufficiency of the corn-supply for the present year.

But there is something more than a mere probability: there are signs, – quite definite ones at that, – that this want exists.

One of such signs is the phenomenon, which is daily repeated with ever growing frequency, that there is no corn for sale in the depths of the famine districts; so, for example, in Dankov County, where I now am, there is no rye to be had at any price. The peasants cannot find any meal. Yesterday I saw two peasants of Dankov County, who have travelled all around the district with which they are familiar, in a radius of twenty versts, visiting all the mills and stores, in order to buy for money two puds of meal, but they were unable to procure it. One of them obtained it after urgent prayers from a storehouse of another county ; the other borrowed it.

This phenomenon is not exclusive, but one which is constantly and everywhere repeated. The millers come to beg you for Christ's sake to let them have meal from the storehouse of the County Council, because they have no meal, and because they cannot get it anywhere. It is possible to purchase it from the merchants, in the cities, near the railways, but only in large quantities, at least half a car-load or a car-load at a time ; but there is no way of getting it at retail. The large merchants, those who have a supply, do not sell at all, but are waiting; the small merchants, the dealers, buy it up and sell it out again at an insignificant profit to the large purchasers. A small trade is carried on only in the fairs, during fair time, and if the purchaser is too late he can get none there, either. This sign, it seems to me, shows quite clearly that there is not as much corn to be had as is needed. This is also in part shown by the prices, although in the present year there have so far been causes which do not permit the prices to be a correct indication of a correspondence between demand and supply. The prices are lower

than they ought to be, and they are artificially kept at this height, in the first place, by the prohibition against exporting the corn ; in the second place, by the activity of the County Councils, by the sale of rye and meal at reduced prices (I speak of the price of rye, assuming that the prices of the other foodstuffs, of bran, potatoes, millet, oats, more or less correspond to the price of rye).

The prohibition against exporting has confused the prices, that is, has had this effect, that the prices can no longer be a correct indication of the amount of the supply of the article. Just as the height of the water's rise in the dammed river cannot be an indication of its real level, so the present price of rye cannot correctly indicate the relation of demand to supply. The prohibition against exporting other grain has had the same effect. The prices now existing are not well-established prices, and are in any case only temporarily lowered prices in consequence of the prohibition against exporting. This is one cause why the prices are lower than what they ought to be. Another cause is the activity of the County Councils.

The County Councils have everywhere bought up a small portion, rarely more than one-fourth, of the corn which, according to their own calculation, they need for supplying all the food, and they sell the corn bought up by them at a lower price. This activity of the County Councils knocks down the price, for, if there did not exist this sale from the County Council storehouses, the sale would take place by private sellers, who, in accordance with the increased demand, would raise the prices. The present price, I think, is much lower than what it would be if we did not have the activity of the County Councils. And this price will at once very rapidly rise as soon as the County Councils have to buy up the other three-fourths of the corn needed by them.

We could say that the price would not rise if the County Councils should now buy up all the necessary amount, and rye remained for sale at this price. But judging from what is now the case, there is no probability of its being so. Judging from what is now the case, that is, when the price is one rouble seventy kopeks, while the County Councils have not bought up even one-fourth of the corn needed, and while rye is not supplied everywhere or at retail, there is, on the contrary, a probability that when the County Councils shall have purchased all the necessary amount, the price will suddenly rise to such a height that it will be shown that there is not enough corn in Russia. The price has in our locality already reached such a height as it has never reached before, being as much as one rouble seventy kopeks, and it continues to rise regularly.

All these signs indicate that there is a great probability that Russia has not the necessary amount of corn within its boundaries. But besides these signs, there is also another phenomenon which ought to cause us to take all the measures which are in our power for the prevention of the calamity that is menacing us. This phenomenon is the panic which has taken possession of society, that

is, the indefinite dim fear of the expected calamity,— a fear by which people are infected from one another, a fear which deprives people of the ability to act in accordance with reason. This panic is expressed in the prohibition against exporting, at first the rye, and later other kinds of grain, from which for some reason wheat is excluded, and in the measures taken, on the one hand, in assigning large sums of money for the starving, and, on the other, in the collection of the taxes by the local powers from those who can pay, as though the extraction of the money from the village is not a direct intensification of the want in the village. (The poor man's planting is mortgaged to the well-to-do peasant; he would be willing to wait, but the taxes are exacted from him, and so he calls on the poor man and ruins him.)

This panic is also startlingly noticeable in the disagreements which are bursting forth among the various local departments. There is repeated what always happens during a panic fear, — some pull in one direction, others in another.

This panic is expressed in the mood and the activity of the masses. I shall quote one example: the masses are all tending toward outside earnings.

In this present year the masses travel to St. Petersburg, to Moscow, to find a living there. At a time when all the work has stopped for the winter, when the living expenses are three times as dear as usual and every master dismisses as many superfluous men as he can, at a time when there is everywhere a mass of working men out of work, — men who have never had anything to do in the cities go there to find work. Is it not obvious to anybody that under such conditions there is more chance for the owner of a lottery ticket to win twenty thousand, than for a peasant who has arrived in Moscow from the country to find a place, and that the whole journey, no matter how inexpensive, with the expenses connected with it, and here and there with a spree, is only an additional burden, which will lie heavy on the starving? One would think that this is obvious, — and yet all of them go to the city and back again, and again to the city. Is not this a symptom of the complete madness, which takes possession of the crowd during every panic ?

All these symptoms and, above all else, the phenomenon of the panic, are very significant, and so we cannot help but be afraid of them. We cannot say, as people generally say of an enemy, before they have tried their strength with him, " We shall undo him with our caps." The enemy, the terrible enemy, is standing here, before us, and it cannot be said that we are not afraid of him, because we know that he exists and, more still, we know that we are afraid of him.

And if we are afraid of him, we must first of all find out his strength. We cannot remain in the ignorance in which we now are.

Let us assume that Russian society, those men who live outside the pale of the starving localities, will understand their material and spiritual solidarity with the suffering masses, and will make true,

serious sacrifices for the purpose of aiding the needy. Let us assume that the activity of those people who now live amidst the famine-stricken, working for them to the best of their ability, will continue doing so until the end, and that the number of these men will be increased; let us assume that the masses themselves are not losing courage and will struggle against want even as they are struggling now, with all positive and negative means, that is, by controlling themselves and increasing their energy and their inventiveness for finding the necessary means for existence, – let us assume that all this has been done and is being done a month, two, three, six months, and suddenly the price rises and continues to rise, as it has risen from forty-five kopeks to one rouble seventy kopeks, by degrees from one fair to another, and in a few weeks reaches as high as two and three roubles per pud, and it turns out that there is no corn, and that all the sacrifices made by those who have given money and by those who have lived and worked among the needy were a useless waste of means and of forces, and, above all else, that the whole energy of the masses is lost in vain, and no matter how much they, that is, a part of them, may have struggled, they none the less had to starve, while we ought to have known and prevented it all.

We cannot, we cannot, we must not remain in such an uncertainty; we, the educated and learned men, must not remain in this uncertainty. A peasant whom I saw yesterday did nearly everything which he could. He provided himself with money and went out to find some meal. He went to see Mikhail Vanilevich; he went to the mill; he went to Chernava – there is nowhere any meal. Having visited all the places where there might have been some meal, he knows that he has done everything in his power, and if after that he could nowhere obtain any meal and the famine overcame him and his family, he would know that he has done everything in his power, and his conscience would be at peace.

But if in our case it turns out that there is not enough corn and that our labours, too, will perish, and, perhaps, we together with the masses, our conscience will not be at peace. We might have found out how much corn we should need, and we might have provided ourselves with it.

If our education and learning is of any avail to us, what greater good can it do than avert such a universal calamity as is the present one ?

To figure out how much corn is needed for the support of those who have none in this present year, and how much corn there is in Russia, and if there is not enough of it to go around, to order the necessary corn from abroad, – all that is our direct duty, which is as natural as what the peasant did yesterday, when he travelled in a district for twenty versts around. And our conscience will be at peace only when we shall have visited all the surrounding country and shall have done everything we can. For him the surrounding country is Dankov, Klekdtki, for us it is India, America, Australia. We not only know that these countries exist, but are also in

friendly intercourse with their inhabitants.

And how is what we need and what corn we have to be figured out ? Is this really so difficult ? We, who know how to figure out how many different kinds of bugs there are in the world, how many microbes there are in a given area, how many millions of versts it is to the stars, and how many pounds of iron and of oxygen there are in each star, – shall we not be able to figure out how much people must eat in order not to starve, and how much has been harvested by these men, by whose aid we have always found our sustenance ? We, who with such a luxury of details have up to the present been collecting such a mass of, so far as I know, absolutely useless statistical data concerning the rate relation between births and marriages, deaths, and so forth, shall we suddenly be unable to collect the actually necessary information, which is needed most urgently ? This is impossible.

It is possible to collect this information, not approximate, guesswork information, like that precise information we get concerning the population by a one day's registration.

We need the information as to how much corn above the amount usually used for the support of all the Russians will be needed for the inhabitants of the famine districts, and how much corn there is in Russia. And we do not want approximate, wholesale, guesswork answers; the matter is too important to be done at haphazard, like building an arch, for which we do not know whether we have stone enough to close it.

This information may be obtained by the government and by the County Councils, wherever they exist; still more correctly it may be obtained by a private society, formed for the purpose. There does not exist any county in which could not be found, not merely one, but several men able and glad to help in this matter. This matter does not present itself to me as difficult. In a week an active man can without much labour travel over one-fourth or one-fifth of a county, especially if he lives in it, and within a possible error of ten or fifteen per cent, define the amount of corn needed for support, and the amount of corn for sale, above what is needed. I, at least, undertake personally to furnish such information in a week's time for one-fourth of the county in which I live. The same, I am told, can be done by the majority of those who live in the villages and with whom I have spoken about the matter. I assume that it is possible and not difficult to organize a central place, where the information may be collected and grouped, and which may send its members for this purpose to places where no volunteers have appeared. There may be mistakes; there may be concealments by the owners of corn; the moving of corn freight may produce mistakes; but the errors of the calculation, I think, will be small, and the information received in this manner would be sufficiently exact to answer the main, troublesome question which, if not expressed, is felt by all, whether there is sufficient corn in Russia, or not.

