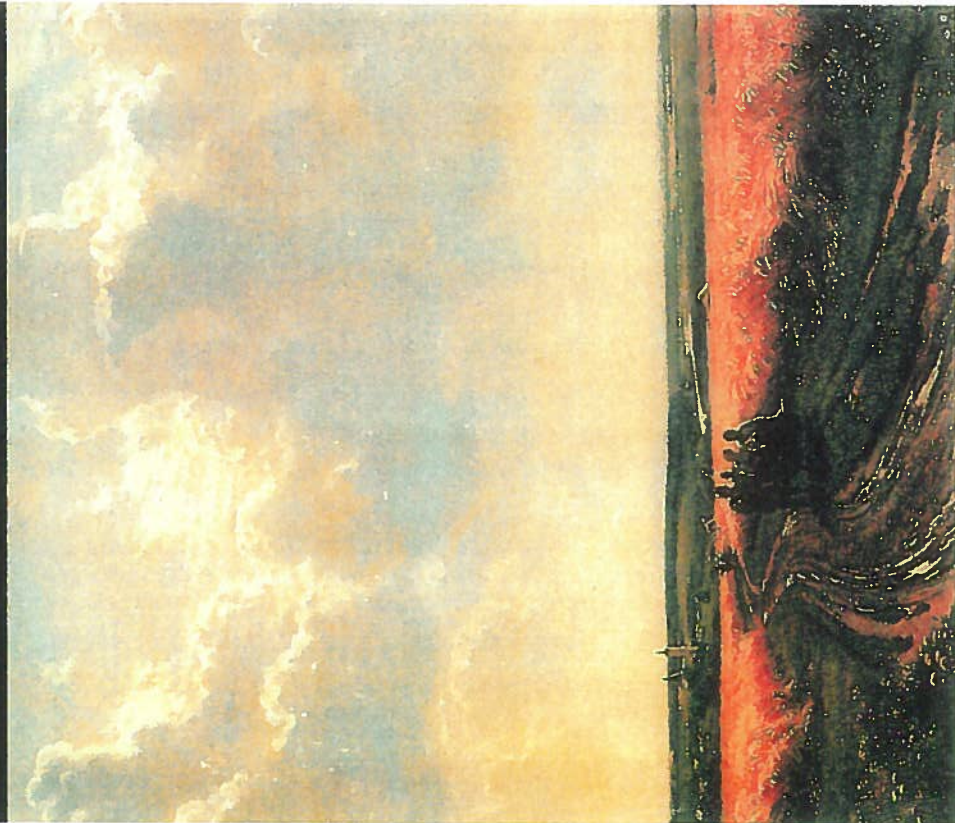


PENGUIN (P) CLASSICS

LEO TOLSTOY
HOW MUCH LAND DOES
A MAN NEED?
AND OTHER STORIES



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HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN NEED?
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TRANSLATED BY RONALD WILKS WITH AN
INTRODUCTION BY A. N. WILSON

'Is it possible that man's heart can harbour, amid
such ravishing natural beauty, feelings of hatred,
vengeance, or the desire to destroy his fellows?'
— from 'The Raid' (1853)

The early stories in this collection — 'The Raid', 'The
Woodfelling', 'The Prisoner of the Caucasus' — take us
back to the action-packed years 1851–54 that Tolstoy
spent with the Russian army in the wild and beautiful
mountains of the Caucasus. With a young man's passion
and a great writer's insight and irony, he was already
exploring the profound moral questions of war, love,
courage, and our relationship with nature and
civilization, that were to dominate his whole life and art.

As well as the novella *Two Hussars*, this volume contains
several later tales including the brilliant parable 'How
Much Land Does a Man Need?', 'Where Love is, God is'
and 'What Men Live by', stories characterized by their
freshness, biblical simplicity and inspiration.

