

EPILOGUE TO " DROZHBIN'S LIFE AND DEATH"

by Leo Tolstoy

Translated from the Original Russian and edited by Leo Wiener
Assistant Professor of Slavic Languages at Harvard University

1895

Even Moses in his commandments, which were given to men five thousand years ago, proclaimed the commandment, " Thou shalt not kill." The same was preached by all the prophets ; the same was preached by the sages and teachers of the whole world; the same was preached by Christ, who forbade men to commit not only murder, but everything which may lead to it, all irritation and anger against a brother; and the same is written in the heart of every man so clearly that there is no act which is more loathsome to the whole being of an uncorrupted man than the murder of one's like, - man.

And yet, despite the fact that this law of God was clearly revealed to us by Moses, by the prophets, and by Christ, and that it is so indelibly written in our hearts that there cannot be the slightest doubt of its obligatoriness for us, this law is not recognized in our world, but the very opposite law is recognized, that of the obligatoriness for every man of our time to enter military service, that is, to join the ranks of murderers, to swear to be ready to commit murder, to learn the art of killing, and actually to kill his like, when that is demanded of him.¹

In pagan times, the Christians were commanded in

¹ In countries where there is no compulsory military service, the law of God and of conscience about not killing is also violated by all their citizens, though not so obviously, because the hiring, enlisting, words to renounce Christ and God, and in sign of the renunciation to bring sacrifices to the pagan gods.

But now, in our time, the Christians are commanded not only to renounce Christ and God by bringing sacrifices to pagan gods (a person may sacrifice to pagan gods, while remaining a Christian at heart), but also by committing an act which is unquestionably most contrary to Christ and to God and which is forbidden by Christ and by God, - to swear to be ready to commit murder, to prepare himself for murder, and frequently to commit murder itself.

And as formerly there were found men who refused to worship pagan gods, and for their loyalty to Christ and God sacrificed their lives, so there have been men who have not renounced Christ and God, who have not consented to take an oath that they would be ready to commit murder, who did not join the ranks of murderers, and who for

this loyalty have perished in the most terrible sufferings, as was the case with Drozhzhin, whose life is described in this book.

And as in former times those who were considered half-witted and strange, the martyrs of Christianity, who perished because they did not wish to renounce Christ, by their loyalty to Christ alone destroyed the pagan world and opened a path for Christianity, so now people, like Drozhzhin, who are considered to be madmen and fanatics, who prefer sufferings and death to transgressing God's law, by their very loyalty to the law destroy the existing cruel order more surely than do the revolutions, and reveal to men the new joyful condition of universal brotherhood, of the kingdom of God, which was proclaimed by the prophets, and the foundations of which were laid eighteen hundred years ago by Christ.

and maintaining of armies, with the money consciously paid by all the citizens for the business of murder, which they all consider to be indispensable, is just as much a consent to killing and a cooperation with it as the personal participation in military service.—Author's Note.

But such men as Drozhzhin, who now refuse to renounce God and Christ, by their activity not only contribute to the establishment of that kingdom of God which the prophets predicted, but by their example indicate the one unquestionable road by which this kingdom of God may be attained and all that may be destroyed which interferes with its establishment.

The difference between the ancient martyrs of Christianity and those of the present time consists only in this, that then it was the pagans who demanded pagan acts from the Christians, while now it is not pagans, but Christians, or at least those who call themselves so, that are demanding from the Christians pagan, the most terrible pagan acts, such as the pagans did not ask for, — murder ; that then paganism found its strength in ignorance, because it did not know, did not understand Christianity, while now the cruelty of the so-called Christianity is based on deception, on conscious deception. To free Christianity from violence it was then necessary to convince the pagans of the truth of Christianity, but that was for the most part impossible to do. Julian the Apostate and many of the best men of the time were sincerely convinced that paganism was enlightenment and a good, and Christianity — darkness, ignorance, and evil. But to free Christianity now from violence and cruelty, it is necessary to arraign the deception of the false Christianity. This deception unanswerably arraigns itself through the one simple, imperturbable profession of the truth, which inevitably provokes the so-called Christian powers to the exercise of violence, to tortures, and to the killing of Christians for observing precisely what they themselves profess.

