

*Tolstoy on how to
make a poor man happy*



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There is but one way of ever ameliorating human life and it is by the love of one’s fellow man for his own sake and not for personal gratification. The greatest Theosophist — he who loves divine truth under all its forms — is the one who works for and with the poor. There is a man known to the entire intellectual Europe-America who possibly may never have heard the name of The Theosophical Society; I mean Count Leo N. Tolstoy, author of *War and Peace*. This great writer is a perfect model for all aspirants to true Theosophy. He is the first in European aristocracy to have solved this problem: “What can I do to make happy any poor man whom I may meet?” This is what he says:

I think that it is the duty of everyone to work for all who may need help; *to work with the hands*, remember, a certain portion of your day. It is more practical to work with and for the poor man than to give him a portion of your intellectual labour. In the first case you help not only him who needs to be helped, but you preach by means of example to the lazy one and the beggar; you show them that you do not consider their prosaic work as being below your dignity, and thus you inculcate in him the feeling of respect and esteem for himself and of satisfaction with his destiny. If, however, you persist in working solely in your own high intellectual region and give to the poor the product of your labour, as one gives alms to the beggar, you will succeed only in encouraging his laziness and his feeling of inferiority. In doing so you establish a difference of social caste between yourself and him who accepts your alms. You take away from him his self-esteem and his confidence in you and you suggest to him aspirations to shake off the hard conditions of his existence, spent in daily physical labour, to associate himself with your life which appears to him easier than his

¹ [This essay from H.P. Blavatsky’s pen was also issued in pamphlet form under the title: *Fausse Conceptions, Réponse à diverses critiques* (Tours: Imp. de E. Arrault, 1887. 8°. 20 pp. 2 fr.). According to the Bibliographer Albert L. Caillet, “Aleph” was Charles Limousin, Editor of the Journal *Acacia*. This pamphlet is very difficult to obtain, but can be consulted in the holdings of the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris (8° R. Pièce 3782). Blavatsky’s text is preceded therein by the following editorial notice:

“In order to reply to various criticisms which we receive from time to time, and which are due to the ignorance, rather excusable, of our critics, and to the secret slander of our enemies — former Fellows expelled from the Society or priests of idolatry in science as well as religion — we think it useful to publish separately the following essay of Madame Blavatsky, which appeared in No. 6 of *Le Lotus*. One could think of ALEPH as representing the public in general, and of Madame Blavatsky as representing The Theosophical Society, at least as far as the general tendency and the goal are concerned.”

— Boris de Zirkoff.]

MYSTIC VERSE AND INSIGHTS
HOW TO MAKE A POOR MAN HAPPY

own, to wear your garb which seems to him more beautiful than his own, and to obtain access to your social position which he considers superior to his own. It is not in this manner, owing to *scientific and intellectual progress*, that we can ever hope to assist the poor, or to inculcate into humanity the idea of a true fraternity.

In India the Theosophical “missionaries” labour towards the eradication of the caste idea and with a view to uniting all the castes in their fraternity. We have already seen — a thing incredible and impossible before their arrival in the country of the Sacred Cows and the Bull-Gods — Brāhmana and Pariah, Hindu and Buddhist, Parsī and Mohammedan, seated at the same table. When we see in republican France aristocrats and financiers keep company with their laundrymen, or a lady of society, proud of her democratic sentiments, help a poor farmer’s wife plant her cabbage, as is done by the daughter of Count Tolstoy and by the real European Theosophists at Madras and elsewhere — then we may say that there is hope for the poor in Europe.