The cover shows *Midday* by Ivan Shishkin in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

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WHERE LOVE IS, GOD IS

In a certain town there lived a shoemaker called Martin Avdeich. He had a small basement room, with one window looking out on to the street. Through it he could see people passing by and although only their feet were visible Martin could tell who they were from their shoes. Martin had lived there for a long time and so he had many friends. There were few pairs of shoes in the neighbourhood that had not passed once or even twice through his hands. Some he had re-soled, others he had fitted with new side-pieces, others he had stitched up, and some he had fitted with new toe-caps, so he could often see the fruits of his own handiwork through the window. He was always busy, since he always did an excellent job, used good materials, never overcharged and could be relied upon. If he knew that he could complete a job on time he would undertake it. If not, he would not make false promises and would tell his customers. Everyone knew Martin and he was never short of work. He had always been a good man, but as old age approached he began to think more about his soul and drawing nearer to God.

His wife had died when he was still an apprentice, leaving him with a three-year-old son. None of their other children survived infancy. At first Martin was inclined to send his little boy to his sister's in the country, but then the thought of parting with him made him decide against it. 'It would be very hard for my little Kapiton to grow up in a strange family,' he thought, 'so I'll keep him here with me.'

When Martin had left his master he went to live with his son in lodgings. But it was not God's wish that he should find happiness in his children. As soon as he had grown up and was able to help his father and bring him joy, he became ill and after being in bed for a week with a high fever he died. After Martin had buried his son he fell into despair, so deep that he blamed God for everything. He was so overwhelmed by grief that more than once he begged God to let him die and reproached Him for taking his only beloved son instead of an old man like himself. And he stopped going to church.

One day a wise old man from the same village as Martin, who had been wandering around the countryside for eight years, called in to see him on his way back from the Monastery of the Holy Trinity. Martin opened his heart to him, bemoaning his sad lot.

'Holy man,' he said, 'I've lost the will to live. All I want is to die, that's all I ask of God. There's nothing left for me now.'

And the wise man told him, 'It is wicked to talk like that, Martin. It is not for us to question the ways of God. We must bow to God's judgement and not always be guided by our own reason. If it was God's will that your son should die and that you should live, then it must be for the best. You are in such despair because you only want to live for your own happiness!'

'What else should I live for?' Martin asked.

'You must live for God, Martin,' the old man replied. 'He gave you life, so it is He you should live for. If you live for Him you will never grieve again and all your sorrows will be easy to bear.'

'But how should one live for God!'

The old man replied, 'It was Christ who showed us how to live for God. Can you read? Well, go and buy the Gospels and study them. Then you will discover how to live for God. Everything is written there.'

These words imprinted themselves on Martin's heart and that same day he bought himself a large-print copy of the New Testament and sat down to read.

At first Martin meant to read the Gospels only on church festivals, but once he had started he felt so uplifted that he read them every day. Sometimes he became so engrossed that all the oil in his lamp was used up before he could tear himself away. And Martin would sit down to read every evening and the more he read the more clearly he understood what God required of him and how he could live for Him. Consequently his heart grew lighter and lighter. Before, when he had gone to bed, he would lie moaning and sighing as he thought of his little Kapiton, but now he would simply repeat, 'Glory to Thee, O Lord! Thy will be done.'

And from then on Martin's life was completely transformed. On church holidays he had been in the habit of going to drink tea at a tavern and would never refuse a glass or two of vodka. Sometimes he liked to have a few drinks with a friend and although he was never

drunk when he came out, he would be fairly tipsy – and then he would talk a lot of nonsense, shout at his friend and say nasty things. But now all that was a thing of the past and his life became peaceful and full of joy. In the morning he would sit down to work and when he had finished he would take the lamp off its hook, put it on the table, fetch the Bible from the shelf and start reading. And the more he read the more he understood, and the clearer and happier in his mind he became.