Formerly a Christian, in refusing to worship the pagan gods, said to the pagans, " I reject your faith ; I am a Christian, and I cannot and will not serve your gods, but will serve the one true God and His son Jesus Christ," and the pagan powers punished, because he

professed a religion which they considered to be false and harmful, and his punishment had no contradiction in itself and did not undermine the paganism, in the name of which he was punished. But now a Christian who refuses to commit murder no longer makes his confession to pagans, but to men who call themselves Christians. And if he says, " I am a Christian, and I cannot and will not fulfil any demands for committing murder, which are contrary to the Christian law," he can no longer be told, as he was formerly told by the pagans, " You are professing a false and harmful teaching," but he is told, " We are also Christians, but you do not correctly understand Christianity, when you assert that a Christian may not kill. A Christian can and must kill, when he is commanded to do so by him who at a given moment is considered to be his chief. And because you do not agree with this, that a Christian must not love his enemies, and must kill all those whom he is commanded to kill, we, the Christians, who profess the law of humility, love, and forgiveness, punish you."

It turns out that the powers which recognize themselves as being Christian, at every such a conflict with men who refuse to commit murder, are compelled in the most obvious and solemn manner to renounce that Christianity and moral law on which alone their power is based.

Besides, unfortunately for the false powers, and fortunately for all humanity, the conditions of military service have of late become quite different from what they were before, and so the demands of the authorities have become even more obviously non-Christian, and the refusals to fulfil their demands have arraigned Christianity even more.

Formerly hardly one-hundredth part of all men was called to do military service, and the government was in a position to assume that men of a lower stage of morality took to military service, men for whom military service did not present anything contrary to their Christian conscience, as was partly the case when men were put in the army for a punishment. When at that time a man, who by his moral qualities could not be a murderer, was called to do military service, such a case was unfortunate and exceptional.

But now, when everybody has to do military service, the best men, those who are most Christian in their thoughts and who are far removed from the possibility of taking part in murder, must all recognize themselves as being murderers and apostates from God.

Formerly the hired army of the ruler was formed by especially chosen, very coarse, non-Christian, and ignorant men, or volunteers and mercenaries; formerly no one or but few men read the Gospel, and men did not know its spirit, but only believed in what the priest told them; and formerly only the rarest people, who were peculiarly fanatical in spirit, the sectarians, considered military service to be a sin and refused to take part in it. But now there is not a man in any Christian state who is not obliged consciously, by means of his money, and in most countries of Europe directly, to take part in

the preparations for murder, or in the murders themselves; now nearly all men know the Gospel and the spirit of Christ's teaching; all know that the priests are bribed deceivers, and none but the most ignorant men believe in them ; and now it is not merely the sectarians, but also men who do not profess any special dogmas, cultured men, freethinkers, who refuse to do military service, and they do not refuse merely for their own sake, but openly and outspokenly say to all men that murder is not compatible with any profession of Christianity.

And so one such refusal to do military service as Drozhzhin's, which is sustained in spite of tortures and death, one such refusal shakes the whole enormous structure of violence, which is built on the lie, and threatens its destruction.

The governments have a terrible power in their hands, and it is not merely a material power, – a vast amount of money, institutions, wealth, submissive officials, the clergy, and the army, – but also vast spiritual powers of influencing men that are in the hands of the government. It can, if not bribe, at least crush and destroy all those who are opposed to it. A bribed clergy preaches militarism in the churches; bribed authors write books which justify militarism; in the schools, both the higher and the lower, they have introduced the obligatory instruction of deceptive catechisms, in which children are impressed with the idea that it is not only allowable, but even obligatory, to kill in war and after a trial; all those who enter the army are compelled to take an oath; everything which could reveal the deception is strictly prohibited and punished, – the most terrible punishments are imposed upon men who do not fulfil the demands of serving in the army, that is, of killing.

