THE GODSON

‘Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil.’—Matt. v. 38, 39.

‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay.’—Rom. xii. 19.

A SON was born to a poor peasant. He was glad, and went to his neighbour to ask him to stand godfather to the boy. The neighbour refused he did not like standing godfather to a poor man’s child. The peasant asked another neighbour, but he too refused, and after that the poor father went to every house in the village, but found no one willing to be godfather to his son. So he set off to another village, and on the way he met a man who stopped and said:

‘Good-day, my good man; where are you off to?’

‘God has given me a child,’ said the peasant, ‘to rejoice my eyes in youth, to comfort my old age, and to pray for my soul after death. But I am poor, and no one in our village will stand godfather to him, so I am now on my way to seek a godfather for him elsewhere.’

‘Let me be godfather,’ said the stranger.

The peasant was glad, and thanked him, but added:

‘And whom shall I ask to be godmother?’

‘Go to the town,’ replied the stranger, ‘and, in the square, you will see a stone house with shop-windows in the front. At the entrance you will find the tradesman to whom it belongs. Ask him to let his daughter stand godmother to your child.’

The peasant hesitated.
'How can I ask a rich tradesman?' said he. 'He will despise me, and will not let his daughter come.'

'Don't trouble about that. Go and ask. Get everything ready by to-morrow morning, and I will come to the christening.'

The poor peasant returned home, and then drove to the town to find the tradesman. He had hardly taken his horse into the yard, when the tradesman himself came out.

'What do you want?' said he.

'Why, sir,' said the peasant, 'you see God has given me a son to rejoice my eyes in youth, to comfort my old age, and to pray for my soul after death. Be so kind as to let your daughter stand godmother to him.'

'And when isthe christening?' said the tradesman.

'To-morrow morning.'

'Very well. Go in peace. She shall be with you at Mass to-morrow morning.'

The next day the godmother came, and the godfather also, and the infant was baptized. Immediately after the christening the godfather went away. They did not know who he was and never saw him again.

The child grew up to be a joy to his parents. He was strong, willing to work, clever and obedient. When he was ten years old his parents sent him to school to learn to read and write. What others learnt in five years, he learnt in one, and soon there was nothing more they could teach him.

Easter came round, and the boy went to see his godmother, to give her his Easter greeting.

'Father and mother,' said he when he got home again, 'where does my godfather live? I should like to give him my Easter greeting, too.'
And his father answered:

'We know nothing about your godfather, dear son. We often regret it ourselves. Since the day you were christened we have never seen him, nor had any news of him. We do not know where he lives, or even whether he is still alive.'

The son bowed to his parents.

'Father and mother,' said he, 'let me go and look for my godfather. I must find him and give him my Easter greeting.'

So his father and mother let him go, and the boy set off to find his godfather.

III

The boy left the house and set out along the road. He had been walking for several hours when he met a stranger who stopped him and said:

'Good-day to you, my boy. Where are you going?'

And the boy answered:

'I went to see my godmother and to give her my Easter greeting, and when I got home I asked my parents where my godfather lives, that I might go and greet him also. They told me they did not know. They said he went away as soon as I was christened, and they know nothing about him, not even if he be still alive. But I wished to see my godfather, and so I have set out to look for him.'

Then the stranger said: 'I am your godfather.'

The boy was glad to hear this. After kissing his godfather three times for an Easter greeting, he asked him:

'Which way are you going now, godfather? If you are coming our way, please come to our house; but if you are going home, I will go with you.'

'I have no time now,' replied his godfather, 'to come to your house. I have business in several
villages, but I shall return home again to-morrow.
Come and see me then.'

'But how shall I find you, godfather?'

'When you leave home, go straight towards the
rising sun, and you will come to a forest; going
through the forest you will come to a glade. When
you reach this glade sit down and rest awhile, and
look around you and see what happens. On the
further side of the forest you will find a garden,
and in it a house with a golden roof. That is my
home. Go up to the gate, and I will myself be
there to meet you.'

And having said this the godfather disappeared
from his godson's sight.

IV

The boy did as his godfather had told him. He
walked eastward until he reached a forest, and
there he came to a glade, and in the midst of the
glade he saw a pine tree to a branch of which was
tied a rope supporting a heavy log of oak. Close
under this log stood a wooden trough filled with
honey. Hardly had the boy had time to wonder
why the honey was placed there and why the log
hung above it, when he heard a crackling in the
wood and saw some bears approaching: a she-bear,
followed by a yearling and three tiny cubs. The
she-bear, sniffing the air, went straight to the
trough, the cubs following her. She thrust her
muzzle into the honey, and called the cubs to do
the same. They scampered up and began to eat.
As they did so, the log, which the she-bear had
moved aside with her head, swung away a little
and, returning, gave the cubs a push. Seeing this
the she-bear shoved the log away with her paw.
It swung further out and returned more forcibly,
striking one cub on the back and another on the
head. The cubs ran away howling with pain, and the mother, with a growl, caught the log in her fore paws and, raising it above her head, flung it away. The log flew high in the air, and the yearling, rushing to the trough, pushed his muzzle into the honey and began to suck noisily. The others also drew near, but they had not reached the trough when the log, flying back, struck the yearling on the head and killed him. The mother growled louder than before and seizing the log, flung it from her with all her might. It flew higher than the branch it was tied to; so high that the rope slackened; and the she-bear returned to the trough, and the little cubs after her. The log flew higher and higher, then stopped, and began to fall. The nearer it came the faster it swung, and at last, at full speed, it crashed down on her head. The she-bear rolled over, her legs jerked, and she died! The cubs ran away into the forest.

The boy watched all this in surprise, and then continued his way. Leaving the forest, he came upon a large garden in the midst of which stood a lofty palace with a golden roof. At the gate stood his godfather, smiling. He welcomed his godson, and led him through the gateway into the garden. The boy had never dreamed of such beauty and delight as surrounded him in that place.

Then his godfather led him into the palace, which was even more beautiful inside than out. The godfather showed the boy through all the rooms: each brighter and finer than the other, but at last they came to one door that was sealed up.

'You see this door,' said he. 'It is not locked, but only sealed. It can be opened, but I forbid you to open it. You may live here, and go where you
please, and enjoy all the delights of the place. My only command is—do not open that door! But should you ever do so, remember what you saw in the forest.’

Having said this the godfather went away. The godson remained in the palace, and life there was so bright and joyful that he thought he had only been there three hours, when he had really lived there thirty years. When thirty years had gone by the godson happened to be passing the sealed door one day, and he wondered why his godfather had forbidden him to enter that room.

‘I’ll just look in and see what is there,’ thought he, and he gave the door a push. The seals gave way, the door opened, and the godson entering saw a hall more lofty and beautiful than all the others, and in the midst of it a throne. He wandered about the hall for a while, and then mounted the steps and seated himself upon the throne. As he sat there he noticed a sceptre leaning against the throne, and took it in his hand. Hardly had he done so when the four walls of the hall suddenly disappeared. The godson looked around, and saw the whole world, and all that men were doing in it. He looked in front, and saw the sea with ships sailing on it. He looked to the right, and saw where strange heathen people lived. He looked to the left, and saw where men who were Christians, but not Russians, lived. He looked round, and on the fourth side, he saw Russian people, like himself.

‘I will look,’ said he, ‘and see what is happening at home, and whether the harvest is good.’

He looked towards his father’s fields and saw the sheaves standing in stooks. He began counting them to see whether there was much corn, when he noticed a peasant driving in a cart. It was night,
and the godson thought it was his father coming to cart the corn by night. But as he looked he recognized Vasili Kudryashov, the thief, driving into the field and beginning to load the sheaves on to his cart. This made the godson angry and he called out:

‘Father, the sheaves are being stolen from our field!’

His father, who was out with the horses in the night-pasture, woke up.

‘I dreamt the sheaves were being stolen,’ said he. ‘I will just ride down and see.’

So he got on a horse and rode out to the field. Finding Vasili there, he called together other peasants to help him, and Vasili was beaten, bound, and taken to prison.

Then the godson looked at the town, where his godmother lived. He saw that she was now married to a tradesman. She lay asleep, and her husband rose and went to his mistress. The godson shouted to her:

‘Get up, get up, your husband has taken to evil ways.’

The godmother jumped up and dressed, and finding out where her husband was, she shamed and beat his mistress, and drove him away.

Then the godson looked for his mother, and saw her lying asleep in her cottage. And a thief crept into the cottage and began to break open the chest in which she kept her things. The mother awoke and screamed, and the robber seizing an axe, swung it over his head to kill her.

The godson could not refrain from hurling the sceptre at the robber. It struck him upon the temple, and killed him on the spot.
As soon as the godson had killed the robber, the walls closed and the hall became just as it had been before.

Then the door opened and the godfather entered, and coming up to his godson he took him by the hand and led him down from the throne.

'You have not obeyed my command,' said he. 'You did one wrong thing when you opened the forbidden door; another, when you mounted the throne and took my sceptre into your hands; and you have now done a third wrong, which has much increased the evil in the world. Had you sat here an hour longer, you would have ruined half mankind.'

Then the godfather led his godson back to the throne, and took the sceptre in his hand; and again the walls fell asunder and all things became visible. And the godfather said:

'See what you have done to your father. Vasili has now been a year in prison, and has come out having learnt every kind of wickedness, and has become quite incorrigible. See, he has stolen two of your father's horses, and he is now setting fire to his barn. All this you have brought upon your father.'

The godson saw his father's barn breaking into flames, but his godfather shut off the sight from him, and told him to look another way.

'Here is your godmother's husband,' he said. 'It is a year since he left his wife, and now he goes after other women. His former mistress has sunk to still lower depths. Sorrow has driven his wife to drink. That's what you have done to your godmother.'

The godfather shut off this also, and showed the
godson his father's house. There he saw his mother weeping for her sins, repenting, and saying:

'It would have been better had the robber killed me that night. I should not have sinned so heavily.'

'That,' said the godfather, 'is what you have done to your mother.'

He shut this off also, and pointed downwards; and the godson saw two warders holding the robber in front of a prison-house.

And the godfather said:

'This man had murdered ten men. He should have expiated his sins himself, but by killing him you have taken his sins on yourself. Now you must answer for all his sins. That is what you have done to yourself. The she-bear pushed the log aside once, and disturbed her cubs; she pushed it again, and killed her yearling; she pushed it a third time, and was killed herself. You have done the same. Now I give you thirty years to go into the world and atone for the robber's sins. If you do not atone for them, you will have to take his place.'

'How am I to atone for his sins?' asked the godson.

