

WHAT MEN LIVE BY

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We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (First Ep. of John, iii. 14.)

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his heart from him, how dwell-eth the love of God in him ? (Ib. iii. 17.)

My children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue ;

but in deed and in truth. (Ib. iii. 18.)

Love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (Ib. iv. 7.)

He that loveth not knoweth not God ; for God is love.

(Ib. iv. 8.)

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. (Ib. iv. 12.)

God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (Ib. iv. 16.)

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen. (Ib. iv. 20.)

I.

A shoemaker was lodging with his wife and children at the house of a peasant. He had no house, no land of his own, and supported his family by his shoemaker's trade. Bread was dear, but work was cheap, and he spent everything he made. The shoemaker and his wife had one fur coat between them, and even that was all worn to tatters ; this was the second year that the shoemaker had been meaning to buy a sheepskin for a new fur coat.

Toward fall the shoemaker had saved some money : three roubles in

paper lay in his wife's coffer, and five roubles and twenty kopeks were outstanding in the village.

In the morning the shoemaker went to the village to get him that fur coat. He put on his wife's wadded nankeen jacket over his shirt, and over it his cloth caftan ; he put the three-rouble bill into his pocket, broke off a stick, and started after breakfast. He thought :

« I shall get the five roubles from the peasant, will add my own three, and with that will buy me a sheepskin for the fur coat.»

The shoemaker came to the village, and called on the peasant: he was not at home, and his wife promised to send her husband with the money, but gave him none herself. He went to another peasant, but the peasant swore that he had no money, and gave him only twenty kopeks for mending a pair of boots. The shoemaker made up his mind to take the sheepskin on credit, but the furrier would not give it to him.

" Bring me the money," he said, " and then you can choose any you please ; we know what it means to collect debts."

Thus the shoemaker accomplished nothing. All he got was the twenty kopeks for the boots he had mended, and a peasant gave him a pair of felt boots to patch with leather.

The shoemaker was grieved, spent all the twenty kopeks on vodka, and started home without the fur coat. In the morning it had seemed frosty to him, but now that he had drunk a little he felt warm even without the fur coat. The shoemaker walked along, with one hand striking the stick against the frozen mud clumps, and swinging the felt boots in the other, and talking to himself.

" I am warm even without a fur coat," he said. " I have drunk a cup, and the vodka is coursing through all my veins. I do not need a sheepskin. I have forgotten my woe. That's the kind of a man I am ! What do I care ! I can get along without a fur coat : I do not need it all the time. The only trouble is the old woman will be sorry. It is a shame indeed : I work for him, and he leads me by the nose. Just wait ! If you do not bring the money, I'll take away your cap, upon my word, I will ! How is this ? He pays me back two dimes at a time ! What can you do with two dimes ? Take a drink, that is all. He says he suffers want. You suffer want, and am I not suffering ? You have a house, and cattle, and everything, and here is all I possess; you have your own grain, and I have to buy it. I may do as I please, but I have to spend three roubles a week on bread. I come home, and the bread is gone: again lay out a rouble and a half ! So give me what is mine ! "

Thus the shoemaker came up to a chapel at the turn of the road, and there he saw something that looked white, right near the chapel. It was growing dusk, and the shoemaker strained his eyes, but could not make out what it was.

" There was no stone here," he thought. " A cow ? It does not look like a cow. It looks like the head of a man, and there is something white besides. And what should a man be doing there ? "

He came nearer, and he could see plainly. What marvel was that ? It was really a man, either alive or dead, sitting there all naked, leaning against the chapel, and not stirring in the least. The shoemaker was frightened, and thought to himself :

" Somebody must have killed a man, and stripped him of his clothes, and thrown him away there. If I go up to him, I shall never clear myself."

And the shoemaker went past. He walked around the chapel, and the man was no longer to be seen. He went past the chapel, and looked back, and saw the man leaning away from the building and moving, as though watching him. The shoemaker was frightened even more than before, and he thought to himself :

" Shall I go up to him, or not ? If I go up, something bad may happen. Who knows what kind of a man he is ? He did not get there for anything good. If I go up, he will spring at me and choke me, and I shall not get away from him ; and if he does not choke me, I may have trouble with him all the same. What can I do with him, since he is naked ? Certainly I cannot take off the last from me and give it to him ! May God save me ! "

And the shoemaker increased his steps. He was already a distance away from the chapel, when his conscience began to smite him.

And the shoemaker stopped on the road.

