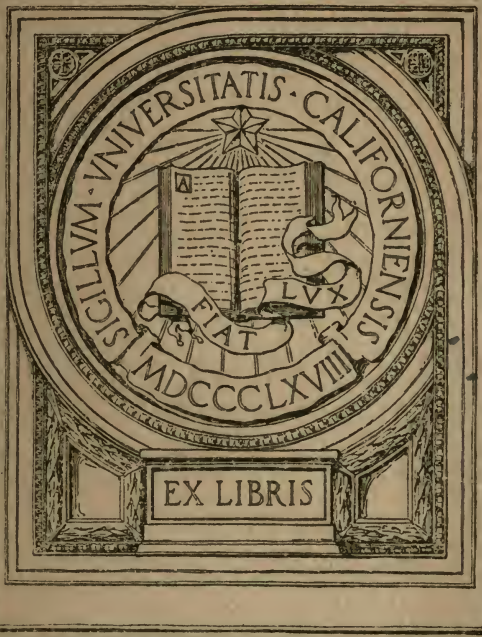

LEO TOLSTOY

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A BIOGRAPHICAL
AND
CRITICAL
STUDY

BY

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PREFACE

ONE of Tolstoy's English disciples complains that no European writer of eminence has refuted the doctrines of his master. For this absence of a lengthy and adverse criticism there are two reasons. In the first place, no European writer of eminence thinks that Tolstoyism, as a religious and social theory, needs refuting; and, in the second place, if it did happen to call for systematic scrutiny, he has more important work on hand, and would prefer to leave such scrutiny to the pens of lesser scribes.

At any rate, the silence of the eminent man may be taken as some justification for the present volume, in which I have endeavoured to trace the development of Tolstoy's ideas and to examine them in the light of modern knowledge.

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LEO TOLSTOY

INTRODUCTION

THE prevalent conception, in this country, of Leo Tolstoy is that he is a great man gone wrong; at least that is the conception which one hears more often than another when Tolstoy's name crops up in conversation, or appears as the subject of a newspaper article. Mr. J. C. Kenworthy thus refers to a writer who spoke of Tolstoy as "a worn-out libertine who had made of the dregs of his old age a hypocritical offering to religion,"[1] —a description which a certain Christian journal described as "fearless and outspoken." Whereas the author of *Anna Karenina* "was once applauded by literate and learned, he is now mainly pitied and opposed by these classes," adds Tolstoy's English disciple.

But there is another side to the subject, and if a census of opinion could be taken, it would be found

[1] *Tolstoy: his Teaching and Influence in England.*

that the Russian teacher has two kinds of followers : the first are devotees of Tolstoy as novelist; the second are pupils of Tolstoy the social reformer. The first have always existed since the day when Matthew Arnold introduced his countrymen to a new type of Slav romance; and the second seem to be a slowly increasing body of earnest men and women, who try with moderate success to embody the idealism of the Sermon on the Mount. These two kinds of followers therefore are, naturally enough, productive of two reasons why Tolstoy is a personality whom we cannot ignore, and who, in his strange history, has perhaps played more varied parts than any other living man. By birth he is an aristocrat; by choice he is a peasant; he fought at Sevastopol, and now fiercely declaims against war; he was trained in the orthodoxy of the Greek Church, but has satirised every system of theology; he occupies a position in the front rank of the world's novelists, and yet regards the writing of his romances as a sinful waste of time; he used to rejoice in his home and retinue of servants, but prefers now to live in a bare chamber and do all his own work.

In these introductory notes we desire to call attention to the more definitely religious and social side of Tolstoy's gospel. As a novelist he will always have his audience, and questions of reputation and standing may safely be left to critics like Arnold, Vogué, Howells, Dupuy, Turner,

and others. But there is not a little questioning among Church people as to what they shall think of Tolstoy when cheap reprints of his social works are placed in their hands by zealous disciples; for, though not numerous, these men and women are hard workers, and spare no pains to make themselves felt. They labour hopefully, and seem to have a definite programme; at any rate we infer this from the writings of Mr. Aylmer Maude and Mr. G. H. Perris, who are apparently the leading exponents of Tolstoyism in England. Mr. Kenworthy's hopeful outlook is based on the fact that England in a peculiar sense is "the country of the Bible. Since we became a nation, all our great national reform movements have been inspired from that literature of the Hebrews. The religious and social movements of Wickliff's time, and Puritanism, Quakerism, Nonconformity, Wesleyanism, Salvationism, are links in the chain of proof that the heart of our people has always concerned itself with the Bible as the source of truth. So that Tolstoy's reversion to 'the Christianity of Christ' has a peculiar force of appeal to England."[1] This may or may not be true, but it is certainly true that Tolstoyism and modern theology will have to meet and settle their differences. As yet the Church does not seem to trouble itself: it resisted the attack of Arnoldism in the early seventies, and, after a battle with science, which is only just over,

[1] *Tolstoy: his Teaching and Influence in England*, p. 8.

it rests confidently in fancied security. But it can have no more subtle enemy than the man who at one blow demolishes the whole system of dogmatic belief, and yet declares his love for Christ, and proves it by convincing sacrifice. The blatant atheist, the cultured agnostic, and the rank materialist, are easily dealt with by the theologian. The blatancy of the first, the deadening doubt of the second, and the unspirituality of the third, are to him, rightly or wrongly, evidences of mischievous error. But what will he say to men whose devotion to Christ equals his own,—men who are prepared for perhaps greater sacrifices on behalf of their belief than he,—and yet men who spoil half the Bible and throw over the authority of the apostles? For the Church there can be no more mischievous error than that which appears to retain the temple of religion whilst it destroys the foundations.[1]

Mr. Kenworthy's hope is further sustained by the reflection that, as our civilisation is more highly complex than any other,—due largely to the principle of liberty,—the crisis which is bound to come will result in a vote for "Christ's Christianity." "What hope of national regeneration there is for us, lies, I am convinced, in such solid and simple convictions as to the truth of life which may have become part of our popular instinct, as the result

[1] See the devotional aspect of *An Appeal to the Clergy* in contrast with its almost savage attack on orthodox doctrines.

of centuries of our familiarity with and use of the Old and New Testaments."[1] It is difficult to accept a prophecy so obscure as this. What is the crisis referred to, and why should it take place? So far as we can see, the crisis will be a final battle between capital and labour, masters and men; and it is bound to come, because the signs are already manifest. If this be the correct interpretation, the result is hardly likely to show itself in favour of the Sermon on the Mount. Crises develop rather than destroy the antagonisms of human nature, and, after what Mr. Kenworthy calls the "destruction" of our civilisation, we shall be no nearer the ideal, but a good deal farther from it.

Nevertheless, Tolstoyism in its social aspects cannot but find some little response in the minds of an increasing number who look to some form of Socialism as the panacea for all evils; and although Tolstoy could never figure as a political economist, —the last thing he would desire,—he can hardly fail to become a secondary influence in the scheme for social redemption.

Leo Tolstoy is a world-character who in some directions will become a world-force. Dr. Wilhelm Bode, an independent expositor and critic, says, "Tolstoy is the first Russian to whose teaching the whole educated world gives close attention."[2]

[1] *Tolstoy: his Teaching and Influence in England*, p. 8.

[2] *Die Lehren Tolstois; Ein Gedanken-Auszug aus allen Seinen Werken*, p. 173.

There is a spice of exaggeration in this opinion, but it is not far from the truth. Whatever lack of interest there may be at the moment,—and if literary and dramatic activity mean anything at all, lack of interest is out of the question,—the day is rapidly drawing near when Tolstoyism and all other gospels of the ideal will press themselves on the attention of mankind, and demand a larger place than they have had before.

In the chapters that follow, we propose first to give a brief outline of Tolstoy's life and teaching. We shall find an organic development of ideas from the days of youth to the time when his convictions realised themselves in *My Confession* and *My Religion*, and between the man and his thought we shall discover a persistent conformity to type. In offering criticisms, we shall try to remember the strange individual history through which he has passed, and to avoid misinterpretation shall use his words as expressed in the best available translations. The ground to be covered is both extensive and varied, including, as it does, Politics, Science, Art, Fiction, Theology, and Philosophy; and in order to avoid going too far afield, as well as exceeding the limits of our space, we shall restrict discussion within the lines of popular interest. Some day, perhaps, the writer will come forward, who, possessed to the full of every necessary qualification, will give us the final account of the way in which Tolstoy became the Apostle of Non-Resistance.

I

CHILDHOOD, BOYHOOD, AND YOUTH

"Childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day."—MILTON.

LEO NIKOLAEVITCH TOLSTOY was born on 28th August 1828,[1] at Yasnaya Polyana, near Moscow. His father was Count Nikolai Ilitch Tolstoy, a colonel retired from active service; and his mother was Princess Marya Nikolaevna Volkonskaya, only daughter of Prince Nikolai Sergieevitch Volkonsky and Princess Gortchakoff. On both sides, therefore, he was of distinguished lineage, and his father's family in particular had rendered great service to the State in fulfilling the responsibilities of high positions. Count Piotr Andreyevitch Tolstoy, a friend and companion of Peter the Great, was Russian ambassador at Constantinople, and another member of the family was ambassador at Paris. If wealth, lineage, and position are an advantage, Leo Tolstoy had no occasion to lament the gifts of fortune; he

[1] This is the old style of reckoning: the corresponding date in the English calendar is 9th September 1828.

was born in a family with a history to be proud of; he suffered no handicap from serious defects of body or mind; and a brilliant career in the army or the law was awaiting him if he cared to take it up.

The strictly narrative portion of his boyhood requires only a few paragraphs for its embodiment. His mother died when he was two years of age, and at nine he lost his father. There were four sons: Nikolai, Sergiei, Dmitri, and Leo; and one daughter, Marya. After their mother's death, Count Nikolai Tolstoy engaged one of his distant relatives,—Tatyana Alexandrovna Yergolskaya,—a maiden lady, to superintend the education of his children. This was in 1830, and the arrangement seems to have worked most successfully. In 1837 the Count removed to Moscow with his family, as the eldest son was about to enter the University. But 1837 was to be a fatal year, for the Count died very suddenly, leaving his affairs in a most complicated state. The Countess of Osten-Saken, a sister who had lived with him in Moscow, was appointed guardian, and for economy's sake she brought the younger three of the family, together with Tatyana Yergolskaya, to Yasnaya Polyana, leaving the elder two in the city. In 1840 the Countess died, and once more the Tolstoy children had to seek a new guardian, and they found her in Madame Pelagie Ilinitchna Yuschkova, whowith her husband resided at Kazan. In 1841 the whole family was

quartered at the Yuschkova's, and Nikolai, the eldest boy, was transferred from the University of Moscow to that of Kazan, in order to be with his brothers and his sister. Leo Tolstoy entered the University in 1843, at the age of fifteen. He left suddenly at eighteen—after spending one year at Oriental languages and two at Law—and returned to Yasnaya Polyana, which he inherited from his father's will. At this stage his youth ends and manhood begins.[1]

Of his boyhood we have little or no account in the way of direct autobiography, and Behrs' *Recollections*, though suggestive on general lines, are not composed of the material, in quantity or quality, which a biographical student feels he needs most. But there seem to be good grounds for taking *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth* as being in the main an autobiographical account of Tolstoy's early days, and, following the example of Ossip Lourié, we shall treat this volume of reminiscences as reflecting the thoughts and aspirations of those years which stretch from childhood to the brink of manhood.

It cannot be said that the youthful Tolstoy was particularly happy, owing partly to the possession of a type of mind for which his surroundings were eminently unsuitable. That in the broad sense he

[1] See Miss Hapgood's Preface to *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*; Ossip Lourié's *La Philosophie de Tolstoï*; and N. H. Dole's Appendix in Dupuy's *Great Masters of Russian Literature*.

enjoyed life may be seen from the beautiful description he gives of youth in itself,[1] but, as will be seen later, there were isolated experiences of momentary duration which decimated the joys of years. His distinctive type of mind is not easily described in one word or phrase; and to be accurate it is best to think of it as a compound of strong passion, timidity, and idealism. Tolstoy's nature has always been extremely passionate.[2] Barely

[1] "Happy, happy days of youth which can never be recalled. How is it possible not to love it, to cherish memories of it? Those memories refresh and elevate my soul, and serve me as the fountain of my best enjoyment.

"You have now your fill. You sit at the tea-table in your high chair; you have drunk your cup of milk and sugar long ago; sleep is gluing your eyes together, but you do not stir from the spot. You sit and listen. And how can you help listening? Mamma is talking with some one, and the sound of her voice is so sweet and courteous. That sound alone says much to my heart! With eyes dimmed with slumber I gaze upon her face, and all at once she has become small, so small,—her face is no larger than a button, but I see it just as plainly still. I see her look at me and smile. I like to see her so small. I draw my eyelids still closer together, and she is no larger than the little boys one sees in the pupils of the eyes; but I moved, and the illusion was destroyed. I close my eyes, twist about, and try in every way to reproduce it, but in vain." —*Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*, p. 54.

[2] Sergyeenko, in writing of this subject so late as 1900, says: "The hot and passionate temperament wherewith nature endowed Tolstoy has not been quenched to the present time. One day, not long ago, a horse grew restive under him. He is a good horseman, and loves horses after the manner of a coachman,—carefully and tenderly, and understands well how to manage them. He knows their nature, habits, and tricks, and sometimes it even seems as though he understood their language. But in this case nothing availed. The horse reared and backed. All at once Leo Nikolaevitch

has he commenced the story of his youth before he introduces us to himself in tears, because the German tutor teased him; he is in tears again when leaving the dog prior to his departure for the school at Moscow; he is sobbing on the way to that city; and there are tears to the end of the book. It is the same with anger. One day he spilled some *Kvas* on the tablecloth, and one of the servants—Natalya Savischna—was called to clean up the mess he had made. "Natalya Savischna came, and on seeing the puddle which I had made she shook her head; then mamma whispered something in her ear, and she went out, shaking her finger at me. After dinner I was on my way to the hall, and skipping about in the most cheerful frame of mind, when all at once Natalya Savischna sprang out from behind the door, with the tablecloth in her hand, caught me, and, in spite of desperate resistance on my part, began to rub my face with the wet place, crying, 'Don't spot the tablecloth! don't spot the tablecloth!' I was so offended that I roared with rage."

straightened up, his eyes flashed, and the whip descended, hissing through the air, upon the horse. The horse sprang forward. And, a minute later, no one would have believed that this plainly dressed, modest old man, with white beard, could be so menacing. But one thing may be truly asserted, that this affair did not pass off without leaving its traces upon Leo Nikolaevitch, for along with his hot temperament and pugnacious, persistent character, he at the same time has a remarkably sensitive conscience, which suffers tortures at every act of violence."—*How Tolstoy Lives and Works*, p. 58.

Natalya thinks she has perhaps gone too far, and a few minutes afterwards comes back to him, and "from beneath her kerchief she drew a horn of red paper in which were two caramels and one grape, and gave it to me with a trembling hand. . . . I turned away, took her gift, and my tears flowed still more abundantly, but from love and shame now, and no longer from anger." [1]

Later, when recording an incident in his early 'teens, we again see the extreme passionateness of his character. He lighted a cigarette in a *café* by using the candle at a table where two gentlemen were dining. One of them objected, and in the quarrel that ensued called Tolstoy "ill-bred." Tolstoy says that the feeling aroused in him by this epithet was "frightfully oppressive and vivid for many years. I writhed and screamed full five years later every time I recalled that unatoned insult." [2] For a boy of about seventeen this evinces a sensitiveness of disposition and a capability of angry feeling which will need much virtue by way of compensation.

But, after all, a passionate nature is not indicative of any special type of mind; it may belong to imbecility and genius alike, the difference being that imbecility will know no after regrets, whilst genius will be full of them. Herein lie the tragedies of Tolstoy's childhood with its introspectiveness and compunction. He was painfully

[1] *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*, pp. 47–48.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 265.

timid. He was too timid to imitate all his elder brother said and did; and too timid to speak and act for himself; too timid to approach his father confidently,—though for this there is much excuse; and, in a manner, he was timid towards the mother he dearly loved. The consequence was he could do no other than live very much to himself, and within himself. It must not, however, be supposed that this shyness prevented him from being a boy among boys; it means that his reserve was essentially stronger than his spontaneity. He was particularly sensitive about his personal appearance. "I remember very well how once—I was six years old at the time[1]—they were discussing my looks at dinner, and mamma was trying to discover something handsome about my face; she said I had intelligent eyes, an agreeable smile, and, at last, yielding to papa's arguments and to ocular evidence, she was forced to confess that I was homely; and then, when I thanked her for the dinner, she tapped my cheek and said:

"'You know, Nikolinka, that no one will love you for your face; therefore you must endeavour to be a good and sensible boy.' These words not only convinced me that I was not a beauty, but also that I should without fail become a good, sensible boy. In spite of this, moments of despair often

[1] It will be remembered that his mother really died when he was two years old. He is probably recounting the words of one of his aunts.

visited me: I fancied there was no happiness on earth for a person with such a wide nose, such thick lips, and such small grey eyes as I had - I besought God to work a miracle to turn me into a beauty and all I had in the present or might have in the future I would give in exchange for a handsome face." [1]

When he was punished by the French tutor for some misdemeanour, he fancied everybody was against him, and, as might be expected, timidity and sensitiveness together produced a distressing loneliness.

"It occurs to me that there must exist some cause for the general dislike and hatred of me. (At that time I was firmly convinced that everybody, beginning with grandmamma and down to Philip the coachman, hated me and found pleasure in my sufferings.) It must be that I am not the son of my father and mother, not Volodya's brother, but an unhappy orphan, a foundling, adopted out of charity, I say to myself; and this absurd idea not only affords me a certain melancholy comfort, but even appears extremely probable. It pleases me to think that I am unhappy, not because I am myself to blame, but because such has been my fate from my very birth." [2]

By this time the boy has become quite morbid.

[1] *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*, p. 66.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 168. On one occasion, after attempting to dance (being unskilled in the art), he was rebuked by his father. He reflects: "Lord, why dost Thou chastise me so terribly?"

He can have been but imperfectly understood, and instead of living the natural life of freedom for which nature intended him, an unkindly environment tormented him with its civilised artificialities, and decreed that this restless youth should submit to the discipline of school and University when instinct bade him follow his own desultory methods of obtaining knowledge.

Tolstoy even in those early years was an idealist: it was part of his mental composition, and nature was accentuated by the circumstances which caused him to live within himself. One day he went out with the hunt, and his duty was to secrete himself in a corner of the field and hold Zhiran the greyhound until a hare came in sight. The story of all that happened is too long to be recounted here, but its best point lies in one sentence, which refers to his excited state of mind whilst waiting for the hare to come: "I fancied I was already coursing my third hare."[1] Many a time since then has Tolstoy adventured beyond reality. When he attacked the poverty in Moscow slums, he saw Heaven instead of Hell ere he had disposed of the first rouble or parted with a loaf of bread; and he has never flinched at the disparity between the prevalent evil and the possible good, or between what is and what might be. This idealism showed itself in several curious ways. The first was *egoism*, a temper of mind not at all

[1] *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*, p. 30.

inconsistent with his timidity. Thus, when eight years old he became possessed of an irresistible desire to fly in the air; and so natural did this desire appear to be, and so consonant with his sense of the value of the *ego* as compared with its surroundings, that he proceeded to make the experiment. He shut himself in his study, opened the window, and leapt into the air, flapping his arms about like a bird. Of course he fell to the ground and was ill for some time afterwards.

The second was inability to settle down to a scholastic curriculum. With his private tutors there was trouble enough, but when he entered the University of Kazan his restlessness had full scope for activity. The School of Oriental Languages first took his attention, but he grew tired of it, and changed over to the School of Law. This suited him better, but his impatience with examinations barred the way to anything like brilliant achievements; and when he left, without even taking his degree, he can only have been following the lead of an inward force which compelled him to seek in the country what he could not find in the city or the professor's class-room.

That he should have—at sixteen—drawn up a set of rules for the guidance of his life is the least remarkable outcome of idealistic tendencies, but that these rules, written on six sheets of paper, should look disappointing in black and white when compared with their fiery existence in his heart, is

in keeping with Tolstoy's temperament. "Why does everything which is so beautiful and clean in my soul turn out so repulsive on paper, and in life generally, when I want to put in practice any of the things which I think?"[1]

We are now brought to a stage in his career which is marked by mental eccentricities, and which will again manifest themselves when the anguish of truth-seeking deepens. The boy is timid, sensitive, passionate, and idealistic: temperament and circumstances have driven his character inwards. What is the result? A boy who tries to be a man. "It is strange how, when I was a child, I strove to be like a grown-up person, and how, since I have ceased to be a child, I have often longed to be like one."[2] Pindar says, "Strive not to be God, a human lot becomes a man." Not so Tolstoy. He draws the breath of life from far away, and the tendency is observable in youth. God in some form or other has ever been the desire of his heart. He attacked problems beyond his mental capacity, and seems to have induced symptoms of brain action which to say the least are abnormal. Max Nordau makes too much capital out of them in his *Degeneration*, but they are more serious than Tolstoy himself appears to have thought, in spite of his admission of a passing state of derangement. The future life and the destiny of man, the origin of life on the planet

[1] *Childhood*, etc., p. 224. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

and the birth of the soul, are problems severe enough to tax the greatest powers, and yet Tolstoy junior, aged about sixteen, boldly pitted his boyish intellect against them, with unfavourable results. The thought occurred to him that happiness does not depend on external conditions, but on our relations to them ; that man, after he is accustomed to endure suffering, cannot be unhappy ; and by way of experiment, he held out Tatischef's *Lexicon* for five minutes in his outstretched hands, in spite of dreadful pain, or entered the garret and castigated himself on his bare back with a rope until the tears sprang involuntarily to his eyes. Like many other writers and poets, he reasoned himself unconsciously into a belief in the doctrine of reincarnation. He was drawing lines on a blackboard, when he suddenly asked the question : "What is symmetry? Is there symmetry in everything? On the contrary, here is life. And I drew an oval figure on the blackboard. After life the soul passes into eternity, and from one side of the oval I drew a line which extended to the very edge of the board. Why not another similar line from the other side? Yes ; and, as a matter of fact, what kind of eternity is that which is on one side only? for we certainly have existed before this life, although we have lost the memory of it."[1]

[1] *Childhood*, etc., p. 185. If the reader will turn to *On Life*, he will find that the above scheme of existence is almost identical with the philosophy of life now held by Tolstoy.

We may not agree with Dr. Crichton-Browne that a belief in reincarnation implies serious mental trouble,[1] but Tolstoy does not stop there. He essays to find out the true relation between objective and subjective. "I fancied that besides myself nothing and nobody existed in the whole world; that objects were not objects, but images which only appeared when I directed my attention to them; and that as soon as I attempted to think of them, the objects disappeared. In a word, I agreed with Schelling in the conviction that objects do not exist, but only my relation to them exists. There were moments when, under the influence of this *fixed idea*, I reached such a state of derangement that I sometimes glanced quickly in the opposite direction, hoping suddenly to find nothingness (*néant*) where I was not."[2] These are undoubtedly symptoms of an overtaxed brain, and they are so far developed that they tremble perilously near the border of complete delusion. Tolstoy himself admits that he suffered in the weakening of his will, and in the loss of freshness of feeling and clearness of judgment. He felt himself to be a great man making mighty philosophical discoveries. He gazed upon other mortals from his own lofty eminence, but when he came down to their level the old shyness returned, and he was timid to excess. He was an idealist

[1] See his *Dreamy Mental States*.
[2] *Childhood*, etc., p. 186.

through and through, and his ultimate belief in the illusion of personal existence, whilst at the same time the terribly real sorrows of that personal existence fill him with despair, is a testimony to his complex nature: as a philosopher he does not believe in the reality of phenomena; as a reformer he believes in nothing more than he can see.