And, strange to say, all that enormous, mighty mass of men, which is vested with all the force of human power, trembles, hides itself, feeling its guilt, and shakes in its existence, and is ready any moment to go to pieces and turn to dust at the appearance of one man, like Drozhzhin, who does not yield to human demands, but obeys the demands of God and professes them openly.

In our time such men as Drozhzhin do not stand alone; there are thousands, tens of thousands of them, and their number and, above all else, their importance are growing with every year and every hour. In Russia we know tens of thousands of men who have refused to swear allegiance to the new Tsar, and who recognize military service to be murder, which is incompatible not only with Christianity, but even with the lowest demands of honour, justice, and morality. We know such men in all European countries: we know of the Nazarenes, who appeared less than fifty years ago in Austria and Servia and who from a few hundreds have grown to be more than thirty thousand strong, and who, in spite of all kinds of persecution, have refused to take part in military service. We have learned lately of a highly cultured surgeon of the army, who refused to do military service, because he considered it contrary to his conscience to serve such an institution as is the army, which is intended only for doing violence to men and killing them.

But even this is not important, that there are many of them and that they are growing more and more, but that the one true path has been found along which humanity will undoubtedly arrive at its liberation from evil, which has fettered it, and because on that path nothing and nobody can now stop it, because for liberation on this path no efforts are wanted for the destruction of evil: – it disperses of its own accord and melts like wax in the fire, – all that is needed is a non-participation in it. In order to stop taking part in this evil, from which we suffer, no special mental, nor bodily efforts are needed, – all that is needed is to abandon oneself to one's nature, to be good and true before God and oneself.

" You want me to become a murderer, but I cannot do so, and neither God nor my conscience permit me to do so. And so do with me what you please; but I will neither kill nor prepare myself for murder, nor be an accomplice in it." And this simple answer, which every man must inevitably make, because it arises from the consciousness of the men of our time, destroys all that evil of violence which has weighed heavily on the world for so long a time.

They say that in Holy Scripture it says:

" Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power ? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for tins cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour " (Rom. xiii. 1-7). Consequently it is necessary to submit to the powers.

But to say nothing of this, that the same politic Paul, who told the Romans that it is necessary to obey the authorities, told the Ephesians something quite different.

" Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. vi. 10-12). Paul's words to the Romans about obeying the powers that be can in no way be harmonized with Christ's own teaching, the whole meaning of which consists in the liberation of men from the power of the world and their submission to the power of God.

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you (John xv. 18). They have persecuted me, they will also persecute you (John xv. 20). If ye were of the world, the world would love his own ; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you (John xv. 19). And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles (Matt. x. 18, Mark xiii. 9). And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake (Matt. x. 22). They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake (Luke xxi. 12). Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them (John xvi. 2-4). Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known (Matt. x. 26). And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body (Matt. x. 28). The prince of this world is judged (John xvi. 11). Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John xvi. 33)."

Christ's whole teaching is an indication of the path of liberation from the power of the world, and Christ, when He was himself persecuted, reminded His disciples that, if they would be true to His teaching, the world would persecute them, and advised them to have courage and not be afraid of their persecutors. He not only taught them this in words, but with His whole life and relation to the powers gave them an example of how those must act who wished to follow Him. Christ not only did not obey the powers, but kept all the time arraigning them: He arraigned the Pharisees for violating God's law with their human traditions; He arraigned them for falsely observing the Sabbath, for falsely sacrificing in the temple; He arraigned them for their hypocrisy and cruelty ; He arraigned the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum ; He arraigned Jerusalem and predicted its ruin.