" What are you doing, Semén ? " he said to himself. "A man is dying in misery, and you go past him and lose your courage. Have you suddenly grown so rich ? Are you afraid that they will rob you of your wealth ? Oh, Semén, it is not right ! "

Semén turned back, and went up to the man.

II.

Semén walked over to the man, and looked at him ; and saw that it was a young man, in the prime of his strength, with no bruises on his body, but evidently frozen and frightened : he was leaning back and did not look at Semén, as though he were weakened and could not raise his eyes. Semén went up close to him, and the man suddenly seemed to wake up. He turned his head, opened his eyes, and looked at Semén. And this one glance made Semén think well of the man. He threw down the felt boots, ungirt himself, put his belt on the boots, and took off his caftan.

" What is the use of talking ? " he said. " Put it on ! Come now ! "

Semén took the man by his elbows and began to raise him. The man got

up. And Semén saw that his body was soft and clean, his hands and feet not calloused, and his face gentle. Semén threw his caftan over the man's shoulders. He could not find his way into the sleeves. So Semén put them in, pulled the caftan on him, wrapped him in it, and girded it with the belt.

Semén took off his tom cap, intending to put it on the naked man, but his head grew cold, and so he thought : " My whole head is bald, while he has long, curly hair." He put it on again. " I had better put the boots on him."

He seated himself and put the felt boots on him.

The shoemaker addressed him and said :

" That's the way, my friend ! Now move about and get warmed up. This business will be looked into without us. Can you walk ? "

The man stood, looking meekly at Semén, but could not say a word.

" Why don't you speak ? You can't stay here through the winter. We must make for a living place. Here, take my stick, lean on it, if you are weak. Tramp along ! "

And the man went. And he walked lightly, and did not fall behind.

As they were walking along, Semén said to him :

" Who are you, please ? "

" I am a stranger."

" I know all the people here about. How did you get near that chapel ? "

" I cannot tell."

" Have people insulted you ? "

"No one has. God has punished me."

" Of course, God does everything, but still you must be making for some place. Whither are you bound ? "

" It makes no difference to me."

Semén was surprised. He did not resemble an evildoer, and was gentle of speech, and yet did not say anything about himself. And Semén thought that all kinds of things happen, and so he said to the man :

" Well, come to my house and warm yourself a little."

Semén walked up to the farm, and the stranger did not fall behind, but walked beside him. A wind rose and blew into Semén's shirt, and

his intoxication went away, and he began to feel cold. He walked along, sniffing, and wrapping himself in his wife's jacket, and he thought :

" There is your fur coat : I went to get myself a fur coat, and I am coming back without a caftan, and am even bringing a naked man with me. Matréná will not praise me for it ! "

And as Semén thought of Matréná, he felt sorry ; and as he looked at the stranger and recalled how he had looked at him at the chapel, his blood began to play in his heart.

III.

Semen's wife got things done early. She chopped the wood, brought the water, fed the children, herself took a bite of something, and fell to musing. She was thinking about when to set the bread, whether to-day or to-morrow. There was a big slice of it left.

" If Semén has his dinner there," she thought, " and does not eat much for supper, the bread will last until to-morrow."

Matréná turned the slice around and a second time, and thought :

" I will not set any bread to-day. I have enough meal for just one setting. We shall somehow hold out until Friday."

Matréná put the bread away, and seated herself at the table to put a patch in her husband's shirt. She was sewing and thinking of how he would buy a sheepskin for a fur coat.

" If only the furrier does not cheat him, for my man is too simple for anything. He himself will not cheat a soul, but a little child can deceive him. Eight roubles is no small sum. One can pick up a good fur coat for it. It will not be tanned, still it will be a fur coat. How we suffered last winter without a fur coat! We could not get down to the river, or anywhere. And there he has gone out, putting everything on him, and I have nothing to dress in. He went away early ; it is time for him to be back. If only my dear one has not gone on a spree ! "

Just as Matréná was thinking this, the steps creaked

OU the porch, and somebody entered. Matréná stuck the needle in the cloth, and went out into the vestibule. She saw two coming in : Semén, and with him a man without a cap and in felt boots.

Matréná at once smelt the liquor in her husband's breath. " Well," she thought, " so it is : he has been on a spree." And when she saw that he was without his caftan, in nothing but the jacket, and that he was not bringing anything, but only keeping silent and crouching, something broke in Matréná's heart. " He has spent all the money in drinks," she thought, " and has been on a spree with some tramp, and has even brought him along."

