

## ON THE MOSCOW CENSUS

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The census has a scientific purpose. The census is a sociological investigation. But the aim of sociology is men's happiness. This science and its method differs markedly from all the other sciences.

It's peculiarity consists in this, that the sociological investigations are not carried on by the learned in their cabinets, observatories, and laboratories, but by two thousand people from society. Another peculiarity of it is this, that the investigations of other sciences are not carried on on living men, while here they are. A third peculiarity of it is this, that the aim of any other science is knowledge, while here it is the good of men. The nebular spots may be investigated by one man, but here two thousand people are needed. The purpose of the investigation of the nebular spots is to find out everything about the nebular spots ; the aim of the investigation of the population is to deduce laws of sociology and on the basis of these laws better to establish the lives of men. It makes no difference to the nebular spots whether they are investigated or not, and they are in no hurry and will be in no hurry for a long time to come ; but it is not all the same for the inhabitants of Moscow, especially for those unfortunates who form the most interesting subject of the science of sociology.

The census-taker comes to a lodging-house, and he finds

in the basement a man who is dying of insufficient nourishment, and asks him politely for his calling, name, patronymic, and kind of occupation, and, after some hesitation as to whether he should enter him in his list as living, he enters him and goes on.

Thus will two thousand young men walk about. That is not good.

Science does its work, and society, which in the persons of the two thousand men is called to cooperate with science, must do its work. The statistician, who makes his inferences from figures, may be indifferent to people, but we, the census-takers, who see these people and have no scientific infatuation, cannot help but have a human interest in them. Science does its work, and, as regards its aims in the distant future, does a work which is useful and necessary for us.

For the men of science it is possible to say calmly that in the year 1882 there are so many paupers, so many prostitutes, so many

children without attention. It may say so calmly and proudly, because it knows that the assertion of this fact leads to the elucidation of sociological laws, and that the elucidation of sociological laws leads to the improved state of society. But how would it be, if we, the laymen, should say : " You are perishing in debauchery, you are starving, you are wasting away, you are killing one another ; but let not that grieve you : when all of you shall have perished and hundreds of thousands like you, then, perhaps, science will arrange everything beautifully." For the man of science the census has its interest : for us it has an entirely different interest. For society the interest and significance of the census consists in this, that it gives it a mirror in which, willy nilly, society and each of us can see himself.

The figures and the deductions will be the mirror. It is possible not to read them, just as it is possible to turn away from a mirror. It is possible to cast a passing glance into the mirror, or to look into it from near by. To take the census, as a thousand men are doing now, is to take a close look into the mirror.

What is the census which is taking place now for us Muscovites who are not men of science ? It is two things. In the first place, that we shall certainly find out that among us, among tens of thousands of men spending tens of thousands of roubles, there live tens of thousands of men without bread, clothing, or shelter; in the second place, that our brothers and sons will go to see this and calmly record in columns how many there are that are dying from hunger and cold.

Both things are very bad.

All cry about the fffmsiness of our social structure, about its exclusive condition, about its revolutionary mood. Where is the root of everything? To what do the revolutionists point? To the poverty, the unequal distribution of wealth. To what do the conservatives point ? To the decay of moral foundations. If the opinion of the revolutionists is correct, what must we do ? Diminish poverty and the unequal distribution of wealth. If the opinion of the conservatives is correct, that all the evil is due to the decay of moral principles, what can be more immoral and corrupt than the consciously indifferent contemplation of human misfortunes with the mere purpose of recording them ? What must we do, then ? We must add to the census the work of a brotherly communion of the rich, the leisurely, and the enlightened with the poor, the oppressed, and the ignorant.

Science is doing its work, – let us do our work. This is what we will do. In the first place, we, who are busy with the census, the managers, census-takers, will form for ourselves a clear idea of what we are doing, – we will gain a clear idea as to why and over what we are making the investigations : over men, and that men may be happy. No matter how a man may look at life, he will agree that there is nothing more important than human life, and that there is no more important business than the removal of obstacles in the way

of the development of life, than aiding it.

In the Gospel we find expressed, with striking boldness, but with definiteness and clearness for all, the thought that the relations of men to poverty, to human sufferings, is the root, the foundation of everything.