In reply to the question as to whether lie shall give the established tax upon entering Capernaum, He says distinctly that the sons, that is, His disciples, are free from every tax and are not obliged to pay it, and only not to tempt the collectors of the taxes, not to provoke them to commit the sin of violence, He orders His disciples to give that stater, which is accidentally found in the fish, and which does not belong to any one and is not taken from any one.

But in reply to the cunning question as to whether the tribute is to be paid to Ciesar, He says, " To Caesar the things which are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's," that is, give to Caesar what belongs to him and is made by him, – the coin, – and to God give what is made by God and is implanted in you, – your soul, your conscience ; give this to no one but God, and so do not do for Caesar what is forbidden by God. And this answer surprises all by

its boldness – and at the same time by its unanswerableness.¹

When Christ is brought before Pilate, as a mutineer who has been perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar (Luke xxiii. 2), He, after saying what He found necessary to say, surprises and provokes all the chiefs with this, that He pays no attention to all their questions, and makes no reply to any of their questions.

For this arraignment of the power and disobedience to it, Christ is sentenced and crucified.

Not only the complete misunderstanding of Christ's teaching, but also a complete unwillingness to understand it could have admitted that striking misinterpretation, according to which the words, "To Caesar the things which are Caesar's," signify the necessity of obeying Caesar. In the first place, there is no mention there of obedience ; in the second place, if Christ recognized the obligatoriness of paying tribute, and so of obedience, He would have said directly, "Yes, it should be paid but He says, "Give to Caesar what is his, that is, the money, and give your life to God," and with these latter words He not only does not encourage any obedience to power, but, on the contrary, points out that in everything which belongs to God it is not right to obey Caesar. – Author's Note.

The whole story of Christ's sufferings and death is nothing but the story of those calamities to which inevitably every man will be subjected, if he follows Christ's example of obedience to God and not to the powers of the world. Suddenly we are assured that the whole of Christ's teaching must not only be corrected, but even be abolished in consequence of the thoughtless and cunning words which Paul wrote to the Bomans.

But Paul's words contradict Christ's teaching and life, with all the desire to obey the powers, as Paul commands us to do, not only from fear, but also from conviction, and in our time such an obedience has become absolutely impossible.

To say nothing of the inner contradiction between Christianity and the obedience to the powers, such obedience to the powers, not from fear, but from conviction, has become impossible in our day, because, in consequence of the universal diffusion of enlightenment, the power, as something worthy of respect, something exalted, and, above all, something definite and whole, has been completely destroyed in our time, and there is no possibility of reestablishing it.

It was all very well not only from fear, but also from conviction, to obey the power, when the men under the power saw what the Bomans saw in it, – the emperorgod, or what the Chinese see in their emperor, – the sun of heaven; or when men in the Middle Ages, and even down to the Bevolution, saw in the kings and emperors divinely anointed men, just as until lately in Bussia the masses saw in the Tsar an earthly God, when tsars, kings, and emperors were not

represented otherwise than in majestic situations, doing wise and great things. But it is quite different to-day, when, in spite of all the efforts of the powers and their friends and even the subjects themselves to reestablish the awe for the power, enlightenment, history, experience, the intercourse of men among themselves have destroyed this awe, so that it is as impossible to reestablish it as it is in the spring to reestablish the melted snow, and as impossible to construct anything firm upon it as it is to travel in a sleigh over a widely spreading river, from which the ice has disappeared.

' It cannot be otherwise, since now all men, with the exception of the coarsest and most uncultured of men, whose number is growing less and less, know what immoral persons were Louis XI, Elizabeth of England, John IV., Catherine, Napoleon, Nicholas I., who ruled and decided the fates of millions, and who did not rule thanks to some sacred, invariable law, as people used to think formerly, but only because these people were able by means of all kinds of deceptions, by cunning, and by rascalities so to strengthen their power that it was impossible to dethrone, kill, or drive them away, as was done in the case of Charles I., Louis XVI., Maximilian of Mexico, Louis Philippe, and others.