Matréna let them pass into the hut, and then stepped in herself. She saw the lean young man, and he had on him their caftan. No shirt was to be seen under the caftan, and he had no hat on his head. When he entered, he stood still, and did not stir, and did not raise his eyes. And Matréna thought : " He is not a good man, – he is afraid."

Matréna scowled and went to the oven, waiting to see what would happen.

Semén took off his cap and sat down on the bench like a good man.

" Well, Matréna, will you let us have something for supper, will you ? " he said.

Matréna growled something under her breath. She stood at the oven, and did not stir : she looked now at the one, and now at the other, –and shook her head. Semén saw that his wife was not in a good humour, but there was nothing to be done, and he acted as though he did not see it. He took the stranger by the arm :

" Sit down, my friend," he said, " we shall have our supper."

The stranger sat down on the bench.

"Well, have you not cooked anything?"

That simply roiled Matréna.

"I have cooked, but not for you. You seem to have drunk away your senses, I see. You went to get a fur coat, and come back without your caftan, and have even brought some kind of a naked tramp 'with you. I have no supper for you drunkards."

" Stop, Matréna ! What is the use of wagging your tongue without any sense ? First ask what kind of a man it is –"

" Tell me what you did with the money."

Semén stuck his hand into the caftan, took out the bill, and opened it before her.

"Here is the money. Trifonov has not paid me, – he promised to give it to me to-morrow."

That enraged Matréna even more : he had bought no fur coat, and the only caftan they had he had put on a naked fellow, and had even brought him along.

She grabbed the bill from the table, and ran to put it away, and said :

" I have no supper. One cannot feed all the drunkards."

" Oh, Matréna, hold your tongue. First hear what I have to say - "

" Much sense shall I hear from a drunken fool. With good reason did I object to marrying you, a drunkard. My mother gave me some liien, and you spent it on drinks ; you went to buy a fur coat, and spent that, too."

Semén wanted to explain to his wife that he had spent twenty kopeks only, and wanted to tell her that he had found the man ; but Matréna began to break in with anything she could think of, and to speak two words at once. Even what had happened ten years before, she brought up to him now.

Matréna talked and talked, and jumped at Semén, and grabbed him by the sleeve.

" Give me my jacket. That is all I have left, and you have taken it from me and put it on yourself. Give it to me, you freckled dog, - may the apoplexy strike you ! "

Semén began to take off the bodice ; as he turned back his ami, his wife gave the bodice a jerk, and it ripped at the seam. Matréna grabbed the jacket, threw it over her head, and made for the door. She wanted to go out, but stopped : her heart was doubled, for she wanted to have her revenge, and also to find out what kind of a man he was.

IV.

Matréna stopped and said :

" If he were a good man, he would not be naked ; but, as it is, he has not even a shirt on him. If he meant anything good, you would tell me where you found that dandy."

" I am telling you : as I was walking along, I saw him sitting at the chapel, without any clothes, and almost frozen. It is not summer, and he was all naked. God sent me to him, or he would have perished. Well, what had I to do ? All kinds of things happen ! I picked him up and dressed him, and brought him here. Calm yourself ! It is a sin, Matréna. We shall all die."

Matréna wanted to go on scolding, but she looked at the stranger and kept silence. The stranger sat without moving, just as he had seated himself on the edge of the bench. His hands were folded on his knees, his head drooped on his breast, his eyes were not opened, and he frowned as though something were choking him. Matréna grew silent. And Semén said :

" Matréna, have you no God ? "

When Matréná heard these words, she glanced at the stranger, and suddenly her heart became softened. She went away from the door, walked over to the oven corner, and got the supper ready. She placed a bowl on the table, filled it with kvas, and put down the last slice of bread. She handed them a knife and spoons.

" Eat, if you please," she said.

Semén touched the stranger.

" Creep through here, good fellow ! " he said.

Semén cut up the bread and crumbled it into the kvas, and they began to eat. And Matréná sat down at the corner of the table, and leaned on her arm, and kept looking at the stranger.

And Matréná pitied the stranger, and took a liking for him. And suddenly the stranger grew merry, stopped frowning, raised his eyes on Matréná, and smiled.

They got through with their supper. The woman cleared the table, and began to ask the stranger:

" Who are you ? "

" I am a stranger."

" How did you get on the road ? "

" I cannot tell."

" Has somebody robbed you ? "

" God has punished me."

