

# Criticism of Leo Tolstoy

Ivan Panin

# Contents

Tolstoy the Artist	3
Tolstoy the Preacher	16
Extract From 'My Literary Passions'	26
Extract From 'Essays on Russian Novelists'	30
Russian Romance	48
Extracts From 'A Survey of Russian Literature'	52
Extract From 'An Outline of Russian Literature'	92
The Russian Point of View	103
Extract From 'Prophets of Dissent'	110

# Tolstoy the Artist

by Ivan Panin

Ivan Nikolayevitch Panin (1855–1942) was a Russian emigrant to the United States, who achieved fame for claiming to have discovered numeric patterns in the text of the Hebrew and Greek Bible and for his published work based on his subsequent research. This essay was taken from Panin's critical work *Lectures on Russian Literature*, first published in 1889, which explores the art of Tolstoy's writing.

1. I have stated in the first lecture that the soul of man ever strives onward and upward; that its goal is the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, which consists in reverence before God above, and in love towards man here below. I have stated that of this journey of the soul heavenward, literature is the record; that the various phases of literary development are only so many mile-posts on the road; that after the voices of the singer, of the protester, of the warrior, are hushed, there must be heard what must remain forever the loftiest voice in letters, — the voice of the preacher, the prophet, the inspirer. And I have stated that just as Pushkin is the singer, Gogol the protester, and Turgenev the fighter, so is Tolstoy in Russian literature the preacher, the inspirer.

2. But just because he is the prophet, the uplifter, the proclaimer, Tolstoy is no longer the merely Russian writer. Pushkin is the Russian singer, Gogol is the Russian protester, and Turgenev is the Russian fighter; but Tolstoy is not the inspirer of Russia alone, but of all mankind. Tolstoy has the least of the Russian in him, because he has the most of the man in him; he has the least of the son of the Slav in him, because he has the most of the Son of God in him. The voice of Leo Tolstoy is not the voice of the nineteenth century, but of all centuries; the voice of Leo Tolstoy is not the voice of one land, but of all lands; for the voice of Leo Tolstoy, in short, is the voice of God speaking through man.

3. For, O my friends, there is a God in heaven, even though the voices of pessimism and agnosticism be raised never so high against him. There is a God who ruleth over the heavens and over the earth; and he is boundless with space, and everlasting with time; and he is sublime with the sky, and he twinkleth with the star; and he smileth with the sun, and he beameth with the moon; and he floateth with the cloud, and he saileth with the wind; he flasheth with the lightning, and resoundeth with the thunder, he heaveth with the sea, and he dasheth with the surf; he floweth with the river, and he rusheth with the torrent; he babbleth with the brook, and he sparkleth with the dew-drop; he repositeth with the landscape, and he laugheth with the meadow; he waveth with the tree, and he quivereth with the leaf; he singeth with the bird, and he buzzeth with the bee; he roareth with the lion, and he pranceth with the steed; he crawlth

with the worm, and he soareth with the eagle; he darteth with the porpoise, and he diveth with the fish; he dwelleth with the loving, and he pleadeth with the hating; he shineth with the merciful, and he aspireth with the prayerful. He is ever nigh unto men, — he, the Prince of Light!

4. And I say unto ye that the Lord God hath not hid himself from the hearts of men; he that spake unto Moses and the prophets, and through them, — he is still nigh. He that spake unto Jesus and the Apostles, and through them, — he is still nigh. He that spake to Mohammed and Luther, and through them, — he is still nigh. He recently spake through Carlyle and through Emerson, and their voices are not yet hushed. And he still speaketh, my friends, through Ruskin in England and through Tolstoy in Russia, as he ever shall speak through all earnest souls who love him with all their heart because they know him, who seek him with all their heart because they know him not. Think not therefore the Lord God hath ceased to speak unto men through men; verily, if men but see to it that there be enough inspired, God will see to it that there be enough inspirers.

5. And of these Heaven-sent inspirers, Tolstoy is the latest. But do not believe that in saying that he is Heaven-sent I attempt to explain aught. The highest is ever inexplicable, and it is the bane of modern science that it is ever ready to explain what cannot be explained. Before the highest we can only stand dumb; and this has been the feeling of the greatest, because of the humblest, of spirits. The Greek painter, therefore, when about to depict the highest grief of a father, gives up in despair, and veils the father's face; and Meyer von Bremen's grandmother, when confronted with the question from the children whence came that sweet babe in her arms, can only reply, "The storks brought it;" and so I can say to you only, Tolstoy is sent unto men from Heaven.

6. I say he is Heaven-sent, because he came to proclaim not what is ephemeral and perishing, but what is permanent and everlasting. He came to proclaim not the latest theory of gravitation, of molecular vibration, of modes of heat and manners of cold, nor of struggle for existence, nor of supply and demand, nay, not even of scientific charity. He came to proclaim that which was as true in the days of Jesus as it is true in the days of Darwin, — that the life of man can have no meaning, unless when guided by obedience to God and love to man. Gravitation, struggle for existence! The earth has been spinning round its parent for ages before man's brain-kin made the marvellous discovery that God's mysterious impulse which set the earth whirling through the abysses of space is explained in right scientific fashion by labelling it gravitation. This green earth has rolled on, this green earth will roll on, label or no label; and the mystery of God men knew not before gravitation, nor do they know it now with gravitation. Men have for ages been multiplying under the blessing of God, and loving one another, long before that marvellous discovery was made that man, sprung from a monkey, and bred in struggle for existence, is destined at last, under fine progress of species, to become brutalized with Malthusian law as a cannibal living on the flesh of his brother, with self-respect and scientific charity in most abundant supply and demand. Tolstoy

came to proclaim not the new gospel of death, but the old gospel of life; not the new gospel of struggle for existence, but the old gospel of helpfulness for existence; not the new gospel of competition, but the old gospel of brotherhood. Tolstoy came to proclaim the gospel of God, the gospel of man, the gospel of Christ, the gospel of Socrates, the gospel of Epictetus, of Aurelius, of Carlyle, of Emerson, — the gospel of reverence before God and love to man, which is indeed ever old, but which, alas! the sons of Darkness see to it that it remain forever new.

7. These, then, are the men among whom Tolstoy belongs: which of these the greater, which of these the less? My friends, when we arrive at these, we are no longer among the measurable planets, but among the immeasurable fixed stars. Sirius flashes indeed with greater splendor than Vega, and Vega than Arcturus, and Arcturus than Capella, and Capella flashes with greater splendor than Aldebaran; but who shall undertake to say which of these suns is the greater, which is the less? The difference of splendor is not in the stars themselves, but in our eyes. And at this our immeasurable distance from these souls who are nighest unto the throne of the Most High, it is not for me, the worm, as I stand before you, to presume to measure which is the greater, which is the less. Rather than spending our time in profitless weighing and measuring, let me beseech you to bow your heads in awe and gratitude, praising God for the mercy which sendeth now and then unto men the living voice, the helping voice.

8. Tolstoy, therefore, is one of those spirits whom I cannot approach with the dissecting-knife, as the critic does the author, in order to “account” for him. To do this, that total freedom from sentiment is required which was possessed by the enterprising reporter who on the death of a prominent citizen forthwith requested an interview with “corpse’s uncle.” In an age when sentiment has become a byword of impotence, and the heart has become a mere force-pump for the blood; in an age when charity has to be put in swaddling-clothes lest it injure a brother by helping him; when the poor are preached to by their rich visiting friends, not to make a home for themselves when their love for a mate is born in the heart, but only when it is born in the purse, — in such an age that reporter’s freedom from sentiment is indeed a most valuable acquisition; but I, alas! as yet possess it not! I shall therefore neither judge the preacher Tolstoy, nor measure him. I shall only point out to you to-day wherein he differs, as he must needs differ, from the rest of that noble band of the chosen messengers of God to which he belongs.

9. And the first striking difference is that Tolstoy is a consummate artist, a creator, in addition to the great preacher. For Marcus Aurelius is no artist. He is merely a speaker; he delivers his message in plain tongue, unadorned, often even unpolished. Epictetus, equally simple, equally direct with Marcus Aurelius, comes, however, already adorned with a certain humor which now and then sparkles through his serious pages. Ruskin brings with him quite a respectable load of artistic baggage; he brings an incisiveness, a sarcasm, often a piquancy with him, which makes him entertaining besides inspiring. Emerson and Carlyle bring with them much that, as artistic work; might, under more favorable auspices, have been worth saving for its own sake: the

one brings a grace, a sportiveness, and a brilliancy which fascinates, the other a fervor, an imagination, a grim-humor, a lightning-flashing, which dazzles. But none of these live in letters because of their art. Were they to depend on this alone, they would quickly perish. They live because of the spirit which worketh through them; so that were you to take the Jeremiah out of Carlyle, the John the Baptist out of Ruskin, and the Solomon out of Emerson, you would deprive them of their literary life. Tolstoy, however, even though the preacher be gone from him, still remains a mighty power in letters because of his art. For not only are his works filled with the highest purpose, — they are also created with the highest art. And I cannot show you this difference any better than by quoting two passages, one from Carlyle, the other from Tolstoy, both treating of the soul's well-nigh noblest emotion, — Repentance.

“On the whole, we make too much of faults. Faults? The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none. Readers of the Bible, above all, one would think, might know better. Who is called there ‘the man according to God’s own heart’? David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough; blackest crimes; there was no want of sins. And therefore the unbelievers sneer, and ask, ‘Is this the man according to God’s own heart?’ The sneer, I must say, seems to be but a shallow one.

“What are faults, what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, true, often-battled, never-ending struggle of it be forgotten? ‘It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.’ Of all acts, is not, for a man, repentance the most divine? The deadliest sin, I say, were the same supercilious consciousness of no sin; that is death; the heart so conscious is divorced from sincerity, humility, and fact, — is dead; it is ‘pure,’ as dead dry sand is pure.

“David’s life and history, as written for us in those Psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of man’s moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest men will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul toward what is good and best. Struggle often baffled, sore battled, down as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never ended; ever with tears, repentance, true unconquerable purpose begun anew. Poor human nature! Is not a man’s walking, in truth, always that, — ‘a succession of falls’? Man can do no other. In this wild element of Life, he has to struggle onward; now fallen, deep abased; and ever with tears, repentance, with bleeding heart, he has to rise again, struggle again still onward. That his struggle be a faithful, unconquerable one; that is the question of questions. We will put up with many sad details, if the soul of it were true. Details by themselves will never teach us what it is.”

10. Powerful as this passage is, I cannot help feeling that Tolstoy has treated the same subject more artistically than Carlyle, by embodying his lesson in objective shape, where Carlyle treats it subjectively. And now listen to Tolstoy: —

#### THE REPENTING SINNER.

There lived in the world a man for seventy years, and all his life he lived in sin. And this man fell ill, and still he did not repent. But when death was nigh, at the last hour, he began to weep, and said, “Lord, as thou hast forgiven the thief on the cross, so do

thou forgive me!" He had scarcely spoken, and away flew his soul. And the sinner's soul began to love God, and, trusting his mercy, came to the gates of heaven.

And the sinner began to knock, and to ask admission into the kingdom of heaven.

And from behind the door he heard a voice: "Who is this knocking for admission into the gates of heaven, and what are the deeds this man in his lifetime has done?"

And the voice of the accuser gave answer, and recounted all the sinful deeds of this man; and of good deeds he named none.

And the voice from behind the door answered: "Sinners cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Get thee hence!"

Said the sinner: "Lord, I hear thy voice, but I see not thy countenance and know not thy name."

And the voice gave in reply: "I am Peter the Apostle."

Said the sinner: "Have mercy upon me, Apostle Peter; remember the weakness of man, and the mercy of God. Was it not you who was a disciple of Christ, and was it not you who heard from his own lips his teaching, and saw the example of his life? And now remember, when he was weary and sad in spirit, and thrice asked thee not to slumber, but to pray, you slept, because your eyes were heavy, and thrice he found you sleeping. The same of me.

"And remember likewise how thou hast promised to him not to renounce him until thy dying day, and yet thou didst renounce him thrice when they led him away. The same of me.

"And remember likewise how crowed the cock, and thou hast gone forth and wept bitterly. The same of me. Not for thee 'tis to refuse me entrance."

And the voice from behind the gates of heaven was hushed.

And after standing some time, again knocked the sinner, and asked admittance into the kingdom of heaven.

And from behind the doors there was heard another voice which spake: "Who is this, and how has he lived on earth?"

And the voice of the accuser gave answer, and repeated all the evil deeds of the sinner; and of the good deeds he named none.

And the voice from behind the door called: "Get thee hence. Sinners such as thou cannot live with us in Paradise."

Said the sinner: "Lord, thy voice I hear, but thy face I see not, and thy name I know not."

And the voice said unto him: "I am David, the king and the prophet." But the sinner despaired not, nor went he away from the gates of heaven, but spake as follows: "Have mercy upon me, King David, and think of the weakness of man and the mercy of God. God loved thee and raised thee up before men. Thine was all, — a kingdom, and glory, and riches, and wives, and children; yet when thou didst espy from thy roof the wife of a poor man, sin betook thee, and thou hast taken the wife of Uriah, and himself hast thou slain by the sword of the Ammonites. Thou, a rich man, hast taken his last lamb from the poor man, and hast slain the owner himself. The same of me!

“And think further how thou hast repented, and said: ‘I confess my guilt, and repent of my sin.’ The same of me. Not for thee ’tis to refuse me entrance.”

And the voice behind the door was hushed.

And after standing some time, again knocked the sinner, and asked admission into the kingdom of heaven. And from behind the doors was heard a third voice which spake: “Who is this, and how hath he lived on earth?”

And for the third time the voice of the accuser recounted the evil deeds of the man, but of the good he named none.

And the voice from behind the door gave in answer: “Get thee hence! The kingdom of heaven not by a sinner can be entered.”

And replied the sinner: “Thy voice I hear, but thy face I see not, and thy name I know not.”

Answered the voice: “I am John, the beloved disciple of Christ.”

And rejoiced the sinner, and spake: “Now verily shall I be let in. Peter and David shall admit me because they know the weakness of man, and the grace of God; but thou shalt admit me because thou hast much love. For hast thou not writ in thy book, O John, that God is Love, and that whosoever knoweth not Love, knoweth not God? Wert not thou he that spake in his old age unto men only this one word: ‘Brethren, love ye one another’? How then shalt thou now hate me and drive me hence? Either renounce thine own words, or learn to love me, and admit me into the kingdom of heaven.”

And the gates of heaven opened, and John embraced the repenting sinner, and admitted him into the kingdom of heaven.

11. Tolstoy, then, is the sole example among men of the harmonious combination of loftiest aspiration with highest artistic skill. Tolstoy sees in himself only the preacher, and therefore at the age of sixty he does not hesitate to repudiate all those works of his which are not those of the preacher, however great their value as works of art. Turgenev sees in him only the artist, and therefore beseeches from his death-bed his fellow-craftsman to give himself back to the forsaken art. Both are here right, both are here wrong. For each sees only one side, while Tolstoy is neither the preacher alone nor the artist alone. Tolstoy, like Janus of old, is two-faced, — the artist, when his soul is in a state of war; the preacher, when his soul is in a state of peace. Turgenev looks only upon the face of the artist; Tolstoy looks out into the world with the face of the preacher.

12. This noble combination of the preacher and the artist has accordingly determined the character of Tolstoy’s art. For the first question Tolstoy asks of every event, of every phenomenon he has to depict, is, What effect has this on the soul of man; what bearing has this on the life of man; what, in short, is its moral meaning? Hence when Tolstoy paints, he paints not only objectively, but also subjectively. In the storm-scene, for instance, which I have read you at the first lecture, Tolstoy is not satisfied to give you merely the outward appearance of the storm, its appearance in Nature, he rests not until he has painted also its effect on the soul; and the progress of the terror



inspired keeps pace with the advance of the cloud. Hence the sudden introduction of the beggar from under the bridge, with his horrible stump of hand stretched out as he runs beside the carriage begging for alms. This incident is as much part of the storm, and as terrifying to the little Katenka and the little Lubotshka as the glare of the lightning and the crash of the thunder. Tolstoy the artist never sees Nature with the eyes of the body, but with the eyes of the spirit, he never sees matter without the underlying mind; he never sees the object without its complement, the subject. Tolstoy, therefore, is the first great artist (and if the one-eyed prophets of the merely objective art prevail, who now clamor so loudly, he promises, alas! to remain also the last) who has painted Nature entire. Tolstoy is the first great artist, therefore, into whose pictures enter not only the details visible, but also the details invisible. To Tolstoy, the vibration of the string is not described in completeness until he has also shown how its music has made to vibrate not only the air, but also the soul. Painter then of the inward universe as well as of the outward, of the spiritual as well as of the natural, of the things unseen as well as of those seen, Tolstoy has exhausted Nature. He has plunged into her nethermost depths, like Schiller's diver, and lo! forth he comes from the abyss with her swallowed-up treasure. Verily, here Tolstoy is unapproachable. Only one other man of letters hath here even distant fellowship with him, and this is Ralph Waldo Emerson.

13. That an art which is born of such a union of the preacher with the worshipper of beauty as it exists in Tolstoy, can only be of the highest, and must be of the highest, I therefore no longer hesitate to affirm. Read, therefore, in this light the successive chapters in Book VII. of "Anna Karenina," where is told the birth of a son of Kitty and Levin. Our modern apostles of the gospel of fidelity at all hazards, even though it be the fidelity of dirt, would have here made you look at the blood, at the towels, at the bowls, at the bottles, would have made you smell the odors, — they would have recounted to you all those details which, however pathetic to those doomed to be by-standers in the sick-room, can only be nauseating to those out of the sick-room. Tolstoy the preacher is impressed with the immeasurable pain which attends the entrance into the world of a newly-born human soul, — agony unendurable, all the more unendurable because inexplicable, inscrutable. His great artistic soul rests not until it hath relieved itself with at least a cry over such sorrow. Paint it therefore he must; but he paints it, observe, not directly, by photographing the tortures of Kitty, but indirectly, by picturing the agony of Levin; for the one would have only nauseated, the other stirs the reader to his very depths. The husband suffers more than the wife, because he sees her not with the eyes of the head, but with the eyes of the heart; the groans of Kitty, which reach him from the neighboring chamber, can indeed be silenced by the physician's drug; but no drug can silence the groan of Levin, for it is pressed out by the agony, not of the body, but by the agony of the soul. And as love, sympathy, is ever an eye-opener, so here Tolstoy, the consummate artist, has reproduced the scene of the sick-room with the highest fidelity, because he has reproduced it not with the arts of cold mechanical photography, but with those of warm, sympathetic imagination.

Tolstoy reproduces therefore with the highest faithfulness because he too sees not with the eye of the head, but with the eye of the heart.

14. And for the highest example of such art I will venture to read to you the passage in which Tolstoy tells of Anna Karenina's fall. Until the reader comes to this passage, there is not a syllable to tell him that she has fallen. Observe then Tolstoy's manner of telling it. I venture to think it far more faithful than any realistic art could have made it by furnishing details not necessarily more true because less delicate: —

“That in which during almost a whole year consisted the one, exclusive longing of Vronsky's life, that which had supplanted all his former wishes, that which to Anna had been a dream of impossible, terrible, yet for this reason all the more fascinating happiness, — this wish was at last gratified. Pale, with his lower jaw trembling, he stood over her and begged her to quiet herself, not knowing himself how and what.

“‘Anna, Anna,’ he spake with trembling voice. ‘Anna, for God's sake!’

“But the louder he spake, the lower sank her head, once proud and glad, now abased; she now crouched, and was sinking from the sofa, where she had been sitting, to the floor, at his feet. She would have fallen on the carpet had he not supported her. ‘O my God, forgive me!’ she sobbed, and pressed his hands to her breast.

“So criminal and so guilty she felt herself, that the only thing left her was to humiliate herself and to beg forgiveness. But now she had no one in life left her but him, and to him she turns with prayer for forgiveness. As she gazed at him she physically felt her degradation, and she could say nothing more. And he on his part felt what a murderer must feel when beholding the body he has just deprived of its life. This body, deprived by him of its life, was their love, the first period of their love. There was something horrible and repulsive in the memory of that which was purchased at the terrible price of shame. The shame of her moral nakedness was stifling to her, and this stifling feeling communicated itself also to him. But, in spite of all the horror before the body of the slain, the body must be cut into pieces, must be hidden away, and use must be made of what the murderer had obtained by his murder.

“And as the murderer with fierceness, almost with passion, throws himself upon the body and drags it and hacks it, so he too kept covering with kisses her face and her shoulders. She kept his hand and moved not. Yes, these kisses, — this it was which was bought with this her shame. ‘Yes, and this one hand which will always be mine is the hand of my — confederate.’ She raised this hand and kissed it. He dropped on his knees and wished to see her face, but she hid her face and said naught. At last, as if making an effort over herself, she rose and pushed him away. Her face was indeed as handsome as ever, but it was now pitiful all the more.

“‘Tis all ended,’ she said. ‘I have nothing left but thee. Remember this.’

“‘I cannot help remembering what constitutes my life. For one minute of this blessedness ...’

“‘Blessedness!’ she uttered with terror and disgust, and her terror communicated itself to him. ‘For God's sake, not a word, not one word more!’

“She quickly rose and turned away from him.

“‘Not another word,’ she repeated; and with an expression strange to him, with an expression of cold despair on her face, she parted from him. She felt that at this moment she could not express in words her feeling of shame, joy, and terror before this entrance into a new life, and she did not wish to speak of it, to lower that feeling with inexact words. But even later, on the morrow, and on the third day, she not only could find no words for expressing the whole complexity of these feelings, but she could not find even thoughts, in revolving which she might clearly define to herself whatever was going on in her soul.

“She said to herself, ‘No, I cannot think this out now; later, when I shall be more calm.’ But this calmness for her thoughts never came; whenever the thought came to her of what she had done, and of what was to become of her, and of what she must do, terror came upon her, and she drove away these thoughts.

“‘Later, later,’ she repeated, ‘when I am more calm.’

“But in sleep, when she had no control over her thoughts, her situation appeared to her in all its ugly nakedness. One dream came to her almost nightly. She dreamed that both were her husbands, that both were spending upon her their caresses. Alexei Alexandrovitch cried as he kissed her hands, and said, ‘Ah, how good this is!’ And Alexei Vronsky was there, and he also was her husband. And she wondered why all this had hitherto seemed to her impossible, and explained to them laughingly how simple all this was, and that now they were both content and happy. But the dream oppressed her like an Alp, and she awoke every time in terror.”

15. And of such unapproachable art the examples in Tolstoy are well-nigh innumerable. There is hardly a single work of Tolstoy in which he does not display that marvellous fidelity which has made Mr. Howells exclaim: “This is not a picture of life, but life itself!” And this fidelity Tolstoy attains not so much by depicting the event itself as by depicting its effect on the soul; just as the silent sight of the wounded on the field tells of the battle more loudly than the thunder of the cannon. I say this is the highest art, because its method is universal, where all others are only particular; for men may indeed differ in the language of the tongue, but they do not differ in the language of the spirit.

16. Read in the same light, then, his unparalleled gallery of life-scenes in “Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth.” Read in the same light the death-scene of Count Bezukhoi in “War and Peace;” read the war-scene on the bridge, the wounding of Balkonsky; read the skating-scene in “Anna Karenina,” the racing-scene, the meeting between Anna and her darling Seriozha. My friends, in the presence of such art words fail me; I can only cry to you, “Read, read, and read!” Read humbly, read admiringly. The reading of Tolstoy in this spirit shall in itself be unto you an education of your highest artistic sense. And when your souls have become able to be thrilled to their very depths by the unspeakable beauty of Tolstoy’s art, you will then learn to be ashamed of thought that for years you sensible folk of Boston have been capable of allowing, — the Stevensons with their Hydes, and the Haggards with their Shes, and even the clumsy Wards with their ponderous Elsmers, to steal away under the flag of literature your thoughtful

moments. You will then learn to understand how it comes to pass that the artistically cold passionless Mr. Howells even, the apostle of heartlessness in art, — however brave and full of heart the noble man be in actual life, — can be struck with awe before the mighty presence of Tolstoy, and how it is possible that the only words he can whisper is, “I cannot say aught!” The preface of Mr. Howells to Tolstoy’s “Sebastopol” has been declared by wiseacres to be the symptom of his decadence. My friends, believe it not. This admiration of Mr. Howells for Tolstoy is verily not the symptom that he is beginning to fall, but rather that he is just beginning to rise.

17. I consider this double-faced presentation, this combination of the subjective method with the objective, as the highest in art, because it is the most comprehensive. Not that Tolstoy is incapable of employing the objective method alone with the highest success; when he does employ it he is here second to none, not even to Turgenev. Witness for example the following description of the arrival of a railway-train; still, the essence of Tolstoy’s art is the universality with which he grasps whatever comes under his creative impulse.

18. Vronsky, engaged in a conversation, suddenly breaks off. “However,” says he, “here is already the train.”

“In truth, in the distance was already whistling the engine. In a few minutes the platform began to tremble, and puffing with steam driven downward by the frost, in rolled the engine with the connecting-rod of its centre wheel slowly and rhythmically bending in and stretching out, and with its bowing, well-muffled, frost-covered engineer. Behind the tender, ever more slowly, and shaking the platform still more, the express car came with its baggage and a howling dog. Lastly, slightly trembling before coming to a full stop, came up the passenger coaches.

“A smartish, brisk conductor, whistling, before the train came to a full stop jumped off; and following him began to descend one by one the impatient passengers, — an officer of the guard with military bearing and frigid gaze, a smiling, lively small tradesman with a bag in his hand, and a peasant with a sack over his shoulder.”

19. And from the same union of the mighty preacher with the mighty artist springs the second great characteristic of Tolstoy’s art, that which in contrast to Turgenev’s architectural manner I must call Tolstoy’s panoramic manner. I have spoken in the last lecture of Turgenev as the great architect in the art of fiction. Tolstoy is the great panorama painter of fiction. Of architectural regularity there is little to be found in him, but not because he lacks the line sense of proportion of Turgenev, and the sense of beauty of form, but because his art is of a nature in which regularity of progress and rigid outline of form are not required.

20. Tolstoy’s masterpieces therefore are panoramas, and his art instinctively seeks that material which easiest lends itself to such purpose. Hence his “Cossaks,” hence his “Scenes before Sebastopol,” hence his “Nekhludof.” But a panorama needs no plot. Hence his “Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth” contains not even a trace of a plot. It is merely a series of pictures, each indeed in itself a thing of unspeakable beauty, but all grouped in such a manner as to give collectively a panorama of the entire growth

of a human soul from the moment it ceases to be animal until it becomes man. In a panorama it matters little where each particular group is placed; just as in Kaulbach's "Era of the Reformation" it matters little whether the figure of Luther is on the left or on the right. "War and Peace" is thus like the Battle of Gettysburg, a vast panorama, and "Anna Karenina" is a vast panorama; the one is a panorama of the political life of the State, the other is a panorama of the spiritual life of the individual. But a panorama requires not so much plots as groups; hence "War and Peace" is not one story, but three stories; and each is the story not of one person or of one pair, but of a group of persons, of a group of pairs. And the same necessity we see in "Anna Karenina;" here again Tolstoy's materials are not persons but groups. Viewed as a work of architecture, the book seems to lack form, the author seems to lack the sense of proportion; for the book could be easily split into two different novels, — the novel of Levin and Kitty on the one hand, and the novel of Vronsky and Anna on the other. As works of architecture, neither would suffer if severed from the other. But as a panorama of the unfolding of heaven in the soul of Levin, and of hell in the soul of Anna, the story of Kitty and Levin cannot be read apart from the story of Anna and Vronsky and still remain a unit, and still remain intelligible.

21. This fact of Tolstoy's art being essentially panoramic and not architectural, accounts for the vast expanse of his two great works, "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina." For it is the very nature of a panorama to be on an extensive scale. The objection therefore made to these two masterpieces that they are too voluminous would indeed be relevant, if they had been conceived as works of architecture; but it is totally irrelevant when applied to a panorama. Which form of art is superior, which inferior, — the concise, compact, rigid severity of the architect's art, or the overflowing, expanding, hence unshackled art of the panorama? Methinks you can best answer this question yourselves by asking another. Which is higher as a work of art, that tender song without words by Mendelssohn, called "Regret," or that indescribably affecting capriccio of his marked as "Opus 33"? Which is higher as a work of art, — that in its sadness unparalleled song of Shakespeare, "Blow, blow, thou Winter wind," or his "Othello"? Or again; which is a higher work of art, a nocturne by Chopin, or a sonata by Beethoven; an Essay by Macaulay, or a "Decline and Fall" by Gibbon? Lastly, which is higher as a work of art, — the wonderfully accurate spiritedness of Schreyer's painting of a horse, or the indescribable power of Wagner's Race in a Roman Circus? On its plane each of the above is indeed of the highest; but that the one is on a higher plane than the other few can fail to observe. For, execution of design being equal, the broader the scene, the wider the horizon, the more comprehensive the view, the higher must be the art. The less extended, because more easily comprehended, may indeed at first give more pleasure than the second; but if the final arbiter in art be the amount of immediate pleasure to be got from it, then Barnum's Circus is indeed a greater work of art than Emerson's Book, and Mark Twain a greater writer than Carlyle. But if creative power be the final measure of art, execution in the different planes being equal,

then Beethoven must rank higher than Chopin, Shakespeare higher than Blanco White, Wagner than Meyer von Bremen, and Tolstoy than Turgenev.

22. "Have you seen any of my later writings?" Tolstoy inquired of a visitor who came to him as the admirer of "The Cossaks," of "War and Peace," of "Anna Karenina." The question referred to his religious writings. When he was told no, Tolstoy could only exclaim, "Ah, then you do not know me at all. We must then become acquainted." In his "Confession," he is no less emphatic; there he boldly declares the art of which he has been a noble follower for some twenty years,— "balovstv[=o]," foolish waste of time.

23. A most wonderful spectacle is thus presented: on the one hand a writer gaining Shakespearian renown for works he repudiates; on the other, a public reading and admiring him because of the very art he thus repudiates. For 'tis idle to assert that Tolstoy's religious writings are what draws readers unto him. Had he published only his religious writings, they might have indeed been bought, they might have found their place on parlor table, they might have even occasionally been glanced into; but read and studied and pondered they would not have been. For Tolstoy's religious writings, in their spirit, are not one whit different from that of The Book which has indeed been for ages lying in the parlors of almost every Christian household; but it is not read, it is not discussed, it is not talked about, like the latest somersaulting performance of some popular magazine-scribe. Nay, the surest way to make one's self unavailable nowadays at social gathering of the parlor sort would be to talk therein solemnly of the very book which in so many houses forms such indispensable part of parlor outfit. Nay, has it not come in society to such a pass that the very presence of The Book on parlor table is already an evidence that the host is not a member of the circle which looks upon itself as the circle, — the select, the exclusive, the highest, in short?

24. The public, then, is interested in Tolstoy the artist more than in the preacher, for the same reason that when Emerson lands in England only a handful of mortals greet him; while when Mr. Sullivan lands in England the streets cannot hold the thousands who flock to receive him. Tolstoy, on the other hand, protests that whosoever looks to him as the artist, sees not him, knows not him; that he is aught else now; that mere art, in fact, is to him a business no longer worthy of a serious soul. The public again, in its ever-confident patronizingness, says unto him: "But for thy great artistic genius, O Leo, son of Nicolas, with thy latest religious antics and somersaultings, we would call thee — a crank. But as to a great genius we shall be merciful unto thee, and bear with many a confession, many a cobbled shoe, if thou givest us only more of Olenins, more of Karenins."

25. Who is here right, who is here wrong, — the public with its millions, Tolstoy in his loneliness?

26. That genius should often misunderstand its own strength, and seek it where it is weakest, is indeed no new phenomenon in its history. Frederick the Great prides himself more on his flute-playing than on his kingship; and it is not so very long ago that in our very midst a university professor called the happiest day of his life not that on which he discovered a new Greek particle, but that on which the crew of

his university won the boat-race. And a mere chance tour on a Sunday through our churches would quickly show the lamentably frequent misapprehension of genius by itself; for many a fine genius for the actor's art is spoiled by an imaginary call to the pulpit. The presumption therefore is indeed against the great Tolstoy in his dispute with the great public. Still, I venture to side with Tolstoy. I too venture to think that Tolstoy's greatest work is found not so much in his works of pure art as in his works of pure religion; and with God's blessing, my friends, I trust you will see it with me in the next lecture.

# Tolstoy the Preacher

by Ivan Panin

This lecture was taken from Ivan Panin's book *Lectures on Russian Literature*, which was first published in 1889.

1. I have stated in the last lecture that Tolstoy is the preacher, not of the new gospel of death, but of the old gospel of life. Tolstoy is to be revered as one of the greatest teachers among men, not so much because he has proved indisputably that only by love alone can men be said truly to live, nor wholly because he shows by logic inexorable that man can be truly blessed only when he devotes his life to the service of his fellow-men. His logic may be bad, his proof may be faulty. To be skilled in the art of lighting with words is no more essential to a noble soul than to be skilled in the art of fighting with lists. Both can indeed knock down an opponent; but knocking down is not the business of life, but raising up. And Tolstoy is to be revered among teachers because he first of all raises up; because he preaches what those who have raised men up have for ages preached; because he preaches what Christ has preached, what Emerson has preached, what Carlyle has preached, what Ruskin is still preaching, and what will ever continue to be preached as long as there is a God in heaven, and a human soul on earth yearning for the possession of that God. "Socialism, Communism!" men bellow to Tolstoy, and think to confound him with the hateful name. "Would you have us give up," they say, "the fruit of civilization and progress, and return to the primitive life of the days of yore?" But read Emerson's "Miscellanies," Carlyle's "Past and Present," Ruskin's "Fors Clavigera," and see for yourselves whether Tolstoy preaches aught different from these. And if this be communism, if this be socialism, then welcome communism, welcome socialism, because ever welcome brotherhood.

2. Tolstoy is indeed a Russian of the Russians, but he is a man before he is a Russian; the greatest of Russians, he is more than a Russian, just as Socrates, the greatest of the Greeks, was more than a Greek; just as Christ, the greatest of Hebrews, was more than a Hebrew. Socrates was sent not for Greece alone, but for us likewise; Jesus was sent not for the Jews alone, but for us likewise; and so Tolstoy is sent not to the Russians alone, but to us likewise.

3. Tolstoy, then, came to deliver a message; but the message of messages has already been delivered well-nigh nineteen hundred years ago. Not one word is there, indeed, to be added to the law laid down in the Sermon on the Mount; and were men to live out the gospel of Christ, there would be no need of new messengers, the kingdom of heaven would then be veritably established, and the Master would once more dwell with men as he hath foretold. But Christianity, alas! has been on trial for well-nigh



nineteen hundred years, while the religion of Christ still remains to be tried. There is therefore ever need of new apostles to preach the kingdom of heaven, the gospel of Christ; and it is Tolstoy's distinction that he came to preach not the new gospel of the nineteenth century, but the old gospel of the first century. For God sees to it that the way to blessedness for men be ever open; that the kingdom of heaven be ever within their reach, if they but choose to enter it, if they but choose not to give themselves over to the Powers of Darkness.

4. I have affirmed in my last lecture, with what articulateness of voice the great God hath seen fit to endow me, that there is a God in heaven who is the Good. And it now, alas! becomes my duty to affirm likewise that beside the great God the Good in heaven, there is also the great Devil the Evil on earth; that beside the great Prince of Light there is also the great Prince of Darkness. And he ruleth neither over the heavens nor over the earth, but he ruleth solely over man. And he graspeth with the greedy, and he splitteth hairs with the lawyers; and he is flirting with scientific charities, and is fortune-hunting with land-grabbers; and he discourseth with politicians, and he puffeth up with men of science; and he balances himself on ropes with theologians; and he preacheth from pulpits through mouths that have Christ only on their tongues; and he prayeth through lips that know God only through hymns; and he danceth at balls, and he sparkleth through diamonds; and he shineth through gold, and he foameth through wine; and he chatteth insincerely at receptions, and he figureth in society-columns of the public prints; and he shrieketh through steam-whistles, and he rusheth sixty miles an hour, and he edits sensational magazines, and he dwelleth with the hating; and he is ever after victims, — he, the Prince of Darkness.

5. And the servants of the Prince of Light are few; and the servants of the Prince of Darkness are many. Yet the Lord God is ever nigh; and he ever sendeth his messengers to call together his wandering, his erring flock. Tolstoy is a messenger sent out to gather together the erring flock back to the fold of Christ.

6. Tolstoy, then, is a teacher of men. Observe, however, this fundamental difference between Tolstoy and the other great teachers. To Socrates, the great enemy of mankind was ignorance; to him, therefore, to know virtue is to be virtuous, and the central idea of his teaching is — knowledge. The seat of the soul with Socrates, therefore, is not so much in the heart as in the head. To Epictetus, the great enemy of mankind is passion, and the central idea of his teaching is self-control; to Epictetus, then, the seat of the soul is not so much in the head as in the will. To Emerson, the great enemy of mankind is authority, and the central idea of his teaching, therefore, is self-reliance; to Emerson, then, the seat of the soul is not so much in man's will as in man's pride. To Carlyle, the great enemy of mankind is consciousness of self, and the central idea of his teaching is unconsciousness of self, the forgetting, the drowning of self in work. To Carlyle, therefore, the seat of the soul is not so much in man's pride as in his hands. Tolstoy has no such central idea of his own. His central idea is that of his Master, Jesus, which is love. To Jesus, the great enemy of man was hatred, and the seat of the soul to him was neither in the head, nor in the will, nor in the pride, nor in the hands.

To Jesus, the seat of the soul was solely in the heart. And Tolstoy proclaims above all the doctrine of Jesus, not because he thinketh lightly of ignorance, not because he thinketh lightly of passion, not because he thinketh lightly of authority, not because he thinketh lightly of self-consciousness, but because he believes that Love conquereth all the children of Darkness. Hence the burden of his message is the ever-recurring, Brethren, follow Christ! Follow Christ with your heads, and your metaphysics will take care of themselves; follow Christ with your will, and your passions will take care of themselves; follow Christ with your hopes, and your self-respect will take care of itself; lastly, follow Christ with your hands, and your work will take care of itself. Tolstoy's book is therefore only the fifth gospel of Christ, and Tolstoy himself is therefore only the thirteenth apostle of Jesus.

7. I must emphasize this fact, my friends, because church-societies are still discussing the propriety of admitting his book into their libraries; I must emphasize this fact, because hitherto not one preacher of the gospel of Christ has yet ventured to utter one word of greeting, one word of fellowship, to Tolstoy. I must emphasize this fact, because Tolstoy having forsaken art and having betaken himself to the cobbling of shoes, the wise world, that ever knoweth the duty of another better than he doth himself, is forthwith at hand with its estimate, its disapproval, its condemnation. Turgenev therefore gently remonstrates with his fellow-craftsman for his new departure, and beseeches him to return to the forsaken higher field, — to the art of amusing folk already over-amused. The Rev. Mr. Savage, the only servant of God in the pulpits of this great God-fearing city who has even dared to make Tolstoy the subject of a Sunday discourse, respects indeed his character, but boldly declares the man Tolstoy and his Master Jesus of Nazareth to have been teaching impracticable teachings; impracticable, indeed, in an age when bank-stock and a grandfather, and foam and froth, and social fireworks are the only acceptable signs of strength. Mr. Savage, however, follows at least Pope's direction, and damns with faint praise, while that wee, tiny manikin from that State of Indiana does not even think this necessary, and therefore, standing on tiptoe, screeches at the top of his voicelet to Tolstoy, "Crank, crank!"

8. But what if in God's eyes there be no higher work, nor lower work, but merely work? What if in God's eyes there be no higher duty, nor lower duty, but merely duty? If it be necessary to chop wood, and sift ashes, and mend shoes, wherefore should this be a lower occupation than to thump on the piano, and read poetry, and write books, and even listen unto lectures? But the artist is held in higher esteem than the house-drudge! What, then! shalt thou make the esteem of thy fellows, which is as changeable as the wind, thy motive for doing, rather than the esteem of thyself, thy conscience, thy God? To do all we ought, be it never so humble, this is doing the highest work, God's work. But chopping wood and mending shoes brings no recognition, no esteem, no applause in gorgeously-lighted parlors, as does the reading and the singing and the writing for select audiences. What, shalt thou do thy duty for the sake of the reward, the mess of pottage it brings, O wretch?