Acting according to impulse and refusing to be turned away from his purpose by his family and the University authorities, Tolstoy, at nineteen, left Kazan and returned to Yasnaya Polyana. In a letter written at this period to his aunt, he says, "I am about to devote myself to a rural life, for which I feel I have been born. You say that I am young. Perhaps; but that does not prevent me from knowing the inclination I have to love the good, and to do it. I found my estates in the utmost disorder. Being compelled to seek a remedy for this state of things, I have come to the conclusion that the root of the evil lies in the misery of the peasants; this evil can only disappear after long and patient work. Is it not then a duty, a sacred duty, to devote myself to the welfare of these seven hundred souls? Why seek in another sphere an opportunity to make myself of service, and to do good, when I have already before me so noble a task, so glorious a mission? I feel capable of being a good master, and for the existence I picture there is no need of

diplomas and degrees. Dear aunt, renounce these ambitious projects which you have formed for me. Accustom yourself to the idea that I have chosen my vocation, the right one I believe, and one that will lead me to happiness."

His aunt would dissuade him from his intentions.

"In life, my dear friend," she writes to him, "our qualities injure us more than our defects. You hope to become a good master? I would say that we have only knowledge of our tendencies when they have already deceived us, and that, to be a good master, it is necessary to be frigid and severe; and I doubt whether you would ever develop those qualities.

"I am almost fifty; I have known many men, respectable in every particular, but I have never heard it said that a young man, well born and with a future, should inter himself in a village under the pretext of doing good. The misery of the peasants is an inevitable evil, in any case an evil which one can relieve without forgetting his duties towards society, towards his own people, and towards himself. With your intelligence, your heart, your love of virtue, it is not the career in which you can hope for success. I believe in your sincerity when you say you are not ambitious, but you deceive yourself. At your age and with your means, ambition is a virtue. You have always wished to figure as an oddity; your

oddity is only another name for your excessive self-love."[1]

But no argument could shake Tolstoyan resolution.

[1] *La Philosophie de Tolstoï*, p. 20.

II

LITERARY LIFE: AND SYMPTOMS OF A CRISIS

"*Toute l'œuvre de Tolstoï peut être considérée comme une autobiographie.*"—OSSIP LOURIÉ.

FOR four or five years, that is, until he was nearly twenty-four, Tolstoy lived at Yasnaya Polyana almost without a break, except for occasional journeys to St. Petersburg or Moscow. This period is, to outsiders, one of the most obscure in the whole of his life, and we are left almost entirely to conjecture as to what were his occupations and the influences that were moulding his mental and moral character. But conjecture need not lead us far from the truth, if we remember his letters to his aunt. He told her that he intended to lead a country life, to reform the administration of his estates, and to relieve the misery of the peasants. Five years is not too long to accomplish the second and third items by means of the first. However much time was occupied by the disordered condition in which he found his property, we may

be sure that he found a considerable margin for the type of desultory reading he loved, and for the search after an ideal, which as yet was vague and undefined. To be face to face with nature and human misery had been his desire, whilst as a student at Kazan he listened to lectures in the class-room or entered into the society life of the place. Now that his desire was realised, he felt the problem of life was still unsolved, for he was unsatisfied himself, and his youthful ardour for reform met with many a discouragement, even from those whom he sought to benefit. In his childhood he thought he himself was very near the centre of the universe. "For the first time a distinct idea entered my head, that not our family alone inhabited this world; that all interests did not revolve about us; and that there exists another life for people who have nothing in common with us."[1] The lives of others had now become of some concern to him, and the Tolstoy family was no longer the centre of creation. Not that at this time altruism was even an embryo religion with him; far from it. He believed in force, heart and soul; but natural instincts of sympathy bade him make some attempt to ameliorate the condition of the serfs, and he made it. Soon it came home to him that the task was far from easy. He appears to have been misunderstood, not only by his equals, but by those for whom he made some sacrifice.

[1] *Childhood*, etc., p. 134.

In 1851 his brother Nikolai, fresh from the Caucasus, came to stay at Yasnaya Polyana, and Leo, desiring a change of scene, was induced to return with his brother. This step was the beginning of a new period, for he was so entranced with the kind of life lived in the Caucasus, that he joined Nikolai's regiment and began a military career which was to be most eventful; and it must have been at this time that the desire for authorship came over him, at any rate it was here he commenced *Childhood*[1] and began to gather important material; whilst there is no sign of previous literary activity during the years 1846–1851.

In the last chapter we became tolerably familiar with his first work, so that it need not detain us here, especially as the subject will come up again when we consider Tolstoy as novelist. *The Cossacks*, *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, and the earlier stories will also be dealt with; our present object is to account for their origin, but mainly to study them as symptoms of the author's intellectual and moral condition at the time of writing. This plan has obvious limitations, and is open to objection, but it is necessary in order to show the organic change in Tolstoy's ideas of the world of men and things.

The instinct to write must have come to him quite naturally. He had sensitiveness and sympathy; he was an egoist and believed in himself;

[1] *Boyhood* and *Youth* were written later.

and the mountains of the Caucasus did the rest. "At first the mountains roused in Olyénin's mind only a sentiment of wonder, then of delight; but afterward, as he gazed at this chain of snowy mountains, not piled upon other dark mountains, but growing and rising right out of the *steppe*, little by little he began to get into the spirit of their beauty, and he *felt* the mountains. From that moment all that he had seen, all that he had thought, all that he had felt, assumed for him the new sternly majestic character of the mountains. All his recollections of Moscow, his shame and his repentance; all his former illusions about the Caucasus, — all disappeared and never returned again."[1]

We do not know what particular book or sketch first engaged Tolstoy's attention, but we know that *Childhood* was finished on the 9th of July 1852, and sent (initialled "L. T.") to *Sovremennik*, a monthly review edited by the poet Nekrassov. Tolstoy heard no more of the matter for some time, until one evening, whilst lying on a couch in a room where officers were quartered, he chanced to hear one of them say, "People are talking in the literary world about a short story signed 'L. T.' which appeared in *Sovremennik*, and which reveals great ability."[2] Afterwards Nekrassov wrote him a charming letter of thanks and congratulation.

[1] *The Cossacks*, p. 29.
[2] Seuron, *Graf Leo Tolstoy*.

Tolstoy's career as a writer had begun — and brilliantly.

The significance of *The Cossacks* from the point of view indicated, is its insatiable love of the "natural" life—life in the open air—life in the woods, on the mountain, and by the river; the life of the natural man living in the midst of nature. This feeling, so prominent a feature in the Tolstoyism of to-day, was thus a growing force; it had driven him from the University and society to Yasnaya Polyana, but his home was evidently too near the attractions of Moscow, and he tore himself away; the desire for life according to nature compelled him to take a long journey to a place where all could be forgotten; and as he approached the Caucasus a voice within seemed to say, "Now life begins."

But a contradiction appears. Olyénin—in other words, Tolstoy — finds that the Cossacks kill Abreks, and Abreks kill Cossacks; and although he is an officer in the army whose final business is that of killing, he asks Lukashka—a Cossack who kills an Abrek—"Wasn't it terrible to you to have killed a man?" "What should I be afraid of?" replies Lukashka, who is proud of his achievement. "What folly and confusion!" thought Olyénin; "a man has killed another, and is happy and satisfied, as though he had done some good deed. Can it be that nothing whispers to him that there is no reason for

rejoicing on account of this? That happiness consists not in killing others, but in self-sacrifice?"[1] This can be no paltry seeking for a contrast between an officer's profession on one hand, and, on the other hand, his acceptance of views diametrically opposed to his profession; it can only be an expression of the author's own feeling put into the mouth of Olyénin, and which finds embodiment in monologues at once descriptive of a delight in nature and an aversion to struggle and death.

Akin to this prophetic incident is a willingness to learn the secrets of life from those who live near the soil and dwell much with nature.

Olyénin meets with an old hunter called Yeroshka—an aggressive, pagan, but somewhat likeable Cossack, who spends his time in the forest, and whose gospel seems to be, "When you die the grass will grow over you: that is all." He teaches Olyénin the art of hunting, but his paganism is catching, and Olyénin, as the story develops, shows how much Yeroshka has done for him in ethical matters, for he determines to have his fling, even if he trespasses on the rights of another. It will be remembered how in *War and Peace* Bezúkhof learns the secrets of existence from Karataeff, a peasant; how in *Anna Karenina*, it is Theodore the peasant who brings Levine to see the way in which men should live; and

[1] *The Cossacks*, p. 191.

how in *The Death of Ivan Ilyitch*, the peasant Gerasime inspires the dying man with faith to find light and bliss in that death he had once awaited with such dread horror. Those who have already followed Tolstoy's own development, and his glorification of the peasant ideal, will see the preparation for these later developments in the incidents here recorded.

Tolstoy remained in the Caucasus until 1853, and when the Crimean War broke out he applied for permission to join the army of the Danube. In 1854 we see him in active service as a member of the staff of Prince Gortchakoff, to whom he was related. By November he had reached Sevastopol, and in May 1855 he was made commander of a division. During that long and bloody siege he distinguished himself by his exceptional bravery, and was considered a wonderful hero even by his comrades. After the celebrated battle of the 16th August, Tolstoy was made aide-de-camp and named for decoration with the usual orders, but this event never realised itself; for he had been unable to dissociate his name with the authorship of a song satirising the movements of Russian troops, a song known and sung by the majority of the soldiers, and not at all complimentary to Russian officers.[1]

The Caucasus had been a school in which

[1] Ossip Lourié, *La Philosophie de Tolstoi*, p. 31.

Tolstoy learned much, with enjoyment; here in Sevastopol he was to learn more, but with deep suffering. The Caucasus represented life according to nature; Sevastopol was—civilisation. He was brave and did his duty; but the whole thing horrified him. Not that he was unpatriotic,—far from it. In *Sevastopol*, he describes the love of country which possessed him and his fellow-soldiers with a keenness and passion about which there can be no mistake. But war *per se* he soon came to hate. He knew what it was to be under fire for the first time, and to remain under fire for varying periods. Could anything be more vivid than this brief account of the coming of a shell against the bastion?—

"As he turned he saw a sudden flash of light: 'Mortar!' cried the lookout, and one of the soldiers who was following, added, 'It's coming straight at the bastion!' Mikhailoff looked up; the bomb, like a point of fire, seemed at its zenith, at the very moment when to decide what course it was going to take was impossible; for an instant it seemed to stop; suddenly, at redoubled speed, the projectile approached them; already the flying sparks were visible, and the mournful hissing could be clearly heard. 'Down' cried a voice!"[1]

This is Tolstoy as a literary artist. As a man viewing the death of his comrades, he says:

"There in the hospital you will see scenes which

[1] *Sevastopol, May* 185 .

frighten you, which pierce your heart. There you will see war without the brilliant marshalling of troops in line, without music, without the rolling of drums, without the flapping standard, without the general on his mettlesome steed. There you will see it in its reality, in blood, in suffering, and in death."[1] Here is the incipient Tolstoy of to-day,—the Tolstoy of *The Kingdom of God within You* and of *Patriotism and Government.*

His complexity of character is again strikingly illustrated in his life behind the walls of the fort. In the Caucasus he was solitary; in Sevastopol he was the life of his immediate circle, enlivening their dull moments by short stories and improvised couplets; he was a soldier and a patriot, yet horrified at war; he was an idealist, and yet disappeared from the fort for one, two, or even several days to take part in some orgy in Simphéropol, a town not far away. And all the time he was writing! After these orgies (one of his old comrades tells us) Tolstoy was always very unhappy; he looked on himself as a criminal. But, adds this same witness, although he was strange and impenetrable, "he was a true and good comrade, a rare and honest soul; it is absolutely impossible to forget him."[2]

The literary products of Sevastopol were *Boyhood*, *The Invasion of the Cossacks*, *The Felling of the Forest*, and, of course, the memorable *Sevastopol*

[1] *Sevastopol, December* 1854. [2] *Ossip Lourié*, p. 35.

in May and December.[1] On the 27th August 1855 he took part in the assault of Sevastopol, and afterwards was sent as a courier to St. Petersburg.

With this begins the most brilliant period of Tolstoy's life, for at the close of the war, in the same year, he severed his connection with the army, and devoted the whole of his winters to literary and social pursuits in Moscow or St. Petersburg, spending only the summers at Yasnaya Polyana. The glory of literary success had seized him, and he hastened to enjoy it; for, as we read in *My Confession*, he thought the gospel of the *litterateur* would give him peace, and satisfy all the desires of his heart. He was received by Turgenieff, Nekrasov, Ostrovsky, Gontcharoff, and the whole circle of writers as one of themselves.[2] In such company and with such an atmosphere Tolstoy naturally produced a good deal of work, and to this period belong *Youth*, *Sevastopol in August*, *Two Hussars*, *Three Deaths*, *Family Happiness*, and *Polikuschka*. But satisfaction with the circle of *litterateurs* was to be short-lived. We learn this from *My Confession*, but we might have guessed it from the fact that Tolstoy, after returning to Yasnaya Polyana for a brief period, commenced to travel with the object of learning the best methods of education; intending to use this knowledge for

[1] *Sevastopol in August* was written later.

[2] For an excellent description of Tolstoy's life at this period, see Schuyler's *Select Essays*.

the benefit of the peasants. The gospel of literature had failed him, and he returned to nature and those who tilled the soil. He visited Germany, Switzerland, France, and England (1857), worked hard at his mission, and returned home to do what he could in the way of raising the condition of his dependants. For three years he laboured as schoolmaster with little encouragement, for the pupils "grew" beautifully less. His faith in human nature was too simple and—too great. Besides, the misery of the peasants was too deep rooted to be relieved at once. Tolstoy not unnaturally succumbs to disappointment and illness, hence he rushes away to the Bashkirs "to live an animal life"—a life according to nature.

On his return he sought the hand of Sophie Andreevna, daughter of Dr. Behrs of Moscow, and married her on the 23rd of September 1862. Tolstoy was thirty-four and she was eighteen. The marriage has been a happy one, and in spite of all that has happened to separate them, in the teeth of radical changes in thought and habit, the two still cleave together; not perhaps in the simplicity of early love, or even on the understanding of maturer years, but on the plane of duty. For fifteen years —from 1862 to 1877—he lived at Yasnaya Polyana wrapped up in his family, and, as leisure allowed, in his literary work; for this period is to produce his masterpieces of art and life, viz. *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

War and Peace occupied the author's attention for five years—1864 to 1869. One of the chief characters is Pierre Bezúkhof, whose wife is unfaithful to him; but Tolstoy does not allow him to obtain a divorce,—wherein we have a hint of the doctrine that will spring up later in *My Religion.* Madame Bezúkhof separates from her husband after he has allowed her to take half his possessions, and Pierre sets out for St. Petersburg. His thoughts, his monologues, his hopes, and his fears are eminently Tolstoyan. He becomes a Freemason in the hope of discovering a new interest in, and meaning to, life; but contact with Prince Bolkonsky, coupled with inability to carry out a projected reform, affect his new ideas disastrously. How well did Tolstoy know the feeling of discovering a gospel; and then discovering it was nothing after all!

Again, Princess Marya, Bolkonsky's sister, terrified by the iron discipline of her father, seeks counsel at the hands of outcasts, peasants, and people of devout spirit: not because they are learned, for they are grossly ignorant; but because they seemed to understand life, to grasp its meaning, and to be able to bear up manfully when deeply afflicted. She learns much from them, and once more Tolstoy makes poverty in this world's goods almost a necessary condition of clear vision and true solace. And finally, as already noted, Karataeff leads Bezúkhof into the light.

But it is in *Anna Karenina* that there are more definite symptoms of a coming crisis. He wrote this work of transcendent merit between 1873 and 1876, beginning it five years after finishing *War and Peace*, by which time his opinions had taken such shape that the thinker and moralist could not hide himself behind the artist; although, with an artistic object in view, no thinking and no moralising could ever mar the expression of his artistic conceptions. The central idea from the point of view of this chapter is that the adulterous amour of Anna Karenina with Count Vronsky cannot be purged by means of a divorce. Anna is a woman who is not understood by her husband, a man of exemplary character, but hard and flinty in disposition,—a man of correctness, but lacking in soul and sympathy. When his wife leaves him and goes to live with Vronsky, the latter naturally desires a divorce, so that marriage can take place in the ordinary way, especially as Karenin is a consenting party. But Anna refuses. There is something in the proposal which touches her dignity to the quick. This refusal is the beginning of strife, and to end it Anna determines to interview her husband and arrange the divorce forthwith. She finds, however, that he has been instructed by mystics, whose counsel he sought, to the effect that the divorce cannot be allowed, and he therefore refuses Anna's request.

Tolstoy's development is herein clearly revealed.

Marriage has become an indissoluble bond; nothing but death can sever the knot when once it has been tied. Even the desertion of Anna, and the birth of a child of which Vronsky is the father, is no justification for Karenin to cast her off. As wife, and as mistress of another man, she is still his —to forgive.

Other notes which sound the coming change are struck by Konstantin Levine, into whom Tolstoy has evidently put a section of himself. When patriotism manifests itself in Russian youths. Levine's sense of the rights of universal man are offended, and he resents in clear terms the glorification of one people at the expense of another. "Resist not evil" is within measurable distance of discovery; and when Vronsky propounds a scheme whereby the peasants shall benefit by means of land reorganisation, we feel already the breath of Tolstoy's *What to Do* blowing upon us.

As to how these later works were received by an admiring world may be left until a later chapter; but we have seen enough of restlessness, of sin, of ennui, of passion, and of moral idealism, to prepare us for a singular confession. In the pages which immediately follow Tolstoy tells his own story.

III

MORAL CONVERSION

"Conversion—a grand epoch for a man; properly the one epoch; the turning-point which guides upwards, or guides downwards, him and his activities for evermore."—CARLYLE.

ANNA KARENINA was written between the years 1873 and 1876. In 1879 appeared *My Confession.* If there had been no symptom of a coming crisis such as that revealed in this book, it would be difficult to believe that in 1876 Tolstoy was an aristocrat, a man of the world, and a *litterateur* with no particular religion, and in 1879 a peasant at heart, a mystic, and a social reformer. Three short years is too short a space of time for so marvellous a transformation. Tolstoy begins his confession by an account of the religion of his childhood. He was trained and educated in the faith of the Orthodox Greek Church, but does not seem to have been more than ordinarily devout; indeed, he and his brother before entering their teens welcomed the "news" brought to them by a schoolfellow that there was "no God." At fifteen

Tolstoy began to read philosophy, and at sixteen he ceased to pray. At eighteen, when his course of study at the University was finished, he had discarded all the beliefs of his childhood.

What took the place of this lost religion? The belief in the possibility of perfection. This looks as if orthodoxy had given place to the Greek conception of the Greatest Good, a suggestion that is strengthened by Tolstoy's own words. "I endeavoured to reach perfection in intellectual attainments; my studies were extended in every direction of which my life afforded me a chance; I strove to strengthen my will, forming for myself rules which I forced myself to follow; I did my best to develop my physical powers by every exercise calculated to give strength and agility, and, by way of accustoming myself to patient endurance, I subjected myself to many voluntary hardships and trials of privation."[1] It is singular that perfectibility is still at the present time a passion with him, but it is not the perfectibility of one, but of all; and that not in the general sense, physical, mental, and moral, but in the moral sense alone. To put it colloquially, Tolstoy began by saying to his fellows, "Not you, but me"; he ended by saying, "Not me, but you." His confession is the story of how he transferred perfection from the individual unit to the mass of humanity.

For ten years he tried to reach his ideal, but he

[1] *My Confession*, p. 8.

had not reckoned with his passions or with his environment. He failed miserably. "Lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence and murder, all committed by me, not one crime omitted, and yet I was not the less considered by my equals a comparatively moral man."[1] There can be no doubt of the general truth of these words,—remembering, of course, that "murder" refers to warfare. When the standard of Russian life is taken into account, a standard which permitted an aunt, "a really good woman," to hope that he would soon have an intrigue with a married woman, it is hardly a matter for surprise that Tolstoy's passionate nature, nursed in such an environment, was unequal to the moral strain put upon it. At twenty-six he went to St. Petersburg, and, as one would have expected, was lionised as a great writer and one of the glories of the empire. He soon accepted the views of life held by his literary comrades, and all his struggles after perfection came to an ignoble end. Once more he had lost his religion.

What was to be the next step? To ask this question is to misconstrue the position. He had lost the idea of perfection almost imperceptibly, and almost as imperceptibly had accepted the creed of the *litterateur*. That creed taught the divine mission of the thinker and poet to teach mankind the art of life, and the secret of its de-

[1] *My Confession*, p. 10.

velopment. For twelve months Tolstoy was quite happy in his new creed, but began to doubt its truth in the second year, and more particularly in the third. *Litterateurs*, he found, might be divine teachers, but their contradictions of each other's doctrines were ridiculous, and their moral characters were a disgrace. It was evident that another change was coming, but a change to what? To nothing—in the shape of a gospel.

He began the policy of drift, and he drifted for six years. During that time he travelled considerably, and we hear of a revival of the old notion of perfectibility,—which others call progress. In Paris he witnessed an execution, and the horror of it caused him to disbelieve in progress as commonly understood. "I understood . . . that if all the men in the world from the day of creation, by whatever theory, had found this thing necessary, it was not so; it was a bad thing, and that therefore I must judge of what was right and necessary, not by what men said and did, not by progress, but what I felt to be true in my heart."[1] There we see the germ of Tolstoy's future criticism of civilisation, and it is suggestive that human progress is condemned *in toto* on the basis of its worst manifestation, rather than valued at its best. We also see the germ—in the last sentence—of the doctrine of rational consciousness. He returned to his own country to occupy his mind by educating the peasants, by writing fiction, and

[1] *My Confession*, p. 19.

by journalism,—for he was both proprietor and editor. Mental occupation, however, did not quell the deeper questions of life. Everything he saw, everything he read, and everything he did, seemed to lead him into problems for which he could find no solution.

He married. Domestic life accomplished more to give him peace of mind than any of his schemes for educating peasants or cultivating opinion by means of the press. "The new circumstances of a happy family life by which I was now surrounded completely led my mind away from the search after the meaning of life as a whole. My life was concentrated in my family, my wife and children, and consequently in the care for increasing the means of supporting them. The effort to effect my own individual perfection, already replaced by the striving after general progress, was again changed into an effort to secure the particular happiness of my family. In this way fifteen years passed."[1] It must not be supposed that the deeper questions previously referred to never insinuated themselves into his mind during this long period of comparative tranquillity. That could never be the case with a naturally restless disposition. But there can be no doubt that for many years Tolstoy's religion was his family's welfare. When the time came for an outbreak of the old conditions,—about midway in the writing of *Anna Karenina* (1874),—mental

[1] *My Confession*, p. 23.

symptoms showed themselves which are difficult to reconcile with the statement that he was in the best of health and strength. Certainly the mind-torpor of which he speaks—"I began to wander, and was a victim to low spirits"—points almost infallibly to some derangement,—bodily rather than mental. He had attacks in increasing frequency, and they were accompanied by the questions, "Why?" and "What after?" Life had come to a full stop, it had no meaning for him; and unless a meaning could be found, suicide was the only logical result. Three sentences will show the state of mind he was in at this period: "I could not attribute reasonable motive to any single act, much less to my whole life."[1] "I was happy, yet I hid away a cord, to avoid being tempted to hang myself by it to one of the pegs between the cupboards of my study, where I undressed alone every evening; and ceased carrying a gun, because it offered too easy a way of getting rid of life."[2] "The horror of the darkness was too great to bear, and I longed to free myself from it by a rope or a pistol ball. This was the feeling that, above all, drew me to think of suicide."[3]

A close scrutiny of these statements gives one the impression that Tolstoy either misinterpreted his symptoms or forgot their characteristics when he came to record them.[4] The first quotation

[1] *My Confession*, p. 32. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 30. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[4] "I now see that I did not kill myself, because I had, in

suggests complete mental exhaustion. The relations of things disappeared altogether, and when he thinks of how he shall educate his son, the question "Why?" crops up and completely confuses him. This can be the result of one thing alone,—brain fag. The other two quotations are flatly contradictory. In one he says he was happy, and yet took precautions not to commit suicide,—a statement which, if at all indicative of his condition at the time, is additional evidence of mental exhaustion. In the last quotation, so far from being happy, he says he was in the horror of darkness and longed to get out of it by suicide. Probably Tolstoy suffered from some obscure ailment difficult of detection; but whatever the cause, the effects were distressing to his happiness, and gave the old questions the chance of asserting themselves,—a chance for which they had waited for years. Once more he set out in search of a religion.