" And you were lying there naked ? "

" Yes, I was lying naked, and freezing. Semén saw me, took pity on me, pulled off his caftan, put it on me, and told me to come here. And you have given me to eat and to drink, and have pitied me. The Lord will save you ! "

Matréná got up, took from the window Semén's old shirt, the same that she had been patching, and gave it to the stranger ; and she found a pair of trousers, and gave them to him.

" Here, take it ! I see that you have no shirt. Put it on, and lie down wherever it pleases you, – on the hanging bed or on the oven."

The stranger took off the caftan, put on the shirt, and lay down on the hanging bed. Matréná put out the light, took the caftan, and climbed to where her husband was.

Matréna covered herself with the corner of the caftan, and she lay and could not sleep : the stranger would not leave her mind.

As she thought how he had eaten the last slice of bread and how there would be no bread for the morrow ; as she thought how she had given him a shirt and a pair of trousers, she felt pretty bad ; but when she thought of how he smiled, her heart was gladdened.

Matréna could not sleep for a long time, and she heard that Semén, too, was not sleeping ; he kept pulling the caftan on himself.

" Semén ! "

" What is it ? "

"We have eaten up the last bread, and I have not set any. I do not know what to do for to-morrow. Maybe I had better ask Gossip Malänya for some."

" If we are alive we shall find something to eat."

The woman lay awhile and kept silence.

" He must be a good man. But why does he not tell about himself ? "

" I suppose he cannot."

" Semén ! "

" What ? "

" We give, but why does nobody give to us? "

Semén did not know what to say. He only said, " Stop talking ! " and turned over, and fell asleep.

V.

In the morning Semén awoke. The children were asleep; his wife had gone to the neighbours to borrow some bread. The stranger of last night, in the old trousers and shirt, was alone, sitting on the bench and looking upward. And his face was brighter than on the day before.

And Semén said :

"Well, dear man, the belly begs for bread, and the naked body for clothes. We must earn our living. Can you work ? "

" I do not know anything."

Semén wondered at him, and said :

"If only you are willing : people can learn anything."

" People work, and I, too, will work."

" What is your name ? "

" Michael."

" Well, Mikhäyla, you do not want to talk about yourself, – that is your business ; but a man has to live. If you work as I order you, I will feed you."

" God save you, and I will learn. Show me what to do ! "

Semén took the flax, put it on his fingers and began to make an end.

" It is not a hard thing to do, you see."

Mikhäyla watched him, himself put the flax on his fingers, and made a thread end, as Semén had taught him.

Semén showed him how to wax it. Mikhäyla again learned the way at once. The master showed him how to weld the bristle, and how to whet, and Mikhäyla learned it all at once.

No matter what work Semén showed to him, he grasped it at once, and on the third day he began to sew as though he had done nothing else in all his life. He worked without unbending himself, ate little, between the periods of work kept silence, and all the time looked toward the sky. He did not go into the street, spoke no superfluous word, and did not jest or laugh.

Only once was he seen to smile, and that was the first evening, when the woman gave him a supper.

VI.

Day was added to day, week to week, and the circle of a year went by. Mikhäyla was living as before with Semén, and working. And the report spread about Semén's workman that nobody sewed a boot so neatly and so strongly as he. And people from all the surrounding country began to come to Semén for boots, and Semén's income began to grow.

One time, in the winter, Semén was sitting with Mikhäyla and working, when a troyka with bells stopped at the door. They looked through the window : the carriage had stopped opposite the hut, and a fine lad jumped down from the box and opened the carriage door. Out of the carriage stepped a gentleman in a fur coat. He came out of the carriage, walked toward Semén's house, and went on the porch. Up jumped Matréná and opened the door wide. The gentleman bent his head and entered the hut; he straightened himself up, almost struck the ceiling with his head, and took up a whole corner.

Semén got up, bowed to the gentleman, and wondered what he wanted.

He had not seen such men. Semén himself was spare-ribbed, and Mikhäyla was lean, and Matrénä was as dry as a chip, while this one was like a man from another world: his face was red and blood-filled, his neck like a bull's, and altogether he looked as though cast in iron.

The gentleman puffed, took off his fur coat, seated himself on a bench, and said :

" Who is the master shoemaker ? "

Semén stepped forward, and said:

" I, your Excellency."

The gentleman shouted to his lad :

" Oh, Fédka, let me have the material ! "

The lad came running in and brought a bundle. The gentleman took it and put it on the table.

" Open it ! " he said.