Once Martin sat over his Bible until very late. He was reading the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St Luke and came to the following verses:

And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

And he read further, where the Lord says,

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

When Martin read those words his heart was filled with joy. He took off his spectacles, placed them on the Bible, leant his elbows on the table and pondered for a moment. As he reviewed his own life in the light of those words he thought, 'Is my house built on rock or on sand? If it is built on rock, then all is well. It's easy enough, sitting here thinking I've done all that God has commanded. But then I might be tempted and sin again. Never mind, I shall not give up. Yes, that would be good. Help me, O Lord!'

After these reflections he wanted to go to bed, but was reluctant to tear himself away from the book. So he began the seventh chapter and read about the centurion, the widow's son and the answer to John's disciples, and he came to the passage where the rich Pharisee invited Christ into his house and where the woman who had sinned anointed His feet and washed them with her tears. Christ had forgiven her. At verse forty-four he read,

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

After reading these verses he thought, '... thou gavest me no water for my feet ... gavest me no kiss ... didst not anoint my head ...'

And he took off his spectacles again, placed them on the Bible and thought hard.

'That Pharisee must have been like me. I've only ever worried about myself, thinking of the next cup of tea, keeping warm and cosy and I've never shown anyone hospitality. Simon only worried about himself and couldn't have cared less about his guest. And who was his guest? Why, it was Christ Himself. Now, would I have behaved like that if Christ had come here?'

And he laid his head on both arms and dozed off almost before he knew it.

'Martin!' he suddenly heard, as though someone were whispering into his ear.

Martin started and sleepily asked, 'Who's there?'

He turned round and glanced at the door - no one was there. He laid his head down again to sleep and then heard quite distinctly, 'Martin, Martin! Look out into the street tomorrow, for I will come.'

Martin roused himself, got up from his chair and rubbed his eyes. He did not know whether he had been dreaming or awake when he heard those words and he put the lamp out and went to bed.

Next morning Martin got up before dawn, said his prayers, and

then lit the stove, warmed up some cabbage soup and porridge, lit the samovar, put his apron on and sat down to work by the window. And as he sat there he could not forget what had happened the night before. And he was in two minds about it, thinking first that he had imagined everything and then persuading himself that he *had* heard a voice.

'Well,' he decided, 'I think I really did hear one.'

Martin went and sat at his window, but he concentrated more on what was happening outside than on his work. Whenever anyone came past in unfamiliar boots he would crouch in such a way that he could clearly see that person's face as well as the feet. A house-porter went by in new felt boots, then a water-carrier. Then an old soldier from Nicholas I's time, wearing old, patched felt boots, with a shovel in his hand, appeared outside the window. Martin recognized him from the boots: the man's name was Stepanych and a neighbouring tradesman gave him food and lodging out of charity. His job was to help the house-porter and he began clearing away the snow outside Martin's window. Martin looked at him and resumed work.

'I must be going soft in the head!' Martin exclaimed, laughing at himself. 'It's only old Stepanych clearing away the snow and I immediately conclude that it's Christ who's come to visit me! Silly old fogey!'

However, after about a dozen more stitches, Martin again felt the urge to look out of the window. This time he saw that Stepanych had propped his shovel against the wall and he could not quite see whether he was warming himself or simply resting.

He was obviously only a poor, broken-down man who just did not have the strength to clear the snow away. Martin thought he might offer him a cup of tea, especially as the samovar happened to be on the boil. Martin stuck his awl in a piece of leather, put the samovar on the table, made the tea and tapped on the window. Stepanych turned round and came over. Martin beckoned to him to come inside and went to open the door.

'Come in and warm yourself,' he said. 'You must be frozen stiff.'

'God bless you! My bones are aching,' Stepanych replied.

Then he came in, shook off the snow and started tottering as he wiped his feet so as not to dirty the floor.

'Don't bother about that,' Martin said, 'I'll clean up afterwards. It's

all in a day's work! Come through and sit down. Now, have some tea.'

Martin filled two glasses, offering one to his guest and emptying his own into a saucer and blowing on it.

When Stepanych had emptied his glass he turned it upside-down, put the remains of the sugar on it and thanked his host. But he obviously wanted some more.