If, let us say, it should appear that in the present year, after the

deduction of what is generally used by the army and for the distilleries, the surplus of corn, above what is needed for the support of the nation, is as much as one hundred or fifty millions of puds, assuming that part of these one hundred millions may be held back by the sellers, part may perish, may be burned, part may form a mistake of calculation, we could peacefully and with assurance continue to live and to work. If there should not be any surplus at all and it should appear that there is in Russia as much corn as is needed, the situation would be doubtful and dangerous, but still it would be possible, without ordering any corn from abroad and only by lessening the use of the corn, as, for example, for the distilleries, and by working substitutes into foodstuffs, to continue to live and to work. But if it should appear that there is a deficit of one hundred or even fifty millions of puds of corn, the situation would be terrible. What would happen would be what happens when a fire breaks out and envelops a building. If we found it out now, it would be as when a fire breaks out and there is still time to put it out. If we found it out when the last ten thousand puds were being used up, it would be as when a fire has already enveloped the whole building and little hope is left of getting out of it alive.

If we should now learn that there is a deficit of corn, be it fifty, or one hundred, or two hundred millions of puds of corn, – all this would not be terrible. We should buy this corn now in America and should manage to settle for it by means of state, public, or national funds.

People who work ought to know that their work has a meaning and does not pass in vain.

Without this consciousness the hands will remain idle. And in order to know it, for the work with which the great majority of the Russians are now occupied, we must know now, at once, in two or three weeks, whether we have enough corn for the present year, and if not, where we can get it and what we need.

Byegievka, November 1, 1891,

ON THE METHODS OF AIDING THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE SUFFERED FROM THE FAILURE OF CROPS

The aid to the people who have suffered from the failure of crops may have two purposes, – that of supporting the peasant agriculture and of freeing people from the danger of falling sick and even dying as the result of insufficient and unwholesome food.

Is this aim attained by the aid which is now offered in the shape of the distribution of from twenty to thirty pounds of flour per month to every mouth, counting in the labourers, or not? I think it is not. And I think so from the following considerations: All peasant families of the whole of agricultural Russia may be classified according to three types: (1) a wealthy farm, from eight to twelve souls, an average of ten to each family; from three to five

labourers, an average of four. From three to five horses, an average of four. And from three to nine desyatfnas of land, an average of six. Such a peasant is a rich man. Such a peasant not only supports his whole family, but frequently hires one or two labourers, buys up land from poor peasants, and lends them corn and seeds. All this may be done under conditions which are disadvantageous to the poor peasants, but the result is this, that where there are in the country ten per cent, of such rich people the land does not lie idle, and in case of need the poor man has still a means for providing himself with corn, seeds, and even money.

The second type is the average peasant, who with great difficulty makes both ends meet with his two lots and with one or two labourers and one or two horses. This farm lives almost on its own corn. What is lacking is earned by the member of the family who fives apart.

The third type is a poor man with a family of from three to five souls, with one labourer, frequently without a horse. He never has enough of his own bread; he must every year invent means for getting out of trouble and is always within a hair's breadth of beggary, and at the least mishap goes a-begging.

The aid which is offered in the form of Hour to the population of the famine places is distributed according to the existing property lists of the peasant families. According to these lists it is calculated how much aid each is to receive; and this aid is offered only to the poorest, that is, to the families of the third type.

No aid is proposed to the farms of the first type, – to the rich and the average peasant, who have yet a few ch^verts of oats left, two horses, a cow, some sheep. But if we enter into the condition, not only of the average, but even of the rich peasant, we cannot help but see that for the support of the peasant agriculture these farmers need the greatest aid.

Let us assume that a rich peasant has some rye left; he has twenty or more ch^verts of oats, five horses, two cows, and eighteen sheep, and so no aid is provided for him, because he still has all these things. But figure up his income and his expenditures, and you will see that he is in just as much need as the poor peasant. To support his establishment with the rented land, he has to sow about ten ch^verts. The fact that he will have left forty, fifty, or sixty roubles' worth of corn is nothing in comparison with what he needs for his family of twelve souls. For his twelve souls he needs fifteen puds at one rouble fifty kopeks – twenty-two roubles fifty kopeks per month, 225 roubles for ten months. He needs, besides, forty, fifty, seventy roubles with which to pay the rental for his land, and he needs money for his taxes. The members of his family, who are hired out, receive this year less money than before, on account of the higher price of corn, or are discharged altogether. He needs about 350 roubles, but he will not get together two hundred roubles, and so there is but one thing left for him to do, and that is, not to hire any land, to sell the seed-oats, to sell some of his horses, for which he cannot get any decent price, that is, to

descend to the level of an average peasant, or even lower, because the family of the average peasant is smaller.

But even the average peasant, so long as he has some oats and one or two horses left, does not receive any aid, or he receives so little that he must sell his land to the exclusive rich men, eat up his seed-oats, and sell his horse for food. Thus, with such a distribution of the aid as now exists, the rich peasant must inevitably descend to the level of the average peasant, and the average peasant to that of the poor peasant. From the conditions of the present year, nearly all must descend to this level.

The distribution of flour, failing to attain the end of supporting the peasant agriculture, also fails to attain the second end, – the prevention of famine diseases. The distribution of flour according to souls does not attain this from the following causes:

In the first place, because with such a distribution of flour it is always possible for the recipient to succumb to temptation and to spend in drinks what he has received, a thing which, though infrequently, has happened in some cases; in the second place, because, falling into the hands of the poor, this aid saves them from famine only in case the family has some other means of its own. The maximum portion is thirty pounds to each man. And if thirty pounds of flour, with potatoes, and some admixture in the flour for the baking of bread, may support a man for the period of a month, these thirty pounds, in connection with complete poverty, when there is no money with which to buy orache to mix in with the bread, are eaten up in the form of pure bread in the period of from fifteen to twenty days, and the people, remaining in a starving condition for ten days, may grow sick or even die from lack of food. In the third place, the distribution of flour to poor families, even such as still have means of their own, does not attain the end of preventing famine diseases, because in a family, in which the strong people easily endure poor food, the feeble, the old, and the young grow sick from insufficient and unwholesome food.

In all localities which are affected by the failure of crops, all – the well-to-do and the poor families alike – eat poor bread which is made with orache. (Strange to say, now the poorest, in the majority of cases, in receiving bread from the County Councils, eat Mre bread, while in the wealthy families nearly all eat it with orache, with the abominable immature orache of the present year.)¹

And it constantly happens that the strong members of a rich family endure the orache bread, while the feeble, the old, the sick, simply run down from its effects and die.

Thus, there arrives a sick woman from a wealthy farm, carrying in her hands a chunk of black orache flat cake, which forms her chief food, and begging to be admitted to the kitchen, for no other reason than that she is sick, and that, too, only for the period of her sickness.

Another example: I go to a peasant who receives no aid and is considered rich. There are only two of them,

1 The use of orache in the present year as food can be explained only by tradition, by the fact that people used to eat it before, – and there is a proverb, which says, “Not worse than porridge is bread with orache,” – and that it grew up in the rye-field and was threshed out with the rye. It seems to me that if there existed no tradition, and if it did not grow in the rye-field, it is more likely that oat straw or filings would be mixed in with the bread than this injurious substance. And yet it is everywhere mixed in with the bread. – Author's Note.

he and his wife, and they have no children. I find them at dinner: potato broth and orache bread. In the fennenting-trough is fresh bread, with a still greater admixture of orache. Husband and wife are cheerful and happy; but on the oven there is an old woman, who is sick from the orache bread, and she says that it is better to eat but once a day, provided one has good bread, for it is impossible to stomach this.

Or a third example: there comes a woman from a wealthy farm, begging to have her thirteen-year-old daughter admitted to the public kitchen, because she is not fed at home. This daughter was born out of wedlock, and so she is not loved and does not receive enough to eat. There are many such examples, and so the distribution of flour as an aid does not secure the old, the feeble, and the disliked members of the family against diseases and starvation, in consequence of insufficient and unwholesome food.

However painful it may be to say so, the activity of the members of the County Council, which consists in the distribution of corn, in spite of the remarkable energy and even self-sacrifice of the majority of them, does not attain either the end of supporting the peasant agriculture, or of preventing the possibility of famine diseases.

But if what is being done now is not good, what is good? What ought to be done?

According to my opinion two things are needed: for the counteraction to complete annihilation, if not for the support of the peasant agriculture, we need to provide work for the whole population capable of working, and to establish free kitchens for the young, the old, the feeble, and the sick in all the villages of the famine-stricken localities.

The provision for labour must be such that tins labour shall be accessible, familiar, and habitual to the population, and not such as the people have never busied them-

selves with or have not even seen, or such that the members of the families who formerly did not go away will now have to leave their home, which is for them frequently impossible for domestic and other

reasons (such as the lack of clothing). The work must be such that, with the exception of all the work outside their houses, to which all those workers who are accustomed to it and able to go out to earn money will go, the home work may be performed by the rest of the population of the famine-stricken localities, – men, women, able-bodied old men, and half-grown children.

The calamity of this year consists not only in the lack of corn, but also in a not lesser lack of earnings, and simply of work, – in the enforced idleness of several millions of the population. If the corn needed for the support of the population is on hand, that is, can be transported to a place where it is wanted for a reasonable price, the famine-stricken people may be able to work for this corn, provided they have the possibility of working, the material for work, and a market for it. But if they do not have this possibility, hundreds of millions will irretrievably be lost in the distribution of aids, but the calamity will none the less not be removed. But the question is not merely one of material loss: the idleness of the whole population which receives free food has a terrible, corrupting effect.

