

# EDUCATIONAL SERIES

## TOLSTOY, THE APOSTLE OF LOVE

The widespread publication of Theodore Roosevelt's attack, through an editorial in the Outlook, upon Count Tolstoy will give The Commoner readers particular interest in the facts concerning this good man. When Mr. Bryan visited Russia he called upon Tolstoy, and the following letter describes Tolstoy as Mr. Bryan saw him:

### TOLSTOY, THE APOSTLE OF LOVE

Count Leo Tolstoy, the intellectual giant of Russia, the moral Titan of Europe and the world's most conspicuous exponent of the doctrine of love, is living a life of quiet retirement upon his estate near the village of Yasnaya, Poliana, about one hundred and thirty miles south of Moscow.

I made a visit to the home of this pleasant philosopher during my stay in Russia, driving from Tula in the early morning and arriving just after daylight. Consul General Smith of Moscow arranged with Count Tolstoy for the visit. I had intended remaining only a few hours, but his welcome was so cordial that my stay was prolonged until near midnight. Count Tolstoy is now about seventy-six years old, and while he shows the advance of years he is still full of mental vigor and retains much of his physical strength. As an illustration of the latter I might refer to the horseback ride and walk which we took together in the afternoon. The ride covered about four miles and the walk about two. When we reached the house the count said that he would take a little rest, and insisted that I should do likewise. A few minutes later, when I expressed to the count's physician, Dr. Burkenheim, the fear that he might have overtaxed his strength, the doctor smilingly assured me that the count usually took more exercise, but had purposely lessened his allowance that day, fearing that he might fatigue me.

Count Tolstoy is an impressive figure. His years have only slightly bowed his broad shoulders and his step is still alert. In height he is about five feet eight, his head is large and his abundant hair is not yet wholly white. His large blue eyes are set wide apart and are shaded by heavy eyebrows. His forehead is unusually wide and high. He wears a long, full beard that gives him a patriarchal appearance. The mouth is large and the lips full. The nose is rather long and the nostrils wide. The hands are muscular, and the grasp bespeaks warmth of heart. The count dresses like the peasants of his country, wearing a grayish-blue blouse belted in at the waist, with skirts reaching nearly to the boot-tops. His trousers, also of the peasant style, are inclined to be baggy and are stuffed into his boots. I was informed that the count never wears any other dress, even when other members of the family are entertaining guests in evening clothes.

The room which I occupied was the one used by the count as a study in his younger days, and I was shown a ring in the ceiling from which at the age of forty-eight he planned to hang himself—a plan from which he turned by the resolve to change the manner and purpose of his life. As is well known, Count Tolstoy is a member of the Russian nobility and for nearly fifty years led the life of a nobleman. He early achieved fame as a novelist, his "War and Peace," which was written when he was but a young man, being considered one of the literary masterpieces of the century. He sounded all the "depths and shoals of honor" in the literary and social world; he realized all that one could wish or expect in these lines, but found that success did not satisfy the cravings of the inner man. While he was meditating upon what he had come to regard as a wasted life, a change came over him, and with a faith that has never faltered he turned about and entered upon a career that has been unique in history. He donned the simple garb of a peasant, and, living frugally, has devoted himself to philosophy and unremunerative work—that is, unremunerative from a financial standpoint, although he declares that it has brought him more genuine enjoyment than he ever knew before. All of his books written since this change in his life have been given to the public without copyright, except in one instance, when the proceeds of "Resurrection" were pledged to the

aid of the Russian Quakers, called Doukhobors, whom the count assisted to emigrate from their persecution in Russia to western Canada, where they now reside. As an evidence of the count's complete renunciation of all money considerations, it is stated that he has declined an offer of \$500,000 for the copyright of the books written by him before his life current was altered.

My object in visiting him was not so much to learn his views—for his opinions have had wide expression and can be found in his numerous essays—but it was rather to see the man and ascertain if I could, from personal contact, learn the secret of the tremendous influence that he is exerting upon the thought of the world. I am satisfied that, notwithstanding his great intellect, his colossal strength lies in his heart more than in his mind. It is true that few have equaled him in power of analysis and in clearness of statement, while none have surpassed him in beauty and aptness of illustration. But no one can commune with him without feeling that the man is like an overflowing spring—asking nothing, but giving always. He preaches self-abnegation and has demonstrated to his own satisfaction that there is more genuine joy in living for others than in living upon others—more happiness in serving than in being served.

The purpose of life, as defined by him, has recently been quoted by Mr. Ernest Crosby in "The Open Court." It reads as follows:

"Life then is the activity of the animal individuality working in submission to the law of reason. Reason shows man that happiness can not be obtained by a self-life and leaves only one outlet open for him and that is love. Love is the only legitimate manifestation of life. It is an activity and has for its object the good of others. When it makes its appearance the meaningless strife of the animal life ceases."