The lad opened it. The gentleman pointed to the material, and said to Semén :

" Listen now, shoemaker ! Do you see the material ? "

" I do," he said, " your Honour."

" Do you understand what kind of material this is ? "

Semén felt of it, and said :

" It is good material."

" I should say it is ! You, fool, have never seen such before. It is German material : it costs twenty roubles."

Semén was frightened, and he said :

« How could we have seen such ? "

" That's it. Can you make me boots to fit my feet from this material ? "

" I can, your Honour."

The gentleman shouted at him:

" That's it : you can. You must understand for whom you are working, and what material you have to work on. Make me a pair of boots that will wear a year without running down or ripping. If you can,

undertake it and cut the material; if you cannot, do not undertake it and do not cut the material. I tell you in advance : if the boots wear off or rip before the year is over, I will put you into jail ; if they do not wear off or rip for a year, I will give you ten roubles for the work."

Semén was frightened and did not know what to say. He looked at Mikhàyla. He nudged him with his elbow, and said :

" Friend, what do you say ?"

Mikhàyla nodded to him : " Take the work ! "

Semén took Mikhàyla's advice and undertook to make a pair of boots that would not wear down or rip.

The gentleman shouted at his lad, told him to pull off the boot from his left foot, and stretched out his leg.

" Take the measure ' "

Semén sewed together a piece of paper, ten inches in length, smoothed it out, knelt down, carefully wiped his hand on his apron so as not to soil the gentleman's stocking, and began to measure. He measured the sole, then the instep, and then the calf, but there the paper was not long enough. His leg at the calf was as thick as a log.

" Be sure and do not make them too tight in the bootleg!"

Semén sewed up another piece to the strip. The gentleman sat and moved his toes in his stocking, and watched the people in the room. He caught sight of Mikhàyla.

" Who is that man there ? " he asked.

" That is my master workman, – he will make those boots."

" Remember," said the gentleman to Mikhàyla, " remember ! Make them so that they will wear a year."

Semén, too, looked at Mikhàyla, and he saw that Mikhàyla was not looking at the gentleman, but gazed at the corner, as though he saw some one there. Mikhàyla looked and looked, suddenly smiled and shone bright.

" What makes you show your teeth, fool ? You had better be sure and get the boots in time."

And Mikhàyla said :

" They will be done in time."

" Exactly."

The gentleman put on his boot and his fur coat, and wrapped himself up, and went to the door. He forgot to bow down, and hit his head against the lintel.

The gentleman cursed awhile, and rubbed his head, and seated himself in the carriage, and drove away.

When the gentleman was gone, Semén said :

" He is mighty flinty ! You can't kill him with a club. He has knocked out the lintel, but he himself took little harm."

And Matréna said :

" How can he help being smooth, with the life he leads ? Even death will not touch such a sledge-hammer ! "

VII

And Semén said to Mikhäyla :

" To be sure, we have undertaken to do the work, if only we do not get into trouble ! The material is costly, and the gentleman is cross. I hope we shall not make a blunder. Your eyes are sharper, and your hands are nimbler than mine, so take this measure ! Cut the material, and I will put on the last stitches."

Mikhäyla did not disobey him, but took the gentleman's material, spread it out on the table, doubled it, took the scissors, and began to cut.

Matréna came up and saw Mikhäyla cutting, and was wondering at what he was doing. Matréna had become used to the shoemaker's trade, and she looked, and saw that Mikhäyla was not cutting the material in shoemaker fashion, but in a round shape.

Matréna wanted to say something, but thought : " Perhaps I do not understand how boots have to be made for a gentleman ; no doubt Mikhäyla knows better, and I will not interfere."

Mikhäyla cut the pair, and picked up the end, and began to sew, not in shoemaker fashion, with the two ends meeting, but with one end, like soft shoes.

Again Matréna marvelled, but did not interfere. And Mikhäyla kept sewing and sewing. They began to eat their dinner, and Semén saw that Mikhäyla had made a pair of soft shoes from the gentleman's material.

Semén heaved a sigh. "How is this?" he thought. " Mikhäyla has lived with me a whole year, and has never made a mistake, and now he has made such trouble for me. The gentleman ordered boots with long boot-legs, and he has made soft shoes, without soles, and has

spoiled the material. How shall I now straighten it out with the master ? No such material can be found."