This time the anguish of the search was pitiably intense. Life seemed like a cruel joke which some creative force had played upon him. Half despairing, he turned to the field of knowledge for enlightenment. To science and philosophy he addressed the question, "What is the meaning of Life?" Neither of them could return a satisfactory reply. He then turned to life itself. How

a confused sort of way, an inkling that my ideas were wrong." —*My Confession*, p. 72.

did other men answer the question? In four ways: (1) the method of ignorance (do not realise that life is absurd); (2) the method of Epicureanism (get what you can out of life, and never think of the future); (3) the method of suicide (understand that life is an evil, and kill yourself); and (4) the method of acquiescence (know that life is unprofitable, and still live). In these four ways men in Tolstoy's own social position answered the grave question of life's meaning. The third way was the only one that appealed to him; and yet he felt impelled to wait before taking his life. The aristocracy formed but a small portion of humanity, and, besides, rich and poor alike live on as if they understood all they wished to understand. "Yes, men live on and never think of calling in question the reasonableness of life."[1] Why? Here was room for a fresh start, and Tolstoy began to study the peasantry, who appeared to dwell in contentment. The ultimate discovery was a painful one. The peasantry, he found, had an answer to the meaning of life, but it was based on orthodox theology, in which he did not believe. What was to be done now? Could delusion, fallacy, error, help men to be happy and give existence a rational atmosphere? or was reason incapable of prosecuting inquiries? This was the opening out of a new vista. He found that the working classes, however deceived

[1] *My Confession*, p. 73.

as to ceremonial superstitions, had a principle of faith by which they lived; and, on examining the life of countries other than his own, he discovered the same fact. "From the beginning of the human race, wherever there is life, there is the faith which makes life possible, and everywhere the leading characteristics of faith are the same."[1] The next point was to decide whether this faith could ever be his. He studied the Koran, the sacred writings of India, and the Bible. He questioned the professors of orthodoxy, and catechised the dissenters. Neither afforded him satisfaction, but he was impressed by the note of reality in the faith of the poorer people. It seemed to him that their religion was a true solace and a source of strength. He sought for God and prayed for light, but no answer came. Still he persevered, and one change in mental attitude was eventually accomplished: "The life of my own circle of rich and learned men not only became repulsive, but lost all meaning whatever. All our actions, our reasoning, our science and art, all appeared to me in a new light. I understood that it was all child's play, that it was useless to seek a meaning in it. The life of the working classes, of the whole of mankind, of those that create life, appeared to me in its true significance. I understood that this was life itself, and that the meaning given to this life was a true one, and I accepted it."[2]

[1] *My Confession*, p. 87. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

Let us pause a moment to note the significance of this change. Tolstoy had already seen that men in his own station, and educated men everywhere, returned one of four answers to the question: What is the meaning of life? Not one of these answers satisfied him fully. On the other hand, the peasantry had an answer which, to themselves, was both satisfactory and helpful. From these facts a remarkable inference is drawn, viz., *that the kind of life we live is responsible for our discernment of life's meaning;* and that as the peasantry possess a discernment which enters deeply into their souls, the life of the peasant is the natural and the ideal life, because it engenders a true outlook on the world—finite and infinite. Tolstoy is now travelling quickly—too quickly to be certain of his ground. Nowhere but in Russia is it possible to divide men into two distinct classes—rich and poor, learned and illiterate; and universal arguments based on local conditions are bound to come to grief. In another place he states the fact conclusively: "If a man does not see the unreality of the finite, he believes in the finite; if he sees that unreality, he must believe in the infinite. Without faith there is no life." Well said! but what a weapon against his own logic! How many millions of people there are in Europe, in every conceivable social position, who believe in the finite alone! and how many other millions, as diversified socially and politically, who

see the unreality of the finite and turn with longing to the infinite! There is almost as much religion—of a kind—in the higher classes everywhere in Europe as there is religion—of a kind—among the lower classes; but as Russia is a possible exception, and the peasantry are unusually devout, Tolstoy argues that the higher classes have got too high, and that progress is a soul-destroying error. We must hie ourselves back again to the land and to simplicity; only there shall we find the true meaning of life. Civilisation is struck down at one blow, and he is committed to the outcome of accepting a new ideal. What this outcome is he does not know, for as yet he has not found his religion; he is still seeking it.

He threw himself with characteristic ardour into Church worship, by attending the services, praying night and morning, and fasting. As usual, the note of dissatisfaction soon sounded. The partaking of the communion, with its required belief in transubstantiation, was too much for him; and in trying to reconcile the Greek Church with the Roman Catholic, and both with the Protestant Church, he found that men's bitterness of feeling was more than he could overcome. What with miracles and ceremonies in the worship itself, and lack of the principle of love among those who called themselves Christians, together with a readiness to go to war, he discovered his position was untenable, and consequently severed his connection

with orthodox Christianity for ever. Hitherto he had feared to study the Bible and Church traditions too closely, lest what little faith he had should be lost to him; but, having now no connection with the Church as an institution, he began to read the Scriptures in order to discover why it was that the peasantry in particular found a meaning for life in their religion—a meaning which evidently had some truth in it, but also a good deal of error.

We have now reached an important stage in Tolstoy's mental and religious development, and must consider in what way he will proceed to arrive at his final conclusions. It is clear that, like the rest of us, he will open his Bible with certain well-defined prejudices. For instance, he is prejudiced against the miraculous; therefore all the narratives of miraculous happenings must be thrown overboard, or else receive a naturalistic interpretation. Again, there is the prejudice of the peasant ideal; therefore all teaching which lends itself to the multiplication of the various classes of men, or involves a tendency to complex civilisation, must be due to a prophet's weakness or an apostle's dulness of understanding. Hence, before Tolstoy re-reads the Scripture, we know what some of the results will be: he will reject everything that directly negatives his findings up to date, select everything that is consonant therewith, and put the rest on one side for further study.

At last he reached the truth, and the story of his

exegesis is given in *My Religion*. The turning-point came when he was reading the Gospels. "I read and re-read them. Of the whole gospel scheme one thing had always stood out for me in stronger relief than any other,—the Sermon on the Mount. And this it was I read oftener than anything else. In no other place does Jesus speak with such solemnity ; nowhere else does He enunciate so many moral, clear, and comprehensible rules, appealing so straight to the heart of every man ; nowhere else does He speak to a greater or more various mass of simple folk. If there be any clear and definite rules of Christian conduct, here it is that they must be found. In these three chapters of Matthew, then, I sought the solution of my doubts."[1]

One day, in reading the words, "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth ; but I say unto you, Resist not evil," he suddenly, and for the first time, understood these words as being a prohibition of the use of violence. "Resist not evil." "Let the evil man do as he pleases with you. When smitten, smite not again. Return good for evil. Love not your neighbours only, but also your enemies." He read the Gospels again in the light of this passage. Discrepancies, confusions, and mysteries disappeared one by one, and finally he came to believe that Christianity was a literal obedience to the com-

[1] *My Confession*, p. 13.

mands of the Sermon on the Mount. His joy was almost delirious. No more doubts, no more conflicts, no more thoughts of suicide through despair of finding life's elusive meaning; the search had been long and heart-breaking, but the joy of discovery was overwhelming. Tolstoy had found his religion.

As we shall see later, there were modifications and developments in his views, but at this time his religion was summed up in five commandments—

(1) Do not be angry (Matt. v. 22).
(2) Do not be sexually incontinent (Matt. v. 28).
(3) Take no oaths (Matt. v. 34).
(4) Resist not evil by violence (Matt. v. 39).
(5) Love your enemies (Matt. v. 44).

The reader may say that this is hardly a religion at all; it is more a code of morals. But above this code, behind it, beneath it, everywhere suffusing it, was the principle of Love, and the God of Christ became the God of Tolstoy. Probably he could not have told any one in those days what exactly he meant by God, but he had found the meaning of life in Love; and in the joy of such a discovery the more philosophical side of Christianity could wait for the development of time.

Meanwhile, what happened in the domestic circle at Yasnaya Polyana? What effect had Tolstoy's change of views on his family and his property? An effect so discordant, that had it not been for the sense, business capacity, and forbearance of

Countess Tolstoy, and the fatherly solicitude of the Count himself, disaster would have been inevitable. The Count was for living as a peasant; the Countess declined to follow him. The Count wished to hold no private property; whereupon the Countess insisted upon a deed of transfer to herself and children. This eventually was carried out, and all the property, including copyrights of books, passed into the hands of the Countess. Visitors to Yasnaya Polyana come away with accounts of the excellent relationship existing between all parties; but there are other accounts, quite authoritative, which point another way. Mr. C. A. Behrs says that Tolstoy has sometimes walked out of the house saying he would never return. Infelicity of this kind is so inevitable that it is best to pass it over in silence.

In the next chapter we shall examine his religious and social teaching at length, but before closing this chapter something ought to be said as to the forces which conspired together to work so remarkable a change of attitude and belief. First comes the temperament of the man. Tolstoy, at heart, is deeply religious. He saw the unreality of the finite, and could not rest until he had found the infinite. It is not so with all men, whether they be rich, poor, learned or unlearned. They seek for a time, and then give up the search as futile. Millions never seek at all. But with Tolstoy life is worthless without a meaning,—not his own life so

much as the life of all men. He is a believer by nature, and delights in obedience to what he recognises as the laws of being. In *My Confession* he suggests that his boyhood was not particularly devout, but this statement does not tally with that of Mr. C. A. Behrs, his brother-in-law. "Even as a boy he began to note down with scrupulous accuracy, in a copybook specially reserved for that purpose, every little sin he had committed since his last confession, in order that he might repent of such sins, and if possible refrain from fresh relapses, and particularly from any offence against the seventh commandment." [1]

Like Augustine, like Loyola, like Francis of Assisi, Tolstoy is what he is largely because he could be no other. Temperament is the womb of destiny.[2]

Added to the first factor is a second, viz., racial

[1] *Recollections of Count Tolstoy*, p. 14.

[2] Tolstoy's temperament is so peculiarly intense, that he of all men should have travelled widely. Mr. A. D. White, at one time U. S. Ambassador to St. Petersburg, says: "Of all distinguished men I have ever met, Tolstoy seems to me most in need of that enlargement of view and healthful modification of opinion which come from observing men, and comparing opinions on different lands and under different conditions. . . . Like so many other men of genius in Russia then,—and Russia is fertile in such,—he has had little opportunity to take part in any real discussion of leading topics, and the result is that his opinions have been developed without modification by any rational interchange of thought with other men. Under such circumstances, any man, no matter how noble or gifted, having given birth to striking ideas, coddles and pets them until they become the full-grown spoiled children of his brain."—*The Idler*, July 1901.

influence. The Russian character is complex to a high degree. It is the product of neither Occident nor Orient, but, standing as it does between the East and the West, it mingles the elements of both and almost defies classification. But one of its most impressive features is its piety, its love of devotion, and its delight in sacrifice.[1] The peasantry in matters of faith have a "craving for discomfort. It is this craving that must be realised to explain Tolstoy, and it may be traced in almost every one of the innumerable sects which have broken away from Russian orthodoxy. The self-burnings among the Bezpopoftsy, the flagellations among the Khlysty, the unspeakable mutilations of the Skoptsy, with many another scarcely conceivable rite of self-torture, all have their origin in the strenuous asceticism at the base of the Russian character."[2] With this testimony, although expressed differently and from another point of view, agrees that of Georg Brandes. "The fundamental inclination which numerous experiences disclose to the stranger is,—the inclination to have their swing. It is not simply the inclination to extremes. But it is this: when a Russian has got hold of a thought, a fundamental idea, a principle, a purpose . . . he does not rest until he has followed it out to the last results."[3] If this be Russian character,

[1] See *Russian Life in Town and Country*, p. 187.
[2] *Edinburgh Review*, vol. cxciv. p. 51.
[3] *Impressions of Russia*, p. 22.

what a Russian of the Russians Tolstoy is! How deeply has he absorbed the passive propensity of the peasantry, and how subtly did it direct him towards the verse in Scripture wherein are the classic lines on non-resistance!

The third factor is Tolstoy's environment. It is not too much to say that he owes a great deal to the people whose cause he has made his own. Among Russian dissenting bodies non-resistance was a tenet long before Tolstoy preached it, but in the *Confession* there is no hint of his acquaintance with this fact. True, he says in one place that he listened to an unlettered pilgrim and learned something of what faith was; and, again, that as he mixed with the people the truth became clearer to him.[1] But in *My Religion* the discovery is referred to as his own, and he expressly remarks with surprise that he had never before taken Christ's words literally.

Even so gentle a critic as Bode, who seems to possess an accurate knowledge of Russian sects, is of opinion that Tolstoy is not the first preacher of the new life, but its most powerful exponent. "I cannot light upon a single feature of Tolstoy's world-philosophy wherein thousands of his countrymen have not anticipated him."[2] Tolstoy does not claim any kind of originality for his teaching, but he does claim to have discovered

[1] *My Confession*, p. 130.
[2] *Die Lehren Tolstois*, pp. 172, 171.

the truth for himself, and there is no reason why we should disbelieve him. Had it been otherwise, he would have acknowledged his indebtedness to a peasant as cheerfully as he did to Christ.

But no man can be independent of his environment; he may not be conscious of the full scope of its influence,—Tolstoy was to a large extent,—but he cannot get away from the prevailing atmosphere. Think for a moment of the conditions of life in Russia, and of the fate which overtook many of the novelist's predecessors, friends, and contemporaries.

"Rykéief was hanged as a conspirator; Gogol committed suicide at 43; Pushkin was killed in a duel at 38; Lérmontoff, twice an exile, died in the same way at 30; Shevtchénko, beaten, tortured, and robbed by imprisonment of half his life, died at 47; Vénévitinof succumbed to insult and outrage at 22; Koltzof died at 23 of a broken heart; Belínsky perished of starvation and consumption at 38; Chernishevski, after two years' imprisonment, was sentenced to the mines at 35; Herzen was imprisoned, twice exiled, and finally banished; Dostoyévski, led out to be shot when 27, was only released from Siberia ten years later, broken in mind and spirit." [1]

If this was life on the active plane, the life in the midst of which Tolstoy lived, how natural it becomes to associate him with a movement towards

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, vol. cxciv. p. 51.

passive resistance. The fierce activity of the Government at St. Petersburg has suggested to many who are not Russians the wisdom of resistance of some kind. The Nihilists resist by force; Tolstoy would resist passively. At first sight it seems strange that non-resistance as a method of life should promise best in the land of despotic monarchy; but, looked at more closely, it becomes the most obvious of national manifestations. There can be no doubt that the political factor in assisting Tolstoy's development was a very strong one; and when temperamental and social influences are considered together, as well as the pressure of religious environment, Tolstoy's moral conversion, for his countrymen, is a perfectly natural phenomenon, and it ought to be for everybody else.

IV

TOLSTOY AS NOVELIST

"*War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* are . . . really novels, original copies."—MEREJOWSKI.

"IF the most interesting books," says M. Vogüé, "are those which translate faithfully the existence of a fraction of humanity at a given moment of history, our century has produced nothing more interesting than the work of Tolstoy. It has produced nothing more remarkable with reference to literary qualities. I do not hesitate to say what I think in speaking of this writer, for when he chooses to be a novelist he is one of the greatest masters among those who bear witness for the century."

With this witness the world of letters everywhere is in substantial agreement. Tolstoy is a great novelist. He has all the human qualities that go to make him a sympathetic observer of his fellows; he has mental power more than sufficient to analyse motive and seek the meaning of life; and as to literary expression,—nature has made him a master.

In *My Confession* he speaks of some who adopt the method of *acquiescence:* they know life is absurd, but—they live on. Tolstoy never acquiesced. If he had, we should have been without those works of fiction than which, during the nineteenth century, there has been nothing more significant. The Schopenhauer element in Tolstoy proved to be a literary spur. Life was so crooked, so meaningless, so cynical, that there was a pleasure in telling the world about it; and an added pleasure in suggesting lines of conduct wherein the writer would improve upon the world as he found it.

Keen observation—observation with insight—is manifest on every page. Nothing escapes him: nature, civilisation, men, women, children, animals, —all are described with an intimacy which is truly amazing. When Anna Karenina gains access to her little boy, by stealth, the scene in its domestic simplicity is inimitably portrayed.

"Let me go in—let me," she stammered.

"At the right of the door was a bed, and on the bed a child was sitting up in his little open night-gown; his little body was leaning forward, and he was just finishing a yawn and stretching himself. His lips were just closing into a sleepy smile, and he fell back upon his pillow still smiling."

Do we not feel that Anna is right in her daring? that the boy is just the sort of little chap to win hearts other than his mother's?

In his earlier novels Tolstoy evinced a

descriptive power which seems to be absent in *Resurrection*, — we mean descriptive of nature. It comes to us with a smack of oddity to think that the author of *The Slavery of our Times* and the apostle of non-resistance ever depicted a night scene like the following :—

"Then everything acquired another meaning for me ; and the sight of the ancient beeches, as their branches on one side shone in the light of the moonlit heavens, on the other side casting black shadows over the bushes and the road ; and the calm, splendid gleam of the pond increasing like a sound . . . and the sound of the snipe beyond the pond ; and the voice of a man on the highway ; and the quiet, almost inaudible scraping of two old beeches against each other . . . and the hops of the frogs, which sometimes even got so far as the verandah steps, and shone rather mysteriously in the moonlight with their green backs,—all this assumed a strange significance for me, the significance of a beauty too great and of an endless happiness!" [1]

Tolstoy's sensitiveness to impressions and his powers of observation—intensive and extensive, as logicians would say—have not always proved themselves to be advantageous. They have incited him to revisions of his work almost numberless, and in his case revisions inevitably mean enlargements, —never a pruning process whereby he seeks to say

[1] *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*, p. 333.

the most in the least number of words. To this habit of revision-enlargement is due the prolixity of many portions of *War and Peace* and *Resurrection*, and the occasional wordiness of *Anna Karenina*, as well as the more wearisome repetitions of the books on religion and social science.

But it is a mark of exceptional merit that in spite of a tendency to increase the size of a book, the reverse of an author's usual process, Tolstoy has secured so high a place in the world of letters for distinctive qualities of style. Only a master hand could run such risks and achieve splendid results. The style of *The Cossacks*, of *Anna Karenina*, of *My Confession*, and of *The Root of the Evil*, is really one style, *i.e.* simplicity itself. And there cannot possibly be a better style. If the object is to set forth his views on the social question, he will convey his statements of fact and arrange his arguments, as directly, plainly, and convincingly as possible. If the purpose is to tell an interesting and dramatic story, he eschews everything that will come between his readers and the story he wishes to tell. When we close the book on social evils, we do not think so much of the writer,—we think of suffering humanity, of the suggestions offered to relieve that suffering, and of the utter impossibility of abolishing suffering altogether. And when we have read *The Cossacks*, we do not put the book down, saying, "How clever Tolstoy is!" We say, "What a splendid story!"

We have forgotten the author in the incidents narrated, and the style in the pleasure of reading. To our mind, this is the ideal method of story-telling. Why should the author attract our attention, continually, from the narrative to himself, by asking us to see how cleverly he can phrase his thoughts,—or how artificially? Why should he compel us to agonise in order to get at his meaning? or subject us to perpetual digressions from the business in hand? If we desire the services of a writer who can take us for a literary pilgrimage, with excursions into curious byways, we call in Mr. Le Gallienne; but the man who sits down to write a novel, and allows his style to become weighted with excess of epigram, or some other form of literary disease, will, whatever his redeeming excellences, contribute to the defeat of his purpose. Instead of centring our attention on the story, he seems to ask us to admire his jugglery with words; and when we wish to be absorbed in events, he appears to attract our attention to himself. It is useless to talk about personality in literature, and of the writer infusing his soul into his work. If his soul is satisfied with literary antics, we know what to think; for there is nothing striking about a personality that can be contained within the narrow limits of the purely minor elements of language. Such a man is not essentially a teller of stories; he is an egotist with a pen in his hand.

Leo Tolstoy and Thomas Hardy are novelists of country life, and there is a close analogy between their respective styles and methods. Each chooses the primary passions of life as forming the best material for representing life in its dramatic intensity; each is far more interested in his work than in himself; and each has a style of writing, simple, direct, and powerful. There is no sign of laborious effort; the sentences nowhere smell of the lamp; and the sense of reality is overwhelming in its vividness. Hardy still occupies the first place in English fiction, and Egdon Heath, as a description and interpretation of nature, stands alone in solitary grandeur. Tolstoy, in spite of what men call his brain softening, can write as cogently as ever, and, as Voguë says, the nineteenth century has seen no more distinctive work than his. These facts suggest a few reflections. One is that both writers live near the soil and abhor the city. The artificiality of the style, and even the subject-matter of modern fiction, may well have something to do with the artificiality of our life; and, judging from the popularity of the new school of American novelists, it looks as if the romance of wheat and of cowboy life was about to take us out of the stultifying atmosphere into which sex problems, casuistry, and morbid psychology have dragged us. Another reflection is that, in the final analysis, the greatest fiction is simple in style and diction. We admire too easily in these days.

We are caught in the meshes of verbiage, and readily accept somebody's *ipse dixit* about "manner" and "the new school" and "idealists" and "realists." Tolstoy's popularity as a novelist ought to do much to abolish our affectations about style.

There is a disposition among critics to gauge a writer, comparatively, by the number and excellence of his characters. By the excellence of his characters, certainly; but why by their number? The power to produce a large number is a significant symptom, but the production of a few should not be taken as evidence of the inability to produce many. In characterisation Tolstoy occupies a high position, although, when compared with Dickens, Scott, and George Eliot, from the standpoint of numbers, he is easily left behind. But what he loses in this way he gains in vividness of portraiture, for there are more people in Europe who know Anna Karenina better than—say, Mrs. Poyser, or Mrs. Gamp, or Rachel. And it may well be questioned whether any artist could have used a canvas so large, and so convincingly, as Tolstoy has done in *War and Peace*.

Taking *The Cossacks* and *Anna Karenina* as specimens of his earliest and maturest periods, respectively, one is more than struck by the reality of all the people who figure in these pages. Reality is the right word to use,—not *realism*, which is too external, and, nowadays, too commonplace.

Matthew Arnold calls *Anna* "a piece of reality." But Yeroshka, the old hunter in *The Cossacks*, and Lukashka and Marianka are just as real. Olyénin is almost perfect. He is a young officer quartered at the home of Marianka, a beautiful and passionate Cossack girl in love with Lukashka, a Cossack youth. There is no vacillating in Lukashka. He is proud of his race, of his life, and of his exploits. But the other two vacillate considerably. Olyénin is from the city, the University, and all that counts for civilisation. Marianka is the beau-ideal of the country girl, tall, strong, and the belle of the village. Olyénin hankers after the life of the half-savage Cossack; Marianka has fits of desire for the glories of civilisation. Olyénin becomes unfaithful to high principles in his heart; Marianka toys almost heartlessly with the feelings of Lukashka. How long can this love skirmish continue? It is settled when Olyénin watches a fight between Cossacks and Abreks, in which Lukashka is severely wounded. At that moment all fitful desires die in Marianka's heart, and she loves Lukashka unfailingly, whilst she drives Olyénin from her presence. It may be asked, "What had Olyénin done?" It should be asked, "What had he not done?" He had watched the fight when he would rather have participated in it; but to Marianka's reasoning only admiration and love could be bestowed on the man who fought and bled,—the man of her own race and whom she

understood. The life according to civilisation, and according to nature, have seldom, if ever, been more keenly analysed; and as the work of a youth of twenty-four *The Cossacks* will always remain a remarkable tribute to Russian genius.