'Drink up,' Martin said, refilling his guest's glass and his own. As he drank his tea Martin kept looking out into the street.

'Are you expecting someone?' his guest asked.

'Am I expecting someone? Well, I feel too ashamed to tell you. As it happens I'm both expecting and not expecting. The fact is, there are some words I just cannot get out of my head. Whether I imagined I heard them I can't really say. You see, my friend, last night I was reading the Gospels, about our dear Lord Christ and how He suffered and walked this earth. I'm sure you must have heard all about it.'

'Yes. I've heard about it,' Stepanych replied. 'But I'm an ignorant man, can't read or write.'

'Well, I was reading about how He walked this earth and how He went to the house of a Pharisee who did not make Him welcome. Well, as I read further I thought to myself how badly Christ the Father was treated. Supposing Christ had come to my house – or to someone like me – what wouldn't I have done to give Him a proper welcome! But that Simon would not receive Him into his house. That's what I was thinking when I fell asleep. And in my sleep I heard someone call my name. Then I lifted my head and thought I could hear someone whispering, "Expect me, for I shall come and see thee tomorrow." Twice I heard that voice whisper. Well, as you can imagine, those words affected me deeply. I know I'm being silly, but I'm expecting our heavenly Father!'

Stepanych silently shook his head, emptied his glass and laid it on its side. But Martin stood it up again and refilled it.

'Here, drink some more. And I was thinking about the time when our Lord was upon this earth, despising no one and mixing mostly with ordinary folk. Yes, He always went with the humble and chose His disciples mainly from folk like us, from ordinary sinners and working people. "Whosoever exalts himself," He said, "the same

shall be abased; and whosoever shall abase himself, the same shall be exalted." "You call me Lord," He said, "but I shall wash thy feet." "He who would be first," He said, "let him be the servant of all." "Because," He said, "blessed are the poor, the humble, the meek, and the merciful."'

Stepanych completely forgot his tea. He was an old man, easily moved to tears and as he sat there listening, the tears rolled down his cheeks.

'Come on, drink your tea,' Martin said. But Stepanych crossed himself, thanked him, moved the glass away and got up.

'Thank you, Martin,' he said. 'You have welcomed me and nourished me in spirit and in body.'

'You are always welcome here. I'm only too glad to have a visitor,' Martin replied.

Stepanych left and Martin poured out what was left of the tea, drank it, cleared the glasses away, sat down again by the window and began stitching the back of a shoe. And as he stitched he kept looking out of the window, waiting for Christ and thinking only of Him and His works. And his head was full of Christ's many sayings.

Two soldiers went past – one in army boots, the other in his own; then the owner of the house next door, in shining galoshes; then a baker with a basket. They all went by and then a woman in woollen stockings and rough peasant shoes came towards the window. But then she stopped by the wall. Martin looked up at her from the window and saw that she was a stranger, poorly dressed, and that she had a child in her arms. She stood against the wall with her back to the wind and tried to wrap the baby up, although she had nothing warm to wrap it in, as she was wearing a summer dress – and a very shabby one at that. Through the window Martin could hear the baby crying. The woman was trying to soothe the child but there was no way it would be comforted. Martin got up, went to the door, climbed the steps and called out, 'My dear woman!'

She heard him and turned round.

'Why are you standing out there in the freezing cold?' he asked. 'And with a little child! Come inside, you can make him nice and warm in here. Follow me.'

The woman was surprised to see an old man in an apron, with spectacles on his nose calling out to her, but she followed him down the stairs and into the little room, where he led her to the bed.

'There, sit by the stove, dear. You can warm yourself and feed the baby.'

'But I've no milk,' she replied. 'Haven't eaten a thing this morning.' But still she tried to put the child to her breast.

Martin shook his head, went to the table for some bread and a bowl, after which he opened the stove door and poured some cabbage soup into the bowl. He also took the porridge pot out, but the porridge was not ready, so he served only the soup, putting the bread next to it, together with a napkin that he took from a hook.

