

The Commoner.

ISSUED WEEKLY.

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is why I try to work with my hands by the side of workmen. If I write a book, I can not be quite sure whether it will be useful or not. If I produce something that will support life, I know that I have done something useful."

Tolstoy presents an ideal, and while he recognizes that the best of efforts is but an approach to the ideal, he does not consent to the lowering of the ideal itself or the defense of anything that aims at less than the entire realization of the ideal. He is opposed to what he calls palliatives, and insists that we need the reformation of the individual more than the reformation of law or government. He holds that the first thing to do is to substitute the Christian spirit for the selfish spirit. He likens those who are trying to make piecemeal progress to persons who are trying to push cars along a track by putting their shoulders against the cars. He says that they could better employ their energy by putting steam in the engine, which would then pull the cars. And the religious spirit he defines as "such a belief in God and such a feeling of responsibility to God as will manifest itself both in the worship of the Creator and in the fellowship with the created."

During the course of conversation he touched on some of the problems with which the various nations have to deal. Of course he is opposed to war under all circumstances, and regards the professional soldier as laboring under a delusion. He says that soldiers, instead of following their consciences, accept the doctrine that a soldier must do what he is commanded to do, placing upon his superior officer the responsibility for the command. He denies that any individual can thus shift the responsibility for his conduct. In speaking of soldiers, he expressed an opinion that indicates his hostility to the whole military system. He said that soldiers insisted upon being tried by military men and military courts, and added:

"That is amusing. I remember that when that plea was made in a case recently, I retorted that if that was so, why was not a murderer justified in demanding a trial at the hands of murderers, or a burglar in demanding trial by a jury of burglars. That would be on all fours with the other proposition."

He is not a believer in protection, and regards a tariff levied upon all of the people for the benefit of some of the people as an abuse of government and immoral in principle. I found that he was an admirer of Henry George and a believer in his theory in regard to the single tax.

He is opposed to trusts. He says that the trust is a new kind of despotism and that it is a menace to modern society. He regards the

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power that it gives men to oppress their fellows as even more dangerous than its power to reap great profits.

He referred to some of our very rich men and declared that the possession of great wealth was objectionable, both because of its influence over its possessor and because of the power it gave him over his fellows. I asked him what use a man could make of a great fortune, and he replied: "Let him give it away to the first person he meets. That would be better than keeping it." And then he told how a lady of fortune once asked his advice as to what she could do with her money (she derived her income from a large manufacturing establishment), and he replied that if she wanted to do good with her money she might help her work people to return to the country, and assist them in buying and stocking their farms. "If I do that," she exclaimed in dismay, "I would not have any people to work for me, and my income would disappear."

As all are more or less creatures of environment, Tolstoy's views upon religion have probably been colored somewhat by his experience with the Greek church. He has, in some instances, used arguments against the Greek church which are broad enough to apply to all church organizations. He has not always discriminated between the proper use of an organization and the abuse of power which a large organization possesses. While animated by a sincere desire to hasten the reign of universal brotherhood, and to help the world to a realization of the central thought of Christ's teachings, he has not, I think, fully appreciated the great aid which a church organization can lend when properly directed. In the work in which Tolstoy is engaged, he will find his strongest allies among the church members to whom the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself?" is not merely sound philosophy, but a divine decree. These will work in the church and through the church, while he stands without raising his voice to the same God and calling men to the same kind of life.

His experience with the arbitrary methods of his own government has led him to say things that have been construed as a condemnation of all government. He has seen so much violence and injustice done in the name of government that it is not strange that the evils of government should impress him more than its possibilities for good. And yet those who believe that a just government is a blessing can work with him in the effort to secure such remedial measures as he asks for in his letter "To the Czar and His Assistants."

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 can not 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.