Work outside their houses may be variously arranged, for the winter, and, still more, for the summer, and may God grant that this kind of work may at once be established and be of the widest possible dimensions. But, besides these larger labours outside the house, the affording the people a chance, without leaving their homes and their customary conditions, to work at their customary work, even though at a very low price, is a matter of imperative necessity and enormous importance.

In the villages of the localities where there was a failure of crops there has been no crop of hemp or of flax ; the sheep are nearly all sold, and the women have no weaving and no spinning to do. The women, old and young, and the girls, who are usually busy, are sitting without any work. More than this: the peasants, remaining at home and having no money with which to buy bast, also sit without their customary winter work, – the weaving of bast shoes. The children, too, loaf about without work, because the schools are for the most part closed. The people, having before themselves only the oppressive conceptions of the ever-increasing need, and deprived of the usual and more than ever indispensable means for diversion and oblivion, – of work, – are sitting for days at a time with folded hands, discussing all kinds of rumours and suppositions in regard to the aid which is being offered or which will be offered, and chiefly in regard to their need. " They feel lonesome and tired and so are ailing more than ever," is what a clever old man said to me.

To say nothing of the economic significance of work for the present year, its moral significance is enormous. Work, any kind of work which could keep busy all the people who are idle this year, forms a most imperative necessity.

So long as these extensive labours have not yet been established (labours for which there have been all kinds of extremely clever

projects, which, as we hear, are being established now, and which will be immensely useful, if only in their establishment the habits and comforts of the population will be taken into consideration), if only in all the famine-stricken villages all the remaining people might be given a chance to work at their customary work, – the men, say, to weave their bast shoes, if nothing more, and the women to spin and weave, – and they are given a chance to sell everything which is produced by this labour, this would be, if not a support of the peasant agriculture, at least a check in its ruin. If it be admitted that their linen can be disposed of at as little as eight kopeks per arshin (and it can be disposed of in enormous quantities), and if the bast shoes, which can be kept for years, are bought up at ten kopeks per pair, the earnings of every man will be at the lowest five kopeks, that is, one rouble fifty kopeks per month. If we, with this, assume that in every family there are no more than one-fourth of their members who cannot work, it will turn out that for each person in a family there will be earned 4501 kopeks, that is, one rouble twelve kopeks; that is, considerably more than what now, with so much effort and so many discussions and quarrels, provoking universal indignation, is given by the County Council.

Such would be the calculation, if they worked at the cheapest and unquestionably the most accessible work, which is best known by the country population.

Greater means would be obtained than what is now received from the free or loan distribution, there would not be that insoluble difficulty of the distribution, and, above all else, of the dissatisfaction which is caused by this distribution.

In order to attain this, it would be necessary merely to spend insignificant sums for the purchase of material for work, – flax and bast, – and to secure the disposition of these products.

Many people, though still to a very small extent, are now busying themselves with the arrangement of such work, – providing weaving material for the women and a sale for their woven products. We, too, have begun this matter, but so far have not received the flax, wool, and bast which we have ordered. Our proposition to the peasants to busy themselves with work – with the production of linen and of bast shoes for sale – has everywhere been met with delight. "If we could but earn three kopeks a day, we should be doing better than sitting without work," we were told.

It is self-evident that all this refers only to the five winter months; in the remaining four summer months, up to the new crop, the work could be much more productive.

To attain the end, if not of supporting the peasant agriculture, at least of checking its fall, there is, in my opinion, but one means, – the arrangement of work.

But to attain the second end, – to save men from falling sick in

consequence of bad food and an insufficiency of it, the only unquestionable means is the establishment in every village of a free kitchen, in which any man who is hungry may get enough to eat.

The establishment of such eating-houses was begun by us more than a month ago, and has so far been conducted with a success which surpasses our expectations. The eating-houses were arranged as follows:

During my journey to Epiphany County, in the end of September, I met my old friend, I. I. Radvski, to whom I communicated my intention of establishing eating-houses in the famine localities. He invited me to settle with him and, without rejecting any other form of aid, not only approved of my plan of establishing eating-houses, but even undertook to aid me in this matter and, with his characteristic love for the people, and determination and simplicity of manner, immediately, even before our coming down to his place, began this matter and opened six such eating-houses about him. The method which he employed consisted in this, that in the poorest villages he proposed to the widows or the poorest inhabitants to feed those who would come to them, and for this purpose distributed to them the necessary provisions. The elder, with others empowered to do so, made lists of the children and the old men who were to receive food in the eating-houses, and the eating-houses were opened. These, though established by none other than the elders themselves and one of Raevski's clerks, went very well and lasted about a month. But at the time of our moving to his place, which coincided with the first distribution of aid from the government, five eating-houses were closed, because the people who used to go there were beginning to get their monthly allowance, and so did not seem to need the double assistance. Very soon, however, in spite of the distribution of aid, the need increased to such an extent that the necessity was felt for the opening of the closed eating-houses and the establishment of new ones. During the four weeks which we passed here we opened thirty eating-houses. At first we opened them in accordance with information collected by us as regards the most necessitous villages, but now for more than a week we have on all sides been requested to open new eating-houses, which request we are no longer able to satisfy.

The business of opening eating-houses consists in the following, - at least, we have acted in this way: Having heard of a village in particular need, we arrive there, go to the elder, and, declaring our intention, invite some of the older men and ask them about the property conditions of the farms from one end of the village to the other. The elder, his wife, the old men, and a few others, who have come to the hut from curiosity, describe to us the condition of the farms.

"Well, beginning at the left: Maksim Aptdkhim What about him ? "

" He is in bad shape; he has children ; there are seven, all told. He has not had any corn for a long time. That's why the old woman and a boy ought to go."

We note down : From Maksim Aptdkhin – two. Next – F(klor Abramov.

" They are in bad shape, too. Still, they manage to feed themselves."

But the elder's wife chimes in, saying that he, too, is in bad shape, and that we ought to take a boy. Next comes an oid man, a soldier of the time of Nicholas.

"He is just starving." Demyan Saprdnov.

" They manage to live."

And thus the whole village is discussed. We can see with what justice and with what absence of class feeling the peasants decide on those who are in need from the circumstance that, in spite of the fact that many peasants were not admitted in the first village, in Tatishchevo, Rykhdtsk Township, where we opened an eating-house, the peasants without the least hesitation named the pope's widow with her children and the sexton's wife among the number of the unquestionably poor who ought to be accepted in the eating-house. Thus all the farms passed in review are, according to the indications of the elder and the neighbours, generally divided into three classes: into those who are unquestionably in bad shape, of whom some persons ought to go to the eating-house, those who are unquestionably all right, – those who can take care of themselves, – and those about whom there is some doubt. This doubt is generally settled by the number of men who attend the eating-house. It is hard for a peasant to feed more than forty, and so, if the number attending the eating-house is less than forty, the doubtful ones are accepted, and if more, it becomes necessary to refuse them. Generally a few persons, who unquestionably ought to be fed in the eating-houses, are left out, and in proportion as this is brought to our notice, changes and additions are made. But if in a village there turns up a very large number of doubtfully needy persons, a second, and sometimes a third, eating-house is opened there.

In general, both in our eating-houses, and in those of our neighbour, Mrs. N. F., who is carrying on the matter independently of us, the number of people fed in an eating-house always forms one-third of all persons in the village.

There are very many volunteers, in nearly all the farms, who are willing to keep the eating-house, that is, to bake the bread, to cook the meals, and to serve the eaters, for the right to receive their food and fuel gratis. All people are to such an extent anxious to keep these eating-houses that in the first two villages where we opened eating-houses, the elders, both of them rich peasants, proposed to open the eating-houses in their huts; but since the keeper of the eating-house is completely provided with food and fuel, we generally choose the very poorest, so long as they are in the centre of the village, and can easily be reached from both ends. We pay no attention to the room itself, since in the smallest hut of

but six arshins square thirty to forty persons can easily be served with meals.

The next business is to apportion provisions for every eating-house. This is done as follows : In one place, which is in the centre of the eating-houses, a storehouse of all necessary provisions is established. As such a storehouse at first Ra^vski's farmhouse served; but with the expansion of the business there were established, or rather chosen, three other storehouses in the estates of well-to-do landed proprietors, where there are granaries and some provisions for sale.

As soon as the dwelling for the eating-house is chosen, and the persons who are to come to it are marked down, a day is set on which the keepers of the eating-house by turns come or send a wagon after the provisions. As, on account of the great number of eating-houses, it is now troublesome to give out provisions every day, two days in the week have been set, Tuesday and Friday, when provisions are given out.

In the storehouse the keeper of an eating-house gets a little book of the following form:

RECEIPT BOOK OF EATING-HOUSE NO.....

Day and Month

Where opened

Flour

Bran

Potat.

Cabb.

Beets

Cracked Oats

Fuel

Salt

Number of Eaters

Nov. 8

Luk«5r-ya Kotdv

4p.

2p.

6p.

30 h.

2 p.

1 p.

10 p.

101b.

The provisions are received according to this book, and everything is noted down.

Besides the provisions, teams come on a stated day from the villages in which there are eating-houses, to receive their fuel: at first it was turf, but now, since there is no more turf, it is wood. On the same day that the provisions are taken home, the loaves are baked, and two days later the eating-houses are opened. The question as to the dishes for cooking, the bowls, the spoons, the tables, is decided by the keepers of the eating-houses themselves. Every keeper uses his own dishes. What he lacks he borrows from those who eat at his house. Everybody brings his own spoon.