And the godfather answered:

'When you have rid the world of as much evil as you have brought into it, you will have atoned both for your own sins and for those of the robber.'

'How can I destroy evil in the world?' the godson asked.

'Go out,' replied the godfather, 'and walk straight towards the rising sun. After a time you will come to a field with some men in it. Notice what they are doing, and teach them what you know. Then go on and note what you see. On the fourth day you will come to a forest. In the midst of the forest is a cell, and in the cell lives a hermit. Tell him all that has happened. He will teach you what to do. When you have done all he tells you,
you will have atoned for your own and the robber's sins.'

And, having said this, the godfather led his godson out of the gate.

VII

The godson went his way, and as he went he thought:

'How am I to destroy evil in the world? Evil is destroyed by banishing evil men, keeping them in prison, or putting them to death. How then am I to destroy evil without taking the sins of others upon myself?'

The godson pondered over it for a long time, but could come to no conclusion. He went on until he came to a field where corn was growing thick and good and ready for the reapers. The godson saw that a little calf had got in among the corn. Some men who were at hand saw it, and mounting their horses they chased it backwards and forwards through the corn. Each time the calf was about to come out of the corn, some one rode up and the calf got frightened and turned back again, and they all galloped after it, trampling down the corn. On the road stood a woman crying.

'They will chase my calf to death,' she said.

And the godson said to the peasants:

'What are you doing? Come out of the cornfield, all of you, and let the woman call her calf.'

The men did so; and the woman came to the edge of the cornfield and called to the calf. 'Come along, browney, come along,' said she. The calf pricked up its ears, listened a while, and then ran towards the woman of its own accord, and hid its head in her skirts, almost knocking her over. The men were glad, the woman was glad, and so was the little calf.
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The godson went on, and he thought:

'Now I see that evil spreads evil. The more people try to drive away evil, the more the evil grows. Evil, it seems, cannot be destroyed by evil; but in what way it can be destroyed, I do not know. The calf obeyed its mistress and so all went well; but if it had not obeyed her, how could we have got it out of the field?'

The godson pondered again, but came to no conclusion, and continued his way.

VIII

He went on until he came to a village. At the furthest end he stopped and asked leave to stay the night. The woman of the house was there alone, house-cleaning, and she let him in. The godson entered, and taking his seat upon the brick oven he watched what the woman was doing. He saw her finish scrubbing the room and begin scrubbing the table. Having done this, she began wiping the table with a dirty cloth. She wiped it from side to side—but it did not come clean. The soiled cloth left streaks of dirt. Then she wiped it the other way. The first streaks disappeared, but others came in their place. Then she wiped it from one end to the other, but again the same thing happened. The soiled cloth messed the table; when one streak was wiped off another was left on. The godson watched for awhile in silence, and then said:

'What are you doing, mistress?'

'Don't you see I'm cleaning up for the holiday. Only I can't manage this table, it won't come clean. I'm quite tired out.'

'You should rinse your cloth,' said the godson, 'before you wipe the table with it.'

The woman did so, and soon had the table clean.

'Thank you for telling me,' said she.
In the morning he took leave of the woman and went on his way. After walking a good while, he came to the edge of a forest. There he saw some peasants who were making wheel-rims of bent wood. Coming nearer, the godson saw that the men were going round and round, but could not bend the wood.

He stood and looked on, and noticed that the block, to which the piece of wood was fastened, was not fixed, but as the men moved round it went round too. Then the godson said:

'What are you doing, friends?'

'Why, don't you see, we are making wheel-rims. We have twice steamed the wood, and are quite tired out, but the wood will not bend.'

'You should fix the block, friends,' said the godson, 'or else it goes round when you do.'

The peasants took his advice and fixed the block, and then the work went on merrily.

The godson spent the night with them, and then went on. He walked all day and all night, and just before dawn he came upon some drovers encamped for the night, and lay down beside them. He saw that they had got all their cattle settled, and were trying to light a fire. They had taken dry twigs and lighted them, but before the twigs had time to burn up, they smothered them with damp brushwood. The brushwood hissed, and the fire smouldered and went out. Then the drovers brought more dry wood, lit it, and again put on the brushwood—and again the fire went out. They struggled with it for a long time, but could not get the fire to burn. Then the godson said:

'Do not be in such a hurry to put on the brushwood. Let the dry wood burn up properly before you put any on. When the fire is well alight you can put on as much as you please.'
The drovers followed his advice. They let the fire burn up fiercely before adding the brushwood, which then flared up so that they soon had a roaring fire.

The godson remained with them for a while and then continued his way. He went on, wondering what the three things he had seen might mean; but he could not fathom them.

IX

The godson walked the whole of that day, and in the evening came to another forest. There he found a hermit's cell, at which he knocked.

'Who is there?' asked a voice from within.

'A great sinner,' replied the godson. 'I must atone for another's sins as well as for my own.'

The hermit hearing this came out.

'What sins are those that you have to bear for another?'

The godson told him everything: about his godfather; about the she-bear with the cubs; about the throne in the sealed room; about the commands his godfather had given him, as well as about the peasants he had seen trampling down the corn, and the calf that ran out when its mistress called it.

'I have seen that one cannot destroy evil by evil,' said he, 'but I cannot understand how it is to be destroyed. Teach me how it can be done.'

'Tell me,' replied the hermit, 'what else you have seen on your way.'

The godson told him about the woman washing the table, and the men making cart-wheels, and the drovers lighting their fire.

The hermit listened to it all, and then went back to his cell and brought out an old jagged axe.

'Come with me,' said he.

When they had gone some way, the hermit pointed to a tree.
'Cut it down,' he said.
The godson felled the tree.
'Now chop it into three,' said the hermit.
The godson chopped the tree into three pieces. Then the hermit went back to his cell, and brought out some blazing sticks.
'Burn those three logs,' said he.
So the godson made a fire, and burnt the three logs till only three charred stumps remained.
'Now plant them half in the ground, like this.'
The godson did so.
'You see that river at the foot of the hill. Bring water from there in your mouth, and water these stumps. Water this stump, as you taught the woman: this one, as you taught the wheelwrights: and this one, as you taught the drovers. When all three have taken root and from these charred stumps apple-trees have sprung, you will know how to destroy evil in men, and will have atoned for all your sins.'
Having said this, the hermit returned to his cell. The godson pondered for a long time, but could not understand what the hermit meant. Nevertheless he set to work to do as he had been told.

The godson went down to the river, filled his mouth with water, and returning, emptied it on to one of the charred stumps. This he did again and again, and watered all three stumps. When he was hungry and quite tired out, he went to the cell to ask the old hermit for some food. He opened the door, and there upon a bench he saw the old man lying dead. The godson looked round for food, and he found some dried bread, and ate a little of it. Then he took a spade and set to work to dig the hermit's grave. During the night he carried water
and watered the stumps, and in the day he dug the grave. He had hardly finished the grave, and was about to bury the corpse, when some people from the village came, bringing food for the old man.

The people heard that the old hermit was dead, and that he had given the godson his blessing and left him in his place. So they buried the old man, gave the bread they had brought to the godson, and promising to bring him some more, they went away.

The godson remained in the old man's place. There he lived, eating the food people brought him, and doing as he had been told: carrying water from the river in his mouth and watering the charred stumps.

He lived thus for a year and many people visited him. His fame spread abroad, as a holy man who lived in the forest and brought water from the bottom of a hill in his mouth to water charred stumps for the salvation of his soul. People flocked to see him. Rich merchants drove up bringing him presents, but he kept only the barest necessities for himself and gave the rest away to the poor.

And so the godson lived: carrying water in his mouth and watering the stumps half the day, and resting and receiving people the other half. And he began to think that this was the way he had been told to live in order to destroy evil and atone for his sins.

He spent two years in this manner, not omitting for a single day to water the stumps. But still not one of them sprouted.

One day, as he sat in his cell, he heard a man ride past, singing as he went. The godson came out to see what sort of a man it was. He saw a strong young fellow, well dressed, and mounted on a handsome, well-saddled horse.
The godson stopped him, and asked him who he was, and where he was going.

'I am a robber,' the man answered, drawing rein. 'I ride about the highways killing people, and the more I kill, the merrier are the songs I sing.'

The godson was horror-struck, and thought:

'How can the evil be destroyed in such a man as this? It is easy to speak to those who come to me of their own accord and confess their sins. But this one boasts of the evil he does.'

So he said nothing and turned away, thinking: 'What am I to do now? This robber may take to riding about here, and he will frighten away the people. They will leave off coming to me. It will be a loss to them, and I shall not know how to live.'

So the godson turned back and said to the robber:

'People come to me here, not to boast of their sins, but to repent and to pray for forgiveness. Repent of your sins, if you fear God; but if there is no repentance in your heart, then go away and never come here again. Do not trouble me, and do not frighten people away from me. If you do not hearken, God will punish you.'

The robber laughed:

'I am not afraid of God, and I will not listen to you. You are not my master,' said he. 'You live by your piety, and I by my robbery. We all must live. You may teach the old women who come to you, but you have nothing to teach me. And because you have reminded me of God, I will kill two more men to-morrow. I would kill you, but I do not want to soil my hands just now. See that in future you keep out of my way!'

Having uttered this threat, the robber rode away. He did not come again, and the godson lived in peace, as before, for eight more years.
XI

One night the godson watered his stumps, and, after returning to his cell, he sat down to rest, and watched the footpath, wondering if some one would soon come. But no one came at all that day. He sat alone till evening, feeling lonely and dull, and he thought about his past life. He remembered how the robber had reproached him for living by his piety; and he reflected on his way of life. 'I am not living as the hermit commanded me to,' thought he. 'The hermit laid a penance upon me, and I have made both a living and fame out of it; and have been so tempted by it, that now I feel dull when people do not come to me; and when they do come, I only rejoice because they praise my holiness. That is not how one should live. I have been led astray by love of praise. I have not atoned for my past sins, but have added fresh ones. I will go to another part of the forest where people will not find me; and I will live so as to atone for my old sins and commit no fresh ones.'

Having come to this conclusion the godson filled a bag with dried bread and, taking a spade, left the cell and started for a ravine he knew of in a lonely spot, where he could dig himself a cave and hide from the people.

As he was going along with his bag and his spade he saw the robber riding towards him. The godson was frightened and started to run away, but the robber overtook him.

'Where are you going?' asked the robber.

The godson told him he wished to get away from the people and live somewhere where no one would come to him. This surprised the robber.

'What will you live on, if people do not come to see you?' asked he.
The godson had not even thought of this, but the robber's question reminded him that food would be necessary.

'On what God pleases to give me,' he replied.

The robber said nothing, and rode away.