And he said to Mikhäyla :

" What is this, dear man, that you have done ? You have ruined me. The master has ordered boots, and see what you have made ! "

He had just begun to scold Mikhäyla, when there was a rattle at the door ring, – some one was knocking. They looked through the window: there was there a man on horseback, and he was tying up his horse. They opened the door : in came the same lad of that gentleman.

" Good day ! "

" Good day, what do you wish ? "

" The lady has sent me about the boots."

" What about the boots ? "

" What about the boots ? Our master does not need them. Our master has bid us live long."

" You don't say ! "

" He had not yet reached home, when he died in his carriage. The carriage drove up to the house, and the servants came to help him out, but he lay as heavy as a bag, and was stiff and dead, and they had a hard time taking him out from the carriage. So the lady has sent me, saying : 'Tell the shoemaker that a gentleman came to see him, and ordered a pair of boots, and left the material for them ; well, tell him that the boots are not wanted, but that he should use the leather at once for a pair of soft shoes. Wait until they make them, and bring them with you.' And so that is why I have come."

Mikhäyla took the remnants of the material from the table, rolled them up, and took the soft shoes which he had made, and clapped them against each other, and wiped them off with his apron, and gave them to the lad. The lad took the soft shoes.

" Good-bye, masters, good luck to you ! "

VIII.

There passed another year, and a third, and Mi-khäyla was now living the sixth year with Semén. He was living as before. He went nowhere, did not speak an unnecessary word, and in all that time had smiled but twice : once, when they gave him the supper, and the second time when the gentleman came. Semén did not get tired admiring his

workman. He no longer asked him where he came from ; he was only afraid that Mi-khäyla might leave him.

One day they were sitting at home. The housewife was putting the iron pots into the oven, and the children were running on the benches, and looking out of the window. Semén was sharpening his knives at one window, and Mikhäyla was heeling a shoe at the other.

One of the little boys ran up to Mikhäyla on the bench, leaned against his shoulder, and looked out of the window.

" Uncle Mikhäyla, look there : a merchant woman is coming to us with some little girls. One of the girls is lame."

When the boy said that, Mikhäyla threw down his work, turned to the window, and looked out into the street.

And Semén marvelled. Mikhäyla had never before looked into the street, and now he had rushed to the window, and was gazing at something. Semén, too, looked out of the window : he saw, indeed, a woman who was walking over to his yard. She was well dressed, and led two little girls in fur coats and shawls. The girls looked one like the other, so that it was hard to tell them apart, only one had a maimed left leg, – she walked with a limp.

The woman walked up the porch to the vestibule, felt for the entrance, pulled at the latch, and opened the door. First she let the two girls in, and then entered herself.

" Good day, people ! "

" You are welcome ! What do you wish ? "

The woman seated herself at the table. The girls pressed close to her knees : they were timid before the people.

" I want you to make some leather boots for the girls for the spring."

" Well, that can be done. We have not made such small shoes, but we can do it. We can make sharp-edged shoes, or turnover shoes on linen. Mikhäyla is my master."

Semén looked around at Mikhäyla, and he saw that Mikhäyla had put away his work and was sitting and gazing at the girls.

And Semén marvelled at Mikhäyla. Indeed, the girls were pretty : black-eyed, chubby, ruddy-faced, and the fur coats and shawls which they had on were fine ; but still Semén could not make out why he was gazing at them as though they were friends of Ids.

Semén marvelled, and began to talk with the woman and to bargain. They came to an agreement, and he took the measures. The woman took the lame girl on her knees, and said :

" For this girl take two measures: make one shoe for the lame foot, and three for the sound foot. They have the same size of feet, exactly alike. They are twins."

Semén took the measure, and he said about the lame girl:

" What has made her lame ? She is such a pretty girl. Was she born this way ? "

" No, her mother crushed her."

IX.

The woman began to talk, and said :

"It was six years ago that these orphans lost their parents in one week : their father was buried on a Tuesday, and their mother died on Friday. These orphans were born three days after their father's death, and their mother did not live a day. At that time I was living with my husband in the village. We were their neighbours, our yard joining theirs. Their father was a lonely man ; he worked in the forest. They dropped a tree on him, and it fell across his body and squeezed out his entrails. They had barely brought him home, when he gave up his soul to God, and that same week his wife bore twins, – these girls. The woman was poor and alone ; she had neither old woman nor girl with her.

" Alone she bore them, and alone she died.