The first eating-house was opened at the house of a blind old man with a wife and orphaned grandchildren. When I, on the first day of the opening of this eating-house, arrived at eleven o'clock at the blind man's house, the woman had everything ready. The loaves were out of the oven and lay on the table and on the benches. In the heated oven, which was closed with a shutter, stood cabbage soup, potatoes, and stewed beets.

In the room were, besides the proprietors, two female neighbours and a homeless old woman, who had begged to be permitted to stay in the house, so as to have something to feed on and warm herself. There were no people there as yet. It turned out that they had been waiting for us, and so had not yet sent out the announcement. A boy and a peasant took it upon themselves to make the announcement. I asked the hostess how they would seat themselves.

" I will arrange it as is proper, have no fear," said the hostess.

This hostess is a stocky woman of fifty years of age, with a timid and restless, but bright expression. Before the opening of the eating-house she used to go out begging, thus supporting herself and her family. Her enemies say of her that she is a drunkard. But, in spite of these accusations, she makes a favourable impression by her relations to the orphans, her husband's grandchildren, and to her

worn-out, barely alive, blind old husband, who is lying on the bench-beds. The mother of these orphans died the year before; the father abandoned the children and went to Moscow, and there went to the dogs. The children – a boy and a girl – are very pretty, especially the boy, who is eight years old; in spite of their poverty, they are well-dressed, and they keep close to their grandmother and are exacting to her, as spoiled children are.

" Everything will be as it ought to be," says the hostess, " and I will get a table. And those who find no place, will eat later."

Out of four puds of flour, she informs me, she made nine loaves, and she has, besides, brewed some kvas. " But the turf has worn me out," she says. " It does not burn. I had to pull some straw down from my shed. I had to open cracks in the shed, for the turf would not burn."

As I have no other business here, I go beyond the ravine, to the eating-house of another village, fearing lest they should be waiting there, too, for me. And, indeed, so they were. Here it was again the same: the same odour of hot bread; the same round loaves on the tables and benches, and the same iron and clay pots in the oven and the curious people in the house. Here again volunteers run away to carry abroad the announcement. After talking awhile with the hostess, who, like the first, complains that the turf does not burn and that she has had to chop up a trough to be able to bake the bread, I return to the first eating-house, thinking that there might spring up some misunderstandings or difficulties, which it would be necessary to remove. I arrive at the blind man's house. The hut is full of people and is alive with a repressed motion, like an open beehive in summer-time.

Vapour escapes through the door. There is an odour of bread and of cabbage soup, and the sound of lapping is heard. The room is very small and dark; there are two tiny windows, which, at that, are on both sides covered high outside with manure. The floor is of earth and very uneven. It is so dark, especially from the mass of people in it, who with their backs conceal the windows, that at first it is impossible to make anything out. But, in spite of the inconveniences and crowding, the eating is going on in the greatest order. Along the front wall, on the left of the door, there are two tables, around which on all sides the people who are dining sit in orderly fashion. In the background of the room, – from the outer wall to the oven, are the hanging beds, on which the emaciated blind old man no longer lies, but sits up, embracing Ids lank legs with his hands, and listening to the conversation and to the sound of eating. On the right, in the unoccupied corner, before the mouth of the oven, stand the host, the hostess, and helpers, who have volunteered their services. They all watch the needs of the diners, and serve them.

At the table in the front corner, under the images, is a soldier of the days of Nicholas; then comes a village old man, then an old woman, then some children. At the second table, nearer to the oven, with the back to the partition, is the miserable-looking wife of a

pope, and about her are her children, boys and girls, and her grown-up daughter. On each table is a bowl with cabbage soup, and the diners sip it, eating at the same time their fragrant bread. The bowls with the cabbage soup are emptied.

« Eat, eat, » the hostess says cheerfully and hospitably, handing them chunks of bread over their heads. " I'll fill them up again. To-day we have only cabbage soup, and potatoes, – the beets are not done. You will have them for supper."

An old woman, barely alive, who is standing at the oven, begs me to send her some bread to her house; she has dragged herself up with difficulty, but she cannot come every day; her boy is eating here, so he will bring it to her. The hostess cuts off a piece of bread for her. The old woman puts it cautiously away in her bosom and thanks her for it, but does not leave. The sexton's wife, a lively woman, who is standing at the oven and helping the hostess, chattily and briskly thanks me for her little girl, who is eating here, sitting at the wall, and asks me timidly whether she, the sexton's wife herself, may not be allowed to eat here.

" I have not tasted pure bread for a long time, and that tastes to us as sweet as honey."

Having received permission, the sexton's wife makes the sign of the cross and climbs over a plank which is thrown from one bench to another. A boy next to her on one side, and an old woman on the other, make place for the sexton's wife, and she seats herself. After the first course of cabbage soup the potatoes are served. From the salt-cellar every person pours out a little pile of salt on the table in front of him, and dips the peeled potatoes in it. All this – the service at the table, the taking of the food, the seating of the people – is accomplished without haste and with decency and decorum, and, at the same time, in such a habitual manner as though what is taking place has always taken place and could not be done otherwise. It is something like a natural phenomenon. Having finished the potatoes and cautiously removed the remaining pieces of bread, the soldier of the days of Nicholas is the first to get up and climb out from behind the table, and all arise with him, turn to the images, and pray, then express their thanks and leave. Those who have been waiting for their turn without haste take their places, and the hostess again cuts bread and fills the bowls with cabbage soup.

Precisely the same happened in the second eating-house ; the only special thing was that there were very many people there, almost forty of them, and the room was even darker and smaller than the first. But here was the same decorum of the guests, the same calm and joyous, somewhat proud relation of the hostess to her work. Here the host served, helping his mother, and matters went faster still. The same took place in all the other eating-houses which we had established, with the same decorum and naturalness. In some the zealous hostesses prepared three and even four courses: beet stew, cabbage soup, broth, potatoes.

The matter of the eating-houses is carried on as simply as many other peasant affairs, in which all the most complicated details are left to the peasants themselves. In the hauling, for example, for which peasants are hired, no employer ever bothers himself about mats, or pegs, or bast hampers, or buckets, or many other things which are indispensable for the hauling. It is assumed that all this will be arranged by the peasants themselves ; and, indeed, all this is always and everywhere arranged uniformly, sensibly, and simply by the peasants themselves, without demanding any participation or attention from the employer. Just so they do things in the eating-houses.

All the details of the matter are attended to by the keepers of the eating-houses themselves, and this is done so definitely and so circumstantially that all that is left for the founder to do is to attend to general matters in regard to the eating-houses. There are four such important matters which are left for the founder of the eating-house to do: (1) to deliver the provisions to the centre, from which it can be distributed in all directions ; (2) to attend to this, that the provisions shall not be wasted; (3) to attend to this, that the most needy persons shall not somehow be overlooked, or that instead such persons shall not receive free food as can get along without it; and (4) to test and apply in the eating-houses new and little used foodstuffs, such as peas, lentils, millet, oats, barley, all kinds of bread, etc.

Quite a lot of trouble was caused us by providing for the people who were receiving a monthly allowance. Some of the members of the family, who were receiving an insufficient quantity, were admitted; others gave their monthly allowance to the eating-house, so as to be allowed to eat in it. In this matter we are guided by the following considerations: with the equal distribution of twenty pounds to each person, as is the case in our locality, we accept them preeminently from the large families; with the insufficient distribution, such as is twenty pounds per month, there are the more unprovided people, the greater the family is.

The theory of the eating-houses is, therefore, the following : to open from ten to twenty eating-houses, which should feed from three to eight hundred men, provisions must be collected in the centre of this locality. Such a centre may always be in a well-to-do proprietor's estate.

The provisions for such a number, let us say five hundred people, will consist (if the eating-houses are to be kept until the new harvest), figuring one pound of a mixture of meal and bran to each of the five hundred persons for three hundred days, of 150,000 pounds or 3,750 puds, or 2,500 puds of rye and twelve hundred puds of bran; the same number of pounds of potatoes, twelve sdzhens of wood, one thousand puds of beets, twenty-five puds of salt, two thousand heads of cabbage, and eight hundred puds of oats. (The cost of all this, to judge from present prices, will be 5,800 roubles, that is, with the increase of the expense for oat broth, one rouble

sixteen kopeks per man.) Having established such a storehouse, it is possible to proceed in a circumference of seven to eight versts to open as many as twenty eating-houses, which will provision themselves from this storehouse. First of all it is necessary to open eating-houses in the poorest villages. The place for the eating-house should be chosen with one of the poorest peasants. The dishes and everything necessary for the preparation of the food and for the table should be left to the discretion of the keepers of the eating-house themselves. The list of the persons admitted to the eating-house should be made with the assistance of the elder and, if possible, of the well-to-do peasants, who do not send their families to the eating-house. The supervision of the eating-houses, if there are very many of them, should be left to the peasants themselves. Naturally, however, the greater the interest which the persons opening the eating-houses will show in this matter, the closer will their relations be with the keepers, and the guests of the eating-houses, – the better will the whole business proceed, the less waste and dissatisfaction will there be, and the better the food. And, above all else, the more cheerful will the mood of the people be. But it may boldly be said that, even with the most distant supervision, with being all left to themselves, the eating-houses will satisfy a demand and, in consequence of the supervision exercised by the interested peasants themselves, the useless waste of provisions will in no case be greater than ten per cent., if we may call it useless waste at all when people carry off some bread, or give it to those who have none. Such is the theory of the establishment of the eating-houses, and any person who wants to apply it will see how easily and how naturally this business is carried on.

