

"I DID NOT MEAN TO DO IT"

Last Product from the Pen of Count Leo Tolstoy.

WEAKNESS IN MAN AND CHILD

Lure of the Gaming Table and the Temptation of Sweet Things

—A Vacation Time Sketch.

By COUNT LEO TOLSTOY.

This is the last product from the pen of the great Russian writer.

The following letter, written by Tolstoy's friend and disciple, V. G. Tshertoff, accompanies the story in the Russian press:

"For those to whom Tolstoy and his work are precious, this story, 'I Did Not Mean to Do It,' will start from the story itself, but of special interest, since it is Tolstoy's last literary production. It is in the middle of June, last year, a few months before his death. Tolstoy came to stay with me at Mescherak. He came from Yuzenski, Poltava, weary in body and soul. In Mescherak, surrounded by warmly devoted friends who did all in their power to guard his freedom and his peace, above all, who treated with respect that which for Tolstoy was the holy of holies, he began to get well with wonderful speed. In a few days he was completely changed. He grew energetic, gay and enterprising, and seemed many years younger. As always he spent his mornings alone in his study writing, or going through his correspondence. During the first few days he terminated an article (beginning some time before this), and wrote another article. And then, suddenly, the inspiration came, and quite unexpectedly for us, he wrote this little sketch."

He returned home at about 6 o'clock that morning, and went, as he always did, into his dressing room. But instead of undressing he dropped into an armchair, and letting his hands fall onto his knees, sat motionless for five or ten minutes, perhaps even for as much as an hour—he did not remember.

"I take the knife of hearts," and he saw the awful relentless face before him with the faint gleam of satisfaction in the cold eyes.

"Damn!" said he aloud.

Somebody moved in the adjoining room, and his wife entered. She wore a muslin cap, a nightdress smothered in lace, and on her feet little, green velvet slippers. She was a plump, pretty, fair-haired little woman, with soft and gentle blue eyes.

"What is the matter?" she asked, simply. And glancing at his feet she cried again. "What is the matter, Mischa—what has happened?"

"What is the matter? I'm done for—"

"You have been playing cards?"

"Yes."

"Well!" repeated he with a sort of fierce elation. "I'm done for—that's all. And he choked back the tears.

"How often have I begged, implored you . . ."

"But she was even more sorry for herself, because they would now be poor, and because she had lain awake the whole night worrying and waiting for him. "It is past 5," thought she, looking at the watch lying on a small table. "Oh, my God! How much is it?"

He threw up his hands past his ears. "All we have—no, not all—more than all! All ours—and all that government money, too. Kill me—do what you will with me."

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My friends were charitable and they called it obesity; others referred to me as being STOUT, but I know, it was just plain bulky weight. I was miserable—

you, too, are equally miserable if you are too stout.

To reduce your weight you must find the cause, you must get at the very reason.

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Before I succeeded, I tried everything within reason and some things beyond reason.

It was maddening—disgusting. All I had to do was to remove the cause and I succeeded. Under my simple method, without drugs, medicine, harmful exercises, or starvation diet, I reduced my weight in a few weeks, and guarantee that I can do the same for you. I do not use medicine of any kind or worthless stuff to rub on the body, but a simple home treatment; even a child can use it without harm.

Through this simple home treatment, I have found the right way, and you can do the same. I will send you a booklet which will tell you how to reduce your weight. "Nature's Way" will permit me to tell you how to reduce your weight. "Nature's Way" will permit me to tell you how to reduce your weight.

Send for my book, "Weight Reduction Without Drugs." It tells you for the cause, and I will be glad to send it to you, postage prepaid.

—this is the end!" He covered his face with his hands. "That's all."

"Mischa, Mischa, listen to me. Have pity on me! You might think of me, too. I've been awake the whole night, waiting and frightened—and this is what I waited for! Tell me at least how much you have lost."

"So much that I can't—no one can—pay it back. The entire sixteen thousand I am ruined. I might disappear, but where am I to go?" He looked up at her, and, quite unexpectedly for him, she drew him towards her.

"How beautiful she is!" thought he, and took her by the arm. She freed herself.

"For heaven's sake, be sensible, Mischa! How could you lose all that money?"

"I hoped to win it back." He took out his cigarette case and began to smoke feverishly. "Yes, of course, I am a scoundrel. I'm not worthy of you; leave me. If you will—only forgive me; I have lost it. It will disappear, Mischa; I couldn't help this. It was like being in a dream—I did not mean to do it!"

She frowned.

"What can I do? It's all up with me now—that is certain—but you might at least forgive me." He wanted to kiss her again, but she drew away angrily.

"Oh—these miserable men! You are all so brave while all goes well—and the moment things go wrong you begin to despair, and can't do anything." She sat down on the other side of the dressing-table. "Tell me everything from the beginning."

Played and Lost.

And he told her. He told how he was on his way to the bank with the money, when he met Nekrasoff. Nekrasoff invited him to his house to play. There they had played, and he had lost. Now he meant to kill himself. So he said at least, but she saw that he had decided nothing, and that he was in despair and ready to catch at any straw. She listened till he had finished, and then said, "All this is absurd and disgusting. It is impossible to lose so much money accidentally. It is too idiotic."