Love is the dominant note in Count Tolstoy's philosophy. It is not only the only weapon of defense which he recognizes, but it is the only means by which he would influence others. It is both his shield and his sword. He is a deeply religious man, notwithstanding the fact that he was a few years ago excommunicated by the Russian church. In one of his essays he has defined religion as follows:

"True religion is a relation, accordant with reason and knowledge, which man establishes with the infinite life surrounding him, and it is such as binds his life to that infinity, and guides his conduct."

He not only takes his stand boldly upon the side of spiritual, as distinguished from material, philosophy, but he administers a rebuke to those who assume that religious sentiment is an indication of intellectual weakness or belongs to the lower stages of man's development. In his essay on "Religion and Morality," to which he referred me for his opinion on this subject, he says:

"Moreover, every man who has ever, even in childhood, experienced religious feelings, knows by personal experience that it was evoked in him, not by external, terrifying, material phenomena, but by an inner consciousness, which had nothing to do with the fear of the unknown forces of nature—a consciousness of his own insignificance, loneliness and guilt. And, therefore, both by external observation and by personal experience, man may know that religion is not the worship of gods, evoked by superstitious fear of the invisible forces of nature, proper to men only at a certain period of their development; but is something quite independent either of fear or of their degree of education—a something that can not be destroyed by any development of culture. For man's consciousness of his finiteness amid an infinite universe, and of his sinfulness (i. e., of his not having done all he might and should have done) has always existed and will exist as long as man remains man."

If religion is an expression of "man's consciousness of his finiteness amid an infinite universe, and of his sinfulness," it can not be outgrown until one believes himself to have reached perfection and to possess all knowledge, and observation teaches us that those who hold this opinion of themselves are not the farthest advanced, but simply lack that comprehension of

their own ignorance and frailty which is the very beginning of progress.

Count Tolstoy is an advocate of the doctrine of non-resistance. He not only believes that evil can be overcome by good, but he denies that it can be overcome in any other way. I asked him several questions on the subject, and the following dialogue presents his views:

Q. Do you draw any line between the use of force to avenge an injury already received, and the use of force to protect yourself from injury about to be inflicted?

A. No. Instead of using violence to protect myself, I ought rather to express my sorrow that I had done anything that would make anyone desire to injure me.

Q. Do you draw a line between the use of force to protect a right and the use of force to create a right?

A. No. That is the excuse generally given for the use of violence. Men insist that they are simply defending a right, when, in fact, they are trying to secure something that they desire and to which they are not entitled. The use of violence is not necessary to secure one's rights; there are more effective means.

Q. Do you draw any distinction between the use of force to protect yourself and the use of force to protect someone under your care—a child, for instance?

A. No. As we do not attain entirely to our ideals, we might find it difficult in such a case not to resort to the use of force, but it would not be justifiable, and, besides, rules can not be made for such exceptional cases. Millions of people have been the victims of force and have suffered because it has been thought right to employ it; but I am now old and I have never known in all my life a single instance in which a child was attacked in such a way that it would have been necessary for me to use force for its protection. I prefer to consider actual rather than imaginary cases.

I found later that this last question had been answered in a letter on non-resistance addressed to Mr. Ernest Crosby, in 1896 (included in a little volume of Tolstoy's Essays and Letters, recently published by Grant Richards, Leicester Square, London, and reprinted by Funk & Wagnalls of New York). In this letter he says:

"None of us has ever yet met the imaginary robber with the imaginary child, but all the horrors which fill the annals of history and of our own times came and come from this one thing—that people will believe that they can foresee the results of hypothetical future actions."

When I visited him he was just finishing an introduction to a biographical sketch of William Lloyd Garrison, his attention having been called to Garrison by the latter's advocacy of the doctrine of non-resistance.

Tolstoy, in one of his strongest essays that he has written—an essay entitled "Industry and Idleness"—elaborates and defends the doctrine advanced by a Russian named Bondaref, to the effect that each individual should labor with his hands, at least to the extent of producing his own food. I referred to this and asked him for a brief statement of his reasons. He said that it was necessary for one to engage in manual labor in order to keep himself in sympathy with those who toil, and he described the process by which people first relieve themselves of the necessity of physical exertion and then come to look with a sort of contempt upon those who find it necessary to work with their hands. He believes that a lack of sympathy lies at the root of most of the injustice which men suffer at the hands of their fellows. He holds that it is not sufficient that one can remember a time when he earned his bread in the sweat of his brow, but that he must continue to know what physical fatigue means and what drudgery is, in order that he may rightly estimate his brother and deal with him as a brother. In addition to this he says that when one begins to live upon the labor of others, he is never quite sure that he is earning his living. Let me quote his language:

"If you use more than you produce you can not be quite content, if you are a conscientious man. Who can know how much I work? It is impossible. A man must work as much as he can with his hands, taking the most difficult and disagreeable tasks, that is, if he wishes to have a quiet conscience. Mental work is much easier than physical work, despite what is said to the contrary. No work is too humble, too disagreeable to do. No man ought to dodge work. If I dodge work I feel guilty. There are some people who think they are so precious that other people must do the dirty, disagreeable work for them. Every man is so vain as to think his own work the most important. That