9. Crank, indeed! My friends, was there ever a time when the great souls on whom we must feed, if we are to live at all, were proclaimed aught else but cranks and nuisances? The children of Darkness are ever abroad, and the messengers of Light are never welcome unto them. Such a nuisance was the noblest of the Greeks to his countrymen, that they could not wait for his peaceful departure, even though he was already on the brink of the grave; and the old man of seventy had to drink the poison to rid his fellow-citizens of the burden of his presence. Of the two noblest sons of Boston, which it has yet produced in all the two hundred and fifty years of its existence, one was dragged through its streets with a rope round his neck, not by a mob of unkempt anarchists, but by a mob of well-shaven, broadcloth-clad citizens, — by the ancestors, perhaps, of the very men who now can watch the statue of that same Garrison from their plate-glass windows on Commonwealth Avenue. And the other was shunned as an ill-balanced intellect, and abused by those who look upon themselves as the best of his townsmen, so that a monument to Wendell Phillips cannot even be thought of at this late day. England's noblest living voice, the voice of John Ruskin, is at this very moment engaged in crying unto his countrymen, "Good my friends, if ye keep on howling at me as ye have done, I shall indeed become insane; but I assure ye, up to this hour, maugre your vociferous clamoring, I am still in possession of my senses, thank God!" And of America's greatest inspirer, while his gentle spirit was still walking on earth, Jeremiah Mason, the clear-headed man, the far-seeing judge, the practical statesman, could only utter the joke, 'I don't read Emerson; my gals do!' And, O ye good people, tell me, I pray ye, what reception would Christ himself be likely to receive at the hands of your swallow-tailed butlers, were he to appear at your doors without silver-headed cane, without Parisian kid gloves, without engraved pasteboard announcing him to be the Scion of his Majesty King David? Would not a mere glance at his bare feet, his flowing garment, and his untrimmed hair be sufficient to convince Mr. Butler that for such folk the lady of the house is never at home, or if at home, is just about to dress for dinner or to go out for a drive, and therefore begs to be excused? Yes, my friends, of the greatest, of the noblest souls, it has ever been the lot to be scorned, since their message of light is ever unwelcome to the children of darkness; and if against their characters not a word can be said, recourse must be had to the abuse at least of their intellects; and Christ and Tolstoy are declared to be weak intellects! This is the meaning of the cry raised against Tolstoy as unbalanced, in this latest change of his life from riches unto poverty.

10. Tolstoy, then, is nothing but a preacher of Christ; and the first articulate utterance in his message is therefore that of boundless faith in the practicability of living according to Christ; that of insistence upon the literal following of the words of Christ as a practical guide of life.

11. And out of this emphasis of the supremacy of Love comes the second articulate utterance in the message of Tolstoy, which is the supremacy of heart over head as a metaphysical guide of life. For God ever revealeth himself unto men, but he speaketh unto them not through their cold intellects, but through their warm hearts; not through

logic, but through love. The reasoner searches God without man and finds him not; the lover finds God within man in his heart, and hath no need of searching him. Hence the following significant utterance of Tolstoy in his "Confession." In his search for the answer to the ever-recurring question, "Wherefore shall I live?" he at last goes abroad to find light: —

"My life abroad, and the intercourse with Europe's most advanced scholars, still more confirmed my faith in perfection as such; for the same faith I now found in them likewise. In me this faith took the same form which it takes in most of the educated men of our time. Its watchword was — progress. Then I thought that this word meant something. Its utter meaninglessness I then could not yet understand. Here I was tormented, like every living soul, with the question, 'How can I better my life?' and I answer, 'Live in accordance with progress.' But this is exactly the answer of a man borne along by wind and tide in a boat. He puts the to him all-important question, 'What direction must I steer for my safety?' and he receives in answer, 'Oh, we are borne along somewhither!'

"All this I did not perceive at the time. Only rarely not my reason but my feeling rebelled against this universal superstition with which men shield themselves against their failure to comprehend the meaning of life. Thus while in Paris the sight of capital punishment revealed to me all the ghastliness of this superstition of progress. When I beheld how the head was severed from the body, and how the one and the other each in turn thumped in the box, I understood not with my reason, but with my whole soul, that no theory of progress, no theory of the reasonableness of our present mode of living, could justify this one deed; that even if all men ever since creation, on whatever theory, had found that this must be, I know that this need not be; that this is evil; that the judge of all this, what is good and needful, is not what men say and do, is not the theory of progress, but I with my heart."

12. Trust ye, therefore, your heart ere you trust your logic. Whatever the heart dictates must be from God, logic or no logic; whatever the heart rebels against must be from the Devil, reason or no reason. Time never yet was when the Devil lacked reasons; and if he can find reasons nowhere else, he at last finds them in science and in Scripture. Next to the slaveholders themselves, the last to forsake the sinking ship of slavery, were the preachers of the gospel of the brotherhood of man, who argued finely from Scripture twisted for the purpose, that the great God having made Mr. Preacher white and Mr. Negro black, had therefore intended that black shall be the minion of white. Time never was when reason and logic most inexorable could not find excuse most sufficient for the shedding of blood of brother by brother, for the burning of village and town, for the erecting of luxurious palace within stone's-throw of the homeless. Time never was when logic could not show the fine propriety, nay, the utmost necessity, for competition and struggle for existence; when men, who might create a paradise of this green earth of ours, if they but chose to help one another, transform themselves into pigs, jostling and pushing one another at the trough, and grunting with satisfaction abundant at having driven the weaker piglet off into starvation, — all of

which is our modern, necessary competition in business; and this is logical, reasonable, scientific struggle for existence!

13. No, no, my friends, let logic cry never so loudly at the necessity of struggle for existence, and competition for bread between men, when the great God hath provided enough for a hundredfold of the present number of men if they but chose to help one another. The heart saith it is wrong; and whatever logic makes it out to be right is accursed, is from the Devil; and it is for ye, if ye are to become the children of the Prince of Light, and not the children of the Prince of Darkness, to have none of such logic, and trust the God within you, who dwelleth not in your heads, but in your hearts.

14. And once more, out of this fundamental idea of the supremacy of love and the brotherhood of all men, — of all men, observe, — follows the insistence of Tolstoy upon the words of Christ, — “Give to him that asketh.” For it is not for man to judge his neighbor, but for God. To Tolstoy, therefore, all men are his brothers, the unworthy as well as the worthy; or rather, he never asks whether they be worthy. To him therefore the law of Christ stands not for utility, nor for fear of consequence, but for mercy and trust in God. Hence Tolstoy would never fear to help from what are branded as sentimental motives. And the third articulate utterance in the message of Tolstoy is therefore the supremacy in charity of the sentiment which comes from God over the logic which comes from the Devil.

15. Relief given from sentimental motives (from mere love of helping for its own sake) only keeps the pauper population alive, we are told by our scientific charities. Heinous, indeed, is the awful crime of keeping pauper population alive; and heinous, indeed, is the crime of having any sentiment of heart in an age of progress of species and self-respecting supply and demand. Then the great God who sendeth his sunshine and his rain upon members of Associated Charities as well as upon members of Dissociated Charities, upon the worthy as well as upon the unworthy, upon the properly introduced as well as upon the improperly introduced, — then his beneficence is verily sentimental. Yes, my friends, the great God is the great sentimentalist, for he blesseth men and bestoweth his mercy upon them not because they are deserving, but because he loveth to be merciful. When the flower buddeth forth in the spring with matchless beauty, no label is tacked on to its stem with ominous reminder: “Not to be gazed at by the eyes of the unworthy. All worthy persons, of good moral character, can obtain tickets by applying to Archangel Michael.” When under His eternal laws the cooling spring babbleth forth merrily from the cave, whispering to the weary, heated wanderer, “Come thou hither, and be refreshed,” no sign-board is placed at its entrance: “Beware! this spring is only for the worthy; members of the pauper population are warned, under penalty of law, not to trespass on these premises.” Verily, I say unto ye, the Lord God is the sentimentalist of sentimentalists!

16. And the Son of God, like unto his Father, was also a sentimentalist. When the sinner came unto him in her distress, he did not inquire for her letters of introduction; he did not inquire whether she was indorsed in most acceptable society-fashion by the

leading ministers of the town. He did not lift the skirts of his garments in scorn of the person unworthy of his company; he gave no orders to his butlers that when Madame Sinner calls next he is not at home for her. Nay, Christ did not even send down to the Central Office of the Associated Charities to look up poor sinner's record. Without much parley he stretched forth his holy hand, gave it to his pauper sister, and with a voice of love spake, "Go thy ways in peace, thou art forgiven!" Verily, I say unto you, Christ was a sentimentalist of sentimentalists.

17. And the father of the prodigal son was only increasing pauperism when he received the unworthy youth with open arms; he had set a premium (in the words of our scientific charities) upon other sons becoming likewise prodigal.

18. And so is a sentimentalist every noble soul that believeth in God's wisdom more than in man's wisdom; that believeth more in the power of trust than in the power of fear; more in mercy than in calculation; more in charity than in justice; more in love than in political economy; more in Christ than in Octavia Hill; more in the Gospels than in Parliamentary Poor Reports. By their fruits ye shall judge them. If the fear of pauperism result in excusing that vilest of sins, the withholding of help by one brother from another, then away with scientific charity and its talked-of diminution of pauperism; and if the lending of a helping hand even to the unworthy be the result of sentimentalism, then welcome sentimentalism, blessed be sentimentalism!

19. The obedience to the commands of Christ has thus furnished Tolstoy with a basis for existence which he had hitherto sought in vain from science and metaphysics; the obedience to the commands of Christ has thus furnished Tolstoy a solution of social problems which he had hitherto sought in vain in ethics and sociology; and lastly, obedience to the commands of Christ has furnished Tolstoy a solution of financial problems found neither in political economy nor in statistics. And the fourth articulate utterance in the message of Tolstoy is his merciless distinction between the money of the poor, which they have earned by their toil, and the money of the rich, which they have forfeited by their idleness.

20. Tolstoy is thus the preacher, the cause of a change in the hearts of men; but while he is thus a cause unto others, he himself is likewise an effect of the change which has begun to take place in the hearts of men. The possibility of a Tolstoy in the nineteenth century is the most hopeful sign of the times with regard to the social brotherhood of men. In theology, the feeling of the equality of men before God has so permeated the minds of men, that the claim of superiority which formerly each made over the other, though still tacitly implied, is now no longer upheld by sober thinking folk; in politics, too, equality of men before the law has at last become acknowledged, if not always in practice, at least in theory. And if monarchies and aristocracies still do exist, it is not because all concerned in the decision have deliberately decided for them, but because it is safer to endure irrational institutions that are old, than to undertake the sudden establishment of rational institutions that are new. Only in the social field the feeling of the equality of men has not yet permeated them enough to rouse their souls against the present division of society into industrial lords on the one hand, and

industrial slaves on the other. That two men born on the same day, at the same hour, in the same nakedness, one in a palace without his merit, the other in a hovel without his fault, should each pass his lifetime, the one in luxury and idleness, the other in want and toil, is still looked upon by thinking men, by feeling men, as something that must be, as something that should be, since Providence evidently meant men to be thus divided. The idle thus go on enjoying their unearned idleness; the toiling thus go on enduring their unearned hardship, and all is quiet.

21. Quiet? Alas! no. Burglars, robbers, tramps, beggars, forgers, defaulters in abundance, jails, prisons, reform-houses, stand out palatially amid lawns and green woods and winding rivers. The silent darkness is occasionally lighted up by the lurid torch of the incendiary, and now and then we are treated to spectacular fireworks with powder and dynamite and bomb.

22. Of course men have preached reform ever since God had resolved that however men may refuse to do his will, they shall at least not fail to hear his voice as uttered by his messengers. But though political freedom had been preached by every thinking soul from Plato to Rousseau, it required an American and a French Revolution to open a path for the entrance of their ideas into practical life. Religious freedom, too, had been preached from the mouth of every soul that had the genuine love for its kind in its heart. From Christ to Emerson in our world, to say naught of the heathen world, the burden of the song of all saints has been, "Love your neighbor as ye love yourselves." Your neighbor, observe! Not your Baptist neighbor, nor your Methodist neighbor, nor even your infidel neighbor, but your neighbor. Plain as this teaching is, it still required Inquisitions, Bartholomew nights, and Thirty-Year-Wars, to establish not even religious brotherhood, but only religious toleration.

23. Social brotherhood, too, has been preached for ages, beginning with John the Baptist, who in answer to the question, What are we to do? can only say, "Whosoever hath two coats, let him give one to him that hath none," and ending with John Ruskin, who, smarting under the unequal distribution of wealth, founds his Company of St. George. Preached then social brotherhood has been, as all else has been preached; but acted out, even under the guise of hypocrisy, it has not yet been. Will this change of heart likewise have to be brought about by blood and slaughter?

24. Tolstoy, in the feeble way of a single man, but in the mighty way of a single soul, giveth unmistakable answer to this question. We must begin the revolution, says he, not without us, with others, but within us, with ourselves; not by force of arms, but by force of love. Of what use are alms handed out with one hand, when with the other we uphold idleness which is the creator of the need of alms? Let each one work, he says, as much as he can, and if he produce more than his own needs, there will ever be enough of the unfortunate and the ailing who cannot produce enough for their own needs. Not leisure, then, idleness, is the haven to be steered for, but work; and work, too, not such as shall pander to the wants of the lazy, but to the wants of the industrious, — work, in short, which shall enable others to enjoy that labor of the body and that rest of the soul which alone in their union make the perfect life.

25. In his Introduction to "My Religion," Tolstoy says that he has at last tasted that joy and happiness which even death could not take away. He has thus attained true blessedness, that heavenly peace which falls to the lot of all souls from whom love of self and pride of intellect have forever fled. But such heaven can be attained by human soul only through struggle, — struggle often for life and death with sin, with doubt, with faithlessness, with despair. For the fable of Sisyphus is not mere fable; this ever rolling back of the stone to the hill-top for the tenth, for the hundredth, for the thousandth time, is only the history of the soul on its journey heavenward; the gold, ere it be freed from the dross, must be scorched, burnt, melted, dissolved; and the soul, to be made pure in its turn, must be likewise burnt, melted, fused. Think not, therefore, that Shakespeare, ere he wrote "To be or not to be," had been perching on the tree and warbling right gladly all his days. His sorrow is not indeed found in his plays, but surely it was found in his life. Think not, therefore, that the sportive, merry, joking Socrates was gay through all the seventy years of his life. Not from a gay heart came those words spoken at the end of his days, "We approach truth only in so far as we are removed from life." And lastly, my friends, not from a gay heart flowed that gentle spirit, that boundless love, of the possessor of whom not once, in all the four Gospels, is recorded the fact that he ever laughed! Verily, only through sorrow can be reached the haven of the soul, that union with God which is free from pride of intellect and love of self. And so Tolstoy's life too, ere he attained that heavenly peace, was filled with sorrow immeasurable, sorrow unspeakable. For fifteen years of his life the thought of suicide was not out of his mind for a day; he upon whom Fortune had lavished every gift which in the opinion of the world can alone make man happy, he who had riches, fame, friends, position, admiration, appreciation, — this man Tolstoy has for years to hide his gun lest he shoot himself, and his towel lest he hang himself. Wherefore, then, such misery? Because, my friends, he was natively endowed with a heaven-aspiring soul, between which and the doctrine of the world there can be no peace. One must perish, or the other, — either the doctrine of the world, or his soul. His soul, indeed, was destined not to perish; but the devil in man dies hard, and for fifty years the doctrine of the world held in him the upper hand.

26. Hence though the essence of Tolstoy is the preacher, he was during these fifty years never the preacher alone; but this very struggle in his soul between the powers of Light on the one hand and the powers of Darkness on the other is also the reason why he never remained the artist alone. Like the thread of Theseus in the labyrinth of Minos, the preacher's vein is seldom, if ever, absent from Tolstoy. Hence his "Morning of a Proprietor," written in 1852, at the age of twenty-four, is as faithful an account of his experience as a visitor among the poor as his "Census of Moscow," written twenty-five years later; hence his "Lutzen," written when he was yet under thirty, is as powerful a plea for the beggar as his "What to Do," written at the end of his career. The final detaching of the preacher from the artist is not therefore a sudden resolve, but the outcome of the life-long struggle of his spirit. The detaching of the preacher from the artist took place therefore in Tolstoy as the detaching of the nourishing kernel takes



place from the castaway shell. When he found his haven and saw that the only meaning of life can be found solely in love of man, and in living and in toiling for him, when the doctrine of the world, in short, was defeated by the soul, then the severance of the preacher from the artist becomes complete, the shell is burst, and in all its native nourishingness there at last lies before us what is eternal of Tolstoy, — the writings, not of the artist Tolstoy, but the writings of the preacher Tolstoy.

27. My hearers, my friends, I have now spoken unto ye for well-nigh six hours. From the manner in which you have listened unto me, I judge that ye have been entertained, perhaps even instructed. And yet I should feel that I have spoken unto ye to but little purpose, if my words have merely entertained, merely instructed you; for mere entertainment you can find already in abundance elsewhere, — in the circus, in the play-house, in the concert-room, in the magazine, in the wit of the diner-out, and not unto me is it given to compete with these. And mere instruction likewise you can find already in abundance elsewhere, — in the cyclopædias, in the universities, in the libraries, in the Browning-reader; and neither is it given wholly unto me to compete with these. Not, therefore, to amuse, not even wholly to instruct ye, have I come before ye these successive evenings, and asked you to lend me your ear. But I had hoped that on parting from me, as you will this evening, perhaps for aye, you might perhaps carry away with ye also that earnestness of purpose, the absence of which made so barren the muse of Pushkin; that sympathy for a soul struggling upward, the want of which made so cheerless the life of Gogol; that faith in God, the lack of which made so incomplete the life of Turgenev; and lastly, that faith in the commands of Christ, the living out of which makes so inspiring the life of Tolstoy.

28. Would to God, my friends, ye might carry away with ye all these things besides the entertainment, besides even the instruction you may have found here. In the days of old the great God was ready to save from perdition a whole city of sinners if only ten righteous men could be found within its walls; and so shall I feel amply repaid for my toil, if of the large number who have listened unto me at least ten leave me with the feeling that they have got from my words something more than mere entertainment, something more than mere instruction.

THE END.

# Extract From ‘My Literary Passions’

by William Dean Howells

William Dean Howells (1837–1920) was an American realist author and literary critic, particularly known for his tenure as editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* as well as his novel *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. In 1895 he published this comprehensive study of his favourite writers, in which the thirty-fifth chapter concentrates on the work of Tolstoy.

William Dean Howells – a great admirer of Tolstoy’s work

\*\*\*35. *Tolstoy*\*\*\*

I come now, though not quite in the order of time, to the noblest of all these enthusiasms — namely, my devotion for the writings of Lyof Tolstoy. I should wish to speak of him with his own incomparable truth, yet I do not know how to give a notion of his influence without the effect of exaggeration. As much as one merely human being can help another I believe that he has helped me; he has not influenced me in aesthetics only, but in ethics, too, so that I can never again see life in the way I saw it before I knew him. Tolstoy awakens in his reader the will to be a man; not effectively, not spectacularly, but simply, really. He leads you back to the only true ideal, away from that false standard of the gentleman, to the Man who sought not to be distinguished from other men, but identified with them, to that Presence in which the finest gentleman shows his alloy of vanity, and the greatest genius shrinks to the measure of his miserable egotism. I learned from Tolstoy to try character and motive by no other test, and though I am perpetually false to that sublime ideal myself, still the ideal remains with me, to make me ashamed that I am not true to it. Tolstoy gave me heart to hope that the world may yet be made over in the image of Him who died for it, when all Caesars things shall be finally rendered unto Caesar, and men shall come into their own, into the right to labor and the right to enjoy the fruits of their labor, each one master of himself and servant to every other. He taught me to see life not as a chase of a forever impossible personal happiness, but as a field for endeavor towards the happiness of the whole human family; and I can never lose this vision, however I close my eyes, and strive to see my own interest as the highest good. He gave me new criterions, new principles, which, after all, were those that are taught us in our earliest childhood, before we have come to the evil wisdom of the world. As I read his different ethical books, ‘What to Do,’ ‘My Confession,’ and ‘My Religion,’ I recognized their truth with a rapture such as I have known in no other reading, and

I rendered them my allegiance, heart and soul, with whatever sickness of the one and despair of the other. They have it yet, and I believe they will have it while I live. It is with inexpressible astonishment that I bear them attainted of pessimism, as if the teaching of a man whose ideal was simple goodness must mean the prevalence of evil. The way he showed me seemed indeed impossible to my will, but to my conscience it was and is the only possible way. If there, is any point on which he has not convinced my reason it is that of our ability to walk this narrow way alone. Even there he is logical, but as Zola subtly distinguishes in speaking of Tolstoy's essay on "Money," he is not reasonable. Solitude enfeebles and palsies, and it is as comrades and brothers that men must save the world from itself, rather than themselves from the world. It was so the earliest Christians, who had all things common, understood the life of Christ, and I believe that the latest will understand it so.

I have spoken first of the ethical works of Tolstoy, because they are of the first importance to me, but I think that his aesthetical works are as perfect. To my thinking they transcend in truth, which is the highest beauty, all other works of fiction that have been written, and I believe that they do this because they obey the law of the author's own life. His conscience is one ethically and one aesthetically; with his will to be true to himself he cannot be false to his knowledge of others. I thought the last word in literary art had been said to me by the novels of Tourguenief, but it seemed like the first, merely, when I began to acquaint myself with the simpler method of Tolstoy. I came to it by accident, and without any manner, of preoccupation in *The Cossacks*, one of his early books, which had been on my shelves unread for five or six years. I did not know even Tolstoy's name when I opened it, and it was with a kind of amaze that I read it, and felt word by word, and line by line, the truth of a new art in it.

I do not know how it is that the great Russians have the secret of simplicity. Some say it is because they have not a long literary past and are not conventionalized by the usage of many generations of other writers, but this will hardly account for the brotherly directness of their dealing with human nature; the absence of experience elsewhere characterizes the artist with crudeness, and simplicity is the last effect of knowledge. Tolstoy is, of course, the first of them in this supreme grace. He has not only Tourguenief's transparency of style, unclouded by any mist of the personality which we mistakenly value in style, and which ought no more to be there than the artist's personality should be in a portrait; but he has a method which not only seems without artifice, but is so. I can get at the manner of most writers, and tell what it is, but I should be baffled to tell what Tolstoy's manner is; perhaps he has no manner. This appears to me true of his novels, which, with their vast variety of character and incident, are alike in their single endeavor to get the persons living before you, both in their action and in the peculiarly dramatic interpretation of their emotion and cogitation. There are plenty of novelists to tell you that their characters felt and thought so and so, but you have to take it on trust; Tolstoy alone makes you know how and why it was so with them and not otherwise. If there is anything in him which can be copied

or burlesqued it is this ability of his to show men inwardly as well as outwardly; it is the only trait of his which I can put my hand on.

After 'The Cossacks' I read 'Anna Karenina' with a deepening sense of the author's unrivalled greatness. I thought that I saw through his eyes a human affair of that most sorrowful sort as it must appear to the Infinite Compassion; the book is a sort of revelation of human nature in circumstances that have been so perpetually lied about that we have almost lost the faculty of perceiving the truth concerning an illicit love. When you have once read 'Anna Karenina' you know how fatally miserable and essentially unhappy such a love must be. But the character of Karenin himself is quite as important as the intrigue of Anna and Vronsky. It is wonderful how such a man, cold, Philistine and even mean in certain ways, towers into a sublimity unknown (to me, at least), in fiction when he forgives, and yet knows that he cannot forgive with dignity. There is something crucial, and something triumphant, not beyond the power, but hitherto beyond the imagination of men in this effect, which is not solicited, not forced, not in the least romantic, but comes naturally, almost inevitably, from the make of man.

The vast prospects, the far-reaching perspectives of 'War and Peace' made it as great a surprise for me in the historical novel as 'Anna Karenina' had been in the study of contemporary life; and its people and interests did not seem more remote, since they are of a civilization always as strange and of a humanity always as known.

I read some shorter stories of Tolstoy's before I came to this greatest work of his: I read 'Scenes of the Siege of Sebastopol,' which is so much of the same quality as 'War and Peace;' and I read 'Policoushka' and most of his short stories with a sense of my unity with their people such as I had never felt with the people of other fiction.

His didactic stories, like all stories of the sort, dwindle into allegories; perhaps they do their work the better for this, with the simple intelligences they address; but I think that where Tolstoy becomes impatient of his office of artist, and prefers to be directly a teacher, he robs himself of more than half his strength with those he can move only through the realization of themselves in others. The simple pathos, and the apparent indirectness of such a tale as that of 'Poticoushka,' the peasant conscript, is of vastly more value to the world at large than all his parables; and 'The Death of Ivan Ilyitch,' the Philistine worldling, will turn the hearts of many more from the love of the world than such pale fables of the early Christian life as "Work while ye have the Light." A man's gifts are not given him for nothing, and the man who has the great gift of dramatic fiction has no right to cast it away or to let it rust out in disuse.

Terrible as the 'Kreutzer Sonata' was, it had a moral effect dramatically which it lost altogether when the author descended to exegesis, and applied to marriage the lesson of one evil marriage. In fine, Tolstoy is certainly not to be held up as infallible. He is very, distinctly fallible, but I think his life is not less instructive because in certain things it seems a failure. There was but one life ever lived upon the earth which was without failure, and that was Christ's, whose erring and stumbling follower Tolstoy is. There is no other example, no other ideal, and the chief use of Tolstoy is to enforce this

fact in our age, after nineteen centuries of hopeless endeavor to substitute ceremony for character, and the creed for the life. I recognize the truth of this without pretending to have been changed in anything but my point of view of it. What I feel sure is that I can never look at life in the mean and sordid way that I did before I read Tolstoy.

Artistically, he has shown me a greatness that he can never teach me. I am long past the age when I could wish to form myself upon another writer, and I do not think I could now insensibly take on the likeness of another; but his work has been a revelation and a delight to me, such as I am sure I can never know again. I do not believe that in the whole course of my reading, and not even in the early moment of my literary enthusiasms, I have known such utter satisfaction in any writer, and this supreme joy has come to me at a time of life when new friendships, not to say new passions, are rare and reluctant. It is as if the best wine at this high feast where I have sat so long had been kept for the last, and I need not deny a miracle in it in order to attest my skill in judging vintages. In fact, I prefer to believe that my life has been full of miracles, and that the good has always come to me at the right time, so that I could profit most by it. I believe if I had not turned the corner of my fiftieth year, when I first knew Tolstoy, I should not have been able to know him as fully as I did. He has been to me that final consciousness, which he speaks of so wisely in his essay on "Life." I came in it to the knowledge of myself in ways I had not dreamt of before, and began at least to discern my relations to the race, without which we are each nothing. The supreme art in literature had its highest effect in making me set art forever below humanity, and it is with the wish to offer the greatest homage to his heart and mind, which any man can pay another, that I close this record with the name of Lyof Tolstoy.

# Extract From ‘Essays on Russian Novelists’

by William Lyon Phelps

This essay on Tolstoy’s life and work is taken from Phelps’ famous collection of essays on Russian writers, first published in 1911. Phelps was an American critic, whose scholarly works explored many areas of world literature.

Dr William Lyon Phelps, 1922

Tolstoi

ON the 6 September 1852, signed only with initials, appeared in a Russian periodical the first work of Count Leo Tolstoi — *Childhood*. By 1867, his name was just barely known outside of Russia, for in that year the American diplomat, Eugene Schuyler, in the preface to his translation of *Fathers and Sons*, said, “The success of Gogol brought out a large number of romance-writers, who abandoned all imitation of German, French, and English novelists, and have founded a truly national school of romance.” Besides Turgenev, “easily their chief,” he mentioned five Russian writers, all but one of whom are now unknown or forgotten in America. The second in his list was “the Count Tolstoi, a writer chiefly of military novels.” During the seventies, the English scholar Ralston published in a review some paraphrases of Tolstoi, because, as he said, “Tolstoi will probably never be translated into English.” To-day the works of Tolstoi are translated into forty-five languages, and in the original Russian the sales have gone into many millions. During the last ten years of his life he held an absolutely unchallenged position as the greatest living writer in the world, there being not a single contemporary worthy to be named in the same breath.

Tolstoi himself, at the end of the century, divided his life into four periods:\* the innocent, joyous, and poetic time of childhood, from earliest recollection up to the age of fourteen; the “terrible twenties,” full of ambition, vanity, and licentiousness, lasting till his marriage at the age of thirty-four; the third period of eighteen years, when he was honest and pure in family life, but a thorough egoist; the fourth period, which he hoped would be the last, dating from his Christian conversion, and during which he tried to shape his life in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount.

\* His own Memoirs, edited by Birukov, are now the authority for biographical detail. They are still in process of publication.

He was born at Yasnaya Polyana, in south central Russia, not far from the birth-place of Turgenev, on the 28 August 1828. His mother died when he was a baby, his father when he was only nine. An aunt, to whom he was devotedly attached, and whom

he called "Grandmother," had the main supervision of his education. In 1836 the family went to live at Moscow, where the boy formed that habit of omnivorous reading which characterised his whole life. Up to his fourteenth year, the books that chiefly influenced him were the Old Testament, the Arabian Nights, Pushkin, and popular Russian legends. It was intended that he should follow a diplomatic career, and in preparation for the University of Kazan, he studied Oriental languages. In 1844 he failed to pass his entrance examinations, but was admitted some months later. He left the University in 1847. From his fourteenth to his twenty-first year the books that he read with the most profit were Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, under the influence of which he wrote his first story, Pushkin, Schiller's *Robbers*, Lermontov, Gogol, Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches*; and to a less degree he was affected by the New Testament, Rousseau, Dickens's *David Copperfield*, and the historical works of the American Prescott. Like all Russian boys, he of course read the romances of Fenimore Cooper.

On leaving the University, he meant to take up a permanent residence in the country; but this enthusiasm waned at the close of the summer, as it does with nearly everybody, and he went to St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1847, where he entered the University in the department of law. During all this time he had the habit of almost morbid introspection, and like so many young people, he wrote resolutions and kept a diary. In 1851 he went with his brother to the Caucasus, and entered the military service, as described in his novel, *The Cossacks*. Here he indulged in dissipation, cards, and women, like the other soldiers. In the midst of his life there he wrote to his aunt, in French, the language of most of their correspondence, "You recall some advice you once gave me — to write novels: well, I am of your opinion, and I am doing literary work. I do not know whether what I write will ever appear in the world, but it is work that amuses me, and in which I have persevered for too long a time to give it up." He noted at this time that the three passions which obstructed the moral way were gambling, sensuality, and vanity. And he further wrote in his journal, "There is something in me which makes me think that I was not born to be just like everybody else." Again: "The man who has no other goal than his own happiness is a bad man. He whose goal is the good opinion of others is a weak man. He whose goal is the happiness of others is a virtuous man. He whose goal is God is a great man!"

He finished his first novel, *Childhood*, sent it to a Russian review, and experienced the most naïve delight when the letter of acceptance arrived. "It made me happy to the limit of stupidity," he wrote in his diary. The letter was indeed flattering. The publisher recognised the young author's talent, and was impressed with his "simplicity and reality," as well he might be, for they became the cardinal qualities of all Tolstoi's books. It attracted little attention, however, and no criticism of it appeared for two years. But a little later, when Dostoevski obtained in Siberia the two numbers of the periodical containing *Childhood* and *Boyhood*, he was deeply moved, and wrote to a friend, asking, Who is this mysterious L. N. T.? But for a long time Tolstoi refused to let his name be known.

Tolstoi took part in the Crimean war, not as a spectator or reporter, but as an officer. He was repeatedly in imminent danger, and saw all the horrors of warfare, as described in Sevastopol. Still, he found time somehow for literary work, wrote *Boyhood*, and read Dickens in English. About this time he decided to substitute the Lord's Prayer in his private devotions for all other petitions, saying that "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" included everything. On the 5 March 1855 he wrote in his diary a curious prophecy of his present attitude toward religion: "My conversations on divinity and faith have led me to a great idea, for the realisation of which I am ready to devote my whole life. This idea is the founding of a new religion, corresponding to the level of human development, the religion of Christ, but purified of all dogmas and mysteries, a practical religion not promising a blessed future life, but bestowing happiness here on earth."

In this same year he wrote the book which was the first absolute proof of his genius, and with the publication of which his reputation began — *Sevastopol* in December. This was printed in the same review that had accepted his first work, was greeted with enthusiasm by Turgenev and the literary circles at Petersburg, was read by the Tsar, and translated into French at the imperial command. It was followed by *Sevastopol* in May and *Sevastopol* in August, and Tolstoi found himself famous.

It was evident that a man so absorbed in religious ideas and so sensitive to the hideous wholesale murder of war, could not remain for long in the army. He arrived at Petersburg on the 21 November 1855, and had a warm reception from the distinguished group of writers who were at that time contributors to the *Sovremennik*\* (The Contemporary Review), which had published Tolstoi's work. This review had been founded by Pushkin in 1836, was now edited by Nekrassov, who had accepted Tolstoi's first article, *Childhood*, and had enlisted the foremost writers of Russia, prominent among whom was, of course, Turgenev. The books which Tolstoi read with the most profit during this period were Goethe, Hugo's *Notre-Dame*, Plato in French, and Homer in Russian.

\* An amusing caricature of the time represents Turgenev, Ovstrovski, and Tolstoi bringing rolls of manuscripts to the editors.

Turgenev had a fixed faith in the future of Tolstoi; he was already certain that a great writer had appeared in Russia. Writing to a friend from Paris, in 1856, he said, "When this new wine is ripened there will be a drink fit for the gods." In 1857, after Tolstoi had visited him in Paris, Turgenev wrote, "This man will go far and will leave behind him a profound influence." But the two authors had little in common, and it was evident that there could never be perfect harmony between them. Explaining why he could not feel wholly at ease with Tolstoi, he said, "We are made of different clay."

In January 1857, Tolstoi left Moscow for Warsaw by sledge, and from there travelled by rail for Paris. In March, accompanied by Turgenev, he went to Dijon, and saw a man executed by the guillotine. He was deeply impressed both by the horror and by the absurdity of capital punishment, and, as he said, the affair "pursued" him for a long time. He travelled on through Switzerland, and at Lucerne he felt the contrast between



the great natural beauty of the scenery and the artificiality of the English snobs in the hotel. He journeyed on down the Rhine, and returned to Russia from Berlin. During all these months of travel, his journal expresses the constant religious fermentation of his mind, and his intense democratic sentiments. They were the same ideas held by the Tolstoi of 1900.

On the 3 July 1860, he left Petersburg by steamer, once more to visit southern Europe. He visited schools, universities, and studied the German methods of education. He also spent some time in the south of France, and wrote part of *The Cossacks* there. In Paris he once more visited Turgenev, and then crossed over to London, where he saw the great Russian critic Herzen almost every day. Herzen was not at all impressed by Tolstoi's philosophical views, finding them both weak and vague. The little daughter of Herzen begged her father for the privilege of meeting the young and famous author. She expected to see a philosopher, who would speak of weighty matters: what was her disappointment when Count Tolstoi appeared, dressed in the latest English style, looking exactly like a fashionable man of the world, and talking with great enthusiasm of a cock-fight he had just witnessed!

After nine months' absence, Tolstoi returned to Russia in April 1861. He soon went to his home at Yasnaya Polyana, established a school for the peasants, and devoted himself to the arduous labour of their education. Here he had a chance to put into practice all the theories that he had acquired from his observations in Germany and England. He worked so hard that he injured his health, and in a few months was forced to travel and rest. In this same year he lost a thousand rubles playing billiards with Katkov, the well-known editor of the *Russian Messenger*. Not being able to pay cash, he gave Katkov the manuscript of his novel, *The Cossacks*, which was accordingly printed in the review in January 1863.

On the 23 September 1862, he was married. A short time before this event he gave his fiancée his diary, which contained a frank and free account of all the sins of his bachelor life. She was overwhelmed, and thought of breaking off the engagement. After many nights spent in wakeful weeping, she returned the journal to him, with a full pardon, and assurance of complete affection. It was fortunate for him that this young girl was large-hearted enough to forgive his sins, for she became an ideal wife, and shared in all his work, copying in her own hand his manuscripts again and again. In all her relations with the difficult temperament of her husband, she exhibited the utmost devotion, and that uncommon quality which we call common sense.

Shortly after the marriage, Tolstoi began the composition of a leviathan in historical fiction, *War and Peace*. While composing it, he wrote: "If one could only accomplish the hundredth part of what one conceives, but one cannot even do a millionth part! Still, the consciousness of Power is what brings happiness to a literary man. I have felt this power particularly during this year." He suffered, however, from many paroxysms of despair, and constantly corrected what he wrote. This made it necessary for his wife to copy out the manuscript; and it is said that she wrote in her own hand the whole manuscript of this enormous work seven times!

The publication of the novel began in the *Russki Viesinik* (Russian Messenger) for January 1865, and the final chapters did not appear till 1869. It attracted constant attention during the process of publication, and despite considerable hostile criticism, established the reputation of its author.

During its composition Tolstoi read all kinds of books, *Pickwick Papers*, Anthony Trollope, whom he greatly admired, and Schopenhauer, who for a time fascinated him. In 1869 he learned Greek, and was proud of being able to read the *Anabasis* in a few months. He interested himself in social problems, and fought hard with the authorities to save a man from capital punishment. To various schemes of education, and to the general amelioration of the condition of the peasants, he gave all the tremendous energy of his mind.

On the 19 March 1873, he began the composition of *Anna Karenina*, which was to give him his greatest fame outside of Russia. Several years were spent in its composition and publication. Despite the power of genius displayed in this masterpiece, he did not enjoy writing it, and seemed to be unaware of its splendid qualities. In 1875 he wrote, "For two months I have not soiled my fingers with ink, but now I return again to this tiresome and vulgar *Anna Karenina*, with the sole wish of getting it done as soon as possible, in order that I may have time for other work." It was published in the *Russian Messenger*, and the separate numbers drew the attention of critics everywhere, not merely in Russia, but all over Europe.

The printing began in 1874. All went well enough for two years, as we see by a letter of the Countess Tolstoi, in December 1876. "At last we are writing *Anna Karenina* *comme il faut*, that is, without interruptions. Leo, full of animation, writes an entire chapter every day, and I copy it off as fast as possible; even now, under this letter, there are the pages of the new chapter that he wrote yesterday. Katkov telegraphed day before yesterday to send some chapters for the December number." But, just before the completion of the work, Tolstoi and the editor, Katkov, had an irreconcilable quarrel. The war with Turkey was imminent. Tolstoi was naturally vehemently opposed to it, while Katkov did everything in his power to inflame public opinion in favour of the war party; and he felt that Vronsky's departure for the war, after the death of Anna, with Levin's comments thereupon, were written in an unpatriotic manner. Ridiculous as it now seems to give this great masterpiece a political twist, or to judge it from that point of view, it was for a time the sole question that agitated the critics. Katkov insisted that Tolstoi "soften" the objectionable passages. Tolstoi naturally refused, editor and author quarrelled, and Tolstoi was forced to publish the last portion of the work in a separate pamphlet. In the number of May 1877, Katkov printed a footnote to the instalment of the novel, which shows how little he understood its significance, although the majority of contemporary Russian critics understood the book no better than he.

"In our last number, at the foot of the novel *Anna Karenina*, we printed, 'Conclusion in the next issue.' But with the death of the heroine the real story ends. According to the plan of the author, there will be a short epilogue, in which the reader will learn that Vronsky, overwhelmed by the death of Anna, will depart for Servia as a volunteer;

that all the other characters remain alive and well; that Levin lives on his estates and fumes against the Slavonic party and the volunteers. Perhaps the author will develop this chapter in a special edition of his novel.”

Levin’s conversation with the peasant, toward the close of *Anna Karenina*, indicates clearly the religious attitude of Tolstoi, and prepares us for the crisis that followed. From 1877 to 1879 he passed through a spiritual struggle, read the New Testament constantly, and became completely converted to the practical teachings of the Gospel. Then followed his well-known work, *My Religion*, the abandonment of his former way of life, and his attempts to live like a peasant, in daily manual labour. Since that time he wrote a vast number of religious, political, and social tracts, dealing with war, marriage, law-courts, imprisonment, etc. Many of the religious tracts belong to literature by the beauty and simple directness of their style. Two short stories and one long novel, all written with a didactic purpose, are of this period, and added to their author’s reputation: *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, *The Kreuzer Sonata*, and *Resurrection*.