He who clothes the naked, feeds the hungry, and visits the prisoners has clothed me, fed me, visited me, that is, has done work for what is most important in the world.

No matter how a man may look at things, everybody knows that this is the most important business in the world.

And we must not forget this, and permit any other considerations to veil from us the most important business of our life. We will record and take the census, but we will not forget that, if we meet a naked and hungry man, it is more important to help him than to attend to the most important investigations and discoveries of all the possible sciences, that, if the question arose whether we should busy ourselves with an old woman who had not had anything to eat for two days, or ruin the whole work of the census, we should let the census go to perdition, if only we can feed the old woman. The census-taking will be longer and harder, but in the quarters of the poor we cannot pass by people and merely record them, without caring for them or trying to help them according to our strength and moral sensitiveness. So much in the first place.

In the second place, this is what we ought to do ; we, who are not taking part in the census, let us not be angry at being disturbed ; let us understand that this census is very useful for us ; that, if it is not a cure, it is at least an attempt at investigating a disease, for which we ought to be thankful, and which ought to serve us as an occasion for trying to cure ourselves a little bit. Let us all, who are being recorded, try and make use of the only opportunity offered us in ten years for cleaning up a little : let us not counteract the census, but help it, namely, in the sense of giving it not the cruel character of a probing of a hopeless patient, but that of a cure and convalescence. Indeed, here is a singular chance : eighty energetic, cultured men, having in hand two thousand young men of the same character, are making the round of the whole of Moscow, and will not leave out a single man in Moscow, without entering into personal relations with him. All the sores of society, all the sores of poverty, debauchery, ignorance, – all of them will be laid bare. Well, shall we stop at this ?

The census-takers will make the round of Moscow, will indiscriminately enter into their lists the overweening, the satisfied, and the calm, the perishing and the ruined, and the curtain will fall. The census-takers, – our brothers and sons, – the youths, will see all this. They will say, " Yes, our life is very detestable and incurable," and with this consciousness will continue to live with us, expecting a remedy of the evil from this or that external force. But the ruined will continue to die in their ruin,

and the perishing will continue to perish. No, we had better understand that science has its business, and we, on the occasion of the census, our own business, and let us not cover ourselves with the raised curtain, but let us make use of the opportunity, in order to remove the greatest evil of the dissociation between us and the poor, and let us establish a communion and the business of mending the evil, the misfortunes, the poverty, and the ignorance, and the still greater misfortune, our own, of the indifference and aimlessness of our life.

I already hear the habitual remark : " All this is very nice, all this is ranting ; but tell us what to do and how to do it." Before telling what to do, I must say what not to do. Above all, if something sensible is to come of all this activity of society, it is, in my opinion, necessary that no society be formed, that there be no publicity, no collections of funds by means of balls, bazars, and theatres ; that there be no announcements : " Prince A. has contributed one thousand roubles, and Honorary Citizen B., three thousand roubles ; " that there be no assemblies, no reports, and no writing, especially no writing ; that there be not even a shadow of any institution, either governmental or philanthropic.

In my opinion, this is what we ought to do at once : first, all those who agree with me ought to go to the managers, ask them to point out the poorest districts in their wards, the poorest tenements, and go with the censustakers, on the twenty-third, the twenty-fourth, and the twenty-fifth, through these districts, enter into relations with those who live in them, and retain these relations with the people who are in want of aid, and work with them.

Secondly: the managers and census-takers are to pay attention to the denizens who demand assistance, and work for them, and point them out to those who want to work for them. But I shall be asked what is meant by working for them. I shall answer: Doing good to them. Not giving them money, but doing them good. By the words " to do good " people generally understand giving money. But, according to my opinion, to do good and give money not only are not the same, but are two entirely different, and generally opposite, things. Money is in itself an evil, and so he who gives money gives an evil. The delusion that giving money means doing good is due to this, that for the most part a man who does good rids himself of the evil and at the same time of his money. And so giving money is only a sign that man is beginning to rid himself of evil. To do good means to do what is good for man. To find out what is good for man, we must get into human, that is, amicable, relations with him. And so, to do good it is not money that is needed, but, first of all, the ability at least for a time to renounce the conventionalities of our life, not to be afraid to soil our boots and garments, nor to be afraid of bedbugs and lice, nor of typhoid, diphtheria, or smallpox ; we must be able to sit down on the cot of a ragged fellow and talk with him so intimately that he will feel that the talker respects and loves him, and is not acting and admiring himself. That this may be possible, a man must look for the meaning of life outside himself. This is what

is needed that there should be the good, and this it is difficult to find.