" I went in the morning to see my neighbour, but she, the dear woman, was already cold. As she died she fell on the girl, and wrenched her leg. The people came, and they washed and dressed her, and made a coffin, and buried her. All of them were good people. The girls were left alone. What was to be done with them ? Of all the women I alone had a baby. I had been nursing my first-born boy for eight weeks. I took them for the time being to my house. The peasants gathered and thought and thought what to do with them, and they said to me: ' Märya, keep the girls awhile, and we will try and think what to do with them.' And I nursed the straight girl once, but the lame girl I would not nurse. I did not want her to live. But, I thought, why should

the angelic soul go out, and so I pitied her, too. I began to nurse her, and so I raised my own and the two girls, all three of them with my own breasts. I was young and strong, and I had good food. And God gave me so much milk in my breasts that at times they overflowed. I would feed two of them, while the third would be waiting. When one rolled away, I took the third. And God granted that I should raise the three, but my own child I lost in the second

year. And God has given me no other children. We began to earn more and more, and now we are living here with the merchant at the mill. The wages are big, and our living is good. I have no children, and how should I live if it were not for these girls ? How can I help loving them ? They are all the wax of my tapers that I have."

With one hand the woman pressed the lame girl to her side, and with the other she began to wipe off her tears.

And Matréná sighed, and said :

"Not in vain is the proverb : 'You can live without parents, but not without God.' "

And so they were talking among themselves, when suddenly the room was lighted as though by sheet lightning from the corner where sat Mikhäyla. All looked at him, and they saw Mikhäyla sitting with folded hands on his knees, and looking up, and smiling.

X.

The woman went away with the girls, and Mikhäyla got up from his bench. He lay down his work, took off his apron, bowed to the master and to the housewife, and said :

" Forgive me, people ! God has forgiven me. You, too, should forgive me."

And the master and his wife saw a light coming from Mikhäyla. And Semén got up, and bowed to Mikhäyla, and said :

" I see, Mikhäyla, you are not a simple man, and I cannot keep you, and must not beg you to remain. But tell me this : Why, when I found you and brought you home, were you gloomy, and when my wife gave you a supper, why did you smile at her and after that grow brighter ? Later, when the gentleman ordered the boots, you smiled for the second time, and after that grew brighter, and now, when the woman brought her girls, you smiled for the third time, and grew entirely bright. Tell me, Mikhäyla, why does such light come from you, and why did you smile three times ? "

And Mikhäyla said :

" The light comes from me, because I had been punished, and now God has forgiven me. And I smiled three times because I had to learn three words of God. And I have learned the three words : one word I learned when your wife took pity on me, and so I smiled for the first time. The second word I learned when the rich man ordered the boots, and then I smiled for the second time. And now, when I saw the girls, I learned the last, the third word, and I smiled for the

third time.”

And Semén said :

“ Tell me, Mikhàyla, for what did God punish you, and what are those words of God, that I may know them.”

And Mikhàyla said :

“ God punished me for having disobeyed him. I was an angel in heaven, and I disobeyed God. I was an angel in heaven, and God sent me down to take the soul out of a woman. I flew down to the earth, and I saw the woman lying sick, and she had borne twins, 7- two girls. The girls were squirming near their mother, and she could not take them to her breasts. The woman saw me, and she knew that God had sent me for her soul. She wept, and said : ‘ Angel of God ’ My husband has just been buried, – he was killed by a tree in the forest. I have neither sister, nor aunt, nor granny, – there is no one to bring up my orphans, so do not take my soul ! Let me raise my own children, and put them on their feet. Children cannot live without a father, without a mother.’ And I listened to the mother, and placed one girl to her breast, and gave the other one into her hands, and rose up to the Lord in heaven. And I came before the Lord, and said : ‘ I cannot take the soul out of the mother in childbirth. The father was killed by a tree, the mother bore twins, and she begged me not to take the, soul out of her, saying, Let me rear and bring up my children, and put them on their feet. Children cannot live without a father or mother. I did not take the soul out of the woman in childbirth.’ And the Lord said : ‘ Go and take the soul out of the woman in childbirth ! And you will learn three words: you will learn what there is in men, and what is not given to men, and what men live by. When you learn them, you will return to heaven.’ I flew back to earth and took the soul out of the woman.

“ The little ones fell away from the breasts. The dead body rolled over on the bed and crushed one of the girls, and wrenched her leg. I rose above the village and wanted to take the soul to God ; but the wind caught me, and my wings fell flat and dropped oif, and the soul went by itself before God, and I fell near the road on the earth.”