The advantages and the disadvantages of the eating-houses are as follows:

The disadvantage of the eating-houses is, in the first place, this, that the provisioning in them costs a little more than the personal distribution of flour. If thirty pounds of flour are given as an assistance to every eater, the same thirty pounds of flour are used up in the eatinghouses, and, in addition, what is used for cooking, potatoes, beets, salt, fuel, and now oats. This disadvantage, to say nothing of the fact that the eating-houses provide better for the people than does the distribution of flour, is redeemed by the introduction of new, cheap, and wholesome foodstuffs, such as lentils, peas in various forms, oat-broth, beets, Indian meal porridge, sunflower and hemp-seed meal, whereby the quantity of the bread used up can be diminished and the food itself improved.

Another disadvantage is this, that the eating-houses keep from starvation only a few feeble members of the family, and not the young and adult people who do not frequent the eating-houses, considering this debasing to themselves. Thus, in determining those persons who are privileged to feeding in the eating-houses, the peasants always exclude the grown lads and girls, as they consider this disgraceful for them. This disadvantage is redeemed by the fact that the very shame which they feel in using the eating-houses

prevents the possibility of misusing them. There comes, for example, a peasant demanding an increase of his monthly allowance, and asserting that he has not eaten for two days. He is asked to attend the eating-house. He blushes and refuses, while another peasant of the same age, who was left without any means and could find no work, comes to the eating-house. Or another example: a woman complains of her condition and begs for assistance. It is proposed to her that she should send her daughter. But her daughter is already a prospective bride, and the woman refuses to send her. And yet the daughter of the pope, who is a prospective bride, and whom I have mentioned before, comes to the eating-house.

The third disadvantage, the greatest of them all, is this, that a few feeble persons, old and young, and children without clothes, cannot attend, especially in bad weather. This inconvenience is removed by allowing those who attend from the same farm, or their neighbours, to carry the food to them.

I know no other disadvantages and inconveniences.

Now the advantages of the eating-houses are as follows:

The food is incomparably better and more varied than what is prepared in the families. It is possible to make use of cheaper and more wholesome foodstuffs. The food is purchased at a lower price. There is a saving in fuel for the baking of bread. The poorest families, those where the eating-houses are established, are completely provided for. There is excluded the possibility of an inequality in the distribution of food which is frequently met with in families in respect to the members of it who are disliked; the old and the children receive the food which corresponds to their age. The eating-houses, instead of irritating and causing envy, evoke good sentiments. Misuse, that is, the receiving of assistance by persons who are least in need of it, may be less than with any other method of assistance. The limits of the misuse which may arise in the use of the eating-houses are set by the dimensions of the stomachs. A man may receive as much flour as he wishes, but nobody can eat more than a very limited amount. And above all else, the chief advantage of the eating-houses, for which alone they can and ought to be established everywhere, is this, that in the village in which there is an eating-house, a man cannot get sick or die from a lack of food, or from its poor quality; there cannot be what unfortunately is constantly repeated, — an old, feeble man, a sickly child, receiving poor and insufficient food now and then, falls off, grows sick, and dies, — if not directly from hunger, at least from the want of good food. And this is most important.

The other day, wishing to avoid all those examinations which had to be undertaken in the eating-houses formerly opened, as to who should be admitted and who not, we in a newly opened eating-house made use of a meeting of the peasants to decide some of their affairs, by leaving it to them to determine who should attend the eating-houses. The first opinion, as expressed by many, was this, that it was impossible for them to do so, as there would be disputes and

quarrels, and they would never be able to agree. Then the opinion was expressed that one person from each farm should be admitted. But this opinion was soon rejected. There were farms from which nobody needed to be admitted, and there were others where there was not one feeble person, but many. And so they agreed to accept our proposition, – to rely on people's honesty. " Meals will be prepared for forty persons, and whoever will come is welcome, and when all is eaten up, you must not think ill of us." This opinion was approved of. One man said that a healthy, strong man would himself be ashamed to come and eat up an orphan's portion. To this, however, a dissatisfied voice replied: " I should gladly refuse to come, but I cannot help it, for lately I have not eaten for two days."

This forms the chief advantage of the eating-houses. Whoever it may be, – whether he be listed in the village commune or not, a servant of the manor, a cantonist, a soldier, whether of the days of Nicholas or of Alexander, the wife of a pope, a burgher, a member of the gentry, an old or a young man, healthy, lazy, or industrious, a drunkard or sober, – so long as he is a man who has had nothing to eat for two days, – will receive the communal food. This is the chief advantage of the eating-houses. Where they exist, nobody will die of starvation and no one can be driven to work while he is hungry.

Everything you please except hunger may be a motive for more or less work. Animals may be trained by means of hunger and may be compelled to do things which are contrary to their nature, but it is time to understand that it is a shame to compel people by means of hunger to do, not what they wish, but what we want them to do.

But is the establishment of eating-houses everywhere possible ? Is it a common measure, which may be applied anywhere and on a large scale ? At first it seems that it is not possible, that it is but a private, local, accidental measure which can be applied only in certain spots, where people specially adapted to this business may be found. I myself thought so at first, when I imagined that it would be necessary to rent a hall for the eating-house, hire a cook, buy dishes, think out and determine what kind of food, when, and for how many persons to prepare; but the method of eating-houses which, thanks to I. I. Itadvski, has now been established removes all these difficulties and makes this measure most accessible, simple, and popular.

With our feeble powers and without any special effort, we opened in four weeks and set a-going in twenty villages thirty eating-houses, in which about fifteen hundred persons are fed. But our neighbour, Mrs. N. F., herself in the course of one month opened and has conducted on the same principle sixteen eating-houses, in which not less than seven hundred persons are fed.

The opening of the eating-houses and their supervision present no difficulties, and their maintenance costs but a little more than the distribution of the flour, if it is supplied to the extent of thirty pounds per month. (Though we have not made any exact calculations,

we assume that the support of each person in the eating-houses will in no case surpass one rouble fifty kopeks per month.)

This measure (the establishment of the eating-houses), which does not provoke any ill feelings in the masses, but, on the contrary, completely satisfies them, attains the chief end which now stands before society, which is, to secure people against the possibility of a death from famine, and so ought everywhere to be accepted. If it is possible for the County Council, – for the orators and the administration, – to figure out the wants of the peasants and, providing flour, to give it to those who are in need, it will cost these people incomparably less labour to establish storehouses for the provisioning of the eating-houses, and the eating-houses themselves.

The other day we received a visit from an inhabitant • of Kaluga, who brought the following proposition for our locality: a few landed proprietors and peasants of the Government of Kaluga, who have an abundance of fodder for cattle, sympathizing with the condition of the peasants of our locality, who are obliged at a great sacrifice to part with their horses, which they will not be able to buy back again in the spring for nearly ten times the price, have proposed to winter ten wagon-loads, that is, eighty horses from our locality. With the horses are to go some chosen men from those villages from which the horses will be taken; after taking them to their destination, they are to return home. In the spring chosen persons are to go for the horses and bring them back.

On the day following this proposition, there were found in the two villages where the announcement was made enough persons who were willing to send off these eighty horses, all of them young and good animals. Since then peasants have come every day, begging us to take their horses.

There can be no stronger and more definite answer to the question whether there is any famine, and of what dimensions. The want must be very great for the peasants to be willing so easily to part with their horses and to trust them to strangers. Besides, the offer and its acceptance are strikingly touching and instructive to me. The Kaluga peasants, who are not wealthy, are taking upon themselves considerable expense and labour and care for their brother peasants, whom they do not know and have never seen, and the peasants of our locality, who evidently comprehend the motives of their Kaluga

brothers and apparently feel that in case of need they would do the same, without the least hesitation entrust to a few people almost their last possessions, – their good, young horses, for which, even at present prices, they could get as much as five, ten, fifteen roubles.

If but one-hundredth part of such living, brotherly consciousness, of such union of men in the name of the God of love, existed in all men, – how easily, nay, not how easily, but how joyously we should be bearing this famine, and all possible material calamities!

Byegichevka, Dankov County,

November 26, 1891.

AMONG THE SUFFERING

REPORT UP TO APRIL 12, 1892

Our activity from the time of the last report consisted in the following:

Our first and chief business consisted in the establishment and management of eating-houses.

The eating-houses, of which, at the time of our former report, there were seventy-two, continue to multiply, and now they exist in four counties, Epiphany, Efremov, Dankov, and Skopin, in all 187. This multiplication has taken place in the following manner: from the villages adjoining those in which we have eating-houses, there come to us, now individual peasants, now representatives of the Commune with the elder, to ask us to open eating-houses among them. One of us goes to the particular village from which the petitioners have come, and, making the round of the farms, writes out a list of the property of the poorer inhabitants. At times, though very rarely, it turns out that a village from which deputies have come does not belong to the poorest and that there is as yet no urgent need of assistance; but in the majority of the cases the one who has made the round of the village has found, as is always the case upon close observation of peasant needs, that the condition of the poorest families is so bad that assistance is indispensable; and this assistance has been given by means of establishing eating-houses, to which the weakest members of the poorest families were admitted. In this manner the eating-

houses have grown up, and still continue to grow up, in those directions where the need is greater and less provided for, namely, in the direction of Efremov County and especially of Skopin County, where the assistance is particularly scanty. There are in all 187 eating-houses, of which 130 are those where the guests receive cooked food and bread, and thirty-seven those where they receive only cooked food. This division into eating-houses with bread and without bread took place in March, because from that time on the County Councils began in the poorest villages of Dankov County, where our eating-houses existed, to loan thirty pounds per man, and in Epiphany County more than thirty, so that in these counties the poorer population was either entirely provided with bread and needed only cooked food, - potatoes, cabbage, and other things, which, if the poorer peasants had had them, were entirely exhausted by March. For these poorer inhabitants were opened the eating-houses without bread, to which the guests come with their own bread. Having become accustomed to receive bread, too, in the eating-houses, the peasants

were at first dissatisfied with this change, and announced that the advantage derived from these eating-houses did not pay for the trouble in bringing the wood by rotation from the groves and that they did not wish to make use of the eating-houses. But this dissatisfaction did not last long. Only the well-to-do refused to come, and they, too, very soon began to ask to be admitted to the eating-houses.