One cannot but admire the courage of Tolstoi in attempting to live in accordance with his convictions, just as we admire Milton for his motives in abandoning poetry for politics. But our unspeakable regret at the loss to the world in both instances, when its greatest living author devotes himself to things done much better by men destitute of talent, makes us heartily sympathise with the attitude of the Countess, who hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry. In a letter to her husband, written in October 1884, and filled with terms of affectionate tenderness, she said: “Yesterday I received your letter, and it has made me very sad. I see that you have remained at *Yasnaya* not for intellectual work, which I place above everything, but to play ‘*Robinson*.’ You have let the cook go . . . and from morning to night you give yourself up to manual toil fit only for young men. . . . You will say, of course, that this manner of life conforms to your principles and that it does you good. That’s another matter. I can only say, ‘*Rejoice and take your pleasure*,’ and at the same time I feel sad to think that such an intellectual force as yours should expend itself in cutting wood, heating the samovar, and sewing boots. That is all very well as a change of work, but not for an occupation. Well, enough of this subject. If I had not written this, it would have rankled in me, and now it has passed and I feel like laughing. I can calm myself only by this Russian proverb: ‘*Let the child amuse himself, no matter how, provided he doesn’t cry*.’”

In the last few weeks of his life, the differences of opinion between the aged couple became so acute that Tolstoi fled from his home, and refused to see the Countess again. This flight brought on a sudden illness, and the great writer died early in the morning of the 20 November 1910. He was buried under an oak tree at *Yasnaya Polyana*.

Although Count Tolstoi divided his life into four distinct periods, and although critics have often insisted on the great difference between his earlier and his later work, these differences fade away on a close scrutiny of the man’s whole production, from *Childhood* to *Resurrection*.

“*Souls alter not, and mine must still advance*,” said Browning. This is particularly true of Tolstoi. He progressed, but did not change; and he progressed along the path

already clearly marked in his first books. The author of *Sevastopol* and *The Cossacks* was the same man mentally and spiritually who wrote *Anna Karenina*, *Ivan Ilyich*, *The Kreuzer Sonata*, and *Resurrection*. Indeed, few great authors have steered so straight a course as he. No such change took place in him as occurred with Björnson. The teaching of the later books is more evident, the didactic purpose is more obvious, but that is something that happens to almost all writers as they descend into the vale of years. The seed planted in the early novels simply came to a perfectly natural and logical fruition.

Not only do the early novels indicate the direction that Tolstoi's whole life was bound to assume, but his diary and letters show the same thing. The extracts from these that I have given above are substantial proof of this — he saw the truth just as clearly in 1855 as he saw it in 1885, or in 1905. The difference between the early and later Tolstoi is not, then, a difference in mental viewpoint, it is a difference in conduct and action.\* The eternal moral law of self-sacrifice was revealed to him in letters of fire when he wrote *The Cossacks* and *Sevastopol*; everything that he wrote after was a mere amplification and additional emphasis. But he was young then; and although he saw the light, he preferred the darkness. He knew then, just as clearly as he knew later, that the life in accordance with New Testament teaching was a better life than that spent in following his animal instincts; but his knowledge did not save him.

\* For a very unfavourable view of Tolstoi's later conduct, the "Tolstoi legend," see Merezhkovski, *Tolstoi as Man and Artist*.

Even the revolutionary views on art, which he expressed toward the end of the century in his book, *What is Art?* were by no means a sudden discovery, nor do they reveal a change in his attitude. The accomplished translator, Mr. Maude, said in his preface, "The fundamental thought expressed in this book leads inevitably to conclusions so new, so unexpected, and so contrary to what is usually maintained in literary and artistic circles," etc. But while the conclusions seemed new (and absurd) to many artists, they were not at all new to Tolstoi. So early as 1872 he practically held these views. In a letter to Strakov, expressing his contempt for modern Russian literature and the language of the great poets and novelists, he said: "Pushkin himself appears to me ridiculous. The language of the people, on the contrary, has sounds to express everything that the poet is able to say, and it is very dear to me." In the same letter he wrote, "'Poor Lisa' drew tears and received homage, but no one reads her any more, while popular songs and tales, and folk-lore ballads will live as long as the Russian language."

In his views of art, in his views of morals, in his views of religion, Tolstoi developed, but he did not change. He simply followed his ideas to their farthest possible extreme, so that many Anglo-Saxons suspected him even of madness. In reality, the method of his thought is characteristically and purely Russian. An Englishman may be in love with an idea, and start out bravely to follow it; but if he finds it leading him into a position contrary to the experience of humanity, then he pulls up, and decides that

the idea must be false, even if he can detect no flaw in it; not so the Russian; the idea is right, and humanity is wrong.

No author ever told us so much about himself as Tolstoi. Not only do we now possess his letters and journals, in which he revealed his inner life with the utmost clarity of detail, but all his novels, even those that seem the most objective, are really part of his autobiography. Through the persons of different characters he is always talking about himself, always introspective. That is one reason why his novels seem so amazingly true to life. They seem true because they are true.

Some one said of John Stuart Mill, "Analysis is the king of his intellect." This remark is also true of most Russian novelists, and particularly true of Tolstoi. In all his work, historical romance, realistic novels, religious tracts, his greatest power was shown in the correct analysis of mental states. And he took all human nature for his province. Strictly speaking, there are no minor characters in his books. The same pains are taken with persons who have little influence on the course of the story, as with the chief actors. The normal interests him even more than the abnormal, which is the great difference between his work and that of Gorki and Andreev, as it was the most striking difference between Shakespeare and his later contemporaries. To reveal ordinary people just as they really are, — sometimes in terrific excitement, sometimes in humdrum routine, — this was his aim. Natural scenery is occasionally introduced, like the mountains in *The Cossacks*, to show how the spectacle affects the mind of the person who is looking at it. It is seldom made use of for a background. Mere description occupied a very small place in Tolstoi's method. The intense fidelity to detail in the portrayal of character, whether obsessed by a mighty passion, or playing with a trivial caprice, is the chief glory of his work. This is why, after the reading of Tolstoi, so many other "realistic" novels seem utterly untrue and absurd.

The three stories, *Childhood*, *Boyhood*, *Youth*, now generally published as one novel, are the work of a genius, but not a work of genius. They are interesting in the light of their author's later books, and they are valuable as autobiography. The fact that he himself repudiated them, was ashamed of having written them, and declared that their style was unnatural, means little or much, according to one's viewpoint. But the undoubted power revealed here and there in their pages is immature, a mere suggestion of what was to follow. They are exercises in composition. He learned how to write in writing these. But the intention of their author is clear enough. His "stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul." There is not a single unusual or sensational event in the whole narrative, nor did the hero grow up in any strange or remarkable environment. The interest therefore is not in what happened, but wholly in the ripening character of the child. The circumstances are partly true of Tolstoi's own boyhood, partly not; he purposely mixed his own and his friends' experiences. But mentally the boy is Tolstoi himself, revealed in all the awkwardness, self-consciousness, and morbidity of youth. The boy's pride, vanity, and curious mixture of timidity and conceit do not form a very attractive picture, and were not intended to. Tolstoi himself as a young man had little charm, and his numerous portraits all plainly indicate the

fact. His Satanic pride made frank friendship with him almost an impossibility. Despite our immense respect for his literary power, despite the enormous influence for good that his later books have effected, it must be said that of all the great Russian writers, Tolstoi was the most unlovely.

These three sketches, taken as one, are grounded on moral ideas — the same ideas that later completely dominated the author's life. We feel his hatred of dissipation and of artificiality. The chapter on Love, in *Youth*, might also form a part of the *Kreuzer Sonata*, so fully does it harmonise with the teaching of the later work.

“I do not speak of the love of a young man for a young girl, and hers for him; I fear these tendernesses, and I have been so unfortunate in life as never to have seen a single spark of truth in this species of love, but only a lie, in which sentiment, connubial relations, money, a desire to bind or to unbind one's hands, have to such an extent confused the feeling itself, that it has been impossible to disentangle it. I am speaking of the love for man.”\*

\* Translated by Isabel Hapgood.

Throughout this book, as in all Tolstoi's work, is the eternal question Why? For what purpose is life, and to what end am I living? What is the real meaning of human ambition and human effort?

Tolstoi's reputation as an artist quite rightly began with the publication of the three Sevastopol stories, *Sevastopol in December*, *Sevastopol in May*, *Sevastopol in August*. This is the work, not of a promising youth, but of a master. There is not a weak or a superfluous paragraph. Maurice Hewlett has cleverly turned the charge that those 'who oppose war are sentimentalists, by risposting that the believers in war are the real sentimentalists: "they do not see the murder beneath the khaki and the flags." Tolstoi was one of the first novelists to strip war of its glamour, and portray its dull, commonplace filth, and its unspeakable horror. In reading that masterpiece *La Débâcle*, and every one who believes in war ought to read it, one feels that Zola must have learned something from Tolstoi. The Russian novelist stood in the midst of the flying shells, and how little did any one then realise that his own escape from death was an event of far greater importance to the world than the outcome of the war!

There is little patriotic feeling in *Sevastopol*, and its success was artistic rather than political. Of course Russian courage is praised, but so is the courage of the French. In spite of the fact that Tolstoi was a Russian officer, actively fighting for his country, he shows a singular aloofness from party passion in all his descriptions. The only partisan statement is in the half sentence, "it is a comfort to think that it was not we who began this war, that we are only defending our own country," which might profitably be read by those who believe in "just" wars, along with Tennyson's *Maud*, published at the same time. Tennyson was cock-sure that the English were God's own people, and in all this bloodshed were doing the blessed work of their Father in heaven.

"God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on a giant liar."

Throughout the heat of the conflict, Tolstoi felt its utter absurdity, really holding the same views of war that he held as an old man. "And why do not Christian people,"

he wrote in Sevastopol in May, "who profess the one great law of love and self-sacrifice, when they behold what they have wrought, fall in repentance upon their knees before Him who, when He gave them life, implanted in the soul of each of them, together with the fear of death, a love of the good and beautiful, and, with tears of joy and happiness, embrace each other like brothers?"

Together with the fear of death—this fear is analysed by Tolstoi in all its manifestations. The fear of the young officer, as he exchanges the enthusiastic departure from Petersburg for the grim reality of the bastions; the fear of the still sound and healthy man as he enters the improvised hospitals; the fear as the men watch the point of approaching light that means a shell; the fear of the men lying on the ground, waiting with closed eyes for the shell to burst. It is the very psychology of death. In reading the account of Praskukhin's sensations just before death, one feels, as one does in reading the thoughts of Anna Karenina under the train, that Tolstoi himself must have died in some previous existence, in order to analyse death so clearly. And all these officers, who walk in the Valley of the Shadow, have their selfish ambitions, their absurd social distinctions, and their overweening, egotistical vanity.

At the end of the middle sketch, Sevastopol in May, Tolstoi wrote out the only creed to which he remained consistently true all his life, the creed of Art.

"Who is the villain, who the hero? All are good and all are evil.

"The hero of my tale, whom I love with all the strength of my soul, whom I have tried to set forth in all his beauty, and who has always been, is, and always will be most beautiful, is — the truth."

The next important book, *The Cossacks*, is not a great novel. Tolstoi himself grew tired of it, and never finished it. It is interesting as an excellent picture of an interesting community, and it is interesting as a diary, for the chief character, Olenin, is none other than Leo Tolstoi. He departed for the Caucasus in much the same manner as the young writer, and his observations and reflections there are Tolstoi's own. The triple contrast in the book is powerfully shown: first, the contrast between the majesty of the mountains and the pettiness of man; second, the contrast between the noble simplicity of the Cossack women and the artificiality of the padded shapes of society females; third, the contrast between the two ways of life, that which Olenin recognises as right, the Christian law of self-denial, but which he does not follow, and the almost sublime pagan bodily joy of old Uncle Yeroshka, who lives in exact harmony with his creed. Yeroshka is a living force, a real character, and might have been created by Gogol.

Olenin, who is young Tolstoi, and not very much of a man, soliloquises in language that was echoed word for word by the Tolstoi of the twentieth century.

"Happiness consists in living for others. This also is clear. Man is endowed with a craving for happiness; therefore it must be legitimate. If he satisfies it egotistically, — that is, if he bends his energies toward acquiring wealth, fame, physical comforts, love, it may happen that circumstances will make it impossible to satisfy this craving. In fact, these cravings are illegitimate, but the craving for happiness is not illegitimate.

What cravings can always be satisfied independently of external conditions? Love, self-denial.”\*

\* Translated by Isabel Hapgood.

His later glorification of physical labour, as the way of salvation for irresolute and overeducated Russians, is as emphatically stated in *The Cossacks* as it is in the *Kreuzer Sonata*.

“The constant hard field labour, and the duties intrusted to them, give a peculiarly independent, masculine character to the Greben women, and have served to develop in them, to a remarkable degree, physical powers, healthy minds, decision and stability of character.”

The chief difference between Turgenev and Tolstoi is that Turgenev was always an artist; Tolstoi always a moralist. It was not necessary for him to abandon novels, and write tracts; for in every novel his moral teaching was abundantly clear.

With the possible exception of *Taras Bulba*, *War and Peace* is the greatest historical romance in the Russian language, perhaps the greatest in any language. It is not illumined by the humour of any such character as Zagloba, who brightens the great chronicles of Sienkiewicz; for if Tolstoi had had an accurate sense of humour, or the power to create great comic personages, he would never have been led into the final extremes of doctrine. But although this long book is unrelieved by mirth, and although as an objective historical panorama it does not surpass *The Deluge*, it is nevertheless a greater book. It is greater because its psychological analysis is more profound and more cunning. It is not so much a study of war, or the study of a vital period in the earth’s history, as it is a revelation of all phases of human nature in a time of terrible stress. It is filled with individual portraits, amazingly distinct.

Professors of history and military experts have differed widely — as it is the especial privilege of scholars and experts to differ — concerning the accuracy of *War and Peace* as a truthful narrative of events. But this is really a matter of no importance. Shakespeare is the greatest writer the world has ever seen; but he is not an authority on history; he is an authority on man. When we wish to study the Wars of the Roses, we do not turn to his pages, brilliant as they are. Despite all the geographical and historical research that Tolstoi imposed on himself as a preliminary to the writing of *War and Peace*, he did not write the history of that epoch, nor would a genuine student quote him as in authority. He created a prose epic, a splendid historical panorama, vitalised by a marvellous imagination, where the creatures of his fancy are more alive than Napoleon and Alexander. Underneath all the march of armies, the spiritual purpose of the author is clear. The real greatness of man consists not in fame or pride of place, but in simplicity and purity of heart. Once more he gives us the contrast between artificiality and reality.

This novel, like all of Tolstoi’s, is by no means a perfect work of art. Its outline is irregular and ragged; its development devious. It contains many excrescences, superfluities, digressions. But it is a dictionary of life, where one may look up any passion,



any emotion, any ambition, any weakness, and find its meaning. Strakov called it a complete picture of the Russia of that time, and a complete picture of humanity.

Its astonishing inequalities make the reader at times angrily impatient, and at other times inspired. One easily understands the varying emotions of Turgenev, who read the story piecemeal, in the course of its publication. "The second part of 1805 is weak. How petty and artificial all that is! . . . where are the real features of the epoch? where is the historical colour?" Again: "I have just finished reading the fourth volume. It contains things that are intolerable and things that are astounding; these latter are the things that dominate the work, and they are so admirable that never has a Russian written anything better; I do not believe there has ever been written anything so good." Again: "How tormenting are his obstinate repetitions of the same thing: the down on the upper lip of the Princess Bolkonsky. But with all that, there are in this novel passages that no man in Europe except Tolstoi could have written, things which put me into a frenzy of enthusiasm."

Tolstoi's genius reached its climax in *Anna Karenina*. Greatly as I admire some of his other books, I would go so far as to say that if a forced choice had to be made, I had rather have *Anna Karenina* than all the rest of his works put together. Leave that out, and his position in the history of fiction diminishes at once. It is surely the most powerful novel written by any man of our time, and it would be difficult to name a novel of any period that surpasses it in strength. I well remember the excitement with which we American undergraduates in the eighties read the poor and clipped English translation of this book. Twenty years' contemplation of it makes it seem steadily greater.

Yet its composition was begun by a mere freak, by something analogous to a sporting proposition. He was thinking of writing a historical romance of the times of Peter the Great, but the task seemed formidable, and he felt no well of inspiration. One evening, the 19 March 1873, he entered a room where his ten-year-old boy had been reading aloud from a story by Pushkin. Tolstoi picked up the book and read the first sentence: "On the eve of the fête the guests began to arrive." He was charmed by the abrupt opening, and cried: "That's the way to begin a book! The reader is immediately taken into the action. Another writer would have begun by a description, but Pushkin, he goes straight to his goal." Some one in the room suggested playfully to Tolstoi that he try a similar commencement and write a novel. He immediately withdrew, and wrote the first sentence of *Anna Karenina*. The next day the Countess said in a letter to her sister: "Yesterday Leo all of a sudden began to write a novel of contemporary life. The subject: the unfaithful wife and the whole resulting tragedy. I am very happy."

The suicide of the heroine was taken almost literally from an event that happened in January 1872. We learn this by a letter of the Countess, written on the 10 January in that year: "We have just learned of a very dramatic story. You remember, at Bibikov's, Anna Stepanova? Well, this Anna Stepanova was jealous of all the governesses at Bibikov's house. She displayed her jealousy so much that finally Bibikov became angry and quarrelled with her; then Anna Stepanova left him and went to Tula. For three

days no one knew where she was. At last, on the third day, she appeared at Yassenky, at five o'clock in the afternoon, with a little parcel. At the railway station she gave the coachman a letter for Bibikov, and gave him a ruble for a tip. Bibikov would not take the letter, and when the coachman returned to the station, he learned that Anna Stepanova had thrown herself under the train and was crushed to death. She had certainly done it intentionally. The judge came, and they read him the letter. It said: 'You are my murderer: be happy, if assassins can be. If you care to, you can see my corpse on the rails, at Yassenky.' Leo and Uncle Kostia have gone to the autopsy."

Most of the prominent characters in the book are taken from life, and the description of the death of Levin's brother is a recollection of the time when Tolstoi's own brother died in his arms.

Levin is, of course, Tolstoi himself; and all his eternal doubts and questionings, his total dissatisfaction and condemnation of artificial social life in the cities, his spiritual despair, and his final release from suffering at the magic word of the peasant are strictly autobiographical. When the muzhik told Levin that one man lived for his belly, and another for his soul, he became greatly excited, and eagerly demanded further knowledge of his humble teacher. He was once more told that man must live according to God — according to truth. His soul was immediately filled, says Tolstoi, with brilliant light. He was indeed relieved of his burden, like Christian at the sight of the Cross. Now Tolstoi's subsequent doctrinal works are all amplifications of the conversation between Levin and the peasant, which in itself contains the real significance of the whole novel.

Even Anna Karenina, with all its titanic power, is not an artistic model of a story. It contains much superfluous matter, and the balancing off of the two couples, Levin and Kitty, with Vronsky and Anna, is too obviously arranged by the author. One Russian critic was so disgusted with the book that he announced the plan of a continuation of the novel where Levin was to fall in love with his cow, and Kitty's resulting jealousy was to be depicted.

It has no organic plot — simply a succession of pictures. The plot does not develop — but the characters do, thus resembling our own individual human lives. It has no true unity, such as that shown, for example, by the *Scarlet Letter*. Our interest is largely concentrated in Anna, but besides the parallel story of Kitty, we have many other incidents and characters which often contribute nothing to the progress of the novel. They are a part of life, however, so Tolstoi includes them. One might say there is an attempt at unity, in the person of that sleek egotist, Stepan — his relation by blood and marriage to both Anna and Kitty makes him in some sense a link between the two couples. But he is more successful as a personage than as the keystone of an arch. The novel would really lose nothing by considerable cancellation. The author might have omitted Levin's two brothers, the whole Kitty and Levin history could have been liberally abbreviated, and many of the conversations on philosophy and politics would never be missed. Yes, the work could be shortened, but it would take a Turgenev to do it.

Although we may not always find Art in the book, we always find Life. No novel in my recollection combines wider range with greater intensity. It is extensive and intensive — broad and deep. The simplicity of the style in the most impressive scenes is so startling that it seems as if there were somehow no style and no language there; nothing whatever between the life in the book and the reader's mind; not only no impenetrable wall of style, such as Meredith and James pile up with curious mosaic, so that one cannot see the characters in the story through the exquisite and opaque structure, — but really no medium at all, transparent or otherwise. The emotional life of the men and women enter into our emotions with no let or hindrance, and that perfect condition of communication is realised which Browning believed would characterise the future life, when spirits would somehow converse without the slow, troublesome, and inaccurate means of language.

I believe that the average man can learn more about life by reading Anna Karenina than he can by his own observation and experience. One learns much about Russian life in city and country, much about human nature, and much about one's self, not all of which is flattering, but perhaps profitable for instruction.

This is the true realism — external and internal. The surface of things, clothes, habits of speech, manners and fashions, the way people enter a drawing-room, the way one inhales a cigarette, — everything is truthfully reported. Then there is the true internal realism, which dives below all appearances and reveals the dawn of a new passion, the first faint stir of an ambition, the slow and cruel advance of the poison of jealousy, the ineradicable egotism, the absolute darkness of unspeakable remorse. No caprice is too trivial, no passion too colossal, to be beyond the reach of the author of this book.

Some novels have attained a wide circulation by means of one scene. In recollecting Anna Karenina, powerful scenes crowd into the memory — introspective and analytic as it is, it is filled with dramatic climaxes. The sheer force of some of these scenes is almost terrifying. The first meeting of Anna and Vronsky at the railway station, the midnight interview in the storm on the way back to Petersburg, the awful dialogue between them after she has fallen (omitted from the first American translation), the fearful excitement of the horse race, the sickness of Anna, Karenin's forgiveness, the humiliation of Vronsky, the latter's attempt at suicide, the steadily increasing scenes of jealousy with the shadow of death coming nearer, the clairvoyant power of the author in describing the death of Anna, and the departure of Vronsky, where the railway station reminds him with intrusive agony of the contrast between his first and last view of the woman he loved. No one but Tolstoi would ever have given his tragic character a toothache at that particular time; but the toothache, added to the heartache, gives the last touch of reality. No reader has ever forgotten Vronsky, as he stands for the last time by the train, his heart torn by the vulture of Memory, and his face twisted by the steady pain in his tooth.

Every character in the book, major and minor, is a living human being. Stepan, with his healthy, pampered body, and his inane smile at Dolly's reproachful face; Dolly,

absolutely commonplace and absolutely real; Yashvin, the typical officer; the English trainer, Cord; Betsy, always cheerful, always heartless, probably the worst character in the whole book, Satan's own spawn; Karenin himself, not ridiculous, like an English Restoration husband, but with an overwhelming power of creating ennui, in which he lives and moves and has his being.

From the first day of his acquaintance with Anna, Vronsky steadily rises, and Anna steadily falls. This is in accordance with the fundamental, inexorable moral law. Vronsky, a handsome man with no purpose in life, who has had immoral relations with a large variety of women, now falls for the first time really in love, and his love for one woman strengthens his mind and heart, gives him an object in life, and concentrates the hitherto scattered energies of his soul. His development as a man, his rise in dignity and force of character, is one of the notable features of the whole book. When we first see him, he is colourless, a mere fashionable type; he constantly becomes more interesting, and when we last see him, he has not only our profound sympathy, but our cordial respect. He was a figure in a uniform, and has become a man. Devotion to one woman has raised him far above trivialities.

The woman pays for all this. Never again, not even in the transports of passion, will she be so happy as when we first see her on that bright winter day. She grows in intelligence by the fruit of the tree, and sinks in moral worth and in peace of mind. Never, since the time of Helen, has there been a woman in literature of more physical charm. Tolstoi, whose understanding of the body is almost supernatural, has created in Anna a woman, quite ordinary from the mental and spiritual point of view, but who leaves on every reader an indelible vision of surpassing loveliness. One is not surprised at Vronsky's instant and total surrender.

As a study of sin, the moral force of the story is tremendous. At the end, the words of Paul come irresistibly into the mind. To be carnally minded is death; to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

One can understand Tolstoi's enthusiasm for the Gospel in his later years, and also the prodigious influence of his parables and evangelistic narratives, by remembering that the Russian mind, which, as Gogol said, is more capable than any other of receiving the Christian religion, had been starved for centuries. The Orthodox Church of Russia seems to have been and to be as remote from the life of the people as the political bureaucracy. The hungry sheep looked up and were not fed. The Christian religion is the dominating force in the works of Gogol, Tolstoi, and Dostoevski. How eager the Russian people are for the simple Gospel, and with what amazing joy they now receive it, remind one of the Apostolic age. Accurate testimony to this fact has lately been given by a dispassionate German observer: —

“In the second half of the nineteenth century the Bible followed in the track of the knowledge of reading and writing in the Russian village. It worked, and works, far more powerfully than all the Nihilists, and if the Holy Synod wishes to be consistent in its policy of spiritual enslavement, it must begin by checking the distribution of the Bible. The origin of the ‘Stunde,’ from the prayer hour of the German Menonites and

other evangelical colonist meetings, is well known. The religious sense of the Russian, brooding for centuries over empty forms, combined with the equally repressed longing for spiritual life, — these quickly seized upon the power of a simple and practical living religious doctrine, and the ‘Stundist’ movement spread rapidly over the whole south of the Empire. Wherever a Bible in the Russian language is to be found in the village, there a circle rapidly forms around its learned owner; he is listened to eagerly, and the Word has its effect. . .

“Pashkov, a colonel of the Guards, who died in Paris at the beginning of 1902, started in the ‘eighties’ a movement in St. Petersburg, which was essentially evangelical, with a methodistical tinge, and which soon seized upon all the strata of the population in the capital. Substantially it was a religious revival from the dry-as-dust Greek church similar to that which in the sixteenth century turned against the Romish church in Germany and in Switzerland. The Gospel was to Pashkov himself new, good tidings, and as such he carried it into the distinguished circles which he assembled at his palace on the Neva, and as such he brought it amongst the crowds of cabmen, labourers, laundresses, etc., whom he called from the streets to hear the news. Pashkov’s name was known by the last crossing-sweeper, and many thousands blessed him, some because they had been moved by the religious spirit which glowed in him, others because they knew of the many charitable institutions which he had founded with his own means and with the help of rich men and women friends. I myself shall never forget the few hours which I spent in conversation with this man, simple in spirit as in education, but so rich in religious feeling and in true humility. To me he could offer nothing new, for all that to him was new I, the son of Lutheran parents, had known from my childhood days. But what was new to me was the phenomenon of a man who had belonged for fifty years to a Christian Church and had only now discovered as something new what is familiar to every member of an evangelical community as the sum and substance of Christian teaching. To him the Gospel itself was something new, a revelation.

“This has been the case of many thousands in the Russian Empire when they opened the Bible for the first time. The spark flew from village to village and took fire, because the people were thirsting for a spiritual, religious life, because it brought comfort in their material misery, and food for their minds. Holy Vladimir, with his Byzantine priests, brought no living Christianity into the land, and the common Russian had not been brought into contact with it during the nine hundred years which have elapsed since. Wherever it penetrates to-day with the Bible, there its effect is apparent. It is such as the best Government could not accomplish by worldly means alone. But it is diametrically opposed to the State Church; it leads to secession from orthodoxy, and the State has entered upon a crusade against it.”\*\*

\*\*Russia of To-day, by Baron E. von der Bruggen. Translated by M. Sandwith, London, 1904. Pages 165-167.

In *The Power of Darkness*, Ivan Ilyich, and the *Kreuzer Sonata*. Tolstoi has shown the way of Death. In *Resurrection* he has shown the way of Life. The most sensational of all his books is the *Kreuzer Sonata*; it was generally misunderstood, and from that

time some of his friends walked no more with him. By a curious freak of the powers of this world, it was for a time taboo in the United States, and its passage by post was forbidden; then the matter was taken to the courts, and a certain upright judge declared that so far from the book being vicious, it condemned vice and immorality on every page. He not only removed the ban, but recommended its wider circulation. The circumstances that gave rise to its composition are described in an exceedingly interesting article in the *New York Sun* for 10 October 1909, *A Visit to Count Leo Tolstoi in 1887*, by Madame Nadine Helbig. The whole article should be read for the charming picture it gives of the patriarchal happiness at *Yasnaya Polyana*, and while she saw clearly the real comfort enjoyed by Tolstoi, which aroused the fierce wrath of Merezhkovski, she proved also how much good was accomplished by the old novelist in the course of a single average day.

“Never shall I forget the evening when the young Polish violinist, whom I have already mentioned, asked me to play with him Beethoven’s sonata for piano and violin, dedicated to Kreuzer, his favourite piece, which he had long been unable to play for want of a good piano player.

“Tolstoi listened with growing attention. He had the first movement played again, and after the last note of the sonata he went out quietly without saying, as usual, good night to his family and guests.

“That night was created the ‘Kreuzer Sonata’ in all its wild force. Shortly afterward he sent me in Rome the manuscript of it. Tolstoi was the best listener whom I have ever had the luck to play to. He forgot himself and his surroundings. His expression changed with the music. Tears ran down his cheeks at some beautiful adagio, and he would say, ‘Tania, just give me a fresh handkerchief; I must have got a cold to-day.’ I had to play generally Beethoven and Schumann to him. He did not approve of Bach, and on the other hand you could make him raving mad with Liszt, and still more with Wagner.”

Many hundreds of amateur players have struggled through the music of the Kreuzer Sonata, trying vainly to see in it what Tolstoi declared it means. Of course the significance attached to it by Tolstoi existed only in his vivid imagination, Beethoven being the healthiest of all great composers. If the novelist had really wished to describe sensual music, he would have made a much more felicitous choice of *Tristan und Isolde*.

Although his own married life was until the last years happy as man could wish, Tolstoi introduced into the Kreuzer Sonata passages from his own existence. When Posdnichev is engaged, he gives his fiancée his memoirs, containing a truthful account of his various liaisons. She is in utter despair, and for a time thinks of breaking off the engagement. All this was literally true of the author himself. When a boy, the hero was led to a house of ill-fame by a friend of his brother, “a very gay student, one of those who are called good fellows.” This reminds us of a precisely similar attempt described by Tolstoi in *Youth*. Furthermore, Posdnichev’s self-righteousness in the fact

that although he had been dissipated, he determined to be faithful to his wife, was literally and psychologically true in Tolstoi's own life.

The *Kreuzer Sonata* shows no diminution of Tolstoi's realistic power: the opening scenes on the train, the analysis of the hero's mind during the early years of his married life, and especially the murder, all betray the familiar power of simplicity and fidelity to detail. The passage of the blade through the corset and then into something soft has that sensual realism so characteristic of all Tolstoi's descriptions of bodily sensations. The book is a work of art, and contains many reflections and bitter accusations against society that are founded on the truth.

The moral significance of the story is perfectly clear — that men who are constantly immoral before marriage need not expect happiness in married life. It is a great pity that Tolstoi did not let the powerful little novel speak for itself, and that he allowed himself to be goaded into an explanatory and defensive commentary by the thousands of enquiring letters from foolish readers. Much of the commentary contains sound advice, but it leads off into that *reductio ad absurdum* so characteristic of Russian thought.

Many of the tracts and parables that Tolstoi wrote are true works of art, with a Biblical directness and simplicity of style. Their effect outside of Russia is caused fully as much by their literary style as by their teaching. I remember an undergraduate, who, reading *Where Love is there God is Also*, said that he was tremendously excited when the old shoemaker lost his spectacles, and had no peace of mind till he found them again. This is unconscious testimony to Tolstoi's power of making trivial events seem real.

The long novel, *Resurrection*, is, as Mr. Maude, the English translator, shows, not merely a story, but a general summary of all the final conclusions about life reached by its author. The English volume actually has an Index to Social Questions, Types, etc., giving the pages where the author's views on all such topics are expressed in the book. Apart from the great transformation wrought in the character of the hero, which is the motive of the work, there are countless passages which show the genius of the author, still burning brightly in his old age. The difference between the Easter kiss and the kiss of lust is one of the most powerful instances of analysis, and may be taken as a symbol of the whole work. And the depiction of the sportsman's feelings when he brings down a wounded bird, half shame and half rage, will startle and impress every man who has carried a gun.

*Resurrection* teaches directly what Tolstoi always taught — what he taught less directly, but with even greater art, in *Anna Karenina*.

In reading this work of his old age, we cannot help thinking of what Carlyle said of the octogenarian Goethe: "See how in that great mind, beaming in mildest mellow splendour, beaming, if also trembling, like a great sun on the verge of the horizon, near now to its long farewell, all these things were illuminated and illustrated."

# Russian Romance

by Earl of Evelyn Baring Cromer

This essay was taken from the critical work *Political and Literary Essays, 1908-1913* by the Earl of Evelyn Baring Cromer

“The Spectator,” March 15, 1913

De Vogüé’s well-known book, *Le Roman Russe*, was published so long ago as 1886. It is still well worth reading. In the first place, the literary style is altogether admirable. It is the perfection of French prose, and to read the best French prose is always an intellectual treat. In the second place, the author displays in a marked degree that power of wide generalisation which distinguishes the best French writers. Then, again, M. de Vogüé writes with a very thorough knowledge of his subject. He resided for long in Russia. He spoke Russian, and had an intimate acquaintance with Russian literature. He endeavoured to identify himself with Russian aspirations, and, being himself a man of poetic and imaginative temperament, he was able to sympathise with the highly emotional side of the Slav character, whilst, at the same time, he never lost sight of the fact that he was the representative of a civilisation which is superior to that of Russia. He admires the eruptions of that volcanic genius Dostoïevsky, but, with true European instinct, charges him with a want of “mesure” — the Greek *Sophrosyne* — which he defines as “l’art d’assujettir ses pensées.” Moreover, he at times brings a dose of vivacious French wit to temper the gloom of Russian realism. Thus, when he speaks of the Russian writers of romance, who, from 1830 to 1840, “eurent le privilège de faire pleurer les jeunes filles russes,” he observes in thorough man-of-the-world fashion, “il faut toujours que quelqu’un fasse pleurer les jeunes filles, mais le génie n’y est pas nécessaire.”

When Taine had finished his great history of the Revolution, he sent it forth to the world with the remark that the only general conclusion at which a profound study of the facts had enabled him to arrive was that the true comprehension, and therefore, a fortiori, the government of human beings, and especially of Frenchmen, was an extremely difficult matter. Those who have lived longest in the East are the first to testify to the fact that, to the Western mind, the Oriental habit of thought is well-nigh incomprehensible. The European may do his best to understand, but he cannot cast off his love of symmetry any more than he can change his skin, and unless he can become asymmetrical he can never hope to attune his reason in perfect accordance to the Oriental key. Similarly, it is impossible to rise from a perusal of De Vogüé’s book without a strong feeling of the incomprehensibility of the Russians.



What, in fact, are these puzzling Russians? They are certainly not Europeans. They possess none of the mental equipoise of the Teutons, neither do they appear to possess that logical faculty which, in spite of many wayward outbursts of passion, generally enables the Latin races in the end to cast off idealism when it tends to lapse altogether from sanity; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that, having by association acquired some portion of that Western faculty, the Russians misapply it. They seem to be impelled by a variety of causes — such as climatic and economic influences, a long course of misgovernment, Byzantinism in religion, and an inherited leaning to Oriental mysticism — to distort their reasoning powers, and far from using them, as was the case with the pre-eminently sane Greek genius, to temper the excesses of the imagination, to employ them rather as an oestrus to lash the imaginative faculties to a state verging on madness.

If the Russians are not Europeans, neither are they thorough Asiatics. It may well be, as De Vogüé says, that they have preserved the idiom and even the features of their original Aryan ancestors to a greater extent than has been the case with other Aryan nations who finally settled farther West, and that this is a fact of which many Russians boast. But, for all that, they have been inoculated with far too strong a dose of Western culture, religion, and habits of thought to display the apathy or submit to the fatalism which characterises the conduct of the true Eastern.

If, therefore, the Russians are neither Europeans nor Asiatics, what are they? Manifestly their geographical position and other attendant circumstances have, from an ethnological point of view, rendered them a hybrid race, whose national development will display the most startling anomalies and contradictions, in which the theory and practice derived from the original Oriental stock will be constantly struggling for mastery with an Occidental aftergrowth. From the earliest days there have been two types of Russian reformers, viz. on the one hand, those who wished that the country should be developed on Eastern lines, and, on the other, those who looked to Western civilisation for guidance. De Vogüé says that from the accession of Peter the Great to the death of the Emperor Nicolas — that is to say, for a period of a hundred and fifty years — the government of Russia may be likened to a ship, of which the captain and the principal officers were persistently endeavouring to steer towards the West, while at the same time the whole of the crew were trimming the sails in order to catch any breeze which would bear the vessel Eastward. It can be no matter for surprise that this strange medley should have produced results which are bewildering even to Russians themselves and well-nigh incomprehensible to foreigners. One of their poets has said:

On ne comprend pas la Russie avec la raison, On ne peut que croire à la Russie.

One of the most singular incidents of Russian development on which De Vogüé has fastened, and which induced him to write this book, has been the predominant influence exercised on Russian thought and action by novels. Writers of romance have indeed at times exercised no inconsiderable amount of influence elsewhere than in Russia. Mrs. Beecher Stowe's epoch-making novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, certainly contributed towards the abolition of slavery in the United States. Dickens gave a powerful impetus

to the reform of our law-courts and our Poor Law. Moreover, even in free England, political writers have at times resorted to allegory in order to promulgate their ideas. Swift's Brobdingnagians and Lilliputians furnish a case in point. In France, Voltaire called fictitious Chinamen, Bulgarians, and Avars into existence in order to satirise the proceedings of his own countrymen. But the effect produced by these writings may be classed as trivial compared to that exercised by the great writers of Russian romance. In the works of men like Tourguenef and Dostoïevsky the Russian people appear to have recognised, for the first time, that their real condition was truthfully depicted, and that their inchoate aspirations had found sympathetic expression. "Dans le roman, et là seulement," De Vogüé says, "on trouvera l'histoire de Russie depuis un demi-siècle."

Such being the case, it becomes of interest to form a correct judgment on the character and careers of the men whom the Russians have very generally regarded as the true interpreters of their domestic facts, and whom large numbers of them have accepted as their political pilots.

The first point to be noted about them is that they are all, for the most part, ultra-realists; but apparently we may search their writings in vain for the cheerfulness which at times illumines the pages of their English, or the light-hearted vivacity which sparkles in the pages of their French counterparts. In Dostoïevsky's powerfully written *Crime and Punishment* all is gloom and horror; the hero of the tale is a madman and a murderer. To a foreigner these authors seem to present the picture of a society oppressed with an all-pervading sense of the misery of existence, and with the impossibility of finding any means by which that misery can be alleviated. In many instances, their lives — and still more their deaths — were as sad and depressing as their thoughts. Several of their most noted authors died violent deaths. At thirty-seven years of age the poet Pouchkine was killed in a duel, Lermontof met the same fate at the age of twenty-six. Griboïédof was assassinated at the age of thirty-four. But the most tragic history is that of Dostoïevsky, albeit he lived to a green old age, and eventually died a natural death. In 1849, he was connected with some political society, but he does not appear, even at that time, to have been a violent politician. Nevertheless, he and his companions, after being kept for several months in close confinement, were condemned to death. They were brought to the place of execution, but at the last moment, when the soldiers were about to fire, their sentences were commuted to exile. Dostoïevsky remained for some years in Siberia, but was eventually allowed to return to Russia. The inhuman cruelty to which he had been subject naturally dominated his mind and inspired his pen for the remainder of his days.

De Vogüé deals almost exclusively with the writings of Pouchkine, Gogol, Dostoïevsky, Tourguenef, who was the inventor of the word Nihilism, and the mystic Tolstoy, who was the principal apostle of the doctrine. All these, with the possible exception of Tourguenef, had one characteristic in common. Their intellects were in a state of unstable equilibrium. As poets, they could excite the enthusiasm of the masses, but as political guides they were mere Jack-o'-Lanterns, leading to the deadly swamp

of despair. Dostoïevsky was in some respects the most interesting and also the most typical of the group. De Vogüé met him in his old age, and the account he gives of his appearance is most graphic. His history could be read in his face.