XL

And Semén and Matrèna understood whom they had clothed and fed, and who had lived with them, and they wept for terror and for joy, and said the angel :

“ I was left all alone in the field, and naked. I had not known before of human wants, neither of cold, nor of hunger, and I became a man. I was starved and chilled and did not know what to do. I saw in the field a chapel made for the Lord, and I went to God’s chapel and wanted to hide myself in it. The chapel was locked, and I could not get in. And I seated myself behind the chapel, to protect myself against the wind. The evening came, I was hungry and chilled, and I

ached all over. Suddenly I heard a man walking on the road; he was carrying a pair of boots and talking to himself. And I saw a mortal face, for the first time since I had become a man, and that face was terrible to me, and I turned away from it. And I heard the man talking to himself about how he might cover his body in the winter from the cold, and how he might feed his wife and children. And I thought : * I am dying from hunger and cold, and here comes a man, who is thinking only of how to cover himself and his wife with a fur coat, and of how to feed his family. He cannot help me.' The man saw me; he frowned, and looked gloomier still, and passed by me. And I was in despair. Suddenly I heard the man coming back. I looked at him and did not recognize him : before that death had been in his face, and now he was revived, and in his face I saw God. He came up to me, and clothed me, and took me with him, and led me to his house. I came to his house, and a woman came out of the house and began to talk. The woman was more terrible yet than the man ; the dead spirit was coming out of her mouth, and I could not breathe from the stench of death. She wanted to send me out into the cold, and I knew that she would die if she drove me out. And suddenly her husband reminded her of God. And the woman suddenly changed. And when she gave us to eat, and looked at us, I glanced at her : there was no longer death in her, – she was alive, and I recognized God in her.

"And I recalled God's first word: 'You will know what there is in men.' And I learned that there was love in men. And I rejoiced at it, because God had begun to reveal to me what He had promised, and I smiled for the first time. But I could not yet learn everything. I could not understand what was not given to men, and what men lived by.

" I began to live with you; and lived a year, and there came a man, to order a pair of boots, such as would wear a year, without ripping or turning. I looked at him, and suddenly I saw behind his shoulder my companion, the angel of death. None but me saw that angel ; but I knew him, and I knew that the sun would not go down before the rich man's soul would be taken away. And I thought : ' The man is providing for a year, and does not know that he will not live until evening.' And I thought of God's second word : ' You will learn what is not given to men.'

" I knew already what there was in men. Now I learned what was not given to men. It is not given men to know what they need for their bodies. And I smiled for the second time. I was glad because I had seen my comrade the angel, and because God had revealed the second word to me.

" But I could not understand everything. I could not understand what men lived by. And I lived and waited

for God to reveal to me the last word. And in the sixth year came the twin girls with the woman, and I recognized the girls and knew how they were kept alive. I recognized them, and I thought : ' The mother begged me for the sake of the children, and I believed the

mother and thought that the children could not live without father and mother, and yet a strange woman has fed them and reared them.' And when the woman was touched as she looked at the children and wept, I saw in her the living God, and I understood what men lived by. And I learned that God had revealed the third word to me and forgave me. And I smiled for the third time."

XII.

And the angel's body was bared and clothed in light, so that the eye could not behold him, and he spoke louder, as though the voice were coming not from him but from heaven. And the angel said :

" I have learned that every man lives not by the care for himself, but by love.

" It was not given to the mother to know what her children needed for life. It was not given to the rich man to know what he needed for himself. And it is not given to any man to know whether before evening he will need boots for his life, or soft shoes for his death.

" I was kept alive when I was a man not by what I did for myself, but because there was love in a passer-by and in his wife, and because they pitied and loved me. The orphans were left alive not by what was done for them, but because there was love in the heart of a strange woman, and she pitied and loved them. And all men live not by what they do for themselves, but because there is love in men.

" I knew before that God gave life to men and that He wanted them to live ; now I understand even something else.

" I understand that God does not want men to live apart, and so He has not revealed to them what each needs for himself, but wants them to live together, and so He has revealed to them what they all need for themselves and for all.

" I understand now that it only seems to men that they live by the care for themselves, and that they live

only by love. He who has love, is in God, and God is in him, because God is love."

And the angel began to sing the praise of God, and from his voice the whole hut shook. And the ceiling expanded, and a fiery column rose from earth to heaven. And Semén and his wife and children fell to the ground. And the wings were unfolded on the angel's shoulders, and he rose to heaven.

And when Lernen awoke, the hut was as before, and in the room were only his family.

