

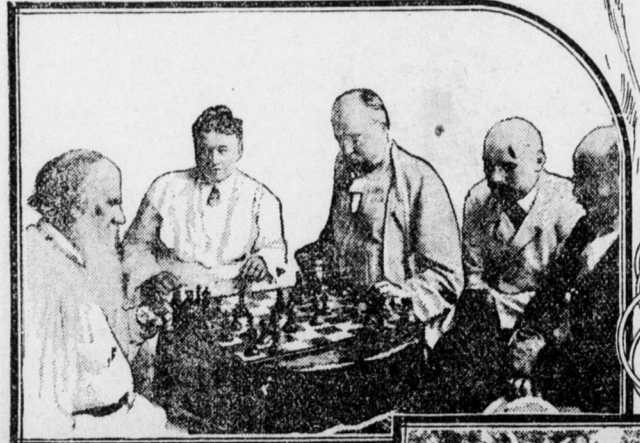
WHY RUSSIA WORSHIPS TOLSTOI

BY WILLARD W. GARRISON



COUNT TOLSTOI

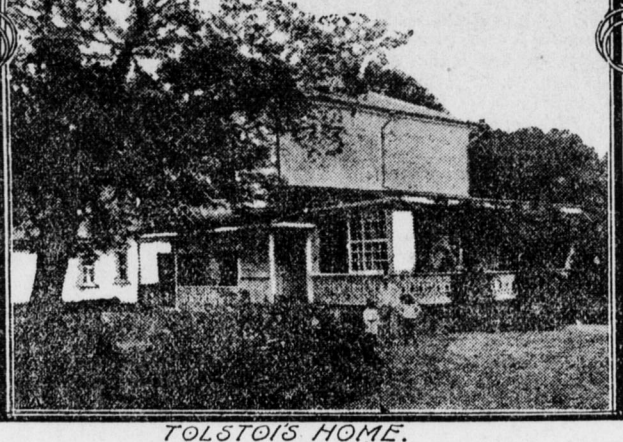
COUNT TOLSTOI AND HIS FAVORITE HORSE



THE COUNT PLAYING CHESS WITH HIS SON-IN-LAW



THE COUNT AND FAMILY ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY



TOLSTOI'S HOME.

IF THE peasants of Russia had their way in the bestowing of a title upon Count Leo Tolstoy, he would be known as the Most-Beloved Leo Tolstoy. For there is no man in the world who has so many friends among the plebeians. Still Tolstoy is immensely wealthy, but that does not interfere with the great life work which has now nearly drawn to a close.

He is now 80 years old and while in good health at the time of this writing, his passing is but a matter of a few months or years. There are two sides to this great man. One is Leo Tolstoy, the artist, and the other—Leo Tolstoy, the man. As the artist he has written fearless works and the person or clique which has fallen under the scathing attack of his pen has seldom been known to boast of it.

There is no disputing his rank as the best known of living authors. Also he is the most generally read and recognized. He has attained the highest pinnacle of fame in the literary field and it cannot be said that he craved fame, either.

Best of all, Tolstoy is a friend of all Americans. The traveler from the United States, visiting Russia, is as welcome at the Yasnaya Polyana estate of Russia's great man, as if he were in his own home. America likes Tolstoy, too, for the author is the most democratic of men.

It is told of him that he spurns all worldly luxuries, even going so far as to have two tables set within his home at each meal—one resplendent with fancy edibles, while the other is stocked with simple food of the peasantry. Friends of his daughters and sons are always welcomed at the more prosperous looking board, while in the same room, Tolstoy, seated alongside of his wife, partakes of the necessities of life as an ordinary plebeian would. However, his children, having been brought up to the luxuries of life, are allowed to gratify their every whim, and he never allows his beliefs to step between them and happiness. In that respect he is an ideal father and he has been praised the world over for his broad-minded manner of treating others who do not believe as he does.

He is also what Americans call a "mixer," but in an entirely different sense. He meets the poor of Russia on their own level, and, except for the fact that he often scatters money at their feet, one would never suspect his wealth. There are no strings attached to Tolstoy's gifts, and thousands of beneficences to Russians in general, while the benefactor's name is a secret, are popularly laid at the door of this great man.

To be a friend of the Russian peasant up to a few years ago meant to be an enemy of the government. Upon several occasions Tolstoy's outcry against oppression of the czar's subjects has placed him behind the grimy walls of Slav dungeons, but he always returned to continue the work which he has so ably accomplished.

He is a social reformer of the first water and many of the acts of justice which the Russian government of late years has accomplished can be traced back to the work of Tolstoy.