It cannot be otherwise, since all men know that even the kings and emperors who rule at the present time are not only not some especial, holy, great, wise people, who are interested in the good of their nations, but, on the contrary, for the most part very badly educated, ignorant, vainglorious, immoral, frequently very stupid and bad men, who are always corrupted by luxury and flattery, who are not at all interested in the good of their subjects, but in their own personal affairs, and are, above all else, without cessation concerned in maintaining their tottering power, which is upheld only by means of cunning and deception.

Not only do men now see the material of which are made their rulers, who formerly presented themselves to them as especial beings, and not only have men peeped behind the curtain, so that it is impossible to reconstruct the old illusion, they also see and know, besides, that it is not really these rulers that rule, but, in constitutional states, the members of the Chambers, the ministers, who attain their positions by means of intrigues and bribes, and in unconstitutional countries, the wives, paramours, favourites, flatterers, and all kinds of parasitic accomplices.

How can a man respect the power and obey it, not from fear, but from conviction, when he knows that this power is not something which exists separately from him, but is the product of men's intrigues and cunning, and constantly passes from one person to another? Knowing this, a man can not only not obey the power from conviction, but cannot even help trying to destroy the existing power and himself to become it, that is, making his way into power, to seize as much of it as he can. And this is actually taking place.

The power of which Paul spoke, the power which one can obey from

conviction, has outlived its day. It no longer exists. It has melted like the ice, and it will not support anything. What formerly was a solid surface of the river is now liquid, and in order to journey over it we do not need a sleigh and horses, but a boat and oars. Even so the composition of life has so completely changed, as the result of education, that the power, in the sense in which it used to be understood, has no longer any place in our world, and all there is left is rude violence and deception. But violence and deception cannot be obeyed, " not from fear, but from conviction."

" But how can we help obeying the powers ? If we do not obey the powers, there will happen terrible calamities, and bad men will torment, oppress, and kill the good."

" How can we help but obey the power ? " say I myself. " How can we make up our minds not to obey the power, the one unquestionable power, from which we shall never get away, under which we always are, and the demands of which we know incontestably and unerringly ?"

times, obey Arakcheev, who seized the power, or must we try to overthrow him and convince the Tsar of the worthlessness of his ministers ? Not the supreme power, but its servants control men: must we obey these servants, when their demands are obviously bad and detrimental ?

Thus, no matter how much we may desire to obey the power, we cannot do so, because there is not one definite earthly power, but all the powers of the earth waver, change, fight among themselves. What power is the real one, and when is it real ? And so, what power is to be obeyed ?

But not only is the power which demands obedience doubtful, and we cannot know whether it is the real one or not, – it also demands of us not indifferent, harmless acts, such as this, that we should build a pyramid, a temple, a castle, or even should serve the mighty of this earth and should satisfy their lusts and their luxury. That would still be possible to do. But this doubtful power demands of us that we should commit the most terrible act for a man, – murder, the preparation for it, the acknowledgment of our readiness for it; it demands an act which is obviously prohibited by God, and which, therefore, causes our souls to perish. Is it possible that I must, out of obedience to this human, accidental, wavering, discordant power, forget the demands of that one divine power, which is so clearly and so indubitably known to me, and cause my soul to perish ?

" We cannot help obeying the power."

" Yes, we cannot help obeying the power," say I myself, " only it is not the power of an emperor, king, president, parliament, and the chiefs chosen by them, whom I do not know and with whom I have nothing in common, but the power of God whom I know, with whom I live, from whom I received my soul, and to whom I shall return it

to-morrow, if not to-day."

I am told, " There will be calamities, if we are not going to obey the power." And they tell the actual truth

if by power they mean the real power, and not the human deception which is called power. There are those calamities, and they are terrible, horrible calamities, through which we are passing now, for the very reason that we do not obey the one unquestionable power of God which was clearly revealed to us in Scripture and in our hearts.