On y lisait mieux que dans le livre, les souvenirs de la maison des morts, les longues habitudes d'effroi, de méfiance et de martyre. Les paupières, les lèvres, toutes les fibres de cette face tremblaient de tics nerveux. Quand il s'animait de colère sur une idée, on eût juré qu'on avait déjà vu cette tête sur les banes d'une cour criminelle, ou parmi les vagabonds qui mendient aux portes des prisons. A d'autres moments, elle avait la mansuétude triste des vieux saints sur les images slavonnes.

And here is what De Vogüé says of the writings of this semi-lunatic man of genius:

Psychologue incomparable, dès qu'il étudie des âmes noires ou blessées, dramaturge habile, mais borné aux scènes d'effroi et de pitié... Selon qu'on est plus touché par tel ou tel excès de son talent, on peut l'appeler avec justice un philosophe, un apôtre, un aliéné, le consolateur des affligés ou le bourreau des esprits tranquilles, le Jérémie de baigne ou le Shakespeare de la maison des fous; toutes ces appellations seront méritées; prise isolément, aucune ne sera suffisante.

There is manifestly much which is deeply interesting, and also much which is really lovable in the Russian national character. It must, however, be singularly mournful and unpleasant to pass through life burdened with the reflection that it would have been better not to have been born, albeit such sentiments are not altogether inconsistent with the power of deriving a certain amount of enjoyment from living. It was that pleasure-loving old cynic, Madame du Deffand, who said: "Il n'y a qu'un seul malheur, celui d'être né." Nevertheless, the avowed joyousness bred by the laughing tides and purple skies of Greece is certainly more conducive to human happiness, though at times even Greeks, such as Theognis and Palladas, lapsed into a morbid pessimism comparable to that of Tolstoy. Metrodorus, however, more fully represented the true Greek spirit when he sang, "All things are good in life" (πάντα γὰρ ἐσθλὰ βίω). The Roman pagan, Juvenal, gave a fairly satisfactory answer to the question, "Nil ergo optabunt homines?" whilst the Christian holds out hopes of that compensation in the next world for the afflictions of the present, which the sombre and despondent Russian philosopher, determined that we shall not find enjoyment in either world, denies to his morose and grief-stricken followers.

# Extracts From 'A Survey of Russian Literature'

by Isabel Florence Hapgood

Seventh Period: Ostróvsky, a. K. Tolstóy, Polónsky, Nekrásoff, Shevtchénko, and Others.

The new impulse imparted to all branches of literature in Russia during the '50's and the '60's could not fail to find a reflection in the fortunes of the drama also. Nowhere is the spirit of the period more clearly set forth than in the history of the Russian theater, by the creation of an independent Russian stage.

Russian comedy had existed from the days of Sumaróhoff, as we have seen, and had included such great names as Von Vízin, Griboyédoff, and Gógol. But great as were the works of these authors, they cannot be called its creators, in the true sense of the word, because their plays were like oases far apart, separated by great intervals of time, and left behind them no established school. Although Von Vízin's comedies contain much that is independent and original, they are fashioned after the models of the French stage, as is apparent at every step. "Woe from Wit" counts rather as a specimen of talented social satire than as a model comedy, and in its type, this comedy of Griboyédoff also bears the imprint of the French stage. Gógol's comedies, despite their great talent, left behind them no followers, and had no imitators. In the '30's and the '40's the repertory of the Russian theater consisted of plays which had nothing in common with "Woe from Wit," "The Inspector," or "Marriage," and the latter was rarely played. As a whole, the stage was given over to translations of sensational French melodramas and to patriotic tragedies.

The man who changed all this and created Russian drama, Alexánder Nikoláevitch Ostróvsky (1823-1886), was born in Moscow, the son of a poor lawyer, whose business lay with the merchant class of the Trans-Moscow River quarter, of the type which we meet with in Alexánder Nikoláevitch's celebrated comedies. The future dramatist, who spent most of his life in Moscow, was most favorably placed to observe the varied characteristics of Russian life, and also Russian historical types; for Moscow, in the '30's and '40's of the nineteenth century, was the focus of all Russia, and contained within its walls all the historical and contemporary peculiarities of the nation. On leaving the University (where he did not finish the course), in 1843, Ostróvsky entered the civil service in the commercial court, where he enjoyed further opportunities of enlarging his observations on the life of the Trans-Moscow quarter. In 1847 he made his first appearance in literature, with "Scenes of Family Happiness in Moscow," which

was printed in a Moscow newspaper. Soon afterwards he printed, in the same paper, several scenes from his comedy "Svoí liúdi — sotchtyémsya," which may be freely translated, "It's All in the Family: We'll Settle It Among Ourselves." This gained him more reputation, and he resigned from the service to devote himself entirely to literature, as proof-reader, writer of short articles, and so forth, earning a miserably small salary. When the comedy just mentioned was printed, in 1847, it bore the title of "The Bankrupt," and was renamed in deference to the objections of the censor. It made a tremendous commotion in Russian society, where it was read aloud almost daily, and one noted man remarked of it, "It was not written; it was born." But the Moscow merchants took umbrage at the play, made complaints in the proper quarter, and the author was placed under police supervision, while the newspapers were forbidden to mention the comedy. Naturally it was not acted. The following summary will not only indicate the reason therefor, and for the wrath of the merchants, but will also afford an idea of his style in the first comedy which was acted, his famous "Don't Seat Yourself in a Sledge Which is not Yours" ("Shoemaker, Stick to Your Last," is the English equivalent), produced in 1853, and in others:

It's All in the Family: We'll Settle It Among Ourselves.

Samsón Sílich Bolshóff (Samson, son of Strong Big), a Moscow merchant, has a daughter, Olympiáda, otherwise known as Lípotchka.

Lípotchka has been "highly educated," according to the ideas of the merchant class, considers herself a lady, and despises her parents and their "coarse" ways. This remarkable education consists in a smattering of the customary feminine accomplishments, especial value being attached to a knowledge of French, which is one mark of the gentry in Russia.

Like all merchants' daughters who have been educated above their sphere, Lípotchka aspires to marry a noble, preferably a military man. The play opens with a soliloquy by Lípotchka, who meditates upon the pleasures of the dance.

"What an agreeable occupation these dances are! Just think how fine! What can be more entrancing? You enter an assembly, or some one's wedding, you sit down; naturally, you are all decked with flowers, you are dressed up like a doll, or like a picture in a paper; suddenly a cavalier flies up, 'Will you grant me the happiness, madam?' Well, you see if he is a man with understanding, or an army officer, you half-close your eyes, and reply, 'With pleasure!' Ah! Cha-a-arming! It is simply beyond comprehension! I no longer like to dance with students or shop-clerks. 'Tis quite another thing to distinguish yourself with military men! Ah, how delightful! How enchanting! And their mustaches, and their epaulets, and their uniforms, and some even have spurs with bells... I am amazed that so many women should sit with their feet tucked up under them. Really, it is not at all difficult to learn. Here am I, who was ashamed to take a teacher. I have learned everything, positively everything, in twenty lessons. Why should not one learn to dance? It is pure superstition! Here is mama, who used to get angry because the teacher was always clutching at my knees. That was because she is not cultured. Of what importance is it? He's only the dancing-master."

Lípotchka proceeds to picture to herself that she receives a proposal from an officer, and that he thinks she is uneducated because she gets confused. She has not danced for a year and a half, and decides to practice a little. As she is dancing, her mother enters, and bids her to stop — dancing is a sin. Lípotchka refuses, and an acrimonious wrangle ensues between mother and daughter, about things in general. The mother reproaches Lípotchka for her ways, reminds her that her parents have educated her, and so forth. To this Lípotchka retorts that other people have taught her all she knows — and why have her parents refused that gentleman of good birth who has asked for her hand? Is he not a Cupid? (she pronounces it “Capid.”) There is no living with them, and so forth. The female match-maker comes to inform them how she is progressing in her search for a proper match for Lípotchka, and the latter declares stoutly, that she will never marry a merchant. The match-maker, a famous figure in old Russia life, and irresistibly comic on the stage, habitually addresses her clients as, “my silver ones,” “my golden ones,” “my emerald ones,” “my brilliant (or diamond) ones,” which she pronounces “bralliant.” Matters are nearly arranged for Lípotchka’s marriage with a man of good birth.

Old Bolshóff, however, is represented as being in a financial position where he can take his choice between paying all his debts and being thus left penniless but honest; and paying his creditors nothing, or, at most, a quarter of their dues, and remaining rich enough to indulge in the luxury of a noble son-in-law, the only motive on whose part for such a marriage being, naturally, the bride’s dowry.

Old Bolshóff decides to defraud his creditors, with the aid of a pettifogging lawyer, and he makes over all his property to his clerk, Podkhaliúzin. The latter has long sighed for Lípotchka, but his personal repulsiveness, added to his merchant rank, has prevented his ever daring to hint at such a thing. Now, however, he sees his chance. He promises the legal shyster a round sum if he will arrange matters securely in his favor. He bribes the match-maker to get rid of the noble suitor, and to bring about his marriage with Lípotchka, promising her, in case of success, two thousand rubles and a sable-lined cloak.

Matters have gone so far that Lípotchka is gorgeously arrayed to receive her nobly born suitor, and accept him. Her mother is feasting her eyes on her adored child, in one of the intervals of her grumbling and bickering with her “ungrateful offspring,” and warning the dear idol not to come in contact with the door, and crush her finery. But the match-maker announces that the man has beaten a retreat; Lípotchka falls in a swoon. Her father declares that there is no occasion for that, as he has a suitable match at hand. He calls in Podkhaliúzin, whom Lípotchka despises, and presents him, commanding his daughter to wed. Lípotchka flatly refuses. But after a private interview with the ambitious clerk, in which the latter informs her that she no longer possesses a dowry wherewith to attract a noble suitor, and in which he promises that she shall have the greatest liberty and be indulged in any degree of extravagance, she consents.

The marriage takes place. But old Bolshóff has been put in prison by his enraged creditors, while the young couple have been fitting up a new house in gorgeous style

on the old merchant's money. The pettifogging lawyer comes for his promised reward. Podkhaliúzin cheats him out of it. The match-maker comes for her two thousand rubles and sable-lined cloak and gets one hundred rubles and a cheap gown. As these people depart cursing, old Bolshóff is brought in by his guard. He has come to entreat his wealthy son-in-law to pay the creditors twenty-five per cent and so release him from prison. Podkhaliúzin declares that this is impossible; the old man has given him his instructions to pay only ten per cent, and really, he cannot afford to pay more. The old man's darling Lípotchka joins in and supports her husband's plea that they positively cannot afford more. The old man is taken back to prison, preliminary to being sent to Siberia as a fraudulent bankrupt. The young couple take the matter quite coolly until the policeman comes to carry off Podkhaliúzin to prison, for collusion. Even then the rascally ex-clerk does not lose his coolness, and when informed by the policeman — in answer to his question as to what is to become of him — that he will probably be sent to Siberia, "Well, if it is to be Siberia, Siberia let it be! What of that! People live in Siberia also. Evidently there is no escape. I am ready."

Although "Shoemaker, Stick to Your Last," the central idea of which is that girls of the merchant class will be much happier if they marry in their own class than if they wed nobles, who take them solely for their money (the usual reason for such alliances, even at the present day), had an immense success, both in Moscow and in St. Petersburg, Ostróvsky received not a penny from it. In the latter city, also, the censor took a hand, because "the nobility was put to shame for the benefit of the merchant class," and the theater management was greatly agitated when the Emperor and all the imperial family came to the first performance. But the Emperor remarked, "There are very few plays which have given me so much pleasure; it is not a play, it is a lesson."

"The Poor Bride" (written in 1852) was then put on the stage, and the author received a small payment on the spot. In 1854 "Poverty is not a Vice" appeared, and confirmed the author's standing as a writer of the first class. This play, a great favorite still, contains many presentations of old Russian customs. It was the first from which the author received a regular royalty, ranging from one-twentieth to two-thirds of the profits.

After many more comedies, all more or less noted, all more or less objected to by the censor, for various reasons, and hostility and bad treatment on the part of the theatrical authorities, Ostróvsky attained the zenith of his literary fame with his masterpiece, "Grozá" ("The Thunderstorm"). It was not until 1856, in his comedy "A Drunken Headache from Another Man's Banquet" (meaning, "to bear another's trouble"), that Ostróvsky invented the words which have passed into the language, *samodúr* and *samodúrstvo* (which mean, literally, "self-fool" and "the state of being a self-fool"). The original "self-fool" is "Tit Tititch Bruskóff" (provincially pronounced "Kit Kititch" in the play), but no better example of the pig-headed, obstinate, self-complacent, vociferous, intolerable tyrant which constitutes the "self-fool" can be desired than that offered in "The Thunderstorm" by Márfa Ignátievna Kabánoff, the rich merchant's widow. She rules her son, Tíkhon, and his wife, Katerína, with a rod of iron. Her

daughter, Varvára, gets along with her by consistent deceitfulness, and meets her lover, Kudryásh, whenever she pleases. Tíkhon goes off for a short time on business, and anxious to enjoy a little freedom, he persistently refuses to take his wife with him, despite her urgent entreaties. She makes the request because she feels that she is falling in love with Borís.

After his departure, Varvára takes charge of her fate and persuades her to indulge her affection and to see Borís. Katerína eventually yields to Varvára's representations. A half-mad old lady, who wanders about attended by a couple of lackeys, has previously frightened the sensitive Katerína (who was reared amid family affection, and cannot understand or endure the tyranny of her mother-in-law) by vague predictions and threats of hell; and when a thunderstorm suddenly breaks over the assembled family, after her husband's return, and the weird old lady again makes her appearance, Katerína is fairly crazed. She thinks the terrible punishment for her wayward affections has arrived; she confesses to her husband and mother-in-law that she loves Borís. Spurned by the latter — though the husband is not inclined to attach overmuch importance to what she says, in her startled condition — she rushes off and drowns herself. The savage mother-in-law, who is to blame for the entire tragedy, sternly commands her son not to mourn for his dead wife, whom he has loved in the feeble way which such a tyrant has permitted. This outline gives hardly an idea of the force of the play, and its value as a picture of Russian manners of the old school in general, and of the merchant class (who retained them long after they were much ameliorated in other classes of society) in particular.

But Ostróvsky did not confine his dramas within narrow limits. On the contrary, they present a wonderfully broad panorama of Russian life, and attain to a universality which has been reached by no other Russian writer save Púshkin and Count L. N. Tolstóy. There are plays from prehistoric, mythical times, and historical plays, which deal with prominent epochs in the life of the nation. A great favorite, partly because of its pictures of old Russian customs, is "The Voevóda" or "The Dream on the Volga" (1865). "Vasilísa Meléntieff" is popular for the same reasons (1868). Ostróvsky's nervous organization was broken down by the incessant toil necessary to support his family, and these historical plays were written, with others, to relieve the pressure. His dramas were given all over Russia, and he received more money from private than from the government theaters. But towards the end of his life comfort came, and during the last year of his life he was in charge of the Moscow (government) Theater. At last he was master of the Russian stage, and established a school of dramatic art on the lines laid down by himself. But the toil was too great for his shattered health, and he died in 1886. His plays are wonderfully rich as a portrait-gallery of contemporary types, as well as of historical types, and the language of his characters is one of the most surprising features of his work. It is far too little to say of it that it is natural, and fits the characters presented: in nationality, in figurativeness, in keen, unfeigned humor and wit it represents the richest treasure of the Russian speech. Only three writers are worthy of being ranked together in this respect: Púshkin, Krylóff, and Ostróvsky.



While, like all the writers of the '40's, Ostróvsky is the pupil of Gógol, he created his own school, and attained an independent position from his very first piece. His plays have only one thing in common with Gógol's — he draws his scenes from commonplace, every-day life in Russia, his characters are unimportant, every-day people. Gógol's comedies were such in the strict meaning of the word, and their object was to cast ridicule on the acting personages, to bring into prominence the absurd sides of their characters; and this aim accomplished, the heroes leave the stage without having undergone any change in their fates. With Ostróvsky's comedies it is entirely different. The author is not felt in them. The persons of the drama talk and act in defiance of him, so to speak, as they would talk and act in real life, and decided changes in their fate take place. But Ostróvsky accomplished far more than the creation of a Russian theater: he brought the stage to the highest pitch of ideal realism, and discarded all ancient traditions. The subjects of his plays are distinguished for their classic simplicity; life itself flows slowly across the stage, as though the author had demolished a wall and were exhibiting the actual life within the house. His plays, like life, break off short, after the climax, with some insignificant scene, generally between personages of secondary rank, and he tries to convince the audience that in life there are no beginnings, no endings; that there is no moment after which one would venture to place a full period. Moreover, they are "plays of life" rather than either "comedies" or "tragedies," as he chanced to label them; they are purely presentations of life. In their scope they include almost every phase of Russian life, except peasant and country life, which he had no chance to study.

For the sake of convenience we may group the other dramatic writers here. The conditions under which the Russian stage labored were so difficult that the best literary talent was turned into other channels, and the very few plays which were fitted to vie with Ostróvsky's came from the pens of men whose chief work belonged to other branches of literature. Thus Iván Sergyéevitch Turgéneff, who wrote more for the stage than other contemporary writers, and whose plays fill one volume of his collected works, distinguished himself far more in other lines. Yet several of these plays hold the first place after Ostróvsky's. "The Boarder" (1848), "Breakfast at the Marshal of Nobility's" (1849), "The Bachelor" (1849), "A Month in the Country" (1850), "The Woman from the Rural Districts" (1851) are still acted and enjoyed by the public.

Alexéi Feofiláktovitch Písemsky (best known for his "Thousand Souls" and his "Troubled Sea," romances of a depressing sort) contributed to the stage a play called "A Bitter Fate" (among others), wherein the Russian peasant appeared for the first time in natural guise without idealization or any decoration whatever.

Count Alexéi Konstantínovitch Tolstóy (1817-1875) wrote a famous trilogy of historical plays: "The Death of Iván the Terrible" (1866), "Tzar Feódor Ivánovitch" (1868), and "Tzar Borís" (1870). The above are the dates of their publication. They appeared on the stage, the first in 1876, the other two in 1899, though they had been privately acted at the Hermitage Theater, in the Winter Palace, long before that date. They are fine reading plays, offering a profound study of history, but the epic element pre-

ponderates over the dramatic element, and the characters set forth their sentiments in extremely long monologues and conversations. There have been many other dramatic writers, but none of great distinction.

Count A. K. Tolstóy stood at the head of the school of purely artistic poets who claimed that they alone were the faithful preservers of the Púshkin tradition. But in this they were mistaken. Púshkin drew his subjects from life; they shut themselves up in æsthetic contemplation of the beautiful forms of classical art of ancient and modern times, and isolated themselves from life in general. The result was, that they composed poetry of an abstract, artistically dainty, elegantly rhetorical sort, whose chief defect lay in its lack of individuality, and the utter absence of all colors, sounds, and motives by which Russian nationality and life are conveyed. The poetry of this school contains no sharply cut features of spiritual physiognomy. All of them flow together into a featureless mass of elegantly stereotyped forms and sounds.

Count A. K. Tolstóy, who enjoyed all the advantages of education and travel abroad (where he made acquaintance with Goethe), began to scribble verses at the age of six, he says in his autobiography. Born in 1817, he became Master of the Hounds at the imperial court in 1857, and died in 1875. He made his literary debut in 1842 with prose tales, and only in 1855 did he publish his lyric and epic verses in various newspapers. His best poetical efforts, beautiful as they are in external form, are characterless, and remind one of Zhukóvsky's, in that they were influenced by foreign or Russian poets — Lérmontoff, for instance. But they have not a trace of genuine, unaffected feeling, of vivid, burning passion, of inspiration. His best work is his prose historical romance, "Prince Serébryany," which gives a lively and faithful picture of Iván the Terrible, his court, and life in his day. The dramas already mentioned are almost if not equally famous in Russia, though less known abroad. "Prince Serébryany," and "War and Peace" by the former author's more illustrious cousin, Count L. N. Tolstóy, are the best historical novels in the Russian language.

Another poet of this period was Apollón Nikoláevitch Máikoff, born in 1821, the son of a well-known painter. During his first period he gave himself up to classical, bloodless poems, of which one of the most noted is "Two Worlds," which depicts the clash of heathendom and Christianity at the epoch of the fall of Rome. This poem he continued to write all his life; the prologue, "Three Deaths," begun in 1841, was not finished until 1872. To this period, also, belong "Two Judgments," "Sketches of Rome," "Anacreon," "Alcibiades," and so forth. His second and best period began in 1855, when he abandoned his cold classicism and wrote his best works: "Clermont Cathedral," "Savonarola," "Foolish Dúnya," "The Last Heathens," "Pólya," "The Little Picture," and a number of beautiful translations from Heine.

Still another poet was Afanásy Afanásevitch Shénshin, who wrote under the name of Fet. Born in 1820, he began to write at the age of nineteen. About that time, on entering the Moscow University, he experienced some difficulty in furnishing the requisite documents, whereupon he assumed the name of his mother during her first marriage — Fet. He reacquired his own name, Shénshin, in 1875, by presenting the

proper documents, whereupon an imperial order restored it to him. From 1844 to 1855 he served in the army, continuing to write poetry the while. Before his death, in 1892, he published numerous volumes of poems, translations from the classics, and so forth. Less talented than Count Alexéi K. Tolstóy, Apollón Máikoff, and other poets of that school, his name, in Russian criticism, has become a general appellation to designate a poet of pure art, for he was the most typical exponent of his school. Most of his poems are short, and present a picture of nature, or of some delicate, fleeting psychical emotion, but they are all filled with enchanting, artistic charm. His poetry is the quintessence of æsthetic voluptuousness, such as was evolved on the soil of the sybaritism of the landed gentry in the circles of the '40's of the nineteenth century.

The oldest of all these worshipers of pure art was Feódor Ivánovitch Tiútcheff (1803-1873). At the age of seventeen he made a remarkably fine translation of some of Horace's works. He rose to very fine positions in the diplomatic service and at court. Although his first poems were printed in 1826, he was not widely known until 1850-1854. His scope is not large, and he is rather wearisome in his faultless poems. The majority of them are rather difficult reading.

A poet who did not wholly belong to this school, but wrote in many styles, was Yákoff Petróvitch Polónsky (1820-1898). Under different conditions he might have developed fire and originality, both in his poems and his prose romances. His best known poem is "The Grasshopper-Musician" (1863). He derived his inspiration from various foreign poets, and also from many of his fellow-countrymen. Among others, those in the spirit of Koltzóff's national ballads are not only full of poetry and inspiration, art and artless simplicity, but some of them have been set to music, have made their way to the populace, and are sung all over Russia. Others, like "The Sun and the Moon" and "The Baby's Death" are to be found in every Russian literary compendium, and every child knows them by heart.

But while the poetry of this period could not boast of any such great figures as the preceding period, it had, nevertheless, another camp besides that of the "pure art" advocates whom we have just noticed. At the head of the second group, which clung to the æsthetic doctrine that regarded every-day life as the best source of inspiration and contained several very talented expositors, stood Nikolái Alexyéevitch Nekrásoff (1821-1877). Nekrásoff belonged to an impoverished noble family, which had once been very wealthy, and was still sufficiently well off to have educated him in comfort. But when his father sent him to St. Petersburg to enter a military school he was persuaded to abandon that career and take a course at the University. His father was so enraged at this step that he cast him off, and the lad of sixteen found himself thrown upon his own resources. He nearly starved to death and underwent such hardships that his health was injured for life, but he did not manage to complete the University course. These very hardships contributed greatly, no doubt, to the power of his poetry later on, even though they exerted a hardening effect upon his character, and aroused in him the firm resolve to acquire wealth at any cost. Successful as his journalistic enterprises were in later life, it is known that he could not have assured himself the comfortable

fortune he enjoyed from that source alone, and he is said to have won most of it at the gambling-table. This fact and various other circumstances may have exercised some influence upon the judgment of a section of the public as to his literary work. There is hardly any other Russian writer over whose merits such heated discussions take place as over Nekrásoff, one party maintaining that he was a true poet, with genuine inspiration; the other, that he was as clever with his poetry in a business sense, as he was with financial operations, and that he possessed no feeling, inspiration, or poetry. The truth would seem to lie between these two extremes. Like all the other writers of his day — like writers in general — he was unconsciously impressed by the spirit of the time, and changed his subjects and treatment as it changed; and like every other writer, some of his works are superior in feeling and truth to others.

The most important period of his life was that from 1841 to 1845, when his talent was forming and ripening. Little is known with definiteness regarding this period, but it is certain that while pursuing his literary labors, he moved in widely differing circles of society — fashionable, official, literary, theatrical, that of the students, and others — which contributed to the truth of his pictures from these different spheres in his poems. In 1847 he was able (in company with Panáeff) to buy “The Contemporary,” of which, eventually, he became the sole proprietor and editor, and with which his name is indelibly connected. When this journal was dropped, in 1866, he became the head, in 1868, of “The Annals of the Fatherland,” where he remained until his death. It was during these last ten years of his life that he wrote his famous poems, “Russian Women” and “Who in Russia Finds Life Good,” with others of his best poems. He never lost his adoration of the critic Byelínsky, to whom he attributed his own success, as the result of judicious development of his powers.

One of the many conflicting opinions concerning him is, that he is merely a satirist, “The Russian Juvenal,” which opinion is founded on his contributions to “The Whistle,” a publication added, as a supplement, to “The Contemporary,” about 1857. Yet his satirical verses form but an insignificant part of his writings. And although there does exist a certain monotony of gloomy depression in the tone of all his writings, yet they are so varied in form and contents that it is impossible to classify them under any one heading without resorting to undue violence. He is not the poet of any one class of society, of any one party or circle, but expresses in his poetry the thoughts of a whole cycle of his native land, the tears of all his contemporaries and fellow-countrymen. This apparently would be set down to the credit of any other man, and regarded as a proof that he kept in intimate touch with the spirit and deepest sentiments of his time, instead of being reckoned a reproach, and a proof of commercialism. Moreover, he wrote things which were entirely peculiar to himself, unknown hitherto, and which had nothing in common with the purely reflective lyricism of the ‘40’s of the nineteenth century. These serve to complete his significance as the universal bard of his people and his age, to which he is already entitled by his celebration of all ranks and elements of society, whose fermentation constitutes the actual essence of that period.

There is one point to be noted about Nekrásoff which was somewhat neglected by the critics during his lifetime. No other Russian poet of that day was so fond of calling attention to the bright sides of the national life, or depicted so many positive, ideal, brilliant types with such fervent, purely Schilleresque, enthusiasm as Nekrásoff. And most significant of all, his positive types are not of an abstract, fantastic character, clothed in flesh and blood of the period and environment, filled with conflicting, concrete characteristics — not one of them resembles any other. He sought and found them in all classes of society; in “Russian Women” he depicts the devoted princesses in the highest circle of the social hierarchy, with absolute truth, as faithful representatives of Russian life and Russian aristocrats, capable of abandoning their life of ease and pleasure, and with heroism worthy of the ancient classic heroines, accompanying their exiled husbands to Siberia, and there cheerfully sharing their hardships. His pictures of peasant life are equally fine; that in “Red-Nosed Frost” (the Russian equivalent of Jack Frost) is particularly famous, and the peasant heroine, in her lowly sphere, yields nothing in grandeur to the ladies of the court.

The theme of “Red-Nosed Frost” may be briefly stated in a couple of its verses, in the original meter:

There are women in Russian hamlets  
With a dignified calmness of face;  
With a beautiful strength in their movements,  
With mien and glance of an empress in grace.

A blind man alone could ignore them;  
And he who can see them must say: “She  
passes— ’tis as though the sun shineth!  
She looks— ’tis giving rubles away!”

A noble-minded, splendid peasant woman, who has worthily fulfilled all the duties of her hard lot, at last becomes a widow. The manner of it; the quaint folk-remedies employed to heal the sick man; the making of the shroud by the bereaved wife; the digging of his grave by his father; the funeral; all are described. The widow drives the sledge with the coffin to the grave. On her return home she finds that the fire is out and that there is no wood on hand. Intrusting her two children to the care of a neighbor, she drives off with the sledge to the forest to cut some. As she collects the fuel, her thoughts wander back over the past, and she sees a vision of her life, its joys and sorrows. Just as she is about to set out for home, she pauses, approaches a tall pine-tree with her axe, and there Jack Frost woos and wins her, and she remains, frozen stiff. The beauty and interest of the poem quite escape in this (necessarily) bald summary. The same is the case with “Russian Women.” The first poem of this is entitled “Princess Trubetzkóy.” It begins by narrating how the “Count-father” prepares the covered traveling sledge for the Princess, who is bent upon the long journey to Siberia, to join her husband, one of the “Decembrists,” exiled for participation in the tumults of 1825, on the accession to the throne of Nicholas I. He spreads a thick bear-skin rug, puts in down-pillows, hangs up a holy image (ikóna) in the corner, grieving the while. After this prologue, the journey of the devoted wife is described; the monotonous way being spent in great part by the noble woman in vision-like memories of her happy childhood, girlhood, and married life. On arriving at Irkútsk she receives a visit from the governor, an old subordinate of her father, who endeavors by every possible means

to deter her from pursuing her journey. She persists in demanding that fresh horses be put to her sledge, and that she be allowed to proceed to the Nertchínsk mines, where her husband is. Failing to frighten her by the description of the hardships she will be compelled to endure, by telling her that she will have to live in the common ward of the prison with hundreds of prisoners, never see her husband alone, and the like, he at last informs her that she can proceed only on condition that she renounces all her rights, title, property. She demands the document on the instant and signs it, and again demands her horses. The governor (who, by pleading illness, has already detained the impatient woman a whole week) then tells her that, having renounced her rights, she must traverse the remaining eight hundred versts on foot, like a common prisoner, and that the majority fall by the way in so doing. Her only thought is the extra time which this will require. The governor, having done his duty, tells her that she shall have her horses and sledge as before; he will assume the responsibility. She proceeds. Here the poem ends. But the second poem, entitled "Princess Volkónsky," and dated 1826-1827 carries the story further for both women. It takes the form of a tale told to her grandchildren, to whom says the Princess Volkónsky, she will bequeath flowers from her sister Muraviéff's grave (in Siberia), a collection of butterflies, the flora of Tchitá, views of that savage country, and an iron bracelet forged by their grandfather from his chains. She narrates how, at the age of seventeen, she married the Prince, a friend of her father, and the hero of many campaigns, much older than herself, who even after the wedding, is absent the greater part of the time on his military duties. Once, when they meet again after one of these prolonged separations, he is suddenly seized with panic, burns many documents in her presence, and takes her home to her father without, however, explaining anything. After that she hears nothing about him for many months; no letters reach her, every one professes ignorance as to his whereabouts, but assures her he is engaged in his duties. Even when her son is born he makes no sign, and all further efforts to pacify her prove useless. She goes to St. Petersburg, finds out the truth, and insists on joining her husband who, with Prince Trubetzkóy and the other noble Decembrists, is in Siberia. Every effort on the part of friends and relatives to prevent her leaving her baby and taking this step prove of no avail. She obtains the Emperor's permission, and sets out. The description of her journey is even more graphic and touching than that of Princess Trubetzkóy's. She hears on the way about the efforts which have been made to turn the latter from her purpose, and that probably the same measures will be used with her. At one point she meets the caravan which is bringing the silver from the Nertchínsk mines to the capital, and she asks the young officer in charge if the exiles are alive and well. He replies insultingly that he knows nothing about such people. But one of the peasant-soldiers of the caravan quietly gives her the desired information, and she adds, that invariably throughout her long and trying experience the peasant men have been truly sympathetic, helpful, and kind to the last degree, when their superiors were not. Efforts to turn her aside fail. She overtakes Princess Trubetzkóy, and the two friends pursue their sad journey together. On arriving in Nertchínsk, the commandant questions their

right to see their husbands, refuses to recognize the Emperor's own signature, says he will send to Irkútsk for information (they had offered to go back themselves for it), and until it is received, they will not be permitted to hold communication with those whom they have come so far to see. The women resign themselves, and pass the night in a peasant hut, so small that their heads touch the wall, their feet the door. Princess Volkónsky, waking early, sets out on a stroll through the village, and comes to the mouth of the mine-shaft, guarded by a sentry. She prevails upon this sentry to let her descend, contrary to orders, and after a long and arduous passage through the rough, dripping corridors, and after running the risk of discovery by an official, and even of death (when she extinguishes her torch to escape the official, and proceeds in the dark), she reaches her husband and the other Decembrist exiles, and delivers to them the letters from their friends, which she has with her. The poem is most beautiful and affecting.

A third very famous poem is "Who in Russia Finds Life Good?" Seven peasants meet by chance on the highway, and fall into a dispute on that theme. One says, "the landed proprietor"; another, "the official"; a third, "the priest." Others say, respectively, "the fat-bellied merchant," "the minister of the empire," "the Tzar." All of the peasants had started out at midday upon important errands, but they argue hotly until sundown, walking all the while, and do not notice even that until an old woman happens along and asks them, "Where are they bound by night?" On glancing about them, the peasants perceive that they are thirty versts from home, and they are too fatigued to undertake the return journey at once. They throw the blame on the Forest-Fiend, seat themselves in the woods, and light a fire. One man goes off to procure liquor, another for food, and as they consume these, they begin the discussion all over again in such vehement wise that all the beasts and birds of the forest are affrighted. At last Pakhóm, one of the peasants, catches a young bird in his hand and says that, frail and tiny as it is, it is more mighty than a peasant man, because its wings permit it to fly whithersoever it wishes; and he beseeches the birdling to give them its wings, so that they may fly all over the empire and observe and inquire, "Who dwelleth happily and at ease in Russia?" Surely, Iván remarks, wings are not needed; if only they could be sure of half a pud (eighteen pounds) of bread a day (meaning the sour, black rye bread), they could "measure off Mother Russia" with their own legs. Another of the peasants stipulates for a vedró (two and three-quarters gallons) of vódka; another for cucumbers every morning; another for a wooden can of kvas (small beer, brewed from the rye bread, or meal) every noon; another for a teapot of boiling tea every evening. A peewit circles above them in the air, listening, then alights beside their bonfire, chirps, and addresses them in human speech. She promises that if they will release her offspring she will give them all they desire. The compact is made; she tells them where to go in the forest and dig up a coffer containing a "self-setting table-cloth," which will carry them all over the country at their behest. They demand, in addition, that they shall be fed and clothed; granted. They get the carpet; their daily supply of food appears from its folds, on demand (they may double, but not treble the allowance),

and they vow not to return to their families until they shall have succeeded in their quest of a happy man in Russia. Their first encounter is with a priest, who in response to their questions, asks if happiness does not consist in "peace, wealth, and honor?" He then describes his life, and demonstrates that a priest gets none of these things. As they proceed on their way, they meet and interrogate people from all ranks and classes. This affords the poet an opportunity for a series of pictures from Russian life, replete with national characteristics, stories, arguments, songs, described in varying meters. The whole forms a splendid and profoundly interesting national picture-gallery.

The movements of the '40's and the '60's brought to the front several poets who sprang directly from the people. On the borderland of the two epochs stands the most renowned of Little Russian poets, Tarás Grigórievitch Shevtchénko (1814-1861). He was the contemporary of Koltzóff and Byelínsky, rather than of Nekrásóff; nevertheless, he may be regarded as a representative of the latter's epoch, in virtue of the contents and the spirit of his poetry.

His history is both interesting and remarkable. He was the son of a serf, in the government of Kíeff. When he was eight years old his mother died, and his father married again. His stepmother favored her own children, and to constant quarrels between the two broods, incessant altercation between the parents was added. At the age of eleven, when his father died, he began a roving life. He ran away from a couple of ecclesiastics who had undertaken to teach him to read and write (after having acquired the rudiments of those arts), and made numerous ineffectual attempts to obtain instruction in painting from various wretched daubers of holy pictures, having been addicted, from his earliest childhood, to scrawling over the walls of the house and the fences with charcoal drawings. He was obliged to turn shepherd. In 1827 he was taken on as one of his master's household servants, and sent to Vílna, where at first he served as scullion. Later on, it was decided that he "was fitted to become the household painter."

But he served at first as personal attendant on his master and handed him a light for his pipe, until his master caught him one night drawing a likeness of Kazák Plátóff, whereupon he pulled Shevtchénko's ears, cuffed him, ordered him to be flogged, but simultaneously acquired the conviction that the lad might be converted into a painter to the establishment. So Shevtchénko began to study under a Vílna artist, and a year and a half later, by the advice of his teacher, who recognized his talent, the master sent the lad to a portrait-painter in Warsaw. In 1831 he was sent to his master in St. Petersburg on foot by the regular police "stages" (*étape*), arriving almost shoeless, and acted as lackey in the establishment. At last his master granted his urgent request, and apprenticed him for four years to an instructor in painting. Here Shevtchénko made acquaintance with the artist I. M. Sóschenko, and through him with an author of some little note, who took pity on the young fellow's sorry plight, and began to invite him to his house, give him books to read, furnish him with various useful suggestions, and with money. Thus did Shevtchénko come to know the Russian and western classical authors, history, and so forth. Through Sóschenko's agency, the aid of the secretary of



the Academy of Arts was invoked to rescue the young man from his artist master's intolerable oppression, and his literary friend introduced Shevtchénko to Zhukóvsky, who took an ardent interest in the fate of the talented young fellow. They speedily began operations to free Shevtchénko from serfdom; and the manner in which it was finally effected is curious. A certain general ordered a portrait of himself from Shevtchénko for which he was to pay fifty rubles. The general was not pleased with the portrait, and refused to accept it. The offended artist painted the general's beard over with a froth of shaving-soap, and sold the picture for a song to the barber who was in the habit of shaving the general, and he used it as a sign. The general flew into a rage, immediately purchased the portrait, and with a view to revenging himself on the artist, he offered the latter's master a huge sum for him. Shevtchénko was so panic-stricken at the prospect of what awaited him, that he fled for aid to the artist Briulóff, entreating the latter to save him. Briulóff told Zhukóvsky, and Zhukóvsky repeated the story to the Empress Alexáandra Feóodorovna, wife of Nicholas I. Shevtchénko's master was ordered to stop the sale. The Empress then commanded Briulóff to complete a portrait of her which he had begun, and she put it up as the prize in a lottery among the members of the imperial family for the sum of ten thousand rubles — the price offered for Shevtchénko by the enraged general. Shevtchénko thus received his freedom in May, 1838, and immediately began to attend the classes in the Academy of Arts, and speedily became one of Briulóff's favorite pupils and comrades.

In 1840 he published his "Kobzár" which made an impression in Little Russia. In 1842 he began the publication of his famous poem, "The Haïdamák" (A Warrior of Ancient Ukraína). In 1843 he was arrested and sent back to Little Russia, where he lived until 1847, and during this period his talent bore its fairest blossoms, and his best works appeared: "The Banquet of the Dead," "The Hired Woman," "The Dream," "The Prisoner," "Iván Gus" (the goose), "The Cold Hillside," and so forth. His literary fame reached its zenith, and brought with it the friendship of the best intellectual forces of southern Russia, and with the aid of Princess Ryépnin (cousin to the minister of public education) and Count Uvároff, he obtained the post of drawing-master in Kíeff University. But in 1847 some one overheard and distorted a conversation in which Shevtchénko and several friends had taken part, the result being that all were arrested, while Shevtchénko, after being taken to St. Petersburg, was sent to the Orenburg government in the far southeast, to serve as a common soldier in the ranks, and was forbidden to paint or to write. There he remained for ten years, when he returned to the capital, and settled down at the Academy of Arts, where he was granted a studio, in accordance with his right as an academician. He never produced anything of note in the literary line thereafter, and the last three years of his life were chiefly devoted to releasing his relatives from serfdom, and furnishing them with land for cottages, which object he accomplished a few months before the general emancipation of the serfs.