"Reproach me if you like—do what you will with me."

"I am not going to reproach you or make a scene. Can't you understand that I want to save you—as I have always done, no matter how pitiful or despicable you have seemed to me?"

"Go on—oh, go on! It isn't for long now."

"Listen—this is what I think you had better do—oh, how mean, how cruel to torture me! I'm ill, and you know it. I have been doing myself with . . ."

"How stupid you are! Am I likely to advise you to sell the director of the bank that you have lost the money entrusted to you at cards? Tell him you were drinking at the Nicolaevsk station—no, better—go at once to the police—no, not now—go about 10 o'clock. Say you were walking along the Nechayevsk Lane, when a girl of 16 years, with a revolver—"

"Another girl, a serious, healthy, solemn little man with a delightful smile which showed his uneven teeth, and Tania, a dark lively and energetic child, initiative, amusing and merry, always good tempered and kind."

"Now, children, who wants to take nurse some jelly?"

"To nurse!" asked Boka. "I do."

"No! Me, no!" shouted Tania, and jumped off her chair.

"Who spoke first—you, Boka," said their father, who invariably spoiled Tania and therefore always welcomed an opportunity to prove how fair he could be.

"Come, Tania, you must give in to your brother," he said to his favorite.

"All right, Boka, go—I'm glad to let him. Come on, Boka, you take it. I never mind giving Boka anything."

Tempted and Fell.

Usually the children thanked their parents for the men before rising, and now everyone remained at table drinking coffee and waiting for Boka to return; but some time passed and he did not appear.

"Tania—run to the nursery and see why Boka's so slow."

Tania jumped off her chair, knooched a spoon off the table, picked it up, and pushed it on to the edge of the table. The spoon fell down again. Tania began to laugh, and picking it up once more, flew off on her stockinged little legs down the corridor to the nursery, beyond which was their nurse's door. She was running through the night nursery when she heard a sob behind her. She looked around. Boka was standing by his cot, looking at a toy horse. In his hand he held a plate, and he was crying bitterly. The plate was empty.

"Boka, what's the matter, Boka? And where is the jelly?"

"I—I ate it accidentally on the way. I won't go—I won't go back there! I—Tania—yes, I did—no—I didn't mean to, really I didn't—only I ate it all up! First just a little bit, and then all of it. What shall I do? I didn't mean to!"

Tania looked thoughtful. Ask Boka was robbing his heart out.

Suddenly Tania brightened. "Look here, Boka—don't cry—you go and tell nurse. Tell her you did it accidentally, and ask her to forgive you. And tomorrow let's give her our pudding—she's so kind."

Boka stopped crying. He rubbed his eyes with his palms and then with the backs of his hands. "How shall I tell her?" he whispered in a trembling voice.

"Let's go together."

"They ran off together, and returned presently, quite happy and merry."

And their nurse and their parents were also happy and very amused when nurse, laughing, and yet with tender pride, told them the whole story.

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NEWS

IN THE course of a conversation over the phone the other day, a man made this remark—"One's best friends are often one's worst enemies!" And it is essentially true.

Electricity lights our homes, toasts our bread, heats the iron on Tuesdays, runs our motors and engines, makes our street cars a great convenience, runs our electric cars, furnishes power, actual power, for various and sundry purposes, in fact one can scarcely see what our forebears did without it. It is one of our best friends. It is great when we control it. As Professor Grunmann pointed out last Monday in connection with Lohi, in his remarks on demography, these beings have good service when they were controlled by the gods; it was when the gods lost control of them, or were in their power temporarily, that they caused trouble. And so, in the matter whereon we are speaking, these friends of ours are of service when they are controlled by us. When electricity, in the form of a lightning bolt, descends, it brings fire, destruction and perhaps death with it; it is then uncontrolled. When we read of some person being electrocuted by having come in contact with a live wire we note that the friend has become a foe, that our best friend is our worst enemy.

Take the case of fire. It heats our houses, cooks our meals, gives us light, heat and comfort. It generates our steam and makes possible the Twentieth Century Limited or the Pennsylvania Flyer, or the Overland Limited. And yet, houses are eaten up by the flames, homes are destroyed, families made miserable, business depressed, warehouses reduced to ashes, men and women driven out of employment; yes, our good friend fire is often spoken of as the fire-devil!

The railroad is a great friend and one that does wonderful things for us. It makes it possible for us to visit friends at a distance, it annihilates space for us, and conveys us comfortably and safely, yet—but there are sometimes bad railway wrecks, and then there are accidents of a fatal nature, and people lose their lives, and it seems as though the friend had become an enemy.