'Why did I not say anything to him about his way of life?' thought the godson. 'He might repent now. To-day he seems in a gentler mood, and has not threatened to kill me.' And he shouted to the robber:

'You have still to repent of your sins. You cannot escape from God.'

The robber turned his horse, and drawing a knife from his girdle threatened the hermit with it. The latter was alarmed, and ran away further into the forest.

The robber did not follow him, but only shouted:

'Twice I have let you off, old man, but next time you come in my way I will kill you!'

Having said this, he rode away. In the evening when the godson went to water his stumps—one of them was sprouting! A little apple-tree was growing out of it.

XII

After hiding himself from everybody, the godson lived all alone. When his supply of bread was exhausted, he thought: 'Now I must go and look for some roots to eat.' He had not gone far, however, before he saw a bag of dried bread hanging on a branch. He took it down, and as long as it lasted he lived upon that.

When he had eaten it all, he found another bagful on the same branch. So he lived on, his only trouble being his fear of the robber. Whenever he heard the robber passing, he hid, thinking:

'He may kill me before I have had time to atone for my sins.'
In this way he lived for ten more years. The one apple-tree continued to grow, but the other two stumps remained exactly as they were.

One morning the godson rose early and went to his work. By the time he had thoroughly moistened the ground round the stumps, he was tired out and sat down to rest. As he sat there he thought to himself:

'I have sinned, and have become afraid of death. It may be God's will that I should redeem my sins by death.'

Hardly had this thought crossed his mind when he heard the robber riding up, swearing at something. When the godson heard this, he thought:

'No evil and no good can befall me from any one but from God.'

And he went to meet the robber. He saw the robber was not alone, but behind him on the saddle sat another man, gagged, and bound hand and foot. The man was doing nothing, but the robber was abusing him violently. The godson went up and stood in front of the horse.

'Where are you taking this man?' he asked.

'Into the forest,' replied the robber. 'He is a merchant's son, and will not tell me where his father's money is hidden. I am going to flog him till he tells me.'

And the robber spurred on his horse, but the godson caught hold of his bridle, and would not let him pass.

'Let this man go!' he said.

The robber grew angry, and raised his arm to strike.

'Would you like a taste of what I am going to give this man? Have I not promised to kill you? Let go!'

The godson was not afraid.
‘You shall not go,’ said he. ‘I do not fear you. I fear no one but God, and He wills that I should not let you pass. Set this man free!’

The robber frowned, and snatching out his knife, cut the ropes with which the merchant’s son was bound, and set him free.

‘Get away, both of you,’ he said, ‘and beware how you cross my path again.’

The merchant’s son jumped down and ran away. The robber was about to ride on, but the godson stopped him again, and again spoke to him about giving up his evil life. The robber heard him to the end in silence, and then rode away without a word.

The next morning the godson went to water his stumps and lo! the second stump was sprouting. A second young apple-tree had begun to grow.

XIII

Another ten years had gone by. The godson was sitting quietly one day, desiring nothing, fearing nothing, and with a heart full of joy.

‘What blessings God showers on men!’ thought he. ‘Yet how needlessly they torment themselves. What prevents them from living happily?’

And remembering all the evil in men and the troubles they bring upon themselves, his heart filled with pity.

‘It is wrong of me to live as I do,’ he said to himself. ‘I must go and teach others what I have myself learnt.’

Hardly had he thought this, when he heard the robber approaching. He let him pass, thinking:

‘It is no good talking to him, he will not understand.’

That was his first thought, but he changed his mind and went out into the road. He saw that the
robber was gloomy, and was riding with downcast eyes. The godson looked at him, pitied him, and running up to him laid his hand upon his knee.

'Brother, dear,' said he, 'have some pity on your own soul! In you lives the spirit of God. You suffer, and torment others, and lay up more and more suffering for the future. Yet God loves you and has prepared such blessings for you. Do not ruin yourself utterly. Change your life!'

The robber frowned and turned away.

'Leave me alone!' said he.

But the godson held the robber still faster, and began to weep.

Then the robber lifted his eyes and looked at the godson. He looked at him for a long time, and alighting from his horse, fell on his knees at the godson's feet.

'You have overcome me, old man,' said he. 'For twenty years I have resisted you, but now you have conquered me. Do what you will with me, for I have no more power over myself. When you first tried to persuade me, it only angered me more. Only when you hid yourself from men did I begin to consider your words, for I saw then that you asked nothing of them for yourself. Since that day I have brought food for you, hanging it upon the tree.'

Then the godson remembered that the woman got her table clean only after she had rinsed her cloth. In the same way, it was only when he ceased caring about himself, and cleansed his own heart, that he was able to cleanse the hearts of others.

The robber went on.

'When I saw that you did not fear death, my heart turned.'

Then the godson remembered that the wheelwrights could not bend the rims until they had
fixed their block. So, not till he had cast away the fear of death and made his life fast in God, could he subdue this man's unruly heart.

‘But my heart did not quite melt,’ continued the robber, ‘until you pitied me and wept for me.’

The godson, full of joy, led the robber to the place where the stumps were. And when they got there, they saw that from the third stump an apple-tree had begun to sprout. And the godson remembered that the drovers had not been able to light the damp wood until the fire had burnt up well. So it was only when his own heart burnt warmly, that another’s heart had been kindled by it.

And the godson was full of joy that he had at last atoned for his sins.

He told all this to the robber, and died. The robber buried him, and lived as the godson had commanded him, teaching to others what the godson had taught him.

1886.
THE REPENTANT SINNER

'And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'—Luke xxiii. 42, 43.

THERE was once a man who lived for seventy years in the world, and lived in sin all that time. He fell ill, but even then did not repent. Only at the last moment, as he was dying, he wept and said:

'Lord! forgive me, as Thou forgavest the thief upon the cross.'

And as he said these words, his soul left his body. And the soul of the sinner, feeling love towards God and faith in His mercy, went to the gates of heaven, and knocked, praying to be let into the heavenly kingdom.

Then a voice spoke from within the gate:

'What man is it that knocks at the gates of Paradise, and what deeds did he do during his life?'

And the voice of the Accuser replied, recounting all the man's evil deeds, and not a single good one.

And the voice from within the gates answered:

'Sinners cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Go hence!'

Then the man said:

'Lord, I hear thy voice, but cannot see thy face, nor do I know thy name.'

The voice answered:

'I am Peter, the Apostle.'

And the sinner replied:

'Have pity on me, Apostle Peter! Remember man's weakness, and God's mercy. Wert not thou a disciple of Christ? Didst not thou hear his teach-
ing from his own lips, and hadst thou not his example before thee? Remember then how, when he sorrowed and was grieved in spirit, and three times asked thee to keep awake and pray, thou didst sleep, because thine eyes were heavy, and three times he found thee sleeping. So it was with me. Remember, also, how thou didst promise to be faithful unto death, and yet didst thrice deny him, when he was taken before Caiaphas. So it was with me. And remember, too, how when the cock crowed thou didst go out and didst weep bitterly. So it is with me. Thou canst not refuse to let me in.'

And the voice behind the gates was silent.

Then the sinner stood a little while, and again began to knock, and to ask to be let into the kingdom of heaven.

And he heard another voice behind the gates, which said:

'Who is this man, and how did he live on earth?'

And the voice of the Accuser again repeated all the sinner's evil deeds, and not a single good one.

And the voice from behind the gates replied:

'Go hence! Such sinners cannot live with us in Paradise.' Then the sinner said:

'Lord, I hear thy voice, but I see thee not, nor do I know thy name.'

And the voice answered:

'I am David, king and prophet.'

The sinner did not despair, nor did he leave the gates of paradise, but said:

'Have pity on me, King David! Remember man's weakness, and God's mercy. God loved thee and exalted thee among men. Thou hadst all: a kingdom, and honour, and riches, and wives, and children; but thou sawest from thy house-top the wife of a poor man, and sin entered into thee, and
thou tookest the wife of Uriah and didst slay him with the sword of the Ammonites. Thou, a rich man, didst take from the poor man his one ewe lamb and didst kill him. I have done likewise. Remember, then, how thou didst repent, and how thou saidst, "I acknowledge my transgressions: my sin is ever before me." I have done the same. Thou canst not refuse to let me in."

And the voice from within the gates was silent.

The sinner having stood a little while, began knocking again, and asking to be let into the kingdom of heaven. And a third voice was heard within the gates, saying:

"Who is this man, and how has he spent his life on earth?"

And the voice of the Accuser replied for the third time, recounting the sinner's evil deeds, and not mentioning one good deed.

And the voice within the gates said:

"Depart hence! Sinners cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

And the sinner said:

"Thy voice I hear, but thy face I see not, neither do I know thy name."

Then the voice replied:

"I am John the Divine, the beloved disciple of Christ."

And the sinner rejoiced and said:

"Now surely I shall be allowed to enter. Peter and David must let me in, because they know man's weakness and God's mercy; and thou wilt let me in, because thou lovest much. Was it not thou, John the Divine, who wrote that God is Love, and that he who loves not, knows not God? And in thine old age didst thou not say unto men: "Brethren, love one another?" How, then, canst thou look on me with hatred, and drive me away?"
Either thou must renounce what thou hast said, or loving me, must let me enter the kingdom of heaven.'

And the gates of Paradise opened, and John embraced the repentant sinner and took him into the kingdom of heaven.

1886.
THE EMPTY DRUM

(A FOLK-TALE LONG CURRENT IN THE REGION OF THE VÓLGA)

EMELYÁN was a labourer and worked for a master. Crossing the meadows one day on his way to work he nearly trod on a frog that jumped right in front of him, but he just managed to avoid it. Suddenly he heard some one calling to him from behind.

Emelyán looked round and saw a lovely lassie, who said to him: 'Why don't you get married, Emelyán?'

'How can I marry, my lass?' said he. 'I have but the clothes I stand up in, nothing more, and no one would have me for a husband.'

'Take me for a wife,' said she.

Emelyán liked the maid. 'I should be glad to,' said he, 'but where and how could we live?'

'Why trouble about that?' said the girl. 'One only has to work more and sleep less, and one can clothe and feed oneself anywhere.'

'Very well then, let us marry,' said Emelyán. 'Where shall we go to?'

'Let us go to town.'

So Emelyán and the lass went to town, and she took him to a small hut on the very edge of the town, and they married and began housekeeping.

One day the King driving through the town passed by Emelyán's hut. Emelyán's wife came out to see the King. The King noticed her and was quite surprised.

'Where did such a beauty come from?' said he;
and stopping his carriage he called Emelyán's wife and asked her: 'Who are you?'

'The peasant Emelyán's wife,' said she.