When the thought came to me of helping in the census, I talked with a few of the rich about it, and I saw how glad the rich were of the opportunity of getting rid of their money, of those alien sins which they shelter in their hearts. "Do take, if you please," they would say to me, "three hundred roubles, or five hundred roubles, but I myself cannot go to those purlieus." There is no want of money. Think of Zacchæus, the chief of the publicans, of whom the Gospel speaks. Remember how he, being small, climbed a tree in order to see Christ, and how he, when Christ announced that he was going to his house, understood only this, that the master did not extol wealth, and tumbled down from the tree and started home on a run, in order to prepare a reception for Christ. And, when Christ entered, the first thing Zacchæus announced was that he had given half his fortune to the poor, and that to those whom he had offended he would give fourfold. And remember how we, reading the Gospel, hold this Zacchæus in little esteem, and with involuntary contempt look at this half of his fortune and fourfold remuneration. And our feeling is right. Upon reflection, Zacchæus, it seems, did a great thing; but our feeling is correct. He had not yet begun to do good: he only began to cleanse himself a little from evil. Christ told him so. All he told him was, This day is salvation come to this house.

Suppose the Moscow Zacchæuses should do the same. There would be more than a billion gathered together. Well, what would become of it? Nothing. There would be even more sin, if they proposed to distribute it among the poor. It is not money that is needed. What is needed is an activity of self-renunciation and men who would be willing to do good, not by giving other people's sins, money, but their own labour, themselves, their life. Where are these people? Here they are, they are walking about Moscow. They are those student census-takers. I have seen them write their cards. They write in a dosshouse, on a sick man's bunk. "What is your disease?" "Smallpox." And such a student does not even frown, but continues writing. And this he does for the sake of some doubtful science. What would he do, if he did this for his undoubted personal good and for the good of all people?

Just as children in a happy mood want to laugh and, unable to discover a cause for laughter, laugh without any cause, simply because they feel happy, so these dear youths sacrifice themselves. They have not yet had time to find a pretext for sacrificing themselves, and yet sacrifice their attention, labour, and life, in order to write the cards, which may lead to something, or not. What would happen, if there were something worth while? This something exists and has existed, and it is a business for which it is worth while to lay down the whole life which there is in man. This business is the brotherly communion of people with people, and the breaking down of those obstacles which people have raised between themselves, in order that the merriment of the rich man may not be impaired by the wild lamentations of bestialized men and by the groans of helpless hunger, cold, and diseases.

The census brings out before the eyes of us, the well-to-do and so-called cultured men, all that misery and oppression which nestles in all the nooks of Moscow. Two thousand people of our class, who stand on the highest round of the ladder, will face thousands of people who stand on the lowest round of society. Let us not miss the opportunity for this communion. Let us preserve this communion through these two thousand people, and let us use it for the purpose of saving ourselves from the aimlessness and monstrosity of our life, and of freeing the wronged from those calamities and misfortunes which do not permit us sensitive people calmly to enjoy our joys.

This is what I propose: (1) all of us, managers and takers of the census, shall to the business of the census add the business of assistance, – of work for the good of such men as we meet, who, in our opinion, demand aid ; (2) all of us, managers and takers of the census, shall, not by the appointment from the City Council's committee, but by the prompting of our hearts, remain in our places, that is, in relations with the inhabitants who demand aid, and shall, after the conclusion of the work of the census, continue our work of assistance. If I have been able to express but a small part of what I feel, I am sure that only impossibility will compel the managers and the takers of the census to abandon this work, and that others will appear in place of those who give up the work; (3) all those inhabitants of Moscow who feel themselves able to work for the needy shall join the various wards and, by the indications of the censustakers and managers, begin their activity at once and continue it in the future ; (4) all those who, on account of old age, feebleness, or other causes, cannot work themselves amidst the needy, shall entrust their work to their young, strong, willing neighbours. (The good is not the giving of money, – it is a brotherly relation of men. It alone is needed.)