With *Anna Karenina* we breathe a new atmosphere. Nature is not absent, but it is mostly civilisation, morals, and retribution. Human nature under cultivation: that is the broad basis of the story. Anna is, of course, the central figure, and she is one of the great characters of fiction. In close association are Karenin, Levin, and Vronsky. The plot itself is not remarkable,—none of Tolstoy's plots are. Ravelling and unravelling has had its day, and men have come to see that plot construction is after all only literary mechanics; the true art lies in characterisation. Life itself is mainly static, as Maeterlinck has shown us, and the Greek dramatists before him. Hence Tolstoy's "three men and a woman" is an old enough plot, but how wonderfully he gives it new life! What pathos! what psychology! What a feeling of Nemesis runs through it all! The key to these four tragic figures, Vronsky, Levin, Karenin, and Karenina, lies in *The Christian Teaching*. The whole four of them fell into what Tolstoy calls "snares." Vronsky's was the snare of lust; Karenin's was the snare of ambition; Levin's the snare of power; and Anna's the snare of love. Vronsky desired the woman for himself,—selfishly

and carnally; Karenin was prepared to sacrifice everybody and everything for the sake of satisfying his greed for cold rectitude and power; Levin loved himself too well to suffer much for others, but could not muster up courage to stifle his feelings for Anna; and Anna loved her happiness too keenly to allow misery the smallest standing room. They all loved themselves in varying degrees, and their self-love lies at the root of their tragic careers.

In reference to strong "scenes," — narrative climaxes tense with excitement,—one would like to quote the meeting of Vronsky and Karenin at Anna's bedside, but we will be content with recounting a piece of sympathetic imagination as full of genius as anything we have read. It refers to Anna's night thoughts a year after joining Vronsky.

"On the other hand, when during sleep she lost control of her imagination, her situation appeared in its frightful reality: almost every night she had the same dream. She dreamed she was the wife both of Vronsky and Alexi Alexandrovitch. And it seemed to her that Alexi Alexandrovitch kissed her hands, and said, weeping, 'How happy we are now!' And Alexi Vronsky, he also was her husband. She was amazed that she could believe such a thing impossible; and she laughed when she seemed to explain to them that everything would simplify itself, and that both would hence-

forth be satisfied and happy. But this dream weighed on her spirits like a nightmare, and she always awoke in a fright."

The underlying philosophy of Tolstoy's novels is progressive, in the sense that his ideas were progressive. In *The Cossacks* he is a soldier with some misgivings about killing men, but still a believer in force. He is perhaps a more vigorous believer in force when he comes to write *Sevastopol*, for he is there a fighter and a patriot. And yet even there the misgivings are abundant. In *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* he is preparing his readers for that Nihilism which is soon to startle an unexpecting world. Voguë says, "More truly than any other man, and more completely than any other, he is the translator and propagator of that condition of Russian mind which is called Nihilism."[1] To this Mr. C. E. Turner, who speaks with some authority on Russian literature, returns an emphatic negative. How far he has misunderstood the French writer's criticisms, will be at once evident.

"Now it may be safely stated that, in the ordinary and proper acceptation of the term, Tolstoy never was and never could be a Nihilist. A real Nihilist is a revolutionary socialist, a man who denies, but who has no misgivings as to the necessity of denying; who knows exactly what he

[1] *The Russian Novelists*, p. 210.

is to do, and finds satisfaction and peace in his denial. He is, as Dostoievsky expressed it, 'a straight-line thinker.'"[1] Mr. Turner goes on to show that Tolstoy is by nature a believer, and has a soul which hungers after the truth.

This is altogether beside the mark. Turgenieff in his *Fathers and Sons* was the first to speak of Nihilism as a characteristic of educated people in Russia; people who "bow before no authority of any kind, and accept on faith no principle, whatever veneration surround it." Art, unconscious artistic creation, parliamentarism, reformed tribunals, and such like were abandoned by Nihilists. Above everything they put the question of "daily bread for all."[2] There is little here which Tolstoy is not preaching now. He denies governments, institutions, courts, oaths, and patriotism; he treats art with scant courtesy, and would do away with tribunals altogether. In fact, the only important point wherein he differs from Nihilism proper is that he would abolish by inaction what they would abolish by force. And who seeks "bread for all" more ardently than he? No; the Frenchman has seen more clearly than the Englishman that Nihilism is quite as much an attitude of mind as a well-defined gospel, and is more significant as a feeling than a policy of action. Let the reader see how many among human things Tolstoy is pre-

[1] *Modern Novelists of Russia*, p. 152.
[2] *Vide* art. in *Chambers' Encyclopædia.*

pared to affirm, and he will see why Nihilism is said to be the sum and substance of those books which bear Tolstoy's name.

The Power of Darkness and *The Fruits of Enlightenment* represent two of Tolstoy's efforts in play-writing. They are a couple: they supplement each other, and in their way are intended to embody, dramatically, the ideas which Tolstoy has put into his novels and essays. *Darkness* is representative of man untutored in the message of Christ,—raw human nature with a thirst for blood and resistance; *Enlightenment* is representative of man tutored in the false idea of Christ and Christian civilisation. Both plays are strenuous in their style, but *Darkness* is the more vivid of the two.

Resurrection is perhaps the wordiest volume of modern fiction that occupies a high place in public regard. Like much more of what Tolstoy has written, it bears the imprint of autobiography, and it is disfigured by more than one breach of good taste. As a picture of Russian prison life, and indeed of life under the Russian *régime* generally, it is most impressive, but the author is too deeply in love with ethics and religion, and too detached from his earlier artistic creed, to exercise the care which is necessary for the production of the highest work of which he is capable. The sacrifice of Katusha at the close of the book is absolutely inconsistent with the girl's previous character and

mental condition. Tolstoy was miserable before finding a suitable ending for *Anna;* he must have been specially miserable when he compelled Nekludoff to make his sacrifice null and void by returning home,—a redeemer who had lost the object of his redemption.

V

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

"Resist not evil."—JESUS CHRIST.
"Resist the Devil."—ST. JAMES.

OSSIP LOURIÉ has truly said that Tolstoy has never expounded in a systematic manner his theories of theology, of sociology, and of morality.[1] This omission has two great disadvantages: it tells against the reputation of Tolstoy himself, and it increases the work and responsibility of the expositor. The latter disadvantage is of no immediate consequence, except in so far as it lays the writer open to charges of misrepresenting facts or misstating theories and their relations to each other. From such charges he is most anxious to be free. But the first disadvantage is of a serious character. An author who has produced so many didactical works, who has criticised dogmatic theology, philosophy, socialism, anarchism, and almost every other -ism and -ology; who has at great length told the world

[1] See note on p. 79 of *La Philosophie de Tolstoï.*

what he thinks and what men should do,—such an author, we say, ought not to have left us without a systematic presentation of his views, showing their origin, their relationship, and how they serve a common end. The fact is, as we shall see later, Tolstoy cannot be classed as a philosopher in the strict sense; he is rather a great moralist who preaches happiness and duty by the observance of a set of rules, commandments, laws, or whatever we may care to call them. It is his failure to enter into the universal bearings of these laws which deprives him of real philosophic distinction. This point will have to be dealt with at greater length when Tolstoy's teaching is considered in its entirety. The purpose of the present chapter is to analyse separate ideas in the order of their importance, and as we learn that the doctrine of non-resistance is central we will take that first.

I. Christ said to His disciples, "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil [margin 'evil']; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (R.V.). Tolstoy's great mission in life is to expound and practise the literal interpretation of these words, and it will always be to his credit that as between word and deed there has never been the shadow of inconsistency.

Resist not evil! Much will depend on what is meant by "evil," and in what consists "resist-

ance"; something will depend on the right translation of the Greek, and still more on the context, as expressing the drift of Christ's ideas; but for the present we will take such conceptions as "evil" and "resistance" convey to average intelligence, and ascertain for ourselves what this simple doctrine can do to reorganise the bases of life.

All assaults upon our persons, our property, our families, our neighbours, our friends, are certainly evils. Very well, we must endure them. We may indeed resist them by argument, appeal, or expostulation, but not by violence or by going to law. Thus, when a man without cause strikes us on the one cheek, we are not allowed to retaliate by returning evil for evil; instead of that, the unsmitten cheek must be presented to the smiter. The burglar who is discovered in the act of carrying away our choicest silver plate should, if impervious to moral suasion, be allowed to depart with his booty, it being a sin to call for a policeman, inasmuch as resistance by proxy is really the same as our own resistance. The man who buys a hundred pounds' worth of goods, and then refuses to pay for them, must not be sued in the county court, for that would be resisting evil. The delinquent purchaser's name is merely entered in the bad debt account, and he is left to his moral sense and—destiny. Even if this same man were to enter the creditor's home, and forcibly abduct the only daughter for base and criminal purposes,

the father would have no right to use any other force than that of parental entreaty; he is compelled to submit to the machinations of this unspeakable fiend.

But laws that affect the individual, affect society; consequently this startling change in the method of dealing with wrong-doing entirely renews the basis on which society rests. At present that basis is one of punishment for the breaking of law; and as the existence of law presupposes a law-enacting body, with an official staff to see that its instructions are carried out, the doctrine of non-resistance implies that all these protective and punitive operations are superfluous; hence magistrates, police courts, county courts, collectors of rates and taxes, policemen, and a host of other bodies and *functionaires*, should be abolished; for they are agents of active resistance,—they punish sin by flogging, or by fines, or by imprisonment, and sometimes by death.

It is the same with the State, which is the authority behind the machinery of local government. The primary object of the State is the protection of life and property, and underlying all its legislation is the unspoken acceptance of the right to resist evil; consequently its army is a crime, and should be at once disbanded; the officers and staff of the navy should enter peaceful occupations; the vessels of war should be broken up, and the ammunition thrown into the sea;

customs and excise duties become unchristian, and all servants of the Crown should be notified that their services are no longer required. Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, Whitehall and Westminster, with everything that follows in their train, must disappear from English life altogether.

It is therefore evident that Tolstoy's central doctrine,—his interpretation of the words of Christ,—if carried out literally, would effect a complete revolution in the national life. And it would be a revolution both noiseless and unbloody. Instead of civil war and all the horrors of internecine strife, instead of sickness, privation, and suffering, we should have a quiet and peaceful transition from resistance by force to that of non-resistance, in which the signs of the former era would be wiped out one by one, and give place to "Love, Labour, and Solidarity."[1]

Many questions arise in the thinking mind when this silent revolution is looked at from various points of view. Did Christ really mean what He seems to have said? Did the disciples understand Him literally? If so, why did Churches become organised and religion crystallise into dogma? And is non-resistance capable of producing results so remarkable as here delineated? Would not evil triumph over good if not resisted?

(*a*) The first question is fundamental. Christ seems to say that evil must be allowed to go

[1] Vide *La Philosophie de Tolstoï.*

unchecked. Was that His real meaning? It is difficult to see what other meaning the words can have. In the Jewish law retaliation was permitted: the man who gouged out the eye of a fellow-citizen must in turn suffer the loss of one of his own eyes; in colloquial parlance, "what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander." But the new law decreed that the said fellow-citizen should offer the other eye with a view to receiving the same treatment as before; that retaliatory vengeance was a sin; and that good should be returned for evil. The fact that this law occupies little room in the minds of militant Englishmen to-day, is of no consequence at the present stage; the question is, "What did Christ mean?" and the only answer so far is, "He meant what He said."

The commentators are not as satisfactory as one could have wished. We reproduce a few interpretations to show the general trend of thought in ecclesiastical circles:—

Turn to him the other also. "We all quote and admire the words as painting an ideal meekness. But most men feel also that they cannot act on them literally; that to make the attempt, as has been done by some whom the world calls dreamers or fanatics, would throw society into confusion and make the meek the victims. The question meets us therefore: Were they meant to be obeyed in the letter; and if not, what do they command? And the answer (1) is found in remembering that

our Lord Himself, when smitten by the servant of the High Priest, protested, though He did not resist (John xviii. 22, 23), and that St. Paul under like outrage was vehement in his rebuke (Acts xxiii. 3); and (2) in the fact that the whole context shows that the Sermon on the Mount is not a code of laws, but an assertion of principles. And the principle in this matter is clearly and simply this, that the disciple of Christ, when he has suffered wrong, is to eliminate altogether from his motives the natural desire to retaliate or accuse. . . . But the man who has been wronged has other duties which he cannot lightly ignore. The law of the Eternal has to be asserted, society to be protected, the offender to be reclaimed, and these may well justify—though personal animosity does not—protest, prosecution, punishment."[1]

This may be said to represent orthodox thought in most churches, although in the *Speaker's Commentary* the writer goes so far as to state that Christ did not even abrogate for one moment the law of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"; He only changed the spirit of the law. On the other hand, John Wesley says of the Sermon on the Mount, "Behold Christianity in its native form as delivered by its Author. This is the genuine religion of Jesus Christ."[2]

[1] *Ellicott's Commentary*, vol. i. p. 29.

[2] *Notes on the New Testament.* See also Gore's *The Sermon on Mount;* the volumes on "Matthew" and "Luke" in the *Expositor's*

There are passages in the Sermon on the Mount which suggest that Christ was speaking in hyperbole. "And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into Gehenna. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee" (Matt. v. 29, 30). Self-mutilation is not an item in the gospel of Christ, and this being so, it proves that there are verses in the Sermon which cannot be taken literally. Then why should "Resist not evil" be taken literally? The question is highly typical of hundreds more which arise in the attempt to extract the meaning from ancient writings, but it must be answered. The impartial critic can only say that the tendency of the whole Sermon is towards literalism; the very point of such a passage as "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye?" is to bring out the difference between the old doctrine and the new; the old law said, "Be equal with the transgressor, and punish him just as he punished you"; the new law says, "When evil comes, when smiters smite

Bible Series. Bossvet and Father Coleridge have published expositions of the *Sermon* which give the Roman Catholic view; Dr. W. C. Smith, Archbishop Trench, and the Rev. Charles Voysey have also made the *Sermon* the subject of volumes setting forth what they conceive to be the true interpretation. Prof. Bacon's *The Sermon on the Mount: Its Literary Structure and Didactic Purpose*, is well worth consulting.

thee, smite not again. Otherwise, what do ye more than others?" Jews, Romans, and Greeks were men who, when struck, struck back; Christmen were to be men who did "more" than others,—they were to present the other cheek; if sued for a coat, they were to offer a cloak also; in all things they must be what Nietzsche would call the "Overmen" of that pagan world.

We think that Tolstoy has made out his case: Christ meant, "Never employ force, never do what is contrary to love; and if men still offend you, put up with the offence; employ no force against force."[1]

In keeping with this view is the commandment respecting anger: "Every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." The meaning of the passage is not easy to determine, but although the threatened punishment (which seems to be a resistance of evil) is somewhat obscure, the general meaning is,—anger is a forbidden emotion, the implied reason being that it destroys brotherly feeling and tends to incite men to resist evil.

(*b*) The next question concerns the reception of the new law by the disciples. Did they understand Christ to mean His words literally? So far as we can tell, they did; and when Peter resorted to violence by cutting off the High Priest's servant's ear, Christ gave him an object lesson by asking

[1] *What I Believe*, p. 19.

him to put up the sword to the ear again, remarking, "Put up again thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." Moreover, Christ's own example of submission unto death without the sign of a struggle must have impressed the disciples with the doctrine of non-resistance; whilst even an outsider like Paul smites not again when smitten on the mouth, and declares forcibly against going to law. The brotherhood of the earliest of all followers of Jesus is seen in the communism which characterised their life: they broke bread at each other's houses, and had everything in common. There are therefore signs that the earliest Christians in Jerusalem and elsewhere were true adherents of the "Christianity of Christ," and endeavoured to realise love, purity, and brotherhood. On the other hand, there are signs that the disciples were not the readiest of scholars: Christ was often grieved by their lack of understanding; and after His death they were soon debating the truth or falsity of certain doctrines and practices. In his *Kingdom of God within You* (p. 58), Tolstoy roundly accuses some of the disciples of mistaking the essence of Christianity. At the first Council of Jerusalem the question before the apostles and elders was, whether the uncircumcised, and those who abstained not from meat offered to idols, should be baptized. "The very manner of asking the question shows that those who dis-

cussed it misconceived the doctrine of Christ, who rejected all external rites, such as the washing of feet, purification, fasts, and the Sabbath." This is a specimen of Tolstoy's handling of New Testament narrative, and we shall deal with it in another chapter, for nothing is said about baptism as a rite commanded by Christ. But unbiassed readers of the New Testament as it stands are convinced that not only were there different types of Christianity in the Early Church,—even in Pauline Churches this was evident: "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ,"[1]—but that the Church at Jerusalem presented the signs of a life nearer to the Sermon on the Mount than that of any other Church before or since. And it is significant that this Church was the chief centre of Christ's ministry. It is, however, too true that all the Christian Churches of the first century soon modelled their religious life on the synagogue basis, composing their prayers and writing their forms of service, electing their officers and carrying out the details of a complete organisation. However much modern Christian theology is due to the original disciples, it is not too much to say that it was the masterly and masterful influence of St. Paul which shaped the thought and practice of Christian peoples. With him, system and organisation were a necessity, hence his Epistles present the spectacle

[1] 1 Cor. i. 12.

of a crystallised body of doctrine. He looked at the past, the present, and the future, and Christ to him is the key to the mysteries of heaven and earth.

But "Resist not evil" never comes to the front. The virtues of meekness and suffering are everywhere, but they never reach the greatest height of all. The writings of St. John and St. James, although closer to Christ's simplicity than the elaborate arguments of Paul, fail to inculcate non-resistance in the absolute sense. It would appear, therefore, that the disciples of Jesus Christ did set up a kingdom of God on earth where men should carry out the principles of the Sermon on the Mount; but that from the very first alien elements insinuated themselves into the life of the new kingdom, quickly effecting changes which caused Christianity to face the questions debated at the Council of Nicæa.

The answer to the inquiry with which this section commenced is therefore an unsatisfactory one. The signs of the existence of a new society composed of Christ's friends and disciples are few and far between, whereas one would expect them to be many and impressive. The few signs already referred to seem to be indistinct, illusory, and evanescent. On the other hand, if the Gospels and the Acts are to be trusted, we read much of miracles, salvation, sin, glory, and life everlasting; and on the whole it may be said that the discus-

sions of the Council at Nicæa are nearer to the discussions of the *Acts of the Apostles* than the theology of the *Acts of the Apostles* is to that of the Sermon on the Mount.

This is one of the great problems of orthodox theologians, as well as an unquestionable difficulty to Tolstoy. The theologians say the Sermon on the Mount represents the ideal towards which we ought to strive; this *must* be so, they argue, because a prophet's disciples know the will of their Master, and if "Resist not evil" had been intended to figure as a cardinal fact, St. John, St. Peter, and St. James would have given it that position. They chose instead salvation by the death of Christ. And yet this exposition is not satisfactory: it does not explain the simple literalness of Christ's words, nor the absence of non-resistance as a primary law, both in New Testament literature and in the life of the Churches.

Tolstoy's difficulty is to explain why the Sermon on the Mount, as he understands it, has been such a failure, and, more particularly, why the disciples themselves seem to have gone astray from it. He easily gets rid of miracles, dogmas, and all the "errors" of the evangelists, by using the law of internal evidence only; consequently, to put it bluntly, everything in the Gospels and Epistles which does not commend itself to him as being right, he rejects. But even then, beyond the few signs of the kingdom of God on earth already

confessed, there is nothing to show that the Christianity of non-resistance had anything more than the merest spark of existence. Why? So early did the Christian religion take a dogmatic form, that Tolstoy must provide an explanation. Here it is: "If instead of that corrupted form of Christianity which was given to the people, it had been offered to them in its purity, the greater portion of mankind would have refused it, like the Asiatic peoples to whom it is yet unknown. But having once accepted it in its corrupted form, the nations embracing it were subjected to its slow but sure influence, and by a long succession of errors, and the suffering that ensued therefrom, have now been brought to the necessity of adopting it in its true meaning. The erroneous presentation of Christianity, and its acceptance by the majority of mankind, with all its errors, was then a necessity, just as the seed if it is to sprout must for a time be buried in the soil."[1] These opinions exhibit a sense of historical perspective to which we are hardly accustomed in Tolstoy's writings; but what are we to think of a buried seed which at the end of nearly two thousand years is only a weak and

[1] *The Kingdom of God*, p. 193. On the other hand, Tolstoy says in *The Overthrow of Hell and its Restoration* (1903), that Christ's teaching was so clear, "so easy to follow, and delivered men from evil so obviously, that it seemed impossible not to accept it, or that anything could arrest its spread." We cannot make this later view agree with the earlier; they are mutually exclusive.—See Axelrod's *Tolstois Weltanschauung*, p. 87.

sickly plant? Non-resistance is not so universally popular as Tolstoy suggests, and although it has had strong representation since the eighteenth century, it is too much to speak of men to-day as being under "the necessity of adopting it."

Whichever way we look at this question, it bristles with difficulties; but of one thing we may be quite sure, that whatever the disciples did or did not understand, and taking the New Testament as representing the beginning and growth of the Early Church, no interpretation is sounder or more scientific than that of Protestant orthodoxy. This interpretation makes non-resistance an ideal towards which we must strive; and although theoretically it is not based on true exegesis, it is nevertheless practical sense, or perhaps we might say it is an interpretation the essence of which is not so much what Christ said, as what is possible to human nature.

(*c*) We now come to the question as to whether the non-resistance of evil could accomplish the revolution outlined in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, and with it is associated the other question, as to whether unchecked evil would not ultimately overcome the good. Passive resistance is the greatest of all revolutionary agencies, if it can be worked on a large scale. Powder, shot, and shell may do marvels, but nothing at all equal to the policy of inaction. Take a huge coal strike where thousands of men refuse to work. They do not assault their employers, they do not shoot down people un-

connected with the strike,—their programme is passive resistance,—they refuse to work. Industry is paralysed. Factories cannot complete their orders; smelters are at a standstill; scores of other businesses are seriously affected, and many a prosperous man has suddenly to devise ways and means to keep himself financially afloat. The right or wrong of causing a strike is not now under consideration; it is the power that lies in united action of a passive nature. That power is well-nigh immeasurable. But it must be on a large scale; at any rate its results depend entirely on the number of its units. If only one hundred soldiers in an army of ten thousand refuse to fight, the refusal merely effects a dramatic example of non-resistance; but if the ten thousand throw down their rifles and march home, who is to stop them? The vast majority would survive the onslaughts of the general and his officers, who might shoot down a few in accordance with the laws of military discipline, but the battle would be lost and the victory the enemy's. Here, again, we are not deciding the rights and wrongs of warfare, but the power of passive resistance on a colossal scale. At this juncture some one says: What is the use of such a power if it can do nothing except by the agency of great numbers? what even is the use of ten thousand soldiers refusing to fight, if there are thirty thousand ready to punish them for so doing?

These are most pertinent inquiries. There is a

seeming hopelessness in following a passive policy unless all men are agreed to do likewise. The evil which is not kept in bonds would apparently luxuriate on the non-resistance of the righteous, and the present state of the world be worse than it was before. But if non-resistance had a beginning, it must of necessity begin with one man. Let us say it began with Christ. It has had no history to speak of since His day, but that it could have a history is suggested by the Quakers and their much-respected character. So far as Christ's mission can be divined from the Gospels, it was to create a group of men who, in the true sense, would be disciples and do what He commanded them to do in reference to forgiveness, love, service, and God. They were to make converts, and the greater the number of converts the greater the influence they would wield. It follows, therefore, that the possibilities of good triumphing over evil are as great in proportion where small groups of disciples are concerned, as in the case where groups are numbered in their thousands,—nay, they would seem to be greater. In a city of forty thousand inhabitants where there is only one disciple who will allow his person to be assaulted, his shop to be looted, and his daughter to be abducted, the chances of absolute extinction are greater than in the case where ten thousand disciples preach and live their gospel in a city of much larger dimensions. Should execution by hanging be the

punishment of refusing to serve as soldiers, and the ten thousand refuse, the State would feel embarrassed in the presence of its own decrees, and could not but hesitate to give an order to hang ten thousand citizens who were in other respects honourable and law abiding. *One* citizen, however, would be hanged without a thought.

There is no doubt, then, about the *power* of passive resistance; but what of its *ethics?* Some will say it is upgrade in tendency; others will say it is downgrade. Arguments can be produced urging the merit of bloodlessness in a revolution against tyrannical cruelty carried out on passive lines; and similar arguments are always ready to show the necessity of evil in the evolution of good. But whatever merits passive resistance to evil may have as a peaceful and yet effective agent of change, — on paper, — the difficulty with the multitude will inevitably lie in the absence of material evidence. Where is the revolution that was brought about by inertia? Where are the people who welcome robbers and justify theft on the ground that evidently the thief needed what he stole?[1] Faint indications of the possible good—such as are seen in the history of the Quakers—do not strike the converting note.