And money, what a friend is money. It makes us happy to be able to buy what we want, and if one has money, many people think that he is rich. (But you can be rich without having money, and you can have money and not be rich.) Lots of people wish for the friendship of this friend, and when they get it they find that they do not get as much of it as they thought. The remark "He was after all, it is purely a commercial proposition, it depends on what it costs; it depends on what you paid for it, what you get out of it. It is a very good friend; it makes possible the trip abroad for education, the trip for the nurse, the teacher, the grocer and baker and candle-stick-maker; it is a good friend this money. But remember it is also an enemy. (Can't we hear someone say "Oh how I do love my enemies!" Money has been the enemy of many good people, often has it ruined a man. Money would be all right if it weren't for his money. Many persons would be happier to-day if they had just one-tenth as much money as they have, and this is no railing against the money power. Many of us think we would like a little more of the friendly side, and risk the enemy proposition; but perhaps not, after all. Even in the musical profession many a piece of trouble or mischief has been caused through money as an enemy. The anxious grabbing for it causes money to be an enemy. And so, money like the other things mentioned, can be a very good friend and a very bad enemy."

That wonderful analyst of human nature, William Shakespeare, said some contents ago:

"He that wants money, means, and content, is without three good friends." (Want here, of course being used in the sense of lack, not desire). But the same immortal seer also said—

"Who should not wish to be from wealth exempt, Since riches point to misery and contempt."

It was said by One in old time "A man's foe shall be the of his own household." And it is true very often today. A man's friends, the very people of his household are his worst enemies in many cases. They have a wrong viewpoint. They are prejudiced in his favor and they can not see him the real truth because they do not see it. And then when someone does tell him the truth, the friend becomes envious and we betide the truth-teller.

Take the matter of playing or singing. It is usually the case that the members of one's household are the most fervent admirers of one's work. It is not always so—sometimes the best critics of one's work are to be found in the family, or in the circle of close friends.

But usually the friends and admirers are false in the household. They always place a false value on the work of the one in whom they are interested. They never remember that they are of the family and may be prejudiced, in one's favor.

In this column the fact has often been drawn attention to by some of the readers, and that is the danger of accepting the too glowing praise of one's own family. If they happen to be wrong, it is doubly bad for the one involved, first because it is not true, and consequently the praise is a reward for work done, and will not feel the necessity of necessary work; and secondly, because when the critic or the outside friend tells the real truth about the person's work, he is not believed, and right here is a tide neglected, which might have borne the aspirant on to success and compensation.

And that leads to another old saying—"Don't believe anything you hear and only half of what you see." Many times does it happen that people who call themselves friends are really enemies, because they are unable to tell the truth when they quote you. A traitor is absorbed in all nations, and betrayal is an offense which is not looked upon with favor. Judas has not yet become a popular character. It was a betrayer, a traitor. In many armies, traitors have been shot. The punishment fits the crime. Now there is not any other way in which a man may be described who will deliberately betray or reveal the private opinion of a friend. We are all human and we all discuss things in the sanctity of a home which we do not proclaim on the street-cars or on the broad highway.

Even in connection with our most intimate and best-loved friends, there are little things which we do not like perhaps, but which we would not mention to them for the world, for fear of hurt-

ing their feelings, and making the matter appear graver than it really is. And yet we discuss them perhaps at a meal together.

Let us imagine that every one who reads this column today, could have a parallel statement of what their best friends say to them about their singing or playing, and what these same best friends say to their other best friends, about the same singing or playing, wouldn't it be an interesting study?

We can be perfectly honest in saying "I enjoyed your playing very much" and yet we may see much to improve and we may not agree at all in regard to the interpretation but refrain from saying so. We have all heard and enjoyed splendid speakers with whom we did not agree.

But it is a dangerous thing when people carry back and forward things which people have said. For example, if Jones discusses Smith with Green present, Jones takes it for granted the conversation is not for Smith's ears. It is therefore betraying a conversation for Green to run and tell Smith what Jones said about him. And such a person is a traitor, wherever you find him, and as remarked before Judas has not yet been accepted as a desirable character.

Strangest part of all in tale-bearing is that people always will jump with credulity at a tale, no matter how they may distrust the person telling, and will relate it and enjoy it and dwell on it, and tell it over again, without ever going to person-number-one and seeing if the things will bear inspection.

Don't believe anything you hear and only half of what you see. In all the writer's experience he has never yet "run down" a story of tale-bearer's gossip, without finding that there was nothing, or at least very little, to the whole thing.

Tales never decrease in the hearing, and gossip diminishes not in its flight.

Just last week a man came to the writer with a "story" of what some one had said; the writer replied "Take me to him and I will explain the thing clearly." But nothing like that was done. The person agreed however to "get us together very soon". Which will be, never! No, they do not want to get things straightened out.

However, this is all due to the remark made over the phone by a good and valued friend, and as we sat together last Monday afternoon waiting for a lecturer to begin, these thoughts began to crystallize.

"A man's best friends are often his enemies."

Do not believe anything you hear, and only half of what you see.

"A man's foe shall be they of his own household."

And while on the subject we might avoid misunderstandings sometimes by reading the words of the wise king and saying "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out; so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth". THOMAS J. KELLY.

Musical Notes.

Mr. Max Landow is playing to two classes of twelve people by a good and valued friend, and as we sat together last Monday afternoon waiting for a lecturer to begin, these thoughts began to crystallize.

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