The amount allowed in these eating-houses without bread for each ten men per week was as follows: rye meal for kvas, five pounds ; wheat meal for broth, two pounds; pea, oats, or maize meal for broth, ten pounds; peas, ten pounds; millet for porridge or broth, ten pounds; potatoes, two measures; beets, one measure; sauerkraut, one-half bucket; hemp oil, one-half pound; salt, four pounds; onions, one pound. Besides, in the winter, one and one-half pounds of kerosene and sixty puds of wood were used up every week.

With this distribution every man gets two pounds of vegetables, that is, of potatoes, cabbage, and beets, per day, and one-half pound of meal food, that is, of millet, peas, and rye meal, which gives in a cooked form more than four pounds per day for each man.

These eating-houses are especially interesting in that they have given an object-lesson as to the faultiness of the conviction, which has taken firm root among the majority of the peasants themselves, that rye bread is the most appetizing, most wholesome, and at the same time the cheapest form of food. These eating-houses have shown beyond a doubt that peas, millet, maize, potatoes, beets, cabbage, oats, and pea broth satisfy the hunger more easily and form a more wholesome and cheaper food than bread. The people who came to the eating-houses without bread brought with them very small pieces of bread, and sometimes came entirely without any bread, and yet passed the winter with their hunger well satisfied and with good health, eating each day about two kopeks' worth of cooked food and two or three kopeks' worth of bread, whereas, eating nothing but bread, they used up at least seven and one-half kopeks' worth of food.

Here is the menu for the week, made up by one of our co-workers. Monday : cabbage soup, porridge; Tuesday : potato soup, pea broth, and the same for supper; Wednesday : pea soup, boiled potatoes, and, for supper, peas with kvas; Thursday : cabbage soup, pea broth, and the same for supper; Friday: potato soup, millet broth, and the same for supper; Saturday : cabbage soup, boiled potatoes, and, for supper, potatoes with kvas; Sunday : potato soup, porridge, and, for supper, peas with kvas.

The author of this menu was guided by those products which he had at his disposal at the given time. With beets, from which was prepared during the whole winter the favourite beet stew, and with the oats broth, this menu can be varied still more without making the food more expensive.

Our eating-houses are distributed, according to localities, as follows (follows the list of eating-houses by counties and

villages).

In all the eating-houses of these four counties 9,093 persons at present receive food.

Such was one business of ours, – the most important one.

Another business for the last winter months consisted in furnishing wood to the population in distress. This distress has become more and more marked as the months advanced, and beginning with the middle of winter, especially when the supplies were more or less secured, it became the most important business. In our locality, where there is no fuel, no turf, and there could be no thought of using straw as fuel, this distress became very great with the beginning of winter. Very frequently, not only children, but even adults, could be found, not on the oven, but inside the oven, which had had a fire started in it the day before and which still retained a little heat, and on many farms they tore down the fences, kilns, sheds, and even vestibules, using for fuel the straw, the wickerwork, and shavings.

Thanks to the liberal gifts of wood from various persons, we were able, besides what we needed for the eating-houses, to distribute more than three hundred sazhen to the people.

Our method of distribution was as follows: to the more well-to-do peasants, we sold wood at our price (counting five kopeks per pud as an average price for wood purchased in the groves and in Smolensk); to the average peasants, we gave the wood on half shares at the station Klekdtki, about thirty versts off, so that they took one-half and hauled the other half for us. To the poor peasants, who had horses, we gave the wood gratis, on condition that they should haul it themselves from the station. To the very poorest peasants, without any horses, we gave the wood on the spot, at home, – the wood which those brought who brought it to us on shares.

Our third business was the feeding of the peasant horses. Besides the eighty horses, which in the beginning of winter were sent to the Government of Kaluga, twenty were taken to be boarded by Prince D. O. O., ten by Merchant S., and forty were placed on the farm of Mr. E., where they were fed on two car-loads of hay, contributed by P. A. U., and on old straw, given by the owner, and on other fodder which was purchased.

Before the beginning of spring, in February, two structures were put up on farms for the feeding of the peasant horses, – one on Mr. S.'s farm, the other on Mr. M.'s farm in Efremov County. For the feeding of the horses, there were bought ten thousand puds of straw, two car-loads of pressed seeds, and three hundred puds of millet meal were provided for mash. By these means 276 horses were fed for the period of the last two months.

Our fourth business consisted in the distribution of flax and bast for work, and gratis to those who were in need of foot-gear and of

cloth. One car-load of flax at 660 roubles was distributed to the needy gratis, and other eighty puds, and one hundred puds contributed, were distributed on half shares. The linen which is due us as our share has so far not reached us, so that we have been unable to satisfy the demands of Mrs. N., who sent us 120 roubles for the linen, and Mrs. K. M., who also offered to buy the peasant cloth, in order to furnish earnings to the peasant women.

Of the bast we have received as a contribution one carload from P. A. II., one hundred puds from L., and one thousand bunches were bought for 219 roubles. Part of this bast has been sold at a low price, and part has been distributed gratis to the most needy, while another part has been given on half shares for the weaving of bast shoes.

The bast shoes which are brought in are partly distributed, and partly will be. This business, the furnishing of material for earnings, was the least successful one for us. This business is so trifling, it is so inconvenient for us, who in relation to the peasants stand in a position of distributors of contributions, to take up the position of work-givers who demand strict account of the use of the material, that this matter has been a complete failure, calling forth nothing but unrealized expectations, envy, and evil sentiments. The best would have been, and we do this now, to sell these articles at the lowest prices to those who can purchase them, and to give them gratis to those who cannot buy them, — to the poorest.

Our fifth business, which began in February, consisted in the establishment of eating-houses for the smallest children, from a few months old, suckling babes, to those who are three years old. We established these eating-houses as follows: having described all the farms where there are children of that age, and where there is no milk, we chose a woman who had a cow that had come in, and offered her a remuneration of fifteen puds of wood and four puds of pressed seeds (which in price is equal to three roubles), if she would make a millet porridge with milk for ten babies of from one and one-half to three years old, and buckwheat porridge for suckling babes. For a babe of from one and one-half to three years old, two pounds of millet per week are furnished, and for suckling babes, one pound of buckwheat groats.

In the large villages these eating-houses are arranged as follows: milk is bought at forty kopeks per bucket. For suckling babes of less than a year, one pound per week is supplied ; for children of from one to three years, two pounds. The youngest children receive one glass of milk per day, the older, two glasses. Those who have no cows receive milk and millet in the form of porridge; those who have a cow, receive the porridge, in return for which they give milk.

The mothers sometimes come themselves for the porridge, which they carry home; at times they bring their babes with them and feed them on the spot. As a rule, in establishing these homes, the mothers, and so far as that goes, all peasants, propose, in the place of an

eating-house in the hut of a certain peasant woman, that the millet and the groats be given out to them, asserting that they can get the milk anywhere from some good people. But we think that, to secure the health of the little children, precisely such an arrangement is necessary. Upon receiving five to ten pounds of millet or groats, every peasant woman, no matter how good a mother she may be, looks upon the millet and the groats as upon provision which belongs to the whole house, and makes use of it to the best of her knowledge and her needs, or as her husband may order, so that frequently the millet or the groats do not reach the children. But if she every day receives a portion of prepared milk gruel for her child, she will certainly feed it out to the child.

We have now some eighty such homes, and every day new ones are established. These homes, which at first called forth doubts, have now become a habitual phenomenon, and nearly every day women come with their children from the villages in which there are not yet such homes, begging us to establish them. These homes cost about sixty kopeks per month for every child.

Since it is absolutely impossible, in the complex and constantly changing matter with which we are occupied, to figure out exactly how much money we shall need in order to carry on everything undertaken by us until the next harvest, and we, therefore, do not begin anything which we cannot carry out to the end, we shall, in all probability, have unexpended money left from the late contributions and from the sums expended in the form of loans, which are to be refunded in the fall. The best placement of such moneys, I think, will be the continuation of such homes for children for the next year. But if, as I am convinced, money and men will be found for it, why should they not be continued for ever? The general establishment of such homes, I assume, could greatly diminish the percentage of child mortality. Such was our fifth business.

The sixth business, which is beginning now, and which, in all probability, will be ended in one way or another when this report shall have appeared in print, consists in the distribution to the needy peasants of oats, potatoes, hemp, millet for sowing. The distribution of such seeds is particularly needed in our locality, because, besides the sowing of the summer fields, it has unexpectedly become necessary to make a new sowing of a considerable part of the rye, which in some localities has been spoiled nearly one-third. These seeds are distributed by us to the most needy peasants, whose land will inevitably remain unsowed if they do not receive seeds; but the seeds are not given to them gratis, but on condition that they will return them in grain from the new crops, independently of the present prices and of those prices which they may bring. The money received from these articles may be used for the establishment of homes for babes for the next winter.

The purchase of horses and their distribution forms our seventh business. Besides the immense number of those who have no horses, who never have a horse, which in some villages is as high as one-third, there are in the present year some peasants who have sold

their horses and have spent the proceeds in food, and who now will inevitably fall into absolute poverty or slavery, if they are not provided with horses. We buy horses for such peasants. This spring we have bought sixteen such horses, and it is necessary to buy one hundred more horses in the localities occupied by our eating-houses. We purchase these horses at the rate of about twenty-five roubles per horse, under the following conditions: the man who receives a horse puts himself under obligation to work the allotments of two souls for the poorer peasants who have no horses, for widows and orphans.

Our eighth business was the sale of rye, meal, and baked bread at cheap prices. This business, – the sale of baked bread, – which was continued to a small extent in the winter, was renewed with the arrival of spring. We have established bakeries for the sale of cheap bread at sixty kopeks per pud.