But passive resistance to evil has a much more serious defect than the absence of material proof of its power in religion. To many people it

[1] See *Ivan the Fool.*

contravenes both the law of nature and the law of God![1] Throughout the world, as we know it, there is a sequence between wrong-doing and retribution. Sometimes the sequence is weak, more often it is strong,—but it is always there. The world is founded upon law, and experience teaches us that if we break the law we suffer; if we obey we receive the reward of obedience. Tolstoy, however, whilst acknowledging this, demands that the life of men in their relations with each other should be lawless: instead of *law* there should be *love*, consequently the law-breaker must never be punished, or confined in a cell, or executed; he must be allowed to do just as he likes. "Resist not evil." Such a policy is ethically unsound. It is unsound because it makes no difference between the various types of men,—the born criminal who will die on the gallows, as distinct from the man who kills another in a fit of anger; it is unsound because it compels men to be the spectators of bloody deeds without raising a finger to restrain the murderer;[2] and it is unsound because it implies a belief in the efficacy of the minor virtues for which neither philosophy, history, nor experience can find a justification.

[1] See Maffre's *Le Tolstoïsme et le Christianisme*, p. 81.

[2] Tikhomirov says in his *Russia* (vol. ii.) that Tolstoy was once asked whether resistance was justifiable if one should see a ruffian violating a girl. Tolstoy is said to have been disconcerted by the question, and to have admitted that force would be necessary. If the story be true the admission is most damaging.

As to the ultimate purpose of Christ's ideal teaching, we may or may not have settled convictions; but it should not be forgotten that there is an idealism which serves humanity best when it remains in its unrealised purity; for if it should become fact, it is ideal no more.

The problem which non-resistance has to face, and always will have to face, is the problem of making a vigorous start. Presuming that the doctrine is now thoroughly understood, what is wanted is sufficient numbers and sufficient distinction to give it the requisite power. But the fact of its having been practically without a history to this day is highly suggestive. Why has non-resistance been such a failure? Simply because it runs counter to the laws of evolution. For tens of thousands of years progress has been accomplished by the law of resistance. In the struggle for life, from the birth of the simplest organism to the last fight in the competitive arena, development in the shape of strength and efficiency have been purchased, not by quiescence, but by the fiercest strife wherein the fittest survived and the weakest went to the wall. The fight has occasioned much pain and suffering: it is a story of horrible details, this story of nature "red in tooth and claw," but as man is closely linked with nature its spirit of resistance to evil and danger has taken possession of him, and men seem as though they will be fighters ever. Can one wonder that a command so opposed to

human history, instincts, and experience, as is non-resistance, should be but slowly recognised by a world which places punitive power on the pinnacle of righteousness? There is, however, a force if anything stronger than that of hereditary instinct; it is the force of a religious conception founded on the Bible and on experience. "Resist the devil" has been one of the favourite passages of preachers and moralists in all ages, and people with aspirations after a good life have made it their first business to resist him who is regarded as the centre of all evil,—the Devil. They have been taught that after a temptation, a struggle, and an ultimate conquest over evil, they will become stronger; every victory means a firmer faith and a mightier arm. The hymn beginning—

> "Soldiers of Christ, arise,
> And put your armour on,"

is an expression of the believer's daily life, hence he takes the idea of resisting evil as part and parcel of his duty as one who desires to live a right life. From this it follows that non-resistance is a strange and alien conception to him; it presents itself as a doctrine curiously out of touch with all that he believes and knows. As to whether the texts "Resist not evil" and "Resist the devil" are contradictory or not, we can only say that much depends on what is included in the word "evil." Even Tolstoy says there are some evils which must be resisted, *e.g.*, his

explicit directions on "The Way to strive against Sins."[1] Probably he would include the apostle's exhortation under this head, and translate Christ's words as "Resist not him that is evil."

To sum up. Whatever Christ meant by "Resist not evil,"—and He can only have meant what He said; whatever the disciples understood,—and they seem to have had more than dim perceptions; whatever the Church itself taught on the subject,—and it effected a tolerable compromise,—we may rest assured that if non-resistance could have had a splendid history it would have been written already; if it had been an ideal at all approachable by millions, then war and strife would long ago have ceased. And what of its future? Its future depends on the number of those who are ready to forsake all and follow Christ, who receive the "hard saying" and obey it, and who take up their cross daily. It may be sad to think this number will be few, but such are the strenuous forces of history and human life that a thousand years hence the student who asks for the story of non-resistance will have to be told, "It is still unwritten."

II. The difficulties of non-resistance increase as we proceed to analyse the required changes in the construction of modern society. Government as seen in town and city, and centralised in houses of representatives with the King at their head is

[1] *The Christian Teaching*, p. 48.

regarded as an inversion of the true order, inasmuch as it "places the greatest part of the people in the power of the smaller part who dominate them; that smaller part is subject to a yet smaller part, and that again to a yet smaller, and so on, reaching at last a few people or one single man, who by means of military force has power over all the rest. So that all this organisation resembles a cone, of which all the parts are completely in the power of those people, or of that one person, who are, or is, at the apex."[1]

All this is wrong, we are told, because government is guilty of resisting evil; it is opposed to the law of human brotherhood; and whereas Christ said, "Swear not at all," it demands an oath of allegiance; and in spite of the command, "Judge not," it sets up county courts, police courts, and high courts of justice. The "Snare of the State" is thus described by Tolstoy. "Those in authority say, 'I much regret being obliged to order the appropriation of the products of labour, to commit men to prison, exile, penal servitude, to exact the penalty of death, to wage wars, but it is my duty to act thus, for it is demanded of me by those who have endued me with power.' Those in a subordinate position say, 'If I rob men of their property, tear them away from their families, imprison, exile, execute them; if I ruin or kill men of another nation, bombard towns containing women and

[1] *Patriotism and Government*, p. 23.

children,—I do all this, not upon my own responsibility, but in fulfilment of the will of the higher power, which, for the general welfare, I have promised to obey.'"[1]

However impossible such views of government may seem to be, they are in perfect keeping with the doctrine of non-resistance, for if this is the law for all men, then the soldier, the policeman, and the judge must quit their avocations; the administrators of the Civil Service, the members of the House of Lords and House of Commons must leave their business for good: and even the King himself will abdicate, for men shall rule themselves by the law of love. But Tolstoy has supported his logic by expositions of certain passages in the Sermon on the Mount, and in these expositions he is not quite happy. For instance, the command, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," is interpreted as an absolute condemnation of every kind of court, but in itself, and its context, the command is rather directed against men measuring their characters with those of other people, to the detriment of the latter. The Pharisee's "I am holier than thou" is easily read between the lines, and against all religious egoism Christ addresses severe words. If the condemnation of all courts—both ecclesiastical and civil—were the real meaning, why did Christ speak of the Church in Matt. xviii. 17? "Moreover, if thy brother sin against thee,

[1] *The Christian Teaching*, p. 32.

show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses, or three, every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the Church [congregation], and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as a Gentile and a publican."

The Church or congregation is certainly a court of judgment to settle a dispute occasioned by a trespass of some kind, and as such is proof positive that "Judge not" refers to rash and uncharitable judgments rather than to the abolition of courts. But of course Matt. xviii. 15–17 may have been ruled out of the Tolstoyan Bible. Possibly it has, for on the face of it there is every appearance of a decided resistance of evil, by means of an organised court. Nevertheless Tolstoy regards uncharitable "judgment" apart from courts as a sin. He himself quite recently wrote a scathing criticism of the conduct of the Crown Princess of Saxony, and her *liaison* with M. Giron, but he ultimately repented and confessed his mistake in the following words :—

"I know into what blind depths the Princess has fallen; but being myself full of sinful deeds I have no right to cast a stone at a woman in distress.

"If my first letter has been made public, and has come under the eyes of the Princess, I ask her pardon for my cruel and unreflecting words. Not only do I not condemn her, but with my whole

heart I sympathise, and hope fervently that she may be released from the obsession which has fastened hold of her, and that she may enjoy that peace which is ever possible to those who believe in God and call on Him."[1] But where are we to draw the line? Is criticism to cease? Why does Tolstoy "judge" the German Emperor, the Greek Church theologians, and the military men of all nations? They may do wrong, but the Princess did no more.

Tolstoy is equally unhappy in his exposition of Matt. v. 33–37: "Again, ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil [one]." The plain meaning of these words is the necessity of truthfulness in conversation and character. It is as if Christ said: When you speak, do not call in the testimony of heaven or earth by way of proving the truth of your Yes and No. Be men of such character that others will accept your words as containing their own evidence, apart from an appeal

[1] *Morning Leader*, 9th March 1903.

to things above or beneath, for whatsoever is more than these is evil,—that is, leads to prevarication, mental reservation, and deliberate falsehood.

But Tolstoy sees in "Swear not at all" a direct command to make no promise of allegiance to the State, and to abstain from oaths of every kind. "If it be the teaching of Jesus that one should always fulfil the will of God, how can a man swear to fulfil the will of a fellow-man? The will of God may not accord with the will of a man."[1] Taking a more philosophic view, Mr. Aylmer Maude says the passage means, "*Do not give away the control of your future actions.* You have a reason and conscience to guide you, but if you set them aside and swear allegiance elsewhere,—to Tsar, Emperor, Kaiser, King, Queen, President, or General,—they may some day tell you to commit the most awful crimes; perhaps even to kill your fellow-men. What are you going to do then? To break your oath? or commit a crime you never would have dreamt of committing had you not first taken an oath?"[2] This teaching is a logical outcome of the acceptance of non-resistance as a guide to conduct, but Christ's words, although proscribing oaths in courts,—which are promises to tell the truth,—do not proscribe promises of allegiance to an empire for the sake of the universal good. In the former case the action is farcical, inasmuch as men swear by a book which says they ought not to swear; in

[1] *What I Believe*, p. 83. [2] *Leo Tolstoy*, p. 17.

the latter case, the oath, when reduced to its lowest common denominator, is merely a promise to support the welfare of the State in return for the protection of life and property. There is no appeal to a person or a thing, held in veneration, as a means of attesting the swearer's sincerity of purpose. On the general question of oaths there is not much to be said. Such is the perversity of human nature, that some sort of attestation or guarantee is necessary ere we can believe what is offered in the way of testimony; and although Christ's words are incumbent upon all His disciples, it would be more than risky to abolish any means adopted to compel a man to tell the truth in a court of law.[1] And as to the sin of promising allegiance to the State—that is a non-Christian conception altogether. Where did Christ declaim against government as a crime? When He said, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," was He speaking insincerely? It cannot be. Nor can He have said it in fear, for fearfulness never characterised the least of His utterances. And St. Paul, he whom Tolstoy quotes approvingly when a text suits his purpose, even St. Paul is emphatic in his respect for law and

[1] That Tolstoy's ideas on government of any kind are extremely hazy, may be gathered from the following. Supposing the headquarters of a government are destroyed, he says that "courts of justice, and public affairs, and popular education will all exist to the extent to which they are really needed by the people" (*Patriotism and Government*, p. 34). In *What I Believe* he says (p. 92) that law courts and oaths are repugnant to Christ's teaching.

order. "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in high place."[1] And likewise St. Peter: "Fear God. Honour the King."[2] In another passage St. Paul provides the basis of his teaching. "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God; and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldst thou have no fear of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same; for he [it] is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid: for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For this cause ye pay tribute also: for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."[3] With St. Paul history is the story of the development of God's plan; with Tolstoy it is a tale of blunders, consequently what the world has found to be good or

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 17. [3] Rom. xiii. 1–7.

necessary has little weight with him. The world is upside down, and only the Sermon on the Mount can right it. But men everywhere, both pagan and Christian, have always accepted the plea set forth in the Epistle to the Romans, and to-day the only men who disbelieve in it are Anarchists and disciples of Tolstoy,—the men who believe in absolutely nothing but force, and the men who do not believe in force at all. The Anarchists endeavour to put an end to government by nitro-glycerine, bombs, and daggers; the Tolstoyans by refusing to participate in the duties of citizenship.

It therefore does not surprise us to find patriotism severely condemned. Patriotism tends to separate men into warring peoples, where love is lost sight of; it is "a rude feeling, because it is one natural only to people standing on the lowest level of morality, and expecting from other nations those outrages which they themselves are ready to inflict on others; it is a harmful feeling, because it disturbs advantageous, joyous, and peaceful relations with other peoples, and, above all, it produces that governmental organisation under which power may fall, and does fall, into the hands of the worst men; it is a disgraceful feeling, because it turns man not merely into a slave, but into a fighting-cock, a bull, or a gladiator who wastes his strength and his life for objects which are not his own, but his government's; and it is an immoral feeling, because, instead of confessing one's self a Son of God, as

Christianity teaches us, or even a free man guided by his own reason, each man under the influence of patriotism confesses himself the son of his fatherhood and the slave of his government, and commits actions contrary to his reason and his conscience."[1] Many of us are patriotic English people, or we think we are, but we do not recognise our photographs as taken by this Russian camera. There is a jingo section in every land which preaches "My country, right or wrong," but we should not like to think that Tolstoy fails to see the difference between a just pride of race and a blood and glory patriotism which foams and does nothing. Pride of race is not necessarily followed by blindness to racial defects, and of all great nations Englishmen have the most need of tuition in the art of international appreciation. We are too apt to think we are the sole repositories of all that is best, and only hard matters of fact compel us to admit the occasional superiority of others. Now the basis of love of country is the expansion of filial love,—the application of family affection to the aggregate families which form the nation. This is both natural and useful, for, as Ruskin remarks, "nothing is permanently helpful to any race or condition of men but the spirit that is in their own hearts, kindled by the love of their native land." The advantages and disadvantages of patriotism, when critically compared, do not occasion a drift towards

[1] *Patriotism and Government*, p. 26.

Nihilism, as in the case of Tolstoy and many others: what is wanted is not abolition,—no student of history can regard such a course as possible,—we want an ethical regeneration of our patriotism, by means of which we can cultivate the national spirit and conserve our national interests without offence to the sensitiveness of other peoples, or without infringing their rightful claims.

III. With no part of Tolstoy's teaching is it more difficult to restrain one's impatience than in following him through the tortuous windings of his scheme of economics. It is not that the scheme itself is unusually profound in character, and demands hard thinking to comprehend it; the feeling of impatience arises out of the absence of serious investigation, the apparently wilful blindness to facts, and the *naïve* trustfulness in the most absolute form of Scripture literalism.

Tolstoy approaches the problems of real life with the methods of the literary artist and the religious mystic, although it is only just to say that he has made practical experiments in reform. He began by trying to improve the conditions of the people living in Moscow slums, and was very sanguine of success. Whilst contemplating this untried scheme of raising the standard of life by distributing money and food, his optimism found expression in these words: "I already saw in the future begging and poverty entirely disappearing, I

having been the means of its accomplishment." Alas! he failed ignominiously, and with his customary frankness acknowledges it without an atom of reserve. Money and food effected no change in character. "Unfortunately, I did not see this at the first, nor did I understand that such people needed to be relieved, not by my charity, but of their own false views of the world." Bread and cash were a failure: he therefore determined on another method—*ideas*,—the doctrines of Christ. Concerning this method—so fully set forth in *The Root of the Evil*—we shall have more to say later on.

Having accused Tolstoy of dealing with economic problems in a literary rather than a scientific manner, some proof of this statement should be forthcoming. By a literary manner we mean painting black pictures, the subject-matter of which is artistically selected from the worst phenomena civilisation has produced; assuming that these phenomena are the normal and inevitable products of all civilisations; and using this dark background as a means of bringing into the utmost relief the new gospel of social regeneration. Here is the proof. The first two chapters of *The Slavery of our Times* are taken up with a description of two monstrosities in the world of labour. The first case is that of the goods porters at the Kursk Station of the Moscow-Kursk Railway. It will hardly be credited, but it seems indisputable, that these men have to work thirty-six hours on

end! We know a few of the evils of European countries, but this specimen of cruelty from Russia will be difficult to match, and it is a fine text for Tolstoy. The next case is not so horrible, although it is bad enough to draw sympathy from the most callous nature. Opposite the Moscow home of the Tolstoy family is a silk factory employing three thousand women and seven hundred men. They work—standing—twelve hours a day. The evil effect on health and morals is naturally of the gravest character, and so long as nothing is done by factory inspection, and united movement on the part of the employees, to lessen hours and raise wages, so long will the evils continue. In setting forth these evils Tolstoy's pen never loses its cunning, and having painted his background, he, with remarkable deftness, begins a keen arraignment of the civilisation which makes such cruelties possible. It is all so cleverly done, that on the surface he appears to succeed, and we find ourselves half in agreement with him, that there must be something wrong in a system of progress which costs so much in human sweat and blood. But a closer scrutiny reveals the fallacy. *Something* is wrong: that we all admit; and the civilisation which produces evils also produces remedies for those evils.[1] But Tolstoy says that not *something*

[1] See *L'Anarchie Passive*, by Marie de Manacéine, where the argument is that the higher qualities of human nature are only developed in civilised communities (p. 46).

is wrong,—*everything* is wrong. Instead of going forwards we ought to go backwards; the ideal is not ahead of us,—it lies behind us; increasing complexity is an evil,—the true good is with simplicity.

Whichever way we turn, passive anarchy stares us in the face. The actions of governments, whether influenced by the doctrines of political economy or not, are said to be only half cures of social evils; for governments are essentially wicked, and nothing good can come out of that which is wicked. The only cure is prohibition,—no government at all, and this is to be brought about by the people's refusal to participate in government affairs. Thus we see how Tolstoy's religious and social philosophy are one and the same thing. Resorting to violence is the perennial crime. It should be stated, however, that there are several Scripture passages on which he binds his scheme of social redemption. In one place he says, "The first and most common snare into which man falls is the personal snare,—that of making preparations to live, instead of living."[1] This assertion is made plain in another place, where he is speaking of the "sin of avarice or Property." "Man is a social animal, and the fruits of his labour so accumulate in society, that but for the sin of avarice every man unable to work might always have what is necessary for the satisfaction of his

[1] *The Christian Teaching*, p. 42.

needs. Hence the gospel saying about taking no thought for the morrow, but living as "the birds of the air," is no metaphor, but a statement of the actual law of all social animal life."[1]

"Be not anxious for the morrow," said Christ to His disciples. It is confessedly difficult to interpret words spoken so long ago, and under circumstances so different to our own, but we do not think Tolstoy has succeeded. He says it is no metaphor of the Great Teacher,—it is an actual law. We are to live like the birds of the air. The news is not cheering, for the weaker fowls are killed by the stronger, and every winter scores die of hunger. Moreover, it is expressly said that the birds "toil not, neither do they spin," and yet the Heavenly Father feedeth them. If "Be not anxious" is a law, why not abstinence from toiling and spinning? If we construe literally in one verse, why not literally in the next? In that case labour would be a reflection on Providence, and toiling on the land as criminal as spinning in the factory. To ask mankind to abolish all anxiety about the possibilities of the near and distant future, is to ask for the impossible. Men cannot live like the birds of the air, for the sufficient reason that they are not birds. It is one of the marks of high intelligence to be able to think of the future and prepare for its contingencies. Tolstoy's statement that bird life is the law of all social animal life is in a sense

[1] *The Christian Teaching*, p. 20.

true,—animal life has little concern for the future, because it is animal life and nothing more. But "man shall not live by bread alone" is a law which everybody admits; and the poet who sings whilst he is anxiously wondering how and where he will obtain the next day's bread, is a finer figure than that of the smug peasant cultivating a patch sufficient for his needs without a care to give him dignity.

Tolstoy would no doubt abolish that monumental sin against anxiety for the morrow,—the insurance system; but the casuist might gently argue that since insurance tends to abolish anxiety, it is therefore a sort of accessory to the Sermon on the Mount.

It will be asked: What is the practical outcome of this new teaching? What have we to do? How will acceptance of Tolstoyism affect us? Let us take the last question as embodying the other two. The first effect would be to change our present notions of Christianity for the true notions, inasmuch as our present notions are wrong and harmful. "If only men would realise this, they would see immediately that the fundamental cause of the misery of contemporary humanity is not in the external material circumstances; neither in political nor economic conditions, but in the perversion of Christianity, in the substitution—instead of truths necessary to mankind and corresponding to its

present age—of senseless and immoral absurdities and sacrileges, called Church-Christianity, according to which evil is considered good, and the unimportant important, and *vice versâ;* . . . if only men would realise that neither parliaments nor strikes, trades unions nor co-operative societies, conventions, schools, universities and academies, nor revolutions can be of any real use to men holding a false religious life conception!"[1]

That is the first step. We must convert the world to the Sermon on the Mount. The programme is extensive, and something must be done meanwhile. According to Tolstoy, we can do three things—

(1) Take no part, neither willingly nor under compulsion, in government activity. Hence we must not be soldiers, ministers of State (civil servants), witnesses in courts of law, aldermen, jurymen, governors, members of parliament, nor hold any office connected with violence.

(2) Pay no taxes to the government directly or indirectly; accept no money collected by taxes, either as salary or pension; and make no use of governmental institutions supported by taxes collected by violence from the people.

(3) Do not appeal to government violence to protect possessions in land or other things, nor for self-defence or the defence of near ones. Lands and all products of individual labour, or of other

[1] *The Root of the Evil*, pp. 38–39.

people's labour, should only be held in so far as others do not claim them for themselves.[1]

Trade and commerce thus die a natural death; governments become a superfluity, for each man governs himself; and the difficulties of human society vanish, giving place to peace and harmony.

But the question still remains: What have we to do? The answer is: Every man must do his own work. We must not engage others to work for us: that means subserviency.

"Neither be ye called masters: . . . he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. xxiii. 10, 11). A simple rule to enact, but what a change it means! Capital and labour abolished by decree, and all the strife between masters and men ended for ever!

One cannot take Tolstoy's social doctrines one by one and refute them: it would only amount to proving what the vast majority of people regard as truisms. He has succumbed to the influence of his surroundings, and is a victim to peasant idealism. He glorifies physical labour, and prescribes it universally. Mental labour is apparently labour in a secondary sense, and very questionable in its results.[2] If Tolstoy could stand on a pinnacle of the Kremlin at Moscow, and make the people hear his

[1] *The Slavery of our Times*, pp. 118–119.

[2] The criticism of "working with one's head" in *Ivan the Fool* is a piece of enjoyable banter, but it is not a serious contribution to the solving of a difficulty.

words, he would not call them to prayer, but urge them to return to the land; to leave the vileness of the city with its struggle, its temptations, and its sin, and journey to the village commune, where in purer atmosphere they could dwell in unity; and instead of competing with each other, let them rather deny themselves to help the common good; instead of striving after progress and development, which had caused them to build a city and herd together in such a way as to cause a fight for life, let them think of unused acres which call for cultivation, and in return yield a livelihood; and instead of the conventional lies of civilisation, supported by a false Christianity, it would be better to throw aside the curse and once more get near to nature's heart.

It is fine idealism: but—it is not life.

IV. Another commandment of Christ having far-reaching consequences is: "Every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." We have always understood this passage to mean that there is a sin of thought as well as of action, and it is hard to imagine any other meaning that is not forced and artificial. But Tolstoy says it prohibits sex-activity altogether! With him there are three possible relationships between the sexes: fornication, married life, and celibacy, — these three, and the greatest of these is celibacy. And

yet Tolstoy himself did not believe in celibacy at one time. In *My Religion*, published in 1884, he said, "Do not give way to the desires of the flesh; but let every man in possession of his natural powers take to himself a wife; let every woman take a husband; let a man have only one wife, and a woman only one husband; and let them under no pretext whatever dissolve the personal relations consequent on marriage."[1] There are sections of the Christian Church to-day whose doctrine is practically identical with this primary teaching of Tolstoy. Why did he forsake it? Because, having eschewed all religious rites and civil ceremonies, he was left in the position of advocating marriage without a form of service to give it significance and authority. This was one reason; for although he speaks of marriage and free union in one breath,[2] he could hardly fail to see the danger of leaving so important a matter to the caprice of unordered human nature. But a greater reason lay in his study of the Gospels. He persuaded himself that marriage was contrary to the law of Christ, and that strict celibacy was the ideal. These views were suggested rather than expounded in the much-talked-of *Kreutzer Sonata*, but in an article contributed to *The New*

[1] *My Religion*, p. 81. See also the closing words of *What to Do*.

