

CURRENT TOPICS

TOLSTOY, THE apostle of love, left home recently and found shelter in the railway station of an obscure village. Various stories were reported concerning the reasons for the flight of the famous man. It was said that he wished to die while hidden from the world and some said that family discord was responsible for it all. The latter report is vigorously denied by Tolstoy's friends. When discovered in his retreat the great philosopher was reported to be very ill, and an army of newspaper correspondents watched for the news of his demise.

IN A LETTER on Tolstoy Mr. Bryan wrote: "Tolstoy's career shows how despotic is the sway of the heart and how, after all, it rules the world, for while his literary achievements have been admired, the influence which they have exerted is as nothing compared with the influence exerted by his philosophy. People enjoy reading his character sketches, his dialogues and his descriptions of Russian life, but these do not take hold upon men like his simple presentation of the doctrine of love, exemplified in his life as clearly as it is expressed by his pen. Many of his utterances are denied publication in Russia, and when printed abroad cannot be carried across the border; and yet he has made such a powerful impression upon the world that he is himself safe from molestation. He can say, with impunity, against his government and against the Greek church what it would be perilous for others to say, and this very security is proof positive that in Russia thought inspired by love is, as Carlyle has declared it to be everywhere, stronger than artillery parks."

A WRITER IN the New York World says: "Something akin to the translation of a prophet will occur on the death of Tolstoy, whose approaching end is only too surely foreshadowed by his critical illness following his restless wandering into exile. For Tolstoy has latterly held the attention of the civilized world not as the author whose relentless criticism created a new epoch in literature, not for 'war and peace' and 'Anna Karenina,' but as a religious teacher who was at once an apostle of peace and a rebel against all constitutional authority, secular or clerical—a philosopher who having probed all creeds had adopted the simple one of humility, hard labor and goodwill to men, and who preached passivity and submissiveness yet championed liberty and was the great foe of autocracy in its last western stronghold. Excommunicated by the Russian church, and his books put under the ban, he has nevertheless remained the most potent moral force in Russia, a subject greater than the czar. Fate was prodigal to the young student and artilleryman of the Crimea in destining him to two careers of supreme eminence—to literary fame of the first order and to distinction in the second phase of life as the individual who probably more than any other of his time has influenced religious and political thought not alone in Russia but the world over."

TOLSTOY PASSED away November 20. He died in the little station house where he had taken refuge. A cablegram from Astapova, Russia, says: "Peasants all day long passed through the death chamber, hung with pine boughs where Tolstoy lies. Many of them knelt beside his bier, silence being at time broken by orthodox chants for the repose of the soul of the dead. Countess Tolstoy sat beside the body for hours. 'The light of the world is out,' she said repeatedly. She left the hut only to attend matins in the school chapel, expecting that a requiem would be sung. When informed that this was not permitted she fainted. Tolstoy left a written wish that he be buried without pomp, wreaths or rite, under 'poverty oak' on a hillock at Yasnaya Poliana, where he played as a child and where the peasants were accustomed to congregate. The funeral will be held on Tuesday and the police have been mobilized to prevent public demonstrations. Tolstoy's death occurred peacefully at 6 o'clock Sunday morning. It was due directly to heart failure

following inflammation of the lungs. Thus the most impressive figure of his age finds his soul's peace. He quitted his home and family ten days ago to find solitude in the belief that the hand of death was already upon him. True to his unswerving and uncompromising search for truth he died as he lived, without reconciliation with the church, his dying words breathing sympathy for afflicted humanity. 'Many millions in the world are suffering; why are you concerned for me?' Only the physicians were present in the room at the time of his death, the members of his family, including his wife, having been admitted previously. Tolstoy was then unconscious and never revived. Members of the clergy in the last days made pressing attempts to gain entrance to the sick room with a view of inducing him to return to the arms of the church, but the doctors repulsed them on the ground that their patient was too ill to receive them. The emperor and his ministers are anxious that Tolstoy shall be buried with the rites of the church, but the holy synod is strongly against this and probably he will be buried without the administration of such rites, unless the emperor commands otherwise. Popular feeling is universally for a religious funeral, and never before was there such confusion and bewilderment over the body of a great man who was regarded by the world as one of the sincerest of Christians."