'Why did you, who are such a beauty, marry a peasant?' said the King. 'You ought to be a queen!'

'Thank you for your kind words,' said she, 'but a peasant husband is good enough for me.'

The King talked to her awhile and then drove on. He returned to the palace, but could not get Emelyán's wife out of his head. All night he did not sleep but kept thinking how to get her for himself. He could think of no way of doing it, so he called his servants and told them they must find a way.

The King's servants said: 'Command Emelyán to come to the palace to work, and we will work him so hard that he will die. His wife will be left a widow and then you can take her yourself.'

The King followed their advice. He sent an order that Emelyán should come to the palace as a workman, and that he should live at the palace and his wife with him.

The messengers came to Emelyán and gave him the King's message. His wife said, 'Go, Emelyán; work all day but come back home at night.'

So Emelyán went, and when he got to the palace the King's steward asked him. 'Why have you come alone, without your wife?'

'Why should I drag her about?' said Emelyán. 'She has a house to live in.'

At the King's palace they gave Emelyán work enough for two. He began the job not hoping to finish it, but when evening came, lo and behold! it was all done. The steward saw that it was finished and set him four times as much for next day.
Emelyán went home. Everything there was swept and tidy; the oven was heated, his supper was cooked and ready, and his wife sat by the table sewing and awaiting his return. She greeted him, laid the table, gave him to eat and drink, and then began to ask him about his work.

"Ah!" said he, "it's a bad business: they give me tasks beyond my strength and want to kill me with work."

"Don't fret about the work," said she, "don't look either before or behind to see how much you have done, or how much there is left to do; only keep on working and all will be right."

So Emelyán lay down and slept. Next morning he went to work again and worked without once looking round. And, lo and behold! by the evening it was all done, and before dark he came home for the night.

Again and again they increased Emelyán's work, but he always got through it in good time and went back to his hut to sleep. A week passed, and the King's servants saw they could not crush him with rough work so they tried giving him work that required skill. But this also was of no avail. Carpentering, and masonry, and roofing, whatever they set him to do, Emelyán had it ready in time, and went home to his wife at night. So a second week passed.

Then the King called his servants and said: 'Do I feed you for nothing? Two weeks have gone and I don't see that you have done anything. You were going to tire Emelyán out with work, but I see from my windows how he goes home every evening—singing cheerfully! Are you making a fool of me?'

The King's servants began to excuse themselves. "We tried our best to wear him out with rough
work,' they said, 'but nothing was too hard for him; he cleared it all off as though he had swept it away with a broom. There was no tiring him out. Then we set him tasks needing skill, which we did not think he was clever enough to do, but he managed them all. No matter what one sets him he does it all, no one knows how. Either he or his wife must know some charm that helps them. We ourselves are sick of him and wish to find a task he cannot master. We have now thought of setting him to build a cathedral in a single day. Send for Emelyán and order him to build a cathedral in front of the palace in a single day. Then if he does not do it let his head be cut off for disobedience.'

The King sent for Emelyán. 'Listen to my command,' said he: 'build me a new cathedral on the square in front of my palace and have it ready by to-morrow evening. If you have it ready I will reward you, but if not I will have your head cut off.'

When Emelyán heard the King's command he turned away and went home. 'My end is at hand,' thought he. And coming to his wife, he said: 'Get ready, wife, we must fly from here or I shall be lost by no fault of my own.'

'What has frightened you so?' said she, 'and why should we run away?'

'How can I help being frightened? The King has ordered me, to-morrow, in a single day, to build him a cathedral. If I fail he will cut my head off. There is only one thing to be done, we must fly while there is yet time.'

But his wife would not hear of it. 'The King has many soldiers,' said she. 'They would catch us anywhere. We cannot escape from him, but must obey him as long as strength holds out.'

'How can I obey him when the task is beyond my strength?'
'Eh, goodman, don't be downhearted. Eat your supper now and go to sleep. Rise early in the morning and all will get done.'

So Emelyán lay down and slept. His wife roused him early next day. 'Go quickly,' said she, 'and finish the cathedral. Here are nails and a hammer; there is still enough work there for a day.'

Emelyán went into the town, reached the palace square, and there stood a large cathedral not quite finished. Emelyán set to work to do what was needed, and by the evening all was ready.

When the King awoke he looked out from his palace, and saw the cathedral and Emelyán going about driving in nails here and there. And the King was not pleased to have the cathedral—he was annoyed at not being able to condemn Emelyán and take his wife. Again he called his servants. 'Emelyán has done this task also,' said the King, 'and there is no excuse for putting him to death. Even this work was not too hard for him. You must find a more cunning plan, or I will cut off your heads as well as his.'

So his servants planned that Emelyán should be ordered to make a river round the palace with ships sailing on it. And the King sent for Emelyán and set him this new task.

'If,' said he, 'you could build a cathedral in one night, you can also do this. To-morrow all must be ready. If not, I will have your head off.'

Emelyán was more downcast than before, and returned to his wife sad at heart.

'Why are you so sad?' said his wife. 'Has the King set you a fresh task?'

Emelyán told her about it. 'We must fly,' said he.

But his wife replied: 'There is no escaping the soldiers; they will catch us wherever we go. There is nothing for it but to obey.'
‘How can I do it?’ groaned Emelyán.
‘Eh! eh! goodman,’ said she, ‘don’t be down hearted. Eat your supper now and go to sleep. Rise early, and all will get done in good time.’

So Emelyán lay down and slept. In the morning his wife woke him. ‘Go,’ said she, ‘to the palace—all is ready. Only near the wharf in front of the palace there is a mound left; take a spade and level it.’

When the King awoke he saw a river where there had not been one; ships were sailing up and down and Emelyán was levelling a mound with a spade. The King wondered, but was pleased neither with the river nor with the ships, so vexed was he at not being able to condemn Emelyán. ‘There is no task,’ thought he, ‘that he cannot manage. What is to be done?’ And he called his servants and again asked their advice.

‘Find some task,’ said he, ‘which Emelyán cannot compass. For whatever we plan he fulfils and I cannot take his wife from him.’

The King’s servants thought and thought, and at last devised a plan. They came to the King and said: ‘Send for Emelyán and say to him: “Go to there, don’t know where,” and bring back “that, don’t know what!” Then he will not be able to escape you. No matter where he goes, you can say that he has not gone to the right place, and no matter what he brings, you can say it is not the right thing. Then you can have him beheaded and can take his wife.’

The King was pleased. ‘That is well thought of,’ said he. So the King sent for Emelyán and said to him: ‘Go to “there, don’t know where,” and bring back “that, don’t know what.” If you fail to bring it I will have you beheaded.’

Emelyán returned to his wife and told her what the King had said. His wife became thoughtful.
'Well,' said she, 'they have taught the King how to catch you. Now we must act warily.' So she sat and thought, and at last said to her husband: 'You must go far, to our Grandam—the old peasant woman, the mother of soldiers—and you must ask her aid. If she helps you to anything, go straight to the palace with it, I shall be there: I cannot escape them now. They will take me by force, but it will not be for long. If you do everything as Grandam directs you will soon save me.'

So the wife got her husband ready for the journey. She gave him a wallet and also a spindle. 'Give her this,' said she. 'By this token she will know that you are my husband.' And his wife showed him his road.

Emelyán set off. He left the town behind and came to where some soldiers were being drilled. Emelyán stood and watched them. After drill the soldiers sat down to rest. Then Emelyán went up to them and asked: 'Do you know, brothers, the way to "there, don't know where?" and how I can get "that, don't know what?"'

The soldiers listened to him with surprise. 'Who sent you on this errand?' said they.

'The King,' said he.

'Ve ourselves,' said they, 'from the day we became soldiers go we "don't know where," and never yet have we got there; and we seek we "don't know what," and cannot find it. We cannot help you.'

Emelyán sat a while with the soldiers and then went on again. He trudged many a mile, and at last came to a wood. In the wood was a hut and in the hut sat an old, old woman, the mother of peasant soldiers, spinning flax and weeping. And as she spun she did not put her fingers to her mouth to wet them with spittle but to her eyes to wet them with tears. When the old woman saw
Emelyán she cried out at him: 'Why have you come here?' Then Emelyán gave her the spindle and said his wife had sent it.

The old woman softened at once and began to question him. And Emelyán told her his whole life: how he married the lass; how they went to live in the town; how he had worked, and what he had done at the palace; how he built the cathedral, and made a river with ships on it, and how the King had now told him to go to 'there, don't know where,' and bring back 'that, don't know what.'

The Grandam listened to the end, and ceased weeping. She muttered to herself: 'The time has surely come,' and said to him: 'All right, my lad. Sit down now, and I will give you something to eat.'

Emelyán ate, and then the Grandam told him what to do. 'Here,' said she, 'is a ball of thread; roll it before you and follow where it goes. You must go far till you come right to the sea. When you get there you will see a great city. Enter the city and ask for a night's lodging at the furthest house. There look out for what you are seeking.'

'How shall I know it when I see it, Granny?' said he.

'When you see something men obey more than father or mother, that is it. Seize that and take it to the King. When you bring it to the King he will say it is not right, and you must answer: "If it is not the right thing it must be smashed," and you must beat it and carry it to the river, break it in pieces, and throw it into the water. Then you will get your wife back and my tears will be dried.'

Emelyán bade farewell to the Grandam and began rolling his ball before him. It rolled and rolled until at last it reached the sea. By the sea stood a great city and at the further end of the city was a big house. There Emelyán begged for a night's lodging and was granted it. He lay down
to sleep, and in the morning awoke and heard a father rousing his son to go and cut wood for the fire. But the son did not obey. 'It is too early,' said he, 'there is time enough.' Then Emelyán heard the mother say, 'Go, my son, your father's bones ache, would you have him go himself? It is time to be up!'

But the son only murmured some words and fell asleep again. Hardly was he asleep when something thundered and rattled in the street. Up jumped the son and quickly putting on his clothes ran out into the street. Up jumped Emelyán, too, and ran after him to see what it was that a son obeys more than father or mother. What he saw was a man walking along the street carrying, tied to his stomach, a thing which he beat with sticks, and that it was that rattled and thundered so and that the son had obeyed. Emelyán ran up and had a look at it. He saw it was round, like a small tub, with a skin stretched over both ends, and he asked what it was called.

He was told, 'A drum."

'And is it empty?'

'Yes, it is empty.'

Emelyán was surprised. He asked them to give the thing to him, but they would not. So Emelyán left off asking and followed the drummer. All day he followed, and when the drummer at last lay down to sleep, Emelyán snatched the drum from him and ran away with it.