'Please sit down,' he said, 'and have something to eat, dear woman, while I hold the baby. Why, I had children of my own once, so I know how to nurse them.'

The woman crossed herself, sat down and began to eat, while Martin sat on the bed with the baby. He tried to make a smacking sound with his lips to soothe the child, but since he had no teeth he made a poor job of it. The baby would not stop crying, so Martin wagged his finger at the baby's mouth and then quickly withdrew it, without letting the baby suck it as his finger was black with shoemaker's wax. The child stopped crying when it saw the finger and then it began to laugh. Martin was delighted. As she drank her soup the woman told him who she was and where she had been.

'I'm a soldier's wife,' she said. 'They sent my husband somewhere far away about eight months ago and since then I've heard nothing of him. I was a cook until my baby was born, and then they wouldn't keep me any more. So I've been struggling along without any job for three months now. All the money I had was spent on food. I wanted to become a wet-nurse, but no one would take me — they said I was too thin. I've just been to see a tradesman's wife — a woman from our village is working for her. She had promised to take me and I thought everything would be all right, but now she's told me to come back next week. She lives such a long way from here. I'm worn out and my baby's cold and hungry, poor darling. Thank God my landlady's taken pity on us and given us free lodging, otherwise I don't know what I'd do.'

Martin sighed. 'Don't you have anything warmer to wear?'

'Yes, I should be wearing warm clothes in this weather, but only yesterday I had to pawn my last shawl for a few copecks.'

The woman went over to the bed and took the child. Martin stood

up and rummaged about in some things hanging on the wall until he found an old jacket.

'Here you are,' he said, 'it's nothing very much, but you can wrap him up warm in it.'

The woman looked at the jacket, then at the old man and she burst into tears as she took it. Martin turned away, crept under the bed and brought out a small chest. He searched for a while (apparently finding nothing) and then sat down opposite the woman.

'May the Lord bless you!' she exclaimed. 'It must have been Christ Himself who sent me to your window, otherwise my baby would have perished with cold. When I set out this morning it was mild, but now it's really freezing. It must have been Christ who encouraged you to look out of your window and take pity on a poor wretch like me.'

Martin smiled and said, 'You are right, it was He who encouraged me. And I had good reason, my dear!'

And Martin told the soldier's wife about his dream, how he had heard a voice promising him that the Lord would visit him that day.

'Yes, all things are possible,' the woman said, getting up. She threw the jacket over herself, wrapped the baby, curtseyed and thanked Martin again.

'Please take this, for Christ's sake!' Martin said, handing her a twenty-copeck piece to get her shawl out of pawn. The woman crossed herself and so did Martin as he saw her out.

When she was gone Martin ate some soup, cleared the table and sat down to work. As he worked he kept watching that window and every time a shadow fell across it he would immediately look up to see who was passing. People he knew and strangers passed, but no one in particular.

And then an old market woman stopped right in front of his window. She was carrying an apple-basket but appeared to have sold most of her wares, as it was almost empty. On one shoulder was a sack of wood-shavings which she had most probably collected at some place where they were building and was on her way home. The sack was clearly very heavy and was hurting her, so to shift it to her other shoulder she put it down on the pavement, placed the apple-basket on a post and gave the shavings a shake. Just as she was doing this a boy in a ragged cap suddenly ran up, grabbed an apple

and tried to run off with it. But the old woman had spotted him, turned round and grabbed his sleeve. The boy tried to struggle free, but the woman seized him with both hands, knocked his cap off and caught hold of his hair. The boy screamed and the woman cursed. Martin did not wait to make fast hisawl but threw it down, rushed through the door and stumbled up the stairs, dropping his spectacles on the way. Out in the street the woman was cursing away, and evidently intended hauling the boy off to the police station. He struggled and protested his innocence.

'I never took it!' he said. 'What are you hitting me for? Let me go!'

Martin separated them, took the boy by the hand and said, 'Let him go, Grandma. Forgive him, for Christ's sake!'