We say: " Our calamities consist in this, that the rich and the idle are growing richer, and the poor, the labouring people are growing poorer; that the masses are deprived of the land, and so are compelled to do convict labour in the factories which manufacture articles that they do not use; that the masses are made drunk on whiskey, which the government sells to them; that young men go into the army, become corrupted, spread diseases, and are made unfit for a simple life of labour; that the rich sit in judgment in the courts, while the poor sit in prisons ; that the masses are stultified in the schools and churches, and that officials and the clergy are rewarded for this by means of the money taken from the masses ; that all the popular forces, men and money, are used for war and the army, and this army is in the hands of the rulers, who by means of this army crush everything which is not in harmony with their advantage."

These calamities are terrible. But whence do they come ? On what are they based ? Only on this, that men do not obey the one true power and its law, which is written in their hearts, but obey invented human statutes which they call the law. If men obeyed this one true power of God and His law, they would not take upon themselves the obligation to kill their like, would not enter the army and would not give money for the hire and support of an army. If there were no army, there would not be all those cruelties and all that injustice, which it supports. Only by means of an army is it possible to establish and maintain such an order that all the land is in the hands of those who do not work it, and those who work are deprived of it; only by means of an army is it possible to take away the labours of the poor and give them to the rich; only by means of an army is it possible purposely to stupefy the masses and deprive them of the possibility of real enlightenment. All that is supported by means of an army. But the army consists of soldiers, and we are the soldiers. If there were no soldiers, there would not be anything of the kind.

The condition of men is now such that nothing can change it but obedience to the true, and not to the false, power.

" But this new condition without an army, without a government, will be many times worse than the one we are in now," we are told. " Worse for whom ? " ask I. " For those who now rule, for one-hundredth part of the whole nation ? For that part of the nation, of course, it will be worse, but not for all the mass of working people, who

are deprived of the land and of the products of their labour, for the simple reason that for these ninety-nine-hundredths of the people the condition cannot be worse than it now is."

And by what right do we assume that the condition of men will become worse, if they obey the law of not committing murder, which is revealed to them by God and is implanted in their hearts? To say that everything in this world will get worse, if the men in it shall follow the law which God gave them for the life in this world, is the same as though we should say that it will be worse, if men are going to use a machine which is given to them, not according to their arbitrary will, but according to the instruction as regards the use of the machine, which is given them by him who invented and constructed the machine.

There was a time when humanity lived like wild beasts, and everybody took for himself in life everything which he could, taking away from others what he wanted, and killing and annihilating his neighbours. Then there came a time, when men united into societies and states, and began to establish themselves as nations, defending themselves against other nations. Men became less similar to beasts, but still considered it not only possible, but even indispensable, and so proper to kill their domestic and foreign enemies. Now the time is at hand and is already here, when men, according to Christ's words, are entering into the new condition of the brotherhood of all men, into that new condition which was long ago predicted by the prophets, when all men shall be taught by God, shall forget how to fight, shall forge the swords into ploughshares and the spears into pruning-hooks, and there will come the kingdom of God, the kingdom of union and of peace. This condition was predicted by the prophets, but Christ's teaching showed how and through what it can be materialized, namely, through brotherly union, one of the first manifestations of which must be the abolition of violence. The necessity of the destruction of violence is already recognized by men, and so this condition will arrive as inevitably as formerly the political condition followed after the savage state.

Humanity is in our time in the child-labour of this nascent kingdom of God, and this labour will inevitably end in birth. But the arrival of this new life will not take place of its own accord, - it depends on us. We must do it all. The kingdom of God is within us.

In order to produce this kingdom of God within us, we do not need, I repeat, any special mental or physical conditions; we need only be what we are, what God made us, that is, rational and, above all, good beings, who follow the voice of our conscience.