[2] *Vicious Pleasures*, p. 21. The difficulty concerning marriage was partly overcome by abolishing marriage. Nevertheless, if a Tolstoyite marries, a ceremony is not necessary.

Age in 1897, and republished and re-edited, together with additional matter, in 1901, he develops these views with characteristic energy. "Yes, I think that marriage is an unchristian institution. Jesus never married, neither did His disciples, and He never instituted marriage; but appealing to men, some of whom were married and others not, He said,—to the married, that they should not change their wives (divorce), as they could according to the law of Moses (Matt. v. 32); and to the unmarried, that if they can they had better not marry (Matt. xix. 10–12)."[1] Again: "The Christian's ideal is love to God and to one's neighbour; it is the renunciation of self for the service of God and one's neighbour. Whereas sexual love, marriage, is service of self, and therefore, in any case, an obstacle to the service of God and man; consequently, from a Christian point of view, a fall, a sin. . . . A Christian could enter into marriage without the consciousness of a fall, a sin, only if he could see and know that all the existing children were provided for."[2] To those who regard marriage either as a sacrament or as a sacred covenant, these words will cause much pain and offence. Relationships which men and women have entered into with the utmost

[1] *Relations of the Sexes*, p. 47. Tolstoy himself has adopted asceticism as a code, and he exhorts others to follow him. He is a vegetarian, a teetotaler, and a non-smoker.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

solemnity, invoking the divine power, and which have matured in happiness and family life, are relationships which cannot be ruthlessly reduced in dignity and made to constitute a state of sin, even if the name and words of Christ are adduced in support. But did Christ teach the doctrines aforesaid? That He did not marry Himself is true, but is it true to say He did not establish marriage? If He had desired His disciples to be celibates, would He not have given special commands to that effect? and if He wished marriage to be "taboo," generally, would He have taken a prominent part in the festivities at Cana in Galilee? Moreover, there is evidence to show that Peter was a married man, and the absence of any reference to the wives of the other disciples cannot be taken as absolute proof that these disciples were never married. The passage on which Tolstoy builds his doctrine of celibacy is by no means a weak and uncertain passage. On the face of it there is an impression of a superiority attached to those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. But, after all, the language has much of oriental figure in it; eunuchs are not ideal men either in pagan or Christian literature, and it cannot be that Christ supports self-mutilation. Even Tolstoy declares himself against this idea.[1] What, then, is a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake? A man who,

[1] As in the case of the Skoptsi, a Russian sect.

for example, remains single to support a widowed mother and younger members of the family. On the other hand, if a man finds celibacy conducive to the living of what he believes to be the highest life, let him by all means follow this course. But there is no clearly drawn statement in Christ's words which places celibacy on the pinnacle of perfection; He addresses Himself to each individual man, and leaves the result to inclination and conscience.

Readers of Tolstoy literature are occasionally puzzled by discrepancies in teaching which seem to be more than verbal. In sex topics this is most marked. For instance, over against the doctrines just stated may be set the following passages from *The Relations of the Sexes*:— "Marriage, of course, is good and necessary for the continuation of the race" (p. 39). "Every grown individual, desirous of living well, should certainly marry" (p. 44). "Marriage, true marriage, which realises itself in the birth of children, is in its true meaning only an indirect service of God, a service of God through one's children"[1] (p. 61).

Mr. Vladimir Tchertkoff says that when Tolstoy was asked to reconcile these views,—apparently conflicting,—he replied that they were both true,

[1] Tolstoy's ideas about Christ blessing children are certainly new. He blessed them because, whereas men are married and sinful, children are full of divine possibilities,—they may remain virginal to the end of life (p. 39).

"all depends on the plane in which a man finds himself." If he feels he must marry, let him do so; but if he is capable of living the celibate life, marriage is a fall, a sin. This explanation is hardly convincing, for if marriage is allowed to be all that Tolstoy says it can be, then it ought not to be condemned so vigorously and—we might add—so "loftily" as in the *afterword* to the *Kreutzer Sonata.*

When asked "what will become of the human race if all men become Christians?" he is quite ready with a reply. "The annihilation of the human race . . . is an article of faith with religious people, and with scientific men an inevitable deduction from observations on the cooling of the sun."[1] True, but neither religious people nor scientific men have a programme for assisting in the process of annihilation; and continuous warfare among the nations would hardly exterminate life so rapidly as a world-mania for celibacy. However much Tolstoy may declaim against war as an agent of destruction, it would not lessen the world's population so quickly and effectively as this striking application of the doctrine of passive resistance to the reproductive principle.

Uncharitable critics have said that here we have an instance of a man who in his youth had sown wild oats, and in his old age had suddenly become soured, melancholy, ascetic, and, in a sense,

[1] Art. in *The New Age*, 16th December 1897.

vindictive. This is not true. Even if Tolstoy's own confession about his early life be taken literally, and to a certain extent it must be taken literally, there is too great a lapse of time between the period of sin and the period under discussion to argue a soured and vindictive spirit. No; Tolstoy's gospel of the sexes is a well-marked development, and seems to have been brought about by two operating causes: (*a*) The prominence of the sex question in his mind and thought; and (*b*) the increasing desire to be like Christ in everything. At times it seems to readers of *My Confession*, and many other books, as if Tolstoy is unhealthily aware of the sex topic, so persistently does it force itself to the front in his pamphlets, episodes in his novels, and points in his criticisms. It exercises on the reader the oppressive feeling of a nightmare; and it is only natural that Tolstoy should welcome Scripture which apparently helps him out of the difficulty by prohibiting sex-activity altogether. Early excesses in the case of men whose temperament is naturally religious, often beget ascetic principles in later life: Augustine and John Bunyan are familiar examples. But neither of them ever preached the ascetic ideals of Tolstoy, to whom sexual reproduction is particularly offensive in itself. Finding words in the Gospels which seemed to cast a slur on marriage as an institution, and to set forth celibacy as the highest good, he used these words in association with

Christ's abstinence from marriage, and announced his new gospel concerning the relation of the sexes. It is significant that St. Paul is sparingly consulted. The apostle was one of those who, metaphorically, had become eunuchs, and who had adopted this course for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He even urged others to follow him, but there is no suggestion that celibacy is morally higher than marriage, or that marriage is a fall, a sin. In this section of his teaching Tolstoy appears in his most unfavourable light. People can put up with his ravages in the realm of cherished ideas, but when he tramples upon facts and puts down as weakness and sin what is regarded as the holiest relation among all human things, he can hardly be surprised at heated feelings and angry comment. Nor can he be surprised at the charge of inconsistency. It requires courage to preach celibacy when one has a wife and thirteen children; and the youngest of the Tolstoy family was born so late as 1891. But candour is a fine virtue, and there is something pathetic in the confession which reads, "When speaking of how married people should live, I not only do not imply that I myself have lived, or now live, as I should; on the contrary, I know positively, by my own experience, how one should live, only because I have lived as one should not."[1]

The domestic side of the prophet's own life

[1] *Relations of the Sexes*, p. 49.

cannot be unaffected by his views as herein expounded. He casts a hideous stigma on himself and his family by suggesting that wife and children are symptoms of moral weakness, both regrettable and unchristian. Small wonder that one of his sons is actively hostile to him ; that the Countess lives her own life ; and that most of the daughters follow their mother. However high Tolstoy may rise in the estimation of the world, it will never forgive him for the desperate attempt to describe married life as impurity. It will always hold to the thought so happily expressed somewhere by Dr. George Matheson : "The virgin state is innocence ; but, after marriage, innocence is turned into purity."

VI

ART CRITICISM.

"In spite of the pretences of our democratic philosophies, the classes whose backs are bent with manual labour are æsthetically inferior to the others."—*Amiel's Journal*, p. 141.

IT is not at all surprising to find that Tolstoy has been greatly interested in the problems that concern the philosophy of art. As a literary artist of the first rank, the question *What is art?* must have presented itself to him at an early stage in his career; and when one remembers that his mind is eminently philosophic in character, it becomes evident that such a question clamouring for solution could not be lightly set aside: an answer would have to be found sooner or later. In the present instance the answer was "later," for Tolstoy had more pressing matters to deal with than the underlying principles of art. He allowed himself fifteen years' study and reflection before publishing *What is Art?*

After a preliminary grumble at the conditions under which dramatic art is carried on, Tolstoy

addresses himself to the real subject by drawing attention to the startling disagreements among authorities as to the essence of all art expression. In this he is quite correct: from Baumgarten to Sully and Grant Allen there has been a veritable Babel of conflicting definitions. Hardly two writers agree as to the meaning of the word Beauty. In these circumstances Tolstoy decides to eliminate the offending word altogether, and substitute the idea that art is a means of intercourse between man and man. This yields the following definition. "Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them."[1] This definition is further elucidated thus: "Art begins when one person, with the object of joining another or others to himself in one and the same feeling, expresses that feeling by certain external indications. To take the simplest example: a boy having experienced, let us say, fear on encountering a wolf, relates that encounter; and in order to evoke in others the feeling he has experienced, describes himself, his condition before the encounter, the surroundings, the wood, his own lightheartedness, and then the wolf's appearance, its movements, the distance between him and the wolf, etc. All this, if only the boy, when telling the

[1] *What is Art?* p. 50.

story, again experiences the feelings he had lived through and infects the hearers and compels them to feel what the narrator had experienced, is art.

If even the boy had not seen a wolf, but had frequently been afraid of one, and if, wishing to evoke in others the fear he had felt, he invented an encounter with a wolf, and recounted it so as to make his hearers share the feelings he experienced when he feared the wolf, that also would be art. And just in the same way it is art if a man, having experienced either the fear of suffering or the attraction of enjoyment (whether in reality or imagination), expresses these feelings on canvas or in marble so that others are infected by them. And it is also art if a man feels or imagines to himself feelings of delight, gladness, sorrow, despair, courage, or despondency, and the transition from one to another of these feelings, and expresses these feelings by sounds, so that the hearers are infected by them, and experience them as they were experienced by the composer." [1]

If the reader wishes to know more in detail what kind of feelings may be transmitted by the artist, Tolstoy replies, "The feelings with which the artist infects others may be most various,—very strong or very weak, very important or very insignificant, very bad or very good: feelings of love for native land, self-devotion and submission to fate or to God expressed in a drama, raptures of

[1] *What is Art?* p. 49.

lovers described in a novel, feelings of voluptuousness expressed in a picture, courage expressed in a triumphal march, merriment evoked by a dance, humour evoked by a funny story, the feeling of quietness transmitted by an evening landscape, or by a lullaby, or the feeling of admiration evoked by a beautiful arabesque,—it is all art."[1]

This is admirably clear. Art is the expression of human feelings with a view to infect others with like feelings, and the feelings themselves may be good, bad, or indifferent. The only doubt arises out of the last clause. Good art, we know, and indifferent art we know, but what is bad art? It is the clever and effective expression of debasing feelings, but it is still art, for the greatest gifts of expression may be defiled by the choice of an ignoble subject. Is there, then, no rule which lays down the legitimate subject-matter of art? Tolstoy is ready with an answer. The rule enacts the transmitting of "the highest feelings to which humanity has attained,—those flowing from the religious perceptions." And what is a religious perception? It is "an understanding of the meaning of life which represents the highest level to which men of any period of society have attained,—an understanding defining the highest good at which that society aims."[2] Lest a narrow meaning should still be attached to the phrase "religious perception," it may be wise to add the testimony of Mr. Aylmer

[1] *What is Art?* p. 49. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Maude, concerning whose Introduction to *What is Art?* Tolstoy is enthusiastic. Mr. Maude says the subject-matter of what we in our day can esteem as being the best art, is of two kinds only:—

(1) "Feelings flowing from the highest perception now attainable by man, of our right relation to our neighbour and to the source from which we come. Of such art, Dickens's *Christmas Carol*, uniting us in a more vivid sense of compassion and love, is a ready example.

(2) "The simple feelings of common life, accessible to every one, provided that they are such as do not hinder progress towards well-being. Art of this kind makes us realise to how great an extent we already are members one of another, sharing the feelings of one common nature."[1] Tolstoy's "religious perception" is consequently something more than the phrase would connote to the average English mind; it includes elements that are social and humanitarian—in the popular sense of the word. This is well stated in Tolstoy's concluding chapter. "The destiny of art in our time is to transmit from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling, the truth that well-being for men consists in being united together, and to set up in place of the existing reign of force that kingdom of God—*i.e.* of love—which we all recognise to be the highest aim of human life."[2]

[1] Introduction to *What is Art?* p. xvii.
[2] *What is Art?* p. 211.

Such is the Tolstoyan conception of art. How does its author defend it? As might be expected, he defends it with considerable ingenuity and acuteness. That art should unite all men together, seems at first sight a plea without much to be said in its favour, but Tolstoy's breezy criticisms of "upper class art," with its exclusiveness and intolerable inanity, are not only good reading, but serve as real guides to the man who, in art, is trying to work out his own salvation. It is contended, and not without truth, that scepticism—or narrow-mindedness—has impoverished the subject-matter of art, diminished the scope of its audience, and deprived the artist of his first claim to attention,—sincerity. Many pages are devoted to evidences said to support this threefold indictment. There are palpable weaknesses in the chain of argument, notably the attempt to pick out instances of good art. Tolstoy selects Schiller's *The Robbers*, Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, Dickens's *The Tale of Two Cities*, Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Dostoievsky's *Memoirs from the House of Death*, and George Eliot's *Adam Bede* as samples of the best work; and after pouring contempt on the productions of many a great name in music, painting, and poetry, he adds the following damaging confession:—"I attach no special importance to my selection; for besides being insufficiently informed in all branches of art, I belong to the class of people whose taste has by false training been perverted. And there-

fore my old, inured habits may cause me to err, and I may mistake for absolute merit the impression a work produced on me in my youth. My only purpose in mentioning examples of works of this or that class is to make my meaning clearer, and to show how, with my present views, I understand excellence in art in relation to its subject-matter. I must, moreover, mention that I consign my own artistic productions to the category of bad art, excepting the story *God sees the Truth*, which seeks a place in the first class, and *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, which belongs to the second."[1] This passage is thoroughly Tolstoyan in its courage, the courage which despoils fine creations about whose message and meaning it stands in doubt, and the courage which does not hesitate to demolish the claims of *Anna Karenina* to a place in the temple of fame. But such courage argues the lack of a faculty that is *par excellence* the test of critical values,—discrimination; and Tolstoy by the confession just quoted not only exhibits his own poverty of judgment, but weakens the foundations on which his criticism of art is built.

To enter the lists against Tolstoy might appear to be an action demanding as much courage as that shown by the Russian prophet himself, but a survey of the whole position will give the reader the required confidence. Take, first of all, the arguments adduced to prove that professionalism

[1] *What is Art?* p. 170.

in art is the cause of perverted taste. Tolstoy does not believe in men living on an income derived from producing objects of art: the need of an income compels them to create stories, novels, and poems which lack the note of sincerity, or to paint pictures and compose music similarly defective. There is enough truth in the remark to keep it from sinking, but if it really means that the greatest art was never paid for, whilst third-rate stuff always fetched its price, one cannot but disagree. Shakespeare was an artist and a man of business who made his profession remunerative, and Sir Walter Scott loses nothing of his reputation because he wrote for money. In view of Tolstoy's sense of the importance of art,[1] it is a little surprising that he will allow no man to be set apart and ordained to that work, but further reflection brings to mind the fact that a separate consecration to art would disarrange the social scheme whereby it is decreed a living must be obtained by the work of one's hands. In Tolstoy's world the artist is required to be a layman. And as for the *art critic*,—well, he is exterminated. "If a work be good as art, then the feeling expressed by the artist — be it moral or immoral — transmits itself to other people. If transmitted to others, then they feel it, and all interpretations are superfluous."[2] This is a hard knock for both artist and critic. If the artist has not made his meaning clear and needs the help of a

[1] *What is Art?* p. 51. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

professional expositor, it is very bad for the artist; and if the expression of feeling is plain even to the simplest, it is equally bad for the critic, inasmuch as his services are quite unnecessary. But after all it is only Tolstoyan art that needs no interpretation: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to wit. To select an audience of peasants and express feelings so that they will appreciate them without assistance of any kind, is to produce art that the educated folk will certainly understand; but will they or ought they to be satisfied with it? The question will come up again later on, when the main thesis is discussed. Let it be sufficient here and now to say that there is too much affectation and something that is a good deal worse about the art criticism of the day, and it is easy to endorse the verdict of Ossip Lourié, one of Tolstoy's disciples: "Mais le critique déploie plus souvent son propre *moi* que celui de l'artiste."[1] But even Ossip Lourié does not crawl on all-fours after his master. He says, "On croit généralement que le critique doit montrer ce que le poète ou l'artiste n'a pas assez montré, il doit ouvrir ce qui n'est qu' entr' ouvert, il doit déployer."[2] The artist *par excellence* often builds better than he knows,—Tolstoy in his *Anna Karenina* for example,—and it is part of the critic's function to interpret art products in relation to their creators, to products of a similar character, and to the surrounding life.

[1] *La Philosophie de Tolstoï*, p. 174. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

Schools of art fare no better than art critics. Technique occupies little place in Tolstoy's rigid scheme. If a man can't write or paint, no school can teach him,—he says. True, but it can teach him much that is helpful. No school can impart quality and power to a voice, but it can educate the gifts of nature, and thus justify the sole object of its existence.

The main thesis of Tolstoy's *What is Art?* is this,—that every work of art should be of such a nature that everybody coming in contact with it will instantly receive the artist's feeling, and be the better for it. There is an amplitude of brotherhood in this idea, but there is not much else. It is an attempt to force the world of art by the power of pure arithmetic. Why should mere numbers of themselves decide so important an issue? If five hundred farmers dislike a picture, or see nothing in it, and five other men praise it highly, does the larger number carry the day apart from the principles of art criticism? To the discerning mind neither the five hundred nor the five mean anything at all apart from the reasons they give for approval or disapproval. And yet the bulk of mere votes is part and parcel of Tolstoy's method of valuation. "The only advantage," he says, "the art I acknowledge has over decadent art lies in the fact that the art I recognise is comprehensible to a somewhat larger number of people than present-day art."[1] If this be the only

[1] *What is Art?* p. 20.

advantage, we cannot but see on how flimsy a basis the whole superstructure is made to rest.

In furtherance of his contention that art should be understood by those who follow manual pursuits, Tolstoy says, "For the great majority of our working people, our art, besides being inaccessible on account of its costliness, is strange in its very nature, transmitting as it does the feelings of people far removed from those conditions of laborious life which are natural to the great body of humanity."[1] But can these far-removed people help having different feelings from working men? Of course in a Tolstoy world there would be no such people at all; but, granting their existence, it follows as a necessary consequence that variety of life and occupation will evolve variety in feeling and expression. The best answer to Tolstoy is furnished by a luminous article from the pen of Mr. A. E. Fletcher, of whom it is not too much to say that he is on other matters most strongly in sympathy with Tolstoy. In criticising the views expressed by Mr. E. J. Dallas in his *Gay Science*, Mr. Fletcher admits that "undoubtedly art is for all, and no man has the shadow of a claim to the title of great poet unless he is possessed of the enthusiasm of humanity, and hears in his soul the music not only of 'earth in its woods, and water in its waves,' but of 'man in his multitudes.' But it is simply because art is for all that few only can

[1] *What is Art?* p. 71.

appreciate it at first, for the majority of men are the victims of ignorance and prejudice and selfishness; and it is impossible, therefore, that they can appreciate that which is great by reason of its freedom from these characteristics, until at least their nobler instincts have been awakened by the contemplation of perfection. Christianity is for all, but the greatest Christians are just those who during their lifetime are least appreciated in this world. 'Not this man, but Barabbas,' howled the mob in the judgment hall of Pilate, when the choice was given them of deciding for the Founder of Christianity Himself or for a notorious robber."[1] And did not Christ Himself recognise the right of selecting an audience? "Cast not your pearls before swine." Incapacity to receive this message was no detriment to an apostle; it ascribed no direct blame to the hearer, neither did it suggest the weakness of the gospel message. It is thus with the message of art. If a great artist expresses himself in poetry, in painting, in fiction, or in marble, and the multitude do not understand him, what then? Let the multitude wait. A great soul needs a great interpreter,—this is really why we have a place for the true critic in our midst. The multitude waited for Shakespeare to be revealed, and for Browning and Wordsworth to create a taste for themselves.

The working class—the peasantry—those whose

[1] "The Philosophy of Art," *The New Age*, 30th Dec. 1897.

mental density Tolstoy has so mercilessly portrayed in *Resurrection*—do not exert claims for a first place in the artist's thought: they have more sense than that. It is the anxiety of the socialist system-maker to effect a harmonious body of doctrine which is responsible for such jejune proposals. Tolstoy has much to say of Ruskin that is good, and they are both agreed on the abomination of railways. Let us therefore hear Ruskin: "It is an insult to what is really great in art or literature to suppose that it in any way addresses itself to mean or uncultivated faculties. No man can be really appreciated but by his equal or superior. . . . The question of the merit of art-work is decided at first by a few, by fewer in proportion as the merits of the work are of a higher order."

To sum up. Tolstoy is to be congratulated on the vigorous way in which he clears the ground at the beginning of *What is Art?* We were more than weary of a hundred different kinds of "beauty," of "ideals" and "theories" and "manners." Consequently it was refreshing to come across a simple definition, viz. that art is the expression of human feelings with a view to infect others with like feelings,—the feelings themselves being good, bad, or indifferent. There is little to quarrel with, so far; but when Tolstoy begins to expound his position, we soon find cause to dissent. How are we to distinguish good art from bad art? By "religious

perception," which signifies an understanding of the meaning of life; in other words, a knowledge of the highest good. Any picture, poem, or statue that fails to minister to this end is bad art. Perhaps so, but much depends on the accuracy of the words as here used. The "meaning of life" and the "highest good" are elastic terms, and novels which to our mind minister to both would be condemned by Tolstoy. The plain truth is that with him good art is an exploitation of the sense of brotherhood and mutual helpfulness, and all else is bad art. If a man has a feeling to transmit to his fellows, he is bound by the law of the greatest number, that is, he must simplify his feeling and rob it of every trace of personality so as to make it plain to those who are most numerous,—the working classes. In itself the aim is morally commendable, but it is impossible of accomplishment, and for that reason is absurd. An art whose sole advantage lies in its being appreciated by the greatest number of people is not an art that is likely to live; it is against facts as we know them. Moreover, it is hardly the kind of doctrine that should come from a man who elsewhere speaks of "the narrow-minded people who compose the multitude."[1] And if these people are the best critics, where is there one among their number who can write an analysis like Tolstoy's *Guy de Maupassant?*

[1] *Vicious Pleasures*, p. 25.

VII

A SURVEY OF THE PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING TOLSTOY'S GOSPEL

"Evils can never pass away, for there must always remain something which is antagonistic to good."—PLATO.

WE have already pointed out that Tolstoy has never embodied his teaching in systematic form, and that this fact deprives him of real philosophic distinction. Behind this lack of system is the lack of originality, for there is scarcely a thought in the whole of his works which may be described as absolutely new. As a drawback, however, the absence of newness is not necessarily serious; a prophet's true measure is more often found in his sincerity and power than in the originality of his ideas. But if Tolstoy's teaching is not systematic, two facts may be urged in extenuation: his doctrines, so far as he expounds them, are consistent in themselves; and he has followed the example of Christ, who never even summarised His commandments, but left them to the memory of His disciples.

Any student who has made the attempt to "codify" Tolstoy will have observed that his theory and practice of religion are traceable to three passages of Scripture; and these passages, together with the conclusions drawn from them, may be stated thus:—

Resist not evil (Matt. v. 39).	*This means* (*a*) No government; no army; no war; no patriotism; no violence; no courts. (*b*) No oaths. (*c*) No anger.
Neither be ye called masters (Matt. xxiii. 10, 11).	*This means* (*a*) No class distinctions. (*b*) No servants — every man to do his own work.
Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. v. 28).	*This means* (*a*) No fornication. (*b*) No marriage; or, (*c*) no sex-action in marriage. (*d*) Celibacy. (*e*) No meat, no intoxicants, no smoking.