No matter what may come of it, it is better than what is going on at present.

Let the least work be this, that we, the takers and the managers of the census, shall distribute a hundred twentykopek pieces among those who have had nothing to eat ; that will not be a trifle, not so much because the starving will have something to eat, as because the takers and the managers of the census will be in a humane relation to a hundred poor people. How are we to figure out what consequences will be produced in the general moral balance by the fact that, instead of the feeling of annoyance, malice, envy, which we shall provoke, as we count up the hungry, we shall a hundred times evoke a good sentiment, which will be reflected on a second, a third man, and will in an endless wave pour forth among the people ? That is a great deal.

Let there be only this much, that those of the two thousand census-takers who did not understand this before will come to understand that amidst misery it is not right to say, " This is very interesting," that a man's misfortune must not merely represent some

interest to a man. Even that will be good. Let there be only this much, that aid will be furnished to all those unfortunates, of whom there are not so many in Moscow as I used to think, who can easily be aided with money alone. Let there be this, that those labourers who have strayed into Moscow and have sold their clothes to buy food, and who are unable to return to the country, will be sent home ; that neglected orphans will be looked after; that enfeebled old paupers, who are living on the charity of fellow paupers, will be spared a death from semi-starvation. (That is very possible. There are not very many of them.) Even that will be very, very much.

But why shall we not think and hope that more, much more will be done ? Why shall we not hope that we shall partially do or begin that real work, which is no longer done with money, but with labour, – that we shall save enfeebled drunkards, uncaught thieves, and prostitutes for whom salvation is possible ? Even if not all evil shall be remedied, there will be its recognition, and we shall struggle against it not with police measures, but with inner measures, – with the brotherly communion of men who see the evil against men who do not see it, because they are in it.

No matter what may be done, it will be much. But why shall we not hope that everything will be done ? Why can we not hope that we shall succeed in accomplishing this, that in Moscow there will not be a single man without clothes, nor one who is hungry, nor one unfortunate man who is crushed by fate, without knowing that he may have brotherly assistance ? What is remarkable is not that this should be, but that it exists side by side with our excess of leisure and wealth, and that we can live calmly, knowing that it exists. Let us forget that in large cities and in London there is a proletariat, and let us not say that it must be so. It must not be, because it is contrary to our reason and to our heart, and it is impossible, if we are living men.

"Why can we not hope that we shall understand that we have not a single obligation, to say nothing of a personal obligation, for our own sake, not any domestic, nor public, nor political, nor scientific obligation, which is more important than this ? Why can we not hope that we shall finally comprehend it ? Is it because this would be too great a happiness ? Why can we not think that some day men will wake up and comprehend that everything else is offensive, and this alone is the business of life ? And why can this " some day " not be now, in Moscow? Why can we not hope that the same will

happen with society, with humanity, that happens with the ailing organism, when suddenly there arrives a moment of convalescence ? The organism is diseased ; this means that the cells stop doing their mysterious work : some die, others are horn, others again remain indifferent, working for themselves. Suddenly there arrives a moment when every living cell begins its independent vital work: it pushes out the dead cells, with a living barrier excludes those that are infected, communicates life to those that live, and the body rises from the dead and lives a full life.

Why can we not think and hope that the cells of our society will revive, and will bring the organism to life ? We do not know in whose power the cells are, but we know that life is in our power. We can manifest the light which is in us, or we may put it out.

Let a man come at the end of the day to the Lyapin ski night lodging-house, when one thousand insufficiently clad and hungry people are waiting in the cold to be let into the house, and let this one man try to help them, – his heart will bleed, and he will with despair and resentment at men run away from there ; but let one thousand people come to those one thousand people with the desire to help them, and the work will appear easy and pleasant. Let the mechanics invent a machine with which to lift the burden which is choking us, – that is good ; but while they have not yet invented it, let us in foolish, peasant, Christian fashion heave in a mass, – maybe we can lift it. Heave, friends, all together !