In the work of Shevtchénko it is possible to follow the curious transformation from what may be called the collective-folk creative power, to the purely individual. His figures, subjects, and the quiet, heart-rending sadness of his poems are precisely the

same as those to be met with in any Little Russian folk-ballad. The majority of his poems are not inventions, but are taken directly from popular legends and traditions, and the personality of the poet vanishes in a flood of purely popular poetry. Nevertheless, he is not a slavish copyist of this folk-poetry. The language of his compositions is strikingly simple, and comprehensible not only to native-born Little Russians, but also to those who are not acquainted with the dialect of that region. Most writers who have employed the Little Russian dialect are difficult of comprehension not only to educated Great Russians, but also to ordinary Little Russians, because their language is artificial, intermingled with a mass of new words and expressions invented in educated circles of Little Russia. But Shevtchénko wrote in the living tongue of the Ukraína, in which its people talk and sing. His best work, after he came under the influence of Zhukóvsky, is "The Hired Woman." This is the story of a girl who is betrayed, then forced by outsiders to abandon her child, after which she hires herself out as servant to the people at whose door she has left the child, and so is enabled to rear it, only revealing the secret to her child on her deathbed.

The sufferings of the people in serfdom form the subject of another series of his poems, and in this category, "Katerína" is the best worked out and most dramatic of his productions. A third category comprises the historical ballads, in which he celebrates the days of kazák freedom. This class comprises two long poems, "The Haïdamák" (The Kazák Warrior of Ancient Ukraína) and "Gamáliya," besides a number of short rhapsodies. In these poems the writer has expressed his political and social views, and they are particularly prized by his fellow-landsmen of the Ukraína. The fourth (or, in the order of their appearance, the first) class of Shevtchénko's poems consists of ballads in the folk-style, and sentimental, romantic pieces, which have no political or social tendencies. Such are the ballads, "The Cause," "The Drowned Woman," "The Water Nymph," "The Poplar Tree," which he wrote in St. Petersburg on scraps of paper in the summer garden.

Of less talent and importance was a fellow-citizen of Koltzóff, Iván Sávitich Nikítin (1824-1861). Perhaps the most interesting thing about him is that Count L. N. Tolstóy took a lively interest in this gifted plebeian, and offered to bear the cost of publishing his poems, regarding him as a new Koltzóff. Count Tolstóy has since arrived at the conclusion that all poetry is futile and an unnecessary waste of time, as the same ideas can be much better expressed in prose, and with less labor to both writer and reader.

The poet from the educated classes of society who deserves the most attention as a member of Nekrásoff's camp, is Alexyéi Nikoláevitch Pleshtchéeff (1825-1893), the descendant of an ancient family of the nobility. In 1849 he was arrested for suspected implication in what is known as "The Petrashévsky Affair" (from the name of the leader), and imprisoned in the Peter-Paul Fortress. Together with Dostoévsky and nineteen others he was condemned to be shot, but all the prisoners were pardoned by the Emperor (the charge was high treason) at the last moment, and after spending nine months in the fortress, Pleshtchéeff was sent to serve as a common soldier in the troops of the line, in the Orenburg government, with the loss of all his civil rights.

There he remained nine years, taking part in several border campaigns, and rising to the rank of ensign, after which he entered the civil service. In 1859 he was allowed to return to Moscow, whence he removed to St. Petersburg in 1872.

The principal writers of satirical verse during this period were: Alexyéi Mikháilovitch Zhemtchúzhnikoff (1822), V. S. Kúrotchkin (1831-1875), who founded the extremely popular journal "The Spark," in 1859, and D. D. Mináeff (1835-1889).

Seventh Period: Danilévsky, Saltykóff, L. N. Tolstóy, Górký, and Others.

SEVENTH PERIOD: DANILÉVSKY, SALTÝKÓFF, L. N. TOLSTÓY, GÓRKY, AND OTHERS.

Under the influence of the romantic movement in western Europe, in the '30's of the nineteenth century, and in particular under the deep impression made by Sir Walter Scott's novels, historical novels and historical studies began to make their appearance in Russia, and in the '50's underwent two periods of existence, which totally differed from each other.

During the first period the romance-writers, including even Púshkin, treated things from a governmental point of view, and dealt only with such epochs, all more or less remote, as the censorship permitted. For example, Zagóskin, the best known of the historical novelists, wrote "Áskold's Grave," from the epoch of the baptism of the Russians, in the tenth century, and "Yúry Miloslávsky," from the epoch of the Pretender, early in the seventeenth century; while Lazhétchnikoff wrote "The Mussulman," from the reign of Iván III., sixteenth century, and "The Last Court Page," from the epoch of Peter the Great's wars with Sweden. The historical facts were alluded to in a slight, passing way, or narrated after the fashion of Karamzín, in lofty terms, with artificial patriotic inspiration. As the authors lacked archæological learning, the manners and accessories of the past were merely sketched in a general, indefinite way, and often inaccurately, while the pages were chiefly filled with the sentimental love-passages of two or three virtuous heroes of stereotyped patterns, who were subjected to frightful adventures, perished several times, and were resuscitated for the purpose of marrying in ordinary fashion at the end.

In the '50's people became far too much interested in the present to pay much heed to the past. Yet precisely at that time the two finest historians came to the front, Sergyéi M. Soloviéff and N. I. Kostomároff, and effected a complete revolution in historiography. Soloviéff's great history brings the narrative down to the reign of Katherine II. Kostomároff dealt with periods, giving a complete picture of each one; hence each study, while complete in itself, does not of necessity always contain the whole career of the personages who figure in it. But both writers are essentially (despite Kostomároff's not very successful attempts at historical novels) serious historians.

As we have already seen, the novels of the two Counts Tolstóy, "War and Peace" and "Prince Serébryany," stand quite apart, and far above all others.

But among the favorites of lesser rank are Grigóry Petróvitch Danilévsky (born in 1829), whose best historical novel is "Miróvitch," though it takes unwarrantable liberties with the personages of the epoch depicted (that of Katherine II.) and those

in the adjacent periods. Less good, though popular, is his "Princess Tarakánoff," the history of a supposed daughter of the Empress Elizabeth.

Half-way between the historians and the portrayers of popular life, and in a measure belonging to both ranks, are several talented men. The most famous of them was Pável Ivánovitch Mélnikoff (1819-1883), whose official duties enabled him to make an exhaustive study of the "Old Ritualists" along the middle Volga.

His two novels, "In the Forests" and "On the Hills" (of the eastern and western banks of the Volga, respectively), are utterly unlike anything else in the language, and are immensely popular with Russians. They are history in that they faithfully reproduce the manners and beliefs of a whole class of the population; they are genre studies of a very valuable ethnographical character in their fidelity to nature. Long as they are, the interest never flags for a moment, but it is not likely that they will ever appear in an English translation. Too extensive and intimate a knowledge of national ways and beliefs (both of the State Church and the schismatics) are required to allow of their being popular with the majority of foreigners who read Russian; for the non-Russian reading foreigner an excessive amount of explanatory notes would be required, and they would resemble treatises. But they are two of the most delightful books of the epoch, and classics in their way. Mélnikoff wrote, for a long time, under the pseudonym of "Andréi Petchérsky."

Nikolái Seménovitch Lyeskóff (1837-1895), who long wrote under the pseudonym of "M. Stebnítzky," is another author famous for his portraits of a whole class of the population, his specialty being the priestly class. He was of noble birth, and was reared in luxury, but was orphaned and ruined at a very early age, so that he was obliged to earn a hard living, first in government service, then as traveler for a private firm. This extensive traveling afforded him the opportunity of making acquaintance with the life of all classes of the population. He began to write in 1860, but a few incautious words, in 1862, raised a storm against him in the liberal press, which accused him of instigating the police to their attacks upon young people. As Count Tolstóy remarked to me, this incident prevented Lyeskóff ever receiving the full meed of recognition which his talent merited; a large and influential section of the press was permanently in league against him. This, eventually, so exasperated and embittered Lyeskóff that he really did go over to the conservative camp, and the first result of his wrath was the romance "No Thoroughfare," published in 1865. Its chief characters are two ideal socialists, a man and a woman, recognized by contemporaries as the portraits of living persons. Both are represented as finding so-called socialists to be merely crafty nihilists. This raised another storm, and still further embittered Lyeskóff, who expressed himself in "To the Knife" (in the middle of the '70's), a mad production, wherein revolutionists (or "nihilists," as they were then generally called) were represented as condensed incarnations of the seven deadly sins. These works had much to do with preventing Lyeskóff from taking that high place in the public estimation which his other works (a mass of novels and tales devoid of political tendency) and his great talent would have otherwise assured to him. Of his large works, "The Cathedral Staff," with its sympathetic

and life-like portraits of Archpriest Savély Tuberósoff and his athletic Deacon Achilles, and his "Episcopal Trifles" rank first. The latter volume, which consists of a series of pictures setting forth the dark sides of life in the highest ecclesiastical hierarchy, created a great sensation in the early '80's, and raised a third storm, and the author fell into disfavor in official circles. Perhaps the most perfect of his works is one of the shorter novels, "The Sealed Angel," which deals with the ways and beliefs of the Old Ritualists (though in the vicinity of Kíeff, not in Mélnikoff's province), and is regarded as a classic, besides being a pure delight to the initiated reader. Count L. N. Tolstóy greatly admired (he told me) Lyeskóff's "At the End of the World," a tale of missionary effort in Siberia, which is equally delightful in its way, though less great. Towards the end of his career, Lyeskóff was inclined to mysticism, and began to work over ancient religious legends, or to invent new ones in the same style.

The direct and immediate result of the democratic tendency on Russian thought and attraction to the common people during this era was the creation of a school of writers who devoted themselves almost exclusively to that sphere, in addition to the contributions from Turgéneff, Tolstóy, Dostoévsky. Among these was a well-known woman writer, Márya Alexándrovna Markóvitch, who published her first Little Russian Tales, in 1859, under the name of "Márko Vovtchék." She immediately translated them into Russian, and they were printed in the best journals of the day. I. S. Turgéneff translated one volume into Russian (for her Little Russian language was not of the supreme quality that characterized Shevtchénko's, which needed no translating), and Dobroliúboff, an authoritative critic of that period, expressed himself in the most flattering manner about them. But her fame withered away as quickly as it had sprung up. The weak points of her tales had been pardoned because of their political contents; in ten years they had lost their charm, and their defects — a too superficial knowledge of the people's life, the absence of living, authentic coloring in portraiture, its restriction to general, stereotyped types, such as might have been borrowed from popular tales and ballads, and excess of sentimentality — became too apparent to be overlooked by a more enlightened public.

The only other woman writer of this period who acquired much reputation may be mentioned here, although she cannot be classed strictly with portrayers of the people: Nadézhda Dmítrievna Khvóshtchinsky, whose married name was Zaióntchkovsky, and who wrote under the pseudonym of "V. Krestóvsky" (1825-1889). She published a great many short stories of provincial town life, rather narrow as to their sphere of observation. Her best work was "The Great Bear" (referring to the constellation), which appeared in 1870-1871.

When literature entered upon a fresh phase of development in the '70's of the last century, the careful study of the people, two men headed the movement, Glyeb Ivánovitch Uspénsky and Nikolái Nikoláevitch Zlatovrátsky. Uspénsky (1840) took the negative and pessimistic view. Zlatovrátsky (1845) took the positive, optimistic view.

Like many authors of that period, adverse conditions hindered Uspénsky's march to fame. Shortly after his first work, "The Manners of Rasteryáeff Street," began to

appear in "The Contemporary," that journal was stopped. He continued it in another journal, which also was stopped before his work was finished, and that after he had been forced to cut out everything which gave a hint at its being a "continuation," so that it might appear to be an independent whole. He was obliged to publish the mangled remains in "The Woman's News," because there was hardly any other journal then left running. After the Servian War (generally called abroad "the Russo-Turkish War") of 1877-1878, Uspénsky abandoned the plebeian classes to descend to "the original source" of everything — the peasant. When he published the disenchanting result of his observations, showing to what lengths a peasant will go for money, there was a sensation. This was augmented by his sketch, "Hard Labor"; and a still greater sensation ensued on the publication of his "'Tis Not a Matter of Habit" (known in book form as "The Eccentric Master"). In "Hard Labor" he set forth, contrary to all theoretical beliefs, that the peasants of villages which had belonged to private landed proprietors prior to the emancipation, were incomparably and incontestably more industrious and moral than the peasants on the crown estates, who had always been practically free men.

Readers were still more alarmed by the deductions set forth in his "An Eccentric Master." The hero is an educated man, Mikháil Mikháilovitch, who betakes himself to the rural wilds with the express object of "toiling there exactly like the rest, as an equal in morals and duties, to sleep with the rest on the straw, to eat from one pot with them" (the Tolstóyan theory, but in advance of him), "while the money acquired thus by general toil was to be the property of a group of people to be formed from peasants and from actually ruined former members of the upper classes." But the peasants, not comprehending the master's lofty aims, treated him as an eccentric fool, and began to rob him in all directions, meanwhile humoring him to the top of his bent in all his instincts of master. It ends in Mikháil Mikháilovitch becoming thoroughly disillusioned, dejected, and taking to drink after having expended the whole of his capital on the ungrateful peasants. This will serve to illustrate Uspénsky's pessimistic point of view, for which he certainly had solid grounds.

While Uspénsky never sought artistic effects in his work, and his chief strength lay in humor, in ridicule which pitilessly destroyed all illusions, Zlatovrátsky never indulges in a smile, and is always, whether grieving or rejoicing, in a somewhat exalted frame of mind, which often attains the pitch of epic pathos, so that even his style assumes a rather poetical turn, something in the manner of hexameters. Moreover, he is far from despising the artistic element. He established his fame in 1874 by his first large work, "Peasant Jurors."

As Zlatovrátsky (whose father belonged to the priestly class) regards as ideal the commune and the peasant guild (artél), with their individualistic, moral ideals of union in a spirit of brotherly love and solidarity, both in work and in the enjoyment of its products, his pessimism is directed against the Russian educated classes, not excepting even their very best representatives. This view he expresses in all his works which depict the educated classes: "The Golden Heart," "The Wanderer," "The Kremléff Family,"

“The Karaváeffs,” “The Hetman,” and so forth. In these he represents educated people — the better classes, called “intelligent” people by Russians — under the guise of sheep who have strayed from the true fold, and the only thing about them which he regards as a sign of life (in a few of the best of them) is their vain efforts to identify themselves with the common people, and thus, as it were, restore the lost paradise.

There are many others who have written sketches and more ambitious works founded on a more or less intimate study and knowledge of the peasants. On one of these we must turn our attention, briefly, as the author of one famous and heartrending book, “The Inhabitants of Podlípovo.” Feódor Mikháilovitch Ryeshétnikoff (1841-1871) was one of three middle-class (“plebeian” is the Russian word) writers who made a name, the others being Alexánder Ivánovitch Levitoff and Nikolái Ivánovitch Naúmoff. For in proportion as culture spread among the masses of society, and the center of the intellectual movement was transferred from the noble class to the plebeian, in the literary circles towards the end of the ‘50’s there appeared a great flood of new forces from the lower classes. The three writers above mentioned, as well as Uspénsky and Zlatovrátsky, belonged to the priestly plebeian class. Ryeshétnikoff’s famous romance — rather a short story — was the outcome of his own hardships, sufferings, and experiences. He was scantily educated, had no æsthetic taste, wrote roughly, not always grammatically, and always in excessively gloomy colors, yet he had the reputation of being a passionate lover of the people, despite the fact that his picture of the peasants in his best known work is generally regarded as almost a caricature in its exaggerated gloom, and he enjoys wide popularity even at the present time.

The spirits of people rose during the epoch of Reform (after the Emancipation of the serfs in 1861) and the general impulse to take an interest in political and social questions was speedily reflected in literature by the formation of a special branch of that art, which was known as “tendency literature,” although its more accurate title would have been “publicist literature.” The peculiarity of most writers of this class was their pessimistic skepticism. This publicist literature was divided into three classes: democratic, moderately liberal, and conservative.

At the head of the democratic branch stood the great writer who constituted the pride and honor of the epoch, as the one who most profoundly and fully reflected it, Mikháil Evgráfovitch Saltykóff (1826-1889). He was the son of landed proprietors, of an ancient family, with a famous name of Tatár descent. He finished his education in the Tzárskoe Seló Lyceum, which, from the time of Púshkin on, graduated so many notable statesmen and distinguished men. The authorities of the Lyceum were endeavoring to exterminate the spirit of Púshkin, who had died only the year before, and severely repressed all scribbling of poetry, which did not in the least prevent almost every boy in the school from trying his hand at it and dreaming of future fame. Thus incited, Saltykóff, from the moment of his entrance, earned the ill-will of the authorities by his passionate love of verse writing and reading, and when he graduated, in 1844, it was in the lower half of his class, and with one rank lower in the civil service than the upper half of the class.

In 1847 he published (under the name of "M. Nepánoff") his first story, "Contradictions," and in 1848 his second, "A Tangled Affair," both in "The Annals of the Fatherland." When the strictness of the censorship was augmented during that same year, after "the Petrashévsky affair," all literary men fell under suspicion. When Saltykóff asked for leave of absence from the service to go home during the holidays, he was commanded to produce his writings. Although these early writings contained hardly a hint of the satirical talents which he afterwards developed, the person to whom was intrusted the task of making a report of them (and who was a sworn enemy to the natural school and "The Annals of the Fatherland") gave such an alarming account of them that the Count Tchérnysheff was frightened at having so dangerous a man in his ministerial department. The result was, that in May, 1848, a posting-tróika halted in front of Saltykóff's lodgings, and the accompanying gendarme was under orders to escort the offender off to Vyátka on the instant.

In Saltykóff's case, as in the case of many another Russian writer, exile not only removed him from the distracting pleasures of life at the capital, but also laid the foundation for his future greatness. In Vyátka, Saltykóff first served as one of the officials in the government office, but by the autumn he was appointed the official for special commissions immediately attached to the governor's service. He was a valued friend in the family of the vice-governor, for whose young daughters he wrote a "Short History of Russia," and after winning further laurels in the service, he was allowed to return to St. Petersburg in 1856, when he married one of the young girls, and published his "Governmental Sketches," with the materials for which his exile had furnished him. Two years later he was appointed vice-governor of Ryazán, then transferred to Tver, where he acted as governor on several occasions. In 1862 he retired from the service and devoted himself to literature, but he returned to it a couple of years later, and only retired definitively in 1868. These items are of interest as showing the status of political exiles in a different light from that usually accepted as the unvarying rule.

As we have said, Saltykóff's exile was of incalculable service to him, in that it made him acquainted with the inward life of Russia and of the people. This knowledge he put to unsparing use in his famous satires. In order fully to understand his works, one must be thoroughly familiar with the general spirit and the special ideas of the different periods to which they refer, as well as with Russia and its life and literature in general. Saltykóff (who wrote under the name of "Shtchedrín") was very keen to catch the spirit of the moment, and very caustic in portraying it, with the result that very often the names he invented for his characters clove to whole classes of society, and have become by-words, the mere mention of which reproduces the whole type. For example, after the Emancipation, when the majority of landed proprietors were compelled to give up their parasitic life on the serfs, there arose a class of educated people who were seeking fresh fields for their easy, parasitic existence. One of the commonest expedients, in the '70's, for restoring shattered finances was to go to Tashként, where the cultured classes imagined that regular gold mines awaited them. Saltykóff instantly detected this movement, and not only branded the pioneers in the colonization of Central Asia



with the name of “Tashkéntzians” (in “Gospodá Tashkéntzy” Messrs. Tashkéntzians), but according to his wont, he rendered this nickname general by applying it to all cultured classes who had nothing in their souls but an insatiable appetite. In other works he branded other movements and classes with equal ineffaceableness.

His masterpiece (in his third and most developed period), the work which foreigners can comprehend almost equally well with Russians, is “Gospodá Golovlévy” (“The Messrs. Golovléff”). It contains that element of the universal in humanity which his national satires lack, and it alone would suffice to render him immortal. The type of Iúdiushka (little Judas) has no superior in all European literature, for its cold, calculating, cynical hypocrisy, its miserly ferocity. The book is a presentment of old ante-reform manners among the landed gentry at their worst.

The following favorite little story furnishes an excellent example of Saltykóff’s (Shtchedrín’s) caustic wit and satire:

The Story of how One Peasant Maintained Two Generals.

Once upon a time there lived and flourished two Generals; and as both were giddy-pated, by jesting command, at my desire, they were speedily transported to an uninhabited island.

The Generals had served all their lives in some registry office or other; they had been born there, reared there, had grown old there, and consequently they understood nothing whatever. They did not even know any words except, “accept the assurance of my complete respect and devotion.”

The registry was abolished as superfluous, and the Generals were set at liberty. Being thus on the retired list, they settled in Petersburg, in Podyátchesky (Pettifoggers) Street, in separate quarters; each had his own cook, and received a pension. But all of a sudden, they found themselves on an uninhabited island, and when they awoke, they saw that they were lying under one coverlet. Of course, at first they could not understand it at all, and they began to talk as though nothing whatever had happened to them.

“Tis strange, your Excellency, I had a dream to-day,” said one General; “I seemed to be living on a desert island.”

No sooner had he said this than he sprang to his feet. The other General did the same.

“Heavens! What’s the meaning of this? Where are we?” cried both, with one voice.

Then they began to feel each other, to discover whether this extraordinary thing had happened to them not in a dream, but in their waking hours. But try as they might to convince themselves that all this was nothing but a vision of their sleep, they were forced to the conviction of its sad reality.

On one side of them stretched the sea, on the other side lay a small plot of land, and beyond it again stretched the same boundless sea. The Generals began to weep, for the first time since the registry office had been closed.

They began to gaze at each other, and they then perceived that they were clad only in their night-shirts, and on the neck of each hung an order.

“How good a little coffee would taste now!” ejaculated one General, but then he remembered what unprecedented adventure had happened to him, and he began to cry again.

“But what are we to do?” he continued, through his tears; “if we were to write a report, of what use would it be?”

“This is what we must do,” replied the other General. “Do you go to the east, your Excellency, and I will go to the west, and in the evening we will meet again at this place; perhaps we shall find something.”

So they began their search to find which was the east and which the west. They recalled to mind that their superior official had once said, “If you wish to find the east, stand with your eyes towards the north, and you will find what you want on your right hand.” They began to seek the north, and placed themselves first in one position, then in another, and tried all quarters of the compass in turn, but as they had spent their whole lives in the registry office, they could decide on nothing.

“This is what we must do, your Excellency; do you go to the right, and I will go to the left; that will be better,” said the General, who besides serving in the registry office had also served as instructor of calligraphy in the school for soldiers’ sons, and consequently had more sense.

So said, so done. One General went to the right, and saw trees growing, and on the trees all sorts of fruits. The General tried to get an apple, but all the apples grew so high that it was necessary to climb for them. He tried to climb, but with no result, except that he tore his shirt to rags. The General came to a stream, the fish were swimming there in swarms, as though in a fish-shop on the Fontánka canal. “If we only had such fish in Pettifoggers Street!” said the General to himself, and he even changed countenance with hunger.

The General entered the forest, and there hazel-hens were whistling, blackcocks were holding their bragging matches, and hares were running.

“Heavens! What victuals! What victuals!” said the General, and he felt that he was becoming fairly sick at his stomach with hunger.

There was nothing to be done; he was obliged to return to the appointed place with empty hands. He reached it but the other General was already waiting for him.

“Well, your Excellency, have you accomplished anything?”

“Yes, I have found an old copy of the ‘Moscow News’; that is all.”

The Generals lay down to sleep again, but gnawing hunger kept them awake. They were disturbed by speculations as to who would receive their pension for them; then they recalled the fruits, fish, hazel-hens, blackcock, and hares which they had seen that day.

“Who would have thought, your Excellency, that human food, in its original shape, flies, swims, and grows on trees?” said one General.

“Yes,” replied the other General; “I must confess that until this day I thought that wheaten rolls came into existence in just the form in which they are served to us in the morning with our coffee.”

“It must be that, for instance, if one desires to eat a partridge, he must first catch it, kill it, pluck it, roast it... But how is all that done?”

“How is all that done?” repeated the other General, like an echo. They fell into silence, and tried to get to sleep; but hunger effectually banished sleep. Hazel-hens, turkeys, sucking-pigs flitted before their eyes, rosy, veiled in a slight blush of roasting, surrounded with cucumbers, pickles, and other salads.

“It seems to me that I could eat my own boots now!” said one General.

“Gloves are good also, when they have been worn a long time!” sighed the other General.

All at once the Generals glanced at each other; an ominous fire glowed in their eyes, their teeth gnashed, a dull roar forced its way from their breasts. They began slowly to crawl toward each other, and in the twinkling of an eye they were exasperated to fury. Tufts of hair flew about, whines and groans resounded; the General who had been a teacher of calligraphy bit off his adversary’s Order, and immediately swallowed it. But the sight of flowing blood seemed to restore them to their senses.

“The power of the cross defend us!” they exclaimed simultaneously; “if we go on like this we shall eat each other!”

“And how did we get here? What malefactor has played us this trick?”

“We must divert our minds with some sort of conversation, your Excellency, or there will be murder!” said the other General.

“Begin!” replied the other General.

“Well, for instance, what do you think about this, Why does the sun rise first and then set, instead of acting the other way about?”

“You are a queer man, your Excellency; don’t you rise first, then go to the office, write there, and afterward go to bed?”

“But why not admit this reversal of the order; first I go to bed, have divers dreams, and then rise?”

“Hm, yes... But I must confess that when I served in the department I always reasoned in this fashion: now it is morning, then it will be day, then supper will be served, and it will be time to go to bed.”

But the mention of supper plunged them both into grief, and broke the conversation off short at the very beginning.

“I have heard a doctor say that a man can live for a long time on his own juices,” began one of the Generals.

“Is that so?”

“Yes, sir, it is; it appears that, the juices proper produce other juices; these in their turn, engender still other juices, and so on, until at last the juices cease altogether...”

“What then?”

“Then it is necessary to take some sort of nourishment.”

“Tfu!”

In short, no matter what topic of conversation the Generals started, it led inevitably to a mention of food, and this excited their appetites still more. They decided to cease

their conversation, and calling to mind the copy of the “Moscow News” which they had found, they began to read it with avidity.

“Yesterday,” read one General, with a quivering voice, “the respected governor of our ancient capital gave a grand dinner. The table was set for one hundred persons, with wonderful luxury. The gifts of all lands seemed to have appointed a rendezvous at this magical feast. There was the golden sterlet of the Sheksna, the pheasant, nursling of the Caucasian forests, and strawberries, that great rarity in our north in the month of February...”

“Tfu, heavens! Cannot your Excellency find some other subject?” cried the other General in desperation, and taking the newspaper from his companion’s hand, he read the following: “A correspondent writes to us from Túla: ‘There was a festival here yesterday at the club, on the occasion of a sturgeon being caught in the river Upá (an occurrence which not even old residents can recall, the more so as private Warden B. was recognized in the sturgeon). The author of the festival was brought in on a huge wooden platter, surrounded with cucumbers, and holding a bit of green in his mouth. Doctor P., who was on duty that day as presiding officer, saw to it carefully that each of the guests received a piece. The sauce was extremely varied, and even capricious.’ ...”

“Permit me, your Excellency, you also seem to be not sufficiently cautious in your choice of reading matter!” interrupted the first General, and taking the paper in his turn, he read: “A correspondent writes to us from Vyátka: ‘One of the old residents here has invented the following original method of preparing fish soup: Take a live turbot, and whip him as a preliminary; when his liver has become swollen with rage.’ ...”

The Generals dropped their heads. Everything on which they turned their eyes — everything bore witness to food. Their own thoughts conspired against them, for try as they would to banish the vision of beefsteak, this vision forced itself upon them.

And all at once an idea struck the General who had been a teacher of calligraphy...

“How would it do, your Excellency,” he said joyfully, “if we were to find a peasant?”

“That is to say ... a muzhík?”

“Yes, exactly, a common muzhík ... such as muzhíks generally are. He would immediately give us rolls, and he would catch hazel-hens and fish!”

“Hm ... a peasant ... but where shall we find him, when he is not here?”

“What do you mean by saying that he is not to be found? There are peasants everywhere, and all we have to do is to look him up! He is certainly hiding somewhere about because he is too lazy to work!” This idea cheered the Generals to such a degree that they sprang to their feet like men who had received a shock, and set out to find a peasant.

They roamed for a long time about the island without any success whatever, but at last the penetrating smell of bread-crust and sour sheepskin put them on the track. Under a tree, flat on his back, with his fists under his head, lay a huge peasant fast

asleep, and shirking work in the most impudent manner. There were no bounds to the wrath of the Generals.

“Asleep, lazybones!” and they flung themselves upon him; “and you don’t move so much as an ear, when here are two Generals who have been dying of hunger these two days! March off, this moment, to work!”

The man rose; he saw that the Generals were stern. He would have liked to give them the slip, but they had become fairly rigid when they grasped him.

And he began to work under their supervision.

First of all he climbed a tree and picked half a score of the ripest apples for the Generals, and took one, a sour one, for himself. Then he dug in the earth and got some potatoes; then he took two pieces of wood, rubbed them together, and produced fire. Then he made a snare from his own hair and caught a hazel-hen. Last of all, he arranged the fire, and cooked such a quantity of different provisions that the idea even occurred to the Generals, “would it not be well to give the lazy fellow a little morsel?”

The Generals watched the peasant’s efforts, and their hearts played merrily. They had already forgotten that they had nearly died of hunger on the preceding day, and they thought, “What a good thing it is to be a general — then you never go to destruction anywhere.”

“Are you satisfied, Generals?” asked the big, lazy peasant.

“We are satisfied, my dear friend, we perceive your zeal,” replied the Generals.

“Will you not permit me to rest now?”

“Rest, my good friend, only first make us a rope.”

The peasant immediately collected wild hemp, soaked it in water, beat it, worked it — and by evening the rope was done. With this rope the Generals bound the peasant to a tree so that he should not run away, and then they lay down to sleep.

One day passed, then another; the big, coarse peasant became so skilful that he even began to cook soup in the hollow of his hand. Our Generals became jovial, light-hearted, fat, and white. They began to say to each other that, here they were living with everything ready to hand while their pensions were accumulating and accumulating in Petersburg.

“What do you think, your Excellency, was there really a tower of Babel, or is that merely a fable?” one General would say to the other, as they ate their breakfast.

“I think, your Excellency, that it really was built; because, otherwise, how can we explain the fact that many different languages exist in the world?”

“Then the flood must have occurred also?”

“The flood did happen, otherwise, how could the existence of antediluvian animals be explained? The more so as it is announced in the ‘Moscow News’...”

“Shall we not read the ‘Moscow News’?”

Then they would hunt up that copy, seat themselves in the shade, and read it through from end to end; what people had been eating in Moscow, eating in Túla, eating in Pénza, eating in Ryazán — and it had no effect on them; it did not turn their stomachs.

In the long run, the Generals got bored. They began to refer more and more frequently to the cooks whom they had left behind them in Petersburg, and they even wept, on the sly.

“What is going on now in Pettifoggers Street, your Excellency?” one General asked the other.

“Don’t allude to it, your Excellency! My whole heart is sore!” replied the other General.

“It is pleasant here, very pleasant — there are no words to describe it; but still, it is awkward for us to be all alone, isn’t it? And I regret my uniform also.”

“Of course you do! Especially as it is of the fourth class, so that it makes you dizzy to gaze at the embroidery alone!”

Then they began to urge the peasant: Take them, take them to Pettifoggers Street! And behold! The peasant, it appeared, even knew all about Pettifoggers Street; had been there; his mouth had watered at it, but he had not had a taste of it!

“And we are Generals from Pettifoggers Street, you know!” cried the Generals joyfully.

“And I, also, if you had only observed; a man hangs outside a house, in a box, from a rope, and washes the wall with color, or walks on the roof like a fly. I am that man,” replied the peasant.

And the peasant began to cut capers, as though to amuse his Generals, because they had been kind to him, an idle sluggard, and had not scorned his peasant toil. And he built a ship — not a ship exactly, but a boat — so that they could sail across the ocean-sea, up to Pettifoggers Street.

“But look to it, you rascal, that you don’t drown us!” said the Generals, when they saw the craft pitching on the waves.

“Be easy, Generals, this is not my first experience,” replied the peasant, and began to make preparations for departure.

The peasant collected soft swansdown, and lined the bottom of the boat with it; having done this, he placed the Generals on the bottom, made the sign of the cross over them, and set sail. The pen cannot describe, neither can the tongue relate, what terror the Generals suffered during their journey, from storms and divers winds. But the peasant kept on rowing and rowing, and fed the Generals on herrings.

At last, behold Mother Nevá, and the splendid Katherine Canal, and great Pettifoggers Street! The cook-maids clasped their hands in amazement at the sight of their Generals, so fat, white, and merry! The Generals drank their coffee, ate rolls made with milk, eggs, and butter, and put on their uniforms. Then they went to the treasury, and the pen cannot describe, neither can the tongue relate, how much money they received there.

But they did not forget the peasant; they sent him a wineglass of vódka and a silver five-kopék piece. “Make merry, big, coarse peasant!”

While Turgéneff represented the “western” and liberal element (with a tinge of the “red”) in the school of the ‘40’s, and Gontcharóff stood for the bourgeois and opportunist

ideals of the St. Petersburg bureaucrats, Count Lyéff Nikoláevitch Tolstóy penetrated more profoundly into the depths of the spirit of the times than any other writer of the period in the matter of analysis and skepticism which characterized that school, and carried them to the extremes of pitiless logic and radicalness, approaching more closely than any other to democratic and national ideals. But notwithstanding all his genius, Count Tolstóy was not able to free himself to any great extent from his epoch, his environment, his contemporaries. His special talents merely caused him to find it impossible to reconcile himself to the state of affairs existing around him; and so, instead of progressing, he turned back and sought peace of mind and a firm doctrine in the distant past of primitive Christianity. Sincere as he undoubtedly is in his propaganda of self-simplification and self-perfection — one might almost call it “self-annihilation” — his new attitude has wrought great and most regrettable havoc with his later literary work, with some few exceptions.

And yet, in pursuing this course, he did not strike out an entirely new path for himself; his youth was passed in an epoch when the ideal of personal perfection and self-surrender stood in the foreground, and constituted the very essence of Russian progress.

Count L. N. Tolstóy was born on August 28, O. S., 1828 (September 9th, N. S.), in the village of Yásnaya Polyána, in the government of Túla. His mother, born Princess Volkónsky (Márya Nikoláevna), died before he was two years old, and his father's sister, Countess A. T. Osten-Saken, and a distant relative, Madame T. A. Ergólsky, took charge of him. When he was nine years old the family removed to Moscow, and his father died soon afterwards. Lyéff Nikoláevitch, his brother Dmítiry, and his sister Márya then returned to the country estate, while his elder brother Nikolái remained in Moscow with Countess Osten-Saken and studied at the University of Moscow. Three years later, the Countess Osten-Saken died, and another aunt on the father's side, Madame P. I. Yúshkoff, who resided in Kazán, became their guardian. Lyéff Nikoláevitch went there to live, and in 1843 he entered the University of Kazán in the philological course, but remained in it only one year, because the professor of history (who had quarreled with Tolstóy's relatives) gave him impossibly bad marks, in addition to which he received bad marks from the professor of German, although he was better acquainted with that language than any other member of his course. He was compelled to change to the law course, where he remained for two years. In 1848 he took the examination for “candidate” in the University of St. Petersburg. “I knew literally nothing,” he says of himself, “and I literally began to prepare myself for the examination only one week in advance.” He obtained his degree of candidate, or bachelor of arts, and returned to Yásnaya Polyána, where he lived until 1851, when he entered the Forty-fourth Battery of the Twentieth Brigade of Artillery as “yúnker” or supernumerary officer, with no official rank, but eligible to receive a commission as ensign, and thence advance in the service. This battery was stationed on the Tére River, in the Caucasus, and there Tolstóy remained with it until the Crimean War broke out. Thus during the first twenty-six years of his life he spent less than five years in towns, the rest in the country; and

this no doubt laid the foundation for his deep love for country life, which has had so profound an effect upon his writings and his views of existence in general.

The dawning of his talent came during the four years he spent in the Caucasus, and he wrote "Childhood," "The Incursion," "Boyhood," "The Morning of a Landed Proprietor," and "The Cossacks." During the Turkish campaign he was ordered to the staff of Prince M. D. Gortchakóff, on the Danube, and in 1855 received the command of a mountain battery, and took part in the fight at Tchérnaya, and the siege of Sevastópol. The literary fruits of this experience were "Sevastópol," in December, May, and August, three sketches.

It is convenient to finish his statistical history at this point with the statement that in 1862 he married, having firmly resolved, two years previously, that he never would do so, and clinched the bargain with himself by selling the big manor-house at Yásnaya Polyána for transportation and re-erection elsewhere. Between that date and 1888 he had a family of fifteen children, of whom seven are still alive.

In his very first efforts in literature we detect certain characteristics which continue to distinguish him throughout his career, and some of which, on attaining their legitimate and logical development seem, to the ordinary reader, to be of extremely recent origin. In "Childhood" and "Boyhood" ("Youth," the third section, was written late in the '50's) we meet the same keen analysis which is a leading feature in his later works, and in them is applied with such effect to women and to the tender passion, neither of which elements enters into his early works in any appreciable degree. He displays the most astounding genius in detecting and understanding the most secret and trivial movements of the human soul. In this respect his methods are those of a miniature painter. Another point must be borne in mind in studying Tolstóy's characters, that, unlike Turgéneff, who is almost exclusively objective, Tolstóy is in the highest degree subjective, and has presented a study of his own life and soul in almost every one of his works, in varying degrees, and combined with widely varying elements. In the same way he has made use of the spiritual and mental state of his relatives. For example, who can fail to recognize a self-portrait from the life in Levín ("Anna Karénin"), and in Prince Andréi Bolkónsky ("War and Peace")? And the feminine characters in these great novels are either simple or composite portraits of his nearest relations, while many of the incidents in both novels are taken straight from their experience or his own, or the two combined.

It is useless to catalogue his many works with their dates in this place. Unquestionably the finest of them (despite the author's present erroneous view, that they constitute a sin and a reproach to him) are his magnificent "War and Peace" and "Anna Karénin." Curiously enough, neither met with prompt or enthusiastic welcome in Russia when they first made their appearance. The public had grown used to the very different methods of the other celebrated romance-writers of the '40's, with whom we have already dealt. Gontcharóff had accustomed them to the delineation of character by broad, sweeping strokes; Dostoévsky to lancet-like thrusts, penetrating the very soul; Turgéneff to tender touches, which produced soft, melting outlines. It was long



before they could reconcile themselves to Tolstóy's original mode of painting a vast series of miniature portraits on an immense canvas. But the effect of this procedure was at last recognized to be the very acme of throbbing, breathing life itself. Moreover, it became apparent that Tolstóy's theory of life was, that great generals, statesmen, and as a whole, all active persons who seem or try to control events, do nothing of the kind. Somewhere above, in the unknown, there is a power which guides affairs at its own will, and (here is the special point) deliberately thwarts all the efforts of the active people. According to his philosophy, the self-contained, thoroughly egotistical natures, who are wedded solely to the cult of success, generally pass through this earthly life without any notable disasters; they attend strictly to their own selfish ends, and do not attempt to sway the destinies of others from motives of humanity, patriotism, or anything else in the lofty, self-sacrificing line. On the contrary, the fate of the people who are endowed with tender instincts, who have not allowed self-love to smother their humanity, who are guilty only of striving to attain some lofty, unselfish object in life, are thwarted and repressed, balked and confounded at every turn. This is particularly interesting in view of his latter-day exhortations to men, on the duty of toiling for others, sacrificing everything for others. Nevertheless, it must stand as a monument to the fidelity of his powers of analysis of life in general, and of the individual characters in whose lot he demonstrates his theory.

This contrast between the two conflicting principles, a haughty individualism and peaceable submission to a higher power, of which the concrete representative is the mass of the population, is set forth with especial clearness in "War and Peace," where the two principal heroes, Prince Andréi Bolkónsky and Pierre Bezúkoff, represent individualism.

In "Anna Karénin," in the person of his favorite hero, Konstantín Levín, Tolstóy first enunciates the doctrine of moral regeneration acquired by means of physical labor, and his later philosophical doctrines are the direct development of the views there set forth. He had represented a hero of much earlier days, Prince Nekhliúdoff, in "The Morning of a Landed Proprietor," as convinced that he should make himself of use to his peasants; and he had set forth the result of those efforts in terms which tally wonderfully well with his direct personal comments in "My Confession," of a date long posterior to "Anna Karénin." "Have my peasants become any the richer?" he writes; "have they been educated or developed morally? Not in the slightest degree. They are no better off, and my heart grows more heavy with every passing day. If I could but perceive any success in my undertaking; if I could descry any gratitude — but no; I see false routine, vice, distrust, helplessness! I am wasting the best years of my life in vain."