TOLSTOY AND ROOSEVELT

Referring to Mr. Roosevelt's attack upon Count Tolstoy the New York Globe says:

"The evil seems to be that Tolstoy, going back to primitive Christianity for his inspiration, has called the world to return good for evil, and to fight the devil, not with his own weapons, but with righteousness and meek and patient endurance. This ideal of passivity and of the regeneration of the individual now is denounced as fantastic and as appealing only to the feeble and the weak. One can imagine how Mr. Roosevelt, if he had lived 1,900 years ago, would have assailed a carpenter of Nazareth for refusing to compromise with the better element of the Pharisees on the theory that a half loaf was better than nothing. He would doubtless have been roundly condemned as an impractical visionary whose influence, on the whole, was bad. Men of action indubitably have their vices and the philosophy of opportunism is a good one for a work-a-day world, but it is seldom

that a man of action and professed opportunism shows the blindness of Mr. Roosevelt to the point of view of the idealist. Our former president and present lion hunter not only has no sympathy with Tolstoyism, which is natural, but no intellectual understanding of what it is, which is strange. He is seemingly firmly persuaded that to contend for the absolute in a conditional world is vicious, and the basis on which Tolstoy is condemned leads inevitably to a similar condemnation of practically all of the great religious teachers except Mahomet."

HOPE "SEES A STAR"

Garret A. Norton, Aurora, Ill., writes to The Commoner to say: "There is hope for the ultimate (if not immediate) redemption of this government from the clutches of the protective tariff demoralization when a republican paper contains such editorials as the one enclosed from the Chicago Daily News of April 17, 1909. Reprint it for the encouragement of democrats."

DEBAUCHING A COMMUNITY

Mark Sullivan in Collier's Weekly tells an incident of last year's political campaign, as recalled on the floor of congress, which throws an important light upon the demoralizing influence of certain forms of tariff making upon American political life.

According to Champ Clark, the democratic leader in the house, Speaker Cannon went into the zinc district of Missouri last fall and promised the voters that if they would retire their democratic congressman and elect the republican candidate in his place the speaker would see that their zinc was taken care of in the tariff. Cannon did not like Clark's way of putting things and took the floor to explain the zinc episode. He asserted that he had said he as a member of congress would regard the people of the district as experts on zinc, and if they sent the republican candidate to congress he would accept that as an indication of their desire to have zinc ore on the list of protected articles. If, however, the people of the district sent a democrat to congress he would vote accordingly.

Coming from Speaker Cannon, these words naturally carried more weight with the voters than the remarks of an ordinary member of congress would have done. The republican was elected.

According to Speaker Cannon's own version his talk to the people of the zinc-producing district of Missouri was an appeal to them to subordinate every other issue of government to their own selfish interest in getting a duty on zinc ore. Is it any wonder that the special interests are so powerful at Washington and that the general welfare of the people is given so little consideration? To get the desired amount of protection for zinc ore the member from Missouri's zinc-producing district must vote blindly for the extortionate demands of every other interest which the ruling clique led by Speaker Cannon sees fit to champion.

Is it any wonder that Pennsylvania is under the rule of corrupt political bosses all the time, when the entire Pennsylvania electorate is continually subjected to the argument used so effectively by Speaker Cannon upon one Missouri district? He must vote the republican ticket all the time, the Pennsylvania voter is told, to insure the high-tariff policy to the special interests of the state. The continuous response to the plea of selfishness as embodied in the demand for high tariff protection has so demoralized the people of Pennsylvania that it is extremely difficult to rouse them to effective participation in any broad-minded and disinterested movement for good government, even in the municipal field.—Chicago Daily News.

LEAVE IT TO ALDRICH

A republican paper published at Keosauqua, Iowa, says "the Republican is not worrying one iota over the revision of the tariff; it is letting the legislators at Washington do that." That's right, don't worry, leave it all to Aldrich. He is a faithful defender of the national honor and may be depended upon to attend to all legislation. It will be time enough for the editor of the Keosauqua Republican and other devoted followers of the "let well enough alone" habit to worry when they come to pay the bills, and judging from present indications there will be ample reasons for worry on pay day.

BLESSING

What a blessing this special session has been! It is going to give the people a chance to pay increased taxes sooner than they would have done if tariff revision had been delayed until the regular session.