The exegesis is more than staggering, but every candid reader will admit that whether or

not these doctrines are deducible from the texts referred to, the whole of the teaching is consistently welded together. It may be asked, sceptically, what has patriotism to do with celibacy? and celibacy with vegetarianism? The earnest disciple will reply, "We entertain celibacy as our ideal, and to live up to it we find a meat diet is a hindrance, whereas vegetarianism is a great help. And the connection between patriotism and celibacy is not so distant as might at first sight appear. There is to be no patriotism because there is to be no national life; there is to be no national life because there is to be no family life; there is to be no family life because there is to be no marriage: celibacy is the ideal."

This is satisfactory so far, but what we look for is the larger view wherein we see the new teaching in its relation to the world of the past and the present. In the case of a religious teacher who appeals to God with much frequency, and who takes his ideas from the New Testament, we look for the larger view with confident expectation. But Tolstoy disappoints us, and leaves us to find the larger view ourselves. Ossip Lourié says, "Toutes les conceptions de Tolstoï, religieuses, sociales, esthétiques peuvent se résumer en trois mots: Amour, Travail, Solidarité."[1] This is rather descriptive than definitive, and it would be more

[1] *Philosophie de Tolstoï*, p. 178.

accurate to say that Tolstoy tests all his ideas by three principles—

1. Universality.
2. Uniformity.
3. Unity.

Every doctrine must, in practice, be applicable to all men; it must tend to keep men on the same level as brethren; and it must finally tend to unite men together. We hope to give evidence of these principles in the criticisms that follow.

As a theologian, Tolstoy is an enigma. Hitherto we have only given hints of his position in reference to orthodoxy, but in the following summary of the orthodox position — the Greek Church, be it remembered—his position is made plain. He is speaking of the chief cause of evil in the world, and says it is Christianity, which affirms that "there is a God, who, six thousand years ago, created the world and the man Adam. Adam sinned, and for his sin God punished all men, and then sent His Son—God, like the Father—upon earth in order that He should be hanged. The fact that the Son of God was hanged delivers men from the punishment they must bear for Adam's sin. If people believe all this, Adam's sin will be forgiven them; if they do not believe, they will be cruelly punished."[1] Without committing ourselves to any view of Old Testament narratives or of substitutional merit, we can safely say that however

[1] *The Root of the Evil*, p. 30.

true this summary may be of the theology of the Greek Church,—and we doubt its truth,—it is a fearful caricature of theology in this country,—at any rate of the theology which is at all progressive. As such it need not detain us, but it shows how much, or how little, Tolstoy appreciates Church Christianity, which with its many shortcomings—some of them very serious—is still the centre of our national idealism, and without which we should soon sink into decay. What does Tolstoy offer instead of the crude summary just noticed? What has he to say of the Bible and its inspiration? of miracles? of immortality?

He regards the Bible as any other book; it is of value mainly because of its moral ideas. When a German professor wrote a book to show that Christ never really existed, Tolstoy was delighted. "Take away the Church, the traditions, the Bible, and even Christ Himself; the ultimate fact of Christ's knowledge of goodness, *i.e.* of God, directly through reason and conscience, will be as clear and certain as ever, and it will be seen we are dealing with truths that never perish,—truths that humanity can never afford to part with."[1] Such a declaration is in perfect keeping with his views of history, and at the same time it sets forth the independent attitude he assumes towards evidences of the genuineness and authenticity of Scripture. Everything in the Bible which his spiritual instinct tells

[1] *Tolstoy and his Problems*, p. 209.

him is wrong, he, metaphorically, draws his pen through ; and if the reader would care to know what is left after the pen-drawing process is finished, he cannot do better than consult *The Four Gospels Harmonised and Translated* (2 vols., third not published), and a little pamphlet called *The Spirit of Christ's Teaching*. The virgin birth, the miracles, the resurrection and ascension, have no place in the Tolstoyan Bible. Whether they ought to have or not, we do not at present determine : we are simply looking at his methods from the orthodox standpoint.

Since theologians tell us that the two postulates of theology are the personality of God and the personality of man, it may be well to see how Tolstoy stands in regard to these first things. He is quite sound on the latter : man is a person. But is God? Emphatically "No." Here is what he says : "It is said that God should be conceived of as a personality. This is a great misunderstanding; personality is limitation. Man feels himself a personality only because he is in contact with other personalities. . . . But how can we say of God that He is a person? Herein lies the root of anthropomorphism. We can only say of God that which Mahomet and Moses said : He is One."[1] This is clear enough in itself, but it is difficult to harmonise with Tolstoy's inculcation of prayer, and with the implied acceptance of

[1] *Thoughts on God*, pp. 33–34.

personality where mention of God is made in other places. One cannot pray to an abstraction. There is no sympathy in an Energy or a Force, and we very much doubt whether a distributed First Cause has enough interest in sins to forgive them, and yet Tolstoy accepts the Lord's Prayer, beginning with "Our Father." In those two words there is both anthropomorphism and anthropopathism, — the very things condemned, without which only mystics find it possible to worship. When Tolstoy prays, he says, "I hate my weakness, I seek Thy way, but I do not despair. I feel Thy nearness, feel Thy help when I walk in Thy ways, and Thy pardon when I stray from them. . . . Lord, pardon the errors of my youth, and help me to bear Thy yoke as joyfully as I accept it."[1] This might be a section from Augustine's *Confessions*, and we should naturally infer that the writer of such a prayer could not do otherwise than accept the personality of the God he addressed. But he does not. In *The Root of the Evil*, after exhibiting the utter miseries of human labour, he says, "If there exists a Supreme Wisdom and Love guiding the world, if there is a God, He cannot sanction such a division among men; . . . if there is a God, this cannot and must not be." The implied personality of God in these expressions is most clear; indeed, were it not for the explicit disavowal of personality previously

[1] *Thoughts on God*, pp. 38–39.

noted, there is little or nothing to show that Tolstoy's theism differs from that of a Unitarian. Then how can the difficulty be solved? Only by taking a complete survey of all books bearing his name; and the result is to discover that our author is a mystic of the first order. His theism is really pantheism. He is a mystic because this God whom he addresses so confidently is a pervading essence rather than a personality,—in other words, a mystic God; and because the definitions of prayer and immortality point to the mystical method of perception. "Christian prayer is therefore of two kinds: that which elucidates for man his position in the world,—occasional prayer; and that which accompanies his every action, bringing it to God's judgment, weighing it,—continual prayer. . . . Occasional prayer is that by means of which a man in his best moments, abstracting himself from all worldly influences, evokes within himself the clearest consciousness of God and his relation to God. . . . Continual prayer consists in reminding man at every moment of his life, during all his actions, what constitutes his life and welfare; . . . it is the perpetual consciousness of the presence of God."[1] Like all mystical teaching, there is something attractive in this view of prayer, and it helps us to understand in what sense Tolstoy speaks of God; God is the Emersonian "All-Soul," and as an indefinite Deity

[1] *The Christian Teaching*, pp. 59–61.

must be approached in ways not too keenly defined; Tolstoy's idea of prayer is a sort of breathing in the breath of spirit as the lungs breathe in the air of the atmosphere. The same absence of crystallised form can be seen in his doctrine of immortality. He abhors personal immortality, and has a sly hit at the popular Christian idea of heaven by calling it a life "immortal, innocent, and *idle*." "However strange it may seem, yet we have to recognise that belief in a future personal life is an extremely crude and barbarous conception, common to all primitive races, and based upon the confusion of death with sleep."[1] Bible students will eagerly press forward with arguments against this contention, but what is the use? Your arguments are probably based on passages which do not exist in the Bible of Tolstoy, consequently they are useless.

Tolstoy's immortality is a compound of Wordsworth's *Ode* and George Eliot's *Choir Invisible*. We come from—we know not where; we go to the power from whence we came, but not as individual entities; we are "swallowed up of life." This is no more nor less than the old Greek conception of the soul as an excerpt from God,—a soul enclosed in a casket of clay, which, when released by death, returns to be absorbed in God.[2] Such is immortality in its other world

[1] *What I Believe*, p. 132.

[2] See the later chapters of *On Life*, particularly chapter xxx.

aspects. In its present world aspect it is a permanency of result, — the conservation of spiritual facts and forces. "The man is dead, but his relationship to the world continues to act upon men; its action is not only what it was during life, but in many cases it is yet more intense; it increases and grows as everything alive does, in proportion to its advanced state of reason and of love, without ever ceasing, and without any interruption."[1] There is a uniform destiny for the race by means of which its many differences are resolved into the unity of God.

Without going further into theological matters, it will be evident to every one that Tolstoy's position is far removed from that of the Churches; and that, whereas the Churches believe in systematising their beliefs, he absolutely refuses to do so, on the ground that it is unnecessary and mischievous. It is unnecessary, because religion is life, not dogma; and mischievous, because it tends to substitute the letter for the spirit. In his latest work he defines religion as follows:—"True religion is the establishment by man of such a relation to the infinite life around him, as, while connecting his life with this

Mr. A. D. White says: "I asked him if he had formed a theory as to a future life, and he said, in substance, that he had not, but that as we came at birth from beyond the forms of time and space, so at death we returned from whence we came."—*The Idler*, July 1901.

[1] *On Life*, p. 148. See also p. 64 of *The Christian Teaching;* Kenworthy's *A Pilgrimage to Tolstoy*, p. 30.

infinitude and directing his conduct, is also in agreement with his reason and with human knowledge."[1] From this definition one does not readily dissent, but so much depends on interpretation. Is Tolstoyism in agreement with human knowledge? Scarcely. In fact he satirises science and the scientific method so mercilessly, that one would think he does not care whether his religion is in accord with human knowledge or not. For him, to live is Christ; and science, and philosophy, and every other type of learning or inquiry is a superfluity. If his gospel is complete in itself, that is enough; its relation to the other facts of a great universe are purely secondary. But all knowledge is one, and although we do not expect systematic form from a mystic, we do expect him to allow those who wish to codify their teaching to do so undisturbed. But no; all the theologians, scientists, and philosophers are wrong, and Tolstoy alone is right. It must be admitted that theologians, scientists, and philosophers, in their attempt to unify knowledge, have often failed lamentably, but they have had the grace to confess it, at least in most instances. When describing these failures Tolstoy is scrupulously unfair. Take the scientist as an instance. "Physics speaks of the laws and relationships of forces without giving attention to the question what force is, and without attempting to explain its nature. Chemistry treats of the

[1] *What is Religion?* p. 16.

relationships of matter without troubling about what matter is, nor attempting to define its nature. Zoology treats of the forms of life without asking the question what life is, nor attempting to define its essence. And force, matter, life are not regarded by science as true objects of study, but as the bases for the axioms of another domain of human knowledge, and on which is constructed the edifice of every separate science."[1] It cannot be that Tolstoy is ignorant of the things about which he writes, hence the only charitable view to take of such expressions as these is that he has so blinded himself to the truth that fairness is out of the question. Force, matter, and life are the very objects of all scientific effort, not merely in their manifestations, but in their essence. The origin of life has occupied the study of generations of men; matter is being closely pressed to give up its secret, and force has never lost for a moment the interest of persevering research. The men who have sacrificed themselves even unto death are far above the cheap cynicism of Tolstoy; they may have failed, but not more conspicuously than the prophet himself; and in the ages to come it is more than likely that the despised efforts of theologian, scientist, and philosopher will have contributed as much to the general well-being, as the religious movement which springs from the steppes of Russia.

Behind all this antagonism to modern science,

[1] *On Life*, p. 40.

is the activity of the three principles referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Investigation into the abstruse matters of the universe tends to increase the complexities of civilisation. If men had not studied steam, we should have been without the locomotive and the cargo boat; the former of which has brought the curse of railways, and the latter the dependence of one country on another for articles of food. The ideal method of motion is to proceed on foot or ride on horseback; and the ideal of food supply is for every man to produce his own. In other words, everything that tends to split men up into sections, or separate them into classes, or spoil the uniformity of their ranks, is reprehensible. With Tolstoy there is only one science, viz., that which teaches us how to live. When we know that, the rest can go; for it is not only immaterial, but somewhat of a danger to the general well-being. The cry is, "Back to nature."

Well may Tolstoy express a love for Rousseau. The *Discourse on the question whether the restoration of the Sciences and Arts has contributed to purify manners*, and the *Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality among men*, are just the kind of books to appeal to a Russian reformer; whilst *Emile* and *The Social Contract* would be almost as acceptable. "Man is born free," says Rousseau, "and everywhere is in chains." This, too, is the burden of Tolstoy. There is the ecclesiastical

chain, — therefore away with dogma and all theological systems; there is the chain of class distinctions,—therefore away with aristocracy and democracy and let all men be equal; there is the chain of unequal labour,—therefore away with hireling systems and let every man do his own work; and, lastly, there is the cursed chain of civilisation, —therefore away with the crime of building cities, with all their concentrated evils, and let men dwell in the open, breathing God's air instead of factory smoke, and living the life of brethren rather than that of enemies and competitors.

If Tolstoy anywhere assumes the garment of the philosopher, it is in his *On Life*. The sum-total of this book is mystic-asceticism. First, our true life is the life lived beyond the limits of time and space.[1] This is what Christianity has been teaching for centuries. And yet Ossip Lourié says, "l'Église chrétienne nous enseigne qu' après cette vie, qui n'est pas la véritable, commencera la vraie vie,"[2] with the object of showing how different is the Tolstoyan view. In essence they are almost identical. We are not discussing the right or wrong of this world as a probationary stage to an eternal career; we are only asserting that, in this particular, Tolstoy and the Christian world are in agreement. But Tolstoy is not consistent. In his *Christian Teaching* he says life in the present is the only actual

[1] *On Life*, chap. xiv.
[2] *La Philosophie de Tolstoï*, p. 96.

life,—"the future does not belong to man."[1] This is far more in keeping with his real philosophy of love and brotherly help than with the ideas borrowed from Greek Platonists. Our true life is either the present one, or one to be lived in the future. Tolstoy says *both;* and we must leave him to settle the contradiction.

Our true life is said to lie beyond the bounds of time and space, because this life is unsatisfactory and illusive, and because spirit is superior to matter. "From the day of his birth," we read, "inevitable destruction awaits man—a senseless life and a senseless death—if he does not find the one thing needful for the true life. . . . Christ . . . shows us that besides the personal life which is an illusion, there is another life which is truth and no illusion."[2] Again, "Simple reasoning, as well as philosophic researches into life, clearly show that all earthly life is a succession of sufferings which are far from being compensated for by joys."[3]

With these pessimistic utterances the following theosophic doctrine is in perfect accord:—"This liberation of the spiritual being from the animal individuality, this birth of the spiritual being, constitutes the true life of man, individual and collective."[4] We are incarnated in bodies of flesh by the will of a mysterious Power, and it is our duty so to live that all fleshly impulses shall be

[1] *The Christian Teaching*, p. 42.
[2] *What I Believe*, p. 123.
[3] *On Life*, p. 163.
[4] *The Christian Teaching*, p. 17.

reduced to a minimum and the impulses of the spirit rejoice in a plenitude of freedom. Hence all practices which tend to stimulate the flesh artificially, such as drinking alcoholic liquors, smoking tobacco, eating meat, and participating in exciting entertainments, are proscribed; and all mental desires and earthly interests that tend to identify man's welfare with this world exclusively — science, philosophy, avarice, ambition — are placed under a similar ban. They are wrong, because the true life is not in things seen, and because they put the present life out of its proper perspective.

If this teaching is not Orientalism as typified in modern theosophy,—what is it? Long ago, whilst still at school, we saw that Tolstoy imagined the present life in the fashion of an oval figure, and by drawing a line from one segment to the edge of the blackboard, he signalised the eternity that was ours before birth; and by drawing a similar line from an opposite segment he represented the eternity that was ours after death. Here again is the same idea. Man is a pilgrim on the earth. He comes from an eternal life of purely spiritual being, and, unfortunately, gets clothed in a body from which it is his duty to free himself as quickly as legitimate means will allow, for true life is life apart from the flesh.

An examination of Tolstoy's gospel, religious and social, reveals many weaknesses in the founda-

tions. Among the first is the fact that the whole structure is based on *a false conception of human nature.* The cardinal commandment is, "Resist not evil." What is behind or beneath this law of conduct? The unspoken conviction that evil can be destroyed by good,—that kindness will always conquer. This is expounded in some of Tolstoy's short stories.[1] He represents soldiers and brigands as marching against hundreds of men and women, who raise not a finger in self-defence, until at last the plundering villains cease their evil deeds, overcome by fear and remorse at the sight of their non-resisting enemies. The picture is not at all ineffective, but a picture of equal power could be drawn representing an opposite state of affairs. Suppose half of London's millions determine on the policy of non-resistance, and that the Hooligan section of the remaining half determine on pillage and plunder. How many will be overcome by remorse? How many will lose a night's sleep over the sins they have committed, and how many will return to shops and private dwellings, carrying stolen jewellery, and tearfully confessing their crimes? Not many. Tolstoy is too optimistic about human nature.[2] It is not on the large scale that non-resistance will become possible; it is by

[1] *Ivan the Fool*, and others.

[2] In this matter the influence of Rousseau probably counts for a great deal. But if man's impulses are good, why is the reproductive impulse bad?

means of units whose preaching shall prepare the minds of successive generations for the reception of so advanced an ideal. Man is only slowly progressive, and, as yet, evil can be overcome by no other means than evil; that is, wrong-doing must be put down by the force of the law, because men are not ready for action on a higher plane.

It can be for no other reason than this that the Christian Church has held the Sermon on the Mount in suspense, and given its attention to teachings which are preparatory thereto. Unfortunately, these preparatory courses have a tendency to become an end in themselves, and not a means to an end; so that one of Tolstoy's services to Christianity is the reopening of a question which has been closed too long.

But in a second sense he holds a false view of human nature. We have heard of an ancient philosopher who was so spiritually minded, and so ashamed of having a body, that he refused to have his portrait painted. Now Tolstoy tries hard to avoid the doctrine that the body is bad, but he does not succeed. When he declares that some pessimistic teachings require the destruction of the body because the enclosing of a spiritual soul is a mistake, he replies that any system which denies the lawfulness of either body or soul is wrong.[1] This sounds conclusive, but if the arguments in *The Christian*

[1] *The Christian Teaching*, p. 16.

Teaching be followed closely they will show that Love requires men to strive towards unity of spirit, which at present is broken by the separation of man from man. What separates them? Bodies. "The obstacles that hinder the manifestation of love by man are (1) his body—its separateness from other beings—and (2) the fact that beginning his life with infancy, during which period he lives only for the animal life of his separate being, he cannot later on, even when reason is awakened, altogether disentangle himself from desiring the welfare of his separate being, and so commits acts opposed to love."[1] The two divisions in this paragraph are really one, and they spell "body." He may say that the body is *lawful*, but he cannot persuade us that he believes it is *good;* everything points to an entirely opposite conclusion. The body is an obstacle to spirituality, and with this teaching one readily harmonises his ascetic practices; for in temper and outlook Tolstoy is a twentieth-century Essene: physiology is a calamity. Such a doctrine, it is needless to say, will only appeal to the other-worldly and celibate few. Essentially it is pessimistic; practically it is retrogressive; and although *My Religion* contains many taunts respecting the evils of Christendom, it is to the credit of Christendom that it has, whilst placing eternal life before all else, founded a healthy gospel of life in the body.

[1] *The Christian Teaching*, p. 16.

As a practical scheme of social reform, Tolstoy's gospel is almost hopeless, although its influence will be felt indirectly. It is based upon what ought to be, rather than upon what is possible. He might have learned a valuable lesson on this head from his own life. When the truth of Christ's teaching dawned upon him, he determined to make every necessary sacrifice. He dressed as a peasant, worked as a peasant, and renounced the ownership of his lands. But he was not able to leave his family, and his desire for complete obedience to Christ was cut short in several ways, as already indicated. The ideal would have been to "leave all and follow the Master,"—that is "what ought to be"; but instead he effected a compromise,—that is, "he decided in favour of what is possible." There is more sanity and wisdom in the programme of The Garden City Association than in all the labour schemes of Tolstoy, for the simple reason that the Association proceeds on a practical basis, and is willing to accomplish a little good if the greater good is out of reach.

Yes, Tolstoy's dream of a Christianised world is the last of our *Ideal Commonwealths*. Plato dreamed of a golden age, where philosophers would be kings, and life would be bliss; Bacon built a city in the sea, and Companella imagined the *City of the Sun*. Plutarch's *Lycurgus*, More's *Utopia*, and Tolstoy's *Christian Teaching*, however different in style and contents, are pathetic strivings after

human perfectibility. Centuries pass, and will continue to pass, but it is improbable that we shall have another Utopia. Imagination has been round the circle, and can only repeat its orbit. This much, however, may be said for the Russian idealist,—that of all schemes for universal good his is the mightiest in its Universality, in its attempt at Uniformity, and in its plea for bringing all inharmonious elements into Unity.

VIII

TOLSTOY'S INFLUENCE IN THE FUTURE

"The world belongs to the energetic."—EMERSON.

TO calculate the probable effects of Tolstoy's teaching on future generations is a task requiring more time, more insight, and perhaps more daring, than we can at present command. Such estimates as are here given are based on the most obvious results of religious propaganda, and do not claim to be anything more than indicative of the lines on which the influence of Tolstoy may be expected to travel.

1. Tolstoy's teaching will wield its greatest power in Russia, and no one can tell what the twentieth century may bring forth. That this is no trite and empty expression of opinion, is easily proved, although the method of proof is rather circuitous. In the first place, the Russian peasantry have no confidence in their clergy,—their "popes," as they are called. "Notwithstanding the devotion of the lower classes to their faith, they are inclined

to look upon the priest as a necessary accessory to the service in church, with whom it is not desirable to come into contact elsewhere; while both they and the higher classes—whose religious feelings are generally widely different—so constantly associate him, often unconsciously, with many of the saddest moments of their lives, that to meet with a priest at any of their social festivities, where it can possibly be avoided, is felt to be almost like meeting an undertaker in his funeral garb."[1] And if this be the attitude of the orthodox-minded, that of the *Raskolniki*, or dissenting sects, is not more amiable. These sects are very numerous, and many of them are very prosperous. Their existence points to the ecclesiastical revolution which was caused by Peter the Great's attempt —largely successful—to Europeanise the Russian Church and people. The *Raskolniki* determined to make some sort of stand for their old faith, but in so doing they imbibed much of the paganism latent in all Russian belief and devotion.

The next point is the popularity of the Four Gospels. At first sight it seems impossible that these ikon-worshipping farmers, so full of the love of religious pomp and ceremonial, should have a love for the simplicity of the Gospels. Nevertheless it is true. But how came

[1] *Russian Life in Town and Country*, pp. 62–63. On one occasion a priest was thrashed because his prayers for a good harvest were not answered !

they to know the Gospels, — in a land where Scripture is understood to be read and interpreted by the clergy? The answer is full of interest. In 1813 the British and Foreign Bible Society was established in Russia, and in a few years there were over three hundred actively distributing branches. The amount of work done in the disposal of Bibles —Gospels chiefly—was enormous; and although a stop was put to the Society's work in 1826, there remained the effect of thirteen years' solid labour. The consequence is that a knowledge of the Gospels is to-day a common acquisition among the rank and file of the peasantry.