But Nekhliúdoff — Tolstóy was not alone in devoting himself to his peasants; before he withdrew to the country he had led a gay life in St. Petersburg, after resigning from the army, and in writing his fine peasant story, "Polikúshka," setting up peasant-schools on his estate, and the like, he was merely paying his tribute to the spirit of the time (which reached him even in his seclusion), and imitating the innumerable village schools and Sunday schools in the capitals (for secular instruction of the laboring classes who

were too busy for education during the week) in which the aristocratic and educated classes in general took a lively interest. But the leisure afforded by country life enabled him to compose his masterpieces. "War and Peace," which was begun in 1864, was published serially in "The Russian Messenger," beginning in 1865, and in book form in 1869, and "Anna Karénin," which was published serially in the same journal, in 1875-1876. His style is not to be compared to that of Turgénéff, with its exquisite harmony, art, and sense of proportion. Tolstóy writes carelessly, frequently repeats himself, not infrequently expresses himself ambiguously or obscurely. But the supreme effect is produced, nevertheless.

At last came the diametrical change of views, apparently, which led to this supreme artist's discarding his art, and devoting himself to religious and philosophical writings for which neither nature nor his training had fitted him. He himself dates this change from the middle of the '70's, and it must be noted that precisely at this period that strong movement called "going to the people," i. e., devoting one's self to the welfare of the peasants, became epidemic in Russian society. Again, as fifteen or twenty years previously, Count Tolstóy was merely swept onward by the popular current. But his first pamphlet on his new propaganda is ten years later than the date he assigns to the change. Thereafter for many years he devoted his chief efforts to this new class of work, "Life," "What Is to Be Done?" "My Confession," and so forth, being the more bulky outcome. Some of the stories, written for the people during this interval, are delightful, both in tone and artistic qualities. Others are surcharged with "morals," which in many cases either directly conflict with the moral of other stories in the same volume, or even with the secondary moral of the same story. Even his last work—"in my former style," as he described it— "Resurrection," has special doctrines and aims too emphatically insisted upon to permit of the reader deriving from it the pure literary pleasure afforded by his masterpieces. In short, with all due respect to the entire sincerity of this magnificent writer, it must be said that those who would enjoy and appreciate him rightly, should ignore his philosophico-religious treatises, which are contradictory and confusing to the last degree. As an illustration, let me cite the case of the famine in Russia of 1891-92. Great sums of money were sent to Count Tolstóy, chiefly from America, and were expended by him in the most practicable and irreproachable manner — so any one would have supposed — for the relief of the starving peasants. Count Tolstóy and his assistants lived the life of the peasants, and underwent severe hardships; the Count even fell ill, and his wife was obliged to go to him and nurse him. It would seem that his conscience had no cause for reproach, and that the situation was an ideal one for him. But before that famine was well over, or the funds expended, he wrote a letter to a London newspaper, in which he declared that helping people by means of money was all wrong — positively a sin. He felt that collecting and distributing money was not the best thing of which he was capable, and called it "making a pipe of one's self," personal service with brains, heart, and muscles being the only right service for God or man. This service he certainly rendered, and without the money he could not have rendered it.

Nothing could more perfectly illustrate this point of view than the following little story, written in 1881, called "The Two Brothers and the Gold."

In ancient times there lived not far from Jerusalem two brothers, the elder Afanásy, the younger Ioánn. They dwelt on a hill not far from the town, and subsisted on what people gave them. Every day the brothers spent in work. They did not toil at their own work, but at the work of the poor. Wherever there were men overwhelmed with work, wherever there were sick people, orphans and widows, thither went the brothers, and there they toiled and nursed the people, accepting no remuneration. In this wise did the brothers pass the whole week apart, and met only on Saturday evening in their abode. Only on Sunday did they remain at home, praying and chatting together. And the angel of the Lord descended to them and blessed them. On Monday they parted and each went his way. Thus the two brothers lived for many years, and every week the angel of the Lord came down and blessed them.

One Monday as the brothers were starting out to work, and had already separated, going in different directions, Afanásy felt sorry to part with his beloved brother, and halted and glanced back. Ioánn was walking, with head bowed, in his own direction, and did not look back. But all of a sudden, Ioánn also halted, and as though catching sight of something, began to gaze intently in that direction, shading his eyes with his hand. Then he approached what he had espied there, suddenly leaped to one side, and without looking behind him fled down the hill and up the hill, away from the spot, as though a fierce wild beast were pursuing him. Afanásy was amazed and went back to the place in order to find out what had so frightened his brother. As he came near he beheld something gleaming in the sunlight. He approached closer. On the grass, as though poured out of a measure, lay a heap of gold... And Afanásy was the more amazed, both at the gold, and at his brother's leap.

"What was he frightened at, and what did he flee from?" said Afanásy to himself. "There is no sin in gold, the sin is in man. One can do evil with gold, but one can also do good with it. How many orphans and widows can be fed, how many naked men clothed, how many poor and sick healed with this gold. We now serve people, but our service is small, according to the smallness of our strength, but with this gold we can serve people more." Afanásy reasoned thus with himself, and wished to tell it all to his brother, but Ioánn had gone off out of earshot, and was now visible on the opposite mountain, no bigger than a beetle.

And Afanásy took of his garment, raked into it as much gold as he was able to carry, flung it on his shoulders and carried it to the city. He came to the inn, gave the gold over to the innkeeper, and went back after the remainder. And when he had brought all the gold he went to the merchants, bought land in the town, bought stone and timber, hired workmen, and began to build three houses. And Afanásy dwelt three months in the town and built three houses in the town, one house, an asylum for widows and orphans, another house, a hospital for the sick and the needy, a third house for pilgrims and paupers. And Afanásy sought out three pious old men, and he placed one over the asylum, another over the hospital, and the third over the hostelry for pilgrims. And

Afanásy had three thousand gold pieces left. And he gave a thousand to each old man to distribute to the poor. And people began to fill all three houses, and men began to laud Afanásy for what he had done. And Afanásy rejoiced thereat so that he did not wish to leave the city. But Afanásy loved his brother, and bidding the people farewell, and keeping not a single gold piece for himself, he went back to his abode in the same old garment in which he had quitted it.

Afanásy came to his mountain and said to himself, "My brother judged wrongly when he sprang away from the gold and fled from it. Have not I done better?"

And no sooner had Afanásy thought this, than suddenly he beheld, standing in his path and gazing sternly at him, that angel who had been wont to bless them. And Afanásy was stupefied with amazement and could utter only, "Why is this, Lord?" And the angel opened his mouth and said, "Get thee hence! Thou art not worthy to dwell with thy brother. Thy brother's one leap is more precious than all the deeds which thou hast done with thy gold."

And Afanásy began to tell of how many paupers and wanderers he had fed, how many orphans he had cared for, and the angel said to him, "That devil who placed the gold there to seduce thee hath also taught thee these words."

And then did Afanásy's conscience convict him, and he understood that he had not done his deeds for the sake of God, and he fell to weeping, and began to repent. Then the angel stepped aside, and left open to him the way, on which Ioánn was already standing awaiting his brother, and from that time forth Afanásy yielded no more to the temptation of the devil who had poured out the gold, and knew that not by gold, but only by labor, can one serve God and men.

And the brothers began to live as before.

Unfortunately, the best of Tolstóy's peasant stories, such as "Polikúshka," "Two Old Men" (the latter belonging to the recent hortatory period), and the like, are too long for reproduction here. But the moral of the following, "Little Girls Wiser than Old Men," is irreproachable, and the style is the same as in the more important of those written expressly for the people.

Easter fell early that year. People had only just ceased to use sledges. The snow still lay in the cottage yards, but rivulets were flowing through the village; a big puddle had formed between the cottages, from the dung-heaps, and two little girls, from different cottages, met by this puddle — one younger, the other older. Both little girls had been dressed in new frocks by their mothers. The little one's frock was blue, the big one's yellow, with a flowered pattern. Both had red kerchiefs bound about their heads. The little girls came out to the puddle, after the morning service in church, displayed their clothes to each other, and began to play. And the fancy seized them to paddle in the water. The younger girl was on the point of wading into the pool with her shoes on, but the elder girl says, "Don't go Malásha, thy mother will scold. Come, I'll take off my shoes, and do thou take off thine." The little lasses took off their shoes, tucked up their frocks and waded into the puddle, to meet each other. Malásha went in up to her knees, and says, "It's deep, Akuliushka — I'm afraid" "Never mind," says she; "it won't get any

deeper. Come straight towards me.” They began to approach each other, and Akúlka says, “Look out, Malásha, don’t splash, but walk quietly.” No sooner had she spoken, than Malásha set her foot down with a bang in the water, and a splash fell straight on Akúlka’s frock. The sarafán was splashed, and some of it fell on her nose and in her eyes as well. Akúlka saw the spot on her frock, got angry at Malásha, stormed, ran after her, and wanted to beat her. Malásha was frightened when she saw the mischief she had done, leaped out of the puddle, and ran home. Akúlka’s mother came along, espied the splashed frock and spattered chemise on her daughter. “Where didst thou soil thyself, thou hussy?” “Malásha splashed me on purpose.” Akúlka’s mother seized Malásha, and struck her on the nape of the neck. Malásha shrieked so that the whole street heard her. Malásha’s mother came out. “What art thou beating my child for?” The neighbor began to rail. One word led to another, the women scolded each other. The peasant men ran forth, a big crowd assembled in the street. Everybody shouted, nobody listened to anybody else. They scolded and scolded. One gave another a punch, and a regular fight was imminent, when an old woman, Akúlka’s grandmother, interposed. She advanced into the midst of the peasants, and began to argue with them. “What are you about, my good men? Is this the season for such things? We ought to be joyful, but you have brought about a great sin.” They paid no heed to the old woman, and almost knocked one another down, and the old woman would not have been able to dissuade them had it not been for Akúlka and Malásha. While the women were wrangling, Akúlka wiped off her frock, and went out again to the puddle in the space between the cottages. She picked up a small stone and began to dig the earth out at the edge of the puddle, so as to let the water out into the street. While she was digging away, Malásha came up also, and began to help her by drawing the water down the ditch with a chip. The peasant men had just come to blows, when the little girls had got the water along the ditch to the street, directly at the spot where the old woman was parting the men.

The little girls came running up, one on one side, the other on the other side of the rivulet. “Hold on, Malásha, hold on!” cried Akúlka. Malásha also tried to say something, but could not speak for laughing.

The little girls ran thus, laughing at the chip, as it floated down the stream. And they ran straight into the midst of the peasant men. The old woman perceived them, and said to the men, “Fear God! Here you have begun to fight over these same little girls, and they have forgotten all about it long ago, and are playing together again in love — the dear little things. They are wiser than you!”

The men looked at the little girls, and felt ashamed of themselves; and then the peasants began to laugh at themselves, and went off to their houses.

“Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

It is a pity that Count Tolstóy, the greatest literary genius of his time, should put his immense talent to such a use as to provoke, on his contradictions of himself, comment like the following, which is quoted from a work by V. S. Soloviéff, an essayist and argumentative writer, who quotes some one on this subject, to this effect:

“Sometimes we hear that the most important truth is in the Sermon on the Mount; then again, we are told that we must till the soil in the sweat of our brows, though there is nothing about that in the Gospels, but in Genesis — in the same place where giving birth in pain is mentioned, but that is no commandment at all, only a sad fate; sometimes we are told that we ought to give everything away to the poor; and then again, that we never ought to give anything to anybody, as money is an evil, and one ought not to harm other people, but only one’s self and one’s family, but that we ought to work for others; sometimes we are told that the vocation of women is to bear as many healthy children as possible, and then, the celibate ideal is held up for men and women; then again, eating no meat is the first step towards self-perfection, though why no one knows; then something is said against liquor and tobacco, then against pancakes, then against military service as if it were the worst thing on earth, and as if the primary duty of a Christian were to refuse to be a soldier, which would prove that he who is not taken into service, for any reason, is already holy enough.”

This may be a trifle exaggerated, but it indicates clearly enough the utter confusion which the teachings of Count Tolstóy produce on ordinary, rational, well-meaning persons. In short, he should be judged in his proper sphere as one of the most gifted authors of any age or country, and judged by his legitimate works in his legitimate province, the novel, as exemplified by “War and Peace” and “Anna Karénin.”

The reform movement of the ‘60’s of the nineteenth century ended in a reaction which took possession of society as a whole during the ‘70’s. Apathy, dejection, disenchantment superseded the previous exultation and enthusiastic impulse to push forward in all directions. Dull discontent and irritation reigned in all classes of society and in all parties. Some were discontented with the reforms, regarding them as premature, and even ruinous; others, on the contrary, deemed them insufficient, curtailed, only half-satisfactory to the needs of the country, and merely exasperating to the public demands.

These conditions created a special sort of literary school, which made its appearance in the middle of the ‘70’s, and attained its complete development in the middle of the ‘80’s. We have seen that the same sort of thing had taken place with every previous change in the public sentiment. The first thing which impresses one in this school is the resurrection of artistic feeling, a passion for beauty of imagery and forms, a careful and extremely elegant polish imparted to literary productions in technique. None of the authoritative and influential critics preached the cult of pure art. Yet Gárshin, the most promising of the young authors of the day, who was the very last person to be suspected of that cult, finished his works with the utmost care, so that in elegance of form and language they offer an example of faultless perfection. There can be no doubt that this renaissance of the artistic element of poetry, of beauty, was closely connected with the subsidence of the flood-tide of public excitement and agitation, which up to that time had carried writers along with it into its whirlpools, and granted them neither the time nor the desire to polish and adorn their works, and revel in beauty of forms.

Vsévolod Mikháilovitch Gárshin, the son of a petty landed proprietor in the south of Russia, was born in 1855. Despite his repeated attacks of profound melancholia, which sometimes passed into actual insanity, and despite the brevity of his career (he flung himself down stairs in a fit of this sort and died, in 1889), he made a distinct and brilliant mark in Russian literature.

Gárshin's view of people in general was thus expressed: "All the people whom I have known," he says, "are divided (along with other divisions of which, of course, there are many: the clever men and the fools, the Hamlets and the Don Quixotes, the lazy and the active, and so forth) into two categories, or to speak more accurately, they are distributed between two extremes: some are endowed, so to speak, with a good self-consciousness, while the others have a bad self-consciousness. One man lives and enjoys all his sensations; if he eats he rejoices, if he looks at the sky he rejoices. In short, for such a man, the mere process of living is happiness. But it is quite the reverse with the other sort of man; you may plate him with gold, and he will continue to grumble; nothing satisfies him; success in life affords him no pleasure, even if it be perfectly self-evident. The man simply is incapable of experiencing satisfaction; he is incapable, and that is the end of the matter." And in view of his personal disabilities, it is not remarkable that all his heroes should have belonged to the latter category, in a greater or less degree, some of the incidents narrated being drawn directly from his own experiences. Such are "The Red Flower," his best story, which presents the hallucinations of a madman, "The Coward," "Night," "Attalea Princeps," and "That Which Never Happened." On the other hand, the following have no personal element: "The Meeting," "The Orderly and the Officer," "The Diary of Soldier Ivánoff," "The Bears," "Nadézhda Nikoláevna," and "Proud Aggei."

Another writer who has won some fame, especially by his charming sketches of Siberian life, written during his exile in Siberia, is Grigóry Alexándrovitch Matchtet, born in 1852. These sketches, such as "The Second Truth," "We Have Conquered," "A Worldly Affair," are both true to nature and artistic, and produce a deep impression.

Much more talented and famous is Vladímir Galaktiónovitch Korolénko (1853), also the author of fascinating Siberian sketches, and of a more ambitious work, "The Blind Musician." One point to be noted about Korolénko is that he never joined the pessimists, or the party which professed pseudo-peasant tendencies, and followed Count L. N. Tolstóy's ideas, but has always preserved his independence. His first work, a delightful fantasy, entitled "Makár's Dream," appeared in 1885. Korolénko has been sent to Siberia several times, but now lives in Russia proper, and publishes a high-class monthly journal.

Until quite recently opinion was divided as to whether Korolénko or Tchékoff was the more talented, and the coming "great author." As we shall see presently, that question seems to have been settled, and in part by Korolénko's friendly aid, in favor of quite another person.

Antón Pávlovitch Tchékoff (pseudonym "Tchekhonte," 1860) is the descendant of a serf father and grandfather. His volumes of short stories, "Humorous Tales," "In the

Gloaming," "Surly People," are full of humor and of brilliant wit. His more ambitious efforts, as to length and artistic qualities, the productions of his matured talent, are "The Steppe," "Fires," "A Tiresome History," "Notes of an Unknown," "The Peasant," and so forth.

Still another extremely talented writer, who, unfortunately, has begun to produce too rapidly for his own interest, is Ignáty Nikoláevitch Potápenko (1856), the son of an officer in a Uhlan regiment, and of a Little Russian peasant mother. His father afterwards became a priest — a very unusual change of vocation and class — and the future writer acquired intimate knowledge of views and customs in ecclesiastical circles, which he put to brilliant use later on. A delicate humor is the characteristic feature of his work, as can be seen in his best writings, such as "On Active Service" and "The Secretary of His Grace (the Bishop)."

The former is the story of a talented and devoted young priest, who might have obtained an easy position in the town, among the bishop's officials, with certain prospect of swift promotion. He resolutely declines this position, and requests that he may be assigned to a village parish, where he can be "on active service." Every one regards the request as a sign of an unsettled mind. After much argument he prevails on his betrothed bride's parents to permit the marriage (he cannot be ordained until he is married), and hopes to find a helpmeet in her. The rest of the story deals with his experiences in the unenviable position of a village priest, where he has to contend not only with the displeasure of his young wife, but with the avarice of his church staff, the defects of the peasants, the excess of attention of the local gentlewoman, and financial problems of the most trying description. It ends in his wife abandoning him, and returning with her child to her father's house, while he insists on remaining at his post, where, as events have abundantly proved, the ministrations of a truly disinterested, devout priest are most sadly needed. It is impossible to convey by description the charm and gentle humor of this book.

But acclaimed on all sides, by all classes of society, as the most talented writer of the present day, is the young man who writes under the name of Maxím Górký (Bitter). The majority of the critics confidently predict that he is the long-expected successor of Count L. N. Tolstóy. This gifted man, who at one stroke, conquered for himself all Russia which reads, whose books sell with unprecedented rapidity, whose name passes from mouth to mouth of millions, wherever intellectual life glows, and has won an unnumbered host of enthusiastic admirers all over the world, came up from the depths of the populace.

"Górký" Alexéi Maxímovitch Pyeshkóff was born in Nízхни Nóvgorod in 1868 or 1869. Socially, he belongs to the petty burgher class, but his grandfather, on the paternal side, was reduced from an officer to the ranks, by the Emperor Nicholas I., for harsh treatment of the soldiers under his command. He was such a rough character that his son (the author's father) ran away from home five times in the course of seven years, and definitively parted from his uncongenial family at the age of seventeen, when he went afoot from Tobólsk to Nízхни Nóvgorod, where he apprenticed himself to a paper-



hanger. Later on he became the office-manager of a steamer company in Ástrakhan. His mother was the daughter of a man who began his career as a bargee on the Volga, one of the lowest class of men who, before the advent of steam, hauled the merchandise-laden barks from Ástrakhan to Nízni Nóvgorod, against the current. Afterwards he became a dyer of yarns, and eventually established a thriving dyeing establishment in Nízni.

Górky's father died of cholera at Ástrakhan when the lad was four years old. His mother soon married again, and gave the boy to his grandfather, who had him taught to read and write, and then sent him to school, where he remained only five months. At the end of that time he caught smallpox, and his studies were never renewed. Meanwhile his mother died, and his grandfather was ruined financially, so Górky, at nine years of age, became the "boy" in a shoeshop, where he spent two months, scalded his hands with cabbage soup, and was sent back to his grandfather. His relations treated him with hostility or indifference, and on his recovery, apprenticed him to a draftsman, from whose harshness he promptly fled, and entered the shop of a painter of holy pictures. Next he became scullion on a river steamer, and the cook was the first to inculcate in him a love of reading and of good literature. Next he became gardener's boy; then tried to get an education at Kazán University, under the mistaken impression that education was free. To keep from starving he became assistant in a bakery at three rubles a month; "the hardest work I ever tried," he says; sawed wood, carried heavy burdens, peddled apples on the wharf, and tried to commit suicide out of sheer want and misery. "Konováloff" and "Men with Pastors" would seem to represent some of the experiences of this period, "Konováloff" being regarded as one of his best stories. Then he went to Tzarítzyn, where he obtained employment as watchman on a railway, was called back to Nízni Nóvgorod for the conscription, but was not accepted as a soldier, such "holy" men not being wanted. He became a peddler of beer, then secretary to a lawyer, who exercised great influence on his education. But he felt out of place, and in 1890 went back to Tzarítzyn, then to the Don Province (of the Kazáks), to the Ukraína and Bessarábia, back along the southern shore of the Crimea to the Kubán, and thence to the Caucasus. The reader of his inimitable short stories can trace these peregrinations and the adventures incident to them. In Tiflís he worked in the railway shops, and in 1892 printed his first literary effort, "Makár Tchúdra," in a local newspaper, the "Kavkáz." In the following year, in Nízni Nóvgorod, he made acquaintance with Korolénko, to whom he is indebted for getting into "great literature," and for sympathy and advice. When he published "Tchelkásch," in 1893, his fate was settled. It is regarded as one of the purest gems of Russian literature. He immediately rose to honor, and all his writings since that time have appeared in the leading publications. Moreover, he is the most "fashionable" writer in the country. But he enjoys something more than mere popularity; he is deeply loved. This is the result of the young artist's remarkable talent for painting absolutely living pictures of both persons and things. The many-sidedness of his genius — for he has more than talent — is shown, among other things, by the fact that he depicts with equal success landscapes,

genre scenes, portraits of women. His episode of the singers in "Fomá Gordyéeff" (pp. 217-227) is regarded by Russian critics as fully worthy of being compared with the scenes for which Turgénéff is renowned. His landscape pictures are so beautiful that they cause a throb of pain. But, as is almost inevitable under the circumstances, most of his stories have an element of coarseness, which sometimes repels.

In general, his subject is "the uneasy man," who is striving after absolute freedom, after light and a lofty ideal, of which he can perceive the existence somewhere, though with all his efforts he cannot grasp it. We may assume that in this they represent Górký himself. But although all his heroes are seeking the meaning of life, no two of them are alike. His characters, like his landscapes, grip the heart, and once known, leave an ineffaceable imprint. Although he propounds problems of life among various classes, he differs from the majority of people, in not regarding a full stomach as the panacea for the poor man. On the contrary (as in "Fomá Gordyéeff," his most ambitious effort), he seems to regard precisely this as the cause of more ruin than the life of "the barefoot brigade," the tramps and stepchildren of Dame Fortune, with whom he principally deals. His motto seems to be "Man shall not live by bread alone." And because Górký bears this thought ever with him, in brain and heart, in nerves and his very marrow, his work possesses a strength which is almost terrifying, combined with a beauty as terrifying in its way. If he will but develop his immense genius instead of meddling with social and political questions, and getting into prison on that score with disheartening regularity, something incalculably great may be the outcome. It is said that he is now banished in polite exile to the Crimea. If he can be kept there or elsewhere out of mischief, the Russian government will again render the literature of its own country and of the world as great a service as it has already more than once rendered in the past, by similar means.

In the '70's and '80's Russian society was seized with a mania for writing poetry, and a countless throng of young poets made their appearance. No book sold so rapidly as a volume of verses. But very few of these aspirants to fame possessed any originality or serious worth. Poetry had advanced not a single step since the days of Nekrásóff and Shevtchéńko, so far as national independence was concerned.

The most talented of the young poets of this period was Semén Yákovlevitch Nádson (1862-1887). His grandfather, a Jew who had joined the Russian Church, lived in Kíeff. His father, a gifted man and a fine musician, died young. His mother, a Russian gentlewoman, died at the age of thirty-one, of consumption. At the age of sixteen, Nádson fell in love with a young girl, and began to write poetry. She died of quick consumption shortly afterwards. This grief affected the young man's whole career, and many of his poems were inspired by it. He began to publish his poems while still in school, being already threatened with pulmonary trouble, on account of which he had been sent to the Caucasus at the expense of the government, where he spent a year. In 1882 he graduated from the military school, and was appointed an officer in a regiment stationed at Kronstádt. There he lived for two years, and some of his best poems belong to this epoch: "No, Easier 'Tis for Me to Think that Thou Art Dead,"

“Herostrat,” “Dreams,” “The Brilliant Hall Has Silent Grown,” “All Hath Come to Pass,” and so forth. He retired from the military service in 1883, being already in the grasp of consumption. His poems ran through ten editions during the five years which followed his death, and still continue to sell with equal rapidity, so remarkable is their popularity. He was an ideally poetical figure; moreover, he charms by his flowing, musical verse, by the enthralling elegance and grace of his poetical imagery, and genuine lyric inspiration. All his poetry is filled with quiet, meditative sadness. It is by the music of his verse and the tender tears of his feminine lyrism that Nádson penetrates the hearts of his readers. His masterpiece is “My Friend, My Brother,” and this reflects the sentiment of all his work. Here is the first verse:

My friend, my brother, weary, suffering brother, Whoever thou may'st be, let not thy spirit fail; Let evil and injustice reign with sway supreme O'er all the tear-washed earth. Let the sacred ideal be shattered and dishonored; Let innocent blood flow in stream — Believe me, there cometh a time when Baal shall perish And love shall return to earth.

Another very sincere, sympathetic, and genuine, though not great poet, also of Jewish race, is Semén Grigórievitch Frug (1860-1916), the son of a member of the Jewish agricultural colony in the government of Khersón. He, like Nádson, believes that good will triumph in the end, and is not in the least a pessimist.

Quite the reverse are Nikolái Maxímovitch Vilénkin (who is better known by his pseudonym of “Mínsky” from his native government), and Dmítry Sergyéevitch Merezhkóvsky (1865) who, as a poet, is generally bombastic. His novels are better.

There are many other good, though not great, contemporary writers in Russia, including several women. But they hardly come within the scope of this work (which does not aim at being encyclopedic), as neither their work nor their fame is likely to make its way to foreign readers who are unacquainted with the Russian language. For those who do read Russian there are several good handbooks of contemporary literature which will furnish all necessary information.

# Extract From ‘An Outline of Russian Literature’

by **Maurice Baring**

Maurice Baring (1874–1945) was an English man of letters, dramatist, poet, novelist, translator, essayist and war correspondent. The sixth chapter of his monumental work of literary criticism explores the joint influences of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy on world literature.

Maurice Baring

\*\*\**Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky*\*\*\*

With Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, we come not only to the two great pillars of modern Russian literature which tower above all others like two colossal statues in the desert, but to two of the greatest figures in the literature of the world. Russia has not given the world a universal poet, a Shakespeare, a Dante, a Goethe, or a Molière; for Pushkin, consummate artist and inspired poet as he was, lacks that peculiar greatness which conquers all demarcations of frontier and difference of language, and produces work which becomes a part of the universal inheritance of all nations; but Russia has given us two prose-writers whose work has done this very thing. And between them they sum up in themselves the whole of the Russian soul, and almost the whole of the Russian character; I say almost the whole of the Russian character, because although between them they sum up all that is greatest, deepest, and all that is weakest in the Russian soul, there is perhaps one element of the Russian character, which, although they understood it well enough, their genius forbade them to possess. If you take as ingredients Peter the Great, Dostoyevsky’s Mwyshkin — the idiot, the pure fool who is wiser than the wise — and the hero of Gogol’s Revisor, Hlestyakov the liar and wind-bag, you can, I think, out of these elements, reconstitute any Russian who has ever lived. That is to say, you will find that every single Russian is compounded either of one or more of these elements.

For instance, mix Peter the Great with a sufficient dose of Hlestyakov, and you get Boris Godunov and Bakunin; leave the Peter the Great element unmixed, and you get Bazarov, and many of Gorky’s heroes; mix it slightly with Hlestyakov, and you get Lermontov; let the Hlestyakov element predominate, and you get Griboyedov’s Molchalin; let the Mwyshkin element predominate, with a dose of Hlestyakov, and you get Father Gapon; let it predominate without the dose of Hlestyakov, and you get Oblomov; mix it with a dose of Peter the Great, you get Herzen, Chatsky; and so on. Mix all the elements equally, and you get Onegin, the average man. I do not mean that

there are necessarily all these elements in every Russian, but that you will meet with no Russian in whom there is not to be found either one or more than one of them.

Now, in Tolstoy, the Peter the Great element dominates, with a dose of Mwyshkin, and a vast but unsuccessful aspiration towards the complete characteristics of Mwyshkin; while in Dostoyevsky the Mwyshkin predominates, blent with a fiery streak of Peter the Great; but in neither of them is there a touch of Hlestyakov. In Russia, it constantly happens that a man in any class, be he a soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, rich man, poor man, plough-boy, or thief, will suddenly leave his profession and avocation and set out on the search for God and for truth. These men are called *Bogoiskateli*, Seekers after God. The one fact that the whole world knows about Tolstoy is that, in the midst of his great and glorious artistic career, he suddenly abjured literature and art, denounced worldly possessions, and said that truth was to be found in working like a peasant, and thus created a sect of Tolstoyists. The world then blamed him for inconsistency because he went on writing, and lived as before, with his family and in his own home. But in reality there was no inconsistency, because there was in reality no break. Tolstoy had been a *Bogoiskatel*, a seeker after truth and God all his life; it was only the manner of his search which had changed; but the quest itself remained unchanged; he was unable, owing to family ties, to push his premises to their logical conclusion until just before his death; but push them to their logical conclusion he did at the last, and he died, as we know, on the road to a monastery.

Tolstoy's manner of search was extraordinary, extraordinary because he was provided for it with the eyes of an eagle which enabled him to see through everything; and, as he took nothing for granted from the day he began his career until the day he died, he was always subjecting people, objects, ideas, to the searchlight of his vision, and testing them to see whether they were true or not; moreover, he was gifted with the power of describing what he saw during this long journey through the world of fact and the world of ideas, whether it were the general or the particular, the mass or the detail, the vision, the panorama, the crowd, the portrait or the miniature, with the strong simplicity of a Homer, and the colour and reality of a Velasquez. This made him one of the world's greatest writers, and the world's greatest artist in narrative fiction. Another peculiarity of his search was that he pursued it with eagle eyes, but with blinkers.

In 1877 Dostoyevsky wrote: "In spite of his colossal artistic talent, Tolstoy is one of those Russian minds which only see that which is right before their eyes, and thus press towards that point. They have not the power of turning their necks to the right or to the left to see what lies on one side; to do this, they would have to turn with their whole bodies. If they do turn, they will quite probably maintain the exact opposite of what they have been hitherto professing; for they are rigidly honest." It is this search carried on by eyes of unsurpassed penetration between blinkers, by a man who every now and then did turn his whole body, which accounts for the many apparent changes and contradictions of Tolstoy's career.

Another source of contradiction was that by temperament the Lucifer element predominated in him, and the ideal he was for ever seeking was the humility of Mwyshkin, the pure fool, an ideal which he could not reach, because he could not sufficiently humble himself. Thus when death overtook him he was engaged on his last and his greatest voyage of discovery; and there is something solemn and great about his having met with death at a small railway station.

Tolstoy's works are a long record of this search, and of the memories and experiences which he gathered on the way. There is not a detail, not a phase of feeling, not a shade or mood in his spiritual life that he has not told us of in his works. In his *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth*, he re-creates his own childhood, boyhood and youth, not always exactly as it happened in reality; there is *Dichtung* as well as *Wahrheit*; but the *Dichtung* is as true as the *Wahrheit*, because his aim was to recreate the impressions he had received from his early surroundings. Moreover, the searchlight of his eyes even then fell mercilessly upon everything that was unreal, sham and conventional.

As soon as he had finished with his youth, he turned to the life of a grown-up man in *The Morning of a Landowner*, and told how he tried to live a landowner's life, and how nothing but dissatisfaction came of it. He escapes to the Caucasus, and seeks regeneration, and the result of the search here is a masterpiece, *The Cossacks*. He goes back to the world, and takes part in the Crimean war; he describes what he saw in a battery; his eagle eye lays bare the splendeurs et misères of war more truthfully perhaps than a writer on war has ever done, but less sympathetically than Alfred de Vigny — the difference being that Alfred de Vigny is innately modest, and that Tolstoy, as he wrote himself, at the beginning of the war, "had no modesty."

After the Crimean war, he plunges again into the world and travels abroad; and on his return to Russia, he settles down at Yasnaya Polyana and marries. The hero of his novel *Domestic Happiness* appears to have found his heart's desire in marriage and country life. It was then that he wrote *War and Peace*, which he began to publish in 1865. He always had the idea of writing a story on the Decembrist movement, and *War and Peace* was perhaps the preface to that unwritten work, for it ends when that movement was beginning. In *War and Peace*, he gave the world a modern prose epic, which did not suffer from the drawback that spoils most historical novels, namely, that of being obviously false, because it was founded on his own recollection of his parents' memories. He gives us what we feel to be the very truth; for the first time in an historical novel, instead of saying "this is very likely true," or "what a wonderful work of artistic reconstruction," we feel that we were ourselves there; that we knew those people; that they are a part of our very own past. He paints a whole generation of people; and in *Pierre Bezukhov*, the new landmarks of his own search are described. Among many other episodes, there is nowhere in literature such a true and charming picture of family life as that of the Rostovs, and nowhere a more vital and charming personality than Natasha; a creation as living as Pushkin's Tatiana, and alive with a reality even more convincing than Turgenev's pictures of women, since she is alive with a different kind of life; the difference being that while you have read in Turgenev's books about

noble and exquisite women, you are not sure whether you have not known Natasha yourself and in your own life; you are not sure she does not belong to the borderland of your own past in which dreams and reality are mingled. War and Peace eclipses all other historical novels; it has all Stendhal's reality, and all Zola's power of dealing with crowds and masses. Take, for instance, a masterpiece such as Flaubert's Salammbô; it may and very likely does take away your breath by the splendour of its language, its colour, and its art, but you never feel that, even in a dream, you had taken part in the life which is painted there. The only bit of unreality in War and Peace is the figure of Napoleon, to whom Tolstoy was deliberately unfair. Another impression which Tolstoy gives us in War and Peace is that man is in reality always the same, and that changes of manners are not more important than changes in fashions of clothes. That is why it is not extravagant to mention Salammbô in this connection. One feels that, if Tolstoy had written a novel about ancient Rome, we should have known a score of patricians, senators, scribblers, clients, parasites, matrons, courtesans, better even than we know Cicero from his letters; we should not only feel that we know Cicero, but that we had actually known him. This very task — namely, that of reconstituting a page out of Pagan history — was later to be attempted by Merezhkovsky; but brilliant as his work is, he only at times and by flashes attains to Tolstoy's power of convincing.

Anna Karenina appeared in 1875-76. And here Tolstoy, with the touch of a Velasquez and upon a huge canvas, paints the contemporary life of the upper classes in St. Petersburg and in the country. Levin, the hero, is himself. Here, again, the truth to nature and the reality is so intense and vivid that a reader unacquainted with Russia will in reading the book probably not think of Russia at all, but will imagine the story has taken place in his own country, whatever that may be. He shows you everything from the inside, as well as from the outside. You feel, in the picture of the races, what Anna is feeling in looking on, and what Vronsky is feeling in riding. And with what reality, what incomparable skill the gradual dawn of Anna's love for Vronsky is described; how painfully real is her pompous and excellent husband; and how every incident in her love affair, her visit to her child, her appearance at the opera, when, after having left her husband, she defies the world, her gradual growing irritability, down to the final catastrophe, bears on it the stamp of something which must have happened just in that very way and no other.

But, as far as Tolstoy's own development is concerned, Levin is the most interesting figure in the book. This character is another landmark in Tolstoy's search after truth; he is constantly putting accepted ideas to the test; he is haunted by the fear of sudden death, not the physical fear of death in itself, but the fear that in the face of death the whole of life may be meaningless; a peasant opens a new door for him and furnishes him with a solution to the problem — to live for one's soul: life no longer seems meaningless.

Thus Levin marks the stage in Tolstoy's evolution of his abandoning materialism and of seeking for the truth in the Church. But the Church does not satisfy him. He rejects its dogmas and its ritual; he turns to the Gospel, but far from accepting it, he

revises it. He comes to the conclusion that Christianity as it has been taught is mere madness, and that the Church is a superfluous anachronism. Thus another change comes about, which is generally regarded as the change cutting Tolstoy's life in half; in reality it is only a fresh right-about-turn of a man who is searching for truth in blinkers. In his Confession, he says: "I grew to hate myself; and now all has become clear." He came to believe that property was the source of all evil; he desired literally to give up all he had. This he was not able to do. It was not that he shrank from the sacrifice at the last; but that circumstances and family ties were too strong for him. But his final flight from home in the last days of his life shows that the desire had never left him.

Art was also subjected to his new standards and found wanting, both in his own work and in that of others. Shakespeare and Beethoven were summarily disposed of; his own masterpieces he pronounced to be worthless. This more than anything shows the pride of the man. He could admire no one, not even himself. He scorned the gifts which were given him, and the greatest gifts of the greatest men. But this landmark of Tolstoy's evolution, his turning his back on the Church, and on his work, is a landmark in Russian history as well as in Russian art. For far less than this Russian thinkers and writers of high position had been imprisoned and exiled. Nobody dared to touch Tolstoy. He fearlessly attacked all constituted authority, both spiritual and temporal, in an epoch of reaction, and such was his prestige that official Russia raised no finger. His authority was too great, and this is perhaps the first great victory of the liberty of individual thought over official tyranny in Russia. There had been martyrs in plenty before, but no conquerors.

After *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy, who gave up literature for a time, but for a time only, nevertheless continued to write; at first he only wrote stories for children and theological and polemical pamphlets; but in 1886 he published the terribly powerful peasant drama: *The Powers of Darkness*. Later came the *Kreutzer Sonata*, the *Death of Ivan Ilitch*, and *Resurrection*. Here the hero Nehludov is a lifeless phantom of Tolstoy himself; the episodes and details have the reality of his early work, so has Maslova, the heroine; but in the squalor and misery of the prisons he shows no precious balms of humanity and love, as Dostoyevsky did; and the book has neither the sweep and epic swing of *War and Peace*, nor the satisfying completeness of *Anna Karenina*. Since his death, some posthumous works have been published, among them a novel, and a play: *The Living Corpse*. He died, as he had lived, still searching, and perhaps at the end he found the object of his quest.

Tolstoy, even more than Pushkin, was rooted to the soil; all that is not of the soil — anything mystic or supernatural — was totally alien to him. He was the oak which could not bend; and being, as he was, the king of realistic fiction, an unsurpassed painter of pictures, portraits, men and things, a penetrating analyst of the human heart, a genius cast in a colossal mould, his work, both by its substance and its artistic power, exercised an influence beyond his own country, affected all European nations, and gives him a place among the great creators of the world. Tolstoy was not a rebel



but a heretic, a heretic not only to religion and the Church, but in philosophy, opinions, art, and even in food; but what the world will remember of him are not his heretical theories but his faithful practice, which is orthodox in its obedience to the highest canons, orthodox as Homer and Shakespeare are orthodox, and like theirs, one of the greatest earthly examples of the normal and the sane.

To say that Dostoyevsky is the antithesis to Tolstoy, and the second great pillar of Russian prose literature, will surprise nobody now. Had one been writing ten years ago, the expression of such an opinion would have met with an incredulous smile amongst the majority of English readers of Russian literature, for Dostoyevsky was practically unknown save for his *Crime and Punishment*, and to have compared him with Turgenev would have seemed sacrilegious. Now when Dostoyevsky is one of the shibboleths of our intelligentsia, one can boldly say, without fear of being misunderstood, that, as a creator and a force in literature, Dostoyevsky is in another plane than that of Turgenev, and as far greater than him as Leonardo da Vinci is greater than Vandyke, or as Wagner is greater than Gounod, while some Russians consider him even infinitely greater than Tolstoy. Let us say he is his equal and complement. He is in any case, in almost every respect, his antithesis. Tolstoy was the incarnation of health, and is above all things and pre-eminently the painter of the sane and the earthly. Dostoyevsky was an epileptic, the painter of the abnormal, of criminals, madmen, degenerates, mystics. Tolstoy led an even, uneventful life, spending the greater part of it in his own country house, in the midst of a large family. Dostoyevsky was condemned to death, served a sentence of four years' hard labour in a convict settlement in Siberia, and besides this spent six years in exile; when he returned and started a newspaper, it was prohibited by the Censorship; a second newspaper which he started came to grief; he underwent financial ruin; his first wife, his brother, and his best friend died; he was driven abroad by debt, harassed by the authorities on the one hand, and attacked by the liberals on the other; abused and misunderstood, almost starving and never well, working under overwhelming difficulties, always pressed for time, and ill requited for his toil. That was Dostoyevsky's life.

