

Leon Tolstoy

# TOLSTOY TO THE CZAR THE KAISER AND THE KING OF ENGLAND

BY COUNTESS NASTASIA TOLSTOY  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANKLIN BOOTH



IN THE AUTUMN of 1910, the Czarina invited me to visit her at the summer palace at Peterhoff, to have an informal talk with her family. This was a very unusual favor and, feeling much flattered, I arrived at the appointed hour at the railway station that served the picturesque royal summer resort. A special coach took me directly to the palace, where the Chamberlain's secretary told me that the Imperial family was on the veranda, drinking tea. It was there that the Czarina wished to receive me.

Her Majesty was still suffering from her long nervous breakdown, and she looked pale and weak. We talked for a short while about her health and exchanged items of court gossip. She then remarked confidentially that the Czar had expressed a wish to see me, and of course such an expression was a command. His Majesty was playing chess with his daughters and the governess, when the Czarina invited him to tell me what he wanted.

"Countess," began the Czar, in a simple and direct way, "I have a very peculiar confidential mission for you. But I call upon you reluctantly."

He became suddenly silent and looked at me as if doubting my readiness to serve him. I bowed politely murmuring:

"Your Majesty, I shall be only too happy to hear about it."

"Well," he drawled, "the German Kaiser and the King of England have put me into an unpleasant position with their requests. They are curious to get a direct message from our old Count Leo Nicolaevitch Tolstoy—a very strange notion—and naturally I could not decline to humor them. I did not know how to go about the delicate matter; as, frankly, I do not care for much of the old man's writings and preachings, as you know. But then, the Czarina told me that she knows you very well, and that you know him personally. I suppose he is related to you? Very well then—I would be greatly obliged if you could take the old man an oral message from me that if he would in a friendly way send a message through you to me, I would send it on to the King of England and the Kaiser of Germany. It has to be something that he has not published before, and that he will never publish himself."

"Your Majesty, I am gratified at this mark of your exceptional favor," I replied. "I shall pay the Count a visit without delay."

"And as soon as you have returned with his mes-

sage, drop a line to the Minister of the Court and I shall arrange to see you immediately," said the Czar, extending his hand to me.

We talked for half an hour longer on various topics of the day, and then I left.

A week later, I was a guest at the country estate of my grand-uncle, and explained to him briefly the object of my call. He listened to me curiously and replied:

"Very strange. I would be glad to send a message to royalty; but the trouble with me is that I have written all my life messages for the mob. I am not accustomed to the conventions of Court diction. However, I will think the matter over."

"Leo Nicolaevitch, don't you have any visions of a political nature, or any prophecies on a large international scale?" I asked.

"A good idea!" he exclaimed. "I have had some

really strange experiences which I could not publish as fiction. There is something that has haunted me for the past two years. I don't know how to explain the nature of it to you. I can not call it a dream, because I have seen it often while I have been sitting at my writing table. On other occasions it has appeared to me at twilight, before my dinner hour. I am not a believer in ghosts, nor in the spiritualistic explanations of phenomena; but I admit that I can not account for this mysterious affair."

"Is it a vision?" I interrupted.

"Something of that order, but very clear. So clear that I could draw a distinct picture of all that transpires. Furthermore, I can call up the vision at will. I am almost sure I could do it while you are here. The only difficulty is, that I am not able to write anything during the time of the manifestation. My hands are absolutely paralyzed."

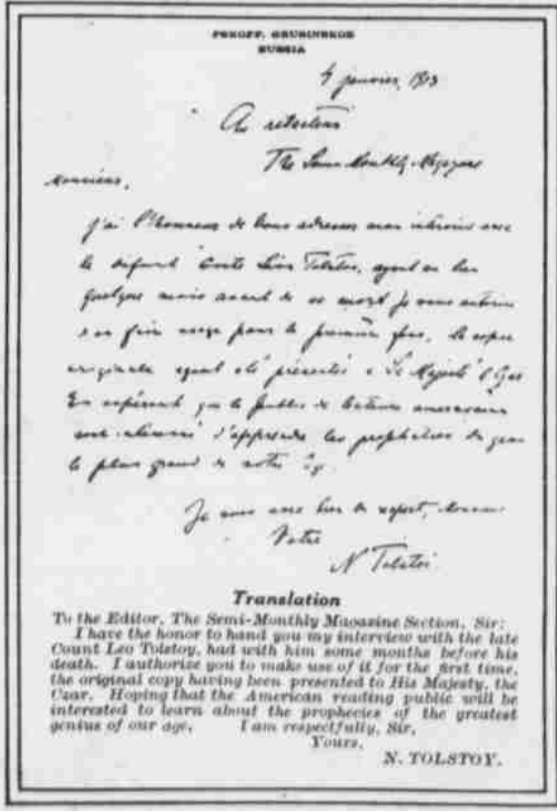
"I shall be happy to write down what you dictate," I urged.

"Very good! That settles the matter," he replied. "I shall try for something immediately. There on the table are paper and pencil. Or use a pen—whatever you want."

In a few minutes I was waiting for the great moment, pencil and paper in hand. My aged host leaned back in his chair, covered his eyes with his hand and relapsed into an apparently comatose condition. For ten minutes he remained absolutely motionless. Then, straightening up like one in a trance, he began in a low and hollow voice:

THIS IS a revelation of events of a universal character, which must shortly come to pass. Their spiritual outlines are now before my eyes. I see floating upon the surface of the sea of human fate the huge silhouette of a nude woman. She is—with her beauty, her poise, her smile, her jewels—a super-Venus. Nations rush madly after her, each of them eager to attract her especially. But she, like an eternal courtesan, flirts with all. In her hair-ornament of diamonds and rubies is engraved her name: "Commercialism." As alluring and bewitching as she seems, much destruction and agony follows in her wake. Her breath, reeking of sordid transactions, her voice of metallic character like gold, and her look of greed are so much poison to the nations who fall victims to her charms.

"And behold, she has three gigantic arms with three torches of universal corruption in her hand. The first torch represents the flame of War, that the beautiful courtesan carries from city to city and coun-



Original letter in French from the Countess Tolstoy, and English translation