Besides these definite divisions, for which the money contributed has been used, small sums have been used by us in direct assistance to the needy for needs which cannot be put off, such as funerals, payment of debts, support of small schools, purchase of books, building, and so forth; there were very few such expenditures, as may be seen from the financial report.

Such has been our business in general outline for the past six months. Our chief business for this time has been the feeding of the distressed by means of eating-houses. During the winter months this form of aid, in spite of the misuse which occurred with it, in the main completely attained its end, which was, to provide for all the poorer and weaker population, for the children, old people, the sick, the convalescent, and thus save them from starvation and poor food. But with the approach of spring there present themselves certain considerations which demand a change in the existing order of the arrangement and management of the eating-houses.

With the approach of spring there presents itself, in the first place, the new condition that many who come to the eating-houses will be at work or attending to the

horses, and will be unable to attend the eating-houses during dinner and supper time ; in the second place, in the summer, when the heat from the ovens in the eating-houses is intense, conflagrations may easily occur. We shall in its proper time give an account of how our activity will be changed in consequence of this, if we shall have a chance to do so.

We add a short general account of the contributions received by us, and of the use to which they have been put. We shall give and print later a complete account, if we have time for it.

ACCOUNT OF THE MONEY CONTRIBUTED FROM APRIL 12 TO JULY 27, 1892

During the summer our business consisted in the following : (1) in the maintenance of the formerly existing eating-houses and the establishment of new ones; (2) in the establishment of homes for suckling babes and children of two years of age; (3) in the distribution of seeds for the summer sowing; (4) in the purchase of horses; and (5) in the establishment of bakeries and the sale of baked bread. Our first business, the eating-houses, lasted from April 12th to July 20th, almost in the same form as in the preceding months, with this difference only, that, fearing fires from overheating, we stopped the baking of bread in the eating-houses. Where we were able to do so, we distributed baked bread, and where it was not possible to prepare a sufficient quantity of bread we distributed flour to the individuals. In many villages a few of our colabourers proposed to distribute the food for cooking to the individuals. At first this change was accepted with joy, but very soon the peasants in the great majority of the villages themselves wished to return to the old order.

The need of eating-houses was more felt in the summer, during the long day and tense labour, than in winter. Very frequently the women in many villages asked that, instead of having their dinner, to which they were entitled, their husbands or fathers, who came home late from work, might be accepted for supper.

The number of the eating-houses at that time was considerably increased.

There were in all 246 eating-houses, and in them were fed, at some times more than at others, between ten and thirteen thousand men.

The second business – the establishment of homes (thus the kitchens for the cooking of the gruel for the children were incorrectly called) – was continued on the old bases and became very popular. For some of the homes in the villages, where there were few cows (and in our district there were villages in which sixty per cent, of the farms had no cows), we bought cows on condition that those who received the cows should supply the milk for the children who were put on their lists. Wherever it was possible, the milk was bought.

There were in all two to three thousand children who were fed in 124 homes.

The third business, which consisted in the distribution of summer seeds, – oats, potatoes, millet, hemp, – we did as follows: upon arriving in a village where there were petitioners, we invited three or four well-to-do farmers, who were not in need, and read to them a list of persons in need of seeds, and by the indication of these honest men we determined the necessary quantity for every petitioner; sometimes we diminished, sometimes we increased it, and sometimes entirely scratched out some of them, and in their place put down others, who were not marked down on the list.

The fourth business, the distribution of horses to those who had regular farms, but whose horses had been sold for food or had been

lost by some unfortunate accident, was particularly troublesome, because the aid for one person was too great and so provoked envy, recriminations, and dissatisfaction on the part of those whom we had to refuse. We determined on this kind of aid, as in the case of the seeds, by the indication of the honest men of the villages from which there appeared petitioners.

In these two matters we saw with peculiar clearness what a difference there was between an activity which had for its purpose the feeding of a hungry man, and which was attained by the eating-houses, and an activity which has for its aim the aiding of the peasant farms, into which we were drawn by the distribution of oats, millet, hemp, potatoes, and horses.

Having undertaken in a certain locality to save men from the danger of suffering, growing ill, and perishing from the lack of food, we fully attained this end by establishing eating-houses in that locality. If there could occur misuses in connection with this, that is, if there were men who would have been able to provide food for themselves at home, and yet attended the eating-houses, these misuses were limited to the consumption of from two to five kopeks' worth of food per day. But having made it our aim to assist the peasant farms, we immediately encountered, in the first place, an insuperable difficulty in determining who was to be helped, and to what extent, and with what: in the second place, the enormity of the want, to meet which one hundred times the means we had at our disposal would not have been sufficient, and in the third place, the possibility of the greatest misuses, which always accompany a free or even a loan distribution.

Neither of these matters, in spite of the great efforts made by us to carry them out, left in us the consciousness of our having been of any actual use to the peasants of our locality.

Our fifth business was the baking of bread and the sale of bread at a low price. At first we sold bread at eighty kopeks, later at sixty kopeks per pud, and so we have continued to do until now.

This business has been going very nicely all the time. The masses think very highly of the possibility of always having cheap corn within reach. Frequently, especially in the summer, people came from a distance of ten versts and more, and, having come too late for the first baking, which was all given away, had themselves booked, as in the cities for theatre boxes, for ten pounds for the next baking, and waited until noon for their portions.

At the end of July we intended to make an interruption in the eating-houses, continuing only the bread-baking and the children's homes, which are always necessary, and on which we proposed to expend whatever money was left at our disposal. But we did not succeed in making this interruption, because, in consequence of the cessation of the activity of the Bed Cross, it was necessary immediately to establish eating-houses for all those who had been under the charge of the Bed Cross, and who since July 20th had been

left without any care. Since the first of August we have established seventy eating-houses for the most needy Bed Cross charges, to whom soon were added the poorest of the landed peasants. Their number has been growing all the time.

The crops for this year, in the locality where we have been active, are like this: In a circle of about fifty versts diameter, in the centre of which we are, the rye crop is worse than last year. In many villages along the Don,— Nikitskoe, Myasnovka, Pashkovo, — in which I was in the beginning of September, there was no rye whatsoever left. What had been left was either sowed or eaten up. There was no crop of oats at all, — there are very few who will have enough for seed. There are oat-fields that have not been mowed at all. The potatoes and millet are good, but not universally so. Besides, not all peasants sow millet.

I should not be able to give any definite answer as to the economic condition of the masses in the present year. I could not do so, because, in the first place, all of us, who last year busied ourselves with the feeding of the masses, are now in the condition of a doctor, who, being called to a man who has wrenched his foot, discovers that the whole man is sick. What shall the doctor say, when asked as to the condition of the sick man ? " What do you want to find out ?" the doctor would ask. " Are you asking about the foot or about the whole condition of the patient ? The foot is all right, — there is a simple sprain, — but the general condition is bad."

Besides, I could not answer the question as to what the condition of the masses is, " Is it hard, very hard, or nothing?" because all of us, who have lived close with the masses, have got too much used to their condition, which has been getting worse and worse.

If some one of the city inhabitants should in a severe cold in winter come into a peasant room, which was only slightly heated the day before, and should see the inhabitants of the room climbing, not down from the oven, but out of the oven, in which they pass their days by rotation, since this is the only means for getting warm, or the people burning the roofs of the outhouses and of the vestibule for fuel, eating nothing but bread which is baked from equal parts of meal and the worst kind of bran, and adult people disputing and quarrelling because a slice of bread cut off does not come within one-eighth of a pound of the established weight, or people not leaving the hut, because they have nothing to put on, they would be startled by what they saw. But we look upon such phenomena as upon something very common. And so the question as to the condition of the masses in our locality will be better answered by him who will come to our places for the first time than by us. We have become accustomed to the suffering, and we do not see anything now.

Some kind of a conception may be formed as to the condition of the masses in our locality from the following statistical data, excerpted from the Tula Government Gazette. During years with good crops, from 1886 to 1890, there died, in the four counties of Bogoroditsk, Epiphany, Efremov, and Novosflsk, on an average, 9,761

men, and were born 12,069 persons, during the five months from February to June inclusive. In the famine year, 1892, there died 14,309 persons and were born 11,383 persons, during the same months. In the ordinary year, the births surpass the deaths by an average of 2,308 persons, while in the present year the deaths surpassed the births by 2,926 persons. Thus the consequence of the failure of crops in these four counties was the diminution of the population as against other years by 5,234 persons. In comparison with other good years we get the following: In the four good counties, Tula, Kashir, Oddev, Bydlev, there were born, during the same five months, 8,268 persons, and there died, 6,468 persons. But in the counties with poor crops there were born 11,383 persons, and there died 14,409, so that, while in the good counties the births are to the deaths approximately as four to three, in the bad counties the mortality is to the birth-rate as seven to five, that is, while in the good counties there were three deaths to every four births, in the bad counties there were five births only to seven deaths.

When we consider the relation in per cent., the condition of the bad localities is most strikingly expressed in the mortality during the month of June. In Epiphany County there died, in 1892, sixty per cent., in Bogord-ditsk County 112 per cent., and in Efrdmov County 116 per cent, more than in ordinary years.

Such were the consequences of the failure of crops during the last year, in spite of the increased aid offered by the government, the Red Cross, and private charity. What, then, will happen this year in our locality, where the rye has turned out worse than last year, oats have been a complete failure, fuel does not exist, and the last stores of the strength of the masses have been sapped during the last year ?

Well, shall we again have starving people ? Starving ! Eating-houses! Eating-houses, - starving, - all that is so old, and we are so tired of it all.

We are tired of it in Moscow, in St. Petersburg; but here, where they stand from morning until evening beneath the windows or at the doors, and it is impossible to cross the street without hearing eternally the same phrases, " Have not eaten for two days, have sold the last sheep. What shall we do ? The last end has come. Shall we die ?" etc., here, however ashamed we are to confess this, we have become so sick of it that we look upon them as upon our enemies.