Tolstoy was a heretic; at first a materialist, and then a seeker after a religion of his own; Dostoyevsky was a practising believer, a vehement apostle of orthodoxy, and died fortified by the Sacraments of the Church. Tolstoy with his broad unreligious opinions was narrow-minded. Dostoyevsky with his definite religious opinions was the most broad-minded man who ever lived. Tolstoy hated the supernatural, and was alien to all mysticism. Dostoyevsky seems to get nearer to the unknown, to what lies beyond the flesh, than any other writer. In Tolstoy, the Peter the Great element of the Russian character predominated; in Dostoyevsky that of Mwyshkin, the pure fool. Tolstoy could never submit and humble himself. Submission and humility and resignation are the keynotes and mainsprings of Dostoyevsky. Tolstoy despised art, and paid no homage to any of the great names of literature; and this was not only after the so-called change. As early as 1862, he said that Pushkin and Beethoven could not please because of their absolute beauty. Dostoyevsky was catholic and cosmopolitan, and admired the

literature of foreign countries — Racine as well as Shakespeare, Corneille as well as Schiller. The essence of Tolstoy is a magnificent intolerance. The essence of Dostoyevsky is sweet reasonableness. Tolstoy dreamed of giving up all he had to the poor, and of living like a peasant; Dostoyevsky had to share the hard labour of the lowest class of criminals. Tolstoy theorized on the distribution of food; but Dostoyevsky was fed like a beggar. Tolstoy wrote in affluence and at leisure, and re-wrote his books; Dostoyevsky worked like a literary hack for his daily bread, ever pressed for time and ever in crying need of money.

These contrasts are not made in disparagement of Tolstoy, but merely to point out the difference between the two men and between their circumstances. Tolstoy wrote about himself from the beginning of his career to the end; nearly all his work is autobiographical, and he almost always depicts himself in all his books. We know nothing of Dostoyevsky from his books. He was an altruist, and he loved others better than himself.

Dostoyevsky's first book, *Poor Folk*, published in 1846, is a descendant of Gogol's story *The Cloak*, and bears the influence, to a slight extent, of Gogol. In this, the story of a minor public servant battling against want, and finding a ray of light in corresponding with a girl also in poor circumstances, but who ultimately marries a rich middle-aged man, we already get all Dostoyevsky's peculiar sweetness; what Stevenson called his "lovely goodness," his almost intolerable pathos, his love of the disinherited and of the failures of life. His next book, *Letters from a Dead House*, has a far more universal interest. It is the record of his prison experiences, which is of priceless value, not only on account of its radiant moral beauty, its perpetual discovery of the soul of goodness in things evil, its human fraternity, its complete absence of egotism and pose, and its thrilling human interest, but also on account of the light it throws on the Russian character, the Russian poor, and the Russian peasant.

In 1866 came *Crime and Punishment*, which brought Dostoyevsky fame. This book, Dostoyevsky's *Macbeth*, is so well known in the French and English translations that it hardly needs any comment. Dostoyevsky never wrote anything more tremendous than the portrayal of the anguish that seethes in the soul of Raskolnikov, after he has killed the old woman, "mechanically forced," as Professor Brückner says, "into performing the act, as if he had gone too near machinery in motion, had been caught by a bit of his clothing and cut to pieces." And not only is one held spellbound by every shifting hope, fear, and doubt, and each new pang that Raskolnikov experiences, but the souls of all the subsidiary characters in the book are revealed to us just as clearly: the Marmeladov family, the honest Razumikhin, the police inspector, and the atmosphere of the submerged tenth in St. Petersburg — the steaming smell of the city in the summer. There is an episode when Raskolnikov kneels before Sonia, the prostitute, and says to her: "It is not before you I am kneeling, but before all the suffering of mankind." That is what Dostoyevsky does himself in this and in all his books; but in none of them is the suffering of all mankind conjured up before us in more living colours, and in none of them is his act of homage in kneeling before it more impressive.

This book was written before the words “psychological novel” had been invented; but how all the psychological novels which were written years later by Bourget and others pale before this record written in blood and tears! Crime and Punishment was followed by The Idiot (1868). The idiot is Mwyshkin, who has been alluded to already, the wise fool, an epileptic, in whom irony and arrogance and egoism have been annihilated; and whose very simplicity causes him to pass unscathed through a den of evil, a world of liars, scoundrels, and thieves, none of whom can escape the influence of his radiant personality. He is the same with every one he meets, and with his unsuspecting sincerity he combines the intuition of utter goodness, so that he can see through people and read their minds. In this character, Dostoyevsky has put all his sweetness; it is not a portrait of himself, but it is a portrait of what he would have liked to be, and reflects all that is best in him. In contrast to Mwyshkin, Rogozhin, the merchant, is the incarnation of undisciplined passion, who ends by killing the thing he loves, Nastasia, also a creature of unbridled impulses, — because he feels that he can never really and fully possess her. The catastrophe, the description of the night after Rogozhin has killed Nastasia, is like nothing else in literature; lifelike in detail and immense, in the way in which it makes you listen at the keyhole of the soul, immense with the immensity of a great revelation. The minor characters in the book are also all of them remarkable; one of them, the General’s wife, Madame Epanchin, has an indescribable and playful charm.

The Idiot was followed by The Possessed, or Devils, printed in 1871-72, called thus after the Devils in the Gospel of St. Luke, that left the possessed man and went into the swine; the Devils in the book are the hangers-on of Nihilism between 1862 and 1869. The book anticipated the future, and in it Dostoyevsky created characters who were identically the same, and committed identically the same crimes, as men who actually lived many years later in 1871, and later still. The whole book turns on the exploitation by an unscrupulous, ingenious, and iron-willed knave of the various weaknesses of a crowd of idealist dupes and disciples. One of them is a decadent, one of them is one of those idealists “whom any strong idea strikes all of a sudden and annihilates his will, sometimes for ever”; one of them is a maniac whose single idea is the production of the Superman which he thinks will come, when it will be immaterial to a man whether he lives or dies, and when he will be prepared to kill himself not out of fear but in order to kill fear. That man will be God. Not the God-man, but the Man-God. The plan of the unscrupulous leader, Peter Verkhovensky, who was founded on Nechaev, a Nihilist of real life, is to create disorder, and amid the disorder to seize the authority; he imagines a central committee of which he pretends to be the representative, organizes a small local committee, and persuades his dupes that a network of similar small committees exist all over Russia; his aim being to create them gradually, by persuading people in every plot of fresh ground that they exist everywhere else.

Thus the idea of the book was to show that the strength of Nihilism lay, not in high dogmas and theories held by a large and well-organized society, but in the strength of the will of one or two men reacting on the weaker herd and exploiting the strength, the weakness, and the one-sidedness of its ideals, a herd which was necessarily weak

owing to that very one-sidedness. In order to bind his disciples with a permanent bond, Verkhovensky exploits the *idée fixe* of suicide and the superman, which is held by one of his dupes, to induce him to commit a crime before he kills himself, and thus make away with another member of the committee who is represented as being a spy. Once this is done, the whole committee will be jointly responsible, and bound to him by the ties of blood and fear. But Verkhovensky is not the hero of the book. The hero is Stavrogin, whom Verkhovensky regards as his trump card, because of the strength of his character, which leads him to commit the most outrageous extravagances, and at the same time to remain as cold as ice; but Verkhovensky's whole design is shattered on Stavrogin's character, all the murders already mentioned are committed, the whole scheme comes to nothing, the conspirators are discovered, and Peter escapes abroad.

When *Devils* appeared in 1871, it was looked upon as a gross exaggeration, but real life in subsequent years was to produce characters and events of the same kind, which were more startling than Dostoyevsky's fiction. The book is the least well-constructed of Dostoyevsky's; the narrative is disconnected, and the events, incidents, and characters so crowded together, that the general effect is confused; on the other hand, it contains isolated scenes which Dostoyevsky never surpassed; and in its strength and in its limitations it is perhaps his most characteristic work.

From 1873-80 Dostoyevsky went back to journalism, and wrote his *Diary of a Writer*, in which he commented on current events. In 1880, he united all conflicting and hostile parties and shades of public opinion, by the speech he made at the unveiling of Pushkin's memorial, in one common bond of enthusiasm. At the end of the seventies, he returned to a work already begun, *The Brothers Karamazov*, which, although it remains the longest of his books, was never finished. It is the story of three brothers, Dimitri, Ivan, and Alyosha; their father is a cynical sensualist. The eldest brother is an undisciplined, passionate character, who expiates his passions by suffering; the second brother is a materialist, the tragedy of whose inner life forms a greater part of the book; the third brother, Alyosha, is a lover of humanity, and a believer in God and man. He seeks a monastery, but his spiritual father sends him out into the world, to live and to suffer. He is to go through the furnace of the world and experience many trials; for the microbe of lust that is in his family is dormant in him also. The book was called the *History of a Great Sinner*, and the sinner was to be Alyosha. But Dostoyevsky died before this part of the subject is even approached.

He died in January 1881; the crowds of men and women of all sorts and conditions of life that attended his funeral, and the extent and the sincerity of the grief manifested, gave it an almost mythical greatness. The people gave him a funeral such as few kings or heroes have ever had. Without fear of controversy or contradiction one can now say that Dostoyevsky's place in Russian literature is at the top, equal and in the opinion of some superior to that of Tolstoy in greatness. He is also one of the greatest writers the world has ever produced, not because, like Tolstoy, he saw life steadily and saw it whole, and painted it with the supreme and easy art of a Velasquez; nor because, like Turgenev, he wove exquisite pictures into musical words. Dostoyevsky was not

an artist; his work is shapeless; his books are like quarries where granite and dross, gold and ore are mingled. He paid no attention to style, and yet so strong and vital is his spoken word that when the Moscow Art Theatre put some scenes in *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Devils* on the stage, they found they could not alter one single syllable; and sometimes his words have a power beyond that of words, a power that only music has. There are pages where Dostoyevsky expresses the anguish of the soul in the same manner as Wagner expressed the delirium of dying Tristram. I should indeed put the matter the other way round, and say that in the last act of *Tristram*, Wagner is as great as Dostoyevsky. But Dostoyevsky is great because of the divine message he gives, not didactically, not by sermons, but by the goodness that emanates, like a precious balm, from the characters he creates; because more than any other books in the world his books reflect not only the teaching and the charity, but the accent and the divine aura of love that is in the Gospels.

“I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, or even of mortal flesh; it is my spirit that addresses your spirit, just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal — as we are!” These words, spoken by Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, express what Dostoyevsky’s books do. His spirit addresses our spirit. “Be no man’s judge; humble love is a terrible power which effects more than violence. Only active love can bring out faith. Love men, and do not be afraid of their sins; love man in his sin; love all the creatures of God, and pray God to make you cheerful. Be cheerful as children and as the birds.” This was Father Zosima’s advice to Alyosha. And that is the gist of Dostoyevsky’s message to mankind. “Life,” Father Zosima also says to Alyosha, “will bring you many misfortunes, but you will be happy on account of them, and you will bless life and cause others to bless it.” Here we have the whole secret of Dostoyevsky’s greatness. He blessed life, and he caused others to bless it.

It is objected that his characters are abnormal; that he deals with the diseased, with epileptics, neurasthenics, criminals, sensualists, madmen; but it is just this very fact which gives so much strength and value to the blessing he gave to life; it is owing to this fact that he causes others to bless life; because he was cast in the nethermost circle of life’s inferno; he was thrown together with the refuse of humanity, with the worst of men and with the most unfortunate; he saw the human soul on the rack, and he saw the vilest diseases that afflict the human soul; he faced the evil without fear or blinkers; and there, in the inferno, in the dust and ashes, he recognized the print of divine footsteps and the fragrance of goodness; he cried from the abyss: “Hosanna to the Lord, for He is just!” and he blessed life. It is true that his characters are taken almost entirely from the *Despised and Rejected*, as one of his books was called, and often from the ranks of the abnormal; but when a great writer wishes to reveal the greatest adventures and the deepest experiences which the soul of man can undergo, it is in vain for him to take the normal type; it has no adventures. The adventures of the soul of Fortinbras would be of no help to mankind; but the adventures of Hamlet

are of help to mankind, and the adventures of Don Quixote; and neither Don Quixote nor Hamlet are normal types.

Dostoyevsky wrote the tragedy of life and of the soul, and to do this he chose circumstances as terrific as those which unhinged the reason of King Lear, shook that of Hamlet, and made Œdipus blind himself. His books resemble Greek tragedies by the magnitude of the spiritual adventures they set forth; they are unlike Greek Tragedies in the Christian charity and the faith and the hope which goes out of them; they inspire the reader with courage, never with despair, although Dostoyevsky, face to face with the last extremities of evil, never seeks to hide it or to shun it, but merely to search for the soul of goodness in it. He did not search in vain, and just as, when he was on his way to Siberia, a conversation he had with a fellow-prisoner inspired that fellow-prisoner with the feeling that he could go on living and even face penal servitude, so do Dostoyevsky's books come to mankind as a message of hope from a radiant country. That is what constitutes his peculiar greatness.

# The Russian Point of View

by Virginia Woolf

The famous novelist and literary critic Virginia Woolf published this essay on Russian literature, examining Tolstoy's contribution, in a London periodical in 1912.

Virginia Woolf

Doubtful as we frequently are whether either the French or the Americans, who have so much in common with us, can yet understand English literature, we must admit graver doubts whether, for all their enthusiasm, the English can understand Russian literature. Debate might protract itself indefinitely as to what we mean by "understand". Instances will occur to everybody of American writers in particular who have written with the highest discrimination of our literature and of ourselves; who have lived a lifetime among us, and finally have taken legal steps to become subjects of King George. For all that, have they understood us, have they not remained to the end of their days foreigners? Could any one believe that the novels of Henry James were written by a man who had grown up in the society which he describes, or that his criticism of English writers was written by a man who had read Shakespeare without any sense of the Atlantic Ocean and two or three hundred years on the far side of it separating his civilisation from ours? A special acuteness and detachment, a sharp angle of vision the foreigner will often achieve; but not that absence of self-consciousness, that ease and fellowship and sense of common values which make for intimacy, and sanity, and the quick give and take of familiar intercourse.

Not only have we all this to separate us from Russian literature, but a much more serious barrier — the difference of language. Of all those who feasted upon Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, and Tchekov during the past twenty years, not more than one or two perhaps have been able to read them in Russian. Our estimate of their qualities has been formed by critics who have never read a word of Russian, or seen Russia, or even heard the language spoken by natives; who have had to depend, blindly and implicitly, upon the work of translators.

What we are saying amounts to this, then, that we have judged a whole literature stripped of its style. When you have changed every word in a sentence from Russian to English, have thereby altered the sense a little, the sound, weight, and accent of the words in relation to each other completely, nothing remains except a crude and coarsened version of the sense. Thus treated, the great Russian writers are like men deprived by an earthquake or a railway accident not only of all their clothes, but also of something subtler and more important — their manners, the idiosyncrasies of their characters. What remains is, as the English have proved by the fanaticism of their

admiration, something very powerful and very impressive, but it is difficult to feel sure, in view of these mutilations, how far we can trust ourselves not to impute, to distort, to read into them an emphasis which is false.

They have lost their clothes, we say, in some terrible catastrophe, for some such figure as that describes the simplicity, the humanity, startled out of all effort to hide and disguise its instincts, which Russian literature, whether it is due to translation or to some more profound cause, makes upon us. We find these qualities steeping it through, as obvious in the lesser writers as in the greater. "Learn to make yourselves akin to people. I would even like to add: make yourself indispensable to them. But let this sympathy be not with the mind — for it is easy with the mind — but with the heart, with love towards them." "From the Russian", one would say instantly, where-ever one chanced on that quotation. The simplicity, the absence of effort, the assumption that in a world bursting with misery the chief call upon us is to understand our fellow-sufferers, "and not with the mind — for it is easy with the mind — but with the heart" — this is the cloud which broods above the whole of Russian literature, which lures us from our own parched brilliancy and scorched thoroughfares to expand in its shade — and of course with disastrous results. We become awkward and self-conscious; denying our own qualities, we write with an affectation of goodness and simplicity which is nauseating in the extreme. We cannot say "Brother" with simple conviction. There is a story by Mr. Galsworthy in which one of the characters so addresses another (they are both in the depths of misfortune). Immediately everything becomes strained and affected. The English equivalent for "Brother" is "Mate" — a very different word, with something sardonic in it, an indefinable suggestion of humour. Met though they are in the depths of misfortune the two Englishmen who thus accost each other will, we are sure, find a job, make their fortunes, spend the last years of their lives in luxury, and leave a sum of money to prevent poor devils from calling each other "Brother" on the Embankment. But it is common suffering, rather than common happiness, effort, or desire that produces the sense of brotherhood. It is the "deep sadness" which Dr. Hagberg Wright finds typical of the Russian people that creates their literature.

A generalisation of this kind will, of course, even if it has some degree of truth when applied to the body of literature, be changed profoundly when a writer of genius sets to work on it. At once other questions arise. It is seen that an "attitude" is not simple; it is highly complex. Men reft of their coats and their manners, stunned by a railway accident, say hard things, harsh things, unpleasant things, difficult things, even if they say them with the abandonment and simplicity which catastrophe has bred in them. Our first impressions of Tchekov are not of simplicity but of bewilderment. What is the point of it, and why does he make a story out of this? we ask as we read story after story. A man falls in love with a married woman, and they part and meet, and in the end are left talking about their position and by what means they can be free from "this intolerable bondage".

"How? How?" he asked, clutching his head. . . . And it seemed as though in a little while the solution would be found and then a new and splendid life would begin." That



is the end. A postman drives a student to the station and all the way the student tries to make the postman talk, but he remains silent. Suddenly the postman says unexpectedly, "It's against the regulations to take any one with the post". And he walks up and down the platform with a look of anger on his face. "With whom was he angry? Was it with people, with poverty, with the autumn nights?" Again, that story ends.

But is it the end, we ask? We have rather the feeling that we have overrun our signals; or it is as if a tune had stopped short without the expected chords to close it. These stories are inconclusive, we say, and proceed to frame a criticism based upon the assumption that stories ought to conclude in a way that we recognise. In so doing, we raise the question of our own fitness as readers. Where the tune is familiar and the end emphatic — lovers united, villains discomfited, intrigues exposed — as it is in most Victorian fiction, we can scarcely go wrong, but where the tune is unfamiliar and the end a note of interrogation or merely the information that they went on talking, as it is in Tchekov, we need a very daring and alert sense of literature to make us hear the tune, and in particular those last notes which complete the harmony. Probably we have to read a great many stories before we feel, and the feeling is essential to our satisfaction, that we hold the parts together, and that Tchekov was not merely rambling disconnectedly, but struck now this note, now that with intention, in order to complete his meaning.

We have to cast about in order to discover where the emphasis in these strange stories rightly comes. Tchekov's own words give us a lead in the right direction. ". . . such a conversation as this between us", he says, "would have been unthinkable for our parents. At night they did not talk, but slept sound; we, our generation, sleep badly, are restless, but talk a great deal, and are always trying to settle whether we are right or not." Our literature of social satire and psychological finesse both sprang from that restless sleep, that incessant talking; but after all, there is an enormous difference between Tchekov and Henry James, between Tchekov and Bernard Shaw. Obviously — but where does it arise? Tchekov, too, is aware of the evils and injustices of the social state; the condition of the peasants appals him, but the reformer's zeal is not his — that is not the signal for us to stop. The mind interests him enormously; he is a most subtle and delicate analyst of human relations. But again, no; the end is not there. Is it that he is primarily interested not in the soul's relation with other souls, but with the soul's relation to health — with the soul's relation to goodness? These stories are always showing us some affectation, pose, insincerity. Some woman has got into a false relation; some man has been perverted by the inhumanity of his circumstances. The soul is ill; the soul is cured; the soul is not cured. Those are the emphatic points in his stories.

Once the eye is used to these shades, half the "conclusions" of fiction fade into thin air; they show like transparencies with a light behind them — gaudy, glaring, superficial. The general tidying up of the last chapter, the marriage, the death, the statement of values so sonorously trumpeted forth, so heavily underlined, become of

the most rudimentary kind. Nothing is solved, we feel; nothing is rightly held together. On the other hand, the method which at first seemed so casual, inconclusive, and occupied with trifles, now appears the result of an exquisitely original and fastidious taste, choosing boldly, arranging infallibly, and controlled by an honesty for which we can find no match save among the Russians themselves. There may be no answer to these questions, but at the same time let us never manipulate the evidence so as to produce something fitting, decorous, agreeable to our vanity. This may not be the way to catch the ear of the public; after all, they are used to louder music, fiercer measures; but as the tune sounded so he has written it. In consequence, as we read these little stories about nothing at all, the horizon widens; the soul gains an astonishing sense of freedom.

In reading Tchekov we find ourselves repeating the word "soul" again and again. It sprinkles his pages. Old drunkards use it freely; ". . . you are high up in the service, beyond all reach, but haven't real soul, my dear boy . . . there's no strength in it". Indeed, it is the soul that is the chief character in Russian fiction. Delicate and subtle in Tchekov, subject to an infinite number of humours and distempers, it is of greater depth and volume in Dostoevsky; it is liable to violent diseases and raging fevers, but still the predominant concern. Perhaps that is why it needs so great an effort on the part of an English reader to read *The Brothers Karamazov* or *The Possessed* a second time. The "soul" is alien to him. It is even antipathetic. It has little sense of humour and no sense of comedy. It is formless. It has slight connection with the intellect. It is confused, diffuse, tumultuous, incapable, it seems, of submitting to the control of logic or the discipline of poetry. The novels of Dostoevsky are seething whirlpools, gyrating sandstorms, waterspouts which hiss and boil and suck us in. They are composed purely and wholly of the stuff of the soul. Against our wills we are drawn in, whirled round, blinded, suffocated, and at the same time filled with a giddy rapture. Out of Shakespeare there is no more exciting reading. We open the door and find ourselves in a room full of Russian generals, the tutors of Russian generals, their step-daughters and cousins, and crowds of miscellaneous people who are all talking at the tops of their voices about their most private affairs. But where are we? Surely it is the part of a novelist to inform us whether we are in an hotel, a flat, or hired lodging. Nobody thinks of explaining. We are souls, tortured, unhappy souls, whose only business it is to talk, to reveal, to confess, to draw up at whatever rending of flesh and nerve those crabbed sins which crawl on the sand at the bottom of us. But, as we listen, our confusion slowly settles. A rope is flung to us; we catch hold of a soliloquy; holding on by the skin of our teeth, we are rushed through the water; feverishly, wildly, we rush on and on, now submerged, now in a moment of vision understanding more than we have ever understood before, and receiving such revelations as we are wont to get only from the press of life at its fullest. As we fly we pick it all up — the names of the people, their relationships, that they are staying in an hotel at Roulettenburg, that Polina is involved in an intrigue with the Marquis de Grioux — but what unimportant matters these are compared with the soul! It is the soul that matters, its passion,

its tumult, its astonishing medley of beauty and vileness. And if our voices suddenly rise into shrieks of laughter, or if we are shaken by the most violent sobbing, what more natural? — it hardly calls for remark. The pace at which we are living is so tremendous that sparks must rush off our wheels as we fly. Moreover, when the speed is thus increased and the elements of the soul are seen, not separately in scenes of humour or scenes of passion as our slower English minds conceive them, but streaked, involved, inextricably confused, a new panorama of the human mind is revealed. The old divisions melt into each other. Men are at the same time villains and saints; their acts are at once beautiful and despicable. We love and we hate at the same time. There is none of that precise division between good and bad to which we are used. Often those for whom we feel most affection are the greatest criminals, and the most abject sinners move us to the strongest admiration as well as love.

Dashed to the crest of the waves, bumped and battered on the stones at the bottom, it is difficult for an English reader to feel at ease. The process to which he is accustomed in his own literature is reversed. If we wished to tell the story of a General's love affair (and we should find it very difficult in the first place not to laugh at a General), we should begin with his house; we should solidify his surroundings. Only when all was ready should we attempt to deal with the General himself. Moreover, it is not the samovar but the teapot that rules in England; time is limited; space crowded; the influence of other points of view, of other books, even of other ages, makes itself felt. Society is sorted out into lower, middle, and upper classes, each with its own traditions, its own manners, and, to some extent, its own language. Whether he wishes it or not, there is a constant pressure upon an English novelist to recognise these barriers, and, in consequence, order is imposed on him and some kind of form; he is inclined to satire rather than to compassion, to scrutiny of society rather than understanding of individuals themselves.

No such restraints were laid on Dostoevsky. It is all the same to him whether you are noble or simple, a tramp or a great lady. Whoever you are, you are the vessel of this perplexed liquid, this cloudy, yeasty, precious stuff, the soul. The soul is not restrained by barriers. It overflows, it floods, it mingles with the souls of others. The simple story of a bank clerk who could not pay for a bottle of wine spreads, before we know what is happening, into the lives of his father-in-law and the five mistresses whom his father-in-law treated abominably, and the postman's life, and the charwoman's, and the Princesses' who lodged in the same block of flats; for nothing is outside Dostoevsky's province; and when he is tired, he does not stop, he goes on. He cannot restrain himself. Out it tumbles upon us, hot, scalding, mixed, marvellous, terrible, oppressive — the human soul.

There remains the greatest of all novelists — for what else can we call the author of *War and Peace*? Shall we find Tolstoi, too, alien, difficult, a foreigner? Is there some oddity in his angle of vision which, at any rate until we have become disciples and so lost our bearings, keeps us at arm's length in suspicion and bewilderment? From his first words we can be sure of one thing at any rate — here is a man who sees what we

see, who proceeds, too, as we are accustomed to proceed, not from the inside outwards, but from the outside inwards. Here is a world in which the postman's knock is heard at eight o'clock, and people go to bed between ten and eleven. Here is a man, too, who is no savage, no child of nature; he is educated; he has had every sort of experience. He is one of those born aristocrats who have used their privileges to the full. He is metropolitan, not suburban. His senses, his intellect, are acute, powerful, and well nourished. There is something proud and superb in the attack of such a mind and such a body upon life. Nothing seems to escape him. Nothing glances off him unrecorded. Nobody, therefore, can so convey the excitement of sport, the beauty of horses, and all the fierce desirability of the world to the senses of a strong young man. Every twig, every feather sticks to his magnet. He notices the blue or red of a child's frock; the way a horse shifts its tail; the sound of a cough; the action of a man trying to put his hands into pockets that have been sewn up. And what his infallible eye reports of a cough or a trick of the hands his infallible brain refers to something hidden in the character, so that we know his people, not only by the way they love and their views on politics and the immortality of the soul, but also by the way they sneeze and choke. Even in a translation we feel that we have been set on a mountain-top and had a telescope put into our hands. Everything is astonishingly clear and absolutely sharp. Then, suddenly, just as we are exulting, breathing deep, feeling at once braced and purified, some detail — perhaps the head of a man — comes at us out of the picture in an alarming way, as if extruded by the very intensity of its life. "Suddenly a strange thing happened to me: first I ceased to see what was around me; then his face seemed to vanish till only the eyes were left, shining over against mine; next the eyes seemed to be in my own head, and then all became confused — I could see nothing and was forced to shut my eyes, in order to break loose from the feeling of pleasure and fear which his gaze was producing in me. . . ." Again and again we share Masha's feelings in *Family Happiness*. One shuts one's eyes to escape the feeling of pleasure and fear. Often it is pleasure that is uppermost. In this very story there are two descriptions, one of a girl walking in a garden at night with her lover, one of a newly married couple prancing down their drawing-room, which so convey the feeling of intense happiness that we shut the book to feel it better. But always there is an element of fear which makes us, like Masha, wish to escape from the gaze which Tolstoi fixes on us. Is it the sense, which in real life might harass us, that such happiness as he describes is too intense to last, that we are on the edge of disaster? Or is it not that the very intensity of our pleasure is somehow questionable and forces us to ask, with Pozdnyshev in the *Kreutzer Sonata*, "But why live?" Life dominates Tolstoi as the soul dominates Dostoevsky. There is always at the centre of all the brilliant and flashing petals of the flower this scorpion, "Why live?" There is always at the centre of the book some Olenin, or Pierre, or Levin who gathers into himself all experience, turns the world round between his fingers, and never ceases to ask, even as he enjoys it, what is the meaning of it, and what should be our aims. It is not the priest who shatters our desires most effectively; it is the man who has known them, and loved them himself. When he derides them, the world indeed turns

to dust and ashes beneath our feet. Thus fear mingles with our pleasure, and of the three great Russian writers, it is Tolstoi who most enthralls us and most repels.

But the mind takes its bias from the place of its birth, and no doubt, when it strikes upon a literature so alien as the Russian, flies off at a tangent far from the truth.

# Extract From ‘Prophets of Dissent’

by **Otto Heller**

The Revivalism of Leo Tolstoy

In the intellectual record of our times it is one of the oddest events that the most impressive preacher who has taken the ear of civilized mankind in this generation raised up his voice in a region which in respect of its political, religious, and economic status was until recently, by fairly common consent, ruled off the map of Europe. The greatest humanitarian of his century sprang up in a land chiefly characterized in the general judgment of the outside world by the reactionism of its government and the stolid ignorance of its populace. A country still teeming with analphabeticians and proverbial for its dense medievalism gave to the world a writer who by the great quality of his art and the lofty spiritualism of his teaching was able not only to obtain a wide hearing throughout all civilized countries, but to become a distinct factor in the moral evolution of the age. The stupefying events that have recently revolutionized the Russian state have given the world an inkling of the secrets of the Slavic type of temperament, so mystifying in its commixture of simplicity and strength on the one hand with grossness and stupidity, and on the other hand with the highest spirituality and idealism. For such people as in these infuriated times still keep up some objective and judicious interest in products of the literary art, the volcanic upheaval in the social life of Russia has probably thrown some of Tolstoy's less palpable figures into a greater plastic relief. Tolstoy's own character, too, has become more tangible in its curious composition. The close analogy between his personal theories and the dominant impulses of his race has now been made patent. We are better able to understand the people of whom he wrote because we have come to know better the people for whom he wrote.

The emphasis of Tolstoy's popular appeal was unquestionably enhanced by certain eccentricities of his doctrine, and still more by his picturesque efforts to conform his mode of life, by way of necessary example, to his professed theory of social elevation. The personality of Tolstoy, like the character of the Russian people, is many-sided, and since its aspects are not marked off by convenient lines of division, but are, rather, commingled in the great and varied mass of his literary achievements, it is not easy to make a definitive forecast of his historic position. Tentatively, however, the current critical estimate may be summed up in this: as a creative writer, in particular of novels and short stories, he stood matchless among the realists, and the verdict pronounced at one time by William Dean Howells when he referred to Tolstoy as "the only living writer of perfect fiction" is not likely to be overruled by posterity. Nor will competent

judges gainsay his supreme importance as a critic and moral revivalist of society, even though they may be seriously disposed to question whether his principles of conduct constitute in their aggregate a canon of much practical worth for the needs of the western world. As a philosopher or an original thinker, however, he will hardly maintain the place accorded him by the less discerning among his multitudinous followers, for in his persistent attempt to find a new way of understanding life he must be said to have signally failed. Wisdom in him was hampered by Utopian fancies; his dogmas derive from idiosyncrasies and lead into absurdities. Then, too, most of his tenets are easily traced to their sources: in his vagaries as well as in his noblest and soundest aspirations he was merely continuing work which others had prepared.

An objective survey of Tolstoy's work in realistic fiction, in which he ranked supreme, should start with the admission that he was by no means the first arrival among the Russians in that field. Nicholas Gogol, Fedor Dostoievsky, and Ivan Turgenieff had the priority by a small margin. Of these three powerful novelists, Dostoievsky (1821–1881) has probably had an even stronger influence upon modern letters than has Tolstoy himself. He was one of the earliest writers of romance to show the younger generation how to found fiction upon deeper psychologic knowledge. His greatest proficiency lay, as is apt to be the case with writers of a realistic bent, in dealing with the darkest side of life. The wretched and outcast portion of humanity yielded to his skill its most congenial material. His novels—“Poor Folk,” (1846), “Memoirs from a Dead House,” (1862), “Raskolnikoff,” (1866), “The Idiot,” (1868), “The Karamasoffs,” (1879) — take the reader into company such as had heretofore not gained open entrance to polite literature: criminals, defectives, paupers, and prostitutes. Yet he did not dwell upon the wretchedness of that submerged section of humanity from any perverse delight in what is hideous or for the satisfaction of readers afflicted with morbid curiosity, but from a compelling sense of pity and brotherly love. His works are an appeal to charity. In them, the imperdible grace of the soul shines through the ugliest outward disguise to win a glance from the habitual indifference of fortune's *enfants gâtés*. Dostoievsky preceded Tolstoy in frankly enlisting his talents in the service of his outcast brethren. With the same ideal of the writer's mission held in steady view, Tolstoy turned his attention from the start, and then more and more as his work advanced, to the pitiable condition of the lower orders of society. It must not be forgotten in this connection that his career was synchronous with the growth of a social revolution which, having reached its full force in these days, is making Russia over for better or for worse, and whose wellsprings Tolstoy helps us to fathom.

For the general grouping of his writings it is convenient to follow Tolstoy's own division of his life. His dreamy poetical childhood was succeeded by three clearly distinct stages: first, a score of years filled up with self-indulgent worldliness; next, a nearly equal length of time devoted to artistic ambition, earnest meditation, and helpful social work; last, by a more gradual transition, the ascetic period, covering a long stretch of years given up to religious illumination and to the strenuous advocacy of the Simple Life.

The remarkable spiritual evolution of this great man was apparently governed far more by inborn tendencies than by the workings of experience. Of Tolstoy in his childhood, youth, middle age, and senescence we gain trustworthy impressions from numerous autobiographical documents, but here we shall have to forego anything more than a passing reference to the essential facts of his career. He was descended from an aristocratic family of German stock but domiciled in Russia since the fourteenth century. The year of his birth was 1828, the same as Ibsen's. In youth he was bashful, eccentric, and amazingly ill-favored. The last-named of these handicaps he outgrew but late in life, still later did he get over his bashfulness, and his eccentricity never left him. His penchant for the infraction of custom nearly put a premature stop to his career when in his urchin days he once threw himself from a window in an improvised experiment in aerial navigation. At the age of fourteen he was much taken up with subtle speculations about the most ancient and vexing of human problems: the future life, and the immortality of the soul. Entering the university at fifteen, he devoted himself in the beginning to the study of oriental languages, but later on his interest shifted to the law. At sixteen he was already imbued with the doctrines of Jean Jacques Rousseau that were to play such an important rôle in guiding his conduct. In 1846 he passed out of the university without a degree, carrying away nothing but a lasting regret over his wasted time. He went directly to his ancestral estates, with the idealistic intention to make the most of the opportunity afforded him by the patriarchal relationship that existed in Russia between the landholder and the *adscripti glebae* and to improve the condition of his seven hundred dependents. His efforts, however, were foredoomed to failure, partly through his lack of experience, partly also through a certain want of sincerity or tenacity of purpose. The experiment in social education having abruptly come to its end, the disillusionized reformer threw himself headlong into the diversions and dissipations of the capital city. In his "Confession" he refers to that chapter of his existence as made up wholly of sensuality and worldliness. He was inordinately proud of his noble birth, — at college his inchoate apostleship of the universal brotherhood of man did not shield him from a general dislike on account of his arrogance, — and he cultivated the most exclusive social circles of Moscow. He freely indulged the love of sports that was to cling through life and keep him strong and supple even in very old age. (Up to a short time before his death he still rode horseback and perhaps none of the renunciations exacted by his principles came so hard as that of giving up his favorite pastime of hunting.) But he also fell into the evil ways of gilded youth, soon achieving notoriety as a toper, gambler, and *courreur des femmes*. After a while his brother, who was a person of steadier habits and who had great influence over him, persuaded him to quit his profligate mode of living and to join him at his military post. Under the bracing effect of the change, the young man's moral energies quickly revived. In the wilds of the Caucasus he at once grew freer and cleaner; his deep affection for the half-civilized land endeared him both to the Cossack natives and the Russian soldiers. He entered the army at twenty-three, and from November, 1853, up to the fall of Sebastopol in the summer of 1855, served in the Crimean campaign. He entered



the famous fortress in November, 1854, and was among the last of its defenders. The indelible impressions made upon his mind by the heroism of his comrades, the awful scenes and the appalling suffering he had to witness, were responsible then and later for descriptions as harrowing and as stirring as any that the war literature of our own day has produced.

In the Crimea he made his *début* as a writer. Among the tales of his martial period the most popular and perhaps the most excellent is the one called "The Cossacks." Turgenieff pronounced it the best short story ever written in Russian, and it is surely no undue exaggeration to say of Tolstoy's novelettes in general that in point of technical mastery they are unsurpassed.

Sick at heart over the unending bloodshed in the Caucasus the young officer made his way back to Petrograd, and here, lionized in the salons doubly, for his feats at arms and in letters, he seems to have returned, within more temperate limits, to his former style of living. At any rate, in his own judgment the ensuing three years were utterly wasted. The mental inanity and moral corruption all about him swelled his sense of superiority and self-righteousness. The glaring humbug and hypocrisy that permeated his social environment was, however, more than he could long endure.

Having resigned his officer's commission he went abroad in 1857, to Switzerland, Germany, and France. The studies and observations made in these travels sealed his resolution to settle down for good on his domain and to consecrate his life to the welfare of his peasants. But a survey of the situation found upon his return made him realize that nothing could be done for the "muzhik" without systematic education: therefore, in order to prepare himself for efficacious work as a teacher, he spent some further time abroad for special study, in 1859. After that, the educational labor was taken up in full earnest. The lord of the land became the schoolmaster of his subjects, reenforcing the effect of *viva voce* teaching by means of a periodical published expressly for their moral uplift. This work he continued for about three years, his hopes of success now rising, now falling, when in a fit of despondency he again abandoned his philanthropic efforts. About this time, 1862, he married Sophia Andreyevna Behrs, the daughter of a Moscow physician. With characteristic honesty he forced his private diary on his fiancée, who was only eighteen, so that she might know the full truth about his pre-conjugal course of living.

About the Countess Tolstoy much has been said in praise and blame. Let her record speak for itself. Of her union with the great novelist thirteen children were born, of whom nine reached an adult age. The mother nursed and tended them all, with her own hands made their clothes, and until they grew to the age of ten supplied to them the place of a schoolmistress. It must not be inferred from this that her horizon did not extend beyond nursery and kitchen, for during the earlier years she acted also as her husband's invaluable amanuensis. Before the days of the typewriter his voluminous manuscripts were all copied by her hand, and recopied and revised — in the case of "War and Peace" this happened no less than seven times, and the novel runs to sixteen hundred close-printed pages! — and under her supervision his numerous works

were not only printed but also published and circulated. Moreover, she managed his properties, landed, personal, and literary, to the incalculable advantage of the family fortune. This end, to be sure, she accomplished by conservative and reliable methods of business; for while of his literary genius she was the greatest admirer, she never was in full accord with his communistic notions. And the highest proof of all her extraordinary Tüchtigkeit and devotion is that by her common sense and tact she was enabled to function for a lifetime as a sort of buffer between her husband's world-removed dreamland existence and the rigid and frigid reality of facts.

Thus Tolstoy's energies were left to go undivided into literary production; its amount, as a result, was enormous. If all his writings were to be collected, including the unpublished manuscripts now reposing in the Rumyantsoff Museum, which are said to be about equal in quantity to the published works, and if to this collection were added his innumerable letters, most of which are of very great interest, the complete set of Tolstoy's works would run to considerably more than one hundred volumes. To discuss all of Tolstoy's writings, or even to mention all, is here quite out of the question. All those, however, that seem vital for the purpose of a just estimate and characterization will be touched upon.