He ran and ran till at last he got back to his own town. He went to see his wife, but she was not at home. The day after he went away the King had taken her. So Emelyán went to the palace and sent in a message to the King: 'He has returned who went to "there, don't know where,"' and he has brought with him "that, don't know what."'
They told the King, and the King said he was to come again next day.

But Emelyán said, 'Tell the King I am here to-day and have brought what the King wanted. Let him come out to me, or I will go in to him!'

The King came out. 'Where have you been?' said he.

Emelyán told him. 'That's not the right place,' said the King. 'What have you brought?'

Emelyán pointed to the drum, but the King did not look at it.

'That is not it.'

'If it is not the right thing,' said Emelyán, 'it must be smashed and may the devil take it!'

And Emelyán left the palace carrying the drum and beating it. And as he beat it all the King's army ran out to follow Emelyán, and they saluted him and waited his commands.

The King from his window began to shout at his army telling them not to follow Emelyán. They did not listen to what he said but all followed Emelyán.

When the King saw that, he gave orders that Emelyán's wife should be taken back to him and he sent to ask Emelyán to give him the drum.

'It can't be done,' said Emelyán. 'I was told to smash it and to throw the splinters into the river.'

So Emelyán went down to the river carrying the drum and the soldiers followed him. When he reached the river bank Emelyán smashed the drum to splinters and threw the splinters into the stream. And then all the soldiers ran away.

Emelyán took his wife and went home with her. And after that the King ceased to trouble him, and so they lived happily ever after.

1891.
PART VI
ADAPTATIONS FROM THE FRENCH
19
THE COFFEE-HOUSE OF SURAT
(AFTER BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE.)

In the town of Surat, in India, was a coffee-house where many travellers and foreigners from all parts of the world met and conversed.

One day a learned Persian theologian visited this coffee-house. He was a man who had spent his life studying the nature of the Deity, and reading and writing books upon the subject. He had thought, read, and written, so much about God that eventually he lost his wits, became quite confused, and ceased even to believe in the existence of a God. The Shah, hearing of this, had banished him from Persia.

After having argued all his life about the First Cause, this unfortunate theologian had ended by quite perplexing himself, and instead of understanding that he had lost his own reason he began to think that there was no higher Reason controlling the universe.

This man had an African slave who followed him everywhere. When the theologian entered the coffee-house the slave remained outside, near the door, sitting on a stone in the glare of the sun and driving away the flies that buzzed around him. The Persian having settled down on a divan in the coffee-house, ordered himself a cup of opium. When he had drunk it and the opium had begun to quicken the workings of his brain, he addressed his slave through the open door:
Tell me, wretched slave,' said he, 'do you think there is a God, or not?'

'Of course there is,' said the slave, and immediately drew from under his girdle a small idol of wood.

'There,' said he, 'that is the God who has guarded me from the day of my birth. Every one in our country worships the fetish tree, from the wood of which this God was made.'

This conversation between the theologian and his slave was listened to with surprise by the other guests in the coffee-house. They were astonished at the master's question and yet more so at the slave's reply.

One of them, a Brahmin, on hearing the words spoken by the slave turned to him and said:

'Miserable fool! Is it possible you believe that God can be carried under a man's girdle? There is one God—Brahma, and he is greater than the whole world, for he created it. Brahma is the One, the mighty God, and in His honour are built the temples on the Ganges' banks where his true priests, the Brahmans, worship him. They know the true God and none but they. A thousand score of years have passed, and yet through revolution after revolution these priests have held their sway, because Brahma, the one true God, has protected them.'

So spoke the Brahmin thinking to convince every one; but a Jewish broker who was present replied to him, and said:

'No! the temple of the true God is not in India. Neither does God protect the Brahmin caste. The true God is not the God of the Brahmans, but of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. None does He protect but His chosen people, the Israelites. From the commencement of the world our nation has been
beloved of Him, and ours alone. If we are now scattered over the whole earth, it is but to try us; for God has promised that He will one day gather His people together in Jerusalem. Then, with the Temple of Jerusalem—the wonder of the ancient world—restored to its splendour, Israel shall be established a ruler over all nations."

So spoke the Jew and burst into tears. He wished to say more, but an Italian missionary who was there interrupted him.

"What you are saying is untrue," said he to the Jew. "You attribute injustice to God. He cannot love your nation above the rest. Nay rather, even if it be true that of old He favoured the Israelites, it is now nineteen hundred years since they angered Him and caused Him to destroy their nation and scatter them over the earth, so that their faith makes no converts and has died out except here and there. God shows preference to no nation, but calls all who wish to be saved to the bosom of the Catholic Church of Rome, the one outside whose borders no salvation can be found."

So spoke the Italian. But a Protestant minister, who happened to be present, growing pale, turned to the Catholic missionary and exclaimed:

"How can you say that salvation belongs to your religion? Those only will be saved who serve God according to the Gospel, in spirit and in truth, as bidden by the word of Christ."

Then a Turk, an office-holder in the custom-house at Surat, who was sitting in the coffee-house smoking a pipe, turned with an air of superiority to both the Christians.

"Your belief in your Roman religion is vain," said he. "It was superseded twelve hundred years ago by the true faith: that of Mohammed! You cannot but observe how the true Mohammedan
faith continues to spread both in Europe and Asia and even in the enlightened country of China. You say yourselves that God has rejected the Jews; and, as a proof, you quote the fact that the Jews are humiliated and their faith does not spread. Confess then the truth of Mohammedanism, for it is triumphant and spreads far and wide. None will be saved but the followers of Mohammed, God’s latest prophet; and of them only the followers of Omar, and not of Ali, for the latter are false to the faith.’

To this the Persian theologian, who was of the sect of Ali, wished to reply; but by this time a great dispute had arisen among all the strangers of different faiths and creeds present. There were Abyssinian Christians, Llamas from Thibet, Ismailites and Fire-worshippers. They all argued about the nature of God and how He should be worshipped. Each of them asserted that in his country alone was the true God known and rightly worshipped.

Every one argued and shouted except a Chinaman, a student of Confucius, who sat quietly in one corner of the coffee-house not joining in the dispute. He sat there drinking tea and listening to what the others said, but did not speak himself.

The Turk noticed him sitting there, and appealed to him, saying:

‘You can confirm what I say, my good Chinaman. You hold your peace, but if you spoke I know you would uphold my opinion. Traders from your country who come to me for assistance, tell me that though many religions have been introduced into China, you Chinese consider Mohammedanism the best of all, and adopt it willingly. Confirm, then, my words, and tell us your opinion of the true God and of His prophet.’
"Yes, yes," said the rest, turning to the Chinaman, 'let us hear what you think on the subject.'

The Chinaman, the student of Confucius, closed his eyes and thought a while. Then he opened them again, and drawing his hands out of the wide sleeves of his garment and folding them on his breast, he spoke as follows in a calm and quiet voice.

Sirs, it seems to me that it is chiefly pride that prevents men agreeing with one another on matters of faith. If you care to listen to me, I will tell you a story which will explain this by an example.

I came here from China on an English steamer which had been round the world. We stopped for fresh water, and landed on the east coast of the island of Sumatra. It was mid-day, and some of us having landed sat in the shade of some coconut palms by the sea-shore, not far from a native village. We were a party of men of different nationalities.

As we sat there a blind man approached us. We learnt afterwards that he had gone blind from gazing too long and too persistently at the sun, trying to find out what it is, in order to seize its light.

He strove a long time to accomplish this, constantly looking at the sun; but the only result was that his eyes were injured by its brightness and he became blind.

Then he said to himself:

'The light of the sun is not a liquid, for if it were a liquid it would be possible to pour it from one vessel into another and it would be moved, like water, by the wind. Neither is it fire, for if it were fire, water would extinguish it. Neither is light a spirit, for it is seen by the eye; nor is it matter, for it cannot be moved. Therefore, as the light of the
sun is neither liquid, nor fire, nor spirit, nor matter, it is—nothing!'

So he argued, and, as a result of always looking at the sun and always thinking about it, he lost both his sight and his reason. And when he went quite blind he became fully convinced that the sun did not exist.

With this blind man came a slave, who after placing his master in the shade of a coconut tree picked up a coconut from the ground, and began making it into a night-light. He twisted a wick from the fibre of the coconut squeezed oil from the nut into the shell, and soaked the wick in it.

As the slave sat doing this, the blind man sighed and said to him:

'Well, slave, was I not right when I told you there is no sun? Do you not see how dark it is? Yet people say there is a sun. . . . But if so, what is it?'

'I do not know what the sun is,' said the slave. 'That is no business of mine. But I know what light is. Here I have made a night-light by the help of which I can serve you and find anything I want in the hut.'

And the slave picked up the coconut shell, saying:

'This is my sun.'

A lame man with crutches, who was sitting near by, heard these words and laughed:

'You have evidently been blind all your life,' said he to the blind man, 'not to know what the sun is, I will tell you what it is. The sun is a ball of fire which rises every morning out of the sea and goes down again among the mountains of our island each evening. We have all seen this, and if you had had your eyesight you too would have seen it.'
A fisherman who had been listening to the conversation, said:

'lt is plain enough that you have never been beyond your own island. If you were not lame, and if you had been out as I have in a fishing-boat, you would know that the sun does not set among the mountains of our island but as it rises from the ocean every morning so it sets again in the sea every night. What I am telling you is true for I see it every day with my own eyes.'

Then an Indian who was of our party, interrupted him by saying:

'I am astonished that a reasonable man should talk such nonsense. How can a ball of fire possibly descend into the water and not be extinguished? The sun is not a ball of fire at all, it is the Deity named Deva, who rides for ever in a chariot round the golden mountain, Meru. Sometimes the evil serpents Ragu and Ketu attack Deva and swallow him: and then the earth is dark. But our priests pray that the Deity may be released, and then he is set free. Only such ignorant men as you, who have never been beyond their own island, can imagine that the sun shines for their country alone.'

Then the master of an Egyptian vessel, who was present, spoke in his turn.

'No,' said he, 'you also are wrong. The sun is not a Deity and does not move only round India and its golden mountain. I have sailed much on the Black Sea and along the coasts of Arabia, and have been to Madagascar and to the Philippines. The sun lights the whole earth and not India alone. It does not circle round one mountain, but rises far in the east beyond the Isles of Japan, and sets far, far, away in the west, beyond the islands of England. That is why the Japanese call their country "Nippon," that is "the birth of the sun."
ADAPTATIONS FROM THE FRENCH

I know this well for I have myself seen much, and heard more from my grandfather who sailed to the very ends of the sea.'

He would have gone on, but an English sailor from our ship interrupted him.