"But that is where the trouble is: men are neither rational nor good beings," I already hear the voice of those men who, to have the right to be bad, assert that the whole human race is bad, and that this is not merely an experimental, but also a divine, revealed, religious truth. "Men are all evil and irrational," they assert, "and so it is necessary for the rational and good men to maintain order."

But if all men are irrational and bad, whence shall we take the rational and the good ? And if there are such, how are we going to tell them ? And if we can tell them, by what means shall we (who are those " we" going to be ?) put them at the head of other men ? But if even we shall be able to put these especial, rational, and good men at the head of the others, will not these rational and good men stop being such, if they are going to exert violence and punish the irrational and the bad ? And, above all else, you say that, in order to keep some thieves, pillagers, and murderers from violating and killing men, you are going to establish courts, a police, an army, which will constantly violate and kill men, and whose duty will consist in nothing else, and into these institutions you will draw all men. But in such a case you are putting in the place of a small and assumed evil another which is greater, a universal and a certain evil. In order to defend ourselves against some imaginary murderers, you compel all men certainly to become murderers. And so I repeat that for the realization of a brotherly intercourse among men we need no special efforts, no mental or bodily efforts, but need only be what God made us, – rational and good beings, – and act in conformity with these properties.

It is not for every one of us to bear all the trials which Drozhzhin endured (although, if this shall be our fate, – may God help us to bear it all, without being false to Him); but whether we want it or not, – even if we live in a country where there is no military duty or we are not called upon to perform such duty, – every one is called in one way or another to subject himself, though in other, much easier forms, to the same trial and, whether he wills so or not, to stand on the side of the oppressors or himself to become an oppressor, or on the side of the oppressed and to help them to bear their trials, or himself to undergo them. Every one of us, even if we do not take any direct part in the persecutions against these new martyrs, as do the emperors, ministers, governors, judges, who sign the decrees for the torturing of these martyrs, or as still more directly do the tormentors themselves, such as the jailers, guards, executioners, – every one of us has none the less to take an active part in these affairs by means of those opinions which we pass upon them in print, in letters, and in conversations. Frequently we, out of laziness, do not reflect on the significance of such a phenomenon, only because we do not wish to impair our peace by a lively representation of what is being suffered by those men who on account of their truthfulness, sincerity, and love of men are pining away in prisons and in places of deportation, and we repeat, without thinking of what we are saying, opinions which we have heard or read elsewhere, " What is to be done ? It serves them right. They are harmful fanatics and the government must suppress such attempts," and similar words, which support the persecutors and increase the sufferings of the persecuted. We will think ten times about an act of ours, about the disbursement of a certain sum, about the destruction or construction of a house, but it seems of so little consequence to say a few words that we generally speak without thinking. And yet, speech is the most significant of all the acts which we can do. Public opinion is composed from what is said. And

public opinion more than all the kings and sovereigns rules all the affairs of men. And so every opinion of ours, concerning acts such as Drozhzhin's act, may be a work of God, which contributes to the realization of the kingdom of God, the brotherhood of men, and which helps those advanced men who give their lives for its realization, or may be a work which is hostile to God, which works against Him, and which contributes to the torments of those men who abandon themselves to His service.

Drozhzhin tells in his diary of one such cruel effect produced upon him by frivolous words that were hostile to God. He tells how in the first of his incarceration, when he, in spite of all his physical sufferings and all his humiliation, continued to experience joyous peace, in the consciousness that he had done what he ought to have done, he was affected by a letter from a friend of his, a revolutionist, who, out of love for him, tried to persuade him to have pity on himself, to recant, and to do the will of the authorities, — to take the oath and serve. Apparently this young man, who had the spirit of a revolutionist and according to the customary code of the revolutionists admitted as a principle that the end justifies the means and that all kinds of compromises with his conscience were allowable, absolutely failed to understand those religious sentiments which guided Drozhzhin, and so had written him frivolously, asking him not to throw away his life, which was a useful tool for the revolution, and to fulfil all the demands of the authorities. These words, it would seem, ought not to have had any special significance, and yet Drozhzhin writes that these words deprived him of his peace and that he fell ill in consequence of them.