'I'll forgive him, but not before he's had a taste of some new birch twigs! I'm taking the little devil to the police station.'

Martin did his best to dissuade her. 'Please let him go, Grandma. He won't ever do it again. For Christ's sake, let him go.'

The old woman released the boy, who wanted to run off, but Martin stopped him.

'You should ask the old woman to forgive you,' he said. 'And don't you ever do it again - I saw you take it.'

The boy burst into tears and begged her to forgive him.

'That's the way! Now, here's an apple for you,' Martin said, taking an apple from the basket and handing it to the boy. 'I'll pay for it, Grandma,' he added.

'But you'll only spoil little devils like him that way,' she said. 'What he deserves is such a thrashing he won't be able to sit down for a week.'

'Oh, Grandma!' Martin retorted. 'That may be our way, but it's not God's way. If the punishment for stealing just one apple is a thorough thrashing, then what should we deserve for our mortal sins?'

The old woman did not reply.

And Martin told her the parable of the master who excused one of his servants a great debt and how that servant went out and seized his own debtor by the throat. The old woman listened and so did the boy.

'God has commanded us to forgive, otherwise He will not forgive us. We should forgive everyone - not least thoughtless little boys!'

The old woman shook her head and sighed. 'That's all very well, but children are terribly spoil these days.'

'Then it's up to us, their elders, to teach them what's right,' Martin said.

'Yes, I agree,' the old woman replied. 'I had seven children once, but now I've only one daughter.'

And she told him how and where she and her daughter were living, and how many grandchildren she had.

'As you can see, I'm not very strong,' she said, 'but I still have to work myself to the bone. I feel so sorry for my grandchildren - such lovely boys, all of them! No one is as kind to me as they are. And my Aksyutka wouldn't leave me for anyone. "Dear Mummy," she says, "you're such a dear!"' And the old woman was quite overcome.

'Well, I suppose it's because he's so young,' she added, looking at the boy. 'May God be with him.'

She was about to lift her sack on to her shoulders when the boy immediately ran forward to help. 'Let me carry that for you, Grandma,' he said, 'I'm going your way.'

The old woman accepted and put the sack on the boy's back.

And off they went down the street. The old woman forgot to ask Martin to pay for the apple and Martin stood there, watching and listening to them talking as they went.

When they were out of sight Martin returned to his room. His spectacles lay unbroken on the steps and he took hisawl and started work again. But before long he found that he could not see to pass the cord through the holes in the leather. Then he saw the lamplighter on his rounds.

'Yes, it's time I had some proper light in here,' he thought. So he trimmed his lamp, hung it up and got to work. After finishing off one boot he turned it over to inspect it: it was perfect. So he put his tools to one side, swept up the cuttings, cleared away all the cords, laces and pieces of leather, stood his lamp on the table and took the Gospels from the shelf. He meant to open them at the place he had marked with a strip of morocco the previous day, but the book fell open at a different page. And when Martin saw it he remembered last night's dream. And no sooner did he remember it than he heard footsteps, as if someone was there, moving around behind him. Martin turned round and saw what appeared to be people in the dark

corner, but he could not make out who they were. A voice whispered in his ear, 'Martin, Martin! Don't you know me?'

'Who is it?' Martin asked.

'It is I,' the voice said. 'Behold, it is I!'

And out of the dark corner stepped Stepanych. He smiled and then he was gone, melting away like a small cloud.

'It is I,' repeated the voice. And out of the dark corner stepped the woman with the baby. She smiled, and so did the child, and then they too vanished.

'It is I!' said the voice. And out stepped the old woman and the boy with the apple. Both smiled, and then they too disappeared.

And Martin's heart was filled with joy. He crossed himself, put on his spectacles and looked at the page where the Bible had fallen open. At the top he read, 'For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in . . .'

And, lower down, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' (Matthew xxv)

And Martin understood that his dream had come true, that his Saviour had visited him that day and that he had welcomed Him into his house.