IN AN ADDRESS delivered at Dallas, Texas, Sunday, November 20, Mr. Bryan paid this tribute to Tolstoy: "Tolstoy saw the coming of the era of brotherhood; it is evident everywhere. This morning in the newspapers I noticed the account of the death of that great apostle of love. He was a wonderful man. Born in the circles of aristocracy, he had access to the highest circles of Russian society. Gifted with a great mind, he became an author, depicting strangely and powerfully the social conditions in his native land. He enlisted in the army of his country. With such advantages he sounded all the depths of privileges for forty years. Yet he found it all unsatisfactory. In the ceiling of a room in his house there is shown to visitors a ring, placed there by him for the purpose of hanging himself. But after he was forty years old this man had a vision. He found out and declared upon an occasion of my visit to him in his home, a few years ago, that the great rule for the lives of men lie in that of the Master: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' and this great man added, 'not enough do we emphasize the first part of this commandment, for unless a man loves God he has not learned to know his neighbor.' And for thirty years this man dared the power of the very circles in which before he had moved, and his messages have been of love for men."

DEFENDING THE Oregon plan before a Philadelphia gathering Senator Jonathan Bourne, Jr., declared the initiative and referendum to be "the keystone of the arch of popular government," and set forth in detail the reason for his belief, analyzing as well the other features of the Oregon system. In his address Senator Bourne argued that the initiative educates and develops the people by compelling them to study public questions and placing upon them responsibility for all laws. It gives every man an opportunity to submit his ideas to the people, providing eight per cent of them believe his ideas worthy of submission to popular vote; thus, the speaker argued, there is a tendency to lift all the people to the plane of the most advanced. "Laws proposed under the initiative," said Senator Bourne, "are not subject to amendment, and therefore cannot be made the means of enacting 'jokers' as has often been done in the case of measures enacted by the legislature. Legislative blackmail and grants of special privilege are made impossible by the referendum. The people of Oregon are satisfied with their system of direct legislation; and it has not been unreasonably expensive."

Oregon has elected three United States senators by popular vote. Explaining the manner in which a democrat was elected senator in Oregon, which is a republican state, Senator Bourne said that fifty-one out of ninety members of the Oregon legislature had subscribed to what is known as the "statement No. 1" pledge, in which a member of the legislature pledges himself to the people to always vote for that candidate for United States senator who has received the largest number of votes for that office at the general election. In pursuance of such pledge the legislature elected a democrat who had received the largest number of popular votes. Senator Bourne advocated extending the direct primary to the election of candidates for president and vice president and of delegates to national conventions, thus relieving presidents of any obligations to men who make and manipulate conventions.

THE MEAT trust representatives announced a marked reduction in the prices of meat. Secretary of Agriculture Wilson says: "A permanent decrease in the cost of living, so far as meat is concerned, will be brought about by the heavy growth of corn and wheat. Prices have not come down heretofore because the farmers have not been feeding freely. Hay, corn and wheat have been scarce. Therefore, farmers could not feed freely because of the high prices of cattle foods. Naturally, the prices of meats became higher. Now, however, corn is plentiful, wheat conditions are promising and fodder is abundant. Cattle food is both cheap and plentiful. The markets are flooded with cattle and will continue to be as long as conditions remain the same. The farmers have been induced to send large quantities of cattle to the market. These cattle are fed properly and the result is plainly seen—the decrease in meat prices."

DR. HARVEY WILEY, chief chemist of the department of agriculture, is not enthusiastic over lower food prices. He says it is merely a trick of the special interests to get a better hold on the market. Dr. Wiley explains: "The interests which manipulated the prices have temporarily released their holds on our throats for the purpose of getting a fresher grip. The so-called reduction in meats is fictitious. It is merely a deliberate manipulation of the market. The prices were fictitious when they reached the top notch, but they were arbitrarily forced to that high level by the interests. The reduction is not a reduction in fact. If there is a reduction at this particular time, it is far from being permanent. The interests which controlled the market a year ago and forced prices of meat up to an abnormal level, are still in control. It is impossible to believe that they have suddenly become philanthropic and decided to give the people a square deal."

THE "TRICKY beef trust" is being treated to a great deal of criticism even at this time when it is pretending to reduce prices. A trained nurse writes to the New York World to say: "The report from the beef barons that we may expect a reduction in the price of meat would be gratifying were it not that the machinations of the beef trust are so apparent. I have lived in the west. It is buying season now. Ranch owners in the western part of the United States, as well as farmers in the Mississippi valley, are disposing of their stock before the winter sets in. The beef trust catches the animals and people alike, both going and coming; before the east, with its over-run immigrant population, can take advantage of the reduction of the buying season is over and the bars are up. England does things much better. A workingman can get a good nourishing meal there for twelve cents—American beef at English prices, two kinds of vegetables and dessert. We call this a free country, but was there ever a people more enslaved? We cannot have a parcels post. No wonder even the republicans have thrown up their hands in horror at what they have accomplished under the fetish of 'protection.'"