'There is no country,' he said, 'where people know so much about the sun's movements as in England. The sun, as every one in England knows, rises nowhere and sets nowhere. It is always moving round the earth. We can be sure of this for we have just been round the world ourselves and nowhere knocked up against the sun. Wherever we went the sun showed itself in the morning and hid itself at night, just as it does here.'

And the Englishman took a stick and, drawing circles on the sand, tried to explain how the sun moves in the heavens and goes round the world. But he was unable to explain it clearly, and pointing to the ship's pilot said:

'This man knows more about it than I do. He can explain it properly.'

The pilot, who was an intelligent man, had listened in silence to the talk till he was asked to speak. Now everyone turned to him, and he said:

'You are all misleading one another and are yourselves deceived. The sun does not go round the earth, but the earth goes round the sun, revolving as it goes, and in the course of each twenty-four hours turning towards the sun, not only Japan, and the Philippines, and Sumatra where we now are, but Africa, and Europe, and America, and many lands besides. The sun does not shine for some one mountain, or for some one island, or for some one sea, nor even for one earth alone, but for other planets as well as our earth. If you would only look up at the heavens instead of at the ground beneath your own feet, you might all understand
THE COFFEE-HOUSE OF SURAT

this, and would then no longer suppose that the sun shines for you or for your country alone.

Thus spoke the wise pilot who had voyaged much about the world and had gazed much upon the heavens above.

'So on matters of faith,' continued the Chinaman, the student of Confucius, 'it is pride that causes error and discord among men. As with the sun so it is with God. Each man wants to have a special God of his own, or at least a special God for his native land. Each nation wishes to confine in its own temples Him whom the world cannot contain.

'Can any temple compare with that which God Himself has built to unite all men in one faith and one religion?

'All human temples are built on the model of this temple, which is God's own world. Every temple has its fonts, its vaulted roof, its lamps, its pictures or sculptures, its inscriptions, its books of the law, its offerings, its altars, and its priests. But in what temple is there such a font as the ocean; such a vault as that of the heavens; such lamps as the sun, moon, and stars; or any figures to be compared with living, loving, mutually-helpful men? Where are there any records of God's goodness so easy to understand as the blessings which He has strewn abroad for man's happiness? Where is there any book of the law so clear to each man as that written in his heart? What sacrifices equal the self-denials which loving men and women make for one another? And what altar can be compared with the heart of a good man on which God Himself accepts the sacrifice?

'The higher a man's conception of God the better will he know Him. And the better he knows God
ADAPTATIONS FROM THE FRENCH

the nearer will he draw to Him, imitating His
goodness, His mercy, and His love of man

'Therefore, let him who sees the sun's whole
light filling the world, refrain from blaming or
despising the superstitious man who in his own
idol sees one ray of that same light. Let him not
despise even the unbeliever who is blind and
cannot see the sun at all.'

So spoke the Chinaman, the student of Confu-
cius; and all who were present in the coffee-house
were silent, and they disputed no more as to whose
faith was the best.

1893.
NEAR the borders of France and Italy, on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, lies a tiny little kingdom called Monaco. Many a small country town can boast more inhabitants than this kingdom, for there are only about seven thousand of them all told, and if all the land in the kingdom were divided there would not be an acre for each inhabitant. But in this toy kingdom there is a real kinglet; and he has a palace, and courtiers, and ministers, and a bishop, and generals, and an army.

It is not a large army, only sixty men in all, but still it is an army. There are also taxes in this kingdom, as elsewhere: a tax on tobacco, and on wine and spirits, and a poll-tax. But though the people there drink and smoke as people do in other countries, there are so few of them that the Prince would have been hard put to it to feed his courtiers and officials and to keep himself, if he had not found a new and special source of revenue. This special revenue comes from a gaming house, where people play roulette. People play, and whether they win or lose the keeper always gets a percentage on the turnover, and out of his profits he pays a large sum to the Prince. The reason he pays so much is that it is the only such gambling establishment left in Europe. Some of the little German Sovereigns used to keep gaming houses of the same kind, but some years ago they were forbidden to do so. The reason they were stopped was because
these gaming houses did so much harm. A man would come and try his luck, then he would risk all he had and lose it, then he would even risk money that did not belong to him and lose that too, and then, in despair, he would drown or shoot himself. So the Germans forbade their rulers to make money in this way; but there was no one to stop the Prince of Monaco, and he remained with a monopoly of the business.

So now everyone who wants to gamble goes to Monaco. Whether they win or lose, the Prince gains by it. 'You can't earn stone palaces by honest labour,' as the proverb says; and the Kinglet of Monaco knows it is a dirty business, but what is he to do? He has to live; and to draw a revenue from drink and from tobacco is also not a nice thing. So he lives and reigns, and rakes in the money, and holds his court with all the ceremony of a real king.

He has his coronation, his levées; he rewards, sentences, and pardons; and he also has his reviews, councils, laws, and courts of justice: just like other kings, only all on a smaller scale.

Now it happened a few years ago that a murder was committed in this toy Prince's domains. The people of that kingdom are peaceable, and such a thing had not happened before. The judges assembled with much ceremony and tried the case in the most judicial manner. There were judges, and prosecutors, and jurymen, and barristers. They argued and judged, and at last they condemned the criminal to have his head cut off as the law directs. So far so good. Next they submitted the sentence to the Prince. The Prince read the sentence and confirmed it. 'If the fellow must be executed, execute him.'

There was only one hitch in the matter; and that was that they had neither a guillotine for
Too Dear

cutting heads off, nor an executioner. The Ministers considered the matter, and decided to address an inquiry to the French Government, asking whether the French could not lend them a machine and an expert to cut off the criminal's head; and if so, would the French kindly inform them what it would cost. The letter was sent. A week later the reply came: a machine and an expert could be supplied, and the cost would be 16,000 francs. This was laid before the King. He thought it over. Sixteen thousand francs! 'The wretch is not worth the money,' said he. 'Can't it be done, somehow, cheaper? Why, 16,000 francs is more than two francs a head on the whole population. The people won't stand it, and it may cause a riot!'

So a Council was called to consider what could be done; and it was decided to send a similar inquiry to the King of Italy. The French Government is republican, and has no proper respect for kings; but the King of Italy was a brother monarch and might be induced to do the thing cheaper. So the letter was written, and a prompt reply was received.

The Italian Government wrote that they would have pleasure in supplying both a machine and an expert; and the whole cost would be 12,000 francs, including travelling expenses. This was cheaper, but still it seemed too much. The rascal was really not worth the money. It would still mean nearly two francs more per head on the taxes. Another Council was called. They discussed and considered how it could be done with less expense. Could not one of the soldiers, perhaps, be got to do it in a rough and homely fashion? The General was called and was asked: 'Can't you find us a soldier who would cut the man's head off? In war they
don't mind killing people. In fact, that is what they are trained for.' So the General talked it over with the soldiers to see whether one of them would not undertake the job. But none of the soldiers would do it. 'No,' they said, 'we don't know how to do it; it is not a thing we have been taught.'

What was to be done? Again the Ministers considered and reconsidered. They assembled a Commission, and a Committee, and a Sub-Committee, and at last they decided that the best thing would be to alter the death sentence to one of imprisonment for life. This would enable the Prince to show his mercy, and it would come cheaper.

The Prince agreed to this, and so the matter was arranged. The only hitch now was that there was no suitable prison for a man sentenced for life. There was a small lock-up where people were sometimes kept temporarily, but there was no strong prison fit for permanent use. However, they managed to find a place that would do, and they put the young fellow there and placed a guard over him. The guard had to watch the criminal, and had also to fetch his food from the palace kitchen.

The prisoner remained there month after month till a year had passed. But when a year had passed, the Kinglet, looking over the account of his income and expenditure one day, noticed a new item of expenditure. This was for the keep of the criminal; nor was it a small item either. There was a special guard, and there was also the man's food. It came to more than 600 francs a year. And the worst of it was that the fellow was still young and healthy, and might live for fifty years. When one came to reckon it up, the matter was serious. It would never do. So the Prince summoned his Ministers and said to them:
"You must find some cheaper way of dealing with this rascal. The present plan is too expensive." And the Ministers met and considered and reconsidered, till one of them said: "Gentlemen, in my opinion we must dismiss the guard." "But then," rejoined another Minister, "the fellow will run away." "Well," said the first speaker, "let him run away, and be hanged to him!" So they reported the result of their deliberations to the Kinglet, and he agreed with them. The guard was dismissed, and they waited to see what would happen. All that happened was that at dinner-time the criminal came out, and, not finding his guard, he went to the Prince's kitchen to fetch his own dinner. He took what was given him, returned to the prison, shut the door on himself, and stayed inside. Next day the same thing occurred. He went for his food at the proper time; but as for running away, he did not show the least sign of it! What was to be done? They considered the matter again. "We shall have to tell him straight out," said they, "that we do not want to keep him." So the Minister of Justice had him brought before him.

"Why do you not run away?" said the Minister. "There is no guard to keep you. You can go where you like, and the Prince will not mind."

"I dare say the Prince would not mind," replied the man, "but I have nowhere to go. What can I do? You have ruined my character by your sentence and people will turn their backs on me. Besides, I have got out of the way of working. You have treated me badly. It is not fair. In the first place, when once you sentenced me to death you ought to have executed me; but you did not do it. That's one thing. I did not complain about that. Then you sentenced me to imprisonment for life and put a guard to bring me my food; but
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after a time you took him away again and I had to fetch my own food. Again I did not complain. But now you actually want me to go away! I can't agree to that. You may do as you like, but I won't go away!'

What was to be done? Once more the Council was summoned. What course could they adopt? The man would not go. They reflected and considered. The only way to get rid of him was to offer him a pension. And so they reported to the Prince. 'There is nothing else for it,' said they; 'we must get rid of him somehow.' The sum fixed was 600 francs, and this was announced to the prisoner.

'Well,' said he, 'I don't mind, so long as you undertake to pay it regularly. On that condition I am willing to go.'

So the matter was settled. He received one-third of his annuity in advance, and left the King's dominions. It was only a quarter of an hour by rail; and he emigrated, and settled just across the frontier, where he bought a bit of land, started market-gardening, and now lives comfortably. He always goes at the proper time to draw his pension. Having received it, he goes to the gaming tables, stakes two or three francs, sometimes wins and sometimes loses, and then returns home. He lives peaceably and well.

It is a good thing that he did not commit his crime in a country where they do not grudge expense to cut a man's head off or to keep him in prison for life.