I get up very early; a clear, frosty morning with a red sunrise; the snow squeaks on the steps; I go out, hoping that no one has come yet, and I shall be able to take a walk. But no; I have barely opened the door, when, behold, two of them are already there, waiting: one is a tall, broad peasant, in a short, ragged fur coat and tom bast shoes, with a wallet over his shoulder; his face is haggard (they all have haggard faces, so that these faces have become the characteristic peasant faces). With them they have a boy of fourteen years of age, without a fur coat, in a tattered peasant coat, also in bast shoes and also with a wallet and a stick. I want

to pass by them, but they begin to bow and to repeat the usual sentences. There is nothing to be done, and I return to the vestibule. They enter after me.

" What do you want ?"

" To your Crace."

" What ?"

" To your Grace."

" What is it you want ?"

"In regard to the aid."

" What aid ?"

" In reference to our living."

" But what is it you want ?"

" We are starving. Help us some."

" Where do you come from ? "

" From Zatvornoe."

I know that this is a beggar village of Skdpin County, where we have not yet had time to open an eating-house. Beggars come from there by the dozen, and I at once class this man in my imagination as a professional beggar, and I am angry at him, especially, because they take their children with them, and thus corrupt them.

" What do you ask ?"

" Do something for us."

" Dow can I? We cannot do anything here. We shall go to your village."

But he pays no attention to me, and there begin once more the words which I have heard a hundred times and which appear to me to be untrue:

" We have had no crops; the family consists of eight souls, – I am the only worker, the old woman is dead; last year we sold the cow for food, at Christmas the last horse died. It makes no difference about me, – the children beg for something to eat; there is no place to go to, – we have not eaten for three days!"

All this is trite. I am waiting for him to get through. But he says:

" I thought I would manage somehow; but I have lost all my strength.

I have not begged before, but God has brought me to this."

"Very well, – we shall come and see," I say, wishing to pass by, and I cast a desperate glance at the boy. The boy looks at me with pitiful, tear-filled, exquisite brown eyes, expressive of hope, and one bright tear-drop is already hanging on his nose and that very moment breaks off and falls on the snow-tracked board floor. And the dear, fatigued face of the boy, with his blond hair curling about his head, twitches more and more from repressed sobs. For me the words of the father are an old, trite subterfuge. But to him it is a repetition of that terrible year which he has gone through with his father, and the repetition of it all during that solemn moment, when they have at last found their way to me, to the help, stir him, and shake his nerves, which are weakened from hunger. But I am tired, tired of it all; I am only thinking of how to take a walk as soon as possible.

To me it is old, but to him – terribly new.

Yes, we are tired of it. But they want to eat as much as ever; they want to live, they want happiness, they want love, as I could see by his charming tear-filled eyes, which were directed upon me, – and such is the want of the good, wretched boy, who is worn out by want and full of naive pity for himself.

Byegichevka, September 11, 1892.

CONCLUSION TO LAST REPORT ON THE AID TO THE STARVING

Our two years' occupation in distributing among the distressed population such contributions as passed through our hands, more than anything else confirmed our old conviction that the major part of that distress, those privations, and those sufferings and the sorrow which goes with them, and which we almost vainly tried in an external manner to counteract in a small corner of Russia, was due, not to some exclusive, temporary causes, which did not depend on us, but to the most common, constant causes, which were fully dependent on us, and which consisted in nothing but the anti-Christian, non-brotherly relation of us, the cultured men, to the poor, the manual labourers, who always bear that want and those privations and the sufferings and sorrows connected with them, though in the last two years these have been noticed by us more than ever. If in the present year we do not hear of the distress, cold, and hunger, and the dying of adults worn out by labour, and of the young and old who do not get enough to eat, by the hundred thousand, this will not be due to the fact that this will not be, but because we shall not see it; we shall forget it, shall assure ourselves that this does not exist, or, if it exists, that it must be so and cannot be otherwise.

But this is not true: it not only cannot be, but it ought not to be and will not be.

No matter how well concealed a glass of wine seems to us in respect to the working classes, no matter how clever, old, and common the

excuses may be by which we justify our luxurious life amidst the working people, who are worn out by labour and do not get enough to eat and serve our luxury, – the light penetrates more and more into these our relations to the labouring people, and we shall soon show ourselves in that shameful and perilous position in which a criminal finds himself when the unexpected daybreak overtakes him on the place of execution. If it was possible formerly for a merchant, who was selling to the labouring people useless, and frequently harmful and worthless articles, trying to take for them as much as possible, or even selling corn which was good and needful, but had been bought cheaply and was sold at a high price, to say that he was serving the needs of the masses by means of honest commerce; or for a manufacturer of cottons, mirrors, cigarettes, or for a distiller of spirits, or for a brewer of beer, to say that he is feeding the masses, by giving them work to do; or for an official who receives thousands in salary, collected from the last pennies of the masses, to assure himself that he is serving for the good of the masses; or, what in these last years has been most obvious in the famine-stricken localities, if it was formerly possible for a landed proprietor, who worked his land by means of the hungry peasants for less than the value of bread, or who rented this same land to the peasants for the highest possible price, to say that, by introducing improved farming, he was contributing to the welfare of the country population ; – now that the masses are starving from lack of land amidst the enormous fields of the landed proprietors, which are planted with potatoes, to be sold for spirit, or for starch, it is impossible to say so. It is impossible now, amidst these masses all about us, who are degenerating from the lack of food and the superabundance of work, not to see that every absorption by us of the products of the labour of the masses on the one hand deprives them of what is necessary for their sustenance, on the other increases their work, which, as it is, has been carried to the highest point of tension. To say nothing of the senseless luxury of parks, flower gardens, chases, – every glass of brandy swallowed, every piece of sugar, butter, meat is, on the one hand, so much food taken from the masses, and, on the other, so much labour added to them.

We Russians find ourselves in this respect in the most favourable conditions for seeing clearly our position.

I remember how once, long before the famine years, a young, morally sensitive Prague scholar, who visited me in the country, upon coming in the winter out of the house of a comparatively wealthy peasant, into which we had gone, and in which, as everywhere else, there was a prematurely aged old woman, worn out by work and clad in rags, a sickly child which had ruptured itself by crying, and, as always in the spring, a calf tied up and a ewe with its new-born lamb, and dirt, and dampness, and infected air, and a gloomy householder, crushed by life, – I remember how, coming out of it, my young acquaintance began to say something to me, and suddenly his voice faltered, and he burst out weeping. It was for the first time that he, after several months passed in Moscow and in St. Petersburg, where, walking on asphalt sidewalks, past elegant shops, from one

wealthy house to another, from one luxurious museum, library, palace, into another, a building just as superb, saw those men, on whose labour rested all that luxury, and he was horrified and startled by it. He, in his wealthy and cultured Bohemia, like any European, especially a Swede, a Swiss, a Belgian, may imagine, though he will be wrong, that where there is relative freedom, where culture is widely diffused, where every man is given the chance of entering into the ranks of the cultured, that luxury is only a legitimate reward of labour and does not ruin the lives of others. He may somehow forget those generations of men, in the mines of that coal by means of which the greater part of the articles of his luxury are made; he can forget, since he does not see them, that other breed of men, who die in the colonies, working for the gratification of his desires; but we Russians can by no means think so: the connection between our luxury and the sufferings and privations of the people of the same breed with us, is entirely too obvious. We cannot help but see that price of human life at which we buy our comforts and our luxury.

For us the sun has already risen, and it is evident that nothing can be hidden. We can no longer hide ourselves behind the government, behind the necessity of governing the masses, behind the sciences, the arts, which are supposed to be indispensable to the masses, behind the sacred rights of property, behind the necessity of sustaining tradition, and so forth. The sun has risen, and all these transparent shrouds do not conceal anything from any one. All see and know that the men who serve the government do not do this for the good of the people, who do not ask for it, but only because they need a salary; and the men who busy themselves with the sciences and the arts, busy themselves with them, not for the enlightenment of the people, but for the fee and the pension; and that the men who keep the land from the people and raise the price on it do not do so for the purpose of maintaining certain sacred rights, but for the increase of their incomes, which they need for the gratification of their lusts. There is no possibility of concealment or of lying.

There are but two ways out for the ruling, wealthy, non-working classes, – one is, to renounce, not only Christianity in its real meaning, but also every semblance of it, – to renounce humanity and justice, and to say: " I possess these advantages and prerogatives, and I shall retain them at all costs. Any one who wants to take

them from me will have his dealings with me. I have the power in my hands, – soldiers, gallows, prisons, scourges, and capital punishment."

Another way out consists in recognizing the injustice, ceasing to lie, repenting, not in words only, or by coming to the aid of the masses with pennies which have been taken from them with suffering and pain, as has been done during the last two years, but by breaking down that artificial barrier which stands between us and the working people; in recognizing them, not in words, but in deeds, as our brothers, and for this purpose changing our lives; in renouncing those advantages and prerogatives which we have, and,

having renounced them, in putting ourselves on an equal footing with the masses, and together with them attaining those benefits of government, science, civilization, which we pretend we are trying to transmit to them in an external manner, without asking their wish about it.

We are standing on the cross-road, and the choice is inevitable.

The first way out means devoting ourselves to a constant lie, to a constant terror of this lie being discovered, and yet the consciousness that sooner or later we shall inevitably be driven away from the position which we are holding now with such stubbornness.

The second way out means a voluntary recognition and execution in life of what we ourselves are proposing, what our heart and our reason demand, and what sooner or later will be fulfilled, if not by us, at least by others, because only in this renunciation of the power by the ruling people lies the one way out from those torments from which suffers our pseudo-Christian humanity. This way out lies only in the renunciation of what is false and in the recognition of true Christianity.

October 28, 1893.