As a literary artist the count is dead. His demise was a literary suicide, and it occurred 33

years ago, when he himself declared that his great creative works were unworthy and altogether evil. Here is his own account of the split in his life: "I had tried to test science and modern culture, and I have turned from them with a feeling of repulsion because of the inability of the first to solve the really important problems of life and because of the hollowness and falseness of the second."

By becoming chummy with the peasant Tolstoy declares he turned to frankness, simplicity and essential kindness, and he says he is to-day nearer mother earth than ever in his life. He declares the peasant, typically, is the ideal Christian. And thus since 1875 his writings have been almost exclusively polemic and didactic.

To-day Count Leo Tolstoy is a large, heavily-built man with unusually long arms, hanging loosely at his sides, with a wide nose, somewhat thick lips, small gray eyes, a head set on bulky but slightly stooping shoulders and a matted white beard. He possesses an air of strength that is found in few great men. The power that one finds in him is both mental and physical, and hence of the durable sort.

One of this man's great themes is the Sermon on the Mount. In this he has declared that he found five laws of God and he has made them his rules for faith and conduct throughout the later years of his life. These laws are summarized as follows:

- Live in peace with all men and do not regard any man as your superior.
- Do not make the beauty of the body an occasion for lust.
- Every man should have one wife and every woman one husband, and they should not be divorced for any reason.
- Do not revenge yourself and do not punish others because you think yourself insulted or hurt. Suffer all wrong and do not repay with evil for you are all the children of one father.
- Never break the peace in the name of patriotism.

- 1828—BORN ON FATHER'S ESTATE AT YASNAYA POLYANA.
- 1843—STUDIED ORIENTAL LANGUAGES AT KAZAN.
- 1848—RECEIVED DIPLOMA AS LAWYER AT KAZAN.
- 1851—DESERTED HIS ESTATE.
- 1853—ENLISTED IN THE ARMY OF DANUBE IN CRIMEAN WAR.
- 1857—VISIT ABOARD WHICH CAUSED DISAPPOINTMENT IN MODERN CIVILIZATION.
- 1864-1869—WROTE HIS MASTERPIECE—"WAR AND PEACE."
- 1862—MARRIED SOPHIE ANDREYEVNA BEHRN OF MOSCOW.
- 1890—IMPRISONED FOR HIS TEACHINGS.
- 1897—THRUST INTO PRISON FOR A SHORT TIME BECAUSE OF ALLEGED ANTAGONISM TOWARD GOVERNMENT.

What Tolstoy has done for the people of his time in Russia is to be found in the dress, customs and habits of the lower classes of that absolute monarchy, but the critics say that right in his home his own teachings have had little effect. The answer which close friends of the count give to that assertion is that Russia's benefactor is too broad-minded to make his home a martyrdom and to inflict his beliefs upon his wife and children if they do not care to abide by them.

So while Tolstoy has spent his life or the greater part of it in preaching the doctrine of poverty and non-resistance, his children were reared on the great estate and from the first their lot was that of the aristocrat. They married "well," and are said to have completely renounced his views. It is told of Tolstoy that his wife has always managed to "slip a piece of velvet under her husband's crown of thorns just when he wishes to press it to his head most heavily."

That might be termed an inconsistency, but surely it is not the count's choice. The work which some of the critics of other nations scoff at has reached from the thatched hut of the poorest peasant clear to the palace of the emperor himself.

For the sake of peace also, Tolstoy has accomplished a great work. The first Hague conference, which made history, would probably never have been called had it not been for the persistent gospel of this friend of the populace at large. Tolstoy saw that the eventual result of his teachings would be some sort of a world's peace gathering and he expressed gratification when Czar Nicholas called the initial session of the body over which the dove of peace was destined to perch.

No church in the world, it is recorded, carried out as petrified a ritual as that of the Slav. Today, chroniclers tell us, there exists a tendency towards softening of the customs of religion in the czar's country. Teachings of simplicity by Tolstoy will be accorded the honor for this change if it is eventually wrought.

Humane treatment of prisoners and philanthropic moves of the immensely wealthy men of Russia are also laid to the work of the count. Tolstoy tasted the bitter cup of imprisonment himself and he was well prepared to go about that work with a zest born of actual experience.

Simple moral truths have been the axioms of Tolstoy throughout his later years and while skeptical persons call his ideas impracticable their defender could, were he not all too modest, point to the works which have followed in the wake of his unique, quaint gospel.

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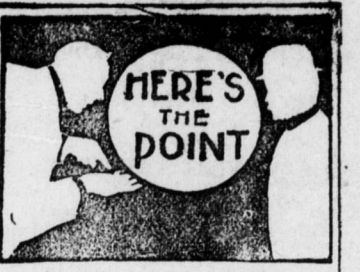
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