1897.
PART VII
STORIES GIVEN TO AID THE PERSECUTED JEWS

2I

ESARHADDON, KING OF ASSYRIA

The Assyrian King, Esarhaddon, had conquered the kingdom of King Lailie, had destroyed and burnt the towns, taken all the inhabitants captive to his own country, slaughtered the warriors, beheaded some chieftains and impaled or flayed others, and had confined King Lailie himself in a cage.

As he lay on his bed one night, King Esarhaddon was thinking how he should execute Lailie, when suddenly he heard a rustling near his bed and opening his eyes saw an old man with a long grey beard and mild eyes.

‘You wish to execute Lailie?’ asked the old man.
‘Yes,’ answered the King. ‘But I cannot make up my mind how to do it.’

1 In this story Tolstoy has used the names of real people. Esarhaddon (or Assur-akhi-iddina) is mentioned three times in the Bible (2 Kings xxix. 37; Isaiah xxxvii. 38, and Ezra iv. 2), and is also alluded to in 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, as, ‘the King of Assyria, which took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.’ His son, Assur-bani-pal, whom he promoted to power before his own death, is once mentioned in the Bible, under the name of Asnapper (Ezra iv. 10). Of Lailie, history does not tell us much; but in Sir Ernest Budge’s History of Esarhaddon we read: ‘A King, called Lailie, asked that the gods which Esarhaddon had captured from him might be restored. His request was granted, and Esarhaddon said, “I spoke to him of brotherhood, and entrusted to him the sovereignty of the districts of Bazu.”’
‘But you are Lailie,’ said the old man.
‘That’s not true,’ replied the King. ‘Lailie is Lailie, and I am I.’
‘You and Lailie are one,’ said the old man. ‘You only imagine you are not Lailie, and that Lailie is not you.’

‘What do you mean by that?’ said the King. ‘Here am I, lying on a soft bed; around me are obedient men-slaves and women-slaves, and to-morrow I shall feast with my friends as I did to-day; whereas Lailie is sitting like a bird in a cage, and to-morrow he will be impaled, and with his tongue hanging out will struggle till he dies, and his body will be torn in pieces by dogs.’

‘You cannot destroy his life,’ said the old man.
‘And how about the fourteen thousand warriors I killed, with whose bodies I built a mound?’ said the King. ‘I am alive, but they no longer exist. Does not that prove that I can destroy life?’

‘How do you know they no longer exist?’

‘Because I no longer see them. And, above all, they were tormented, but I was not. It was ill for them, but well for me.’

‘That, also, only seems so to you. You tortured yourself, but not them.’

‘I do not understand,’ said the King.
‘Do you wish to understand?’

‘Yes, I do.’

‘Then come here,’ said the old man, pointing to a large font full of water.

The King rose and approached the font.

‘Strip, and enter the font.’

Esarhaddon did as the old man bade him.

‘As soon as I begin to pour this water over you,’ said the old man, filling a pitcher with the water, ‘dip down your head.’

The old man tilted the pitcher over the King’s
head and the King bent his head till it was under water.

And as soon as King Esarhaddon was under the water, he felt that he was no longer Esarhaddon, but some one else. And, feeling himself to be that other man, he saw himself lying on a rich bed, beside a beautiful woman. He had never seen her before, but he knew she was his wife. The woman raised herself and said to him:

'Dear husband, Lailie! You were wearied by yesterday's work and have slept longer than usual, and I have guarded your rest and have not roused you. But now the Princes await you in the Great Hall. Dress and go out to them.'

And Esarhaddon—understanding from these words that he was Lailie, and not feeling at all surprised at this, but only wondering that he did not know it before—rose, dressed, and went into the Great Hall where the Princes awaited him.

The Princes greeted Lailie, their King, bowing to the ground, and then they rose, and at his word sat down before him; and the eldest of the Princes began to speak, saying that it was impossible longer to endure the insults of the wicked King Esarhaddon, and that they must make war on him. But Lailie disagreed, and gave orders that envoys shall be sent to remonstrate with King Esarhaddon; and he dismissed the Princes from the audience. Afterwards he appointed men of note to act as ambassadors, and impressed on them what they were to say to King Esarhaddon. Having finished this business, Esarhaddon—feeling himself to be Lailie—rode out to hunt wild asses. The hunt was successful. He killed two wild asses himself, and, having returned home, feasted with his friends and witnessed a dance of slave girls. The next day he went to the Court, where he was awaited by petitioners, suitors, and
prisoners brought for trial; and there, as usual, he decided the cases submitted to him. Having finished this business, he again rode out to his favourite amusement: the hunt. And again he was successful: this time killing with his own hand an old lioness, and capturing her two cubs. After the hunt he again feasted with his friends, and was entertained with music and dances, and the night he spent with the wife whom he loved.

So, dividing his time between kingly duties and pleasures, he lived for days and weeks, awaiting the return of the ambassadors he had sent to that King Esarhaddon who used to be himself. Not till a month had passed did the ambassadors return, and they returned with their noses and ears cut off.

King Esarhaddon had ordered them to tell Lailie that what had been done to them—the ambassadors—would be done to King Lailie himself also, unless he immediately sent a tribute of silver, gold, and cypress-wood, and came himself to pay homage to King Esarhaddon.

Lailie, formerly Esarhaddon, again assembled the Princes, and took counsel with them as to what he should do. They all with one accord said that war must be made against Esarhaddon, without waiting for him to attack them. The King agreed; and taking his place at the head of the army, started on the campaign. The campaign lasts seven days. Each day the King rode round the army to rouse the courage of his warriors. On the eighth day his army met that of Esarhaddon in a broad valley through which a river flowed. Lailie's army fought bravely, but Lailie, formerly Esarhaddon, saw the enemy swarming down from the mountains like ants, over-running the valley and overwhelming his army; and, in his chariot, he flung himself into the midst of the battle, hewing and felling the
enemy. But the warriors of Lailie were but as hundreds, while those of Esarhaddon were as thousands, and Lailie felt himself wounded and taken prisoner. Nine days he journeyed with other captives, bound, and guarded by the warriors of Esarhaddon. On the tenth day he reached Nineveh, and was placed in a cage. Lailie suffered not so much from hunger and from his wound as from shame and impotent rage. He felt how powerless he was to avenge himself on his enemy for all he was suffering. All he could do was to deprive his enemies of the pleasure of seeing his sufferings; and he firmly resolved to endure courageously, without a murmur, all they could do to him. For twenty days he sat in his cage, awaiting execution. He saw his relatives and friends led out to death; he heard the groans of those who were executed: some had their hands and feet cut off, others were flayed alive, but he showed neither disquietude, nor pity, nor fear. He saw the wife he loved, bound, and led by two black eunuchs. He knew she was being taken as a slave to Esarhaddon. That, too, he bore without a murmur. But one of the guards placed to watch him said, 'I pity you, Lailie; you were a king, but what are you now?' And hearing these words, Lailie remembered all he had lost. He clutched the bars of his cage, and wishing to kill himself, beat his head against them. But he had not the strength to do so; and, groaning in despair, he fell upon the floor of his cage.

At last two executioners opened his cage door, and having strapped his arms tight behind him, led him to the place of execution, which was soaked with blood, Lailie saw a sharp stake dripping with blood, from which the corpse of one of his friends had just been torn, and he understood that this had been done that the stake might serve for
his own execution. They stripped Lailie of his clothes. He was startled at the leanness of his once strong, handsome body. The two executioners seized that body by its lean thighs; they lifted him up and were about to let him fall upon the stake.

‘This is death, destruction!’ thought Lailie, and, forgetful of his resolve to remain bravely calm to the end, he sobbed and prayed for mercy. But no one listened to him.

‘But this cannot be,’ thought he. ‘Surely I am asleep. It is a dream.’ And he made an effort to rouse himself, and did indeed awake, to find himself neither Esarhaddon nor Lailie—but some kind of an animal. He was astonished that he was an animal, and astonished, also, at not having known this before.

He was grazing in a valley, tearing the tender grass with his teeth and brushing away flies with his long tail. Around him was frolicking a long-legged, dark-grey ass-colt, striped down its back. Kicking up its hind legs, the colt galloped full speed to Esarhaddon, and poking him under the stomach with its smooth little muzzle, searched for the teat, and, finding it, quieted down, swallowing regularly. Esarhaddon understood that he was a she-ass, the colt’s mother, and this neither surprised nor grieved him, but rather gave him pleasure. He experienced a glad feeling of simultaneous life in himself and in his offspring.

But suddenly something flew near with a whistling sound and hit him in the side, and with its sharp point entered his skin and flesh. Feeling a burning pain, Esarhaddon—who was at the same time the ass—took the udder from the colt’s teeth, and laying back his ears galloped to the herd from which he had strayed. The colt kept up with him, galloping by his side. They had already nearly
ESARHADDON, KING OF ASSYRIA

reached the herd, which had started off, when another arrow in full flight struck the colt's neck. It pierced the skin and quivered in its flesh. The colt sobbed piteously and fell upon its knees. Esarhaddon could not abandon it, and remained standing over it. The colt rose, tottered on its long, thin legs, and again fell. A fearful two-legged being—a man—ran up and cut its throat.

'This cannot be; it is still a dream!' thought Esarhaddon, and made a last effort to awake. Surely I am not Lailie, nor the ass, but Esarhaddon!'

He cried out, and at the same instant lifted his head out of the font.... The old man was standing by him, pouring over his head the last drops from the pitcher.

'Oh, how terribly I have suffered! And for how long!' said Esarhaddon.

'Long?' replied the old man, 'you have only dipped your head under water and lifted it again; see, the water is not yet all out of the pitcher. Do you now understand?'

Esarhaddon did not reply, but only looked at the old man with terror.

'Do you now understand,' continued the old man, 'that Lailie is you, and the warriors you put to death were you also? And not the warriors only, but the animals which you slew when hunting and ate at your feasts, were also you. You thought life dwelt in you alone, but I have drawn aside the veil of delusion, and have let you see that by doing evil to others you have done it to yourself also. Life is one in them all, and yours is but a portion of this same common life. And only in that one part of life that is yours, can you make life better or worse—increasing or decreasing it. You can only improve life in yourself by destroying the barriers that divide your life from that of others, and by con-
IN AID OF THE PERSECUTED JEWS

considering others as yourself and loving them. By so doing you increase your share of life. You injure your life when you think of it as the only life, and try to add to its welfare at the expense of other lives. By so doing you only lessen it. To destroy the life that dwells in others is beyond your power. The life of those you have slain has vanished from your eyes, but is not destroyed. You thought to lengthen your own life and to shorten theirs, but you cannot do this. Life knows neither time nor space. The life of a moment and the life of a thousand years, your life and the life of all the visible and invisible beings in the world, are equal. To destroy life, or to alter it, is impossible, for life is the one thing that exists. All else, but seems to us to be.'