This is quite comprehensible. All men who move humanity forward and who are the first and foremost to step out on the path on which all men will soon walk, do not come out on this path lightly, but always with suffering and with an internal struggle. An inner voice draws them on to the new path, and all their attachments, the traditions of weakness, draw them back. In such moments of unstable balance every word of support or, on the contrary, of retardation has an enormous importance.

The strongest man can be pulled over by a child, when this man is straining all his strength in order to move a burden which is above his strength.

Drozhzhin experienced terrible despair from these apparently unimportant words of his friend, and quieted down only when he received a letter from his friend Izyumch[^]nko, who joyfully bore the same fate, and who expressed a firm conviction of the righteousness of his act. And so, no matter how far we may personally stand from events of this character, we always involuntarily take part in them, influence them through our relation to them, through our judgments of them.

Let us take the standpoint of his friend the revolutionist, and consider that, to be able at some time, somewhere, to influence the

external conditions of life, we can and must depart from the very first demands of our conscience, and we not only do not alleviate the sufferings and the struggle of men who strive to serve God, but we also prepare these sufferings of an inner discord for all those who will have to solve the dilemma in life. And there is not one who will not have to solve it. And so all of us, no matter how far we may be removed from such events, take part in them with our opinions and judgments. A thoughtless, careless word may become the source of the greatest sufferings for the best men in the world. We cannot be too careful in the use of this tool: " By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned."

But many of us are called to take part in such events not with words alone, but in a still more direct way. I am speaking of those who serve, who in one way or

1 This friend was for the same refusal to do military service locked up in the guard-house in Kursk. Just now, while I am writing these lines, this friend is kept in strictest secrecy, having no permission to see any one, in the Moscow transportation prison, on his way to the Government of Tobolsk, whither he is deported by order of the Tsar. – Author's Note. ' another take part in those hopeless oppressions, by means of which the government persecutes such men as Drozh-zhin, and which only strengthen the movement; I am speaking of the participants in these persecutions, beginning with the emperor, the ministers, the judges, the prosecuting attorneys, and ending with the guards and jailers, who torture these martyrs. You all, participants in these torments, know that this man, whom you torture, is not only not a malefactor, but also an exceptionally good man, that he is being tormented for the very reason that he wants with all the forces of his heart to be good; you know that he is young, that he has friends, a mother, that he loves you and forgives you. And you will put him in a lockup, will take away his clothes, starve him, not give him to eat, not let him sleep, deprive him of his communion with his neighbours, his friends.

How can you, emperor, who have signed such a decree, minister, prosecutor, superintendent of the prison, jailer, sit down to your dinner, knowing that he is lying on a cold floor and in exhaustion is weeping on account of your malice ? How can you fondle your child ? How can you think of God, of death, which will lead you to Him ? No matter how much you may pretend to be the executors of some invariable laws, you are simply men, and good men, and you are to be pitied, and you show pity, and only in this pity and love for one another does our life consist.

You say that necessity compels you to serve in your capacity. You know yourselves that that is not true. You know that there is no necessity, that necessity is a conventional word, that what for you is a necessity, is for another a luxury ; you know that you can find another position, one in which you will have no need to torture people, and what people! Precisely in this way did they torture the prophets, and later Christ, and later His disciples; thus have they always tortured those who,

loving them, lead them ahead to their good. If you could only refrain from being participants in these tortures!

It is terrible to torture an innocent bird, an animal. How much more terrible it is to torture a good, pure youth, who loves men and wishes them well. It is terrible to be a participant in this matter.

And, above all, to be a participant for nothing, – to ruin his body, oneself, one's soul, and yet not only not to put a stop to the consummation of the establishment of the kingdom of God, but, on the contrary, against one's will to contribute to its triumph.

It has come and is already here.

Moscow, March 1895.