Now, put these three facts together,—the lack of confidence in the clergy, the number and earnestness of the dissenters, and the love of the simple narratives of Christ and His teaching,—what do they stand for in relation to Tolstoy? They can only mean that he is the peasants' prophet, a John the Baptist who is to prepare the way for the coming of the spiritual kingdom. Tolstoy gathers together in himself the hopes, fears, sufferings, and unspeakable longings of those whose cause he has espoused, and it is not too much to say that many thousands of Russian peasants believe in him as Prophet, Priest, and King,—but most of all as Brother. Readers of *The Kingdom of God within You* may have smiled at the *naïve* expressions of confidence in the complete victory of non-resistance. We who live in this country

know how slow is its progress among us, and we perhaps wondered why Tolstoy was so jubilant. But his jubilation is explained when we study Russian religion. No one can be surprised at sudden developments in Russia. The Government is often more than puzzled to know what to do. It allowed the *Dhoukobortsi* to emigrate to Canada, but these fanatics are not the only people who cause the Tzar and his ministers anxiety. The *Raskolniki* number twelve or thirteen millions, and among these, as among others, Tolstoyism is being vigorously preached,—by debate, by books, and by secret missions. What will the future bring? Tolstoy is hopeful: we, ourselves, are not doubtful as to possibilities. A question which baffles everybody is: Why has Tolstoy not been exiled? The only reasonable answer is, that since he has deserved it, over and over again, and still retains his liberty, the Tsar is afraid of him, or fearful as to the political, social, and religious results which might follow banishment. Needless to say, any such step would arouse the ire of Europe, and although an Emperor's will may not be resisted, he would hesitate to face the scorn of enlightened peoples. But the step would mean most at home. Such is the Russian character, that just as Nekhludoff followed Katusha, so thousands upon thousands of peasants might take it into their heads to follow Tolstoy into Siberia; and the officers would have to choose between allowing

them to go, and inflicting wholesale butchery,—a shooting down on a scale which would stagger even the most hardened of Russian generals. It seems plain that the tolerance of the Government is another testimony to the prophet's hold on the imagination of his countrymen. This does not mean a hold in the sense of their accepting all his teaching; it means that they are sympathetic in their attitude, and regard him as "their man." As to the kind of change which his influence may bring about it is difficult to prognosticate. The probabilities are that it will be a series of changes, —changes in land tenure and local government; in Church teaching and practice, by the elimination of superstitions; in an increase of the brotherhood spirit, and, in some cases, of definite societies for life according to the Sermon on the Mount.

In 1882 a Russian writer, Mr. Abramof, published in *The Annals of the Country* a very curious study of the *Shalaputin*. Turgenieff was greatly struck with it. He said in regard to it: "There is the peasant getting up steam; before long he will make a general up-turning." Speaking of this religious sect, M. Dupuy says, that by preaching and practising a communistic gospel, like Tolstoy, it has, within a score of years, won over all the common people, all the rustic class, of the south and south-west of Russia. "Judicious observers, well-informed economists, foresee the complete and immediate spread of the doctrine in the

lower classes throughout the empire. The day when the work of propagation shall be finished, the *raskolniks* of a special socialistic dogma will be counted: their number will suffice to show their power. That day, if they take it into their heads to act, will only have—using the popular expression—'to blow' on the old order of things, to see it vanish away."[1]

2. Outside his own land Tolstoy's influence on Christianity is somewhat doubtful. Theologians have not taken him seriously, and the average Christian in this country regards him as a fanatic or an enthusiast. If, eventually, he exercises any modification in religious opinion, it will be in two directions: (*a*) He will keep alive in the minds of successive generations who read his works, the wide divergence between the Sermon on the Mount and the Council of Nicæa,—the one standing for Christ's Christianity, and the other for the Christianity of the Churches; (*b*) he will also keep alive the question of morality in relation to religious dogma. In addition to what has already been said on this topic, it is hardly necessary to remind the reader that the problem is perennial, and faces every intelligent man at some moment in his life. With a certain type of intellect there is no difficulty in finding a solution; with others there is the greatest difficulty. In the case of the latter, Tolstoy will always be a centre of conflict. He

[1] M. Dupuy, *The Great Masters of Russian Literature*, p. 337.

will accentuate every degree of difference between Christ's simplicity and Paul's complexity, and between the "Resist not" of Christ and the armed resistance of professedly Christian nations. For some people the reading of *My Religion*, *My Confession*, and *What is Religion?* will be the beginning of doubt and mental anguish; for others, they will be the pathway to peace. And as Tolstoy aimed at making people first miserable in order that they might ultimately be happy, it is not unlikely that he will frequently succeed in producing the misery without the compensating happiness.

If this be true of the question relating to the Sermon on the Mount, it is more true of the deeper question, viz., the relation of religious and moral life to theological dogma. Hitherto the stress has been placed on the necessity for truth to be dogmatically set forth: first, because otherwise it is only the truth "in solution"; and secondly, because truth in crystallised form is absolutely necessary in preaching with a view to making converts, and securing consistency of conduct. Tolstoy puts forth all his strength to remove the stress from dogma and place it on life itself,—good living. He takes away all the personality from doctrines, and in so doing deprives them of their history; the truth to him is composed of ideas which help us to live, and these ideas are independent of all authority, inasmuch as they carry

their own conviction with them. In this way systematic theology becomes a negligible quantity, and the emphasis is laid upon two things: (1) love to God and man; (2) actions expressive of such love.

Practically, the scheme is not unsuccessful, but it will never succeed on a large scale on the lines laid down by Tolstoy. Men's minds are too inquisitive about the philosophical relations of things to be content with simple action, and too jealous of mental freedom to submit to enforced agnosticism. But to the orthodox Christian Church the method adopted by Tolstoy must surely be full of danger. He supplies excellent excuses for the overthrow of dogma, whilst, like Matthew Arnold, he encourages the religious spirit. He endeavours to evolve a religion of simplicity, strength, and beauty, but minus every symptom of a creed in the ecclesiastical sense. In other words, he desires to be a power that makes for righteousness, and yet to cut himself adrift from every religious authority except a few selected words of Christ. Is such a course dangerous to morality? Judging from the austerity of Tolstoy's life, and his almost painful consistency, the loss of dogma does not seem to result in the weakening of moral muscle; and from the way in which he calmly anticipates death, it would appear that his religion is one of real solace. To the Churches which say, "Only with us can men live lives acceptable to

God," one would think the spectacle of Tolstoy is rather disconcerting. Nothing so shakes confidence in a creed which practically damns unbelievers, as the life of a great man who gives the lie to dogmas and yet proves himself to be a man of undoubted piety. The saintliness of Dr. James Martineau is responsible for more heterodoxy than all the cavils of the Higher Critics; and Nonconformists use this line of argument most effectively when twitted by the older churches for their lack of "orders."

3. In politics and social affairs Tolstoy's influence is likely to be considerable: the direct influence may be meagre, but indirectly the leaven of his teaching will permeate all liberal movements. Non-resistance, celibacy, and what may be called his perfectionist views will probably be left high and dry; but his denunciations of war and heavy taxation, his diatribes against monopolies and excessive hours of labour, will form both text and sermon for the socialistic preaching of the future. The signs are already evident. The multiplication of Tolstoyan societies in England is not, in itself, an important item, but in years to come the result will be distinctly appreciable. The growth of all kinds of organisations which have for their object the protection of the rights of those classes which happen to be most numerous, is a striking feature in the life of every civilised nation, and Tolstoyism —at any rate in part—will add its quota to the socialism of the day. In England, on the

Continent, and in the United States, socialist thought, in the wide sense, has made wonderful strides: it has not only increased its numbers, but has increased its education; and in developing *an attitude of mind* towards the problems of life, rather than preaching a gospel of political dogmas, it has doubled its scope and trebled its power. To this world-sentiment Tolstoy's name and teaching will be no mean addition. Some time may elapse before the process of selection and rejection is complete, but eventually the labour reformer, the social democrat, and many others will have proved to their satisfaction that the man who wrote *The Root of the Evil* and *What shall We Do?* was one of themselves. Tolstoy has preached the immortality of influence, and he will join the choir invisible of those who live

> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> For miserable aims that end in self.

4. For the world in general, Tolstoy will always be a great prophet. True, a number will only admire him up to his fiftieth year; after that they will pity him, and lament his so-called mental aberration. The wise who have eyes that can see and hearts that can feel will assign no age limit to his greatness; and a few will say that his real life began where for others it ended. In these pages we have passed severe strictures on Tolstoy's doctrines, and occasionally have expressed our impatience with the man himself. But he is not

easily vulnerable; and in bringing these studies to a close, it will be our pleasure to gather together a few facts which, to our mind, will always ensure for Tolstoy the respect and admiration of future generations, even though other facts may apportion a third of his life to fanaticism. There is, for instance, his transparent sincerity. Search where we may through the pages of universal literature, we shall not find a man who has made a confession like his. His whole heart is in every sentence, and, like Samuel, he tells us "every whit." Rousseau whispered to us many of his secret thoughts and feelings,—or he said he did; Augustine before him laid bare corners of his once pagan heart; Coleridge and many another have written charmingly of their intellectual travels; but there is no one who has dared to tell the world—*all*,—until Tolstoy. And he dared, because he must. Only a man of supreme moral genius is bold enough to thrust upon a jeering world the story of his sin in thought and deed, or of his loss and gain in religious belief. Only one who trusted in God and human dignity could have treated his fellows to such a confidence.

Tolstoy's sincerity is no doubt one great secret of his power.[1] The world does not listen to

[1] "The question has been asked me at various times, whether, in my opinion, Tolstoy is really sincere. To this my answer has always been, and still is, that I believe him to be one of the most sincere and devoted men alive,—a man of great genius, and at the same time of very deep sympathy with his fellow-creatures."—Mr. A. D. White in *The Idler*, July 1901.

hypocrites. It always listens to men who believe in something and who can say it well. It finds Rousseau's *Confessions* entertaining, but as criticism has proved some of the stories to be fictitious, the world hardly takes Rousseau seriously, more especially as he exhorted the mothers of France to care for their children, whilst he sent his own illegitimate offspring to the Foundling Hospital.

With Tolstoy there is no grave discrepancy between creed and conduct. He has been accused of inconsistency by living in a large house and preaching poverty, by allowing servants to wait upon him, and yet declaring that each individual should do his own work. But the facts have already been dealt with, and there is nothing to show that Tolstoy has not sacrificed as much as it was his duty to part with. There is nothing more painful to him than the reflection that his obedience to the law of Christ is necessarily circumscribed by the needs of his family; he would that he were free to obey to the full. That he has made a compromise is at once a testimony to his sanity and his desire for consistency.[1] The hypocrite would have left Yasnaya Polyana and its occupants to care for themselves, but into whatever retreat he repaired he would have arranged for creature

[1] Madame Dovidoff, in *The Cosmopolitan* (April 1892), makes some attempts to show the failure of Tolstoyism, and succeeds amusingly, as when the gardener complained that the Count was pulling up the young raspberry trees thinking he was weeding! But she cannot find anything serious by way of real inconsistency.

comforts whilst outwardly he presented the appearance of poverty. Not so Tolstoy. Having decided what to do, he is just as courageous about his compromise as he is about the gospel itself.

Unwittingly we have touched upon "courage," which is the final trait in his character. Tolstoy never hesitates as to a conclusion if it be logical. Many times we come across a passage like this: "I was horrified at my conclusions, but I could not do otherwise than accept them." It was a startling result to find that by pursuing a certain course of inquiry, the apostles of Jesus Christ were made entirely to misunderstand His teaching; but, having accepted the premisses, Tolstoy accepted the conclusion, and cheerfully ousted *The Epistle to the Galatians* as being an inferior exposition of the gospel when compared with *My Religion.* It requires a hardy courage to preach celibacy from within the precincts of Yasnaya Polyana, where resides Countess Tolstoy, and where thirteen children have been born; but once again, the premisses being accepted, Count Leo will embrace the conclusion even though the heavens fall.

In bidding him adieu, we may pause awhile to consider the man and his teaching in their unity. It has been possible to put a finger on grave defects here and there,—defects which will rouse some people to angry retort and pious remonstrances. Other people will hail him as a saviour of the race, and others again will affect to consider

his doctrines as unworthy of studious attention. But apart from those points on which we disagree with him, whether they be few or many, important or indifferent, the conviction arising out of a survey of the man and his work can only be this,—that he sought to unite his forces with the Power that makes for Righteousness.

IX

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BEFORE giving a list of Tolstoy's works in chronological order, it may be well to offer a few remarks respecting translations. Those who are best qualified to judge are very positive in their statements that many of our translations are most inaccurate. In some cases the Russian double negative has been rendered as a positive, and Tolstoy is made to say the very opposite of what he really did say. In these circumstances some guidance as to reliable editions is absolutely necessary. The ideal translation is generally the work of two men; and in most of the publications of the Free Age Press (Christchurch, Hants, and 13 Paternoster Row, London, E.C.) this ideal has been happily attained. Mr. Vladimir Tchertkoff is a Russian who knows English well, and Mr. A. C. Fifield is an Englishman acquainted with Russian. These two gentlemen have combined to translate, or supervise translations of, Tolstoy, and the result is highly satisfactory. To reliability of rendering is added good type and remarkable

cheapness. As yet only a portion of Tolstoy's works have been published in this way, but the Tolstoy Library now in course of publication by Mr. Grant Richards, for which Mr. Aylmer Maude is responsible, is an authoritative undertaking, and for those who desire good printing, good binding, and artistic illustrations, it will be *the* library to purchase. Mr. F. Henderson of 26 Paternoster Square, E.C., is also a publisher of Tolstoy literature.

Books in English on the study of Tolstoy are not plentiful. On the social and domestic side there is nothing equal to *How Tolstoy Lives and Works*, by P. A. Sergyeenko; *Recollections of Count Tolstoy*, by C. A. Behrs; and *Gespräche über und mit Tolstoy*, by R. Loewenfeld. Anna Seuron's descriptions of life at Yasnaya Polyana have been translated into German under the title of *Graf Leo Tolstoï: Intimes aus seinem Leben* (Berlin, 1895).

Mr. J. C. Kenworthy's *A Pilgrimage to Tolstoy* (Henderson, 6d.) is well written; and the same author's *Tolstoy, His Life and Works*, forms a useful introduction from the standpoint of a disciple. There are some interesting pages in Mr. Aylmer Maude's *Tolstoy and His Problems* (Richards, 1s.). Mr. G. H. Perris's *The Grand Mujik* and *Life and Teaching of Tolstoy*, the latter especially, are useful books. The following works on related aspects of the subject are important: Stadling and Reason's

In the Land of Tolstoy, Tikhomirov's *Russia*, vol. ii., and George Brandes' *Impressions of Russia.*

The literature written by outsiders is mainly on Tolstoy as a novelist. Mr. C. E. Turner's *Tolstoy as Novelist and Thinker* (C. Kegan Paul) and his *Modern Novelists of Russia* are well worth reading. The chapter on Tolstoy in Mr. Ernest Dupuy's *Great Masters of Russian Literature* has all the charm of French style and insight. In this connection Mr. A. E. Street's *Critical Studies*, Mr. Havelock Ellis's *The New Spirit*, and Voguë's *The Russian Novelists* may be consulted for their references to Tolstoy. Merejowski's *Tolstoi as Man and Artist* is undoubtedly *the* book on Tolstoy as a novelist, whilst at the same time it contains much valuable information on other points.

Tolstoy-criticism is plentiful in Germany. Axelrod's *Tolstois Weltanschauung und ihre Entwickelung*, and Glogau's *Graf Leo Tolstoy: Ein Beitrag zur Religions-philosophie* are fine examples of analysis and exposition. Other works are by Schrœder, Dukmeyer, Schmitt, and Loewenfeld. As might be expected, France is not behind in this department. Maffre's *Le Tolstoisme. et le Christianisme* is a reply to the prophet from the orthodox point of view, and shows signs of the impatience which has always characterised Churchmen when dealing with Tolstoy. Mariya Manacein's *L'Anarchie passive et le Comte Tolstoy*

is quite a piquant attack on non-resistance. Ossip Lourié's *La Philosophie de Tolstoy* is the cleverest book yet written by way of partisan exposition. Dumas' *Tolstoy et la philosophie de l'amour* is tender in its criticism, but none the less effective.

In compiling this bibliography, I am greatly indebted to Mr. G. J. H. Northcroft, by whose help the following entries form the most complete list of Tolstoy's translated works :—

Date of Writing.	Title of Work.	Translator.	Publisher.	Date.
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	Childhood and Youth, a Tale. 8vo, pp. 270.	Von Meysenbug.	Bell & Daldy, London.	1862
	Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth. 8vo, pp. 381. (Reprinted in London by Vizetelly, 1888; Walter Scott, 1889.)	I. F. Hapgood.	Crowell, New York.	1886
	Boyhood, Adolescence, and Youth. 8vo, pp. 480.	Popoff.	Stock, London.	1890
1852	*A Landlord's Morning.*			
1852	*The Cossacks.*			
	The Cossacks. 2 vols. 8vo.	E. Schuyler.	London.	1878
	,, 1 vol. 8vo.	,,	Scribners, New York.	1878
	The Cossacks, and other Stories (*i.e.* Prisoner of Caucasus; Sevastopol; and Three Deaths). 8vo, pp. 320.		Vizetelly, Lond.	1888
	The Cossacks. 8vo, pp. 350.	N. H. Dole.	W. Scott, Lond.	1888
1852	*The Invaders.*			
	The Invaders. 8vo, pp. 343.	N. H. Dole.	W. Scott, Lond.	1889
1854	*Boyhood* (*vide supra*).			
1854–55	*The Wood-Cutting Expedition.*			
1854–56	*Sevastopol Sketches.* [The 8th of September; the 4th of August; Satirical Soldier Songs. First published anonymously in Hertzen's *Polar Star.*]			
	Sebastopol. (From French.) Introduction by W. D. Howells. Portrait. 16mo.	F D. Millet.	Harpers, New York.	1887

	Sevastopol. 8vo, pp. 362.	I. F. Hapgood.	W. Scott, Lond.	1889
1855–57	*Youth* (*vide supra*).			
1856	*Meeting a Moscow Friend at the Front.* *The Snow Storm.* *Recollections of a Billiard Marker.* *The Two Hussars.*			
1857	*Albert* *Lucerne* } Memoirs of Prince Neklindoff.			
	A Russian Proprietor, and other Stories (*i.e.* Lucerne; Recollections of a Scorer; Albert; Two Hussars, etc.) 8vo, pp. 349. (Reprinted by Walter Scott, London, 1887.)	N. H. Dole.	Crowell, New York.	1887
1859	*The Three Deaths* (*vide* under *Cossacks*).			
1859	*Family Happiness.* (Translated into French under title *Katia*, by Delines.)			
	Katia. Authorised Edition. 8vo, pp. 193.		Gottesberger, New York.	1887
	Family Happiness. 8vo.	N. H. Dole.	New York.	1888
1860	*Polikushka* (*vide infra*, Ivan the Fool).			
1861	*Kholstomyer*, the Story of a Horse. Revised and published in 1886.			
1862	*Papers on Education.* (From the *Yasnaya Polyæna*).			
1863–78	*The Decembrists* (Fragments).			
1864–69	*War and Peace.*			
	War and Peace (Before Tilsit; The Invasion; The French at Moscow). 3 vols. 8vo.		Vizetelly, Lond.	1886
	Another Edition. 4 vols. 8vo. (Reprinted by Walter Scott, London, 1889 and 1897).	N. H. Dole.	Crowell, New York.	1889

Date of Writing.	Title of Work.	Translator.	Publisher.	Date.
	Napoleon—Power and Liberty. 8vo.	Huntington Smith.	New York.	1888
	The Physiology of War. (From French.) 8vo.	H. Smith.	W. Scott, Lond.	1889
1869–72	*A Prisoner in the Caucasus*, and other Stories and Translations for Children. (*Vide supra, Cossacks.*)			
1870	*The New Speller.*			
1873	*The Samara Famine.* Letter to Moscow *Vyedomosti.*			
1873–76	*Anna Karenina.*			
	Anna Karenina. 8vo, pp. 773. (Reprinted by Vizetelly, London, 1 vol., 1887; Walter Scott, 2 vols., 1889.	N. H. Dole.	Crowell, New York.	1886
1875	*On Popular Education.* Article in the Radical monthly *Otechestreniya Zapiski.*			
1879–82	*My Confession.*			
	My Confession, and The Spirit of Christ's Teaching. 8vo.		W. Scott, Lond.	1889
	How I came to Believe (My Confession).		Free Age Press	1901
1880–81	*Criticism of Greek Orthodox Dogmatic Theology.* 2 vols. Published in Geneva in Russian.			
1880–82	*The Gospels* translated, compared, and harmonised.		Crowell, New York.	1896
	The Gospel in Brief. 8vo, pp. 226.			
1881	*What Men Live By.* (Popular Tale.)			
	What Men Live By, and What Shall it Profit a man? (Two Stories.) 8vo, pp. 126.		W. Scott, Lond.	1897

1882	*Short Exposition of the Gospels* ("The Spirit of Christ's Teaching" is an abstract from this).			
1882	*On the Moscow Census.* Letter to *Vyedomosti.*			
1882	*Wherein is Happiness.* A Chapter from *My Religion*, passed by the Censor.			
1883	*A Letter to N. N.*			
1884	*What I Believe* (or My Religion) could not be issued in Russia.			
	Christ's Christianity. Being two Essays, "How I came to Believe," and "What I believe." 8vo, pp. 384.		Kegan Paul, London.	1885
	My Religion. (From French.) 8vo, pp. 274. (Reprinted by Walter Scott, London, 1889.)	H. Smith.	Crowell, New York.	1885
	What I Believe. 8vo, pp. 236. (Reprinted by Gottesberger, New York, 1886.)	C. Popoff.	Stock, London.	1885
1884–85	*What is to be Done?* Thoughts suggested by the Census. ("What is my Life?" originally published as a separate work, is the first part of this.)			
	What to Do? 8vo, pp. 273.	I. F. Hapgood.	Crowell, New York.	1887
	What to Do? 8vo. New and authorised translation from unabridged MS.		W. Scott, Lond.	1888
1884	*Money.*			
1884–86	*The Death of Ivan Ilyitch.*			
	Ivan Ilyitch, and other Stories. 8vo. (Reprinted by Walter Scott, London, 1889.)	N. H. Dole.	Crowell, New York.	1887
	Ivan Ilyitch. 12mo, pp. 31.	Several hands.	Brotherhood Co., London.	1898

Date of Writing.	Title of Work.	Translator.	Publisher.	Date.
1885	*Popular Tales:* The Long Exile; If you Neglect the Fire; A Candle; The Two Pilgrims; Ivan the Fool; Where Love is, there God is; Text for Four Woodcuts.			
	In Pursuit of Happiness: Four Tales—Where Love is; How much Land; Two Pilgrims; Illyus. 8vo, pp. 193.	A. Delano.	Lothrop, Boston.	1887
	The Long Exile, and other Stories for Children. 8vo, pp. 363. (Reprinted by Walter Scott, London, 1889.)	N. H. Dole.	New York.	1888
	Ivan the Fool; also, A Lost Opportunity and Polikushka. 8vo, pp. 172.	Norriakow.	Webster, New York.	1891
	Life is Worth Living, and other Stories (*i.e.* Two Old Men; God is Love; A Candle). 8vo. Illustrated. pp. 208.	Norriakow.	Webster, New York.	1892
	Ivan the Fool, and three other Parables. 12mo, pp. 115.		W. Scott, Lond.	1895
	Where Love is, there God is; and the Godson. 8vo, pp. 96.		W. Scott, Lond.	1897
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	The Dominion of Darkness, a Drama. 8vo, pp. 96.		Vizetelly, London.	1888
	Another Edition. 8vo, pp. 116.		Sugel, Chicago.	1890
1887	*Life.* [Tolstoi states that M. Dumas rightly made this work the basis of his study of the Author.]			
	Life. 8vo, pp. 295. (Reprinted by Walter Scott, London, 1899.)	I. F. Hapgood.	Crowell, New York.	1888
1887	*On Truth in Art*, a Preface.			
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	The Kreutzer Sonata. 4th Edition. 8vo, pp. 143.	Tucker.	Tucker, Boston, Mass.	1890
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1889	*Fruits of Enlightenment.*			
	The Fruits of Enlightenment, a Comedy. Act iv. only. 4to, pp. 29.	E. J. Dillon.	Heinemann, London.	1890

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	Another Edition. Introduction by A. W. Pinero. 8vo, pp. 276.		Heinemann, London.	1891
	The Fruits of Culture, a Comedy. 8vo, pp. 185.	Schumm.	Tucker, Boston, Mass.	1891
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