The literary fame of Tolstoy was abundantly secured already in the earlier part of his life by his numerous short stories and sketches. The three remarkable pen pictures of the siege of Sebastopol, and tales such as "The Cossacks," "Two Hussars," "Polikushka," "The Snow-Storm," "The Encounter," "The Invasion," "The Captive in the Caucasus," "Lucerne," "Albert," and many others, revealed together with an exceptional depth of insight an extraordinary plastic ability and skill of motivation; in fact they deserve to be set as permanent examples before the eyes of every aspiring author. In their characters and their setting they present true and racy pictures of a portentous epoch, intimate studies of the human soul that are full of charm and fascination, notwithstanding their tragic sadness of outlook. Manifestly this author was a prose poet of such marvelous power that he could abstain consistently from the use of sweeping color, overwrought sentiment, and high rhetorical invective.

At this season Tolstoy, while he refrained from following any of the approved literary models, was paying much attention to the artistic refinement of his style. There was to be a time when he would abjure all considerations of artistry on the ground that by them the ethical issue in a narration is beclouded. But it would be truer to say conversely that in his own later works, since "Anna Karenina," the clarity of the artistic design was dimmed by the obtrusive didactic purpose. Fortunately the artistic interest was not yet wholly subordinated to the religious urge while the three great novels were in course of composition: "War and Peace," (1864-69), "Anna Karenina," (first part, 1873; published complete in 1877), and "Resurrection," (1899). To the first of these is usually accorded the highest place among all of Tolstoy's works; it is by this work that he takes his position as the chief epic poet of modern times. "War and Peace" is indeed an epic rather than a novel in the ordinary meaning. Playing against the background of tremendous historical transactions, the narrative sustains the epic character not only

in the hugeness of its dimensions, but equally in the qualities of its technique. There is very little comment by the author upon the events, and merely a touch of subjective irony here and there. The story is straightforwardly told as it was lived out by its characters. Tolstoy has not the self-complacency to thrust in the odds and ends of his personal philosophy, as is done so annoyingly even by a writer of George Meredith's consequence, nor does he ever treat his readers with the almost simian impertinence so successfully affected by a Bernard Shaw. If "War and Peace" has any faults, they are the faults of its virtues, and spring mainly from an unmeasured prodigality of the creative gift. As a result of Tolstoy's excessive range of vision, the orderly progress of events in that great novel is broken up somewhat by the profusion of shapes that monopolize the attention one at a time much as individual spots in a landscape do under the sweeping glare of the search-light. Yet although in the externalization of this crowding multitude of figures no necessary detail is lacking, the grand movement as a whole is not swamped by the details. The entire story is governed by the conception of events as an emanation of the cosmic will, not merely as the consequence of impulses proceeding from a few puissant geniuses of the Napoleonic order.

It is quite in accord with such a view of history that the machinery of this voluminous epopee is not set in motion by a single conspicuous protagonist. As a matter of fact, it is somewhat baffling to try to name the principals in the story, since in artistic importance all the figures are on an equal footing before their maker; possibly the fact that Tolstoy's ethical theory embodied the most persistent protest ever raised against the inequality of social estates proved not insignificant for his manner of characterization. Ethical justice, however, is carried to an artistic fault, for the feelings and reactions of human nature in so many diverse individuals lead to an intricacy and subtlety of motivation which obscures the organic causes through overzeal in making them patent. Anyway, Tolstoy authenticates himself in this novel as a past master of realism, particularly in his utterly convincing depiction of Russian soldier life. And as a painter of the battlefield he ranks, allowing for the difference of the medium, with Vasili Verestschagin at his best. It may be said in passing that these two Russian pacifists, by their gruesome exposition of the horrors of war, aroused more sentiment against warfare than did all the spectacular and expensive peace conferences inaugurated by the crowned but hollow head of their nation, and the splendid declamations of the possessors of, or aspirants for, the late Mr. Nobel's forty-thousand dollar prize.

Like all true realists, Tolstoy took great pains to inform himself even about the minutiae of his subjects, but he never failed, as did in large measure Zola in *La Débâcle*, to infuse emotional meaning into the static monotony of facts and figures. In his strong attachment for his own human creatures he is more nearly akin to the idealizing or sentimentalizing type of realists, like Daudet, Kipling, Hauptmann, than to the downright matter-of-fact naturalists such as Zola or Gorki. But to classify him at all would be wrong and futile, since he was never leagued with literary creeds and cliques and always stood aloof from the heated theoretical controversies of his time even after he had hurled his great inclusive challenge to art.

“War and Peace” was written in Tolstoy’s happiest epoch, at a time, comparatively speaking, of spiritual calm. He had now reached some satisfying convictions in his religious speculations, and felt that his personal life was moving up in the right direction. His moral change is made plain in the contrast between two figures of the story, Prince Andrey and Peter Bezukhoff: the ambitious worldling and the honest seeker after the right way.

In his second great novel, “Anna Karenina,” the undercurrent of the author’s own moral experience has a distinctly greater carrying power. It is through the earnest idealist, Levine, that Tolstoy has recorded his own aspirations. Characteristically, he does not make Levine the central figure.

“Anna Karenina” is undoubtedly far from “pleasant” reading, since it is the tragical recital of an adulterous love. But the situation, with its appalling consequence of sorrow, is seized in its fullest psychological depth and by this means saved from being in any way offensive. The relation between the principals is viewed as by no means an ordinary liaison. Anna and Vronsky are serious-minded, honorable persons, who have struggled conscientiously against their mutual enchantment, but are swept out of their own moral orbits by the resistless force of Fate. This fatalistic element in the tragedy is variously emphasized; so at the beginning of the story, where Anna, in her emotional confusion still half-ignorant of her infatuation, suddenly realizes her love for Vronsky; or in the scene at the horse races where he meets with an accident. Throughout the narrative the psychological argumentation is beyond criticism. Witness the description of Anna’s husband, a sort of cousin-in-kind of Ibsen’s Thorvald Helmer, reflecting on his future course after his wife’s confession of her unfaithfulness. Or that other episode, perhaps the greatest of them all, when Anna, at the point of death, joins together the hands of her husband and her lover. Or, finally, the picture of Anna as she deserts her home leaving her son behind in voluntary expiation of her wrong-doing, an act, by the way, that betrays a nicety of conscience far too subtle for the Rhadamantine inquisitors who demand to know why, if Anna would atone to Karenin, does she go with Vronsky? How perfectly true to life, subsequently, is the rapid dégringolade of this passion under the gnawing curse of the homeless, workless, purposeless existence which little by little disunites the lovers! Only the end may be somewhat open to doubt, with its metastasis of the heroine’s character, — unless indeed we consider the sweeping change accounted for by the theory of duplex personality. She herself believes that there are two quite different women alive in her, the one steadfastly loyal to her obligations, the other blindly driven into sin by the demon of her uncontrollable temperament.

In the power of analysis, “Anna Karenina” is beyond doubt Tolstoy’s masterpiece, and yet in its many discursive passages it already foreshadows the disintegration of his art, or more precisely, its ultimate capitulation to moral propagandism. For it was while at work upon this great novel that the old perplexities returned to bewilder his soul. In the tumultuous agitation of his conscience, the crucial and fundamental questions, Why Do We Live? and How Should We Live? could nevermore be silenced. Now a definitive attitude toward life is forming; to it all the later works bear a vital

relation. And so, in regard to their moral outlook, Tolstoy's books may fitly be divided into those written before and those written since his "conversion." "Anna Karenina" happens to be on the dividing line.

He was a man well past fifty, of enviable social position, in prosperous circumstances, widely celebrated for his art, highly respected for his character, and in his domestic life blessed with every reason for contentment. Yet all the gifts of fortune sank into insignificance before that vexing, unanswered Why? In the face of a paralyzing universal aimlessness, there could be to him no abiding sense of life in his personal enjoyments and desires. The burden of life became still less endurable face to face with the existence of evil and with the wretchedness of our social arrangements. With so much toil and trouble, squalor, ignorance, crime, and every conceivable kind of bodily and mental suffering all about me, why should I be privileged to live in luxury and idleness? This ever recurring question would not permit him to enjoy his possessions without self-reproach. To think of thousands of fellowmen lacking the very necessaries, made affluence and its concomitant ways of living odious to him. We know that in 1884, or thereabouts, he radically changed his views and modes of life so as to bring them into conformity with the laws of the Gospel. But before this conversion, in the despairing anguish that attacked him after the completion of "Anna Karenina," he was frequently tempted to suicide. Although the thought of death was very terrible to him then and at all times, still he would rather perish than live on in a world made heinous and hateful by the iniquity of men. Then it was that he searched for a reason why the vast proportion of humanity endure life, nay enjoy it, and why self-destruction is condemned by the general opinion, and this in spite of the fact that for most mortals existence is even harder than it could have been for him, since he at least was shielded from material want and lived amid loving souls. The answer he found in the end seemed to lead by a straight road out of the wilderness of doubt and despair. The great majority, so he ascertained, are able to bear the burden of life because they heed the ancient injunction: "ora et labora"; they work and they believe. Might he not sweeten his lot after the same prescription? Being of a delicate spiritual sensibility, he had long realized that people of the idle class were for the most part inwardly indifferent to religion and in their actions defiant of its spirit. In the upper strata of society religious thought, where it exists, is largely adulterated or weakened; sophisticated by education, doctored by science, thinned out with worldly ambitions and with practical needs and considerations. The faith that supports life is found only among simple folk. For faith, to deserve the name, must be absolute, uncritical, unreasoning. Starting from these convictions as a basis, Tolstoy resolutely undertook to learn to believe; a determination which led him, as it has led other ardent religionists, so far astray from ecclesiastical paths that in due course of time he was unavoidably excommunicated from his church. His convictions made him a vehement antagonist of churchdom because of its stiffness of creed and laxness of practice. For his own part he soon arrived at a full and absolute acceptance of the Christian faith in what he considered to be its primitive and essential form. In

“Walk Ye in the Light,” (1893), the reversion of a confirmed worldling to this original conception of Christianity gives the story of the writer’s own change of heart.

To the period under discussion belongs Tolstoy’s drama, “The Power of Darkness,” (1886). It is a piece of matchless realism, probably the first unmixedly naturalistic play ever wrought out. It is brutally, terribly true to life, and that to life at its worst, both in respect of the plot and the actors, who are individualized down to the minutest characteristics of utterance and gesture. Withal it is a species of modern morality, replete with a reformatory purpose that reflects deeply the author’s tensely didactic state of mind. His instructional zeal is heightened by intimate knowledge of the Russian peasant, on his good side as well as on his bad. Some of his short stories are crass pictures of the muzhik’s bestial degradation, veritable pattern cards of human and inhuman vices. In other stories, again, the deep-seated piety of the muzhik, and his patriarchal simplicity of heart are portrayed. As instance, the story of “Two Old Men,” (1885), who are pledged to attain the Holy Land: the one performs his vow to the letter, the other, much the godlier of the two, is kept from his goal by a work of practical charity. In another story a muzhik is falsely accused of murder and accepts his undeserved punishment in a devout spirit of non-resistance. In a third, a poor cobbler who intuitively walks in the light is deemed worthy of a visit from Christ.

In “The Power of Darkness,” the darkest traits of peasant life prevail, yet the frightful picture is somehow Christianized, as it were, so that even the miscreant Nikita, in spite of his monstrous crimes, is sure of our profound compassion. We are gripped at the very heartstrings by that great confession scene where he stutters out his budget of malefactions, forced by his awakened conscience and urged on by his old father: “Speak out, my child, speak it off your soul, then you will feel easier.”

“The Power of Darkness” was given its counterpart in the satirical comedy, “Fruits of Culture,” (1889). The wickedness of refined society is more mercilessly excoriated than low-lived infamy. But artistically considered the peasant tragedy is far superior to the “society play.”

Tolstoy was a pessimist both by temperament and philosophical persuasion. This is made manifest among other things by the prominent place which the idea of Death occupies in his writings. His feelings are expressed with striking simplicity by one of the principal characters in “War and Peace”: “One must often think of death, so that it may lose its terrors for us, cease to be an enemy, and become on the contrary a friend that delivers us from this life of miseries.” Still, in Tolstoy’s stories, death, as a rule, is a haunting spectre. This conception comes to the fore even long after his conversion in a story like “Master and Man.” Throughout his literary activity it has an obsessive hold on his mind. Even the shadowing of the animal mind by the ubiquitous spectre gives rise to a story: “Cholstomjer, The Story of a Horse,” (1861), and in one of the earlier tales even the death of a tree is pictured. Death is most terrifying when, denuded of its heroic embellishments in battle pieces such as “The Death of a Soldier” (“Sebastopol”) or the description of Prince Andrey’s death in “War and Peace,” it is exposed in all its bare and grim loathsomeness. Such happens in the short novel published in 1886

under the name of "The Death of Ivan Ilyitch," — in point of literary merit one of Tolstoy's greatest performances. It is a plain tale about a middle-aged man of the official class, happy in an unreflecting sort of way in the jog-trot of his work and domestic arrangements. Suddenly his fate is turned, — by a trite mishap resulting in a long, hopeless sickness. His people at first give him the most anxious care, but as the illness drags on their devotion gradually abates, the patient is neglected, and soon almost no thought is given to him. In the monotonous agony of his prostration, the sufferer slowly comes to realize that he is dying, while his household has gone back to its habitual ways mindless of him, as though he were already dead, or had never lived. All through this lengthened crucifixion he still clings to life, and it is only when the family, gathering about him shortly before the release, can but ill conceal their impatience for the end, that Ivan at last accepts his fate: "I will no longer let them suffer — I will die; I will deliver them and myself." So he dies, and the world pursues its course unaltered, — in which consists the after-sting of this poignant tragedy.

Between the years 1879 and 1886 Tolstoy published the main portion of what may be regarded as his spiritual autobiography, namely, "The Confession," (1879, with a supplement in 1882), "The Union and Translation of the Four Gospels," (1881–2), "What Do I Believe?" (also translated under the title "My Religion," 1884) and "What Then Must We Do?" (1886). He was now well on the way to the logical ultimates of his ethical ideas, and in the revulsion from artistic ambitions so plainly foreshown in a treatise in 1887: "What is True Art?" he repudiated unequivocally all his earlier work so far as it sprang from any motives other than those of moral teaching. Without a clear appreciation of these facts a just estimate of "The Kreutzer Sonata" (1889) is impossible.

The central character of the book is a commonplace, rather well-meaning fellow who has been tried for the murder of his wife, slain by him in a fit of insensate jealousy, and has been acquitted because of the extenuating circumstances in the case. The object of the story is to lay bare the causes of his crime. Tolstoy's ascetic proclivity had long since set him thinking about sex problems in general and in particular upon the ethics of marriage. And by this time he had arrived at the conclusion that the demoralized state of our society is chiefly due to polygamy and polyandry; corroboration of his uncompromising views on the need of social purity he finds in the evangelist Matthew, v:27–28, where the difference between the old command and its new, far more rigorous, interpretation is bluntly stated: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Now Tolstoy thinks that society, far from concurring in the scriptural condemnation of lewdness, caters systematically to the appetites of the voluptuary. If Tolstoy is right in his diagnosis, then the euphemistic term "social evil" has far wider reaches of meaning than those to which it is customarily applied. With the head person in "The Kreutzer Sonata," Tolstoy regards society as no better than a *maison de tolérance* conducted on a very comprehensive scale. Women are reared with the main object of alluring

men through charms and accomplishments; the arts of the hairdresser, the dressmaker, and milliner, as well as the exertions of governesses, music masters, and linguists all converge toward the same aim: to impart the power of attracting men. Between the woman of the world and the professional courtesan the main difference in the light of this view lies in the length of the service. Pozdnicheff accordingly divides femininity into long term and short term prostitutes, which rather fantastic classification Tolstoy follows up intrepidly to its last logical consequence.

The main idea of "The Kreutzer Sonata," as stated in the postscript, is that sexless life is best. A recommendation of celibacy as mankind's highest ideal to be logical should involve a wish for the disappearance of human life from the globe. A world-view of such pessimistic sort prevents itself from the forfeiture of all bonds with humanity only by its concomitant reasoning that a race for whom it were better not to be is the very one that will struggle desperately against its summum bonum. Since race suicide, then, is a hopeless desideratum, the reformer must turn to more practicable methods if he would at least alleviate the worst of our social maladjustments. Idleness is the mother of all mischief, because it superinduces sensual self-indulgence. Therefore we must suppress anything that makes for leisure and pleasure. At this point we grasp the meaning of Tolstoy's vehement recoil from art. It is, to a great extent, the strong-willed resistance of a highly impressionable puritan against the enticements of beauty, — their distracting and disquieting effect, and principally their power of sensuous suggestion.

The last extensive work published by Tolstoy was "Resurrection," (1889). In artistic merit it is not on a level with "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina," nor can this be wondered at, considering the opinion about the value of art that had meanwhile ripened in the author.

"Resurrection" was written primarily for a constructive moral purpose, yet the subject matter was such as to secrete, unintendedly, a corrosive criticism of social and religious cant. The satirical connotation of the novel could not have been more grimly brought home than through this fact, that the hero by his unswerving allegiance to Christian principles of conduct greatly shocks, at first, our sense of the proprieties, instead of eliciting our enthusiastic admiration. In spite of our highest moral notions Prince Nekhludoff, like that humbler follower of the voice of conscience in Gerhart Hauptmann's novel, impresses us as a "Fool in Christ." The story, itself, leads by degrees from the under-world of crime and punishment to a great spiritual elevation. Maslowa, a drunken street-walker, having been tried on a charge of murder, is wrongfully sentenced to transportation for life, because — the jury is tired out and the judge in a hurry to visit his mistress. Prince Nekhludoff, sitting on that jury, recognizes in the victim of justice a girl whose downfall he himself had caused. He is seized by penitence and resolves to follow the convict to Siberia, share her sufferings, dedicate his life to her redemption. She has sunk so low that his hope of reforming her falters, yet true to his resolution he offers to marry her. Although the offer is rejected, yet the suggestion of a new life which it brings begins to work a change in the woman. In the



progress of the story her better nature gradually gains sway until a thorough moral revolution is completed.

“Resurrection” derives its special value from its clear demonstration of those rules of conduct to which the author was straining with every moral fiber to conform his own life. From his ethical speculations and social experiments are projected figures like that of Maria Paulovna, a rich and beautiful woman who prefers to live like a common workingwoman and is drawn by her social conscience into the revolutionary vortex. In this figure, and more definitely still in the political convict Simonson, banished because of his educational work among the common people, Tolstoy studies for the first time the so-called “intellectual” type of revolutionist. His view of the “intellectuals” is sympathetic, on the whole. They believe that evil springs from ignorance. Their agitation issues from the highest principles, and they are capable of any self-sacrifice for the general weal. Still Tolstoy, as a thoroughly anti-political reformer, deprecates their organized movement.

Altogether, he repudiated the systems of social reconstruction that go by the name of socialism, because he relied for the regeneration of society wholly and solely upon individual self-elevation. In an essential respect he was nevertheless a socialist, inasmuch as he strove for the ideal of universal equality. His social philosophy, bound up inseparably with his personal religious evolution, is laid down in a vast number of essays, letters, sketches, tracts, didactic tales, and perhaps most comprehensively in those autobiographical documents already mentioned. Sociologically the most important of these is a book on the problem of property, entitled, “What Then Must We Do?” (1886), which expounds the passage in Luke iii:10, 11: “And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answered and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.” Not long before that, he had thought of devoting himself entirely to charitable work, but practical experiments at Moscow demonstrated to him the futility of almsgiving. Speaking on that point to his English biographer, Aylmer Maude, he remarked: “All such activity, if people attribute importance to it, is worthless.” When his interviewer insisted that the destitute have to be provided for somehow and that the Count himself was in the habit of giving money to beggars, the latter replied: “Yes, but I do not imagine that I am doing good! I only do it for myself, because I know that I have no right to be well off while they are in misery.” It is worth mention in passing that during the famine of 1891–2 this determined opponent of organized charity, in noble inconsistency with his theories, led in the dispensation of relief to the starving population of Middle Russia.

But in “What Then Must We Do?” he treats the usual organized dabbling in charity as utterly preposterous: “Give away all you have or else you can do no good.” ... “If I give away a hundred thousand and still withhold five hundred thousand, I am far from acting in the spirit of charity, and remain a factor of social injustice and evil. At the sight of the freezing and hungering I must still feel responsible for their plight, and feel that since we should live in conditions where that evil can be abstained from, it is

impossible for me in the position in which I deliberately place myself to be anything other than a source of general evil.”

It was chiefly due to the influence of two peasants, named Sutayeff and Bondareff, that Tolstoy decided by a path of religious reasoning to abandon “parasitical existence,” — that is, to sacrifice all prerogatives of his wealth and station and to share the life of the lowly. He reasoned as follows: “Since I am to blame for the existence of social wrong, I can lessen my blame only by making myself like unto those that labor and are heavy-laden.” Economically, Tolstoy reasons from this fallacy: If all men do not participate equitably in the menial work that has to be performed in the world, it follows that a disproportionate burden of work falls upon the shoulders of the more defenseless portion of humanity. Whether this undue amount of labor be exacted in the form of chattel slavery, or, which is scarcely less objectionable, in the form of the virtual slavery imposed by modern industrial conditions, makes no material difference. The evil conditions are bound to continue so long as the instincts that make for idleness prevail over the co-operative impulses. The only remedy lies in the simplification of life in the upper strata of the social body, overwork in the laboring classes being the direct result of the excessive demands for the pleasures and luxuries of life in the upper classes.

To Bondareff in particular Tolstoy confessedly owes the conviction that the best preventive for immorality is physical labor, for which reason the lower classes are less widely removed from grace than the upper. Bondareff maintained on scriptural grounds that everybody should employ at least a part of his time in working the land. This view Tolstoy shared definitely after 1884. Not only did he devote a regular part of his day to agricultural labor; he learned, in addition, shoemaking and carpentry, meaning to demonstrate by his example that it is feasible to return to those patriarchal conditions under which the necessities of life were produced by the consumer himself. From this time forth he modelled his habits more and more upon those of the common rustic. He adopted peasant apparel and became extremely frugal in his diet. Although by natural taste he was no scorner of the pleasures of the table, he now eliminated one luxury after another. About this time he also turned strict vegetarian, then gave up the use of wine and spirits, and ultimately even tobacco, of which he had been very fond, was made to go the way of flesh. He practiced this self-abnegation in obedience to the Law of Life which he interpreted as a stringent renunciation of physical satisfactions and personal happiness. Nor did he shirk the ultimate conclusion to which his premises led: if the Law of Life imposes the suppression of all natural desires and appetites and commands the voluntary sacrifice of every form of property and power, it must be clear that life itself is devoid of sense and utterly undesirable. And so it is expressly stated in his “Thoughts.”

To what extent Tolstoy was a true Christian believer may best be gathered from his own writings, “What Do I Believe?” (1884), “On Life,” (1887), and “The Kingdom of God is within You,” (1893). Although at the age of seventeen he had ceased to be orthodox, there can be no question whatever that throughout his whole life religion remained the

deepest source of his inspiration. By the early eighties he had emerged from that acute scepticism that well-nigh cost him life and reason, and had, outwardly at least, made his peace with the church, attending services regularly, and observing the feasts and the fasts; here again in imitating the muzhik in his religious practices he strove apparently to attain also to the muzhik's actual gift of credulity. But in this endeavor his superior culture proved an impediment to him, and his widening doctrinal divergence from the established church finally drew upon his head, in 1891, the official curse of the Holy Synod. And yet a leading religious journal was right, shortly after his death, in this comment upon the religious meaning of his life: "If Christians everywhere should put their religious beliefs into practice with the simplicity and sincerity of Tolstoy, the entire religious, moral, and social life of the world would be revolutionized in a month." The orthodox church expelled him from its communion because of his radicalism; but in his case radicalism meant indeed the going to the roots of Christian religion, to the original foundations of its doctrines. In the teachings of the primitive church there presented itself to Tolstoy a dumfoundingly simple code for the attainment of moral perfection. Hence arose his opposition to the established church which seemed to have strayed so widely from its own fundamentals.

Since Tolstoy's life aimed at the progressive exercise of self-sacrifice, his religious belief could be no gospel of joy. In fact, his is a sad, gray, ascetic religion, wholly devoid of poetry and emotional uplift. He did not learn to believe in the divinity of Christ nor in the existence of a God in any definite sense personal, and it is not even clear whether he believed in an after-life. And yet he did not wrongfully call himself a Christian, for the mainspring of his faith and his labor was the message of Christ delivered to his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount. This, for Tolstoy, contained all the philosophy and the theology of which the modern world stands in need, since in the precept of non-resistance is joined forever the issue between the Law and the Gospel: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

And farther on: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." ...

In this commandment Tolstoy found warrant for unswerving forbearance toward every species of private and corporate aggression. Offenders against individuals or the commonwealth deserve nothing but pity. Prisons should be abolished and criminals never punished. Tolstoy went so far as to declare that even if he saw his own wife or daughters being assaulted, he would abstain from using force in their defense. The infliction of the death penalty was to him the most odious of crimes. No life, either human or animal, should be wilfully destroyed.

The doctrine of non-resistance removes every conceivable excuse for war between the nations. A people is as much bound as is an individual by the injunction: "Whosoever

shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." War is not to be justified on patriotic grounds, for patriotism, far from being a virtue, is an enlarged and unduly glorified form of selfishness. Consistently with his convictions, Tolstoy put forth his strength not for the glory of his nation but for the solidarity of mankind.

The cornerstones of Tolstoy's religion, then, were these three articles of faith. First, True Faith gives Life. Second, Man must live by labor. Third, Evil must never be resisted by means of evil.

Outside of the sphere of religious thought it is inaccurate to speak of a specific Tolstoyan philosophy, and it is impossible for the student to subscribe unconditionally to the hackneyed formula of the books that Tolstoy "will be remembered as perhaps the most profound influence of his day on human thought." Yet the statement might be made measurably true if it were modified in accordance with the important reservation made earlier in this sketch. In the field of thought he was not an original explorer. He was great only as the promulgator, not as the inventor, of ideas. His work has not enriched the wisdom of man by a single new thought, nor was he a systematizer and expounder of thought or a philosopher. In fact he possessed slight familiarity with philosophical literature. Among the older metaphysicians his principal guide was Spinoza, and in more modern speculative science he did not advance beyond Schopenhauer. To the latter he was not altogether unlike in his mental temper. At least he showed himself indubitably a pessimist in his works by placing in fullest relief the bad side of the social state. We perceive the pessimistic disposition also through his personal behavior, seeing how he desponded under the discords of life, how easily he lost courage whenever he undertook to cope with practical problems, and how sedulously he avoided the contact with temptations. It was only by an almost total withdrawal from the world, and by that entire relief from its daily and ordinary affairs which he owed to the devotion of his wife that Tolstoy was enabled during his later years to look upon the world less despairingly.

Like his theology, so, too, his civic and economic creed was marked by the utmost and altogether too primitive simplicity. Political questions were of slight interest to him, unless they touched upon his vital principles. If, therefore, we turn from his very definite position in matters of individual conduct to his political views, we shall find that he was wanting in a program of practical changes. His only positive contribution to economic discussion was a persistent advocacy of agrarian reform. Under the influence of Henry George he became an eloquent pleader for the single tax and the nationalization of the land. This question he discussed in numerous places, with especial force and clearness in a long article entitled "A Great Iniquity." He takes the view that the mission of the State, if it have any at all, can only consist in guaranteeing the rights of every one of its denizens, but that in actual fact the State protects only the rights of the propertied. Intelligent and right-minded citizens must not conspire with the State to ride rough-shod over the helpless majority. Keenly alive to the unalterable tendency of organized power to abridge the rights of individuals and to dominate both their material and spiritual existence, Tolstoy fell into the opposite extreme and would have

abolished with a clean sweep all factors of social control, including the right of property and the powers of government, and transformed society into a community of equals and brothers, relying for its peace and well-being upon a universal love of liberty and justice.

By his disbelief in authority, the rejection of the socialists' schemes of reconstruction, his mistrust of fixed institutions and reliance on individual right-mindedness for the maintenance of the common good, Tolstoy in the sphere of civic thought separated himself from the political socialists by the whole diameter of initial principle: he might not unjustly be classified, therefore, as an anarchist, if this definition were neither too narrow nor too wide. The Christian Socialists might claim him, because he aspires ardently to ideals essentially Christian in their nature, and there is surely truth in the thesis that "every thinker who understands and earnestly accepts the teaching of the Master is at heart a socialist." At the same time, Christianity and Socialism do not travel the whole way together. For a religion that enjoins patience and submission can hardly be conducive to the full flowering of Socialism. And Tolstoy's attitude towards the church differs radically from that of the Christian Socialists. On the whole one had best abstain from classifying men of genius.

The base of Tolstoy's social creed was the non-recognition of private property. The effect of the present system is to maintain the inequality of men and thereby to excite envy and stir up hatred among them. Eager to set a personal example and precedent, Tolstoy rendered himself nominally penniless by making all his property, real and personal, over to his wife and children. Likewise he abdicated his copyrights. Thus he reduced himself to legal pauperism with a completeness of success that cannot but stir with envy the bosom of any philanthropist who shares Mr. Andrew Carnegie's conviction that to die rich is to die disgraced.

Tolstoy's detractors have cast a plausible suspicion upon his sincerity. They pointed out among other things that his relinquishment of pecuniary profit in his books was apparent, not real. Since Russia has no copyright conventions with other countries, it was merely making a virtue of necessity to authorize freely the translation of his works into foreign languages. As for the Russian editions of his writings, it is said that in so far as the heavy hand of the censor did not prevent, the Countess, as her husband's financial agent, managed quite skilfully to exploit them.

Altogether, did Tolstoy practice what he professed? Inconsistency between principles and conduct is a not uncommon frailty of genius, as is notoriously illustrated by Tolstoy's real spiritual progenitor, Jean Jacques Rousseau.

Now there are many discreditable stories in circulation about the muzhik lord of Yasnaya Polyana. He urged upon others the gospel commands: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" and: "Take what ye have and give to the poor," and for his own part lived, according to report, in sumptuous surroundings. He went ostentatiously on pilgrimages to holy places, barefooted but with an expert pedicure attending him. He dressed in a coarse peasant blouse, but underneath it wore fine silk and linen. He was a vegetarian of the strictest observance, yet so much of an epicure that his taste for

unseasonable dainties strained the domestic resources. He preached simplicity, and according to rumor dined off priceless plate; taught the equality of men, and was served by lackies in livery. He abstained from alcohol and tobacco, but consumed six cups of strong coffee at a sitting. Finally, he extolled the sexless life and was the father of thirteen children. It was even murmured that notwithstanding his professed affection for the muzhik and his incessant proclamation of universal equality, the peasantry of Yasnaya Polyana was the most wretchedly-treated to be found in the whole province and that the extortionate landlordism of the Tolstoys was notorious throughout the empire.

Much of this, to be sure, is idle gossip, unworthy of serious attention. Nevertheless, there is evidence enough to show that Tolstoy's insistence upon a literal acceptance of earlier Christian doctrines led him into unavoidable inconsistencies and shamed him into a tragical sense of dishonesty.

Unquestionably Tolstoy lived very simply and laboriously for a man of great rank, means, and fame, but his life was neither hard nor cramped. Having had no personal experience of garret and hovel, he could have no first-hand practical knowledge of the sting of poverty, nor could he obtain hardship artificially by imposing upon himself a mild imitation of physical discomfort. For the true test of penury is not the suffering of to-day but the oppressive dread of to-morrow. His ostensible muzhik existence, wanting in none of the essentials of civilization, was a romance that bore to the real squalid pauperism of rural Russia about the same relation that the bucolic make-belief of Boucher's or Watteau's swains and shepherdesses bore to the unperfumed truth of a sheep-farm or a hog-sty. As time passed, and the sage turned his thoughts to a more rigid enforcement of his renunciations, it was no easy task for a devoted wife to provide comfort for him without shaking him too rudely out of his fond illusion that he was enduring privations.

After all, then, his practice did not tally with his theory; and this consciousness of living contrary to his own teachings was a constant source of unhappiness which no moral quibbles of his friends could still.

Yet no man could be farther from being a hypocrite. If at last he broke down under a burden of conscience, it was a burden imposed by the reality of human nature which makes it impossible for any man to live up to intentions of such rigor as Tolstoy's. From the start he realized that he did not conform his practice entirely to his teachings, and as he grew old he was resolved that having failed to harmonize his life with his beliefs he would at least corroborate his sincerity by his manner of dying. Even in this, however, he was to be thwarted. In his dramatic ending, still plainly remembered, we feel a grim consistency with the lifelong defeat of his will to suffer.

Early in 1910 a student by the name of Manzos addressed a rebuke to Tolstoy for simulating the habits of the poor, denouncing his mode of life as a form of mummery. He challenged the sage to forsake his comforts and the affections of his family, and to go forth and beg his way from place to place. "Do this," entreated the young fanatic, "and you will be the first true man after Christ." With his typical large-heartedness,

Tolstoy accepted the reproof and said in the course of his long reply: ... "The fact that I am living with wife and daughter in terrible and shameful conditions of luxury when poverty surrounds me on all sides, torments me ever more and more, and there is not a day when I am not thinking of following your advice. I thank you very, very much for your letter." As a matter of fact, he had more than once before made ready to put his convictions to a fiery proof by a final sacrifice, — leaving his home and spending his remaining days in utter solitude. But when he finally proceeded to carry out this ascetic intention and actually set out on a journey to some vague and lonely destination, he was foiled in his purpose. If ever Tolstoy's behavior irresistibly provoked misrepresentation of his motives it was by this somewhat theatrical hegira. The fugitive left Yasnaya Polyana, not alone, but with his two favorite companions, his daughter Alexandra and a young Hungarian physician who for some time had occupied the post of private secretary to him. After paying a farewell visit to his sister, a nun cloistered in Shamardin, he made a start for the Trans-Caucasus. His idea was to go somewhere near the Tolstoy colony at the Black Sea. But in an early stage of the journey, a part of which was made in an ordinary third-class railway compartment, the old man was overcome by illness and fatigue. He was moved to a trackman's hut at the station of Astopovo, not farther than eighty miles from his home, and here, — surrounded by his hastily summoned family and tenderly nursed for five days, — he expired. Thus he was denied the summit of martyrdom to which he had aspired, — a lonely death, unminded of men.

Even a summary review like this of Tolstoy's life and labors cannot be concluded without some consideration of his final attitude toward the esthetic embodiment of civilization. The development of his philosophy of self-abnegation had led irresistibly, as we have seen, to the condemnation of all self-regarding instincts. Among these, Art appeared to him as one of the most insidious. He warned against the cultivation of the beautiful on the ground that it results in the suppression and destruction of the moral sense. Already in 1883 it was known that he had made up his mind to abandon his artistic aspirations out of loyalty to his moral theory, and would henceforth dedicate his talents exclusively to the propagation of humanitarian views. In vain did the dean of Russian letters, Turgenieff, appeal to him with a death-bed message: "My friend, great writer of the Russians, return to literary work! Heed my prayer." Tolstoy stood firm in his determination. Nevertheless, his genius refused to be throttled by his conscience; he could not paralyze his artistic powers; he could merely bend them to his moral aims.

As a logical corollary to his opposition to art for art's sake, Tolstoy cast from him all his own writings antedating "Confession," — and denounced all of them as empty manifestations of worldly conceit. His authorship of that immortal novel, "War and Peace," filled him with shame and remorse. His views on Art are plainly and forcibly expounded in the famous treatise on "What is Art?" and in the one on "Shakespeare." In both he maintains that Art, no matter of what sort, should serve the sole purpose of bringing men nearer to each other in the common purpose of right living. Hence, no art work is legitimate without a pervasive moral design. The only true touchstone

of an art work is the uplifting strength that proceeds from it. Therefore, a painting like the "Angelus," or a poem like "The Man with the Hoe" would transcend in worth the creations of a Michael Angelo or a Heinrich Heine even as the merits of Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Goethe are outmatched in Tolstoy's judgment by those of Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot. By the force of this naïve reasoning and his theoretical antipathy toward true art, he was led to see in "Uncle Tom's Cabin" the veritable acme of literary perfection, for the reason that this book wielded such an enormous and noble influence upon the most vital question of its day. He strongly discountenanced the literary practice of revamping ancient themes, believing with Ibsen that modern writers should impart their ideas through the medium of modern life. Yet at the same time he was up in arms against the self-styled "moderns"! They took their incentives from science, and this Tolstoy decried, because science did not fulfill its mission of teaching people how rightly to live. In this whole matter he reasoned doggedly from fixed ideas, no matter to what ultimates the argument would carry him. For instance, he did not stick at branding Shakespeare as an utter barbarian, and to explain the reverence for such "disgusting" plays as "King Lear" as a crass demonstration of imitative hypocrisy.

Art in general is a practice aiming at the production of the beautiful. But what is "beautiful"? asked Tolstoy. The current definitions he pronounced wrong because they were formulated from the standpoint of the pleasure-seeker. Such at least has been the case since the Renaissance. From that time forward, Art, like all cults of pleasure, has been evil. To the pleasure-seeker, the beautiful is that which is enjoyable; hence he appraises works of art according to their ability to procure enjoyment. In Tolstoy's opinion this is no less absurd than if we were to estimate the nutritive value of food-stuffs by the pleasure accompanying their consumption. So he baldly declares that we must abolish beauty as a criterion of art, or conversely, must establish truth as the single standard of beauty. "The heroine of my stories whom I strive to represent in all her beauty, who was ever beautiful, is so, and will remain so, is Truth."

His views on art have a certain analogy with two modern schools, — much against his will, since he strenuously disavows and deprecates everything modern; they make us think on the one hand of the "naturalists," inasmuch as like them Tolstoy eschews all intentional graces of style and diction: and on the other hand of the "impressionists," with whom he seems united by his fundamental definition of art, namely that it is the expression of a dominant emotion calculated to reproduce itself in the reader or beholder. Lacking, however, a deep and catholic understanding for art, Tolstoy, in contrast with the modern impressionists, would restrict artists to the expression of a single type of sentiments, those that reside in the sphere of religious consciousness. To him art, as properly conceived and practiced, must be ancillary to religion, and its proper gauge is the measure of its agreement with accepted moral teachings. Remembering, then, the primitive form of belief to which Tolstoy contrived to attain, we find ourselves face to face with a theory of art which sets up as the final arbiter the man "unspoiled by culture," and he, in Tolstoy's judgment, is the Russian muzhik.



This course of reasoning on art is in itself sufficient to show the impossibility for any modern mind of giving sweeping assent to Tolstoy's teachings. And a like difficulty would be experienced if we tried to follow him in his meditations on any other major interest of life. Seeking with a tremendous earnestness of conscience to reduce the bewildering tangle of human affairs to elementary simplicity, he enmeshed himself in a new network of contradictions. The effect was disastrous for the best part of his teaching; his own extremism stamped as a hopeless fantast a man incontestably gifted by nature, as few men have been in history, with the cardinal virtues of a sage, a reformer, and a missionary of social justice. Because of this extremism, his voice was doomed to remain that of one crying in the wilderness.

The world could not do better than to accept Tolstoy's fundamental prescriptions: simplicity of living, application to work, and concentration upon moral culture. But to apply his radical scheme to existing conditions would amount to a self-stultification of the race, for it would entail the unpardonably sinful sacrifice of some of the finest and most hard-won achievements of human progress. For our quotidian difficulties his example promises no solution. The great mass of us are not privileged to test our individual schemes of redemption in the leisured security of an ideal experiment station; not for every man is there a Yasnaya Polyana, and the Sophia Andreyevnas are thinly sown in the matrimonial market.

But even though Tolstoyism will not serve as a means of solving the great social problems, it supplies a helpful method of social criticism. And its value goes far beyond that: the force of his influence was too great not to have strengthened enormously the moral conscience of the world; he has played, and will continue to play, a leading part in the establishing and safeguarding of democracy. After all, we do not have to separate meticulously what is true in Tolstoy's teaching from what is false in order to acknowledge him as a Voice of his epoch. For as Lord Morley puts the matter in the case of Jean Jacques Rousseau: "There are some teachers whose distinction is neither correct thought, nor an eye for the exigencies of practical organization, but simply depth and fervor of the moral sentiment, bringing with it the indefinable gift of touching many hearts with love of virtue and the things of the spirit."

The Ted K Archive

Ivan Panin  
Criticism of Leo Tolstoy

**[www.thetedkarchive.com](http://www.thetedkarchive.com)**