Having said this the old man vanished.

Next morning King Esarhaddon gave orders that Lailie and all the prisoners should be set at liberty and that the executions should cease.

On the third day he called his son Assur-bani-pal, and gave the kingdom over into his hands, and he himself went into the desert to think over all he had learnt. Afterwards he went about as a wanderer through the towns and villages, preaching to the people that all life is one, and that when men wish to harm others, they really do evil to themselves.

1903.
WORK, DEATH AND SICKNESS

A LEGEND.

THIS is a legend current among the South Ameri- 
can Indians.

God, say they, at first made men so that they had 
no need to work: they needed neither houses, nor 
clothes, nor food, and they all lived till they were 
a hundred and did not know what illness was.

When, after some time, God looked to see how 
people were living, he saw that instead of being 
happy in their life, they had quarrelled with one 
another, and each caring for himself, had brought 
matters to such a pass that far from enjoying life, 
they cursed it.

Then God said to himself: ‘This comes of their 
living separately, each for himself’ And to change 
this state of things, God so arranged matters that it 
became impossible for people to live without 
working. To avoid suffering from cold and hunger, 
they were now obliged to build dwellings, and to dig 
the ground, and to grow and gather fruits and grain.

‘Work will bring them together,’ thought God. 
‘They cannot make their tools, prepare and trans- 
port their timber, build their houses, sow and 
gather their harvests, spin and weave, and make 
their clothes, each one alone by himself.

‘It will make them understand that the more 
heartily they work together, the more they will 
have and the better they will live; and this will 
unite them.’

Time passed on, and again God came to see how 
men were living, and whether they were now happy. 
But he found them living worse than before. 
They worked together (that they could not help 
doing), but not all together, being broken up into 
little groups. And each group tried to snatch work
from other groups, and they hindered one another, wasting time and strength in their struggles, so that things went ill with them all.

Having seen that this, too, was not well, God decided so to arrange things that man should not know the time of his death, but might die at any moment; and he announced this to them.

'Knowing that each of them may die at any moment,' thought God, 'they will not, by grasping at gains that may last so short a time, spoil the hours of life allotted to them.'

But it turned out otherwise. When God returned to see how people were living, he saw that their life was as bad as ever.

Those who were strongest, availing themselves of the fact that men might die at any time, subdued those who were weaker, killing some and threatening others with death. And it came about that the strongest and their descendants did no work, and suffered from the weariness of idleness, while those who were weaker had to work beyond their strength, and suffered from lack of rest. Each set of men feared and hated the other. And the life of man became yet more unhappy.

Having seen all this, God, to mend matters, decided to make use of one last means; he sent all kinds of sickness among men. God thought that when all men were exposed to sickness they would understand that those who are well should have pity on those who are sick and should help them, that when they themselves fall ill, those who are well might in turn help them.

And again God went away; but when He came back to see how men lived now that they were subject to sicknesses, he saw that their life was worse even than before. The very sickness that in God's purpose should have united men, had divided them
more than ever. Those men who were strong enough to make others work, forced them also to wait on them in times of sickness; but they did not, in their turn, look after others who were ill. And those who were forced to work for others and to look after them when sick, were so worn with work that they had no time to look after their own sick, but left them without attendance. That the sight of sick folk might not disturb the pleasures of the wealthy, houses were arranged in which these poor people suffered and died, far from those whose sympathy might have cheered them, and in the arms of hired people who nursed them without compassion, or even with disgust. Moreover, people considered many of the illnesses infectious, and, fearing to catch them, not only avoided the sick, but even separated themselves from those who attended the sick.

Then God said to Himself: 'If even this means will not bring men to understand wherein their happiness lies, let them be taught by suffering.' And God left men to themselves.

And, left to themselves, men lived long before they understood that they all ought to, and might, be happy. Only in the very latest times have a few of them begun to understand that work ought not to be a bugbear to some and like galley-slavery for others, but should be a common and happy occupation, uniting all men. They have begun to understand that with death constantly threatening each of us, the only reasonable business of every man is to spend the years, months, hours, and minutes, allotted him—in unity and love. They have begun to understand that sickness, far from dividing men, should, on the contrary, give opportunity for loving union with one another.

1903.
THREE QUESTIONS

IT once occurred to a certain king, that if he always knew the right time to begin everything; if he knew who were the right people to listen to and whom to avoid; and, above all, if he always knew what was the most important thing to do, he would never fail in anything he might undertake.

And this thought having occurred to him, he had it proclaimed throughout his kingdom that he would give a great reward to any one who would teach him what was the right time for every action, and who were the most necessary people, and how he might know what was the most important thing to do.

And learned men came to the King, but they all answered his questions differently.

In reply to the first question, some said that to know the right time for every action one must draw up in advance, a table of days, months, and years, and must live strictly according to it. Only thus, said they, could everything be done at its proper time. Others declared that it was impossible to decide beforehand the right time for every action; but that, not letting oneself be absorbed in idle pastimes, one should always attend to all that was going on and then do what was most needful. Others, again, said that however attentive the King might be to what was going on, it was impossible for one man to decide correctly the right time for every action, but that he should have a Council of wise men who would help him to fix the proper time for everything.

But then again others said there were some things which could not wait to be laid before a Council,
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but about which one had at once to decide whether to undertake them or not. But in order to decide that, one must know beforehand what was going to happen. It is only magicians who know that; and, therefore, in order to know the right time for every action, one must consult magicians.

Equally various were the answers to the second question. Some said, the people the King most needed were his councillors; others, the priests; others, the doctors; while some said the warriors were the most necessary.

To the third question, as to what was the most important occupation: some replied that the most important thing in the world was science. Others said it was skill in warfare; and others, again, that it was religious worship.

All the answers being different, the King agreed with none of them, and gave the reward to none. But still wishing to find the right answers to his questions, he decided to consult a hermit widely renowned for his wisdom.

The hermit lived in a wood which he never quitted, and he received none but common folk. So the King put on simple clothes, and before reaching the hermit's cell dismounted from his horse, and, leaving his bodyguard behind, went on alone.

When the King approached, the hermit was digging the ground in front of his hut. Seeing the King, he greeted him and went on digging. The hermit was frail and weak, and each time he stuck his spade into the ground and turned a little earth, he breathed heavily.

The King went up to him and said: 'I have come to you, wise hermit, to ask you to answer three questions: How can I learn to do the right thing at the right time? Who are the people I most need, and to whom should I, therefore, pay more atten-
IN AID OF THE PERSECUTED JEWS

tion than to the rest? And, what affairs are the most important, and need my first attention?"

The hermit listened to the King, but answered nothing. He just spat on his hand and recommenced digging.

"You are tired," said the King, "let me take the spade and work awhile for you."

"Thanks!" said the hermit, and, giving the spade to the King, he sat down on the ground.

When he had dug two beds, the King stopped and repeated his questions. The hermit again gave no answer, but rose, stretched out his hand for the spade, and said:

"Now rest awhile—and let me work a bit."

But the King did not give him the spade, and continued to dig. One hour passed, and another. The sun began to sink behind the trees, and the King at last stuck the spade into the ground, and said:

"I came to you, wise man, for an answer to my questions. If you can give me none, tell me so and I will return home."

"Here comes some one running," said the hermit, "let us see who it is."

The King turned round, and saw a bearded man come running out of the wood. The man held his hands pressed against his stomach, and blood was flowing from under them. When he reached the King, he fell fainting on the ground moaning feebly. The King and the hermit unfastened the man's clothing. There was a large wound in his stomach. The King washed it as best he could, and bandaged it with his handkerchief and with a towel the hermit had. But the blood would not stop flowing, and the King again and again removed the bandage soaked with warm blood, and washed and rebandaged the wound. When at last the blood ceased flowing, the man revived and asked for something to drink.
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The King brought fresh water and gave it to him. Meanwhile the sun had set, and it had become cool. So the King, with the hermit's help, carried the wounded man into the hut and laid him on the bed. Lying on the bed the man closed his eyes and was quiet; but the King was so tired with his walk and with the work he had done, that he crouched down on the threshold, and also fell asleep—so soundly that he slept all through the short summer night. When he awoke in the morning, it was long before he could remember where he was or who was the strange bearded man lying on the bed and gazing intently at him with shining eyes.

'Forgive me!' said the bearded man in a weak voice, when he saw that the King was awake and was looking at him.

'I do not know you, and have nothing to forgive you for,' said the King.

'You do not know me, but I know you. I am that enemy of yours who swore to revenge himself on you, because you executed his brother and seized his property. I knew you had gone alone to see the hermit, and I resolved to kill you on your way back. But the day passed and you did not return. So I came out from my ambush to find you, and I came upon your bodyguard and they recognized me and wounded me. I escaped from them, but should have bled to death had you not dressed my wounds. I wished to kill you, and you have saved my life. Now, if I live, and if you wish it, I will serve you as your most faithful slave and will bid my sons do the same. Forgive me!'

The King was very glad to have made peace with his enemy so easily, and to have gained him for a friend, and he not only forgave him, but said he would send his servants and his own physician to attend him, and promised to restore his property.
IN AID OF THE PERSECUTED JEWS

Having taken leave of the wounded man, the King went out into the porch and looked around for the hermit. Before going away he wished once more to beg an answer to the questions he had put. The hermit was outside, on his knees, sowing seeds in the beds that had been dug the day before.

The King approached him, and said:

'For the last time, I pray you to answer my questions, wise man.'

'You have already been answered!' said the hermit still crouching on his thin legs, and looking up at the King, who stood before him.

'How answered? What do you mean?' asked the King.

'Do you not see,' replied the hermit. 'If you had not pitied my weakness yesterday and had not dug these beds for me, but had gone your way, that man would have attacked you and you would have repented of not having stayed with me. So the most important time was when you were digging the beds; and I was the most important man; and to do me good was your most important business. Afterwards, when that man ran to us, the most important time was when you were attending to him, for if you had not bound up his wounds he would have died without having made peace with you. So he was the most important man, and what you did for him was your most important business. Remember then: there is only one time that is important—Now! It is the most important time because it is the only time when we have any power. The most necessary man is he with whom you are, for no man knows whether he will ever have dealings with any one else: and the most important affair is, to do him good, because for that purpose alone was man sent into this life!'
and Guy de Maupassant follow, and three stories written in aid of the Jews left destitute after the massacres of 1903. Tolstoy's humour and honesty led him to write profoundly but never ponderously, while his fertile and original mind gave a quality of unexpectedness to everything he produced.

Jacket design by Peggy Fortnum

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